

*The Ethnic Ancestry  
of the  
Orthodox Christians  
of Syria and Palestine*

**Pavlos Karolidis**

**Athens**

**1909**

**Translated and Edited**

**George Manolopoulos**

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## *Editor's Introductory Note*

I first heard of the monumental work of Pavlos Karolidis as a brief mention in a committee hearing of the Greek parliament in November 2021 where representatives of Arabic speaking organizations of the Levant were expressing their hopes for recognition and assistance by the Greek state. A couple of years later, through the non-profit organization “Epitropi Ellinismou” and the posting of awards for students of Greek ancestry in the Eastern Mediterranean and Black Sea regions, I came in contact with some of these organizations. I was asked to translate this book for them for educational purposes, in a continuing effort to raise awareness amongst the people of the Levant. To assist them in finding their roots and their history that has all but been erased after decades of pan-Arabism propaganda.

I always had an interest in Greek minorities and their present-day well-being in areas where historically Hellenism flourished. There was a time, not too long ago, that you could walk from Odessa to Alexandria and only hear Greek. Enclaves of Greeks, big or small, internationally recognized as a Greek minority or not, still exist in all these areas. Most are struggling to survive and to maintain their Greek heritage. All are asking for recognition and assistance by the Greek state that today sits on a small portion of what used to be the Greek eastern Mediterranean. However, because of various non-flattering reasons for this Greek state, no assistance is forthcoming in any organized way.

*“Of your proud line and blood, I claim to be”*

*«Ὀμειτέρης ταύτης τοι γενεῆς τε καὶ αἵματος εὔχομαι  
εἶναι»*

With this quote from Homer, empress Eudocia, an Athenian and wife of Emperor Theodosius II, addressed the people of Antioch, proclaiming her Hellenic identity and theirs. And this is what today’s Greek Orthodox and actually the Catholic as well of Syria, Lebanon and Palestine want to proclaim to their fellow Greeks and the rest of the world. A self-evident truth for millennia that got replaced by the pan-Arabism propaganda, invented and promoted by the then Russian empire to support an expansionist agenda based on falsehoods. But the people of the region are awakening from this false narrative and seeking their roots with the help of science and history.

This book comes to aid in their search for their true ancestry. Written in 1909, it lacks the knowledge of the discoveries of DNA and molecular biology. The latter term didn’t even exist at the time. Discoveries that decades later would only reinforce the premise of this book. However, it is written closer to a time when the Orthodox of the region still knew their true history and their national affiliation was to their brethren spread all over the eastern Mediterranean and the Black Sea. It is not a coincidence that the Greek revolutionaries of 1821 tried to spread the rebellion there as well. The author proves their ancestry by following the thread of time and coming to logical conclusions.

Pavlos Karolidis can be considered as the Konstantinos Paparigopoulos (the father of modern Greek historiography) of the Greek history of Syria and Palestine. He was born in a society that centuries earlier had to make a choice under the threat of violence. Keep your language



or your religion. His Greek ancestors in Cappadocia chose religion and preserved their national identity even without the language. So, he understood better than most the plight of the struggling Greek Orthodox Arabic speakers of the Middle East.

I hope this book proves helpful to those interested in the history of the region and of the Greeks. It is a history that parallels in many ways the history of southern Italy and Sicily and in other ways the history of Asia Minor and Macedonia.

The nomenclature was chosen to aid in the encyclopedic reference of names in the English language except for some historical figures or places which are widely known with slightly different variations of their names. The separation into chapters has also been edited and two appendices created from material referenced in footnotes of the original text, to aid the reading flow and comprehension.

## ***Dedication of the Original Book***

This book is dedicated to the respected head of the Holy Church of Jerusalem, the current guide of the throne of the brother of Jesus, Damian I. Not only as a sign of our respect to his high position, but also to the person of the Blessed Patriarch Damian I. Inspired by Orthodox Christian and national feelings, we wish to express our gratitude towards Him. Greek Orthodoxy, fighting a great and terrible fight in all of the East, finds in Damian I a strong fighter and able leader on behalf of the Church of Jerusalem. Damian I with his careful decisions, firm beliefs and indomitable fortitude combined with moderation, gives examples and lessons to those of us concerned with the peace, stability and good reputation of the mother of all Churches, to gaze with courage and hope the fight taking place there.

Through this book and the historic and scientific truths presented in it, we aim indirectly to consolidate the moral order guarded by Damian I and with it the rights of the Church and the Nation in the Holy Land. To contribute to the success of the great struggle of the Blessed Patriarch. We respectfully ask for His blessings and ask for Him to receive this small token of our devotion to the interests of the patriarchal throne of the Holy city and the Brotherhood of the Holy Sepulchre.



## *Introduction*

A characteristic trend of political opportunism of modern times is the basing of plans of expansion and conquest on supposed scientific ethnological studies. Studies that have nothing to do with scientific theory and only serve to discredit and twist scientific truth. This is an indication of the need of the conqueror to justify his conquering policy and brute force with supposed scientific truth. But when examined from a moral perspective, it is an insult against science to twist the truth to achieve political plans that overthrow every historic and ethnic right of people and nations. As Friedrich the Great said “Never is violence and injustice more devastating in the world than when they take place in the name of justice and the law”. The same goes for science and scientific truth. Every action against scientific truth in the name of justice, violence and material strength, not only destroys that truth but also dishonors it.

It is well known the uproar caused in the scientific and political world by the infamous theory of the German scholar J Fallmerayer about the origins of the people of Greece today. This scholar in his studies of Medieval Greece, had observed in the histories of the 6<sup>th</sup> through the 8<sup>th</sup> centuries, the not very well documented barbarian Avar raids in the European Greek lands that took place as far south as the Peloponnese. He considered this a great historic discovery announcing to the world that “the race of Greeks has been exterminated in Europe”, that “not a single drop of pure Greek blood runs in the veins of the people living in Greece today” and that “from the Danube to the last corner

of the Peloponnese a new race lives, brother to the Slavic people”.

His claims were initially considered an insult in Philhellenic Europe against the beliefs of all humanity. But after a while, as the philhellenic enthusiasm during the Greek revolution subsided, his theories started gaining traction and potentially to have influence on the stance of other nations towards Greece. When examined completely and only under the scientific light, great German historians concluded that Fallmerayer's theories lacked any historical evidence.

But what prompted the German historian to publicize his theories? Was it an antihellenic passion just because of his character or just to go against the philhellenic spirit of the time in Europe? Was it a personal hatred against the Greeks? Was it fear of the potential influence of Russia all the way to the Mediterranean? Or was it personal interest and Russian money that made him hide his true colors, pretending to fear Russia so as to act in favor of the grander Russian plan of Pan-Slavism?

The answer to these questions does not matter anymore since the issue of the origins of the people of present-day Greece has been answered. Fallmerayer's honor was questioned as his German critics politely put it, but it gave the opportunity to study more the history of the Middle Ages and the life of the Greek nation since it entered the Byzantine era. Therefore, we can also judge Fallmerayer leniently because he became the reason to study the history of Medieval Greece and through that the uninterrupted ethnic connection to the ancient Greeks was clearly determined.

We talk so much about Fallmerayer and his theory because it was the start of those supposed scientific ethnographic theories that resulted in political demands. Fallmerayer gave a political character to his theories supposedly due to a fear of a Slavic expansion to the Mediterranean by the creation of a “Greco-Slavic” country (as he called the Greek nation). Fear of Slavic power spanning from the Baltic to the Mediterranean and then as Napoleon put it, a triumph of the Greek crown (meaning Greek Orthodoxy) in the same vast area.

But those who took more advantage politically of his theories were those in Europe who hated Greece and were on the side of the Turks and were dreaming a rebirth of the Ottoman state, as a defense against the Slavic giant in the north and protector of European interests in the East. For that they criticized the liberation of Greece as a grave political sin because it weakened the Ottoman state and for the support Russia was going to find in this free “Greco-Slavic” and Orthodox, like Russia, nation, in its expansionist plans. Greece and the Greek nation according to them was the advanced guard of the Slavic world against Europe because of its Slavic origins according to the theories of Fallmerayer.

The fact that in the liberated part of Greece and the rest of the Greek East there was a nation that called itself Greek, spoke Greek, had deep conscience and pride of its ethnic Greek origin, maintained its ethnic traditions through the church and through education it maintained the continuity to the great Greek history, that it continually fought for its national freedom and unity and that it rejected any national affiliation with the Slavs, considering it an insult against it any *supposed* scientific way that cut it off from the glorious past of Greece and Hellenism, meant nothing to the political speculations of those in Europe that hated Greece. “The

new Greeks are Slavs in origin. Same nation as the Russians and therefore a dangerous political instrument of Russia in conquering the East". That was the main political dogma of those people.

In this turmoil of intentional or unintentional confusion of beliefs, ideas and opinions, the true science through the work of such men as I. Zinkeisen, Miklosich, Hopf or Bernard Smith, shone above political speculation and ended the debate by proving that today's Greece and the Greek nation has an uninterrupted continuity to the ancient Hellenism and Hellenism through the centuries. And that today's Greek history is just another stage of this continual line. This scientific victory brought to the East the final break between Hellenism and the Slavic world.

Russia under Czar Nicholas I kept a cool distance towards the scientific "news" of the Greek East. Firstly, because Russian policy viewed with caution and apathy new theories. Secondly, because Russia's eastern policy at the time relied on the Pan-Slavic idea but also on the protection it offered to the Orthodox Church with its center in Constantinople. The Church in Constantinople in turn had as its main representative in the Ottoman state and the rest of the East, the Greek nation. Therefore, the Czar's attention was primarily focused on the Greeks and then the Vlach populations of the principalities of Moldova and Wallachia along the Danube. It is known that the last act of the reign of Nicholas I was the more active protection of the Orthodox church in the Ottoman state through the Ecumenical Patriarch which led to the Crimean war.

During the reign of his successor, Alexander II, the change of methods in Russia's eastern policy influenced heavily its position towards the Ecumenical Patriarchate. Russian policy since the time of Peter I aimed at the subjugation of

the East directly or indirectly to the Czar. Until 1856 the method used was forcing Turkey through war. After that point Russia chose the “peaceful” subversive way of dismantling the Ottoman state by inciting racial uprisings and conflicts and creating national issues. One of those was the support for Slavism in the East. The Pan-Slavic movement as it was called, started by Alexander I and made great progress under the reign of Nicholas I but without yet much influence on the Eastern foreign policy of Russia.

This changed under Czar Alexander II and it became the main driving force of its Eastern policy. The goal became the prevailing of the Slavic element within Turkey over the up until then only representative of Orthodoxy in the East which was Hellenism. The passage of time and global events had rendered the Greeks useless for the plans of Russian policy. The latinized Vlachs by the Danube, formerly protected under Russia, lost that protection with the treaty of Paris in 1856. And the Christians in the entire Ottoman state including the Orthodox Church that were under Russian protection under the 1774 Kuchuk-Kainarji treaty between the Russian and Ottoman empires, were now going to be under the protection of all the Great Powers of Europe. Turkey, which Czar Nicholas I imagined he could tie to his state via the Unkiar Skelessi treaty of 1833 and in a form of alliance subjugate to Russia, was now under the protection of Europe, a member of the family of European states, with guaranteed territorial integrity and independence against Russia. Therefore, the only leverage that remained of Russia’s Eastern policy was the Slavic element.

Until 1865 Slavism was primarily represented by the Serbs and their neighbors with the same blood, the Montenegrins, the Bosnians and the Herzegovinians. Because of their geographical position, laying far from a potential military



conquest by Russia and close to the borders of Austria and with a strong national identity, they were not considered particularly useful despite their devotion to the great Slavic empire with the same blood and religion. Russian policy preferred a people closer to Russia and on the path an army would take between Russia and Constantinople. A people with a less developed national identity and sense of national history.

That people were the Bulgarians who after their inglorious end of their barbarian political existence in 1386 fell into obscurity not only in the eyes of the world but in their own conscience. Not having a national identity but being part of the great Orthodox Church, they never pursued their own individualism. They existed under the Greek Church and through that Church they survived as a Christian people. Their national characteristics in latency for centuries they finally revolted. Bulgarians as a people and especially as a Slavic people until the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century had no significance in the political calculations of Russia in its Eastern policy. Peter the Great who first initiated a policy of a strong Russia in the East, was promoting himself to the Christians of the Ottoman state as “Peter the First Emperor of the Russogreeks”, promising protection against that state. Only the Bulgarians were never mentioned. And regarding the “Eastern Question”, the “Greek plan” (Projet Grec) of Catherine II was the most important part and the basis of the 1786 Austro-Russian alliance against Turkey. In that plan, Bulgaria was just a geographic space, a province of the Greek empire that would spread from the Danube to the Mediterranean with its capital in Constantinople, that her second grandson would rule over.

The events of the Russo-Turkish war of 1828-29 proved the national nonexistence of the Bulgarians both in the minds of the Slavic world and the Bulgarians themselves. While a

Russian army was marching south through Bulgaria supposedly for the aid of the revolted Greeks, no action or mention not for the liberation but not even for the existence of the Bulgarians took place. At the time no sign of Bulgarian national life showed itself even though the timing was perfect for the creation of a political autonomous Bulgaria or at least the declaration of a distinct Bulgarian Christian nation. In the peace treaty of 1829 Turkey was forced to recognize the Greek state under the protection of the three Great Powers of the time, the Serbs were granted even more freedoms in addition to the ones they gained in 1817 for their struggle that had started in 1806, and even the principalities of Wallachia and Moldavia gained more autonomy. No mention whatsoever though about the Bulgarians.

This “raw” racial mass of people with its only characteristic being its language and its synonymous to “barbarian” national name, Russian policy and Pan-Slavism tried to turn into the Bulgarian nation (not with pure intentions but with ulterior motives). Along with its national identity they were preparing its political freedom and restoration. It would have been honorable work if they were truly working for the Bulgarian people and the Bulgarian idea. This goal was only possible because any little seeds left for the rebirth of the Bulgarian national existence, were preserved after the conquest by the Turks thanks to the Greek Orthodox Church. Without the Christian care of the Church, especially the one in Constantinople, the Bulgarian people would have ceased to exist and would have converted to Islam. This fact even the Exarch of the Bulgarian church did not hesitate to admit. That “to a great part the maintaining of the Bulgarian nation is owed to the Great Church (Constantinople)”. He only expressed his sorrow that lately “that loving mother has turned into an unloving

stepmother”. If that accusation towards the Great Church is warranted, we will examine further down. The undeniable truth is that the Great Church of Christ, during the stormy, dangerous and disastrous years protected the Bulgarian people and as through time brighter days came in the Greek East, the Church pioneered in the spiritual and cultural rebirth of the Bulgarian people.

It is known that the groundwork for the national reconstitution of the Bulgarians took place in Greek schools and by the educated Greek community of Constantinople. The leaders of the “Bulgarian Issue” were educated in the Greek schools of the City. The first Exarch of the Bulgarian Church, Anthimos, lived, studied and even taught in the theological school of Halki. And while there, their education had no missionary purpose to convert them to Hellenism but instead to promote their national education. Proof of that is that the Great Church always allowed Bulgarians to be taught in their language and hold their church services in Slavic just like any other Slav. And not only did it allow 50 years ago the building of a church (San Stefano) in the district of Fanari, near the Ecumenical Patriarchate (at the time there was no Schism or Bulgarian ecclesiastical issue) so that services could be held in Slavic but also the Patriarchate urged the Orthodox Greeks to aid with donations the building of this church in favor of the Orthodox Bulgarian people so that they can pray to God in a language understood by them.

The Greek people viewed favorably the spiritual awakening of a fellow Orthodox and enslaved people like themselves. And just as favorably the national groundwork being laid through a cultural promotion that would lead to their political reconstitution. Unfortunately, Pan-Slavism and Russia’s Pan-Slavic policy cast its nets on this movement by the Bulgarians that were being aided by Hellenism and

the Greek Orthodox Church in particular, aiming to dominate in the East through the Slavic idea.

The methods used for the accomplishment of this goal do not need to be detailed here as they are widely known. Of course, in politics, whether coming from Russia or anywhere, you cannot expect to respect the Christian value of “Good, is not good, if not done in a good way”. But in the Bulgarian issue, the disrespect of an Orthodox nation such as the Russian, exceeded all measure. The Pan-Slavic policy was just the cover. The goal was Russian expansion and conquest and had nothing to do with Bulgarian interests. Bulgaria was just the instrument of the policy of a conquering force. This is proven in the memoirs of the German prince Hohenlohe, who served Prussia and the German Empire in many capacities, who stated that in 1890 Russia was planning to annex Bulgaria but was prevented by Germany.

The Russian plan did not just want the creation of a Bulgarian state and the political freedom of its people within the true and fair borders of the Bulgarian national idea. Through the false idea of the Great Bulgaria, it attacked the Great Orthodox Church of Christ and indirectly the Greek nation. The Bulgarian state about to be born needed to extend beyond the ethnographical boundaries of Bulgaria. It would have access to the Aegean Sea and include if not the entire, at least the majority of Macedonia. Because of this they also needed to create a big Bulgarian nation. But because according to law in the Ottoman state any national identity had to be based on religion to constitute a religious community, those about to give birth to the “Great Bulgaria” conceived the plan to create not a new religion but a new Church. A Great Bulgarian Church that would include, if possible, the entire Macedonia and

most of Thrace. Therefore, the new Bulgarian state would have claims in all those lands.

Therefore, all efforts of Pan-Slavism turned to the creation of this Church. In Macedonia its Greek inhabitants spoke a Grecoslavic dialect. A mixture of Greek roots and Slavic grammatical forms. This was due to the frequent barbaric raids, just like in the Turk occupied areas of Asia Minor. The Pan-Slavists thought they could take advantage of this dialect for their plan claiming that “Wherever the Bulgarian language is spoken (Because that’s what they called the Greco-Slavic dialect) that’s where Bulgaria is. And where Bulgaria is that’s where the Bulgarian Church also is”. They wanted to create a national Church, without defined boundaries, just so that they can lay claims. Disregarding the laws and rules of the Church which did not allow on the same territory two Ecclesiastical jurisdictions (The Ecumenical Patriarchate and the Bulgarian Church), because from a moral and dogmatic perspective the splitting of the Church on the basis of language, dialect or nationality is not allowed. Yet the organizers of this plan disrespected the Church and through political means pursued the issuance of a firman by the sultan of the Ottomans and Caliph of the Muslims. The entire Orthodox Church of the East condemned as illegal and excommunicated the clerics and laymen involved in these actions (the unlawful and through the use of secular, political power of a Muslim government, the formation of a nationality based schismatic Church) in a Synod that took place in Constantinople in 1872.

But the agents of Pan-Slavism did not stop at this. They attempted to twist and falsify science (history and ethnology) by declaring that Macedonia was Slavic for centuries and particularly Bulgarian. The birthplace of the Bulgars. The Finno-Turkic nation that existed by the

Caucasus mountains in the 4<sup>th</sup> century and then in southern Russia and who by the end of the 7<sup>th</sup> century settled between the Danube and the Aimos mountains and whose language became Slavic after centuries. They also declared as Bulgarian Slavs the descendants of the ancient Macedonian Greeks such as Aristotle, Philip and Alexander, who due to circumstances now spoke a mixed Greco-Slavic dialect.

They attempted to desecrate the upmost rule of ethnology, that nationality is not something physical but something moral. Connected with an identity, a will, a culture and a history. Each people belong to that nation that shares its history, culture and identity. And through that national identity and will, it is tied together and declares that it belongs to that nation. Not to that race whose barbaric dialect due to circumstances and national disasters was forced to speak. To justify this unholy encroachment of the rule of nationality, they created fake history, literature and poetry. Things that did not even need to be scrutinized by science as they were so obviously silly.<sup>1</sup>

Therefore, Church dogma and rules were violated, history, literature and ethnology falsified and desecrated to achieve those political aims. And for a moment those aims seemed to be achieved through the San Stefano treaty of 1878. A treaty that ended the Russo-Turkic war of 1877-78 that was caused by the Bulgarian pseudo revolution of 1876. In that treaty almost all of Macedonia and a big part of Thrace became part of the Bulgarian state that spanned from the Danube to the Aegean, destroying all the national and historic rights of Hellenism in those Greek lands. Europe

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<sup>1</sup> Songs attributed to the mythological figure of Orpheus were created to prove the ancient Bulgarian ancestry of him and the inhabitants of Macedonia and Thrace and that modern spoken Bulgarian comes from the language of the region in ancient times.

through the English minister of foreign affairs formally complained on April 15, 1878, about the complete disregard of the rights of Hellenism. Russia backed down after the demand of England and Austria and in the Berlin conference and the treaty that followed it that same year, the Great Bulgaria of Pan-Slavism was dissolved. In its place a Bulgarian state was established within more logical borders that guaranteed the free national and political development of the Bulgarian people, saving it from the claws of Pan-Slavism and its trap that would lead to its absorption by Russia. But the Bulgarian state inherited the idea of the Great Bulgaria despite the short life of the San Stefano treaty and sought by any means the recreation of such a Bulgaria, even asking to be used as part of the Pan-Slavic aims.

For us Greeks it is indifferent which deceit, the Bulgarian or the Russian would win. The importance of the matter is that the struggle for Macedonia and Thrace takes place through a national Church, under a fraudulent national pretense of ethnographic theories that have nothing to do with scientific truth and history.

This attempt of Slavism against Hellenism and the Greek Orthodox Church that was just described as taking place in Turkey, did not limit itself in its European lands but extended during the same period in Asia and Africa. This proves the conquering aim of Russia as the same exact methods were applied in all the Greek East. Pan-Slavism understanding that the main strength of Hellenism in the East is in the Orthodox Church and its historic patriarchal seats and great ecclesiastical centers, it set its traps there. Hellenism, with a rich culture and glorious history, also had the Orthodox Church as an integral part of it as the Church had a Greek character since its establishment. The two of them combined presented a major obstacle in the

conquering aims of Slavism when the time came that the Ottoman state dissolved either through external war or internal reasons.

Therefore, to weaken Hellenism, Pan-Slavism sought to take away its Ecclesiastical centers and turn them into Slavic. The same way it tried to weaken the Ecumenical Patriarchate as the center of Hellenism with the formation of a national Bulgarian Church, the exact same method was tried in the Middle East with the use of nonexistent historically, artificially created, false nations as temporary bridges for the transfer of the Church from Hellenism to Slavism and Russia.

Starting in the 4<sup>th</sup> decade of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, after the Greek revolution and liberation of Greece and the dashing of Russian hopes there, Pan-Slavism started influencing unofficially but systematically Russian foreign policy in the European and Asiatic territories of Turkey against Hellenism. In 1838 Bishop Porfyrios was sent by Russia on a tour of the Asian provinces of Turkey to examine the best course of action on behalf of the Slavic idea. Porfyrios visited the Patriarchates of Antioch, Jerusalem and Alexandria and returned to Russia with a similar discovery as in Macedonia and Thrace. That the Orthodox people called themselves Greek (Rum) but were not Greek speaking in their everyday language but Arabic. He figured that due to this a nationality issue could be created in the patriarchal Churches which could be solved in the Pan-Slavic way. Make those Churches Arabic, make Arabic their official language and by displacing Greek inspire in the Arabic speakers that lacked cultural affinity to Hellenism, the belief that they have nothing in common with Hellenism and the Greeks. According to Porfyrios, this Arabization would be temporary. Used in the process to make them Russian. He believed that the Arabic speakers of Syria and



Palestine would not be able to rule their Churches and soon they would seek protection under Russia. He also believed that the Churches of Antioch and Jerusalem should become Slavic first, after which Alexandria would easily fall as well.

These thoughts he formally presented to the Synod and the government of Russia. Despite his sincerity and feasibility of the plan, Russia did not officially adopt this policy because Czar Nicholas I had a different policy. But that started to change in 1856. War on Hellenism was taking place based on Pan-Slavism on both the European and Asian lands of Turkey. In 1872 as the Bulgarian Schism was taking place, Russia was organizing a schism in the Patriarchate of Jerusalem by stirring a revolt by the local married Arabic speaking clerics of Palestine against the monastic Brotherhood of the Holy Sepulchre and its leader the patriarch. The successes of this first attempt were insignificant. But it was a start and it led to the creation in 1885 of the Palestinian Russian Company.

Russia continually pressed the Church of Jerusalem during the times of Patriarchs Procopius II (1873-1874), Hierotheus (1874-1882), Nicodemus (1883-1890), Gerasimus (1891-1897) and Damian (1897-1931). But the morale of the Church remained high and it resisted. Through the Palestinian Russian Company, Russia built schools for boys and girls in the Arabic speaking villages and cities. It sent to Russia many Arabic speakers for higher education to become the apostles of Slavism in Syria and Palestine. It built churches and monasteries in strategic locations. Yet it made little headway.

On the contrary, in a short amount of time in the territory of the Church of Antioch it accomplished great victories using the same company and means. Since it started building

schools in 1897 in Antioch, it managed within two years to create a divide between Arabic speakers and Greek speakers and to hold an election for the patriarchate seat in a way that broke the rules of 180 years. Russia was following the almost 70-year-old advice of Bishop Porfyrios. And it spread its influence to Egypt too through Arabophones who had moved there from Syria and Palestine creating a schism there as well based on language. In all 3 countries it was asking from the Arabophones to pretend they are Arabs, or the more scientific sounding to pretend they have Aramaic ancestry, just based on language. Exactly same tactic as in Macedonia. Aiming to erase their Greek identity, to destroy their cultural unity with Hellenism and prepare their subjugation to the Slavs.

Facing such political opportunism, we feel it is our scientific duty and obligation towards the truth to support the rights of Hellenism, by examining in depth and impartially the ancestry of the Orthodox Christians of Syria and Palestine and come to a final, logical conclusion.

# *Chapter 1*

## *Clarification of the Issue*

For centuries in the subconscious of the entire Greek nation and in the minds of foreign people, the Orthodox of Syria and Palestine, belonging to the patriarchates of Antioch and Jerusalem and through those, connected to the other two great patriarchates of the Greek East, were the same nation as the Orthodox Greeks of the rest of the East<sup>2</sup>. All calling themselves the nation of the Romans (Rum) or Grecs or Hellenes<sup>3</sup>. The patriarchate was Rum and in the Ottoman

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<sup>2</sup> From an ethnological perspective the term “Orthodox of Syria and Palestine” is not entirely correct. In this book it includes more than what we consider in the strict religious notion. Orthodox are considered those not belonging to the main heretic Churches of Syria, Palestine and Mesopotamia. Nestorianism, Monophysitism and Maronite. In this book as Orthodox are also considered those belonging to the Eastern Rite Catholic Churches, also known as Greek Catholic or Romans or Melhites, who up to the beginning of the 18<sup>th</sup> century belonged to the Orthodox Church. The name Melhites from a historical perspective would be a better term to use as it used to describe all the Greek Orthodox of Syria, in contrast to the non-Greek heretics. But since the name Melhites was given to those belonging to the Eastern Rite Catholic Churches, people who remained loyal to their Greek nationality after the schism of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, the term would create confusion. Therefore, I chose the term Orthodox, without a strict religious meaning but more of a national or ethnographical, that also quietly includes the Roman Catholic Melhites, also known as Arabic speaking Greeks, who proudly still maintain their Greek ancestry.

<sup>3</sup> The name Roman initially meant the inhabitant of Rome. But in the beginning of the 3<sup>rd</sup> century all non-enslaved inhabitants of the empire were given that title. It had a political meaning. Not an ethnological one. After Constantine the Great, in the Greek East where Hellenism ruled culturally, politically and nationally, the name Roman also became the

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national name of the citizens of the “Greco-Roman” state and the Greeks of the East called themselves Romans, replacing the ancient name Hellene (Greek) and giving it a national meaning. That was because the name Hellene after Christianity triumphed, became synonymous to the followers of the ancient religions. It came mean anyone not Christian or Jewish non-Christian Arabs were called Hellenes before Islam. In medieval times for western chronographers, Roman (today Rum), expressed the notion of Greek Christian. In the minds of the Greek Romans there was no other connection to the Romans or rather Latins of the West. Just the political meaning of the name and the imperial claims of the Greek emperors who followed the Roman emperors. Thus, the name Roman was primarily used through the peak centuries of Byzantium but with the name Hellene remaining in the back of the people’s conscience, aware of its ancient and present meaning. But as the antithesis between Christianity and the ancient religion was gradually forgotten, so did the religious meaning of the name Hellene. In the 13<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup> centuries Byzantine chronographers started the frequent use of the term Hellene along with Roman and called the emperors “Kings of the Hellenes” even though the official name of the emperors of the Greek state to the end was “King of the Romans”. Even the last emperor in his address to the people of Constantinople calls them descendants of Romans and Greeks. In the centuries that followed, the two terms continued to be used in parallel and both with a national meaning. Roman in official use by the Church and the people and Hellene by the educated class. After 1821 the Greek state officially started using the name Hellene. But that term made little headways and it will probably never prevail. Not only with the people of the Greek kingdom but those living in Turkey and everywhere else as well. The name Roman remained in official use by the church and used by the people with its new form Rum. In the Ottoman state the Greeks are referred as the Rum Millet and the patriarch is the leader of the Rum.

As for the name Greek (Grekos) for the ancient Hellenes it was not only useless but also unknown until the time of Aristotle. It was the name of a small tribe in Epirus and from that the Romans started calling all Hellenes with that name (Graeci and the country Graecia). In Hellenistic times the name got a more general meaning but still its use remained limited. But even though the name became known in all the Roman world it never became a national name. Same for the so-called Byzantine times and the centuries after the fall of Constantinople. Only in modern times in Turkey, communities in the rural provinces afraid to use the name Hellene and not wanting to use the name Roman, they chose to start using the name Greek (Grekos) for their schools,

Empire they were the Rum millet. Through those names and through the Church and through national life and identity, they are united with those living in European and Asiatic Turkey and have the same blood and are the same nation as those living in the Greek kingdom.

The situation for the people speaking Arabic in Syria and Palestine and in a great part of Mesopotamia and part of Cilicia, after the Arab conquest of the 7<sup>th</sup> century is the same as for the Greek people in the inland parts of Asia Minor speaking Turkish after the Turkic conquest of the 11<sup>th</sup> century. And just as the Greeks of Asia Minor who spoke Turkish were never considered Turks, neither were the Greeks of Syria and Palestine considered Arab just because they spoke Arabic. That is until today, where this widely held knowledge has been replaced by a debate of whether they are Arabs or should they be considered Aramaean. Through scientific analysis we will present in this work the flaws and gaps of either of those two new theories and prove what is accurate.

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hospitals, orphanages etc. Foreigners however use this term in its various form in each language.

## *Chapter 2*

### *Possible Hypotheses*

Scientific analysis and clarification of the ancestry of any people demands the examination of the physical and moral elements that make up the parts that compose this ancestry. Such physical elements in ethnology are the racial characteristics, the biological history in other words. The anthropological genius and the language of the race in its natural state of development. Moral elements are the national characteristics, the ones that refer to the nation, (with the current scientific meaning of the term nationality) the historical course of a people, its creations in this course, evolving and creating in harmony to the race or outside of it. The creation of its collective identity as a people through history and its place in the history of humanity. National identity as expressed through historic traditions and the national language, whether it developed naturally on its own or from another language in the passage of history. Language is an instrument for national life, identity, traditions, education, feelings and the entire cultural life of a nation as it is being created through history. Therefore, in order to determine the ancestry of a people we must keep in mind all these elements and separate the matter of the physical or racial ancestry from the matter of national ancestry.

In the first matter the scientific determination for the ancestry of the Orthodox of Syria and Palestine by physical characteristics is very difficult if not impossible. The

science of the anthropological categorizing of people after the initial division into five groups, or as newer investigators suggest seven, becomes precarious. Especially when it comes to people belonging to the same great anthropological family of the White or Caucasian people that always lived in Syria, Mesopotamia, Armenia, Asia Minor and the European Greek peninsula. This becomes even more difficult as since mythological times many people have lived in the area. Hittites, Egyptians, Phoenicians, Philistines, Assyrians, Babylonians, people known through the Old Testament and classical Greek literature, the numerous Greek colonies in Mesopotamia and Syria and the Semitic and Turkic people associated with the Islamic conquest. All belonging in the greater anthropological race or family, they all mixed in this area. I confess that I know of no scientific research on the anthropological ancestry of the Orthodox of Syria and Palestine that proves their biological relation to one people or another.<sup>4</sup> The opinions of travelers through Syria lack of course any scientific basis or accuracy. Even I travelling through Palestine, from Iope and Jerusalem to Samaria and Galilee, I admired the almost identical anthropological types to the Greeks of Smyrna or Philadelphia and the rest of the Greek lands. This observation in conjunction with history, concurs with our theory about the Greek ancestry of the Orthodox in these lands. But we cannot claim to come

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<sup>4</sup> Editor's Note: This book was published in 1909. Biological research at the time relied on largely mistaken ideas of physical measurements. DNA was four decades away from being discovered and the field of molecular biology did not even exist yet. Today DNA research is so advanced that ancestry results are available to anyone for a small fee. These results largely prove the biological connection of the Orthodox from the region to ancient and modern Greeks. A good scientific reference book on the subject available to the public in both Greek and English editions is the "*The Genetic Origins of Greeks*" by Costas Triantafyllidis, pub. Kyriakidis, 2018, ISBN 978-960-599-250-7.

to a conclusion based on these observations. Not because it is not satisfactory evidence but because ethnological science does not consider biological relation to other people as something necessary to determine national ancestry. Of course, the picture of nationality becomes even more complete when we have known biological relation of peoples, but it is not necessary. Therefore, since anthropological observations and research are not a secure enough way to determine racial, not national, ancestry for a people in a region inhabited by many other anthropologically related peoples, we move on to the next characteristic of racial ancestry, language.

Language as a physical element and characteristic of racial ancestry of people is of great scientific importance because it represents the cultural character and nature of a race but also because it is easier to study scientifically and the results of its study are safer than anthropology's. Even so, its value as a racial characteristic is not beyond doubt.<sup>5</sup> In the case of

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<sup>5</sup> Language can be considered a safe trace of racial ancestry when there is no antithesis between the linguistic and anthropological relation of peoples. But that doesn't always occur. It is not uncommon for different races to fall within the same linguistic family. **(Editor's Note: The linguistic theory that follows has been proven inaccurate since 1909 when the book was written)** A line stretches from the eastern shores of the Baltic, through European Russia (frequently interrupted by the Aryan Slavic linguistic idioms) to western Siberia and northwestern and central Asia and all the way to Manchuria and Beijing. That line is made up of the Turanian languages. Yet the people who speak these related languages differ anthropologically as they belong to various branches of the White or Caucasian people and the Yellow or Mongolian people. And as the Turanian speakers of the Baltic Russian provinces (and far to their south also the Magyars) represent the Caucasian anthropological type of the Turanian family of languages, on the far east end of Asia, in Manchuria and in Beijing, belonging to the same great linguistic family, the Manchu represent the Yellow or Mongol anthropological family. In contrast the Chinese and Manchu although they belong to the same anthropological family, they speak completely different and unrelated to each other languages. The same can be said



a people whose history is transformed from a racial history to a national history, language gains even more significance as it becomes an instrument and an expression of their history, culture and national development. Because of that, to examine the racial and national ancestry of a people, language does not have an absolute value but a relative one. It is useful as a characteristic of racial ancestry only if through history that ancestry can be proven. And it is useful as a feature of national ancestry if it expresses national identity and development and represents the entire cultural

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about the anthropological relation and linguistic difference between Chinese and Japanese. In Africa Black Muslims speak the language of White Muslims, a language completely different to the languages of the non-Muslim Black people of the continent. The explanation for this disagreement between anthropological and linguistic relation can be found in history and in extrapolating from known facts the unknown. We know that in America there are millions of black people who speak the language of the white Europeans (English in the USA, Spanish and Portuguese in Central and South America) because as we clearly know from history, when they arrived to America from Africa they lost their barbarian, natural or racial, language and learned the languages of the white people there. Same in Africa. The spread of Islam amongst the black people of Africa and the establishment along with that spreading of the new religion of a White Arab state over the Black people, made brought about the use of the Arabic language as well. From these known historical facts, we can explain the antithesis between linguistic and anthropological relation within the great Turanid language family of people. Most likely because of historical events, the prevailing of White or Yellow race people upon Turanid speakers, (because we don't know if at first this language was spoken by Yellow or White race people) also forced their language on people of different anthropological ancestry. But there are Turanid people, ranging somewhere between the Mongol Turanid and the Caucasian Turanid race that are not Turanid in terms of language. Such are the Bulgars beyond the Aimos mountains according to history and evidenced by the names of their ancient rulers, but also the Turano-Finnish type of face and skull. A Turanid-Mongol people who have lost completely their original language, in the middle of the Slavic people with who they mixed. Their language has completely transitioned to the Aryan family of languages. In conclusion it is often precarious and incomplete any ethnographic theory that is based on a singular physical, anthropological or linguistic theory.

life, cultural development and upbringing of the people and not just the physical necessities of life. In cases of people that have a history, language cannot be considered a nationality feature if it rests outside their historical course and is a product of external circumstances. This happened with the Turkish speaking Greeks of Asia Minor who speak the common Turkish language but as a national language, the language that declares their national identity, they have the Greek language. Their Turkish language being considered by them a result of enslavement and their falling into barbarism.

Also, the Copts of Egypt, the descendants of ancient Egyptians, discarded in modern times the national Coptic tongue (which has been proven to be a later stage of the ancient Egyptian language) and speak Arabic, without considering themselves Arabs. They maintain Coptic in their ecclesiastical and entire spiritual and national life as their national language.

We can cite many other such examples where the language of the common people for everyday use, is not an instrument of intellectual life and national identity and cannot be considered, especially for a people with a long history and rich culture, as a national language. Not even as a racial language as it is often the result of conquest and enslavement.

In conclusion, language as a physical element and characteristic of a race is not permanent if it does not engrain itself in the history of a people as an expression of its national identity and its national life and culture. It would be a great upset in the science of history and in the history of not just one but of many of the greatest and most fertile periods of humanity if someone claimed based on the spoken Arabic language that in the entire geographic region

between the Iranian plateau to the east, the Armenian plateau to the north, Asia Minor and the Mediterranean Sea to the west and the Persian Gulf and the Red Sea to the south, the Arab race and the Arab nation always prevailed and all the people in those lands trace their ancestry from.

Therefore, to examine the ethnic ancestry of the Orthodox inhabitants of Syria and Palestine, who use Arabic as their commonly spoken language, it is necessary to first examine if this language was always the language of all or at least some of the various people in Syria and if between them and the Orthodox of Syria there is a historic or at least racial bond that can give the Arabic language commonly used by the people the characteristic feature of the ancestry of these Orthodox. Or if it is the language of historic circumstances, of their conquest and enslavement, that was forced upon them but without entering the core of their spiritual life and national identity. And as far as this issue is under examination the theory of the Arab ancestry of the Orthodox of Syria must be listed, if not as likely, at least as a possible hypothesis of the ancestry of this people, until proven otherwise.

Besides the language as the only physical proof of ancestry of the Orthodox inhabitants of Syria and Palestine, based on the actual history we can make two other hypotheses. History tells us that before the Arab conquest of Syria, Palestine and Mesopotamia in the 7<sup>th</sup> century, two languages were spoken in the region, Aramaic and Greek. Both were not limited to common people use but were also instruments of culture, of producing literature and of education. An instrument of expression and characteristic of identity.

Literary monuments of both languages survive to this day able to guide us through the history of the speakers of these

languages in Syria. This history, through the written word teaches us that two people with historic value inhabited Syria, Mesopotamia and Palestine. Those were the Aramaean or Syrian and the Greeks who from the 4<sup>th</sup> century BC flooded those lands with colonists and the historically important cities that they built.

So, besides the theory of the Arab ancestry of the Orthodox Christians, we can also make two more hypotheses. The Aramaean and the Greek ancestry of this Orthodox people. Each will be thoroughly discussed.

# *Chapter 3*

## *The Arab Ancestry*

### *Hypothesis and Theory*

The first and main reason in favor of this hypothesis is the use of the Arabic language by the common people. As if there are no historical reasons opposing this theory, which proves just how lacking and incomplete a suggestion about ancestry can be if it is just based on language. The entire history and literature of the region, before and after Christ prove that before the Muslim conquest of the 7<sup>th</sup> century two languages were primarily in use. Western Aramaic or Syro-Chaldean since the 7<sup>th</sup> century BC and Greek starting in the 4<sup>th</sup> century BC with the Greek Seleucid empire and its numerous Greek colonies. Greek not only established itself as the language spoken by the people, but also produced rich literature during the Hellenistic and Greco-Roman periods. Arabic literature before the 7<sup>th</sup> does not exist nor any other historic reference of it.

So, the question must be asked this way. During the Arab Muslim conquest of Syria and Palestine were the nations of Aramaean and Greek Christians absent and the area got populated by Arabs, either Muslim or Christian Arabs (the latter divided in Orthodox and non-Orthodox)? Or were only the Orthodox absent and replaced by Orthodox Arabs? It is undeniable that during the 7<sup>th</sup> century the invading Arabs were only Muslim and this conquest was primarily a religious one. No Christian of any denomination invaded

Syria along with the Muslims from Arabia. It has been forbidden to this day by punishment of death for any Muslim to convert to Christianity. And finally, any suggestion that all Christians inhabiting the area were killed after the conquest is also false. There was certainly great oppression under the Muslims but not systematic destruction of the Christians. Therefore, this hypothesis can be rejected.

But even if the Arab ancestry hypothesis is rejected based on language, it is worth examining this hypothesis based on whether history mentions Arabs in Syria and Palestine before the 7th century conquest. Arabs are a Semitic people. As such they are related at least linguistically to all other Semitic peoples, Jews, Phoenicians, Assyrians, Babylonians and the Aramaic speakers of Syria and Mesopotamia. Despite that, none of the above-mentioned people ever identified in historic times with the Arabs. Instead, they developed their own racial and national entities and culture different than the Arab. Arab culture being the lowest of all Semites in ancient history.

In ancient times, in the valley between the rivers Tigris and Euphrates, and to the east of that, flowered the famous states of Babylon and Assyria. To the west flourished various Semitic states, Hittites and later on Aramaeans, Phoenicians, Canaanites in northern and Coele Syria and in southern Syria, Jews and of the disputed ancestry Philistines.<sup>6</sup> The Arabs were contained in the great Arab peninsula to the south. No Arab people or tribe is mentioned as living outside that peninsula in Syria or Palestine. In the

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<sup>6</sup> Editor's note: Modern DNA analysis on skeletons found in graveyards in Ascalon has shown that Philistines were Greek. However, within a few centuries they had intermarried into the local Levantine population to such a degree that their DNA eventually became indistinguishable.

times of the great Assyrian and Babylonian conquering kings, from Tiglath-Pilese I (1115-1110 BC) to Nebuchadnezzar II (605-562 BC) there is no mention of Arabs living in Syria and Palestine, but there are mentioned Arab tribes from the desert. Greek literature also confirms this. In Homer for example, even though Homeric geography is incomplete and poor, they are mentioned as living *near* Egypt, Ethiopia and Syria. From Homer until the time of Herodotus there is no other mention of Arabs. But Herodotus and Xenophon define the land of the Arabs. Herodotus puts them in Petraea Arabia and the Arabian Peninsula while Xenophon mentions that the Arabs live in tents in the desert south of Mesopotamia.

With the conquests of Alexander the Great and the establishment of the Seleucid state that included Syria, Palestine and Mesopotamia to the border of Arabia, Antioch, Alexandria and Seleucia became great centers of knowledge. The knowledge of the Greeks about the geography and the people living in the region became more accurate. Eratosthenes and then Strabo defined Arabia in about the same way as present-day geographers. The truth is that at the time of Strabo, Arab tribes had infiltrated Coele Syria. But they were absorbed and Hellenized like many of the local Syrians. But before we go into more details about those Arabs, let's look at another historic source, the Old Testament.

From the Old Testament we find out that Arabs did not live in Syria and Palestine before the time of the Babylonian exile. It is mentioned that the Jews had trade relations with them, that their land was near Ethiopia and that the Arabs attacked the Jews along with the Philistines. They are also mentioned as bringing the king of the Jews gifts and that they lived in tents wandering in the desert between Judea and Babylon.

It is known that around the end of the 8<sup>th</sup> century BC the great kings of Assyria conquered the Jewish state and even Damascus and the rest of middle and northern Syria. They introduced in those lands barbarians of many names from the lands around Babylon, including Arabs who merged with the leftover Jews to form the people of Samaria. During the same mixture of peoples in middle and northern Syria the Arameans came to be. Later on, when King Nebuchadnezzar II invaded Palestine around the end of the 7<sup>th</sup> century BC, an Arab tribe asked for asylum inside the walls of Jerusalem and resided there. After the Babylonian exile, Arab names are listed as living within the ruins of Jerusalem. All those localized relocations of Arabs, absorbed by the Jews or the local Syrians produced the Aramaeans or the Syrian people in Syria. They do not mean that Arabs lived in Syria and Palestine as a unique people or tribe. The region during the Achaemenid empire had nothing Arab and those travelling with Alexander and chronicling his campaign did not write anything about Arabs in his march through Syria and Palestine. It is known that after his Indian campaign Alexander was contemplating a campaign against the Arabs who almost entirely lived in the Arabian Peninsula and the Arab desert of Mesopotamia.

Alexander's plan did not materialize. However, his presence in Asia and of his Diadochi after him, created the Greek state of Syria through the Seleucids, the spreading of Hellenism and Hellenic civilization to the Red Sea and India and because of this the Arab people came out of the darkness of the night into the light of history. In this, their first appearance in history, the Arabs may not have left a great mark as they did centuries later because they got attracted to Hellenic civilization, they got absorbed and became Hellenized.



In Greek and Latin literature of the Greco-Roman period, the Arabs near Syria who came in contact with Hellenism were usually called Nabataeans whereas in Muslim Arab literature they are considered Babylonians. Some researchers consider them the ancestors of the Mandaean of Basra who don't belong either in Christianity or Islam. Their name in Aramaic Christian literature eventually came to have the meaning of the follower of the pagan religions. We will not examine here more details about their history or culture. What matters is that on the border of Syria and Arabia there was an Arab state at the time of Alexander which came in contact with the Greeks of Syria after his death.

Initially the relations of this state with the Greek masters of Syria were hostile. Demetrius I the Besieger had an unsuccessful campaign against them. But Greek culture infiltrated the Arab state. Their capital Sela changed its Arab name to the Greek *Petra* and became Hellenized.<sup>7</sup> Greek art and Greek architectural style buildings were created and coins with Greek writing were minted. The Greeks honored them and gave their leaders the title of *basileus* (king). Their first known king was Aretas I (Hareta in Arabic) who sided with the Maccabees against Antiochus IV and was often involved in the affairs of Palestine.<sup>8</sup> The two countries continued to act hostile to each other until the arrival of Pompey in 65 BC. The Roman general marched to the outskirts of Petra but did not attempt to take the city. The fear and respect that Pompey's army instilled in King

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<sup>7</sup> Kiepert's (Lehrbuch der alten Geographie, p. 184) saying that the Greek conquerors of Petra changed its Arabic name to Greek may imply that Petra Arabia was conquered by Alexander. But the history of the failure of Demetrius's campaign shows that even if after a long time the city of Petra and the surrounding country were conquered, they soon became independent again.

<sup>8</sup> Josephus, Antiquities of the Jews, M, 13, 3.

Aretas II, forced the Arabs later under Malichus II to ally himself to Julius Ceasar. This particular king broke his alliance with Rome and sided with the Parthians just to be forced to be aligned with Rome again. Later he sided with Anthony against Octavian.<sup>9</sup>

The history of the kingdom of Petra is largely vague due to many conflicting stories by Strabo, Josephus and Plutarch. But we will present those parts of the history that have to do with our subject at hand, the Arab colonization of Syria and Palestine.

King Aretas II was meddling in the affairs of Judea and Palestine at the time of the reign of Antiochus XII. When the later campaigned against him he died in battle and his army was routed. Syrian soldiers (formerly in the army of Antiochus) then declared Aretas as king of Coele Syria.<sup>10</sup> Part of Syria was now ruled by an Arab dynasty from the Arab state of Petra. The rule of the Arabs in Damascus did not last long. At the time when Pompey was campaigning in Armenia, the Roman general sent some of his subordinates that expelled the Arabs from Coele Syria. The Romans under general Marcus Aemilius Scaurus, then attacked Judea because Aretas, allied with Hyrcanus, brother of the Jewish King Aristobulus II, was besieging Jerusalem. Aretas lifted the siege and retreated. During his retreat he was attacked by Aristobulus and defeated. That was the end of the Arab rule over Coele Syria, which was not a result of migration and establishment of Arab people in Syria, but rather voluntary subjugation of the people of Damascus to Aretas II.

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<sup>9</sup> Plutarch, *Life of Anthony*, 41.

<sup>10</sup> Josephus, *Antiquities of the Jews*, M, 15, 2 and Josephus, *Jewish War*, A, 9, 3.

It is due to this event and the Arab armies marching repeatedly through Palestine that the Arab settling around Damascus and other places in Syria started. And while the cities were inhabited by Greeks and the lowlands partly by Greeks or Hellenized populations and partly by those maintaining the Aramaic language, the land from the Amman mountains to Lebanon were occupied by Arabs who were raiding the lowlands.

Plutarch mentions that Pompey on his way to Syria subdued the Arabs around Amman. Strabo mentions the Itureans<sup>11</sup> in Lebanon and Arab bandits raiding Coele Syria. Their lairs were on mountains and caves and in time a bandit chief with the Greek name Zenodorus created a true state of bandits in the area of Palestine beyond the river Jordan. His son Theodotos according to Josephus was said to have killed in just one expedition 10,000 Jews and robbed the train of the Jewish King Alexander.<sup>12</sup> The Arab bandits on the mountains of Syria were not made up of just one nationality. Nevertheless, the Arab population around Damascus increased slightly and that was enough that around the year 37 the city, according to Apostle Paul and his letter to the Corinthians, came under the control of the Arabs of Petra. This Arab rule is attributed to King Aretas III or IV. It contrasts what Strabo mentions about Roman rule of the area during that time. Its people are described as Roman citizens. Therefore, we can assume that the Arab dynasty ruled under the suzerainty of the Romans, having the role of local governor or something similar.

Apostle Paul taught the Christian faith for three years in Damascus which was under the rule of Aretas. During that

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<sup>11</sup> Strabo does not consider them Arab. However, they have gone down in history as Arab and their name in Arabic means mountainous.

<sup>12</sup> Strabo, P, p. 755.

time, Emperor Caligula (37-41 AD) took away from Herod Antipas, Galilee and Judea beyond the river Jordan (Perea) and gave Herod Agrippas Abilene, Batanaea, Trachonitis and Auranitis,<sup>13</sup> making him tetrarch at least nominally while Aretas was still alive. Definitely the history of the kings of Petra in Syria and the lands beyond the river Jordan is not entirely clear. After Aretas IV it is not known if their rule in the area remained.

In 105 AD during the reign of Emperor Trajan, Petra was captured by the Romans and the territory became a Roman province that included all the lands the west of the river Jordan up to Damascus. It was no longer called Arabia but *Third Palestine*. The lands beyond the river that used to be part of the kingdom of Petra became the Roman province of Arabia with its capital at Bostra. Since then, Petraea Arabia came closer to Greek Palestine. It became a great center of Greek and Christian life. After the 4<sup>th</sup> century when Constantinople became the capital of the Greco-Roman state, Petraea Arabia remained firmly attached to it.

In the 6<sup>th</sup> century, Emperor Justinian established a great monastery on mount Sinai and a major military post. When Hellenism lost control of the area in the 7<sup>th</sup> century, the monastery remained a great center of Christianity and Greek letters and such remains to this day. The only link of Hellenism and Orthodoxy to Petraea Arabia. But both Hellenism and Orthodoxy survived in Petra up until the 12<sup>th</sup> century as was witnessed by the Latins who wrote about the Crusades.

But what is more important to us than the Arabs of Petraea Arabia is the facts about the Arabs in Coele Syria around Damascus. The effect they had there in the ethnological

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<sup>13</sup> Claudius later added Judea and Samaria in his territories.

make up of Syria. For sure their appearance there coincides with the expansion of the influence of the Arab state of Petra. The Arabs raided or migrated to Syria not from Petra but from the Arabosyrian desert as was naturally happening for centuries. But their center was always the desert. They infiltrated places like Chalcis, Iturea and Perea thus coming near the Greco-Syrian places of habitation. They lived outside the cities in tents making up their own communities or tribes and getting their names from the name of their leader. After the dissolution of the state of Petra these populations seem to have grown in numbers. Although according to Muslim literature these migrations that took place in the 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> century happened before and after the Fall of Petra and were regardless to that fact. Instead, the reason offered was widespread flooding and destruction of their dwellings. Arabs from Arabia Felix had to flee and they spread in two directions. Some went towards Chaldea, the Persian Gulf and the banks of the rivers Tigris and Euphrates and others towards Syria.

Arab Muslim traditions are not clear on the names of the tribes that settled in Syria. According to them those that went to Chaldea were called Hozaites (which means separated). While a great number of them under the tribal leader Salih established themselves on the east bank of the Jordan river and recognized Roman rule (Salihides).<sup>14</sup> The dynasty of Salih was appointed by the Romans and ruled for 140 years. They were replaced by the tribal leader Dzanif who came from a group that had migrated to Chaldea. Around 222 AD he established the Ghassanid dynasty which maintained rule until the Arab conquest of the 7<sup>th</sup> century, first under Roman suzerainty and protection

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<sup>14</sup> Besides the Salihides and Dzanifes in Arab sources there is mention of two other important tribes. The Tuhides and the Lahmides.

and then after the 4<sup>th</sup> century, under suzerainty and protection from the Greek kingdom with its capital in Constantinople.

These events are also known from Arab historiography that deals with the pre-Muslim colonization of Syria from Arabia. However, recent discoveries from the Frenchman Rene Dussaud have revealed a new Arabian tribe that settled in Syria, to the north of the Nabataeans. This Safatean Arab tribe was completely Hellenized. Of this tribe we will talk extensively in a later chapter.

So, to the nations that lived in Syria, the Greeks and the local Aramaeans, a third one was added, the Arabs whose history and culture are of importance to the issue in question.

### *The Life and Culture*

#### *Before the Muslim Conquest of the 7<sup>th</sup> Century*

##### *of the Newly Arrived Arabs.*

Strabo provides a good picture of the life of the Arabs in Syria. As long as they dwelled in tents and wandered the desert, they remained Arab. But the closer they got to cities and the Greco-Syrians the tamer they became and *less Arab*. Because of this difference in lifestyle two different Arab people emerged in and around Syria. A) Those living in tents outside of cities that in pre-Muslim times were usually called Saracens and were organized in tribes<sup>15</sup>. From early

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<sup>15</sup> One of those tribal leader's name was Aretas. In Hellenistic and early Roman times the honorary title of *basileus* was often given to local leaders. But at the time of the Greco-Roman kingdom only the emperors

times they became Christian just like their brothers in the cities. They remained separated socially and politically for the Greco-Syrians and the Arabs of the cities who had been absorbed and become Hellenized. B) Those living in the cities, who had become civilized and Hellenized and merged with the Greeks.

What were then those cities that the Arabs lived in, abandoning their nomadic ways? The province of Arabia which was formed after the fall of Petra, which included besides the lands of Petraea Arabia, the lands of Palestine, east of the river Jordan, (Perea Arabia, Trachonitis, Gerasa, Bostra, Rabath Ammon). Later, in Byzantine times when Petraea was separated from the province of Arabia to form *Third Palestine*, cities and bishop seats east of the river Jordan listed in the book of Ierokleus, *Synekdimos*, are Nilakomi, Dia, Adra, Neapolis, Ierapolis, Philippopolis, Konstantia, Dionysias, Canatha, Adrassos, Madaba, Meoudos, Faina, Hexakomia. From the names of the cities listed we can conclude 1) The province of Arabia did not include any cities of Coele Syria. Therefore, we can assume that the Arabs in Coele Syria, which included Damascus, dwelled in tents around the cities under tribal leaders and not in cities, as in Apamea, Emissan and especially Damascus. And that the capture of Damascus and governance by Aretas when Apostle Paul was in the city was a temporary event.<sup>16</sup> 2) From the 17 cities of the

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in Constantinople and Persia were given this title. It is extraordinary then that according to Procopius the title of basileus was given to this tribal leader by Justinian after those tribes sided with Constantinople and were used in the war against Persia.

<sup>16</sup> That Damascus is not in Arabia is shown by the history of Apostle Paul, who left from Damascus to go to Arabia and from Arabia returned again to Damascus (Galatians, A, 17).

province, 9 have Greek names and the rest, including the capital Bostra are known to have been Greek.

Because of this it is possible to doubt for a minute that Arabs were living in those cities. All the monuments and all the inscriptions were Greek. Nothing testified that in this land Arabs lived. But these Arabs were Greek speaking according to the German researcher Sepp in his work *Jerusalem und das Heilige*. These Arabs changed the names of men and gods into Greek and enriched Greek literature with Arab names of Arab-Greek orators and philosophers. Iamblichus, Malchus etc. Greek monuments of art and inscriptions filled the land. They were completely Hellenized. I cannot confirm how accurate Sepp's statement is that the Greeks mentioned by the Evangelist John that went to Jerusalem to meet Jesus just before his passion were Arab-Greeks from that region. But it is known that Christianity was taught in Arabia even before the first Christian Church was established in Antioch. And the first teaching of it was by the Apostle of Nations, Paul, right after his baptism in Damascus. Paul stayed in Arabia teaching for three years (38-41 AD). That the Arabs were amongst the first people to receive Christianity is testified by Muslim Arab historians that write that the Arabs from Chaldea were Christian but that they didn't bring it with them but that they accepted it in Palestine. So, if we believe that in the followers of Jesus were Arabs then the spreading of the new faith in Greek Arabia was very fast.

It is true that the Christian Church in Arabia succumbed to the Ebionites who after the destruction of Jerusalem by Titus in 70 AD moved to the east bank of the river Jordan and spread their teachings.<sup>17</sup> But if the Ebionites just as Nestorianism later on, gained ground in the nomadic Arab

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<sup>17</sup> Renan, *Les apôtres*, p. 154.



tribes east of the river Jordan, it is also true that in the cities grew the teachings of the catholic<sup>18</sup> and Orthodox Church. Emperor Phillip the Arab (244-249 AD) from Bostra was born to Christian parents, Christian himself and is evidence that the people in the cities followed the mainstream catholic and Orthodox Church teachings. The great Origen, between the years 217 and 246 AD travelled and taught in Bostra. That is another indication that the Orthodox faith prevailed amongst the Arab-Greeks.<sup>19</sup> Many passages written by the fathers of the Church refer to martyrs from Arabia and in the history of the Church we find fathers from Arabia in Syria. This proves that Christianity was well spread in Arabia before the 4<sup>th</sup> century. But not just through Orthodox Christianity was Arabia in Palestine connected to Hellenism.

Here too, as in the entire Greek and Hellenistic world, until the 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> century, Hellenism was flourishing. Athens as center of Greek philosophy and education was home to many Greek and Hellenized intellectuals of the Greco-Roman world. Especially orators and philosophers. It was a nursery for students from all places including Arabia. The Arab teachers and students mentioned in the oratory and philosophical school of Athens are children from this Greek Arabia.<sup>20</sup> Bostra, the capital of Arabia, although not having a Greek name became a Greek city.

After the brief capture of Damascus by the king of Petraea Arabia and then the dissolution of this state by Trajan, the

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<sup>18</sup> Editor's note: catholic in the Greek meaning of the word which means *entire Church*.

<sup>19</sup> The condemnation of Origen's teachings by the Church in later years has nothing to do with the information presented here.

<sup>20</sup> The orator Diogenes in the 4<sup>th</sup> century who vied for the highest teaching position in the school of Athens, was supported by an entire chorus of Arab students.

city was renamed Nova Traiana Bostra. It became a Roman colony during the reign of Emperor Alexander Severus (222-235 AD) and as all Roman colonies in the east was made up primarily by Greeks and Hellenized easterners. A letter from Emperor Julian that is saved to this day, written to the *Demos* of Bostra, was written in a classical Greek language in the exact same way it would be written to the *Demos* of Athens. In that letter the emperor urged and demanded the ceasing of hostilities between Christians and Pagans.

But about the Hellenism of Bostra and the rest of the cities of Arabia we will talk more in the chapter about the Greek ancestry of the Orthodox of Syria. Summarizing what so far has been said about the Arab ancestry theory, we can conclude that during Roman times there was a small in numbers Arab migration to the cities. In those cities the Arabs ended up becoming Hellenized. No Arab national life was exhibited. No Arab literature except for a few inscriptions. Whatever size that migration had (from just a biological perspective it couldn't affect much the ethnic mix because of the superiority in numbers of the other racial elements) we cannot really talk about a Christian Arabic nationality in the cities of Syria.

Regarding those Arabs living as nomads around Syria and Palestine we know for a fact that there were Arab tribes whose king (the Ghassanid, Aretas) was appointed by Justinian. These Ghassanids maintained their state until the Muslim conquest of Syria in the 7<sup>th</sup> century. But what happened to those Christian Arabs living in tents? Did they disappear by converting to Islam as it victoriously advanced by the force of arms of their Arab brethren into Syria?

That is the most likely explanation since no Christian nomads survived anywhere. The Christians in the

Syroarabian dessert were primarily followers of Nestorianism, therefore we can't talk about them when it comes to the issue of the ethnic ancestry of the Orthodox of Syria. Any suggestion about the migration of the Christian populations from the Syroarabian dessert to the mountains of Lebanon, forced by the Muslim invasion of the 7<sup>th</sup> century, is based on a combination of incomplete, superficial and ignorant studies. However, two such studies need to be presented to check their inaccuracies. These studies are by Sepp and Elisee Reclus.

Sepp thinks that in Lebanon along with the so-called Maronite Christians also live Melhites (mostly followers of the Eastern-Rites Catholic Church) who are descendants of Arab Christians such as the Ghassanids. Who, like we just mentioned, supposedly migrated to the mountainous region of Lebanon, preserving their religion and later on converted to the Eastern-Rite Catholic Church so as (according to Sepp) the work of civilization in the East is not left in the hands of the Orthodox clergy and get ruined.

But the wise professor of Semitic studies from the University of Munich, made knight of the Holy Sepulcher under the western clergy for his devotion to the western Church, exhibits ignorance in two ways. First, thinking that these Orthodox, whether genuinely Orthodox or Eastern-Rites Catholics, gave themselves the name Melhites. Secondly, thinking that Melhites only live in Lebanon and that they are often confused with the Maronites because of the outfits of their priests. But Melhites are spread throughout Syria, especially the north and middle part of the country and Eastern-Rites Catholics call themselves Grecocatholic (Rum Catholic) and consider themselves pure Greeks. Greeks of Syria, descendants of the Greek Christians of the time of John Chrysostom and that their priests' outfits, their religious ceremonies and their prayers

are like the Orthodox ones (Rum Orthodox as they are called by them) and that their priests are easily mistaken as Orthodox clerics and not as Maronites.

Reclus also makes a lot of unforgivable mistakes and has many inaccuracies, unworthy of his reputation as a geographer. He says that the pure (according to him) Arabs, despite calling themselves Grecs or Rum and Melhites (again according to Reclus), converted to Christianity in the 4<sup>th</sup> century. However, as we saw earlier, Christianity had spread in the region already from the 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> century. These (of pure Arab ancestry according to him) Christian Arabs, lived only to the south and west of Damascus. While in the north and middle Syria there are many communities of Grecocatholics. Their most important communities being in Aleppo and other cities of northern Syria. He continues inaccurately stating that these Arabs are called Graeci only because they have the same religion as the Greeks and no other relation to them. But then why do the Eastern-Rite Catholics call themselves Greek?

He continues that these “Arabs” by uniting with the Papal Church replaced the Greek language in their Church with Arabic. He seems to not know that the partial<sup>21</sup> use of Arabic in the Orthodox Church of Syria and Palestine was introduced long before the Latins began proselytizing in the lands of the Orthodox Patriarchates of Antioch and Jerusalem. That was done because of the fervent religious belief of the people in the churches. The pious Christians did not understand the Greek language and the Orthodox Church strives to teach and enlighten. It therefore used the

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<sup>21</sup> The partial use of Arabic next to Greek which always has primacy (except in places where the Arab speaking priest could not learn to read Greek) is considered as a necessary evil. Greek is always considered as the common ecclesiastical language.

language of the church goes and transformed this language from crude and barbarian to an instrument for the Divine *logos* while promoting and developing its literature. Didn't this Church through the Greek missionaries and through the Ecumenical Patriarchate of Constantinople spread the faith of Christ to multiple barbaric Slavic people in their own language? Didn't it translate the holy books in that language, transforming that language from a barbaric tool of simply physical life to a language for spiritual life. In the process promoting ecclesiastical literature and through that strongly influencing their historical course and raising their morals and spirituality?

But the Orthodox Arab speakers of Syria and Palestine just like the Turkic speakers Orthodox of Asia Minor, were not strangers to Orthodox Hellenism. Since apostolic times, since the founding of the Church, they used the Greek language in their Church. But the Church not being in favor of any racial or national individuality, after the established language of the Apostles stopped being understood due to outside forces, it allowed in its Christian and philanthropic spirit the use also of the language of the people. Whether that was Arabic as in Syria, Palestine and Mesopotamia or Turkish in Asia Minor.

It is almost funny to claim that by uniting with the Papal Church, it allowed them to use Arabic. The characters of the Greek Orthodox Church and the Latin are completely different. As we saw, the local languages are used in Orthodox churches. Whereas a main characteristic throughout the history of the Latin Church is the use of Latin. The Papal Church whether in Greece, Germany, England, France or Italy does not allow the use of the local

languages for reasons it considers fundamental in its whole system of worship and ceremonies.<sup>22</sup>

But also, isn't it illogical to claim that the Grecocatholics of Syria are of Arab ancestry without examining all the Graeci or Rum of Syria? To claim that all Graeci or Rum are Arabs would be an opinion. But to give Arab ancestry to people who just 180 years ago changed from Orthodox to Eastern-Rite Catholic is a paradox.

Someone might say that Reclus considers Arabs only the Grecocatholics of Trachonitis (Lajat), Batanaea and Lebanon since he mentions only "south and west of Damascus Grecocatholics". Yet in his writings he mentions that the patriarch of the Eastern-Rite Catholics is based in Damascus and bears the honorary title of Patriarch of Alexandria, Antioch and Jerusalem. And in everything else that he writes about the supposed "pure Arab" Orthodox, he refers to all Grecocatholics. And all the information he uses come from the writings of a fanatical Jesuit missionary.<sup>23</sup> Therefore, Reclus considers "pure Arabs" not just those Grecocatholics living south and west of Damascus but all Grecocatholics in Syria. On page 756 of his work, he

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<sup>22</sup> Leo XIII who eagerly tried to unite the Eastern and Western Churches was thought to have wanted to introduce the Greek language to Western churches located in Greece and the Greek East but nothing happened. Western scholars asked about the issue responded that it would have been impossible because prayers and ceremonies were styled established in the Latin language and separating the Latin language from the Catholic Church would alter its character.

<sup>23</sup> This Jesuit was the Jewish in nationality, Christian in faith, English William Gifford Palgrave. Palgrave left his position as an English officer and joined the Jesuits, working in favor of Catholicism in India. He returned through Rome and went to Syria where he was present in the massacres of Christians in Lebanon and Damascus in 1860. Later on, he wrote a book about the different people of Syria titled "Essays on Eastern Questions". From there Reclus took his opinions about the Grecocatholics.

disregards his saying about south and west of Damascus and talks about “*pure Arabs*” and people “*who call themselves Arabs*”<sup>24</sup> which proves their pure ancestry. Migrating from Yemen long before the Christian calendar begins and reinforced by colonists from Hedjaz. These people converted to Christianity at the end of the 4<sup>th</sup> century and because of the new religion they were named Greeks (Greco). After the Arab conquest, part of them maintained their religion. But because the Orthodox state had become a burden<sup>25</sup> and because of love for independence, they attached themselves to the pope who allowed them to have their own hierarchy and to replace in their services the Greek language with Arabic. They are called Greco-catholic although they have no connection either via ancestry or religion. They are also called Melhites or “Royalists”. Their spiritual leader is based in Damascus and bears the title Patriarch of Antioch, Alexandria and Jerusalem. Of all Christians in Asia, Latin and Greek, Arab Melhites are respected because they are truly brave and develop their intelligence through education. They know their language well and even those who have not studied literature, speak Arabic beautifully and clearly. They have resisted oppression which is a miracle because they are small in numbers (around 100.000) yet great people”.

We leave these contradicting and confusing narratives of the so-called Arab ancestry of the Christians in Syria to the judgement of the reader to evaluate their logic and scientific value. Although this issue is created by the suggestion of

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<sup>24</sup> This is not accurate. They call themselves and everybody calls them Greco-catholic.

<sup>25</sup> But they were Orthodox themselves before they became Greco-catholic. So which Orthodox became a burden and forced these Orthodox to become Greco-catholic? The real reasons for Greco-Catholicism in Syria have nothing to do with such explanations that defy logic and will be detailed elsewhere in this book.

the Arab ancestry of the Orthodox it can only be resolved by one of two theories. The Aramaean ancestry or the Greek ancestry. Both of those theories will be examined in their own chapters.

Summarizing what has been said so far about the Arab ancestry of the Orthodox people of Syria and Palestine we can say that a non-Muslim Arab nationality cannot exist. Arab course of history and civilization did not develop in these lands. As for the Arab colonists, they got absorbed by the Greeks. And we say they got absorbed by the Greeks and not by the Aramaean elements in Syria and Palestine because we positively know the history of those Arabs as we have described it already. In addition, at the time of the arrival of the Arab colonists, Aramaic civilization either did not exist or was too weak to have any absorbing power.

Therefore, we can note two things: A) No *national* affinity can exist between the present-day Arabic speaking Orthodox people and the Arab colonists of the past. Not even partial. B) If someone can suppose that *racial* affinity exists between the two people, that is limited to a tiny part of the present-day Arabic speakers.

Finishing the chapter on the Arab ancestry<sup>26</sup> and before we move on to the chapters regarding the theories about the

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<sup>26</sup> There is no value in any theory suggesting that the Arabic speaking Christians (whether Orthodox or not) in the lands of Syria and Palestine derive their ancestry from the Muslim Arab conquerors of the 7<sup>th</sup> century. Anyone with basic knowledge of the character of the Muslim religion in relation to other religions and especially Christianity and the history of the Muslim people would understand how false such a hypothesis would be. Islam from its beginning till today, with the threat of the death penalty, does not allow entire people nor even individuals or families to abandon it and convert to Christianity or any other religion. It would also be false to suggest that along with the Muslim conquerors from Arabia in the 7<sup>th</sup> century and since then, Christian Arabs of any dogma also migrated, becoming the ancestors of the



Aramaean or Greek ancestry let's discuss one more point. That is the ancestry and national character and civilization of the people and state of Palmyra.

*The State of Palmyra and its Civilization.*

In the middle of the 3<sup>rd</sup> century, after the great Persian raid of Shapur I (258 AD), Palmyra became the center of a great eastern Roman state covering almost all the Roman possessions in Asia. This state became even more famous after the death of Odaenathus, during the rule of his wife, the legendary Zenobia. Nevertheless, this state has nothing to do with the ethnological issues of Syria and Palestine. Nor does Zenobia, whether she was Greek or Egyptian, or Arab or even Jewish as such a rumor was spread due to her relation to the heretic Bishop Paul.

It's about the small city in the Syro-Arabian dessert. Just like the cities in Palestine east of the river Jordan, it was basically a Hellenized or Hellenistic center of Hellenic civilization in the 3<sup>rd</sup> century with a female ruler, Zenobia, with a brother named Timolaos (bearer of Greek name and great orator in both Greek and Latin). She made her children speak Greek, she was an expert in Alexander's history, she read Roman history in Greek and her primary advisor was the Athenian philosopher Longinus. The magnificent ruins of Palmyra with the monuments of Greek art and Greek inscriptions testify to the great power of Hellenism that infiltrated all the way to the small oasis in the Syro-Arabian dessert.

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present-day Arab speaking Christians. These theories go against history and are not only unlikely but totally unreasonable.

The fact that the great Athenian Longinus, who processes a prominent position in Greek letters and whose spirit was deeply Greek, believed that under the political system of Zenobia a new light of Greek freedom was rising in the East, testifies to the fact of the great Hellenic cultural glamour and Hellenic spirit being inspired by that little corner of Syrian Arabia. And it bears no weight on the ethnic composition of Syria that the culturally Hellenized people of Palmyra were Arabs in race because the population of this isolated dessert oasis could not affect the overall ethnological trajectory of Syria. This small Hellenized, Arab city of the dessert proves the cultural and ethnic strength of Hellenism in Syria and bears witness to the historic event of the appearance for the first time of the great Arab race in history. Tied to the history of Hellenism, is not just the history of the Arab race, but all creative historic energy in pre-Muslim Arabia belongs to the strength of Hellenism. The first civilized Arabs in history were these Greco-Arabs, the Hellenized Arabs of Syria which, along with so many other things are one of the most admirable pieces of evidence in Syria of the great cultural strength of Hellenism in Syria.

*Chapter 4*

*The Theory of the Aramaic Ancestry  
of the Orthodox of Syria and  
Palestine*

The idea that part of the non-Muslim people of Syria, Palestine and Mesopotamia draw their ancestry from the ancient inhabitants of those lands (Syrians or more accurately for our subject matter, Aramaeans<sup>27</sup>) before the Greek colonization, can at first seem very likely to a researcher. Aramaeans could be considered the present day Orthodox who are Arabic speakers in their daily lives, but users of Aramaic for their ecclesiastical language and literature. Afterall, Aramaic is the language of the non-Orthodox Christians in the region. But the question is, what is the relationship of the present day Orthodox in Syria to those that in the past spoke Aramaic and produced Aramaic literature? And can these Orthodox be considered partial or complete descendants of those Aramaeans or is it that today's Arabic speaking Graeci or Romans (Rum), as they call themselves, Orthodox of Syria have no relation to those Aramaeans? In order to clarify the issue, it is necessary to briefly describe the ethnic origins of the Aramaeans or

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<sup>27</sup> Aramaean is not a more accurate term than Syrian but its use in this book is safer because the term Syrian during and after the Hellenistic period also meant Greek from Syria.

Syrians (from the time predating the Greek or Aramaic meaning of the word) starting with those two names.

1) In regard to the name Aramaean, in ancient times it had mostly a geographical meaning. In the cuneiform inscriptions of Assyria, Aram is called the land between the rivers Euphrates and Tigris. What the Greeks called Mesopotamia. In the Old Testament the name has geographical but also some ethnic meaning.<sup>28</sup> In the chapter of Genesis where it lists the nations, geographic names are represented as people. In this case Aram is referred to as one of the sons of Shem.<sup>29</sup> Later on in the Hebrew text, Aram refers either to the northern part of the country that the Greeks will later on call Syria or Mesopotamia, sometimes as a city or sometimes as a state called Aram Sova (also known as Nisibis or Antioch on the Mygdonius). Occasionally, even the land around Damascus is called Aram. The first meaning of the word is not known but the prevailing opinion is that it means high ground.

Therefore, the name Aram found in the cuneiform inscriptions simply means Mesopotamia and either in geographic or ethnic meaning does not correspond exactly to *Syria* or *Syrians* of the Persian or Greek times. In Hellenistic times the name is not clear if it was widely known. Interpreters of Homer sought to explain the name Ἀρίμοις (pronounced Arimis) as Aram and Aramaean. The names were possibly unknown to Strabo as well who simply relates the opinion of Posidonius<sup>30</sup> for the term Ἀρίμοις.

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<sup>28</sup> In Greek translation the name Aram is interpreted as geographical but in the Hebrew text it has an ethnic meaning.

<sup>29</sup> In another part of Genesis, Aram is referred to as son of Nahor. Both names refer to the same.

<sup>30</sup> Interpreters of Homer disagree on the name Ἀρίμοις. Some believing it describes Lydia, Cilicia or even a place as far as Pithikousses in Magna Grecia. In Hellenistic times the idea that Ἀρίμοις means the

And while the Greek interpreters try to explain the name geographically, the confusion becomes even greater due to its affinity with the names Syria and Syrian. In addition, the Hebrew translation of the Homeric poems give it again an ethnic meaning.

In any case in regard to the history of the names Aram and Aramaean and whichever meaning can be considered their primary, the truth is they cannot describe the ancestry of the inhabitants of Syria before the Greek colonization. The name Syria was prevalent in usage but the relationship between the two is such that the clarification of the meaning of the one requires the knowledge of the history and the meaning of the other.

2) Syria and Syrians. Before Alexander, the Greeks called Syrians not only the people that lived in the lands that later, during Hellenistic and Roman times, would be called Phoenicia and Palestine. They also called Syrians (or Assyrians) all the people of Mesopotamia, Assyria and Babylon. The name is not derived from the name Sur (the name of the city of Tyre in Phoenician) as it used to be thought, but as it was confirmed from the Assyrobabylonian inscriptions, from the name Assur (Assyria).

Assur or Atur<sup>31</sup> at first was just the name of the city of Assur and its surrounding area. The ancient Greeks called by that

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same as Aramaean probably had nothing more to do than the similarity of their sound. Aramaeans, unknown to Hellenism before Alexander or at least unknown to their history books and literature, were certainly unknown to them at the time of Homer. Same for Syrians. Because of that, ancient Greek literature is not helpful. In Greco-Roman times the name was very little known and even fewer were the people who could find a connection between the name Aram and the Homeric myths.

<sup>31</sup> Aturia is a second version of the word in Greek. The Aramaic version of the name is Atur while Assur is the ancient Assyrian version of it. In the Assyrian language the name is Mat Assur, from the name of the

name the entire Assyrian state. Therefore, the name Assur varied in its ethnographic meaning, from the people of the city to all the nations that were part of the Assyrian or Assyrobabylonian state. From the beginning of the 2<sup>nd</sup> millennia BC the Assyrian state that had started as a colonial state of Babylon, had as its capital, Nineveh, not Assur. With its great conquering kings by the end of the 2<sup>nd</sup> and the beginning of the 1<sup>st</sup> millennia BC it expanded its rule in every direction. By the beginning of the 6th century BC either through the Assyrian kings or the kings of the new or so-called 2<sup>nd</sup> Babylonian state of the Chaldean dynasty of Nebuchadnezzar II, the entire land from Amman to Petraea Arabia, was called since then Syria in the broadest sense of the word, (including of course Phoenicia and Palestine part of which was Judea). And Mesopotamia from Armenia to the Persian Gulf and the land beyond the Tigris river, Assyria proper as it was, all those lands were politically united and formed the great Assyrian state. The state was called Assyria and its people regardless of their ancestry, in all this vast territory were called Assyrian. From those names, by removing the first syllable the Greeks produced the names Syria and Syrian.

This is confirmed by the ancient authors. Herodotus says that those that the Greeks call Syrian, the barbarians call Assyrian. Strabo writes that the people from Nineveh and Babylon, the ones called Assyrian and Babylonian are the Syrians.

Therefore, in the beginning the name Syrian did not have any ethnological meaning but a geographical one. It referred to the Assyrian state, and taking a political meaning it covered all the people living between the Persian gulf, the

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protector god of the city, Assur. He was the protector and guide of Assyrian victories and conquests, representing the power of the state.

gulf of Issus, the Iranian and Armenian plateaus, the eastern Mediterranean, Egypt and the Arabian peninsula, regardless of their racial or national relation.

But did this broad geographical and political meaning of the term Syrian have a similar broad scope as an ethnological term? Did these people have internal unity, based on national or racial relation, based on language and identity? The clarification of this issue does not necessarily have to do with the history of the name Syrian. Firstly, because of such great geographic and ethnographic extent, the name was not local but was given to these people by the 6<sup>th</sup> century BC and later centuries Greeks. The name Assur had for the Assyrians a local meaning. A political meaning referring to the Assyrian state and a religious one referring to the god Assur. Not an ethnographical meaning as today we understand the meaning of the name.

Assyrians and Babylonians were of the same race, spoke the same language and had the same religion. In the beginning the Assyrians were colonists from Babylon but the Babylonians and the Chaldeans of the second Babylonian state did not call themselves Assyrian or Syrian nor were they called Assyrian by the Assyrians. The Assyrians called their capital city and their country and their god Assur.

Besides the Greek language and literature, only in Armenian we find the names Assyria (or Syria) and Assyrian (or Syrian). But those names probably found their way into Armenian from Greek during Hellenistic times.

Since the names Syrian and Assyrian did not exactly have an ethnological meaning for the Assyrians and Babylonians themselves, it is impossible to have such a meaning for the rest of the people subjugated to the Assyrian or Babylonian state. Neither the Jews of Palestine, nor the Palestinians

(Philistines), nor the Phoenicians, nor the inhabitants of northern Syria who in later times, at the time of Herodotus, would be called Syrians by the Greeks, called themselves Syrian and neither did anyone else call them that. It is true that in Homer the land around Damascus is called Syria. But the text is translating into Greek the Hebrew name Aram. We also know from Strabo that the names Syria and Syrian were not local but instead that's what the Greeks called the Aramaeans and their land, Aram.

Secondly, the names Syrian and Syria (Assyrian and Assyria) are usually given by Greek and Hellenized Jewish writers of the years after Alexander, to the lands and the people subjugated to the Seleucid state regardless of their ancestry. Including the Greek colonizers, the Greek rulers and the indigenous inhabitants who were under Greek rule. In contrast however, not to the Jews or anyone who was not under the rule of the Seleucids. Only centuries later, under the Greek Christian state, were all the people of the area called Syrian, but the term had a wide variety of uses<sup>32</sup> depending on the period. Sometimes Syrians are called the Greeks and the indigenous before the arrival of the Greeks. Other times it refers to the Greek Christians. Other times just the Arabic speaking Greeks or Hellenized indigenous people. Just by the name it is almost impossible to determine the racial ancestry of the inhabitants of Syria and

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<sup>32</sup> These uses were a) For all Greeks and Hellenized Christians who spoke Greek b) For all Christians of Syria regardless of race and language. c) For non-Greek speaking Christians in contrast to the Greek speakers. d) By the Franks for the Arabic speaking Orthodox Christians e) By the Orthodox Arabic speakers who call themselves Rum, for the non-Orthodox and non-Graeci, primarily the Monophysites Christians. f) (Suriji) the name of the Aramaic language in the Talmud. g) (Surjaio) the name for the Christians in all of Syria in contrast to the pagans of this country, the so-called Aramaeans. This is similar to how the term Hellene was used to identify the followers of the old religion.



a detailed ethnographic and historic study would be necessary for each individual case.

Leaving then the names Syrian and Aramaean aside we must examine a) the different people called by the general name Syrian, that lived in the area spanning from the Persian gulf to the gulf of Issus, called Syria before the conquest by the Greeks and b) if besides the names Aramaean and Syrian there is any other racial or national relation to each other and common ancestry of these people. We will begin then to clarify the beginning, birth and ancestry of the people of the lands of Syria and Palestine before the Greek conquest.

*Who were the people inhabiting Syria  
before the Greek conquest?*

We cannot greatly expand on the various ancient sources who are partly mythological. In Greek mythology and in the Old Testament, especially in Genesis, we see names that don't always have a clear ethnological meaning. But under genealogical names usually hide names that have to do with geography even if sometimes they don't agree with the safer scientific conclusions.<sup>33</sup>

The people of Syria known from the Old Testament, the Aramaeans of upper Syria, the inhabitants of Coele Syria, the people of Phoenicia and to the south of them the Philistines and the Jews along with their neighbors on both sides of the river Jordan, despite their ethnological and

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<sup>33</sup> For example, the Phoenicians or Canaanites who are very closely related to the Jews, in the Old Testament they are not listed in the Semitic family of people but in the house of Ham and Hus.

linguistic relation to each other within the great Semitic family,<sup>34</sup> they had no idea of their relation to each other nor did they feel any cultural unity with each other and therefore did not constitute any ethnic unit. On the contrary, in their history they were fierce enemies. They hated each other, viewed them as violent conquerors and fought desperately for their freedom. These Assyrian and Babylonian kings in order to establish their rule over all these people through long and persistent struggles devised ways that went down in history as monuments characteristic of the violent conquering policies of Assyria and Babylon. Tribes and people were forcibly removed from Syria and Palestine and relocated to the banks of the Tigris river or the Persian lands by or beyond the estuaries of that river and the Euphrates. At the same time other people were forcibly moved to the now vacated lands.

Between the 8<sup>th</sup> century when the power of the Assyrian state was at its peak till the beginning of the 6<sup>th</sup> century when the conquering force of the Babylonian or Chaldean King of Babylon, Nebuchadnezzar II, tamed the people of Syria, existed a real chaos of nations and people, stranger to each other, either of the same race or of different race, who were forcibly mixed creating new mulatto mobs of people in Syria, Palestine and Mesopotamia.

Such was the situation in the middle of the 6<sup>th</sup> century when the great Persian monarchy was established. It united politically all the nations and people of western Asia under the scepter of the mighty Achaemenids. And it remained so throughout the reign of that dynasty.

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<sup>34</sup> Editor's note: At the time of the writing of the book the author did not know of the Greek ancestry of the Philistines.

Summarizing what so far has been mentioned about the names Aram and Aramaean, Syria and Syrian (and Assyria and Assyrian) we come to the safe conclusion that national unity or an Aramaean or Syrian nation in the region of those names, did not exist. There were individual nations with their own history who gained historical significance. Those were the Jews, the Phoenicians, the Assyrians around Assur and the Babylonians. But not the inhabitants during those historic times of the land called Aram or Syria.

Nevertheless, above the differences of nations and races, above the great variety of people and the plethora of names, who were usually enemies of each other, there was external political unity. It was created to a small degree during the later period of the Assyrobabylonian period and maintained during the time of the Persian monarchy. There was linguistic unity and from that common language came in later years the so-called Syrian or Aramaean nationality or better yet as it is called now, the Syrian or Aramaean people in the ethnography of Syria. That language was *Aramaic*.

The Aramaic language or more scientifically accurate, the Aramaic languages did not get their name from an Aramaean people. The name of the language is much more ancient than the narrow ethnographic meaning that in later years (the time of the Seleucids) is usually given to the inhabitants of upper Syria. But the name Aramaean, which is derived from Aram, and the geographic and ethnographic meaning that it represents, not in the least matches the size of the territory of the Aramaean languages.

As we mentioned earlier the geographic name Aram doesn't have clearly defined limits. It is given to northern Syria, Coele Syria and Mesopotamia but does not include Phoenicia or Palestine which are lands that are only included in the area of the Aramaic languages starting in the

6<sup>th</sup> century BC. It is also not clear if the land took the name Aram first or the nation was named that<sup>35</sup> after the language was named first. The birthplace of this language is not the land that in later years was called Aram but Mesopotamia and in particular the southern part of it and Babylon. But is the Aramaic language the Babylonian or Chaldean language of historic times? This very complicated issue is worth clarifying.

It is known that the Assyrian and Babylonian language found on cuneiform inscriptions from before the 2<sup>nd</sup> millennium BC is a purely Semitic language. But there are cuneiform Babylonian<sup>36</sup> inscriptions from the 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> millennia BC whose language is not Semitic but Turanian. But the Turanian racial element by the end of the 3<sup>rd</sup> millennium had already been replaced by the Semitic and the Semitic language prevailed in Babylon and then in Assyria which at first it was just a colony of Semitic Babylon. Where from the Semitic people came to Babylon and Assyria does not matter. But in Babylon by the end of the 3<sup>rd</sup> millennium and in Assyria from the establishment of that state, the spoken and written language was Semitic and all of Mesopotamia was a Semitic land. In this Semitic land and in Assyria a Semitic language was spoken, called Aramaic. This Aramaic Semitic language, widely known to science through its written monuments it produced and left behind, is not the same as the Assyrobabylonian Semitic

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<sup>35</sup> The etymology of the word from a Hebrew root meaning hill or plateau is unlikely and illogical since the birthplace of the language is Babylon. As for the name Aram, the cuneiform inscriptions give the name to Mesopotamia and the Old Testament to Mesopotamia and Syria outside of Phoenicia and Palestine.

<sup>36</sup> In the Assyrian cuneiform inscriptions, there are ancient Babylonian written monuments of the Sumerian language, translated via the Semitic Assyrobabylonian language.

language even though it is very closely related to it as it is with all other Semitic languages.

Consequently, the cuneiform language of the Assyrobabylonian monuments is the language of the first Semitic people. The language of both states as a written classical language it maintained for centuries its classical character whereas Aramaic was formulated by the many Semitic people that forcibly congregated in Assyria, Babylon and Mesopotamia and especially by the Semites of the desert area between Babylon and Syria. It became the one dialect out of all these languages that the common people spoke and as such it spread and prevailed in all the lands conquered by the Assyrians and Babylonians. The great Assyrian kings of the 8<sup>th</sup> century BC spread it and the great Babylonian kings of the early part of the 6<sup>th</sup> century BC firmly established its dominance.

By the time when Assyria and Babylon were erased from the face of the earth, Assyria by the sword of the Medes and the Scythians and Babylon by Cyrus the Great, the Assyrobabylonian language that was spoken by the people, the so-called Aramaic, became permanently the language of all people subjugated up until then to the Assyrians and Babylonians. From the Persian Gulf to the gulf of Issus and to the isthmus of Pelusium.

The Jewish people with the great historical past, the beautiful language and great literature forgot their national language (contributing to that was the exile to Babylon) and were using Aramaic by the 6<sup>th</sup> century BC even after their return from exile. Only their Holy books retained Hebrew and even there, there was a strong Aramaic influence. After the return from Babylon almost all written products of the Jewish people contain Aramaic elements.

The Phoenicians also had developed their own literature with a Phoenician language<sup>37</sup> very closely related to Hebrew. But after the 6<sup>th</sup> century BC their people used Aramaic. Same for the Philistines and all the people of Syria, Palestine and Mesopotamia.

But this linguistic unity in the above-mentioned lands that came about in the 6<sup>th</sup> century after the Assyrobabylonian conquest and maintained under Persian rule, did not have any unifying power or notion of national unity as we understand it today. There was no Aramaean nationality in the land covered by the Aramaic language. The Babylonians, the inhabitants of the birthplace of the Aramaic language, did not call themselves Aramaean and no one called them that. The Greeks remembering the old Assyrian and Babylonian states called everyone in the land that Aramaic was spoken, Syrian. Despite being used to speaking the same language, great differences divided all these people.

Amongst these people, Assyrians and Babylonians (merged after the destruction of Nineveh) maintained even under Persian domination and at the time of Alexander, their own separate national and political identity and their historic memories, without any moral attachment to the Aramaism or any Aramaean national idea.

The Jews, as always hated the other Aramaean people. Even though they spoke Aramaic<sup>38</sup> they maintained their national

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<sup>37</sup> This Phoenician language continued to be spoken in later years outside Phoenicia and Syria, in the Phoenician colonies. Especially Carthage, until the Roman conquest.

<sup>38</sup> It is worth noting that the Jews had almost no idea that by speaking Aramaic they spoke a foreign language. Because of that they called their language Hebrew. This is because Aramaic, also being related to Hebrew, did not suddenly replace Hebrew as a foreign language but gradually took over by influencing it, paraphrasing it and Aramizing

and cultural identity, devoted to the traditions of their fathers and no moral attachment to the nonexistent Aramaean nation. Same for the Phoenicians. Despite using the same language, they had no affinity for the rest of the Aramaeans or better said, the Aramaic speaking people. They had their own history, identity, institutions, literature. Entirely historically unique until the Hellenistic period, when they merged with the Greeks and the rest of the Hellenized elements of the region.

Even the Palestinians or Philistines, maintained in their cities their own identity. Despite speaking Aramaic, they had no Aramaean national identity until the time when they merged with the Greek rulers and colonizers.

The people living in upper and Coele Syria and Mesopotamia during the time of Persian dominance can be considered as the descendants of many people. The Hittites and through the Assyrian conquest, the eastern people who migrated to the west and the various people found in Egyptian, Assyrian and Jewish history<sup>39</sup>. It is not known if all of them were Semitic people. But the ancestors of the people who in Hellenistic times would be called Aramaeans or Syrian, did not have an Aramaean national identity even though they spoke Aramaic like all the other aforementioned people.

There is, a rather little known in history, people who never developed their own culture or literature or their own language. They are known only from Assyrian and Jewish chronicles for their wars against the Assyrians and the story

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Hebrew. Besides, the Aramaic spoken in Palestine differs from the one spoken in upper Syria because of its many Hebrew elements.

<sup>39</sup> The multiracial composition of these people is testified by the number of people that relocated in Samaria alone during the reign of Esarhaddon.

in the Old Testament of general Naaman and the king of Aram-Damascus, Ben-Hadad II. That people were later called Aramaean and Syrian but it is of little historic value as compared to the historic significance of the Aramaic language. Because of the significance of the Aramaic language to attach importance to this mix of barbarian people, it would be the same as giving importance to a small mix of barbarian people at the end of the Roman empire just because they adopted the Latin language.

Aramaic, which the Greek authors and the Homeric poems called Syrian, was spoken by the Babylonians according to Xenophon. Through the Assyrobabylonian conquests it spread to many lands and was spoken by the people in those lands. During the time of the rule of the Achaemenids it became the language of the official correspondence of the court and the government of the great king to the local authorities of the Assyrobabylonian and Syrian countries, in the same way that the Greek language was the language of correspondence in Western Asia Minor.

But another question arises. Why were Aramaeans and Syrians later in history almost exclusively called Aramaean? This fact is not explained through testimony from ancient sources. However, its explanation does not seem difficult. As we saw earlier, the Jews always used the name Aram for Syria and Mesopotamia. And the language of the Babylonian inhabitants of Mesopotamia, they called Aramaic. Because of this use of the name by the Jews, possibly the local inhabitants of Syria and Mesopotamia got the name and made it their local name. As for the Greeks who recorded the people of Syria and Mesopotamia, they limited the name Syrian in Hellenistic times to Syria and northern Mesopotamia, contributing possibly to the limiting of the name Aramaean as well in the same region.



We must keep in mind that although the birthplace of the Aramaic language (or better yet Aramaic languages<sup>40</sup>) is Mesopotamia and Babylon in particular, the language did not get its name by the Babylonians but by the Jews. And the name Aram as a geographic and ethnological term, did not have the same spread in territory as did the Aramaic languages.

In conclusion, the inhabitants of Syria spoke Aramaic during the time of Persian domination but cannot be considered as an Aramaean nation or as having that identity. They were simply one of the people of the Aramaic lands. They were historically insignificant, with no national identity and the Aramaic language that they spoke, they spoke it not because that was their national language but because it had prevailed through conquest.

However, we must mention that this language in the years before the Greek political and cultural conquest of those lands, produced very little in the region of Syria. Its development and growth took place far from Syria, in its birthplace of Babylon.<sup>41</sup> Literature in Aramaic in Syria and northern Mesopotamia developed after the influence of Hellenism and especially Christian Hellenism, starting from the 2<sup>nd</sup> century AD. For our discussion, Babylonian Aramaic literature is not our concern. But Syrian Aramaic

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<sup>40</sup> We sometimes talk in plural about the Aramaic languages. That's because Aramaic is divided in two branches. The eastern, called Chaldean, without of course, as mentioned earlier, it being the language found on Babylonian monuments of the ancient Chaldean kings. And the western, called Syrian or Syrochaldean, spoken in Syria and Palestine. The difference between the two dialects is found only in the pronunciation and the alphabet of each dialect.

<sup>41</sup> Syrian inscriptions going back to the 9<sup>th</sup> millennium BC have been found. Still even more ancient are Hittite Syrian inscriptions. But those cannot be considered as ancient monuments of language and literature of Aramaic as we will see in the next chapter.

literature has great importance in this discussion because only that one historically represents the so-called Aramaean nation of Syria and it is as we shall see, the only characteristic of that nationality, if it is possible to be called a nationality, where supposedly and with incomplete arguments, the present-day Arabic speaking Orthodox of Syria and Palestine draw their ancestry.

## *Chapter 5*

### *About Aramaic Literature*

#### *Aramaeans and Greeks*

The mix of mulatto masses of upper and Coele Syria who had no national or racial unity in ancient times, who took the Aramaic language from the conquerors, spent the entire Persian conquest period without history. Being inert, at the end of the 4<sup>th</sup> century BC without any noise or action, they transitioned from one ruler and master to another. The victory in the battle of Issus in Cilicia of the Macedonian hero over the armies of Darius, which took place outside Syria, handed over that country without a fight as if no people lived there. Only in Phoenicia, in Palestine, in Egypt and in Babylon, Alexander understood that he was amongst people with history and national identity. The great Macedonian easily became master of those countries and one of his generals made Syria one of the provinces of a great Greek state with its center in Babylon and extending at times to the Indian peninsula.

But in the vast Seleucid state the main provinces of interest for the kings, where they usually stayed, moved and acted were the countries along the banks of the Tigris and Euphrates rivers and along the eastern shores of the Mediterranean, the Syrian, Phoenician and Palestinian lands from Amman to Pelusium and Mesopotamia. Of all those, upper and Coele Syria ranked the highest.

The state was named Syrian and “Kingdom of Syrians”. All its people and subjects of the Seleucids were called Syrians without discrimination, Greeks and Aramaeans. A powerful wind of Hellenism and its higher culture was now sweeping through the Aramaean people (Aramaic speaking people) of Syria and Mesopotamia. Greek state, Greek dynasty, Greek court and government but even more powerful than those, an entire Greek population. Hundreds of cities, seventy just in Mesopotamia, were founded in the Aramaean lands, becoming homes and centers of Hellenism. Antioch, the great Greek city of Syria both in size and population. Its people all Greek, with the civilizing power it exercised through the Greek language, the Greek schools, Greek upbringing and all facets of Greek life. The capital Seleucia-on-Tigris, a pre-eminently Greek city from its foundation, strongly influencing for centuries the lives of the locals, established firmly in Syria and Mesopotamia the cultural strength of Hellenism making those countries practically Greek.

About the outward expansion and internal intensity of the strength of Hellenism in these lands and the degree of Hellenization of each country we will talk in the chapter on the Greek ancestry of the Arabophone Orthodox of Syria. In this chapter where we only briefly mention the relations of Hellenism with Aramaism, it is enough to say that all Aramaean people, but also the nearby Arab people, as it was mentioned in an earlier chapter, succumbed to the influence of Hellenism. Some people like the Jews, also succumbed to this strong influence but at least outwardly, politically and religiously, they resisted. But the rest of the people in this land, especially in upper and Coele Syria, quietly, peacefully and without complaints, as if they were always Greek, submitted to the strength of Hellenism politically, militarily and culturally. And the Greek language not only

did it become the one that dominated. Not only did it become the one used by the state and the majority of the people. But it became the language of higher cultural life, of education and religion and the everyday life of the whole Syrian people.

What happened in upper and Coele Syria, also happened, slower but definitely in Phoenicia and in Palestine after the first and second century BC and the dissolution of Jewish autonomy and the Jewish national center. But the Greek language that completely prevailed in Syria proper and on the west bank of the Euphrates river, as admitted even by experts on the Syrian language and literature,<sup>42</sup> did not completely dominate the land east of the Euphrates, in Mesopotamia. This widespread land that was taken over by the establishment of 70 important Greek cities with a dense population of Greek colonizers and under the powerful influence of Hellenism, did not nevertheless get rid of the Aramaic language. Aramaic not only survived but under the influence of Hellenism and of Christianity gained cultural substance and life through the borrowed light of the Greek language and literature. The local language was cultivated and produced literature, making it the only element and characteristic of the Aramaic nationality.

### *Pre-Christian Aramaic Literature*

As ancient pre-Christian monuments of Aramaic literature, that nevertheless have nothing to do with Syria of historic times, are considered 1) The Aramaic linguistic elements

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<sup>42</sup> Victor Langlois according to C. Müller fragment. History. Graec, vol. 5, part B, p. XVIII.

found in the Jewish book of Ezra and the book of Daniel. These have nothing to do with the topic of our book other than show the prevailing of Aramaic in Palestine, starting in the 6<sup>th</sup> century BC. 2) The written monuments produced in Babylon, the birthplace of the language. As it has been previously mentioned, these are completely different in the linguistic idiom used and in the period that they were created and in content, from the cuneiform Assyrobabylonian writings surviving on stone and pottery inscriptions. This literature is usually called Nabataean or Sabaeen, because the Arab writers of the Muslim era gave them an ethnological meaning.<sup>43</sup> Few and poor in content are the surviving monuments of this Babylonian Aramaic literature.<sup>44</sup> But it is hypothesized that the start of this literature can be traced to the 4<sup>th</sup> century BC and that a lot more writings existed, from which the known Babylonian or rather Perso-Babylonian historiographer of the 2nd-3<sup>rd</sup> century, Berossus,<sup>45</sup> drew the material for his books.

As we mentioned earlier, the Mandaeans who live in the present day around Basra and in Persia and have a religion related to Christianity and Judaism and even to the ancient Babylonian and Persian religion, recognize as their great prophet, St. John. They call themselves Suba and the Arabs consider them descendants of the Sabaeans. In the 17<sup>th</sup> century they numbered around 20 thousand but today number only around 1500. Their literature is written in Aramaic and as is old as around the time of the rise of Islam.

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<sup>43</sup> As mentioned earlier, Nabataeans and Sabaeans were called by the Greek and Roman authors the Arabs of Petraea Arabia. But the Muslim authors transferred these pre-Muslim Arab names to a Babylonian people, considered different from the Arab nation.

<sup>44</sup> Up until 1909 when this book was published only one agricultural essay had survived in this language.

<sup>45</sup> His name was probably Persian and mispronounced as Berossus by the Greeks.

For the purposes of this book, we are not concerned about the Aramaic literature of the Arab speaking Mandaean. But we are interested in the relation of their literature with the Nabataean (or Sabaeen) Aramaic, so-called Babylonian Aramaic whose start goes back to the 4<sup>th</sup> century BC and the Christian Aramaic (the one called Syrian) literature of Mesopotamia which starts in the 3<sup>rd</sup> century BC. This issue is not clearly resolved. Renan and Langlois think there was a relation between the two Aramaic literatures that developed in different times and places, but they were not able to define their internal sequence. They simply suppose this connection from the Babylonian ancestry of the first representatives of Syrian literature, not denying the cultural influence of Hellenism in the birth and development of Syrian literature.<sup>46</sup> The truth is that before the 2<sup>nd</sup> century BC no trace of a development of literature has been found.<sup>47</sup> The inscriptions in Palmyra up until the year 49 AD written

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<sup>46</sup> What Renan says in his book *Histoire des lang. Semitiques* (p. 242) although very worthwhile, is not free of contradictions. He admits that the literary development known as the pure *Syrian*, is Aramaic only in language since deep down it is purely Greek and Christian. That while neither Hellenism nor Christianity adapted to the Semitic spirit, only Syria from all Semitic lands, with no originality became part of the foreign (Greek) cultural development. He added that “it is a unique fact, the birth of such literature without any tradition before that known to us. But our surprise of its sudden development is a result of our ignorance of ancient Aramaic writings. It has been proven that Chaldea (southern Babylon) had local pre-Christian literature. Syria proper and northern Mesopotamia do not appear to actively participate in these cultural activities taking place in Chaldea but it’s difficult to believe that they were unaware of them either. It is remarkable that the most ancient men who wrote in Syrian and whose names are preserved to this day, were Chaldeans of the time of the Sassanids.” It is obvious that these theories of Renan are weak and relying on precarious assumptions.

<sup>47</sup> The sayings about the Syrian author Mar Apo Katina, as an author who lived in the middle of the 2<sup>nd</sup> century BC, are extremely contested. The mythical stories attributed to him by Armenian chronicles belong undisputedly in a later period.

in a Syrian alphabet clearly show that in Syria before Christianity there was use of the Syrian alphabet because it would be impossible to have Syrian Christian writings<sup>48</sup> in the year 49. Regardless of the birth of Syrian Aramaic literature and its relation to Chaldean Aramaic, the cultural substance of this literature was Greek as admitted by Renan in his history of Greek Christian writings.

Two are the reasons that led to the birth of Syrian Aramaic literature. The first was the spreading of Christianity in Syria. It spread out of Antioch, the first city in that country where a Christian church was founded through the use of the Greek language. It contributed to the prevailing and establishment of Hellenism in Syria and Syrian Arabia, which was mostly Hellenized already by the time Christianity was spreading and where the Greek language had prevailed and was spoken by most people. Because of that, the message of the new faith exploded in its hold especially in the populus without the need for the development of new Christian literature in the local Syrian language since Greek had already become the local language and was satisfactory for the spiritual needs of all classes, even though the previous local language was not completely extinct.

But that wasn't the case on the eastern bank of the Euphrates. In Mesopotamia. There, despite all the intellectual and physical strength of Hellenism, represented by the seventy Greek cities built in that land, the Aramaic language especially around Nisibis maintained its hold especially as the language of the lower classes of people. Greek was spoken primarily in the cities and Greek education was limited to a few classes of people. But the message of the Christian faith and its spreading in

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<sup>48</sup> The use of an alphabet in Syria dates back many centuries BC.



Mesopotamia through the use of the Greek language in turn contributed to the increase of the popular use of Greek.<sup>49</sup> However, it was still necessary to teach the new faith in the language of the people not knowing Greek. The Greek Christian clergy as in same situations in later years, proceeded to translate the Holy books to the language of the people coming to Christ. The first book translated in Greek was the Bible. The Old and New Testament. This translation was later followed by the translation and composition in Syrian Aramaic of ecclesiastical hymns.<sup>50</sup>

From the 4<sup>th</sup> century AD begin Syrian ecclesiastical writings other than hymns. Most ancient of all being the book by Isaiah about the martyrs Zenovios, Lazarus, Marinthos and others in Mesopotamia. By the middle of that century, saint Ephrem the Syrian, (who was from Mesopotamia) became the most well-known figure of Syrian Christian literature which from the 5<sup>th</sup> century was mostly cultivated by the Nestorians and from the 6<sup>th</sup> century also by the Monophysites. This way Syrian ecclesiastical literature separated from the Orthodox Church and became characteristic of the heretical Churches in Mesopotamia. Churches who constituted the otherwise, under the true history and meaning of the name, nonexistent Aramaean or Syrian nation.

As it is known the Greco-Syrian state ruled over Syria (except for a short interval of the occupation of parts of

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<sup>49</sup> Victor Langlois according to C. Müller fragment. History. Graec, vol. 5, part B, p. XIX. « L'introduction d'un culte nouveau en Syrie fut la cause déterminante de l'extension, que prit l'idiome Grec dans la partie occidentale de la Mésopotamie ; mais comme le peuple n'entendait pas cette langue le clergé se vit dans la nécessité de remédier à l'ignorance des classes inférieures en entreprenant des productions du Grec en Syriaque, Syriaque, langue vulgaire du pays ».

<sup>50</sup> In the second half of the 2<sup>nd</sup> century AD, Bardaisan, a Christian Syrian writer from Edessa became famous for his written works.

Syria by the Armenian kingdom of Tigranes II) until the time of the Roman conquest. But the Roman conquest did not reduce the strength of Hellenism in the country. If anything, it helped promote this strength. But that wasn't the case in Mesopotamia. Most of that land, especially the south and east were conquered by the Parthians. They had created a state in the 3<sup>rd</sup> century BC which they expanded to the Tigris and Euphrates by the middle of the 2<sup>nd</sup> century BC. They made their capital in Ctesiphon and captured even the famous Seleucia-on-Tigris.

Two other big cities also fell to the control of the Parthians. Edessa and Nisibis. Edessa which laid by the Euphrates was built by the Macedonians. It was named after the capital of the ancient Macedonian kings in memory of old Macedonia. This city was at first a center of Hellenism in northern Mesopotamia. But in the middle of the 2<sup>nd</sup> century BC, it seceded to form a small state which included the lands around the city, the Greco-Syrian lands of northern Mesopotamia and some Armenian lands. From 136 BC a series of rulers, many with the name Abgar,<sup>51</sup> probably of Parthian ancestry and subject to Parthia, governed the city. A well-known ruler of Edessa in ecclesiastical traditions is Abgar V who was in contact with Jesus and his name is linked directly with the spreading of Christianity in his country. The spreading of the new faith became the reason that in Edessa, amongst Greeks and the mulatto people speaking Aramaic, Syrian Christian literature was developed, Greek in spirit and Syrian in language. This literature was produced and cultivated mostly through translations of Greek texts.

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<sup>51</sup> It is not accurate that Abgar which meant ruler, was simply an honorary name for the rulers of Edessa. Regardless of the meaning of Abgar, the truth is that not all kings of Edessa had that name.

When the political and dynastic change happened in Edessa, the city did not cease to be a center of Greek education. But this Greek education in this Christian period produced a Greco-Syrian education with the resulting birth of Syrian literature. In Edessa was founded at that time the famous *Greek school* (called Persian school after some centuries for reasons that will be explained later). In that school the non-Greek speakers of Mesopotamia were taught the Greek language from Greek Christian books and translated them into Syrian or wrote their own in the spirit of Greek Christian literature. These Syrians were experts in the use of the Greek language.

To a lesser extent independent theological writings were produced in Aramaic as well. It referred primarily to the history of the Church (or better said the history of the heresies) in Mesopotamia. History books were also written. The character of all these writings was heavily influenced from the Greek language.<sup>52</sup> But the historic and literary strength of the Syrian remained mediocre.<sup>53</sup> It's worth noting only from an ecclesiastical perspective.

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<sup>52</sup> The heavy influence of the Greek language is seen in the language itself and its grammatical elements. The Semitic Aramaic adopted from the Aryan Greek not just names but actual words such as conjunctions without even changing their pronunciation.

<sup>53</sup> Renan, *de Philosophia Peripatica apud Syros* 1852, p3: "Characteristic of the Syrians is mediocrity. Not in war, not in art and not in science did they distinguish themselves. Their literature does not have the poetic fire of the ancient Jews and Arabs. They simply showed ability to assimilate Greek and become students of the Greeks without adding anything, even minute, to what they received from the Greeks. Their only value is that the Greek letters given to the Arabs and through them their writings as a historic material has interest for researchers. The Syrian Church did not produce men of the stature of Eusebius, Gregory of Nazianzus, Basil of Caesarea or John Chrysostom but we should be grateful to it because it preserved good translations of books of Greek fathers of the Church which did not survive in the original

Syrian Aramaic literature produced through the Christian Church did not produce Syrian nationality and national identity. Just two heretic Churches, broken away from the Eastern Church and with animosity towards each other. The Church of the Nestorians and the Church of the Monophysites or Jacobites as they were called in Syria.

Nestorianism spread its message in Asia. From Assyria and Babylon to Persia and all the way to India and the Turkic and Mongolic countries and even China. It established Christian churches everywhere in these countries and spread the Syrian alphabet. Even the Monophysite Church with barely anything written, existed for centuries in Mesopotamia and survives to this day in complete decline.

Getting back to our issue, all Syrian or Aramaic literature and Chaldean as well, was born and developed in the lands beyond the Euphrates, in Mesopotamia. Its cultural centers were in Edessa, the Greek (or Persian) school which in 484 moved to Nisibis, in Carrhae and in the numerous monasteries. All Syrian lands west of the Euphrates stayed clear of this Aramaic spiritual movement. All Aramaean Syrian intellectuals were from Mesopotamia. None were from west of the Euphrates where the only developed and cultivated literature and the only ecclesiastical language was Greek, which was understood and spoken by everyone.<sup>54</sup>

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Greek. Even chroniclers of little worth such as John of Ephesus, Dionysios Telmahr or Barebreos have some value because without them we wouldn't know what we know about two very important branches of the Eastern Church. Nestorianism and the Church of the Jacobites."

<sup>54</sup> Perhaps one can argue that according to popular opinion that the first Aramaic Christian literary movement took place in Palestine. In Judea in particular. And that the "Words of the Lord" from which the Gospels of Mark and Mathew were produced, were first composed in Aramaic. This opinion is highly debatable as we'll see in the next chapter.

We must remember the fact that in Mesopotamia amongst the Aramaic speaking local population also existed a Greek speaking population who shared the same Christian books. Shortly these writings stopped being representative of the Orthodox Church and instead became the ecclesiastical literature of the heretic Churches of the Nestorians and the Jacobites. When those Churches started splitting from Christianity in the 5<sup>th</sup> century, a split that was made permanent in the next century, they included all the non-Greek speaking population of Mesopotamia. Therefore, the heretics became Aramaic speaking Christians, called either Nestorians or Jacobites.

Nestorians and Monophysites (Jacobites in Syria) separated from the Greek speaking Orthodox who called themselves Romans and Orthodox. The heretics called them Melhites (Royalists) and claimed that they developed Syrian

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Possibly only the so-called Gospel of the Hebrews, of Jewish Christians and other religious books of theirs were written in Aramaic. But these Christian Jewish-Aramaic writings remained completely isolated within the first Jewish Christians and quickly disappeared without any impact on the Christian Aramaic writings of Mesopotamia. Renan agrees with this assessment: “Despite the great similarities of Syrian and the language spoken in Palestine at the time of Jesus, we don’t see a connection between the early Christian letters of Judea and the development of literature that is called Syrian that was produced in the 4<sup>th</sup> century AD Mesopotamia.” To what Renan says we must add that one Aramaic Christian monument of Syria “Evangelical Jerusalem collection of the Vatican” (Evangelium Hierosolymitanum Vaticanum) is a written monument produced within the Orthodox Church of Syria after the separation of the two heretical Churches that were mentioned. It was recently proven that it was not a collection of Jerusalem but of Antioch. This collection, made up of ecclesiastical books translated from Greek originals in the 6<sup>th</sup> or 7<sup>th</sup> century during the reigns of Justinian or Heraclius was used as research showed, by Jews, Samaritans and Christian heretics (whose common language was Aramaic) who were coming to the Orthodox Church. In no way can it be considered that in Syria and Palestine, Christian literature developed that was not Greek.

literature. They left to the Greek speaking Orthodox Romans the field of Greek Christian literature. This religious or ecclesiastical separation in Mesopotamia and even in Syria, also became racial and ethnic. This will be clarified even further in the chapter about the Greek ancestry of the present-day Arab speakers.

But before who move on to that chapter, it is necessary to say the following as a general conclusion of this chapter about the Syrian ancestry theory. Aramaean and/or Syrian nation in the true ethnographic and historic meaning of the word never really existed in history. There was Aramaic language or languages and many nations who spoke those languages. Those nations that lived in Mesopotamia produced Christian Aramaic literature and separate Christian Churches. Two Churches, hostile to each other, initially formed the *Aramaean nation* and make up that nation till today.

## *Chapter 6*

### *About the Greek Origins of the Arabic Speaking Orthodox of Syria, Palestine and Mesopotamia*

In this chapter we intend to prove that the only true theory about the present-day Arabic speaking Orthodox of Syria, Palestine and Mesopotamia is that they are pure descendants of the Greek inhabitants of those lands. The Greeks that from the end of the 4<sup>th</sup> century BC till the end of the 7<sup>th</sup> century AD, ruled those lands politically, militarily and culturally as Macedonians and as Romans (because even the Roman rule, culturally was always Greek in this land. Political and military rule was Greek except for a small interval during the early Roman period). The Greeks also constituted from a population perspective but especially in terms of culture, language, literature, science, religion, theology and Church life, the most important racial and national element of the country. The core of its history and the entirety of the culture that was developed. Hellenism spiritually and culturally absorbed all the racial elements for centuries and constituted the only history and the only historic people of this land.

Greek life and especially Christian Greek life dominated spiritually. Weaker elements separated from Hellenism and Greek Orthodoxy taking nevertheless with them elements of Greek ecclesiastical life. After this separation anything

purely Greek, cleansed from Aramaism remained in Greek Orthodoxy. The Orthodoxy of the Greeks or Roman-Syrians. These people were called by members of other faiths (but sometimes also called themselves) Melhites or Syrian.

Those who don't accept the connection between the ancient Greek or Hellenized population and the current Orthodox population of these lands by default fall into the following false assumptions. a) That the Arabophone Orthodox are Arabs which as described earlier is false or b) That they are Aramaic. But this assumption does not correspond either with the name or their ecclesiastical status. They don't have in their Church the Syroaramaic language nor do they share the same literature with the heretics after the Schism in the Christian Church of Syria.

This raises the question, if these Orthodox were truly Aramaean in ancestry or to be historically correct according to what we've said already, if they were an Aramaic speaking people, why not maintain that language in their Church, as the Nestorians and the Jacobites have. Of course, the Orthodox clergy never objected to the introduction of Aramaic to the Church even before the schismatic Churches were formed. Nowhere in the world did it object to the use of local languages and of course it didn't want to nor could the clergy object to the introduction and regular use of Aramaic in the Orthodox Church if the inhabitants of Syria, Palestine and Mesopotamia truly spoke Aramaic.

It is easily understood that both of those hypotheses are invalid as they lead to invalid conclusions. As for the second hypothesis there is also the argument that these Arabic speaking Orthodox have no concept of relation to the Aramaeans or affinity towards their supposed ancestors.



The same lack of affinity is shown towards their supposed Nestorian and Jacobite brothers.

But the greatest fault in logic that comes from accepting this theory is the assumption that overturns one thousand years of history. That the Greek element that during that time ruled not just politically but also culturally those lands, that filled the cities and villages, that created and grew the Christian Church and gave it its Greek character and language, that produced legions of renowned representatives of Christian education and theology, that this Greek element was simply lost when disaster struck these three countries. And that from that disaster the Aramaic element alone survived intact.

Of course, any such hypothesis is immediately and completely disproven as physically impossible, illogical and historically false. If the Greek element did not get lost physically and historically in Syria, where in these lands and in what people should the descendants of the Greeks be found? In the Muslim Arabs or Turks? Of course not. In the Druze? No. In the Jews and Samaritans? No again. It has to be found in a Christian people since the Greeks in all these lands joined the Christian faith and the ancient Greek religion no longer exists. But if we search for the descendants of the Greeks who became Christians in a Christian people of Syria (and of course Palestine and Mesopotamia) in which of the many Christian people of this land should they be searched for? In the Aramaeans whether Nestorians or Chaldeans or in the Monophysites or Jacobites who we know that from the 4<sup>th</sup> century AD and especially in the 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> century, formed their own Churches and religious sects using the Aramaic language and bearing the names of the Chaldean and Syrian Church?

We must look for them in those Christians that through faith remained united with the rest of the Greek Orthodox of the Greek state. Those called by others as Royalists and who used in the Church the Greek language, which they cultivated and produced eminent writers. The people who listened in Greek and read the books of the great fathers of the entire Orthodox Church that were written in Greek. And not only till the 7<sup>th</sup> century, but even much later, even under the rule of another nation and Islam they maintained their cultural and spiritual connection to the great political and religious centers of Orthodox Hellenism. Those people who called themselves Romans, (i.e. Greek) pronouncing this way to the world that they are part of the Greek Orthodox nation.

Therefore, the present-day Arabic speaking Orthodox (Arabic speaking because of the language used by the people after the Muslim conquest of the 7<sup>th</sup> century) are the only undisputed descendants of the Greeks of Syria, Palestine and Mesopotamia. Even though no further proof is necessary we will present even more evidence of this truth.

## *Chapter 7*

### *History of Hellenism in Syria, Palestine and Mesopotamia*

It is a historical fact that Hellenism ruled these lands for a thousand years. Partially politically and completely in terms of culture either in its pure Greek form or in Roman or Greco-Roman and Byzantine form. And it was such the cultural strength of Hellenism that it survived even the Muslim Arab rule which began in the 7<sup>th</sup> century and was followed by Turkish rule.

But there are four questions to be answered by use of the historical analytical method. a) What was the beginning and what was the political character of this rule, b) What was the strength of Hellenism in these lands from an ethnological perspective. Materially and population wise, c) What was the historic and cultural strength of Hellenism, d) What was the historical course of Hellenism after the end of its state as a legal entity, from the 7<sup>th</sup> century till today.

*The beginning and political character of the Greek state in Syria and Mesopotamia.*

The Greek state of the Seleucids that was founded around the end of the 4<sup>th</sup> century BC in Syria, Palestine and Mesopotamia, had these countries as its core and expanded

at times in other Asiatic lands. It wasn't a Greek colonial state like the present-day state of the English in India and the French in Algeria. The main population was not composed of the locals who were of different nationality as to the rulers and simply contained through the military strength of the ruling state. Nor was it part of a Greek state that had its center and the seat of the king and government elsewhere and ruled by military and political representatives of the Caesar like the Roman provinces which were inhabited by natives, foreign to the ruler. Nor was it just a state ruled by a Greek dynasty and connected to the rest of Hellenism through that dynasty. If that was the case that dynasty would have been absorbed by the local elements just like the Norman dynasty of William the conqueror that settled in Saxon England in the 11th century and was quickly absorbed into the English element. On the contrary in Syria there was a Greek state under a Greek dynasty, having the center and real power of it in the country itself and not just in the military and the military aristocracy but in the Greek people who constituted the culturally superior population and who created there one of the shiniest beacons of cultural enlightenment by Hellenism during the period of its great and global cultural explosion.

The Greek state of Syria was established at a time when Hellenism was spreading its lights in the primarily Greek lands where an indigenous Greek culture was developed, in western Asia and Egypt where, new routes were opened by the sword of the heroic and political ingenious Macedonian king. This enlightenment did not happen indirectly but through Greek migration from Europe to Asia. A new Greek colonization of Asia constituting the second period in history when a great Greek colonial state was established. The Syrian state was founded and grew through this Greek colonization.

Greek colonies from the greatest centers of mainland Greece, such as Athens and other cities, were founded in Syria and Mesopotamia. Many and great centers of Greek life, culture and education were established. Cretans, Macedonians, Cypriots but mostly Athenians made up the population of the great Greek city built by the Orontes river. This city, Antioch, became the greatest center of Hellenism, pagan and Christian and one of the brightest beacons of Greek education and birthplace of Greek Christianity. Besides Antioch a great number of Greek cities of various names were founded along the shoreline of Syria but inland as well. In Coele Syria, the great ancient city of Damascus, the “eye of the East”, the city with the prominent role in the history of Syria and Palestine and of the great states by the rivers Tigris and Euphrates and even under the rule of the Achaemenids, which came under Greek rule after the Alexander’s victory at Issus, soon became Greek not just politically as a city ruled by Greeks but ethnologically as well. It received Greek colonists and took part in every facet of the Greek cultural life spreading through the East. During Christian times it became one of the main centers of Greek Christianity in Syria and the rest of the East.

In short time the entire Coele Syria and the Phoenician coast, which until then maintained their Phoenician racial characteristics, became Greek, took Greek names (Ptolemais, Tripoli etc.) and became centers of Greek and Christian culture. To the south, in Palestine, despite the local political opposition to Hellenism and in part moral resistance of Judaism, Hellenism made great strides even before the message of Christianity. The Palestinian or Philistine coast which was equally ruled by the Seleucids of Syria or the Ptolemies of Egypt, was Hellenized rapidly. Inland, to the north, Galilee before Christ was under the rule of Judaism but had received a powerful infusion of

Hellenism until after the spread of Christianity Hellenism prevailed permanently. In the middle, Samaria, it succumbed immediately to the message of Christianity as it had earlier to the cultural strength of Hellenism. To the south, Judea proper with its capital Jerusalem, until the destruction of the city it remained officially Jewish and, in the surface, antihellenic. But deep down the cultural influence of Hellenism was great. In the new Jewish state that was formed after the Jewish revolt against the Seleucids, its rulers received the Greek title for king (basileus) and Greek names (Aristobulus, Alexander) and became one of the Hellenistic states of the East. The Idumaeen kings or tetrarchs that succeeded the Hasmoneans also had Greek names and were Philhellenes.

Judaism through Philo of Alexandria and Josephus gained a prestigious position in Greek philosophy. Jerusalem, although Judaism was very conservative there at the time of Jesus, later on joined the Hellenistic wave with four synagogues being built there for the Greek speaking Jews. The Greek language already from the time of Jesus and the Apostles seems to have prevailed there or at least used alongside Aramaic. But the Hellenization of Jerusalem became permanent during the reign of Titus and Hadrian. Jerusalem was destroyed and the new Christian Jerusalem became a Greek city since the original Judeo-Christian Church relocated beyond the river Jordan. Nevertheless, it too was already for the most part Hellenized. The Church of Jerusalem and of all Palestine and Syria became Christian under a Greek identity.

The Roman conquest of Syria and the surrounding countries after the dissolution of the remnants of the Hellenistic kingdoms, brought a political and administrative unity. This contributed greatly to the establishment of Hellenism and the spreading of Greek Christianity in the East.

But the strength of Hellenism in the Aramaic lands did not contain itself west of the Euphrates. The wide land between the Euphrates and Tigris rivers, from the southern edge of the Armenian plateau to the Persian Gulf also yielded to the strength of Hellenism. It started with Alexander but the greatest push for the Hellenization of this land was given by the founder of the Seleucid dynasty. This king who built Greek cities in Syria and Phoenicia and Hellenized those lands, “expanded this good” according to Libanius the great sophist from Antioch, “to the Tigris and Euphrates. He took Babylon and planted Greek seeds everywhere in Persia and left no place empty and made Greek the barbarian land”.<sup>55</sup> According to Pausanias the number of cities he built outside Syria, in Mesopotamia, came up to 75 and he listed the names of all of them.

Libanius stated that Seleucus built more cities than Athens and Miletus did combined at the time of the first Greek colonization. Those two cities were at the forefront of that colonization and Miletus alone built more than 80 colonies. Edessa in northern Mesopotamia which bore the name of the ancient Macedonian capital and Seleucia in southern Mesopotamia and capital of the entire Seleucid state were the main centers of cultivation and advancement of Hellenism. But it is necessary now to discuss in more detail each of the great centers of Hellenism in Syria and Mesopotamia. The colonial cities which transformed those barbarian lands to pure Greek lands.

Most famous of them all was the great Antioch by the Orontes. It is worth mentioning the stories and myths surrounding the birth of this city. From those traditions we can extrapolate that before the city was built, in its place was another Greek city before the time of Alexander and

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<sup>55</sup> Libanius, *pub Reiske*, vol 1, p 304-305.

Seleucus. The existence of a Greek city in Syria before the Macedonians, during the rule of the Achaemenids, leads to the conclusion that the beginning of the presence of Hellenism in Syria is more ancient than the Macedonian period.

It is known that Hellenism, through its colonies in centuries past lost in history had taken over the entire western coast of the great Asia Minor peninsula. These colonies in turn proceeded to send out new colonies which Hellenized not only the coast of Propontis (Sea of Marmara) and Bosphorus but also the southern and eastern shores of Euxinos Pontos (Black Sea) including the part of the Caucasus mountains as they reached the shores. Just as the northern coast of Asia Minor was covered by dense Greek colonies, the same happened in its southern coast in the eastern Mediterranean. From the coast across from Rhodes, from Lycia to the Gulf of Issus, Greek colonies and Greek civilization were heavily present. It is true that from Pamphylia to Cilicia the presence of Hellenism would start to wane. But there too, including the great island of Cyprus, there was a great mixture of civilizations (Assyrian, Phoenician and Greek). Tarsus was the center of this meeting of civilizations.

Already by the end of the 8<sup>th</sup> and the beginning of the 7<sup>th</sup> century BC, on the entire coast of Asia Minor, from the Black Sea where the Caucasus mountains end at the shores of Colchis to the most southeastern shore of the peninsula, the Gulf of Issus, including Cyprus, Greek civilization had prevailed. At that time (696 BC) the Assyrian King Sennacherib built a great fleet which floated down the river Tigris and into the Persian Gulf, with most of its crews being Greek. This king and his successor Esarhaddon had in their armies Greek mercenaries and maintained diplomatic relations with the Greek rulers of Cyprus. Much later Antimenidas, the brother of the famous poet Alcaeus



of Mytilene served in the Assyrobabylonian army. If we consider all that, Hellenism during the 7<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> century BC was established in Asia Minor and was active as an up-and-coming political power in Egypt (during Psamtik I and Amasis)<sup>56</sup> and present in the great Assyrobabylonian state as well.

Undisputedly, later on when all of Asia was under the rule of the Achaemenids, the greater communication that came from being part of a single empire, brought closer the Greek world to the Tigris and Euphrates rivers and to Syria. It appears that at that time a Greek city called Ioni was founded in upper Syria, near the site where Antioch would later be built. The start of this colony, Libanius of Antioch, puts it at the time of the Assyrians. According to him the Assyrians and then later the Persians always respected that city. Cambyses II, the son and successor of Cyrus the Great, while marching through Syria on his campaign against Egypt, received an embassy from the city. When he found out that it was Greeks who had built it and had their own autonomous thriving community, he admired them and instead of demanding anything from them for occupying land in his territory, he considered them benefactors and he sent them on their way with gifts.

Bearing in mind the brutal character of Cambyses, his contemporaries attributed his behavior to divine intervention. That led to a story being told that when Cambyses was camped by Ioni, he saw in his sleep the god of the sun who told him that in the future a Macedonian city would be built there. All this prove well enough the historic presence of the city during the time of the Persians. But especially interesting is the name “Ioni” and its possible etymology of it. A tradition mentioned by Libanius, Malala

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<sup>56</sup> Strabo, 13, 617.

and later authors Stephanus of Byzantium and Eustathius connects the name Ioni to the story of Io, daughter of Inachus. Since more ancient traditions connect her to the Ionian Sea and also Bosphorus was tied to the myth of her transformation to an ox, it was logical that Ioni of Syria was also tied to that name. Later the name Ioni was changed to Iopolis.<sup>57</sup>

According to tradition, mixed with myths because of the involvement of Io, the founders of Ioni were Argives, (same as Tarsus) who had left their city of Argos in search of Io. However, their leader was not an Argive but Triptolemus of Elefsis. He is also the mythological builder of the temple of Cassius Zeus. His mother's name was also Ioni (but spelled differently, *Ιώνη* the city vs *Υόνη* Triptolemus's mother) which is probably what led to the confusion of this story. After the Argives, more colonists from Crete arrived under the leadership of Kasos, who was a relative of the king of Cyprus which became the reason for many Cypriots to follow suit and migrate to the Greek colony in Syria.

Examining the historic core of these myths, the part about Argos may be complete myth and have only to do with the similar sounding names and the worship of Zeus, which was very similar in many places across Greece, including in Argolis. But that is not the case about the colonization from Crete and Cyprus. Crete from an era lost in time always maintained a lot of contact with the Syrian coast and Cretans were recruited as mercenaries. It is very likely that Cretans had been sent out as colonists long before the Macedonian and Persian times and that at the very least

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<sup>57</sup> Pausanias of Damascus, *Historici Graeci minores*, pub. Dindorf, vol. 1, p. 157.

Cretans lived in Syria and had contributed to the building of Ioni.

Even more likely is the same hypothesis for Cyprus. The island had recognized the suzerainty of Assyria at the time of Sargon II. At the time of his grandson, Cyprus was tied commercially and colonially to the coast of Cilicia and the Gulf of Issus and it is very likely that it contributed to a small degree to the colonization of upper Syria.

But it is worth noting that the name Ioni or Iopolis may mean nothing else than Greece, Greek city, Ionia. Asian nations gave Greek people the name Ionian (or a variation of it). It is found in cuneiform Assyrian inscriptions (Iaman), in the Old Testament (Iavan), in Egyptian inscriptions of the 8<sup>th</sup> century BC (Uin), in Armenian till today (Uin), in Arabic, Persian and Turkish (Uini-stan or Yunanistan).

Ioni therefore became the first birthplace of Hellenism in Syria. The first Greek city in Syria where Greek life met with Assyrian life. Where the Assyrian deity Istar or Astarte became the Greek goddess Artemis whose ancient temple in Ioni is considered to have been built long before the Greek settlement. That temple was lavishly decorated under Persian rule and Cambyses also built a second temple for Apollo the goddess's brother (Sun god of the Persians)

With the building of Ioni, a single and not large city, Hellenism in Syria could not achieve great material advances before the Macedonian period and the city itself could not become large and powerful. Libanius explains that an inland Greek city in the heart of the great king's country, was not possible to become powerful and fearsome. A lot of time had to go by and more favorable circumstances to arise and a new order of things established

in order for Hellenism in Syria and Mesopotamia to become more powerful and successful.

These circumstances were created in Syria after the battle of Issus by which the rule of the great king in Syria and Mesopotamia was dissolved and a great opportunity for Hellenism appeared. The great victorious Greek king in his hurry to conquer Syria could not in his brief stay or rather passing through, Hellenize the country. But what he accomplished became the solid foundation for what took place shortly thereafter. Only two cities with Greek colonists in upper Syria built by Alexander are mentioned. Alexandria near Issus (also known as Alexandretta in the Middle Ages. Present day Iskenderun) and Nikopolis.<sup>58</sup> But construction had begun for Antioch as well, the capital of Hellenism in the East and therefore that city too is associated with the Macedonian hero. It is said that Alexander had camped on the site of the future Antioch. It brought him memories from home and he started the construction of a temple for Zeus Bottiaeus,<sup>59</sup> as Zeus was called in parts of Macedonia. Since then, the land where this temple was built was called Imathia (Ἰμαθία) again named after an area in Macedonia.

But the main body of work of the Greek colonization of Syria took place during the time of the *Diadochi* of Alexander. First Antigonus, the powerful Macedonian satrap in Asia built in 307 BC a Greek city which he called

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<sup>58</sup> Nikopolis was built in commemoration of Alexander's victory at Issus but not near Issus itself as mistakenly Stephanus of Byzantium states, but according to Strabo and Ptolemy in Cilicia. In its coins it is called "Nicolitans of Seleucis", Seleucis being the land of upper Syria. Antioch was also called city of Seleucis.

<sup>59</sup> From the Macedonian city Bottiaea. However, the building of this temple is attributed by Pausanias of Damascus to Seleucus I. Pausanias also mentions a small city called Bottiaea that was located across from the city of Iopolis.

Antigonia, an hour away from where Antioch would shortly be built. He populated it with Greeks from many cities, including Athens. Based in that city and following an omen, Seleucus I Nikator who had defeated Antigonus, built around 300 BC a city in the location of the temple of Zeus Bottiaeus which he named Antioch after his father. A Greek city that would play a great role in the history of the world and that would become one of the brightest beacons of Hellenism in the East.

The new city was inhabited by Greeks from nearby Antigonia, from the pre-Macedonian Iopolis and many veterans of the armies of Seleucus. According to Strabo because of the growth in population, soon a second city was built within the same walls. A third followed, built by Seleucus II Callinicus and a fourth built by Antiochus IV Epiphanes. In this way Antioch the Tetrapolis was built, all surrounded by the same walls but each being individual. As for the settlers of the city, Libanius writes that Antiochus III the Great introduced settlers from Aetolia, Crete and Euboea.

The population of the city rose over time to several hundred thousand people so that at the time of Libanius entire suburbs, the size of cities themselves were built outside the walls. According to Strabo, Antioch was not much smaller than Seleucia on the Tigris<sup>60</sup> and Alexandria in Egypt. But in the years between when Strabo wrote his works and Libanius and John Chrysostom, there was such an increase that there was no other city in the Greco-Roman world, other than Rome, comparable in area covered and number of people to Antioch. Libanius, as he often did, compared Antioch in everything to Athens. At the beginning of the Peloponnesian war the farmers of Attica, afraid of the

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<sup>60</sup> Seleucia had a population of six hundred thousand.

Spartan invasion left their farming communities and sought refuge in the city. Therefore, the city was full of people, but the countryside was abandoned. In Antioch even though a great number of people left each day to go work in the fields, the city was not emptied but it continued to bustle. And there was such an activity each day that a stranger might think that he had arrived on a market day. Or seeing the number of people going through each gate he might think that at each gate there was a celebration taking place. And it was impossible for a traveler to cross the streets fast, as he was obstructed by waves of masses of people *“just like the waves of the sea slowed down the passage of the ship”*.

The natural and man-made beauties of the great and populous Antioch, we do not intend to describe in detail as Libanius did for his homeland. We do not want to extend this book by describing the brilliant twin arcades, its main avenue, the stone paved streets, its arches, its walls, the many great public buildings, the many temples and especially the temple of the nymphs, the theaters, the hotels, the many baths, the brilliant and biggest building that served as the palace of the Caesar when in the city, the natural richness and beauty of the city. All these we just mention to demonstrate the material power and size of the city and from that to guess the material power and great number of Greeks living there. The most important is the intellectual and cultural power of the city that made it not just a big and famous Greek city but a center of Greek culture that greatly affected the Hellenization of all of Syria.

As for the cultural influence of Antioch as a Hellenic center in all the East, Libanius finds only one other city in the history of Hellenism that could compare to the great metropolis of Syria. That city from which a great part of the people of Antioch also traced their ancestry was Athens.

Both cities were connected to each other through metropolis and colony ties. They also had in common that even though they both had great works that demonstrated outwardly their strength and their wealth and even though they ruled over other cities, above all they valued the pursuit and possession of wisdom. Comparing from that perspective the two cities, Libanius goes as far as to say that divine providence made it so, so that there would be balance between European and Asiatic Greece in wisdom and intellect. Like two bright torches enlightening the two continents and anyone worthy enough to teach in one of them would also be worthy to teach in the other.

This wisdom, and especially rhetoric, the power of the use of words, did not limit itself to schools or academies but just like in Athens, in Antioch too the entire city was a school for all others. In the city assembly and in the courts, many people would congregate as if in school lectures to listen to the debates.<sup>61</sup> And the people attending the theater or the assembly were so educated themselves that no word or expression went unchecked or unjudged.

Antioch produced many eminent orators and scholars. Here it is necessary to say that Antioch, the beautiful metropolis of not just Syria but of Asia, it alone had many hundreds of thousands of people population.<sup>62</sup> A pre-eminently Greek

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<sup>61</sup> Cicero, *Pro Archia*, chapter 3. “locum nobilem celeberrimum hominibus liberalissimisque studiis affluentem” and “antecellere omnibus ingenii gloria contigit Antiochiae”.

<sup>62</sup> The population of Antioch from the time of its foundation, continually grew. Strabo considers it as not much smaller in size than Alexandria and Seleucia. According to Josephus who wrote shortly after Strabo, Antioch was the third in size in the Roman empire. John Chrysostom in his Ignatius speech estimates the population at the time of Bishop Ignatius (1<sup>st</sup> century AD) to just 200,000. Of course, if he is referring only to the Christian population which at the time was an infinitesimal part of the whole population, then it can be assumed that Antioch had

population.<sup>63</sup> Therefore this city alone with its huge population and Greek culture was enough to establish in Syria a Greek population and to contribute to the ethnography of the country a new and extremely important ethnic element.

Antioch was not just a Greek city that harbored the treasures of Greek civilization, nor was it the only city that brightened the world with these treasures. Antioch was a life-giving fountain and center of enlightenment for other cities and countries. It was not just a city that attracted students, but it also provided teachers to every corner of the world. That's why it was a metropolis of Asia and not just because of its political position. It was such the educational influence of the city that Ammianus Marcellinus wrote that "*Antioch civilizes Syria*" (Syriam nobilitat).

Antioch during the years of decline of the Seleucid state and especially at the time of Pompey's Asian campaign (64 BC) was an autonomous city. It was so important that when Emperor Julian was mocked by part of the people of the city, he took the time to write a treatise "*to the*

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more than a million people. If the whole population was truly 200,000 then it multiplied by the time John Chrysostom lived. Also, that number must not account for the slaves and the mobile population of the city. So, an average population must be close to around 500,000. Which is close to what Strabo also suggests when he describes Antioch as slightly smaller than the city of Seleucia of the 600,000 people.

<sup>63</sup> That Antioch was completely Greek, at least at the time of Libanius, is made clear by his praises of the city. Even the experts on Aramaic writings admit as much, only suggesting that the names of some of the suburbs of the great city may be Aramaic. Even if we assume that they are Syrian or Aramaic, this is not indisputable evidence that the inhabitants were Syrian. They could be considered as evidence of the Syrian ancestry of the people before the arrival of the Greeks and the building of the city.



*Antiochians*". A rather explanatory piece of work about himself and a condemnation of the city.

Years later, the famous queen Eudocia, wife of Emperor Theodosius II appeared in the city's assembly. She was an Athenian and daughter of a philosopher. In her address there she declared in the most official way how Greek the city was by pronouncing proudly that she was of the same race as the Antiochians by quoting the Homeric line "*Of your proud line and blood I claim to be*" (*Υμετέρης γενεῆς εὐχομαι εἶναι*).

Antioch as a Greek city and great cultural center, birthplace of Hellenic Christianity, influenced the history of humanity in a way that signifies the greatness of Hellenism in this city and the surrounding country. This will be discussed in detail later in the book. At this point we will simply present the physical size of Hellenism in Syria with its center in Antioch.

### *The suburbs of Antioch*

The great city extended beyond its walls for a distance of 40 stadia or approximately 7 ½ km. Its suburbs were towns themselves with large populations. They ended in the furthest one, a town called Daphne. It was surrounded by a pleasant forest 80 stadia wide with streams of drinking water and a temple dedicated to Apollo and Artemis. Daphne in modern times was given the nickname Versailles of Antioch. It was a place where Antiochians and their neighbors from the surrounding cities held festivals. It was so well known that sometimes Antioch is called Antioch by Daphne.

## *Seleukis, the land around Antioch*

Antioch was the metropolis of all Syria. The first and greatest of all prominent Greek cities of that part of upper or northern Syria which was called Seleukis (from the name of Seleucid Nicator. Seleukis was divided in four provinces that each had as capitals four great Greek cities, Antioch, Seleucia on Pieria, Apamea and Laodicea. Seleukis was also called tetrapolis as it contained the four greatest and most important cities of the country which were connected to each other via the so called Omonoia (Ομόνοια). Brotherly cities to each other. All four were built by King Seleucus I Nicator.

Seleucia in Pieria, a name transplanted from mainland Greece to Syria (just like the name Imathia) reminds us of one of the most ancient birthplaces of Hellenic civilization, the home of the Muses. Seleucia was located where the Orontes river fell into the Mediterranean Sea and was an important trading center and center of Greek culture. Zeus was the most venerated deity in this city as testified by the Greek inscriptions<sup>64</sup> on the city ruins that survive to this day.

Third greatest city of Seleukis was Apamea, named after the wife of Seleucid. Even after the Arab conquest of the 7<sup>th</sup> century and throughout the Middle Ages it remained prosperous and maintained its Greek name (Afamiya). Since it was built and inhabited primarily by Macedonians, it was also called Pella, after the Macedonian capital.

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<sup>64</sup> Böckh, *Corpus Inscriptionum Graecarum* Vol III fasc 1, n. 4488-4489.

Around it there were three other Greek cities, Larisa, Megara and Appolonia.

Fourth was Laodicea, present day Latakia, named after Seleucus's mother. Very important city, especially during Roman times. Emperor Septimius Severus even made it capital of Syria during his reign. It maintained its pure Greek character until at least the time of the Crusades and we will talk more about it elsewhere.

These were the four great cities of Seleukis or tetrapolis but there were many other Greek cities. Some of the most notable included Alexandria by Issus towards the Cilician mountains. Built by Alexander or Seleucid I Nikator, definitely named in honor of the great Greek king. It kept its name through the centuries with small variations. Alexandretta by the Franks, Iskenderun by the Arabs.<sup>65</sup> Another Greek city in upper Syria near Apamea was Arethusa, built by Seleucus I Nikator.

A famous Greek city of upper Syria, built in the place of the ancient Hittite city Hamath by Antigonos IV Epiphanes was Epiphaneia on the Orontes. Different from Epiphaneia on the Euphrates.

Other Greek cities mentioned in upper Syria include Ierapolis Bambice, where Artemis the Beautiful was worshipped.<sup>66</sup> Veria, named after the city in Macedonia.<sup>67</sup>

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<sup>65</sup> Iskander is how Alexander is called by the Arab and Asian people.

<sup>66</sup> C. I. G. Vol III fasc 1, n. 4444-4445.

<sup>67</sup> Veria was later on and to this day called Halepi or Aleppo or Halab. Its name sounds like the ancient Halivon (Χαλιβών) from which the term "Land of Halivonites" was derived. However, Halivon is mentioned as a different city than Veria by Ptolemy. But the plethora of Greek inscriptions around Halepi (C. I. G. Vol. III fasc. 1 n. 4446-4453) support those who think that the city lays on top of where a Greek city used to lay, probably Veria. As for the name Halivon it is pre-Greek according to Strabo who mentions Halivonian wine being sent from

Heraclea located to the east of Antioch. And to the southwest by the Mediterranean Sea the cities Posideion and Heraclion and the sacred Nymphaion.

To the north of Antioch, in Commagene, there were the Greek cities of Antiochia ad Taurus, Germanikeia, Doliche and Nikopolis. As for the land of Commagene, it too took the Greek name Pieria. In upper Syria there were the Greek cities of Seleucia near Belus and Larisa, the latter being another one built by Seleucus I Nicator and the city of Cyrrhus from which the province of Cyrrhestica took its name.<sup>68</sup>

### *Coele or Middle Syria*

With the name Coele Syria we describe the part of Syria by the Lebanon and Anti-Lebanon mountains. We can also call it Middle Syria because Coele Syria was called under a broader sense the entire land south of Seleukis all the way to Egypt and Arabia. In this land Greek cities founded by the Seleucids include Laodicea by Lebanon, not to be confused with Laodicea of upper Syria the one also known as Laodicea by the sea. But by the time of Strabo almost all ancient cities in Coele Syria and the Phoenician coast had succumbed to the influence of Hellenism and had been Hellenized. The rule of the Seleucids in Syria and partly of the Ptolemies was followed by Roman rule. This major

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Syria to the court of the Achaemenids. This pre-Greek Halivon is the city Helvon, mentioned by Ezekiel, also known for its wine. Kiepert believed that Veria, Halivon and Halepi are the same city. But that contradicts what Ptolemy has written and Halivon is described as a neighbor of Damascus.

<sup>68</sup> Droysen, *Geschichte der Bildung des hellenistischen Staatensystems*, p. 61.

political change and change in system of governance not only did not slow down the force of Hellenism but more likely promoted it. It is in Roman times that we see the Hellenization of Middle Syria and its ancient and important cities.

One such city (leaving of course out the Phoenician coast and Palestine) is the famous even from ancient times city of Damascus. This ancient city was completely destroyed during the Assyrian conquest and part of its people moved to Cyrene. It was rebuilt according to Strabo by the Persians. Arrian and Diodorus mention the capture of the city by the Greeks after the battle of Issus. Hieronymus however mentions the rebuilding of the city by the Macedonians (Seleucids and Ptolemies) which implies its Greek colonization.

Starting at the time of Alexander, in Hellenistic and Roman times, coins of the city of Damascus bear Greek writing (Δαμασκηνών, Δαμασκού μητροπόλεως, Δαμασκού μητροκλωνείας, Δαμασκού ιεράς ενδόξου). From inscriptions we learn that the city even held Olympic games. In pre-Christian times it produced several famous men such as Nicolaus of Damascus and his father Antipatros, Pausanias of Damascus and others. From Nicolaus's biography we know that he was educated in Damascus and that he wrote poetry, tragedies and comedies. He was an orator, played music, knew mathematics and was an all-around philosopher.<sup>69</sup> This shows that Damascus in the 1<sup>st</sup> century BC was a center of Greek education, Greek letters and philosophy.

The name Kolonia (Κολωνία) in its coins does not refer to the colonization during the time of the Seleucids and the

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<sup>69</sup> Historici Graeci minores, pub. Dindorf, vol. 1, p. 137.

Ptolemies. Rather it refers to yet a new colonization during Roman times even though like all Roman colonization in the East, it had a Greek character. The numerous Greek inscriptions testify to the Hellenization of the city. From these inscriptions we learn that the people of Damascus during Roman times still used a Macedonian calendar with Macedonian names<sup>70</sup> for the months. It is obvious that the city was truly renovated under the Macedonians as Hieronymus wrote and became Greek and Hellenism continued to thrive by the time Christianity was preached in the city.

As it was mentioned earlier in the book, the rule of the Arab Aretas over the city, at the time of Apostle Paul's first teachings of Christianity in Damascus, did not hinder the progress of Hellenism in the city in the slightest. On the contrary it helped as the Arabs who lived in Syria at the time were completely Hellenized. Aretas himself on his bronze coins of Damascus was not called "*Friend of the Romans*" (Φιλορωμαίος) as it was customary for rulers at the time, but "*Philhellene*" (Βασιλέως Αρέτου φιλέλληνας). Also, the story of the conversion of Apostle Paul to Christianity in Damascus, as it is described in "the Acts of the Apostles", implies that the spoken language in Damascus was Greek.<sup>71</sup> Even the myth that was created during the Hellenistic times about the legendary Damascus, son of Hermes and the Arcadian nymph Alimedes, reflects the Hellenization of the city. Besides that, Damascus was one of the centers in Syria where Greek literature was brilliantly developed in Hellenistic and Roman times and continued just as brilliantly with Greek Christian literature in Byzantine

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<sup>70</sup> C. I. G. n. 4512, 4515, 4516, 4517, 4518, 4519, 4521, 4522.

<sup>71</sup> The Greek names of the landmarks described when Ananias found and baptized Paul coincide with the Arabic names used today.

times.<sup>72</sup> Finally, many other cities in Middle Syria and all the Syrian lands were Hellenized during Hellenistic and Roman times.

The Phoenician cities Aradus, Sidon, Tyre, Ake and others of the Phoenician coast maintained in Hellenistic times and partly in the early Roman times their Phoenician population who used the Aramaic language. But already at the time of Strabo (end of the 1<sup>st</sup> century BC and beginning of the 1<sup>st</sup> century AD),<sup>73</sup> Hellenism had infiltrated so much in these cities that they were the home of famous Hellenistic philosophers. From Sidon such were Boethus and Diodorus. Boethus studied Aristotelian philosophy alongside Strabo. From Tyre<sup>74</sup> was the philosopher Antipater, contemporary of Strabo as well and Apollonius.

During the Ptolemies the ancient Phoenician city of Ake was also Hellenized. It was renamed Ptolemais and it received Greek colonists. According to Strabo Ptolemais was a great city whereas Ake was an insignificant Phoenician town.

The city of Tripolis was built according to Strabo by the three cities of Tyre, Sidon and Aradus. The Greek name of

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<sup>72</sup> According to the chronographer Theophanes (vol. 1, p. 532, pub. Bonn) in 654 AD the Arabs relocated from Sicily to Damascus a great number of Christians, most of them Greek and Greek speaking.

<sup>73</sup> In Sidon survive an inscription between 147-144 BC with an official decree of the city: Ἡ πόλις Ἀρία Δαμοθέτου, Κρήτα, τὸν ἀρχισωματοφύλακα (τοῦ Πτολεμαίου τοῦ Φιλομήτορος τῆς Αἰγύπτου) καὶ ἐπὶ τῆς πόλεως, ἀρετῆς ἕνεκα καὶ εὐνοίας τῆς εἰς Βασιλέα Πτολεμαῖον καὶ βασίλισσαν Κλεοπάτρα τὴν ἀδερφήν, θεοῦς φιλομήτορας, καὶ τέκναν αὐτῶν καὶ τῆς εἰς αὐτὴν εὐεργεσίας.

<sup>74</sup> Droysen places the beginning of the Hellenization of Tyre with Alexander based on a passage from Iustinos. From that passage we understand that eight thousand people died during the siege and capture of Tyre and another thirty thousand were sold as slaves and that after its fall Alexander gave the city to new inhabitants.

the city along with the Greek names of mountains, rivers etc. testify that the dominant language was Greek. Nor is it logical to think that Strabo and Ptolemy use Greek translations of Aramaic names since even Josephus who was Jewish uses the Greek names. The same goes for everything located between Ptolemais and Stratonos Pyrgos (later the pre-eminently Greek city of Caesaria of Palestine) and the surrounding small cities. Sykaminou city, Voukolou city, Krokodelou city, Ornithon city, Orthosia and Enydras.

Another famous Greek colony in Syria was Chalcis or Chalcis on the Vilo (Phoenician river). Built by Seleucus I Nicator and named after the city on the island of Euboea, it was the home of the philosopher Iamblichus.<sup>75</sup> Besides this Chalcis there is another one to the north, at the foot of mount Lebanon near Veria, which was later renamed Kinnesrun or Kinnastrin (Κιννεσρούν or Κινναστρίν). Both cities were built by Greeks. This city is one of the few in Syria where Christian Aramaic literature was cultivated.

Many cities in Coele Syria went from being Phoenician to being Greek. Balanea was one of them which colonists renamed Leykas. Another was Baalbek which was renamed Heliopolis, a Roman colony from the time of Augustus. The colonies in the East at the time of the Roman empire, were in reality Greek colonies, as it was mentioned earlier and this is testified by the Greek inscriptions found in those cities.<sup>76</sup> Even the ancient city of Beirut on the Phoenician coast which maintains its name to today was Hellenized during Roman times. The city grew and was beautified during the reigns of Emperors Augustus, Claudius and

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<sup>75</sup> Stephanus of Byzantium says that Chalcis was built by Monicus the Arab. This can be explained by the fact that the city came under the rule of Ptolemy the Menaean, who appears to be the same person as Monicus, known to us by Strabo (16, 752) as the ruler of Iturea.

<sup>76</sup> C. I. G. Vol. III fasc. 1, n. 4523-4528.



Caracalla. During the early Byzantine times it became an important trading and cultural center of Byzantine Hellenism, famous for its law school. Again, inscriptions from the Roman era (C. I. G. Vol III fasc. 1 4529-4536) testify to the Hellenization of the city.<sup>77</sup>

Another piece of evidence that proves the Hellenization of the above-mentioned Hellenized Phoenician cities and Syria in general is the establishment of the Greek language as an official language alongside Latin. The government decrees would be issued in Latin and translated into Greek for them to be understood by the people. The Jewish Hellenist Josephus writes that Mark Anthony sent an order as Emperor General to the rulers and assembly of Tyre saying, *“I order you through this decree in your public announcements to include Roman and Greek letters so that they can be read by all”*. Therefore, the language that everyone in Tyre could read and understand was Greek, with Latin only holding the place of officiality. Josephus adds that Mark Anthony sent the same order to the people of Sidon, Antioch and Aradus, which signifies that in all those cities the language understood by all was Greek. As for Sidon, Josephus mentions a letter by Julius Ceasar to the rulers and assembly of the city that Julius Ceasar said he is sending them a copy of an official decree *“to be posted for the public of Sidon”* adding that *“I order you to post this in Greek and Roman”*.

Another famous Hellenized city was Emesa, a Syrian or Phoenician city, today called Homs. The city and its surrounding area before the time of Augustus had been

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<sup>77</sup> Notable among these inscriptions is number 4536 where the Hellenized Phoenician god Balmarkes is mentioned. More on that important inscription, D Ioh. Leonh. Hug, Einleitung in die Schriften des neuen Testaments, Zweiter Theil. P. 54.

captured by the Arabs. It is one of the first Hellenized Arab colonies, home to Posidonius the Stoic, contemporary of Strabo. Later during the reign of Caracalla in the 3<sup>rd</sup> century AD Emesa became a Roman colony (i.e. Greek colony) and in the 4<sup>th</sup> century AD capital of the province of Lebanon. Few Greek inscriptions are known.<sup>78</sup> These Arab colonists lived primarily between Coele Syria and Palestine in an area called Trachonitis, Auranitis and Batanaea.

But before we talk about Palestine and the Greeks or the Hellenized people there, it is worth to briefly describe the Hellenization of the Arabs of Syria and the prime example of a Greco-Arab city in an oasis in the desert, Palmyra. Because the thriving of Hellenism in this remote Arab land is indicative of the progress of Hellenism in all the Arab colonies of Syria.

### *Hellenization of the Arabs in Syria*

It may seem odd, but it is true that of the people of Syria, faster and in greater numbers succumbed to the influence of Hellenism the Arabs who settled to this land in the final period of the Seleucids and during Roman rule. As it was mentioned earlier, these Arab settlements came in close contact with the Greek population of Syria and therefore Greek civilization. The expansion of the rule of Arab leaders in pre-eminently Greek cities such as Chalcis and Arethusa or Hellenized like Heliopolis and Emesa contributed to the Hellenization of the Arabs in Coele Syria. But the fact that Hellenism thrived in the middle of Arab settlements is corroborated by the history of Palmyra.

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<sup>78</sup> C. I. G. Vol III fasc. 1, n. 4511.

## *Hellenism in Palmyra*

The city of Tadmor, built by Solomon in the Syro-Arab desert as a trading post to help communication between Syria and Palestine in the west and the Assyrian and Babylonian lands by the Tigris and Euphrates rivers in the east, was named Palmyra by the Romans.<sup>79</sup> Although isolated, it succumbed to the influence of Greek civilization as it was mentioned in an earlier chapter and the numerous Greek inscriptions that we mainly have to refer to, testify to the Hellenization of this Arabian oasis.

From these inscriptions<sup>80</sup> we learn that the Arab settlement took a Greek character<sup>81</sup> and was organized within the Roman state as an autonomous Greek city. With an assembly of its citizens voting for each issue. Palmyra's calendar was the Seleucid Macedonian (beginning in 312 BC) and its inscriptions start being dated from that year with Macedonian names for the months.<sup>82</sup> Most of those dates are from the Roman times, after the birth of Jesus and especially the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> century. It is known that Palmyra became a Roman colony (unknown exactly when but before the 3<sup>rd</sup> century AD) and it was because of that that it was called "brilliant colony" (inscr. 4496 "Septimus Orodios general of the brilliant colony"). Ulpianus also calls Palmyra "Colonia juris Itali" (Bockh commentary on inscr. 4483). Bockh on the fact of the use of the Macedonian calendar in Palmyra, he speculates that before its Roman colonization it had become a Greek colony. Of course,

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<sup>79</sup> From the Latin palma=phoenix, Hebrew tamar=phoenix. The root of the word is Latin, but the form of the word is Greek.

<sup>80</sup> C. I. G. Vol III fasc. 1, n. 4478-4510.

<sup>81</sup> C. I. G. Vol III fasc. 1, n. 4478, 4489, 4480 and 4483.

<sup>82</sup> C. I. G. Vol III fasc. 1, n. 4503, 4506, 4509 and 4503.

becoming a Roman colony later on it practically meant being a Greek colony like all Roman colonies in the East. And it is a fact that most Greek monuments in Palmyra belong to the Roman times.

Palmyra in inscriptions is also called metrocolony.<sup>83</sup> In other words metropolis of other colonial cities. Another measure of the size and strength of this Greek colony.

In the Greek inscriptions in Palmyra we see the remarkable mixture of Greek culture, Arabic and Syrian physical elements and the trappings of Roman government. The various Greek names for Zeus, intertwined with the Hellenized Syro-Phoenician names for the same god and the pure Arab names of Ala, Alailam, Nese, Moamed,<sup>84</sup> next to Greek and Roman names.<sup>85</sup>

We also learn from those inscriptions that autonomous Palmyra that had its own assembly, was also the seat of a representative of the Ceasar. They also describe the whole range of military, political and religious positions of power in its government.

As a Greco-Arabic and Roman city, as an important oasis and trading post in the desert, Palmyra sent out but also attracted commercial escorts and caravan leaders<sup>86</sup> (an important and difficult task), not just traders.

The city whether populated by Hellenized Arabs or Greek colonists alongside Arabs, was divided in tribes, in the way

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<sup>83</sup> C. I. G. Vol. III fasc. 1, n. 4485.

<sup>84</sup> C. I. G. Vol. III fasc. 1, n. 4500. We see here that 500 years before the teaching of Islam by Mohamed and his appearance as a prophet, we find this Arabic name in the Hellenized Palmyra. We even find a Greek Moamed, not of course dating from the Hijri year but from 312 BC and using a Macedonian calendar.

<sup>85</sup> C. I. G. Vol III fasc. 1, n. 4482, 4483, 4490, 4503.

<sup>86</sup> C. I. G. Vol III fasc. 1, n. 4489.

we see in the Greco-Arab cities of Palestine. One such tribe was the Komarene (Χομαρήνοι). The leaders of those tribes were the rich and powerful of the land, establishing dynasties just like the tribal leaders in the Greco-Arab cities of Coele Syria. One known leader was Odaenathus, the husband of Zenobia that we talked about in an earlier chapter. But these tribal leaders were also Hellenized, with the highest level of Greek education.

From everything discussed so far it is understood that Palmyra, which was colonized by the Greeks probably at the time of the Seleucids but definitely also during the Roman empire, the city that was visited by two Roman Emperors, Hadrian and Severus Alexander and that briefly through Zenobia became the capital of half of the global Roman state and especially Asiatic Hellenism, the city that the famous Athenian orator and philosopher Longinus served, presents to us the measure of Hellenism in all of Syria. Because if a city, separated from the rest of the country by the desert, requiring a difficult and dangerous journey to get to it, became Hellenized to such a degree, the rest of the country must have become even more Hellenized and much faster. Especially the part of Syria that was inhabited by Arabs. Trachonitis, Auranitis and Batanaea. All lands belonging to Perea, i.e. Palestine beyond (to the east) the river Jordan.

### *Greek cities in Trachonitis*

The land around Damascus took its name after the two rugged mountains that overlook the city. They rise by the eastern foothills of the mountains Lebanon and Anti-Lebanon. In ancient times it was inhabited by the tribes

related to the Canaanites, the Amorites and the Ammonites. During Roman and early Byzantine times, it had numerous Greek cities. Some established by the Greeks and some by Hellenized Arabs. There were also even more ancient cities built by the ancient people of that land that also became Hellenized. Today a traveler going through the deserted land will be astounded at the sight of numerous and sizable architectural monuments, temples, mansions, hostels and a plethora of inscriptions showing the peak of Hellenism especially during the Roman era.

Most famous of those cities was Pheno or Phena (Φαινώ or Φαινά) in the location where the present-day village of Messima is. In the early Byzantine centuries, it was the seat of an ecclesiastical province.<sup>87</sup> In the inscriptions found we read Greek and Roman names, Greek deities and the city itself is referred to as “*metrokomia*” (a word similar to metropolis) meaning capital of the surrounding small towns and villages. Undeniable proof that in Phena and all of Trachonitis only Greek was spoken, is inscription 4551 that contains the decree of the military commander of the region. In this decree he mentions that the soldiers living there, not being content with the accommodations provided for them, forced the people to provide them shelter in their own homes and also demanded money from them. So, he was ordering that those who committed these actions be reported to the commander and to be punished. But more importantly for our subject, the people of Phena were ordered in the Greek language and told to post this decree publicly so as everyone will be made aware of the order and not fake ignorance.<sup>88</sup>

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<sup>87</sup> C. I. G. Vol. III fasc. 1, n. 4542-4551.

<sup>88</sup> C. I. G. Vol. III fasc. 1, n. 4551.

Another city of Trachonitis was Aire (Αίρη), known only by the inscriptions found in the town of Eszamanain (Εσζαμαναίν) in a location called in Arabic “Two Idols”. From the numerous inscriptions<sup>89</sup> found we learn that the names of the people were once again usually Greek or Roman (Filoneos, Theodoros, Hector, Commodus, Julius Germanus). We also learn that in the city there was a temple of Zeus and a temple for the goddess Luck (θεά Τύχη. Temple called Τυχαίον). As builder (or colonizer) and benefactor of the city is recorded on inscription 4454 Commodus Julius Germanus military tribune,<sup>90</sup> therefore the colony was established during imperial Roman times.

In Aire, as in other cities in Syria and Palestine, whether purely Greek or Hellenized, we also come across Syrian or Hellenized Arabic names. A name worth mentioning (like Moamed earlier) is the name Amer son of Mathaio brother of Onain found on inscription 4559. Amer of course is the Arabic name, Omar.<sup>91</sup> Also on inscription 4558 we read the Semitic name Kaiiam Malhaios. What makes this particularly interesting though is that the name is mentioned on the same inscription in conjunction with the Greek technical terms for the little statues dedicated to goddess Nike and a religious ceremony.

Another Greek city of Trachonitis, known mostly from inscriptions was Zora or Zara (Zora in the inscriptions<sup>92</sup>)

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<sup>89</sup> C. I. G. Vol. III fasc. 1, n. 4555 etc.

<sup>90</sup> C. I. G. Vol. III fasc. 1, n. 4454.

<sup>91</sup> Byzantine chroniclers pronounce the Arabic name Omer as Amer.

<sup>92</sup> The only ancient author that mentions Zara in Palestine is Josephus. He places the city in Perea. He includes it in the Moabit cities but that's because in the 9<sup>th</sup> century BC (this became known after the discovery of the famous inscription in 1869 belonging to Moabit King Mesa) they had extended their rule to Auranitis and at the time of the Maccabees they controlled temporarily Perea. Josephus includes other Perea cities as Moabit. Esivona, Madaba, Pella even though they laid outside

located where the village of Ezra is today.<sup>93</sup> A great number of inscriptions has been found in the ruins of Zora. From them we learn that the city just like Phenā was a “*metrokomia*” (Insc. n. 4561).<sup>94</sup> Here too as in other cities of Trachonitis, Greek or Greco-Roman names mix with local names which are changed to a Greek pronunciation (Aeneas, Vassaios, Oueteranos, Claudianos, Theofanes, Claudius, Sabbinos, Veris, Mathaios, Zenobios, Diomedes, Zevaidis, Varouhos). It seems that this city thrived in the early Byzantine times judging from the number of ecclesiastical ruins, without however any Christian inscription having been found.

Besides these cities, in Trachonitis and on the border with Auranitis many locations with ruins and Greek inscriptions have been discovered but their Greek names have not been revealed by them. Those locations nowadays are called Nedzran, Medzel, Melihit-al-Harir, Rima-el-Liha,<sup>95</sup> Kafer-el-Liha, Eddour.<sup>96</sup> Most of the names on the inscriptions are purely Greek or Roman (Troilos, Maximus, Eudaimon, Gaianos, Antioch, Sabinos, Silouios, Priskos) but there were some Arabic names as well (in Eddour) in Hellenized form (Siedos, Moenas and Amaros). The inscriptions also

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Moabititis. It is very possible that Zora or Zara is the city mentioned by Byzantine geographer Hierocles, author of *Synecdemus* (721, 7), as Ziara. A city different than Dora, which we will discuss further later.

<sup>93</sup> Incorrectly Ezra is identified as the ancient Adra of Perea. Besides what we mention about the identity of Ezra as Zora, it is known that Adra is located in present day Adraa, far to the south of Ezra.

<sup>94</sup> It is unknown when Zora became a Greek colony but that took place before the rule of Emperor Alexander Severus (222-235 AD) as it is mentioned on inscription 4561.

<sup>95</sup> Rima-el-Liha used to be called Reimea was a small town according to a locally found inscription (n. 4590)

<sup>96</sup> Eddour is not the known Palestinian town Dora (Δώρα) but a small town that is pronounced the same way but spelled differently in Greek (Δώρα, insc. n. 4576)



contained the names of various military officers (military tribunes, centurions). It is worth noting that some of the inscriptions found were written in the form of hexameter poetry.<sup>97</sup>

As understood from inscription 4585 from Kafer-el-Liha all these locations were small towns at the time when the Greek language was introduced and became the main one used. Similarly, we will see that a lot of inscriptions in Auranitis were also found not in cities but in small towns. This is

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<sup>97</sup> C. I. G. Vol. III fasc. 1, n 4578, 4579 and 4588.

4578:

Τόνδε νέον οἱ τύμβον ἀνήρ ὄνομαστὸς ἔδειμε  
τρώϊλος ἀρτιεπιῆς φίλος ὀλβιστός τε,  
ὅς ποτε ἡγεμόνος βενεφικιάριος\* κατὰ ἔθος  
ἔπλετο Φοινίκων\*\*... τέ τα δόμοι.  
αὐλῆς τε προπάροιθεν ἐνεύδειν οἶος ἀπ' ἄλλων,  
ὅποτ' ἂν αἴσα ἔλῃσι ὁμοίου θανάτοιο.  
Αἰεὶ χώροισιν ἐνείη.

4579:

Μάξιμος Εὐδαίμων καὶ Γαϊανὸς δύο παῖδες  
ἔκτισαν Ἀντιόχοιο καὶ ἀψίδα τήνδ' ἐπὶ πάσαις  
ἔστασαν, ὄφρα πέλοιτο φίλοι παρὰ πατρὶ θανόντες.

4588:

Κελεστεῖνος πινυτὸς μὲ ἐδίματο τὸδ' ἐνὶ χωρῶ  
αὐτῷ καὶ τοκέεσσι φίλη τ' ἄλοχῳ ἐποίησεν  
νηὸν Πλουτῆι καὶ ἐπεινὴ Φερσεφονεΐη  
ἐσθλῆς ἐκ στρατιῆς. Νῦν δ' οὐδαμῶς εἰμι τάφως πῶ.  
Οὕτω καὶ μείνῃμι πολὺν χρόνον, ἰδ' ἄρα καὶ δι,  
δεξαίμην γηράσκοντας, εὐδαίμονας, τεκνῶσοντας.

\*This Latin word means here not the benefactor but the beneficiary. The soldier who benefited from the general and was relieved from menial military work and simply served the leaders. Bockh criticizes this word for being wrongly interjected amongst Homeric words. But it was an established military term, signifying here the position in society of Troilos.

\*\*Here it has a geographical meaning. In inscriptions and by authors of Roman and Byzantine times, ethnographic names signify place of origin.

indicative of how the use of the Greek language was common in every corner of the country.

An inscription in Nedzran (4578b) talks about a tribe with the name *Manein* that Andronikos Agrippa and Karos Maramatou were members of. It doesn't clarify if it was a city or just a village in that location.

Another small town in Trachonitis was Kyrianthi (Κυριάνθη. Notit. Episcop. 1, 18, 39). Located probably where the present-day town of Kerata or Gerata is located. On the border of Trachonitis and Auranitis, where the modern town of Canouat or Canavat is located, was the town of Canatha. From the many inscriptions<sup>98</sup> that have survived we learn that it had an auditorium in the shape of an amphitheater. It was built “for the sweet fatherland” and we even know how much it cost. The people of the town held pentathlon sporting events and torch races.<sup>99</sup> Finally, this is another city that also had a temple of the Nymphs. When and how Canatha was Hellenized is unknown, but Josephus (who calls this city Cana) writes that it was a Hellenized Arab town. The Arabs of Perea were allies of Cleopatra in the war against Octavian. Near the city of Canatha under the leadership of their general, Athenion, they defeated the Jews under Herod who were allies of Octavian. Canatha laid by the Alsadamon mountain, beyond which to the south was Auranitis.

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<sup>98</sup> C. I. G. Vol. III fasc. 1, n. 4611-4616.

<sup>99</sup> C. I. G. Vol. III fasc. 1, n. 4614.

## *Greek cities of Auranitis*

Aurianitis just like Trachonitis was a country of Coele Syria or Palestine inhabited by Hellenized Arabs during Roman times. Its capital was the city of Bostra. This ancient city of the Amorite Canaanites was captured by the Arabs as we saw earlier during the 1<sup>st</sup> or 2<sup>nd</sup> century BC, who settled the area.<sup>100</sup> In the final years of the Roman republic and in the first years of imperial Rome it maintained its own local rulers. In 184 AD (854 years from the building of Rome)<sup>101</sup> it was captured by Emperor Trajan and the local state dissolved. He completely rebuilt the city, renamed it Nova Traiana Bostra and stationed there the 3<sup>rd</sup> legion (Cyrenaica). It became a Roman colony, which practically meant a Greek colony at the time of Alexander Severus (222-255 AD) and since then the city's official name was seen on its coins "Nova Traiana Alexandrina colonia Bostra".<sup>102</sup>

But long before this colonization, already from the time of the Arab settlement that so easily joined Greek civilization, but definitely from the time of Trajan, Bostra along with prosperity and progress it also progressed within Hellenism. This is demonstrated by the Greek inscriptions that survive from that era. By the middle of the 3<sup>rd</sup> century AD it was one of the most important centers of Christianity in Palestine. It had a bishop that wrote lectures in Greek. At the same time on the imperial throne of Rome rose a man

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<sup>100</sup> The name Auranitis (Hauran) possibly comes from the Hebrew *hour=cave* because of the hollowed-out caves on the mountains.

<sup>101</sup> This is the beginning year of the calendar of Bostra according to coins and inscriptions.

<sup>102</sup> Roman imperial coins of Bostra exist since the time of Antoninus Pius (138-160 AD) and coins as an autonomous city from the time of Elagabalus (218-222 AD) the predecessor of Alexander Severus.

from Bostra or its surrounding area, Phillip the Arab (244-249). The city became a “*metropolis*” (a political meaning during imperial Roman times) and at the same time the Church of Bostra became Metropolis of Arabia. In the 4<sup>th</sup> century Bostra was a large city (*ingens civitas*, according to Ammianus Marcellinus), important due to its commercial and strategic location to the rest of the Arab populated country. The numerous surviving inscriptions from Bostra<sup>103</sup> begin in the year 104 AD and end around the years that Hadrian reigned. They contain mostly Greek and Greco-Roman names (Vassos, Aurelian, Domitician) and talk about the city’s colonization, the building of temples and walls. There are also tombstones.

These inscriptions and the fact that Bostra was a colony signify that Hellenism, Greek life and the Greek language prevailed in this city. But we also have two undeniable pieces of evidence of this. Firstly, as it was mentioned earlier, by the middle of the 3<sup>rd</sup> century AD Bostra was a very important center of Christianity and the Christian Church in Greco-Arab Palestine. At the same time Bishop of Bostra was Beryl, a contemporary of Origen. He wrote books and letters in Greek. His works were discovered by Eusebius in the library of Jerusalem that was founded around the end of the 2<sup>nd</sup> century AD by then Bishop Alexander of Cappadocia. Eusebius used them in his books on ecclesiastical history.<sup>104</sup> He also mentions that there were documents that contained discussions between Beryl and Origen on the subject of Beryl’s new beliefs and two of his lectures. Beryl’s lectures were in Greek which means that Greek was the only language spoken in Bostra.

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<sup>103</sup> C. I. G. Vol. III fasc. 1, n. 4644-4654.

<sup>104</sup> Eusebius, Ecclesiastical History, b. 6.

The other piece of evidence is the letter that Emperor Julian wrote to the people of Bostra in a colorful Greek language. The letter survives to this day. It was sent from Antioch on August 1st 362 AD and urged the assembly of Bostra, especially the Greeks (meaning the followers of the old religion) not to disrupt religious peace by attacking the Galilees (meaning the Christians). In the letter he also accuses the Christian clergy and the Archbishop of Bostra, Titus, based on reports that “they urged the Christians, who were equal in numbers to the Greeks, towards violence”.<sup>105</sup>

As for the coins of Bostra, the city is called a colony (Colonia) and they feature a camel or an Arab sitting on a camel. But this just indicative of the great commercial importance and the extensive trading that the Greek city of Palestine had through the great trading route that in the 7<sup>th</sup> century AD stretched from Bostra to Mecca in Arabia (C. Ritter, *Vergleichende Erdkunde der Sina-Halbinsel, von Palaestina und Syrien* 2 Band (Asien 8b) Berlin, 1850 p. 975).

Close to Bostra, in a town called El-Kurege a Greek inscription (4643) was found that talks about a lake or a water tank built in 204 AD thanks to a donation by Cornelianus. In the same location another inscription (4644b) on a tombstone we read the name Amathalte.<sup>106</sup>

Another interesting city in Auranitis is Phlippopolis or Philippopolis, named after Emperor Philip the Arab who is supposed to have built it. The name of the city was read on an inscription found near Bostra, in a location called

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<sup>105</sup> Julian emp. Letters let. 52, publ. Hertlein p. 559-562.

<sup>106</sup> Kurege or El-Kurege supposedly is the town of Herus, belonging to the metropolis of Bostra, that is mentioned in Notit. Episcop. 1036.

Erman.<sup>107</sup> In the inscriptions from Philippopolis (4635-4639) which are from tombstones, we simply read Greco-Roman and local (possibly Arabic) names but constructed with a Greek pronunciation (Gantos, Solimos, Domitianus, Themallos, Drakountios Themallou).

There are many locations in Auranitis with ancient Greek ruins and Greek inscriptions that are significant for the history of Hellenism in this country. From these locations the most significant is the village of Suveida, seat of the Seich of the Druze. It has majestic ruins of various monuments of Greek architectural art. Several inscriptions were found in these ruins (n. 4616-4622). On 4616 in particular there is mention of the building of a temple to the nymphs and an aqueduct. From this most ancient of all Greek inscriptions in Trachonitis and Auranitis we learn that the unknown to us city in the location of Suveida existed as a Greek city already from the time of Emperor Nerva (96-98 AD). That is at least 8 years before Bostra surrendered and was occupied by Trajan's army.

On another inscription (n. 4617) there is mention "*of a building and workshops built by representatives of the tribe of Aitain*". Here the name of the tribe as in the previously mentioned names of the tribes of Komarene in Palmyra and Manein in Nedzran, should be taken as meaning an Arab tribe that is Hellenized. Tribal division according to the Arabs themselves. But on inscription number 4618 there is another tribe mentioned in this location. The tribe of *Alexandreon*.

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<sup>107</sup> 4635: «Γάντος Σολύγου βουλευτής Φιλιππουπόλεως οικόδομησεν τόδε μνημα ἔτι 690 ἀπὸ κτίσεως Ρώμης», ἤτοι 189 μ.Χ.

*«Αιλίω Ούλιανῶ ἀπὸ φυλῆς Ἀλεξανδρέων διὰ χάριν ἀνδρῶν  
πραγματευτῶν κητέων χιλιάρχω λεγεῶνος  
τεσσαρεσκαίδεκάτης Γεμίνης».*

The inscription talks about the honoring of the military tribune Ailio Uliano by including him as one of its members. But what does it mean tribe of Alexandreion? The name is not Arabic. But that doesn't preclude us to assume that it's an Arab-Greek tribe that took its name from someone named Alexander. The same inscription mentions that they were fish (κητέων) traders, probably meaning the tribe was a sort of trading guild. Others interpreted the word κητέων, as an ethnic name of the otherwise unknown ancient name of the city. The one thing that matters, as with the study of all these inscriptions, is that it teaches us that in Soveida there was a large and important center of Greek life and civilization and of commerce. It also indicates the great strength and progress of Hellenism in Auranitis and that here as in other places next to the pure Greek population there was also a local Arab Hellenized people. Next to the Greek names on inscriptions we can read Arab names Hellenized in their pronunciation,<sup>108</sup> showcasing the Greek character of the city laying below.<sup>109</sup>

Another location in Auranitis with ruins and inscriptions from the Greek era is the present village of Um-ez-Zeitun.

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<sup>108</sup> C. I. G. Vol. III fasc. 1, n. 4620 : «Ὀδαίνατος Ἀνήλου ὠκόδομησέ  
την στήλην Χαμιάτη τῆ αὐτοῦ γυναικί» and 4621: «Αἰνείας χιλίαρχος  
ἔκτισε τὸ μνημα ἐνθάδε κεῖται Ἐλπίδιος υἱὸς ἐμὸς ἐτῶν ιβ'»

<sup>109</sup> C. I. G. Vol. III fasc. 1, n. 4622:

«Χαῖρε, καλή, πασῶν προφερεστάτη εἵνεκα πάντων  
σεμνοτάτη συνόμευνε, καλῶν ὑπόδειγμα φιλανδρῶν  
Φλαυία, τῶν χαρίτων τουνομα κτησάμενη  
εἰκόνα σῆς ἀρετῆς παιδὰς γαμέτη προλιποῦσα».

From those inscriptions (n. 4591-4594) 4591<sup>110</sup> and 4592<sup>111</sup> tell us that there used to be a small town, not a city. In 4591 there is mention of the unusual name Uprokanos. Some think that is a name while others interpret it as the title of an office in Auranitis.

More inscriptions were found in El-Hait (n. 4595-4597). Based on them we do not know the name of the city or town lying underneath. Here too Greek names are found next to non-Greek but Hellenized in their pronunciation. (Haris, Helidon, Helakleidis, Monimos, Tafalos, Evouros, Nuairos, Uaros). There is also mention of temples, temple treasuries etc.<sup>112</sup>

Ruins and writings were also found in Sevva, one of the main Druze settlements. The interesting part here is that inscriptions 4602 and 4603 talk about tribes but those are described not by names but by numbers.

Important location for ancient Greek findings in Auranitis is the small town of Aatil. Of the surviving architectural monuments, the most important are the remains of two temples. One has completely collapsed and is in ruins. The other stands out for its unique building style and its columns in the Corinthian style. The inscriptions are notable for their calligraphy and from one of them (n. 4608) we learn that it was built at the time of Emperor Antoninus Pius in 161 AD. Its builder was Uadilos Mathaiou of Uadilo. On another

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<sup>110</sup> «Αγαθή τύχη. Τὸ κοινὸν τῆς κόμης καὶ τοῦ θεοῦ τὴν ἱεράν καλύβην ἔκτισε διὰ Οὐλπίου Καλλιανοῦ Οὐπροκάνου καὶ Αὐλοῦ τοῦ βουλευτοῦ καὶ Νεγρεινοῦ Μαρεῖνου Οὐιπρανικοῦ προνοητοῦ».

<sup>111</sup> «Ὑπὲρ σωτηρίας καὶ νίκης τοῦ Κυρίου ἡμῶν αὐτοκρατόρος Καίσαρος... τοῦ κοινοῦ τῆς κόμης».

<sup>112</sup> 4595: «Ἐτους Κυρίου ἡμῶν... Εὐτυχῆς Ἔβουρος Νοαίρου καὶ Οὐάρος Χάρητος Χελιδόνος ἱεροταμίαι τὴν οἰκοδομὴν ἀνήγειραν ἐξ ἱερατικῶν ἐπὶ Ἡρακλείδου Χάρητος στρατηγοῦ» and 4596: «Μόνιμος Ταφάλου ἐπιμελητῆς ἐπισκευῆς θύρας θεοῦ ἐκ τῶν ἰδίων».



inscription (n. 4609) there is mention of the Hellenized Arab deity Theandriou<sup>113</sup> as a “fatherland god” to whom Julius Proklos built a temple with his own money “for the salvation and victory of our Emperor Marcus Aurelius Antoninus”.

Also notable is inscription number 4611. In it there is mention of Zenodorus, brother of Valentinian Maximus. The name Zenodorus reminds us of the infamous bandit but also tetrarch, contemporary of Octavian and Herod, who ruled the land between Galilee and Trachonitis. From all these findings it is possible that a city or town used to stand where the town of Aatil is today. The name Zenodorus was not common amongst the Greeks. But its mention in this inscription in addition to the name of Zenodorus the tetrarch indicates that it was a common local name in Trachonitis and Auranitis. It is also known that after the death of Zenodorus his house continued to rule part of the land between mount Trachon, Galilee and Trachonitis.<sup>114</sup>

Other locations with Greek ruins and inscriptions are the towns of Evre (n. 4624), Zaple (n. 4629 where there is mention of a transaction deed deposited in the archives) and Zahavet-el-Kudr (n. 4630).

An important location regarding Greek inscriptions is the town of Salhad which is supposedly located on the site of the ancient Salha near the border of Batanaea, known from the Old Testament. It seems that in the Hellenistic and Roman times it was colonized by the Greeks. In the

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<sup>113</sup> The name of the Arabic or Greco-Arab deity is passed on to us as Theandritis or Theandretis. Another Arabic deity, especially popular in Bostra, was Dionysus Dousaris. Known from the coins of the city and to whom the Dousarioi or Dousaria (Ludi Dusaria) games were dedicated.

<sup>114</sup> Josephus, *Jewish Antiquities*, L, 11, 4.

inscriptions found there (n. 4638-42) there are mentioned Greek and Greco-Roman names (Alexander, Andromahos, Ualis, Vasis, Uistrianos) along with local names (Faiskos, Soleos, Samsios, Soedos).

More Greek writing has been found in the town of Smerin. The ancient name of the city there was Philikos (n. 4656). A Greek inscription has been found in the valley between Zora and Bostra. There we see the names Saveinos, Gaios, Theodoros and Vagai. Also, in the town of Daar (n. 4658) we read the names Auitos, Sanamu, and Gedaronis in an inscription that gives them credit for the building.

In the town of Nahita, between Bostra and Adras, on inscription 4659 there was mention of the Arab-Greek name Masalemos Iavu.

The town of Siha seems to be located on the site of ancient Sakkaia. According to Ptolemy it laid on the border of Auranitis and Batanaea. There, inscriptions 4598 to 4601 were found. The first two were tombstones with Homeric verses. In these inscriptions it is worth noting the influence of eastern ideas on Greek culture. Also, they make clear that the city was a colony.

So far regarding Greek inscriptions we referenced only the great Corpus Inscriptionum Graecarum of Bockh. But since it was first published many other books about the inscriptions of Syria and Palestine have been published that have a lot to teach us about the prevailing of Hellenism in those countries. Especially about the Hellenization of the Arabs of Syria before Christianity.<sup>115</sup>

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<sup>115</sup> The most important of these books in chronological order are: 1) Wetzstein, *Reisebericht über Hauran und Trachonen*. Berlin 1860. In this book an additional 266 new inscriptions were published. 2) Richard Burton *Une plore Syria (an additional 25 inscriptions)*, 1872 3) Moritz

From these books and especially from the one by Rene Dussaud we learn the very important fact that the Arab tribe of Safatin (or Sabatin according to Josephus) that migrated to Syria in the 1<sup>st</sup> century BC and settled on the eastern slopes of the mountain of Auranitis (Drebel-el-Hauran) was Hellenized and changed the names of their gods to Greek. Their main god was renamed Zeus Sabatin. The Arab goddess al-Lat (feminine version of Allah or according to Herodotus, Urania of the Arabs) became Athena etc. Dussaud also discovered in their land a significant number of bilingual inscriptions (Greek and Arabic) and trilingual (Greek, Arabic and Aramaic) from which he concluded that all three of these languages were spoken in Auranitis in Roman times.

### *Greek cities in Batanaea*

In Batanaea of Palestine which included in its greater expansion, Judea and Iturea, there were the Greek cities of Hippos on the shores of lake Tiberias and Gadara nearby, both clearly called Greek cities by Josephus.<sup>116</sup> From the latter the whole surrounding area took the name Gadaris.<sup>117</sup> Nevertheless, the name Gadara is not Greek. The Greek city

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Sobernheim. Palmyrenische Inschriften (an additional 25 inscriptions), 1905 and 4) the already mentioned book of Rene Dussand, *Les Arabes en Syrie avant l' Islam*. Paris 1907.

<sup>116</sup> Josephus, *Jewish Antiquities*, L, 11, 4. «Γάζα γὰρ καὶ Γάδαρα καὶ Ἴππος Ἑλληνίδες εἰσὶ πόλεις». The name Hippos from which the surrounding area took its name is considered Phoenician (meaning fort or harbor). It appears that a Phoenician fort was located in the position where later on a Greek city was built. The Greeks did not give it a new name thinking the name was Greek.

<sup>117</sup> It appears that Strabo mistakes Gadara of Perea with Gazara on the Philistine coast (even more ancient Gat)

built on top of the previously unknown Canaanite town or village was called Seleucia (probably named after Seleucus Nicator) and renamed Antioch probably by Antiochus III the Great after he retook the city from Ptolemy V Epiphanes. But under Antiochus's Diadochi and during the wars between the Greeks of Syria and the Jews, the city suffered a lot and was reduced to a small town by the time Pompey (64 BC) freed Demetrius and gave the city to him. At that time, it took back its old name of Gadara with which it became famous in the coming years. According to Josephus it became "a powerful metropolis of Perea" with its name on imperial coins for 250 years, from Augustus to Gordian.

The pure Greek character of the city is not proven only by Josephus's testimony but also by the majestic ruins of the city and the Greek inscriptions found in the present-day town of Om-Kes that is on the same location. Gadara was the home of the Epicurean philosopher Philodemus, the orator Theodore a contemporary of Strabo, the poet Meleager (who in a beautiful poem praises Hellenism in his country by saying that his country is Athens or Attica living in Gadara. Or in other words that Gadara in Syria was as Greek as Athens and Attica.) and the famous Cynic satirist Menippus. Characteristic feature of the prevalent use of the Greek language in Gadara is the information provided by Eunapius in the 5<sup>th</sup> century AD that the two hot springs near the city were named Eros and Anti-Eros.

The evangelist Mark writes that Jesus Christ visited the land of Gadara. Whereas evangelist Matthew in his version of the story he describes it as the land of Gerasa. Gerasa was a Macedonian town populated by veterans of Alexander's campaign. Tradition says that it got its name because of the old people that lived there. This city was one of the biggest and most remarkable cities of the Greco-Roman world. Its

ruins lay in present-day Dzirah and include part of the city walls, a temple of Zeus of which 150-200 columns survive an amphitheater etc.<sup>118</sup> Only a few ancient writers mention it and not in a way that describes its glory as its ruins do. Ammianus Marcellinus who wrote in the middle of the 4<sup>th</sup> century AD, calls Gerasa as one of the big cities of Arabia (Arabia meaning Palestine). From its Greek coins it seems that protector goddess of the city was Artemis and Tihi (Τύχη-Luck) of Gerasa. The most ancient of the numerous Greek inscriptions are from the time of Antoninus Pius (138-160 AD) and in those are mentioned the names of the gods Zeus and Helios (Sun) and the names of men Amarathos, Demetrios and Davidiolos.

Another Greek city of Batanaea and in particular of the area of Galaaditis, was Pella of Perea, a short distance from the east bank of the Jordan river. According to tradition it was built by Alexander during his march through Syria and first settled by veterans of his army.<sup>119</sup> That's why it was given the name of the capital of Macedonia. The city is mentioned by Polybius in the history of the Palestinian campaign of Antioch the Great (218 BC). As for its importance in the history of Hellenism in Palestine, it will be discussed later in this book.

Another Hellenistic city in Batanaea that bears a Macedonian name was Dion. It belonged to the federation of Greek cities in northern Palestine known as Dekapolis.

Another Greek city was Adra. Greek inscriptions have survived in the present-day location with the name Edari or Draa. In one of the inscriptions (n. 4658) the names Auitos Sanamu and Gedaranis are mentioned.

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<sup>118</sup> C. I. G. Vol. III fasc. 1, n. 4661-4666.

<sup>119</sup> Karl. Ritter p. 1025.

In Batanaea, on the border between Galaaditis and Gaulanitis<sup>120</sup> was Capitolias. The history of this city and its exact location are completely unknown. The name shows that it was a Roman colony. This fact and that it belonged to the federation of Decapolis can be considered proof of the Greek character of this city.

Part of Decapolis was also Avida,<sup>121</sup> usually called Abila. A different town than the Abila or Abilene of Lysanias.<sup>122</sup> Monuments have been discovered near the Anti-Lebanon mountain by the river Barrada. It is possible that this is the city that Pliny mentions as Ambola as one of the cities in Trachonitis.<sup>123</sup> Eusebius mentions a second city with the name Abelan and Hieronymus calls this second city Abila the wine bearer. But Pliny along with Ambola mentions another city called Ambeloessa (Ἀμπελόεσσα=The one with many vines) in Trachonitis. Considering Eusebius's *Abila the wine bearer* and *Abila vini fetrilis* of Hieronymus one can suppose that it is not the name of a different city but just an adjective of Abila. However, in Pliny's list of cities there is a third city called Arca that is listed between them (Ambola, Arca, Ambeloessa) which does not allow for such an interpretation. In any case Pliny's Ambeloessa, either in Trachonitis or Batanaea is not known from anywhere else, but its Greek name reveals the character of the city.

Greek city was also Julias, named after Caesar's daughter. A city above lake Tiberias on the east bank of the river

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<sup>120</sup> Editor's note: present day Golan heights.

<sup>121</sup> Ptolemy E, 15,22.

<sup>122</sup> Lysanias, son of one Ptolemy son of Mennaeus, one of the bandit rulers of Coele Syria. Josephus, Jewish Antiquities, N, 13, 3 and O, 10,1.

<sup>123</sup> Pliny extends the borders of Trachonitis into Batanaea.

Jordan, in the location of the old Bethsaida.<sup>124</sup> According to Josephus the rule of Phillip was limited around the river Jordan and lake Tiberias, therefore it could not include Bethsaida of Galilee.<sup>125</sup> Pliny's writing of "Jordanes in lacum se funit amoenis circumceptum oppidis ab oriente Juliade et Hippo" proves that Julia was located on the east bank of the river Jordan.<sup>126</sup> Only a few ruins have survived and no inscriptions. But as a city built in Roman times with its Greek characteristics in the middle of other Greek cities, it can safely be considered Greek.

In Gaulanitis of Batanaea laid the Greek city Seleucia, close to lake Samehonitis (Present-day Hula valley). Josephus in the same passage also uses a second name for the lake, the Greek name Daphne.

Finally, before we leave Batanaea and move on to Perea we need to mention the two farthest apart edges of this land with two cities with purely Greek names. At the northernmost edge is the city of Batanaea Paniada or Caesarea Philip Paniada and at the southernmost edge is the city of Philadelphia.

Caesarea was called Paneas or Panias because before the city was built in its location was a cave that served as a temple of Pan. Which means that the city was built on Greek

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<sup>124</sup> This Bethsaida on the east bank of the river Jordan must not be confused with the one north of Capernaum on the west bank of lake Tiberias. The confusion between the two names and two locations created problems for geographers until they were clarified. Bethsaida means place of fish, in other words place of fishing which could be given in many places. In the Gospels there is no clear clarification between the two.

<sup>125</sup> Josephus, *Jewish Antiquities*, R, 4, 6.

<sup>126</sup> Of course, this Julias is not the same as the Julias that Herod (son of Herod the Great) built. Formerly known as Bitharamtha (according to Josephus). Julias of Galilee is also mentioned by Ptolemy. It is also different than Libias, also known as Julias by the Dead Sea.

land, where the worship of Greek deities took place. Pan became the patron deity of the city that was later built. It was built by the son of the great Herod Philip, tetrarch of the Transjordan lands of northern Palestine, in the beginning of the 1<sup>st</sup> century AD. A time when Palestine kept receiving Greek colonists. Greek inscriptions inside the temple of Pan near the source of the river Jordan prove that in Caesarea the worship of Pan was widespread and in conjunction with Zeus (another name for Zeus is Dias) he was called Diopan. Along with Pan the Greek goddess Nemesis and Pan's favorite Iho (Ἠχώ=Echo) were also worshipped.<sup>127</sup>

Philadelphia, built by Ptolemy Philadelphus King of Egypt (285-247 BC) was built during his temporary conquest of Palestine in place of the once Ammonite city Rabbath-Ammon. A name which survived partially in a Hellenized form as Rabbatamana (Polybius E, 71) or simply Ramma (According to Eusebius and Hieronymus) or Ammana (according to Stephanus of Byzantium "prominent city formerly known as Ammana or Astarti was Philadelphia of Ptolemy Philadelphus"). Strabo talking generally about the mixture of races inhabiting Judea, he includes Philadelphia. Talking about Egyptian nations and Arabs and Phoenicians living in Galilee in the cities of Ierakounta, Philadelphia and Samaria. From his words we could assume that at least at his time the city was not a purely Greek one. However, his writings must not be interpreted to the letter. As precarious as his theory about Egyptian nations living in Philadelphia is, he also mentions that "*They were mulatto. The belief of the people of the temple of Jerusalem was that the ancestors of the Jews were Egyptians*". Also, it would be wrong to assume that a city built by Ptolemy did not have Greek

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<sup>127</sup> C. I. G. Vol. III fasc. 1, n. 4537-4539.



inhabitants who came from Egypt or elsewhere. The fact that in the 2<sup>nd</sup> century AD Philadelphia under Ptolemy is included in the federation of Greek cities called Decapolis of Perea and/or Coele Syria shows that the Greek element was prevalent in the city. This is also proven by the fact that the city was autonomous and that on its coins it was written “*Philadelphia of Coele Syria*”. Kiepert considers Philadelphia a Greek colony (Alt. Geogr. p. 181). The city is the last in the south of Batanaea and Galaaditis and the most southern of all the cities of Decapolis. To the west is the land of Perea that partially extends to the east bank of the river Jordan, partially to the east bank of the Dead Sea, from Pella and Galaaditis to Mahaira.

But before we move on to Perea it is necessary to say a few things about the noteworthy federation of Greek cities in the outer Palestinian lands (Trachonitis, Auranitis, Batanaea). That federation was Decapolis.

### *Decapolis (Decapolitana regio)*

Decapolis was made up of Greek cities, at first apparently ten. Pliny (V. 72,16) gives us their names: Damascus, Philadelphia, Rafana, Scythopolis (formerly known as Nesa), Gadara, Hippos, Dion, Pella, Gerasa, Canatha. But that number seems to have changed often and not limited to ten. As in all federations the name was given at first to the initial nucleus of cities or simply because it was a sacred number (like the number 12 for the Achaean league, the Ionian and Aeolian confederations of Greek cities in Asia Minor, the same number even for the Etruscan federation).

Same for Decapolis of Palestine. According to Ptolemy it had double the number of cities. In his book (E', 15, 22-23) the listed cities of Decapolis were: 1) Heliopolis, 2) Abila Lysaniou, 3) Soana, 4) Ina, 5) Damascus, 6) Samulis, 7) Abida (or Abila of Trachonitis of Batanaea, 8) Hippos, 9) Capitolias, 10) Gadara, 11) Adra, 12) Scythopolis, 13) Gerasa, 14) Pella, 15) Dion, 16) Gadara, 17) Philadelpihia, 18) Canatha. Missing from this list is Raphana that is mentioned by Pliny, but Ptolemy includes it in the cities of upper Syria (E', 15, 16). This can be an indication that in Decapolis just like in the Achaean and Aetolian leagues, distant cities or even cities separated by other cities' territories from the center of the federation could become members.

Pliny implies (v. 74, 16) that external reasons contributed to the formation of this federation. Just like kingdoms (*regnum in instar*) they are besieged by the tetrarchies (*intercurtant cinguntque has urbes*). When we consider that the rulers of the tetrarchies who had Greek names and were most probably Greek, sometimes became bandits or collaborated with predatory desert tribes, we can understand the need that these cities felt to maintain their autonomy and their freedom against these tetrarchs for their security against these predatory raids. We will discuss later specifically the relations of the autonomous cities in Syria, Palestine, Mesopotamia and elsewhere with the local rulers.

Another reason for this formation by the Greek cities was most probably the need for a united defense against the most burdensome enemy of the Greek cities of Palestine, the Jews, for whom these Greek cities were always like a nail in their eye. The Jews not only sought by violence to subjugate them to their state, when their state existed, but also to oppress them. Often causing bloody acts of vengeance against them from Damascus all the way to

Gadara and Gerasa. They also exposed the Greek cities against the Romans, either by luring some of them or by violence including them to their plots against the regime.

As for the internal system of organization of the federation of Decapolis we know almost nothing. Pliny (V. 74, 16) writes “eadem observant” meaning “they follow these”. But we don’t know if it should be interpreted “following the state institutions” or “the cities were connected to each other by requirement of mutual assistance”.

Putting aside these details, for our subject the important thing is that in Palestine and in this case in just a part of Palestine, there were autonomous Greek cities that formed a system of a federation that lasted for centuries (when the federation was formed is unknown but it lasted for the entire 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> centuries) and increased the power of Hellenism in northern Palestine (mostly in the Transjordan area). When Kiepert (Alt. Geogr.) calls Decapolis and the rest of the cities in northern Palestine *more than half-Greek* (mehr als halbgriechische) he means of course that against the vast majority there were also non-Greek minorities. But those minorities were not only under the domination of the cultural influence of Hellenism. They were also continually being absorbed into Hellenism and into Christianity who came through Hellenism.

### *Greek cities of Perea Proper*

In Perea proper, not far from the eastern shore of the Dead Sea laid the Greek city Callirhoe in what is assumed to be

Lasi or Lisi today,<sup>128</sup> near a hot spring also called Callirhoe.<sup>129</sup> Because of this spring the city was initially called Antioch on Callirhoe (on coins it is seen as “Antiocheans on Callirhoe”). Stephanus of Byzantium, this 8th Antioch he calls it “on lake Callirhoe”. Ptolemy mentions a city named Callirhoe on the land east of the river Jordan. Finally, Josephus also mentions Callirhoe.

Another, it seems, Greek city was Livias or Julias, confused with Callirhoe. It was located more to the north on the east bank of the Jordan. It was called that by Herod in honor of Libia wife of Augustus who was also known as Julia.

Two cities of Perea that were in close proximity to each other were Midaiba or Midaba (modern Madaba) and Esibon (Heshbon in Hebrew, Εσιβών in Greek). Of course, they were not Greek. But they offer proof of the expansion of Greek letters in this corner of Palestine as well. Midaba was also the seat of a bishop (Hierocles Synecdemus 722, 6). At the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century the only surviving Greek geographical table from antiquity or early Byzantine era was discovered, not on parchment or paper, but on stone. It was in the Greek language and through told the geographic history of Palestine.

Esibon’s name appears in Greek in coins (Ησεβώ) from the time of the reign of Nero. It too became the seat of a bishop under the name Esebo (Not. Episc. 1, 1022).

To the south of Perea was Moabitis (or Moab) which included the city Areopolis. The name of the city derives from the old Moabit city of Ar (Ar Moab) and changed via

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<sup>128</sup> Hieronymi quaestiones Gènes. 10, 19. « Lisa, quae nunc Callirrhoe dicitur, ubi aquae calidae prorumpentes in mare mortuum defluunt ».

<sup>129</sup> Plin. Hist. Nat. V 72. « Calidus fons medicae salubritatis aquarium gloriam ipso nomine praeferens ».

Hellenism to the city of Areopolis.<sup>130</sup> How the name from Hebrew became Greek and if the city changed its name or was a new Greek construction, it is unknown. We only know that in Christian times it was the seat of a bishop.

In Moabitis according to Ptolemy (V. 17, 5) there was also the city called Harakoma, or Harakmoba according to Stephanus of Byzantium also known as Movou Harax or Petra (present Kiran). About this city it is known that it became the capital of Moabitis and the seat of an archbishop. In the middle of the 4<sup>th</sup> century, it was destroyed by an earthquake. About this city we will be able to say more when we talk about Jerusalem at the time of the Crusades since it was inhabited by many Orthodox people.

### *Petraea Arabia*

After Moabitis to the south lays Petraea Arabia. Here, not Greek, but with a strong Greek influence was the capital Petra. It had a Greek name which it gave to all northern Arabia.<sup>131</sup> Petra was not a Greek city because it was not a Greek colony. But it too was heavily influenced by Greek culture and the Greek language was the one spoken there as evidenced by the Greek inscriptions carved into the rock of the temples. The coins that the city minted have the Greek inscriptions “Petra Metropolis” “Hadrian Petra Metropolis”. The name Hadrian is in honor of Emperor

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<sup>130</sup> Hieronym, dans Josué ch. 15 : « Huius (Mohabitidis) Metropolis civitas Ar, quae hodie ex Hebraeo et Graeco sermon composita Areopolis nuncupatur, non, ut, plerique existimant quod Ἀρειος, id est Martis, civitas sit ».

<sup>131</sup> Petraea Arabia does not mean rocky Arabia as some ignorant people say. It means Arabia of Petra or having Petra as the capital.

Hadrian, not because it was colonized by him but because it was benefited by him. That the Greek language was very widespread in Petra is also shown by a tombstone inscription in poetic style found in Rome on the grave of a man from Petra who had gone there to study law and died at the young age of 27.<sup>132</sup>

That Petraea Arabia, the land of Edomites and Nabataeans fell so much to the influence of Hellenism is proven by Pliny's mentioning in the country of three Greek cities. Larisa, Arethusa and Chalcis which were destroyed by the frequent wars (Pliny VI, 159-160 "Graeca oppida Arethusa, Larisa, Chalcis deleta variis belis"). But Pliny mentions (VI, 159) another Greek city called Ampelomi built by colonists from Miletus.

A city built by Miletians in Arabia goes back in history to the pre-Macedonian years, at the time of the peak of Miletus, before the Persian wars. At that time the Miletians extended their trade to the interior of Scythia and to the edge of the Caucasus and according to a theory all the way to central Asia. They had a strong trading position in Egypt where they also built the colony of Naucratis. It is not strange then that the Miletians that were conducting so much trade also established themselves in Near Arabia. This fact is important to the subject of this book because northern Arabia i.e. Petraea Arabia that extended to the Red Sea, was known to the Greeks and received Greek colonists long before the Hellenistic times. During Hellenistic times as it

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<sup>132</sup> C. I. G. Vol. III fasc. 1:

«Αριανός μὲν μοὶ ὄνομα, ζαθέη δὲ μὲ Πέτρῃ  
γαίης Ἀραβίης γείνατο μητρόπολις  
Αὐσονίων δ' ἡμερτὴ ἀπηνέγκατο τιμὴ  
θεσμῶν καὶ γλυκερῆς ἔρωτος ἔγωγε πάτρης.  
Ἐβδόματον (δὲ μ' ἄγοντα) καὶ εἰκοστὸν λυκάβαντα  
Νοῦσος πανδαμάτειρ ἤρπασ' εἰς Αἶδην».

was located between Egypt of the Ptolemies and Syria of the Seleucids, it succumbed greatly to the cultural influence of Hellenism. This influence produced men that are recorded in the history of Greek letters and Greek education and about whom we will talk more later. It is also connected with the incredible by many aspects, complete Hellenization of the Arabs of Palestine.<sup>133</sup>

So far from what we've seen about Coele Syria and the Transjordan Palestine it is clear that the Arab tribes that settled in Syria and Palestine, from Damascus to Moabitis (or Moab) and Palmyra in the 1<sup>st</sup> and maybe even the 2<sup>nd</sup> century BC, were completely Hellenized. Of course, we are talking of those who abandoned the nomadic life of the desert and settled in or near cities and mixed with their Greek inhabitants. This happened in Coele Syria and the lands where the Arabs primarily settled in Transjordan Palestine, Trachonitis, Auranitis and Batanaea (with the broad sense of the word). The wonderful Greek character of cities where the mixing of Arabs and Greeks happened such as Gadara, Gerasa and especially Bostra is proof of this. But even outside the cities, in all the land, Greek was spoken and was possibly the only language spoken. Proof of that is the huge number of Greek inscriptions, not just in cities but in small towns too. This is remarkable because possibly in no other Greek land are so many inscriptions found in small towns. Towns and villages and metropolises compete for the highest number of them. These inscriptions are not just official writings on monuments by Hellenized rulers which can also be found in non-Hellenized countries such as Ethiopia. These writings were made by people of all classes and professions (military men, farmers, workers, slaves)

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<sup>133</sup> In Petraea Arabia or Edom there was also a city called Bostra. It is mentioned here just so that there is no confusion with Bostra of Auranitis.

and they had to do not only with public but also private life events. Even the public announcements of city laws were published in Greek in prominent places for all to read.

The Arab element via the Hellenized names of men, gods and public events next to Greco-Roman names is heavily represented in these inscriptions. This use of Arabic names in the Greek language what else does it mean but their full assimilation? If no monument was left by the Arab element and everything that had survived was purely Greek without Arabo-Greek names, it would be possible to say that the Arab element took a passive stance against Hellenism and that the entire Greek civilization of these Palestinian lands was the work of Greeks only. But these inscriptions disprove this and instead show conclusively that in these lands Hellenism comprised of the Greek colonists plus the Arab plus any local non-Jewish element (**Jews would adopt features of the Greek culture but would not become Hellenized**).

We must also add this as worth noting. In Palestine and completely in Syria the Arab element became Hellenized faster and more completely than the Aramaic. That's because it was an element rather pliable and receptive to cultural assimilation by what represented intellectual education. That's why not only the cities became Greek but also the rulers of the territories between the cities. Ptolemy son of Mennaeus, Lysanias I & II, Archelaos, Theodoros son of Zeno, Zenodorus, they all passed their names on to us and on their coins.<sup>134</sup> All bearing Greek names. Even the ruler of Damascus from Petraea Arabia (85-64 BC) Aretas II or III is called on his coins as Philhellene King Aretas. In the years before the spreading of Christianity he had

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<sup>134</sup> From these coins it is evidenced that these tetrarchs were also high priests of the deities worshipped in their territories.



promoted Hellenism in Transjordan Palestine, where many great men in the history of Greek letters came from. The final victory of Christianity rather supported the creation east of the Jordan river in Palestine of a Christian Greek population.

But let's move on to Palestine to the west of the river Jordan, lake Tiberias and the Dead Sea.

### *Palestine west of the river Jordan*

#### *Galilee*

In Galilee, the northernmost part of Palestine west of the Jordan river, there are not as many Greek cities mentioned in Hellenistic and Roman times as on the east bank of the river and Hellenism progressed here slower. But even though Galilee lacked big cities, its biggest and most important ones were Greek.

Scythopolis. We don't know when this city was built or how it took its name. It is not written anywhere that it was Greek. But based on the fact that later on, it alone west of the Jordan became the biggest of Decapolis (Josephus, Jewish War, C, 3, 7) it is made clear that it was Greek along with its clearly ancient Greek name.<sup>135</sup> The city was built either

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<sup>135</sup> The name Scythopolis according to Pliny (V. 72, 16) was given by the arrival there of Scythians. But which Scythians and when did they arrive in Palestine? It is extremely unlikely any connection of the name with the 7<sup>th</sup> century BC raid of the Scythians in Palestine. The Jewish prophets of the time called them Gog, not Scythians as the Greeks did. In addition, it would be a mistake to even suppose that the Greeks of the 7<sup>th</sup> century called Scythopolis the Jewish city of Beisan. It is more likely that the name comes from the nearby small Jewish town of Sykith

on the old Jewish city of Beisan or it was the same city (Josephus, Jewish War, L, 8, 5. *Beisan, which the Greeks called Scythopolis*). According to Pliny the city was called Nysa in honor of the nymph who raised god Dionysus (V. 16, 72). Pictures of the nymph breastfeeding the god have been found along with inscriptions that use both names. Nothing else is known about the city. The ancient use of the name shows that at least from the time of the Diadochi the city had been assimilated into Hellenic culture. But the best of times for the city, as with many other cities in Syria and Palestine, begin at the time of Pompey. His general Gabinius recaptured the city which later became the largest in Decapolis. During Christian times (4<sup>th</sup> century AD) it became a metropolitan seat (Patrophilos was the bishop in 318 AD) and it was the home of Basilides the founder of a Gnostic heresy and Cyril a biographer of saints. In the following centuries it appears it became a great center of ecclesiastical life. In the 5<sup>th</sup> Ecumenical Synod (534 AD) there was a representative of the monks of Scythopolis. The Greek character of the city is also shown by the fierce opposition of its inhabitants against the Jews in their war against the Romans and the massacre by them of 13000 Jews (Josephus, Jewish War, B, 18, 3).

Near Scythopolis in Galilee was the Greek city Philotera or Philoteria (Polyb. E. 70, 4) built by Ptolemy the Philadelphus in honor of his sister Philotera.

A third city near and to the northwest of Nazareth was Diocaesarea or as it used to be known Sefor or Sapfor or Sepforis. It too was later called by its Hellenized name Sepforis.<sup>136</sup> From its coins we understand that it was

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or Suheth. From that it is possible that the Greeks created the name Scythopolis.

<sup>136</sup> In its coins it is referred to as city of the people of Sepforis.

autonomous. From the inscription on the coins “*Emperor Trajan gave*” it is possibly proclaimed that its autonomy was given by this emperor and possibly also became a colony. The main god worshipped in Diocaesarea apparently was Zeus from whom it took its name. In Christian times, probably during the reign of Constantine the Great, it became the seat of a bishop (Not. Episc. 5, 116).<sup>137</sup>

Another city in Galilee with a Greek name was Maximianopolis, west of Scythopolis. About it we only have the testimony of Hieronymus<sup>138</sup> that it was located in the place of the old Jewish city Adadremnou. It is also mentioned in Ierocleus’s Synekdimos as one of the cities in Palaestina Secunda with a bishop. Its name appears to be attributed to Emperor Maximian, co-emperor of Diocletian.

The tetrarch Herod Antipas, son of Herod the Great, built on the west bank of Lake Gennesaret, in honor of Emperor Tiberius, the city Tiberias. Tiberias received most of its people from Jerusalem and was therefore practically a Jewish city. Yet it did not take part in the great Jewish revolt at the time of Nero and Vespasian. Jewish letters flourished there for centuries. From there was the Jewish teacher of law (Legis doctor) who taught Hieronymus Hebrew. Its

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<sup>137</sup> According to Epiphanius (Panarion, book A, p 136, pub Migne) in Diocaesarea as in Nazareth, Capernaum and Tiberias, the Jews did not allow Greeks, Christian or Samaritans to live until the 4<sup>th</sup> century. But this cannot be true about this city since on its coins the city is called autonomous, which is very unlikely this could have been if the city was pre-eminently Jewish. The coins also picture a temple of Zeus, Athena and other deities. Even the name of the city goes against the writings of Epiphanius. The truth is what is written by Josephus. That in Diocaesarea also lived a great number of Jews and that the city was practically Jewish before the Jewish-Roman war. During that war the city was burned and its people killed (Josephus, Jewish War, B, 5, 1).

<sup>138</sup> De Palaestinae locis. Hieron. Pub. Migne, Patrologia Latin, vol. 23, p. 978.

Jewish character was always maintained and to this day. There were Greeks in the city before the great Jewish revolt, but during that revolt (68-70 AD), Jews from Galilee came upon the city and slaughtered all the Greek inhabitants (Josephus, Life § 12). Yet, (and this is characteristic of the expanded cultural influence of Hellenism in Palestine) at the time of Josephus Greek letters were cultivated in Tiberias and knowledge of the Greek language was considered necessary to be a writer. An example of this was Ioustos from Tiberias. Jewish and political opponent of Josephus, he wrote against Josephus in the Greek language.

The leaders of the Jewish nation led different political groups while using the Greek language in their political competition. After the destruction of Jerusalem, Tiberias became the center of Judaism. Yet these Jewish leaders addressed the Jewish people in the Greek language. This shows the influence and domination of the Greek language in Jewish Galilee. But even in this great center of Judaism and Jewish literature, in the 4<sup>th</sup> century, during Constantine's reign, a Christian Church with its own building was founded by Jews who had converted.<sup>139</sup> In the next century a bishop was installed in the city and it became a small center of Greek Christianity<sup>140</sup> by lake Tiberias.

Not many monuments of Hellenism, archaeological or literary, have survived from Galilee like they did from Transjordan Palestine. But everything that we've mentioned so far and more that will be presented later, show that Galilee was not only Jewish but rather a Galilee of nations. Nevertheless, the region was heavily influenced by

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<sup>139</sup> Epiphanius, Panarion, p. 128, pub. Migne.

<sup>140</sup> The coins of Tiberias minted by the tetrarch Herod, king Herod Agrippa and even the imperial coins (from Claudius to Hadrian) do not bear any picture or symbol of pagan worship which shows that the Greco-Roman pagan worship did not prevail in this Jewish city.

Greek culture. The fact that Galilee was close to Decapolis and that on the coast there was a great Hellenic center, Caesarea of Palestine and that after the dissolution of Jewish autonomy it was merged administratively with the rest of Palestine, convince us that the Greek language was used extensively there. Even more so in Samaria.

### *Samaria*

To the south of Galilee, between it and Judea laid Samaria. Inhabited by heretical Jews,<sup>141</sup> even though from the time of Jesus and the Apostles till the time of Emperor Justinian I, it had a mixed Jewish and Samaritan population. It was greatly Hellenized by the time of Jesus primarily by buildings on the coast.

On that coast there was a Greek city, Caesarea of Palestine, which was originally built by Greeks and known as Straton's tower, named after its founding settler from Greece.<sup>142</sup> It grew and was expanded by Herod the Great (13 BC) who built strong walls around it and beautified it with monuments of art the remains of which draw admiration to this day. It was renamed by Herod in honor of Ceasar Augustus and eventually became the capital of the Roman province of Palestine. It maintained its Greek character to the extent that Greek was the only spoken language and even the Jews in the synagogue in their

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<sup>141</sup> During my visit to Samaria in 1900, 50 to 60 Samaritan families were surviving.

<sup>142</sup> Justinian's novels (Novellae Constitutiones-Νεαράι) prologue of 103. It is unknown when Straton built the city. But this took place no later than the 2<sup>nd</sup> or 1<sup>st</sup> century BC, as it is mentioned by Strabo.

religious ceremonies used it.<sup>143</sup> Caesarea was known as the first and best in Palestine, especially after it became its capital and it heavily influenced the Hellenization of the whole province during Roman times. It is known that in Christian times all of Palestine, including Jerusalem (until the 5<sup>th</sup> century) was ecclesiastically dependent on Caesarea.

Another Greek city on the Samaritan coast of Palestine was Apollonia. Built by Seleucus Nicator (Appian Syr. 57).

Dora was another city. Located either on the coast of Samaria or in Galilee north of Caesarea near mount Carmel. The coins minted by the city refer to its people as Dorians, Doriton or Doriniton. The coins also refer to the city as “sacred, autonomous”. They depict the head of Zeus crowned with a laurel wreath or the goddess of good fortune. These findings plus the fact that the city is not known as Phoenician before Hellenistic times nor as a Philistine city show that it was a Greek city. This is reinforced by the local worship of Apollo (Josephus, Against Apion, B’ 9). The city is also mentioned by Pausanias of Damascus who calls it Doron and its people Dorians (Historici Graeci Minores, vol I, 155, 18-13).

Inland in Samaria the following Greek or Hellenized cities existed:

1/ Samaria who gave its name to the whole region and for centuries was the capital of the northern Jewish state (the state of Israel) and center of the Samaritan religious heresy. Eusebius mentions that Alexander subjugated the Samaritans either before or after the fall of Tyre and that he

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<sup>143</sup> Ernest Renan, *Les Apotres*, p. 131, pub. 1867. « La langue Grecque yja Césarée était seul parlée et les Juifs eux-mêmes en étaient venus à réciter certaines parties de la liturgie en Grec ». (*Talmud de Jérusalem*, Sota, 216).

appointed Andromachos as governor. The Samaritans murdered Andromachos when Alexander was in Egypt but upon his return to Syria, he punished the rebels and settled Macedonians in the city. Georgios Syncellos writes (p. 496, pub. Bonn.) “That Alexander quickly turned Samaria into a Greek city”. Cutrius, the Roman historian writes that the Samaritans burned Andromachos alive and that Memnon was his appointed successor. The same story is passed on to us by Stephanus of Byzantium as well, only he confuses Samaria with the nearby even more ancient Jewish city of Sihem. Therefore, the city received Greek colonists even from the time of Alexander. It became so thoroughly Greek that 300 years later the philhellene and Hellenized King of Judea beautified the city with monuments usually found in Greek cities and renamed it with the Greek name Sebastin (in honor of Octavian Augustus). Characteristic of the Hellenism of this city were its coins which depicted the kidnaping of Persephone.

2/ Neapolis. Built on or more likely next to the ancient Jewish town of Sihem. Therefore, Sihem became a suburb of Neapolis. According to Josephus (Jewish War, D', 8, 1) Neapolis was built on the site that the locals called Marvotha. It was founded by Alexander the Great.<sup>144</sup> It appears that at the time of Vespasian it received Roman colonists and was renamed Flavia Neapolis (as it appears on its coins). The coins also depicted Serapis, Asclepius, and Apollo, which show the prevailing there of Hellenism. That the city became a colony during Roman times is shown by its imperial coins where it is called Colonia.<sup>145</sup>

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<sup>144</sup> Georgios Syncellos, p. 496, pub. Bonn.

<sup>145</sup> Droysen, Geschichte der Bildung des hellenistischen Staatensystems, vol. 1, p. 600-601.

Finally, Herod, in honor of his father Antipater, built on the site of the ancient Samaritan city Kafarsava the city of Antipater. Nothing more than the name is known about this city.

### *Judea*

Judea did not have a shoreline inhabited by Jews. Instead, its entire coastline was inhabited by the Palestinians or Philistines who gave the name to the entire country. This coastline had many cities known from ancient history, almost all of which were Hellenized in the years after Alexander.

The northernmost of those cities was Iope. The old Philistine city of Iafu. The meaning of the word was *beautiful* in Hebrew but unknown what it meant in the Philistine tongue. In later years when Iope succumbed to Greek cultural influence the name was considered Greek and synonymous to Cassiopeia, the wife of Cepheus and mother of Andromeda. Consequently, the myth of Perseus and Andromeda was relocated here (Eustathius and Stephanus of Byzantium).

The city after Alexander's death just like the rest of the coast became an area of contest between the Ptolemies and the Seleucids. Alexander used it as the location of one of his mints. So did the Ptolemies (either Ptolemy II or III<sup>146</sup>). The Ptolemaic coins from the city feature Perseus's harp. In Roman times the coins featured an image of Perseus. In both eras the name of the city on those coins was the Greek

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<sup>146</sup> Berclay V. Head, History of coins, (Greek translation by Svoronos), vol. B, p. 402.



name Iope. All signs that Hellenism was the dominant culture in the city. Finally, from the Acts of the Apostles we understand that in this city as in the rest of the cities of Palestine lived Greeks but because of the domination of the Greek language even the Hebrew names were translated into Greek.

From the rest of the coastal cities, Gaza is clearly called *Greek city* by Josephus (F', 11, 4). Following the example of Athens, it had an elected assembly of 500 and a temple of Apollo (Josephus, Antiquities of the Jews, M, 13, 3). Over time it was the home of many philosophers and intellectuals.<sup>147</sup>

Another Greek city in the region was Azotos.<sup>148</sup>

Ascalon too. After 104 AD (After the dissolution of the Seleucid state) it gained its freedom which maintained even in imperial Roman times and did not get subjugated to the Jews. It became a Greek city as evidenced by the worship in the city of Greek deities (Zeus Nicephorus, Poseidon, Apollo, Athena, Hermes, Castor and Polydeukes).<sup>149</sup> Stephanus of Byzantium mentions a great number of intellectuals from Ascalon. The renowned Stoics Antiochus of Cygnus, Antibios, Eubios, the writer Polemon, the historians Apollonius and Artemidorus who wrote amongst others about Bithynia and many others who will be discussed later.<sup>150</sup>

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<sup>147</sup> A characteristic of Gaza is that its coins bear the inscription *Demos of the people of Gaza*.

<sup>148</sup> Droysen, *Geschichte der Bildung des hellenistischen Staatensystems*, p. 700 and Schurer: *Lehrbuch der Neutestamentlichen Zeitgeschichte* p. 69.

<sup>149</sup> Schürer: *Lehrbuch der Neutestamentlichen Zeitgeschichte* p. 379.

<sup>150</sup> During Christian times Ascalon also became a bishop's seat.

To the south of Ascalon was Anthedon. Built by Greeks during Hellenistic times.<sup>151</sup> It shared its purely Greek name with Anthedon of Boetia (named after the mythical hero and nymph with the same name). Herod the Great renamed the city in honor of his friend (and friend of Augustus) Agrippa. It thrived and in Christian times it became the seat of a bishop. All this information was regarding Hellenism of the Philistine coast.

Inland of Judea there was the Greek city of Eleftheriopolis. Its coins had on them Greek writing and portrayed the Greek goddess Artemis of Ephesus. It became a colony in later Roman times (beginning of the 3<sup>rd</sup> century AD. The city's chronological system begins between the years 202 and 208 AD).<sup>152</sup> The city is known as being the seat of a bishop and as home of the ecclesiastical father Epiphanius.

A Greek city between Iope and Jerusalem was Diospolis, on the site of ancient Lud. It took its name from the worship of the Greek god Zeus (Dias). This name appears to be in use from the beginning of the early 3<sup>rd</sup> century, during the reign of Emperor Septimius Severus. Its more ancient coins depict the image of Zeus Serapis and Demetra and bear the name of the city along with the emperor's. But Hellenism in the city is much older. Christianity was present there very early. Apostle Peter was the first to teach there and Zenas the first bishop was one of the seventy apostles (Paul to Titus letter C, 13). Also, the fact that its bishop was not only present in the 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> ecumenical synods (Aetios in the first one in 325 and Dionysius in the second one in 381), but in 425 a local council of 12 bishops was called to judge

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<sup>151</sup> Sepp, Jerusalem und das Heilige, p. 529.

<sup>152</sup> Berclay V. Head, History of coins, (Greek translation by Svoronos), vol. B, p. 407.

the famous British heretic Pelagius, shows that the Greek language was the dominant one in the city.

Greek was also the city of Arethusa located inland but near Iope. With a clearly Greek name it was one of the many cities Seleucus Nicator built.<sup>153</sup>

Similarly, Greek was the city of Nicopolis to the northwest of Jerusalem on the location of the city of Emmaus. Nicopolis was built by Titus in memory of his final victory over the Jews in 70 AD, from which time the chronological system of the city began.

Another town with the name of Emmaus was founded next to Jerusalem in 70 or 71 AD. That one is well known from the Gospel of Luke. It also got the name Colonia in later times, which means that in Roman times it received foreign elements, i.e. Greek.

And now we come to the great capital of Judea, Jerusalem. But before we discuss this historic city, that is the Greek cultural influence on the city, even before it became Greek after its destruction of 70 AD, it is necessary to mention some general facts about the Greek cities and the Greek population of Judea and Palestine in the years before 70 AD.

The existence of so many Greek cities on the coast of Judea but also inland before the destruction of Jerusalem (70 AD and 130 AD when the Jewish element's national identity was at its highest) and the exile of the Jews is enough to demonstrate the predominance of Hellenism in Judea.

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<sup>153</sup> Droysen, (*Geschichte der Bildung des hellenistischen Staatensystems*, p. 700) incorrectly he concludes for Josephus (N, 4, 4) that Arethusa was on the coast. On the contrary, Josephus lists the inland cities amongst which he includes Arethusa.

But one would be mistaken if the material strength of Hellenism was just measured by the great number of Greeks and Hellenized people of Judea. Or its cultural strength, especially the language, was measured by the number of the listed cities. Firstly, just as in northern Palestine, in the south we cannot assume that the number of Greek colonies was simply only what has survived as historical information, inscriptions and coins. As we saw in northern Palestine in many places survive inscriptions that indisputably proclaim that in those locations used to be cities, towns or villages, definitely Greek and very important ones as in Suveida, whose names did not survive. We also have information from ancient writers where indirectly is understood that the number of Greek cities was much larger than what is known to us.

Nicolaus of Damascus, the known Greek secretary of King Herod the Great and after the king's death, advisor to his son Archelaus, was a man in a position to know in detail the situation in Palestine. He wrote<sup>154</sup> that after the death of Herod, Archelaus wanted to inherit his undivided power. Because of that he came in conflict with the Jews who did not want to obey him as a ruler and with his brothers who wanted to share the power with him and with "Herod's Greek cities who were now requesting from Caesar their freedom". On that occasion Nicolaus urged Archelaus "Don't oppose the Greek cities who wish for freedom". He wrote that Caesar as a mediator resolved the differences between the brothers, but we do not find out from his writings about the fate of the Greek cities. But when comparing the history by Nicolaus to Josephus regarding this mediation (Josephus, *Antiquities of the Jews*, L, 11, 4) we see that Caesar divided Herod's state to his three sons.

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<sup>154</sup> *Historici Graeci Minored*, pub. Dindorf, vol. 1 p. 143.

Archelaus took half the country that Herod used to rule and the Greek cities Gaza, Gadara and Hippos, “*he removed from him the administration of Syria but added the three cities*”. One can assume that the Greek cities mentioned by Nicolaus are the same that Josephus mentions. But what Josephus is saying is incomplete because it is unlikely Gaza that is separated from Syria by the entire Palestine, was added to it. It seems that all the cities from Gadara and Hippos to Gaza, all became autonomous, simply reporting to the Roman proconsul, representative of Caesar (Caesaris legati) in Damascus.

But Nicolaus mentions another thing about the Greeks that Josephus (who systematically presented Jewish power in Palestine greater than it was and only in passing and out of necessity mentioned Hellenism and the Greeks and often even concealing them) fails to do. Nicolaus clearly states that Herod’s army was made up of more than ten thousand Greeks and that after his death the Jewish nation gathered against the house of Herod and that in the battle that followed the Greeks won.<sup>155</sup> Josephus reports this revolt<sup>156</sup> and says that three thousand Jews were killed by the cavalry that Archelaus sent. He mentions nothing of the ethnicity of Archelaus’s army.<sup>157</sup>

Of course, Nicolaus who was then advisor to Archelaus provides us with more accurate information when he writes that the entire army of ten thousand and more men of

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<sup>155</sup> *Historici Graeci minores*, pub. Dindorf, vol. 1, p. 143.

<sup>156</sup> Josephus, *Antiquities of the Jews*, L, 9, 3.

<sup>157</sup> Only in the description of the funeral of Herod (L, 8, 3) he mentions that the military was organized by nations and that after the spearmen came Thracians, Germans and Galatians and after them the entire army. It appears that the Galatians were recruited from Galatia of Asia Minor. The “entire army” that Josephus mentions that came after the German and Galatian bodyguards, were the Greeks mentioned by Nicolaus.

Archelaus and Herod were Greek (With the exception of the Germans and Galatians, possibly bodyguards, mentioned by Josephus,).

We should add that all the advisors to this king, the ruler of all Palestine, such as Nicolaus and his brother Ptolemy were Greek. Most likely the language spoken in court was Greek since the king preferred it over Hebrew and Aramaic. In contrast to his predecessors of the Hasmonean ruling dynasty of Palestine whose coins had Hebrew writing, his coins had Greek inscriptions. Even the Roman commanders, just like in Syria and Phoenicia where it was customary to address the people in Greek, in Palestine too they used the Greek language to talk to the people.<sup>158</sup> According to Josephus who bitterly admits to it, Herod sought the favor of the Greeks of Palestine over the Jews (Josephus, *Antiquities of the Jews*, I, 7, 3).

The reason for this was not political motivation nor Platonic philhellenism. The real reason was the supremacy of the Greek element in the country. This element in the northeast part of the country, Palestinian Arabia (Trachonitis, Auranitis and Batanaea), completely and entirely ruled and dominated life in the cities, which were all Greek. We also saw that in Galilee and Judea there were cities populated entirely by Greeks or at least half of the population was Greek according to Hug, an expert on ancient history and ethnography.<sup>159</sup>

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<sup>158</sup> Hug, *Einleitung in die Schriften des neuen Testaments*, p. 44.

<sup>159</sup> Hug, *Einleitung in die Schriften des neuen Testaments*, p. 54-55. Hug's conclusions from his research are listed here.

a/ Through the Macedonian conquest, Asia was filled with Greek cities. In western Asia many cities were founded by the dynasty of the Ptolemies and especially by the Seleucids. Older cities such as Tyre and Sidon changed their language (were Hellenized in language) under the Greek cultural influence.

So, the entire population was divided in Greek and Jewish. No other ethnic element existed as the Arabs who settled during the Roman era or shortly before that, were Hellenized. No other Semitic element existed because long before the Hellenistic era all inland Palestine had become Jewish, not excluding the people of Samaria.<sup>160</sup> As for the Palestinian coast, it was always inhabited by a non-Jewish people and it had become Hellenized even before the spread of Christianity.

In the cities, the dominant element was the Greek. The Jews were simply seeking equality in those cities in Palestine, as

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b/ The Syrian, Phoenician and Jewish coasts up to Egypt were taken over by cities entirely or at least half Greek. Israeli Palestine to the east. Above the river Arnon (river of Moab or Moabitis) Galaaditis, Batanaea, Auranitis and Trachonitis including Abilene to the north was Greek and to the south it was controlled for the most part by the Greeks. In Judea and Galilee there were cities populated by Greeks whether in their entirety or at least half.

c/ Herod the Great put a lot of effort into Hellenizing the Jews.

d/ Roman domination helped the progress of Hellenism.

e/ The Jewish religious leaders only slightly impeded the progression of Hellenism. By the final years of Jewish autonomy, they respected the Greek language, recognizing it as a language in their literature and even allowing its use in courts.

f/ The Greek language whenever it found fertile ground, it spread through the communication and mixing of all classes of the people. Thus, the people (the Jewish people) came to understand it without being able to tell apart the elements from either language even if they were leaning more to their native tongue.

g/ In the Holy city entire communities of Greek speaking Jews settled. From them and from Greek converts to Christianity, the Christian school of Jerusalem was created and developed.

<sup>160</sup> The city of Samaria was Hellenized and it was later on renamed Sebastia. But the Samaritans as a religious community and as a people retained their ancestral ways (but proclaiming or denying their Jewish ancestry based on circumstances, Josephus, Jewish Antiquities, I, 14, 3, 19, 7) and always existed in the entire country of Samaria. Distancing themselves from the Jews and hostile for the most part towards the Greeks.

in Syria to the Greeks. This is shown by the example given of the city of Doron and many other examples previously mentioned about the position of the Jews in the Greek cities.<sup>161</sup>

Such was the way that the population of Palestine was divided when Christianity arrived. It was born amongst Hellenized Jews and Jewish Greeks (Jewish not in language but converted to the religion), separated completely from Judaism and grew within Hellenism producing a Christian people that was completely Greek with its center in Greek Jerusalem. But before we discuss this matter in detail it is necessary to examine two related matters.

- a) What was the standing of Hellenism in the birthplace of Christianity, Jerusalem, before Jesus.
- b) How did Jewish Jerusalem through Christianity transform into an entirely Greek city.

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<sup>161</sup> It is true that other writers including Josephus mention Syrians in Syria and Palestine. It is also true that in Syria, Palestine and Mesopotamia even after their Hellenization there were Syrians, i.e. Aramaeans. But those in Syria and Palestine were an insignificant number that kept dwindling. In any case we shouldn't consider as Aramaean all those that the writers of the Hellenistic and Roman times called Syrians. In those times those ethnic names had mostly a local meaning, not a national one (Strabo Q, 743). Strabo makes that clear by stating the difference between Babylon the city and Babylonia the land and that the men are called Babylonian because they come from that land. He also makes it clear that Diogenes the Stoic philosopher (who was a Greek from Seleucia of Babylonia) was called Babylonian. Not Seleucian. By that we understand that the Greeks in Babylonia were called Babylonian. Same for Syrian. As it was mentioned earlier and according to other authors, the term usually had a political meaning, i.e. the citizens and the subjects of the Seleucid state and in particular the ruling Greeks. It is true that occasionally Josephus differentiates Greeks and Syrians but at other times he does not.



a) *What was the Standing of Hellenism in Jerusalem  
Before Christianity*

Jerusalem after the conquest of Syria and Palestine by Alexander the Great and under the rule of the Seleucids until Antiochus IV (175-164 BC) was an exclusively Jewish city and center of Jewish cultural life. The national revolution of the Maccabees against the Seleucid dynasty (175-165 BC) was an armed protest against the beginning of the transformation of things towards Hellenization in Judea. The political freedom and autonomy of the Jews that came from that revolt and the establishment of Jerusalem as the capital of the new Jewish state of the Hasmonean dynasty, raised the importance of the city as a national and cultural center. With the expansion of Hasmonean rule over most of Palestine, many Greek cities established by the Seleucids, submitted by force to the Jewish state. However, the cultural influence of Hellenism in western Asia and Egypt was such that the Jews, who through the force of arms had liberated themselves from the rule of the Greeks and subjugated Greek cities in their state, succumbed to this cultural influence themselves. The Hasmoneans, the leaders of the successful revolt against the Greeks, did not remain untouched by this influence as they started taking Greek names (Alexander, Aristoboulos etc.).

The political weakening of the new Jewish state in the 1<sup>st</sup> century BC probably enhanced Greek influence. When Pompey came to Palestine in 64 BC, he liberated many Greek cities subjugated until then to the Jewish state and made them autonomous.<sup>162</sup> He and his successor Gabinius,

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<sup>162</sup> Josephus, *Jewish Antiquities*, N, 4, 4.

also destroyed completely many Jewish cities.<sup>163</sup> As Hug says in his book on page 43, “With the appearance of Pompey in Syria ceases the resistance of the Jews against the infiltration of Hellenism to the interior of Palestine and the Greeks become the favorite side”. At that time it appears that the federation of Decapolis was formed in northeast Palestine with its main goal being self-defense and preservation of autonomy of those Greek cities against the Jewish dynasty and the tetrarchs.

The dynastic change that raised the Araboidumaeon house of Herod to the throne of Jerusalem, the Hellenist and philhellene who protected and promoted Hellenism in all his domain and who Hellenized his court and his country, could not leave unaffected the capital of the state.

Herod replaced the Jewish mint in the city with a Greek one and started minting coins with Greek writing on them. He built in Jericho, Caesarea and even Jerusalem itself buildings of Greek art and Greco-Roman life, (theaters and stadiums) and established athletic competitions.<sup>164</sup> All things foreign to Jewish traditions and making the cities Greek in their lifestyle. Herod announced the establishment of the games to the nations around Jerusalem (especially of course the Greeks of Palestine, Syria and Mesopotamia). According to Josephus “The games attracted the best in each sport from all over the world”.<sup>165</sup> It is known that throughout the Roman empire the Greeks were the ones that did sports professionally, even founding clubs. The games also included musical and theatrical competitions, which were purely Greek events.

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<sup>163</sup> Josephus, *Jewish Antiquities*, N, 4, 6.

<sup>164</sup> Josephus, *Jewish Antiquities*, O, 8, 1.

<sup>165</sup> Josephus, *Jewish Antiquities*, O, 8, 1.

But it wasn't just the Greeks who through theatre, sports and musical games were Hellenizing Jerusalem. More than the Greeks, Hellenism was introduced to Jerusalem in a very cultured way by the Jews. Not the Jews of Jerusalem or Palestine, but the Jews from all over the Greco-Roman world who were returning to the holy capital of Judaism. The Jews of the Diaspora who during the Hellenistic times had spread to the countries of Asia, Europe and Africa (especially Egypt). Almost all of these Jews (especially in Egypt, Asia Minor and the Greek lands) had long ago been completely and perfectly Hellenized in terms of language so that very early, during the reign of Ptolemy the Philadelphus (3<sup>rd</sup> century BC), their holy books were translated to Greek while they also translated the Homeric poems. This linguistic Hellenization of the Jewish diaspora was so widespread that even the fanatical Maccabees of Jerusalem who hated the Greeks of Syria and Palestine and destroyed Greek cities, greeted the Greeks of the Greek lands as relatives and brothers descending from Abraham himself.<sup>166</sup> Soon, Hellenizing Jewish philosophers started writing books using the Greek language, interpreting in a philosophical way the Jewish religious traditions.

Jews of the diaspora coming to Jerusalem from Parthia, Persia and Elam (where Jewish settlements and Greek colonies existed), Mesopotamia, Cappadocia, the Black Sea region, western Asia Minor, Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and Cyrene of Libya,<sup>167</sup> congregated with each other through the use of the Greek language. They were called Hellenists. Of them, only the ones from Cyrene, Alexandria,

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<sup>166</sup> Maccabees A, 12, 2 and 14, 16. Refer to letter and embassy exchange between Sparta and the city of Simon where they address each other as brothers.

<sup>167</sup> Acts of the Apostles, B, 1-14.

Cilicia and western Asia Minor (the province called Asia) shared the same synagogue.<sup>168</sup>

These Jews of the diaspora made up the Greek or embracing the Greek lifestyle, community in Jewish Jerusalem. If we add to them the more than ten thousand men of Herod's army who were Greek and spoke Greek, his Hellenized court, the fact that the local Jewish leaders wrote using the Greek language, their politicians argued about their homeland in Greek, even Josephus and Ioustos not only did they have a Greek education but also the courage to write in Greek<sup>169</sup> and finally the courts accepted both the Greek and Hebrew use of language as legal,<sup>170</sup> from all that we understand that the Greek language was just as popular as Hebrew (Aramaic Hebrew at this point in history).

Josephus in his *Jewish Antiquities* (K, 11, 2), relates to us that the Jews did not particularly like the way that orators or sophists constructed their speech. A style of speech that became the pinnacle of the art of oration at the time of Josephus, with Athens at the forefront and its teachers, the so-called sophists, becoming famous and respected in the entire Greco-Roman world. Renan interpreted this passage from Josephus as meaning that very few Jews were able to master the correct accent.<sup>171</sup> This is illogical since millions of Jews had Greek as their mother tongue and it was the only language they spoke. Instead, the correct interpretation of Josephus refers to this sophist style of oration. The more conservative Jews seem to have preferred in Greek and in other languages a more concise and clear way of speaking and nothing more. Therefore, from this passage we come to

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<sup>168</sup> Acts of the Apostles, F, 9 and H, 29.

<sup>169</sup> Josephus, Life of Josephus, 9.

<sup>170</sup> Hug, Einleitung in die Schriften des neuen Testaments, p. 47.

<sup>171</sup> Renan, Histoire de langues Semitiques, p. 230.

understand that Josephus who admittedly has a beautiful style of writing, but not as polished as the sophists, was not aiming simply for an audience in the Greco-Roman world but his Jewish community around him.<sup>172</sup> This proves that knowledge and use of the Greek language was very common by the Jews in the 1<sup>st</sup> century AD.

Even the famous decision of Rabbi Simeon found in the Misnah that the Greek language is allowed in the writing of books,<sup>173</sup> proves the use of Greek by even the most conservative Jews. In other parts of the Misnah, the Rabbi interpreters of the law declared that the Talmud can be read in Hebrew and in Greek.<sup>174</sup>

It is true that when Jewish fanaticism rose, as in the war against the Romans at the time of Vespasian, the hatred against the Greeks would erupt as well and the Jewish revolutionaries would slaughter indiscriminately when they were able to capture Greek cities. This hatred was also extended against the Greek language.<sup>175</sup> Its use was

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<sup>172</sup> His book *Jewish Antiquities* was written primarily for the Greeks (A, 1, 2).

<sup>173</sup> Hug, *Einleitung in die Schriften des neuen Testaments*, p 461.

<sup>174</sup> Hug, *Einleitung in die Schriften des neuen Testaments*, p 460.

<sup>175</sup> An anathema was proclaimed against the study of the Greek language. In particular against those teaching their sons Greek. Yet the language had penetrated so much that while the teaching of sons was banned, women were still allowed to learn it as a form of external decoration or jewelry. (Renan, *Histoire de langues Semitiques*, p. 295).

forbidden and so were Greek inscriptions and coins<sup>176</sup> and any Greek custom.<sup>177</sup>

But this ephemeral reaction against Hellenism and the Greek language could not be successful. The head rabbi of Caesarea in Palestine complained against the law banning the use of the Greek language in synagogues and against rabbi's Levi-Bar Heita indignation about hearing prayers in Greek, by saying "How then? Do you want those who don't understand Aramaic not to pray in any language?"<sup>178</sup>

The fact that in the Talmud there is a plethora of Greek words and not just words that have to do with public or spiritual life, but common words of the people,<sup>179</sup> proves the influence of Hellenism on Judaism. It is also known that in the Jewish text of the Old Testament, the parts written during Hellenistic times contain Greek words in Hebrew form.

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<sup>176</sup> Renan, *Histoire de langues Semitiques*, p 294. "The history of Jewish coins is very educational. In it one can see Hebrew appearing and reappearing with every Jewish victory and being replaced by Greek after every defeat. These coins are Greek (they have a Greek inscription) under the Seleucids, Jewish under the Hasmoneans, Greek under the Idumaeans rulers, Jewish during the first revolt, Greek again after the reconquest of Jerusalem by Titus and Jewish under Bar Kokhba, the leader of the second Jewish revolt at the time of Hadrian".

<sup>177</sup> During the revolt at the time of Vespasian the use of crowns for men in weddings was forbidden as a Greek custom. Later at the time of Titus, when Jerusalem was under siege, the use of crowns for the bride was banned as well, along with the aforementioned ban on the study of the Greek language for men.

<sup>178</sup> Renan, *Histoire de langues Semitiques*, p. 294.

<sup>179</sup> Schürer: *Lehrbuch der Neutestamentlichen Zeitgeschichte* p. 379. It appears that even the words patriarch and apostle had no religious meaning but were common public offices. (patriarch= mayor, apostle=councilmen). Both were apparently introduced into Hebrew after the destruction of 70 AD.

It is undisputed that before Christianity, Greek was spoken in Jerusalem. But the main question is if it was spoken by most of the people as it is extremely important in the beginning of the Christian Church in Jerusalem.

The question is answered by the great number of Jews of the diaspora who came to Jerusalem and who spoke Greek. As for the local Jews of Jerusalem we don't have much information. But it is a fact that in Jerusalem as in all of Palestine, the Aramaic language survived with the Jews and Samaritans for centuries after Christ (until the Arab conquest of the 7<sup>th</sup> century AD). For this matter we cannot question if at the time of the foundation of the Christian Church in Jerusalem, only Greek was spoken in the city.

It is undisputed that in Jerusalem, the state and the royal court and the army and the rulers spoke Greek. Correspondence to the Roman state and to the Roman authorities in the east was done in Greek. Jewish intellectuals wrote in Greek and a great number of the former Jewish diaspora used Greek in their everyday lives and as the language in the synagogue. Therefore, it is not worth investigating if the local masses understood and spoke Greek. But for the sake of accuracy, we need to present the findings regarding this question as well.

According to the Evangelists Mathew, Mark and Luke, the Pharisees asked Jesus a question in Greek, reading an inscription found on the imperial coins of Jerusalem bearing an image of Caesar. According to Schürer (p. 377) that is proof that the Jews of Jerusalem spoke and read Greek. This, however, seems to me like an insignificant indication. According to the Acts of the Apostles (ch. 22, 40), Paul spoke to the people of Jerusalem in Aramaic (Hebrew dialect). Schürer and other interpreters took this as meaning that the people of Jerusalem spoke Aramaic. However, the

same passage proves the opposite. That the use of Greek was almost as common as Aramaic (or the Aramaic version of Hebrew). In that passage (Acts of the Apostles, ch. 22, 37) Paul directly asked a military tribune “do you know Greek?”, which proves that the authorities in their interaction with the people used Greek or preferred its use.

Then there is also the following. In the same chapter (ch. 22, 2) it says that the people upon hearing that Paul was speaking in Hebrew (i.e. the Aramaic dialect) “quieted down”. This shows that the big mass<sup>180</sup> of the Jews of Jerusalem (perhaps because of religious fanaticism against the Greeks and the Hellenizing followers of Christ’s Church) in this particular case was carefully listening to Paul (“quieted down”), speaking Aramaic but they were not ignorant of Greek, since Paul specifically because of the noise of the crowd, reverted to the use of Aramaic. Passages from Josephus point to the direction that the Jewish mass of people probably understood Aramaic or more likely preferred it. In those passages (Jewish Wars, E, 9, 3) it says that Titus always spoke Greek to the crowd and that “Josephus spoke to his fellow Jews in the language of their country.” This passage doesn’t mean that the mass of people did not understand the language that Titus spoke but rather that Josephus spoke to the Jews in Aramaic as he was one of them and had the choice to talk to them in a language understood only by the Jews and not the Romans. In another chapter (F, 2, 5) Josephus appears not as a translator but as a messenger of the Greek speaking Ceasar, Titus. In yet another passage (F, 6, 2) he clearly states that he spoke to the crowd without a translator. It should be noted that the

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<sup>180</sup> The Jews that turned in Paul were from Asia (i.e. the western provinces of Asia Minor, Ionia, Lydia, Caria). Greek speaking Jews. But the ones listening to him were the mass of Jerusalem (Acts of the Apostles, ch. 21, 27).



crowd that Titus was addressing had come to Jerusalem from all the lands of Palestine and its leaders Josephus calls bandits and tyrants. In this crowd there were people who only understood Aramaic and Titus thought it useful to address this crowd in Greek and to have by him a translator to translate, not everything, in Aramaic.<sup>181</sup>

From all these and many more examples it is clear that in Jewish and pre-Christian Jerusalem, the Greek language had primacy in official documents and signs. Even in their own temple the Jews had erected columns with Greek and Roman letters, according to Titus. It is also known that the sign on the cross that Christ was crucified on was written in Greek and Roman and Hebrew.<sup>182</sup> Closing this section it is time to move on from Jewish yet Hellenizing Jerusalem to Christian Jerusalem.

*b) How did the Hellenizing Jewish Jerusalem  
become Greek Christian Jerusalem*

Examining in this chapter the birth of Christianity in relation to Hellenism and the Greek language it is necessary to clarify the issue of what language (speech and writing) was used by the first teachers and students of the Christian faith, first amongst them, Jesus.

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<sup>181</sup> Hug, (p 47-48), thinks that the use of a translator for speaking to the Jews should be attributed to the fanatical hatred of the Jews against the Greek language that Titus was using.

<sup>182</sup> According to Luke and John the Evangelists.

## *What language did Jesus speak?*

The ancient writers of the Church left this issue unexamined, considering it as nonexistent, thinking as his language the language of the Gospel. In modern times it was the subject of much research and discussion by theologians and linguists and many works have been written on the subject. Dominico Diodati wrote in 1767 his book “De Christo Graece loquente” arguing that Jesus spoke Greek. On the opposite side of the argument Gioberto di Rossi published in 1772 his work “Della lingua propria di Christo”. Hug, Ewald, Schürer have also written on the subject. Obviously, this matter in its simple historical and linguistic aspect is the same issue that we are examining about the spoken language in Palestine and Jerusalem during Jesus’s years on earth. A direct and clear testimony by the Evangelist and the Apostles on the subject does not exist but from what has been discussed so far, we can consider it indirectly solved.

The answer is that Jesus spoke both Aramaic and Greek, but primarily Greek. That he spoke Aramaic occasionally is shown by the Evangelists Mathew and Mark (especially Mark) who mention Aramaic words that Jesus said and they explain in Greek. Those words are according to Mark ch. 5, 41, *Talitha koumi*=*rise girl*, ch. 7, 34, *Effatha*=*open*, ch. 14, 36, *Avva*=*father* and *Eloi, Eloi lama savvahthani*=*my Lord, my Lord why do you abandon me?* In Mathew only in ch. 27, 46, *Ili, Ili lama savvahthani*=*my Lord, my Lord why do you abandon me?*<sup>183</sup>

It is perhaps a bold assumption that Jesus spoke in Aramaic based only on these words. However, it is worth noting that

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<sup>183</sup> This list does not of course include names.

the Evangelists put only these words in the Lord's mouth (Luke and John mention no other non-Greek word other than Pasha). It should also be noted that the only Gospel that is said to have been written in Aramaic and then translated into Greek is the one by Mathew.<sup>184</sup>

The fact that the Evangelists and the rest of the Apostles as eyewitnesses of the Lord's words, passed them on in Greek except for a few words proves that the language that the Lord taught, with the exception perhaps of a few occasions, was Greek. Whatever anyone might think, the safe conclusion is that the Lord was brought up in Nazareth of Galilee and of course spoke Aramaic. There, like everywhere in Galilee, the Jewish element was strong, but mixed with Greeks and heavily influenced by Greeks. His teaching in the land beyond Tiberias, in the land of Gadara and Decapolis where Hellenism and the Greek language completely dominated, was done in Greek. The same in Tyre and Sidon.

The Lord's teaching in Jerusalem that took place in the temple in front of a lot of people and especially on holidays when countless Greek speaking Jews of the diaspora were coming into the city, could not take place in any way other than Greek. The Gospel of John gives us clear indications proving that Jesus spoke Greek when he writes (John 7, 35-36): "Where will he go that we cannot find him? Will he go into the diaspora of the Greeks and teach the Greeks?" Of course, the Jews would not talk like that about Jesus if he didn't teach in Greek or at least also in Greek.

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<sup>184</sup> The opinion that the Gospel of Mathew was written in Aramaic and then translated into Greek is based on a passage in the book by Epiphanius (Panarion, book A, p. 127, pub. Migne). This opinion is rejected by many famous theologians and he is the only one to think so.

The evangelist provides another clear indication with the presence of Apostles Andrew and Philip when they tell Jesus that Greeks from Jerusalem wish to see him. Even the judgement by Pilate took place in Greek since the Roman rulers spoke Greek to the Jews and no interpreter is mentioned between Pilate and Jesus or Pilate and the Jews. It is very unlikely that between Pilate and the Lord, Aramaic words were exchanged. As for the “crucify Him” (σταυρωθήτω) that so emphatically was cried by the Jews, the Evangelists, including Mark, recorded it equally emphatically, that was yelled out just like that in Greek.

That the Lord spoke Greek and Aramaic is undisputed. Everything in the Gospels including the double names of places and people, testify that the history of the Lord on Earth and his Apostles was bilingual.

Such was Jerusalem from a linguistic perspective at the time of Jesus. After His resurrection, at the time of the Apostles, the city’s character was pre-eminently Greek. The first Church was made up of Hellenizing Jews and Greek converts (converts to Judaism). The speech of Apostle Peter on the day of the Pentecost (Acts of the Apostles 2) was in Greek. Spoken and written in Greek as were all his letters and of all the other Apostles. The first deacons (Stephen, Philip, Prochorus, Nicanor, Timon, Parmonas, and Nicholas the convert from Antioch) bear Greek names and so does Peter. Paul returning as a Christian from Damascus to Jerusalem, spoke directly to and had conversations with Hellenizing Jews (Acts of the Apostles 9, 29). Peter preached the Christian faith in Caesarea where the only spoken language was Greek.

Even though the language of the Church from the beginning was Greek in the Holy city of Jerusalem, its ethnic composition was probably Jewish. Made up mostly of

Hellenizing Jews. The city became Greek after it was first destroyed as a Jewish city by Titus in 70 AD. The new city built by the Romans was called Aelia Capitolina and as all Roman colonies in the East, it became a Greek city. At that time a purely Greek Christian Church was formed in Jerusalem. That was after Christianity had risen under a new purely Greek character and taken its historic name (Christians, Christian Church) in the big metropolis, capital of Syria and center of all Hellenism in the East, Antioch.

This new Greek Church of Jerusalem belonged to the jurisdiction of the Greek city of Caesarea, capital of all Palestine. Alexander the Cappadocian, a known Christian traveler and pilgrim of the Holy Land made the city even more Greek with the establishing in it of a full Greek library. A library which Eusebius utilized to write his great ecclesiastical history. Since then and with the Jewish state dismantled in Palestine, the city became Greek Christian, remaining a part of the Orthodox Church till today.

At this point it is necessary to discuss the new period beginning in all of Syria and Palestine of the Greek life of Christianity, complementing Hellenism of pre-Christian times.

Everything said so far about Hellenism in Syria and Palestine aimed to simply describe the material strength of Hellenism. Anything that had to do with its cultural influence was mentioned in passing and to give a clearer picture of its material strength. This numeric and material strength proved truly great and was represented by a great number of Greek colonies and a great number of Hellenized cities through the political power of Hellenism and the widespread use of the Greek language. It was proven that in Syria and Palestine, except for Galilee and Judea proper (even though there as well the physical presence of

Hellenism was not small), almost all cities were Greek. In Arabian Palestine even the smaller towns were almost all Greek.

It is necessary to describe specifically the powerful cultural influence of Hellenism in these lands. The influence of Greek education and letters before Christianity and the great number of representatives of Greek philosophy, Greek oratory and Greek reasoning that came from these countries. Syria and Palestine before they became Greek Christian countries, they became a great Asian Greece. Home to Greek enlightenment and education, maybe more than any of the lands outside mainland Greece.

But before we proceed, we must finish with the description of the physical presence of Hellenism in another formerly Semitic land, the adjacent Mesopotamia. We will close with the detailing of the cultural influence of Hellenism in all three countries in parallel.

*The material strength of Hellenism  
in Mesopotamia*

Mesopotamia, this wide land that stretches between the two rivers Tigris and Euphrates and from the Armenian mountains to the Persian Gulf, historically is divided in two parts. The southern part includes Babylonia and to its south by the Persian Gulf, Chaldea. The northern and middle part, which are greater in size than the south, make up Mesopotamia proper.

Southern Mesopotamia (Babylonia and Chaldea) was one of the cradles of Asian civilization, with cities known to

history, most famous of them all, Babylon. But Mesopotamia proper (north and middle) until the time of Hellenism in western Asia Minor, until the time of Alexander and his Diadochi, remained partially deserted and partially populated with small towns. The only known cities were possibly Harran, known from the Old Testament, and the ancient Aramaean Nasibina. (Nineveh on the Tigris, on the eastern shore of the river. Like every Assyrian city and the country of Assyria itself, it was not part of Mesopotamia).

Building of cities in Mesopotamia and civilizing the land begins in Hellenistic times. This is clearly stated by the ancient Roman author Pliny, who is greatly respected for the knowledge of nations, countries and cities that he has passed on to us. Pliny (VI, 21) tells us that first the Macedonians congregated in cities (Mesopotamia tota vicatim dispersa... Macedones eam in urbes congregaverunt propter ubertatem soli). Similarly, Ammianus Marcellinus (XIV, 8, 6) tells us (ex agrestibus habitaculis urbes in Mesopotamia constituit (S. Nicanor) multis opibus firmas et viribus. Based on the words of these writers one can logically assume that the cities founded by the Greeks in Mesopotamia were many more than the ones we know. Even so, just what has been discovered so far is enough to show the Greek strength in this country and its great influence.

We said that in southern Mesopotamia, Babylonia and Chaldea prospered and were important ancient cities. However, even in those countries many Greek cities were built, becoming great and proud in the history of Hellenism. We begin from southern Mesopotamia.

Seleucia. Great and important was Seleucia on the Tigris. Built by Seleucus Nicator, it grew bigger than Babylon and

replaced it as the metropolis of Babylonia and Assyria (Strabo, 16, 738). According to Josephus (Jewish Antiquities, 18, 1, 8) it was a great city, built by Nicator and inhabited by mostly Greeks including many Macedonians. It maintained its Greek identity for centuries. After the Seleucid state was dissolved, it became the capital of the Parthian kings according to Dion Kassios (M, 16, 20). Pliny estimates its population at 600,000.<sup>185</sup> It was an autonomous city like almost all Greek colonies of the Hellenistic era in Syria, Palestine, Mesopotamia and Asia Minor.

Opposite Seleucia on the other side of the Tigris laid Ctesiphon. Greek city (Josephus, Jewish Antiquities, 18, 9, 9) built by Macedonians (Procopius, The Persian War, B, 28).

Apamea. Greek city also built by Seleucus Nicator. Built where the rivers Tigris and Euphrates meet in the land called Messene (Droysen, p. 709)

Artemita. Greek city (Isidorus of Charax, Parthian Stations, p. 2)

Diadochoupolis. Located not far from Ctesiphon.

Zenodotion. Greek city according to Dion Kassios (M, 12,).

Sittaki. City near Ctesiphon inhabited by Greeks (Pliny, VI (28), 132, "oppidum Graecorum").

Antioch. Located between the Tigris and Tirma (Theophanes vol. A, p. 492 pub. Bonn) outside the eastern boundaries of Mesopotamia.

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<sup>185</sup> Pliny, VI. (30) 122, Iul. Capil. Ve. VIII.



Appolonia. Located east of Seleucia towards the border of Medea. (Droysen, p. 634).

Hala. Greek city (Isidorus of Charax, Parthian Stations, p. 2).

Laodikea near Seleucia (Pliny, VI. 26).

Seleucia by the Edofonti river. Big city according to Strabo (16, 734), outside the boundaries of Mesopotamia.

Even Babylon, the city that rose to the clouds in political glory and strength became a Greek city inhabited by Greeks according to Josephus (13, 5, 11) “*they kept sending embassies to Demetrius promising to fight on his side against Arsakes the Parthian king.*” From this passage it can be inferred that it was also autonomous as most Greek colonies in Syria and Mesopotamia.

Alexandria in Babylonia. Built by Alexander the Great to the south of Babylon according to Droysen (p. 630) where he settled veteran Greek mercenaries (Arrian, 7, 21, 7).

Alexandria Charax by the Persian Gulf. Settled by veteran soldiers of Alexander. Their assembly was called Pelleon (named after Alexander’s hometown) following Alexander’s orders.

Even the islets in the Persian Gulf were settled by Alexander, taking Greek names. Ithaca, Cassandra, Alexander’s Island (also known as Arakia).

Moving on to middle and upper Mesopotamia, according to Pliny the Macedonians were the first to build cities whereas before the country only had small towns and villages. Truly except for one or two older Aramaean cities, all the rest were built by the Greeks. Thanks to the Greeks and the Greek cities, the formerly inaccessible land, traversed only

by large armies and great convoy escorts, became accessible. It was developed and united Syria and Mesopotamia.

From north to west the first Greek city we find is Apamea. On the east bank of the Euphrates, across the Greek city in Syria called Zeugma. The name Zeugma tells us that there was a bridge over the Euphrates uniting Syria and Mesopotamia. Apamea was big and powerful with walls stretching for 12 kilometers. Both cities were built by Seleucus Nicator. Near Apamea was Seleucia on the Euphrates, also known as Seleucia by the Zeugma (Polybius, E, 43). Built like the others by Seleucus Nicator, it was a fortress in quite a deserted area (Strabo, 16, 749).

To the south of them, not far from the banks of the Euphrates was Anthemousias, also known as Charax Spasion. Built by Macedonians (Tacitus Annales VI, 41) it took its name from the surrounding area (Strabo, 16, 748 and Ptolemy, E, 18, 4).

South of the city of Anthemousias but in the same area was the city of Vatne (Isidorus of Charax, Parthian Stations, p. 3). Ammianus Marcellinus clearly states that it was a Greek city (XIV, 33) "*municipum in Anthemusia conditum Macedonum manu proscorum*". Also, the Emperor Julian in his letter to Libanius (27, pub. Hertlein, vol. 1, p. 317) calls Vatne "Greek village with a barbarian name".

South of Vatne was the city of Ihne. Greek city built by Macedonians (Isidorus of Charax, Parthian Stations, p. 1), named after the cities with the same name in Macedonia and Thessaly.

Further to the south was Nicephorion. Greek city built by Alexander the Great (Isidorus of Charax, Parthian Stations, p. 3/ Pliny VI, 26/ Dion Kassios, 40, 13/ Diodorus, 19, 91).

South of Nicephorion was the city of Europos. Built by Macedonians and named after the city in Emathia, Macedonia or the one in upper Syria. Its founder was Seleukus Nicator. The locals used to call it Doura on the Euphrates to differentiate it from the one on the Tigris (east of the river and therefore outside the boundaries of Mesopotamia).

Near Nicephorion and Europos was the Greek city Callinikon, built by Seleucus II (Chronicon Paschale, pub. Bonn, p. 330).<sup>186</sup>

Edessa and Nisibis. Edessa was a famed city founded by Alexander the Great and expanded by Seleucus Nicator, named after the capital of ancient Macedonia. It was also called Antioch the “Mixobarbarian”, possibly after its expansion by Seleucus<sup>187</sup> or Callirrhoe (or Antioch on Callirrhoe) after the water source found there (Pliny V, 24 “Edessam quae quondam Antiochia dicebatur, Callirrhoem a fonte nominatam”).<sup>188</sup> The characterization “mixobarbarian” tells us that in Edessa there was a great mixture of Greeks and locals from the beginning. This is also very likely, since as we know later it became a small independent state whose rulers through Greek letters

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<sup>186</sup> Droysen and Kiepert both come to the conclusion that Callinikon was the same city as Nicephorion.

<sup>187</sup> This is the opinion of Droysen (p. 707). Seleucus built Antioch the mixobarbarian close to the Greek city built by Alexander. Shortly thereafter the two were merged and Antioch the mixobarbarian gave Edessa its name.

<sup>188</sup> From the name Callirrhoe came later the Arab name of Roha for the city. That name was paraphrased by the Turks to Orfa. Kiepert (p. 156) the name Orfa does not come from Callirrhoe but from the pre-Greek name Urhe and Osroe. Others think that the name Osroe came from the first ruler of the country (Procopius, Persian War, D, 17). Even the name Osroe, Kiepert thinks its short for the Persian name Hosroe, while others think it comes from the Syrian Osroe (Saint-Martin, Histoire des Arsacides, vol. 1, p. 104).

created and promoted Syrian or Aramaean Christian literature. As it was mentioned earlier, in Edessa there was the famous Greek School (later on called Persian) that was shut down in 489 AD by Emperor Zeno and reopened by the Syrians in Persian occupied Nisibis.

Nisibis. Greek city built by Seleucus. Also known as Antiochia Mygdonia after the name of the entire northeast region of Mesopotamia which in turn was named after Mygdonia in Macedonia. Nisibis like Edessa was a Greek and barbarian city. It became home to Grecosyrian education after its relocation there of the school of Edessa.

However, Nisibis was more often occupied by the Persians than controlled by the Greeks and after the 7<sup>th</sup> century AD it was captured by the Arabs. In time it got alienated from Hellenism, unlike Edessa which until the 7<sup>th</sup> century was always a Byzantine city and even during the Arab occupation it maintained its Greek character. After the 10<sup>th</sup> century when Edessa, just like Antioch, was retaken by the Greeks, it rejuvenated and maintained Hellenism and during the Crusades it was practically a Greek city. In Byzantine times its Greek character is proven by its loyalty to the Greek state during the 6<sup>th</sup> century Persian wars of Justinian and the sympathy shown to Greek populations of cities captured by the Persians, especially Antioch. Also, while the city had surrendered to the Persians, after time the people of Edessa overpowered the barbarian guards of the city and gave it to the Romans (Procopius, Persian War, B, 12). This seems to have happened before the schism between the Orthodox and the Monophysite Aramaeans. But even after this schism, when center of the Aramaeans became Nisibis, Edessa remained loyal to the Greek state in the war between Justinian I and Hosroe I (541-546 AD). The people of Edessa, including the priests fought bravely alongside Justinian's soldiers, attempting an exodus from

the walls and fighting in organized lines. This wouldn't be able to happen if there was a numerous Aramaean population, as Aramaeans were always friendly to the Persians. As for the sympathy shown towards the captured Antiochians by the Persians, Procopius states that (Procopius, Persian War, B, 13) the people of Edessa, of all professions, collected a lot of gold and silver to buy their freedom.

But as we said earlier, in the beginning Edessa was "mixobarbarian" and had an Aramaean population as well. In Christian times, at least before 489 AD (when the Greek or Persian school of the Aramaeans was shut down) the city was bilingual and both Greek and Aramaic was spoken. Signs of this double language we find in the local names in the city. *Tripyrgian* (Procopius, Persian War, B, 7) and *Antiforon* (Procopius, Persian War, B, 7) but also the names for two city gates, Siinas (Procopius, Persian War, B, 27) and Varlau which are not Greek names but probably Aramaic.

### *Other Greek cities in Mesopotamia*

Amongst the Greek cities of Mesopotamia notable in the history of Hellenism in the region is Carrhae. This city used to be the ancient Aramaean Harran, one of the few cities in the country before Greek colonization. It became completely Hellenic through Macedonian colonization (Dion Kassios, 37, 5). Carrhae maintained its Hellenism even during the Arab times, becoming a center of Greek education in Mesopotamia and the caliphate.

Nicephorion by Edessa. Known in Byzantine times with the name Constantina according to Stephanus of Byzantium. Procopius mentions it often in his history of the Persian wars. One time he even refers to its buildings (Procopius, *The Persian War*, B, 5).

The famous fortress Daras on the Greek-Persian border. Named by Emperor Anastasius I as Anastasiopolis or Anastasioupolis. It was thought to have been founded by Alexander. According to Malala, that is where Alexander captured Darius (Malala, p. 399, pub. Bonn).

Another city in Mygdonia of Mesopotamia was Alexandria (Pliny, 13) also known as Alexandriana.

According to Pliny (VI, 27, 117), in the interior of Mesopotamia, in the midst of Arabs living in tents, was Antioch the Arab built by the governor of Mesopotamia, Nicator. Near this city there were also the cities of Diospagi, Polyteleia, Stratonicea and Anthemus. Unknown if the latter was the same as the one mentioned earlier.

Besides cities, rivers are mentioned with Greek names that have replaced the Aramaic ones. The river formerly known as Valihos (Malihos=king) or Velis or Velias or Valiassos (from Vel=lord), was renamed Vasileios (king in Greek). Daisan became Skirtos. Zavas or Zavates became Lycos.

In Hellenistic and early Roman times, Mesopotamia was completely Hellenized. Even without the ancient local people being completely assimilated in terms of language, Mesopotamia was a Greek land from a perspective of material strength, wealth, culture and political status. According to Dion Kassios: *“Of the Macedonians and the other Greeks who had fought alongside them, their many colonists were suffering from the Parthians and they were placing their hopes on the Romans as philhellenes.”*

*The political status of the Greek cities in  
Mesopotamia, Syria and Palestine*

Summarizing about the Greek cities of Mesopotamia we conclude their great importance in the Hellenization of the country, especially upper Mesopotamia, since there were almost no cities there before Greek colonization. Their importance in the life of this country, just like the Greek cities in Syria and Palestine, is great if we consider that most of them were autonomous. In other words, these cities along with their surrounding areas constituted their own state, not at all hindered (except periodically as in the cities of Palestine who succumbed to the force and strength of the Jewish state) through the centuries, in the development of their national, political and cultural life, by the surrounding nations, rulers, kings or tetrarchs.

This independence of the Greek cities was the reason and the requirement of their rapid development because that was the only way to easily attract colonists from mainland Greece. The Seleucid kings considered the Jews that were scattered in Syria and Mesopotamia to be a hard-working element, useful in the development of commerce and industry in the cities. Thus, they allowed them to settle in the cities that they were building or improving and expanding, giving them equality with the Greeks. But in these cities the Jews never had supremacy. On the contrary, they were a minority exposed to bloody persecution as in Damascus and other cities. This autonomy made these cities practically independent states and even in later centuries they had favorable protection by the Romans. Treaties with the local kings of Syria included special provisions in favor

of the cities.<sup>189</sup> Even the Parthians who after the 2<sup>nd</sup> century AD conquered parts of Mesopotamia, respected the autonomy of the Greek cities. The cities, however, seem to have considered their autonomy safer under Roman rule and preferred it over Parthian rule.

When in the middle of the 2<sup>nd</sup> century BC the Jews with their victorious revolt against the Seleucids became free and created a new Jewish state or kingdom, the Greek cities of Palestine became subjugated to it and in the beginning, it appears they were oppressed by it. Shortly thereafter however they all became free and formed the notable federation of Decapolis which aimed at the maintenance of the autonomy of the Greek cities in northeastern Palestine against the surrounding kings and tetrarchs.

When Syria became a Roman province, the Greek cities under the rule of the Roman proconsul in Syria maintained their autonomy and as we saw after the death of Herod the Great, when in Archelaus's inheritance fell Greek cities, they acted to break away from his state and to come under the rule of the Roman proconsul of Syria. This autonomy under the Romans was maintained throughout imperial times and until the end of the 4<sup>th</sup> century AD. Especially at the time of Emperor Julian the Greek cities were

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<sup>189</sup> It appears that the cities paid tribute to the local kings or rulers, but it is not clear if that was always and everywhere the case (Polybius, 22, 78). The cities were also protected from foreign intervention through the right of asylum which was also often connected with the attribute of holy. "Holy and asylum" or holy and autonomous". The honorary title of metropolis (very common especially in Palestine) did not have an administrative meaning nor did it mean they were the capital of a province. It was just an honorary title for the autonomous city in relation to the region that constituted their autonomous state. As it has been mentioned, each of the Greek cities of Syria, Palestine and Mesopotamia had its own coins and its own calendar even though the Seleucid calendar was in common use which even the Jewish Hellenist Josephus used.



autonomous, with their own governmental institutions and their own assembly which decided on everything. But from the beginning of the 5<sup>th</sup> century, the administrative decisions of the government in Constantinople were aimed at absorbing them. The Theodosian code and later the Justinian laws slowly brought the dissolution of autonomy and the political and administrative absorption of the people of the cities by the people of the country.

This autonomy of the cities that lasted for centuries contributed greatly to the development of a great cultural Greek life and especially the cultivation of Greek letters. So, it's time to specifically discuss this as it clearly shows the great strength of Hellenism's presence in Syria, Palestine and Mesopotamia, especially through the great number of men who represented Greek education, philosophy, literature and every other science in those lands. These eminent men either in their own countries or at the great cultural centers of the Greco-Roman world gave glory and glamour to Hellenism of these lands and established its cultural dominance.

*The cultural strength of Hellenism,  
(Greek literature)  
in Syria, Palestine and Mesopotamia.  
The Greek writers of these lands.*

This chapter of the history of Greek letters, i.e. the history of Greek literature that thrived in Syria, Palestine and Mesopotamia proves above else the complete Hellenization of those lands. From a cultural perspective it is divided into

two parts. Non-Christian and Christian literature. The non-Christian literature is further divided in two periods. The period before Jesus or before the time of Augustus, that is the time before the complete conquest by the Romans. A period known as Hellenistic or Alexandrian. And the period after Jesus, that is the Greco-Roman period.

In both periods of pre-Christian literature, the entire cultural life of these lands (except for Judea) was exclusively Greek. All education and literature (partially even by the Jews with the adoption of Greek form and language) were Greek. Besides Hellenism no other power existed besides the national life, national identity and national religion of the Jews.

All the famous cities of these lands, Antioch, Damascus, Tyre, Edessa, Carrhae, Seleucia became centers of Greek letters. Especially the Greek schools of Antioch and Tyre competed with the schools of Athens. Those schools, as in Athens, trained great minds of all kinds of writers, philosophers, orators, sophists, historians, geographers, mathematicians, astronomers. Not all the names of those men who were distinguished in Greek letters have been preserved. Of their works, even less have survived. However, even just those names of writers and their works, partial or entire that have been passed on to us, prove the cultural influence of Hellenism in these lands. They demonstrate that from a population perspective and cultural impact, it was truly an Asiatic Greece. A *Magna Grecia* of the Hellenistic and Greco-Roman times.

The names of the men who represent the non-Christian education and literature are listed below. Not in a chronological order but alphabetical in each of the two periods.

## *Hellenistic or Alexandrian Period*

Aithiops from Ptolemais. Student of Aristippus the younger, grandson of the founder of the school of Cyrene, the so-called “mother taught”. He lived around the end of the 3<sup>rd</sup> century BC. (Diogenes Laertius, B, Lives of Philosophers, 2, 8, 7).

Antiochus of Ascalon. Philosopher of the Academy of Athens. He was a student of Philo of Larisa and Mnesarchus the Stoic. He was a great reformer of philosophy as he fought against the movement of the *New Academy* and founded the school of the Eclectic. Through the specification of the common principles of all philosophical systems he aimed to unite all schools in the Academy and to steer it away for Skepticism. Teaching in Athens, he had as students the famous Roman philosophers Marcus Terentius Varro and Cicero. The latter very respectfully mentions him (nobillissimum et prudentissimum philosophum) as a famous and intelligent philosopher of the old Academy.

Because of his great reforming actions, he came into conflict with many of his peers including his teacher, Philo. He wrote many treatises, argumentative, the most important one against his teacher. Some of the titles of his works were “Sosos”, “On the gods”, “Canonica”, a treatise on the agreement between the Stoics and the Peripatics and many others. It is also hypothesized that he wrote about Logic and Physics.<sup>190</sup>

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<sup>190</sup> Franz Susemihl, Geschichte der Griech. Litterat. In der Alexandrin Zeit. II 288.

Most philosophical works of Cicero are full of ideas of Antiochus. This source has proven so varied, multifaceted and rich that modern philologists believe that Antiochus had included in a great treatise the opinions of Greek philosophers who had written on the subject.

It is also worth noting that this great Greek philosopher had criticized Zeno, the great founder of the Stoic school of philosophy, for using the Phoenician language (As we know Zeno was from Kition of Cyprus where the population was a mixture of Greek and Phoenicians).

Antiochus, as many of the philosophers of the time due to their relations to great Romans (in his case Lucullus and Cicero), was actively involved in politics, acting on several occasions as an ambassador to Rome and following Lucullus in his Asian campaign.

Antipater of Sidon. Poet with many of his inscriptions surviving to this day in the *Greek anthology*. He was characterized by his brilliant and rich expressive style. He lived in the middle of the 2<sup>nd</sup> century BC.

Antipater of Tyre. Stoic philosopher of the 1<sup>st</sup> century BC. He was friends with Cato the younger (Plutarch, Lives, Cato the younger). He died in Athens where he taught. He wrote many works of which “On duties” and “On the Cosmos” are mentioned by other writers. Antipater is also mentioned by Strabo (16, 757).

Antipater of Damascus. Father of the famous Nicholaos of Damascus. Orator, contemporary to Octavian. He is mentioned by Dion the Chrysostom.

Apollodorus of Artemita of Assyria. Lived approximately at the same time as Strabo. Historiographer. He wrote the history book “Parthian”, in which he also talks about the

history of the Greek state of Bactria until the time of King Eucratides.

Apollonius the senior of Antioch. Doctor and philosopher, he belonged to the school of the so-called Empiricals. He is known for his writings against Zeno, the doctor and philosopher of the school of Herophilos. He lived in the beginning of the 2<sup>nd</sup> century BC.

Apollonius the younger. Son of the above mentioned. Doctor and philosopher as well. Associate of his father in their scientific argument against Zeno.

Apollonius of Ascalon. Historiographer probably from the 1<sup>st</sup> century BC.

Apollonius of Ptolemais. Philosopher of the 2<sup>nd</sup> century BC, student of Panaetius.

Apollophanes of Seleucia (on the Tigris). Doctor in the court of King Antiochus III the Great. He followed the king in his campaigns. He belonged to the school of Erasistrateon (Named after its founder Erasistatus). He was the inventor of medicines and author of “Theriaka”. He lived around the end of the 3<sup>rd</sup> century and the beginning of the 2<sup>nd</sup> century BC.

Aristus of Ascalon. Stoic philosopher. Brother of Antiochus of the Academy and friend of Brutus the younger.

Aristus of Coele Syria, son of Iamblichus.

Aristus of Gerasa of Palestine. Orator according to Stephanus of Byzantium in his discussion of Gerasa.

Artemidoros of Ascalon. Historian who wrote about Bithynia. Unknown when exactly he lived.

Arhias of Antioch. Poet contemporary of Cicero. He became famous after the great orator's speech in his favor (Pro Archia poeta). 60 of his inscriptions survived to this day in the Greek Anthology.

Boethos of Sidon. Peripatic philosopher. Fellow student of Strabo. He gained great fame from his notes on Aristotle's works. He taught in Rome.

Boethos of Sidon. Great Stoic philosopher of the middle of the 2<sup>nd</sup> century BC. He introduced eclecticism in Stoic philosophy which he reformed and rejected the introduced theory of Chrysippus. He replaced it with the *mind and science* as the source of knowledge followed by the *senses* and *appetite*.

Boethos of Ptolemais of Phoenicia. Peripatic philosopher (Fabric. Bibliotheca Graeca III 480).

Geminus of Tyre. Interpreter of dreams according to Artemidorus (II, 44). Author of three books on dreams, medicinal recipes and therapies.

Demetrius of Syria. Teacher of oratory in Athens where Cicero practiced and from whom we know about Demetrius.

Diogenes of Seleucia, known Babylonian because of that. Famous Stoic philosopher, son of Artemidorus and student of the Stoic Chrysippus. He taught in the middle of the 2<sup>nd</sup> century BC in Athens as the person in charge of the Stoic school, following Zeno of Tarsus in that role. From his position he took an active part in the political life of Athens. He was one of the three ambassadors sent to Rome for a resolution to the matter of Oropos. He authored many philosophical books, most noteworthy being "Dialectic Art", "On the Ruling Faculty of the Soul", "On Laws", "On

Athena” and “On Speaking”. Cicero talked a lot about Diogenes’s treatises.

Diogenes of Ptolemais. Stoic philosopher, thought to have lived in the middle of the 2<sup>nd</sup> century BC.

Diogenes the Epicurian of Seleucia.

Diodotus of Sidon. Peripatic philosopher and brother of Boethos the Peripatic. (Strabo, 16, 757).

Diodorus of Tyre. Peripatic philosopher who taught in Athens around the end of the 2<sup>nd</sup> century BC. He had a tendency towards eclecticism and sought to combine Aristotelian, Stoic and Epicurian ethics (Susemihl, I, p. 154).

Dionysius of Sidon. Lived in the middle part of the 1<sup>st</sup> century BC. Focused on grammatical rules and increasing their number. Known for his disagreement with the great Aristarchus.

Diotimos of Tyre. Philosopher and follower of the system of Democritus. Unknown when exactly in the Hellenistic period he lived.

Difilos of Laodikea. Grammarian.

Dorotheos of Ascalon. Grammarian and author of dictionaries. Unknown if he lived in the Alexandrian or Roman period.

Dorotheos of Sidon. Grammarian.

Dorotheos of Chaldea. He wrote about rocks.

Euphranor of Seleucia. Sceptic philosopher and author but nothing has survived of his work.

Zenodorus of Tyre. Philosopher of the Academy of the middle of the 2<sup>nd</sup> century BC.

Zeno of Sidon. Great Epicurean philosopher of the end of the 2<sup>nd</sup> century and beginning of the 1<sup>st</sup> century BC. He taught in Athens. Present in his audience were an elderly Cicero and the famous Pomponius Atticus (around 79 BC). Zeno stood out amongst all the philosophers in his school for the depth of his thought, the richness of his ideas, their value and beauty of them. He is considered the pinnacle of the Epicureans and opponent of the Academy philosophers. Nevertheless, he was admired by them too, even though he argued against the theories of their great leader Carneades. He partially corrected the “Canon” of Epicurus, introduced new theories and developed further Aristotelian theories (Susemihl, II, 261). Prolific writer, compared in that capacity to Aristotle. His works were read and utilized by Cicero in his written work. From the many books he wrote only his criticism on the deduction from fundamental mathematical principles is known and that based on his lectures his student Philodemus wrote some of his books.

Zeno of Sidon. Stoic philosopher of the 3<sup>rd</sup> century BC, son of Musaeus and student of the great Zeno the founder of the Stoic school.

Heraclitus of Tyre. Philosopher of the Academy and friend of the previously mentioned Antiochus of Ascalon, student of Philo of Larisa. None of his written works have survived.

Isidorus of Charax of Mesopotamia. Geographer. Contemporary of Strabo. His work was utilized by Pliny the elder. His work “Parthian Stations” has survived to this day.

Meleager of Gadara. Previously mentioned Cynic philosopher, inscription writer and collector of inscriptions. He is the first to ever compile an inscription collection, an



anthology, which he named “Garland of inscriptions”. He composed many inscriptions, many of which survive to this day. For his style of writing modern scholars named him “the Greek Ovidius”. All his inscriptions strictly follow the metric rules. He lived in the 1<sup>st</sup> century BC.

Menippos of Gadara. Mentioned earlier in the book when we talked about the city of Gadara. Famous Stoic philosopher. He featured as a main character in Lucian’s satirical “Dialogues of the Dead”. Satirical writer himself, he had many imitators, including Meleager and Varro.

Mithres of Syria. Unknown of which city or part of Syria. Philosopher and officer in the court of Lysimachus (3<sup>rd</sup> century BC). One of the first students and disciples of Epicurus. Besides letters addressed to him by Epicurus, the great philosopher also dedicated to him the book “Opinions about Diseases and Death”.

Mnaseas of Tyre. Philosopher of the Academy and student of Antiochus of Ascalon. He lived in the 1<sup>st</sup> century BC.

Nicholaos of Damascus. Author of many books, historian, philosopher of the Peripatetic school, poet, orator, mathematician, musician and natural historian. Son of the forementioned Antipater. Secretary of the King of Judea, Herod the Great. He maintained his position till the death of the king and from his position he came to know and become friends with Augustus. Nicholaos as a poet he wrote both tragedies and comedies but not even their titles have survived. As a philosopher he wrote a treatise “On Aristotelian Philosophy” which was composed of many books. As a natural historian he wrote two books entitled “History of Plants”, one book titled “Synopsis of the History of Animals” and a book about meteorites. As a historian, besides the history of Augustus, of which large

parts have survived and the history of Herod the Great of which nothing has survived but Josephus quotes often, he also wrote a great history work composed of 144 books. Parts of the first seven books have survived which refer to the history up to the point of the foundation of the Persian state. Very little survived of his books 8 to 95. He also wrote a treatise on the “Metaphysics” of Aristotle and various psychological and philosophical works. Finally, he authored his own autobiography.

Oenomaus of Gadara. Cynic philosopher and author. He wrote various philosophical treatises on the principles of his school of philosophy. Most famous being “On Cynicism”, “On Philosophy According to Homer”, “Republic” and “Detection of Deceivers”. Of all his works only of the last one a great part has been preserved by Eusebius.

Ptolemy of Ascalon. Famous grammarian of the 2<sup>nd</sup> century BC. Most notable of all grammarians that lived before Herodianus. He taught in Rome and authored many works, amongst them a criticism on the grammatical system of Cratetos, treatises on the Odyssey and the Iliad, on the differences of words and many more.

Seleucus of Emesa. Historian. Unknown when he lived or what he wrote about, but he is considered to belong to the Alexandrian period of Greek letters.

Serapis of Antioch. Famous mathematician and geographer, opponent of Eratosthenes. He lived probably towards the end of the 2<sup>nd</sup> and beginning of the 1<sup>st</sup> century BC. Definitely earlier than Cicero who in 59 BC read Serapis’s geography book, sent to him by Pomponius Atticus and according to Cicero himself he wasn’t able to understand even the tiniest fraction of it as it was so incomprehensible (Cicero Epist. Ad Atticus II, 4, 1).

Serapis of Ascalon. Decipherer of dreams. Unknown when exactly he lived but he is listed amongst the authors of Alexandrian literature.

Strato of Beirut. Doctor, friend and student of Erasistratus the leader of the Erasistratian school. He lived in the early 2<sup>nd</sup> century BC. He wrote many books on medicinal therapies (Galen, 11, 1697, pub. Kuhn. “Strato it appears from his books treated patients without phlebotomy”) and explanations of difficult parts of the work of Hippocrates.

Sosos of Ascalon. Stoic philosopher and student of Panaetius. Well respected by Antiochus of Ascalon.

Philodemos of Gadara. Famous Epicurean philosopher, student of Zeno of Sidon. He lived and taught most of his life in Rome, respected by the Roman aristocracy and praised by Cicero. He was a prolific author, but only small fragments have survived. He wrote 10 books on the history of the different philosophical schools, 4 books on music, books on vices and virtues, on honest criticism, on anger, on poetry, on gods, on the good king according to Homer, on death, on charity, on wealth, on speech, on the senses, on phenomena, on learning and others. He was also the author of inscriptions of which 24 have survived to this day.

Philo of Tyre, also known as Antas. Inscription writer. Son of Antipater of Tyre that was mentioned earlier. He lived in the second half of the 2<sup>nd</sup> century BC.

Philo of Byblos. Geographer and historian. Admiral in the service of Ptolemy I of Egypt. He is thought to have been the first to transport topaz from the Red Sea to the Indian Ocean in a journey that he described in his “Ethiopian” book. Besides his geographic description of Aswan and Meroe he also wrote many astronomical observations which were later utilized by the famous Eratosthenes. He lived

around the end of the 4<sup>th</sup> and beginning of the 3<sup>rd</sup> century BC.

Phevos of Antioch. Decipherer of dreams much reputed in later times.<sup>191</sup>

### *Roman Period*

Adrian of Tyre. Great orator and sophist, student of Herod Atticus. He studied and taught in Athens and managed to climb up the hierarchy of teachers in the city to the point where he was financially supported by the emperor, receiving from the imperial coffers a salary of 10000 drachmas. He lived in the middle of the 2<sup>nd</sup> century AD during the reign of Emperor Marcus Aurelius who honored him greatly and invited him to Rome. There he taught and according to Philostratus, his oratory attracted and was loved even by people who did not speak Greek. He died in

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<sup>191</sup> This catalogue does not include the Jewish Hellenizing authors of Palestine of the Alexandrian period. Best known of them were: Aristeeas who in the 2<sup>nd</sup> century BC wrote a book on the history of the Jews. Eupolemos who wrote "About the kings in Judea". Kleodemos of Samaria, also known as Malhos who wrote a paradoxical history of Jewish and Greek traditions. Ezekiel (2<sup>nd</sup> century BC), author of tragedies with their subjects derived from Jewish history. Of his works only a part of the one titled "Exodus" has survived, with its story being the exodus of the Jews from Egypt. Philo who composed an epic poem of the history of Jerusalem, (2<sup>nd</sup> century BC). Theodotos of Samaria (2<sup>nd</sup> century BC), who wrote the epic history of Shechem of which 47 lines have survived. Ioannes Hyrcanus the chief priest (135-105 BC) who wrote a book about his days in priesthood leadership. Also, in the Alexandrian period (end of the 4<sup>th</sup> and beginning of the 3<sup>rd</sup> century) belongs the Babylonian with the Persian name Hellenizing historian Berossus.

Rome when emperor was Commodus who had appointed him director of the imperial Greek office.

Acacius of Caesarea of Palestine. Sophist who lived around the same time as Libanius (4<sup>th</sup> century AD). He is mentioned in Eunapius's work "Lives of Philosophers and Sophists".

Anatolius of Beirut. He lived in the 4<sup>th</sup> century AD. According to Eunapius "He loved glory and words. He had studied law and rose to high offices in Rome. While in Athens he was greatly honored".

Andromachos of Neapolis of Palestine. Sophist who rose to fame during the reign of Emperor Diocletian (end of the 3<sup>rd</sup> century AD).

Damascius. One of the survivors of the dissolution of the Neoplatonic school of Athens. He was the last principal administrator of that school. He wrote "Difficulties and Solutions of the First Principles" in regards to Plato Parmenides and notes on Aristotle. He also wrote the biography of his predecessor in the school of Athens, Isidorus. Damascius was the last notable man of the ancient non-Christian world and the last one who was able to attract to Athens and educate brilliant philosophers. He was the final brilliant twilight of pagan Hellenism as it was setting below the horizon.

Dionysius of Sidon. Grammarian of the 1<sup>st</sup> century AD.

Dionysius of Antioch. Letter writer of the 5<sup>th</sup> century AD.

Diophantus of the Hellenized Arabs of Palestine. Famous sophist and teacher in Athens in the 4<sup>th</sup> century AD. Fellow student and competitor of Prohaeresius, for whom he recited his epitaph.

Epiphanius of Syria. Famous sophist and teacher in Athens at the same period as Diophantus and Prohaeresius.

Hermippus of Beirut. By birth a slave he managed to gain his freedom and become an intellectual in the 2<sup>nd</sup> century AD. He wrote the treatise “On Famous Slaves in Education”.

Theodoros of Gadara. Great orator of the 1<sup>st</sup> century AD. He became a teacher of Emperor Tiberius and later taught in Rhodes. He became the leader of his own oratory school.

Theophilus of Gaza. Probably lived in the 5<sup>th</sup> century AD and is known for writing the epic poem “About Indian Animals” in hexameter poetic style.

Iamblichus of Syria (that is Hellenized of Syrian ancestry). Well known author of novels who lived in the 2<sup>nd</sup> century AD. He wrote the “Babylonian” which described in 35 books the amazing adventures of Rodanus and Sion.

Iamblichus of Chalcis of Coele Syria, the famous Neoplatonic philosopher. He wrote many books of which the following have survived to this day: “On the Pythagorean Way of Life”, “Exhortation to the Study of Philosophy”, “On General Mathematical Science”, “Introduction to Nicomachus’s Arithmetics” and “On the Mysteries”.

Ioannes of Gaza. Geographer and poet who wrote in hexameter the “Expression of the Cosmos” in two books. A few inscriptions of his also remain. He is thought to have lived in the 5<sup>th</sup> century AD.

Ioannes of Epiphaneia of Syria. Historiographer who lived in the 7<sup>th</sup> century AD, relative of Evagrius.

Libanius of Antioch. Prolific author of the 4<sup>th</sup> century AD. He was a teacher of Basil, Gregory, Julian and even John Chrysostom in his old age. He studied in Athens and taught in Constantinople, Nicomedia and finally in Antioch.

Longinus the Athenian. Orator and philosopher of the 3<sup>rd</sup> century AD. Eunapius called him “living library” and “walking museum”. He can be added to the men of Syria and Palestine representing Greek letters as he was from Palmyra and a senior advisor to the famous Zenobia. His name is bound to the history of both Zenobia and Palmyra.

Lucian of Samosata of Syria. He lived in the 2<sup>nd</sup> century AD and became a very well-known prolific writer, using a very sarcastic Greek language.

Magnus of Antioch beyond the Euphrates (Nisibis). He lived in the 4<sup>th</sup> century AD. Eunapius talks about him as being a healer and an orator. Influenced by Aristotle’s theories on the nature of bodies. He is also said to have lived and taught in Alexandria.

Malhus of Philadelphia of Palestine. Historian of the 5<sup>th</sup> century AD.

Marinus of Tyre. Geographer who became famous during the reign of Trajan, in the early part of the 2<sup>nd</sup> century AD. He was a precursor of the great Ptolemy who spoke highly of him in the introduction of his Geography with an entire chapter dedicated to him.

Maximus of Tyre. Notable philosopher of the mid-2<sup>nd</sup> century AD. Of his many lectures some have survived. “About Pleasure”, “About Love”, “the End of Philosophy”, “On the Genius of Socrates” and others.

Paul of Tyre. Orator who lived in the 3rd century AD. Some of his works were “The entire Paul” and “The Statue of Oratory”.

Pausanias of Damascus or Antioch. Historiographer who wrote the history of Antioch in many books which are often quoted by the chronographer John Malalas. Unknown when he lived but definitely in the first centuries AD.

Porfyrius of Tyre. The famous Neoplatonic philosopher of the 3rd century AD. He was originally named Malhos (king). He was renamed as Porfyrius (he who wears purple, i.e. king) by his teacher Longinus. He was educated in Athens in grammar, oratory and philosophy and when in Rome he attended lectures by Plotinus. He was a prolific writer. Some of his works include: “About the life of Plotinus and the order of his books”, “Aids to the Study of the Ineligibles”, “Life of Pythagoras”, “Introduction to Aristotle’s Categories”, “Explanation of Aristotle’s Categories”, “Letter to Marcella” a letter to his wife encouraging her to virtue, “About the Cave of the Nymphs in the Odyssey”, “Homeric Questions”, “Against the Christians” and many others. He also wrote books of history that have not survived, which covered history up to the year 270 AD.

Procopius of Gaza.<sup>192</sup> Sophist of the 5<sup>th</sup> century AD and writer of speeches on various subjects.

Procopius of Caesarea of Palestine. The famous historian of the time of Justinian I and secretary of Belisarius.

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<sup>192</sup> Procopius like others that are mentioned here as belonging to the Roman period, belong to the first centuries of the Byzantine period and were also Christians.



Sergios of Emesa. Grammarian of the 5<sup>th</sup> century AD who wrote a book on the rules of Aelius Herodianus.

Sopatros of Apamea of Syria. Sophist and philosopher, author of “People who have Undeserved Good or Bad Fortune”.

Timotheus of Gaza. Grammarian of the 5<sup>th</sup> century who wrote the epic “About Amazing Animals” and “Rules of Syntax”.

Philo of Byblos. Grammarian of the 1<sup>st</sup> century AD who wrote many treatises such as, “On the Acquisition and Choice of Books” and “On Cities and their Famous Men”. Philo also translated into Greek the famous history of Phoenicia attributed to the mythical Sanchuniathon, of which fragments have survived.

Choricus of Gaza. Orator of the 5<sup>th</sup> century AD. He wrote many speeches on ethics, “Tyrant slayer”, “Greedy” etc.

Besides the pagan and Christian Greek writers that belong to the Roman period of Greek letters, there were many Hellenizing Jews from Syria and Palestine. Most notable:

Ioustos of Tiberias. Political adversary of Josephus in the 1<sup>st</sup> century AD. He wrote in Greek a chronicle of Jewish kings from Moses till the death of the last Jewish king, Agrippa II (100 AD).

Josephus. The renowned Hellenizing Jewish author.

Marinos of Neapolis of Palestine. Famous Neoplatonic philosopher who taught in Athens. He was Samaritan in ancestry and religion but converted to Judaism only to defect to Hellenism and Neoplatonic philosophy.

This was a brief listing of the Alexandrian and Roman times blossoming of Greek literature in Syria, Palestine and

Mesopotamia. The list does not include all the Greek writers who are presently known to come from those lands or who distinguished themselves there. To them we must add an unknown but certainly great number of other writers whose names were not preserved. All of Syria and Phoenicia and most of Palestine and Mesopotamia became during this time a sort of breeding ground of Greek philosophy, poetry, oratory, historiography, geography and all kinds of Greek literature. Greek letters were cultivated in Greek schools and science, mathematics, astronomy, medicine and the study of law were promoted.

These lands gave birth throughout the Alexandrian and Roman period to the most famous and knowledgeable men of Greek philosophy of a variety of systems and schools. They produced notable orators and sophists who studied the mystery of the beauty of the Greek language and made their life's work to perfectly use it in speech and writing. They studied in depth the Homeric epics. Historiographers, mathematicians, natural historians produced new treasures of Greek literature and gave humanity a new chapter of cultural development. Hellenism of Syria, Palestine and Mesopotamia reveals itself in all its glory in literary and physical monuments. It produced an Asiatic Greece by the Tigris and Euphrates that from every aspect was a worthy heir of classical Greece of olden times.

But the course of history made Hellenism of those lands completely local and created a new original Greece. It became the beginning of new Hellenic life which spread and prevailed because of its internal spiritual strength on European Greece. This new period of Hellenism is the Christian period which was began in Syria and Palestine and established Greek Antioch as the new center of Hellenism. As for Jewish Jerusalem, it transformed it in a

new center of Greek spiritual life. This new period will be discussed in detail in its own chapter.

**Chapter 8**  
***Greek Ecclesiastical Literature in  
Syria, Palestine and Mesopotamia  
as opposed to  
Aramaic Ecclesiastical Literature***

*The Ethnic Character of the Church in these countries*

Christianity in its historic substance and form was born in Palestine and Syria. Jerusalem is the birthplace and the beginning of the historic evolution of Christian teaching. It is the city of the first Church of the new faith, the Church of the Apostles. This faith was proclaimed in the Greek language and strongly contributed so that the new Christian Jerusalem to become Greek.<sup>193</sup> As for Antioch, the capital of Syria, the most Greek city of the East that included behind its walls hundreds of thousands of Greeks, the great and proud center of Greek life and culture in the East, the great school of Greek letters, of Greek philosophy and

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<sup>193</sup> Clem. David, arch. Syr. De Damas : La langue parlée par I. Christ Terre-sainte ler. Octobre 1888 p. « Depuis le temps le plus rapproché du berceau du Christianisme, nous voyons l'Eglise de Jérusalem s'helléniser : ses écrivains, sa liturgie, son histoire, ses monuments, ses rapports avec les autres Eglises, tout chez elle respire le Grec ou est purement Grec ».

oratory and of all Greek literature, it was the city that gave the teaching of the faith that originated from Jerusalem, its pure Greek character and form and its historic name, Christianity. In Antioch was founded the first Church with the name Christian by the Apostle of the nations, Paul.<sup>194</sup> The language of that Church was only Greek. Its founder, Apostle Paul, taught in Antioch in Greek, the language he used to write all of his letters. The evangelist Luke who accompanied Paul and author of one of the Gospels and the Acts of the Apostles, called Antioch his home.

The Greek character of that Church is described by Renan,<sup>195</sup> saying that the dominant (dominante) language in the city was Greek. However, he considers likely that members of this Church became from the beginning many who spoke Syrian and lived in the city's suburbs. He also conjectures that already from the time of the Apostles in Antioch there were the seeds of two competing to each other Churches which later became hostile. One which spoke Greek and was represented by the Greeks of Syria whether Orthodox or Catholic and one which today is represented by the Maronites which spoke Syrian and kept that language as their ecclesiastical language.<sup>196</sup> Renan is

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<sup>194</sup> John Chrysostom (Patrologia Graeca, Migne, vol. 2 p. 48, p. 176, vol. 7, p. 80, vol. 9, p. 192)

<sup>195</sup> E. Renan, *Les Apôtres*, Paris 1867 p. 183 « Certes Jérusalem restera à jamais la capitale religieuse du monde. Cependant le point de départ de l'Église des gentils, le foyer primordial des missions chrétiennes fut vraiment Antioche. C'est là que pour la première fois se constitua une Église Chrétienne éloignée de liens avec le judaïsme, c'est là que s'établit la grande propagande de l'âge apostolique ; c'est là que se forma définitivement Saint Paul. Antioche marque la seconde étapes progrès du christianisme. En fait de noblesse chrétienne ni Rome ni Alexandrie ni Constantinople seraient lui être compares ».

<sup>196</sup> E. Renan, *Les Apôtres*, Paris 1867 p. 185. « La langue dominante de l'Église d'Antioche était le Grec. Il est bien probable cependant que les faubourgs parlant syriaque donnèrent à la reste de nombreux adaptés.

correct in the first part of his opinion. The ancestry of the present day Orthodox and Greek Catholic of Syria is derived from the first Greek speaking Christians of Syria. However, his opinion is extremely debatable in the second part, about the ancestry of the Maronites of Lebanon from the Syrian or Aramaic speaking first Christians of Antioch and Syria.

That in Antioch lived at the time of the foundation of the first Christian Church, alongside the majority Greek and Greek speaking population, Syrians who spoke Syrian i.e. western Aramaic, that is partially true, because as we can see from John Chrysostom all the citizens of Antioch are presented as Greek speakers. But that the Aramaic speakers constituted a significant mass of population that lived in the suburbs as opposed to the main city that was inhabited by Greek and Greek speaking people, that does not appear to be accurate. According to the previously mentioned testimony by Libanius, the suburbs of Antioch were also beautiful, planned like the rest of the city and not differing in their love for beauty and refined way of life, especially when it came to festivals and pleasures. The fact that these suburbs had names considered to be Syrian in origin (Yisira, Harandama, Gandigoura, Apate) is not proof that they were inhabited by Syrians. The Syrians of Antioch constituted their own population and lived in their own quarter made up of poor people doing odd jobs, surviving by working for the Greeks as we will see further down.

No matter what the situation was for the Syrian or Aramaean population of Antioch and the rest of the Greek

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Déjà, par conséquent, Antioche renfermait le germe de deux Eglises rivales et plus tard ennemies, l'une parlant Grec, représentée maintenant par les grecs de Syrie, soit orthodoxes soit catholiques ; l'autre dont les représentants actuels sont les Maronites, ayant parlé autrefois le syriaque et le conservant encore comme langue sacrée ».

cities of Syria and Palestine, the truth is that in Antioch and the rest of Syria and Palestine only one language prevailed ecclesiastically from the beginning, since dogmatically there was only one Church before the Monophysite schism. That language was Greek. Similarly, there was only one ecclesiastical literature, Greek, since the population was mostly Greek. The Syrian language, as a language of the Church and Syrian ecclesiastical literature, prevailed and was used beyond the Euphrates, in Mesopotamia, just like Chaldean did, without however sidelining the Greek language and Greek ecclesiastical literature. Greek was cultivated after the schism by the Orthodox whether Greek or Greek speaking.

As for the Maronites of Lebanon that Renan mentions, (who he thinks are probably the last descendants of the native inhabitants of northern Syria before the Seleucid state was founded, who lived in the previously mentioned suburbs of Yisira, Harandama etc. and that their anthropological type is very similar to the present-day inhabitants of Antioch, which demonstrates their migration to Lebanon) it raises the question: Where did the author find that the ancestors of these Maronites lived in Antioch and made up the Syrian or Aramean people of the city, who formed their own Church already from the very early centuries and who were persecuted by the Orthodox emperors as heretics and fled to Lebanon? That the Maronite community in Lebanon was made up of various newcomers and refugees (non-Orthodox and non-Greeks of Syria) is considered true. It is also very likely that amongst these new settlers and refugees were many heretical Aramaeans from the area around Antioch. But what is not consistent with history is what Renan says that in the early centuries they made up their own Church in Syria especially in and around Antioch. The entire history of the Christian Church in Syria completely disproves this

hypothesis. There is not the slightest suggestion in this history about the existence of such a Church or of its founders or of any bishop or any servant of it.

From John Chrysostom we learn that the Christians of Syria differed in their language but were united in their faith to the Church. The existence of such a Syrian Church was impossible (which Renan seems to ignore) because the institutions of the Church did not allow for two Churches of different languages to exist in the same place. For the same reason in Mesopotamia where the Aramaean element was much stronger than in Syria, there was no separate Syrian (as it was called after the Monophysite schism) or Chaldean (as the Nestorian Church was called) Church. These special Churches came to be after schisms which were practically the result of ethnic differences and ended in a final ethnic separation. In the same way after a schism the Maronite Church was produced in the 8<sup>th</sup> century. It was made up of followers of Monothelitism, a heresy that came to be in the 7<sup>th</sup> century.

About the Maronite Church we will talk more later in the book. Now we need to return to the point where we deviated talking about the Maronites, that in Antioch and Syria the Church founded by the Apostles of Nations had Greek as its language and in its literature and always maintained its Greek character without having any Aramaean or Aramaic speaking branch or subdivision. Of course, the Maronite question in no way diminishes the truth of the theory of this book, that the present-day Orthodox of Syria and the Eastern Rites Catholics are Greek in ancestry and descendants of those belonging to the Greek Church of Antioch, since Renan also declares that as the historic truth. All the rest that was just mentioned in some detail has to do with the historic truth but nothing to do with the issue that we are examining. In addition, with what Renan says about



the Maronite Church he indirectly admits that only the heretics of Syria such as the Maronites, are considered descendants of the Aramaean Syrians and not the Orthodox.

Just like the ethnic Churches of the Syrians, Chaldeans and Maronites were produced by the schism and since then followed their historic path, the same goes for the ecclesiastical literature. Yes, in Mesopotamia and only in Mesopotamia, for the reasons we already mentioned, began in the 2<sup>nd</sup> century and especially in the 3<sup>rd</sup>, the development of Aramaic ecclesiastical literature in parallel to the Greek one, undivided in the loyalty to the entire and Orthodox Church of the country. This Aramaic literature has as writers, fathers of the Church, who are called Syrian by the origin of the language but are who are actually from Mesopotamia. Syrian or to be more scientifically accurate, Aramaic literature with its two branches, Chaldean and Syrian, after the schism of the 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> century becomes the possession and characteristic of the schismatic Churches of the Nestorians (or Chaldeans) and the Monophysites (or Jacobites or Syrians). After the schism no Orthodox father of the Church or ecclesiastical author appears to be writing in Aramaic. The entire history of ecclesiastical literature in Syria, Palestine and Mesopotamia serves as the undeniable proof of this. Ecclesiastical literature except for a few ancient literary monuments whose origin is disputed between Greek or Aramaic (the Gospels of Mark and Mathew that we talked about earlier) has its origin in the Holy city and Antioch and from those two cities it spread to the rest of Palestine, Syria and even Mesopotamia. And in the beginning, it was only Greek in all three countries.

From the middle of the 2<sup>nd</sup> century in Mesopotamia began amongst the Aramaic speaking element a movement to create its own ecclesiastical literature. Its most ancient monument is the translation to Aramaic of the holy

scriptures. This literature for three centuries grew weakly in parallel to Greek. Always outshone and borrowing from the Greek light. But from the 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> century it gained its own independent character as the literature of Churches that had broken away from the Greek Orthodox Church. Authors as we mentioned were Aramaic speaking men of Mesopotamia, where religious and educational centers of this new literature were founded.

While this was happening in Mesopotamia and a dual (Syrian and Chaldean) ecclesiastical Aramaic literature was being created and growing, Persia, Central Asia, India, Syria and Palestine remained clear of heretical Aramaeanism and for centuries were flourishing centers of Orthodox Hellenism and its Greek and only Greek (Orthodox of course) literature. A parallel examination of the historic evolution of the two literatures clearly demonstrates this.

### *Greek Ecclesiastical Literature*

The most ancient monuments of Greek Christian literature in Palestine and Syria are also the most ancient monuments of Christian literature. Those are the Gospels and the epistles of Peter, Jacob and Juda. A great number of renowned ecclesiastical writers from Antioch and Jerusalem and many other cities of Syria and Palestine followed the first Apostles and teachers of the Christian Church, teaching everyone in the Greek language and authoring in it. Of the books of this great number of ecclesiastical authors from Syria, Palestine and Mesopotamia or of those who taught in those countries, not everything has been preserved. Many of the lost books we

don't even know their names. Even the catalogue of the ecclesiastical writers who wrote in Greek from those countries is not complete. Yet one is still surprised by the number of writers that we know of and the sheer number and size of their writings. Just the writings of Eusebius, John Chrysostom and John of Damascus are enough to fill a library. We do not intend to write a treatise but just to outline the pure Greek character of the Christian literature that blossomed in these three countries in contrast to the beyond the Euphrates Aramaic literature.

We present here the most well-known representatives of this literature after the Apostles, who were the authors of the first and most ancient monuments of Christian literature.

Ignatius, Bishop of Antioch. 1<sup>st</sup> century. He wrote epistles that are included in volume 4 of "Patrologia Graeca" written by Migne.

Aristo of Pella, 2<sup>nd</sup> century. "Patrologia Graeca" volume 3.

Theophilus, Bishop of Antioch. "Patrologia Graeca" volume 6.

Tatian the Assyrian of the 2<sup>nd</sup> century. More about his work in "Patrologia Graeca" volume 6.

Theophilus of Caesarea of Palestine. 3<sup>rd</sup> century. "Patrologia Graeca" volume 5.

Anatolius of Laodikea of Syria. "Patrologia Graeca" volume 10. Father of Christian chronography.

Julius Africanus. 3<sup>rd</sup> century. "Patrologia Graeca" volume 5.

Serapis of Antioch. 2<sup>nd</sup>-3<sup>rd</sup> century. "Patrologia Graeca" volume 5.

Malhius the elder of the Church of Antioch. Originally a teacher of oratory in Antioch. 3<sup>rd</sup> century. “Patrologia Graeca” volume 10.

Pamphilus the elder of the Church of Caesarea of Palestine. Originally from Beirut. “Patrologia Graeca” volume 10.

Methodius, Bishop of Tyre (312 AD). Many treatises on various topics in “Patrologia Graeca” volume 18.

Titus of Bostra, Bishop. He lived at the time of Emperor Julian the Apostate. “Patrologia Graeca” volume 18.

Eusebius Pamphilus. 4<sup>th</sup> century. Bishop of Caesarea of Palestine. One of the most prolific ecclesiastical writers. He wrote about Church history and various theological treatises. “Patrologia Graeca” volume 19-23.

Cyril, Archbishop of Jerusalem. 4<sup>th</sup> century. “Patrologia Graeca” volume 33.

Eustathius, archbishop of Antioch. 4<sup>th</sup> century. “Patrologia Graeca” volume 18.

Apollinarius of Laodicea of Syria. Poet and orator. “Patrologia Graeca” volume 33.

John Chrysostom of Antioch. Elder and messenger of the divine word in the 5<sup>th</sup> century. While in Antioch and as Archbishop of Constantinople, he ushered according to Neander, a new era in the history of the literature of the Eastern Church by giving it its unique spirit and character. According to Villemain “The mind cannot comprehend the magnitude of the works of this man, his zeal and his broad-mindedness. His great character and his restless spirit are found in the richness of his ideas. Taking quotes from his words is like stealing marble parts from the church of Saint

Sophia just like the English traveler stole the stones of the Parthenon.” His work can be found in “Patrologia Graeca”.

Epiphanius of Eleftheriopolis of Palestine. Bishop of Constantia in Cyprus. Prolific ecclesiastical writer of the 4<sup>th</sup> century.

Severian of Gabala of Syria. A competent and prolific writer of speeches. “Patrologia Graeca” volume 65.

Severian of Arethusa.<sup>197</sup>

Theodoros of Mopsuestia. Author of many books in the 4<sup>th</sup> century who came from an aristocratic family of Antioch.

Synesius, the famous Bishop of Ptolemais. Author of many books, theologian and philosopher of the 4<sup>th</sup> century.

Theodoretos of Antioch. The ecclesiastical historiographer and interpreter of the Scriptures of the 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> centuries.

Aineas of Gaza. Writer and philosopher of the 4<sup>th</sup> century.

Zachary the Bishop of Mytilene. Originally from Gaza. Former scholastic philosopher, orator and author of history. Many of his works are only preserved in Syrian translation.

Abbas Zosimas. 4<sup>th</sup> century.

Andreas, Bishop of Samosata. 4<sup>th</sup> century. Epistles of his have survived to this day.

Antipater, Bishop of Bostra. Writer of speeches in the 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> century.

Nemesios, Bishop of Emesa. 4<sup>th</sup>-5<sup>th</sup> century.

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<sup>197</sup> Those authors where no works are mentioned, they are known as ecclesiastical writers but of their works everything is lost, including the titles.

Timotheus, Bishop of Beirut in the 4<sup>th</sup> century. He was also born in that city. From his writings still survive the works titled “Apologetics” and “Epistles”.

Paul of Emesa. 5<sup>th</sup> century.

Eustathius, Bishop of Beirut. 5<sup>th</sup> century.

Acacius of Veria. 5<sup>th</sup> century.

Andreas of Samosata. 5<sup>th</sup> century.

Procopius of Gaza. 6<sup>th</sup>-7<sup>th</sup> century. His best known work is the monody to the Holy Wisdom.

Theodoros, Bishop of Scythopolis. 6<sup>th</sup> century.

John Moschus. Author of the “Leimonarion” and teacher of the Patriarch of Jerusalem, Sophronius. 6<sup>th</sup>-7<sup>th</sup> century.

Timotheus the elder of Jerusalem. 6<sup>th</sup> century.

Eusebius bishop of Emesa. 6<sup>th</sup> century.

Zachary, Patriarch of Jerusalem who was captured by the Persians in 614 AD.

Modestus. Guardian of the seat of Zachary and his heir in the patriarchal seat of Jerusalem.

Sophronius, Patriarch of Jerusalem. He was born in Beirut. One of the most productive Ecclesiastical writers and theologian.

Antiochus monk of the Holy Lavra of Saint Sabbas. 7<sup>th</sup> century. “Patrologia Graeca” volume 89.

Dorotheos, Archimandrite from Palestine. 7<sup>th</sup> century.

Epiphanius of Jerusalem. 6<sup>th</sup> century. Author of “Narration of a Traveler to Syria and the Holy city”.

Gregory of Antioch. 6<sup>th</sup> century. He wrote various speeches. Exceptional are the ones addressed to the army.

Anastasius of Sinai. Patriarch of Antioch from Palestine. Very productive author of the 6<sup>th</sup> century.

Esehios the elder of Jerusalem. 5<sup>th</sup> century author with many works in his name.

John of Damascus. One of the greatest theologians and authors of the Eastern Church. He was given the nickname Chryssoroas (“streaming with gold” or “the golden speaker” of Christian wisdom). Father and founder of medieval Ecclesiastical philosophy and the greatest composer of hymns of the Eastern Church. After John Chrysostom he is the most productive writer of the fathers of the Church that came from Syria. “Patrologia Graeca” volume 3.

Theodoros of Carrhae. Student of John of Damascus and Archbishop of Carrhae of Mesopotamia.<sup>198</sup> One of the most well know fathers of the Church that wrote in Greek.

Cosmas of Jerusalem. Fellow student of John of Damascus. Renowned composer of hymns of the Eastern Church. He also wrote comments on the writings of Gregory of Nazianzus.

Bartholomew of Edessa. 8<sup>th</sup> century. He wrote a treatise against the Muslim Arabs.

Moses of Varsifa. 10<sup>th</sup> century. Although bearing a Syrian name he wrote in Greek the treatise “Notes on Paradise and Liturgies”.

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<sup>198</sup> Or of the city of Cares of Palestine which laid beyond the river Jordan as mentioned by the Frank writer of the Crusades, William, Bishop of Tyre.

Samonas, Bishop of Gaza. 11<sup>th</sup> century. Author of lectures to Ahmet the Saracene.

Anastasius, Bishop of Caesarea of Palestine.

Anastasius IV of Antioch, "Patrologia Graeca" volume 89.

John of Jerusalem. Monk of the 12<sup>th</sup> century. He wrote "Narration of our holy faith against the atheist Muslim Arabs" and many others.

Simon of Antioch. "Patrologia Graeca" volume 77.

John, Patriarch of Antioch in the 12<sup>th</sup> century.

Theodoros Balsamon. Canonist of the laws of the Synods of the Church.

Additionally:

Vavelas of Edessa. 5<sup>th</sup> century.

Efrem, Patriarch of Antioch. 6<sup>th</sup> century. "Patrologia Graeca" volume 86.

Isaac, Bishop of Nineveh. 6<sup>th</sup> century.

Varsakufas. 6<sup>th</sup> century.

Leontios of Jerusalem. 6<sup>th</sup> century.

Euagrios the scholastic. Author of ecclesiastical history. 7<sup>th</sup> century.

Procopius of Gaza. Christian sophist. 6<sup>th</sup> century.

Zachary, Patriarch of Jerusalem. 7<sup>th</sup> century. "Patrologia Graeca" volume 89.

Anastasius of Antioch.

Leontios of Damascus.



Gregorius of Decapolis. 9<sup>th</sup> century. “Patrologia Graeca” volume 93.

Josephus of Judea. 11<sup>th</sup> century.

Andreas of Jerusalem. Composer of hymns.

Maximus of Jerusalem.

These named men represent the flourishing Greek Christian literature of Syria, Palestine and Mesopotamia until the 14<sup>th</sup> century. Their books are more than enough to demonstrate how much in the years until the 7<sup>th</sup> century and the Muslim conquest but even after the conquest, for many centuries, the Greek language was the only national language of the Orthodox people of these countries. The language of the Church and education. The language that God was worshipped in, that faith and morality were taught, that hearts were comforted.

These men practically represent Hellenism and the Greek language in Church, which in turn represents the true national life of the Orthodox. The Greek language was spoken, understood and used by the majority in their homes and by everybody at Church. Antioch was the ultimate Greek city in the world at the time. No other city in the Christian East, at least before the 7<sup>th</sup> century, had more of a Greek Christian character than the great Greek city by the Orontes river.<sup>199</sup> Many brought fame to this and the many other Greek cities of Syria and the Holy city through their Greek education, oratory ability, productive writing and

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<sup>199</sup> The great power of the Church of Antioch already from the early centuries, in Syria and Palestine and the nearby countries of Mesopotamia and Armenia, is proven by the composition of the Christian laws of which only the Syrian and Armenian translations are preserved. According to Sahaon these laws were composed under the care of the Church of Antioch which at the time was the only link between the Christian Church and the State, i.e. Roman rule.

ingenious and polished use of the Greek language.<sup>200</sup> But even if there weren't so many men, just the invoking of Chrysostom is enough to represent the strong cultural presence of Hellenism. This man according to Villemain "raises and enlightens the mind with the great spiritual thoughts he produced", "the torch of the Eastern Church, the ingenious orator who saved Antioch, disarmed the barbarians and raised the fallen Roman state". Just his existence is great testament to the absolute power of Hellenism in Syria.

But was John Chrysostom the only one of unsurpassed spiritual strength and fame representative of Christian Hellenism in Syria? What can we say about the other John the one from Damascus, the so-called Chryssoroas? Through his philosophical and theological genius and his oratory he was like a spring of wisdom, revealing to the people the richness and beauty of the Greek language. What about the wise man of the Church of Jerusalem, Sofronios of Beirut, the theologian and composer of hymns? For all of them, more will be said. But for our matter at hand and for better description of the strength of Hellenism in these lands, it is necessary to present the Aramaic Christian literature produced in the midst of the Aramaic speaking population of Mesopotamia and which was developed in the non-Orthodox ethnic Churches, which were and remained just Aramaean.

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<sup>200</sup> It is worth noting that Theodoros of Metohia ("Patrologia Graeca" vol. 144) commented on the language used by the writers in Syria such as Lucian and Libanius and the many Ecclesiastical writers compared to the ones who were educated in Egypt. The use of language of those educated in Syria and Phoenicia was much smoother and pure than the one rougher language of those educated in Egypt.

## *Aramaic Christian Literature before the Schism*

More than once we have already mentioned that Aramaic Christian literature began to develop in Mesopotamia from the 2<sup>nd</sup> century amid the Greek and Greek speaking population of the cities and the Aramaean or Aramaic speaking population of the countryside. That's when Christianity began to slowly establish itself with this people. The center of this cultural movement of the Aramaeans became Edessa. A Greek city, with a Greek name but that also included Aramaean and other Asiatic people. Because of the make-up of this population, it was easy to transfuse Greek Christian wisdom from Greek to Aramaic. The first Aramaic literary monument of the Christian Church of Mesopotamia was the translation of the Bible for the Aramaic speaking Christians of Edessa. It was later called "Peshitta", i.e. "Simple" (Nappahta Peshitta= simple translation. The name was in use from the 9<sup>th</sup> or 10<sup>th</sup> century).

During the time of the first translation of the Bible, also lived the first Aramaean ecclesiastical writer, Varsedanes of Edessa. Besides ecclesiastical books he also wrote the history of Armenia which was translated into Greek by Moses of Chora. He also wrote commentary on the Bible and ecclesiastical hymns, just like his son Harmonius.

After Varsedanes, in the 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> century we know of Simon of Varsafa, Bishop of Seleucia and Ctesiphon and Malhus who wrote hymns.

In the 4<sup>th</sup> century there is mention of the ecclesiastical writer Jacob, Bishop of Nisibis, who was also present in the Ecumenical Synod of Nicaea. He wrote ecclesiastical speeches.

A true author, writing in Aramaic, is considered to be the Persian, Afraates, of the 4<sup>th</sup> century. In Persia there were numerous Aramaic speaking Christians. But the most well known and most important, father of Aramaic ecclesiastical literature and in particular of its Syrian branch, in the 4<sup>th</sup> century is Efrem the Syrian from Mesopotamia and from Nisibis in particular. He is called Syrian because of his Aramaean ancestry and his language, not because he was from Syria. He wrote comments on the Bible and hymns. Students of Efrem were Abraham, Simon Mara, Zenobios and the heretical Paulinos (Arian). All of them from beyond the Euphrates.

In the 4<sup>th</sup> century we also find Valeos or Valinas and Cyrilonas, both composers of hymns. The latter also wrote a chronography of his time. Also, Cyril, the nephew of Efrem. Father Gregory who wrote about monastic life and Dionysius Haviv. All of them from Mesopotamia.

The most well-known authors of the 5<sup>th</sup> century were Ravvalas, Bishop of Edessa (411-418) and the famous Eves who became the leader of the Monophysite schism. Acacius, Bishop of Amida (a city in Mesopotamia). John who was a priest in Antioch but was originally from Amida. He was a student of Zenobios. While in Rome he composed 200 speeches and historic poems. Dada, writer in a monastery of Amida.<sup>201</sup>

This Aramaic literature grew for three centuries amid the Orthodox Christian people of Mesopotamia. From the

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<sup>201</sup> In the 5<sup>th</sup> century also took place the translation from Greek to Syrian of the laws of Emperors Constantine, Theodosius and Leo. According to their modern-day translator and publisher, Sachau (*Syriische-römisches Rechtsbuch um dem fünften Iahrbundal* Georg Braunsund Eduard Sachau, 1880 and *Syriische Rechtsbüchechen*, herausgegeben und übersetzt von Eduard Sachau, Berlin 1907) that was the work of the Church of Antioch.

middle and especially the end of the 5<sup>th</sup> century it split from the Orthodox Church with the establishment at the time of the schismatic Nestorian Church. This schism was followed by another, that of the Monophysites. From which was produced in the 6<sup>th</sup> and permanently in the 7<sup>th</sup> century the schismatic Church of the Monophysite Jacobites. One offshoot of this heresy was that of the Monothelites which produced in Lebanon and Syria a new schismatic Church, that of the Maronites. Therefore, three schismatic Churches came to be in Syria and Mesopotamia, which exist to this day and represent ecclesiastically, ethnically and linguistically the Aramaean element.

The Nestorians got their name from the Patriarch of Constantinople, Nestorius (428-431 AD) whose innovations in Church dogma were condemned by the Ecumenical synod of Ephesus in 431. But Nestorius's name has no direct relation to the schismatic Nestorian Church that was first formed in Babylonia and from there spread to Persia and the rest of Asia, India and China. The name was given by the other Christians who saw this new dogma as the same as Nestorius's new ideas. The "Nestorians" did not call themselves that nor considered Nestorius as their leader and founder of their Church. They do not honor him as a saint but just consider him as someone who embraced the dogma that they first declared. They call themselves Chaldeans, considering this name representative of their noble ancestry from the glorious Chaldeans of Babylonia. This name is very indicative of the whole character of this Aramaean Church.

This Church did come out of dogmatic differences, however it also largely came out from the ethnic differences with the Orthodox Greeks of Mesopotamia and Syria. These differences were magnified due to political reasons. Babylonia, Persia and Assyria were either Persian or more

often than not under the rule of Persian Sassanid kings. The Christian Church there was under the political influence of the Sassanid state whose policy was religious separation of the Christians in their state from their fellow Christians in the neighboring hostile Greek state.

Besides that, ambition and separatist tendencies of the bishops in these countries aided this policy of the Persian state. This explains why while Nestorian's heretical teaching was taught in Constantinople, the so-called Nestorian schism started in Babylonia and Persia. The Bishop of Seleucia (a Greek city at first, but in time it fell to the Parthian state of the Arsacids, then the Persian state of the Sassanids and in short time it became Perso-Aramaean) always but especially from the 5<sup>th</sup> century was demanding that he be the highest bishop and priest of all the Bishops in Babylonia, Assyria and Persia. They were all Aramaean and only nominally under the Patriarch of Antioch. In 498 he was pronounced catholic<sup>202</sup> autocephalous leader of the Church of the Chaldeans as the eastern Aramaeans called themselves.

Interestingly, the declaration of the autocephaly of the Chaldean Church took place one year prior to the

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<sup>202</sup> Catholic (translation of the Latin *universalis* or *generalis*) was called in the Roman empire and in the early years of the Greco-Roman empire of Byzantium, everybody in any branch of public administration with a high rank. This name began to be used in the Christian Church as well and catholic were called the bishops and metropolitans of the big cities that were capitals of large provinces (*praefecturae*) or commands (dioceses). In the same way later, the Bishop of Rome was named pope or patriarch (*papa universalis*). But in the Greek East after the 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> century instead of catholic, the title of patriarch was used which at first was given to any high ranking elder or bishop of the Church. From the 5<sup>th</sup> century it became the title of the leaders of the large Churches. The title catholic is maintained to this day amongst the Orthodox, only by the Georgians. As for the schismatics, the Armenians, Chaldeans and Syrians (Jacobites) use it.

declaration of the religious schism. The first to receive the title catholic was the Bishop of Seleucia, Vavaios. In 499 he called a Synod in Seleucia which formulated the dogma of the Chaldean Church according to the teachings of Nestorian. With the formation of their Church the Chaldeans separated religiously from the Greeks of those lands who nowadays remain a small Orthodox minority in Babylonia, Assyria and northeastern Mesopotamia, opposite the Chaldean heretics. The name Chaldean that the new schismatic Church took clearly signifies the ethnic character of the schism. And it separates them not only from their former fellow Orthodox Greeks but from their western Aramaean brothers who call themselves Syrian and who for a short period remained Orthodox and united with the Greeks.

*Syrian or Aramean Monophysites (Jacobites)*

This unity was short lived after the Chaldean schism. A new schism, this one too having in actuality an ethnic Aramaean character followed. Using religious disputes as an excuse and magnified because of ethnic differences, a new schismatic Church was founded in the area stretching from northwestern Mesopotamia to Syria.

Shortly after the condemnation of Nestorian and his teachings, the Monophysite heresy based on the teachings of Eutyches appeared in Constantinople. It was condemned by the 4<sup>th</sup> Ecumenical Synod of Chalcedon (451 AD) and by the 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> century it was eliminated amongst the Greek population of the empire. But it was still found in Syria, Mesopotamia, Armenia and Egypt, with non-Greek or non-Greek speaking people. It found support in the hate

towards the ruling Greeks. Religious and ethnic hatreds separated these people from the Greeks and produced new heretical and anti-Hellenic Churches in Armenia, Egypt (the Copts are the descendants of the ancient Egyptians) and in Mesopotamia and Syria known as Syrian or Jacobites as they are often called. Named after Jacob Baradaeus<sup>203</sup> who lived in the 6<sup>th</sup> century and is the true founder of the Church of the Monophysites.

With the new heresies that started in Mesopotamia and spread to Syria, the Aramaic speakers of these countries separated from the Orthodox Greeks, with the possible exception of remote areas away from the main centers, who maintained their Orthodox faith and their ties with the Greeks.<sup>204</sup> Because of that complete separation, from that exact time, Aramaic ecclesiastical literature is completely nonexistent in the Orthodox Church. It becomes the possession of the Aramaean Christians, either Chaldean or Syrian, while Orthodox ecclesiastical literature remains completely Greek with its center in Syria and Palestine, extending to the easternmost parts of those countries, following the river Euphrates and finding another small center in the city of Melitene.

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<sup>203</sup> Jacob Baradaeus was born in Tell of Mesopotamia. He was initially a monk in Nisibis and then Bishop of Edessa (541 AD). A tireless apostle of Monophysitism in all the lands of the Greek East. Travelling on foot huge distances, preaching and teaching, founding Churches and appointing bishops. He did all that with Apostolic poverty, wearing raggedy clothing. His nickname in Greek, Aramaic and Arabic reflected the way he looked and ended up becoming his surname from the Arab version of the word.

<sup>204</sup> Today, such are in Malula of Syria, the very few Aramaic speaking Orthodox.



## *Aramaic Literature after the Schism*

About its literary character and value, we talked about earlier. It was basically a reflection of Greek literature with no vitality or intellectual uniqueness. Because of that, it lacks in comparison even with the literatures of the other Semitic languages, Hebrew and Arabic. Its historic value lies in the Greek literary treasures that it preserved and transferred, either partially or in their entirety, into Arabic. The great educational strength of the Aramaean intellectuals was always the Greek language and Greek literature. That's why thousands of Greek words were transplanted into Syrian and Chaldean.<sup>205</sup>

Intellectual centers of the Nestorians or Chaldeans as we mentioned were Nisibis and the ecclesiastical center of Seleucia. From both these cities they spread their religious teachings and language through Persia all the way to Middle Asia, India and China.<sup>206</sup> The Jacobite original religious center for education was Edessa where the Greek language and literature were also studied. Because this city was part of the Greek state, there were fierce religious fights between the Orthodox and the Monophysites. As we mentioned

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<sup>205</sup> In just the Syrian translation of the Chronography of Zachary of Mytilene, the list of Greek words comes up to 170. And not just words with historical meaning, but also words of everyday life. Even in the translation of the laws of Constantine, Theodosius and Leo I, there is a great number of Greek words simply written in Aramaic letters.

<sup>206</sup> In Middle Asia many Turkic people had been proselytized to Christianity before the 11<sup>th</sup> century because of the Nestorians. In modern times, Russian conquests revealed a plethora of Christian monuments (graves of rulers of Turkic and Tatar Christian people) with inscriptions in the Chaldean language. In Hindustan, the Saint Thomas Christians that the Europeans found were Christians who were taught the faith by Nestorians. And in China, monuments were found of the Nestorian teaching of Christianity.

earlier this school of Edessa came to be known as Persian and was shut down in 489 by Emperor Zeno. The Monophysites then moved this school to Nisibis which was under Persian rather than Greek control for longer periods. The city became then the educational center for both Nestorians (Chaldeans) and Jacobites (Syrians). The Jacobites later formed a second educational center in Kennesre, a city by the Euphrates. This school also moved from northern Syria, leaving the area void from any Aramaic educational activity.

This way, from the 6<sup>th</sup> century and completely by the 7<sup>th</sup> century, Syria and Palestine were purified religiously and linguistically from all Aramaic elements, leaving behind a purely Greek Orthodox Christianity. The Aramaean Monophysite remains became in the 7<sup>th</sup> and especially the 8<sup>th</sup> century the Maronite people. Made up of refugees from all over Syria to the northern slopes of mount Lebanon.<sup>207</sup> The Maronites did not develop their own Aramaic literature, like their brothers beyond the Euphrates, Syrians and Chaldeans. Their only books were the ecclesiastical books of the Aramaic literature of the early centuries. From a literary perspective the so-called Maronite people are not particularly important.

Putting aside this isolated and unimportant to our issue at hand history of this Aramaean group of people of Syria, this separation from Orthodoxy was the last act of cleansing of

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<sup>207</sup> The Maronites got their name from the monastery of saint Maron either because it was their spiritual center or because their leader became a monk named John Maron, who they elected as their Patriarch of Antioch. As we know, the Maronites from the time of the Crusades, due to their frequent communication with the Franks, they quickly joined the papal Church, becoming at first Eastern Rites Catholics. They eventually united dogmatically with the Catholics after they accepted the decisions of the Council of Trent.

Orthodox Hellenism in Syria of any non-Greek element. It should be noted that the ecclesiastical schism of the 7<sup>th</sup> century that separated the Aramaeans from the Greeks of Syria, gave new momentum to the development of Aramaic literature. A detailed presentation of this is not necessary for the purpose of this book.<sup>208</sup> But it is worth mentioning that the history of Aramaic Christian literature, as well as the catalogue of Syrian or Chaldean authors who wrote in Aramaic, demonstrate clearly that all of them were heretics. Not even one was Orthodox. Irrefutable proof that after the schism all the Orthodox people of Syria, Palestine and Mesopotamia were Greek. And that's why all the Orthodox ecclesiastical writers wrote in their ethnic tongue, which was Greek. In contrast, the heretical Nestorians and Jacobites, Syrian and Chaldean, their ecclesiastical and national language became Aramaic.<sup>209</sup> This fact is enough

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<sup>208</sup> For further proof that Aramaic literature had no relation to Orthodoxy, but also no relation to Syria and Palestine, except for the Maronites there were no Aramaeans after the schism of the 7<sup>th</sup> century. In appendix A we present the names of the most well-known authors of Chaldean (Nestorian) and Syrian (Monophysite) Aramaic literature. With the letter N will be noted those belonging to the Nestorian Church and with the letter J those belonging to the Jacobite Church.

<sup>209</sup> The only known Orthodox ecclesiastical literary monument written in Syrian that is worth mentioning is the previously mentioned collection of excerpts of a manuscript of the Gospels. It was found in the library of the Vatican and it is known as *Evangeliarium Hierosolymitanum Vaticanum*. There are many conflicting opinions on the origin of this lone monument in Syria and Palestine. Last one to express his opinion was the English theologian and expert on Semitic languages, F. C. Burkitt, in the conference of the Orientalists in Rome in 1899. His announcements in the conference are found in the book published by the conference afterwards (vol. 2, sec. 2, p. 119-126). The history of this literary monument is as follows based on three notes on the document. 1) The first note mentions that the work was written in 1029 AD by the priest Elias of Abud in the monastery Aba Musa in the city of Antioch, in the department of the Dux. 2) In the second note, this Elias states that this book was brought by him and others "from Antioch the Arabian as an eternal gift to the church of prophet Elias in the

to convince us that the Orthodox of Syria were Greek and Greek speaking. How else could the heretical Aramaic speakers, whether Monophysite or Nestorian, develop such a rich literature, while the Orthodox “Aramaicans” did not

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monastery of Aster”. 3) From the third note it becomes known that the monastery of Aster is dedicated to prophet Elias and that the priest or monk with the name Elias, managed to be donated to the monastery enough lands around Abud. According to Burkitt, Abud was a large town between Iope and Caesarea in Palestine. But which is the Antioch where this monastery was located and which is the Antioch the Arabian from which this book came from? According to Burkitt, Antioch of the Dux as opposed to Antioch the Arabian is the land around Antioch that in 1029, when the book was written, was under the command of a duke, in other words a Greek commander sent by Byzantium. Antioch in 968 was taken back from the Arabs and had become a Greek city again. It was lost once more between the years 1080-1084. It seems then that the city, or rather the area, was at the time when the note was written (1029), the boundary between the Greek state and the Muslims. It was probably the last Greek city on the border and part of the land belonging to the Muslim state. That’s regarding the history of the manuscript. As for its origin, Burkitt considers it a product of the 7<sup>th</sup> century or even earlier. When Emperor Heraclius or even long before him, Emperor Justinian, in their eager support for the Christian faith and Orthodoxy ordered translations of the Gospel and other ecclesiastical books for use by the Jews and Samaritans in Palestine who were converting to Christianity and were partially Aramaic speakers, so that they could read the holy books in their spoken language. Possibly, the few remaining Orthodox Aramaicans in Syria and Palestine and the Monophysite Aramaicans who were converting to Orthodoxy, also used them (according to Burkitt). These books were not intended for the Melchites or Orthodox of Syria and Palestine whose ethnic and ecclesiastical language was Greek. Besides this, the surviving remains of the supposed Aramaic Orthodox literature that are mentioned in the “Announcements of the Imperial Orthodox Palestinian Society” of 1906, are not worth discussing. Their mention was included in the publication of this Society by the Arabic speaking Orthodox, Zuze of Jerusalem. Zuze, was loyal to Russian interests, had studied on a Russian scholarship and taught as a professor in the theological seminary of Kazan. In any case, collections like this are just an Aramaic drop in the ocean of Greek ecclesiastical literature of Syria. They prove the great numbers of population, the great material strength and the great cultural difference in dynamic between Greek speaking and Aramaic speaking Orthodox.

cultivate their Ecclesiastical literature in their ethnic language, but in Greek?

The theory that the Orthodox in the region are not Greek is illogical and it requires another, even greater leap in logic. That the entire Greek population of Syria, Palestine and Mesopotamia disappeared from these countries, leaving behind a living Greek language and their ecclesiastical literature in Greek, which the Orthodox Aramaeans cultivated, (a foreign language to them), while the schismatics cultivated their ethnic language, the Aramaic Syro-Chaldean. In addition, if we assume this is true then we must assume that the Orthodox Aramaeans neglected completely their national ecclesiastical language and cultivated Greek. That they were Hellenized to such a degree that their national conscience became Greek, since their Greek culture was not aligned in any way with Aramaean.

Fortunately, we have presented so much evidence of the Greek ancestry of the Orthodox so that we don't have to argue against these monstrous theories. It is however necessary to present the relations between the Greeks of Syria, Palestine and Mesopotamia and their differences with Aramaism during the whole time that Hellenism dominated in these countries. From the Hellenistic era till today.

## *Chapter 9*

# *Greeks and Aramaeans in Syria, Palestine and Mesopotamia*

After the great and ingenious Macedonian king conquered western Asia by the force of arms and by Greek intellect, he and his successors, especially Seleucus the builder of Antioch, became, as Libanius puts it,<sup>210</sup> populators of Greek cities. They built more colonies to the west of the Euphrates than what the Athenians and Miletians, the primary builders of the Greek colonial state ever did. They even extended colonization beyond that river. Seleucus “Did not leave a single good place without a Greek city”.<sup>211</sup> But even Seleucus’s heirs, being great men themselves descendants of great men and jealous of their fathers, remained loyal to his work and through Greek cities Hellenized these lands.

From that time the main population of Syria, Palestine and Mesopotamia that filled especially the cities, was Greek. Of the previous inhabitants of these lands no one remained who didn’t become Hellenized in entirety or at least partially, except for the Jews and Samaritans who they too succumbed to a great part to Greek cultural influence. As we saw, the urban population everywhere was Greek or Hellenized in language. Syrians and Phoenicians and Palestinians, even the Arabs beyond the river Jordan. The later, all of them spoke Greek. In Mesopotamia, according

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<sup>210</sup> Libanius, Rieske, vol. A (Antiochian p. 305)

<sup>211</sup> Libanius, Rieske, vol. A (Antiochian p. 305)

to Pliny, first the Macedonians spread cities everywhere and this urban population was mostly Greek. When the Hellenistic kingdoms were conquered by the Romans, Hellenism under Roman rule was reinforced rather than weakened and it continued its absorbing work.

In Syria (and of course Palestine, not including the Jews in that country) the cultural strength of Hellenism prevailed completely as in Mesopotamia. But in this Hellenization, there was a difference between Syria and Mesopotamia. In Syria, Hellenism also prevailed in sheer numbers. Because of that no other culture other than the Greek one flourished. Neither before the spreading of Christianity, nor after. Neither before the schism of the 7<sup>th</sup> century, nor after. And since the middle of the 2<sup>nd</sup> century AD in the lands beyond the Tigris and Euphrates rivers, Aramaic Christian literature started being produced, Syria and Palestine remained apart of this intellectual activity. No writer, Aramaean or writing in Aramaic, appeared living in Syria or being from Syria.<sup>212</sup>

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<sup>212</sup> As shown by the list of Appendix A, of ecclesiastical authors in Aramaic, no Aramaean author is mentioned from west of the Euphrates (except for Melitene which is not part of Syria). This is seen especially after the schism of the 7<sup>th</sup> century. But even before the schism, almost no known Aramaean author was from Syria. In the Syrian translation of the Chronography of Zachary of Mytilene (translated into English by F. I. Hamilton and E. W. Brooks, London, 1899, p. 17) there is mention of an Isaac as a teacher from Syria who lived in the 4<sup>th</sup> century. He wrote a lot of commentary on the Gospel in Syrian. It is true that before the appearance of the Monophysite heresy there were monasteries in Syria where Aramaic speaking monks lived, studying in Greek. But those monasteries were dissolved when the persecution of the heresies began. The only place then in Syria that the Aramaeans had an educational center was the city of Kennesrin by the Euphrates on the border of Mesopotamia, or rather the monasteries around that city where the Greek letters were taught. As we saw, the Aramaean refugees in Lebanon (Maronites) did not create any educational centers there nor they produced authors.

But in Mesopotamia the Greek and Greek speaking population lived primarily in the cities, almost all which were built by the Greeks. On the contrary, the people in the countryside of this far-flung land were definitely a compact Aramaean population. This explains the fact that in Mesopotamia, through Christianity, we see Aramaic literature which in turn quickly produced a culture for the Aramaean element, that in the end prevailed in the whole country. In this also contributed as we saw earlier, that by the end of the 4<sup>th</sup> century began in the eastern and southern parts of the country a political change. And it was in the interest of the Persians to support the Aramaean element against the Greek in their perpetual dispute over Mesopotamia with the Greco-Romans. The ecclesiastical unity of the Christians in Mesopotamia and in Persia who were primarily Aramaeans and Nestorians also played a strong role in the evolution of things.

After Seleucia, the great city of southeast Mesopotamia or Babylonia and Ctesiphon became permanently part of the Persian state and Ctesiphon became its capital, Seleucia, a city even bigger than Antioch, the creation of Seleucus and great center of Greek civilization, became instead an Aramaean Nestorian religious and educational center under the auspices of the Persian authorities. Same was the fate of the important city of Nisibis in northeast Mesopotamia. The Aramaean heretical element came to dominate in all of Mesopotamia while the Greek element that represented Orthodoxy became a minority. This situation did not change in the 7<sup>th</sup> century with the dissolution of the Sassanid state by the Arabs. On the contrary it was reinforced by the Arab conquest since the capital of the caliphate in Mesopotamia, with the support of the new regime, became the ecclesiastical and educational center of the Nestorians.



However, neither under Arab rule nor later under the Turks did the Greek element disappear from Mesopotamia. On the contrary, in all the land and especially in the cities, Churches and Greek Orthodox communities survived with metropolitans or bishops as their leaders. They recognized as their supreme spiritual and religious leader the patriarch of Antioch and through him and the Orthodox Church they stayed connected to the rest of the Greek Orthodox world and the Greek state and the monarchy in Constantinople. Considering it deep in their religious and ethnic conscience as their national kingdom. In northern Mesopotamia, in Edessa, Amida and Carrhae, Greek Orthodox presence remained strong and was revitalized and strengthened after the 10<sup>th</sup> century Greek victories against the Arabs of the great kings of Byzantium, Romanos II, Nikephoros Focas and John Tzimiskes. Because of that, at the end of the 11<sup>th</sup> century and during the 12<sup>th</sup> century, when Greek rule had ended and the crusader Franks captured the land from the Muslims, the conquered land and especially Edessa had a Greek character.

But after the partial and temporary rule of the crusaders and following that, the Mamluk and Ottoman rule until nowadays, the Greek Orthodox element became Arab in language and became a minority not only against the non-Christians but also against the Nestorian Chaldeans and the Jacobite Syrian. The present-day Arabic speaking Orthodox in Mesopotamia are the remains of the once great population of Greeks who lived in the land.

Syria on the contrary, (including Phoenicia and Palestine) after the time of the Macedonians when it became full of Greek colonies, it became pre-eminently Greek. Under the Romans, Hellenism not only did not go down in numbers but actually increased and established itself even further, making this land a beacon of Christian Hellenism or Greek

Christianity. Its population and education centers were Antioch, Damascus, Beirut and even the Holy city. The Aramaean and Aramaic speaking Christian element was not entirely absent, but it was so small that the schism of the 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> century (Monophysite) which started in Syria, quickly took Aramaean character but did not prevail in the country. It was cast out of Syria with Greek Orthodoxy remaining master of the land. The heretics were limited to the periphery, by the Euphrates river and around the mountains of Lebanon.

At this point, for the better understanding of the situation it is necessary to discuss the relations of the Greeks and Aramaeans of Syria before and after the 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> century schism.

*Greeks and Arameans in Syria and Palestine  
before the 6<sup>th</sup> century schism*

As we described in length, Hellenism from the time of Alexander and his Diadochi gained great strength in Syria and Palestine. It grew and by Roman and Christian times these countries were Greek. Because of that Christianity did not produce any intellectual works in Aramaic there, contrary to Mesopotamia and the countries beyond the Tigris and Euphrates rivers. As we also saw the so-called Syrian Fathers who produced Aramaic Christian literature, were actually from Mesopotamia.<sup>213</sup>

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<sup>213</sup> It is extremely interesting and characteristic that Basil the Great in his work “On the Holy Spirit”, when he talks about theological expression in Aramaic as in Greek, he states that the local language of

But can someone argue that since no Aramaic literature was produced in these countries, that Aramaic was not spoken and only Greek was spoken by everybody? That Syrian was spoken in these lands after the Hellenistic era and into the Christian times, at least until the 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> century, is undisputed. We don't of course talk about the Aramaic speaking Jews and Samaritans of this time, but of those who converted to Christianity or those who remained loyal to their ancestral religion. The descendants of the original Aramaean inhabitants of Syria and the Phoenicians and the Palestinians. Even those who alter history and ethnology to suit their political aims do not deny that the language that was primarily spoken in the cities was Greek. But they argue that the countryside was not inhabited by Greeks but Aramaean farmers where Aramaic was spoken. That in the countryside Aramaic was also spoken alongside Greek, at least until the 5<sup>th</sup> century, it is something that we too, according to our research consider very likely. But the claim that in the countryside only Aramaic was spoken and that Greek was unknown, is not true at all. It is not possible that in all of Syria and Palestine in this period there were people ignorant of Greek.

The graduates of the Russian theological Academies and instruments of pan-Slavism are repeating the same argument of the Jesuit Father Lammeus. That in the 4<sup>th</sup> century, Sylvia journeyed to Palestine and Aramaic was spoken alongside Greek as the language of a great part of the people. She travelled as a pilgrim to Jerusalem from the West and according to her *“In the province of Jerusalem part of the people knew Greek and Syrian (et graece et syriste novit) part of them knew only Greek (per se graece) and a third part knew only Syrian. Because of that, the*

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Mesopotamia was Aramaic. Not of Syria. And that in Mesopotamia it had become the language of the Church.

*bishop even if he knew Syrian he only spoke Greek and never Syrian (semper graece et nonquam syriste). By the side of the bishop there was always an elder translating in Syrian for the people. And because there are also Latins who speak neither Greek or Syrian, in order not to be sad, the words of the bishop are translated for them as well through a Greco-Latin monk or nuns”.* Based on this what other conclusion do we come to other than that Greek as a spoken language was more prevalent in Jerusalem (in the 4<sup>th</sup> century, two centuries before the schism) than Aramaic, since a part of the population (part populi) only spoke Greek, another part spoke Greek and Aramaic and a third part only spoke Aramaic. As for the bishop, he only spoke in Greek and never in Aramaic.

Besides, who can doubt that in 4<sup>th</sup> century Palestine, Latin was also spoken alongside Greek? We know plenty about that based on our research. Firstly, that Aramaic was spoken in Palestine in the 4<sup>th</sup> century is mentioned in the Synaxarion, preserved for us both in Greek and Latin. In the Synaxarion, the biography of the 4<sup>th</sup> century St. Hilarion mentions amongst other miracles in Gaza, the following.<sup>214</sup> During the reign of Constantine (337-361 AD) an officer suffering of mental illness heard about a holy man performing miracles, so he travelled from Constantinople to Gaza to be cured. It is said in the saint’s biography that this officer not knowing any other language other than the Phrygian dialect which was his mother tongue and the language of the “Romans” (Latin), “*he responded to the saint’s questions in the local Palestinian language. The Daemon inside the officer was responding in Syrian.*” The biography continues in a non-linear way and with

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<sup>214</sup> Ανάλακτα Ιεροσολυμιτικής Σταχυολογίας, Αθανάσιος Παπαδόπουλος-Κεραμεύς, Αυτοκρατορικού Ορθοδόξου Παλαιστινίου Συλλόγου.

syntactical errors: “[*The Daemon*] confessed that he entered the officer from the beginning.” “*The soldiers that were with him were ignorant of the Syrian language. So were his children. And they didn’t know what he was saying. But they all knew Greek and were asking him [the Daemon] who was also replying in Greek saying that he entered him [the officer] out of curiosity*”.

The biography of Saint Hilarion<sup>215</sup> was written in Latin by Saint Hieronymus.<sup>216</sup> With misunderstandings and mistranslations (Phrygian instead of Frankish) it was translated to Greek. In the original text, the officer of Constantine is German and in particular Frank, not Phrygian. He doesn’t know any other language other than Frankish and Latin and the soldiers who are present and followed him knew Greek. This story shows that in 4<sup>th</sup> century Palestine, Aramaic was spoken alongside Greek.

But there is yet another story about a saint from Palestine, again from the city of Gaza, that shows that in Palestine there were also people who did not know Greek but started speaking it in a miraculous way. In the biography of Saint Porphyrius, Bishop of Gaza (end of 4<sup>th</sup> century) written by his friend Marcus the deacon (only the Latin translation has

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<sup>215</sup> Sancti Eusebii Hieronymi Vita J. Hilarionis Eremitae. Patrologi Graeca, Migne, vol. 23, p 39-54.

<sup>216</sup> « Statim enim as interrogationem Dei servi suspensus homo, vix terram pedibus tangere coepit, et emmane rugiens, Syro quo interrogatus fuerat sermone, respondit. Videre de ore barbatae, et qui Francam tantum et Latinam linguam noverat, Syra ad purum verba resonare : at non stridor, non aspiration, non idioma aliquod Palaestini deesset eloqui. Confessus est itaque, quo in eum intrasset ordine. Et ut interpretes ejus intelligerent, qui Graecam tantum et Latinam linguam noverant, Graece quoque eum interrogavit. Quo similiter et in verba eadem respondente, multas que, ait quomodo intraveris ; sed ut esse in nomine Dominostri Jesu Christi, impero ».

survived)<sup>217</sup>, as an eyewitness he tells us that the Christians of Gaza after overpowering the pagans they wanted to destroy the sanctuary of Zeus and were debating as to how to go about it. Then a seven-year-old in the middle of the crowd spoke in Syrian, inspired by God, as to how to go about its destruction. When Saint Porphyrius forced the child to confess if he says these things on his own or if someone else told him, the young boy after a long stubborn silence finally answered the bishop but this time not in Syrian but in Greek. The bishop demanded that the mother swear an oath that neither she nor her son knew Greek. This convinced the saint, who up to that point thought the child only spoke Syrian, that it was a God inspired miracle.

There is no doubt that Marcus wrote what he saw, but the conclusion is the people of Palestine rarely spoke Greek and Aramaic. We say rarely because in Palestine as we saw earlier there were cities such as the capital Caesarea where the only spoken and understood language was Greek, even being the official language in synagogues. But definitely Palestine in the 4<sup>th</sup> century was bilingual with Greek being the superior one both amongst Christians and pagans. At that time the rest of Syria was also bilingual but with Greek having superiority not only in intellectual and public life where it was completely dominant but also in everyday life because the pure Greek population in the country was very dense, especially in the cities. The greatest one, Antioch, was completely Greek. As for the rural population, it was Greek speaking or at least understood Greek. But the history of this city regarding our subject in the 4<sup>th</sup> century, is worth its own special research.

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<sup>217</sup> Marci Diaconi, *Vita S. Porhyrii episcopi Gazensis interprete Gestiano*, *Patrologia Graeca*, Migne Vol. 65, p. 1291 § 56-58.

Renan wrote that no city of the Roman era in the East had the population of Antioch but that next to the dense Greek population there was also a Syrian population worth noting. This is not supported by clear testimonies but on vague assumptions. At most this was valid at the time that the first Christian Church was founded in the city by Apostle Paul. But by the 4<sup>th</sup> century AD, the time that the great Antiochian Father of the Church, John Chrysostom, preached the word of God in the Churches of Antioch, the situation was different. At that time the people of the city were Greek or at least Greek speaking. This is proven by the speeches of the great preacher of the word of God. In speech 19 (to Antiochians, ch. A) he talks about the crowd of people that came from the countryside to the city to listen to him speak. *“Different in their language versus ours (the Antiochians) but same in faith”*. This difference in language between the people of the countryside compared to Chrysostom and his fellow Antiochians, what else does it show other than that they were Aramaic speakers<sup>218</sup> or that the people of Antioch all shared the same language, in other words the Antiochians spoke Greek.

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<sup>218</sup> The way it is phrased in the original ancient Greek text it can also mean the mixobarbarian speaker. The speaker of a Greek idiom. This is also seen in references to martyr Barlaam in speeches of Basil the Great. The way syllables were cut and pronounced by the martyr were barbarian in pronunciation but not a different language than Greek. In the written works of the ecclesiastical Fathers, the word “language” or “tongue” often means idiom, or the way the language is pronounced. There are many references in the written works of all three Holy Hierarchs (Basil the Great, Gregory the Theologian (of Nazianzus) and John Chrysostom) to *“barbarian voice”* or some similar expression, that refers to the Greek language spoken or pronounced with a different or barbarian accent. The only objection to this can be argued that John Chrysostom on occasion clearly differentiates the Greek language or *“our language”* to *“the barbarian languages”*.

This passage from Chrysostom also proves another thing. All the farmers that rushed to the city to listen to the great orator and with their presence made the day a holiday, (*“The day feels like a holiday. With their presence, our brothers beautified our city and decorated the Church”*), understood and spoke Greek. Otherwise, how did they understand Chrysostom who did not know or at least did not speak Aramaic to the Greek speaking Antiochians when he preached? How could his message be referred to as a *gift* and a *provision* to these farmers as the ancient Greek text states? Chrysostom spoke and taught only in Greek and his teaching to the people of the countryside could be a *gift* and a *provision* only if the people in front of him spoke Greek and understood it so well as to understand the high and spiritual teachings of the Church.

In a different speech of his about “Martyrs” in chapter A, he repeats the same, calling “barbarian voice” the language of the rural people as opposed to the Antiochians. Further down it is made clear though that barbarian is any non-Greek language and that the rural people spoke Greek but with some barbarian pronunciation and that those with the “barbarian voice” understood perfectly clear the message delivered in Greek by John Chrysostom. Proving that Greek was spoken everywhere in Syria and by everyone. It was the only language of all forms of education. And of course it was the spoken language in Church.

Regarding education and language, the Greeks of Syria and Palestine and even Mesopotamia, did not study the Syrian language and literature. As we saw from John Chrysostom, they called this language barbarian. Syrians (Aramaicans) meticulously studied Greek and from it, Syrians and Chaldeans translated into Aramaic not only the products of Greek ecclesiastical literature but also books of secular classical wisdom, such as Aristotle and other philosophers.



In Syria, the monasteries that were inhabited by Syrian in ancestry monks, became schools of Greek literature. Many Syrians authored in Greek. One such person was John Malalas whose style of writing is a great example of the typical style of Greek writing by the Syrians. Another great example was the Bishop of Gabala, Severian, contemporary of John Chrysostom. He wrote amongst other things in Greek a beautiful hymn for Theophania (or Epiphany). Sozomen writes characteristically and relevant to our matter at hand, that Severian was an eloquent ecclesiastical orator and when he preached in Constantinople (where he accumulated a great fortune by being invited to preach in different churches), he maintained the special Syrian accent (*aspiratio*). The same accent characteristic is referenced in the previously mentioned biography of Saint Hilarion as written by Saint Hieronymus (p. 2, *ut non stridor, non aspiratio non idioma adiquid deesset Palaestini eloquio*). Another great Hellenist who wrote in Greek a Prologue to the Gospel was the Syrian Moros bar Kustnat (The chronicle of Zachary, p. 209 and 213).

The Syrian language in the countries west of the Euphrates, was the language of just a small barbarian minority who through education were becoming Hellenized in language. The great orator, in the big cities or at least in Antioch, out of Christian love did not discriminate between Greek or Syrian but also had no need to use the Syrian language. In all of Syria and Palestine before the 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> century schism, in contrast to Mesopotamia, the Arameans were not substantial in physical presence. They appear to have been unimportant and a secondary nation. Their clergy was mostly made of monks and had their own leaders (archimandrites) as it is written in the chronography of Zachary of Mytilene (p. 210).

John Malalas talks about the relations between the Syrians and the Greeks in Antioch, specifically mentioning an interesting tradition, while describing the mythical tradition about the building of the city of Iopolis (as we saw earlier, it was located near where Antioch was later built) and the arrival of Io in Syria. *“When Io arrived in Syria she died. Her father, Inahos, sent her brothers and relatives and Triptolemus and Argives with him, in search of her. They searched for her everywhere but could not find her. When the Argives learned Io had died in the land of Syria, they went there and knocked on every door saying, “the soul of Io is saved”. In a vision they saw a calf that spoke to them in human voice saying, “I am Io”. They woke up impressed by the power of the dream and they decided to stay. Thinking that in the nearby mountain of Silpium Io must be buried, they built a temple in her honor and built a city for themselves which they named Iopolis. The Syrians called them Ionites and call them that to this day. The Syrian Antiochians from that time in memory of the Argives who came looking for Io, once a year went around knocking on the doors of the Greeks.*

From this grammatically incorrect and incoherent as usual passage of Malalas, one thing emerges with certainty. Antioch, being a metropolis, was considered a mythical city, called Iopolis, with a mythical history connected with the stories about Io. Every year there was a celebration in memory of Io’s arrival and the founding of Iopolis during which the Syrian Antiochians knocked on the doors of the Greek Antiochians in memory of the search of the Argives for Io. But in historical times, in the book by Malalas, why were the Syrian Antiochians knocking on the doors of the Greek Antiochians? It would be more logical for the Greek Antiochians representing the Argives in search of Io, to knock on the doors of the Syrian Antiochians. This question

is easily answered if we assume that the tradition of knocking on house doors is irrelevant to the ancestry of those knocking on doors and that this tradition is performed by those socially inferior and poor. The Syrian Antiochians going to the houses of the rich and noble and rulers of the city, the Greeks<sup>219</sup> and receiving presents by them for the occasion. Therefore, this tradition describes the social status in Antioch of Greeks and Syrians.

Finishing the chapter about language, it is difficult to determine exactly when Aramaic became completely absent in Syria and Palestine. Renan believes that in Palestine the language continued to be spoken by a part of the population until the 7<sup>th</sup> century conquest. The same someone can say about Syria as well. The truth however is that in Syria, as in Palestine, before the 7<sup>th</sup> century Arab conquest and for a time afterwards, Greek was the only language understood and spoken by the entire Christian population while there still were some that understood and spoke Aramaic as well. How else can it make sense that Patriarch Sofronius spoke and taught the people in Greek? How else can we explain that in the beginning of the 7<sup>th</sup> century Patriarch Zachary that was captured by the Persians and held captive “by the rivers of Babylon”, wrote only in Greek in his letters to his “flock that was left without a shepherd”? Letters that were intended for the entire people. How can we suppose that the Bishop of Ptolemais, Antiochus, who lived at the time of John Chrysostom, and was sought after to preach in the churches of Constantinople, taught his people in Ptolemais in a language not understood by all?

In Syria and Palestine, the total eclipse of Aramaic brought about two great events of the 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> centuries AD. The

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<sup>219</sup> Malalas, p. 202, “*Seleucus urged the Argives of Iopolis to move to Antioch and settled them as priests and noble rulers*”.

first is the completion of the Monophysite schism. Persecuted by the Greek Orthodox, they fled to the lands by the Euphrates and in Syria to the mountains of Lebanon. The second was the Arab conquest of these countries. It took place shortly before the middle of the 7<sup>th</sup> century and very quickly the Arabic language became the language of the people in both these countries and in Mesopotamia. With the passage of time, it also became the spoken language of the Greek Orthodox people as well, with the Greek language maintained for centuries as the ethnic language in the spiritual life of the people.

Starting in the 6<sup>th</sup> and finally by the 7<sup>th</sup> century, because of the schism, Hellenism in these three countries identified in language and in literature and in religious and national life with Orthodoxy. Orthodox and Greek became synonyms. But what was the use of the name Greek as a national name in those times in these countries? Before we discuss the matter of the ethnic name of the Orthodox, summarizing what has been said so far, it is necessary to point out the safe conclusion that the Christians of Syria who separated ecclesiastically in the 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> century, were Syrian in ancestry. In Orthodoxy remained those of Greek ancestry and language.

This truth was proven by everything said so far and it is the entire conclusion. But the truth is also proven by the following:

1/ The new schismatic Church is called Syrian or rather its followers are called Syrians. Its language and its ecclesiastical literature are called Syrian.

2/ The writers and theologians of this Church, of the Monophysite heresy of which the schism came from, were Syrian. It was first preached in Antioch by the Greek

Patriarch Severus (condemned as a heretic, accursed and removed from the Orthodox Church). After the schism no Syrian appears in the Orthodox Church either as a theologian, writer or simply ecclesiastical Father. Anyone who wrote in Syrian was a heretic and schismatic.

3/ Regarding the leadership of their schismatic Church, they call their patriarchs, patriarch of Antioch (as successors of the heretic Severus). However, they have no relation to the Church of Antioch and their ecclesiastical center is in Amida.

4/ All the persecuted clerics of the 6<sup>th</sup> century in Syria and Mesopotamia were Syrian in their ancestry. Because of these persecutions their religious centers in Syria, which were also educational centers, were dismantled or relocated by the Euphrates. Many fled to the Syrian desert where they built monasteries. In this way, according to Zachary of Mytilene, exiled from Syria between the years 525-531 were the Archimandrite of the Syrians of Antioch, Cyrus, along with all the monks of the Syrian monastery of Tel Addo and Romanus, Simon of the monastery of Alginos, Ignatius the Archimandrite of the monastery of Akivos (by Chalkis), the brothers of the monastery of Enun, John, Archimandrite of Hafro, the monks of the monastery of Vasso, John of the monastery of the Orientals, the monks of the monastery of Arhis, the monks from the monastery of Magnus, Sergius of the monastery of Karro, Thomas from the house of Nasith and Isaak from the house of "bediesou". Many monasteries in Mesopotamia were dissolved and many monks exiled. Later, Justinian allowed the return of some of the exiled, but the Syrian monasteries were not rebuilt except for the mountainous areas of Lebanon.

5/ Because of the persecutions by the Orthodox who held the power everywhere in Syria, the persecuted fled to the

inaccessible parts of Lebanon which led to the creation of the heretical Aramaean Church and nation of the Maronites. For centuries and to this day, the Maronites make up for the most part the only indigenous Aramaean people in Syria and Palestine opposite the Greek Orthodox.

At this point it is necessary to define the ethnic names of the various Christian people of Syria, Palestine and Mesopotamia.

***Syrians, Chaldeans, Aramaeans, Greeks, Ionites,  
Melhites, Romans (Rum)***

*Syrians, Chaldeans, Aramaeans*

The clarification of the relations of the Greeks with the Aramaeans in Syria, Palestine and Mesopotamia becomes difficult partially because of the often not clear and not defined use of their ethnic names. As we saw earlier, the names Syrian and Chaldean in Hellenistic times had a geographic meaning. Syrian also had a political meaning, referring to the citizen or subject of the great state of the Seleucids. After the schism, first of the Nestorians and then of the Monophysites, these names also took a religious or ecclesiastical meaning and along with that a national meaning as they got linked together.

As for the name Aramaean, we repeat what was said in the early chapters of this treatise, that the name is derived from Aram which in the Old Testament is given to northern Syria and northern Palestine. Initially it had just a geographical meaning and from that it ended up also having an

ethnological meaning. According to Strabo and Posidonius (Strabo A, 42), the Syrians under the Greeks called themselves Aramaean. But this name which today has a glossological and ethnological meaning and includes Syrians (western Aramaeans) and Chaldeans (eastern Aramaeans),<sup>220</sup> it appears that it was rarely used in Greco-Roman times. It disappeared in Christian times and today is in use only as a scientific term in the ethnological science and in linguistics since the name Syrian and Chaldean have become the ones commonly used. Chaldeans are always called the eastern Aramaeans, Nestorians in ecclesiastical terminology.<sup>221</sup> Syrians usually before the schism and commonly afterwards, the western Aramaeans, Jacobites and Maronites in ecclesiastical terms. The Jacobites being Monophysite and the Maronites Monothelites.

Many ecclesiastical writers before the schism, especially John Chrysostom, give a local meaning<sup>222</sup> to the names Palestine and Phoenicia and in the term Syrian an ethnological meaning.<sup>223</sup> After the schism both Greeks and

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<sup>220</sup> Today's Chaldean language is also called Eastern Aramaic and Syrian is also called Western Aramaic. The alphabet of each language although closely related to each other, is different in each.

<sup>221</sup> In modern times a part of the Nestorians joined the Eastern Rites Catholic Churches. Europeans usually call Chaldeans these Eastern Rites Catholics and Nestorians those that stayed loyal to their fathers' religion.

<sup>222</sup> Chrysostom (vol. 3, p. 725, *Patrologia Graeca*, Migne).

<sup>223</sup> It is not clear if Chrysostom by saying "Syrian bishops" (vol. 3, p. 533) means Syrian in ancestry and language. Of the three bishops that he implies (Acacius of Veria in Syria, Severian of Gabala and Antiochus of Ptolemais) we only know for sure that Severian spoke Syrian. Antiochus was a great orator of the Greek language and accumulated a great fortune in Constantinople by being invited to speak in various churches. As for Acacius, we don't know anything about his ancestry. He wrote in Greek but none of his works have survived. However, there are passages of Chrysostom where the name Syrian only has a geographical meaning. A person leaving in Syria (vol. 5, p186). But the

Syrians used the name Syrian to contrast not only to the Orthodox Greeks but also to the Nestorian Chaldeans. It meant the Jacobite Aramaeans while the Maronites were usually differentiated with their own name. Such was also the use by the Frankish writers of the Crusades, with rare exceptions. To this day the Jacobites are generally called Syrians.

This regarding the names Syrian, Chaldean and Aramaean.<sup>224</sup> It is time to examine how the Orthodox Greeks of Syria called themselves and how they were called by the Aramaeans.

*Hellenes, Graeci, Ionites, Melhites, Romans (Rum)*

The name Hellene which was the general ethnic name of the Greeks in Syria, Palestine and Mesopotamia in pre-Christian times, lost this meaning during Christian times and referred to the non-Christians or Jews in contrast to the Christians. It meant someone having any other religion without any relation or reference to ethnic ancestry or language. Because of that, Saracens (before Islam) were called Hellenes (Greek Saracene = non-Christian, non-Jewish and non-Muslim, pagan). Graecos before Christianity was not used in Greek or any language other than Latin. In the Christian era its use was very rare. Its use became common only during the era of Turkish rule but has no significance for the subject that we are examining.

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most common use of the name by the holy Father has an ethnological meaning (vol. 1, p. 714, vol. 8, p. 32, vol. 5. P. 226, vol. 6. p. 88)

<sup>224</sup> As mentioned earlier (especially in the Synaxarion) in the most ancient Christian times, the term *Palestinian language* (Palaestini eloquium) is the same as Aramaic language.



The usual name of the Orthodox of Syria after the schism were *Melhites*<sup>225</sup> and *Rum* which remain to this day their ethnic and religious name. There is one more name that will be discussed here, mostly out of scientific, historical and literary interest and not because of a direct relation to our subject.

Ionites. The chronicler John Malalas from Syria gives us the noteworthy piece of information that up until his time the Greeks of Antioch were called by the Syrians, Ionites. Earlier we talked about the Greek colonists, before Alexander, of a part of Syria where later Antioch was built. We saw that according to tradition the colonists built a city called Ionopolis or Iopolis near the future site of Antioch. According to Libanius (vol. 1, p. 289) the city was called Ioni which we considered related not to the mythical Io of Argos, but to the Ionians, assuming that it meant nothing else other than city of Ionians. What Malalas mentions about the Greek Antiochians being called Ionites up to his time supports our assumption and makes another one of our assumptions highly likely. That Ionites were called by the indigenous Syrians (or Aramaeans) all the Greeks who colonized the country and became its primary people.

The Aramaic name for the Greeks is Ianau. A term Barebreos uses to identify the Greeks of the time of John Tzimiskes. This name, Christian Lasseu interprets in Latin as Iones. It is known that the Greeks were known by other ancient Asian people as Iones or some small variation of it (Iavan by the Jews, Uin by the Egyptians in public signs of the 8<sup>th</sup> century BC, Iunan or Yunan by the Persians and

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<sup>225</sup> After the 18<sup>th</sup> century schism in the Orthodox Church in Antioch (after that schism a part of the Orthodox became Eastern Rites Catholics, calling themselves Greek or Roman Catholics). Melhites are usually called by the Europeans and by the Orthodox of Syria only these Eastern Rites Catholics but not the Orthodox.

Arabs. Yunan are also called the Greeks of the free Greek state by the Turks and Greece is called Yunanistan. Hunastan by the Armenians etc.

Most likely the stories about the city of Ioni (the name in Greek does not match grammatically the spelling of Io's name but rather the name Ionians) and Iopolis are all myth and have no other historic meaning. Therefore, the city was not named after Io of Argos but probably after the nation that before Alexander and especially after him, colonized the country. And as an explanation for the name, the whole myth about her presence in the country was created. That these myths are also associated with the Greek establishment in Cilicia (Tarsus) is obvious. Greek colonization in the 6<sup>th</sup> century BC of Cilicia appears to be simultaneous with the establishment of colonies in Syria. It may even have been an extension of the already establishment of the Greeks inland in Cilicia.

This name disappeared with the passage of time. In Syria as in the entire Roman empire the name Roman prevailed as the political, national and religious name of the Greeks. But in Syria, Palestine and Mesopotamia, Orthodox Greeks were also distinguished after the 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> century schism by another name. Melhites.

Melhites were called (unknown when it began but definitely after or at the beginning of the schism) the Orthodox, not only in these three countries but also in Egypt. In contrast to the local Monophysites. The name is Syrian (Melh in Syrophoenician meant king, Melhisedek = just king) or Arabic (malic means king). Most likely though Aramaic, given by the heretics, especially the Aramaean Jacobites to the Orthodox in Syria, Palestine and Mesopotamia. We find an older use of the name in Egypt by Eutychius, Patriarch of Alexandria. The name literally means *royal* (*βασιλικός*)

but the historic start and reason why it took a religious name is unknown.

The explanation of the change in meaning based on the fact that in Greek βασιλικός can also mean royalist, the king's or emperor's follower, the one who agrees in religious matters with the opinion of the king or with the king's religious beliefs, does not appear correct. Euty chius also calls the Orthodox kings Melhites. He also talks about Emperor Anastasius I that he fought the Melhites. This last one shows that at the time of Euty chius the term had no connection to the king in the minds of the Melhites. It simply and purely meant Orthodox.

Some of the most ancient and famous kings like Zeno and Anastasius were accused of protecting the heretics. Justinian I looked favorably towards some of the leading heretics. Heraclius through his actions towards uniting the heretics gave partially reason for the birth of the Monothelite heresy. His grandson Konstas II had a terrible discord for the matter with Pope Martin I who supported Orthodoxy. Philippicus lost his throne for being favorably inclined towards the heretics. These facts do not support the previous theory that the name means those who follow the king's beliefs. We leave aside the fact that many kings were considered enemies of Orthodoxy and impious, not for their favoritism towards the heretics but as iconoclasts.

Therefore, more likely is the opinion that Melhites means Royals as of royal ancestry or of the ruling nation the Romans (Hellenes or Graeci of the eastern Roman empire). This is what the Aramaeans probably called the Greeks of the empire as true and pure citizens or subjects. Aramaeans and the indigenous Copts of Egypt had a racial and religious hatred towards the Greeks and were sympathizers towards the Persians and the Arabs.

Also worth noting, is that Eutychius talks about Greek Melhites.<sup>226</sup> This just proves that in the minds of his contemporaries the term meant nothing more than Orthodox. No matter what the case may be for the unknown to us historic start of the use of the name Melhites as the name for the Orthodox, it was first given by the heretics but eventually embraced by the Orthodox themselves as a religious and national name in all three countries and in Egypt. Maybe in other countries too where there were Nestorian or Monophysite Churches, such as in Persia, but not in Armenia. There the Orthodox Greeks were referred to as heretics.

Even the phrase by Eutychius, Greek Melhites, may simply mean Greek Orthodox, with the terms having identical meaning and used interchangeably.

As we mentioned, the name is still used by the Greeks of Syria who became Eastern Rites Catholics to identify themselves. It did not prevail as the name Roman (Rum) did, which remained the primary ethnic name of the Orthodox and the Eastern Rites Catholic Greeks of this country, as well as the Orthodox of Palestine and Mesopotamia.

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<sup>226</sup> For the sake of thoroughness, since we don't know the exact historic start of the name, we cannot rule out the hypothesis that it may have come from the name of a leader named Melhos (similar to the Jacobites, Maronites, Nestorians etc). Orthodox bishops from Syria and Mesopotamia are not unknown in the history of the Church. However, none of these men were famous enough to deserve such an association with the name Melhites.

*Relations of the Greek Orthodox of  
Syria, Palestine and Mesopotamia  
with the rest of the Orthodox Hellenism  
from the 6<sup>th</sup>-7<sup>th</sup> century schism and the Muslim conquest  
till today.*

*Greek letters in the three countries*

The history of the Orthodox of Syria, Palestine and Mesopotamia after the Muslim conquest in the 7<sup>th</sup> century and the political separation of the three countries from the Greek Byzantine state, is not known in all its details. Rarely is there mention of these Orthodox and their fate, in the political and ecclesiastical history of the Greek state.<sup>227</sup> Even more rarely is there mention in Western histories and almost no mention in the Muslim world of the East. Very little can be learned from the history books of the other Christians of the East, Syrians, Chaldeans and Armenians. Records of pilgrimages to the Holy Land of the Middle Ages that have survived in Greek or Latin contain almost no information on our subject. Not even indirectly are we informed of the language spoken by the Orthodox to learn when Arabic replaced Greek. They teach us nothing about their feelings of national identity.<sup>228</sup> Only a biography written by a German nun provides us, not with information,

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<sup>227</sup> Editor's note: Same for the Greeks of southern Italy and Sicily or the Greeks of the northern shores of the Black Sea. Greek history books focus on the history of the area of the present-day Greek state.

<sup>228</sup> Appendix B is a list of these pilgrimages written either in Greek or Latin.

but hints on our subject, from a pilgrimage that took place in the years 720-730 AD. Some of the Frankish chronographies of the crusades however, written by men travelling with the crusader armies and visiting the places in person provide useful information. They will be presented in detail further down.

All this aside, the rare but clear evidence from Byzantine literature proves that for centuries after the Muslim conquest the Orthodox in these countries kept their national identity through the Greek language and education. They especially kept their connection to the free Greeks of the Greek state. These countries, especially Syria, remained centers of Greek ecclesiastical education and Greek letters in general, long after the Muslim conquest. There is much evidence that shows that. Greek letters were cultivated through the entire Arab Muslim period in Syria and Mesopotamia. Strong proof of that is not just the great Fathers of the Church that were in these countries and who amazed the world of their time and later, with their extensive theological education. Further proof is the diligent way that non-Orthodox, Syrian and Chaldean Aramaeans studied Greek letters. Additionally, the eagerness of the Muslim Arab caliphs with which they assigned to Greeks and the patriarch of the Greek Orthodox (Melhites) the translation of the works of Aristotle and other Greek writers. These Greeks translated directly from the Greek text to Arabic.<sup>229</sup>

But the Greeks were not the only translators working for the caliphate. Many Syrian and Chaldean Hellenizing intellectuals worked on this project. The only difference was that they didn't translate directly from Greek. Instead,

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<sup>229</sup> Oriens Christianus, 2 Jahrgang, Briefe des Katholicus Timotheus, prologue by Oscar Braun, p. 2.

they translated into Arabic from Aramaic translations. We don't know how accurate it is what the Nestorian Catholic Timotheus I (he lived at the end of the 8<sup>th</sup> century) wrote in his letter to Pethion, that the Caliph al-Mahdi, the first friend of Greek letters, saw no value in direct translations from the Greek texts into Arabic, preferring instead translations by Syrians and Chaldeans into Arabic from Aramaic translations.<sup>230</sup> The only reason all this matters for our subject is that to this day the Orthodox of Syria, whether Greek or Greek speaking, did not concern themselves with Aramaic letters nor had any relevance to them. They simply studied Greek and by necessity Arabic. Between ethnic Hellenism and them over time having to speak Arabic, no Aramaic language use interposed.

The study and cultivation of Greek letters after the decline of the caliphate and the establishment in Syria and Mesopotamia of Turkic or Kurdish Muslim dynasties, remained flourishing by the Orthodox and even by the Syrian Monophysites.<sup>231</sup> It should be noted that while Syrian and Chaldean Aramaeans studied Arabic and their most famous writers wrote in both languages, the Orthodox wrote only in Greek, utilizing Arabic simply for external

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<sup>230</sup> Oriens Christianus, 2 Jahrgang, Briefe des Katholicus Timotheus, prologue by Oscar Braun, p.5.

<sup>231</sup> In the middle of the 12<sup>th</sup> century, Emperor Manuel Komnenos ordered the famed Greek theologian and philosopher Theorianos to go to Armenia and Mesopotamia to talk with the leader of the Monophysite Churches of both countries. With the Catholic of the Armenians and the Armenian synod he communicated with the help of translators. But the patriarch of the Jacobites sent his credo in Greek, in an ornate way as was the style of the Syrians to write Greek. A monk named Theodorus ordered by the patriarch to negotiate with Theorianos about the dogmatic differences between the Orthodox and the Jacobites, was so familiar with Aristotelian philosophy that forced Theorianos to express his admiration for the words of the heretic. (Patrologia Graeca, Migne, vol. 133, p. 119).

use. As far as I know no famous Orthodox writer wrote in Arabic. And those books that are found in Arabic are translations of Greek books of ecclesiastical liturgies, translated much later, during the era of Turkish rule. They were translated as we mentioned in an earlier chapter, due to the eagerness of the Greek Orthodox clergy of the Churches of Jerusalem and Antioch to make understood by the people the language of these liturgies.

The Orthodox showed little desire to study Arabic, in contrast to the abilities developed by the Jacobites and Nestorians. This ability probably convinced the Caliph al-Mahdi to prefer the translations of Aristotle's books by Syrians and Chaldeans from Greek through Aramaic into Arabic and to value less the direct translations from Greek to Arabic by the Orthodox Greeks or Melhites. Probably preferring the rich and flowery form of their translations over the accurate interpretation of the Greek text. The caliph was not the biggest expert in understanding and verifying the accuracy or not of the translation, not understanding that the Aramaeans only had the ability to understand Greek by studying it, whereas the Melhites had it as their ethnic and religious language.

According to the Jacobite Bishop Elias when talking to the Orthodox theologian and philosopher Theorianos, the Syrians superseded all nations of the world in wisdom. We saw that the Jacobite monk Theodorus was an expert in Aristotle. And the Nestorian Patriarch Timotheus II wrote to Pethion (different than the one previously mentioned) about Sergius the Metropolitan of Elam in what used to be Persia (they kept their positions after the Muslim conquest) that "he had two languages. One Athenian of Attica and one



of fire”.<sup>232</sup> From excerpts like this we see that Nestorians and Jacobites diligently studied Greek letters. But we cannot assume that these Nestorian or Jacobite Hellenizers could, through their Greek education, compare to John of Damascus or Theodorus Aboukaras or other Orthodox ecclesiastical writers in Syria, Palestine and Mesopotamia.

Therefore, the only reason that the caliph preferred translations of Aristotle by Syrians and Chaldeans was that Orthodox intellectuals did not study Arabic like the ancestral brothers of the Arabs, the Aramaeans, whose language was related to Arabic.

It is true that in the 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> centuries the Orthodox of Palestine used Arabic letters in their private business while using the Greek language and alphabet in public. On the other hand, the Aramaeans used Aramaic letters. Syrian letters by the Syrians and Chaldean by the Chaldeans. This does not mean that the Greeks were now cultivating Arabic letters like the Aramaeans. It simply means that the Greeks who had no relation to Aramaism, not in language nor in writing and having their own language and alphabet, the Greek one, used the Greek language in public documents and those who were not educated in it, used Arabic in private while Aramaeans used their own. This is further proof that the Orthodox had no religious or ethnic or linguistic affiliation to Aramaism.

Thus, it is shown that even after the Muslim conquest of the 7<sup>th</sup> century, Syria, Palestine and Mesopotamia remained centers of Greek enlightenment and Greek education and that the Greek language and education kept the Orthodox Greeks of these countries connected to the Greek state and

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<sup>232</sup> Oriens Christianus, 2 Jahrgang, Briefe des Katholicus Timotheus, p. 29.

its Great Greek Church and the entire Hellenic world. And not just the Greek letters, but also the national identity and national feelings unbreakably connected the Orthodox of Syria to the great Greek state.

*National Identity of the Orthodox  
of Syria, Palestine and Mesopotamia  
after the Muslim Conquest of the 7<sup>th</sup> century*

The national identity of the Orthodox of these three countries was very closely attached to Byzantium and the Greek state. Their only national state, their only national kingdom with the only king of the faith of the nation. The king of their hearts was the king of the Greeks in Constantinople. “The faithful king and emperor of the Romans”. They were an unliberated part of Greece and of Hellenism if we can use today’s terminology. There is much supporting evidence for all this and we will go ahead and present the most well-known examples in history.

*The two Tripolitan brothers.* At the time of the third caliph, Osman, after they had already conquered all of Palestine, Syria and Mesopotamia and were preparing to invade Asia Minor, the governor of Syria, Mu’awiya, who later became caliph, as the leader of the planned campaign he was building a fleet in Tripoli of Syria (654 AD) to attack the Greek islands and if possible to move via the sea on to Constantinople. Two brothers from that city inspired by national and religious feelings attempted a brave act that demonstrated that the Orthodox of Syria were loyal to the Greek state. They attacked the city’s prison releasing captured Greeks from the previous battle and uniting with

them they killed the governor of the city. They then attacked the fleet being built, destroying it and all the prepared supplies by fire. After their brave act they fled to the Greek state.

After a while, Mu'awiya built a new fleet and sent it to the Greek seas. Off the coast of Lycia a battle between the two fleets took place where one of the two brothers accomplished another brave act. In the heat of battle he saw Emperor Constans II in danger. He rushed and jumped on his ship and rescued the emperor, helping him move to a different ship. He then returned to the royal ship where he fought till he died. In this way an Orthodox of Syria with his brave act, saved the king of the Greek state.

Ten years later, another Greek of Syria, with his intelligence and his invention saved the capital and the whole Greek empire.

Callinicus of Heliopolis of Syria. He arrived in Constantinople just before the new campaign by land and sea by Mu'awiya who aimed to take the city. Emperor at the time was Constantine IV. Callinicus invented and manufactured the legendary "Greek fire" (υγρόν πυρ) by which the Arab fleet was completely destroyed and the siege lifted, thus saving the city. It also led to the Arabs seeking a humiliating truce. Callinicus's house was then given the privilege to keep the secret of the Greek fire, which it kept for centuries.

During the same time in Syria an entire armed Christian people occupied all the mountainous parts of Syria and Palestine. For a time, they were able to unite with the Greek state while becoming the terror of their Muslim enemies. Those people were the Mardaites.

The first mention of them is by the chronographer Theophanes (vol. 1, p. 542). *“In the year 669 the Mardaites entered Lebanon and held the territory from the Black Mountain to the Holy city. They fortified Lebanon and many slaves and locals sought refuge with them, swelling their ranks into many thousands. When Mu’awiya and his advisors learned that, they got scared thinking that the kingdom of the Romans is guarded by God and they sent ambassadors to Constantine asking for peace”*. Constantine VII copied all this from Theophanes and passed them on to his son along with some more information.

Constantine IV who we are talking about here ruled between 668-685 AD. According to Theophanes the Mardaites took over Lebanon was 669, the second year of his rule, when the siege of Constantinople had not even begun. From the description of this story, we see the terror that the Mardaites caused Mu’awiya. The sending of an embassy to the emperor that followed the event described, took place in 678 AD which agrees with Constantine’s the VII text that mentions that shortly before Mu’awiya’s death (681 AD) the Mardaites took over Lebanon. This apparent discrepancy in dates in Theophanes’s story is because the capture of Lebanon by the Mardaites was not the work of a single year but a result of years of action.

The historic importance of the Mardaites and their relevance to our subject is connected with the clarification of their beginning and their ethnic ancestry. On this subject, Byzantine sources say nothing. Modern historians have offered many opinions and speculations, many of which making no logical sense. Those that interpret the name from Persian thought that Mardaites were called by the Persians in Syria those that fled to the mountains and continued to fight them when they raided the country in the 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> century, especially under Chosroes II. The Persians called

them bandits which supposedly came from the Persian word is *Mard*. This opinion is based possibly on an inadequate explanation of their ethnic name.<sup>233</sup> It is not unlikely that before or after the Arab conquest of Syria those who became known as Mardaites by taking over the mountainous parts of Syria and Palestine, came to be already from the time of the Persian raids. Armed gangs of men on the mountains of Syria and Palestine fighting for faith and country against irreverent raiders. But the name Mardaites seems to belong in Arab times.

The opinion of the English historians Gibbon and Finlay and before them Catholic historians, was that the Mardaites were the same as the Maronites. The German historians Hammer and Pihler had their own discredited theory. Both theories were illogical since the Mardaites were Orthodox and loyal to Constantinople and acting on its orders, while the Maronites (Monophysites or Monothelites) like all heretics in Syria, were favorably inclined to foreign conquerors, Persian and Arabs. They hated the Mardaites, calling them bandits (more information further down). In any case there can be no affiliation of the names Maronites and Mardaites. The Maronite community was formed by heretics chased out of Syria and seeking refuge in Lebanon. Maronites lived only in Lebanon whereas the capture by the Mardaites of territories of Lebanon was just a strategic event as part of the war. Over time the Mardaites came to control an area from the northernmost mountains of Syria

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<sup>233</sup> Merd in Persian (Mard in Armenian) means male. In this case the Persian word also means brave. There is also the Armenian word mar(d)t=battle, mar(d)t-warrior. Also, possibly the name of a warlike and raiding people the Mardians that lived in ancient times on the southern shores of the Caspian Sea may be linguistically related to this word.

to the Holy city. Controlling all the mountainous parts of Syria and Palestine.

For the same reason, Hammer's theory and other theories are equally not worth examining. He claimed that today's Druze of Lebanon are the descendants of the Mardaites. But the Mardaites were not just in Lebanon but in all of mountainous Syria and Palestine. Their occupation of parts of Lebanon was just a part of their war against the Arabs.

Unsubstantiated is also the opinion of other European historians, which was copied even by our own Paparigopoulos, that the Mardaites came from the Mardian people living near the shores of the Caspian Sea. It seems impossible that the Mardians of the Persian lands mentioned in Herodotus, Plutarch and Arrian all of a sudden appear as Christians in the time of Constantine IV, at a time when the Muslim Arabs rule Persia and with a gesture by the king in Constantinople they rush through Muslim countries to the mountains of Syria and Palestine to fight with such eagerness for Orthodoxy and the king in Constantinople. Then, once again with a nod by this king, to evacuate their positions. Leaving all this aside let's look at who truly were the Mardaites.<sup>234</sup>

The name Mardaites is Arabic and it means apostate or rebel (v. rada=resist, mardad=resister, rebel). That was the name

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<sup>234</sup> Also not worth much discussion is the opinion of Goaros that the Mardaites were Arabs. *Constantine VII to his son Romanus*, pub. Migne, vol 113, p. 201, note 95, « De his voce et scriptis decideratus Ecchellens » p. 156, « Cognatio Maraditarum appellatione dignoscitur, ita dicta a Mahrado F. Cahlavi, quae regionem Syriae conterminam large lateque habitat et ad quam referenda quoque sunt innumera prope modum hujus nominis familiae, qual plures Arabiae felicitis occupant urbes et agros. Hi prae omnibus Arabibus genus armorum splendore ac virtute praeclarum rediderunt: sed multo magis christiana religione, cujus propugnatores accerimi fuere. Ipse Ecchellensis Libanita Mardaitam se jactabat, et nomine ac christiani gloriabatur ».

given to the Greek Orthodox who captured Lebanon and the mountains of Syria and Palestine at the time of Constantine IV. This is mentioned clearly by the Syrian (Jacobite) historians. “Mardaitarum, hoc est Rebellium nomen eisdem crearunt” says Edenensis in *Assemani Bibliotheca Orientale* I p. 402. The same, rebels and bandits, they are called by the Syrian chronographer Mihel in the French translation of Langlois p. 242 « De brigands allèrent occuper le Mont Liban et prirent le nom de Rebelles”. Greek murderous rebels, according to Syrian chronographer Abdul Faradz, «Misit Constantinus sicarios Romanos, Rebelles (Mardaitas) vel satellites qui a Syris Audaces vocantur ». By him we also learn that the Syrian Christians called these Mardaites, not only bandits and rebels but also bold and daring. All this proves that the Mardaites were Greek Orthodox hated and ridiculed by the Syrians but also admired for their daring.

Very important testimony for the origins of the Mardaites is of Patriarch Nikephoros (pub. Bonn, p. 41) who calls them “hoplites”, «μεθιστησιν (ο Ἰουστινιανός Β΄) τοὺς ἐν τῷ ὄρει του Λιβάνου λοχῶντας ἐκ παλαιοῦ χρόνου ὀπλίτας». Hoplites therefore were called in the beginning the warriors of the mountains of Syria and Palestine which the Syrian chronographer disrespectfully changed to murderers. Constantine Sathas who wrote quite a bit about the Mardaites in his “*Medieval Library, vol. 2*” (*Μεσαιωνική Βιβλιοθήκη*), he largely successfully investigated their origins and concluded that the Mardaites came to Lebanon from the Taurus mountains where at the time of the Isaurian dynasty military units were stationed, including German mercenaries and later on Varangians. They were the first *armatoloi* (αρματολοί=militia) of Greek folklore songs. In the earliest known of these songs from the Pontus region they are referred to as “dragons”, “Roman lads”, “Greek

speaking”, “Young Greeks”, “with a Greek spear they killed the Emir” etc. From these *Greek lads* according to Sathas many frontier castles in access routes through the Taurus mountains got the name “Greek castles”. Sathas adds (without referencing his source) that because the name Greek (Hellene) sounded bad to the ears of Christians, these *dragon* Greeks of the Taurus mountains were sometimes called Macedonians, a name that after given to them no longer signified origin but bravery.

The Mardaites therefore were simply hoplites (or as they were known later, *armatoloi*) stationed in mountain passes, making up the irregular army of the mountains. The Arabs called them rebels for resisting their rule. On the mountains of Syria and Palestine they were the “bronze wall” of the Greek empire, as historiographers called them, against the enemies of the state, the Arabs. With the prevailing of the name, we start seeing Mardaites, that is irregular mountain soldiers, in Pamphylia as well.<sup>235</sup> These other Mardaites they became known not by Byzantine chronography but by the epic poems describing the deeds of Digenes Akritas and by smaller poems of similar nature describing the accomplishments of heroes such as Andronikos, Constantine, Porfyrius, Argyrius and others.

Another name by which they became known other than Hoplites or Mardaites is “apelates” (*απελάτης*). The literal meaning of this word is thief, bandit etc. or according to

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<sup>235</sup> Constantine VII to his son Romanus, pub. Migne, *Patrologia Graeca*, vol. 113, p. 381. «Ὁ Νικήτας οὖν οὕτως ἠτήσατο ὅτι τὸν υἱὸν μου αἰτοῦμαι ἵνα ποιήσῃ ἡ βασιλεία σου Κατεπάνω τῶν Μαρδαϊτῶν Ἀτταλείας, οὗτινος ὁ βασιλεὺς τῆ αἰτήσῃ πεισθεῖς, ἐπὶ προελεύσεως εἰσαγωγῶν ἐπὶ τοῦ Χρυσοτρικλίνου τὸν υἱὸν τοῦ πρωτοσπαθαρίου Νικήτα, τὸν Σπαθακανδιδάτον Ἀβέρκιον, προεβάλετο αὐτὸν Κατεπάνω τῶν Μαρδαϊτῶν Ἀτταλείας».



“Glossarium ad Scriptores mediae et infimae Graecitatis,” horse rider. But its primary meaning in history books is irregular soldier of the mountains. Apelates are also called in the Akritas epics, the soldiers under the akrites (the leaders) in 10<sup>th</sup> century Pamphylia, also known as Mardaites whose leaders were appointed by the king himself in Constantinople.

Their weapons included sword, spear and a variety of clubs. One of them the ropalon (ρόπαλον) was also known as apelatikion, taking its name from these warriors. According to Sathas, on this weapon they had the icon of their patron saint, Saint Mamas of Cappadocia. Sathas calls him Hercules of Christianity and in Cappadocia, as far as I know, he is pictured sitting on a lion. On his spear he is seen holding the icon of Saint George, also from Cappadocia, who according to popular tradition was given a lot of the attributes of Perseus.

All this leads us to the conclusion that Apelates and Mardaites were the same and that Mardaites is the name given to them by the Arabs in Syria. As with many other Arab names it came to be partially used in Byzantium as well. Constantine VII, using these names, he calls the Apelates of Attalia, Mardaites. But the purpose of this book is not to discuss the Apelates, as others have written about them, but to show that the Apelates or Mardaites of Syria constituted a political and ethnic connection between the Orthodox Greeks in that country and the kingdom of Constantinople.

*Mardaites or Apelates of Syria*  
*and the Kingdom of Constantinople*

The Mardaites as we saw were simply Greek Apelates of the mountains of Syria, occupying the land from the Taurus to the Black Mountain, near Antioch. At the time when Constantine IV and Mu'aiya were fighting each other, the Mardaites fought for the Greek state on orders by King Constantine. From the Black Mountain they marched and captured Lebanon and from there extended their power and their state to the Holy city. The terror they caused the Arabs was so great and unexpected that they attributed the appearance of the Mardaites to divine intervention. Thinking that god is protecting the Romans, the caliph sent ambassadors to ask for peace by the king. He gave the Arabs peace with humiliating terms. They were forced to pay the Roman king three thousand gold coins each year and to give up eight thousand men as prisoners and noble horses.

However, in this chapter of recorded history there is a gap that creates questions for those studying history. This peace was the result of an aggressive war by the Arabs against the Greek state, aiming for the capture of the capital and the dissolution of the empire. The attack failed, the Arabs were stopped but the Greek did not assume an attacking stance and no Greek army invaded the Greek lands occupied by the Arabs in Asia. No fleet set sail to attack the coastal cities of the Arab state. The Greek provinces of Asia Minor appeared exposed to new raids. Yet a peace treaty was signed that surprised the Khagan of the Avars and all the kings of Europe because by the terms of the treaty, the size of the victory and the strength of the Greek state was demonstrated, making the state of the caliphs, a vassal state.

This question is answered by what is recorded by chronographers but not mentioned by later historians. This peace was a direct result of the actions of the Greek Mardaites in Syria and Palestine that extended their power from Antioch to Jerusalem.

Who were these Mardaites? Irregular Greek army of mountain dwelling Greeks between the Taurus Syria and Asia Minor and the Black Mountain of Antioch. When they advanced towards Lebanon and Jerusalem a great number of Orthodox Christians of Syria joined them. This way a great Greek force was created within the Arab state. A Greek state within a Muslim state forced the caliph to subjugate himself to the king of the Greeks. These Greeks of Syria, from Mopsuestia of Cilicia to the Holy city, uninhabited Syria and Palestine and became the “bronze wall” of the Greek state, dependent on the orders of the king of the Greeks. The Arabs called them rebels because most of them were from Syria. The Aramaean Syrians called them bandits. Is there greater proof of the different ancestry of the Orthodox of Syria and Palestine from the Aramaean Syrians?

What was the size of this army of the Greek and Orthodox faith in Syria and Palestine? It is not exactly known but the following sheds light on this issue as well. The peace treaty that the caliph had to submit to was the direct result of the fearsome movement of the Greek Mardaites in the mountains of Syria and Palestine. Such was the terror and discomfort of the caliph that in the treaty he did not dare to ask for the removal of the Mardaites, but it appears he only asked for the ceasing of their hostile acts. The Mardaites, after the conclusion of the peace treaty remained in their positions. This shows their strength, but also shows that they were made up of indigenous Greeks of Syria. Otherwise, it would be incomprehensible after the signing

of the peace treaty for them to remain in Syria, being warriors of the Greek state. The Mardaites therefore were Greek guerilla fighters of Syria, loyal to the kingdom of Constantinople.

The caliph of course could not bear the presence within his state of rebels whose numbers surpassed twelve thousand. He was therefore looking for ways to get rid of their presence, since they kept attacking parts of Lebanon. Mu'awiya and his heirs, Yazid, Mu'awiya II and Marwan I, were distracted by civil unrest and did nothing. But in 685 Abd al-Malik came to power and after he restored internal peace, he worked wholeheartedly to accomplish this. He proposed to the emperor in Constantinople, Justinian II, a new treaty, where the caliph would pay the emperor instead of 3000 gold coins and 8000 prisoners annually, 1000 coins and one slave and one horse per day. But the caliph made more great concessions. The taxes of Cyprus, Armenia and Iberia (Georgia) would be split equally between the two countries.<sup>236</sup> With these great concessions, the emperor dissolved the army of the Mardaites and 12000 of them abandoned the mountains of Syria and Palestine and came to the lands of the Greek kingdom.

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<sup>236</sup> Θεοφάνης τομ. Α, σ. 543-4 «Τῶν δὲ Μαρδαϊτῶν ἐπιτιθεμένων τοῖς μέρεσι τοῦ Λιβάνου καὶ λοιμοῦ ἐπικρατοῦντος ὁ αὐτὸς Ἀβιμελεχ τὴν ἐπὶ Μαυρίου εἰρήνην αἰτεῖται ἀποστείλας πρέσβεις πρὸς τὸν βασιλέα, τὰς αὐτὰς τξέ χιλιάδας τῶν χρυσῶν νομισμάτων συνθέμενος τελεῖν καὶ τοὺς τξέ δούλους καὶ ὁμοίους εὐγενεῖς ἵππους τξέ». This peace offer took place in 685 AD. (677 according to the mistaken year by Theophanes). «Ἀβιμέλεχ ἀποστέλλει πρὸς Ἰουστινιανὸν βεβαίωσαι τὴν εἰρήνην καὶ ἐστοιχήθη ἡ εἰρήνη οὕτως: ἵνα ὁ βασιλεὺς παύσῃ το τῶν Μαρδαϊτῶν τάγμα ἐκ τοῦ Λιβάνου καὶ διακαλώσῃ τὰς ἐποδρομὰς αὐτῶν, καὶ Ἀβιμέλεχ δώσῃ τοῖς Ῥωμαίοις καθ' ἑκάστην ἡμέραν νομίσματα χίλια καὶ ἵππον καὶ δοῦλον καὶ ἵνα ἔχωσι κοινῶς κοινῶς κατὰ τὸ ἴσον τοὺς φόρους τῆς Κύπρου, Ἀρμενίας καὶ Ἰβηρίας».

This act of Justinian, Theophanes calls it “dismemberment of the Roman dynasty”. “All the frontier towns inhabited by the Arabs were powerless and rendered uninhabited by the raids of the Mardaites. Limiting the tragedies the Romans suffered by the Arabs so far”. But it seems that not all Mardaites left their lands in Syria. Theophanes says that Justinian II, four years after the signing of the treaty, due to senility he cancelled the peace. The caliph “satanically pretended to beg not to cancel the peace treaty”. Justinian mistook this for fear “not realizing this was due to the removal of the Mardaites”. In any case, after the rule of Justinian II, Mardaites are no longer mentioned in Lebanon. But the Mardaites were Orthodox Greek guerillas against the caliphate, always connected to their brethren, the Greeks of the Greek kingdom.

The attacking stance by the middle of the 10<sup>th</sup> century towards those lands by the Greek kingdom and the accomplishments of the great Greek hero-generals and kings of the time, gave new life to the Mardaites apelates from the Taurus all the way deep into the lands of Syria and Mesopotamia. The life and times of these Greek Mardaites or apelates were not recorded by Byzantine chronography but were praised in Greek epics of the time and immortalized in folk songs.<sup>237</sup> Especially the epics of

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<sup>237</sup> Folk song from Trapezus found in the Medieval Library of Sathas.

Ἄς τὸν βασιλέα χαρτὶν ἔρθεν. «Δράκοι, δρακοντοπούλα,  
Δράκοι καὶ δρακοντόπουλα, Ρωμαίικα παλληκάρια,  
Ζώστεστε τὰ λωρίτσα σας, κρεμάστε τὰ σπαθία  
Δράκοι καὶ παλληκάρια μου, καὶ πᾶρτε τα ρασία,  
Περάτε ‘ς τα παρχάρια, ‘ς τὰ δύο κρύα πηγῶδια  
Δράκοι μ’, ἀκούγω ‘νᾶν λαλιάν, Ἑλληνικὸν λαλιάν,  
Τὸν Ταῦρον καὶ τὸν Κάσκαμον λεβέντοι ἐκατέβαν.  
Εἴχαμε νέους, Ἑλλενους, Ρωμαίικα παλληκάρια,  
Ἐπήγαμ’, ἀνταμώθημ’ ἴσα ‘ς τὰς Πέντε Πέτρας,  
Ἐκεῖ ἤψαμε τὸν Ἀλήν, μὲ τὸν Ἐμίρ ἀνταμᾶν.

Digenis Akritas that praise the wars of the apelates against the Arabs.

*The Akritic Epic and Greek Syria and Mesopotamia*

The great hero of this epic, Basil Digenes Akritas, is Cappadocian from his mother's side and from Syria on his father's. Even though it is not unlikely that this dual ancestry came to be from the pareymology of the name Diogenes and digenes, the great affinity of Akritas to Syria and Mesopotamia is undisputed.

In Mesopotamia the rival of Akritas is the apellate leader Akylos. There we see other great leaders of apelates horsemen, Filopappos, Ioannikios and Kinnamos. We see them gathering for a meeting at night using torch lights. We also read about the great amazon companion of the apelates, Maximo, with who Akritas has a duel. The names Filopappos and Kinnamos are names associated with Hellenism of Syria and Mesopotamia. Akritas built the luxurious palaces and gardens of his by the banks of the Euphrates and at the time of his death, rushing by the side of his death bed, are the people of Syria and Mesopotamia (the Orthodox Greeks of course). They came from Amida of Mesopotamia, the Black Mountain of Syria, from "the place of Luke" i.e. the fortress of Luke found near Antioch, from Salum or Salamia of Syria.<sup>238</sup> All this is supported by

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«Ἀλή, ντὶ στέκεις ἀντίκρυ ‘ς Ἑλλενικὸν κοντάριν».  
Ἐσκοτώσαμε τὸν Ἐμίρ καὶ τὸν Ἀλὴν ἐπιάσαμε’.  
«Ἀλή, ἐσὸ κ’ ἐγνώριζες τ’ Ἑλλένικα παλληκάρια,  
Ἀλή, τὰ τοξοσάϊτα, τ’ Ἑλλένικον τὸ κοντάριν!»

<sup>238</sup> See treatise by the author "Critical notes on the epic of Akritas" (Σημειώσεις κριτικαὶ εἰς τὸ ἔπος Ἀκρίταν), found in the annals of the National University of Athens, 1906, p. 189-246.

the actual epic history of medieval Hellenism and the national unity felt by the Greek Orthodox warriors in Syria towards the Greek kingdom in Constantinople and medieval Hellenism of Byzantium. But Syria and Palestine of the Muslim era was connected ethnically and culturally with other bonds as well with Byzantium and its Greek king. These bonds we clearly see in the history of the Orthodox Church of these countries.

***Chapter 10***  
***The Orthodox Church and the***  
***Orthodox people***  
***of Syria and Palestine***  
***and the Kingship in Constantinople***

The Greek Orthodox Churches of Antioch and Jerusalem kept their pure Greek character even after the Muslim conquest. And the Churches themselves became the strong bond, not just spiritual, but also national, between their Orthodox flock and the rest of the Greek Orthodox Church. This was demonstrated by the previously outlined history of Greek ecclesiastical literature in Syria and Palestine, from the time of the first Muslim conquest to the Ottoman conquest. The entire clergy of both countries was purely Greek, with a strong Greek identity and an active communication on spiritual matters with the Church of Constantinople. It is true that this communication during the time of the Arab caliphs was not as active as before the conquest, but this was due to the difficult to overcome political barrier of the foreign Muslim domination interfering between the Church in Constantinople and the two other Churches. This domination did not allow the frequent exchange of letters between the patriarchs.

In 869, Theodosius the Patriarch of Jerusalem writes just that to Ignatius, Patriarch of Constantinople. “*You are not*



*unaware, holy despot, of the reason why we cannot write nor send. So as not to arise any suspicion to our rulers... and now, our emir ordered us to write*". What the emir ordered the patriarch of Jerusalem to write to the Ecumenical Patriarch is the following: "*We beg you to speak to our God protected despot to let go of as many Saracenes<sup>239</sup> as he decides, so as with their release to appease the anger of our ruler*". We see that the patriarch of Jerusalem in 870, centuries after the capture of the Holy city by the Arabs, calls the Arab administration simply "our rulers" while the emperor in Constantinople "God protected despot".<sup>240</sup> Similarly, in the Synod of Constantinople of 870, the exarch and guardian of Theopolis (Antioch) Metropolitan of Tyre, Thomas, spoke about "Roman rule", where the Orthodox of Syria belong and obey.<sup>241</sup>

It is therefore clearly recorded, that these patriarchal Churches, or rather their leaders, recognized as their national kingship, the kingship in Constantinople. They worked in supporting it and considered themselves its legal functionaries, assuming the responsibilities that came along with it. They demonstrated their devotion to the throne of Constantinople with dangerous and daring acts.

Theodorus, the Patriarch of Antioch at the time of Emperor Constantine V, was punished by exile by the caliph for

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<sup>239</sup> Meaning prisoners of war.

<sup>240</sup> In this particular letter, *Mansi Sacrorum Consiliorum nova et amplissima Collectio*, v. 16, p. 314, there are other very interesting things mentioned about the relations of the two Patriarchates. "We sent (with Elias the elder the representative to the Synod of 870) the hieratic outfit of Jacob the brother of Jesus which you desired and relics of the Holy resurrection, an engraved silver chalice for the blessing of our Church".

<sup>241</sup> *Mansi Sacrorum Consiliorum nova et amplissima Collectio*, v. 16, p. 338. Also, the patriarch of Alexandria wrote in the same period to Emperor Basil I, calling him "Our master and despot", *Mansi*, p. 391.

“with letters often informing Constantine about the Arabs”. The caliph was so mad about this that in 756 he banned the building of new Orthodox churches, the display of crosses and any discussion about faith between Christians and Arabs (Theophanes, v. 1, p. 663). Occasionally these caliphs or the local emirs tried to benefit politically by the Greek national identity and religious power of the patriarchates in their countries, as the emir of Palestine did in 870. The same in 821 when under order by the Caliph al-Ma'mun, the Patriarch of Antioch, Job I, crowned as King of the Romans (Greeks), the rebel general Thomas who had sought refuge after his revolt against Emperor Michael II (Genesius, chronography, pub. Bonn, p. 33). This patriarch as we are told by the Patriarch of Alexandria, Eutychius,<sup>242</sup> was forced by the son and heir of Caliph al-Ma'mun, al-Mu'tasim, to escort the caliph in his campaign against the Greek state and during the siege of Amorium to unsuccessfully urge its people to surrender the city to the caliph.

These, forced of course, actions of the Patriarch of Antioch show that the caliphs understood the national unity of the Orthodox of Syria and their patriarch with the people of the Greek state. The national character of the patriarchal throne is proven by yet another fact. The patriarchs recognized as their legal ruler the king in Constantinople. After they were ordained as patriarchs and presented to their Churches, if their Muslim rulers allowed it, they would travel to Constantinople to be presented to the king. This is clearly stated by the historian and king, John Kantakouzenos, that it was the common practice when he wrote about Patriarch Lazarus.<sup>243</sup> Lazarus, during the reign of Andronicus III

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<sup>242</sup> *Patrologia Graeca*, pub. Migne, vol 111, p. 1134.

<sup>243</sup> *Ἰωάννης Καντακουζηνός*, τόμ. 3, σ. 91, «Οὗτος γὰρ δὴ ὁ Πατριάρχης (Λάζαρος) ὅτε βασιλεύοντος Ἀνδρονίκου(Γ') περιόντος ὑπὸ τοῦ

(around 1340), travelled to Constantinople to be presented to the king. But while there he was chased away by a faction of the clergy of Constantinople who wanted a different man presented as patriarch to the king. But even the Ecumenical Patriarch did not support him. Rather he chased him away and after many adventures he ended up seeking the protection of the opponent of the emperor (John Palaiologos) in Didymoteicho, John Kantakouzenos. Kantakouzenos who had already declared himself emperor was then crowned by Lazarus.

From the same historian we learn that the local Muslim rulers in Syria and Palestine tolerated and allowed the Christians and especially the patriarchs who were also ethnic leaders, to claim the protection of the king in Constantinople and allow his mediation in favor of the Orthodox Christians. For that reason, John Kantakouzenos sent an embassy (between 1340-1350) to the Mamluk sultan of Egypt who at the time ruled over the Holy city and Antioch to petition the sultan about various requests of the Orthodox of Palestine and to allow the return of Lazarus and his enthronement as patriarch. The sultan welcomed the embassy and gladly fulfilled all the emperor's requests. He announced the fulfillment of the emperor's requests in a letter to him full of compliments. The letter was translated in the spoken Greek language of the period and included in the history written by John Kantakouzenos.

The relations of the patriarchal Churches of Antioch and Jerusalem with the kingship in Constantinople and the Ecumenical throne became closer again from the time of the Crusades and especially during the time of the Palaiologian dynasty. Many letters of the patriarchal thrones to the

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συνεπισκόπου ἐν τῇ ἀγίᾳ πόλει ἦν κεχειροτονημένος, ὃσπερ ἔθος, εἰς Βυζάντιον ἔπειτα ἀφίκετο προβληθισόμενος καὶ παρὰ βασιλέως».

kingship and Church in Constantinople survive to this day that showcase these relations. The monastic estates (Metochia) in Constantinople, founded by these two patriarchates and the time spent in Constantinople by the patriarchs themselves and other religious leaders further demonstrate the closeness of these relations. The remarkable fact is that the metropolitans of the throne of Jerusalem also took on missions on behalf of the emperors and the Great Church, often being sent as ambassadors to the courts of the great rulers of Russia. In 1393, Saint Bethlehem accompanied by a man named Alexius Aaron was sent by the emperor to Russia. Later on, the same saint was sent on the same mission again.<sup>244</sup> During that period, when the throne of Alexandria became vacant, Ecumenical Patriarch Antonius, was invited by a faction to send a patriarch from Constantinople. Fearing that his selection might not be to the liking of the Sultan of Egypt and to some of the Alexandrians, he wrote to the Patriarch of Jerusalem giving him the order on behalf of “the mighty and holy emperor and lord” to go to Alexandria to investigate the situation and act in filling the patriarchal throne.<sup>245</sup>

But not just patriarchs, bishops and metropolitans of Syria and Palestine considered the kingship in Constantinople as their national and legitimate ruler. The local leaders and the people shared the same beliefs and feelings. More importantly these ties were recognized by the Muslim rulers of these countries and did not forbid their expression. In 680 AD, Caliph Mu’awiya I was building the temple in Mecca and wanted to take the columns of the Christian church in Gethsemane to build the Muslim temple. A Christian man named Sergius, in the service of the caliph was approached by the local Christian leaders of Palestine who asked him to

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<sup>244</sup> Miclosich et Müller, *Acta et Diplomata Graeca*, Vol. 2, p. 194.

<sup>245</sup> Miclosich et Müller, *Acta et Diplomata Graeca*, Vol. 2, p. 273.

intervene with the caliph, promising to ask King Justinian II to send other columns instead. Which the king did.<sup>246</sup>

Other examples of the national unity between the Orthodox of Palestine and the kingship in Constantinople are mentioned by the Latin chronographer of the crusades and Latin Bishop of Tyre, William. He described with grim colors what the Orthodox suffered in the Holy Lands during the 11<sup>th</sup> century, after the area became part of the state of the Fatimids of Egypt and during the demolition of the Church of the Resurrection by the Caliph al-Hakim bi-Amr Allah (996-1021). *“In the end God’s mercy sent relief in the desperate situation of things. After the murder of Hakim, his son and heir, al-Zahir li-I’zaz Din Allah, renewed the peace treaty with Constantine (emperor Constantine IX Monomachos) that had been violated by his father and gave permission to the faithful to rebuild the church. When the permission was given, the people of the Holy city seeing that they didn’t have the means for such a task, sent representatives to the heir of Romanus,<sup>247</sup> Lord Constantine Monomachus who held the scepters at the time and humbly presented how much sadness and deprivation had overcome the people after the destruction of the church and begged him to extend his imperial generosity in the rebuilding of the church. Head of the delegation was John Carianitis. A noble man, with even more noble ethics. When he resigned of his earthly titles and became a monk, he lived penniless in Jerusalem. He worked without wavering and managed to secure from his lord and emperor the necessary funds from the imperial treasury for the rebuilding of the church. When the petition of the faithful people became accepted, the*

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<sup>246</sup> Theophanes.

<sup>247</sup> Romanus III. William forgets that between Romanus and Constantine IX, Michael IV the Paphlagonian and Michael V Kalaphates ruled for a few years.

*representatives returned to Jerusalem. There, when the success of the mission was announced and the wishes of the people heard by the emperor, all the people and the clergy felt relieved as if from a grave illness. Head of the Church at the time was the respected Patriarch Nikephoros. With the permission of the caliph and the expenses covered by the imperial treasury, the church was rebuilt in 1048”.*<sup>248</sup>

This Latin bishop and chronicler, like all crusader clerics, can be considered anything but a philhellene. But he provides us another important piece of information about the Greek national identity of the Orthodox living in the Holy Land. He witnessed Patriarch Simon of the Holy city, (the one who according to western historians asked the famous monk Peter Amvianitis to request western aid for the Holy Land), say that the Orthodox of the Holy Lands were of the same nation, “same blood (consanguinei) with the Greeks of the Greek state”. (“Nam de Graecorum imperio, licet et consanguinitate et loco nobis sint propinquoires”).

Speaking of crusader chroniclers, who as we said were the only ones who provided a few enlightening information of the situation in Syria, Palestine and Mesopotamia in the 11<sup>th</sup>, 12<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup> century, it is necessary to include some of the most important information that they provided us.

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<sup>248</sup> This church is the one that stands till today. It has suffered partial damage and alterations due to arsons, especially in the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

**Chapter 11**  
***Western Chronographers of the***  
***Crusades***  
***on the Orthodox of Syria, Palestine***  
***and Mesopotamia***

Travelogue of Villibaldi. As we saw earlier, in medieval travelogues to the Holy Lands, either in Greek or Latin, we find almost no information to enlighten our subject matter. A small exception to this is the travelogue of Saint William or rather his life written by a nun. In it there is mention of his visit and stay in the Holy Lands between the years 723-729. On his arrival to the coast of Syria he went to the city of Arhe, which appears to be the island of Arados (not Akke which in the book is called Ptolemais) where he witnessed the Greeks on Easter day perform a great litany according to their tradition. After many adventures the saint went to Palestine where besides the Holy tomb, he visited Galilee and climbed Mount Tabor. On the top of the mountain there was a church called *Agemoni* (*Αγία Μονή*=*Holy Monastery*).

From this biography it appears that some cities of Palestine maintained their Greek names, such as Ptolemais. More importantly in the travelogue there is no other mention of another Christian nation in the Holy Lands other than the Greek one and no other Christian Church. Which shows that

the Orthodox were the dominant Christian nation in Palestine and that they were called Greek (Romans, Graeci) and they had the possession in the Holy Land of all Holy sites.

*Chronographies of the Crusades.*

From the chronographies of the crusades usually titled “Gesta Dei per Francos” (God’s works through the Franks) or “Christi expedition” (written by Alberti Aquensis), we learn a few things that have to do with the Orthodox Greeks of Syria and Palestine but without much accuracy or detail in terms of names or events. All these chronographies,<sup>249</sup> even the most important ones, those written by William of Tyre and Vitry, are confused in the use of the names Syri, Syriani and Suriani. Sometimes they mean the indigenous people of Syria, Palestine and Mesopotamia, Christians of all religious denominations, including the Orthodox Greeks.<sup>250</sup> Other times Syrians and more often Syriani are

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<sup>249</sup> Collections of chronographies. 1) Recueil des Historiens des Croisades Historiens Occidentaux, publié par les soins de l’Académie des inscriptions et Belles-lettres. 2) Bongars, Gesta Dei per Francos. 3) Martène et Durand, Thesaurus novus anecdotus. 4) Basnage, Thesaurus monumentorum ecclesiasticorum.

We use in this book the first collection and references to volumes and pages refer to this.

<sup>250</sup> Alberti Aquensis p. 38 D. « Syriani enim, qui civitates illas incolebant, christiani errant. Sed eis Turci principalbantur ». Baldrici Dolencis p. 41 B. « Erant autem in civitate Armenii multi et Syriani, ipsi quidem christiani, sed Turcis multum obnoxii ». Guiberti Abbatis G. D. p. 169 H. « Armenii autem et Syri, ex quibus praeter, ut sic dixerim, Turcos epibatas tota urbs illa constabat ». Bald. Histor. Hierosolymitam p. 436 « Armenii et Syriani, homines terrae illius indigenae ».

Bald. p. 47 F. « Armenii et Syriani Turcos fugientes opprimunt ». Guib. Alb. 178 F. « Armeniorum et Syronun gens perfida ». Page 180 F.



used to refer to the Monophysite Jacobites as opposed to the Orthodox of Syria and Palestine.<sup>251</sup> I have even found once

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« Armenii et Siri quum essent Christiani, sagillas ad nostros emittere cogebantur ». Bald. p. 52 D. « Syriani et Armenii ». Guib. p. 182 A. « Magna frequentia Armeniorum atque Sirorum per Montana veniebat ». In a chronography entitled « L'estoire de Eracles empereur » p. 384 vol. B. « Les Christiens, qui estaient en Ierusalem, Latin et Surien » and p. 592. « Surienz Christienz, quand eil virent le Crestienz (meaning the crusaders) eutrer en la ville, il pristrent eroiz, et par ce norent garde » and p. 505. « Entre la rue de Iosaphus et la murz de la eite, a main senestre, avoit rue ausint comme une ville. Et la manoiient, et demoiroient li plus des Surienz dedenz comme une ville. Et la manoiient, et demoiroient li plus des Surienz dedenz la cité de Iherusalem ». Bald. 6th « Suriani, qui in urbe (Ioppa) errant con fratribus suis Christianis, apertis portis, illam tradiderunt ». Alb Agn. p. 645 E. « Syros con fratres et con christianos e cuncils locis regionis congregans » Wilhelmi Tyrensis (vol. 6, p. 310) « Accitis etiam quibusdam fidelibus Syris montis Libani habitatoribus viris prudentibus et locorum gnaris (and in French, « Suriens qui habitoient soear le mon Liban »). W. Tyr. p. 501 « Suriani autem ab initio urbis (Hierosolymorum) cives extiterant ». W. Tyr. p. 825 « Omnes civitalis (Hierosolymorum) habitores Sarraceni erant et infideles, excepio domino patriarcha et clero et popello misero Surianorum ». Iacobi Vitriani Historia Iherosolymit (Bongars. p. 1066) « Suriani et alii fidèles ab intolerabili jugo servitutis liberali ». Raimond de Agiles, Canonicos Podienis (Historia Francorum qui ceperunt Hielusalem Borngars, Gesta Dei per Francos p. 148) « Ab Armenieis et Graecos » (The name of the Armenians of Syria by other crusader chronographers was always next and after that of the Suriani. Here it is listed after the name Graeci, which according to Raimond is the same as Syri or Suriani. Alb. Aqu. p. 235 A. « At Petrus Heremita cum laicis Graecis partier ac Latinis in civitate (Ascalone) remansit »). Alb. Aqu. p. 171 « Tum accesserant ad nos quidem Suriani. Sunt enim ibi montana Libani, in quibus ad sexginta milia habitabant Christianorum. Here of course it is not just about the Aramaean Maronites. On the contrary it's about the Arabic speaking Orthodox of Lebanon.) ».

<sup>251</sup> Alb. Aqu. p. 404 E. « Graeci, Syri, Armenici cives et viri christianae professionis concurrerunt as portas (Antiocheae) aperiendas » and p. 404 D. « Cadavera tam Gallorum quam Graecorum, Syrorum (Sirorum) et Armenicorum admixtis ». Bldr. Dol. p. 36 « Hermenios, Graecos et Syrianos » and p. 107 « Suriani quoque et Graeci, qui Turcorum videre belli non valent ». Fulcherii Carnotensis (Bongars p. 390) « Graecis, Syris » p. 396 « Graeci videlicet et Syriani ».

the name Suriani as a synonym to tax collector (*publicanus*) and Saduccuee (perhaps the Christian chronographer meant to say Pharisee or Samaritan), which as a term meant sinner, unbeliever and hypocrite.<sup>252</sup> Based on this information regarding the names of nations and national differences, we cannot come to safe conclusions on the racial, ethnic and ecclesiastical status of the Christian people of Syria and Palestine. But from all this, (sometimes clear and sometimes confusing information), we come to know that the Greek language was spoken in northern Syria, where after the 10<sup>th</sup> century reconquest of the area by the Greek state, Hellenism had been rekindled and not at all diminished by the 11<sup>th</sup> century new Muslim conquest. The coastal Syrian city of Laodikea was held by the Greek state

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Guibert. Alb. p. 256 D. « Quum flamme coelestis efficeret sepulcrum gloriosum universonum penitus vota » suspicunt, Graecis igitur ac Syris, Armeniis que pariter ac Latinis, quibusque pro suarum linguarum idiomatibus, Deum ac ejus convocantibus sanctos ». (Obviously it refers to different Christian denominations and different languages). Gauterii (Bong. p. 442) « Latini, Graeci, Syri ». L' estoir de Eracles Empereur p. 507 « Les moustierz des Syrie ne de Grifons, ne de Nestorieus ne de Herminz ne des autrez manierez de genz ». Here of course it refers to various religions and Churches, but there is some confusion about this too, since along with the Jacobites (Jacobites and Nestorians) Suriani are also mentioned. Wilhelmi Tyriensis p. 224 « Graecos, Syros et Armenios (cives Antiocheae) et alios conjuscunqve generis Christianae fidei professores ». It is not clear here if Syrian means Jacobite, but there is mention of Christian religious differences. The same applies for the next passage from William of Tyre (p. 189). « Nec erat difficile bujusmodi hominibus inter nostros latere, cum linguarum habentes commercium alii Graecos, alii Suriacos, alii Armenios se esse confingerent, et verborum idiomate et moribus et habitu talium personas exprimerent ». Alb. Aqu. p. 521 A. « Omnibus illic Christianis, Gallos, Italicis, Syris, Armenicis, Graecis, et gentibus plerisque ».

<sup>252</sup> Bald. Dol. 1051 « Suriani et Publicani cum Saducaeis ili (Neapoli) manebant ».

and was completely Greek Orthodox.<sup>253</sup> In Antioch itself Alb. Aqu called its Christian inhabitants, Greek. (p. 378 E.) « Ex accusatione fidelium graecorum occisus est ». When Antioch came under Muslim control, the use of the Greek language remained the usual practice and the Frank chronographers of the crusades interpreted the names of places from Greek.<sup>254</sup>

Other important evidence that Greek was spoken in Antioch at the time of the crusades is what has been passed down to us by the Franks about the capture of the city. As we know the fall of the city was achieved by betrayal by the commander of one of the towers of the city walls when it was besieged by the Franks. This commander was named Pyrrhus and he's thought to have been a Greek Christian who had converted to Islam. Later historians think the name is Asian (Firuz, Peruz or Perozis) and think he was Muslim or Armenian. But the most accurate historian of the crusades, William of Tyre, tells us that Emir Feruz (Emirfeirus or Emurferius) was Prince Feruz belonging to a noble (Christian) house of Antioch and from a tribe called Beni Zerra (Armor makers. The name and art of making armor, being passed down to the next generation). He wanted revenge for an insult by the Muslims against his family and communicated with the Franks and handed them the city. The important information from this story is that

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<sup>253</sup> William of Tyre p. 436, « Laodicea a Graecis possidebatur ». Alb. Aqu. 5065 « Laodiceam urbem et habitationem Catholicorum (meaning Orthodox).

<sup>254</sup> The Frankish-Latin name Mons Nero of the Black Mountain by Antioch, Jacob of Austria (Bongars p. 1069) translated it from the Greek word for water (nero means water in Greek): « Mons nero, id est aquosus Mons Nero enim Gracce, aqua Latine. Simplices autem et laici Noire id est nigra nominant in vulgari sermon ». Therefore, Mons nero became watery mountain.

this Pyrrhus, whether Christian or Muslim,<sup>255</sup> talked Greek with the Franks (*Pyrros graeco lingua finremuit*). The other important fact was that for the Christians of the city to be recognized by the crusaders and not harmed, they were supposed to welcome the crusaders chanting *Kyrie Eleison* (“God have mercy” in Greek) and other hymns.<sup>256</sup> All in Greek, showing that the Christian population of the city was Orthodox Greek.

After Antioch, crusader chronographers describe the fall of cities of Syria and Palestine which had Greek names but unfortunately do not mention anything about their inhabitants. Noteworthy are Apamea Luca, Ptolemais (which everybody called Ptolemaida), Caesarea of Palestine, Iope and Ascalon. Only about Ascalon, Alb. Aqu. (p. 235 B.) mentions that Peter the Hermit stayed in the city with Greek (Orthodox) and Latins. The same is mentioned by Baldwin (p. 107) “Peter the Hermit and the Suriani and the Greeks (*Suriani quoque et Graeci*) along with the women, do litanies from church to church”.

About the Christians of Syria and Palestine, especially of Antioch and Jerusalem, from the writings of the crusaders it is understood that the Christian population was primarily Orthodox. The Jacobites are only mentioned in passing (and only in Jerusalem) and the Maronites even more rarely. The so-called Suriani were the Orthodox.

Then what is the difference between the Suriani and the Greeks? It is true that the name is often used to describe the Orthodox. But there are many passages in all these histories where the Greeks are distinct from the Orthodox Suriani based on language. Greeks (*Graeci*) are called those who

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<sup>255</sup> Jacob of Austria (p. 1066) calls him *fidelem Christianum*.

<sup>256</sup> Robert Monadi (*Bongars* p. 55)

speak Greek and Suriani the Greeks in ancestry but Arabic speaking. But what is the meaning of this distinction? How are the Orthodox people divided in Greek speakers and non-Greek speakers?

This must be explained differently for different locations. Antioch was a purely Greek city where only Greek was spoken before the Muslim conquest. Greek never stopped being spoken (obviously up to the time of the crusades). It was spoken by a great portion of the people especially since the city laid not far from the borders of the Greek state. It had a close relation with the Greek world since it was also a patriarchal seat and ecclesiastical center. Additionally, not too long before the crusades, for about a century, it was again part of the Greek state (middle of the 10<sup>th</sup> to middle of the 11<sup>th</sup> centuries). The Suriani of the city came from the countryside, Arabic speakers looking for work. They were the Christians outside the cities.

What took place in Antioch with the Greek and Arabic speakers probably also took place to some degree in other cities as well. Laodicea, held by the Greeks (after the Greeks under Nicephoros II and John Tzimiskes reconquered northern and middle Syria) appears to have been completely Greek speaking. As for the Holy city, we find great information regarding the relations of Greek speakers and Arabic speakers, in the work of Jacob the Austrian (Bongars p. 1089-1090). This chronographer talking about the various Christian people of Palestine (in the 12<sup>th</sup> century) and especially about the Franks, he wrote the following about the Suriani (the Arabic speaking Orthodox): “There are people from antiquity, under various rulers living in the country. Under Romans, Greeks, Latins (Franks) and barbarians, Saracens and Christians. Long suffering slavery. Everywhere slaves, always suffering, used by their rulers for agricultural work and other menial

labor. People inexperienced in warfare and useless in battle like women. With few exceptions, they don't carry weapons and are prone to run away. They only use the bow to shoot with. These are called Suriani. They take their name either from the city Sur (Tyre), an ancient Syrian city or from Syria. In ancient writings they were called Syrian. They are mostly unbelievers, cheaters like the Greeks,<sup>257</sup> deceivers, liars and unstable. They are traitors, saying one thing but believing something else. They don't consider stealing as something bad. For a small price they become spies and the secrets of the Christians they betray to the Saracens. They follow twisted traditions. Like the Saracens they hide amongst the women. And just like the Saracens and the Greeks and almost all the Easterners they don't shave." The author continues rambling for a while about the beards of those Christians, but eventually he mentions the following that are worth noting: "The Suriani in their common speech use the language of the Saracens (Arabs). Letters and writing they use the Saracen for contracts and commerce and all other work with the exception of the religious documents and other religious acts, where they use Greek letters. Because of that in their religious ceremonies their laymen who only know the language of the Saracens, they don't understand, while the Greeks use this language in their common speech and in writing and understand their priests at church and it is the language of their intellectuals. The Suriani observe diligently traditions and religious

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<sup>257</sup> The chronographer is a fierce enemy of all the Orthodox. In Palestine he distinguishes them in Graeci and Suriani, in Romans and Melhites who call themselves Orthodox, who he considers descendants of Syrians. That is the Aramaeans of Syria, because the ignorant chronographer, only of those he has read in the Gospels. He talks more about the moral character of the Orthodox of Palestine and reveals his hatred towards all Orthodox. This is all mentioned word for word to give an example of the hatred of the Franks towards the Orthodox.

ceremonies and other religious acts and obey the Greeks as if they are their rulers (Superioribus). In the districts where they live, they tell the Latin bishops that they obey them. But that is only superficial, not from their heart, because of fear of the secular lords. Otherwise, they have their own bishops”.

According to his writings it is clearly understood that in Jerusalem, as in Antioch, there were, like today, Arabic speaking Orthodox and Greek speaking Orthodox. But the Greek speakers were few, primarily, like today, the clergy of the Patriarchate.<sup>258</sup>

From everything said, we learn that for the Arab speaking Orthodox the only ecclesiastical language in the 12<sup>th</sup> century was Greek. The partial use of Arabic started in much later times.

We are also convinced that between these Orthodox and Aramaism there was no connection. There was no use by the Orthodox of the Aramaic language or Syrian writing as the Jacobites did, nor Chaldean as the Nestorians did. The above mentioned Orthodox only used Greek and Arabic writing.

Everything else that this author mentions about the Suriani ancestry are not worth noting. We only note that the name given by the Frank crusaders to these people is an arbitrary creation of the Franks who used this name to tell apart the Arabic speakers from the Greek speakers. We know precisely that Syrian and Suriani called themselves and were called by others, the Jacobites and they in turn called the Orthodox, Melhites. From the crusader chronographers

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<sup>258</sup> William of Tyre, p. 625 « Omnes civitatis (Hierosolymi) habitatores Sarraceni errant et infideles, *excepto domino patriarcha* et clero popello misero Surianorum ».

we also learn something that we already knew. That the Orthodox in Jerusalem were few, reduced by various persecutions by the Muslims. As William of Tyre tells us, King Baldwin in order to increase their number relocated to the Holy city Arab speaking Orthodox from beyond the river Jordan.

### *After the Crusades*

Concluding the chapter on the crusades it is necessary to highlight that a result of the crusades was making stronger the moral, spiritual and ethnic affinity of the Orthodox of Syria and Palestine to the Orthodox Hellenism of the Greek state and to that state itself. The persecutions of the Orthodox Church by the Latin Church that ruled politically in these two countries under the Franks, strengthened the moral, spiritual and ethnic ties that already existed between the Orthodox of these countries to the spiritual and political center of Orthodoxy. By the end of the 13<sup>th</sup> century and the beginning of the 14<sup>th</sup> when Frankish rule was ended by the Mamluks of Egypt, the close national unity continued to strengthen over time, making Constantinople from every perspective the national center and refuge and protection of these Orthodox. We saw that the Greek kings of Constantinople of the 14<sup>th</sup> century undertook willingly and with no hesitation the interceding on behalf of these Orthodox to the court of the Mamluk sultan. The Churches of Syria and Palestine (Antioch and Jerusalem) without hesitation they formally recognized as the highest national authority the kingship in Constantinople and the patriarchs travelled to Constantinople to present themselves and have their throne endorsed by the king of the Greeks.



## *Chapter 12*

### *Orthodoxy of Syria and Palestine*

#### *under the Ottoman Dynasty*

These national ties were maintained over time. In the middle of the 15<sup>th</sup> century the Greek state ceased to exist and by the beginning of the 16<sup>th</sup> century all of Syria, Mesopotamia and Palestine fell to the Ottomans. This political union under the Ottoman state was practically the national unification of all the Greek Churches. Constantinople, under new conditions and new capacity became the national center of Hellenism and national capital of Orthodoxy of Syria and Palestine as well. Now more than even since the Muslim conquest of the 7<sup>th</sup> century, Hellenism became the true national power in Jerusalem and Antioch (now in Damascus). The local Orthodox were united with the nation of the Greeks or Rum (and as the Turks said, Rum millet).

In Jerusalem during the Ottoman rule a new ecclesiastical order was founded, the Brotherhood of the Holy Sepulchre. In Antioch, the protection of the Ecumenical Patriarchate as center of Hellenism and as center and highest authority of the Greek nation, became the moral backbone of Greek Orthodoxy for the entire period after the 15<sup>th</sup> century and especially around the beginning of the 18<sup>th</sup>, when unworthy men rose to the glorious throne of Antioch. During that time the Orthodox of Syria placed their Church under the guardianship of the Ecumenical Patriarchate assigning it to

send pious patriarchs for the throne of Antioch. The memoranda proclaiming the guardianship of the Ecumenical throne<sup>259</sup> are a clear proof of the piety and patriotism<sup>260</sup> of the laymen and clergy in charge, by the way they addressed the Ecumenical Patriarch and the leading clergymen surrounding him.

This moral and spiritual unity and harmony as a national bond existed till our time when the desire for offices and other despicable motives and pan-Slavic political machinations and Russian money created the question of the true ancestry of the Orthodox of these countries. A question that we have now analyzed and shed light onto. We can now summarize everything said and put the seal of the truth on it.

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<sup>259</sup> These memoranda were reports to the Great Church by Orthodox Metropolitans of Syria and decisions by the Synod and its replies to the Orthodox of Syria. Εκκλ. Ἀληθ. Του 1906, αρ. 7,8,9,10 φυλ. 17 Φεβρουαρίου 1906 και ἐφεξῆς.

<sup>260</sup> During those sad times (end of 17<sup>th</sup>-beginning of 18<sup>th</sup> century) due to the irreverent Patriarchs Makarios and Cyril, the throne of Antioch entered a period of internal anomaly. Part of the Orthodox Arabophone Greeks converted to the Catholic Church and became since then the Eastern Rites Catholics of Syria, also known as Melhites. As we saw earlier Melhites was the name that used to be given to all Orthodox.

# *Epilogue*

## *General Conclusion*

### *The Race and Nationality of the Arabophone Orthodox*

Considering everything that we have discussed, the following safe conclusions can be reached. 1) The Orthodox Arabic speakers of Syria, Palestine, but also Mesopotamia do not trace their ancestry from Syrians, also known as Aramaeans, but are descendants, firstly of Greek colonists who settled in these countries, primarily during the time of Alexander and his Diadochi, the Seleucids, who filled many Greek cities and megalopolis. They are also descendants of local Syrians Hellenized by the Greeks and some settlers of Arab tribes. 2) This Hellenized Asian Greece became the center of a great civilizing movement and Greek culture, language and literature. Pagan at first and then Christian. 3) In parallel to this great in number, primarily urban Greek population, the indigenous people of the Aramaean nation maintained their language, especially in Mesopotamia. The Aramaeans made up mostly the rural population. They too were greatly influenced by Greek culture and under that influence they developed their own literature. Through the religious separation that followed, they developed their own national identities. Chaldean and Syrian. 4) The Greek Orthodox (with who the Arab settlers merged, except for those Arabs living the nomadic lifestyle outside the cities) for many centuries maintained their ethnic language. With the Arab conquest of the 7<sup>th</sup> century, they quickly got used to using in their public lives the language of the conqueror. They preserved their ethnic language in Church, in

education and in ecclesiastical and secular literature. Much later the Arabic language was allowed to be used in prayers and religious ceremonies for the majority of the people who didn't understand the Greek language of their fathers.

This is the only safe conclusion for the ancestry of the Orthodox and the Catholics (including those that are nowadays called Melhites) of this historical, ethnological and glossological study.

Those who deny the absolute truth of this conclusion must admit one of the following three things: 1) Those Greeks that filled the metropolitan cities, the cities, the towns, the metropolitan towns, the colonies, the metropolitan colonies, who were the powerful politically and intellectually ruling people, that they were completely uprooted and disappeared forever in a manner historically unknown or understood, leaving their place to a miraculously surviving Aramaean Orthodox people. 2) In a way that is historically not understood but cancels all verified historical truth and ridicules the science of history and all surviving literature, those Greeks did not get lost, but survived in the heretical Nestorians and Jacobites. 3) That the Greeks and the Hellenized Arabs disappeared from the face of the earth and in their place sprouted a new people, Arab and Arabic speaking Christian, Orthodox, with Greek ecclesiastical literature and calling themselves Greek (Rum). These people would have been created in a way historically impossible to understand after the Arab Muslim conquest and in a period when there was no Christian Arab in Arabia and with punishment of death if converting from Islam to Christianity. Because all three of these hypotheses are completely illogical and because the ethnic and historic affinity of the present day Orthodox of Syria, Palestine and Mesopotamia to the rest of the Greeks is undeniable, this

matter viewed from an ethnic ancestry perspective is considered resolved.

But even above this strongly proven ethnic unity of the Arabophone Orthodox with Hellenism, there is also a relation historically great and more important morally, spiritually and historically more meaningful than ethnic ancestry. That is national affinity. The nationality of the Arabic speaking Orthodox is Greek and so is their ethnic ancestry. What is nation and nationality with the present understanding of the terms and how it differs from race we talked about earlier. Race and racial relation are something physical. Whereas nationality and national relation are a moral driving force in the history of humanity that is materialized and demonstrated. The transition from race to nation and nationality is the history of each people, made up of its intellectual life and civilization.

A nation can be formed by one or more, related or not, races, through the absorption of many races, by the unity of the historic idea, the unity of civilization and the intellectual monuments that reveal and announce this unity.

Races as physical elements can disappear in the passage of history. But a nation coming as a force out of national consciousness which grows through the passage of history, is above temporary influences and survives as long as national consciousness survives, even if racial characteristics disappear. A race has as characteristic the anthropological unity displayed in body build and the unity of the language that was naturally produced. Nationality has as characteristics the national unity and the unity of consciousness and the spirit of history. The higher and spiritual human ideas, beliefs and feelings, also displayed in the unity of language created through history. Nationality, just like race, has language as characteristic and as cultural

strength. But national language is truly national only when through the history of the nation it developed and it expresses its historic consciousness and interprets its cultural life, revealing and promoting the nation's entire culture, literature, traditions and ideals. Therefore, the national language of a people is not the one spoken in daily life, but the one that expresses its inner identity. It is true that in the normal course of history the language used in daily life is also the one that expresses its higher national intellectual ideas. But this is not always the case. Often, due to historic circumstances, a people subjugated to another, speak the language of the conqueror in everyday life. But its real national language that expresses its national cultural ideals is the one not spoken in public life and by most of the people. Yet, it is always the only true national language in the mind of the nation.

Because of circumstances, foreign conquest, the Greeks in Syria, Palestine and Mesopotamia have the language of the Arab people who conquered these countries as the language of their daily public life. But their national language, as with the Turkic speakers of Asia Minor, always remains Greek. This national character of the Greek language for the Arabic speaking Orthodox of Syria, Palestine and Mesopotamia is enough, even if there weren't infinite other historical reasons, to prove the Greek nationality of the Arabic speaking Orthodox. There is no bigger mistake than to judge the ethnic ancestry of a people simply by using the language that they use in their daily life. This would overturn the science of ethnography, not just in the East, but in Europe too. In France (Brittany) there is a people that speak the Celtic Brittonic language, yet their ethnic identity is French and they use the French language in their literature. These people of France are racially Celtic yet became French by their absorption by the rest of the French,

with who they live with and got assimilated by, nationally and historically. On the contrary, the Arabic speaking Orthodox draw their racial ancestry from Greeks and Hellenized ancestors and have the Greek identity. There are many similar examples in the history of humanity that prove the antithesis of the spoken language of public life such as of the Arabic and Turkish speakers of the Greek East and of the language of their national identity.

It is very natural for the Greek nation with the more than 3000-year life and having suffered through historical adventures and catastrophes, to produce such glossological antitheses while maintaining in its national conscience its unity through its national language. But here exactly lays the difference in the Greek case. In European people the difference between the national language and the languages spoken by parts of the nation came to be by the existence from the beginning of different races uniting at some point in history (Brittons, Alsatians, Corsicans). Whereas in the Greek case the language antitheses and differences came from the nation itself, the entire nation, not from the struggle of coexisting of races uniting in a nation, but simply because of circumstances and catastrophes bringing about an externally enforced language. In this way, with the conquest by the Turks of Asia Minor, in some areas of the country Turkish speaking Greeks were produced. Similarly, because of the density of the Armenian population in some parts of Asia Minor, Armenian speaking Greeks (Haihorum= Armenograecos)<sup>261</sup> were also produced and in

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<sup>261</sup> We use this name with a meaning different than Gallograecos (Hellenized, Greek speaking Galatian of Asia Minor) of the Roman era and Gothograecos (Hellenized, Greek speaking Goth of Asia Minor of the Byzantine times.

the Macedonian lands because of the Slavs, Slavic speaking Greeks.

Therefore, for the Greek case all of the linguistic antitheses and differences produced locally came not from mixing of races but from the one nationality that divided linguistically due to circumstances. Because of that there is much more clarity in the Greek idea of national unity than with the European people.

Hellenism, with a great, rich, long and variable history that produced the most beautiful flowers of human civilization, falling into the most terrible of national catastrophes and experiencing every state in between, throughout all this maintained intact its national and historical identity. The banks of the Euphrates to the base of the Caucasus, are the most eastern boundaries of the ethnographic region of Hellenism. And if we look at the picture from the shores of the Ionian Sea and from the Aimos mountains to Mount Ida and the Libyan Sea we would see and admire the united in its variety, indomitable Greek nation.

Between the Euphrates and the Mediterranean Sea, and partially beyond the Euphrates, in Mesopotamia, we will find the Arabic speaking Greeks divided in Greek Orthodox (Rum Ortodox) and Catholics, the so-called Greek Catholics (Rum Catolic) and Melhites. In the area between upper Euphrates and the Black Sea and the southern slopes of the Caucasus we will find Greek speaking Muslims. Greeks in ancestry but Turks in national identity. These people have kept none of their external Greek characteristics such as their language, intelligence, love of learning and beauty and are forever lost from Hellenism. To the west, in Pontus we can find Orthodox Greek speaking and Turkish speaking, both Greek in national identity and faithfully following their fathers' traditions. To the south, in



southeastern Asia Minor, in the mountains of Taurus, Antitaurus and the Euphrates we find a great number of Greek speaking Orthodox, speaking an ancient Greek form of the language and with Greek national identity. To the west the mountain range of Taurus and north of Antitaurus, in southern Cappadocia and Lycaonia, amongst Turkish speaking Greeks of the big cities we find a great number of small Greek speaking Cappadocian towns. Both Turkish speaking and Greek speaking have a solid Greek national identity. To the west, in Phrygia and Lydia, the Turkish speaking Greek element with a strong Greek national identity prevails. Further to the west, on the coastal lands and almost the entire coast of Asia Minor, from Trapezus to the estuary of the Eurymedon river and partially to the estuary of the Pyramos river, we find Greek speakers with a solid Greek identity. From the western shores of Asia Minor going to the pearl of the Aegean Sea and the Mediterranean, the island of Crete, we find Muslims speaking Greek but with Turkish national identity and Turkish as their national language. From the Aegean moving to the European Greek peninsula, we find in Macedonia Muslims speaking Greek but with Turkish national identity. In Macedonia besides the Greek speaking Greeks also live Orthodox who speak as their daily language a mixobarbarian Greco-Slavic language. Their national identity is purely Greek, they have Greek upbringing and consider Greek their national language, using it in church and teaching it in their schools. They suffer everything in the name of Hellenism and are called Grecomani by the Bulgarians. In this land and in Epirus also live the Vlahian speaking Greeks. A pure Greek people. In

Epirus also live Muslims who speak Greek but are Turkish in identity.<sup>262</sup>

In the great, glorious and variable historical development of Hellenism, one can see and understand that from the great Greek East inhabited only by Greeks, some parts detached by force from the great Greek family and lost their Greek identity even though they maintained their natural Greek language. Other parts lost their national language used in public life but maintained their national identity and with it their national language as the language expressing it in Church, in faith, in education, in national traditions and through that kept their place as members of the Greek nationality in the great family of Hellenism.

Those speaking Greek but having no Greek national identity and no Greek upbringing are forever left outside Hellenism, being a sort of liability in the great historic balance sheet of Hellenism. Those speaking foreign tongues but having Greek national identity through Church, schools, upbringing and traditions are an asset in this balance sheet. In the column of assets belong of course the Arabic speaking Orthodox of Syria and Palestine.

From everything that has been said in this book it is clear that these people draw their ancestry physically and historically from Greeks especially when viewed through their greatest affinity with Byzantine Hellenism. This Hellenism is expressed particularly in the knowledge of the national unity in Greek Orthodoxy, in the common national name of Romans (Rum) and with the traditions that are connected with this name. These traditions continue

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<sup>262</sup> Editor's note: Some of these groups either no longer exist, or were reduced in size, or were forced to convert or relocate, before, during and after the First World War and the Genocide by the Turks, after the Greco-Turkish war and after the Second World War.

uninterrupted with the Turkish and Arabic speaking Orthodox of Asia. Only in Hellenism can these people find a national identity and expression and historic meaning. Without Hellenism they have no history, no nationality, no national tradition, no Church, no literature. Their history would only be darkness and chaos.

It is very clear, brighter than daylight and everybody understands what a nation, nationality and ethnic ancestry is, so one wonders how such questions can exist or how they come about. But we already explained how this happened and what was the purpose of the creation of such questions. They are created by political opportunism and taking advantage even of science. They are put forth on a ground already prepared by materialism that denies all truth, all love of country, all national identity, all national feelings in favor of political speculation.

What is the nationality of the Orthodox outside of Hellenism? Arabic? But what history and what national identity can Arabism have since all its history is Islamic? Only in Islam it exists and through Islam it created a state and culture. Outside Islam and before Islam the Arabs don't have history because those of them in Syria that stayed away from Hellenism, stayed away from history. While those that came close to Hellenism, merged with it, becoming Greeks. But if there was no Arab non-Muslim nationality in the past, one can say that it can happen in the future through today's Arabic speaking Christians by the creation of an artificial national identity with eyes to the future.

In our case we talk about an ethnic ancestry based on history and through history, not the future. In our case it is the scientific historical truth, not lies and deceits created in laboratories of future nationalities. Of course, if this was the

only deceit the forgers of history attempted, they would at least rely on the Arabic language spoken by the people. But the counterfeiters of the history of the past that are trying to create the history of the future, do not want a Christian Arab nationality, worried that such a nationality may actually form in the future. Instead, they claim that the Arabic speaking Orthodox draw their ancestry from Aramaeans. This agrees more with their aims. Since it is impossible to create an Aramaean nationality from Orthodox Arabs the future will be without risks. Their aim is not the creation of Arab or Aramaean nationality, but simply the eradication of the Greek national identity. This can be achieved through the Aramaean nationality theory and through it the creation of any number of future new nationalities. In this way as we saw in the introduction, they are preparing the Russian nationality after first the Churches of Syria, Palestine, Antioch and Jerusalem come to the possession of the Russians.

We are not examining the question if the Arabophone Orthodox, in case their ancestry historically and scientifically proves not to be Greek and they have to choose between the two nationalities. The one whose history is the glory and cultural treasure of Syria and Palestine and the other, the pale reflection of the first. We are simply examining if it is possible for an Aramaean nationality to exist in the historically and ethnographically descendants of the Aramaeans, today's Chaldeans and Syrians (Nestorians and Jacobites and their offshoot the Maronites). This is what the great expert on Aramaean matters professor in the university of Berlin and director of the school of spoken Eastern languages, Eduard Sachau says in the prologue of "Syrian manuscripts of the Berlin library" (Syrische Handschriften der Berliner Bibliothek). *"Nowadays it is not possible to talk about an Aramaean*

*nation. There are only two people of the Aramaean race that are so different between them, like the Dutch and the Germans, the French and the Germans, the English and the Germans and hate each other no less than their common enemy, the Muslims. Each of these people use a different form of this writing and in it the language of their fathers (Aramaic) was preserved. Each of these people uses its own dialect. Anyone communicating with them is convinced that their common ancestry is understood by them and so is the fact of their common source of their religious beliefs. But neither has any inclination to compromise with each other. A European intellectual going to the East and knowing history, has difficulty understanding the odd relationship between the two Aramaean people with all the practical consequences of it. But to understand this reality it is worth remembering that what caused this situation comes from very ancient times, from the schism of the 5<sup>th</sup> century.”*

These are the words of Sachau who knew not just theoretically through science but also practically, through direct communication, the Chaldean Aramaeans and the Syrian Aramaeans.

If between the two Aramaean people who are divided religiously, but are united through language and Aramaic literature, is impossible for national unity to exist and it is also impossible for an Aramaean nationality to exist, how is it possible to talk about national unity between Aramaean and Orthodox Arabic speakers? They have no connection to the Aramaic language and literature, nor to Aramaean tradition. How can the Arabophone Orthodox attach to a non-existent Aramaean nationality? But this is exactly what they are aiming to create, against nature, science and history. An Arabic speaking non-existent nationality. They want, through lies and a non-existent nationality and national idea to take away their true national identity, to

erase everything and based on that to spread the Slavic idea. To create an imaginary nation of Aramaean Orthodox that does not exist (since there is also no heretical Aramaean nation) and eliminate the real Greek Arabic speaking. Unfortunately, agents for these unethical and monstrous aims they find in bought out Orthodox, traitors to their country,.

The nationality and national identity of the Orthodox and Catholic (Melhites) Arabic speakers are attacked from two directions. The Orthodox by Slavism and the Catholic by the Jesuits. The Catholics fight strongly against this Jesuit enemy with science and patriotism. This is shown by the example of the Melhite named Hird<sup>263</sup> against the Jesuit, Lammens and the recently moved to Athens, father Polycarpus who performed the Catholic liturgy in Greek and after the reading of the Holy Gospel, preached in the church about the Greek ancestry of the Catholics of Syria.<sup>264</sup>

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<sup>263</sup> In his brief treatise “On the ancestry of the Greek Melhites” (Étude sur les Origines des Grecs Melchites, Réponse au Père Lammens S. I. par Evangelos Hird) (Le patriarcat et l’Église de Jérusalem), Hird proved brilliantly the complete ignorance about the Greek language and interpretation of the Greek fathers by the perverted ideas of the Jesuit, Lammens who wrote his delusions in an Arabic newspaper published in Beirut. There is no need to discuss much the incomplete beliefs and inventions of this Jesuit. It’s enough to mention just one example of his logic. According to him because in 1054 the Patriarch of Antioch Peter could not find in all of Antioch someone to translate in Greek the letter written to him by Pope Leo IX (nobody could understand the Latin text of the letter and that’s why they sent it to Constantinople to be translated), the naïve father assumes that no one in Antioch knew Greek!!! Et c’ est ainsi qu’écrit l’ histoire le père Lammens.

<sup>264</sup> The speech was published in the newspaper “Athens” (July 7<sup>th</sup>, 1908, ed. 2063). The start of Hellenism in Syria is known. It spread greatly with the conquests of Alexander the Great. With the rise of the light of the Gospel, quickly the ethnically Greek civilization of Syria transformed to Greek Christian civilization. To the Greek and the

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Hellenized local elements living in Palestine, Syria and Egypt, was given the name Melhites. History tells us exactly how. In the year 451, Emperor Marcian, the great defender of Orthodoxy, in collaboration with the Pope, called the Ecumenical Synod of Chalcedon. At the time, the Eutychians, the Monophysites and the Nestorians could not bear the rule of Byzantium. They took the opportunity to become free by rejecting the decisions of the Synod and those who accepted them they gave them the name Melhites, which in Syrian means *imperial*. These people carried this title proudly as a declaration of the truth about their faith and their loyalty to the throne of Byzantium. Since then, the distinction and separation between Melhites and Syrians remained undiminished as proof of the difference between the two people. The Syrian enemies of the Greeks through their historian Brevraios then said, "We thank the Lord that freed us from the yoke of Byzantium through the Arabs." In Egypt the Copts eagerly sent an embassy to the caliph begging him to hasten his march to Egypt. The Arabs considered their first duty to eliminate the Greek Melhites when they conquered the country, because they could see the continuing influence of Byzantium through them, as the ancient masters of the country.

Despite all the difficult circumstances, with Divine help Hellenism survived till today. But how did the Greek language disappear? The Greek population of Syria was forced to abandon it and learn Arabic, the language of the conquerors, on threat of their tongues being cut off if they continued speaking Greek.

The language of their fathers was abandoned by the people, but found asylum in the churches. But even there, silence was brought upon by the hard times. The people could no longer understand the language of the liturgies. By necessity the holy books were translated into Arabic, the language of the people and the country. Today two hundred thousand Catholics Greek Melhites and four hundred thousand easterners speak Arabic. But with the passage of time and relative freedom today in Syria, a new breath of life is sweeping the souls of these estranged children of Hellenism.

The clergy and the people know their Greek ancestry and desire to see again the glory years of their ancestors. Of Basil, Chrysostom and Damaskene. They hope this primarily through the study and spreading of the Greek language.

Therefore, our hopes are great. Just as great as our love for everything connected with the glory of our nation. To fulfil deep desires, we call upon and hope that we will find the moral support of our free brothers, in order to unite by their side and fight the great and glorious fight that God has predestined for our nation. Let it be so!"

But Russian machinations and Russian money is creating divisions and trouble for the throne of Antioch and in Palestine. We are hoping that the Church of Antioch will quickly end the divisions that start from small things and end up escalating in favor of aims foreign to the interests of the Church. As for Palestine and the Church of Jerusalem, Patriarch Damian's steady, wise leadership, devoted to our country and Christian self-denial, supported by the Brotherhood of the Holy Sepulchre and the pious Orthodox people of the Holy city and the rest of the country, will disarm forever the enemies of ecclesiastical order and the rights of the Greek Patriarchate. May in this holy and noble struggle this book come to aid in some small way.



## Appendix A

Narsai. Composer of hymns at the end of the 5<sup>th</sup> century. N.

Varsubas of Nisibis. 5<sup>th</sup> century. N.

John Savva, bishop of the 6<sup>th</sup> century. N.

Isaac of Nineveh. 6<sup>th</sup> century. N.

Abraham of Neftar. 6<sup>th</sup> century. N.

Moses Aggilis from Mesopotamia. 6<sup>th</sup> century. N.

Peter from Kalliniki of Mesopotamia. Jacobite patriarch of Antioch<sup>265</sup> in the 6<sup>th</sup> century. J.

Abraham of Nisibis. Interpreter of the Holy Gospels of the 6<sup>th</sup> century. J.

John of Nisibis. Commentator on the history of the prophets. He lived in the 6<sup>th</sup> century. J.

Joseph Huzayia. Grammarian.

Steven Var. 6<sup>th</sup> century. Famous author of the theological treatise “Hierotheus”.<sup>266</sup>

Abraham of Keskira. Philosopher of the 6<sup>th</sup> century. N.

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<sup>265</sup> The Jacobites as well as the Maronites called their patriarchs or catholics, patriarchs of Antioch, considering their throne of Antioch as the legitimate patriarchal throne. However, they had no relation to Antioch.

<sup>266</sup> In this treatise, Hierotheus is portrayed as the teacher of Dionysius the Areopagite and he analyzes his theological system. This treatise had a great influence on the future works on Dionysius.

Theodosius of Antioch of Margiana (present day Turkmani city of Merv, on the Russo-Afghan border). Aristotelian. N.

Gabriel. Bishop of Hormicher, brother of Theodosius.

Paul the Persian. He wrote in Chaldean in the 6<sup>th</sup> century. N.

Vodi the traveler. He is called Apostle in Syrian. 6<sup>th</sup> century. J.

Hamane Hiddagas from Mesopotamia. 6<sup>th</sup> century.

Joseph Hadjie. From Erbil of Assyria. 6<sup>th</sup> century. N.

Issoyav of Arzanene (Armenia). 6<sup>th</sup> century. J.

Dadisi. N.

Vareta. N.

Simon Varhaya. N.

Jacob of Serug. Bishop of Vatian of Mesopotamia. 6<sup>th</sup> century. N.

Philoxenos or as he is known in Syrian, Ksanayias, of Mesopotamia. He authored the second translation into Aramaic of the Bible. 6<sup>th</sup> century. N.

Ioses Stylite. Resident of a monastery near Amida. 6<sup>th</sup> century. N.

Simon Koukayias. Composer of hymns. 6<sup>th</sup> century. N.

Simon Vetarsam of Persia. N.

John Koursos of Kalliniki of Mesopotamia. Bishop of Constantina. 6<sup>th</sup> century.

Mari Amidis. N.

John of Afthonia. (Afthonia being the name of his mother). Monk of the monastery of Saint Thomas that moved from Syria to Mesopotamia. 6<sup>th</sup> century. N.

Jacob Baradaeus. Founder of the Jacobite Church and of whom we talked about in this book.

Sergios of Rasein. Translator of many books of Aristotle. 6<sup>th</sup> century. N.

Avudemme. Syrian missionary in Persia. Some consider him a Monophysite while others consider him a Nestorian.

In the 6<sup>th</sup> century belongs the Syrian translation of the Chronicle of Zachary of Mytilene (original was written in Greek) and also the translation of the Chronicle of Edessa, written by an unknown author.

7<sup>th</sup> century:

Sevresin. Catholic. N.

Simon of Vetgarmai who translated to Syrian the Chronicle of Eusebius.

Father Paul. N.

Maronta of Mesopotamia. N.

Severus Sevint. N.

John I. Jacobite patriarch.

Jacob of Edessa. N.

Athanasius. Jacobite patriarch. Translator of many theological and philosophical works from Greek to Syrian.

Januarius Kandidatos. He translated to Syrian poems of Gregory Nazianzus. N.

Daniel Saleh. He wrote commentary on Daniel and Ecclesiastes. N.

Georgios of Martyropolis (Mardin) of Mesopotamia. N.

Elias the Jacobite patriarch.

Georgios of Vetnika. He wrote commentary on the Holy Gospels. N.

Daniel bar Mose of Babylonia. N.

Theophilus bar Thomas of Edessa. N.

Georgios Veiltan of Syria, who lived in Mesopotamia and Melitene. N.

Kyriakos of Mesopotamia. Author of speeches. N.

Vevlaios. Archimandrite from Mesopotamia. N.

Savdona of Halamun. N.

Isoyiav II. N.

Isoyiav III. N.

Ananisos of Hedayiav and his brother Ishoyiav. N.

John of Bet-Yarmai. N.

Sevrison Rustam. N.

Georgios of Kefra. N.

Elias. Bishop of Merv. N.

Daniel bar Mariam of Hedayiav. N.

Gabriel Tauraetos from Sahrazor of Persia. N.

Alahazeha and Miha. Unknown exactly but they are supposed to have lived in the 7<sup>th</sup> century. Ecclesiastical historiographers.

Hananisu. Catholic of Selucia. N.

8<sup>th</sup> century:

David of Bet-Rabban. N.

Babaios of Nisibis.

Varsahdi of Harha of Assyria. He wrote about the Zoroastrian religion. N.

Abraham bar Dapanda. Prolific writer from Babylonia. N.

Marabbas of Kaskar. Catholic. N.

Simon bar Tabahe of Kaskar. N.

Surenos. Bishop of Nisibis. Born in Holvan of Persia. N.

Kyprianos. Bishop of Nisibis. N.

Timotheus I of Hedayav.<sup>267</sup> Catholic. N.

Issodena. Bishop of Basra. N.

Dioysius of Tellemahre. Known Jacobite patriarch and author of many books. Of his works, the most famous being his world history, written based on Greek sources, especially, Eusebius and Julius of Emmaus (Africanus). N. (J).

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<sup>267</sup> Recently, newly found letters of his were found and published. Oriens Christianus, Römische Halljahrhefte für Kunde das christlichen Oriens 2 Jahrgang, p. 4-32.

Theodosius. Bishop of Edessa. Brother of Dionysius. N. (J). Hellenizer who translated into Syrian the speeches of Gregory Nazianzus.

Anthonius. Monk from Tagret of Mesopotamia. He was called *orator* because of his many speeches. Most famous are his four speeches about God's providence.

9<sup>th</sup> century:

Lazarus bar Safeta. Bishop of Baghdad. When he became a bishop, he took the name Philoxenus.

John. Bishop of Dara. N. (J).

Nonnos. Archdeacon of the Jacobite Church in Nisibis.

Romanos. Jacobite patriarch. When he became a patriarch, he took the name Theodosius.

Moses bar Kefa of Assyria. Bishop of Mosul who spent extensive time on the road. When he became a bishop, he took the name Severus. Very well educated and productive author on various theological and philosophical topics. N. (J).

Honain ibn Isah of Babylonia. Hellenizing doctor who was educated in Greek lands. N.

Gabriel bar Vohtisu of Babylonia. Doctor in the court of the Caliph of Baghdad. Philologist and author of a dictionary of Chaldean.

Ese Marouzaya (in other words, Ese of Merv). N.

Ese bar Ali of Baghdad. Author of a dictionary. N.

Ese bar Non of Mosul. Catholic. N.

Deiha I Hevva. Prolific writer and Hellenizer. Especially student of the works of Aristotle.

Thomas of Salah of Assyria. Bishop of Marga. N.

Issedod of Merv.

Theodorus bar Honi. Author of ecclesiastical history and interpreter of the Gospels. N.

10<sup>th</sup> century:

Simon the deacon. His country of origin is unknown. N.

John of Maron from Melitene. (Not the leader of the Maronites).

Marcus bar Kiki archdeacon and Bishop of Mosul. When he became a bishop, he took the name Ignatius. In his old age he became a Muslim, only to return to his ancestral religion. N. (J).

Jesus bar Susan. Jacobite patriarch.

Said bar Sebuni. Hellenizing, well-educated author and composer of hymns. Bishop of Melitene. N. (J).

Bar Sarosvai/ Bishop of Heras in Babylonia. Interpreter of the Gospels and author of dictionaries. N. (J).

Bar Balul. Author of dictionaries of unknown ancestry. N. (J).

Elias. Bishop of Aibar in Persia with a lot of books in his name. N.

Georgios. Bishop of Mosul and Arbil. N.

Emmanuel bar Sahhari. Bishop of Mosul. N.

Elias the Catholic of Babylonia.

Avdisu bar Bahriz. Bishop of Mosul. N.

Daniel Tubanites of Babylonia. Bishop of Tahal. N.

Elias bar Sinaya of Mosul. Bishop of Nisibis. N. (J).

John of Carrhae Martyropolis. N. (J).

Jacob or Dionysius bar Salibi of Melitene. Bishop of Germanikeia.

Michael of Melitene. Jacobite patriarch.

12<sup>th</sup> century:

Jacob bar Byrbon. N.

Isoyav bar Melkon. Bishop of Nisibis. N.

Simon Sanilabi of Arbil. N.

John bar Zodin. N.

13<sup>th</sup> century:

David bar Pol.

Jacob bar Sakhi. Monk. N. (J).

Aaron bar Madeni. Bishop of Martyropolis.

Bar Jew. The famous Jacobite Bishop of Melitene. His real name was Abulfaradz. (Bar-Jew in Syrian means son of a Jew). He was called that because he converted to Christianity from Judaism. Very productive author. Especially history.



Daniel bar Hatap.

Solomon of Ahlat of Armenia. N. (J).

Georgios bar Ias of Arbil. N. (J).

Masut of Baghdad. N.

Hamis. N.

Gabriel Haba. N.

Isaac of Mosul. N.

Abdiu bar Bariha. N.

Timotheus II. Catholic. N.

From the 14<sup>th</sup> century we start to see the decline of Aramaic Christian literature. Both Chaldean and Syrian.<sup>268</sup>

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<sup>268</sup> In the conference of Orientalists held in Rome in 1899, De. A Baumstarck presented in the Semitic part of the conference a copy of a previously unknown history in Aramaic of an unidentified author, similar to the world histories of the Middle Ages. It belonged to the 7<sup>th</sup> century and it was made up of 15 books. Actes du Douzième Congrès International des Orientalistes (Rome 1897). Florence 1902. Tome 3 (1<sup>re</sup> partie), p. 117-118.

## Appendix B

### *In Greek*

Epiphanius monk of Agiopolis. *Patrologia Graeca*, Migne, vol. 120, p. 259-260. 2<sup>nd</sup> half of the 6<sup>th</sup> century.

Perdikas of Ephesus. «Εκφρασις περί των εν Ιεροσολύμοις Κυριακών θεμάτων». *Patrologia Graeca*, Migne, vol. 133, p. 963. Written between the 9<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> century.

Ioannes Focas. «Εκφρασις εν Συνόψει των απ' Αντιοχείας μέχρι Ιεροσολύμων κάστρων και χωρών Συρίας, Φοινίκης και των κατά Παλαιστίνην αγίων τόπων». *Patrologia Graeca*, Migne, vol. 133, p. 927. Written in the 12<sup>th</sup> century.

Anonymous. «Απόδειξις περί των Ιεροσολύμων». *Patrologia Graeca*, Migne, vol. 133, p. 974.

Translation of a pilgrimage whose original Greek text no longer exists. Only the Latin translation : Eugesippi de distantis locarum Terrae sanctae. *Patrologia Graeca*, Migne, vol. 133, p. 991.

### *In Latin*

Itinerarium a Burdigala Hierusalem usque et ab Heraclea per Aulonam per urbem Romam, Mediolanum usque. *Patrologia Latin*, Migne, vol. 8, p. 783. Written at the end of the 4<sup>th</sup> century.

Veda (Venerabilis) De locis sanctis. *Patrologia Latin*, Migne, vol. 8, p. 784

Vita Sancti Villibaldi Episcopi. Written by a nun at a monastery in Heidenheim. (Sancti moni di Heidenheimensi). Julii vol. 2, p. 485. The pilgrimage of the saint described in this biography took place between 720-729. The biography is also known as Hodoeporicon.

Itinerarium Bernardi in loca sancta. Patrologia Latin, Migne, vol. 121, p. 569. Written the year 870.

Itinerarium Antonini Placentini in terra sancta. Patrologia Latin, Migne, vol. 52, p. 897-899. Written sometime in the 9th or 10th century.

De itinere Hierosolymitano historico. Patrologia Latin, Migne, vol. 155).

Sancti Adamani Abbatis, de locis sanctis en relatione Arulti, episcopi Galli libri tres. Patrologia Latin, Migne, vol. 88, p. 779.

Petri Blessensis Passio Reginaldi principis olim Antiocheni. Patrologia Latin, Migne, vol. 207, p. 958.

De locis sanctis libellus, quem de opusculos majorum abbreviando Beda (Venerabilis) composuit. Patrologia Latin, Migne, vol. 94, p. 1179. Either from the 6th or 7th century.