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Al-Fārābī's Isrā'īl and Quwayra: On the Two Christian *Mutakallims* Who Transmitted Philosophy from Ḥarrān to Baghdad

- I -

In 1930, Max Meyerhof constructed a re-mapping of Greek philosophy's journey from Alexandria in Antiquity, through Antioch in Late Antiquity, right to Baghdad in the early Abbasid era.[1] Meyerhof supports his reconstruction by a report the Muslim historiographer, Ibn Abī Uṣaybiʿa recorded in his book, *ʿUyūn al-Anbā' fī Ṭabaqāt al-Aṭibbā'* (The Springs of Information about the Classes of Physicians). Ibn Abī Uṣaybiʿa reports a story attributed to the Muslim philosopher, Abū Naṣr al-Fārābī. In this narrative, al-Fārābī relates that Greek philosophy reached Abbasid Baghdad from Alexandria after the latter city survived the Muslims' conquest. From there, the Greek intellectual heritage (mainly Aristotelianism) was first transmitted to Antioch and then to the city of Ḥarrān. From there, four Christian scholars carried this knowledge to Baghdad. These four scholars, the account states, were Isrā'īl al-Usquf; Quwayra, Yūḥannā b. Ḥaylān, and al-Marwazī.[2] Meyerhof opines that it was in Antioch, before Ḥarrān and Baghdad, where Syriac translations of Aristotelian literature, especially the *Organon*, were first made.

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1 Max Meyerhof, "Von Alexandrien nach Baghdad: ein Beitrag zur Geschichte des Philosophischen und midizinischen Unterrichts bei den Arabern", *Sitzungsberichte der Preussischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, phih-hist, Klasse* 23 (1930), pp. 389-429.

2 Meyerhof, "Von Alexandrien nach Baghdad", pp. 400 and 405. See also Ibn Abī Uṣaybiʿa, *ʿUyūn al-Anbā' fī Ṭabaqāt al-Aṭibbā'* (The Springs of Information about the Classes of Physicians), Edited by Umrū' al-Qaīs b. al-Ṭaḥḥān , (Riyadh: Wahhabi Press, 1882), II.15: 135.

During the last two decades of the twentieth century and the first decade of the twenty-first, Meyerhof's proposal was scrutinized and reassessed by various scholars.[3] These scholarly examinations generated a conviction that both al-Fārābī's account in Ibn Abī Uṣaybiʿa's text, on one hand, and Meyerhof's proposed hypothesis, on the other, are historiologically problematic.[4] This notwithstanding, I believe that abandoning Meyerhof's thesis does not necessarily entail that the questions his thesis seeks to answer are no longer relevant. It is still useful to explain why the Arabs' interest in Greek thought primarily focused on the Neoplatonic-Aristotelianism of Late Antiquity.[5] It is as equally important to ask why al-Fārābī's/Ibn Abī Uṣaybiʿa's account ascribes the transmission of this Neoplatonic-Aristotelianism from Alexandria, then from Ḥarrān and Merv, specifically to these four persons: Ibn Ḥaylān, al-Marwazī, Isrā'īl the Bishop, and Quwayra?

In 2011 John Watt published a categorical refutation of Meyerhof's thesis. Contrary to the latter, Watt argued that Aristotelianism did not need to be translated from Greek into Syriac in Antioch in order to enter the Syriac intellectual world. There were already prominent Syriac scholars, mainly Sergius of Reshaina (d. 536 A.D.)[6], who did not need to wait for Aristotelianism to knock at their doors. They personally found their way to Alexandria and studied Aristotelianism in Greek at its school.[7] Watt concludes that Aristotle's translation into Syriac did not take place "at Antioch in the transferred school of Alexandria". It happened, instead, at the Monastery of St. Thomas at Qenneshre.[8] Watt ends up affirming that "Syriac Christians and their monastic schools were, thus, of decisive significance in the transmission

3 See G. Strohmeier, "Von Alexandrien nach Baghdad. Eine Fiktive Schultradition", in J. Wiesner; P. Marauxgwidmet (eds.), *Aristoteles Werk und Wirkung*, (Berlin & New York: De Gruyter, 1987), pp. 380-389; J. Lameer, "From Alexandira to Baghdad: Reflections on the Genesis of a Problematical Tradition", in G. Endress and R. Kruk (eds.), *The Ancient Tradition in Christian and Islamic Hellenism*, (Leiden: Brill, 1997), pp. 181-191; D. Gutas, "The 'Alexandria to Baghdad' Complex of Narratives: A Contribution to the Study of Philosophical and Medical Historiography among the Arabs" *Docmunti e studi sulla tradizione filosofica medievale* 10(1999), pp. 155-193; and Philippe Vallet, *Farabi et l'école d'Alexandrie. Des prémisses de la connaissance à la philosophie politique*, (Paris: Vrin, 2004).

4 Uwe Vagelpohl, *Aristotle's Rhetoric in the East: The Syriac and Arabic Translation and Commentary Tradition*, (Leiden & Boston: Brill, 2008), p. 58; and John W. Watt, *The Aristotelian Tradition in Syriac*, (London & New York: Routledge, 2019), p. 9.

5 Watt, *Aristotelian Tradition*, p. 47.

6 According to John Watt, 'Sergius's commentary on the *Categories* of Aristotle to Theodore is the earliest known major work in Syriac on the subject of Aristotelian logic": Watt, *Aristotelian Tradition*, p. 25.

7 Watt, *Aristotelian Tradition*, p. 11. "It was not necessary that the school of Alexandria be transformed to Antioch for Alexandrian Aristotelianism to penetrate the Syriac linguistic area. It was sufficient that Syrians, such as Sergius, studied in Alexandria, and others such as Theodore [Bishop of Karkh Juddan] wished to hear about it" (ibid.).

8 Watt, *Aristotelian Tradition*, pp. 13-14.

of philosophy from Alexandria to Baghdad…the evidence of their importance as scholars and translators during the two centuries of the Abbasid translation movement suggest that no other group was of comparable importance".[9]

Quite intriguing, if not fairly surprising, is Watt's undermining the value of knowing who were exactly the persons behind the names of the four transmitters of Greek philosophy from Alexandria to Baghdad, especially the two figures who are associated with Ḥarrān: Isrā'īl al-Usquf and Quwayra. One has to point out here that, despite his verdict that al-Fārābī's account is fictional, Watt is still willing to concede that the names of the four scholars who went to Baghdad are not fabricated: "non-fictional, we may assume, are the names of the four scholars who 'came to Baghdad', all of whom were Christian…".[10] This admittance notwithstanding, Watt solely focuses on the geographical trajectory of the transmission of philosophy from Alexandria to Baghdad.[11] Frankly deeming the referral to four teachers as inconsequential data in a total historical fallacy, Watt takes for granted that the so-called Quwayra in Ibn Abī Uṣaybiʿa's text is the very same Quwayra mentioned in *Al-Fihrist*, about whom Ibn an-Nadīm says that his Arabic language was not fluent and obscure.[12] Watt even dismisses any Ḥarrānian Neoplatonic Christian contribution to the transmission of Aristotelianism to Baghdad. He argues that the Neoplatonic legacy was scarcely known and circulated in translations in Baghdad, save for some contributions made by the translators of the circles of al-Kindī and al-Fārābī, like Ḥunayn b. Isḥāq, Yaḥyā b. ʿAdī and Ibn al-Baṭrīq. Here Watt indirectly disposes the contribution of Ḥarrāni Christians to the transmission of philosophy to Baghdad by stating that none of the abovementioned translators in these two circles came from Ḥarrān.[13]

It is surprising that in his analysis of philosophy and Neoplatonic-Aristotelianism in the context of Ḥarrān, Watt speaks about the pagan Ṣābi'ans, and he points in passing to Thābit b. Qurrah, yet he never speaks about Theodore Abū Qurrah, the known Christian, trilingual, *mutakallim* (rationalist theologian), *nāqil* (translator) and *mufassir* (commentator) from Ḥarrān,

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9 Watt, *Aristotelian Tradition* , p. 16. Watt had earlier published his proposal in German language. See: John W. Watt, "Von Alexandrien nach Baghdad: Ein Erneuter Besuch bein Max Meyerhof", in Alfons Fürst (ed.), *Origenes und sein Erbe in Orient und Okzident*, (Münster: Aschendorff, 2011), pp. 213-226.

10 Watt, *Aristotelian Tradition*, p. 232.

11 Watt, *Aristotelian Tradition*, p. 14.

12 Watt, *Aristotelian Tradition*, p. 59. Watt repeats this predicament further down his text, stating that "al-Fārābī's story, however, is not based on genuine knowledge of the distant past, is in many aspects clearly quite fictional, and is probably addressed to the situation of his own day" (Watt, *Aristotelian Tradition*, p. 59). According to Watt, al-Fārābī's purpose was to glorify Islam over against the Christianity of the past by means of demonstrating "that Islam allowed the study of the full *Organon*, and that it was not the preserve of the Christians…according to the story, it was only 'Islam' that had delivered [the *Organon*] from its truncation by Christians" (Watt, *Aristotelian Tradition*, p. 149).

13 Watt, *Aristotelian Tradition*, p. 61.

and who in his lifetime either resided in Baghdad or frequented to it. More puzzling still, Watt leaps over the Arabic-speaking Christian *mutakallims* of the third/ninth century, seemingly disregarding the role their *Kalām* played in conveying Aristotelian and Neoplatonic philosophies to the Muslim intellectual world. Instead of recognizing this role, Watt circumvents this whole century and its figures and moves right into the fourth/tenth century, attributing a sole heroic conveyance of Greek philosophy via theology to Yaḥyā b. ʿAdī alone.[14] By minimizing Christian Arabic philosophical contributions, Watt's thesis gives a lesser role to Christian figures from Ḥarrān. This sidelining resonates with his conviction that chasing after the identity of the four teachers, who are said to have conveyed philosophy to Baghdad, is inconsequential.

On the contrary, this article argues that the names Isrā'īl al-Usquf and Quwayra can provide a fruitful explanation for how philosophical thought travelled from Alexandria to Baghdad. Investigating these names resonates with Garth Fowden's insight:

> What all too easily seems like a history of books [or even of locations] is a story of people, and… our exegetical cultures nourish communities, schools, and monasteries made up of individuals who may never proceed to the 'greater mysteries' but even so…bring about changes in the world…[make] new forms of institutions and practices.[15]

If anything, al-Fārābī's account of the transmission of philosophy from Alexandria to Baghdad, as Fowden persuasively opines, reveals to us that Muslims (Christians and Jews) were aware of the fact that "their books and teaching techniques" were transmitted from Alexandria to them and were, directly or indirectly, "affected by *individual teachers* and by the books they carried with them".[16] If we can identify the figures from Ḥarrān who conveyed philosophy to

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[14] Watt, *Aristotelian Tradition*, p. 170. Italic is mine. I cannot find a plausible explanation for not including the Arabic extant *Kalām* texts of Christians like Theodore Abū Qurra, Ḥabīb b. Khidma Abū Rā'iṭah, ʿAmmār al-Baṣrī, Nunnūs of Nisibis, Qusṭā b. Luqā, and Isrā'īl of Kashkar among those whose theological discourses deployed philosophy "extensively" in defense of Christian doctrines. On the philosophical foundations of the *Kalām* of some of these Arabic-speaking *mutakallims*, see, for instance, Najib George Awad, "Dāwūd ibn Marwān al-Muqammaṣ on the Trinity: A Moment in Abbasid Jewish-Christian *Kalām*", *Studia Graeco-Arabica* 9 (2019), pp. 107-128; N. G. Awad, "*Creatio ex Philosophia*: *Kalām* as Cultural Evolution and Identity-Formation Means in the Early Abbasid Era", *The Muslim World Journal* 4 (109), 2019, pp. 510-534; and N. G. Awad, "When the Intellectuals of Ḥarrān Contributed to *Falsafa*: Theodore Abū Qurra as '*Naqil wa-Mufassir*' of Proclean Legacy in Early Islam", *Journal of Eastern Christian Studies* 74 (1), 2022, pp. 1-43.

[15] Garth Fowden, *Before and After Muḥammad: The First Millennium Refocused* (Princeton & Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2014), pp. 144-145.

[16] Fowden, *Before and After Muḥammad*, p. 150. Italics are mine. See also C. Hein, *Definition und Einleitung der Philosophie: Von der spätantiken Enleitungsliteratur zur arabischen Enzyklopädie*, (Frankfurt am Main: P. Lang, 1985); and G. Schoeler, *The Oral and the Written in Early Islam*, translated by U. Vagelpohl; edited by J. E. Montgomery, (Abingdon: Routledge, 2006).

Baghdad, this might invite us to conjure a more coherent and complete picture on how Greek philosophy, including its Neoplatonic and Proclyean versions, were transmitted to the Baghdadi circles of reasoning. It would also drive us to trace this transmission vis-à-vis the development of *Kalām*, and not just the evolution of *Falsafa* and its translations.

- II -

In his account of the transmission of *Falsafa* to Baghdad, Ibn Abī Uṣaybiʿa names two particular figures who are said to have moved to the Abbasid capital carrying the philosophical *paideia* they acquired from a Ḥarrānian teacher. The first figure is called Quwayra, while the second is introduced as a church prelate, bishop (*usquf*) in particular, and is called Isrā'īl.

إلى أن بقِيَ مُعلِّمٌ واحِدٌ، فتعلَّمَ منهُ رجُلانِ وخرجا ومعهما الكُتُب. فكانَ أحدهما من أهلِ حرَّانِ والآخرَ من أهلِ مرو...وتعلَّمَ من الحرَّانِي إسرائيل الأسقُف وقويرى، وسارا إلى بغداد، فتشاغلَ إبراهيم بالدينِ وأخذَ قويرى في التعليمِ

> Until only one teacher remained and two men learned from him before they, then, walk away carrying the books with them. So, one of them was from the inhabitants of Ḥarrān, while the other from the inhabitants of Merv…and with the Ḥarrānian, studied Isrā'īl the bishop and Quwayra, and they both walked towards Baghdad, wherein Ibrāhīm busied himself with religious affairs, while Quwayra went into teaching.[17]

Who is this Isrā'īl the bishop', who co-transmitted philosophy to Baghdad along with his compatriot Quwayra? The extant data on these figures are limited. The Arabic syntax of Ibn Abī Uṣaybiʿa's attestation muddies this water even further. After mentioning the two names of Isrā'īl and Quwayra, the author of *ʿUyūn* states that these two persons moved to Baghdad, yet this time he names Quwayra and Ibrāhīm, instead of Quwayra and Isrā'īl. Are 'Ibrāhīm' and Isrā'īl one and the same person? Is the author here indirectly informing us that the second student of the Ḥarrānian teacher has a double name, Isrā'īl-Ibrāhīm, just like we today, for example, have people called, Jean-Jacque, John-Paul, Johannes-Wolfgang, etc.? Or is this a scribal copying error?

The text of *ʿUyūn* does not offer any clear answer to these questions. One might speculate that Ibrāhīm here is Ibrāhīm al-Marwazī, since he already mentions this latter name in the very same pericope:

[17] Ibn Abī Uṣaybiʿa, *ʿUyūn*, II.15: 135.

فأمَّا الذي من أهلِ مَرو فتعلَّمَ منهُ رجُلانِ أحدهما إبراهيم المروزي والآخرُ يوحنّا بنُ حَيلان

> Two men studied under the [teacher] from the people of Merv: one of them is Ibrāhīm al-Marwazī and the other is Yūḥannā b. Ḥaylān.[18]

It appears that the Arabic passage disapproves such hypothesis. In the text, the sentence '*wa-sārā ilā Baghdād, fa-tashāghala Ibrāhīm bid-dīn wa-akhadha Quwayra fil-taʿlīm*' (and they both journeyed to Baghdad, and Ibrāhīm busied himself with religious affairs, while Quwayra went into teaching) comes as a conjunctive phrase to '*wa-taʿallama min al-Ḥarrānī Isrā'īl al-usquf wa-Quwayra*' (and from the Ḥarrānian, learned Isrā'īl the bishop and Quwayra). It does not, that is, appear as a conjunctive phrase to the sentence on al-Marwazī and Ibn Ḥaylān. Only one sentence later the text indicates that its author moves from speaking about the two men who studied with the Ḥarrānian teacher (Quwayra and Isrā'īl/Ibrāhīm) into reporting on the two men who studied under the teacher from Merv. There, he relates the following regarding al-Marwazī:

وانحدرَ إبراهيم المروزي إلى بغداد، فأقامَ بِها وتعلَّمَ من المروزي متّى بن يونان [أبو بِشر متّى بن يونِس]

> And Ibrāhīm al-Marwazī strolled down to Baghdad, wherein he resided, and from al-Marwazī learned Matta b. Yūnān [i.e., Abū Bishr Matta b. Yūnis].[19]

Had Ibn Abī Uṣaybiʿa meant Ibrāhīm al-Marwazī in the sentence he wrote on the two students of the Ḥarrānian teacher, he would have not needed, syntax-wise, to start with a new sentence repeating that Ibrāhīm al-Marwazī went to Baghdad. When he talks about an 'Ibrāhīm' in the sentence related to the removal of the two Ḥarrānian scholars to Baghdad, Ibn Abī Uṣaybiʿa is not referring to Ibrāhīm al-Marawzī, but to Isrā'īl the bishop who studied with a teacher from Ḥarrān.

The abovementioned blurriness makes it quite difficult to discern the real person(s) behind the names of Isrā'īl and Ibrāhīm. However, it does no harm exploring some hypothetical possibilities inspired by *ʿUyūn*'s description of Isrā'īl/Ibrāhīm as *usquf* (bishop). This title invites us to consult other extant early Christian historical texts to see if they point to a bishop from one of the Christian communities who is also called Isrā'īl, or even Ibrāhīm.

The text called, *Kitāb al-Majdal* (The Book of Debate) by the author Mārī b. Sulaymān, offers historiographical-biographical chronicles on the Nestorian patriarchs of the Orient. In the entry related to the biographical *vitae* of Mār Abbā the Great from the sixth century, Ibn Sulaymān mentions that Mār Abbā's [missing word] was contemporaneous to a man called 'Ibrāhīm al-Kashkarānī' (إبراهيم الكشكراني), whom Ibn Sulaymān describes as "the monk, and he

[18] Ibn Abī Uṣaybiʿa, *ʿUyūn*, II.15: 135.

[19] Ibn Abī Uṣaybiʿa, *ʿUyūn*,II.15: 135.

was an ascetic philosopher and scholar' (الراهب، وكانَ فيلسوفاً عالماً زاهداً / *ar-rāhib, wa-kāna faylasūfan ʿāliman zāhidan*). He then adds that this Ibrāhīm al-Kashkarānī had written also monastic rules and behavioral codes (*qawānīn*) that were translated from Syriac into Persian by someone called 'أيّوب' (*Ayyūb*).[20]

Further down the text, Ibn Sulaymān mentions another church prelate, and he calls him 'Isrā'īl the bishop'. He links this prelate's episcopal status to 'Kashkar' (كشكر), as he did earlier when he also associated a figure called Ibrāhīm with the episcopal See of Kashkar. This Isrā'īl is mentioned as a referential figure summoned by the 'Prince of Baghdad' (أمير بغداد/*amīr Baghdād*) to come down from Samarra (سر من رأى/ *Surra Man Ra'a*) to Baghdad to persuade its Christian inhabitants about consecrating patriarch Ānūsh (آنوش). It is also reported that, in this event, Isrā'īl sustained a public assault, passed out, fell seriously ill for forty days then he, eventually, passed away and was buried in St. Fithīyūn Monastery.[21] Ibn Abī Uṣaybiʿa mentions afterwards a catholicus (جاثليق/jāthlīq) called Isrā'īl, before he also speaks about yet another catholicus called Aysrāyil (ايسرايل) – notice here the name's different spelling – from 'Karkh Jaddān' (كَرخ جدّان). This figure was a teacher (*melphān*) at the school (*askūl*) of Mār Mārī, and, after becoming a monk, he was ordained as the bishop of Kashkar. It is said that he was contemporaneous to Muʿizz al-Dawlah, the Buwayhid prince of Iraq (932-967 A.D.), and that he became a catholicus when he was ninety years of age.[22] Ibn Sulaymān's account confirms that there were church prelates called Isrā'īl and Ibrāhīm who lived during the early Islamic era, and whose ecclesial statuses were similarly associated with Kashkar. On Ibrāhīm of Kashkar, Ibn Sulaymān says that he was known as an ascetic philosopher and scholar. While on Isrā'īl, he relates that he was quite known in Baghdad and the region, and deeply involved in religious affairs. He was also strongly connected to Muslim authorities in Baghdad, who would summon him regularly to the capital of the Muslim Caliphate.

To come back to *ʿUyūn*, it seems that Ibn Abī Uṣaybiʿa (or al-Fārābī) corroborates some data on the two persons from Kashkar. From Ibrāhīm of Kashkar, he borrows the background of the scholar who is versed in knowledge and philosophy, while from Isrā'īl of Kashkar he invokes the connection to Baghdad and Muslim circles.[23] What this might suggest is that al-Fārābī's/Ibn Abī Uṣaybiʿa's account alludes to two figures called Isrā'īl and Ibrāhīm, who are both associated with the episcopacy of Kashkar, thus both are *usqufs* for that matter.

It might be the case that al-Fārābī's/Ibn Abī Uṣaybiʿa's Isrā'īl the bishop is the Nestorian bishop of Kashkar in the third/nineth century, who died in 872 A.D., and who is called Isrā'īl.

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20 Mārī b. Sulaymān, *Kitāb al-Majdal: Akhbār Faṭārikat Kursī al-Mashriq* (The Book of Debate: The Chronicles of the Patriarchs of the See of the Orient), (Rome: s.n., 1889), V.5: 52.

21 Sulaymān, *Kitāb al-Majdal*, V.5: 81.

22 Sulaymān, *Kitāb al-Majdal*, V.5: 98.

23 Ibn Abī Uṣaybiʿa, *ʿUyūn*, II.15: 135.

On this figure, and for his only extant *Kalām* text titled, *Risālah fī Tathbīt Waḥdāniyyat al-Bārī' wa-Tathlīth Khawāṣṣih* (An Epistle on Confirming the Monadization of the Creator and the Trinitarianization of His Attributes), Bo Holmberg published a valuable introduction and critical edition in 1989.[24] Holmberg also pauses at the existence of two bishops who presided over the See of Kashkar and held the name Isrā'īl,[25] and he proposes that, if the Isrā'īl of al-Fārābī's account is the bishop of Kashkar, he must, then, be the Isrā'īl of Kashkar of the ninth century. Holmberg notices that, on this specific figure, Ibn Sulaymān in the early volumes of *Kitāb al-Majdal* states that he was not just a respected prelate who was trusted by the Muslim princes of Baghdad. He was also a '*mufassir*', which means simultaneously 'commentator/interpreter', 'translator' and 'scholar'. Furthermore, *Kitāb al-Majdal* not only describes 'Isrā'īl of Kashkar' as '*nāqil/mufassir*'. It also states that he "was worthy of being elected catholicus because of his knowledge (علم) and his excellence (فضل), and it is further added that he was intelligent (فهيم) and an expert in debate (عالم بالجدل)".[26] From this, Holmberg correctly concludes that this Christian figure was not just an influential church leader, but also a serious *mutakallim* who was deeply versed in Neoplatonic and Aristotelian philosophies.

There is an Arabic text from the second half of the ninth century, written by an unknown author, found in MS Florence, *Bibliotheca Mediceo-Laurenziana*, Ar. 299, fols. 149v-155v, known in Arabic with the title, *Majlis Dhakarahu Īlaiyya Muṭrān Niṣībīn Ḥaḍirahu Isrā'īl al-Kaskarī* (A *Majlis* Brought to my Attention by the Bishop of Nisibis, attended by Israel of Kaskar). This text narrates a theological-philosophical debate between Isrā'īl and one of Abū Yūsif al-Kindī's students, Aḥmad b. aṭ-Ṭayyīb al-Sarākhisī. In her introduction to this manuscript, Barbara Roggema relates that it was al-Sarākhisī who instigated the debate after he heard of the reputation of Isrā'īl as a dialectical logician.[27] The text praises Isrā'īl's abilities in logic and philosophical reasoning by portraying the philosopher al-Kindī as "indirectly admitting Israel's triumph when, after receiving a report of the debate, he bends down his head and forbids al-Sarākhisī from debating with the bishop again".[28] Finally, a careful reading of Isrā'īl's extant

[24] Bo Holmberg, *A Treatise on the Unity and Trinity of God of Israel of Kashkar (d. 782): Introduction, Edition and Word Index*, (Lund: Plus Ultra, 1989).

[25] Holmberg, *A* Treatise, pp. 43-44. The first was a bishop, and an in-term catholicus (*jāthliq*) for a very short time, during the last third of the ninth century. The second Isrā'īl is one who became catholicus later on for also a short period, when he was ninety years old, during the second half of the tenth century.

[26] Holmberg, *A Treatise*, p. 49; referring to Ibn Sulaymān, *Kitāb al-Majdal*, I.81: 12; II.73:1-14, 20; II.74: 1.

[27] Barbara Roggema, "The Debate between Israel of Kashkar and al-Sarkhasī", in D. Thomas and B. Roggema (eds.), *Christian-Muslim Relations. A Bibliogrpahical History, Volume 1 (600-900)*, (Leiden & Boston: Brill, 2009), pp. 840-843, esp. p. 840.

[28] Roggema, "Israel of Kashkar and al-Sarkhasī", p. 841.

text, *Risālah fī Tathbīt Waḥdāniyyat al-Bāri'* (A Letter Confirming the Oneness of the Creator), reveals a Christian *mutakallim* who is profoundly versed in Greek philosophy.[29]

It is possible that the Isrā'īl al-usquf in al-Fārābī's account is Israel of Kashkar, the Nestorian scholar, *mutakallim* and philosophical *nāqil/mufassir*. The bishop of Kashkar was remembered by al-Fārābī as an '*usquf*', and he is called either Isrā'īl or Ibrāhīm (the second name might be mistakenly mixed up with Isrā'īl by Ibn Abī Uṣaybiʿa, who is reporting this story at least three centuries after al-Fārābī).[30]

- III -

The other major figure associated with Ḥarrān is Quwayra. This name also appears in *Al-Fihrist* of Ibn an-Nadīm. In the first chapter of the *Fihrist*'s seventh book, Ibn an-Nadīm dedicates a concise entry (merely three lines-long) to a scholar called Quwayra:

قويرى: واسمهُ إبراهيم، ويُكنَّى أبا اسحٰق. مِمَن أُخذَ عنه علمُ المنطق. وكانَ مُفسّراً وعليه قرأ أبو بِشر متّى بن يونان [يونس]. وللقويرى من الكتب كتاب تفسير قاطيغوراس، مشجّر. كتاب بارَبرمينياسَ، مشجّر. كتاب أنالوطيقا الأولى، مشجر. كتاب أنالوطيقا الثاني، مشجّر. وكتبه مطروحة مجفوّة لأنّ عبارته كانت عفطيّة غلقة.

Quwayra: and his name is Ibrāhīm, and he is called Abū Isḥaq. He was one of those from whom the science of logic was obtained. He was an interpreter; and Bishr b. Mattā b. Yūnān [Yūnis] studied under him. Among Quwayra's books are the book of the interpretation of the *Categories*, ornamented; the book of *Par Hermenias*, ornamented; the book of *Analotica I*, ornamented; and

[29] See the critical edition of his text in Holmberg, *A Treatise*, pts. 23-42, pp. 9-14.

[30] Someone might argue that Israel of Kashkar is not related to Ḥarrān, and that the mentioned Isrā'īl in al-Fārābī's account came from that city, since he studied philosophy under a teacher from Ḥarrān. However, al-Fārābī's/Ibn Abī Uṣaybiʿa's account says: "وتعلّمَ من الحرّاني إسرائيل الأسقف وقويرى" (*wa-taʿallama min al-Ḥarrānī Isrā'il al-usquf wa-Quwayra*/ and from the Ḥarrānian studied Isrā'īl and Quwayra) (*ʿUyūn*, II.15: 135), and not "حرّانيّان وتعلم منه" (*taʿallama minhu Ḥarrāniyyān*/ and two Ḥarrānies studied with him). This means that the text says nothing about wherefrom hailed the two students of this Ḥarrānian teacher. They can be from anywhere, and they can easily be two students who were exposed to philosophical paideia on the hands of someone who hailed from Ḥarrān. Second, we know nothing about Isrā'īl's birth-date and place. We only know that he died in 872 A.D. in Baghdad and was buried in the monastery of Mār Fithiyūn. Yet, this does not automatically negate that Israel could have hailed actually from Ḥarrān or its environs, or he spent some time learning theology and philosophy from someone in Ḥarrān.

the book of *Analotica II*, ornamented. His books are discarded and un-used, for his phrases are ambiguous and far from lucid.[31]

Ibn an-Nadīm mentions the name Quwayra elsewhere in his *magnus opus*. Once, he enlists this name among thetranslators (*naqalah*) of texts into Arabic: "قويرى: واسمه إبراهيم ويكنى أبا اسحق" (*Quwayra: wa-asmuhu Ibrāhīm wa-yukannā Abā Isḥaq*/Quwayra: his name is Abraham and his nickname is Abū Isḥaq).[32] We do not find any specific dates concerning the lifetime and operating dates of the meant person. Yet, mentioning him beside "عبد المسيح بن عبدالله الحمصي، ابن ناعمة" (*Abdullmasīḥ b. Abdillah al-Ḥimṣi, Ibn Nāʿimah*) might suggest that he was contemporary to the latter or lived at a time approximate to his. Elsewhere, Ibn al-Nādīm names with Quwayra a certain commentator of Aristotle's texts that were translated into Arabic: Quwayra interpreted *Par Hermenias* and *Prior Analytics*. He is said to have interpreted three parts of the Arabic translation that were made by one called "تيادورس" (*Tiādūrus/Theodoros*).[33] Quwayra is also said to have made an interpretation for the book of *Sophistica*, which Ibn an-Nadīm says was translated into Arabic by Ibn Nāʿimah.[34]

To what extent can this data avail to us a better portrait of Quwayra in these sources? The report on the transition of philosophy from Alexandria to Baghdad in Ibn Abī Uṣaybiʿa's *ʿUyūn* indicates that the two disciples of the Ḥarrānian teacher conveyed their education to Baghdad sometime between the third/ninth and the early years of the fourth/tenth centuries. This is what Ibn Abū Uṣaybiʿa relates from his time of writing in the seventh/thirteenth century. Much earlier than him, ʿAlī b. al-Ḥusayn al-Masʿūdī, living and writing between the third/ninth-fourth/tenth centuries, also refers to the story of the transmission of philosophical *paideia* from Alexandria to Baghdad. However, and differently from Ibn an-

[31] Ibn an-Nadīm, *Kitāb Al-Fihrist*, edited by Rida al-Māzindānī, (Amman: al-Masīra Press, 1988), VII.1: 321. Quite interesting here is the *Fihrist*'s reporting that Abū Bishr Mattā b. Yūnis studied under Quwayra. This is different from al-Fārābī's account in *ʿUyūn*, where we read that Abū Bishr studied under Ibrāhīm al-Marwazī, who, in turn, acquired his knowledge of philosophy from a teacher came from Merv. In his turn, Abū al-Ḥasan Alī b. al-Ḥusayn al-Masʿūdī (d. 345/957) also relates that Abū Bishr Mattā and another student called Abū Muḥammad b. Karnīb studied with Ibrāhīm al-Marwazī. This invites us to presume that Ibn Abī Uṣaybiʿa might have relied on al-Masʿūdī's account, and not on the one of Ibn an-Nadīm: Alī b. al-Ḥusayn al-Masʿūdī, *al-Tanbīh wal-Ishrāf* (The Admonition and Overseeing), (Cairo: The Orient Muslim Press, 1938), p. 105.

[32] *Al-Fihrist*, VII.1:305.

[33] *Al-Fihrist*, VII.1:309.

[34] *Al-Fihrist*, VII.1:310. In the tenth book of *Al-Fihrist*, Ibn an-Nadīm jots down variant nomenclatures that seem very close to Quwayra, yet without relinquishing sufficient information on the identity of these variant's personnel. He calls 'Quwayra' al-Ruhā's (*Orhai*) bishop. He claims that *Sarjis al-Rās ʿAimī* (Sergius of Rishʿāina) composed a book on philosophy (and maybe also on Chemistry) and send it to this Quwayra (*al-Fihrist*, X:420). Ibn an-Nadīm does not elaborate further on this bishop, nor does he specify whether he was a prelate in the Melkite or the Jacobite Church.

Nadīm, also wrote his *Fihrist* sometimes during the fourth/tenth century, al-Masʿūdī states that Abū Bishr Mattā b. Yūnis (or Yūnān) studied under Ibrāhīm al-Marwazī. Yet, al-Masʿūdī also adds that he equally learned from Quwayra (*qara'a ʿalā Quwayra*).[35] In his report, Ibn Abī Uṣaybiʿa principally concurs with al-Masʿūdī's version, and he ascribes Mattā b. Yūnis's education to Ibrāhīm al-Marwazī. Nevertheless, al-Masʿūdī adds in his report a connection to 'Quwayra' and the philosophical conduit that ran from Ḥarrān. More importantly still, al-Masʿūdī's account also contains an additional, small yet very important, detail, namely that Quwayra in Ḥarrān and Ibn Ḥaylān in Merv (he never mentions Isrā'īl the bishop, as Ibn Abī Uṣaybiʿa does) both acquired their two philosophical *paideia* during the rule of the Caliph al-Muʿtaḍid:

> انتهى [انتقال التعليم] في أيامِ المُعتَضِد إلى قويرى ويوحنّا بن حيلان، وكانت وفاتهُ بمدينةِ السلامِ في أيامِ المقتدِر وإبراهيم المروزي...
>
> And [the transmission of *Paideia*] during the days of al-Muʿtaḍid, reached, eventually, to Quwayra and Yūḥannā b. Ḥaylān - whose death was in al-Salām City during the days of al-Muqtadir – and to Ibrāhīm al-Marwazī…[36]

If al-Masʿūdī's historiographical chronology is accurate, this means that the Quwayra associated with Ḥarrān actively conveyed philosophy during the ninth century. The crucial question here, anyhow, is: Are all the figures named after one of the variations of 'Quwayra' nomenclature, which Ibn an-Nadīm records in *Al-Fihrist*, one and the same person?

In the tenth book of *Al-Fihrist*, Ibn an-Nadīm mentions someone called Quwayra. He relates that this figure was the Edessan bishop (*al-usquf al-Rahāwī*), and that he received a book on philosophy and the profession (*al-ṣanʿa*) from an author called Sergius of Rishʿaīna (*Sarkhas al-Rāsʿaynī*).[37] This same prelate is also mentioned in the abovementioned, historiographical text of Mārī b. Sulaymān, *Kitāb al-Majdal*. Ibn Sulaymān narrates that, during his residence in Edessa, the famous master (*muʿallim*), Mār Narsāī, blasphemed consistently Kyrillos (*Qūrullūs*). This annoyed the bishop of Edessa, called قيوري (*Qiyore*, thus Mārī jots down the name in his text), as well as two other figures called "ساوري" (Sāwrī/Sergis) and Jacob (يعقوب/yaʿqūb).[38] Further down, when Ibn Sulaymān speaks about Mār Abbā the Great (مار أبّا الكبير), he relates that this prelate had an apprentice called Quwayra, who, upon the death of Mār Abbā, took his

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35 *Al-Fihrist*, VII.1:322; and al-Masʿūdī, *al-Tanbih wal-Ishrāf*, p. 105. Al-Masʿūdī relates that he is here just repeating what he has already reported in his other book, *Funūn al-Maʿārif wa-Mā Jarā fi al-Duhūr al-Sawālif* (The Arts of Knowledge and the Events that Occurred in the Past Ages) (al-Masʿūdī, *al-Tanbih wal-Ishrāf*, p. 104).

36 Al-Masʿūdī, *al-Tanbih wal-Ishrāf*, p. 105.

37 *Al-Fihrist*, X:420.

38 Sulaymān, *Kitāb al-Majdal*, V.5:44.

master's corps and buried it in al-Ḥīra.[39] These data not only suggest that what Ibn an-Nadīm reports in the fourth/tenth century about a prelate from Edessa, associated also with the nomenclature Quwayra and its variants, resonate with the historiographical reports of a Nestorian author from the sixth/twelfth century, Mārī b. Sulaymān. It, more significantly, demonstrates that the name Quwayra is written and used in various forms in ancient historiographical text to speak about one and the same person: Ibn an-Nadīm calls the bishop of Edessa Quwayra. Mārī b. Sulaymān calls the same bishop "قيورا" (*Qiyūrā*).[40]

Now, all the above also reminds us of the fact that the ancient extant Arabic texts convey another seemingly variant nomenclature linked to Quwayra, namely "قُرّة" (Qurrah). We do at least know two famous figures who were scholars, translators and interpreters of Greek philosophy, who are also associated with the intellectual activities of Edessa-Ḥarrān, and whose names include the term Qurrah: Thābit Ibn Qurrah and Theodore Abū Qurrah. The most intriguing factor, I reckon, is that, in his *Fihrist*, Ibn an-Nadīm never mentions any Theodore with the by-name 'Abū Qurrah'. Once, he mentions someone called "أبو قران" (Abū Qrān), and he enlists this name along with the names of those authors who wrote about philosophy and chemistry.[41] Yet, he does not associate this by-name with any Theodore, even when, in the same book number ten Ibn an-Nadīm dedicates an entry to this so-called 'Abū Qrān'.[42]

Nevertheless, the name 'Theodore' and its variants are not absent from *Al-Fihrist*. Book number seven speaks about a translator (*nāqil*) called "تيادوروس" (Tiyādūrūs), who translated Aristotle's *Prior Analytics* into Arabic and then gave it to Ḥunayn (Ibn Isḥāq) to edit and proof-read.[43] In the same entry, where this Tiyādūrūs is mentioned, Ibn an-Nadīm says that an interpreter called Quwayra made a commentary on three parts of the *Prior Analytics*. By this, Ibn an-Nadīm seems to be insinuating that we have here two different figures: a translator called Tiyādūrūs, and an interpreter called Quwayra. However, it is worth pausing here, I believe, at the fact that Ibn an-Nadīm does not add the by-name 'Abū Qurrah' to the proper name 'Tiyādūrūs'. This does not help much in determining whether the Tiyādūrūs mentioned here is our Theodore Abū Qurrah or not.

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39 Sulaymān, *Kitāb al-Majdal*, V.5:52.

40 On this Qiyūrā, the disciple of Mār Abbā, Sebastian Brock speaks and writes his name as 'Qiyore'. He introduces him as 'Cyrus of Edessa' from the sixth century A.D., who studied at the school of Nisibis and left behind him commentaries on liturgical traditions: Sebastian P. Brock, "Qiyore of Edessa", in S. P. Brock, et. al. (ed.), *The Gorgias Encyclopedic Dictionary of the Syriac Heritage,* (Piscataway, NJ: Gorgias Press, 2011), p. 346.

41 *Al-Fihrist*, X:419.

42 *Al-Fihrist*, X:424.

43 *Al-Fihrist*, VII.1:309.

More puzzling still is that Ibn an-Nadīm has a very short entry on a figure called Thīūdūrus (ثيودورس) in the second chapter of the seventh book of *Al-Fihrist*. There, Ibn an-Nadīm says the following on this Thīūdūrus:

ثيودورس: ولهُ من الكتُب كتاب الأُكُر ثلاثَ مقالاتٍ، كتاب المساكِن، مقالَة، كتاب الليل والنهار، مقالتان

Thīūdūrus: some of the books he has, *The Book of Acres*, three essays; *The Book of Dwellings*, one essay; and *The Book of Day and Night*, two essays.[44]

Worth noting here is Ibn an-Nadīm's inclusion of this Thīūdūrus among the group of the following specialized scholars: " المهندسين والأرثماطقيين والموسيقيين والحسّاب والمنجّمين وصنائع الآلات وأصحاب الحيل والحركات" (*al-muhandisīn wal-arīthmāṭiqiyyīn wal-mūsīqiyyīn wal-ḥussāb wal-munajjimīn wa-ṣanā'i'i al-ālāt wa-aṣḥāb al-ḥiyal wal-ḥarakāt*/engineers, arithmatists, musicians, enumerators, soothsayers, machines-forgers and tricks-conjurers).[45] As we know, none of these domains were among of the expertise, or even interests, of Theodore Abū Qurrah. On the other hand, none of the books, which Ibn an-Nadīm names in the entry for this 'Thīūdūrus' (texts on cultivation, engineering and seemingly arithmetic) are among the extant texts Theodore Abū Qurrah wrote in Arabic or Syriac (all of which were theological, *Kalām*-like *Mayāmir*). When one looks in *Al-Fihrist* where Ibn an-Nadīm enlists the names and works of philosophers and *mutakallims* from all backgrounds, one never spots in any designated entry any mentioning of these three optional nomenclatures: Theodore; Abū Qurrah or Theodore Abū Qurrah.

What might be worth pausing at regarding Theodore Abū Qurrah in *Al-Fihrist*, finally, is Ibn an-Nadīm's report in the second chapter of the first book of his *magnum opus*. There, *Al-Fihrist* offers information on the religious books of Christianity and Judaism. When it comes to the Christian Gospel and Christian authors and scholars, Ibn an-Nadīm names a translator and interpreter called "تيادورس" (*Tiyādūrus*) beside others. He, then, says that he will touch upon these figures further in the book on ancient sciences (which I referred to above).[46] Ibn an-Nadīm mentions this interpreter called 'Tiyādūrus' earlier as well, in the first chapter of the first book, when he talks in particular about Syriac language[47] and then Hebrew language and its derivation from Syriac.[48] Perennially speaking, we can postulate that the 'Tiyādūrus' in the first and second chapters of the first book, and the one Theodore the translator of Aristotle's *Prior Analytics* in chapter one of book seven, are one and the same '*nāqil wa-mufassir*'. This notwithstanding, I beg to differ from Ignace Dick in his, rather hasty, conclusion that the "ثيودورس" (*Thūdūrus*) Ibn an-Nadīm names and introduces in chapter two of book seven, as

44 *Al-Fihrist*, VII.2:328.
45 *Al-Fihrist*, VII.2:325.
46 *Al-Fihrist*, I.2:26.
47 *Al-Fihrist*, I.1:14.
48 *Al-Fihrist*, I.1:17.

one of the engineers, arithmetists, musicians and soothsayers is actually our *mutakallim*, Theodore Abū Qurrah.[49] I would even hesitate to say that Ibn an-Nadīm either speaks about one and the same figure, once as 'Tiyādūrus' and once as 'Thīūdūrus' in book one and book seven, or that by 'Tiyādūrus' the interpreter and translator, Ibn an-Nadīm unquestionably means no other than Theodore Abū Qurrah. Ibn an-Nadīm's textual recording does not offer a crystal clear, affirmative data to make us speak confidently on this matter.

The ambiguity of *Al-Fihrist*'s various forms of 'Theodore' reflects itself in the contemporary scholars' dividedness regarding the translation of *Prior Analytics*. We have those who argue that Abū Qurrah was not the one who made this text's Arabic translation, suggesting, instead that this translator is either Theodorus, Bishop of Karkh (Steinschneider); Theodore Bār Kūnī (Rescher); or Theodorus, the brother of Isṭīfān Ibn Bāsīl (Lameer).[50] On the other hand, we do have others who propose that the Arabic translator of *Prior Analytics* is no other than the Melkite *mutakallim* from Ḥarrān (Kraus, Waltzer, Nasrallah and Peters).[51] The available data on Theodore Abū Qurrah inform us that this Melkite *mutakallim* was trilingual, who mastered Syriac, Greek and Arabic languages. Theodore himself transpired that he composed thirty maymars in Syriac besides his writings in Arabic.[52] Be that as it may, Ibn an-Nadīm might most probably be referring to Theodore Abū Qurrah when he speaks about Tiyādūrus the interpreter and translator in relation to Syriac language and the Gospel in chapters one and two of the first book of *Al-Fihrist*.

This notwithstanding, one still needs to find a plausible explanation of Ibn an-Nadīm's speech on this Tiyādūrus without his known by-name, Abū Qurrah, or even without using any other variant like Quwayra, Qiyūrā or Qiyore. Again, I believe that Ignace Dick raises too hastily an affirmation flag when he suggests that Ibn an-Nadīm means undoubtedly Theodore

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49 Theodore Abū Qurrah, *Maymar fī Wujūd al-Khāliq wal-Dīn al-Qawīm* (Maymar on the Existence of the Creator and the Right Religion), edited by Ignace Dick, (Jounieh: Librairie Saint-Paul/Roma: Pontificio Istituto Orientale, 1982), p. 38.

50 See M. Steinscheider, "Al-Fārābī, des arabischen Philosophen. Leben und Schriften", *Mémoiress de L'Académie Impérial de sciences de st. Pétersbourg,* VIIe Série Tome XIII, No. 4, (St. Petersboug, 1869); al-Fābāī, *Al-Fārābi's Short Commentary on Aristotle's Prior Analytics*, translated by N. Rescher, (Pittsburgh, 1963); and J. Lameer, *Al-Fārābī and Aristotelian Syllogistics: Greek Theory and Islamic Practice*, (Leiden & New York: Brill, 1994).

51 See P. Kraus, "Zu Ibn al-Muqaffa'" *Rivisita degli studi Orientali* 14(3), 1933, pp. 1-20, p. 3, nt. 3; and R. Walzer, "New Light on the Arabic Translationsof Aristotle", in Fuat Sezgin (ed.), *Aristotle in the Arabic Tradition, Texts and Studies II: Organon, Rhetorica, Poetica and fragmenta*, (Frankfurt am Main: Institute for History of Arabic-Islamic Science, 2000), pp. 107-158, p. 99; R. Walzer, "New Studies on al-Kindī", in R. Walzer (ed.), *Greek into Arabic: Essays on Islamic Philosophy*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1962), pp. 175-205; Joseph Nasrallah, *L'Eglise Melchite en Iraq, en prese et land L'Asie Central*, (Jerusalem, 1976); and F. E. Peters, *Aristotles Arabus: The Oriental Translation and Commentaries on the Aristotelian Corpus*, (Leiden: brill, 1986).

52 Theodore Abū Qurrah, *Maymar fī Mawt al-Masīḥ* (Maymar on the Death of the Messiah), edited by Ignace Dick, (Jounieh: Librairie S. Paul/Rome: Papal Oriental Institute, 1982), pp. 60-61.

Abū Qurra in his speech about someone called "أبو عِزَّة" (Abū ʿIzza) in chapter two of *Al-Fihrist*'s book number one. According to Dick, this form 'Abū ʿIzza' "is certainly a misreading [of the name Abū Qurrah] perpetrated by Muslim scribes who do not know who is Abū Qurrah".[53]

Let us read how Ibn an-Nadīm mentions this 'Abū ʿIzza' in *al-Fihrist*

ومن علمائهم [أي النصارى] تاوما الرهاوي...ولاليا مطران دمشق...وأبو عزّة وكان أسقف الملكية بحرّان، وله من الكتب، كتاب يطعي فيهِ على اسطورس الرئيس وقد نقضه عليه جماعة

And among their [the Christians'] scholars Thomas of Edessa…and Lāliyā the bishop of Damascus…and Abū ʿIzza, and he was the bishop of the Melkites in Ḥarrān, and he has among his books a book wherein he attacks Nestorius and the book was nullified by some people.[54]

Ibn an-Nadīm's association of this Abū ʿIzza with the episcopal See of the Melkite Church in Ḥarrān attractively invites the reader to invoke immediately Theodore Abū Qurrah. However, Ibn an-Nadīm does not make it easy for us to take this postulation for-granted. Just one line above the quoted sentence, Ibn an-Nadīm names some of the prominent Christian translators of philosophy, referring among them, as I pointed out above, to someone called 'Tiyādūrus'. Now, if Ibn an-Nadīm wanted to speak here about the same person, whey would not he then say Tiyādūrus Abū ʿIzza in both places; and why would he even talk about the same person regarding single subject in two separate and different ways: once as interpreter-translator called 'Tiyādūrus', and then (almost immediately after) as a scholar called 'Abū ʿIzza'? This is something the text of *Al-Fihrist* does not really care to explain, especially that Ibn an-Nadīm never uses 'Abū 'Izza' in other parts of his *Fihrist*, though he uses 'Qurrah' as a name for other figures.[55]

In the extant historiographical texts that we have available today, we do find another author who also uses the name 'Theodore' to speak about a Christian figure similarly linked to Edessa and Ḥarrān and is involved in philosophy, but he is not necessarily Theodore Abū Qurrah. In the historical text known with the title *Tārīkh al-Rahāwī al-Majhūl* (The History of the Unknown Edessan), the so-called Mattā al-Rahāwī narrates incidents related to Theodore Abū Qurrah and others related to a prelate in Edessa also called Theodore. On Abū Qurrah, al-Rahāwī narrates as follows an encounter with the Caliph al-Ma'mūn in Ḥarrān:

وجاءَ المأمون وبلغَ حرَّان وشرعَ تاودوروس أسقف حرَّان المُلَقَّب بأبي قُرَّة في مفاوضَة المأمون ودار بينهما حوار طويل عن الإيمانِ المسيحي، وهذا الحوار مكتوب في سِفرٍ خاصٍ تتيسر مراجعته لمن شاءَ ذلك.

53 Abū Qurrah, *Maymar fī Wujūd*, p. 36.

54 *Al-Fihrist*, I.2:26.

55 *Al-Fihrist*, VII.2:343; IX.1:385; IX.1:390.

> And, then, al-Ma'mūn reached Ḥarrān and Tāūdūrūs the bishop of Ḥarrān, also called Abū Qurrah, went on negotiating with al-Ma'mūn and a lengthy dialogue took place between them over Christian faith, and this dialogue is jotted down in a private book, which is available to whoever wishes to read it.[56]

Here, the anonymous author clearly annexes the by-name Abū Qurrah to the bishop of Ḥarrān's first name, Thāūdūrūs, leaving no margin of suspicion or inquisition for the reader about the identity of this figure who engaged the Caliph in a religious interlocution. This notwithstanding, couple of paragraphs earlier in the historiography of this unknown Edessan, the author points to another Christian prelate from Edessa who is also called Theodore. This time, this Theodore is called "تيودوروس مطرافوليط الرها" (*Tiyūdūrūs mitrāfūlīṭ al-Ruhā*/ Tiyūdūrūs, the metropolitan of Edessa). On him, the author states the following: " الذي كان مهتما بالفلسفة كثيراً ومتضلّعاً في اللغات السريانيّة والعربيّة" (*al-ladhī kanā muhtamman bil-falsafa kathīran wa-mutaḍalli'an fī al-lughāt al-siryāñiyyah wal-'arabiyyah*/ who was interested in philosophy and deeply versed in Syriac and Arabic languages). More interestingly still, the author of *Tārīkh al-Rahāwī al-Majhūl* says that the Muslim Abbasid prince and ruler of Egypt, Abdullah b. Ṭāhir, used to express deep reverence to this Tiyūdūrūs; he trusted him, used to converse with him and listen to him comfortably.[57] The author of *Tārīkh* goes even farther in confirming a close relationship the metropolitan had with Patriarch Dionysius of Tell Maḥre (the Jacobite Prelate), who would take this Tiyūdūrūs with him to Egypt to meet the governor, Abdullah b. Ṭāhir, whenever the patriarch needed to intercede before the prince to make him aid the Christian community.[58] The author even uses the term 'his brother' (أخيه/*akhīh*) to describe the close relation between Dionysius and this Tiyūdūrūs of Edessa.

All this is as puzzling and fuzzy a recording of personal nomenclatures as the one we spot in the text of *Al-Fihrist*. One cannot straightforwardly conclude from *Tārīkh* that the Tiyūdūrūs of Edessa is Theodore Abū Qurrah. In his entry on this figure, Lucas Van Rompay calls him "Theodosios of Edessa" (though the nomenclature in the text appears closer to 'Theodoros' in English), and he suggests that this Theodosios is "the elder brother of Patriarch Dionysius of Tell Maḥre" (Van Rompay here relies on data from the Chronicles of Michael Rabo from the twelfth century A.D.).[59] On this Theodosios, Van Rompay proceeds

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[56] Matta al-Rahāwī, *Tārīkh al-Rahāwī al-Majhūl* (The History of the Unknown Edessan), translated by Albert Abouna, (Baghdad: al-Nūr Bookshop/St. Joseph Cathedral, 1986), II.211:23(37). In his referral to the same report, Ignace Dick writes the name of Tāūdūrūs as 'Thāūdūsiyūs' (ثاودوسيوس), instead. He also translates the Syriac terminology into '*mujādalah*' (debate) in Arabic, instead of Albert Abouna's '*ḥiwār*' (dialogue). See Abū Qurrah, *Maymar fī Wujūd*, p. 27.

[57] Al-Rahāwī, *Tārīkh*, II.204:16(30).

[58] Al-Rahāwī, *Tārīkh*, II.205:17(31); II.205:22(35).

[59] Lucas Van Rompay, "Theodosios of Edessa", in *GEDOSH* (2011), p. 407.

commenting that he accompanied his sibling, the patriarch, to Egypt, and that he is known as an author of a historical work and as a translator of the poems of Gregory Nazianzus from Greek into Syriac.[60] Van Rompay seems not to be paying attention to the *Tārīkh* of the unknown Edessan and its attestation on someone called 'Tiyūdūrūs', who is also recalled to be the metropolitan of Edessa, the 'brother' of Dionysius (not exactly clearly his sibling).

The additional factor here, though, is that the author of *Tārīkh* describes this Tiyūdūrūs as deeply interested in philosophy and versed in Syriac, Arabic and Greek languages. These features all apply to the known biography of Theodore Abū Qurrah, the philosopher, *mutakallim* and trilingual. In his turn, Ibn an-Nadīm ascribes the same skills to a figure called 'Tīūdūrus'; the thing that invites us to search for Theodore Abū Qurrah behind the attestation. But, linking this Tiyūdūrūs to Dionysius of Tell Maḥre, a Jacobite not Melkite patriarch, would cast the light away from the Chalcedonian of Ḥarrān, Theodore Abū Qurrah. Add to this, calling this Tiyūdūrūs Dionysius's 'brother' (*akhīh*) is quite interesting in the light of the two prelates' different denominational-ecclesial affiliations. as stated above, Van Rompay conveys the opinion that 'Theodosios' is Dionysius's 'elder brother'.[61] Now, clergies commonly call each other (let alone other lay members in the church) with the term 'brother' (*akh*) or 'our brother' (*akūnā*/*akhīnā*). But this is a tradition practiced usually among the priests who belong to the same ecclesial clerical order[62], not commonly between clerics from different denominations, especially rivalry clerical orders like the Jacobites and the Melkites. Unless we want to postulate that the author of *Tārīkh al-Rahāwī* wants to report an unconventionally close affinity between the Jacobites and the Melkites during the early third/ninth century, which is quite surprising, the fraternal relation and the strong trust between the Jacobite patriarch and the metropolitan of Edessa casts very strong doubts on associating this Tiyūdūrūs of Edessa with Theodore Abū Qurrah. Had the author of *Tārīkh* wanted to suggest that they are one and the same person – and despite his ascription to the metropolitan of Edessa of skills and calibers also known to be characteristic of the bishop of Ḥarrān – he would have added the by-name 'Abū Qurrah' to Tiyūdūrūs, as he did when he talked about Tāūdūrūs, the bishop of Ḥarrān.[63]

All the above displayed examples of names' recording invite us to presume that the same naming-labyrinth might be present in *Al-Fihrist* not just regarding Theodore, but also Qurrah

60 Rompay, "Theodosios", p. 407.

61 Rompay, "Theodosios", p. 407.

62 See, for example, Theodore Abū Qurrah's addressing of another church member called 'John' (*yanna*) with '*akhāna*' (our brother) in Theodore Abū Qurrah, *Maymar fī Ikrām al-Aiqūnāt* (Maymar on the Veneration of Icons), edited by Ignace Dick, (Jounieh: Librairie St. Paul/Dhūq Mikhāyil: Christian Arabic Heritage/Rome: Papal Oriental Institute, 1986), intro, sec. I, pt. 1.

63 The author even talks about the metropolitan of Edessa at one point writing his name as 'Tāūdūsiyūs': *Tārīkh*, II.209:22(35).

and Quwayra. One needs to pause before treating these naming models as synonymous. It is quite surprising that Ibn an-Nadīm would speak about Theodore Abū Qurrah as merely Theodore, though Qurrah, and other similar variants like Quwayra, Qiyore or Qiūrā, were familiar proper names ascribed particularly to the people of Ḥarrān,[64] and they were commonly used during the fourth/tenth century. For example, there is a Christian prelate called, Agābiūs b. Qasṭantīn al-Manbijī, who wrote a historiographical book during that era. There, he narrates an incident occurred in the Jacobite church of Edessa during the pre-Islamic Byzantine-Persian wars. In this story, we are told that king Khosrow the son of Hormuz (Kisrā b. Hurmuz) appointed a Jacobite man nicknamed or named (*yuqālu lahu*) 'Qurrah' to collect the poll tax for the king from Edessa.[65] Further down, al-Manbijī reports another story, this time on an incident occurred during the Muslim conquest of Egypt. The incident relates that the two siblings, Saʿīd and ʿAmrū b. al-ʿĀṣ, who invaded Egypt, met the bishop of Alexandria, upon their entrance to the land. This bishop is also called Qurrah (قرّة) (in the footnote of the manuscript, the name is written '*Kīrīs*'), and al-Manbijī introduces him as a pious and a devout monk (راهب متعبّد/*rāhib mutaʿabbid*).[66] The example of al-Manbijī demonstrates that the formula 'Qurrāh' was used in the literatures of the fourth/tenth century in a habitual manner. So, explaining Ibn an-Nadīm's speaking on Theodore without using his by-name Qurrah demands pondering other plausible hypotheses.

The above exhaustive investigation on the attestations we have on Quwayra and its variations, and then connecting it with the mentioning of the name Theodore and its variants in other historiographical texts, aimed at demonstrating that figuring out who could be the man behind the name Quwayra that is used in al-Fārābī's/Ibn Abī Uṣaybiʿa's account may not show us clearly that the person meant is Theodore Abū Qurrah, yet it equally fails to demonstrate to us that he is not the Melkite *nāqil-wa-mufassir* from Ḥarrān either. We cannot rely on the attestations of *Al-Fihrist* in our attempt to know the identity of the figure called Quwayra in *'Uyūn al-Anbā'*. The naming strategy of Ibn an-Nadīm's reports is so chaotic and inconsistent that no one can truly determine when he speaks about the same person and when he means different personnel. It might be the case that both al-Fārābī and Ibn Abī Uṣaybiʿa alike did not mean what *Al-Fihrist* recorded when they related that the student called Quwayra conveyed philosophy to Baghdad. They might have, rather, been having another figure in mind, especially that the name 'Qurrah' and its variant 'Quwayra' seem to have been commonly used to refer to people from Ḥarrān.

64 Abū Qurrah, *Maymar fī Wujūd*, p. 39.

65 Agābiūs b. Qasṭantīn al-Manbijī, *Tārīkh al-Manbijī*, edited by ʿUmar Abdulsalām Tadmurī, (Tripoli: al-Manṣūr Press, 1986), p. 34.

66 Al-Manbijī, *Tārīkh*, pp. 48-49.

- IV -

The previous analysis proposes that the name Quwayra in al-Fārābī's/Ibn Abī Uṣaybiʿa's account alludes to Theodore Abū Qurrah. Such a possibility is far from historically unlikely or intellectually untenable, given what we know of Abū Qurra's background and biography:

1- al-Fārābī's/Ibn Abī Uṣaybiʿa's account points to a Quwayra who was exposed to Greek philosophy vis-a-vis a Ḥarrānian teacher. We do have in our hands some data relating that Theodore Abū Qurrah was exposed heavily to Greek philosophy and was versed in it. Ignace Dick translates into Arabic a description in the Chronicles of Michael the Great (*Tārīkh Mikhā'īl al-Kabīr*), wherein the latter calls Abū Qurrah "*faylasūfan wa-yujādilu bi-qiyāsill-manṭiq*" (فيلسوفاً ويجادل بقياس المنطق/ philosopher and he debates by means of logical syllogism).[67] Dick also refers to the letters of Ḥabīb b. Khidma Abū Ra'iṭah, where the latter describes Abū Qurrah as 'the sage' (*al-ḥakīm*).[68] The Arab authors attributed the very same nomenclature, '*al-ḥakīm*', to no other than Aristotle and Plato.[69] Scholars started recently to pause at Theodore's contributions to the spreading of Greek philosophy in the Abbasid era, especially in the context of Baghdad.[70] Cristina D'Ancona-Costa has frequently referred to Abū Qurrah's contribution of translations of the Aristotelian corpus into Arabic.[71] Francis Peters concurs with D'Ancona-Costa and adds further suggestions of Aristotelian translations made also by Theodore Abū Qurrah.[72] One needs not here even point out that, being linked up in all extant sources to the context of Ḥarrān, whether as a church prelate or as an intellectual versed in

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67 Abū Qurrah, *Maymar fī Wujūd*, p. 28, citing and translating from Syriac from *The History of Michael the Great*, III:32-34.

68 Abū Qurrah, *Maymar fī Wujūd*, pp. 32-33.

69 See also George Graf (ed.), *Die Schriften des Jacobiten Ḥabīb b. Ḫidma Abū Rā'iṭah*, (Louvain: Peeters, 1951), art. 14–15, 56–71. For English edition of Abū Rā'iṭah's writings, see Sandra Toenies Keating, *Defending the 'People of Truth' in the Early Islamic Period: The Christian Apologies of Abū Rā'iṭah* (Leiden & Boston: Brill, 2006).

70 Joseph Nasrallah, *L'Eglise Melchite en Iraq, en prese et dand L'Asie Centrale* (Jerusalem,1976), p. 84. See also Najib George Awad, "Theodore Abū Qurrah as 'Nāqil-wa-Mufassir'", pp. 18-20. Joseph Nasrallah concedes, though in passing, Abū Qurrah's contribution to Arabic translation of Greek philosophy, adopting the belief that he was behind the translation of Prior Analytics into Arabic, and that this translation was quite known to intellectuals of Baghdad, like al-Ḥasan b. Siywār, Yaḥyā b. ʿAdī and Abū Bishr Mattā.

71 Cristina D'Ancona-Costa, "Aristotle and Aristotelianism", in *Encyclopedia of Islam*, 3rd ed., edited by G. Krämer et al., at *http://referenceworks.brill-online.com/entries/encyclopaedia-of-islam-3/aristotle-and-aristotelianism-COM-0170*.

72 F. E. Peters, *Aristotles Arabus*, pp. 74–75. See on Peter's proposal, Tiziano Dorandi and Issam Marjani, "La tradizione siriaca e araba delle cosiddette Divisiones Aristoteleae Analisi e commento della versione siriaca (ed. Brock) e delle due traduzioni arabe (ed. Kellermann-Rost)," in http://learningroads.cfs.unipi.it/wp-content/uploads/2017/12/SGA_2017_1_DORANDI-MARJANI_pp_1_55.pdf.

falsafa and *Kalām* alike, makes the possibility of Theodore Abū Qurrah's acquiring a philosophical *paideia* from a Ḥarrānian teacher more than likely and tenable.

2- al-Fārābī's/Ibn Abī Uṣaybiʿa's account relates that the two students of the Ḥarrānian philosophy teacher, Isrā'īl and Quwayra, transmitted their knowledge when they moved to Baghdad. This piece of information resonates as well with the biography of Theodore Abū Qurrah. We also know that Theodore was linked to the circles of reasoning in Baghdad and elsewhere around the Abbasid territories, including Jerusalem, the environs of Mar Sabas Monastery (which is debated), Armenia and Egypt. Therefore, he can be easily one of the main candidates of conveying philosophical, particularly Neoplatonic-Proclean and Aristotelian, thought to the circles of reasoning in Baghdad.[73] The common familiarity of Muslim *falāsifa*, like al-Kindī, and Christian *mutakallims*, like Abū Qurrah (and others), with Proclus's theologico-philosophical interpretation of Plato, or their understanding the 'First Cause' in terms of 'the One', strongly suggests that al-Kindī and his circle could have been exposed to this philosophical thought vis-à-vis their interaction with the intellectual contributions of someone like Theodore Abū Qurrah, be it through his theological reasoning as a *mutakallim* or his translations and commentaries as *nāqil-wa-mufassir*.[74] It has, thus, been recently argued that Theodore Abū Qurrah could be one of these *mutakallims* who submitted his translation of Aristotelian legacy to the Caliphal Court, and whose Neoplatonized-Aristotelian *Kalām*…could have caught the attention of a *faylasūf* like al-Kindī and ignited his curiosity. Consequently, al-Kindī asked translators to prepare Arabic versions of some of the known Greek texts because he wanted to avail himself of this Neoplatonized understanding of Aristotle, whose echoes he might have heard in the theological speeches of his Melkite translators. Al-Kindī could have also heard stories on the *mutakallim* called Abū Qurrah and how he once shared his theological and philosophical ideas in the caliphal court or in the intellectual venues of Baghdad.[75]

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[73] There are early Muslim works narrate that a Christian *mutakallim* with either the by-name 'Abū Qurrah' or 'Ibn Qurrah" visited in Baghdad the Shīʿī Imām, ʿAlī b. Mūsā al-Riḍā and debated with him over theological issues. See on this account in Arabic Muḥammad Bāqir al-Majlisī, *Biḥār al-Anwār al-Jamiʿah li-Durar Akhbār al-A'immah al-Aṭhār* (The Comprehensive Seas of Illumination for the Pearls of Chronicles of the Pure Imams), edited by M. Dh. An-Najafī, (Beirut: Dār al-Taʿāruf lil-Maṭbūʿāt, 2001), IV.10/341-342 (p. 428); IV.10/349 (pp. 432-433). See also in English David J. Wasserstein, "The 'Majlis of al-Riḍā": A Religious Debate in the Court of the Caliph Al-Ma'mūn as Represented in the Shīʿī Hagiographical Work about the Eighth Imām ʿAlī ibn Mūsā al-Riḍā", *The Majlis* 1999, pp. 108-119; and David Thomas, "Two Muslim-Christian Debates from the Early Shiʿite Tradition", *Journal of Semitic Studies* XXXIII, 1988, pp. 53-80, esp. pp. 65-80.

[74] Awad, "Theodore Abū Qurrah as 'Nāqil-wa-Mufassir'", pp. 21ff.

[75] Awad, "Theodore Abū Qurrah as 'Nāqil-wa-Mufassir'", p. 22.

We also know that, while in Baghdad, Abū Qurrah met other Muslim Muʿtazilites, like an-Naẓẓām and Abū al-Hudhayl al-ʿAllāf and that the Muʿtazilite Abū Mūsā ʿĪsā b. Ṣabīḥ al-Murdār wrote a text against the thought of Theodore Abū Qurrah[76], while the other Muʿtazilite Abū ʿĪsā al-Warrāq implicitly struggled with and responded to his ideas.[77] This is enough to make us surmise that Abū Qurrah's name and thought were known quite well in the intellectual circles of Baghdad. So much so that a philosopher like al-Fārābī would attribute to him the transmission of philosophy from Ḥarrān to Baghdad along with another co-student called Isrā'īl al-usquf.

3- One might ask here: If the person named Quwayra in al-Fārābī's/Ibn Abī Uṣaybiʿa's account is Theodore Abū Qurrah, who is also known as the Melkite bishop of Ḥarrān, why the account does not call him 'Quwayra *al-usquf*', as it actually calls his study-mate, Isrā'īl '*al-usquf*'? why would the account not do so, if Quwayra was Abū Qurrah the bishop? As valid as this inquiry can be, we do have in our data on Abū Qurr's biography some information that might offer us a tenable explanation for this situation.

In Michael the Great's historiographical text, we read that, after only serving for a short time, the Melkite patriarch, Theodoret of Antioch, decided to demote Theodore Abū Qurrah from his episcopal position as the bishop of Ḥarrān. This was sometimes between 785 and 799 A.D. Sidney Griffith commented on the possible reason behind such demotion in an essay published in 1993. There, Griffith refers to Ignace Dick's suggestion that it was Abū Qurrah's own decision to step down from his See because he was keen on devoting himself to research and interreligious interlocution.[78] Griffith then expresses his personal surmise that an iconophobe-vs-iconophile clash took place among the two men; the thing that, consequentially, led the Patriarch to demote the bishop. Griffith also reflects his acceptance of the hypothesis

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76 Abū Qurrah, *Maymar fī Wujūd*, p. 51; and *Al-Fihrist*, I: 394. See also Sidney H. Griffith, *The Church in the Shadow of the Mosque: Christians and Muslims in the World of Islam,* (Princeton & Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2008), 63; and J. W. Fück, "Some Hitherto Unpublished Texts on the Muʿtazilite Movement from Ibn an-Nadīm's Kitāb al-Fihrist", in S. M. Abdullah (ed.), *Professor Muhammad Shafi Presentation Volume 62*, (Lahore: Punjab University Pres, 1955).

77 N. G. Awad, *Orthodoxy in Arabic Terms: A Study of Theodore Abu Qurrah's Theology in Its Islamic Context*, (Berlin & Boston: De Gruyter, 2015), p. 2. See also Ignace Dick's introduction to Abū Qurrah, *Maymar fī Wujūd*, p. 49; and A. Abel, *le livre de la refutation des trois sects Chrétiennes de Abū ʿĪsā Muḥammad ibn Hārūn al-Warrāq. Sa date, son importance, sa place dans la littérature polemic arabe* (Doctoral Dissertation, Bruxelles, 1949), p. ix.

78 Sidney H. Griffith, "Reflections on the Biography of Theodore Abū Qurrah", *Parole de l'Orient* XVIII (1993), pp. 143-170, p. 165. See also Ignace Dick, "Un continuateur arabe de Saint Jean Damascène: Théodore Abuqurra, évêque melkite de Harran", *Paroche-Orient Chretien* 12 (1962), pp. 209-223.

that Abū Qurrah regained his position in 799 A.D. after the accession of patriarch Job to the throne of Antioch.[79]

What this piece of information suggests is that Abū Qurrah was asked to leave his See in Ḥarrān, which means that he had to depart from the city and to reside elsewhere. Scholars do speculate on Theodore's whereabout during the period between 785 and 799 A.D. (this is if we concede that he eventually truly regained his episcopal position in the church. I personally surmise that he never became a church prelate again, but dedicated all his life to *Kalām* and to *Muʿatzilite* lifestyle, as I will show in my forthcoming monograph). Some of them believe that Theodore Abū Qurrah spent his time in the Monastery of Mar Sabas and the environs of Jerusalem (I. Dick; S. Griffith; J. Nasrallah; S. K. Samir), while others reject this possibility and deny any link whatsoever to Abū Qurrah with Mar Sabas's monastery.[80] I do believe that linking Theodore unquestionably to Mar Sabas, as well as dissociating him categorically from the Melkite-Chalcedonian intellectual context that is attributed to Mar Sabas, are equally too quick and untenable options.[81] One can still acknowledge an affinity between Theodore Abū Qurrah's theological discourse and the theological legacy of John of Damascus and Mar Sabas' intellectual tradition and simultaneously search for another location as the potential residing place of Abū Qurrah when he was no more the bishop of Ḥarrān.

It is my proposal that the Quwayra who moved from Ḥarrān carrying philosophical knowledge to Baghdad is Theodore Abū Qurrah. After being demoted from his See in the city, Theodore decided to move to the capital of the Caliphate sometimes after 785 A.D., and he made the city his homebase ever since. While in Baghdad, the ex-bishop dedicated all his time to 'teaching' (*taʿlīm*), away from any direct interference in the religious affairs of the church. This is why al-Fārābī's/Ibn Abī Uṣaybiʿa's account suggests a distinction between Quwayra's concentration on 'teaching' and his study-mate, Isrā'īl's involvement in religious affairs, and this is why the account calls the latter '*usquf*' while it abstains from using this title to the former: Abū Qurrah was no more *usquf* during that period, but only a teacher of philosophical and theological thought (dedicating himself only to teaching and thinking, just like an ideal *Muʿtazilī*!). This time that was spent in Baghdad only on teaching, translating, debating, and developing rationalist theological discourse made Theodore Abū Qurrah remembered in the ensuing decades and centuries as one of the main Christians who contributed to the transmission of philosophical reasoning to the world of Islam.

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79 Griffith, "Reflections on the Biography", p. 167.

80 See John C. Lamoreaux, "The Biography of Theodore Abū Qurrah Revisited", *Dumbarton Oaks papers* 56 (2002), pp. 25-40.

81 Awad, *Orthodoxy in Arabic Terms*, p. 7.

4- A valid question to my proposal here would be something like the following: If al-Fārābī's/Ibn Abī Uṣaybiʿa's account speaks about the renowned Melkite-Chalcedonian *mutakallim* and *nāqil-wa-mufassir* from the third/ninth century, why does it not, then, simply say 'Abū Qurrah', instead of 'Quwayra'? One reason for replacing 'Abū Qurrah' with 'Quwayra' is the fact that Ibn Abī Uṣaybiʿa is writing his chronicle many centuries after the time of its claimed original author, al-Fārābī. He could have received this news orally, so his memory, while composing his text, drove him into mis-spelling 'Abū Qurrah' and mistaking it with 'Quwayra'. This might have sounded remote from a mistake for him, since both by-names Quwayra and Abū Qurrah were commonly used to nickname people from Ḥarrān.

Another possible answer to the above inquiry might be something we read in the manuscript of the debate Isrā'īl of Kashkar held with al-Sarākhisī, the disciple of al-Kindī. Barbara Roggema summarizes a thought-provoking, tension-raising part in the interlocution that kicked off between the two men in the following words:

> The first sign of tension between the two men comes at the start, when al-Sarākhisī asks for Israel's *kunyā*, the Arabic named formed by 'Father of' (Abū), and the name of the first son. Israel rejects this familiar Arabic way of addressing people for several reasons, one of which is his claim that it does not have validity in the universal language of reason, which is what should be used in philosophical inquiry.[82]

In his comments on this incident, Bo Holmberg relates that Isrā'īl offers four reasons to al-Sarākhisī on why it is inappropriate to address him with 'Abū someone' *kunya* manner, suggesting also that, by stating this, Isrā'īl wanted to tell his Muslim interlocutor that the *kunya* only applies to Arabs and is not used among the Syriacs.[83]

This is quite an intriguing and suggestive piece of information. It invites us to glean that al-Fārābī/Ibn Abī Uṣaybiʿa could have received oral reporting (or they even red) about the debate between Israel and al-Sarākhisī and took seriously what Israel said about the use of 'Abū someone' *kunya* and its use to address Syriac Christians, especially those with ecclesial background. This might have driven him to say that the two Syriac students who transmitted

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[82] Roggema, "Israel of Kashkar and al-Sarkhasī", p. 841.

[83] Holmberg, *A Treatise*, pp. 52, 54. Let us remember that Ibn ʿAsākir also informs us in his text, *Tārīkh Dimashq al-Kabīr* (The Grand Historiography of Damascus), that one of the items of the peace treaty the people of Damascus co-signed with the Commander of the Muslim army or the Muslim Caliph, upon the invasion and opening of Damascus, was that the Christians will abstain from using the Muslims' *kunya* as part of their names: Ibn ʿAsākir, *Tārīkh Dimashq al-Kabīr* (The Grand Historiography of Damascus), edited by Abū ʿAbdullah ʿAlī ʿAshūr al-Janūbī, (Beirut: Dār Īḥiyā' al-Turāth al-ʿArabī, 2001), I: 84-85; 119-122 On this and the use of *Kunya* among Christians in early Islam, see N. G. Awad, *Umayyad Christianity: John of Damascus as a Contextual Example of Identity Formation in Early Islam*, (Piscataway, NJ: Gorgias Press, 2018), pp. 119-152.

philosophy to Baghdad from the conduit of Ḥarrān were called Isrā'īl al-usquf (he stresses the *usquf* here probably after he heard that Isrā'īl himself stressed it in response to what he deemed an insultation from al-Sarākhisī in their *mujādalah*) and Quwayra. Here, one can also add that, had al-Fārābī/Ibn Abī Uṣaybiʿa been just talking about the very same Quwayra which Ibn an-Nadīm talks about in one of *Al-Fihrits*'s entries, they would have probably realized that *Al-Fihrist* relates that the Quwayra it introduces holds the *kunya* of Abū Isḥaq.[84] It seems that al-Fārābī/Ibn Abī Uṣaybiʿa deliberately abstained from associating either Isrā'īl or Quwayra with any 'Abū someone' *kunya*. Taking Isrā'īl-Sarakhsī tensive altercation over the issue of *kunya* into consideration, one might surmise that al-Fārābī/Ibn Abī Uṣaybiʿa wanted to tell us that the two students of the Ḥarrānian teacher, who conveyed philosophy from Ḥarrān to Baghdad, were Syriac in background. One might further presume here that the intellectual circle of al-Farābī took seriously Isrā'īl's comment, especially his remark 'Abū someone' *kunya* "does not have validity in the universal language of reason, which is what should be used in philosophical inquiry".[85] Abstaining from using *Abū* Qurrah and replacing it with Qwuayra (another common nickname used for those who come from Ḥarrān) might just be al-Fārābī's/Ibn Abī Uṣaybiʿa's expression of respect and appreciation of the intellectual and philosophical calibers of Theodore Abū Qurrah by abstaining from addressing him with any *kunya* associated with 'Abū someone' manner of naming.

- V -

In this paper, I endeavored to explore possible information on the persons behind al-Fārābī's/Ibn Abī Uṣaybiʿa's account on the transmission of philosophy to Baghdad on the hands of two disciples, called 'Isrā'īl' and 'Quwayra', studied with a teacher from Ḥarrān. I assessed the available data in the extant Muslim and Christian historiographical texts that mention these two names and associate them with philosophical and rational theological (*Kalām*) reasoning. It was my proposal that the two persons which al-Fārābī's/Ibn Abī Uṣaybiʿa's account was talking about are Isrā'īl of Kashkar and Theodore Abū Qurrah, who both existed in Baghdad, each in his own way, and were prominent figures within the circles of philosophical and theological reasoning in the city during the third/ninth century.

If my examination of nomenclatures' modeling and diversification in Arabic, late antique and medieval historiographical sources make sense, on can then remain on a plausible track in

84 *Al-Fihrist*, VII.1:321.

85 Roggema, "Israel of Kashkar and al-Sarkhasī", p. 841.

pondering the possibility that the Ḥarrānian teacher's second student called Quwayra is no other than our Melkite (once bishop of Ḥarrān) *mutakallim* and '*nāqil-wa-mufassir*', Theodore Abū Qurrah. At one point in his life, Abū Qurrah moved to Baghdad and resided there, dedicating his life to *Iʿtizāl* and *Muʿtazilī* life-style and activities, only composing *Kalām*, translating *Falsafa*, teaching his knowledge to others and engaging other Muslim and Christian intellectuals in *mujādalāt*; manifesting with other Christian *mutakallims* in that context models of 'Christian Muʿtazilism'.[86]

It is my belief that Garth Fowden, implicitly and in his own special way, invites us to ponder such possibility when he reminds us of the following:

> Theodore… was familiar with both Aristotle and Late Greek philosophy… [his] association with the Edessa-Ḥarrān area athwart the Fertile Crescent highway from Alexandria to Baghdad…makes Theodore easy to integrate into the schematic Arabic narrative of how ancient learning passed to its Muslim heirs. Theodore fits well into the milieu of Christian Syrian translators of Greek texts, and as a bishop was the absolute insider who knew where to get his hands on the sought-after manuscripts of Aristotle and the other ancients.[87]

Tracing the identity of the so-called Quwayra to someone versed in philosophy and *Kalām* alike in a trilingual manner like Theodore Abū Qurrah will not only enable us to find Abū Qurrah's due place in al-Fārābī's/Ibn Abī Uṣaybiʿa's story, and not only offer us a new chapter in our attempt at re-writing the *vitae* of this very significant Christian voice during early Islam. It will also invite us to chase after the trajectory on which philosophy travelled from the Christian and pagan worlds of Antiquity vis-à-vis *Kalām* and its Muslim-Christian-Jewish creation in the early centuries of Islam, and not just by means of the translation movement, which conveyed philosophy via translating Aristotelianism from Greek into Arabic and Syriac. It was a *mutakallim* from Ḥarrān called Quwayra/Abū Qurrah who moved to Baghdad and got involved in teaching rather than in his church's religious affairs (thus, Abū Rā'iṭah describes him as versed in philosophy more than in religious Christian catechism), contrary to his study-mate, Isrā'īl al-usquf, who maintained dedication to religious affairs. This Quwayra/Abū Qurrah conveyed Aristotelian (but equally, if not more primarily, Neoplatonic-Proclean trends

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[86] I am pursuing a research project chasing after demonstrating the possibility of having *Christian* Muʿtazilite *mutakallims* active during the third/ninth century; the thing that invites us to consider seriously that Muʿtazilism during that century was cross-religious, cross-boundaries, crosspollinational phenomenon. The tentative title of my forthcoming monograph on this subject is, *Christian Muʿtazilism? Studying the Cross-pollination between Christian and Muslim Kalām During the Early Abbasid Era*.

[87] Fowden, *Before and After Muḥammad*, pp. 152-153.

of thought) to the circles of reasoning in the Muslim capital.[88] He did this via his theological *Mayāmir*, his translation and interpretation of philosophy, as well as through his *mujādalāt* in the presence of the Caliph.

The possibility of having a Ḥarrānian Christian Melkite *mutakallim* taking upon himself the status of '*ḥakīm*' (sage) (as Abū Rā'iṭah calls Theodore) and conveying philosophy to the circles of knowledge in Baghdad invites us to seriously question any tendency to compartmentalize the development of philosophy and theology in the Arabic-Islamic milieu as two parallel, not intertwined or co-generated, lines of thinking, whose evolutionary processes were conducted by two separated, and sometimes conflicting, groups of scholars. With Theodore Abū Qurrah, and Isrā'īl of Kashkar for that matter, being the possible historical personal medium behind the names of 'Isrā'īl al-usquf' and 'Quwayra', we can reckon anew with the role theologians (*mutakallims*) played not only in implementing philosophy, but also in *transmitting* and creating *Falsafa* by means of teaching, translation (*naql*), interpretation (*tafsīr*), as well as theological accommodation and rehabilitation. This is an invitation for us to recall what in 2006, Roshdi Rashed also paid attention to, when he called us to look beyond the earliest philosophers among the Arabs to the *mutakallims*, or "theologian-philosophers", who either preceded these philosophers or were their contemporaries.[89] Rashed goes on to propose that "this self-same milieu of theologian-philosophers (*mutakallims*) will one day provide the key to understand the reason for the preliminary stages of works within the corpus of writings which is the Aristotelian Neoplatonic tradition".[90]

Abstract: There was a time when scholars conducted lengthy investigations on the story of the transmission of Greek philosophy from Roman Alexandria to Abbasid Baghdad vis-à-vis Antioch and then the city of Ḥarrān. During the past three decades, scholars started to deconstruct the 'from Alexandria to Baghdad' narrative. Many

Resumen: Hubo un tiempo en que los estudiosos realizaron largas investigaciones sobre la historia de la transmisión de la filosofía griega de la Alejandría romana al Bagdad abasí frente a Antioquía y luego a la ciudad de Ḥarrān. Durante las últimas tres décadas, los académicos comenzaron a deconstruir la narrativa "de Alejandría a Bagdad". Muchos estudiosos

88 On the conveyance of Proclean philosophy vis-à-vis Christian *Kalām*, especially the one of Abū Qurrah, see Najib G. Awad, "Theodore Abū Qurrah as 'Nāqil-wa-Mufassir'", pp. 26-40; and N. G. Awad, "*Creatio ex Philosophia*", pp. 525-532.

89 Roshdi Rashed, "Greek into Arabic: Transmission and Translation", in *Arabic Theology; Arabic Philosophy. From the Many to the One: Essays in Celebration of Richard M. Frank*, James E. Montgomery (ed.), (Leuven & Paris: Peeters, 2006), pp. 157-196, p. 193.

90 Rashed, "Greek into Arabic", p. 194.

scholars deem Ibn Abī Uṣaybiʿa's reports on such transmission, related by the philosopher al-Fārābī in the former's book, *ʿUyūn al-Anbā' fi Ṭabaqāt al-Aṭibbā'* (The Springs of Information about the Classes of Physicians), to be historically unreliable and untenable. It is because of this conviction, scholars rarely paused at al-Fārābī's/Ibn Abī Uṣaybiʿa's attestation that the transmission of philosophy to Baghdad occurred via two students, who learned philosophy from a Ḥarrānian teacher. These two students are called Isrā'īl al-Usquf and Quwayra. This article tackles directly the question of the real identity of the two persons called Isrā'īl and Quwayra. The article searches for these two persons by examining some historical and biographical attestations one finds in extant, early Muslim and Christian historiographies. Then, it proposes that the data available in our hands strongly suggests that these two persons can tenably be the Nestorian Isrā'īl of Kashkar and the Melkite Theodore Abū Qurrah, the two intellectuals and *mutakallims* who were known within the circles of theological and philosophical reasoning in ninth-century Baghdad.

Key terms: 'Alexandria-to-Baghdad'; al-Fārābī; Ibn Abī Uṣaybiʿa; Aristotelian-Neoplatonic Philosophy; Isrā'īl of Kashkar; Theodore Abū Qurrah, *Kalām*, *falsafa*. Ḥarrān.

consideran que los informes de Ibn Abī Uṣaybiʿa sobre dicha transmisión, relatados por el filósofo al-Fārābī en el libro del primero, ʿUyūn al-Anbā' fī Ṭabaqāt al-Aṭibbā' (Las fuentes de información sobre las clases de médicos), son históricamente poco fiables e insostenibles. Debido a esta convicción, los estudiosos rara vez se detuvieron en el testimonio de al-Fārābī/Ibn Abī Uṣaybiʿa de que la transmisión de la filosofía a Bagdad ocurrió a través de dos estudiantes, que aprendieron filosofía de un maestro 'harraniano'. Estos dos estudiantes se llaman Isrā'īl al-Usquf y Quwayra. Este artículo aborda directamente la cuestión de la identidad real de las dos personas llamadas Isrā'īl y Quwayra. El artículo busca a estas dos personas examinando algunos testimonios históricos y biográficos que se encuentran en las historiografías cristianas y musulmanas antiguas existentes. Luego, propone que los datos disponibles en nuestras manos sugieren fuertemente que estas dos personas pueden ser defendiblemente el nestoriano Isrā'īl de Kashkar y el melkita Teodoro Abū Qurra, los dos intelectuales y mutakallimíes que fueron conocidos dentro de los círculos del razonamiento teológico y filosófico en Bagdad en el siglo noveno.

Palabras clave: "Alejandría-Bagdad"; al-Fārābī; Ibn Abī Uṣaybiʿa; Filosofía aristotelico-platónica; Isrā'īl de Kashkar; Teodoro Abū Qurra; *Kalām; falsafa*; Ḥarrān.