

Rewriting Global Orthodoxy: Contemporary Oriental Orthodox Textual Traditions in Europe

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In the summer of 2022, Mor Polycarpus, bishop of the Dutch Archdiocese of the Syriac Orthodox Churches, gifted me a nicely bounded and abundantly illustrated book with the title *Orientalische Kirchen, Glaube und Leben* (“Oriental Churches: Faith and Life”) that was published in Vienna in 2012. The book introduces the Coptic, Armenian, Syriac, Malabar, and Tewahdo churches in two to three pages, with half a page devoted to the Assyrian Church of the East. It further includes thematic chapters on various aspects of the faith of the Oriental churches, the liturgy, the sacraments, and the feasts, with brief excerpts and images from all the different churches. The text is straightforward and geared towards readers who know little to nothing about these churches. The principal authors are a Syriac Orthodox priest of Vienna, Emanuel Aydin, and a German professor, Daniel Lanzinger. The book is commissioned by the Orientalisch-orthodoxen Kirchenkommission and published by the Austrian Bible Society. According to the colophon, the book is intended for “Oriental Orthodox religion teaching” in Austrian schools.¹

This book (of a mere hundred pages) tables all the themes that are important in the current volume and this final contribution: the ‘Oriental churches’ as one group,² a focus on teaching faith and tradition in the local language and the national school system, the cooperation between a variety of actors within and outside these churches, and the transnational production and distribution process. The book was printed in Italy to be used in Austria, ending with a Dutch bishop who brought it to our project via a scholarly meeting in Paris. Our project, under the title *Rewriting Global Orthodoxy: Oriental Christians in Europe, 1970-2020*,³ aims to understand the profound changes that Oriental Orthodox churches

1 Emanuel Aydin and Daniel Lanzinger, *Orientalische Kirchen: Glaube und Leben* (Vienna: Österreichische Bibelgesellschaft, 2012).

2 See my introductory essay for a conceptual and historical discussion of the ‘Oriental Churches’.

3 The project has received funding from the European Research Council (ERC) under the European Union’s Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme (grant agreement No. 834441 GlobalOrthodoxy). For more information on the project, see <https://www.ru.nl/ptrs/researchinstitute/research-centres/crcs/ongoing-projects/@1335159/rewriting-global-orthodoxy/> I thank the

underwent in the past fifty years, starting from the perspective of European Oriental communities and their publications. In the coming pages, I will situate this rather exceptional Austrian publication in the larger context of what these churches have produced over time, based on my initial analysis of the collection of publications that we have at our disposal at the moment and which is available via the database *FourCornersoftheWorld*.⁴ Over and above this descriptive aim, I hope to contribute to a better understanding of how the Oriental churches position themselves in this European world, what those involved in writing and publishing intend to convey to co-religionists and outsiders, and how these materials contribute to constituting a new Oriental Orthodox world.

Methodological considerations

Our focus on a combination of corpus analysis and close reading of religious publications situates itself at the intersection of sociological and anthropological studies of specific contemporary communities and the mostly philological study of religious literature. These fields are often practiced in distinct scholarly communities, whereas we hold that bringing these two approaches together yields valuable insights that provide deeper layers to our understanding. This is especially the case because texts in these churches play fundamental roles in practicing religion. In this way, we intend to bridge the divide between those who study ‘lived religion’ ethnographically and those who focus on ‘belief’ as expressed in texts. Our starting point is that ‘belief’ is never just a matter of texts and the mind, while at the same time, religion is lived in and with texts as much as outside written materials.⁵

Starting from the texts, the *FourCornersoftheWorld* database forms the backbone of our study. As a team, we began to collect materials from the beginning of the project in 2019. Though the restrictions posed by the emerging COVID-19 pandemic hampered the collection process, the number of items has steadily increased, especially since the summer of 2021. In addition, we included relevant materials that were acquired, as gifts or purchases, in earlier years. The way items

team members, Elise Aghazarian, Habtom Yohannes, Matija Miličić, Jan Gehm, Gaétan du Roy, Christopher Sheklian, Emmanuel Chamilakis and Wessel Stoop for their invaluable help in setting up the database and working with me on this project.

4 <https://fourcornersoftheworld.pters.ru.nl/>. The analysis of this chapter is largely based on the database collection as it stood in the summer of 2023.

5 For more on the theoretical considerations that have informed this project, see my overview article “Rewriting Global Orthodoxy: Oriental Christians in Europe between 1970 and 2020,” in *Europe and the Migration of Christian Communities from the Middle East*; ed. by Martin Tamcke (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2022), 15–29.

in the database are described is based on a combination of straightforward bibliographical data, with additional data that register characteristics important to our specific research questions: photographs of the publication to document layout and aesthetics, comments on the content and collection context, and a variety of tags labelling language(s) of publication, the church community to which it is connected, whether the publication is registered in national collections via ISBN or not, and our initial classification as to the genre. Note that this partly overlaps to what one would find if and when these publications were included in a university library catalogue; however, the vast majority of these publications are not included in national or university library collections.

For this sub-study, 'genre' has been the most critical heuristic tool, at least as far as our initial analysis is concerned. In the database, we employ genre at the level of subcategories of the broader genre of religious texts, which is difficult to define and demarcate. Rather than starting from an external definition of religion, we take books produced by and circulating in the churches as 'religious,' also when the topics are not necessarily religious in and of themselves. For example, language teaching is a significant concern to some churches. It thus should be studied as part of the religious genre as defined for this project, although we do not assume that all language teaching should be seen as religious. The same is true for publications on nationalism and (national) culture, which function in the context of debates over what it means to be an Orthodox Christian in Europe. Again, not all nationalism is, by definition, religious, but the presence of nationalist themes in church-related publications indicates that these are part of a broader conversation about religious identity.

Thus, though we start from a theoretical approach to *genre*, based on given formal and content characteristics of a text, our interpretation of these a priori genres relies strongly on how these formal and content-related characteristics relate to the historical and contemporary social contexts in which they function – the context of the author as much as that of the recipients. In this, we follow Carolyn Miller in seeing genre as a flexible concept that helps to understand the social dynamics in which texts function.⁶ Such an approach to genre bridges the divide between the study of religious practice and religious belief by interpreting texts, in their material form but also regarding their immaterial content, as intrinsically part of religious practice.⁷ This led us to start from an initial list of genres

6 C.R. Miller, "Genre as Social Action," *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 70 (1984), 151–67 and C.R. Miller, "Genre as Social Action (1984), Revisited 30 Years Later (2014)," *Letras & Letras* 31 (2015), 56–72.

7 See Theo Pleizier, Arnold Huijgen, Dolf te Velde, "On the Construction of Religious Texts: The Case of Writing a Catechism," *NTT* 74 (4), 355–373.

based on traditional Orthodox genres such as liturgy, Bible, theology, grammar, and canon law,⁸ complemented with contemporary genres such as news and biography. With additional tags for formal characteristics ('poetry') or particular audiences ('youth'), this allows for fine-grained comparison and analysis within and between the churches, over time, on language and between genres.⁹

Before I move into a discussion of our findings, a few notes are in place as to how the collection so far, as it stands in the summer of 2024, is representative of the whole of publishing activities of the Oriental Orthodox over the past fifty years. We believe this is the case, but only when considering some clearly defined problems of our current collection. This concerns especially numbers and historical distribution. Undoubtedly, the more than 450 items constitute only a small part of what was published in the past fifty years. We know this because we could not collect and include everything we came across in our church visits and internet searches. We often come across references to earlier publications that today are out of print and most likely are lost to scholarship. Moreover, when considering the years of publication, almost 75% of our collection is post-2000, reflecting that these are the publications now in circulation. Whereas production likely increased over the years, the publications of the earlier decades are surely under-represented. This is particularly true for magazines, which were prominent in the early years but not collected systematically in libraries or (church) archives. Many of these magazines have been discontinued; their backlists have disappeared, and only incidental copies surface. Similar fates have befallen leaflets published for a particular occasion, such as a special liturgical celebration or parish anniversary. A few of these are in the collection, but this is a small sample of what was produced. This means that we have to argue carefully as to what the relative numbers of the various types of publications mean for our general analysis: in some instances, absence might indicate non-existence, in others, loss and fragility; in some cases, low numbers suggest changing tastes and habits, in others care and longevity.

8 On such genres in earlier Syriac literature, see Murre-van den Berg, *Scribes and Scriptures: The Church of the East in the Eastern Ottoman Provinces (1500-1850)* (Leuven: Peeters, 2015), Ch. 4-6.

9 These are: Scripture, Liturgy/Prayer books, Hagiography, Auto(Biography), Canon Law, Sermon/Homily, Theology, Religious Teaching, Religious Practice, Spirituality, Language & Grammar, History, News/Contemporary Issues, Nationalism & Politics, Arts & Culture, Youth/Children, Fiction & Folk stories, Poetry. See the database for a concise description of each of these categories: <https://fourcornersoftheworld.pt.rs.ru.nl/genres/>.

Publishing and distribution

Printing by Oriental Christians in Europe began in the early modern period.¹⁰ Many of these publications resulted from the cooperation of Oriental authors with European editors and publishers, often in connection to Catholic missionary activities.¹¹ As one of the first, *Armenians* operated printing presses in Amsterdam, Venice, and Vienna, reflecting the transnational networks of the time.¹² After the genocide and displacement from the Ottoman Empire, many Armenians settled in France, housing the first substantial modern Oriental Christian community. Marseille, where many of the early Armenian materials in the database come from, is one of the oldest Oriental communities in Europe, dating back to 1922. The oldest attested publication dates back to 1957, followed by a liturgical publication in 1963, which, though without a place name, may also have originated in Marseille, whereas output continues to the present.¹³ An early publication in our database testifies to the connections between pre- and post-war UK and French Armenian communities: it was printed in Paris in 1922 and included the bylaws of the Manchester community.¹⁴ Until today, France has remained vital

¹⁰ Note that I mention individual publications only when the contents are foregrounded; those indicated by place and date of publication can easily be found in the database. In general, I keep references to primary sources that are also in the database as brief as possible, no translations of the titles are given except when the publication uses non-Western scripts.

¹¹ For an excellent overview of earlier printing activities in relation to Eastern and Oriental Christians, see Aurélien Girard, « Introduction. Livres et confession chrétiennes orientales (xvie et xviii^e siècles). Proposition pour une histoire comparée et connectée », in Aurélien Girard, Bernard Heyberger, Vassa Kontouma (eds.), *Livres et confessions chrétiennes orientales. Une histoire connectée entre l'Empire ottoman, le monde slave et l'Occident (xvie-xviii^e siècles)* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2023), 9–84, as well as earlier chapters by J.F. Coakley, Jeffrey Roper & John Tatt, and Meliné Pehlivanian in Eva Hanebutt-Benz et al, *Middle Eastern Languages and the Print Revolution: A Cross-cultural Encounter*. (Westhoven: WVAVerlag Skulima, 2002). For further context, see Bernard Heyberger, *Les chrétiens du proche-orient au temp de la réforme catholique* (École Française de Rome: Palais Farnèse, 1994).

¹² Meliné Pehlivanian. “Mesrop’s Heirs: The Early Armenian Book Printers,” in Eva Hanebutt-Benz et al, *Middle Eastern Languages and the Print Revolution*, 54–92. See also Theo Maarten van Lint & Robin Meyer, *Armenia: Masterpieces from an Enduring Culture* (Oxford: Bodleian Library, 2015).

¹³ The database includes publications from 1980, 1990, 1999, 2002, 2003 and 2006, as well as ten undated but probably post-2000 four-page leaflets on the feast days by local priest Fr. Aram Ghazaryan; cf., e.g., Սուրբ Զատիկ | *La Fête de Pâques*.

¹⁴ (Anon.) Կանոնագիրք Մանչեսթրի Հայոց Երեսփոխանական Ժողովով [Bylaws of the Representative Assembly of the Manchester Armenians] (Paris: Dbaran Nerses / Nerses Publishers, 1922). See also the early Manchester publication (Anon.) Ծրագիր Հայ Երիտասարդաց Ակումբի / Հիմնադրված ի Մանչեսթր, Programme of the Armenian Youths’ Club / Founded in Manchester (Manchester: Armenian Youths’ Club of Manchester, 1911), and a recent one detailing its history: (Anon.) *Holy Trinity Armenian Church. Inscriptions on Armenian Headstones and Memorials in Southern Cemetery Manchester: In celebration of 150 Years of Manchester’s Holy Trinity Church Consecrated in 1870* (Manchester: Heritage Fund, 2022).

for Armenian publishing in Europe, with, from the 1990s onwards, a considerable number of publications from various publishers in Paris between 1992 and 2020.¹⁵ The earliest publication on this list is a scholarly history of Armenians in France. In contrast, in 1995, a diocesan magazine of Catholic Armenians in France was restarted, and it picked up on a publication in 1958.¹⁶ However, Armenian publishing was not restricted to Marseille and Paris but took place in various local parishes, such as Montélimar (2007, 2012), Décine (1997-), Chaville (1995-), Romans Bourse-de-Péage (n.d.) and Lyon (1980-, 1994). Though France remains the uncontested centre of Armenian life in Europe, Armenian publishing activities occurred all over Europe. Another early Armenian publication comes from Venice (1977), and further publications come from Switzerland (Geneva: 1986-), Italy (Lucca: 2018), the UK, Belgium (n.p.: 2019), Sweden (Stockholm: 2023), and the Netherlands.¹⁷ Finally, the database testifies to the interaction with communities outside Europe, with publications from Etchmiadzin (2018, 2020, n.d.), Yerevan (2004, 2014, 2018), Beirut (1959), Antelias (1988, 2013, 2016), Istanbul (2009), New York (1969, 1987, 1994, 1996, 2000) and Glendale (1997).

The oldest *Syriac Orthodox* publication in our database dates to 1981. It is a collection of poems related to the genocide (*Sayfo*) edited, translated, and partly authored by Mor Julius Çiçek (1942-2005), the first metropolitan of northwestern Europe.¹⁸ This publication predates the official beginnings of what today is called the Bar ʿEbroyo Press, located in the Mor Efremon monastery in Glane (Netherlands). This successful publishing house originates in the activities of Mor Julius Çiçek, who, right from the moment Patriarch Mor Ignatius Jakob III tasked him with the pastoral care of diasporic communities in Europe and the United States, started to think about publications. These publications were aimed at the communities in Turkey, where the government did not allow the Syriacs to publish such materials, and the new communities in the US and Europe. The first two publications were published in the US in 1977.¹⁹ Mor Julius was an accomplished

15 1992, 1995-, 1997-, 2000, 2003, 2004, 2006, 2012, 2015, 2017, 2018, 2019, 2020.

16 Martine Hovanessian, *Le Lien Communautaire: Trois générations d'Arméniens* (Paris: Armand Colin Editeur, 1992); Եկեղեցին Հայկական | *L'Église Arménienne: Bulletin de l'Éparchie de Sainte-Croix-de-Paris des Arméniens Catholiques de France* (The Armenian Church Paris, 1995-).

17 Amsterdam: 2001, 2008, 2017-, 2019, 2021; Den Haag: 2008; Almelo: 2023.

18 Mor Julius Yeshu Çiçek, 1714-1914 *دعای مسیحیان کشته شده در ترکیه* [Poems about the massacres that were suffered by the Christians in Turkey between 1714 and 1914] (n.p.: 1981).

19 Gabriel Rabo, „In Memoriam Mor Julius Yeshu Çiçek†, Metropolit der syrisch-orthodoxen Diözese von Mitteleuropa und den Benelux-Ländern, 1942-2005,“ *Kolo Süryoyo* 147 (2005), 2-26 and Sebastian Brock, “H.E. Mor Julius Yeshu` Çiçek; An Appreciation,” *Kolo Süryoyo* 147 (2005), 41-45.

scribe who handwrote these early Syriac publications in the absence of affordable Syriac typesetting. That same year, he was appointed as patriarchal vicar for Central Europe and moved to Hengelo (Netherlands), where he continued his publishing activities. After he established the Mor Ephrem monastery in Glane in 1981, printing and publishing activities were moved there. These included the church magazine *Kolo Sūryoyo* ("The Syriac Voice") from 1978 onwards.²⁰ From 1985 onwards, under the name Barhebräus Verlag, professional printing equipment was used.²¹ No complete list of their publications is available, though Rabo's overview of the publications overseen by Mor Julius lists everything until 2005.²² Since then, printing has long been outsourced to other places, but the Bar 'Ebroyo Press continues to be a hub of Syriac publishing in Europe, led by Rabban Said Çakıcı under the supervision of bishop Mor Polycarpus. This publisher's books are sold mainly via the web shop of the monastery, which also sells similar publications produced by other publishers.²³ Alongside the Bar 'Ebroyo Press (BEP) in Glane, a few other Dutch towns, such as Hengelo and Enschede, have hosted Syriac publishing.²⁴

Some early Syriac Orthodox publications come from Vienna²⁵; the oldest item celebrates the tenth anniversary of its parish.²⁶ Notably, this booklet was published by a Protestant publishing house and written by an Austrian scholar. However, Patriarch Ignatius Zakka I Iwas's explicit support situates it firmly within

20 Fikri Sümer, *De Syrisch Orthodoxe Gemeenschap* (Hengelo: 1982), 130–3.

21 Mor Ignatius Yacoub III. ܡܨܪܝܝܐ ܕܝܗܝܐ ܕܡܨܪܝܝܐ ܕܡܨܪܝܝܐ [The Syrian Orthodox Church of Antioch] *The history of the Syriac Church* (Glane: Bar-Hebraeus Verlag, 1985).

22 Rabo, „In Memoriam Mor Julius Yeshu Çiçek†". Our database lists items under this imprint for 1985, 1987, 2x 1988, 1989, 2x 1990, 1992, 2x 1995, 1997, 1999, 2x 2002, 2x 2005, 2008, 4x 2009, 2x 2010, 3x 2012, 4x 2014, 2015, 2016, 3x 2017, 3x 2018, 2x 2019, 3x 2020, 2x 2021.

23 Mor Ephrem bookshop (<https://morephrem.shop/>) (last seen, d.d. 18/7/23). Note that the "about us" section does not explicitly mention the Syriac-Orthodox connection and in fact presents itself as a publisher as much as a bookseller: "Mor Ephrem Books is a publisher of new titles and reprints of rare books in the areas of Arabic, the Near East, classics, religion, languages and linguistics, Syriac studies, the Middle East and more." For more on the press and its publications see Rabo, "In memoriam Mor Julius Yeshu Çiçek" and Heleen Murre-van den Berg, "Texts, Language, and Religion in the Making of Syriac Orthodox Communities in Europe," in Birgit Meyer, Peter van der Veer (eds.), *Refugees and Religion: Ethnographic Studies of Global Trajectories* (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2021), 179–197.

24 Hengelo: n.d., 1982, 2001, 2020 (in cooperation with BEP), Enschede: 1993, 2007, n.d.; from 1986 onwards, the cultural magazine *Shemsho*, which included many church- and religion-related topics, was published in Enschede.

25 n.d., 1984, 1993, 2012, 2015.

26 Peter Mallat, *Die syrisch-orthodoxen Christen in Österreich. Zum 10jährigen Bestehen der Gemeinde von St. Efreim in Wien-Lainz* (Vienna: Nuhro Yayinlari, 1984). Similarly: Reinhard Kuster, Hans-Urs Köppel, *Die syrisch-orthodoxe Kirche: ihre Geschichte und Herkunft, ihre Situation in der Schweiz* (Bern: Texte der Evangelischen Arbeitsstelle Oekumene Schweiz, 1989).

the context of Syriac Orthodox publishing. A similar publication was produced in Switzerland (Bern: 1989), to which only one publication from Arth-Goldau (2014) can be added.

From its early days, Bar 'Ebroyo Press also published for the German Syriac communities, sometimes in co-publication, like in Berlin (1995) and, more recently, in Tübingen (2015) and Delbrück (2017). Over the past decades, a flourishing publishing scene has supplanted BEP by private initiatives or new Syriac publishers. St. Jakob von Sarug Verlag (JSV) is the most important. This publisher mainly publishes from Warburg and Giessen.²⁷ Warburg also houses the private publishing house ESC-Eigenverlag (2009). In contrast, other publications seem to come from either church dioceses or private owners, such as in Berlin (2000, 2007-2011), Paderborn (2013), Delbrück (2007), Göppingen (2016), Giessen (2008), Herne (1991), Gütersloh (2x 2017), and Rheda-Wiedenbrück (2005, 2x 2009). Some books were published further afield, most notably by the Syriac Orthodox community in Turkey and India.²⁸ Though it is not always certain whether these books were published with the European communities in mind, most were acquired in European contexts. One of the most vibrant European communities is that of Sweden, which was formed from 1976 onwards.²⁹ The oldest samples in our database date to the late 1980s and early 1990s, starting with primarily secular publications in the modern language, followed by Classical Syriac publications, both earlier reprints and contemporary writings.³⁰ Earlier, journals had been initiated, *Hujādā* in 1978 and *Bahro Sūryoyo* in 1979. The database also includes more recent Swedish publications from Stockholm (2001, 2003, 2003), Göteborg (2009), and Alberga (2020, 2x 2021). So far, the UK and France have not yielded much in the line of Syriac publications, with only two attestations for London (2016, 2019). Though the French and British communities are smaller than those in the Netherlands, Sweden, and Germany, this low number of publications in our database might well underreport the production in these countries, especially because no sustained fieldwork could be done there.

The oldest (dated) *Coptic publication* of Europe in our database is somewhat of an outlier, being a booklet published by an established Dutch publisher (Kok, Kampen) with a Dutch translation of spiritual lessons by the Coptic Pope Shenouda III. The

²⁷ 2014, 2019, 2020, 2021; Giessen: 2021.

²⁸ Istanbul: 2002, 2014, 2015, 3x 2019; Adiyaman: 2012, 2015, 2016; Puthencruz (India): 2009.

²⁹ See Sümer, *De Syrisch Orthodoxe Gemeenschap*, 126–8, Naures Atto, “Hostages in the Homeland, Orphans in the Diaspora: Identity Discourses among the Assyrian/Syriac Diaspora” (Dissertation, Leiden University Press, 2011), and Jennifer Mack, *The Construction of Equality: Syriac Immigration and the Swedish City* (Minneapolis/London: University of Minneapolis Press, 2017).

³⁰ Modern Syriac: 2x Örebro: 1989, and 2x Jönköping: 1990; Classical Syriac in Jönköping: 1993, 1994, 1995.

introduction has a foreword by archpriest Arseny of Amsterdam (the future bishop) and thus situates the book published in 1988 at the interface of early Dutch-Coptic cooperation.³¹ The second oldest publication, a brief tract on Pope Shenouda III, dates to 1992 and was probably produced on the occasion of the consecration of the Virgin Mary Church in Amsterdam on 21 February of that year.³² Another early publication consists of a translation of a small pamphlet by Pope Shenouda on the intercession of the saints.³³ The diocesan magazine *al-Tariq* ("The Way") was published from 1985 onwards. From the mid-1990s onwards, more publications have been preserved, many of which were produced under the auspices of the diocesan office in Amsterdam,³⁴ but also by the Coptic Orthodox parishes in Eindhoven (magazine *Het Licht*, 2018-), Utrecht (n.d.) and Bussum (n.d.).

Coptic publications also originate in other European countries, including the UK, France, Germany, Switzerland, Italy, and Spain.³⁵ Like in the case of the Armenians and the Syriac Orthodox, the wide range of small publications originating in parishes or dioceses all over Europe suggests that the collected materials cover only a small part of what was published over the past decades.

Remarkably, our collection shows that the textual corpus of the Oriental Christians in Europe includes many materials published elsewhere. Some of these may have been brought along upon migration. Still, because many of these publications are being sold in bookshops and church locations, we may assume that these books are imported directly from their source. This is most clearly the case for the Tewahdo communities, our shorthand for the various churches of the *Ethiopian and Eritrean Orthodox Tewahdo tradition*. Most of the materials collected in Europe so far find their origin elsewhere. Until today, Addis Ababa (Ethiopia) and Asmara (Eritrea) remain essential sources of Tewahdo publishing in various languages. A few of these materials predate the independence of Eritrea and the Eritrean Orthodox Tewahdo Church in 1991; others date to the 1990s, such as [*The*] *Book*

31 Pope Shenouda III, *Brood uit de Woestijn* (Kampen: Kok Kampen, 1988).

32 Pope Shenouda III, *Paus van Alexandrië en 117e Opvolger van de Heilige Marcus de Evangelist* (Amsterdam 1992).

33 Pope Shenouda III, *De Voorspraak der Heiligen* (Amsterdam: Stichting Koptisch Orthodoxe Kerk in Nederland 1993).

34 2x 1994, 2x 1995, 2x 1996, 2x 1999, 2x 2000, 2x 2008, 2011, 2020, 2021.

35 Stevenage, 2x 2012; Paris: 2x 2005 (including a publication by a non-Coptic author & publisher, but available in the Coptic church in Amsterdam: Christine Chaillot, *The Coptic Orthodox Church: A Brief Introduction to its Life and Spirituality* (Paris: Inter-Orthodox Dialogue, 2005), Fontanieu: 1975-, Villejuif: n.d. (2x), 2009; Bégnolles-en-Mauges: 1998; Kröffelbach: 2005, Höxter-Brenkhausen: n.d., 2013, Dillenburg: 2017, Göttingen 2016; Lausanne: 2002; Rome: n.d., 2008, 2x 2009, Milan: various n.d.; 2x 2001, 2013, 2018, 2018-, 2x 2019, 2021, Reggio-Emilia: 2007; Cervera: 2013, 3x 2014, 2015, 2x 2016.

of *Light* published in Asmara in 1994.³⁶ Most publications date to the last two decades, testifying to the ongoing contacts between home and host countries.³⁷ Other countries that produce books for the various Tewahdo communities in and outside Ethiopia and Eritrea include Egypt, Sudan, Israel, Australia, and the United States.³⁸ In addition to materials from outside Europe, a few were produced in Europe: the UK, Germany, Italy, Sweden, and the Netherlands.³⁹

Whereas the Coptic community publishes extensively in Europe, the oldest Coptic materials in the collection come from Egypt, among others from the well-established Mahabba Bookshop in Cairo.⁴⁰ There are also active printing establishments outside Cairo, such as Alexandria (n.d., 1979, 1986), Wadi El-Natroun (1993, 2003, 2015), Qena (2007), Mallawi (1995), Samalout (2015), Ismailia (2017), Fayoum (2010), Beni Suef (n.d.). Most of these publications are in Arabic, though English and occasionally French are used. One church shop (in Eindhoven, The Netherlands) sold an Arabic Gospel edition that was published in Lebanon (Beirut, 1996),⁴¹ and the community in The Hague had a publication from Sydney (Australia, 1996).⁴² Rather remarkable is an electronic publication offered via an app from the Diocese of Paris and North of France (*Eklisia*), a text produced in Lumumbashi (DRC, n.d.) by Fidèle Mutonkonle. One is tempted to interpret this transmission as testifying to the increasing importance of Coptic Orthodoxy in other African countries. However, as Gaétan du Roy suggests, its usage is probably also connected to the shortage of Coptic materials in French.⁴³

So far, the Armenian European communities produce and use mainly their own materials. However, a few exceptions exist, such as materials for teaching Armenian. In the Netherlands, two language textbooks used at Sunday school in Amsterdam come from Armenia (Yerevan 2004, 2014) and another from Leba-

36 Ghebre-Egziabher, Welde Abrham Zebizen, *The Book of Light* (Asmara: Eritrean Orthodox Tewahdo Church (EOTC), 1994). Further publications of the 1990s: Asmara: 1995; Addis Ababa: 2x 1993.

37 Asmara: 3x 2000, 2001, 2002, 2003, 2004, 2x 2013, 2017, 2x 2018; Addis Ababa: 2000, 2001, 2010, 2011, 2013, 2014, 2016, 3x 2017, 2018, 2020, 2021.

38 Cairo: 2003, 2018, 2019; Khartoum: 2000; Tel Aviv: 2009, 2017, 2018, 2019; Sydney: 1997; California: 2017, 2018, New Jersey: 2018, Maryland: 2010, Atlanta, Georgia: 2019; n.p.: 2004.

39 London: n.d.; 2015; Frankfurt, 2018, 2018; Turin, 1997; Umea, 2021; Rotterdam: 2020.

40 As of 18/7/23, the website include 37 publications from various publishers in Cairo, of which 16 from Mahabba Bookshop (several n.d., 1979, 1980, 1983, 1988, 1989, 1991, 1993, 1995, 1997, 1997, 1998, 1999, 3x 2000, 2002, 2003, 2006, 2007, 2009, 2009, 2x 2011, 2012, 2014, 2015, 2017, 2018); see, e.g., Fr. Tadros Y. Malaty, *Tradition & Orthodoxy* (Sporting, Alexandria: St. George Coptic Church: 1979), collected in The Hague in 2020.

41 *The Gospel* (Beirut: La Société Biblique au Liban, 1996).

42 Deacon Ehab R. Wahib. سفر يهوديت, *The Book of Judith* (Sydney: St. George Coptic Orthodox Church, 1996).

43 See Gaétan du Roy, this volume ; Fidèle Mutonkonle, *L'histoire de l'Eglise orthodoxe copte* (Lubumbashi: Paroisse Saint Philo pater (Mercure- Abu sefein), n.d.).

non (Antelias 2013). A fourth one, however, is produced in Amsterdam (2019).⁴⁴ As noted by Christopher Sheklian, another production of Antelias (2016) was encountered in the Armenian Church in Athens (Greece), which perhaps is less surprising because this diocese falls directly under the Cilician Catholicosate in Antelias.⁴⁵ English-language materials perhaps were more readily shared: Christopher Sheklian notes the usage of US-origin materials in the Armenian community in Manchester.⁴⁶ The other way around, one recent Dutch publication published by the (Dutch-Armenian) Narekatsi Foundation in 2018 was printed in Yerevan.⁴⁷ So far, publications produced in Istanbul have not been used in Europe.⁴⁸

This brief overview of fifty years of publishing by and publications used among the Oriental Christians in Europe suggests a sustained commitment to printing and distributing written materials among the new European communities. As argued above, what we found is likely only a small part of what has been published and what continues to be published. What is more, our collection largely ignores online publications. Websites with PDFs, postings on social media, and a variety of liturgical apps increasingly take over functions earlier covered by printed materials. Most of these postings are brief and ephemeral, related to contemporary matters. However, longer texts are posted regularly, adding to the texts circulating in the communities. One genre in which online possibilities have had a significant impact is church magazines. Many of the 1980s and 1990s printed magazines are no longer around.⁴⁹ Constraints of costs and effort related to printing vis-à-vis the short-term use of such magazines make it likely that online platforms (includ-

44 S. Abrahamyan, A. Movsesyan. Արագիլ Ալֆաբենարան Աշխատանքային Տետր [Quick Armenian Alphabet Work Notebook] (Amsterdam, 2019).

45 Vaghinag Ts. Vrt. Meloyian. Ի՞նչ կ'ըսեն Սուրբ Հայրերը Պահեցողության մասին [What do the Holy Fathers Say About Fasting?] (Antelias: Armenian Catholicosate of the Great House of Cilicia, 2016).

46 See, e.g. Şahan Arzruni. *A Treasury Ոսկեփորձիկ of Armenian Chants* (New York: St. Vartan Armenian Press, 1994), and Սրբազան Երգեցողությունք եւ Անմահ Ս. Պատարագ Հայաստանեայց Առաքելական Սուրբ Եկեղեցւոյ – *The Sacred Music and The Divine Liturgy of the Armenian Apostolic Church* (Glendale, 1997).

47 Gregory of Narek. *Het Boek der Weeklaging*. Vert. Theo Maarten van Lint. (Yerevan: Stichting St. Grigor Narekatsi Amsterdam, 2018).

48 Religious Council of the Armenian Patriarchate of Istanbul. Խաչվերացի Թափօր Անդաստան եւ Երեկոյեան Ժամերգություն, Հանդերձ աշխարհաբարով [The Antasdan Procession and Evening Service of the Exaltation of the Holy Cross, Accompanied by Modern Armenian.] (Istanbul: Armenian Patriarchate of Istanbul, 2009). And Religious Council of the Armenian Patriarchate of Istanbul. Կարգ Օրհնության Խաղողոյ, Հանդերձ աշխարհաբարով, Service of the Blessing of the Grapes, Accompanied by Modern Armenian. Istanbul: Armenian Patriarchate of Istanbul, 2009. However, note the connection between these publications and those produced in the US (Glendale), using similar cover illustrations.

49 This is especially true for the Syriac magazines, where all of the early publications, like *Kolo Sūryoyo*, *Bahro Sūryoyo* and *Mardutho*, were discontinued.

ing websites, YouTube channels, FB pages, WhatsApp groups, and customised apps) have taken over the role of such magazines – especially regarding ongoing community news such as times and dates of the liturgy, pictures, reports of community events, and daily spiritual guidance.⁵⁰ Nevertheless, despite the increasing number of online postings and publications – exacerbated further under pandemic pressures – there is little doubt that for the time being, the production and distribution of printed publications do not seem to diminish significantly. To understand why this is the case, we will need a better look into what is published and how these materials are used.

Tradition, teaching, and transnationalism

Now that we have set the stage for the production and distribution of materials in Europe, we can have a closer look at what was published. I will discuss these texts along the lines of the three themes I highlighted above in the vignette on the book *Orientalische Kirchen: Glaube und Leben* (Vienna 2012): transnationalism, tradition, and teaching. These constitute three critical characteristics of the materials that we have collected so far and speak via a genre-based analysis to the broader context in which these materials are produced (the transnational communities), the main thrust of their contents (the ‘tradition’ of the churches), and their primary function, as to how these texts are used (educationally).

Transnationalism

As I have argued earlier, the study of Oriental Christian migrant communities in Europe is best approached from the perspective of transnational communities characterised by complex, multilayered, and multi-directional interactions between communities in home- and host lands.⁵¹ Written materials, whether printed matter or online publications, play crucial roles in these networks – both

50 For a first appraisal of online publications in relation to printed matters in Oriental Orthodox circles, see du Roy, this volume and Habtom Yohannes, “Some Reflections on the “aba-nefs” WhatsApp of an Eritrean Priest Queshi-Afwerki,” Martin Tamcke (ed.), *Europe and the Migration of Christian Communities from the Middle East* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2022), 145–160.

51 See also earlier work on Syriac and Assyrian transnationalism, “A Center of Transnational Syriac Orthodoxy: St. Mark’s Convent in Jerusalem,” *Journal of Levantine Studies* (2013) 3(1), 61–83; “Voice of the East: The Transnational Messenger of the Assyrian Church of the East,” in Mirella Cassarino [...] Marco Moriggi et al. *Diaspore nel vicino oriente. Melodie Ebraiche in Benedetto Marcello* (Milan: Veneranda Biblioteca Ambrosiana, 2022), 59–89; and dissertation work by Jan Gehm on the Syriac Orthodox communities in Germany.

as constitutive elements of these networks and as witnesses to the social, political, and economic dynamics that characterise these networks.⁵²

The ecclesiastical organizations of each Oriental church constitute the primary transnational network reflected in the publications. This is most explicitly the case when the publications include formal blessings of the patriarch. Some books include a letter, and sometimes a photograph, from the highest dignitary on one of the early pages, often with a seal, signature, and official permission to print added to it.⁵³ Less formally, prefaces and introductions usually supply information about the production process, providing ecclesial connections and thus authority to the publication.⁵⁴ These pages confirm that for many types of publication, the hierarchy's permission is needed or at least preferred, thus honouring and maintaining the ties between the communities in Europe and the centre in the Middle East where the church's highest leadership usually is located. Such official permissions are found regularly in liturgical publications (whose efficacy relies on correct transmission) but also in history books, religious teaching, theology, or books on healing.⁵⁵

Often, however, transnational ties transpire in different ways. As described above, Coptic books in Arabic, in most cases, come from Egypt, where a vibrant, well-educated, and relatively wealthy Coptic community produces many materials that continue to be relevant for those in the lands of migration. These cover various genres, including liturgy, religious teaching, history, arts and culture. Some of these printing houses are close to the cultural and clerical centre in Cairo, with an extensive range of publishers publishing for the church centre.⁵⁶ Others, at least geographically, are further away from the centre, like the printing houses in Egyptian cities such as Alexandria, Wadi El Natrun, and Asyut. Notably, some of these

52 In this section too, I mention one or two examples in the notes; for more examples, please consult the database FourCornersoftheWorld, either via search terms, or via one of the tabs in the side bar, which among others include 'church', 'genre', 'city of publication', 'authors' 'translators', and 'file categories'.

53 See, e.g., *Shhimo – Veckobönek bok enligt den Syrisk-ortodoxa kyrkan av Antiokia* (SOKU, 2016). For more examples, search via File Categories > Frontispiece, Dedication and Imprimatur.

54 See, e.g., Pope Shenouda III, *Brood uit de Woestijn* (Kampen: Kok Kampen, 1988).

55 *La prière des heures (Agpia)* (Villejuif: Eglise Archange Michel et Saint Georges, 2009); Holy Gospel of our Lord of the dominical feastsdays. (Glane Bar 'Ebroyo Verlag, 2010); Georg Bubolz, *Syrisch-Orthodoxer Religionsunterricht: Didaktische Grundlinien* (Glane: Bar 'Ebroyo Verlag, 2015); (مع باقة عطرية من سير قدسين أطباء), Healing the Sick (with a Special Collection of Biographies of Healing Saints) (Wadi El Natrun: Monastery of St. Pishoy in Wadi El Natrun, 2015).

56 Publishing ventures such as Mahabba Bookshop, Anba Ruwis Printing Press, Clerical College (الكلية الإكليريكية بالقاهرة), and the Coptic Orthodox Patriarchate – the Bishopric of Youth and Triakromy printing house (شركة تريكرومي للطباعة).

publish in English, suggesting that these publishing houses are well aware of the increasing importance of English in the transnational Coptic community. The importance of homeland publishing is also obvious in the case of the Tewahdo churches. Here, the balance is even stronger in favour of homeland publishers because many Tewahdo European communities have been reluctant to start publishing themselves. As was mentioned earlier, most publications from outside Ethiopia and Eritrea come from the US. Others are produced in Israel, where a vibrant Tewahdo community developed over the past decades. However, such transnational publishing links also point to different allegiances, corresponding with the presence of the publications of one or another hierarchical line. In the case of the Tewahdo churches, such rivalries characterise many of the publications, but one can trace this also among the Armenians, where productions linked to the different Catholicosates in the homelands (Echmiadzin and Cilicia represented by Antelias and Beirut) cater to different parts of the Armenian diaspora.

The history of the Bar ʿEbroyo Printing House, mentioned above, demonstrates yet another way in which book production reflects and creates transnational connections. In its earliest phase, archbishop Julius Çiçek published primarily for the international Syriac community, especially for those in Turkey, where publishing due to political restrictions was nearly impossible.⁵⁷ Gradually, the focus shifted, and the publications were more and more geared towards the larger diocese of which Germany formed an important part. In both phases, printing was mostly in Classical Syriac, though gradually German and Dutch publications were added to the collection. Magazines such as *Kolo Sūryoyo* were consistently multilingual (Classical Syriac, Dutch, German, English, Turkish, Arabic), and thus allowed for a wide distribution among European Syriacs.⁵⁸ After 2005, separate German dioceses were created, and BEP started to cooperate with other publishing houses, thus expanding its transnational network. At the same time, it started to publish more materials specifically for what now was the Dutch (rather than Northwest European) diocese.

Though the transnational market was intrinsically part of early European publishing activities, local publication for local markets remained a crucial aspect of textual practices, at the level of the parish as much as the level of a diocese.

⁵⁷ Rabo, "In Memoriam Mor Julius Yeshu Çiçek†."

⁵⁸ *Kolo Sūryoyo: Zeitschrift der syrisch-orthodoxen Diözese von Mitteleuropa, 1978–2005* (Ed.: Mor Julius Yeshu Çiçek). Similar multilingual magazines were published by cultural and political Assyrian and Aramaic organizations in Sweden (*Hujāddā: Assyrisk Manatlig & kulturell-, nyhets- och informationstidning*), the Netherlands (*Shemsho*) and Germany (*Mardutho d-Suryoyo*); Gabriele Yonan, *Journalismus bei den Assyriern. Ein Überblick von seinen Anfängen bis zur Gegenwart* (Beth-Nahrin, 1985).

Enabled by the increasing possibilities of cheap production without complicated and expensive printing equipment, many parishes started to publish their own materials (professionalizing earlier publications that used mimeographs and photocopies). These include occasional publications on parish or clerical anniversaries, liturgical texts for special occasions, publications on local histories, and officially sanctioned translations of the liturgy in local languages. So far, such publications seem to remain mostly local in distribution, although incidentally, we see examples of translations done in one language being used as the basis for another translation elsewhere.

Tradition

It is not surprising, both in the context of Orthodox theology and regarding the needs of a migrant community, that the textual traditions (see the Introduction) of the respective churches are particularly attuned to the theme of 'Tradition,' capitalised as it often is in Orthodox literature.⁵⁹ 'Tradition,' that is, as the whole of religious knowledge, written and unwritten, that characterises Orthodox Christianity over and above other Christian traditions and that is explicitly valued in contradistinction to the 'Sola Scriptura' of most Protestant churches. Texts play an important role in safeguarding this Orthodox Tradition. Tradition in this sense, however, is never static and comes in formative and transformative ways in today's collections as much as in the past. This is true for the make-up of the collection as a whole, the contents of the actual publications, the way in which 'tradition' is thematised, and the way in which the books are designed. This last aspect is discussed in more detail in a separate publication on visual culture,⁶⁰ so here I focus on the contents, starting from the major genres of Oriental literature.

The most traditional genre is *liturgy*. Liturgical books comprise a good deal of the collection (about twenty percent), though less prominently so than in the past.⁶¹ Most of the publications include either the traditional liturgical texts or translations or excerpts from those texts. However, even in the most traditional part of the collection, embodying the heart of traditional knowledge, no text comes out quite the same as in the past – all are transformed in myriad ways. One reason for this is the demands of current liturgical practice. In the past, for example, marriage and baptismal liturgies would have been included in larger priestly

⁵⁹ Timothy Ware, *The Orthodox Church* (Penguin Books, 1963), chapter 10.

⁶⁰ Murre-van den Berg, "Situating the Sacred: Images and Style in Oriental Christian Publications in Europe," in *Visual Culture of Oriental Christians*; Sheklian & du Roy (eds.) (in preparation).

⁶¹ In Syriac manuscript collections, liturgical items would make up about fifty percent of the collections, see Murre-van den Berg, *Scribes and Scriptures*, 181, 274–5.

ritual books. Today, we find copies of the complete text in small booklets – more manageable for the priest to use and accessible to the families when they want to follow what is happening.⁶² As importantly, lay members of the community are increasingly expected to participate actively in liturgical rituals, and therefore, liturgical books are produced especially for this group. In the Coptic and Syriac churches today, certain parts of the eucharistic service, including the Bible lectures,⁶³ are read or sung in translation, in Arabic, vernacular Syriac, or European languages.⁶⁴ In the Armenian churches, the liturgical languages are less likely to be replaced by translations, though they are sometimes added alongside the Classical Armenian in Latin transcription.⁶⁵ This production for the laity also includes volumes with prayers for use at home, in the original texts and in translations, of which the Coptic *Agpeya*, the Book of Hours, is the most prominent example, with the somewhat similar Syriac *Shhimo* as yet less well represented.⁶⁶ Finally, the database includes several introductions to and commentaries of the liturgy. Some of these are newly composed, others build upon and explain earlier commentaries, some are geared towards the wider public of the educated lay or even to children, and some are geared to fellow clerics and academics.⁶⁷

This interplay of traditional texts, translations, and commentary also characterises the genre of *hagiography*. Here the transformation of tradition is mostly in translating the traditional texts into various modern languages. Often, these translations are accompanied by introductions and modern illustrations – photographs of the shrines and monasteries of the saints in the homelands combined

62 See, e.g., *Orde van de Doop* (Glane: Bar 'Ebroyo Verlag, 2020), Կանոն Կենդանաբար Սուրբ Մկրտութեան Ըստ Հայաստանեայց Առաքելական Եկեղեցւոյ / *Le Sacrement Du Baptême Du Rite Église Apostolique Arménien* (Marseille, 2002).

63 Usually, standard Bible translations in English, Dutch, Swedish etc. are used, but compare Amill Gorgis. *Biblische Lesungen für den Gottesdienst: Eingerichtet für das Kirchenjahr nach der Ordnung der Syrisch-Orthodoxen Kirche von Antiochien* (Glane: Bar 'Ebroyo Verlag, 1995).

64 See, e.g., *Santo Misal y las fracciones santas Liturgia de San Basilio* (Cervera: Patriarcado de los coptos ortodoxos, 2013); *Hemels Brood & Geestelijke Drank. Syrisch-Orthodoxe Eucharistieviering* (Glane: Bar 'Ebroyo Verlag, 2017) and *Kerkgebeden* (Moeder Gods Mariakerk Hengelo, n.d.). Increasingly, translations are projected on screens during the liturgical celebration.

65 Սուրբ Պատարագ Հայաստանեայց Առաքելական Եկեղեցւոյ | *Heilige Liturgie in de Armeense Apostolische Kerk* (ed. by Armen Melkonian) (n.p., 2019).

66 *Agpeya* (*Agbeya*, *Agpia*, *Agbia*), with at least twelve copies in the database, in Arabic, Dutch, Spanish, Italian); see, e.g., *De Agpeya* (Amsterdam: Stichting Koptisch Orthodoxe Kerk in Nederland, 2008); *Shimo – Veckobönbok enligt den Syrisk-ortodoxa kyrkan av Antiokia* (SOKU, 2016).

67 See, e.g., Mgr. Vahan Hovhannessian, *La Célébration de la Divine Liturgie, Badarak, dans l'Église Apostolique Arménienne: Explorons les racines de notre Église Apostolique Arménienne*, vol. 2 (Paris: Diocèse de France de l'église apostolique arménienne, 2019) and Rewis Anba Pola, *Mi Iglesia: la misa* (Cervera: Patriarcado de los coptos ortodoxos, 2014). On this topic, see further Sheklian in this volume.

with traditional and modern icons.⁶⁸ Sometimes, the texts are retold for a younger audience, combining different sources and historicizing the story.⁶⁹ The Coptic materials also include the stories of recent saints, along the lines of earlier hagiography, like those of Pape Cyril IV, the apparitions of Mary in Zeitoun, and the Libyan martyrs.⁷⁰ Some of these overlap with the historical genre, which often displays hagiographic tendencies when concerned with important church leaders.

In other genres, too, we find traditional texts that, through re-editions and republications, are brought back into circulation. In the *Scriptures* category, only a few of the publications more or less keep to the traditional forms, most clearly so a Gospel lectionary in Classical Syriac and a (Coptic) Book of Psalms in Arabic.⁷¹ Perhaps also a Syriac Peshitta or Arabic version of the whole Bible counts as such, even though this form – the whole Bible in one concise volume – is new to the Syriac and the Coptic traditions.⁷² Other publications in this category include translations for children, a two-column translation of the Gospels (Arabic and French), a vernacular Syriac Epistle lectionary, a translation of all the lections of the Syriac liturgy in German, and a few publications including biblical commentary – all of these new inflections of the genre of biblical literature.⁷³ The genres of ‘Theology’ and ‘Spirituality’ both consist of a mix of traditional texts (straightforward or adapted to modern readers in language and set-up) and new texts that build upon traditional texts. Here, the differences between the churches are significant, with the Copts having produced a range of new texts in both genres, whereas the Syriacs and Tewahdos appear to be more conservative in keeping to traditional texts.

The category of *History* so far contains only one traditional historical work. This is Barhebraeus’ *World History* or *Chronicon*, published by the Syriac press, which was named after this famous thirteenth-century author (Glane, 1987). All the other texts under History are new works, narrating the history of the churches in light of the contemporary period, explicating what of the past is deemed essential for today’s Oriental Christian identity. Three main themes characterise the works in this category. The first is the foregrounding of a concise version of the earliest history of the churches. All churches cherish their origin stories, and most

68 See, e.g., Eliyo Aydin (ed.), *Das Leben des Heiligen Jakob von Nisibis* (Glane: Bar ‘Ebroyo Verlag, 2008).

69 See *Die Heilige Hilaria Die Tochter des Königs Zinon* (St. Antonius Kloster: Kröffelbach, 2005).

70 See Fr. Rafael Ava Mina, Hanna Youssef Ata, *La Vie de Sa Sainteté le Pape Cyril VI* (Lausanne: Les fils de Pape Cyril VI 2002).

71 *Gospel Lectionary* (Glane: Bar ‘Ebroyo Verlag, 2010) and *The Book of Psalms* (Cairo: Mahabba Bookshop, 2003).

72 Cairo: The Bible Society of Egypt, 2015; see also Murre-van den Berg, “The Long-Term Influence of American Bible Translations in the Middle East,” *Cairo Journal of Theology* 3 (2016): 19–29 (<http://journal.etsc.org>).

73 For examples, see the database, under ‘Genre’ > ‘Scripture’.

churches have published works in European languages that capture this for contemporary audiences, young and old. The Austrian publication nicely summarises these, referring to the Coptic stories about the Holy Family's flight to Egypt and St. Mark's apostolate for the Copts, the Tewahdo identification with the stories about Menelik, the son of Solomon and the Queen of Sheba, and the first convert of the apostle Philip, the Armenian references to the apostolate of Bartholomew and Judas Thaddaeus (Jude) and the early state church of Armenia, and the Syriac pride in the Aramaic language of Jesus, the first Christians in Antioch and bishop St Ignatius.⁷⁴ These historical snippets – all related to biblical and early Christian periods – have come to stand for these churches' unquestionable early Christian credentials. Today, they form the backbone of a variety of historical works that, in various levels of detail, tell the history of the churches. Each of these churches, in different ways, emphasises their apostolic connection, early reception, and pure transmission of the Gospel and thus their legitimacy vis-à-vis each other as much as vis-à-vis the churches of Europe and the rest of the world. The second theme concerns recent pre-migration history. The same works that recount the earlier history often include chapters on the recent history in the homelands, with stories of discrimination, persecution, and genocide – thus explaining why these communities, or at least part of them, decided to leave their home countries. Sometimes distinct volumes are produced, especially with the Armenian and Syriac presses. The writing of the history of the 1915 genocide, spurred by the need to preserve this for the next generation, is also stimulated by the fact that in Turkey, writing about the genocide is restricted if not outright forbidden. Finally, we see a considerable amount of texts that relate to the history of migration and the establishment of communities in Europe. Often, these focus on establishing parishes and dioceses, documenting the building of a European church.⁷⁵

'Tradition', therefore, captures the fundamentally conservative nature of the textual practices of the Oriental churches, in the literal sense: in attempting to preserve for future generations what is the essence of being an Oriental Christian, of explaining what is needed (to 'do' and to 'know') to be a true Oriental Christian. At the same time, however, when focusing on *how* tradition is being transmitted, it becomes clear that renewal is omnipresent because, apart from a few rare exceptions, the traditional texts rarely are transmitted 'as is' – the textual corpus we are studying is both formative and transformative in relation to tradition. What this

⁷⁴ Aydin & Lanzinger, *Orientalische Kirchen*, 8–17.

⁷⁵ For examples, see under 'History', '(Auto)Biography' 'Mixed Genre' and 'News & Contemporary issues'; for a discussion of Syriac materials on the genocide, see also Murre-van den Berg, "Texts, Language, and Religion".

re-constitution and renewal of the tradition entails differs from subject to subject and from church to church. In liturgical texts, the continuity between past and present remains relatively strong, with change mostly restricted to translations, new and additional explanations, and the addition of new hymns. The breach with the past is much bigger in the writing of history, with new traditions being built up almost from scratch and whole new histories being written to include recent developments. Yet, the texts here reflect only part of the picture: some of the new stories may have been around orally for much longer than they have been written and printed, whereas liturgical practice regularly deviates from the texts in ways not being recorded in the texts.⁷⁶

Teaching

The most striking element of the textual production of the Oriental churches is the pervasive educational aspect in the materials that we have collected. Put differently: whereas parts of the collection are explicitly geared towards ritual use in the church and others are aimed at personal spiritual reflection, most publications are envisaged as teaching material. Explicitly, this is the case in many German-language publications, where state funding is often used for religious primary and secondary education. Many such materials are included in the database, among which is the example with which I started this contribution.⁷⁷ Other books in layout and text are clearly aimed at children or youth and are used in Sunday schools or other educational activities organised by the churches. However, the educational aspect is not restricted to explicitly educational textbooks. The overall educational intent shows how traditional contents are reframed and reformulated by adding introductory and explanatory materials (including illustrations) to the traditional texts and by re-telling traditional stories, beliefs, and practices to make them accessible to contemporary believers of all ages. Again, this might seem obvious for religious publications (of all religious groups), as to some extent inherent to the broader genre of ‘religious texts.’⁷⁸ However, when comparing this to the traditional literatures of the Oriental churches, the educational thrust entails a fundamental change that has shifted the focus of religious literature from that of religious specialists who write for each other, to texts that are primarily produced with the wider, non-specialist, public in mind. This wider

⁷⁶ See Bar-Sawme, this volume.

⁷⁷ Aydin & Lanzinger, *Orientalische Kirchen*, 2: „als Schulbuch für den orientalischo-orthodoxen Religionsunterricht herausgegeben im Auftrag der orientalischo-orthodoxen Kirchenkommission und approbiert am 26.03.2012.“

⁷⁸ See Pleizier, Huijgen en te Velde: “On the Construction of Religious Texts”.

public includes not only youth and adult laypersons who are interested but are not learned in the traditions of the church but also outsiders to the tradition, such as potential converts or those encountered in ecumenical contexts. Early traces of this move to the broader public of lay members of the church can be noticed in the materials from the sixteenth century onwards, especially in those of the Church of the East.⁷⁹ However, what was then an emerging and relatively small genre relative to the materials produced by learned clerics for other clerics now constitutes the majority of what is produced.

This move to the educational is best visible in the works we have subsumed under 'Religious teaching,' which at the moment constitutes the largest single group within the various genres. In comparison to some of the other genres, one is struck by the preponderance of European languages (English, French, Spanish, Italian, Dutch, Swedish, German) among these publications. When homeland languages are used, these are all contemporary languages, such as Modern Standard Arabic, Eastern or Western Armenian, Amharic, Tigre, or Tigrinya, rather than the classical liturgical languages of these churches. This suggests that these educational publications aim not only at younger generations or those from outside who do not read the classical languages but also at the older generations who are literate in the languages of the homelands and perhaps not yet as much in the languages of the home countries.

When we look at the type of educational materials that are subsumed here, there is a wide variety of subgenres, from books that retell the stories of the biblical and post-biblical saints (overlapping with Scripture and Hagiography), books that educate people about fasting or the sacraments, and books geared towards 'theology' proper, sometimes in the form of catechisms. Some of these catechisms are reprints or translations of catechisms of the first half of the twentieth century; others date to a later period.⁸⁰ The works of the Coptic Pope Shenouda III constitute a considerable subcategory among the educational materials. These have been translated into various European languages, with English, Dutch, French, Italian, Tigrinya, and Swedish represented in our collection. Most have been produced in Cairo and are easily recognizable by the same stylised drawing of St. Mark's Cathedral in Abbassiya, Cairo. Interestingly, some of these are not published by

⁷⁹ Murre-van den Berg, *Scribes and Scriptures*.

⁸⁰ See, e.g., the Syriac Orthodox catechism of Mor Ignatios Aphrem I Barsaum in Dutch translation: *Catechismus van de Syrisch-orthodoxe Kerk van Antiochië* (Glane: Bar 'Ebroyo Verlag, 2002) and Mgr. Vahan Hovhanessian, *Catéchisme Abrégé De L'Église Apostolique Arménienne Pour Les Adolescents: Explorons les racines de notre Église Apostolique Arménienne*, vol. 4 (Paris: Diocèse de France de l'église apostolique arménienne, 2019).

Copts but by Tewahdo Christians (those in Tigrinya) or by Syriac Orthodox Christians, like the one in which Shenouda argues against the teachings of the Jehovah's Witnesses.⁸¹ Despite occasional polemic works or paragraphs (such as in the last example), these publications are mostly set in a positive tone that would not endanger relations with the major churches of the countries of migration.

However, it is especially in the genres that I discussed in more detail under 'Tradition' that the educational thrust becomes particularly visible. Here, the publications are not necessarily produced for an educational setting, but yet display clear didactic aims. This is true for liturgical publications, where paratexts such as introductions, translations, and commentaries help modern readers, most of which are not clerically trained, to understand what is going on. Additionally, these paratexts suggest how these readers can participate in ways that in the past were restricted to clergy but now are expected of all committed believers. As indicated above, hagiography fits into this educational trend and is published in ways that make the stories accessible to all believers. And finally, this is particularly true for the historical genre, which has greatly expanded over the past fifty years. It is here where this educational drive comes across as the most urgent, where authors feel committed to sharing their knowledge of the history of the larger community and their particular local or regional part of that history. If anything, migration has brought home the need to write history, to deal with the past – a story of pride as much as of suffering and expulsion – to be able to inscribe oneself as part of Europe's past, present, and future.

Conclusion

The preliminary analysis of the materials that have been collected so far indicates that though there are obvious differences between the churches of the Oriental tradition, there is much that they share. These similarities may be summarised under the shorthand "teaching tradition transnationally." How this maxim takes form, however, differs from church to church and from country to country: the actual types of publication, the role of European versus homeland publishers, the role of clergy versus laity and lay experts, and the role of liturgical languages vis-à-vis homeland and European languages. In further publications, project members will show how, among other things, the political contexts of home- and host countries have played a considerable role in determining the outcome of similar

⁸¹ Pope Shenouda, *Jehovas vittnen och deras irrlära* (Sweden, 1996); note that also the original Arabic, French and English publications are distributed among non-Copts, see, e.g., the Tewahdo website tewahedo.dk > Litteratur (which hosts pdfs of the English series).

initiatives. Other differences are rooted in distinct migration histories and the impact of transnational communal dynamics, including the power (or the absence of it) of homeland politicians and clergy over the diaspora.

The main aim of this paper, however, was to show that it is indeed possible to write a common history of Oriental communities in Europe through their publication practices. Indeed, similar Christian theologies, largely parallel migration histories, and comparable publication strategies allow for various avenues of comparison. At first sight, much of what is common seems to be a matter of similar responses to similar challenges born from similar starting points. What is dear to Oriental Christians is shared and published, taught and transmitted, without concerted efforts to calibrate amongst the various Oriental churches. However, similarities also arise from commonalities. There are signs that common ground between those churches is gradually emerging in Europe and elsewhere. This is often stimulated by local or national politics of recognition: in many countries, it is easier to gain governmental support when forces are joined into an 'Orthodox' or 'Oriental Orthodox' group that advocates on behalf of all the churches. The publication which was described in the initial paragraph originates in such a context, in which internal and external forces stimulated a concerted effort to portray the 'Oriental Christians' as one group vis-à-vis other (Eastern) Orthodox churches on the one hand and other Christians (esp. Catholics and Protestants) on the other. Our corpus shows, however, that such pragmatic ecumenism is only one part of the story. It is likely, for example, that the success of Pope Shenouda's publications – among Copts and non-Copts alike – stimulated other clergy to try their pen at similar texts. The attempts to make the Syriac Orthodox *Shḥimo* available to the larger Syriac Orthodox public seem to be patterned on the success of the *Agpeija* among the Copts, whereas, vice versa, the active European publishing policy of the Syriac Orthodox might have spurred clerics of other churches to do likewise. As a final example, we note websites such as that of a Tewahdo church and a Syriac Orthodox Church in Sweden, which advertise not only publications of their own church but also those of others – suggesting that as to 'what one should read' other (mainly Eastern) Orthodox materials are just as legitimate as those from one's own church.⁸²

Above all, I hope we have showed – in this final contribution, and in the volume as a whole – how books remain important in the Oriental churches. Books are produced and cherished for their ability to solidify and transmit faith and knowledge,

⁸² See Syrisk-Orthodoxa Ungdomsförbundet: //souf.nu/shop > shop (last seen dd 25/7/23). For the Tewahdo, see previous note.

religious practice, and religious belonging, while remaining versatile and portable – as much and as easily as a community on the move needs. Whereas new media have been widely accepted and integrated in the flexible toolbox available for religious mediation, books have retained their centrality in religious thought and religious practice, deserving our full attention. And in this, perhaps, the Oriental Churches are not so different from many other religious communities, Christian and otherwise, and not so different from all communities that put high stakes on transmitting a living and ever-expanding textual tradition to a new generation. Among which, of course, is the learned community of scholars.

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