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## Abū al-Barakāt and a lost manuscript of the *Book of Philaletes* by Severus of Antioch

### *Introduction*

Severus of Antioch is by far the most important author of the non-Chalcedonian churches. However, his life attributed to Athanasius of Antioch survived in a few Coptic Sahidic texts and a single folio in Coptic Bohairic,<sup>1</sup> and three manuscripts in Arabic<sup>2</sup> while there are other manuscripts that did not survive.<sup>3</sup>

The fate of his works was not better. Justinian ordered to burn all his writing<sup>4</sup> and only Syriac translation survived as well as some texts in Coptic<sup>5</sup> and in Arabic.<sup>6</sup>

### *Severus of Antioch in the book of Ibn Kabar*

The encyclopaedist Šams al-Riyasah abū al-Barakāt called Ibn Kabar<sup>7</sup> who lived in the second part of the thirteenth century and died on Thursday 10 May 1324 AD<sup>8</sup> was a great

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<sup>1</sup> Youhanna Nessim Youssef, "A contribution to the Coptic Biography of Severus of Antioch" in *Coptic Studies on the Threshold of a New Millennium: Proceedings of the Seventh International Congress of Coptic Studies - Leiden, August 27- 2 September 2000*, M. Immerzeel and J. van der Vliet (eds), «Orientalia Lovensiensa Analecta» 133 (Leuven: Peeters, 2004), pp. 413-426. E. Goodspeed and W.E. Crum, *The Conflict of Severus Patriarch of Antioch by Athanasius*, PO 20 (4.6), (Paris: Firmin-Didot, 1908).

<sup>2</sup> Youhanna Nessim Youssef, *The Arabic life of Severus of Antioch attributed to Athanasius*, PO 220 (49.4), (Turnhout: Brepols, 2004).

<sup>3</sup> Youhanna Nessim Youssef, "The lost manuscripts of the Arabic version of the life of Severus of Antioch," *Parole de l'Orient* 39 (2014), pp. 275-289.

<sup>4</sup> M. Brière, *Les Homiliae Cathedrales de Sévère d'Antioche. Introduction générale*, PO 138 (29.1) (Paris : Firmin-Didot, 1961), pp. 14-16.

<sup>5</sup> We have nearly the complete text of the first homily published by C. J. A Lash in PO 175 (38.2). For other fragments cf. the note of E. Lucchesi, *Analecta Bollandiana* 124 (2006), p. 14, and other recent works.

<sup>6</sup> Cf. G. Graf, *Geschichte der christlichen arabischen Literatur*, I, «Studi e Testi» 118. (Città del Vaticano, 1944), pp. 418-420. Some of these works were pseudography, cf. Youhanna Nessim Youssef, *The life and Works of Severus of Antioch in Coptic and Copto-Arabic tradition*, (NJ: Gorgias Press, 2014), pp. 269-383.

<sup>7</sup> A. Wadi, "Abu al-Barakat Ibn Kabar, Misbah al-Zulmah (cap. 18: il digiuno e la settimanta santa)", *Studia Orientalia Christiana Collectanea* 34 (2001), pp. 233-322.

writer, in the golden age of the Copto Arabic literature.<sup>9</sup> His book *The Lamp of Darkness for the Explanation of the Service* is an encyclopedia of all the ecclesiastical knowledge of his time.<sup>10</sup> This book is divided into 24 chapters; the first four chapters are devoted to theology, chapters 5 and 6 to Canon Law. Chapter 7 is a bibliography of Christian authors especially those who wrote in Arabic, the remaining chapters 8-24 are a detailed description of the liturgy of the Coptic Church of that time.<sup>11</sup> Severus of Antioch is mentioned twice in this book:

**The First** mention occurs in Chapter 5, concerning the Canon Law of the Coptic Church

قوانين أخرى غير منسوبة لأحد معين  
ترجمها: هذه القوانين الزمنية التي وضعها آباؤنا القديسون الذين تقدموا قبلنا وقرروها من أجل صعوبة  
الزمان ورغبة التائبين بقلب فريح  
(حاشية) في بعض فصولهم استشهد بكلام أنبا ساويرس البطريك وجملها بل كلها فيما يتعلق بالكهنة -  
الاسقف فما دونه  
بدايتها: اذا رفع على اسقف بسبب زنا أو بسبب شئ من ذل  
وغايتها: في كاهن يصلي عليه للزيجة وتوفت امرأته قبل اجتماعه بها (... وما يتلوه من تمة الفصل الأخير)  
وعدد أوامرها وزواجها ستة وعشرين

Other canons, which are not attributed to anybody:

Their introduction: These are the *earthly* canons of our holy fathers who preceded us, and they established them **for the difficulties of the times** and the willingness of the repentants with a joyful heart.

(Remark) In some of their chapters, **there are quotations from the words of Anba Severus the patriarch**. There are generally or entirely concerned with the priest-bishop and those who are of lesser (rank) than him.

<sup>8</sup> Cf. R.G. Coquin, « Ibn Kabar », *Catholicisme* 6, (1996), col. 1349-1351 ; L. Villecourt, « Les observances liturgiques et la discipline du Jeûne dans l'Église Copte », *Le Muséon* 36, (1922), pp. 249-292.

<sup>9</sup> Adel Sidarus, « Essai sur l'âge d'or de la littérature copte arabe » in *Acts of the Fifth International Congress of Coptic Studies (Washington D.C., August 1992)*, vol. II, ed. by D. Johnson, (Roma: Centro Italiano de Microfiches, s.d.) pp. 443-462, esp. p. 455.

<sup>10</sup> Samir Khalil, "L'encyclopédie liturgique d'Ibn Kabar († 1324) et son apologie d'usages coptes", in *Crossword of Cultures Studies in Liturgy and patristics in Honor of Gabriele Winkler*, edited by H.-J. Feulner, E. Velkovska and R. Taft, *Orientalia Christiana Analecta* 260, (Rome: s.n., 2000), pp. 629-655.

<sup>11</sup> Chapters 16-19 were translated to French in the Article of L. Villecourt, « Les observances liturgiques et la discipline du jeûne dans l'Église Copte », *Le Muséon* 36 (1923), pp. 249-292 ; *Le Muséon* 37 (1924), pp. 201-280 ; *Le Muséon* 38 (1925), pp. 261-320.

(Their incipit) If it was submitted to a bishop a matter concerning adultery or for any humiliating act.

(Their end) Concerning a priest who was engaged to be married and his wife died before having intercourse with her (and what follows till the end of the last chapter). The number of commands and interdictions is twenty-six.<sup>12</sup>

For the corpus of Canon law<sup>13</sup> mentioned in Abū al-Barakāt ibn Kabar, there is a unique study, which is the old study of W. Riedel wherein he gave a complete list of the canonical texts mentioned in Ibn Kabar and known at his time.<sup>14</sup>

It seems that the manuscript of Canon 5 in the library of the Patriarchate in Cairo is the same one that Ibn Kabar referred to. It contains a canonical collection. Unfortunately, during my visit to Cairo,<sup>15</sup> I learned that this manuscript is lost. Here is the description of Simaika:

Collections of various canons: ...3) **Of the saintly fathers on the difficulties of the times.**<sup>16</sup>

131 folios, 20 lines, 26x18 cm. Titles in red. Copied by Nakhlah Quzman. In parts wrongly vocalized. Undated.<sup>16</sup>

**The second** mention is in Chapter Seven concerning the bibliography of Christian authors.<sup>17</sup>

ساويرس بطريرك أنطاكية:

أ- له فصول في إثبات الإمانة الارثوذكسية ترد ضمن سيرته.

ب- واقوال في تفسير بعض كلام الأنجيل المقدسة

Severus Patriarch of Antioch:

A- He wrote several Chapters proving the Orthodox Faith, which are included in his biography.

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<sup>12</sup> Unfortunately, there is no critical edition of this important book. This quotation is taken from the popular edition with the introduction by Samir Khalil, *Miṣbāḥ al-zulmāḥ / fī idāḥ al-ḥidmāḥ*, مصباح الظلمة في إيضاح الخدمة [The Lamp of Darkness for the explanation of the Service], (Cairo: Al-Karūz bookshop, 1971), p. 201.

<sup>13</sup> For an overview cf. R. G. Coquin, 'Canon Law', *Coptic Encyclopedia*, A. S. Atiya (ed), (New York: MacMillan, 1991), pp. 449-451.

<sup>14</sup> W. Riedel, *Die Kirchenrechtsquellen des Patriarchats Alexandrien* (Leipzig: s.n., 1900; repr. Aalen, 1968), pp. 15-80.

<sup>15</sup> January-February 2004. Information was given by the late M. Nabih Kamel Daoud.

<sup>16</sup> M. Simaika and Yassa 'Abd al-Masih, *Catalogue of the Coptic and Arabic Manuscripts in the Coptic Museum, the Patriarchate, the Principal Churches of Cairo and Alexandria and the monasteries of Egypt*, (Cairo: s.n., 1942), p. 257.

<sup>17</sup> Cf G. Graf, *Geschichte*, p. 418.

B- Sayings explaining some verses of the Holy Gospels.<sup>18</sup>

Hence, we can see that the knowledge of Ibn Kabar about Severus of Antioch is very limited.

*The Philalethes in Ibn Kabar*

Ibn Kabar is also the author of the so-called *Scala Magna*,<sup>19</sup> a classified vocabulary divided into ten chapters distributed over a total of thirty sections. The order of the material is very interesting.<sup>20</sup> It was published for the first time by Athanasius Kircher<sup>21</sup> and a new edition was published recently.<sup>22</sup>

The name of Severus of Antioch occurs in section 24 which regroups different names of prophets, Wise men, and others: *سَعْيُهِرُوسَ* *مُحِبُّ الْحَقِّ*<sup>23</sup>.

Kircher translated this word as “Seuerus amans veritatis”. As for Macomber, he used the Arabic expression “lover of the truth” and commented thus in a note:

Rather it means “stern, strict.” Severus of course, was the name of the Patriarch of Antioch, who was one of the chief protagonists of Monophysite theology. A more noble significance of his name had to be found.

In fact *مُحِبُّ الْحَقِّ* is the translation of the Greek word “*φιλαλήθης*,” which is the title of the most important work of Severus. Abū al-Barakāt confused the title of the book with the explanation of the author which is of Latin origin.<sup>24</sup> The *Pilaletes* was already known in the early fourteenth century at the time of the compilation of the *Scala Magna*, while nowadays

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<sup>18</sup> Samir Khalil, Samir Khalil, *Miṣbah al-ẓulmah*, p. 293.

<sup>19</sup> Cf. Adel Sidarus, “Onomastica Ægyptiaca: The Tradition of Thematic Lexicography in Egypt through the Ages and Languages”, *Bulletin de la Société d'Archéologie Copte* 39 (2000), pp. 11-22. Adel Sidarus, “The Copto-Arabic Renaissance in the Middle Ages: Characteristics and Socio-Political Context”, *Coptica* 1, (2002), pp. 141-160.

<sup>20</sup> Adel Sidarus, “Coptic lexicography in the Middle Ages, the Coptic Scalae,” *The future of Coptic Studies*, R. Mcl. Wilson, (ed.) «Coptic Studies» 1, (Leiden: Brill, 1978), pp. 125-143 esp. p. 132-134.

<sup>21</sup> A. Kircher, *Lingua aegyptiaca restituta. Opus tripartitum*, (Romæ: s.n., 1644), pp. 39-272. This edition is based on Ms Vatican 71, cf. Adel Sidarus, “La philologie copto-arabe médiévale et le Vat. Copt. 71”, *Coptic treasures from the Vatican Library: A Selection of Coptic, Copto-Arabic and Ethiopic manuscripts: papers collected on the occasion of the tenth international Congress of Coptic Studies*, «Studi e testi» 472, pp. 85-107.

<sup>22</sup> W. F. Macomber, *The Scala Magna of Shams al-Ri'āsah Abū al-Barakāt*. Volume 1: *Introduction, Texts, Translation and Notes*, CSCO 684/Ar. 55, (Lovanii: Peeters, 2020).

<sup>23</sup> A. Kircher, *Lingua aegyptiaca restituta*, p. 226; W.F. Macomber, *The Scala Magna*, p. 182.

<sup>24</sup> For another fantasist explanation of the name cf. Youhanna Nessim Youssef, *A Homily on Severus of Antioch by A Bishop of Assiut (XV Century)*, PO 222 (50.1), (Turnhout, 2006), p. 97, § 116: “O bell of Orthodoxy! You are the priest of the time, according to the explanation of your name, for means *Saw* ‘the time’ and *’irus* means ‘priest’”. In fact, the Bohairic Coptic word *CHOY* means «time» and the second part of the words corresponds to the *ἱερεύς*.

only an Arabic manuscript from the fourteenth century and a copy of the nineteenth century.<sup>25</sup>

### *Conclusions*

Despite the importance of Severus of Antioch for the non-Chalcedonian church, his writings survived only in Syriac, with some texts in Coptic and in Arabic.

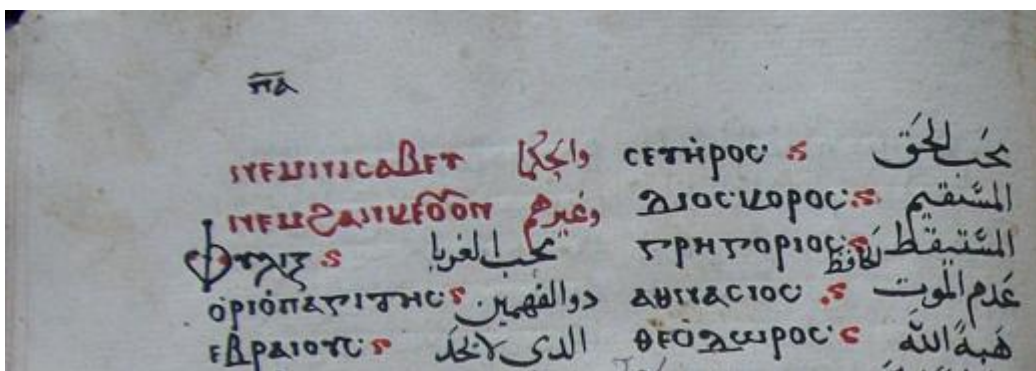
His most important book the *Philaletes* survived in Syriac and Copto-Arabic manuscripts.

Ibn Kabar while briefly tackling the works of Severus of Antioch in his encyclopaedic work *The Lamp of Darkness*, made an important allusion to the *Philaletes*, “The Lover of Truth” showing that a copy had existed before the fourteenth century.

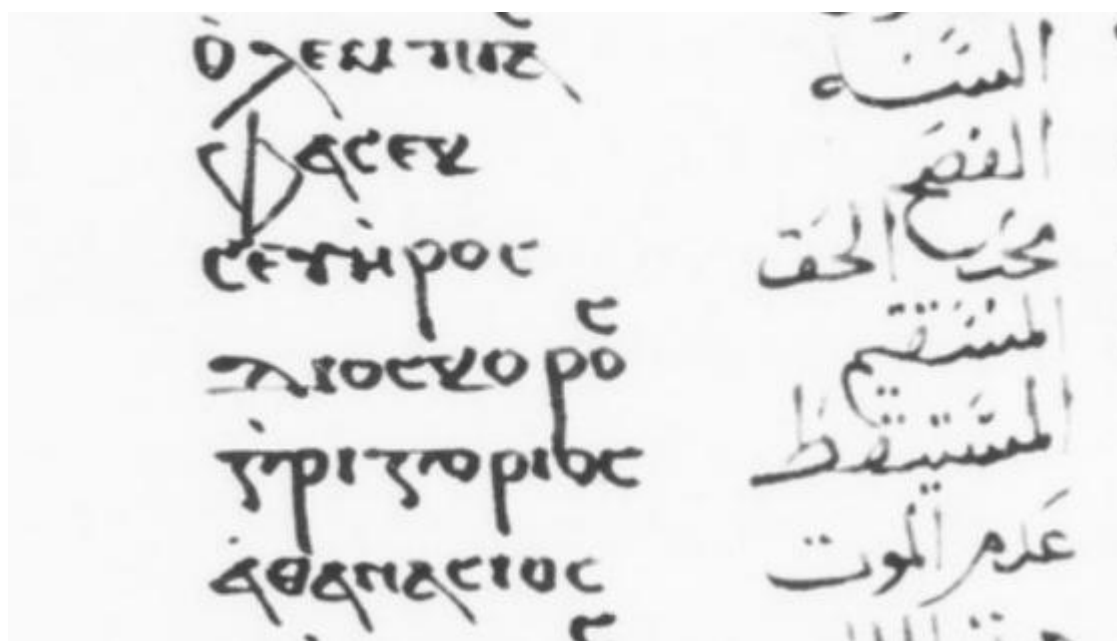
This note highlights the importance of studying Medieval Texts as they contain many allusions to Severus of Antioch.

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<sup>25</sup> Youhanna Nessim Youssef, “Arabic Manuscripts of the Philaletes of Severus of Antioch,” *Proche Orient Chrétien* 51 (2001), pp. 261-266. Youhanna Nessim Youssef, “Some preliminary remarks on the Copto-Arabic version of the Philaletes,” *Bulletin de la Société d'Archéologie Copte* 48 (2009), pp. 85-92.



Scala Magna, Coptic Institute f. 81v



Ms Paris Copte 53 fol. 88a

