



EASTERN SYRIAC CHRISTIANS FACING THE ARAB CONQUEST

TACTICS OF ACCEPTING THE CATASTROPHIC REALITY

THE CHRONOLOGY

- 629 earthquake
- 630 death of Muhammad
- 633 death of Abu Bakr, succeeds
- 634 – Roman-Arab fight near Gaza
- 635 Arabs invade Syria and raid monasteries in Ṭur ʿAbdīn
- 636-7 Arabs conquer Mesopotamia
- 640 Dara is taken
- 641-2 Palestine taken
- 643 ʿUmar killed, ʿUṭman succeeds
- Ishoyahb II 646 letter of protection poll tax
- 648 Arabs invade Cyprus
- 652 Ḥabīb invades Mesopotamia
- 655 ʿUṭman killed
- 656 battle of Siffin
- 657 assassination of ʿAli
- 659 earthquake in Palestine; 659 – another one
- Muʿawiyya acclaimed in Jerusalem
- 662 Arabs at walls of Constantinople
- 691 first Arab census in Mesopotamia
- 693 Solar eclipse
- 699 plague in Syria



632 A.D

WESTERN SYRIANS



- Reicheschatologie (eschatology based on a series of prophecies): defeat of Rome as the end of hope
- Divided group (Jacobites, Maronites and Melkites)
- Acceptance of the Moslem rule as a punishment for the sins (Chalcedon etc)
- Ps-Methodius:
 - four heads of the punishments, Devastation and Devastator, Destruction and Destroyer;
 - people from the four winds of heaven
 - These are not men but sons of desolation
 - They will tether their cattle into the sarcophagi of martyrs
 - Kind people will be rejected and despised
 - Honor will be taken away from the priests, the Divine Office and the Heaven Sacrifice will come to an end
 - Millenarist' perspective, then Son of Perdition appears

EASTERN SYRIAC CHRISTIANS

- Isolated Church in the Sassanid Iran
- No contact with the Greek Church
- Strong monastic movement (5th-6th cc.)
- Moderated choc from persecution
- No sympathy for the conquerors and no hope for the Romans



TACTICS IN OPPOSING THE INVASION

- Asceticism and mystical experience based on medical and philosophical knowledge
- solidarity (lay and monastic ties)
- Missionary activity
- Liturgical reform
- Hagiographic texts production



MONASTIC REVIVAL

- Ishoyahb the 3rd moved to Beth ʿAwe the theological school (In the second half of the seventh century became a center of East Syriac academic life)
- 150 East Syriac monasteries have been determined, of which eight lay in the outlying provinces and 142 in the central provinces, especially in the north.
- In 676 on the Bahraini island of Dirin, Giwargis held a synod whose canons were preserved together with a circular letter to a Persian priest.
- On the island of Kharg outside of Rewardashir, an East Syriac monastery dating from the fifth to eleventh centuries was discovered and gravestones with “Nestorian crosses” found.

LITURGIACAL REFORM



- Composition of Hudra
 - the church year was divided into eight series of weeks (Annunciation, Nativity, Epiphany, Lent, Resurrection, Apostle, Summer, Elias, Moses, and Consecration of the Church).
 - Special books were created (Kashkul, Marzmore)
 - Qyamut qālā
 - Penqitā d-qanōnē
 - The Taksha, a compilation of liturgical texts including the rites for the consecration of water, the consecration of the altar, and baptism, was also edited by Ishoyahb and made binding upon the whole church, including the Malabar coast.
- Reform of the statutes of the school of Nisibis. Besides the theological disciplines of dogmatics, exegesis, canon law, and liturgy, philosophy, medicine, logic, and music were also taught.
- Missionary books ()

DIDACTICS (SCIENCE AND HAGIOGRAPHIC LITERATURE)

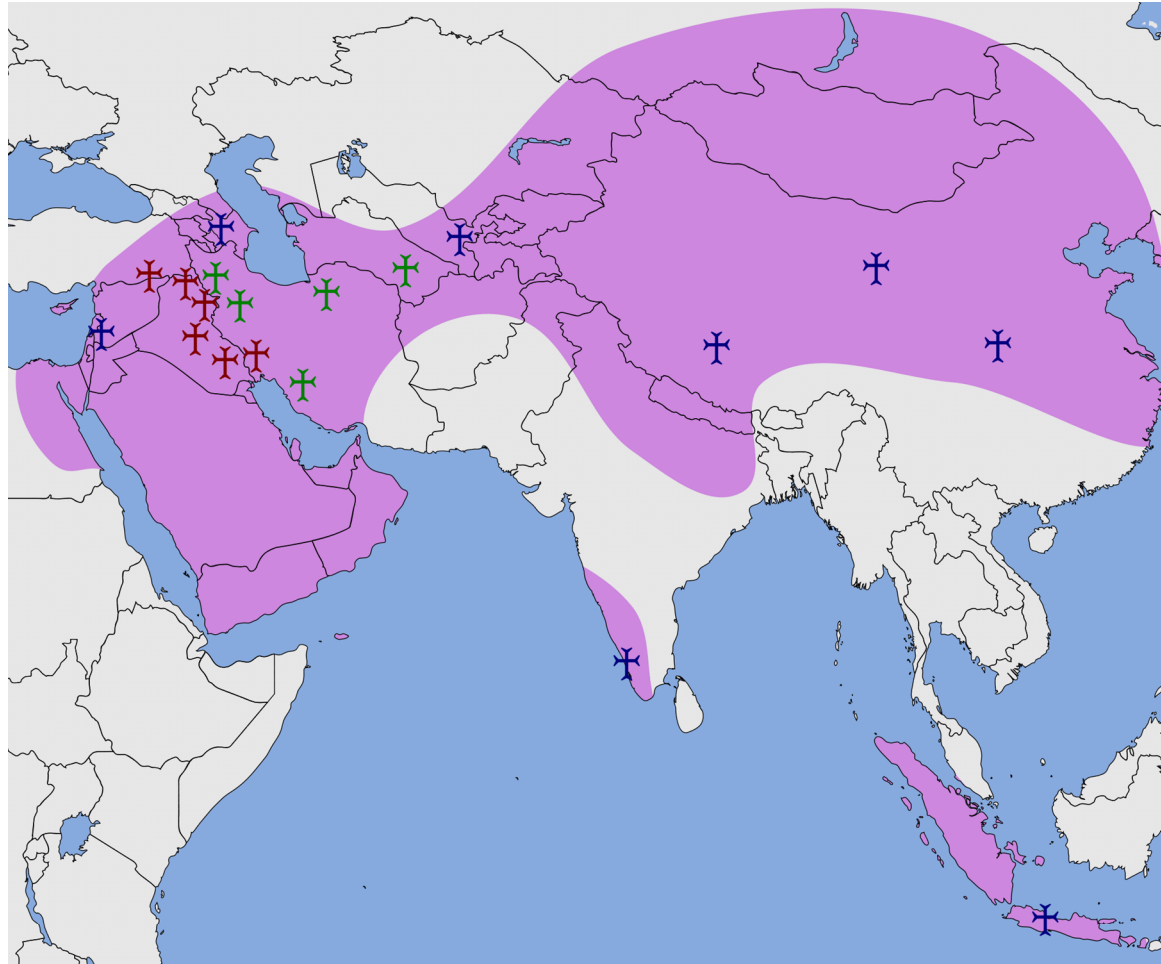
- Henanisho I († 700): a series of theological writings, letters, and a commentary on Aristotelian analysis, as well as a commentary on a few books of Aristotle's *Organon*. A *memra* (verse homily) on his teacher Ishoyahb III is preserved in an eighteenth-century manuscript.
- Biography of Isho 'sawran
- at the request of Ishoyahb's successor Catholicos Giwargis I (George) assembled the legends and sayings of Egyptian monks under the title *Paradise of the Fathers* (add. 177 chapters accounts of Mesopotamian ascetics)

EASTERN SYRIAC ASCETICISM

- Beth ʿAwe school; its library, Evagrian ascetical theory
- North and South: Abraham and Rabban Šabur
- Iṣḥāq of Nineveh: the enemy inside and outside
 - Abstaining from the worldly affairs
 - Care of the soul: a rule over the emotional
 - Systematic training of the intellect (madʿā)
 - Abstaining from disputes
 - Silence (šelyā) and zawʿē

MISSIONS

- China:
 - Tarsa and Tzingziao
 - In 642 the translation of a Christian text into Chinese was completed
 - under Emperor Kao-tsung (650–83) churches were built in all of China's provincial capitals
 - Under the empress Wu (690–705) Christianity was regarded as competition for Buddhism and was persecuted
 - 781 – stele of Xian
- India
 - Early Christianisation
 - Ishoyahb II (628–46) eventually sent additional bishops.
 - The jurisdiction of the Church of the East over the Christians of the Indian Malabar coast was established under Catholicos Ishoyahb III († 658) around 650
 - Between 650 and 850 a separate metropoly of India was established
 - 745 Thomas of Cana



CASE: A MS FROM TAIPEI

- Written 12th c.
- Three languages
- Liturgical profile



EASTERN SYRIAC CHRISTIANS: WHY THE TACTIC DID NOT SUCCEED?

- Lost Enlightenment (S. F. Starr): Qutayba and Abu Muslim's oppression in Central Asia
- Mongol Empire
- Tamerlan