# Simon Magus and Simon Peter in Rome

## The Sureth Version of a Late East-Syriac Hymn for the Commemoration of Saints Peter and Paul

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A Sureth (Christian North-Eastern Neo-Aramaic) version of an East-Syriac hymn on *Simon Magus and Simon Peter in Rome* and its late Classical Syriac *Vorlage* are here published for the first time. The text is part of a small group of hymns on Peter and Rome that belong to the East Syriac liturgy for the commemoration of Saints Peter and Paul. The episode of the public contest and specific narrative details derive from the Syriac *History of Simon Cephas, the Chief of the Apostles*. These narrative and poetic texts on Peter have their ultimate roots in literary works, such as the *Acts of Peter* and the Pseudo-Clementine *Recognitions*, that circulated in various languages from Antiquity onwards and contributed to the genuine lore of Christian culture, in Europe as well as in Africa and the Near East. More or less consciously adopting a rather narrow-minded, confessional point of view, we are used to labelling as apocryphal this kind of foundational Christian literature. An attempt is made to contextualize the two versions of the hymn and their text transmission in the histories of Classical Syriac and Sureth literatures.

### 1. East-Syriac Hymns on Rome and its Apostles

The Classical Syriac *Vorlage* of the Sureth[1] hymn on *Simon Magus and Simon Peter* belongs to a short cycle of East-Syriac hymns on Rome and its apostles Peter and Paul, preserved in various manuscript

[1] Sureth derives from Classical Syriac *surā'ith* "*syriace*, in Syriac" and is the autoglottonym used for various Christian North-Eastern Neo-Aramaic (NENA) dialects. It has a strong religious connotation: the word *sur(y)āyā* means "Christian" in various languages of the region. Especially literary varieties of Sureth are also known as Modern Syriac, Vernacular Syriac or Assyrian. Sureth, however, does not genetically derive from Classical Syriac. Neo-Aramaic varieties represent the modern continuation of the language sub-family that we commonly call "Aramaic". Quite faithfully reflecting the geographical distribution of Old Aramaic in the first millennium BC, Neo-Aramaic languages form today a "geographically discontinuous dialect continuum" (Kim 2008: 511) which encompasses Western Neo-Aramaic (Ma'lula and other villages in the Qalamun valley of the Antilebanon mountains), Central Neo-Aramaic (also known by the autoglottonym Ṣurayt or Ṭuroyo, viz. the language of Ṭur ʿAbdīn in south-eastern Turkey), NENA varieties, and Neo-Mandaic (Khuzestan province of Iran and southern Iraq). NENA dialects are or were spoken by Jews and Christians of various denominations and represent the largest portion of the Neo-Aramaic continuum, today spread across south-eastern Turkey, northern Iraq and north-western Iran. All speakers of Jew-

collections of *sughithā* poems. All manuscripts known so far that contain the hymn date from the Ottoman period.

In Syriac hymnography, *sughyāthā* form a specific sub-group of stanzaic hymns (*madrāshē*). *Sughyāthā* are usually formed by quatrains of seven-syllable lines. An alphabetic acrostic often marks the beginning of each verse or pair of verses. Dialogue sections may be included, in which two or more characters interact in alternating (pairs of) verses. The *sughithā* is the favourite metrical form for Syriac dialogue and dispute poems, which according to Brock (e.g., 1991 and 2001) form a distinct and characteristic genre of Syriac literature.

Forms, contents and liturgical functions of the *sughithā* changed over time (Murre-van den Berg 2015: 164-8). From the Mongol period onwards, East-Syriac hymnography experienced a "late blooming",[2] which is usually considered as a constitutive element of the so-called Syriac Renaissance (10th-14th centuries).[3] In this late period, probably under the influence of Arabo-Persian poetry, *sughyāthā* usually have monorhyme verses, whereas end rhyme is generally avoided in the Syriac poetry of the classical — i.e., pre-Islamic — period. Certainly, the Arabo-Persian models are

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ish NENA varieties migrated to Israel in the early Fifties of the 20th century and most NENA-speaking Christians have abandoned their unstable and insecure homeland and live in a global diaspora.

[2] "Läßt in bezeichnender Weise schon die Literatur des 11. und 12. Jhs in den beiden großen syrischen Nationalkirchen [i.e. the Syriac Orthodox Church — West Syriac tradition, once called "Jacobite" — and the Church of the East — East Syriac tradition, once called "Nestorian"] ein Wiedererwachen speziell auch der dichterischen Produktion fühlbar werden, so hat vollends das 13. Jh das Zeitalter einer ganz hervorragenden Nachtblüte [sic, 'night blooming' for Nachblüte 'late blooming'] wenigstens der nestorianischen Dichtung eröffnet" (Baumstark 1922: 302-3).

[3] The term Renaissance is perhaps disputable in its original meaning: the Italian and European "Rinascimento", with the ideological assumption of a continuity solution after a previous period of decadence (indeed, death) and cultural languor. It risks being even more problematic if applied to Syriac and other Eastern Christian cultures (Coptic, Georgian and Armenian) during the 10th-14th centuries. Herman Teule (2010) draws it from Anton Baumstark (1922: 285). By specifying its chronological limits (from Elia of Nisibi, 975-1046, to the death of 'Abdisho' bar Brikha in 1318), Teule makes of it an instrument of historical periodization, useful for gathering cultural phenomena that seem to characterize the period that precedes and coincides with the first phase of the Mongol conquest, namely: 1. the rediscovery and encyclopedic systematization of the Syriac cultural heritage, 2. an almost "ecumenical" attitude in the relationships among the different Christian denominations, despite their traditional theological divergences, and 3. the openness towards Islam and the Arabo-Persian culture and the acceptance and adoption of Islamic cultural, religious and literary models, customs and practices. These phenomena, and especially the third one, can be seen as part of a "process of enculturation" (Teule 2010: 30), thanks to which late Syriac authors show they are aware of the fact that Christians share traits and trends of the dominant culture and indeed belong to what is called today the "Islamicate" world. From this standpoint, it would perhaps be better to speak of Syriac literature of the Mongol and, later on, Ottoman periods, rather than of a Renaissance. The idea of a Syriac Renaissance, however, has had the merit of drawing attention to a period that used to be neglected and underinvestigated in Syriac studies.

responsible for the adoption of much more sophisticated meters and rhyme patterns by late Syriac poets and hymnographers. The metrical form and the use of rhyme in the poem on *Simon Magus and Simon Peter* belong to this late trend[4] and, despite its inclusion in manuscripts of *sughyāthā* — possibly because of its liturgical function — the text cannot be considered a *sughithā*, at least as far as the form is concerned.

Another hymn of this cycle, entitled *Great Rome*, has been published together with other hymns characterized by a living rhythmical structure and the use of pseudo-teretismata such as sequences of *lā lā lā lā* "no, no, no, no" and, more to the point in *Great Rome*, *R(h)om R(h)om R(ho)m R(h)omē rabthā* "Rome, Rome, Rome, great Rome" (Mengozzi and Ricossa 2013a). The exaltation of Rome's military superiority seems to prevail in this text over poetic and hagiographic motifs. Peter and Paul are not named and they are presented as master-builders placed as guards of the city, which however is forever protected only by the Cross. The text appears thus to allude to Constantine's victory with the Cross and confirms the rather strong sympathy of East Syrians — not necessarily Chaldean uniates — for Rome and the Romans. In post crusade times, Rome may represent Latin-Frankish power, but in certain contexts also, and more traditionally, Byzantine Christianity.[5]

A longer dialogue poem has the structure of a classical *sughithā* and is richer in narrative details. It belongs to the same "Roman" cycle and has as its main characters the emperor Nero[6] and St. Peter , who is called by his Aramaic name Kepha in the rubrics as well as throughout the hymn. It is not a dispute, but a dialogue, in which the emperor shows he is aware of Jesus' death on a cross. He questions Peter about what he is preaching in Rome and learns from him that their faith has spread among all nations thanks to Paul, apostle of the gentiles. Nero orders Peter to leave Rome and tries to convice him to apostatize. Having received a negative answer, he asks the apostle to choose how he wants to die and Peter asks to be crucified upside down. The concluding verses refer that passers-by

[4] A wind of novelty seems indeed to blow in Syriac poetry, especially in the last part of the "Syriac Renaissance". The experimentation and adoption of Arab-Persian forms (meter, rhyme, poetic and rhetorical figures) and themes (e.g., love, wine and the whole language and imagery of Sufic mysticism) characterize the "diwans" of great authors such as Barhebraeus, Giwargis Warda (Pritula 2015, Nicák 2016, both with extensive bibliographies), Khamis bar Qardaḥē (Mengozzi 2014 and 2015, Pritula 2017) and 'Abdisho' bar Brikha (Younansardaroud 2010 and 2012). Especially Pritula's studies show that this was, at least at the beginning, a learned and elitist phenomenon. However, it had important and lasting repercussions precisely in late East-Syriac (and early Sureth) hymnography, that is the kind of poetry that concerns us here.

[5] See Mengozzi (2006: 354–5 and 2010: 194), with references. On the history and meanings of the Syriac term *r(h)omāyā* "Roman" see Pennacchietti (2011).

[6] Nero is hardly mentioned in the *Acts of Peter*, whereas his figure gains importance in later Petrine literature, so as to conform with the early Christian *topos* of Nero as the first emperor who persecuted the Christians (Thomas 2003: 51-3).

took pity on the old man who was crucified upside down and the believers acknowledged that his preaching had found fertile ground in Rome: "His bones will be forever an advocate for them". This last reference to the relics of the saint and their cult seems to confirm the strong Roman setting of the text and its ultimate origin in Rome.

The Classical Syriac text of the *Dialogue of Peter with the Emperor Nero* was published by Bedjan (1891: vol. II, 680-6) and Mingana (1905: no. VII) in his edition of Narsai's metrical homilies (*mēmrē*).[7] In both editions and in a manuscript collection of *sughiyāthā* that I was able to consult (Archbishopric of the Church of the East in Baghdad 6, 179-86), the *Dialogue* is preceded by a series of allegorical quatrains in which the apostles are described as twelve ships wrecked in the sea of this world. The "king of the sea" is the devil, who hates Christ and the Christians and leads people to refuse the teaching of the apostles. Paul, Peter and the emperor Nero are then introduced as the characters of the following dialogue poem. The alphabetic acrostic begins with the dialogic section and the preceding group of verses seems to form a narrative prologue, which is an almost standard element in the structure of Syriac dialogue and dispute poems, but it is usually much shorter.

In his survey of Syriac literary texts that bear witness to the *Acts* of Peter and Paul, Baumstark (1902: 46-7) recognizes the East-Syriac *Dialogue of Peter with the Emperor Nero* as belonging to a long history of narratives on the apostles of Rome. In the dialogue of Nero and Peter, however, Paul is only a secondary character, which leads Baumstark to think that the text probably derives from the earliest layer of oriental translations of the Greek *Acts of Peter*, which would contain anti-pauline motifs.[8] The dialogue of the apostle with the emperor reminds Baumstark of the stereotyped fictional dialogues of the martyrs with judges and pagan authorities in hagiographical literature.

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[7] In late East Syriac manuscripts almost each metrical homily (*mēmrā*) by Narsai is followed by a *sughithā* on the same subject. The *sughiyāthā* are probably later compositions by anonymous authors, which were added to Narsai's *mēmrē* for liturgical or merely catalogic purposes.

[8] More recent scholarship on the *Acts of Peter* has shown that, rather than containing anti-Pauline contents, the Pauline elements have been introduced quite early in the fluid literary transmission of the Greek *Acts* to a narrative core centered on Peter. Thomas' (2003: 21-4) literary and linguistic analysis of the chapters of the *Acts of Peter* in which Paul appears as a character shows that they are probably additions and interpolations — indeed, manipulation — of a redactor — or the author(s) of his source(s) — partly motivated by the intent of harmonizing the narrative to the ideological agenda of canonical writings and stressing the image of Peter and Paul as comartyrs in the imperial city: in *Galatians* 2:9 Paul presents his and Barnabas' mission to the nations as agreed with James, Cephas and John who would instead work for the evangelization of the Jews and, in general, the *Acts of the Apostles* presents Peter and Paul as "working in close cooperation". Thomas' analysis is mainly conducted on the *Actus Vercellenses*, a possibly 4th-century Latin translation, copied in the 6th century, that is the

As Baumstark (1902: 46) implicitly admitted when speaking of the sources of the East-Syriac *Dialogue*, the task of reconstructing the sources and history of certain episodes and motifs is not easy at all. We should know more on the transmission of the narrative contents of the *Acts of Peter* and related texts (e.g., *Acts of Peter and Paul* or *Pseudo-Marcellus*, *Didascalia apostolorum*, *Apostolic Constitutions* and *Pseudo-Clementine Writings*) in Syriac[9] and Christian Arabic, especially Garshuni, literatures to trace the intermediary sources of the *Dialogue of Peter with the Emperor Nero* as we find it in late East-Syriac collections of *sughiyāthā*. Moreover, these texts, in all the languages in which they are transmitted, display the variation in narrative details that is typical of popular literature in prose, where a text and the stories it contains are often transmitted in various recensions and versions — sometimes combined or contaminated with each other, translated and adapted from one language to another or gathered under the deck of a frame story — and there is hardly any version identical with another.[10]

The *Dialogue of St Peter with Nero*, however, is a clear witness of the popularity among East-Syrians in the Ottoman period of "apocryphal" narratives on St. Peter and Rome, rooted in very old and prestigious literary traditions. Immersed in an Islamic culture in which the *Stories of the prophets* served both as edifying, entertaining readings and exegetic tools,[11] late East-Syriac Christianity was

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most complete witness to the originally Greek *Acts*. According to Thomas (2003, 39), a Greek text containing the Pauline interpolations existed already in the late 2nd century.

Various kinds of anti-Paulinism are indeed present in the Pseudo-Clementine literature (Cirillo 2001), a 4th century collection of texts that may have been inspired by and drawn from earlier works on the apostles such as the *Acts of Peter*.

[9] See Desreumaux (2005) for a survey of the vast literature on or attributed to the apostles in Syriac.

[10] Commenting on Thomas' (2003: 78) remarks on the "textual instability" of works such as *Joseph and Aseneth*, the *Acts of Peter*, the *Alexander Romance*, and the late Greek erotic novels, Selden (2012, 17) implicitly describes the *Acts of Peter* as an example of what he calls text networks, together with the *Story and Proverbs of Ahiqar*, *Kalīla wa-Dimna*, *Barlaam and Josaphat*, *The Seven Wise Masters*, *The Thousand and One Nights*, *Vis o Rāmin*, *The Life of Aesop*, *Leylī o Majnūn*. In his view, a text network is an autopoietic, self-organizing narrative system, that develops into a diffusional pattern of interrelated texts (Selden 2009 and 2012), "arguably the most common type of diffusional patterning in the Roman East." Moreover, "all such narratives explicitly thematize their own dissemination, which suggests that their crosscultural transmission is less an arbitrary matter dependent upon taste, than structurally encoded in the works themselves" (Selden 2009: 13). The text network of the *Acts of Peter* may probably be extended so as to encompass the Pseudo-Clementine literature and the whole constellation of texts that give information on the biography of the chief of the apostles: "The *Acts of Peter* as presented in the *Actus Vercellenses* are only one text in a narrative trajectory of related Petrine texts dating from the fourth to the sixth centuries" (Thomas 2003: 40).

[11] The use of narrative, non-canonical texts for exegetic purposes and to fill narrative gaps in the Scriptures is traditional among Jews, Christians and Muslims in the Near East. Midrash-like, halakhic exegesis is certainly not confined to late Islam-

only indirectly touched by the concerns about the Canon that characterize both Protestant Reformation and Catholic Counter Reformation. Late East Syriac and early Sureth[12] authors felt free to insert what we consider — and Western missionaries indeed condemned as[13] — apocryphal literature in their narration of the history of salvation, which for most of them probably was world history tout court (Mengozzi: forthcoming b).

This attitude towards apocryphal literature, which often became part of the official liturgy as a hymn or a ritual reading,[14] is a universal feature in Christian culture. For instance, the (4th cent.?) Latin *Acts of Peter and Paul* or *Passion of Saints Peter and Paul*, also known as Pseudo-Marcellus,[15] tells a version of the dispute of Peter, Paul and Simon Magus in front of the emperor Nero, that ended up in that wonderful deposit of Biblical, "apocryphal" and hagiographical narratives that is *The Golden Legend* by Jacobus de Varagine (c. 1230–1298). Hence it reached learned circles of commissioners and artists in early Renaissance Florence.

Peter's upside-down crucifixion and his dispute with Simon Magus in front of the Emperor Nero are represented in a famous fresco by Filippino Lippi (late 15th cent.) in the Brancacci Chapel (Santa Maria del Carmine, Florence). Christiansen (1991: 9) suggests that the overall meaning of the decorative program of the Chapel is "salvation through the Church, as symbolised by St Peter." The head of the apostles is described according to the ideological agenda set by Jacobus de Varagine in his *Legenda aurea*: Peter was raised above the apostels "in authority, in the love of Christ, and in the power to work miracles."

Active in the same period, Benozzo Gozzoli represented the fatal fall of Simon Magus in front of St. Peter, Paul and the Emperor Nero on an altar predella painted in 1462 for the Compagnia di San Marco in Florence. Christiansen (1983: 6) observes that "Gozzoli's treatment conforms to the story as told in *The Golden Legend*". Gozzoli depicted the same scene, enriched with historical details and

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ic culture. In the Ottoman period, however, there are signs of a large-scale appropriation of Muslim narrative lore among Near-Eastern Christians, especially in manuscript collections of long prose narratives, that have Biblical, para-Biblical, hagiographic and sometimes profane, albeit edifying, contents (see Bellino and Mengozzi 2016 and Mengozzi, forthcoming a).

[12] The earliest literary texts in Sureth are long hymns, dated to the late 16th- early 17th century, preserved in manuscripts from the 18th century (Mengozzi 2011 and Murre-van den Berg 2015: 183-195).

[13] See, e.g., Perkin's (1866) comment on the popularity of the Apocalypse of Paul among East Syrians.

[14] See Thomas (2003, 86) on the reading of the Greek *Acts of Peter* in the liturgical commemoration of Saints Peter and Paul in June.

[15] The *Acts of Peter and Paul* are known also in various Arabic versions (Graf 1944, vol. 1, 261), two of which published by Lewis (1904).

dramatic force, in a panel for an altar predella of the church of San Pier Maggiore in Florence, now preserved at the Metropolitan Museum of Art (Christiansen 1983, 7). In this account of the story, Peter orders the devils who hold Simon Magus up to leave him so that he falls down and dies with his skull split on the ground. A similar, yet different, account of the story is precisely the content of the East-Syriac hymn on *Simon Magus and Simon Peter in Rome*, published here for the first time in Classical Syriac and Sureth.

## 2. Simon Magus and Simon Peter in Rome

In *Le thème de l'opposition entre Pierre et Simon dans les Pseudo-Clémentines*, Dominique Côté (1998) analyses the literary construction of Peter and his antagonist Simon as fictional characters in a composite text — the 4th-century Pseudo-Clementine novel in its various versions[16] — by which an author or a compiler intends to demonstrate the truth by telling a story rather than referring historical facts.[17] In the third chapter various early Christian sources are surveyed, in which we find "variations on the theme of Simon and Peter antagonism". This last chapter, which in Côté's perspective serves to describe possible sources and epigones of the Pseudo-Clementine writings, is a helpful guide to unravel the net of interwoven texts that is probably the ultimate source of the East Syriac hymn.

According to chapter 8 of the canonical *Acts of the Apostles*, Peter met Simon Magus in Samaria, where Simon had a reputation as a magician and was called "great Power of God". He was baptised and tried to buy with money the disciples' power in performing miracles. Peter refused and condemned Simon's wickedness and venal thought. According to the *Acts of Peter* and the *Didascalia apostolorum*[18] this first meeting and confrontation happened in Jerusalem and not in Samaria (Coté 1998: 187). In the Pseudo-Clementine literature, Peter defeated his antagonist Simon both as a preacher and a performer of miracles in Caesarea and Laodicea. If we put together various texts of the Petrine network — as happens indeed in some manuscripts, such as the famous Vercelli manuscript of the *Actus*, and harmonized narratives, such as the Syriac *History of Simon Cephas* — we

[16] Jones (2014) has published an English translation of the Syriac *Pseudo-Clementines* and intends to publish a new edition of the text in the *Corpus Christianorum Series Apocryphorum*.

[17] See Côté (1998: 5). Quite on the contrary, Thomas (2003, 3) reads the *Acts of Peter* in "the shadowy realm between ancient fiction and ancient historiography".

[18] The *Didascalia apostolorum* was probably composed in the first half of the 3rd century. The original Greek is lost and Syriac texts were published by de Lagarde (1854), Gibson (1903), and Vööbus (1979).

gain the idea that Peter first met Simon in Samaria (or Jerusalem), then pursued him along the Eastern coast of the Mediterranean, to arrive finally in the capital of the empire.[19]

However, the authors of the East-Syriac hymns on St. Peter were clearly only interested in Peter's connection with and activity in Rome. Simon Magus had preceded the apostle there, preaching his heretical doctrine and astonishing the Romans with miracles and special effects. From quite an early time, these events are part of Peter's biography among Christians. Eusebius of Caesarea (c. 260–340), probably the most influential of Greek Christian historians and usually reluctant to give credit to the apocryphal *Acts*[20], refers that after what happened in Samaria Simon fled to Rome where he and his partner Helena were honoured and worshipped as gods. Their success did not last long since God sent Peter to Rome to preach the truth and eventually overcome the impostor.

The East-Syriac hymn on *Simon Magus and Simon Peter* opens precisely with Peter's arrival in Rome, where the Christian community is shaken and led astray by Simon's claim to be the Son of God. The following verses summarize, as it were, the narratives of Peter's miracles and Simon's preaching in Rome so as to focus, towards the end of the text, on the final dramatic contrast with Peter. Narrative details of the story and rhetorical details of Simon's speech to the Romans are taken from the Syriac *History of Simon Cephas, the Chief of the Apostles*.[21]

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[19] On the confrontation in Caesarea and Laodicea, see Coté (1998: 193) and Cirillo (2001: 291). On literary grounds Wehnert (1992: 216) identifies precisely the story of the duel between Simon Peter and Simon Magus as the earliest layer of the Pseudo-Clementine novel and, given its thematic affinity with the story of the *Acts of Peter*, dates it to the turn of the 2nd century (Côté 1998: 20-1). The *Grundschrift* from where the other components (*Homilies* and *Recognitions*) of the Pseudo-Clementine novel would derive is usually identified with a Greek *Itineraries of Peter*, mentioned by early authors and attributed to Clemens, one of Peter's disciples. If the author of this source knew the *Acts of Peter*, he probably intended to fill the narrative gap that, in the *Acts*, separates Peter's activities in Jerusalem from his preaching in Rome, with the story of his fight against Simon Magus in cities of the Palestinian and Syrian coast (Cirillo 2001: 282-4). Thomas (2003: 21 and 39) suggests that a sixth century redactor may have suppressed all parts of the narrative taking place in Jerusalem so as to harmonize the *Acts* with the Pseudo-Clementine *Recognitiones*.

[20] See Moraldi (1971: 965), with bibliography.

[21] The Syriac prose *History of Simon Cephas, the Chief of the Apostles* was published by Bedjan (1890: vol. I, 1-33) from a Koj-Kirkuk manuscript of unknown date and has recently been translated into English by Jones (2016). There might be other copies (and versions) of the text, but the manuscripts mentioned in the literature are currently unavailable (Jones 2016: 372, n. 4). Guidi (1892) checked the edition on a copy of the manuscript used by Bedjan and recognized the noncanonical sources of the narrative: the contents of pp. 8-12 of Bedjan's edition come from the Pseudo-Clementine *Recognitions*, pp. 12-14 is the text of the Syriac *Teaching of Peter in Rome*, known from a half dozen 6th- to early 20th-entury manuscripts, while pp. 19-29 contain a Syriac version of the *Acts of Peter*, including the episode of Simon's flight and fall and Peter's martyrdom — it is not clear to me on which basis Thomas (2003: 72) maintains that the oriental translations, including the Syriac text, would con-

In his abridged poetic version of the story, the late hymnographer seems to put on stage Simon's preaching and defeat as one episode, which took place in a theater (v. 2). In the *History of Simon Cephas* and its sources, the action develops over several days, in a series of scenes in which Simon preaches or challenges Peter's powers in a theater. In these meetings, Peter shows his superiority in reviving the dead (see the three resurrections listed in v. 2 of the hymn).

In the *History*, the last contest follows a so far unknown version of the *Acts of Peter*. Simon addresses the Romans with a short speech, in which he describes himself as Christ, the true Messiah, and rebukes them for their error and hostility (see vv. 3, 4 and 7). When Peter asks him to desist from sorcery and wickedness, he insults him as the disciple of a sorcerer who was not even able to save himself from the cross. Possibly reading another version of the *History*, the hymnographer amplifies the parallelism with Christ proposed by Simon: while in the *History* Simon presents himself as the son of a certain Rachel, in the hymn he claims to have descended from heaven and dwelt in the Virgin, from whom he got a visible body, and to be prepared to ascend back to his Father in heaven. In the hymn Simon's last flight on high thus gets decidedly East-Syriac Christological connotations.

Moreover, the author of the hymn inserts in Simon's speech segments drawn from preceding scenes of preaching. Simon boasts of his magic powers and some of them — such as "I cleave a mountain like soft clay… I make grow trees where there is no irrigation" (v. 5) — come from preceding sections of the *History*, based on the Pseudo-Clementine *Recognitions*. The rather obscure "I make pregnant women give birth to old men" (v. 6) can be compared with "I will give a beard to a baby" in the *History* (transl. by Jones 2016: 380) .

In the *History*, the last duel happens generically in the city center and not in a theater, as suggested by the hymn,[22] whereas the *Actus Vercellenses* (above, n. 8) specify that the public contest took place in the *Via Sacra*. As an effect of the summarization process, unity of time and space gives dramatic force to the story as told in the hymn, as if in a very short tragedy conforming to the

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tain only the martyrdom account. Guidi stressed the importance of the discovery a Syriac version of (part of) the *Acts of Peter* and recognized Middle Arabic versions of the same Syriac narratives in the Garshuni manuscript Vat. Syr. 199.

An up-dated bibliography and list of manuscripts and editions of the various sources of the *History* can be found in Jones (2016: 372). Jones observes there (n. 8) that "The existence of a Syriac [longer or complete version of the?] *Acts. Pet.* [*Acts of Peter*] has sometimes been doubted, but *Hist. Sim. Ceph.* [the *History of Simon Cephas*]'s manner of excerpting earlier texts renders such a lost Syriac version of *Acts. Pet.* highly likely."

[22] The East-Syriac hymn thus comes to share the venue of the last contrast in a theater with Greek versions of the *Apostolic Constitutions* (Côté 1998: 194), a late 4th-century collection of eight books, the first six of which are a free re-wording of the *Didascalia Apostolorum* (Côté 1998: 191, n. 88, with bibliography). On the *Didascalia apostolorum* and the *Apostolic Constitutions* in Syriac literature, see Kaufhold (2005).

Aristotelian canon. Like a device of stage machinery, a chariot of fire suddenly seizes Simon Magus and allows him to fly. In order to re-affirm the superiority of his power, which comes from God, Peter orders the devils who hold Simon in the air to leave him and let him fall.

The detail of Simon's leg (τὸ σκέλος) broken in three places comes from the *Acts of Peter*, is reinterpreted as three different fractures in the *History of Simon Cephas* ("His bones were broken in three places: his neck, his back and his wrists"; transl. by Jones 2016: 391) and is baroquely amplified in the hymn, where all the bones of the poor demon-assisted Icarus are broken in three parts (v. 9). The *Didascalia apostolorum* only says that Simon fell down and broke the heel of his foot (Moraldi 1971: 964-5; Côté 1998: 188). According to at least certain versions of the *Acts of Peter and Paul* (Pseudo-Marcellus), when Simon fell down in the *Via Sacra*, his body was split in four parts, but this caused four pave-stones to unify in one (Moraldi 1971: 1055): traces of the impact on the four stones were still to be seen in 1928 in the church of Santa Francesca Romana next to the Roman Forum (Côté 1998: 212, n. 175).[23]

In line with the cultural climate of Syriac literature in the Mongol and Ottoman periods, the author of the hymn on *Simon Magus and Simon Peter* translated into verses, in an abridged and varied form, the narrative of an old, very popular narrative on Peter that was known to him thanks to a Syriac or an Arabic version of the *History of Simon Cephas*, in its turn composed from various venerable early Christian sources, such as the *Acts of Peter* and the Pseudo-Clementine *Recognitions*. The very idea of re-telling traditional stories in poetry is typical of the late period: according to the model of Persian culture, poetry is the almost exclusive medium to elaborate, systematize, transmit and spread shared and encyclopedic knowledge.[24]

What remains of the *Acts of Peter* in Syriac deserves scholarly attention as a literary text, both in its external relationship with versions in other languages — Greek and Latin (see Jones 2016: 372-3, n. 8) — but also Slavonic, Armenian, Arabic and Ethiopic) and within the history of Syriac literature and culture.[25] Together with the dialogue poem of *Peter and the Emperor Nero*, the East-Syriac hymn on

[23] This kind of kaleidoscopic and dizzying variation of details is typical of the literary transmission of text networks, in which narratives seem to be endowed with a generative, autopoietic force (see, e.g., in the *Alexander Romance*: Mengozzi 2017).

[24] See Pritula (2015: 117-37) on the poetic rendering of "apocryphal" and classical sources in the Wardā collection of hymns (13th century, with later additions).

[25] The Syriac *History of Simon Cephas* is anything but "a mechanical compilation" of sources — see Thomas (2003: 40) on the Pseudo-Abdias and possibly on the Syriac text (Thomas 2003: 136, n.1) — and deserves to be studied as the product of a literary process in balance between tradition and ideological agendas of authors/redactors and readers, precisely as Thomas

*Simon Magus and Simon Peter* bears witness to the fortune of the *Acts of Peter* and interrelated texts — Peter's text network — until a very late period and possibly reflects a Syriac or Arabic version of the story that is slightly different from the Syriac text that we can read.

These poems are transmitted among others on Peter and Rome in East-Syriac hymnaries of the Ottoman period, when progressively intensified contacts with Rome and Latin missionaries led East Syriac clergymen to seek or oppose union with the Catholic Church. The hymns may have served as pro-Catholic propoganda — with an ideological agenda similar to that of Lippi's and Gozzoli's paintings in Renaissance Florence — or to demonstrate that the indigenous East-Syriac tradition involved independent sources on Peter as chief of the apostles and martyr in Rome.

## 3. The text(s)

The Classical Syriac hymn *On Simon Magus and Simon Peter* is here published, in the right column below, on the basis of the collation of four manuscript witnesses:[26]

A = Chaldean Diocese of Alqosh 13 (DCA 13 in HMML data-base),[27] 15r-16r (Alqosh 1679)

B = Vatican Borg. Syr. 33, f. 210v-211v (15th cent. according to Scher 1909, 258).

V = Vatican Syr. 188, f. 20v-22v (sine data, perhaps 18th century)

C = Cambridge Add. 2820, f. 27-29, copied by Yawsep ʿAzarya, probably in Telkepe 1882

A is used as the base text and variants of the other manuscripts are recorded in the apparatus. Most of them are orthographic variants. In a couple of cases, however, I have preferred the orthography or readings of all the other manuscripts and put the forms of A in the apparatus. Witnesses and true variant readings are too few to establish a stemma. The inversion of lines by B and V and their use of the accusative marker *l-* in *eḥzē l-ḵon* (v. 7) show that the two manuscripts of the Vatican Library derive from the same sub-archetype, at least as far as this poem is concerned.

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does, and brilliantly, for the Greek and Latin *Acts of Peter*. In the account of the public contest of Simon and Peter in Rome, for instance, the dialogic section has in the Syriac *History* an elaborated rhetorical form — also reflected in the late East-Syriac hymn — that is not present in the *Actus Vercellenses* and recalls the well-known contiguity with the school of rhetoric of the Greek novelistic tradition — the *Alexander Romance* and the late antique erotic novels — that Thomas intriguingly chose as a comparandum for the literary structure and fluidity of the *Acts of Peter*.

[26] Probably depending on the rubrics, Saint Laurent et al. (2015) entitle the text *Peter and Paul*, according to its liturgical use rather than its content, and list a couple of other manuscripts that are unavailable to me, with bibliography.

[27] A digital copy of the manuscript can be seen in the virtual Reading Room of the Hill Museum & Manuscript Library (Collegeville, Minnesota).

The orthographic variation is typical of late East-Syriac manuscripts. Short *e* vs. long *ē* are marked in a rather irrational way, often precisely the opposite to what we expect from the morpho-phonology of the classical language: see, e.g., *zlāmā qashyā* (ē) in the second syllable of the active participles in v. 6 '*āḇēḏ*, *yāhēḇ*, *pāshēṭ*, but *masle* (first line of v. 7) with *zlāmā pshīqā* in the final syllable of a third-weak root. This vocalization of the active participle is almost an orthographic convention in late East-Syriac manuscripts, that deserves further attention and more systematic study and possibly reflects the evolution of the pronunciation of Classical Syriac in Sureth-speaking milieu. In the modern language vowel length has lost phonemic value and short and long vowels are usually in complementary distribution and occur respectively in closed and open syllables.

The scribe of A is not consistent in writing the *mḇaṭṭlānā* on the initial *ālaf* of the 1st singular pronoun, when this is in the enclitic form. V does not have the dot at the end of the three first hemistiches of each verse, is less vocalized, does not mark *quššāyā* and *rukkāḵā* regularly and has other orthographic peculiarities (see in the apparatus).

The number of syllables in each verse and the corresponding rhyme pattern are rather regular and can be represented as follows:

| 1st hemistich | 2nd hemistich | rhymes | |
|---|---|---|---|
| 7 syll. | 4 syll. | A | B |
| 7 syll. | 4s yll. | A | B |
| 7 syll. | 4 syll. | A | B |
| 5 syll. | 5 syll. | *-on* | *-on*[28] |
| 7 syll. | 5 syll. | A | B |

The scribe of A marks with four dots (⁘), which usually indicate the end of a verse or a paragraph in late East-Syriac manuscripts, the end of the third and fifth (last) lines of each verse and with a single dot all other hemistichs and verse lines. The other manuscripts, and especially the manuscript of the Sureth translation, are far less consistent in using punctuation to divide the texts in hemistichs, lines and verses. The scribe of the Sureth text places two or more groups of four dots to mark the end of a verse.

The Sureth translation (left column below) preserves the same complicated structure of the verses. The syllabic structure and the rhyme pattern sometimes led the author to minor adjustments

[28] The rhymes of the fourth line are actually *-hon* 'their/them' throughout the poem, with the exception of *-ḵon* and *-kon* 'your/you' in v. 7 and –'*on* (part of the name of Simon Peter) in the second hemistich of v. 10.

in the translation. Otherwise, the translation is quite literal, with the exception of the two last verses, where the translator would seem to read (or remember) a text that is slightly different from the Syriac Vorlage that we know. When Sachau (1899: 441) describes the content of the manuscript, he fails to notice the regularity of the rhyming hemistichs in the translation and remarks that the irregular rhyme pattern partly recalls a kind of *mawwāl*, the Arabic improvised vocal genre characterized by virtuosic melismatic embellishments.

In verse 1, A has two strokes, similar to Arabic *fatḥatan*, in red ink on the last word of the first three hemistichs and on each end word of the four hemistichs of the second part of the verse. B and V have the same strokes only on the endings *-on*, throughout the text. C has the strokes only occasionally in the second part of the text, on words ending in *-on* and, curiously, on the ending of *knišā'iṯ* in the first hemistich of v. 10. These strokes probably mark the syllables on which the performer(s) may freely prolong the vowels and sing them with embellishments (Mengozzi-Ricossa 2013a, 174). However, it is possible that not all scribes understood or interpreted their function in the same way.

The Sureth text is preserved in a miscellaneous multilingual manuscript of the Berlin Sachau collection (Berlin 134, Sachau 336),[29] written in 1883 by the copyist Fransi (Francis) Mērī of Telkepe, a major Chaldean center near Mosul. The same copyist wrote a number of other Sureth manuscripts of the Sachau collection, which bears witness to the interest of the German scholar for the languages spoken in the region. Berlin 134 is a good example in this connection. It contains:

1. a Kurdish Garshuni erotic poem;[30]
2. Sureth erotic triplets;[31]
3. the famous Sureth poem by David the Blind on the Virgin Mary (*b-shemmā d-bābā w-bronā*), that is a kind of national anthem for the Chaldeans of the plain of Mosul (Mengozzi 2011: xv);
4. the Story of Aḥiqar[32] and
5. Aesopic fables in Classical Syriac;
6. Sureth poems:

[29] See Sachau (1899: 437-42). A digital copy of the manuscript is available in the website of the Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin – Preußischer Kulturbesitz (Germany): Sammlung von Gedichten, Hochzeitsliedern und Geschichten 1883.

[30] On Kurmanji Kurdish in Syriac script, see Dehqan (2016a and 2016b).

[31] Pennacchietti (1976) is still the most precise description of this genre and its *Sitz im Leben*. See Mengozzi (2012: 327-9) for up-dated bibliography.

[32] On versions and fortune of *Aḥiqar*, see Contini-Grottanelli (2005). An up-dated bibliography on the various Neo-Aramaic versions can be found in Mengozzi (forthcoming a).

6.a The *Dispute of the Months*,

6.b The *Dispute of Gold and Wheat*,

6.c *The Girl Māmo Loved by a Bishop in Azerbaidjan*,

6.d *The Dispute of Cup, Jar and Wineskin*, preceded by a short Classical Syriac dialogue poem of a new friend who asks to be admitted in a company of drinkers,[33]

6.e *Satan and the Sinful Woman* (Mengozzi 2008),

6.f *Simon Magus and Simon Peter*,

6.g *The Cherub and the Thief*,[34]

6.h *Our Lord and Mary (Magdalene?)*;

7. the prose story of a *Duenna (kahrāmānā) and a Young Prince*.

Eduard Sachau (1845-1930) intended to collect texts in various languages — Kurdish, Sureth and Classical Syriac in this manuscript, but he also asked local scribes to collect texts in Ṣurayt/Ṭuroyo and various Arabic dialects — in verses as well as in prose. Neo-Aramaic prose texts are usually translations of Syriac and, more frequently, Arabic works, with a marked preference for narratives that had been or were being included as additional nights in the fluid corpus of the *Arabian Nights* (see nos. 4 and 7 in Berlin 134).[35] The Neo-Aramaic poems collected by Sachau belong to traditional genres of Sureth literature (Mengozzi 2012): oral-oriented written compositions such as the long religious poems (no. 3) and improvised oral compositions such as the erotic triplets (no. 4).

What is specific of the manuscript Berlin 134 is that Sachau or the scribe Fransi Mērī, possibly following instructions of the German scholar, decided to include Sureth translations of Classical Syriac poems, most of which are dispute or dialogue poems and have been transmitted in liturgical collections of *sughiyāthā* or in collections of *sughiyāthā* associated with the name of the East-Syriac poet Khamis bar Qardaḥe (late 13th century).[36] The Classical Syriac originals of the poems 6.a to 6.d normally feature in manuscripts — like Borgia Syr. 33 (B) and Vat. Syr 188 (V) — that include the second part of the *Book of Khamis* (*sughiyāthā* for various feasts of the liturgical year, poems on wine, love and other subjects), whereas 6.e to 6.h may derive from liturgical manuscripts, like Chaldean

[33] 6a, 6b and 6d were published by Lidzbarski (1896), with German translation.

[34] The text was published by Sachau (1896) and re-published as A version by Pennacchietti (1993), together with two other Sureth versions. On fortune and *Sitz im Leben* of this text see Mengozzi and Ricossa (2013b).

[35] See Mengozzi and Bellino (2016) and Mengozzi (forthcoming a) on Sachau's preferences and criteria in collecting Neo-Aramaic texts.

[36] On the complicated transmission of the *Book of Khamis*, see Mengozzi (2015).

Diocese of Alqosh 13 (A). Cambridge Add. 2820 (C) is somewhat in between these two types of manuscript, in that it is a nicely handwritten and decorated collection of *sughiyāthā* of the East-Syriac liturgy and contains texts that were probably copied from the second part of a *Book of Khamis*.

Brock (1985: 182 and 200, n. 37) noticed the strange relationship between the multilingual collection Berlin 134, written by Fransi Mēri of Telkepe in 1883 and C, copied one year before by Joseph 'Azarya[37] near Telkepe: the Sureth version of the *Dispute of the Months* corresponds rather faithfully to the Classical Syriac text as preserved in C, whereas the Sureth version of the *Dispute of Gold and Wheat* derives from a Classical Syriac *Vorlage* quite different from the text as preserved in C.[38] Fransi may have used various Classical Syriac and/or Sureth manuscripts and we cannot exclude that he actually translated (some of the) poems from Classical Syriac to Sureth. He was a versatile and creative scribe and a Sureth poet himself. He added, for instance, a colophon-like verse with signature to the hymn *On Shmuni and her Seven Sons* by Israel of Alqosh (early 17th century), in the collection of poems that he copied for Sachau in 1882 (Berlin Syr. 123, Sachau 223): "My name is Fransi. I wrote this by myself. May Shmuni be my mother!" (Mengozzi 2002: 69-70).

Sachau may have asked him to collect or translate dialogue poems into Sureth on the basis of his literary taste: European scholars of the 19th appreciated *sughiyāthā*, dispute and dialogue poems for their living and "modern" character.[39] Moreover, dispute and dialogue poems were the Syriac texts closest to drama, which traditionally offers the scholars interesting written materials for the study of spoken languages, and thus the record of actual conversation, albeit stylized by rather rigid formal constraints.

The hymn on *Simon Magus and Simon Peter* has only some features of the Mesopotamian dispute,[40] as attested in Syriac literature (Mengozzi and Ricossa 2013b): it is a poem and has a short narrative prologue; two characters speak in front of a judging audience (the Romans) and at the end one of them wins thanks to divine intervention. The two characters do not really dispute with each other

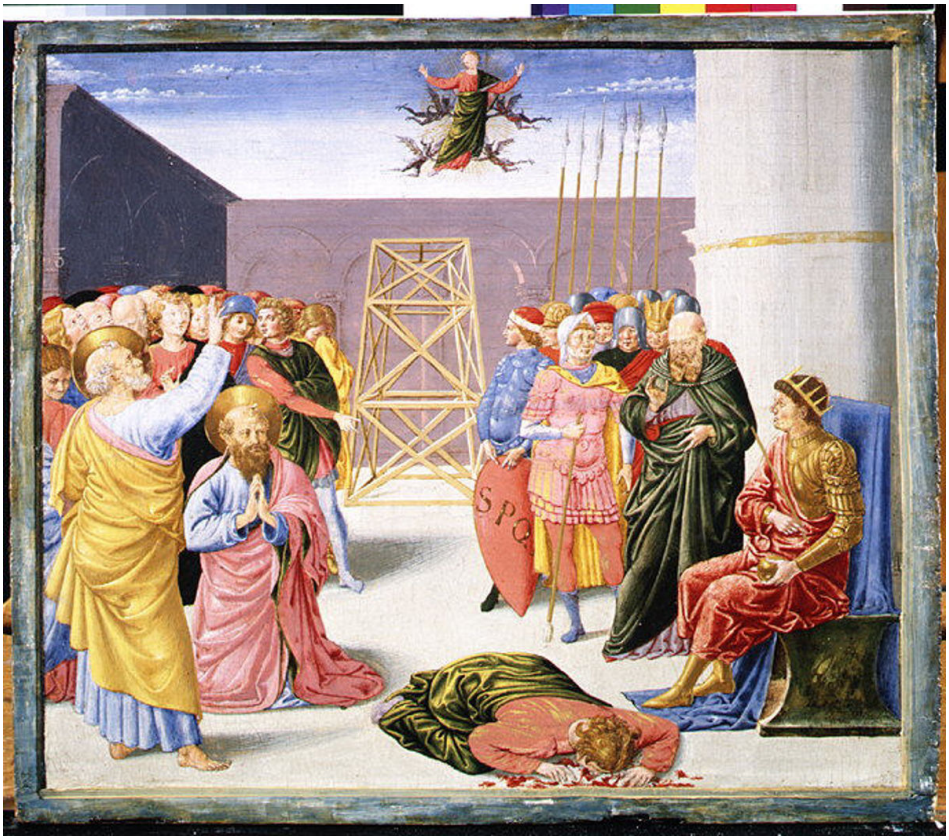
[37] See Mengozzi (2011: xx) on Joseph 'Azarya as a scribe and an author.

[38] The *Dispute of the Months* is certainly not an original work by Khamis, since it is known from a much earlier West-Syriac liturgical manuscript (British Library Add. 17141, 8th-9th century) and Anton of Tagrit (9th century) quotes the first part in his *Rhetoric* as an example of prosopopoeia (Brock 1985: 181-3). It is reasonable to assume that also the *Dispute of Gold and Wheat* had circulated earlier than in the 13th century.

[39] See Martin (1899: 449) and Feldmann (1896: 4) on the *sughiyāthā* attributed to Narsai.

[40] See Jiménez (2017) on the Mesopotamian dispute and its incredible diffusion in literary traditions that have been directly or indirectly in contact with the ancient Mesopotamian civilization. The format of the Mesopotamian dispute is characterized by the following features: 1. poetic form, 2. tripartite structure (introduction, disputation proper, and conclusion), 3. few or no narrative portions, 4. usually inanimate disputants, 5. supremacy or precedence as main matter of debate.

and only one of them sings his own praises to discredit his opponent, as usual in the disputes. In this hymn Simon Magus actually addresses his attack against the audience rather than against his opponent Peter. Nevertheless, as we have seen, the Classical Syriac *Vorlage* has been transmitted in East-Syriac manuscript collections of *sughiyāthā* that contain many other dispute and dialogue poems destined to liturgical use, and the Sureth version has been included in a selection of dispute and dialogue poems translated from Classical Syriac (no. 6 in Berlin 134).[41]



Benozzo Gozzoli, Saint Peter and Simon Magus

(www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/436563; Public domain)

[41] See Mengozzi (forthcoming c) on Sureth dispute and dialogue poems.

| | |
|---|---|
| ܕܕܒܚܬܐ ܕܦܟܕܐ ܗܘܠܟܐ ܚܒܫܐ ܒܥܡܐ:[a] | ܕܕܝܐ ܚܕܐ ܕܥܡܟܐ ܚܕܐ ܗܒܥܟܐ. |
| 1 ܟܕ ܒܟ ܥܡܟܐ ܒܙܒܬܐ. ܠܟܗ ܕܣܐܦܫܬܐ.[b] | ܚܒ ܢܙܕܐ ܥܡܟܐ ܒܕܒܬܐ. ܝܠܐ ܕܣܐܦܫܬܐ. |
| ܝܥܟܗ ܠܗܒܥܟܐ ܒܙܕܬܐ. ܕܒܙܐ ܗܒܗܠܬܐ. | ܟܠܐ ܒܟܐ ܟܒܥܬܬܐ. ܚܗܟܟܣܗ ܩܒܬܐ. |
| ܟܕ ܒܟܐ ܟܒܥܬܬܐ. ܚܗܟܟܣܗ ܩܒܬܐ. | ܚܒ ܒܟܐ ܒܕܒܕܬܐ. ܚܗܠܩܐ ܗܥܬܐ. |
| ܗܟܒ ܒܗܒܟ ܒܟ ܠܥܟ. ܠܕܣܐܦܐ ܚܠܥܟ. | ܐܟܠ ܒܗܒܐ ܒܟ ܠܥܟ. ܠܕܣܐܦܐ ܚܠܥܟ. |
| ܟܕ ܒܟ ܒܗܒܟ ܟܢܕܬܐ. ܚܗܟܟܣܗ ܩܒܬܐ.[c] ܚܙܗ[d] ܢܕܐ ܕܝܟܬܐ. | ܟܕ ܢܙܕ ܒܟ ܠܥܟ ܟܢܕܬܐ. ܚܙܗ ܢܕܐ ܕܝܟܬܐ. |
| 2 ܟܒܥܗ ܟܠܗ[e] ܗܙܥܟܐ ܟܗܢܟܕܐ.[f] ܚܒܝ ܒܟ ܬܕܩܬܐ. | ܟܗܟܟ ܚܟܥܒ ܟܗܢܟܕܐ. ܚܕܐ ܒܟ ܬܕܩܬܐ. |
| ܗ ܥܬܒܐ ܗܙܐ ܢܣܒ ܥܡܟܐ. ܒܙܕ ܙܟܟ ܐ. | ܚܙܗ ܥܬܒܐ ܗܙܐ ܢܣܒ ܥܡܟܐ. ܒܙܕ ܙܟܟ ܐ. |
| ܒܟܗ ܕܣܐܦܐ ܒܟ ܗܒܥܟܐ. ܚܕܐܟܒܐ ܒܚܝܥܟܐ. | ܒܟܗ ܕܣܐܦܐ ܒܟ ܗܒܥܟܐ. ܚܕܐܟܒܐ ܒܚܝܥܟܐ. |
| ܟܕ ܒܟ ܟܢܕܬܐ. ܚܗܟܟܣܗ ܩܒܬܐ. ܚܙܗ ܢܕܐ ܕܝܟܬܐ. | ܟܕ ܒܟ ܟܢܕܬܐ. ܚܗܟܟܣܗ ܩܒܬܐ. ܚܙܗ ܢܕܐ ܕܝܟܬܐ. |
| 3 ܒܟܒܐ ܗܒܥܟܐ ܒܙܕܬܐ. ܗܒܟܝܟ ܚܒܥܒܗܐ. | ܟܟܒ ܒܗܒܥܟܐ ܒܙܕܬܐ. ܗܒܟܝܟ ܚܒܥܒܗܐ. |
| ܟܝܢܐ ܒܙ ܢܟܬܐ ܢܕܐ. ܗܟܗ ܙܕ ܢܕܥܒܗܐ. | ܟܝܢܐ ܒܙ ܢܟܬܐ ܢܕܐ. ܗܟܗ ܙܕ ܢܕܥܒܗܐ. |
| ܗܒܟ ܟܦܒܗ ܗܥܗܟܬܥܐ. ܚܙܕܟܐ ܟܒܗܒܬܐ. | ܗܒܟ ܟܦܒܗ ܗܥܗܟܬܥܐ. ܚܙܕܟܐ ܟܒܗܒܬܐ. |
| ܐܗ ܥܝܟܒ ܢܕܐ ܠܥܟ. ܙܟ ܒܟܗܝ ܢܕܐ.[g] ܠܥܟ. | ܐܗ ܥܝܟܒ ܢܕܐ ܠܥܟ. ܙܟ ܒܟܗܝ ܢܕܐ. ܠܥܟ. |
| ܗܝܕܐ ܠܙܒ ܢܙܒ ܟܟܒ ܢܕܐ. ܠܙܗܟܐ ܕܦܟܗܬܐ. | ܗܝܕܐ ܠܙܒ ܢܙܒ ܟܟܒ ܢܕܐ. ܠܙܗܟܐ ܕܦܟܗܬܐ. |
| ܟܠܝܝܕ ܥܒ ܝܕܢܗܝܡ ܠܙܗܟܐ ܕܦܟܗܬܐ. | ܟܠܝܝܕ ܥܒ ܝܕܢܗܝܡ ܠܙܗܟܐ ܕܦܟܗܬܐ. |
| 4 ܢܕܐ ܒܫܟܐ ܒܟ ܥܒܬܐ. ܒܦܫܟܐ ܥܒܥܟܗܐ. | ܢܕܐ ܒܫܟܐ ܒܟ ܥܒܬܐ. ܒܦܫܟܐ ܥܒܥܟܗܐ. |
| ܗܒܥܒܗܐ ܥܦܒܟܐ ܟܒܬܐ. ܗܟܝ ܗܟܒܙܐ ܕܥܬܐ. | ܗܒܥܒܗܐ ܥܦܒܟܐ ܟܒܬܐ. ܗܟܝ ܗܟܒܙܐ ܕܥܬܐ. |
| ܗܝܟܒ ܠܟܐ ܙܗܠܙܬܥܐ. ܒܦܟܬܐ ܒܟܒܗܐ.[h] | ܗܝܟܒ ܠܟܐ ܙܗܠܙܬܥܐ. ܒܦܟܬܐ ܒܟܒܗܐ.[h] |
| ܒܝ ܒܦܟܒܐ ܢܕܐ ܠܥܟ. ܒܟ ܬܥܠܟܒܗܐ. | ܒܝ ܒܦܟܒܐ ܢܕܐ ܠܥܟ. ܒܟ ܬܥܠܟܒܗܐ. |
| ܗܙܗ ܫܙܬܒ[i] ܒܦܟܬܐ . ܗܒܟܟ ܬܥܟܒܗܐ[l] | ܗܙܗ ܫܙܬܒ[i] ܒܦܟܬܐ . ܗܒܟܟ ܬܥܟܒܗܐ[l] |
| 5 ܢܕܐ ܠܟܒܗܐ ܬܙܕ ܢܕܐ. ܝܒ ܟܒܬܐ ܒܦܬܐ. | ܢܕܐ ܠܟܒܗܐ ܬܙܕ ܢܕܐ. ܝܒ ܟܒܬܐ ܒܦܬܐ. |
| ܗܟܝܐ ܢܕܐ ܙܕ ܙܒ ܗܒܬܐ. ܒܟܝܐ ܟܟܗ ܒܬܐ. | ܗܟܝܐ ܢܕܐ ܙܕ ܙܒ ܗܒܬܐ. ܒܟܝܐ ܟܟܗ ܒܬܐ. |
| ܢܟ ܢܬܟܝܐ[m] ܗܒܝܐ ܢܕܐ. ܙܟܬܐ ܒܟܗ ܝܗܬܐ. | ܢܟ ܢܬܟܝܐ[m] ܗܒܝܐ ܢܕܐ. ܙܟܬܐ ܒܟܗ ܝܗܬܐ. |
| ܒܦܝܝܒ ܒܝܒܦܝܒ. ܟܟܒ ܢܟܒܟܝܒ. | ܒܦܝܝܒ ܒܝܒܦܝܒ. ܟܟܒ ܢܟܒܟܝܒ. |
| ܒܟܗܬܐ ܗܬܒܐ ܗܒܬܟ ܟܒܟܬܐ. ܟܒܗܬܐ ܒܟܟ ܐ. | ܒܟܗܬܐ ܗܬܒܐ ܗܒܬܟ ܟܒܟܬܐ. ܟܒܗܬܐ ܒܟܟ ܐ. |
| 6 ܢܕܐ ܠܝܝܬܐ ܒܬܟܬܗ. ܗܬܐ ܗܗܝܒ ܢܕܐ. | ܢܕܐ ܠܝܝܬܐ ܒܬܟܬܗ. ܗܬܐ ܗܗܝܒ ܢܕܐ. |
| ܒܟܝܝܬܕ ܒܬܬܟܗ. ܟܟܝܐ ܢܟܝܒ ܢܕܐ. | ܒܟܝܝܬܕ ܒܬܬܟܗ. ܟܟܝܐ ܢܟܝܒ ܢܕܐ. |

[a] B: ܗܘܠܟܐ ܦܟܕܐ ܗܘܠܟܐ ❖ ܬܒܥܐ ‘Another (*sughithā*). Of Peter and Paul’. The rubric in V 20r is not entirely readable, but it is probably the same as in B: [ܗܘܠܟܐ] ܗ ܦܟܕܐ ❖ ܬܒܥܐ.

[b] V: ܕܣܐܦܫܬܐ. [c] V: ܟܢܕܬܐ. [d] B: ܚܙܗ.

[e] C (and the Vorlage of NA?): ܟܠܗ ܟܒܥܗ. [f] V: ܟܒܗ ܒܟ ܗܙܥܟܐ ܟܗܢܟܕܐ. [g] V: ܒܟܗܝ.

[h] A: ܒܟܒܗܐ. [i] V: ܫܙܬܒ. [l] V: ܬܥܟܒܗܐ. [m] B and V: ܟܢܬܟܝܐ.

ܘܠܨܒܝܢܐ ܕܠܝܬ ܠܗܘܢ ܣܘܟܐ. ܒܡܘܕܐ ܢܗܘܪܐ[a]❖
ܘܠܕܒܝܠܐ ܠܝܬ ܠܗܘܢ. ܘܢܬܒܥܐ ܠܐ ܦܓܥܗ[b] ܠܗܘܢ.
ܢܗܘܪ ܐܢܐ ܠܗܘܢ ܒܟܠܝܘܡ. ܘܢܬܒܥܐ ܦܓܥ ܐܢܐ❖

ܘܠܡܫܩܝܐ ܕܠܝܬ ܒܘܬܐ. ܒܗܘܕܐ ܒܡܫܟܢܐ.
ܘܐܢܫ ܕܠܝܬ ܐܟܠܬܐ. ܘܗܘܐ ܠܐ ܢܣܒܬܐ.
ܒܢܘܪ ܥܠܝܡܐ ܕܡܕܢܚܐ. ܘܢܬܒܥܐ ܒܡܫܡܫܢܐ❖ ❖

7 ܟܠ ܕܐܢܬܘܢ ܐܣܠܝܬܘܢܢܝ. ܐܦ ܡܣܠܝܐ ܐܢܐ ܠܟܘܢ.
ܕܒܣܝܬܘܢܢܝ ܘܫܛܝܬܘܢܢܝ. ܗܐ ܫܐܛ ܐܢܐ ܠܟܘܢ.
ܕܐܒܙܚܬܘܢܢܝ[c] ܘܡܒܙܚܬܘܢܢܝ. ܗܐ ܒܙܚ ܐܢܐ ܠܟܘܢ❖[d]
ܘܗܐ ܡܕܝܢ ܐܢܐ ܠܟܘܢ. ܐܝܟ ܡܘܡܐ ܕܥܒܕܝܟܘܢ.
ܘܢܥܒܕܘܢܟܘܢ ܕܥܒܕܬܘܢܢܝ. ܘܐܠܐ ܗܘܐ ܢܣܘܒܟܘܢ[e]❖

ܟܕ ܕܢܚܘܢ ܒܡܫܠܡܢܘܬܝ. ܗܘ ܐܢܐ ܕܡܫܠܡܢܘܬܟܘܢ.
ܘܐܝܟܢܐ ܒܡܫܝܚܘܬܝ. ܗܘ ܐܢܐ ܒܡܫܝܚܘܬܟܘܢ.
ܒܡܢܝܢܘܬܟܘܢ ܘܒܡܚܙܝܢܘܬܝ. ܗܘ ܐܢܐ ܒܡܢܝܢܘܬܟܘܢ.
ܘܐܢ ܡܫܝܚܘܬܟܘܢ ܕܡܫܝܚܘܬܝ. ܕܐܢܬܘܢ ܒܟܘܢ.
ܘܗܘܐ ܒܡܫܝܚܘܬܟܘܢ. ܘܐܟܝܢ ܒܪܘܚܘܬܝ❖ ❖

8 ܡܢܥܠܡ[f] ܝܘܡܝ ܡܕܒܪܢܘܬܐ. ܒܗ ܒܗܘ ܝܕܥܐ.
ܟܕ ܡܢܘܪܐ ܒܟܠܝܘܡܢܐ. ܘܡܢܘܪ ܟܣܝܢܐ.
ܣܓܝܐܐ ܠܗܘܢ ܒܗܝ ܥܕܬܐ. ܘܫܠܝܡ ܒܟܢܝܢܐ❖
ܐܢܝܢܘ ܡܟܠܗܘܢ. ܕܗܘܦܟܐ ܒܠܗܘܢ.
ܦܣܠܢ ܕܐܬܦܬܚܢ ܗܟܢ. ܕܐܠܗܐ ܗܘ ܗܢܐ❖

ܡܬܦܠܓܐ ܕܝܘܠܦܐ ܡܕܒܪܢܘܬܐ. ܗܘ ܒܗ ܝܕܥܐ.
ܠܟܢܫܐ ܢܘܗܪܐ ܡܢܗܪܢܝܬܐ. ܘܡܬܘܢܐ ܘܢܗܪܐ.
ܒܦܘܠܓܐ ܠܗܘܢ ܒܗܝ ܥܕܬܐ. ܘܫܡܠܝܐ ܒܢܝܢܐ.
ܡܬܚܫܒܐ ܒܡܬܠܝܬܐ. ܕܗܘܦܟܐ ܒܘܠܒܝܢ.
ܦܐ ܕܢܗܝܠܐ ܐܒܕܢܐ. ܕܢܕܒ ܐܠܗܝ ܣܠܝܐ❖ ❖

9 ܘܥܒܕ ܢܝܫܐ ܘܐܡܪ ܠܗܘܢ. ܠܝܕܥܐ ܟܠܗ ܒܥܠܡܐ.
ܕܡܠܟܘܬܐ ܚܕܐ ܐܚܪܢܝܬܐ. ܡܬܚܙܝܐ ܠܟܠ ܚܙܝܐ.
ܕܢܦܠ[g] ܘܢܬܒܕܪܘܢ ܒܠܗܘܢ. ܐܬܪܘܬܗܘܢ[h] ܒܝܘܡ ܢܘܗܪܐ[i]❖
ܘܡܬܒܢܝܢ ܘܥܒܕܘ ܠܗܘܢ. ܢܦܠ ܡܢ ܒܢܝܢܗܘܢ.
ܘܢܬܒܕܪܘܢ ܐܬܪܘܬܗܘܢ ܒܠܗܘܢ. ܐܠܗ ܐܠܗ ܡܢܩܘܬܐ❖

ܡܬܦܘܪܩܝܢ ܝܬܝܪܐ ܘܐܡܪܐ. ܗܐ ܦܠܓܝܐ ܒܗܝ ܥܕܬܐ.
ܘܡܬܩܒܠܝܢ ܘܒܗܘܢ ܦܠܓܐ. ܥܡܘܡܐ ܠܐ ܐܬܕܘܢ ܒܚܝܒܬܐ.
ܘܗܐ ܐܟܕܒ ܒܘܠܝܘܢ ܐܬܪܘܗ. ܘܦܠܓܗ ܒܚܕܒܬܐ.
ܘܗܘ ܒܗܝ ܝܕܥܐ ܢܦܠܐ. ܡܢ ܟܢܫܝܘܢ.
ܘܦܠܓܗ ܒܘܠܗ ܡܦܘܠܓܠܐ. ܘܥܠܐ ܐܠܗ ܡܢܩܘܬܐ❖ ❖

10 ܡܟܐ ܕܗܘܦܟܐ ܒܡܕܢܚܐ. ܒܣܘܦܐ ܘܒܝܫܘܬܐ.
ܠܒܝܬ ܗܝܡܢܘܬܐ ܐܡܕܢܚܝܐ. ܒܟܠܗܘܢ ܙܒܢܐ[l].
ܒܪܝܟ ܝܬܝܪܐ ܕܡܕܢܚܐ. ܠܥܒܕܗ ܗܝܡܢܘܬܐ❖
ܘܣܝܡܐ ܐܝܩܪܗܘܢ. ܢܦܫ ܠܥܒܕܗ ܕܝܬܝܪܐ.
ܘܟܠ ܕܐܝܟ ܕܩܘܕܫܐ ܢܗܘܐ. ܘܥܠܝܡ ܒܚܝܘܬܐ❖

ܡܬܚܫܚܐ ܕܗܘܦܟܐ ܒܘܠܝܘܢ. ܒܗܝ ܫܡܫܘܬܐ.
ܠܒܗܝܠܐ ܗܝܡܢܘ ܕܝܢܝܢ. ܘܡܫܡܫܢܐ ܕܢܡܘܣܐ.
ܘܗܘܒܕܝܡܬ ܫܡܫܝܢ. ܘܡܕܝܢܬ ܡܚܙܝܐ ܢܨܝܚܐ.
ܒܕܒܝܠܐ ܝܬܝܪܐ. ܡܕܡ ܒܕܝܫܘܬܐ.
ܠܟܠܐ ܕܡܬܬܝܩܪܐ ܬܠܡܝܕܘܢ. ܘܡܫܒܚܝܢܬ ܡܚܕܬܘܬܐ❖ ❖

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[a] B: ܢܗܘܪ ܐܢܐ.
[b] C: ܦܓܥ.
[c] B: ܕܫܛܝܬܘܢܢܝ “since you treated me like a fool”.
[d] B and V invert line 2 and 3.
[e] B and V: ܢܣܘܒ ܠܟܘܢ.
[f] B: ܡܢ ܥܠܡ; V: ܡܢܥܠܡ; C: ܡܢ ܥܠܡ.
[g] C: ܕܢܦܠ.
[h] A: ܐܬܪܘܬܗ.
[i] C: ܒܢܘܗܪܐ.
[l] A: ܒܟܠܗܘܢ ܥܕܢܐ “in all times”.

Another hymn of Simon Peter and Simon Magus

1 When Saint Simon entered in the Land of Rome[42]
he found the abominable and despicable Simon Magus,
while he was leading people astray with his hateful teaching[43]
and making all Romans well amazed
by saying: "He is the son of a human being, I am the son of the Most High."

2 One day they met and both entered the theater.
Simon Peter raised two dead men to life and a third one at the same time.
The Romans stood against Simon Magus with anger and rage[44],
with stones in their hands and insults in their mouths,
since Simon Magus had led them away from faith.

3 Simon Magus, the viper,[45] answered and spoke with stubbornness:
"I am son of God and not of mankind.
Since I have been an viper in Great Rome,[46]
look, I despise them and treat them back with contempt.
I will ascend to my Father on high.

4 I descended from heaven and dwelt in the Virgin
and she gave me birth in a visible body, while she remained pure.
I came to the Land of Rome, which is full of error.

[42] Payne Smith (1901: vol. II, 3832) gives for the form *R(h)omāniyā* the meanings of "land" or "jurisdiction of Rome", whereby — as usual in Syriac — both Rome and Constantinople (*Rūm*) are meant. As a synonym of *R(h)omē* "(the city of) Rome", *R(h)omāniyā* is used in another late East-Syriac text (attributed to Warda or at least included in a Warda manuscript available to Payne Smith) speaking of Paul's imprisonment in Rome.

[43] Syriac: his hateful words.

[44] The synonymic hendiadys of the Syriac text (*rughzā* and *ḥemthā*) is translated with a bilingual hendiadys: the first term is the Aramaic word *ḥemthā*, whereas the second term is *ğeger*, from Arabic *ğakr*. Multilingual hendiadys is a reflex of the multilingualism of Aramaic-speaking communities and is a typical stylistic device of Sureth poetry and, more in general, Neo-Aramaic literary languages (Mengozzi 2012: 339, with references).

[45] Perhaps "the cruel Simon Magus".

[46] Syriac: Since I have been despised in erring Rome.

While I turn them from wrong,
they deem me contemptible, as one who speaks with folly.

5 I cleave a mountain like soft clay
and I swim like a fish in the sea and in the water.[47]
I make trees grow since the beginning of time[48]
and sweet are their fruits in the mouths of those who eat them.
With a high order I used to raise dead people to life.[49]

6 I allot children to pregnant women[50]
and I make children for white haired women.
I give the light to the blind who do not have the sight.
To those who do not have legs and hands,[51]
I give them steps and I stretch their hands.

7 Since you treated me with contempt, I too will treat you with contempt.
Since I loved you and you hated me, I too will hate you much.
Since I honored you and you despised me, look, I will despise you.
Look, I will abandon you. You will die in your sins[52].
I will leave you because you have left me and I will not see you again."

8 Suddenly, at that moment, a chariot came,
girded with flame. A mighty power
then seized Simon Magus and he went up on a cloud.
All the Romans raised their voices:
"Woe to us! Ruin has come to us, since this is God."

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[47] Syriac: I swim through it like a fish that swims in the water.

[48] Syriac: I make trees grow where there is no irrigation.

[49] Syriac: With a high order I raise to life dead people who were buried.

[50] I translate *mkhalqēnā* according to the Syriac meaning of the root ܒܪܐ. Alternatively, it may be translated "I let create, make", according to the meaning of the Arabic root خلق. Syriac: I make pregnant women give birth to old men.

[51] Syriac: To those who do not have legs and cannot stretch their hands.

[52] John 8:24.

9 Simon Peter replied and then said to the demons,
he prayed and ordered: "Leave this sinner
so that his bones and body of sin may break apart!"
And, look, on that moment he fell down among them
and all his body was split in three parts.

10 All the Romans cried out together:
"May Simon Magus their master be cursed with his pupils of sorcery!"
Their lips were healed and they spoke out of anger.
Blessed is Simon Peter. Incessantly invoke
the Father who sent him to them and saved them from sorcery![53]

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[53] The Sureth translator would seem to read a different *Vorlage* of vv. 9-10. The Syriac text that I read has:

9 Simon Peter replied and then said to the demons:
"With a living word I ban you. Leave this sinner
so that he may fall and all his bones be broken altogether (Psalm 42:10)!
Leave him and escape them!" He fell down among them
and all his bones broke apart, each one in three parts.

10 The Romans cried out together with love and compassion:
"May Simon Magus be truly cursed by all lips!
May Simon Peter be blessed as a saint! Praises be to his Lord!"
And we, like them, let us persuade Simon Peter's Lord
and may His mercy be upon the author and all of us together!

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