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Plate 3



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Plate 2. Evangelion (Gospel lectionary). Paper, 540×360 mm, 125 f. Syriac, 1586 AD. Chaldean Church of Batnaya, Iraq, MS CCB 00009, fol. 80v, fragment. Photos courtesy of the Hill Museum & Manuscript Library, Saint John's University, Minnesota, USA and the Centre Numérique des Manuscrits Orientaux, Erbil, Iraq.

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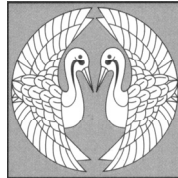
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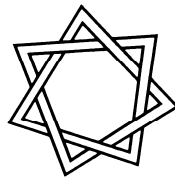
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EAST SYRIAC POETRY EMBEDDED IN THE MANUSCRIPT ILLUMINATION: 16TH CENTURY

Abstract. Over the course of the Syriac tradition's interaction with Islamic culture, the role of poetry became increasingly significant. It is for this reason that so-called scribal poetry first appeared. This genre is often found alongside passages in prose and accompanied other paratextual features of the manuscript such as the colophon and marginal notes. Due to the increasing cultural importance of poetry from the medieval period onwards, these features were often composed in verse. Some poems were embedded in the manuscript illumination and therefore formed part of decorative compositions. The current paper discusses notable examples of scribal poetry, in particular, quatrains from the 16th century, when the earliest known “decorative” poems first appeared. Despite their popularity and the important information they contain, such poems have hitherto never been published or studied.

Keywords: East Syriac tradition, Syriac poetry, manuscript production, manuscript decoration, scribes, manuscript illumination

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Introduction

It is well-known that the role of poetry in Syriac literature took on a new dimension as a result of its exposure to Arabic and Persian models. Although poetry was extremely popular in the Syriac tradition for centuries before, thanks to the Islamic surrounding, it mastered short poetic forms, such as quatrains [1]. Many Syriac hierarchs of the medieval and early modern period distinguished themselves as poets, but also worked as scribes, copying manuscripts and sending them to monasteries and churches to ensure that their confreres had access to accurate texts [2]. As such, these scholar-bishops actively preserved their ecclesial traditions and mediated the transmission of foundational texts. Their extensive involvement in such poetic activities is well-documented during the so-called Syriac Renaissance (11th — early 14th century) [3], in particular, from the 13th century. Later Syriac hierarchs in the Ottoman period, such as Chaldean Patriarchs ‘Abdīshō’ of Gazarta (1555—1570), Joseph II (1696—1717) [4] and many others, were following this earlier model, being prolific poets as well as copyists of manuscripts for their community's use [5]. In terms of form and style, they were clearly following the models established by their predecessors in the Syriac

Renaissance, often going so far as to imitate them entirely [6].

It is during this period that so-called scribal poetry first appeared. Most of these pieces, together with the prose passages in which they are incorporated, often accompany other paratextual features of the manuscript such as the colophon and various notes as well as scribal introductory doxology [7]. Due to the increasing popularity of poetry from the 13th century onwards, such features were often composed in verse [8]. Little wonder, then, that short scribal poems are also found alongside decorative features such as miniatures, frontispieces (“carpet pages”), and decorative borders — many East Syriac examples of which were produced in Ottoman times. The preponderance of scribal poems in this period may be connected to the central role in Syriac literature of poetry itself. This paper examines notable examples of scribal poems, in particular, quatrains from the 16th century, when the earliest “decorative” poems emerge. One more article on the further development of these poetic forms is forthcoming [9]. Most of the poems under discussion contain the scribe's prayer requests and often include his name, which can be identified with the name contained in the colophon

of the same manuscript (hence the reason why I refer to them as “scribal poems”). Despite their popularity, such texts have not attracted attention from modern scholars. Yet, given their vast diffusion in East Syriac manuscripts, scribal poems deserve to be treated as a genre in their own right as well as an important feature of paratextual writing more generally.

As previously mentioned, the poems under discussion are often integrated into a manuscript's decorative scheme and forms part of its illumination. In this regard, they do not act independently as other scribal poems do, but rather should be read alongside the image. The character and content of the poem therefore depends on the decorative program of a manuscript. As such, this kind of material requires an approach that combines textual analysis with attentiveness to the visual aspects of the manuscript's decoration and illustration. The questions that immediately emerge when faced with this type of material concern its origin, general classification, chronology of evolution, authorship, and types of circulation. In this paper, we will attempt to answer at least some of these in order to bring to light new information and provide a starting point for further discussions. One question in particular is whether the manuscript's poet-scribe was the same person as its decorator. Undoubtedly, reconstructing the manuscript production process and identifying its contributors are of primary importance to codicological studies across various traditions.

Since the bulk of this material has never been studied, it is necessary to survey a number of representative specimens. And given that scribal poetry is less common in European manuscript collections, we must turn to one of the world's richest repository of digitised collections of Syriac manuscripts. The Hill Museum & Manuscript

Library (HMML) has digitised thousands of manuscripts contained in monasteries and churches across the Middle East, and has made them available online [10]. Since these short poems are usually not included in the catalogue descriptions, I list here the following collection as examples:

ACA (Chaldean Archdiocese of Aqra) — 4 MSS;
ACE (Chaldean Archdiocese of Erbil) — 188 MSS;
ACK (Chaldean Archdiocese of Kirkuk) — 202 MSS;
CAM (Chaldean Archdiocese of Mosul) — 7 MSS;
CAM MIC (Chaldean Archdiocese of Mosul, Mar Ishaya) — 17 MSS;
DCA (Chaldean Diocese of Alqosh) — 145 MSS;
DCD (Chaldean Diocese of Duhok) — 32 MSS;
MACCK (Mar Addai Chaldean Church of Karmlish) — 78 MSS;
QACCT (Chaldean Church of Quriyaqos, Telkepe) — 227 MSS.

As for the CCM (Chaldean Cathedral of Mardin), which contains more than 500 manuscripts from Mardin and Āmid (modern-day Diyarbakır), I was able to successfully search the database of HMML's Virtual Reading Room (vHMML) by applying various filters [11]. This method yielded just over fifty results, though not all manuscripts containing decorative features contained the scribal poems under discussion. Moreover, this picture cannot be exhaustive since many collections were destroyed long before the digital era, such as that of the Seert Cathedral library [12], while several extant collections await digitisation (for instance, the famous library of the Chaldean monastery of Notre Dame des Sémances near Alqosh) [13]. Nevertheless, the material presented here should be sufficient enough to work towards a typology and reconstruction of scribal poetry's evolution.

16th-Century Gospel Lectionaries: ‘Aṭāyā son of Faraj and his Output

The earliest samples discussed here are found in East Syriac manuscripts from the 16th century. They were written by ‘Aṭāyā of Alqosh, who is the most prolific East Syriac copyist known to us from the early Ottoman period, and one of the tradition's most outstanding scribes. About thirty manuscripts copied by him between 1536 and 1594 survive in different manuscript collections [14]. Most of them are of various types of liturgical books [15].

‘Aṭāyā, who worked in both Gāzartā (modern-day Cisre) and Alqosh, excelled as a poet as well as a scribe. The poems he composed survive in various manuscripts, some of which are embedded in the colophon or take the form of scribal introductions — or, to precise, introductory doxologies — in verse [16]. However, the issue of originality is rather complex, since one cannot be sure whether the poems are compositions by the scribe himself or borrowed from others — in much the same way that prose colophons are often formulaic, containing as they do identical passages across numerous manuscripts [17].

Among the book types copied by ‘Aṭāyā are the *Gazzā* (services of the feasts of the year and the commemorations of the saints), *Ḥudrā* (services of all the

Sundays of the year and of the Lent), *Shlīhā* (Epistle lectionary) [18], and non-liturgical manuscripts, such as Bar ‘Ebrōyō's *Metrical Grammar* [19]. To the best of my knowledge, manuscripts of the Gospel lectionary (*Evangelion*) are the only ones containing the types of poems under discussion. This is hardly surprising because it is often only Gospel lectionaries that were decorated with miniatures in the Ottoman period. All other types of manuscripts contain ornate borders at most but little else by way of decoration or illustration. Yet even in the case of Gospel lectionaries, one sometimes finds no illumination at all, as in the case of a number copied by ‘Aṭāyā, for instance, CCM 00062, copied in 1543, which contains a scribal quatrain as part of the colophon (fol. 200v) but no illustration [20].

CCM 00062 is a rather early work of this scribe, given that his latest surviving manuscript is dated 1594 [21]. One can therefore assume that he started to produce decorated Gospels later in life, and consequently the poems embedded in their decoration appeared at that stage of his activities, though we do not have enough information to come to a firmer conclusion.

'Aṭāyā's Lectionary Manuscripts: Scribal Poems Embedded in Decorative Compositions

The earliest surviving manuscript containing 'Aṭāyā's "decorative" poetry is the famous Gospel lectionary Borg. Sir. 169 [22], now in the Vatican Library, produced in 1576 for the East Syriac monastery in Jerusalem that played an important part in pilgrimage and manuscript transmission [23]. As mentioned by the scribe, the manuscript was copied from a *Vorlage* written by 'Abdīshō' bar Brīkā (d. 1318) [24], a theologian and man of letters of the Syriac Renaissance who later became an important authority in the East Syriac literary canon. 'Aṭāyā's pilgrimage to Jerusalem in 1573 [25] presumably influenced the decoration of the East Syriac illuminated lectionaries, and thus Borg. Sir. 169 might be one of the very first exemplars of a new design [26]. It is very likely that its decoration was to a large extent borrowed from the West Syriac tradition that was available to the scribe in Jerusalem, as suggested by Leroy [27]. We know of no earlier tradition East Syriac figurative decoration prior to this manuscript. Thus, Borg. Sir. 169 contains a number of miniatures that set a standard for future lectionaries [28], namely, Christ's entry to Jerusalem (fol. 64v); a representation of the Cross with the two lamps on either side (fol. 82r); the same figure for the reading at Pentecost (fol. 95r); the apostle Thomas touching Christ's wounds (fol. 86v); an image of St. George, who was among the most popular saints (fol. 87v); a geometrical composition, reminiscent of an architectural portal, which most commonly

features at the beginning of a work (fol. 1v); and many other less ornate types of crosses and geometrical patterns. Also noteworthy is the fact that it is written in the estrangela script [29], which is also employed in all known East Syriac lectionaries decorated with miniatures in subsequent centuries.

In Borg. Sir. 169, there are four quatrains that are embedded in the following decorative compositions:

(i) One in a decorative border for the Gospel reading for the feast of the Forty Martyrs (fol. 50r, quatrain 1);

(ii) One in an image of the Cross right before the section on Lent (fol. 50v, quatrain 2);

(iii) Two near an image of St. George and the reading for his feast day (fol. 87v, quatrains 3 and 4);

(iv) One right before the reading for the feast of the Cross, with one line on each side of the image of the Cross (fol. 122r, quatrain 5).

Quatrain 2 is written vertically in a monumental estrangela script (both within the images of the Cross), while the other quatrains are written horizontally, in a small cursive script, one line under the other. All of them are written in heptasyllabic verse with a regular end-rhyme. The choice of the meter can be connected with the practical reasons: short lines are easier to set in the decorative compositions.

What follows is a transcription and translation of the poems, the numeration of which is intended to provide easy reference to them throughout this paper.

1. Fol. 50r, in geometrical decorative border

Reader, pray with love
for this miserable 'Aṭāyā
that the Lord forgives his debts
and gives him his reward in heaven.

ܡܠܝܬܐ ܕܡܠܝܬܐ ܕܡܠܝܬܐ ܕܡܠܝܬܐ
ܕܡܠܝܬܐ ܕܡܠܝܬܐ ܕܡܠܝܬܐ ܕܡܠܝܬܐ

2. Fol. 50v, in geometrical decorative border, written vertically, in estrangela

O sublime brother, pray
a prayer with pure heart
for 'Aṭāyā the sinner
that Christ makes him worthy of
forgiveness.

ܡܠܝܬܐ ܕܡܠܝܬܐ ܕܡܠܝܬܐ ܕܡܠܝܬܐ
ܕܡܠܝܬܐ ܕܡܠܝܬܐ ܕܡܠܝܬܐ ܕܡܠܝܬܐ

3. Fol. 87v, St. George image, on the upper right corner

Make a petition, blessed martyr
Mār Gīwargīs the confessor,
on behalf of the meek scribe,
to your Lord that He makes him worthy
of forgiveness.

ܡܠܝܬܐ ܕܡܠܝܬܐ ܕܡܠܝܬܐ ܕܡܠܝܬܐ
ܕܡܠܝܬܐ ܕܡܠܝܬܐ ܕܡܠܝܬܐ ܕܡܠܝܬܐ

4. Fol. 87v, St. George image, in the upper left corner

Make a petition, holy martyr,
to your Lord on behalf of every man
who cared for this sacred book
that they avoid harm by the evil one.

ܡܠܝܬܐ ܕܡܠܝܬܐ ܕܡܠܝܬܐ ܕܡܠܝܬܐ
ܕܡܠܝܬܐ ܕܡܠܝܬܐ ܕܡܠܝܬܐ ܕܡܠܝܬܐ

5. Fol. 122r, in the decorative border with the image of the Cross,
written vertically, in estrangela

Look, o brother and beloved one,
and observe this Cross,
and ask the Good One for mercy
on the scribe 'Aṭāyā.

ܡܪܝܬ ܕܐܬܝܐ ܕܡܪܝܬܐ ܕܡܪܝܬܐ ܕܡܪܝܬܐ
ܕܡܪܝܬܐ ܕܡܪܝܬܐ ܕܡܪܝܬܐ ܕܡܪܝܬܐ

A further Gospel lectionary (DCA 00096) was written by the same scribe in 1585 and now resides in the Chaldean Church of Alqosh [30]. It was repaired in a later period by another famous scribe, Abraham Shekwānā, who was active in the late 19th/early 20th century [31]. This was most likely he who added the notes about the copyist's biography on a rear flyleaf (see fol. 108v). The author of the first note — most likely the renovator of the manuscript — states that he had seen a quatrain about the scribe 'Aṭāyā in a manuscript in the library of the monastery of Jacob the Recluse, near Seert. On the same folio below it, he reproduces the following:

ܡܪܝܬܐ ܕܡܪܝܬܐ ܕܡܪܝܬܐ ܕܡܪܝܬܐ
ܕܡܪܝܬܐ ܕܡܪܝܬܐ ܕܡܪܝܬܐ ܕܡܪܝܬܐ
ܕܡܪܝܬܐ ܕܡܪܝܬܐ ܕܡܪܝܬܐ ܕܡܪܝܬܐ
ܕܡܪܝܬܐ ܕܡܪܝܬܐ ܕܡܪܝܬܐ ܕܡܪܝܬܐ

Poem

In year 1907 of Alexander, King of Kings,
on the day of the commemoration of Hōrmezd the Persian,

there passed from this world full of grief the honour-
able priest
named 'Aṭāyā, archdeacon and pilgrim to Jerusa-
lem [32] (fol. 108v).

The above quatrain contains extremely valuable information: an exact date of the death of this important copyist, namely 1907 AG, which corresponds to 1596 AD.

DCA 00096 has fewer illuminated folia than the Vatican manuscript, though many might have been lost and later replaced with new leaves. It only has three quatrains, one of which is also found in Borg. Sir. 169 (see above, quatrain 5). Two of them, written in a small cursive East Syriac hand, are found in the section on the Resurrection, placed in the upper corners of the image of the Cross with a lamp on either side (fol. 64v, quatrain 6; *fig. 1, plate 4*). Another poem is written at the bottom of the Cross, in the section on the feast of the Holy Cross (fol. 97v, quatrain 7). The text and translation of these poems are as follows:

6. Fol. 64v, two quatrains in the upper corners, in the image of the Cross and
two lamps (in the upper right corner)

O he who endured the Cross of
ignominy,
and suffered a blow from a servant,
guide your servant 'Aṭāyā,
to your meeting-place and be glad of
him with your chosen ones.

ܡܪܝܬܐ ܕܡܪܝܬܐ ܕܡܪܝܬܐ ܕܡܪܝܬܐ
ܕܡܪܝܬܐ ܕܡܪܝܬܐ ܕܡܪܝܬܐ ܕܡܪܝܬܐ

In the upper left corner. Same as quatrain 5 (see above)

7. Fol. 97v, under the Cross

O my lord reader, pray
for the sinner 'Aṭāyā
that the lord forgives his debts
in the day when he judges created beings.

ܡܪܝܬܐ ܕܡܪܝܬܐ ܕܡܪܝܬܐ ܕܡܪܝܬܐ
ܕܡܪܝܬܐ ܕܡܪܝܬܐ ܕܡܪܝܬܐ ܕܡܪܝܬܐ

Textual Variation in 'Aṭāyā's Scribal Poems

The third illuminated manuscript by the same scribe, also a Gospel lectionary, is CCB 00009 (Chaldean Church of Batnaya), written in 1586 [33]. Its decoration is similar to that of Borg. Sir. 169, having virtually the same set of miniatures though smaller in size and simpler in technique. There are three quatrains, each of which we have already encountered above. One poem, the same as quatrain 5 (see above), is written vertically in estrangela on each side of the Cross (fol. 37r) follow-

ing the reading for the commemoration of the dead. Another quatrain, the same as poem 6 (see above) is embedded in the image of the Cross in a similar fashion (fol. 75r), preceding the section on the Resurrection. However, this quatrain displays a minor variation when compared with DCA 00096, namely, line 3 which reads “ܕܡܪܝܬܐ ܕܡܪܝܬܐ ܕܡܪܝܬܐ ܕܡܪܝܬܐ” (“guide the miserable 'Aṭāyā”) instead of “ܕܡܪܝܬܐ ܕܡܪܝܬܐ ܕܡܪܝܬܐ ܕܡܪܝܬܐ” (“guide your servant 'Aṭāyā”). The third quatrain (fol. 80v), the same as quatrain 3 (see above), is

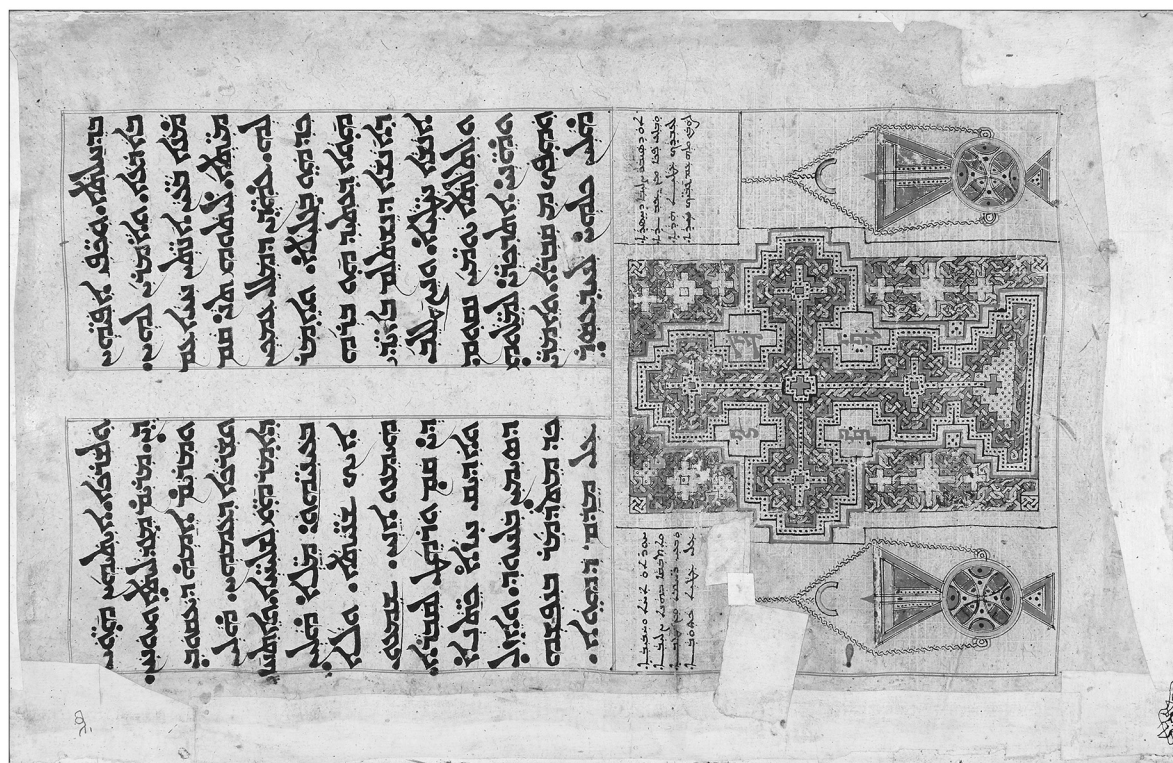


Fig. 1



Fig. 2



Fig. 3



Fig. 4

A further lectionary, CCM 00059 [36], was copied by the same scribe and today resides in the collection of the Chaldean Church of Mardin. It is one of the latest surviving works by 'Aṭāyā, dating to 1593, which he copied in Gāzartā (see the colophon, fol. 113r). It is undoubtedly the same scribe that wrote the above-mentioned manuscripts, since he refers to himself as "the priest 'Aṭāyā ... *maqd-shāyā* [*i. e.* one who has made pilgrimage to Jerusalem], son of Faraj" (fol. 113r). Unlike all the other manuscripts discussed above, this one contains no miniatures, and no decorative features other than two very modest borders in which poetry is embedded. By the way, it is written not in estrangela, but in East Syriac cursive. The first piece (fol. 81r) contains two lines that combine those from quatrains 1 and 7 (see above):

ܡܕܢܐ ܬܬܦܠܐ ܒܠܒܐ ܕܥܬܐܝܐ.

Pray with love, reader,
for the sinner 'Aṭāyā.

It is interesting to note that the two lines are written perpendicularly to one another, thereby forming a Cross. Moreover, the name of the scribe is written as "ܡܕܢܐ" (with the final "ܐ"), which is unusual and perhaps an Arabic Garshuni influence. In the reading for the commemoration of St. George (fol. 109v), there is a decorative border, which contains quatrain 9 (see above) written vertically along both edges of the border. The text is identical to that of CCM 00063, and the scribe once again refers to himself as an archdeacon.

Problems of Authorship, Origin and Evolution

As previously mentioned, the earliest East Syriac scribal poems integrated into decorative schemes (*e. g.* miniatures and carpet pages) first appeared in Gospel lectionaries. If one accepts that the first illuminated East Syriac lectionaries of this type emerged after 1573, thanks to 'Aṭāyā's pilgrimage and other activities, then it is reasonable to assume that scribal poetry was first embedded in decorative schemes thanks to him. As such, we may surmise that these verse texts were his own compositions. But what was the initial purpose of combining such poems with illumination? It seems that the primary reason was to make such verses more noticeable and to attract the readers' attention to the scribe's requests for prayers. Thus, the most effective way to capture the attention of the reader would have been to combine them with illumination. In addition to the general popularity of poetry, it was for this same reason that scribal poems were incorporated into the prose of manuscripts, such as in colophons. Many were also written in a way that distinguishes them from the prose of the text, either by using different colour inks or in the way in which the lines are set and the type of hand employed. At a later stage, such "decorative poems" formed an important part of the overall manuscript design.

We are also faced with the question of whether the poet-scribe was also the artist involved in decorating and illuminating the manuscript. It is important to bear in mind that unlike many Islamic manuscript traditions, scribing and illuminating a manuscript were not necessarily separate operations in Syriac Christian milieus. For instance, in a manuscript from the Monastery of Notre Dame des Sémances near Alqosh we find a set of wooden planks used as pressing boards for manuscript binding which contain the name of 'Aṭāyā son of Faraj, dated 1545 — thus suggesting that the scribe was involved with more than simply copying [37]. Fortunately, we are able to compare the decoration of different manuscripts produced by the same scribe, such as those by 'Aṭāyā. One should note that the iconographic schemes of the miniatures of different lectionaries of the later period are very much standardized [38], and thus colour and quality of execution serve as our main point of reference.

The most carefully executed manuscript of this type is Borg. Sir. 169, which contains several elegantly figural representations. CCB 00009 is similar in quality and colour, and may well have been decorated by the same person. CCM 00063 is more or less similar to Borg. Sir. 169 in colour but far less expertly drawn. Unlike the others, the illumination of DCA 00096 is dominated by the colours green and yellow. CCM 00059 contains only poorly executed decorative borders in bright colours. As can be seen from the following dimensions, the much smaller manuscripts are those by 'Aṭāyā:

Borg. Sir. 169 — 57.0×38.5 cm;
DCA 00096 — 60.0×38.0 cm;
CCB 00009 — 54.0×36.0 cm;
CCM 00063 — 54.0×37.0 cm;
CCM 00059 — 42.8×28.5 cm.

Thus, the dimensions, social status surrounding the manuscript commissioned, and price of commission may have determined the quality of its illumination and, consequently, the poetry integrated into it. As Leroy has suggested, the quality of a manuscript's decorative and illustrative scheme often depended on the availability of the painter. In cases where a painter was not available, the scribe was compelled to illustrate the manuscript himself [39]. This suggestion has been supported by Murre-von den Berg to explain the striking variability in the quality of manuscript production in this period [40]. Similarly, Ewa Balicka-Witakowska, based on the inexperienced quality of miniatures in one lectionary (Add. 7174, dated 1599 AD), surmises that its copyist Elias was also its illuminator [41]. It should be noted nevertheless that this is a sample of the West Syrian Church manuscript production. What is not in doubt, however, is that there existed in the East Syriac milieu of the 16th century specialist painters, since they receive a number of mentions in the manuscripts of this period [42].

No less intriguing is the problem of the origin of the poem type under discussion. It is quite notable that at an early stage, in the 16th century, most of them are written in East Syriac cursive with small lettering. The quatrains in the Cross compositions are the only ones written in monumental estrangela, in red ink, vertically, on either

side of the Cross, in a similar fashion to the titles and rubrics, and thus may be treated as a part of the decorative scheme. In cases where such poems are written in the same hand and colour as the rubrics and titles, there is no doubt that they were produced by scribes themselves.

Text accompanying images of the Cross have a long history in the Syriac tradition, in both manuscripts and epigraphy. Pier Giorgio Borbone has detailed a typology in several studies, pointing out that such inscriptions were common in the representations of the Cross on grave-stones — and in one case, a bronze mirror — originating from Mongolia [43]. Very often, these contain the verse from the Peshitta version Ps. 34:6a “ܠܡܢܗ ܠܡܢܗ ܕܥܝܢܐ ܕܥܝܢܐ” (“look at it and trust in it”), attested in both East and West Syriac manuscript frontispieces, gravestones and buildings containing representations of the Cross [44], alongside another Psalm passage “ܐܝܢܐ ܕܝܚܝܐ ܕܝܚܝܐ” (“through you, we will destroy our enemies”, Ps. 44:6). These two quotations are common in figures of the Cross from at least the thirteenth century [45], and are often present within the same composition [46]. One also encounters the sentence “ܐܝܢܐ ܕܝܚܝܐ ܕܝܚܝܐ” (“the Cross has won, the Cross wins”). In East Syriac manuscripts, all three sentences are some-

times found together, especially in the Ottoman period, such as in Cross compositions in ‘Aṭāyā’s works (see for instance, CCB 00009, fol. 37r, 75r; CCM 00063, fol. 24r, *fig. 3, plate 1*). Quatrain 5 (see above) seems to be a poetic response to Ps. 34:6a, the first of the three above mentioned sentences that traditionally accompany images of the Cross in the Syriac tradition.

Thus, it is probable that “decorative poems” appeared in Cross compositions first and then spread to other miniatures, in which they played little role in the overall design and context. This would support the suggestion that the miniatures in Vat. Sir. 169 were borrowed from the Syriac Orthodox tradition. Unlike the rest of the miniatures, the image of the Cross was not alien to the East Syriac tradition, having had a long pre-history in manuscripts and inscriptions. It is noteworthy that in the later manuscripts written by ‘Aṭāyā, poems accompanying miniatures were written in a large estrangela too, forming vertical borders in red ink on both sides of the image (see, for instance, *fig. 4, plate 3*). It is possible that even at a late stage in his career, ‘Aṭāyā found that the scribal poems carried more resonance and meaning.

Notes

1. For instance, see Mengozzi, 2015a; idem, 2015b.
2. For instance, see Gospel lectionary Borg. Syr. 169 that is discussed below. It was copied from a manuscript written by ‘Abdīshō’ bar Brīkā (d. 1318), one of the most outstanding poets and Church actors of the Syriac Renaissance. Salam Rassi discusses ‘Abdīshō’s work as a copyist in his dissertation (see Rassi, 2015: 54—55, 79, 80).
3. For instance, such famous actors of both West Syrian and East Syrian Churches as Bar ‘Ebrōyō and ‘Abdīshō’ bar Brīkā (see, for instance, Mazzola, 2013; Younansardaroud, 2010).
4. More detailed about this Patriarch see Teule, 2004.
5. See, for instance, Pritula, 2019a.
6. See, for instance, idem 2018: 379—382; idem, 2019c; idem, 2019b.
7. See *ibid.*: 93—94.
8. For instance, see Murre-van den Berg, 2011: 291—292.
9. I am also planning a series of articles that examine developments in the genre of scribal poetry between the 19th and 20th centuries.
10. These collections are available at vHMML: <https://www.vhmml.org/readingRoom>.
11. Namely, by limiting the search to Syriac language manuscripts and checking the boxes for “decorations”.
12. The most detailed information on it is found in the catalogue by Addai Scher (Scher, 1905).
13. See: Vosté, 1929.
14. Murre-van den Berg, 2015: 90, 107. See also idem, 2011: 280.
15. Idem, 2015: 104—105.
16. See, for instance, Pritula, 2019b: 93—94.
17. Murre-van den Berg, 2015: 117—142.
18. See Wilmshurst, 2000: 400—423.
19. See Pritula, 2019a: 311—316.
20. Formerly, Mardin 14; see: Scher, 1908: 9, cat. 14; Available at vHMML; permanent link: <https://w3id.org/vhmml/readingRoom/view/132241>.
21. By the term “scribal” I mean a prayer by the scribe. A discussion about these prayers later transmission is under preparation by the present author.
21. Murre-van den Berg, 2015: 90.
22. See Leroy, 1964: 404—408; available at the site of the Vatican Library: https://digi.vatlib.it/view/MSS_Borg.sir.169.
23. See Murre-van den Berg, 2015: 53—55; Wilmshurst, 2000: 417. In recent years, several works have been published that discuss manuscripts and texts connected with the East Syriac Church in Jerusalem (see Brock, 2007; Pritula, 2019c).
24. See Leroy, 1964: 404; more details see in Rassi, 2015: 54, 79—80.
25. See Murre-van den Berg, 2015: 133, footnote 81.
26. See idem, 2015: 104—105; idem, 2011: 280; Leroy, 1964: 404—408.
27. *Ibid.*
28. For the standards of the late East Syriac lectionary decoration, see Murre-van den Berg, 2015: 104—105.
29. Generally, Syriac lectionaries were often scribed in estrangela, which in the 2nd millenium functioned as a kind of “luxury” script as opposed to more cursive *serṭō* (West Syriac cursive) and *madnḥāyā* (East Syriac cursive). For instance, see Harrak, 2012.
30. Sana, 1978: 96. Available at vHMML; permanent link: <https://w3id.org/vhmml/readingRoom/view/208321>.
31. For instance, see Kessel, 2011.
32. The title *maqdashāyā* (from the Arabic *maqdisī*), meaning a person who has performed pilgrimage to Jerusalem, has been written about by Hubert Kaufhold (see Kaufhold, 1991).

33. Available at vHMML; permanent link: <https://w3id.org/vhmml/readingRoom/view/135415>.

34. As I will argue in a forthcoming paper, further adaptations of these poems emerge in manuscripts from later centuries.

35. Formerly, Diyarbakir 16; see in Scher, 1907: 337, cat. 16; available at vHMML; permanent link: <https://w3id.org/vhmml/readingRoom/view/132242>.

36. Available at vHMML; permanent link: <https://w3id.org/vhmml/readingRoom/view/132238>.

37. See Murre-van den Berg, 2015: 107.

38. Idem: 104—105; idem, 2011: 280.

39. Leroy, 1964: 406—407.

40. Murre-van den Berg, 2011: 280.

41. Balicka-Witakowska, 1998: 641.

42. See, for instance, Leroy, 1964: 406—407; Murre-van den Berg, 2011: 281. In the later Ottoman period, in particular in the 19th—20th centuries, there is more evidence for specialist painters, as I will discuss in a forthcoming article.

43. Borbone, 2019. The mirror is most likely a forgery, as the scholar has argued.

44. Idem, 2006: 167—168. The same verse together with other slogans is found, for instance, in the carved alter of Chapel in Mar Behnam monastery near Mosul, datable to 12th — 13th centuries (See Snelders, 2010: 494, pl. 48).

45. Borbone, 2006: 171—174.

46. For instance, see the two frontispieces next to each other in manuscript DIYR 00341 in the Maryamana Church in Diyarbakir, dated 1214; available at vHMML: <https://w3id.org/vhmml/readingRoom/view/125052>.

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Illustrations

Front cover:

Plate 1. Evangelion (Gospel lectionary). Paper, 540×370 mm, 28 f. Syriac, 1591 AD. Chaldean Cathedral, Mardin, Turkey, MS CCM 00063, fol. 10v, fragment. Photos courtesy of the Hill Museum & Manuscript Library, Saint John's University, Minnesota, USA and the Centre Numérique des Manuscrits Orientaux, Erbil, Iraq.

Back cover:

Plate 2. Evangelion (Gospel lectionary). Paper, 540×360 mm, 125 f. Syriac, 1586 AD. Chaldean Church of Batnaya, Iraq, MS CCB 00009, fol. 80v, fragment. Photos courtesy of the Hill Museum & Manuscript Library, Saint John's University, Minnesota, USA and the Centre Numérique des Manuscrits Orientaux, Erbil, Iraq.

Plate 3. MS CCM 00063, fol. 23v, fragment. Photos courtesy of the Hill Museum & Manuscript Library, Saint John's University, Minnesota, USA and the Centre Numérique des Manuscrits Orientaux, Erbil, Iraq.

Plate 4. Evangelion (Gospel lectionary). Paper, 600×380 mm, 110 f. Syriac, 1685 AD. Chaldean Diocese of Alqūsh, Iraq, MS DCA 00096, fol. 64v, fragment. Photos courtesy of the Hill Museum & Manuscript Library, Saint John's University, Minnesota, USA and the Centre Numérique des Manuscrits Orientaux, Erbil, Iraq.

Inside the text:

Fig. 1. MS DCA 00096, fol. 64v. Photos courtesy of the Hill Museum & Manuscript Library, Saint John's University, Minnesota, USA and the Centre Numérique des Manuscrits Orientaux, Erbil, Iraq.

Fig. 2. MS CCB 00009, fol. 80v. Photos courtesy of the Hill Museum & Manuscript Library, Saint John's University, Minnesota, USA and the Centre Numérique des Manuscrits Orientaux, Erbil, Iraq.

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Fig. 4. The same MS, fol. 23v. Photos courtesy of the Hill Museum & Manuscript Library, Saint John's University, Minnesota, USA and the Centre Numérique des Manuscrits Orientaux, Erbil, Iraq.