CHAPTER 1

Syriac Florilegia and Patristic Christianity beyond East and West

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Scholarship has recently come to see Late Antiquity as a Eurasian "Denkraum",[1] an epistemic space stretching over Syria, Mesopotamia, Iran, and the Caucasus as well as Palestine and the Arabian Peninsula; recent hypotheses expand it chronologically until 1000 CE.[2] This periodization, together with this broad Eurasian scope, suitably account for a range of religious, cultural, and intellectual phenomena that cross-fertilized the area.[3] Within this broader space, people, ideas, and religious identities were entangled in intellectual continuums and religious divides. Patristic Christianity was one of the major enduring cultural patterns of this long Late Antiquity;[4] the canonization of textual authorities is one of the common cultural forms shared by the Abrahamic religion in the area, and "Patristic Christianity", a process of "canonization of the Church Fathers",[5] is one of its manifestations.

1 Nora K. Schmid, Nora Schmidt, and Angelika Neuwirth, "Spätantike. Von einer Epoche zu einem Denkraum," in *Denkraum Spätantike. Reflexionen von Antiken im Umfeld des Koran* (ed. N. Schmidt, N.K. Schmid, and A. Neuwirth; Episteme in Bewegung 5; Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2016), 1–35.

2 Garth Fowden, *Before and after Muḥammad. The First Millennium Refocused* (Princeton-Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2014).

3 See Garth Fowden et al., "The First Millennium Refocused: Eine Debatte," *Millennium* 13 (2016), 3–64.

4 As persuasively suggested by Fowden, *Before and after Muḥammad*, 181–188.

5 This phenomenon has been the focus of increasing scholarly attention in the last decades. See Patrick Gray, " 'The Select Fathers': Canonizing the Patristic Past," *SP* 23 (1989): 21–36; Thomas Graumann, *Die Kirche der Väter. Vätertheologie und Väterbeweis in den Kirchen des Ostens bis zum Konzil von Ephesus (431)* (Beiträge zur historischen Theologie 118; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2002); Yonatan Moss, " 'Packed with Patristic Testimonies': Severus of Antioch and the Reinvention of the Church Fathers," in *Between Personal and Institutional Religion: Self, Doctrine, and Practice in Late Antique Eastern Christianity* (ed. B. Bitton-Ashkelony and L. Perrone; Cultural Encounters in Late Antiquity and the Middle Ages 15; Turnhout: Brepols, 2013), 227–250; Yonatan Moss, "The Rise and Function of the Holy Text in Late Antiquity: Severus of Antioch, the Babylonian Talmud, and Beyond," in *Patristic Studies in the Twenty-First Century: Proceedings of an International Conference to Mark the 50th Anniversary of the*

Patristic Christianity, when seen in this broader perspective, was the object of intensive transfer and renegotiation processes between different Christian cultures within the epistemic space of Late Antiquity. The passage of patristic knowledge from Greek to Syriac and Arabic was the most relevant episode of patristic transfer in the Late Antique world, albeit not the only one. Indeed, two crucial knowledge transfer pathways in the area were the interaction between Greek and Syriac Christian cultures (fourth–seventh century), and the later contacts between Syriac Christianity and Islam (seventh–tenth century). The latter phase saw the formation of an Arabic-speaking Syriac Christian culture as part of the multicultural environment known as "the Islamicate world".[6] Indeed, around the end of the first millennium, both East Syrian and West Syrian intellectuals were integrated members of early Abbasid society, sometimes belonging to its highest elite, and their intellectual confrontation with Muslim scholars and rulers was intense.

The approach of the present volume to Syriac patristic Christianity does presuppose a first-millennium focus, 1) because the Syriac evolution and transformation of the Greek "fathers" as a corpus of authoritative thinkers is comprised fairly precisely within that time period; 2) although other Eastern Christian cultures (Coptic, Armenian, Georgian, Slavonic, Ethiopic, Arabic Melkite) experienced analogous developments of patristic canonization, the Syro-Arabic line is particularly relevant, for it builds the most exemplary bridge between the two poles of a first-millennium perspective on Late Antiquity, that is, from Greek patristic literature up until the year 600 to the Syro-Arabic writers of the ripe Abbasid era (ninth–tenth century), while hinging substantially on the central role of the Syriac rearrangement of Greek patristic literature.

1 The 'Allelopoietic' Approach to Patristic Christianity in Syriac

The idea of this volume originates from the perception of two complementary lacunae in contemporary approaches to the study of Eastern patristic Christianity. On the one hand, the attitude of Syriac and Arabic Christian cultures towards Greek Christian thought has been too often treated with a "Grecocentric" approach, as if they had been only or mostly mere "recipients" of Greek patristic literature; the specific creative contribution of the Eastern cultures

International Association of Patristic Studies (ed. C. Harrison, B. Bitton-Ashkelony, and T. de Bruyn. Turnhout: Brepols, 2015), 521–546.

6 For a definition, see Camilla Adang, Meira Polliack, and Sabine Schmidtke, "Introduction," *Intellectual History of the Islamicate World* 1 (2013): 1–5.

in this field has been mostly overlooked (with the exception, e.g., of Sebastian Brock,[7] although in a recent work he focuses again on the "Hellenization" of these cultures).[8] On the other hand, scholarship has tended to disregard a pervasive literary form of Syriac literature, the patristic florilegia and miscellanies. Although artifacts of this kind represent, e.g., 40% of the Syriac manuscripts of the British Library,[9] they have been almost completely overlooked in the last 150 years, apart from an important recent study[10] and a few older works.[11]

As far as the first lacuna is concerned, it is well known that integral translations of Greek patristic writings were particularly lively between the fourth and seventh century, with a blooming in the sixth and seventh century. However, this phenomenon was relatively short-lived, as also attested by the relative paucity of extant manuscripts containing integral patristic translations, and by the early date of many among them.[12] This translation literature is far from understudied,[13] as the penetration of Late Antique Greek Christian thought into Syriac culture enjoyed scholarly interest throughout the twentieth century. Scholars mainly and comprehensibly focused their attention on capital

7 Sebastian P. Brock, "From Antagonism to Assimilation: Syriac Attitudes to Greek Learning," in *East of Byzantium: Syria and Armenia in the Formative Period. Dumbarton Oaks Symposium, 1980* (ed. N. Garsoïan, T.F. Mathews, and R.W. Thomson; Washington, DC: Dumbarton Oaks, 1982), 17–34.

8 Sebastian P. Brock, "Charting the Hellenization of a Literary Culture: The Case of Syriac," *Intellectual History of the Islamicate World* 3 (2015): 98–124.

9 David Michelson, "Mixed Up by Time and Chance? Using Digital Media to 'Re-Orient' the Syriac Religious Literature of Late Antiquity," *Journal of Religion, Media and Digital Culture* 5 (2016): 136–182, here 154–155.

10 Grigory Kessel, "Syriac Monastic Miscellanies," in *Comparative Oriental Manuscript Studies. An Introduction* (ed. A. Bausi et al. Hamburg: COMSt, 2015), 411–414.

11 E.g. Herman G.B. Teule, "Les compilations monastiques syriaques," in *Symposium Syriacum VII: Uppsala University, Department of Asian and African Languages, 11–14 August 1996* (ed. R. Lavenant; OCA 256; Roma: Pontificio Istituto Orientale, 1998), 249–264, and numerous articles by Albert Van Roey (see bibliography).

12 Sebastian P. Brock, "L'apport des Pères grecs à la littérature syriaque," in *Les Pères grecs dans la tradition syriaque* (ed. A. Schmidt and D. Gonnet; ES 4; Paris: Geuthner, 2007), 9–26.

13 From Sebastian P. Brock, "Aspects of Translation Technique in Antiquity," *Greek, Roman, and Byzantine Studies* 20 (1979): 69–87, and Sebastian P. Brock, "Towards a History of Syriac Translation Technique," in *III Symposium Syriacum, 1980: Les contacts du monde syriaque avec les autres cultures* (*Goslar 7–11 Septembre 1980*) (ed. R. Lavenant; OCA 221; Roma: Pontificio Istituto Orientale, 1983), 1–14 to Adam C. McCollum, "Greek Literature in the Christian East: Translations into Syriac, Georgian, and Armenian," *Intellectual History of the Islamicate World* 3 (2015): 15–65. See also Daniel King, *The Syriac Versions of the Writings of Cyril of Alexandria: A Study in Translation Technique* (CSCO 626, Subsidia 123; Leuven: Peeters, 2008).

texts whose Greek original is lost, e.g., the *Chapters on Knowledge* of Evagrius of Pontus.[14] Other Syriac translations of Greek works were studied, among other reasons, because of their value for the establishment of the Greek critical text, since manuscripts that transmit the Syriac versions are often more ancient than the whole Greek manuscript tradition. This is the case for the writings of Dionysius the Areopagite (sixth century): the first witness of these writings is not in Greek, but in Syriac.[15] Nevertheless, the study of these patristic versions has been completely unilateral so far, for it has exclusively hinged on what the Syriac translations tell us about the ancient form of the Greek texts, as Joseph-Marie Sauget did in 1978.[16] There has been no dramatic change in this one-sided approach for the last forty years. As a result, the specificity of the Syriac "patristic attitude", which is a seminal feature of all Late Antique Christian cultures on a first-millennium scale, has only rarely been given any attention. Hints have recently emerged, however, at the perceived necessity of a broader approach to the study of Patristic Christianity "beyond East and West",[17] and thus from an entangled intercultural perspective within a first millennium periodization.

Syriac Christianity was transformed by its assimilation of Greek patristic literature, but the latter became something else in its Syriac form. What took place was not only a "Hellenization" of Syriac and Arabic Christian cultures, but also a "Syriacization" and "Arabization" of Greek patristic culture. Recent studies on knowledge transfer between different cultures term this kind of exchange *allelopoiesis*, i.e., a reciprocal creative transformation between cultures.[18] The allelopoietic approach is particularly suited to the intercultural study of patristics, since it aims at understanding *how and why* an original contribution is concretely manifested. In our case, we look at how Syriac and Arabic Christianity contributed to the recreation of Greek patristic literature. Based on such an approach, we ask the following questions: how did Syriac

14 A survey in Muriel Debié and Dominique Gonnet, "Les Pères disparus en grec," in *Les Pères grecs dans la tradition syriaque* (ed. A. Schmidt and D. Gonnet; ES 4; Paris: Geuthner, 2007), 127–148.

15 See Emiliano Fiori, ed., *Dionigi Areopagita. Nomi divini, teologia mistica, epistole. La versione siriaca di Sergio di Rēšʿaynā (VI secolo)* (2 vols.; CSCO 656–657, Scriptores Syri 252–253; Louvain: Peeters, 2014).

16 Joseph-Marie Sauget, "L'apport des traductions syriaques pour la patristique grecque," *Revue de théologie et de philosophie* 110 (1978): 139–148.

17 Columba Stewart, "Patristics beyond East and West," in *Patristic Studies in the Twenty-First Century* (ed. C. Harrison, B. Bitton-Ashkelony, and T. de Bruyn; Turnhout: Brepols, 2015), 317–341.

18 The term allelopoiesis was proposed by Lutz Bergemann, Hartmut Böhme, Martin Dönike et al., eds., *Transformation. Ein Konzept zur Erforschung kulturellen Wandels* (München: Wilhelm Fink, 2011).

Christians give shape to the patristic patrimony they received? Why and in what forms did they, and later the Christian Arabic writers, select, transform, and make the Greek "fathers" *their own* fathers? What are the themes and the patterns around which they organized their reading of the fathers? How did their reorganization contribute to the production of new knowledge?

2 Syriac Patristic Florilegia as Creative Laboratories of Knowledge

Since not much attention has been paid to the originality of the Syriac reading of the "fathers", patristic florilegia—one of the places where this originality most eminently manifests—have also been understudied. This brings us to the second lacuna mentioned above. From the sixth century onwards, florilegia progressively became a prominent (though certainly not the exclusive)[19] and, in some cases, the predominant form used by Syriac and Christian Arabic intellectuals to reshape Greek Christian thought, and thus produce new knowledge by selecting and rearranging patristic literature in new collections. Although they did not stop reading integral patristic texts, they largely privileged the florilegium and other types of collections.

Important progress has been made in recent years in the study of manuscripts containing a plurality of texts, and a broad phenomenology has recently been proposed of "reading in excerpts" as a knowledge-organizing practice, which extends across many cultures and covers fields ranging from Egyptology to Late Western Medieval philosophy.[20] Greek Byzantine,[21] Coptic,[22]

19 Integral translations of major works, like Gregory of Nazianzus' Homilies or Dionysius the Areopagite's Corpus, continued to be read as a whole. As far as collections are concerned, also homiliaries had great importance (see the reference work by Albert Ehrhard, *Überlieferung und Bestand der hagiographischen und homiletischen Literatur der griechischen Kirche* [3 vols., Leipzig: Hinrichs, 1937–1952]). On Syriac homiliaries see especially the studies collected in Joseph-Marie Sauget, *Littératures et manuscrits des chrétientés syriaques et arabes* (Studi e Testi 389; Città del Vaticano: Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, 1998): homiliaries, however, did not collect excerpts as florilegia did, but rather integral homiletic texts.

20 Sébastien Morlet, ed., *Lire en extraits. Lecture et production des textes de l'Antiquité à la fin du Moyen Âge* (Cultures et civilisations médiévales 63; Paris: PUPS, 2015); Jacqueline Hamesse, " 'Florilège' et 'autorité': deux concepts en évolution depuis l'Antiquité jusqu'à la Renaissance," in *On Good Authority. Tradition, Compilation, and the Construction of Authority in Literature from Antiquity to the Renaissance* (ed. R. Ceulemans and P. De Leemans; Lectio 3; Turnhout: Brepols, 2015, 199–225; the whole volume edited by Ceulemans and De Leemans is interesting and relevant in this regard).

21 E.g. Alexandros Alexakis, *Codex Parisinus Graecus 1115 and its Archetype* (Dumbarton Oaks Studies 34; Washington, DC: Dumbarton Oaks Research Library and Collection, 1996).

22 Paola Buzi, "Miscellanee e florilegi. Osservazioni preliminari per uno studio dei codici

Ethiopic,[23] and Slavic[24] studies have especially enjoyed this scholarly rush. Terminological definitions and cataloguing methods have been established, while codicological issues have been investigated.[25] Manuscripts containing a plurality of texts have been defined as "multiple-text manuscripts", the study of which is a field in rapid and constant expansion.[26] Alessandro Bausi[27] introduced the concept of "corpus", i.e. the totality of the texts and excerpts of texts available to a written culture that are rearranged and crystallized in ever-new multiple-text combinations. Every time discrete excerpts or source blocks are extracted from the textual corpus of a culture, they undergo ever different assemblages

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copti pluritestuali: il caso delle raccolte di excerpta," in *Christianity in Egypt: Literary Production and Intellectual Trends. Studies in Honor of Tito Orlandi* (ed. P. Buzi and A. Camplani; Studia Ephemeridis Augustinianum 125; Roma: Institutum Patristicum Augustinianum, 2011), 177–203; Paola Buzi, "From Single Text to Multiple Text Manuscripts: Transmission Changes in Coptic Literary Tradition. Some Case-Studies from the White Monastery Library," in *One-Volume Libraries—Composite and Multiple-Text Manuscripts* (ed. M. Friedrich and C. Schwarke; Studies in Manuscript Cultures 9; Berlin: De Gruyter, 2016), 93–109.

23 Alessandro Bausi, "A Case for Multiple Text Manuscripts Being Corpus Organizers," *Manuscript Cultures Newsletter* 3 (2010): 34–36; Alessandro Bausi, "Composite and Multiple-Text Manuscripts: The Ethiopian Evidence," in *One-Volume Libraries—Composite and Multiple-Text Manuscripts* (ed. M. Friedrich and C. Schwarke; Studies in Manuscript Cultures 9; Berlin: De Gruyter, 2016), 111–153.

24 David J. Birnbaum, "Computer-Assisted Analysis and Study of the Structure of Mixed-Content Miscellanies," *Scripta & e-Scripta* 1 (2003): 15–54; Anisava Miltenova, "Intertextuality in the Orthodox Slavic Tradition. The Case of Mixed-Content Miscellanies," in *Between Text and Text: International Symposium on Intertextuality in Ancient Near Eastern, Ancient Mediterranean, and Early Medieval Literatures* (ed. M. Bauks, W. Horowitz, and A. Lange; Journal of Ancient Judaism. Supplements 6; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht, 2013), 314–327.

25 See e.g. Marilena Maniaci, "Il codice greco 'non unitario'. Tipologie e terminologia," in *Il codice miscellaneo, tipologia e funzioni. Atti del convegno internazionale* (*Cassino, 14–17 maggio 2003*) (ed. E. Crisci and O. Pecere; Segno e testo 2; Turnhout: Brepols, 2004), 75–107; Patrick Andrist, "La descrizione scientifica dei manoscritti complessi: fra teoria e pratica," *Segno e testo* 4 (2006): 299–356.

26 As attested by, among others, Michael Friedrich and Cosima Schwarke, eds., *One-Volume Libraries—Composite and Multiple-Text Manuscripts* (Studies in Manuscript Cultures 9; Berlin: De Gruyter, 2016). See also Stephan Dusil, Gerald Schwedler, and Raphael Schwitter, eds., *Exzerpieren—Kompilieren—Tradieren: Transformationen des Wissens zwischen Spätantike und Frühmittelalter* (Millennium-Studien 64; Berlin: De Gruyter, 2017); Marrietta Horster and Christiane Reitz, eds., *Condensing Texts—Condensed Texts* (Palingenesia 98; Stuttgart: Franz Steiner, 2010). Multiple-text manuscripts can be either composite, i.e. consisting of codicological units of different provenance, or unitary, i.e. consisting of a single codicological unit.

27 Bausi, "A Case."

within each new collection. From the point of view of its contents, a multiple-text manuscript contains diverse writings that are not by the same author and do not belong to the same work. This textual plurality can take up the form of a florilegium, which can be defined as a collection of *excerpts* from writings by different authors. These excerpts are often mistakenly called "fragments", but such a denomination tends to obliterate the creative act of selection (the excerption) that lies at the ground of these anthologies.

Although they are among the most ancient extant Christian florilegia, and abundant in number, Syriac patristic florilegia have remained largely untapped and untouched by this methodological renewal. A serious philological and hermeneutical approach to these texts has so far remained a desideratum in the field of Syriac studies. Such an approach is all the more desirable since, as Marilena Maniaci has rightly pointed out, in florilegia the "juxtapositions of textual units" are "bound together by a more or less tenuous line".[28] Even if this line is admittedly difficult to find in some of the extant Syriac florilegia, many of them do bear witness to a high degree of organization of the sources. The excerpts in the latter type of florilegia are not merely juxtaposed but organized around specific topics in "patchwork-treatises" with clear overall aims; as such, they vividly reflect a coherent editorial project on the part of the compiler. Thus, it is particularly regrettable that so far Syriac florilegia have mostly been treated as mere juxtapositions of texts by scholars of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, who pillaged them by picking and publishing some interesting passages of works whose Greek original is lost.[29]

Therefore, the main objective of the present volume is to outline a phenomenology of Syriac patristic florilegia and map their diffusion and relevance in time and space, from the sixth to the eleventh century and from the Roman Empire to China. In order to do this, it has been indispensable to study them in their own right, i.e., as specific cultural products with their own textual-

28 Maniaci, "Il codice greco," 84.

29 A representative, though certainly not exhaustive list can include the following: Ernest W. Brooks, ed., *A Collection of Letters of Severus of Antioch from Numerous Syriac Manuscripts* (PO 12.2, 14.1; Paris: Firmin-Didot, 1915, 1920); Paul A. De Lagarde, ed., *Analecta syriaca* (Leipzig: B.G. Teubner, 1858); Friedrich Loofs, *Nestoriana: Die Fragmente des Nestorius gesammelt, untersucht und herausgegeben* (Halle an der Saale: Max Niemeyer, 1905); Jean-Pierre P. Martin, *Analecta sacra Patrum Antenicænorum ex codicibus orientalibus*. Analecta sacra spicilegio Solesmensi parata. Tomus 4: Patres Antenicæni. (Paris: Ex publico Galliarum typographeo, 1883); Eduard Sachau, ed., *Theodori Mopsuesteni fragmenta syriaca e codicibus Musei Britannici Nitriacis* (Leipzig: W. Engelmann, 1869); Eduard Sachau, ed., *Inedita Syriaca: Eine Sammlung syrischer Übersetzungen von Schriften griechischer Profanliteratur, mit einem Anhang, aus den Handschriften des Brittischen Museums herausgegeben* (Wien: K.K. Hof- und Staatsdruckerei, 1870).

ity. This approach has enabled us to appreciate what florilegia were for Syriac culture: laboratories of knowledge, where the selection, rearrangement, codification and transformation of old patristic sources—and in some cases their canonization—were prompted by new religious and intellectual needs, most often within the entangled cultural world of the Islamic Middle East.

3 Typological and Phenomenological Outlines

From a diachronic point of view, Syriac patristic florilegia mostly stem from the two pivotal periods of Syriac Christianity. One is the Byzantine phase (sixth–seventh centuries), in which florilegia were produced by Syriac Christians in a context of Greco-Syriac bilingualism within the borders of the Roman Empire, and the other is the Abbasid phase (eighth–tenth centuries), in which the Islamic environment and the confrontation between different Syriac Churches were among the main factors determining the production of florilegia.

From a typological standpoint, patristic florilegia (not only Syriac but Christian florilegia at large) can be divided into three major categories:

– the exegetical florilegium, a rather rare type of patristic anthology in Syriac, an example of which is illustrated by Marion Pragt in the present volume;[30]
– the ascetical florilegium,[31] certainly the most frequent type, which mostly contains works on ascetic topics and is investigated here by Grigory Kessel and Vittorio Berti, who both further expand their research beyond the genre of the florilegium;
– the speculative florilegium (defined as "dogmatic florilegium" by Marcel Richard),[32] usually aimed at the refutation of heresies, and sometimes accompanied by excerpts from translated Greek philosophical works, which is the focus of the chapters written by Flavia Ruani, Emiliano Fiori, Bishara Ebeid, and Herman G.B. Teule.

We should also mention the collections of biblical testimonia explored in Sergey Minov's chapter. This literary genre can be regarded as a precursor of florilegia and, arguably, an immediate model for them. Testimonia were collected

30 See Bas ter Haar Romeny, "The Identity Formation of Syrian Orthodox Christians as Reflected in Two Exegetical Collections: First Soundings," *PdO* 29 (2004): 103–121; Bas ter Haar Romeny, "Les florilèges exégétiques syriaques," in *Les Pères grecs dans la tradition syriaque* (ed. A. Schmidt and D. Gonnet; ES 4; Paris: Geuthner, 2007), 63–76.

31 Teule, "Les compilations;" Kessel, "Syriac Monastic Miscellanies."

32 Marcel Richard, "Notes sur les florilèges dogmatiques du Ve et du VIe siècle," in *Actes du VIe Congrès international d'Études byzantines* (*Paris, 27 juillet–2 aout 1948*), I (Paris: École des Hautes Études, 1950), 307–318. Repr. as n. 2 in id., *Opera minora* I (Turnhout: Brepols, 1976).

scriptural quotations which Christians gathered and organized thematically for apologetic and polemic purposes against Jews and (to a lesser extent) pagans. They emerged as early as the second century and enjoyed considerable popularity during Late Antiquity. However, despite the existence of these exclusively biblical collections, the Bible and the Fathers do not seem to be theoretically distinguished within florilegia, where it often happens that the biblical text is quoted along with a stream of patristic citations; indeed, the same terminology is used for both, "testimonia" or "demonstrations" (ܣܗܕܘܬܐ or ܡܚܘܬܐ). The underlying idea is that a transhistorical truth cannot but remain stable from the Bible to whatever age in the history of theology.

Syriac florilegia raise a number of questions that are only partially specific to them.[33] In some cases, such as the monastic miscellanies, a florilegium overlaps with a single manuscript (Kessel's chapter in this volume illustrates this point well).[34] Contrariwise, we can observe that many florilegia—especially dogmatic and, more rarely, exegetical ones (the Collection of Simeon, marginally touched upon in Pragt's chapter)—have their own manuscript tradition preserved in more than one multiple-text manuscript. At any rate, florilegia are rather unstable artifacts, subject to both expansion, by the addition of texts, and/or contraction, by means of abridgment. What, then, is the degree of textuality of florilegia? How strong is it? Can they always be defined as texts in their own right? How should they be approached in terms of a critical edition? This most general question can only be answered by tackling other broad questions, shown below.

a. What appears to be most difficult is determining how the sources from the original works made their way to the florilegia. Some chapters in this volume (especially Fiori's and Ruani's) show that we might get a clue from blocks of excerpts that travel from one text to another rather than from single excerpts; however, single excerpts may be useful when

33 The following part of the paragraph repeats, develops, and rearranges remarks that had already appeared in Emiliano Fiori, "Conference report: *Florilegia Syriaca. Mapping a Knowledge-Organizing Practice in the Syriac World, Ca' Foscari University of Venice, 30 January–1 February 2020*," *COMSt Bulletin* 6:1 (2020): 93–110.

34 Indeed, in the definition quoted above (see note 28), Maniaci maintains that florilegia are "bound together by a more or less tenuous line that is not sufficient to cause a new stable tradition to take place" (Maniaci, "Il codice greco," 84). She assumes that even if the same texts or blocks of texts do recur, their arrangement in each collection is a unicum transmitted by a single manuscript, which never reappears in an identical way. Thus, florilegia would seem to defy traditional philology, since they cannot always be investigated with the traditional stemmatic method that locates every manuscript along well-defined lines of derivation. They have no identical models, nor are they the origin of faithful copies. This uniqueness of florilegia, however, is not an absolute rule, as we will immediately see.

they feature typical but decisive characteristics such as interruptions with ܘܬܘܒ ("and again"), ܒܬܪ ܩܠܝܠ ("after a while"), and others. In one case, as pointed out by Moss in his chapter, we are so fortunate as to observe the process of excerpt selection in the making; marginal signs and glosses to a continuous, integral text sometimes clearly indicate the intention of the Syriac reader to isolate some passages which indeed are later found as excerpts in florilegia. Since glosses are often present in many Syriac manuscripts, and they are rather uncharted territory as well, we should consider mapping them more carefully when studying florilegia. However, we can also observe some florilegia that have other florilegia as their source, not the original texts from which excerpts are drawn. Such florilegia thus appear to be of a second (or even third) degree. In fact, glosses also appear in florilegia manuscripts themselves, which thus also bear witness to an ongoing activity of reading and elaboration even once the florilegia had reached a relatively stable form.

b. In order to assess the internal coherence and agenda of a florilegium, it is also crucial to determine its historical context, wherever possible, especially through the reading of all possible sources touching upon the themes of the florilegium at hand and belonging to its presumable age. Therefore, determining compilation practices requires working on the fine details (see next point) as well as the big picture.

c. Many manuscripts containing florilegia include more than one, and some contain florilegia exclusively. One can even think of the term "metaflorilegium" to define such manuscripts, but this prospective category will require further elaboration. If we apply it to any manuscript containing a plurality of florilegia, it risks being an empty category; it may rather be useful to apply it to manuscripts in which the florilegia are bound together by a recognizable agenda or thematic thread.

These general remarks highlight how Syriac florilegia pose problems common to all other compilation traditions in the Late Antique and Medieval Mediterranean and beyond. That being the case, one cannot pursue the study of Syriac florilegia without considering the developments of more advanced fields, such as the most recent scholarship on Greek Byzantine and Latin Medieval studies on multiple-text manuscripts.

Let us now turn to an overview of the individual contributions of this volume.[35]

35 This paragraph is an abridged and reworked version of the COMST Bulletin report (see note 33), and partially relies on the abstracts of the papers given at the first FLOS workshop (see below).

4 The Present Volume: An Overview

Sergey Minov's paper deals with a collection of biblical *testimonia*, and therefore opens the volume with good reason. Minov discusses how this genre was still operative during the early Islamic period among Syriac-speaking Christians. The primary focus of his investigation is an unpublished Syriac work, entitled *Collection of Demonstrations from the Old Testament against the Jews and Other Unbelievers*, which is attested in a single West Syriac manuscript (London, British Library Add. 12154) dated to sometime between the eighth and ninth century. He addresses the question of whether this composition stands in a direct genetic relation with the early specimen of the Greek *testimonia* literature, or whether it should be regarded as an original compilation, produced in a Syriac-speaking milieu. The chapter also discusses the question of a possible social and religious function of this text during the early Abbasid period, as well as its relation to the rich tradition of Syriac florilegia of this period.

In his chapter, Yonatan Moss tackles some core methodological questions of the volume. Why did the florilegium become a predominant mode of organizing, transmitting, and creating knowledge in the Syriac world? How did the process of selection from larger texts, and compilation in florilegia, work in practice? Moss' proposal to explore these overarching questions is highly concrete. He asks whether there are any material traces of the selection and extraction processes of individual passages from the continuous texts and their incorporation into the florilegia. Moss precisely finds such traces in at least one continuous sixth-century manuscript—London, British Library Add. 14567—which contains "minor" works by John Chrysostom, in conjunction with several of the later theological florilegia. BL Add. 14567 comes with dozens of scribal notes appearing in the margins and serving a variety of functions. Structurally, the link between the marginal notations and the main body of the text in this manuscript has the same function as that between headings to excerpts and the excerpts themselves in the florilegia. But there is more. Moss tracks down several cases of word-for-word identity between notations found in BL Add. 14567 and headings found in subsequent florilegia, both referring to the same texts. This would seem to open a window unto one of the concrete processes through which the late ancient and early medieval Syriac florilegia were formed.

Marion Pragt's chapter explores the organization of exegetical knowledge in two West Syriac collections. These are the so-called London Collection (seventh century, extant in one single manuscript of the eighth–ninth century, London, British Library Add. 12168), and the Collection of Simeon (Città del Vaticano, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana Syr. 103 and London, British Library Add. 12144). Her focus is on the reception of Gregory of Nyssa's *Homilies on the Song of*

Songs in both collections. Gregory's *Homilies* circulated in Syriac in both full and abbreviated versions, which have not yet been edited or fully studied, and became one of the main sources for Syriac interpretations of the Song. In the London Collection and the Collection of Simeon, the compilers operated in two ways; they abridged texts from individual authors (Gregory of Nyssa's Homilies on the Song of Songs) while they also added extracts selected from various works. Pragt examines how the *Homilies* were abbreviated and organized, in what different ways Gregory and other authors were used and what this may reveal about the compilers' aims and interests.

In her chapter, Flavia Ruani studies the content and form of florilegia as part of the Syriac heresiological tradition. These often bear the title of *Demonstrations from the Fathers against Heresies*, and their main goal is to refute the opinions of a variety of adversaries (Julianists, Nestorians, etc.). Furthermore, they both adopt and adapt a structural way of refutation going back to classical heresiology (starting in the second century in Greek), which consists of quoting excerpts either from the adversaries themselves, for the sake of refutation, or from previous Church authorities, in support of specific arguments. As one way to understand the polemical nature of the florilegia as constructed texts with their own editorial intention, Ruani suggests that we study the use they make of previous heresiological works. Firstly, the chapter offers an overview of the heresiological sources quoted in the florilegia, which come from the Syriac and Greek traditions. Such a survey allows us to understand which texts were in circulation and available to the authors of the florilegia in Upper Mesopotamia in the seventh–tenth century, and which were deemed relevant. The main part of the chapter focuses on two of them. These are the *Panarion* by Epiphanius of Salamis, and Ephrem of Nisibis' heresiological works, namely, the *Prose Refutations against Mani, Marcion and Bardaisan* and the *Hymns against Heresies*. After offering a survey of the quotations from these sources, she concentrates on a close reading of the selection, organization, and content of these excerpts, including the textual modifications they may have undergone and the contexts in which they were received. Finally, the chapter broadens its scope to previous, contemporary, and later authors and texts that quote the same sources. Comparisons are drawn, for example, with Philoxenus of Mabbug, Severus of Antioch, and Moses bar Kepha.

Emiliano Fiori's chapter presents a large Christological florilegium preserved in different manuscripts of the British Library and the Mingana collection. The florilegium, which expounds a Miaphysite Christology in 110 chapters and is mainly made up of quotations from Cyril of Alexandria and Severus of Antioch, discusses highly technical topics. An initial exploration of the patristic materials of this florilegium and of their itineraries through the centuries leads

Fiori to some provisional results concerning the context in which they were originally collected and the circumstances that may have prompted the production of the florilegium as we have it now. Much of what is discussed in the Christological florilegium in its current form was already present in some late sixth-century controversies between Miaphysites and Chalcedonians. These very topics emerged again in an age of renewed polemics that opposed Miaphysites to Chalcedonians, between the end of the Umayyad caliphate and the first decades of the ʿAbbasid rule. By investigating the reiterated emergence of these topics in Syriac Miaphysitism between the sixth and ninth century, Fiori illustrates the nature of the florilegium as an 'emergency kit' for Miaphysite apology against Chalcedonian adversaries, who were in the heyday of their power and influence, with the support of both the Roman Empire and the first Caliphs.

Bishara Ebeid concentrates on the apologetic writings on the Trinity and Christology of Abū Rāʾiṭah al-Takrītī, a Miaphysite theologian of the eighth–ninth centuries, who used Greek patristic authorities to answer the accusations of non-Miaphysite Christians as well as Muslims (with the latter group, of course, the references made to the Fathers are indirect). In the Christological controversies of the fifth and sixth centuries, Miaphysite authors like Severus of Antioch and Peter of Callinicum relied on the patristic heritage to prove that their doctrine was orthodox and in agreement with the Church Fathers. Two centuries later, the patristic quotations used by Severus, Peter, and other authors were further selected and reorganized in Christological and Trinitarian patristic florilegia. In his paper, Ebeid analyzes the use of the patristic tradition in some of Abū Rāʾiṭah's writings (*The first letter on the Holy Trinity*, *The letter against Melkites*, and *The apology on the Trisagion*) and demonstrates that the latter's knowledge of the Fathers' doctrine and the quotations and references he makes from their works, both directly and indirectly, are based on these Syriac dogmatic florilegia. Ebeid points to the highly relevant fact that Syriac florilegia had a multilingual life, whose impact extended beyond the Syriac language, as his chapter clearly shows, and influenced the arguments and thought of a seminal Christian Arabic author like Abū Rāʾiṭah.

Herman Teule's chapter takes us as far as the second half of the second millennium and allows us to explore the persistence of ancient compilation practices in a little explored age of Syro-Arabic literature. While he was still the Metropolitan of Amid, the later Chaldean Patriarch Joseph II (1667–1713) published in Syriac a selection of conciliar decrees. The oldest extant manuscript is probably an autograph by Joseph himself. As stated by Joseph in one of the introductions to this work (there are at least three), his Syriac text goes back to an Arabic original, authored by a Carmelite. Teule discusses the *Sitz im*

Leben of the Arabic original, focusing on the rationale behind the selection of these conciliar documents.

Grigory Kessel's paper moves from the assumption that, just as in other Christian traditions, reading played an important role in Syriac Christianity, but that the development of reading practices within the Syriac Christian tradition has not yet received the attention it deserves. Scholars of Syriac Christianity are in a very fortunate position, as we have in our possession the actual products that reflect the changes and developments that took place within the Syriac monastic tradition from the sixth century onwards, namely, the miscellanies (not only florilegia). Miscellanies were the main vehicle for the transmission of monastic literature and were deemed essential for a monk's spiritual formation. In the earliest extant examples (dating to the sixth century) we can already detect a feature that remains constant through time: each miscellany has a unique combination of texts. Such collections of texts thus offer us a unique glimpse into the Syriac monastic milieu of their day. They show us, for example, which texts were given preference in copying and which texts fell out of use after a period of circulation. Thanks to miscellanies, we can observe clearly how Syriac monasticism was shifting from its admiration for the Byzantine monastic tradition to the establishment of its own extensive corpus; most of Syriac monastic literature, including translations of Greek patristic writings, is preserved solely in monastic miscellanies. Kessel considers Syriac miscellanies containing ascetic texts as a source for the study of intellectual activity in Syriac monasteries. He demonstrates some aspects of the significance of the miscellanies for the study of Syriac literature by presenting as a case study the works of Ephrem of Nisibis that can be found in the miscellanies. Traditionally, Ephrem was known in both Byzantine and Syriac milieus not as the historical Ephrem, the fourth-century author of cycles of *madrashe*, but as a solitary who left the world and concentrated on permanent contrition for his sins. Indeed, a close look at monastic miscellanies produced in different periods reveals that the works transmitted by such miscellanies as Ephremian are in fact not by Ephrem himself; they are rather pseudo-Ephremian. Ephrem's authentic works probably did not exercise any attraction for an audience that was entirely concentrated on ascetical questions.

Vittorio Berti's paper vastly broadens the geographic scope of our investigation and shows how far in space the Syriac practices of collection and compilation reached. The Sogdian Christian manuscript E28 is a set of scattered sheets and fragments discovered in Turfan which were reordered by scholars through codicological and philological analysis. It can be defined as an East Syriac monastic miscellany, although not a florilegium in the proper sense; it collects entire works, which include lives of ancient solitaries, counsels for

novices, and ascetical homilies. A Syriac manuscript containing precisely the same texts is not extant; it is most likely that the Sogdian miscellany is an original product of the Turfan Christian monastic community. The latter possibility suggests that we pursue a comparative work on the most pertinent Syriac manuscript tradition for each text collected in the Sogdian miscellany in order to sketch the hypothetical Syriac library as it may have been known by these Sogdian monks, the imagined audience, and the plausible context of use of the book.

The present volume was inspired by and represents a development of an international workshop that was held in Venice between 30 January and 1 February 2020 and was organized by the ERC-funded Starting Grant project "FLOS. Florilegia Syriaca: The Intercultural Dissemination of Greek Christian Thought in Syriac and Arabic in the First Millennium CE". It was the first such event entirely devoted to practices of compilation of religious texts in the field of Syriac and Christian Arabic studies. Both the workshop and this book are the first major landmarks of the project towards the definition of a new phenomenology and methodology of patristics in a broader Eurasian perspective, which was outlined earlier in this chapter using the fresh look offered by florilegia. Indeed, we hope that the studies collected here will usher in a new season of research on patristic anthologies and collections as intellectual artifacts and, thereby, as creative laboratories of new religious knowledge, which transformed the heritage of Greek patristic thought and brought it well beyond the spatial and chronological limits of its original context.

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