Adamantius

Indice

de Carthage, *Abrégé de l'histoire des Nestoriens et des Eutychiens*, Ph. Blaudeau, F. Cassinge-na-Trévedy (H. Leppin), 536; *Maître Eckhart, lecteur des Pères grecs*, sous la direction de M.-A. Vannier (A. Le Huërou), 536.

Alle lettrici e ai lettori

Care lettrici e cari lettori,

con una lettera datata 30 novembre 2021 e indirizzata alla Presidente del G.I.R.O.T.A., Teresa Piscitelli, ho rinnovato la mia disponibilità a coordinare le attività di Adamantius per il prossimo quadriennio. L'Assemblea dei soci del G.I.R.O.T.A., riunitasi il 6 dicembre 2021, preso atto di ciò, mi ha rinnovato la fiducia designandomi nuovamente come direttore all'unanimità. Di questo sono profondamente grato sia ai membri del G.I.R.O.T.A., sia a quelli della redazione.

In tale lettera esprimevo le mie valutazioni sull'evoluzione di Adamantius. Facevo osservare come gli ultimi anni abbiano visto un'ulteriore crescita della rivista dal punto di vista dell'impatto nel mondo scientifico e della presenza nelle biblioteche e nelle università di tutto il mondo. Adamantius è divenuto una realtà culturale ormai ineludibile anche in virtù della scelta compiuta dalla redazione di collocarsi tra filologia e storia: filologia della letteratura giudaica e cristiana antica, storia degli assetti culturali dei più diversi fenomeni cristiani, con attenzione ai centri della produzione testuale così come alle periferie, con le loro peculiarità linguistiche.

D'altra parte non ho nascosto i numerosi limiti organizzativi che ancora segnano il lavoro del direttore e della redazione, che potranno essere superati con una distribuzione più razionale degli incarichi e una formalizzazione dei processi editoriali.

Soprattutto, ribadisco che grandi appaiono le sfide metodologiche. Come già segnalavo nella mia lettera del 2017, la redazione dovrà prestare la più grande attenzione alle modalità della valutazione della ricerca scientifica in Italia e nel mondo, nonché alla questione dibattutissima della fruibilità di contenuti ('Open Access') che vengono pubblicati in Adamantius. Un primo tentativo è stato quello di una sezione monografica The Coptic Book curata da Paola Buzi per il numero 24 del 2018.

Infine desidero ringraziare la redazione nel suo insieme, i revisori, i membri del comitato scientifico, per il contributo da loro dato alla crescita della rivista, spesso facendosi carico di intere sezioni tematiche, o svolgendo un lavoro editoriale faticoso: mi riferisco in particolare a Antonio Cacciari, Daniele Tripaldi, Lorenzo Perrone, cui si sono aggiunti più recentemente Andrea Villani e Julian Bogdani, ma anche ai molti che hanno curato l'impaginazione di intere sezioni o hanno contribuito alla redazione degli indici.

Alberto Camplani

Abū Rāʾiṭah al-Takrītī's Trinitarian Doctrine
Between Miaphysite Tradition and Islamic Challenge*
by
Bishara Ebeid

Introduction

The ninth century was a remarkable period for Christians under the Islamic Caliphate of Baghdad. It was the beginning of the Arabic Christian Heritage as a reaction to the increased number of conversions to Islam from Christianity. Therefore, Christians started to write apologetic works in Arabic to defend their doctrine from Muslim accusations[1]. In this same century, we also have Islamic scholarship opening up to philosophy and other sciences under the encouragement, support, and protection of the Caliphs. It was an age of enormous intellectual and cultural achievements of the Arabic and Islamic culture, in which the Islamic speculative theology (*ʿIlm al-kalām*) was developed[2]. One of the most important characteristics of this age is in fact the use of rational argumentation in the discussion of theological topics, either in internal-Islamic or in interreligious circles.

One of the main issues discussed in those times dealt with the oneness of God, the multitude of his attributes and how affirmation of this multitude of attributes does not mean polytheism. This topic related directly to Christian doctrine on the Trinity, that is, the teaching of one God and three divine hypostases or persons, and to the way Christian theologians explained to Muslim *mutakallimūn* (scholars of *kalām*) that the Trinity is not in contradiction with monotheism[3].

Basing their opinions on his writings addressed to Muslims, some modern scholars consider that Abū Rāʾiṭah al-Takrītī, a famous Miaphysite theologian of the eighth-ninth centuries, applied the Islamic doctrine of God's attributes to his Trinitarian doctrine, which considers the divine hypostases as simply divine attributes. A careful reading of his writings, however, demonstrates the opposite. In this study, therefore, I aim to present the Trinitarian doctrine of this Miaphysite author in his treatises on the Trinity written in response to Muslim attacks. I will demonstrate that (1) he faithfully follows the official Miaphysite Trinitarian doctrine developed during the sixth and seventh centuries; (2) he tries to show, through dialogue with the Islamic doctrines on God's oneness and attributes, that the Trinitarian doctrine of the Miaphysites is correct and that the concept of the Trinity is not in contradiction with monotheism, without (3) this dialogue or even use meaning an acceptance of these Islamic doctrines and their application to Christian faith. Rather (4) the procedure is a creative method by which Islamic doctrine can be turned

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[1] On the Christian Arabic Heritage and its encounter with Islam see among others S. Griffith, *The Church in the Shadow of the Mosque: Christians and Muslims in the World of Islam* (JCMAMW), Princeton University Press, Princeton, NJ 2007; J. Tannous, *The Making of the Medieval Middle East: Religion, Society, and Simple Believers*, Princeton University Press, Princeton, NJ 2018; J. Jakob, *Syrisches Christentum und früher Islam. Theologische Reaktionen in syrisch-sprachigen Texten vom 7. bis 9. Jahrhundert* (IThS 95), Tyrolia-Verlag, Innsbruck-Vienna 2021.

[2] In this regard, see, among others, M.W. Watt, *The Formative Period of Islamic Thought*, Edinburgh University Press, Edinburgh 1973; H. Wolfson, *The Philosophy of the Kalam,* Harvard University Press, Cambridge, MA, 1976; M.W. Watt, *Islamic Philosophy and Theology. An Extended Survey,* Edinburgh University Press, Edinburgh 1985²; *The Cambridge Companion to Classical Islamic Theology*, ed. T. Winter, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 2014; *The Oxford Handbook of Islamic Theology*, ed. S. Schmidtke, Oxford University Press, Oxford 2018.

[3] See for example D. Thomas, *The Doctrine of the Trinity in the Early Abbasid Era*, in *Islamic Interpretations of Christianity*, ed. L. Ridgeon, St. Martin's Press, New York 2001, 78-98; S. Griffith, *The Unity and Trinity of God: Christian Doctrinal Development in Response to the Challenge of Islam - An Historical Perspective*, in *Christian Theology and Islam*, ed. M. Root – J. Buckley, James Clarke & Co, Cambridge 2014, 11-21. See also M.N. Swanson, *Are Hypostases Attributes? An investigation into the Modern Egyptian Christian Appropriation of the Medieval Arabic Apologetic Heritage*, PdO 16 (1990-1991) 239-250.

into an instrument which proves the correctness of Christian faith, and therefore, (5) his writings related to Islam are addressed mainly to well-educated Christians, familiar with Islamic *kalām*, and probably involved in dialogues with Muslims, also having in mind former Christians who have left Christianity and converted to Islam.

Abū Rāʾiṭah and His Apologetic Writings in Relation to Islam

Unfortunately, we possess little information about Abū Rāʾiṭah's life[4]. It is certain, however, that he was a Miaphysite theologian, active between the late eighth and early ninth centuries. His complete name is Ḥabīb Ibn Ḫidmah Abū Rāʾiṭah al-Takrītī. His *nisbah* 'al-Takrītī' is the reason why pre-modern authors and some modern scholars consider him to have been bishop of the city of Tagrit (in Arabic *Takrīt*) – situated between Baghdad and Mosul in present-day Iraq – which in Abū Rāʾiṭah's time was the main administrative centre of the Miaphysite Church in Mesopotamia[5]. In contrast, modern scholars are quite certain that he was a layman – and probably father to a daughter named Rāʾiṭah – since there is no evidence in contemporary sources which would show with certainty that he was a priest and/or bishop of the city of Tagrit. Abū Rāʾiṭah is mentioned as a great teacher (*vardapet*) in some Armenian chronicles; this is a title given to apologists and teachers of theology. In addition, Islamic sources refer to him as a great theologian and Christian philosopher. It therefore seems reasonable to assert that he was a teacher (*malphōnō*) in his Church in the city of Tagrit. In this case, and following Arabic onomastics, a *nisbah* that is based on a place name usually refers to its bearer's birthplace or long-time residence, so it is very likely that Tagrit was the place where he was active.

Abū Rāʾiṭah was indeed one of the most important apologists and theologians of his time. He belonged to the generation of those Christian authors who during the Abbasid dynasty felt the necessity to translate, express and even write theology in the Arabic language, which was the new *lingua franca*. Abū Rāʾiṭah's use of Arabic reveals that he was born of Syriac-speaking parents, and that he was an Arabic-speaker living in the Syriac milieu. In fact, his Arabic belongs to the so-called 'Middle Arabic'[6].

As an apologist, he was involved in disputes with both non-Miaphysite Christians, East Syrians and mainly Melkites[7], as well as with Muslim scholars, especially those of the *Muʿtazilah*, the dominant Islam-

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[4] The main detailed study on Abū Rāʾiṭah's life and writings is S.T. Keating, *Defending the 'People of Truth' in the Early Islamic Period. The Christian Apologies of Abū Rāʾiṭah* (HCMR 4), Leiden-Boston 2006, 32-56. See also S.T. Keating, *Abū Rāʾiṭa l-Takrītī*, in *Christian-Muslim Relations: A Bibliographical History*. vol. 1 *600-900*, ed. D. Thomas – B. Roggema (HCMR 11), Brill, Leiden-Boston 2009, 567-581, here 567-571; S.T. Keating, *Ḥabīb ibn Khidma Abū Rāʾita al-Takrītī's 'The Refutation of the Melkites concerning the Union [of the Divinity and Humanity in Christ]' (III)*, in *Christians at the Heart of Islamic Rule: Church Life and Scholarship in ʿAbbasid Iraq*, ed. D. Thomas, (HCMR 1), Brill, Leiden-Boston 2003, 39-53, here 39-45; S. Griffith, *Ḥabīb ibn Ḫidmah Abū Rāʾiṭah, a Christian mutakallim of the first Abbasid century*, OC 64 (1980) 161-201, here 164-165; L. Husseini, *Early Christian-Muslim Debate on the Unity of God: Three Christian Scholars and Their Engagement with Islamic Thought (9th Century C.E.)* (HCMR 21), Brill, Leiden - Boston 2014, 77-80; S.Kh. Samir, *Création et incarnation chez Abū Rāʾita. Étude de vocabulaire*, in *Mélanges en hommage au professeur et au penseur libanais Farid Jabie* (SEPS 20), Publications de l'Université libanaise, Beirut 1989, 187-236; H. Suermann, *Ḥabīb ibn Ḫidma Abū Rāʾiṭa. Portrait eines miaphysitischen Theologen*, JECS 58 (2006) 221-233; S. Daccache, *Abū Rāʾiṭah al-Takrītī wa-Risālatuhu fī al-ṯālūṯ al-Muqaddas*, Dar El Machreq, Beirut 1996, 10-20. My presentation of the biography of Abū Rāʾiṭah is based on all these sources and references together.

[5] Cf. A. Harrak, *Tagrit*, in *Gorgias Encyclopedic Dictionary of the Syriac Heritage: Electronic Edition*, ed. S.P. Brock, A.M. Butts, G.A. Kiraz and L. Van Rompay, Beth Mardutho, 2018, https://gedsh.bethmardutho.org/Tagrit. (Accessed 28/05/2021); G.A. Kiraz, *Maphrian*, in *Gorgias Encyclopedic Dictionary of the Syriac Heritage: Electronic Edition*, ed. S. P. Brock, A.M. Butts, G.A. Kiraz and L. Van Rompay, Beth Mardutho, 2018, https://gedsh.bethmardutho.org/Maphrian. (Accessed 28/05/2021). See also J.-M. Fiey, *Tagrît: Esquisse d'histoire chrétienne*, OS 8 (1963) 289-342; L. Van Rompay and A. B. Schmidt, *Takritans in the Egyptian Desert: The Monastery of the Syrians in the Ninth Century*, JCSSS 1 (2001) 41-60; S.Kh. Samir, Création, cit., 189-190; H. Suermann, *Ḥabīb ibn Ḫidma*, cit., 225-227; S.L. Husseini, *Early Christian-Muslim Debate*, cit., 78; Ph. Wood, *The Imam of the Christians: The world of Dionysius of Tel-mahre, c. 750-850*, Princeton University Press, Princeton, NJ 2021, 104-139.

[6] On 'Middle Arabic' see J. Blau, *The state of research in the field of the linguistic study of Middle Arabic*, *Arabica* 28 (1981) 187-203.

[7] On his polemical writings against Melkites see my forthcoming study on our author's Trinitarian doctrine against

ic school of his time[8]. Against the first group, he defended Miaphysite theology and Christology, while against the second, he defended Christian doctrine against Islamic accusations of Tritheism, Bible falsification, and the Muslims' rejection of Christ's divinity etc. His writings, then, can be categorized under these two main types of disputes: (1) polemic writings against non-Miaphysite Christians, and (2) apologetic writings in relation to Islam and Muslims.

His known surviving works were edited and translated into German by G. Graf[9]; while those apologetic works related to his defence of Christianity from the accusations of Muslims were re-edited with an English translation by S. Keating[10]. Two of these writings were also edited, one completely and the other partially, but without any translation, by S. Daccache[11]. In the following analysis I will follow S. Keating's edition and translation, sometimes with some modifications[12].

Muslims and Islam were opponents Abū Rāʾiṭah had to deal with because conversions to Islam had been increasing during his time[13], a fact which alarmed Christian theologians[14]. Abū Rāʾiṭah, as noted by S. Keating, does not mention Muslims by name. He refers to them by means of expressions like 'those who differ from us', 'our opponents' or even 'the people of the South'[15]. The probable reason behind such practice was that his writings related to Muslims were addressed mainly to Christians involved in dialogues and disputes with Muslim scholars and not directly to the Muslims themselves, although his works were probably accessible to Muslims. Another reason might be, as S. Daccache noted, the author's fear of imprisonment for being involved in disputes with Muslims or having written against them and their faith[16]. Despite this understandable fear, Abū Rāʾiṭah indeed wrote apologetic answers to Muslims and, as S. Daccache affirms with reference to Muslim sources contemporary to Abū Rāʾiṭah's, he also participated in disputations with *Muʿtazilī* theologians and therefore earned the appellation of 'Christian theologian and apologist'[17].

According to S. Keating, the apologetic works in relation to Islam known to be by Abū Rāʾiṭah are the following[18]:

  1. On the Proof of the Christian Religion and the Proof of the Holy Trinity[19].

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the one of the Melkites which will be published in the proceedings of the conference 'Florilegia Syriaca: Mapping a Knowledge-Organizing Practice in the Syriac World' that took place at Caʼ Foscari University, Venice, 30 January – 1 February 2020, while for our author's anti-Theopaschite doctrine and his defense of the addition into the Trisagion hymn, see B. Ebeid, *Miaphysite Syriac Patristic Florilegia and Theopaschism: Abū Rāʾiṭah's Defence of the Christological Trisagion Hymn*, ASR 14 (2021) 231-269.

[8] The *Muʿtazilah maḏhab*, particularly the school of Baghdad, had a great influence on the Abbasid Caliphate politics, especially during the reign of al-Maʾmūn (d. 833), who declared the *Muʿtazilite* doctrine as the official theology of the Caliphate. His successors, the caliphs al-Muʿtaṣim (d. 842) and al-Wāṯiq (d. 847) showed sympathy to *Muʿtazilah*. The influence of this theological school continued until the reign of the caliph al-Mutawakkil (d. 861) who started a great polemic against *Muʿtazilites*. On them and their doctrine see, among others, N.A. Nader, *Le système philosophique des Muʿtazila (Premiers penseurs de l'Islam)* (Recherches 3), Les lettres Orientales, Beirut 1968; M.W. Watt, *The Formative*, cit., 209-250; M.W. Watt, *Islamic Philosophy and Theology*, cit., 46-55. See also chapters 8 and 9 of H. Kennedy, *When Baghdad Ruled the Muslim World. The Rise and Fall of Islam's Greatest Dynasty*, Da Capo Pres, New York 2005.

[9] Cf. *Ḥabīb Ibn Ḫidma Abū Rāʾiṭa. Die Schriften*, ed. G. Graf (CSCO. A 14-15), Imprimerie Orientaliste, Louvain 1951.

[10] Cf. S.T. Keating, *Defending*, cit., 73-357.

[11] Cf. S. Daccache, Abū Rāʾiṭah, cit., 56-117.

[12] It must be mentioned that sometimes I do not agree with the translations made by S.T. Keating. Where this happens I make changes and mention them in footnotes. In addition, the given page numbers include those of the Arabic text and the English translation.

[13] Cf. S. Griffith, *Ḥabīb ibn Ḫidmah*, cit., 162-163; S.T. Keating, *Defending*, cit., 12.

[14] Cf. S.T. Keating, *Defending*, cit., 5-6.

[15] Cf. S.T. Keating, *Defending*, cit., 63-64.

[16] Cf. S. Daccache, Abū Rāʾiṭah, cit., 15-16.

[17] Cf. S. Daccache, *Abū Rāʾiṭa*, cit., 18-20.

[18] For the titles of Abū Rāʾiṭah's works, I have used the English titles proposed by Keating, see S.T. Keating, *Defending*, cit., 71-72. For a description of his works and their topics see S.T. Keating, *Defending*, cit., 56-65; S.T. Keating, *Abū Rāʾiṭa l-Takrītī*, cit., 571-581.

[19] Text number I according to Keating's edition, S.T. Keating, *Defending*, cit., 82-145. Text number VIII according to

2. On the Holy Trinity[20].

3. On the Incarnation[21].

4. Witnesses from the Words of the Torah, the Prophets and Saints[22].

5. From the Teaching of Abū Rāʾiṭah al-Takrītī, Bishop of Nisibis: on the Demonstration of the Credibility of Christianity Which was Received from the Preaching of the Evangelists in the Holy Scriptures[23].

6. Letter to the Christians of Baḥrīn[24].

7. Christological Discussion[25].

Abū Rāʾiṭah's argumentations in these writings are based on: (1) the Bible[26]: although Muslims accused Christians of falsifying the Bible[27], Abū Rāʾiṭah quotes verses from the Bible and explains them to demonstrate the correctness of the Christian creed; this means that the main part of his audience were Christians[28], or newly-converted Muslims from Christianity, who were familiar with the Christian Bible; (2) Miaphysite doctrine and patristic tradition, having official Church doctrine as a basis and making indirect use of the Church Fathers and their philosophical way of explaining the Christian faith[29]; (3) Aristote-

Graf's edition, *Ḥabīb Ibn Ḥidma Abū Rāʾiṭa. Die Schriften*, ed. G. Graf, cit., 131-161. It was partially edited by Daccache, see S. Daccache, *Abū Rāʾiṭah*, cit., 103-117.

[20] Text number II according to Keating's edition, S.T. Keating, *Defending*, cit., 164-215. Text number I according to Graf's edition, *Ḥabīb Ibn Ḥidma Abū Rāʾiṭa. Die Schriften*, ed. G. Graf, cit., 1-26. Daccache's edition: S. Daccache, *Abū Rāʾiṭah*, cit., 59-102.

[21] Text number III according to Keating's edition, S.T. Keating, *Defending*, cit., 222-297. Text number II according to Graf's edition, *Ḥabīb Ibn Ḥidma Abū Rāʾiṭa. Die Schriften*, ed. G. Graf, cit., 27-64.

[22] Text number IV according to Keating's edition, S.T. Keating, *Defending*, cit., 308-333. Text number VI according to Graf's edition, *Ḥabīb Ibn Ḥidma Abū Rāʾiṭa. Die Schriften*, ed. G. Graf, cit., 94-104.

[23] This is a quotation from an Arabo-Coptic work entitled *Maǧmūʿ uṣūl al-dīn* by the 13th century Abū Isḥāq al-Muʾtaman al-Dawlah Ibn al-ʿAssāl (cf. *Al-Muʾtaman ibn al-ʿAssāl. Majmūʿ uṣūl al-dīn wa-masmūʿ maḥsūl al-yaqīn*, 2 voll., ed. A. Wadi (Studia Orientalia Christiana. Monographiae 6a-b, 7a-b), The Franciscan Centre of Christian Oriental Studies, Cairo 1998-1999, here vol. 1, chapter 12, sections 25-27). Text number V according to Keating's edition, S.T. Keating, *Defending*, cit., 342-345. Text number X according to Graf's edition, *Ḥabīb Ibn Ḥidma Abū Rāʾiṭa. Die Schriften*, ed. G. Graf, cit., 162.

[24] This is a quotation found in the Arabo-Coptic florilegium called *Iʿtirā al-Ābāʾ* (the Confession of the Fathers, cf. G. Graf, *Zwei dogmatische Florilegien der Kopten. B. Das Bekenntnis der Väter*, OCP 3 (1937) 345-402, here 398-399). This text was not included in Keating's edition. Text number IX according to Graf's edition, *Ḥabīb Ibn Ḥidma Abū Rāʾiṭa. Die Schriften*, ed. G. Graf, cit., 160. Note, in addition, that Baḥrīn should not be confused with Baḥrayn.

[25] This is a Christological disputation that, according to one tradition, occurred between Abū Rāʾiṭah and Abū Qurrah and a Nestorian Metropolitan named 'Abdišū' in the court of a Muslim vizier. Text number XI according to Keating's edition, S.T. Keating, *Defending*, cit., 352-357. Text number XI according to Graf's edition, *Ḥabīb Ibn Ḥidma Abū Rāʾiṭa. Die Schriften*, ed. G. Graf, 163-165. See also S.T. Keating, *A Christological discussion*, in *Christian-Muslim Relations: A Bibliographical History*. vol. 1 *600-900*, ed. D. Thomas – B. Roggema (HCMR 11), Brill, Leiden-Boston 2009, 553-555.

[26] On the use of Bible in Abū Rāʾiṭah's writings see: S.T. Keating, *The Use and Translation of Scripture in the Apologetic Writings of Abū Rāʾita al-Takrîtî*, in *The Bible in Arab Christianity*, ed. D. Thomas (HCMR 6), Brill, Leiden-Boston 2007, 257-274; O. Mihoc, *Hermeneutische und argumentative Modelle im Traktat über Christologie von Ḥabīb ibn Khidma Abū Rāʾiṭah l-Takrītī*, in *Begegnungen in Vergangenheit und Gegenwart: Beiträge dialogischer Existenz. Eine freundschaftliche Festgabe zum 60. Geburtstag von Martin Tamcke*, ed. C. Rammelt – C. Schlarb – E. Schlarb (Theologie 112), Lit Verlag, Münster 2015, 380-397, here 383-389; H. Suermann, *Ḥabīb ibn Ḥidma*, cit., 230; B. Ebeid, *Esegesi Arabo-Cristiana primitiva: L'uso della Bibbia nei primi apologisti arabo-cristiani, Cadernos Patrísticos – Textos e Estudos* 10/19 (2016) 127-166.

[27] In this regard see S.T. Keating, *Refuting the Charge of Tahrīf: Abū Rāʾita (d. ca. 835) and his "First Risāla on the Holy Trinity"*, in *Ideas, Images, and Methods of Portrayal: Insights into Classical Arabic Literature and Islam*, ed. S. Günther (IHC 58), Brill, Leiden-Boston 2005, 41-57, here 42-45; M. Kuhn, *Early Islamic Perspectives of the Apostle Paul as a Narrative Framework for Taḥrīf*, in *Arab Christian and the Qurʾan from the Origins of Islam to the Medieval Period*, ed. M. Beaumont (HCMR 35), Brill, Leiden-Boston 2018, 150-173.

[28] Cf. S.T. Keating, *Refuting the Charge*, cit., 41-57.

[29] See my forthcoming publication, cit. (n. 7) and B. Ebeid, *Miaphysite Syriac Patristic*, cit., 247-261.

lian logic[30], based on the tradition of the Syriac Aristotelian Philosophical School, in which Abū Rāʾiṭah probably took part, and the Islamic school of *Muʿtazilah* and other Islamic kalāmic movements[31]; and (4) knowledge of the Qurʾān and Islamic *kalām* and using them in his argumentation[32].

Scholars have already studied the works Abū Rāʾiṭah composed to defend Christianity against Muslims, analysing and illustrating all the previous points in depth except the second one, i.e., his Miaphysite doctrinal background and its relationship to patristic tradition, as they considered it to be secondary. However, since the main audience of these texts by Abū Rāʾiṭah was made up of highly educated Christians and/or newly-converted Muslims from Christianity, I think that the official Miaphysite doctrine and the patristic heritage were important elements and instruments for this author in demonstrating the correctness of Christian faith. In fact, as I have demonstrated elsewhere, his Church tradition and doctrine were the basis of his polemics against the Melkites[33], so one should not exclude that this same background formed the basis of his apologetic writings against Muslim accusations.

The main purpose of this study is therefore to offer an analysis of Abū Rāʾiṭah's explanation of the Trinitarian dogma and his dialogue with (and even his use of) Islamic doctrines in this regard, with specific reference to two of his writings related to Muslims: 1) *On the Holy Trinity*, and the part on the Trinity in his 2) *On the Proof of the Christian Religion and the Proof of the Holy Trinity*.

Abū Rāʾiṭah's Trinitarian Doctrine in Metaphysical Terms

Before starting my analysis, note should be taken of the translations employed in this study of the technical and metaphysical terms used by Abū Rāʾiṭah in his writings[34]:

Arabic term	English translation
kiyān	nature
ṭabīʿah	nature
ǧawhar	substance
ḏāt	essence
māhiyyah	constituent element [of the substance]
wuǧūd	existence
qiwām	subsistence
qiwām ḏāt	subsistent
uqnūm	hypostasis
šaḫs	person
ḫāṣṣah/ḫāṣṣiyyah	property

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[30] He says explicitly in his *On the Proof of the Christian Religion and the Proof of the Holy Trinity* that he follows these three methods: «we answer with a deductive proof or an analogy or evidence from a book», S.T. Keating, *Defending*, cit., 102-103.

[31] Cf. S.T. Keating, *The Rationality of Christian Doctrine: Abū Rāʾiṭa al-Takrītī's Philosophical Response to Islam*, in *Heirs of the Apostles: Studies on Arabic Christianity in Honor of Sidney H. Griffith*, ed. D. Bertaina – S.T. Keating – M.N. Swanson – A. Treiger (ACTA 1), Brill, Leiden 2019, 157-178, here 158; H. Suermann, *Ḥabīb ibn Ḫidma*, cit., 227-228, 230-231, 232; O. Mihoc, *Hermeneutische und argumentative Modelle*, cit., 392-397; S. Daccache, *Abū Rāʾiṭah*, cit., 16- 20, 31.

[32] Cf. S. Griffith, *Ḥabīb ibn Ḫidmah*, cit., 170-171; O. Mihoc, *Hermeneutische und argumentative Modelle*, cit., 389-392.

[33] In this regard see my forthcoming publication, cit. (n.7).

[34] In some cases, I do not agree with the translation proposed either by Keating or by Graf, and in some of my choices I agree with the translation proposed by Haddad, cf. R. Haddad, *La Trinité divine chez les théologiens arabes (750-1050)* (Beauchesne Religions 15), Beauchesne, Paris 1985, 161-185.

ḫawāṣṣ ḏātiyyah	essential properties/ properties of essences
aqānīm ǧawhariyyah	substantial hypostases
ṣifah	attribute, idiom
ṣifāt ǧawhariyyah	substantial attributes
al-ṣifāt al-dāllah ʿalā l-ǧawhar	the attributes indicating the substance
ism ʿāmm	universal name
ism ǧawhar	name of substance
ism ḫāṣṣ	proper name
iḍāfah	relation
iḍāfah ǧawhariyyah	substantial relation, relation of existence
ʿaraḍ	accident
lāhūt	divinity/Godhead
ʿillah	cause

Abū Rāʾiṭah's method in the two works examined here is to answer all the probable hypothetical questions the opponent, in this case a Muslim, might direct to Christians. By discussing the probable questions, he leads his opponent to understand the correctness of the Christian doctrine[35]. Consequently, these works are not a systematic expression of the author's Trinitarian doctrine in metaphysical terms. Despite this, I will try to reconstruct his Trinitarian doctrine in metaphysical terms by analysing all the affirmations he makes in his argumentations discussing Islamic doctrines and defending the Christian faith:

1. God is unique; in all creation there is nothing like him since he is the only perfect one[36].
2. God is one substance and three hypostases[37].
3. He is one and unique according to substance (oneness and monotheism), at the same time, he is numbered according to hypostases (Trinity)[38].
4. According to his substance, God is perfect since nothing is like him in substance; according to his hypostases, he is also perfect since the number three is the perfection of number, it includes, in fact, both species of number, even and odd[39].
5. God, according to his substance, is continuous and connected, that is united, and at the same time, according to his hypostases, he is separated and divided, that is, the hypostases are distinct realities[40].
6. His substance is his hypostases and his hypostases are his substance[41].
7. The relationship between the substance and the hypostasis is based on the distinction between the universal and its particulars[42].
8. The hypostases of the same substance share the same common and constituent element[43], while each, individually, is not the substance since the substance is the sum total of all its hypostases[44].
9. The hypostases of the same substance share and manifest the same substantial attributes[45]; however, each has its own distinctive characteristic, i.e., property, which can be shared neither with the other hypostases of the same substance nor with the common substance itself[46].

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[35] Cf. S. Daccache, *Abū Rāʾiṭah*, cit., 30-31.
[36] S.T. Keating, *Defending*, cit., 174-177.
[37] S.T. Keating, *Defending*, cit., 174-177.
[38] S.T. Keating, *Defending*, cit., 174- 177.
[39] S.T. Keating, *Defending*, cit., 174-177, 198-199.
[40] S.T. Keating, *Defending*, cit., 184-185, 200-201.
[41] S.T. Keating, *Defending*, cit., 184-185, 186-187.
[42] S.T. Keating, *Defending*, cit., 186-187.
[43] S.T. Keating, *Defending*, cit., 186-187, 200-201.
[44] S.T. Keating, *Defending*, cit., 186-187, 210-211.
[45] S.T. Keating, *Defending*, cit., 108-111, 198-199, 200-201.
[46] S.T. Keating, *Defending*, cit., 110-111, 188-189.

10. Each hypostasis is recognised through its property: the Father through the fatherhood, the Son through the sonship and the Holy Spirit through the procession[47].

11. The property belongs to the hypostasis, and the hypostasis gets its name through it[48].

12. Though each hypostasis has different properties it does not mean that they are different in substance[49], since they share the same constituent element and manifest it perfectly[50].

13. Each hypostasis is subsistent, that is, a self-existing singularity. Therefore, the three hypostases in the Trinity are considered three essences, even if, according to their constituent element, they are similar[51]. However, this does not mean that they are three substances; they are one substance[52].

14. Hypostasis, then, is a concrete and subsistent reality, i.e., essence, while substance, in its universal meaning, is an abstract reality, manifested perfectly and concretely through its particulars. At the same time, substance cannot be identified with any one of its hypostases since it includes all of them together.

15. Properties are attributes, i.e., idioms[53]. They indicate the relationship of one hypostasis to another hypostasis of the same substance and not the in-relationship essences themselves[54].

16. The relationship between the three divine hypostases is one of cause and caused. There is one cause in the Trinity, the hypostasis of the Father, the other two hypostases are caused. The relationship between the cause and the caused is not temporal but essential; therefore, it is called a substantial and natural relationship[55], or in other words, a relationship of existence[56].

17. The caused hypostases are perfect essences from perfect essence, eternal from eternal, and not parts from part or actions of an actor, because they share the same common substance, that is, the same divine constituent element[57].

18. The three hypostases are not three gods. Each, however, considered individually, can be called God, since the name God is a natural and substantial name, that is, a shared and common characteristic. This, consequently, does not entail considering the Trinity as Tritheism, since when one speaks of them together, one is forced to consider them all together as one God[58].

19. The three hypostases are united because they share the same incorporeal and spiritual substance; however, they are distinct from each other because of the different property that belongs to each of them[59].

20. Terminologically speaking, one might conclude that, for Abū Rāʾiṭah, 'substance' referes to universal reality, 'essence' to concrete and subsistent reality, and 'hypostasis' to specified essence, that is, concrete reality with its own property.

Reading these metaphysical principles and comparing them with those that Abū Rāʾiṭah develops in

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[47] S.T. Keating, *Defending*, cit., 188-189.

[48] S.T. Keating, *Defending*, cit., 114-115.

[49] S.T. Keating, *Defending*, cit., 188-189, 200-201.

[50] S.T. Keating, *Defending*, cit., 106-107, 200-201.

[51] S.T. Keating, *Defending*, cit., 106-107, 198-199, 200-201.

[52] S.T. Keating, *Defending*, cit., 112-113.

[53] I think in this affirmation our author means the word 'attribute' to be the equivalent of 'idiom' used by the Cappadocians to indicate the relationship between the divine hypostases: fatherhood, sonship and procession. On the Cappadocians' doctrine see among others J. Zachhuber, *The Rise of Christian Theology and the End of Ancient Metaphysics: Patristic Philosophy from the Cappadocian Fathers to John of Damascus*, Oxford University Press, Oxford-New York 2020, 12-71; Ph. Kariatlis, *St Basil's Contribution to the Trinitarian Doctrine. A Synthesis of Greek Paideia and the Scriptural Worldview*, Phronema 25 (2010), 57-83; S.M. Hildebrand, *The Trinitarian Theology of Basil of Caesarea. A Synthesis of Greek Thought and Biblical Truth*, Catholic University of America Press, Washington D.C. 2007. See also in my analysis below on its use by our author.

[54] S.T. Keating, *Defending*, cit., 200-201.

[55] S.T. Keating, *Defending*, cit., 114-115, 186-187.

[56] S.T. Keating, *Defending*, cit., 114-115.

[57] S.T. Keating, *Defending*, cit., 114-115, 212-215.

[58] S.T. Keating, *Defending*, cit., 114-115, 210-211.

[59] S.T. Keating, *Defending*, cit., 114-215.

his writings against the Melkites[60], where the main problem is the distinction between substance and hypostasis made by the council of Chalcedon and the (neo-)Chalcedonian theologians and thinkers, one concludes that they are identical and reflect the same metaphysical system. In addition, it has been demonstrated that Abū Rāʾiṭah's writings against the Melkites are based on the Miaphysite tradition developed during the sixth and seventh century, i.e., after the Tritheistic controversy, and through some patristic writings and Syriac patristic Trinitarian florilegia, like the one copied in Ms BL Add. 12155, ff. 1va-32va[61]. It was on this element that I based my choices in translating the technical Arabic terms in the table presented above, trying to see the Syriac concept behind each term, and above all the metaphysical definition given to it in such Trinitarian florilegia[62]. Turning now to what Abū Rāʾiṭah declares in his *On the Proof of the Christian Religion and the Proof of the Holy Trinity*, I shall show that his writings related to Islam are based on the doctrinal and patristic tradition transmitted in these patristic sources and florilegia. Indeed, in this work we read the following:

> We are speaking in this [book] in accordance with our beliefs and [drawing] from the teaching of the best [of our] chosen leaders (imams) and pillars of faith and religion, may the blessings of God be upon them, [and may] their prayers protect us and give us success. Amen[63].

To better understand Abū Rāʾiṭah's Trinitarian teaching, one must remember that during the sixth and seventh centuries, Miaphysites, like the other Christian denominations in the East, had to face a number of problems of a metaphysical nature because of their Christology[64], according to which nature/substance and hypostasis/person were *quasi* synonymous[65]. These problems might be condensed into the following questions. (1) Were the two natures, of which the one Christ was composed, universal and common or singular and particular? (2) If the divinity in Christ was the universal and common divine nature, does it mean that the whole Trinity, i.e., the three divine hypostases, was incarnate? (3) If the divine nature of Christ was singular and concrete, how should one explain the relationship between the universal and the singular nature, the abstract and concrete realities, and consequently, the relationship between the substance and the hypostasis?

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[60] See the analysis in my forthcoming study, cit. (n. 7).

[61] I have shown that he quotes some Church Fathers directly from these Syriac florilegia translating them into Arabic, see my forthcoming study, cit. (n. 7); see also B. EBEID, *Miaphysite Syriac Patristic*, cit., 247-261.

[62] See my study on the theology of an abbreviated version of this florilegium, copied in Ms *BL Add.* 14532, in B. EBEID, *Metaphysics of Trinity in Graeco-Syriac Miaphysitism: A Study and Analysis of the Trinitarian Florilegium in MS BL Add. 14532*, SGA 11 (2021) 83-128.

[63] S.T. KEATING, *Defending*, cit., 82-83.

[64] For the Miaphysite Christology see, among others, R. CHESNUT, *Three Monophysite Christologies. Severus of Antioch, Philoxenus of Mabbug and Jacob of Sarug* (OTM), Oxford University Press, Oxford 1976; A. DE HALLEUX, *Philoxéne de Mabbog. sa vie, ses ècrits, sa théologie*, Imprimerie Orientaliste, Louvain 1963; H. MANOIR, *Dogme et spiritualité chez Saint Cyrille d'Alexandrie* (EtThHS 2), J. Vrin, Paris 1944; M.A. MATHAI, *The Concept of 'Becoming' in the Christology of Philoxenos of Mabbug*, The Harp 2 (1989) 71-77; S. MCKINION, *Words, Imagery, and Mystery of Christ. A Reconstruction of Cyril of Alexandria's Christology* (VigChr.S 55), Brill, Leiden-Boston-Köln 2000; B. MEUNIER, *Le Christ de Cyrille d'Alexandrie. L'Humanité, le salut et la question monophysite* (ThH 104), Beauchesne, Paris 1997; D. MICHELSON, *Practical Christology of Philoxenos of Mabbug* (OECS), Oxford University Press, Oxford 2014; L. PERRONE, *Il "Dialogo contro gli aftartodoceti" di Leonzio di Bisanzio e Severo di Antiochia*, CrSt 1 (1980) 411-442; A.A. LUCE, *Monophysitism, Past and Present. A Study in Christology*, Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, London 1920; Ph. M. FORNESS, *Preaching Christology in the Roman Near East: A Study of Jacob of Serugh* (OECS), Oxford University Press, Oxford 2018; D. MICHELSON, *Philoxenos of Mabbug: A Cappadocian Theologian on the Banks of the Euphrates?*, in *Motions of Late Antiquity: Essays on Religion, Politics, and Society in Honour of Peter Brown*, ed. J. KREINER – H. REIMITZ (CELAMA 20), Brepols, Turnhout 2016, 151-174; I.R. TORRANCE, *Christology after Chalcedon. Severus of Antioch and Sergius the Monophysite*, The Canterbury Press, Norwich 1988; V.C. SAMUEL, *The Christology of Severus of Antioch*, Abba Salama 4 (1973) 126-190.

[65] As Erismann correctly notes, from a metaphysical point of view the Miaphysites, in their attempt to avoid a duality of subjects in Christ, i.e. two hypostases/individuals, stressed the principle that 'hypostasis' necessarily refers to a 'particular substance/nature'. From this perspective we must understand their identification between hypostasis and nature, see C. ERISMANN, *Non Est Natura Sine Persona: The Issue of Uninstantiated Universals from Late Antiquity to the Early Ages*, in *Methods and Methodologies: Aristotelian Logic East and West, 500-1500*, ed. M. CAMERON – J. MARENBON, Brill, Leiden 2011, 75-91, here 81-82.

In trying to find solutions during the second half of the sixth century, the Alexandrian Miaphysite John Philoponus (d. 570)[66], proposed that the two realities of which Christ was composed should be understood as two concrete natures/substances, that is, two hypostases. This led Philoponus to affirm that, in the Trinity, the three hypostases were three singular natures/substances, while the common and universal substance is considered abstract, i.e., does not exist, but can only be comprehended with the mind. This doctrine moreover forced Philoponus to consider the three divine hypostases as three consubstantial divinities. His opponents saw his Trinitarian doctrine as Tritheism[67], and the rest of the Miaphysites therefore polemicised against and anathematised it[68].

The Miaphysites polemicising against Tritheism gave rise to a new controversy, the one between Damian of Alexandria (d. 605) and Peter of Callinicum (d. 591), which was caused by the different doctrinal approach each used to confute Tritheism. Peter accused Damian of being a Sabellian, since he considered the one divine substance as concrete and existing, that is, according to the definition of Aristotle's *substantia prima*, and consequently, he identified the three divine hypostases with the three properties (idioms). Peter, in turn, was accused by Damian of being an Eunomian and a Tritheist, since he considered each hypostasis, taken individually, to be a concrete, perfect and singular substance, while the universal and common substance was considered the sum total of its particulars, i.e., the hypostases all together. The controversy was unresolved and led to a schism between the Miaphysite sees of Antioch and Alexandria. In 616, just years after the death of both patriarchs, the two sees reached a reconciliation with an official rejection of Damian's doctrine[69]. Nonetheless, it did not totally disappear, as we can find traces of it in

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[66]   On John Philoponus see, among others, G. Couvalis, *John Philoponus: Closeted Christian or Radical Intellectual?*, JMGS 15 (2011) 207-219; C. Erismann, *The Trinity, Universals, and Particular Substances: Philoponus and Roscelin*, Traditio 53 (2008) 277-305; Th. Hainthaler, *John Philoponos: Philosopher and Theologian in Alexandria*, in *Christ in Christian Tradition*, vol. II, part IV, *From the Council of Chalcedon (451) to Gregory the Great (590-604). The Churches of Alexandria with Nubia and Ethiopia after 451*, ed. A. Grillmeir – Th. Hainthaler, Mowbray, London 1996, 107-146; M.U. Lang, *John Philoponus and the Controversies Over Chalcedon in the Sixth Century: A Study and Translation of the Arbiter* (SSL 47), Peeters, Leuven 2001; J. Zachhuber, *Christology after Chalcedon and the Transformation of the Philosophical Tradition. Reflections on a Neglected Topic*, in *The Ways of Byzantine Philosophy*, ed. M. Knežević (CCTh 32), Sebastian Press, Alhambra CA 2015, 103-127; J. Zachhuber, *Personhood in miaphysitism. Severus of Antioch and John Philoponus*, in *Personhood in the Byzantine Christian Tradition: Early, Medieval, and Modern Perspectives*, ed. A. Torrance – S. Paschalides, Routledge, London-New York 2018, 29-43; H. Martin, *Jean Philopon et la controverse trithéite du VIe siècle*, StPatr 5 (1962) 519-525; A. van Roey, *Les fragments trithéites de Jean Philopon*, OLP 11 (1980) 135-163; H. Chadwick, *Philoponus the Christian Theologian*, in *Philoponus and the Rejection of Aristotelian Science*, ed. R. Sorabji, Duckworth, London 1987, 41-56.

[67]   On Tritheism see, among others, A. Grillmeir, *The Tritheist Controversy in the Sixth Century and its Importance in Syriac Christology*, in *Christ in Christian Tradition*, vol. II, part III, *From the Council of Chalcedon (451) to Gregory the Great (590-604). The Churches of Jerusalem and Antioch from 451 to 600*, ed. A. Grillmeir – Th. Hainthaler, Oxford University Press, Oxford 2013, 268-280; R.Y. Ebied – A. van Roey – L.R. Wickham, *Peter of Callinicum. Anti-Tritheist Dossier* (OLA 10), Departement Oriëntalistiek, Leuven 1981, 20-33; A. van Roey, *La controverse trithéite depuis la condemnation de Conon et Eugène jusqu'à la conversion de l'évêque Elie*, in *Von Kanaan bis Kerala: Festschrift für Prof. Mag. Dr. J.P.M. van der Ploeg O.P. zur Vollendung des siebzigsten Lebensjahres am 4. Juli 1979 überreicht von Kollegen, Freunden und Schülern*, ed. W.C. Delsman – J.T. Nelis – J.R.T.M. Peters – W.H.Ph. Römer – A.S. van der Woude (AOAT 211), Verlag Butzon & Bercke, Kevelaer 1982, 487-497; A. van Roey, *La controverse trithéite jusqu'à l'excommunication de Conon et d'Eugène (557-569)*, OLP 16 (1985) 141-165; J. Zachhuber, *The Rise of Christian Theology*, cit., 145-169.

[68]   Cf. A. Grillmeir, *The Tritheist Controversy*, cit., 268-276; R.Y. Ebied – A. van Roey – L.R. Wickham, *Peter of Callinicum*, cit., 20-21.

[69]   For the controversy and the doctrines of both Damian and Peter see A. van Roey, *Le traité contre les Trithéites (CPG 7245) de Damien d'Alexandrie*, in *Philohistôr. Miscellanea in Honorem Caroli Laga Septuagenarii*, ed. A. Schoors - P. van Deun (OLoA 60). Leuven 1994, 229-250; R.Y. Ebied – A. van Roey – L.R. Wickham, *Peter of Callinicum*, cit., 34-43; *Petri Callinicensis Patriarchae Antiocheni Tractatus contra Damianum*, vol. 1, ed. R.Y. Ebied – A. van Roey – L.R. Wickham (CCh.SG 29), Brepols, Turnhout-Leuven 1994, xxii-xxvi; D. Krausmüller, *Properties Participating in Substance: the Trinitarian Theology of Severus of Antioch and Damian of Alexandria*, JLARC 12 (2018) 15-29; R.Y. Ebied, *Peter of Antioch and Damian of Alexandria: The End of a Friendship*, in *A Tribute to Arthur Vööbus: Studies in Early Christian Literature and Its Environment, Primarily in the Syrian East*, ed. R.H. Fischer, The Lutheran School of Theology, Chicago 1977, 277-282.

some anti-Tritheistic Syriac florilegia[70], and it was also followed and developed by the great Miaphysite philosopher and theologian Yaḥyā ibn ʿAdī (d. 974), who comprehended the general substance according to Aristotle's *substantia prima*, and *quasi* identified the hypostases with the properties[71].

Peter's doctrine, however, did not resolve all the metaphysical questions,[72] so the Miaphysites tried to reformulate it by creating a 'new' metaphysical system, though this was based mainly on Peter's doctrine. The aforementioned Syriac patristic Trinitarian florilegium copied in Ms *BL Add.* 12155 may be considered a testimony of this attempt. The doctrine it expounds can be summarised in the following points: (1) A universal substance is an abstract reality, the common, that is, the constituent element of its concrete, subsistent and particular realities, that is, the hypostases. (2) The substance is also the sum total of the hypostases proper to it. (3) Each hypostasis, taken individually, is a particular substance, but cannot be identified with the universal substance, i.e., the sum total of the hypostases. (4) Each hypostasis, however, manifests perfectly all the natural and substantial characteristics of its universal substance according to the common sense. Therefore, (5) the substance is termed shared and participated while the hypostases are the sharers and participants. In addition, (6) each hypostasis possesses its own particular property through which it is distinguished from the rest of the hypostases of the same universal substance. (7) Property, then, belongs to the hypostasis and indicates it, but is not identified with it or with the substance, the constituent element of the hypostasis. (8) Through the property, the hypostasis gets its proper name, which indicates its manner of existence and not its substance, therefore (9) the property of one specific hypostasis cannot be shared with other hypostases[73].

As mentioned above, Abū Rāʾiṭah uses this metaphysical system to demonstrate to the Melkites that their distinction between hypostasis and substance is errant[74]. Moreover, it is evident that he follows this same doctrine in his writings he addressed to Muslims to defend Christian Trinitarian doctrine from the Muslim accusation of Tritheism. We can therefore say that Abū Rāʾiṭah follows the mainstream discourse of his Church doctrine faithfully[75] and tries to express it in Arabic terms. This last element is indeed one of his main contributions to Miaphysite theology[76].

Furthermore, I shall highlight another important contribution made by Abū Rāʾiṭah to Miaphysite Trinitarian doctrine, which he developed where he felt that it was necessary. For example, he distinguishes between terms that are usually considered *quasi* synonymous in the Miaphysite tradition: 'substance', 'essence' and 'hypostasis'. Unfortunately, although R. Haddad had already noticed our author's different uses of these terms[77], scholars who studied and even translated Abū Rāʾiṭah have not taken this element into consideration; as a result, in my opinion, they have come to some mistaken conclusions concerning his Trinitarian doctrine. Indeed, behind this distinction one should see an application of the so-called

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[70] See for example the florilegium translated by G. Furlani where it is said that the divine substance must be comprehended according to Aristotle's *substantia prima*, while the hypostases are identified with properties, cf. G. Furlani, *Un florilegio antitriteistico in lingua siriaca*, ARIVS.LA IX, 8 [83] (1924) 661-677.

[71] Cf. E. Platti, *Towards an interpretation of Yaḥyā Ibn ʿAdī's terminology in his theological treatises*, MIDEO 29 (2012) 61-71.

[72] For the open questions Peter's system left, see J. Zachhuber, *The Rise of Christian Theology*, cit., 181; see also B. Ebeid, *Metaphysics*, cit., 119-121.

[73] See B. Ebeid, *Metaphysics*, cit., 94-97, 119-121.

[74] In this regard, see my forthcoming study, cit. (n. 7).

[75] Daccache, like other scholars, noted that our author uses patristic tradition and mainly follows the Cappadocian Fathers, though at the same time there are some differences between his and their approaches to Trinitarian doctrine. However, and although he maintains that Abū Rāʾiṭah acquired his knowledge of the patristic tradition through existing Syriac translations, he did not look for the possible sources of Abū Rāʾiṭah, and therefore failed to understand the principal difference between his, or the 'Miaphysite Trinitarian doctrine', and the Cappadocian, consequence of the internal controversies among the Miaphysites, cf. S. Daccache, *Abū Rāʾiṭah*, cit., 44-47, 51-52.

[76] Cf. S. Daccache, *Abū Rāʾiṭah*, cit., 17-18.

[77] Unfortunately, Haddad did not make a systematic study of Abū Rāʾiṭah, but a study of the Trinitarian doctrine among the Christian Arab authors. Therefore, one must read everything he provides and search there for the specific material on Abū Rāʾiṭah, cf. R. Haddad, *La Trinité*, cit., 161-185; in these pages Haddad argues the terms used by the Arab Christian authors for the Trinity and the given metaphysical explanations.

'three states of the universals' developed by some Neoplatonic commentators on Aristotle[78] and adopted by some Christian thinkers of the three main denominations of the East during the sixth and seventh centuries, and even later[79]. Finally, we should also notice the importance of the distinction Abū Rāʾiṭah applies to the terms 'attribute' and 'property', where the former is used for the common characteristics shared by the hypostases of the same substance, while the latter indicates the specific characteristic that each hypostasis possesses. This is one of the main topics of my further analysis, and therefore it must be always taken into consideration for a proper understanding of Abū Rāʾiṭah's teaching, especially in some of his ambiguous passages.

Abū Rāʾiṭah's use of Islamic doctrine on God and his Attributes

Both of the works under examination, *On the Holy Trinity* and *On the Proof of the Christian Religion and the Proof of the Holy Trinity*, were written as letters sent to unidentified Christians involved in disputes with Muslims and who had asked Abū Rāʾiṭah for help in answering some questions addressed to them by their Muslim interlocutors. The main issues at that time were the oneness of God and his attributes[80]. This is not the place to discuss the origins of this doctrine, how it developed and its relationship with Christian theology[81]. My interest is rather to highlight the fact that this issue had divided Muslim scholars and was an important reason for new reflections on the Islamic doctrine regarding the oneness of God and the polemics Muslims raised against Christians accusing them of polytheism. All Muslims agree that God is one and unique and this oneness is according to number; therefore, if the attributes were eternal in God, it would mean affirming more than one eternal and, as a consequence, teaching polytheism, which is worse than the Christian Trinity seen as Tritheism. In addition, Muslim scholars had to deal with the following additional question: if the attributes did not exist always in God, would it mean that God existed without his attributes? Muslim *mutakallimūn* were not in agreement on how to answer these questions, in fact, this issue was one of the reasons that led to the development of different schools and currents of *kalām* within the Muslim theological world. Regarding the divine attributes, one might assert that the answers given can be divided into two principal categories: the one by the *Sunnah* and the one by the *Muʿtazilah*.

Sunnah scholars affirmed that the divine attributes existed in God always. For them, the attributes are not simply nominal or linguistic entities with which God is described, but they are real things and incorporeal beings; they are something other than God himself; they exist eternally in God and through them God is described with his different attributes. The *Muʿtazilī* scholars, by contrast, considered such teaching risky and dangerous since they understood it as polytheism. They did not refuse to describe God with the same attributes, but, instead, they considered them nouns, separate from God, which came into existence before creation; therefore they were neither eternal nor uncreated, but created from eternity, before time and creation. Moreover, it must be mentioned that Muslim *mutakallimūn* divided the divine attributes into several

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[78] Cf. L. Benakis, *The Problem of General Concepts in Neoplatonism and Byzantine Thoughts*, in *Neoplatonism and Christian Thought*, ed. D. J. O'Meara (SN.AM 3), International Society for Neoplatonic Studies, Norfolk 1982, 75-86; C. Erismann, *Logic in Byzantium*, in *The Cambridge Intellectual History of Byzantium*, ed. A. Kaldellis – N. Siniossoglou, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 2017, 362-380, here 364.

[79] For the reception of this theory in Byzantium see L. Benakis, *The Problem*, cit.; C. Erismann, *The Trinity, Universals, and the Particular Substances: Philoponus and Rescelin*, Traditio 53 (2008) 277-305, here 277-285; while for its reception by East Syrian authors see B. Ebeid, *The Trinitarian doctrine of Ibn aṭ-Ṭayyib: An interpretation of Babai the Great's metaphysical system in the world of Islam*, PdO 44 (2018) 93-131.

[80] On this topic see, among others, R. Frank, *Beings and their Attributes. The Teaching of the Basrian School of the Muʿtazila in Their Classical Period*, State University of New York Press, New York 1978; D. Gimaret, *Les noms divins en Islam. Exégèse lexicographique et théologique*, Les Éditions du Cerf, Paris 1988; H. Wolfson, *The Philosophy of the Kalam*, cit., 112-232; H. Wolfson, *The Muslim Attributes and the Christian Trinity*, HTR 49 (1956) 1-18; M. W. Watt, *The Formative*, cit., 242-249; M. Allard, *Le problème des attributs divins dans la doctrine d'al- Ašʿarī; et de ses premiers grands disciples* (RechILOB 28) Beirut 1965; S.T. Keating, *An Early List of Ṣifāt Allāh in Abū Rāʾiṭa al-Takrītī's 'First Risāla on the Holy Trinity'*, JSAI 36 (2009) 339-355.

[81] One can mention, for example, S. Griffith's critique of H. Wolfson's opinion, which was that the doctrine on the divine attributes in Islam comes from Christianity and Hellenism, especially Neoplatonism, cf. S. Griffith, *Ḥabīb ibn Ḫidmah*, cit., 188.

groups and categories such as attributes of essence, attributes of qualification, attributes of action and so on. It is evident that the Muslim doctrine on God and that of Abū Rāʾiṭah as presented above belong to different understandings of God, his oneness and his attributes. Nevertheless, as previously mentioned, some scholars maintain that the Miaphysite theologian adopted the Muslim doctrine of the attributes and applied it to his Trinitarian teaching. However, through careful analysis and reading of his two works under examination, we come to a different conclusion. In his *On the Holy Trinity*, we read the following:

> You have asked that I write a book explaining what is obscure to you concerning the teachings of the peoples and their claim that what they hold is correct, and especially the teaching of the People of the South, and their description of the superiority of their own religion, and its excellence and preeminence above the other religions. And so, along with this [clarification], I shall set forth for you the confession of the People of Truth, and what they love and what they offer [in defence] of it by way of wisdom and proof, and I shall communicate this in the form of questions and answers … The first [issue] is the following. The People of the South say: «The evidence is in our possession and the proof is in our teaching. For you agree with us, and give witness to the truth of what we possess, in as much as you do not deny our description of God as one, always was and always will be, living, knowing, seeing, hearing, having no partner in His *ousia* or in His dominion. And He is the first and the last, Creator of what is seen and what is unseen, without want, perfect [in] His being, He is not described by those who [wish to] describe Him, [He is] exalted above diminishing and weakness, not described by division, nor by [having] an envoy, Ruler, powerful Doer of what He wishes, not seen, not sensed, not comprehended, not limited, comprehending everything [in His] knowledge. The obvious demonstration that our teaching is the truth and our religion is the correct one (and that the one who follows another [religion] is among those who are lost), is in your confession and your assent to our teaching in which we describe God by His true description. However, if your claim and your description of God is threeness, together with His oneness, then this is not [something] which is incumbent upon us, because we reject it and deny it»[82].

Even if the opinion of some scholars could be sustainable[83], such as that of S. Keating, who maintains that these writings were fabricated in the form of letters and that the author tried to communicate information on some topics in the guise of an epistle to an unidentified reader, the topics on which the discussion is concentrated were chosen from the Islamic side, as it is evident in the passage above, which fact reveals that the opponents had already defined their questions in a precise way. This means that Abū Rāʾiṭah was forced to answer these specific issues concerning the 'oneness' and 'threeness' of God using two Islamic doctrines, the one on the oneness of God and the one on his attributes, according to, not just as S. Daccache notes, the *Muʿtazilah* way of thinking[84] but also the teaching of other Islamic schools of *kalām*. What obliges Abū Rāʾiṭah to deal with this topic is the conclusion of the Muslim interlocutors, who consider the doctrine on the oneness of God and his attributes common and agreed dogmas between Muslims and Christians. The logic of the Muslim interlocutors, then, is to use the Christian doctrine as proof of their own teaching; the Christian doctrine that God is one, and that he is described with attributes, is presented as implicit approval of the correctness of the Islamic doctrine on the oneness of God and his attributes.

Abū Rāʾiṭah's answer to these two questions is formulated carefully. For the first, he starts by declaring that the Muslims' understanding of the oneness of God is different from that of the Christians[85]. As mentioned earlier, our author sees God as one according to the substance, and three according to the hypostases, and he is professed to be perfect in both cases: in substance, since he is unique and no one in creation is like him, and in number, since the number three includes both species of numbers, odd and even. Abū Rāʾiṭah knows that the Muslims' understanding of the oneness of God is not identical. In fact, even if Muslims affirm that God is one and unique[86], his oneness is indicated in number and in being and not in substance as the Christians teach[87].

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[82] S.T. Keating, *Defending*, cit., 164-169.

[83] Cf. S.T. Keating, *Defending*, cit., 60-61, 159-163.

[84] Daccache notes that the Islamic doctrine to which our author refers is the one of the *Muʿtazilah*. However, it will be demonstrated that Abū Rāʾiṭah uses, or refers to, other doctrines than the one of the *Muʿtazilah*. In addition, Daccache claims that Abū Rāʾiṭah sent this epistle to a Muslim *Muʿtazilite* scholar. In my opinion, this statement cannot be supported, cf. S. Daccache, *Abū Rāʾiṭah*, cit., 18-19, 37-39.

[85] S.T. Keating, *Defending*, cit., 170-171.

[86] Cf. S. Griffith, *Ḥabīb ibn Ḫidmah*, cit., 179.

[87] Cf. V. Abdi, *Jacobite Explanation of the Trinity in the Context of Muʿtazilite Theology: Abu Raʾitah al-Takriti*, Reli-

I should also point out that Abū Rāʾiṭah knows that Muslims do not apply the term substance when they speak of God[88], and for this reason he pays attention to when and how he uses the Christian terms in dealing with Islamic doctrines, as will be shown below. Therefore, he very carefully tries to demonstrate that in the Muslim understanding of the oneness of God there is a contradiction, especially when it comes to rationality and its principles, i.e. the basic Aristotelian logic. It is evident that Abū Rāʾiṭah (1) is well acquainted with the rational argumentation used by the *Muʿtazilah* and the other Islamic movements, and (2) he is aware of the fact that the main common background for both parties, Christians and Muslims, is philosophy and rationality, or as he also calls it, *kalām*[89].

Applying the Aristotelian division regarding the 'one'[90], Abū Rāʾiṭah states that we can speak of the 'one' in three ways: (1) one in genus, (2) one in species, and (3) one in number[91]. God cannot be described 'one in genus' since this would mean that he comprehends a variety of species, which neither Muslims nor Christians can accept[92]. In addition, if God is unique and nothing is like him, a teaching on which Muslims and Christians agree, he cannot be 'one in number', since creation offers other instances of things which are 'one in number', like each individual human being[93]. In addition, God cannot be 'one in number', since the number one is imperfect, and God is far from being imperfect[94]. As for affirming that God is 'one in species', Abū Rāʾiṭah points out that according to the basic Aristotelian logic[95], each species includes different essences even if they are 'one in substance'[96]. In addition, the 'one in species' is not 'one in number', since the 'one in number' includes just himself[97]. It seems then that our author's main question here is whether Muslims think that 'one in species' is the same as 'one in number' and by discussing this topic he tries to manoeuvre his opponents into agreeing that God's oneness must be understood in terms of species and not in terms of number, which must lead to acceptance that the species 'God' includes more than one essence, that is, the Christian doctrine on the Trinity.

Through this analysis and syllogism, which sometimes seems to be weak –like the argument against the 'one in number' which can also be applied against the 'one in species' since in creation there are things that are one in species but different in essences, and this contradicts our author's understanding of God as 'no one like him'–, Abū Rāʾiṭah aims to demonstrate that the Christian doctrine concerning the oneness of God is correct since it is not in contradiction with rationality. After this conclusion, he immediately starts to argue the second question, i.e., the one related to the divine attributes. Similarly to the case of the oneness of God, Abū Rāʾiṭah begins his answer by asserting that there is a difference in the understanding of this topic between Muslims and Christians. In fact, he states that Muslims presume that Christians agree with them in describing God as living, knowing, hearing, and seeing[98]. But even if they do describe God with these attributes, Christians do not understand them like Muslims do. It seems that Abū Rāʾiṭah wants to assert that even if these attributes are used by Christians to describe God, this does not mean an approval of the correctness of the Islamic doctrine[99]. Unlike the first topic on the oneness of God, our author does not indicate directly what the exact difference is between Muslims and Christians in understanding the attributes, and his argumentation needs first to deal with some other issues.

Abū Rāʾiṭah believes that two important questions must be resolved: (1) with what kinds of name is God described[100]? (2) who is being described? God in his being and substance, so the attributes used are

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gious Inquiries 8 (2019) 5-23, here 15-17.

88 Cf. V. Abdi, *Jacobite Explanation*, cit., 15-16.

89 S.T. Keating, *Defending*, cit., 168-170, 172-173. See also S.T. Keating, *An Early List*, cit.

90 Cf. Aristotle, *Metaphysics* 5.6 [1016b-1017a].

91 S.T. Keating, *Defending*, cit., 172-173.

92 S.T. Keating, *Defending*, cit., 172-173.

93 S.T. Keating, *Defending*, cit., 172-175.

94 S.T. Keating, *Defending*, cit., 174-175.

95 In his references to philosophy and philosophers, Abū Rāʾiṭah has mind not only Aristotle and his *Categories* but also the *Isagoge* by Porphyry.

96 S.T. Keating, *Defending*, cit., 174-175.

97 S.T. Keating, *Defending*, cit., 174-175.

98 S.T. Keating, *Defending*, cit., 174-175.

99 In my opinion this is different from the one Keating expressed in S.T. Keating, *An Early List*, cit.

100 S.T. Keating, *Defending*, cit., 176-177.

substantial (natural attributes, attributes of essence), or God in his actions, so the attributes used are of action (verbal attributes)[101]? He asserts that, in general, there are two kinds of name: single-absolute and relative[102]. The attributes of God are relative and can be divided into two groups: (a) those that describe God in his being –as living through life, knowing through knowledge, being wise through wisdom and so on; and (b) those attributes that God acquired after having carried out an action – as in describing God as creator after the act of creation[103].

The second group of attributes was called 'verbal' by the *Muʿtazilah*, or attributes of actions, since, from a linguistic point of view, they derive from verbs[104]. Abū Rāʾiṭah accepts this doctrine and also uses this technical term for this category of attributes. Moreover, he uses another term for the verbal attributes, i.e. 'acquired attributes',[105] that is, attributes with which God is described after having performed an action in his creation. Additionally, from his argumentation, it would seem that this category of attributes did not create many problems[106], since it is evident, as he declares, that the acts of God in creation are carried out in time, and these attributes describe the relationship between God and the things he created; therefore, they are not similar to the substantial attributes of God[107].

The first group of attributes, i.e. the 'relative and substantial' attributes, was indeed problematic, especially for the Muslims themselves, as mentioned previously, and therefore Abū Rāʾiṭah concentrates his interest on it[108]. He then asks the following rhetorical question: since these attributes are relative to things, are these things of God, or of something else than God[109]? No one, in fact, can assert that, for example, God's life and knowledge are something other than God, since this would mean polytheism. In conclusion therefore, they must be of his substance, and they must thus be eternal as he is eternal[110]. It is evident that, in his argumentation, Abū Rāʾiṭah takes account of the internal Islamic discussion on the attributes of God, to some extent affirming the position of the *Sunnah*, as we shall see, in opposition to that of the *Muʿtazilah*, and therefore he asks another rhetorical question: are these names perfect from perfect or parts from perfect[111]? Since all, Muslims and Christians, agree that God is far from imperfection, these things or names with which he is described must be of his substance, and therefore perfect from perfect[112]. This last affirmation should be understood in the light of his Trinitarian doctrine, presented previously (no. 17 in the list above), which will be also explained in detail below, that is, the doctrine concerning the caused hypostases as perfect essences from perfect essence-cause, that is, they are not parts from part, and therefore each, seen individually, is considered perfect God (no. 18 in the list above).

Then follows the last question, which this time is not rhetorical, but philosophical: are the names with which God is described (1) divided and dissimilar so they have no continuity, that is, they cannot be united in any way; (2) continuous and connected, thus they have no dissimilarity, that is, united with con-

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[101] S.T. Keating, *Defending*, cit., 178-179.

[102] S.T. Keating, *Defending*, cit., 176-177.

[103] S.T. Keating, *Defending*, cit., 174-175.

[104] Cf. R.R. Frank, *Beings and their Attributes*, cit., 1-38, especially 18-25.

[105] The term 'acquisition' (*kasb/iktisāb*) was usually linked to the *Ašʿarī* kalāmic school, founded at the beginning of the 10th century. However, the doctrine of acquisition has its roots in some earlier *Muʿtazilī* circles. In both schools this doctrine was mainly used in anthropology for questions related to the good and evil actions of man, as well as free will and predestination, or in other words, it was related to the question of who creates man's acts, God or man himself? For more details see L. Gardet, *Kasb*, Encyclopaedia of Islam, second edition, vol. 3, 692-694; W.M. Watt, *The Origin of the Islamic Doctrine of Acquisition*, JRAS 2 (1943) 234-247; B. Abrahamov, *A Re-Examination of al-Ashʿarī's Theory of 'Kasb' According to 'Kitāb al-Lumaʿ*, Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain and Ireland 2 (1989) 210-221. It is clear then that Abū Rāʾiṭah uses the same terms to develop another doctrine and in different contexts, the one of the divine attributes related to God's actions in creation.

[106] S.T. Keating, *Defending*, cit., 180-181.

[107] S.T. Keating, *Defending*, cit., 178-181.

[108] S.T. Keating, *Defending*, cit., 178-179.

[109] S.T. Keating, *Defending*, cit., 182-183.

[110] S.T. Keating, *Defending*, cit., 180-181.

[111] S.T. Keating, *Defending*, cit., 182-183.

[112] S.T. Keating, *Defending*, cit., 182-183.

fusion; or (3) connected and at the same time divided, that is, united and distinct[113]? To understand these possibilities, we need to consider our author's Trinitarian doctrine (no. 5 in the list above), according to which he affirms that on the one hand God is united and on the other that he is divided and distinct. Abū Rāʾiṭah, then, in his argumentation, discusses each possibility and tries to demonstrate that if we want to affirm that the things or names by which God is described are of his substance, perfect and eternal from perfect and eternal, they must be connected and at the same time divided[114]. In addition, he is aware that such a solution/explanation is seen as impossible, or irrational in the eyes of his opponents. However, as he did in the argumentation regarding the oneness of God, he concludes that such an affirmation is possible, since he is going to demonstrate that it is consistent with rationality, and the proof is the Christian doctrine of the Trinity. Indeed, as I presented it above, Abū Rāʾiṭah's Trinitarian doctrine maintains that God is continuous, similar and connected in substance, but distinct and divided in the hypostases; God's substance is the three hypostases, and the three hypostases are God's substance[115]. In conclusion, Abū Rāʾiṭah asserts that if Muslims want their doctrine of the divine attributes to be correct, they must accept that God is simultaneously both continuous and separate, otherwise their doctrine would be inconsistent with rationality. It is clear again that even when our author discusses the doctrine on the divine attributes, he has in mind his Trinitarian doctrine, and through his analysis and argumentation he always tries to lead his audience to accept this doctrine and to recognize that it is indeed rational.

Scholars have already analysed Abū Rāʾiṭaha's answers in detail[116]. However, I feel that they did not pay attention to certain points, as a result of which they attributed doctrines to him which he could not have accepted. V. Abdi correctly notes that when Abū Rāʾiṭah argues the oneness of God and his attributes, he concludes without clarifying exactly why Muslims should assign three hypostases to the one God[117]. Although this scholar is aware that Muslims could not accept the use of terms like substance and hypostasis for God[118], he builds on the opinion of other previous scholars[119] to affirm that Abū Rāʾiṭah wrote these works with mainly Muslims in mind, and he therefore tries to use their language and doctrine to prove the correctness of his own Christian faith[120]. He also asserts that Abū Rāʾiṭah's method was creative, but not successful[121]. In my opinion, the main fault of the scholars who studied these works of Abū Rāʾiṭah is that they maintained that our author addresses these writings principally to Muslims. I think that the key to better understanding Abū Rāʾiṭah's thoughts and methods is to take seriously into consideration that his audience is composed mainly of well-educated Christians involved in dialogue with Muslims. This, however, does not deny that Abū Rāʾiṭah also had in mind newly-converted Muslims, who left Christianity for Islam[122] and even Muslims. A careful reading of our author's argumentation and of how and when he uses metaphysical terms like substance and hypostasis should help us gain a better understanding of this consideration.

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[113] S.T. Keating, *Defending*, cit., 182-183.

[114] S.T. Keating, *Defending*, cit., 182-183.

[115] See the references in my description of Abū Rāʾiṭah's Trinitarian doctrine and metaphysical principles above.

[116] See mainly S. Griffith, *Ḥabīb ibn Ḥidmah*, cit., 161-201; R. Haddad, *La Trinité*, cit., 187-245; S. Daccache, *Polemique, logique et elaboration theologique chez Abū Rāʾita al-Takrītī*, Annales de Philosophie 6 (1985) 38-88; H. Suermann, *Der Begriff Sifah bei Abū Rāʾiṭa*, in *Christian Arabic apologetics during the Abbasid period (750-1258)*, ed. S.Kh. Samir – J.S. Nielsen (SHR 63), Brill, Leiden 1994, 157-171; S. Daccache, *Abū Rāʾiṭah*, cit., 29-53; F. Benevich, *Christliche Trinitätslehre vor dem Islam: Ein Beispiel von Abū Rāʾiṭa al-Takrītī*, OC 96 (2012) 149-164; S.L. Husseini, *Early Christian-Muslim Debate*, cit., 77-104, 193-198; S.T. Keating, *The Rationality of Christian Doctrine*, cit.; V. Abdi, *Jacobite Explanation*, cit.

[117] Cf. V. Abdi, *Jacobite Explanation*, cit., 10.

[118] Cf. V. Abdi, *Jacobite Explanation*, cit., 15-16.

[119] See for example the opinion of S. Griffith, *Ḥabīb ibn Ḥidmah*, cit., 172. Although S. Keating stresses that our author addresses these writing to an anonymous Christian who is involved in disputes with Muslims, or who had left Christianity for Islam, she continues to see Muslims as the main readers in the mind of our author, cf. S.T. Keating, *Defending*, cit., 63-64, 79, 159-160; S.T. Keating, *The Rationality*, cit., 157-159.

[120] Cf. V. Abdi, *Jacobite Explanation*, cit., 18-19.

[121] Cf. V. Abdi, *Jacobite Explanation*, cit., 20.

[122] S. Keating also sees that these could be the characteristics of the readers to whom our author addresses his writings, however she also considers it as probable, maybe more probable, that Abū Raʾiṭah expected to be read by Muslim missionaries, cf. S.T. Keating, *Defending*, cit., 79, 159-160.

Firstly, one might wonder why Abū Rāʾiṭah argues these two specific topics in detail when he knows that the Muslims' understanding of these doctrines is radically different from that of the Christians? Why does he use Christian terminology when he knows that Muslims would neither agree to consider God as substance nor to describe him with the metaphysical category of hypostasis[123]? We should note then that Abū Rāʾiṭah applies Christian concepts in an Islamic doctrinal context only when he wants to show, on the one hand, the agreement between Christian doctrine and rationality, and on the other, the errant and irrational considerations of Islamic thought. This explains why, at the beginning of his discussion on the oneness of God, he neither affirms that the species is substance nor says that perfectness in number is to be found in the number three, nor does he use the term hypostasis. The same occurs in the discussion of the divine attributes. He never affirms, directly or indirectly, that the divine attributes are identified with or relate to the divine hypostases.

However, some scholars, such as S. Griffith[124], S. Keating[125] and V. Abdi[126], maintain that in some way Abū Rāʾiṭah identifies the three divine hypostases with specific divine attributes and names that *Muʿtazilī* scholars usually use in their doctrine. No one can ignore the fact that our author did indeed use such doctrine and discussed it[127], but, and as F. Benevich correctly concludes that in so doing, Abū Rāʾiṭah did not betray his Miaphysite tradition and doctrine at all[128]. H. Suermann, in addition, followed by S. Husseini, noted that, even if Abū Rāʾiṭah used and adopted the term 'attribute' and demonstrated that he knew its doctrinal context in the internal Islamic discussion, he did not identify it with hypostasis[129]. F. Benevich, criticizing the conclusions of both S. Griffith and H. Suermann, affirms that Abū Rāʾiṭah did not adopt the Islamic doctrine on the divine attributes of God to explain the Christian Trinity, even if he used Islamic terminology in regard thereto. F. Benevich called attention to Abū Rāʾiṭah's use of two metaphysically different terms, 'attribute' and 'property'[130]. As clearly shown above, these terms should not be confused.

If H. Suermann sought to support his opinion by trying to find a relationship between Abū Rāʾiṭah's Trinitarian doctrine and that of the early Fathers, like Tertullian, the Cappadocians, Cyril of Alexandria and others, and their use of the terms 'attribute' and 'property' as distinct from 'hypostasis'[131], F. Benevich correctly remarked that a proper understanding of Abū Rāʾiṭah's doctrine necessarily entails taking account of the internal controversies among Miaphysites during the sixth and seventh centuries, that is, the Tritheistic controversy and the controversy between Peter and Damian[132].

Indeed, how could Abū Rāʾiṭah consider the hypostases as simply attributes or properties when he knew that such doctrine, adopted by Damian of Alexandria, was rejected by his Church? How could Abū Rāʾiṭah, who affirms that the divine substance is the three hypostases and vice versa, declare to Muslims that, for Christians, hypostases are simply attributes? How could Abū Rāʾiṭah, who distinguishes between substance and hypostases as universal and its particulars and calls hypostases essences and considers them subsistent, identify them with attributes?

Usually, scholars who assert that Abū Rāʾiṭah applied the Muslim doctrine of the attributes of God in his

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[123] As I mentioned above, one might also add the question why does Abū Raʾiṭah refer to biblical verses as authoritative and proof if he is aware that Muslims accuse Christians of having falsified the Bible?

[124] Cf. S. Griffith, *Ḥabīb ibn Ḫidmah*, cit., 183.

[125] Cf. S.T. Keating, *The Rationality*, cit., 175.

[126] Cf. V. Abdi, *Jacobite Explanation*, cit., 18. According to Abdi, Abū Raʾiṭah links the attributes to hypostases but at the same time he recognizes the difference between them. Abdi, however, affirms that Abū Rāʾiṭah uses the Muslim language to make the doctrine of the Trinity more acceptable to Muslims, leaving the reader to be convinced that he had double language/doctrines.

[127] Besides the scholars mentioned, one must note that Daccache and Haddad note that Abū Rāʾiṭah used and discussed with Islamic, and especially the *Muʿtazilite*, doctrines but without asserting that for him the hypostases are attributes. They in fact leave the reader with the idea that Abū Rāʾiṭah simply used a Muslim linguistic code to express Christian dogma without, however, this necessarily meaning that he himself adopted such doctrines, or considered the hypostases attributes.

[128] Cf. F. Benevich, *Christliche Trinitätslehre*, cit., 164.

[129] Cf. H. Suermann, *Der Begriff Sifah*, cit., 162-163; S. S. L. Husseini, *Early Christian-Muslim Debate*, cit., 91-92.

[130] Cf. F. Benevich, *Christliche Trinitätslehre*, cit., 155-156.

[131] Cf. H. Suermann, *Der Begriff Sifah*, cit., 167-170.

[132] Cf. F. Benevich, *Christliche Trinitätslehre*, cit., 159-161.

Trinitarian doctrine affirm that he limited his doctrine to two attributes chosen from those found in the *Muʿtazilah* doctrine: God (as existing/being) is knowing and living[133]. However, through the following table and further analysis, I will demonstrate that this hypothesis needs to be adjusted, since Abū Rāʾiṭah refers to various other attributes in his discussion, not just to these two, albeit with limitations in some cases. In addition, it must be noted that our author sometimes uses the attributes 'knowing' and 'wise' together, but usually Arabic Christian authors use just one of them to indicate the Word of God. His use of these two attributes in the same argumentation should therefore make us wonder whether he applies them to his discussion to explain the doctrine of the divine hypostases or whether he is using them for another reason:

Passage	*Used attributes*
As for your description of God as living, knowing, hearing, and seeing, and your presumption that we agree with you in this and witness to what is correct [in your view][134]	living, knowing, hearing, seeing
we wish to examine everything closely concerning these descriptions of living and seeing and knowing…[135]	living, seeing, knowing
As for the predicative names, [they] are related to something else, just as "knower" and "knowledge" [are related to each other], "seer" and "seeing", "wise" and "wisdom", and anything similar to this[136]	knowing, seeing, wise
So the knower is knowing through knowledge, and the knowledge is knowledge of a knower. And the wise person is wise through wisdom, and the wisdom is wisdom of a wise person[137]	knowing, wise
If you are saying that [those terms] by which you describe Him, [such as] living and knowing and wise, are on the contrary derived for[138] Him…[139]	living, knowing, wise
In the same way, it should therefore be allowed to say that God existed and had no life, no knowledge and no wisdom until the attributes of life and knowledge and wisdom began to exist in Him[140]	living, knowing
And it is a contradictory statement [to say] that God, may He be praised! Was for [even] a blink of an eye, lacking life and knowledge[141]	living, knowing
On the other hand, the construct [names which are] connected and related to something else, are [those] like "living", and "knowing", and "wise"[142]	living, knowing, wise
If God has not ceased to be living and knowing, then [His] life and knowledge are eternal[143]	living, knowing

In his argumentation, Abū Rāʾiṭah uses the term 'attribute' and applies it to a specific category of characteristics: living, knowing, wise, seeing, hearing and so on. These attributes, Abū Rāʾiṭah also affirms, should be of God's substance, eternal and inherent; he also calls them 'natural attributes':

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[133] Cf. S. Griffith, *Ḥabīb ibn Ḫidmah*, cit., 183; V. Abdi, *Jacobite Explanation*, cit., 18.
[134] S.T. Keating, *Defending*, cit., 176-177.
[135] S.T. Keating, *Defending*, cit., 176-177.
[136] S.T. Keating, *Defending*, cit., 176-179.
[137] S.T. Keating, *Defending*, cit., 178-179.
[138] I do not agree that *la-hu* should be translated as 'from Him', but 'for Him'.
[139] S.T. Keating, *Defending*, cit., 178-179.
[140] S S.T. Keating, *Defending*, cit., 178-179.
[141] S.T. Keating, *Defending*, cit., 178-179.
[142] S.T. Keating, *Defending*, cit., 180-181.
[143] S.T. Keating, *Defending*, cit., 180-181.

…the inherent attributes[144], do they belong to [God's] substance[145] eternally, or did He acquire them…[146]

these two attributes are different: [a natural and inherent attribute by which God is described eternally][147], and an acquired attribute, which He has acquired, is an attribute of [God's] operation[148].

Abū Rāʾiṭah, moreover, chooses another term for the particular characteristics that each hypostasis possesses, and by which it is distinguished from the rest of the hypostases; as mentioned, he uses the term 'property':

If each one of them were not a perfect hypostasis, different[149] from the others by a property[150].

However, when each one of them is a perfect hypostasis, bound by its property by which [the hypostasis] differs from the other [hypostases][151].

According to Abū Rāʾiṭah, the distinction between these two terms, attribute and property, is very important. The 'attribute', being natural and substantial, is shared by all the hypostases of one substance, while the 'property' is the distinctive characteristic each hypostasis possesses:

[God is] one in substance[152], eternity knowledge, power, honour, majesty, and substantial attributes other than these, and [He himself is simultaneously three in hypostases because of the subsistence of each one of them and the establishment of a proper property for each of them][153] in union and harmony with the other hypostases…[154]

In this quotation, Abū Rāʾiṭah considers explicitly that the attributes by which God is described are 'substantial', that is, they belong to the three divine hypostases. One of the attributes he gives is knowledge (knowing), which is used more than once in his discussion on the divine attributes analysed above. This consideration leads us to wonder if this is how Abū Rāʾiṭah explains the difference between Christians and Muslims in their understanding of the attributes, to which he initially referred and did not indicate. I think that scholars who studied this author and noted that he affirms a different understanding of the doctrine on the divine attributes between Islam and Christianity did not pay full attention to this affirmation. However, in my opinion, this difference is a key to a better understanding of Abū Rāʾiṭah's use of this doctrine and his purpose with it.

Firstly, we should seriously consider that (1) Christian Trinitarian doctrine makes a distinction between the attributes of the shared divine substance and the properties, the particular characteristics of each hypostasis, and that (2) Islam makes no such distinction; all attributes describe the one Godhead (in essence, in action and so on). Therefore, Christians who were to apply the Islamic doctrine on attributes in their Trinitarian teaching would have had to face some ontological and metaphysical problems. Keeping in mind this perspective and the potential issue I just stated, I shall examine some ambiguous passages, where Abū Rāʾiṭah may seem to have tried to apply the doctrine of the divine attributes to his explanation of the Trinity, but where careful reading reveals what our author actually intended by this use:

Now, if they say: «What prompts you to describe God, May He be praised! as three hypostases rather than ten

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[144] I do not agree that *ṣifah* should translated as 'property'.

[145] The translator uses the term *ousia* for *ğawhar*, which I have preferred, in all my studies, to translate as substance.

[146] S.T. KEATING, *Defending*, cit., 178-179.

[147] I changed the translation of the sentence between [ ] since I do not agree with that of the translator, where she unfortunately confuses the terms 'attribute' and 'property', which are for our author, as I highlighted, metaphysically different.

[148] S.T. KEATING, *Defending*, cit., 180-181.

[149] I do not agree with the translation of the term *mubāyin* as 'particularized'. In fact, in some cases these wrong translations can lead scholars to wrong affirmations. As in our case, Abū Rāʾiṭah does not say that each hypostasis is particularized through its property, but each hypostasis is different from the other hypostases through its property.

[150] S.T. KEATING, *Defending*, cit., 188-189.

[151] S.T. KEATING, *Defending*, cit., 188-189. The translation of this passage is mine.

[152] See here n. 145.

[153] I changed the translation of the sentence between [ ] since I do not agree with that of the translator.

[154] S.T. KEATING, *Defending*, cit., 106-107.

or twenty[155], or fewer than this or more?», it should be said to them: Truly, we do not describe Him as three hypostases without [describing Him as][156] one substance[157]. These three hypostases are one substance[158] in all aspects. It is not possible to find an equivalent or a likeness for this. As for when you say: «What prompts you to describe three hypostases without adding or subtracting?», we say that that which prompts us to describe [God] by this description[159] is the existence of the hypostases themselves. Because they, without ceasing to be three, are one substance[160]. As we have already explained, God possesses knowledge and spirit, and the knowledge of God and His spirit are permanent and subsistent[161], not ceasing. For it is not permitted in a description of God, may He be glorified! that He be described in His eternity without knowledge or spirit[162].

The ambiguity that may be perceived in this passage disappears when we understand how Abū Rāʾiṭah links, on the one hand, the fact that God as one substance is the three hypostases (Christian doctrine), and on the other, the fact that God has always possessed knowledge and spirit (which sounds like Islamic doctrine). Abū Rāʾiṭah's argumentation is based on the following: (1) the identification of the sum total of three hypostases with the one substance, which is the condition for avoiding any polytheistic understanding; (2) the affirmation that God exists as three hypostases. To prove both affirmations, Abū Rāʾiṭah uses the doctrine on the attributes, but with some modifications. God has always (from eternity) knowledge and spirit, and since his knowledge and his spirit are subsistent, it is correct then to describe him as three hypostases and that the three hypostases are the one substance.

In my opinion, Abū Rāʾiṭah intends this augmentation to give an example of what Christians should do if they were to use the doctrine on the attributes as an instrument to explain the dogma of the Trinity. Certainly, the use of these two nouns, that is, knowledge (knowing) and spirit, is not original to his thought; Church fathers and other Arabic Christian authors used such triads, that is, God, his knowledge/wisdom/word and his spirit/life as an analogy for God the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit[163]. What is original is the way this analogy is used by Abū Rāʾiṭah; we have two distinct doctrines, the one on the Trinity and the one on the 'nouns' by which God is described with specific attributes. Thus, the two teachings are presented on different levels. The second doctrine is simply a comparative tool by which one might approve the correctness of the first doctrine. In other words, if it is legitimate to affirm that God has spirit and knowledge always, and that he remains one God even if his knowledge and spirit are subsistent, a doctrine which is accepted, to some extent, by the Muslims (in this case he follows the logic of *Sunnah*), it is also legitimate to affirm that God is three hypostases and that the three hypostases are the one substance of the Godhead. Finally, even if these attributes are found, as S. Griffith notes, in the Qurʾān[164] and also in Islamic *kalām*, I think that the way they were selected and used is comprehensible only from a Christian point of view, where 'knowledge' corresponds to the Word of God and 'spirit' to the Holy Spirit.

What is, then, the connection or relationship between, on the one hand, God and the (two) attributes by which he is described, and, on the other, the three hypostases and their three properties? In another passage, Abū Rāʾiṭah affirms that property is a 'relational attribute' for hypostasis, that is, it indicates the relationship of a hypostasis to another hypostasis:

> Because the properties indicate the attributes of the relation between one hypostasis to another, and not the essences of the [hypostases] in relation[165].

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[155] The author says *ʿišrīn*, i.e., twenty, and not twelve as Keating translates.

[156] I prefer to translate the preposition *dūna* with 'without' and not 'instead of' as the translator does.

[157] See here n. 145.

[158] See here n. 145.

[159] Even if the term used by our author is *ṣifah*, I do not think that it is correct, considering its context, to translate it with 'attribute'. I prefer to translate it here with 'description', as the same translator does in other passages.

[160] See here n. 145.

[161] I prefer to translate *qāʾim* with 'subsistent' and not 'perpetual' as the translator does.

[162] S.T. Keating, *Defending*, cit., 196-197.

[163] For more details see B. Ebeid, *La Tunica di al-Masīḥ. La Cristologia delle grandi confessioni cristiane dell'Oriente nel X e XI secolo,* Valore Italiano - Edizioni Orientalia Christiana, Roma 2019, 294-320, 456-476. See also chapter four of R. Haddad, *La Trinité*, cit.

[164] See S. Griffith, *Ḥabīb ibn Ḥidmah*, cit., 186. For the Qurʾān see Q 11:14 and 12:87.

[165] S.T. Keating, *Defending*, cit., 200. The translation is mine.

As I have maintained elsewhere, from the sixth and seventh centuries, the mainstream of the West Syrians, with their 'Miaphysite Trinitarian doctrine', did not pay major attention to the intra-Trinitarian relationships, traditionally expressed as cause (Father) and caused (Son and Spirit), and rather than the doctrine of the 'monarchy of the Father' they emphasised the 'monarchy of the substance'[166]. It seems, however, that our author, who follows the doctrine of Miaphysite mainstream, had again to find a place in this doctrine for the intra-Trinitarian relationships, a consequence of the Christian-Muslim dialogue[167]. By affirming that a property is an attribute that indicates the relationship of a hypostasis to another hypostasis, Abū Rā'iṭah manifests the necessity to explain the relationship between the hypostases, and the role played in this by attributes, or better to say, properties. Does it mean, then, that he had to modify the doctrine on the 'monarchy of the substance'?

> Now if this is possible of things created and made, should this be denied of the Creator and Maker, whose remembrance is exalted! In this way, [describing His essence to be living and speaking with eternal life and substantial word (His word is begotten from Himself from eternity without ceasing, and His life proceeds from Him without time), is considered three essential properties, that is three substantial hypostases:][168] a Father, Who begets His Word ceaselessly, and a Son, Who is begotten without time, and a Spirit, Who proceeds from Him, without interruption, One God, one Lord, one *substance*[169].

Upon a quick reading, this passage, seems to be very ambiguous and could lead to misunderstandings, especially if one takes Abū Rā'iṭah's identification (?) of the hypostases with the properties away from the whole context, since he says, «… three essential properties, that is, three substantial hypostases…». However, once again careful reading can reveal exactly what Abū Rā'iṭah means in this passage. Firstly, he uses different attributes. Where in the previous passage he used, 'God, his knowledge and his spirit', in this one he states that, 'the Creator is speaking by word and living by life'. Using different attributes indicates what their main function is for Abū Rā'iṭah; they are instruments for analogy, comparison, and even explanation, that can be understood only from a Christian point of view but should not be considered as an integral part of pure Christian doctrine. This shows again that our author's audience was composed mainly of well-educated Christians involved in dialogues with Muslims.

Moreover, and in support of this opinion, I would analyse the way Abū Rā'iṭah tries to explain the relationship between the three hypostases as 'cause' and 'caused'. The cause is identified with the Father, a subsistent hypostasis, i.e. an essence; therefore, when Abū Rā'iṭah affirms that the creator and maker can be described, in his essence, as living and speaking, the fact that he uses the term 'essence' and not 'substance', reveals the real and correct use of the doctrine on attributes by Christians, which is evidently different from that of Muslims. The two attributes under examination should be identified with the properties, and therefore they explain the relationship between the hypostases. As a consequence, when Abū Rā'iṭah uses these 'attributes' in his Trinitarian doctrine, he considers them 'relational properties'. Let us now make a detailed analysis of Abū Rā'iṭah's affirmations in the passage quoted above:

> 1) The creator is described, in his essence, as living and speaking.
> 2) His life is eternal, and his word is substantial.
> 3) From eternity, his word is generated of him and his life proceeds from him.
> 4) The 'being the cause of generation and procession', the 'generation' and the 'procession' are three essential properties.
> 5) The three substantial hypostases, which are one substance, one Lord and one God are: the Father who generates the Son, the Son who is generated by the Father and the Spirit who proceeds from the Father.

Therefore, according to Abū Rā'iṭah, the Father, Son and Holy Spirit are 'substantial hypostases', that is,

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[166] In this regard see B. Ebeid, *Metaphysics*, cit., 125; see also how an anti-thriteistic text, edited and translated by G. Furlani, explicitly refuses to deal with 'cause and caused' within the Trinity, cf. *Sei scritti antitriteistici in lingua siriaca*, ed. G. Furlani (PO 14.4), Firmin-Didot, Paris 1920, 673-766 here 716.

[167] For an analysis of the way our author discusses the internal cause in the Trinity, see S. Griffith, *Ḥabīb ibn Ḫidmah*, cit., 186-187.

[168] I have changed the translation of the sentence between [ ] since I do not agree with the version of the translator.

[169] S.T. Keating, *Defending*, cit., 112-115. See also here n. 145.

ἐνούσια and not ἀνούσια (they are not empty of the constituent element of the substance, thus they are subsistent essences). The 'generating and giving procession', the 'being generated' and the 'being processed' are essential properties, that is, they describe each hypostasis as a subsistent and distinct essence. In other words, they describe the manner of existence of each hypostasis. Given the above, we can have a better understanding of how attributes are used in Abū Rāʾiṭah's Trinitarian doctrine: The Creator, as the Father, is always (from eternity) living (giving procession to his life/Spirit) and speaking (generating his word/ Son); his word is substantial (ἐνούσιος) and his life is eternal. His word is generated from him and his life proceeds from him. Therefore, they co-exist and are related to each other as cause and caused:

Father	Son	Holy Spirit
generates and gives procession	generated	proceeded

Creator	Word	Life
Speaking by generating his word and living giving procession to his life	generated	proceeded

What remains now for Abū Rāʾiṭah to do is to explain how all this does not contradict the Miaphysite Trinitarian metaphysical principle, that the three hypostases are the one substance and the one substance is the three hypostases. In my opinion, here we can observe the importance and originality of his affirmation that the 'relationship between the hypostases is substantial and natural':

> As for the relationship of the Son and the Spirit to the Father, it is a substantial, unceasing relationship, because the Father is the eternal cause of the Son and the Spirit[170].

> Rather, one of them is the cause of the other two, without beginning and without time. And the two are related to the one in a substantial, natural relation[171].

The main difference between Christians and Muslims when it comes to understanding the attributes and their relationship to the doctrine on God forced Abū Rāʾiṭah to be clearer in the second passage; when Christians use the doctrine as a method of explanation, their aim is to prove the intra-Trinitarian relationships; therefore, these properties are relational and of essences, that is, they belong to hypostases and describe the relationship between them, as cause and caused. They do not indicate the hypostases themselves.

Once again, Abū Rāʾiṭah's methods in his argumentations reveal that he addresses his writings to intellectual and well-educated Christians: (1) he is aware that Muslims use the attributes in a different way; (2) he knows very well that Muslims could not accept an internal cause of existence in the Godhead; (3) in the analogy, he uses the term essence to indicate the Father as cause; (4) he uses two specific attributes, the one of 'speaking through word' and the one of 'living through life' (which are, indeed, used by Muslims, but for centuries before Islam, Christians had used them for the Son, the Word of God, and the Holy Spirit, God the giver of life); (5) he uses 'generation' and 'procession' as adjectives in the analogy; and finally (6) he distinguishes between substantial attributes, common to all hypostases of the same substance, and relational attributes, that is the properties[172].

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[170]   S.T. Keating, *Defending*, cit., 114-115.
[171]   S.T. Keating, *Defending*, cit., 186-187.
[172]   Again, to give one example, we see a relationship between our author and the Trinitarian florilegium contained in Ms. *BL Add.* 12155, where on f. 30r, we read the following title for chapter 102: 'On the fact that light, life and goodness are referred to the concept of substance' which deals with the distinction between the common attributes, which refer to the concept of substance, and the proper characteristics, i.e., the properties, each of which refers to just one hypostasis.

Consequently, the use of the Islamic doctrine again functions as an instrument engineer approval of Christian doctrine. If the Creator is speaking and living, he should be speaking through word, generated from his substance, and living through life, which proceeds from him eternally. This means that God the creator (the Father), his word and his life are three distinct entities, coexist and have a relationship of cause and caused. If Muslims, and in this case, he has in mind the *Sunnah* doctrine more than that of the *Mu'tazilah*, accept their teaching on God's attributes and consider it legitimate, without it being understood as polytheism, then the teaching of Christians on the Trinity should be accepted and considered correct without any accusation of Tritheism. This is because the Father generates the Son from his essence and the Holy Spirit proceeds from him eternally, thus they are three and coexist as distinct hypostases of which one is the cause of the other two, but at the same time, all together they are one substance and one Godhead, one species of 'God'.

I think that only in this way could Abū Rāʾiṭah re-integrate the doctrine on the relationship between the hypostases as cause and caused into the Miaphysite Trinitarian doctrine, based on the monarchy of the substance, using the doctrine on the attributes as an instrument of analogy, comparison and approval. He distinguishes between the substantial and natural attributes, shared by the hypostases of the same substance, and the properties of the hypostases, i.e. the relational characteristics, proper to each hypostasis. Through the property each hypostasis is distinguished from the other hypostases of the same substance, and with it the relationship of each hypostasis to the other hypostases of the same substance is indicated, which is a relationship of existence.

Conclusion

In his writings related to Islam, the West Syrian theologian Abū Rāʾiṭah al-Takrītī shows how certain Christian theologians used the doctrine on the divine attributes to persuade some Muslim scholars to consider it as approval for their own doctrine and its correctness. In his answers, however, Abū Rāʾiṭah tries to do the opposite, which is to see in these Islamic doctrines approval for the correctness of the Christian dogma on the Trinity. Therefore, he neither betrays his Miaphystite teaching and tradition nor applies or adopts Islamic doctrine into Christian dogma, but he simply uses Islamic doctrines as instruments of comparative analysis through which he could confirm approval of the proper faith. He is shown to be a faithful theologian of his Miaphysite tradition and, at the same time, an expert on Islamic *kalām*. For Abū Rāʾiṭah, then, the Trinitarian doctrine and the doctrine on the attributes are on two different levels.

With my analysis, I have tried to demonstrate that Abū Rāʾiṭah's method is creative. I have also shown that this method could be successful only if the main audience of Abū Rāʾiṭah's writings related to Islam was composed of intellectual Miaphysite Christians who are very familiar with their own teachings and involved in disputes with Muslims. It is also probable that he had former Christians, new converts to Islam, in mind and that he tried to show them the correctness of the Christian doctrine by comparison with that of Islam. By contrast, the hypothesis that his target readers were principally Muslim scholars seems to have little foundation and therefore to be unsustainable.

His creative method is based on (1) affirming that there is a dissimilarity in the understanding of the two main topics, the oneness of God and describing him by attributes, between Christians and Muslims; (2) discussing each doctrine with the dialectical method and in detail; (3) considering his own interpretation of the Islamic doctrine as a condition for accepting it to be correct and rational; (4) the correctness of Islamic doctrine, according to his interpretation, becomes proof and approval for the correctness of the Miaphysite and Christian doctrine. In addition, since he is aware that Muslims would have difficulty in accepting his explanation of their doctrine, he tries to demonstrate that correctness means agreement with Aristotelian logic, the main common ground for the theological dialogue between Muslims and Christians. Finally, it is observed that he is very careful in using and selecting his terminology: when he deals with pure Islamic doctrines and tries to interpret them from his own perspective, he uses the linguistic and doctrinal lexicon of Islam, whereas when he starts to use Islamic doctrine as proof for the correctness of the Christian doctrine, he switches to the Christian lexicon and applies Christian metaphysical terminology.

As for his Trinitarian teaching, I have demonstrated that he follows the so called 'Miaphysite Trinitarian doctrine', based on the 'monarchy of the substance' and that the substance is both the 'sum total' of its hypostases and the 'shared constituent element' of all its hypostases. Therefore, he could not have accepted the concept of hypostases as attributes. Additionally, to explain the intra-Trinitarian relationship, Abū Rāʾiṭah succeeded in integrating the 'monarchy of the substance' with the teaching on the 'cause and caused', further developing the Miaphystite doctrine. With the new concepts of 'substantial attribute' and 'relational attribute', he tries to indicate the relationship between the hypostases. His originality can also be seen in the metaphysical distinction he makes between 'attribute' and 'property', and the distinction between 'substance', 'essence' and 'hypostasis', which might be read as the three states of οὐσία (being) that some Neoplatonic commentators of Aristotle had previously developed. Finally, in this way, he tries to remain faithful to his Miaphysite tradition and doctrine and to answer the new challenges Islam and Muslims were currently presenting.

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Abstract. The Christian Trinitarian doctrine was understood as Tritheism by the Qurʾān and Muslims, at least during the first centuries of Islamic rule. Producing a huge number of apologetic works, Arabic Christian theologians tried to defend their faith in the oneness of God and to demonstrate to Muslims that the Trinity is not Tritheism. One of the favourite methods used by Arabic Christian authors in their Trinitarian apologetic works was to exploit the Islamic discussion on the divine attributes of God. However, the explanations of some of these Christian apologists were problematic for the Christian doctrine itself, as they reduced the three divine hypostases to three divine attributes, a doctrine which had already been censured during the third century (condemnation of Modalism and Sabellianism), and was again judged as heretical by the Miaphysite Church in the sixth century, that is, after the controversy between Peter of Callinicum and Damian of Alexandria.
Abū Rāʾiṭah al-Takrītī, a famous Miaphysite theologian of the eighth-ninth centuries, is considered by some scholars to have applied the Islamic doctrine of the attributes of God to his Trinitarian doctrine. A careful reading of his writings, however, demonstrates the opposite. My study, then, aims to offer new considerations on Abū Rāʾiṭah's Trinitarian doctrine. Through an analysis of his writings on the Trinity addressed to Muslims, I will try to show that (1) he follows faithfully the official Miaphysite Trinitarian doctrine established during the sixth and seventh centuries and develops it; (2) he tries to demonstrate, through dialogue with the Islamic doctrines on the oneness of God and on the attributes of God, that the Trinitarian doctrine of the Miaphysites is correct and that the Trinity is not in contradiction with monotheism. In doing so, he is careful (3) to avoid this dialogue meaning an identification of hypostases with attributes, but rather (4) a method by which he tries to use Muslim doctrine to imply approval of Christian doctrine.

Keywords. Miaphysite. Abū Rāʾiṭah. Tritheism. Hypostasis. Attribute. Property. Substance. Essence. Natural attribute. Verbal attribute. Attribute of action. Essential property. Substantial property. Relational property.