

During the conference the following posters were displayed: Benjamin Kiessling, Daniel Stökl Ben Ezra, Rodney Ast, Holger Essler, *Aligning Extant Transcriptions of Documentary and Literary Papyri with Their Glyphs*; Isabelle Marthot-Santaniello, *D-scribes: Digital Paleography of Greek and Coptic Papyri*; Elisa Nury, Susan Fogarty, Lavinia Ferretti, Paul Schubert, *Grammateus: the Architecture of Documentary Papyri*; Nina Sietis, *NOT A WrittEn Word but Graphic Symbols. NOTAE: An Evidence-based Reconstruction of Another Written World in Pragmatic Literacy from Late Antiquity to Early Medieval Europe*; Leonora Sonogo, *Quantitative Tools for the Dating of Arabic Documentary Texts*.

The full conference details, programme, abstracts, and links to the recorded presentations are available at <<https://d-scribes.philhist.unibas.ch/en/events-179/neo-paleography-conference/>>. Proceedings are being prepared for publication as a special issue of the *Comparative Oriental Manuscript Studies Bulletin*.

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Florilegia Syriaca. Mapping a Knowledge-Organizing Practice in the Syriac World

Ca' Foscari University of Venice, 30 January–1 February 2020

From 30 January to 1 February 2020, a group of scholars in Syriac studies gathered at Ca' Foscari University of Venice to participate in the first workshop organized by the ERC Starting Grant Project 'FLOS: *Florilegia Syriaca: The Intercultural Dissemination of Greek Christian Thought in Syriac and Arabic in the First Millennium CE*'. The meeting, which dealt with compilations of excerpts in the Syriac language, was the first in a series of three workshops planned by the FLOS project, which should progressively broaden their scope to other Eastern Christian literatures and eventually to other religions.

The concept of the workshop originated from the observation that the florilegium, or anthology, though a highly pervasive form of Syriac literature, was generally disregarded in Syriac scholarship. And yet, anthologies and collections of texts have recently been the focus of increasing scholarly attention, and issues of codicology, terminology, and philology have been raised. A broad study of 'reading in excerpts' as a knowledge-organizing practice, transversal to many cultures and covering fields ranging from Egyptology to Late Western Medieval philosophy, has bloomed; indeed, the study of 'multiple-text manuscripts' is a field in rapid and constant expansion. From the point of view of its content, a multiple-text manuscript can be defined as a

manuscript containing diverse writings that are not assigned to the same author and do not belong to the same work—and the florilegium, in particular, as a collection of excerpts from writings of different authors. Many domains have benefited from this scholarly rush, especially Greek Byzantine, Coptic, Ethiopic, and Slavic studies. Syriac florilegia, however, have remained almost untouched by this renewal. And indeed, with very few notable exceptions, they have hardly ever been studied in their own right and have only been pillaged by scholars of the nineteenth and the twentieth centuries, who picked and published from them some interesting passages of works whose Greek original is lost.

From the sixth century onwards, however, and especially under Abbasid rule from the eighth to the eleventh century, florilegia progressively became a prominent, and in some cases the dominant form through which Syriac and Christian Arabic intellectuals shaped their knowledge of theology, philosophy, ascetic literature, and in some cases even historiography. We can single out at least three major categories of Syriac florilegia: the exegetical florilegium, the ascetical florilegium, and the dogmatic florilegium, the latter aimed at the refutation of heresies and, correspondingly, at the definition of orthodoxy. These three forms usually involve a massive re-use of translated Greek patristic literature. But also Syriac historiography underwent a substantial process of selection and re-organization, resulting in the creation of historiographical florilegia. Many of the extant florilegia bear witness to a high degree of organization of the sources: the excerpts are not only merely juxtaposed, but organized around specific topics in a series of ‘patchwork-treatises’ on the relevant topics, with clear overall aims. They thus vividly reflect a coherent editorial project of the compiler.

The main objective of the workshop *Florilegia Syriaca* was to start outlining a phenomenology of Syriac florilegia, especially of patristic content, and to map their diffusion and relevance in time and space, from the sixth to the eleventh century, and from the Roman Empire to China. In order to do this, during three days of lively and friendly scholarly discussion, the workshop studied Syriac florilegia in their own right, as cultural products possessing their own specific textuality. This approach gave us the opportunity to fruitfully reflect, for the first time in Syriac scholarship, on what florilegia have really been for Syriac culture: laboratories of knowledge, where the selection, re-arrangement, and in some cases the canonization of old sources were prompted by the new needs of an entangled religious and intellectual world.¹

1 In what follows, the description of the papers delivered at the workshop is largely based, with some adaptations, on the speakers’ abstracts, which were very substantial and provided with bibliographies. This report must thus be considered as the fruit of a collective effort and not as the exclusive work of the present author.

On 30 January Sergey Minov (Sorbonne Université, Paris) opened the workshop with a paper on ‘Anti-Jewish Testimonia among Syriac Christians of the Early Islamic Period: Continuity of a Polemical Genre’. Although the paper was not immediately concerned with the genre of patristic florilegia but with a collection of biblical testimonia, it served as an ideal introduction to what followed, since it tackled the literary genre of testimonia as a precursor of and, arguably, an immediate model for florilegia. Testimonia were collections of scriptural quotations, gathered and organized thematically by Christians for the purposes of apologetic and polemic against Jews and (to a lesser extent) pagans, and had emerged as early as the second century, enjoying a considerable popularity during Late Antiquity. Minov discussed how this genre was still operative during the early Islamic period among Syriac-speaking Christians. The primary focus of his investigation was an unpublished Syriac work, entitled *Collection of Demonstrations from the Old Testament against the Jews and Other Unbelievers*, which is attested in a single textual witness, the West Syrian manuscript London, British Library (BL), Add. 12154 (ff. 201v–222r), dated to sometime between the eighth and the ninth centuries. He addressed the question of whether this composition stands in a direct genetic relation with the early specimens of the Greek *testimonia* literature, or whether it should be regarded as an original compilation, produced in a Syriac-speaking milieu. The problem of a possible social and religious function of this text during the early Abbasid period, including its relation to the rich tradition of Syriac florilegia of this period, was discussed as well.

In the following paper, ‘From Scholium to Florilegium: Tracing the Development of West Syrian Theological Collections’, Yonatan Moss (Hebrew University of Jerusalem) tackled some core questions of the workshop: why did the florilegium become a predominant mode of organizing, transmitting, and creating knowledge in the Syriac world, beginning in the sixth century, and with ever-increasing energy in the Abbasid period? How did the process of selection from larger texts, and compilation in florilegia, work in practice?

Moss’ proposal to enter into these overarching questions was highly concrete and was based on the following logic: the patristic extracts comprised in the theological florilegia (if we limit our focus to these among the various types of florilegia) would obviously need to have been excavated, either directly or indirectly, from earlier manuscripts of continuous patristic texts. It is equally obvious that the surviving manuscript evidence for both continuous texts and florilegia tells only part of the story. Yet, even within those manuscripts that happen to be at our disposal, we may ask whether there are any concrete traces of the processes of selection and extraction of individual passages from the continuous texts and their incorporation into the florilegia.

Moss showed us how he found what he believed to be precisely such traces in at least one continuous, sixth-century manuscript (MS BL, Add. 14567) in conjunction with several of the later theological florilegia. MS BL, Add. 14567 contains several of the ‘minor’ works of John Chrysostom: the five homilies *On the incomprehensibility of God*; the three treatises *To Stagirus the monk tormented by a demon*; the treatise *On the Fact That Demons Do Not Govern the World*; and a series of four extracts from other homilies by Chrysostom, including two from his homilies on Matthew.

Unlike several of the other continuous Syriac patristic manuscripts from the sixth century, MS BL, Add. 14567 is furnished with dozens of scribal notes appearing in the margins. These notes serve a variety of functions: some merely highlight certain passages in the text; others point out lessons to be gleaned from this or that passage; and yet others indicate the theological, polemical, or exegetical import of a passage, or of a phrase, in places where the connection would not otherwise be obvious (especially cases where Chrysostom could not have known about the connection, such as two notes marking passages as ‘against Julian’ of Halicarnassus, who post-dated Chrysostom by a century).

The scribal notes are written carefully, in what appears, at least in the first part of the manuscript, to be a hand very similar, if not identical, to the hand that produced the main text. These notes are invariably linked to a three-dot glyph (the so-called ‘therefore sign’) indicating the part of the main text to which they refer. Many are surrounded by *tabulae ansatae*, or other graphic measures, pointing to their importance. Structurally, the link between the marginal notations and the main body of the text in this manuscript functions like the link between headings to excerpts and the excerpts themselves in the florilegia. Yet, the connection is not merely structural and hypothetical. As he showed in his paper, Moss was able to track down several cases of word-for-word identity between notations found in MS BL, Add. 14567 and headings found in subsequent florilegia, with both, naturally, referring to the selfsame texts. This would seem to open a window unto one of the concrete processes through which the late ancient and early medieval Syriac florilegia were formed.

Using insights gleaned from the recent study of marginal notations in medieval Latin manuscripts, Moss argued that the bridge he found between scholium and florilegium does not only help answer the ‘how’ question about the formation of the Syriac florilegia, but also, to some degree, the ‘why’ question as well.

On 31 January the morning session was opened by Marion Pragt (Katholieke Universiteit Leuven), whose paper, ‘Lovers of Learning: Inter-

preting the Song of Songs in Two Syriac Exegetical Collections', concentrated on the exegetical florilegium. Pragt explored the organization of exegetical knowledge in two West Syrian collections: the so-called London Collection, and the Collection of Simeon. The London Collection contains extracts on the interpretation of scripture and related subjects from Greek Christian works and is extant in a single eighth- or ninth-century manuscript (BL, Add. 12168), although the collection itself has been dated to the seventh century. The Collection of Simeon presents a series of commentaries on scripture largely based on Syriac authors and is preserved both in the ninth- or tenth-century manuscript Vatican, Biblioteca apostolica Vaticana (BAV), Vat. Syr. 103 and its eleventh-century copy BL, Add. 12144. The paper specifically concentrated on the reception of Gregory of Nyssa's *Homilies on the Song of Songs* in both collections. Gregory's *Homilies* circulated in Syriac in both full and abbreviated versions, which have not yet been edited or fully studied, and became one of the main sources for Syriac interpretations of the Song. In the London Collection and the Collection of Simeon, the compilers operated in two ways, both by creating abridged texts from single authors (Gregory of Nyssa in the case of Song 1–6:9) and by adding selected extracts taken from various works. Thus, Pragt examined how the *Homilies* were abbreviated and organized, in what different ways Gregory and other authors were used and what this may reveal about the aims and interests of the compilers. Specifically, she argued that Gregory's *Homilies* were re-organized in different ways, revealing two different organizing principles. Whereas the London Collection presents abbreviated versions of each homily, the Collection of Simeon is structured around verses of the Song which are followed by brief explanations. In this way, the London Collection makes available Gregory's lengthy spiritual *Homilies* in a shorter and more manageable form, while in the Collection of Simeon the *Homilies* are used as a tool to identify the philological, moral and spiritual sense of the Song's words. Moreover, although both collections contain paratextual material, the London Collection mainly uses marginal notes as reading aids, guiding users through the abridged versions of the *Homilies* and enabling them to navigate to a section of particular interest. On the other hand, in the Collection of Simeon, marginal notes offer alternative readings from the Song as well as explanatory notes and additional interpretations. Finally, in both collections, by reworking Gregory's interpretations and through the addition of extracts from other authors (notably Cyril of Alexandria, Severus of Antioch and Daniel of Ṣalah), the compilers introduced ideas which reflect Miaphysite theological interests. The two collections thus show how the Syriac version of a Greek work could be abbreviated and adapted to accommodate the aims and interests of new contexts.

Flavia Ruani (CNRS, Paris) presented her paper ‘Heresiology in the *Demonstrations against Heresies: The Reception of Ephrem of Nisibis’ Heresiological Works*’ as a part of a larger research project that aims at exploring the tradition of Syriac heresiology, both in its direct manifestations (i.e. texts dealing with the refutation of ‘erroneous’ doctrines studied in their own right) and in its internal and self-referential development (namely, the reception and quotation of previous heresiological works in later texts). In this regard, the corpus of Syriac dogmatic florilegia (seventh to tenth century) reveals itself to be particularly interesting. Notwithstanding their own specificities, the florilegia could rightly be considered as part of the Syriac heresiological tradition, both regarding their content and their form. They oftentimes bear the title of *Demonstrations from the Fathers against Heresies* and their main aim is to refute the opinions of a variety of adversaries (Julianists, Nestorians, etc.). Furthermore, they both adopt and adapt a structural way of refutation going back to classical heresiology (starting in the second century in Greek) that consists of quoting excerpts either from the adversaries themselves, for the sake of refutation, or from previous Church authorities, in support of specific arguments.

One way to understand the polemical nature of the florilegia as constructed texts with their own editorial intention, is to study the use they make of previous heresiological works: which ones they quote, in which way, and in which specific contexts. First, the paper offered an overview of the heresiological sources, coming from the Syriac and Greek traditions, which are quoted in the florilegia. Such a survey allowed us to understand which texts were in circulation and available to the authors of the florilegia in Upper Mesopotamia in the seventh to tenth centuries, and/or which ones were deemed relevant for their purposes. In particular, next to sources directly dealing with Christological matters that would fit the florilegia’s aims, there are others with an apparently less relevant content. Two of them were the focus of the following part of the paper. They are both dated to the fourth century, one belonging to the Greek tradition, the other to the Syriac one: the *Panarion* by Epiphanius of Salamis, and Ephrem of Nisibis’ heresiological works, namely the *Prose Refutations against Mani, Marcion and Bardaisan* and the *Hymns against Heresies*. Ruani examined their reception in the florilegia, with a particular emphasis on Ephrem’s texts. After offering a survey of the quotations from these sources, most of which were new identifications, she concentrated on the selection, organization, and content of these excerpts, including the textual modifications that they may have undergone and the contexts in which they were received. Ruani’s analysis revealed that the reception of these texts in a later and religiously different milieu disregarded their original polemical

aims and even their polemical nature, as they were quoted in various thematic sections, some of which feature a spiritual content rather than a controversial one. Finally, in order to understand if florilegia were simple transmitters of heresiology or heresiological work in their own right, the paper enlarged its scope to previous, contemporary and later authors and texts that quote the same sources. Comparisons were drawn, for example, with Philoxenus of Mabbug's *Florilegium* (end fifth century), Severus of Antioch's *Against Julian of Halicarnassus* (sixth century), and Moses bar Kepha's *Treatise on Free Will* (ninth century), still unedited and transmitted by MS BL, Add. 14731. Ruani explored how these authors used fourth-century heresiology and indicated which differences and similarities can be observed with the florilegia. With regard to previous authors, her analysis showed that florilegia did not make use of the selection of fourth-century heresiologists: even when they quote extracts that already existed in an earlier selection, they do not insert them in the same cluster of citations, but rather create their own. With respect to contemporary or later authors, the example of Moses bar Kepha's *On Free Will* suggests that florilegia represented an intermediary source, but also that original works continued to be used in parallel: if *mimro* 3, ch. 2 contains a passage from Ephrem's *Prose Refutations* probably borrowed from a florilegium similar to the one contained in BL, Add. 12155, *mimro* 2, ch. 5 ('Against the followers of Mani and Marcion who destroy free will'), ff. 10r–11r, is a compilation of extracts taken from the *First Discourse* of Ephrem's *Prose Refutations*, which, as far as we can tell, is not transmitted in florilegia.

Marianna Mazzola's paper, "This Story May Provide Proof". History and Authority in Syriac Excerpt Collections and beyond' was based on a project she co-authored with Peter van Nuffelen and Andy Hilken, which received funding from the Belgian FWO to be carried out at the University of Ghent.² This project started from very much the same premises as FLOS: i.e. the observation that over the past three decades, scholarship has revised the traditional view that the late antique and medieval practice of excerpting is unoriginal, uninteresting and a sign of intellectual decline; and that scholars now tend to approach excerpt collections as a particular way of organizing and disseminating knowledge. Yet, by understanding excerpts as simply another way of ordering knowledge, Mazzola and colleagues remarked, scholarship on excerpt collections has tended to ignore insights from intellectual history, which showed that from the fourth century onwards, the ability to cite passages from authoritative predecessors (usually church fathers) was a prerequisite for an argument to be judged valid. Excerpt collections therefore are

2 The title of the project is 'Re-assembling the Past. Dionysius of Tel-Mahre, Early Syriac Historiography, and Its Byzantine and Arab Context' (FWO 582-842).

not merely forms that organize knowledge, but they also attribute status and authority to particular types of knowledge. The Ghent project seeks to inject that perspective into the study of excerpt collections, by focusing on one particular type of excerpts, namely those drawn from histories. By combining the study of a material form (excerpt collections) with intellectual history through a particular case study (historiography), this project, as Mazzola explained, aims at contributing substantially to the study of 1) Excerpt collections; 2) History of historiography; 3) Identity formation in the Miaphysite church.

(1) *Excerpt collections*. The project will begin with Syriac collections, specifically focusing on those containing historical excerpts, and will compare the results of this study with those that were already achieved for other languages and cultures. Only through comparison can general and culture-specific features be separated.

(2) *History of historiography*. Excerpt collections organize knowledge, but not all types of knowledge are equal. Excerpt collections testify to the rise in importance of quotations from authoritative figures in debate. The authority of a citation was closely linked to its authorship. The project proposes that another feature played a role, namely the kind of text a citation derived from. Not all genres were equal in epistemological status, and historiography is a particularly interesting case. Hardly ever is the status of historical knowledge in relation to other types of knowledge discussed, even though history in the Greek world was born in competition with other types of knowledge, such as medical, philosophical, and rhetorical. Indeed, Christianization had a major impact in this respect; the Christian understanding of history was built on a distinction between, on the one hand, the historical books of the Bible, which, being inspired, were true in the strongest possible sense, and, on the other, ordinary histories that were imperfect. In addition, as history was summed up in Christ, nothing substantially new could happen between the Incarnation and the Second Coming. Paradoxically, although Christianity is called a historical religion, it generated an epistemologically lower status for historiography in comparison to other genres, such as exegesis. The role of historical excerpts in mainly theological collections, then, begs explanation.

(3) *Identity formation in the Miaphysite church*. Scholarship has addressed how history helped shape Miaphysite identity, but has, understandably, focused on extant histories. Yet the embedding of historical excerpts in doctrinal excerpt collections shows how an understanding of the past was intertwined with an understanding of doctrine. In turn, the identification of authoritative theologians that were to be cited in excerpt collections was shaped by a particular view of history. Mazzola illustrated how, by looking at excerpt

collections as presupposing a historical narrative, the Ghent project intends to chart how identity, theology, and narratives of the past were closely related.

Based on existing catalogues, 17 manuscripts have turned out to contain historical excerpts, all deriving from Miaphysite milieus and ranging from the sixth to the twentieth century. Besides the chronological span, these manuscripts contain historical excerpts to very different extents. The main body of the project is focusing on a corpus of three important witnesses from the formative period of the Miaphysite church (sixth to tenth century): Dayr as-Suryān, Syr. 28 (sixth or seventh century); BAV, Vat. Sir. 145 (ninth or tenth century); and BL, Add. 12154 (eighth or ninth century). Their formal differences ensure a wide enough breadth to compare different ways of fashioning excerpt collections, whilst their chronological proximity allows them to be interpreted as witnesses to a single culture. Each manuscript is analyzed at three levels. A first level draws inspiration from material philology: how is the manuscript made up, that is what are its dimensions, format, composition, annotations, and colophons? How are the excerpts organized and introduced? Does the compiler show an awareness of difference in genre? Secondly, the project will assess the overall aim of each single manuscript and ask if it implies a narrative about the past; this will be done by employing rhetorical analysis, i.e. looking at a possible thematic coherence in the excerpts, as well as at the overall architecture of the manuscript. As a final step, the project will focus on the historical excerpts: how is material from histories dealt with (e.g. selection, reworking, positioning)? How does this treatment compare to non-historical excerpts? Does the collection rely on an earlier collection, or has it directly used or even translated the original text from the Greek?

Building on these results, the Ghent project intends to answer its more general questions: (1) Through comparison with earlier work on historical excerpts in other languages, especially Latin and Greek, but also Armenian, it will find out if there are culture-specific and generally shared features of such excerpt collections. (2) Setting the results against a *longue durée* history of the changing status of history in Antiquity and the Middle Ages, it will ask how the status of historical knowledge is enhanced in excerpt collections so as to allow it to become a source of authority. As a working hypothesis, the project envisages two non-exclusive options: by suggesting a historical narrative of orthodoxy that supports the status of the theological excerpts, and by selecting elements from histories that are non-historical in nature (such as conciliar documents, letters by church fathers); (3) Relating to identity formation: what role does history play in excerpt collections that seek to establish first and foremost a theological identity? How does the historical narrative implied in the collection compare to the ones present in integrally preserved narratives?

The project will thus be expanding on current concepts of narrative identity, which have been applied more often to complete narrative texts than to implicit narratives like the ones it is dealing with.

Emiliano Fiori (Ca' Foscari University of Venice, PI of the FLOS project) opened the afternoon session of 31 January with the paper 'The Contexts and Afterlife of a Widespread Christological Florilegium (1v–36r): A Travelogue', which illustrated a work in progress he is carrying out within the framework of the FLOS project on a large Christological florilegium preserved in different manuscripts of the British Library and of the Mingana collection. MSS BL, Add. 14532, 14533, 14538, 12155, and Birmingham, Cadbury Research Library, Mingana Syr. 69 date from the eighth to the ninth/tenth centuries. The florilegium, which expounds a Miaphysite Christology in 110 chapters and is mainly made up of quotations from Cyril of Alexandria and Severus of Antioch, discusses technical topics such as 1) The persistence of a difference between the natures from which Christ derives, which excludes any confusion in Christ while at the same time saving the hypostatic unity, and is safeguarded by the preservation in the union of the so-called 'natural characteristic' of each nature; 2) The exclusion of any duality in Christ to such an extent that it is impossible to mention the number 'two' in relation to him in any respect; 3) The apology of the alleged novelty of the Miaphysite doctrine through a collection of patristic authorities, from Dionysius the Areopagite to the Cappadocians; 4) An overview of the debates held at Chalcedon, proving that the polemical goal of the florilegium is Chalcedonian rather than Nestorian Christology.

An initial exploration of the patristic materials of this florilegium, of their relationship with the above-mentioned topics, and of their complex itineraries through the centuries leads to some provisional results concerning the context in which they were originally collected and the circumstances that may have prompted the production of the florilegium as we have it now. As to the context, the topics discussed in our florilegium were the core of a rather obscure Christological debate at the end of the sixth century, which nevertheless was crucial for the theological self-consciousness of later Miaphysitism, namely the controversy around Probus, a Miaphysite theologian who converted to Chalcedonianism in the 580s. Much of what is discussed in the Christological florilegium as it is now, especially the 'natural characteristic' and the removal of duality, is already present in this sixth-century controversy. These very topics emerge again in an age of renewed polemics that opposed Miaphysites to Chalcedonians, between the end of the Umayyad caliphate and the first decades of the 'Abbasid rule. A precious source of the middle of the eighth century, the letter of a certain Elias who converted from Chalcedonianism to

the Miaphysite faith and addressed to the Chalcedonian syncellus Leo of Ḥar-rān, shows us that the discussion still focused on the same points: Difference vs division of the natures, unity vs confusion, exclusion of any duality. The authorities quoted by Elias to defend his Miaphysite options are the same as in the Christological florilegium and are also organized in a similar way. One generation later, Nonnus of Nisibis and his relative Abū Ra'īṭah used the florilegium in very much the same form as we find it in the British manuscripts for their polemic against the Melkites. Fiori defined his travelogue as incomplete; it is still difficult, and will perhaps remain impossible, to determine the exact production context of the florilegium. However, it seems clear that the travel is bringing us very close to the alleged date of the earliest witness that preserves it, MS BL, Add. 14532 (eighth century according to Wright), and that it reveals the nature of the florilegium as an 'emergency kit' for Christological apology against an adversary who, supported both by the Roman Empire and by the first Caliphs, was in the heyday of its power and influence.

Bishara Ebeid (Ca' Foscari University of Venice, senior researcher in the FLOS project) presented his ongoing research for the FLOS project in his paper, 'Syriac Dogmatic Florilegia and Christian Arabic Writings. The Case of Abū Ra'īṭah al-Takrītī'. Abū Ra'īṭah al-Takrītī, a Miaphysite theologian of the eighth-ninth centuries, was one of the most important thinkers of his Church. He participated in many theological discussions, both with Muslims and with Christians of other denominations. Although his nisbah 'al-Takrītī' might mean that he was the bishop of the city of Takrīt (the main administrative center of the Miaphysite church in Mesopotamia, situated in present-day Iraq between Baghdad and Mosul), scholars today agree that such a hypothesis is improbable. His *nisbah*, then, may point to some form of connection to the city of Takrīt, either his place of birth or of work, since the city was a very important cultural and educational center for the Jacobite Church in that period. Abū Ra'īṭah is mentioned as a great teacher in some Armenian chronicles, which makes us think that he was a teacher in his church in the center of Takrīt. He wrote in the Arabic language, the new lingua franca of the Christians under Islamic rule in the Middle East. His works mostly had an apologetic character and can be regarded as one of the starting points of the Christian theological production in Arabic. In his apologetic writings on the Trinity and Christology, Abū Ra'īṭah uses the patristic heritage to answer the accusations of non-Miaphysite Christians, as well as Muslims. With the first group he makes a direct use of the Church Fathers, quoting some of their works in support of the Miaphysite doctrine, while with the second group the references to the Fathers are indirect. In the Christological controversies of the fifth- and sixth-century Miaphysite authors like Severus of Antioch and

Peter of Callinicum relied on the patristic heritage in order to prove that their doctrine was orthodox and in agreement with the Church Fathers. Two centuries later, the patristic quotations used by Severus, Peter, and other authors were further selected and reorganized in the Christological and Trinitarian patristic florilegia that are currently studied by the FLOS project. These florilegia were copied more than once in the following centuries and continued to be instruments of theological education and formation for the West Syrians. In his paper, Ebeid analyzed the use of the patristic tradition in some of Abū Ra'īṭah's writings (*The first letter on the Holy Trinity*, *The letter against the Melkites*, and *The apology on the Trisagion*) and demonstrated that the latter's knowledge of the Fathers' doctrine and the quotations and references he makes from their works, directly and indirectly, is based on these Syriac dogmatic florilegia.

Herman Teule (Katholieke Universiteit Leuven) concluded the afternoon session by bringing us as far as the second half of the second millennium with his paper 'An Anthology of Conciliar Decrees of the Seventeenth Century: Context and Purpose', and allowed us to explore the persistence of ancient compilation practices in a little explored age of Syro-Arabic literature. While still metropolitan of Amid, the later Chaldean Patriarch Joseph II (b. 1667, d. 1713) published in Syriac a selection of conciliar decrees. The oldest extant manuscript is probably an autograph by Joseph himself. As stated by Joseph in one of the introductions to this work (there are at least three), his Syriac text goes back to an Arabic original. This Arabic original could be identified as *Misbāḥ al-lāmi* ('The Burning Lamp'), composed by the Carmelite Johannes Petrus à Matre Dei, one of the Latin missionaries working in Aleppo who cooperated closely with the French Consul François Picquet. The Syriac redaction has some idiosyncratic characteristics. Teule discussed the *Sitz im Leben* of the Arabic original, comparing it to the redaction of Joseph II. The paper focused on the rationale behind the selection of these conciliar documents. In the nineteenth century, Joseph's work was printed by Paul Bedjan; this raises the question of the importance of this work for the Chaldean Christians of the Urmia-Khosrova region, the normal readership of Bedjan's work.

In the last session, which was held in the morning of 1 February, after the rich overview of the previous days on theological, exegetic, historical, and conciliar collections, we finally turned to monastic collections.

Grigory Kessel (Austrian Academy of Sciences, Vienna, and Manchester University), who has been dealing with the topic for several years, tackled it again for us in his paper 'A Syriac Monk's Reading: A Perspective on the Monastic Miscellanies'. Kessel moved from the assumption that, as in other Christian traditions, reading played an important role in Syriac Christianity,

but that, in contrast to these other traditions – particularly the Greek-speaking one—the development of reading practices and book culture within the Syriac Christian tradition has not yet received the attention it deserves. As heirs of the ancient Mesopotamian scribes, Syriac Christians placed great value on books and reading. And as with many other aspects of their Christianity, the Syriac attitude towards reading and learning had certain traits unique to its tradition.

Quite often it is hagiographic works that provide the most interesting material for the study of book culture in a monastic milieu. The lives of the Syriac monks offer intriguing evidence about monks' reading practices. Thus, for example, we read in the life of Rabban Bar 'Edta (d. 611) that he memorized the magnum opus of Nestorius, the *Book of Heraclides* (521 pages in the modern edition!), and learned the entire Bible by heart, as well as the works of Abba Isaiah, Mark the Monk, and Evagrius of Pontus.

Moreover, a scholar of Syriac Christianity is in a very fortunate position, as we have in our possession the actual products that reflect the changes and developments that took place within the Syriac monastic tradition from the sixth century onwards, namely the miscellanies. Miscellanies were the main vehicle for the transmission of monastic literature and were deemed essential for a monk's spiritual formation. Already in the earliest extant examples (dating to the sixth century) we can detect a feature that remains constant through time, as each miscellany has a unique combination of texts. Such collections of texts thus offer us a unique glimpse into the Syriac monastic milieu of their day. They show us, for example, which texts were given preference in copying and which texts fell out of use after a period of circulation. Through miscellanies we can observe clearly how Syriac monasticism was shifting from admiration for the Byzantine monastic tradition to the establishment of its own extensive corpus.

Most of Syriac monastic literature, including translations of Greek patristic writings, is preserved solely in monastic miscellanies. A significant number of monastic texts are no longer extant, so the importance of such manuscripts is self-evident. However, it has not yet been established how many of these anthologies are still extant, and those that are known to have survived have not been thoroughly studied. In particular, it is important to discover whether a circulation of texts within such miscellanies presupposed certain changes that those texts had to undergo.

Kessel's paper considered Syriac miscellanies containing ascetic texts as a possible source for the study of intellectual activity in Syriac monasteries, and discussed the particular character and defining features of the miscellanies. By way of an example, he demonstrated some aspects of the significance

of the miscellanies for the study of Syriac literature by presenting as a case study the works of Ephrem of Nisibis (d. 373) that can be found in the miscellanies.

As was highlighted by many scholars in the second half of the twentieth century, the life of Ephrem which is known not only in Syriac but also in Greek laid the foundation for the creation of the so-called 'Ephrem byzantinus' in contrast with the 'Ephrem syrus' (so S. Griffith), the real fourth-century author of *madraše*. Traditionally Ephrem was (and largely continues to be) known in both Byzantine and Syriac milieus as a solitary and even a recluse who left the world and concentrated on permanent contrition for his sins. It is exactly this image that appears when one reads not only the corpus of *Ephraem graecus* but also many Syriac works attributed to him. It is this Ephrem that is known and venerated throughout the Christian ecumene, rather than the one who spent most of his life in Nisibis and was active in Edessa in the last ten years of his life. Thanks to the study of ancient manuscripts that contain the works of Ephrem and their critical editions by Dom Edmund Beck we discovered a completely different Ephrem, open to the challenges of the world and to the demands of his community and steadily fighting for Orthodoxy. Distortion of historical memory has affected not only the biography of Ephrem but his literary heritage as well. As was just mentioned, the image of the historical Ephrem became available to us exclusively thanks to the extant early Syriac manuscripts, which preserved a fairly significant part of Ephrem's authentic corpus. However, just as the historical Ephrem needed revision in accordance with the new ideals of Christian monasticism, so too the body of Ephrem's works was destined to be re-edited and re-thought. The most eloquent witness to the changing attitudes toward the literary heritage of Ephrem are the manuscripts containing his works and which therefore provide us with the material evidence of this transformation. Indeed, Ephrem's authentic works reached us in a special kind of manuscripts, which could be described as collections of works by a single author. A characteristic feature of these manuscripts is the fact that they contain the works of Ephrem alone and usually include whole cycles of *madraše*. To the contrary, through a closer look at the monastic miscellanies produced in different periods in comparison with manuscripts containing the works of Ephrem alone, Kessel showed that the works that these miscellanies transmitted as Ephremian are in fact not by Ephrem himself, but are rather pseudo-Ephremian; Ephrem's authentic works probably did not exert any particular attraction on an audience that was entirely concentrated on ascetical questions.

Vittorio Berti (University of Padua) concluded the workshop with a paper on 'The Composition Criteria of the Christian Sogdian Manuscript E28

in the Light of the Syriac Ascetic Collections of the Church of the East', thus vastly broadening the geographic scope of the meeting and showing how far in space the Syriac practices of collection and compilation reached. The Sogdian Christian MS Berlin, Staatsbibliothek Preußischer Kulturbesitz, Turfan, E28 is a set of scattered sheets and fragments discovered in Turfan which were reordered by scholars through a codicological and philological analysis. According to Nicholas Sims-Williams, it might be ascribed to the hand of a single copyist, but it should be possibly subdivided into three groups belonging to three different codices, originating from the same scriptorium. Such materials display an East Syrian monastic miscellany, although not a florilegium in the proper sense: indeed, it collects entire works, which include lives of ancient solitaries, counsels for novices, and ascetical homilies. Berti's contribution focused on one of the three hypothetical manuscripts that contain a set of texts whose identification is fairly complete. According to the current scholarly consensus, it is assumed to have included the History of Mar Awgin, an excerpt from the *Asceticon* of Abba Isaiah, the *Selected sayings* of Simon of Taibuteh, some excerpts from the first and the second part of the Homilies of Isaac of Niniveh, and other excerpts from the Commentaries of Dadišo' Qatraya on the already mentioned *Asceticon* of Abba Isaiah and on the book known as *The Paradise of the Fathers*. In fact, a Syriac manuscript containing all these very texts is not extant. This entails two alternative possibilities: either a hypothetical Syriac model has been lost, or, which is most likely, such composition is an original product of the Turfan Christian monastic community. The latter possibility suggests that we pursue a comparative work on the most pertinent Syriac manuscript tradition for each text collected in the Sogdian miscellany in order to sketch the hypothetical Syriac library known by these Sogdian monks, the imagined audience, and the plausible context of use of the book. In looking for the social features of the intellectual context behind this miscellany, the paper drew on the linguistic study provided by Kessel and Sims-Williams for the *Profitable counsels* of Simon of Taibuteh, the textual analysis of Isaac of Ninive's Homilies, the intricate relation between the Syriac translation of the *Asceticon* of Abba Isaiah and the commentary on it provided by Dadišo', and finally on a comparison between E28 and the composition criteria of BL, Add. 14653, containing, among other things, the life of Mar Awgin.

In the final discussion we tried to draw some provisional conclusions, especially by singling out the common threads that emerged from the workshop and the more general questions that the papers raised.

Firstly, we dealt with issues which are not specific to Syriac florilegia, i.e. the philological problems that the study of florilegia implied. In some cas-

es, as was observed, for example, in the monastic miscellanies, the florilegium overlaps with the single manuscript, since the occasion that produced the florilegium coincided with the occasion that produced the manuscript. Conversely, we could observe that many florilegia have their own manuscript tradition, being preserved in more manuscripts. But even so, florilegia remain quite unstable artefacts that are subject to expansion through addition of text, or to contraction through abridgment. What is, then, the degree of textuality of florilegia? How strong is it? Can they always be defined as texts in their own right? How should they be approached in terms of a critical edition? This most general question can only be answered by tackling other broad questions:

a) What appears to be most difficult is to determine the journey of the sources from the original works up to the florilegia: during the workshop it has become clear, however, that a possible orientation comes from blocks of excerpts that travel from one work to another rather than from the single excerpts; the single excerpt, however, can also be useful when it showcases certain typical but decisive characteristics like the interruptions with *ܘܥܝܢܐ* ('and again'), *ܘܥܝܢܐ ܡܠܟܠܐ* ('after a while'), etc. More than once, it was observed that florilegia, and not the original texts from which excerpts are drawn, are the source of other florilegia, which thus appear to be florilegia at the second (or even third) degree.

b) In order to assess the internal coherence and agenda of a florilegium it is also crucial to determine, wherever possible, its historical context, especially through the reading of all possible sources touching upon the themes of the florilegium at hand and belonging to its presumable age. Determining the compilation practices, then, implies a work on fine details (see next point) and at the same time on broad pictures.

c) Another fruitful orientation for further studies is the discussion we had on the relation between excerpts from a certain text as they appear in florilegia and glosses to the whole text as preserved in other manuscripts. Since glosses are often present in many Syriac manuscripts, and are themselves quite an uncharted territory, we should consider mapping them more carefully when studying florilegia. Still another point that emerged in the workshop was that the presence of glosses in florilegia manuscripts themselves also bears witness to the ongoing activity of reading and elaboration on the florilegia even once they had reached a relatively stable form.

d) Many manuscripts containing florilegia include more than one florilegium, and some exclusively contain florilegia. Thus, the term 'metaflorilegium' was suggested during the workshop; a useful category indeed, though it certainly requires further elaboration. If one applies it to any manuscript containing a plurality of florilegia, it risks becoming an empty category; it

may rather be useful to apply it to manuscripts in which the different florilegia are bound together by a recognizable agenda or thematic thread.

These general remarks highlight how Syriac florilegia pose problems common to all other traditions of compilation in the Late Antique and Medieval Mediterranean and beyond. One, then, cannot pursue the study of Syriac florilegia without taking into account the developments of more advanced fields, in particular in the most recent scholarship on Greek Byzantine or Latin Medieval studies on multiple-text manuscripts, also because of the sheer fact that some Syriac florilegia are themselves translations of Greek florilegia.

Another more specific, but highly relevant point that emerged in the discussion is that Syriac florilegia had a multilingual life, having an impact beyond Syriac itself, and influencing the arguments and thought of seminal Christian Arabic authors like Abū Rā'īṭah and, later on, Sāwīrus ibn al-Muqaffa'.

Moreover, in the Syriac florilegia we explored, we often happened to observe that the Bible and the Fathers do not seem to be distinguished; the same terminology is used for both, 'testimonia' or 'demonstrations' (ܩܘܪܕܢܐ or ܩܘܪܕܢܐܝܬܐ). The underlying idea is that of a transhistorical truth, which cannot but remain stable from the Bible to whatever age in the history of theology.

Thanks to the high quality of the contributions and the liveliness of the debate, this workshop represented the ideal starting point for the broad reflection on florilegia that FLOS intends to tackle. The questions it raised will be further developed in the proceedings, which should be published no later than the end of 2021, and in the next conferences organized by the project.

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