

## Three short Arabic texts relating to Severus of Antioch

### English translation

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The texts translated here were published by M. A. Kugener in *Patrologia Orientalis* 2 (1907) pp. 408-410. They are in the same volume as the Syriac life and Syriac texts relating to Severus, also published by M. Kugener.

The other texts in Arabic relating to Severus 'to be published' following the Ethiopic life of Severus are probably the Coptic (Sahidic and Bohairic) fragments edited and translated by W.E. Crum in *P.O.* 4 (1908) pp. 578 ff., which occupy the space before Edgar Goodspeed's Ethiopic Severus text.

The texts are short and presumably fragmentary. Two are described as Garshuni texts, but are here reproduced in the Arabic script

Text 1 contains a direct address to the readers/audience.

Text 2 is prefaced by the Trinitarian formula.

Text 3 opens in mid-sentence.

I am not very familiar with the Severus literature and cannot identify the person mentioned in Texts 1 and 2 as Dadiânus the governor,<sup>1</sup> but there is evidence that a synod was held at Tyre on 16th Sept. 518.<sup>2</sup> Reference is made in these texts to a 'life' (Text 1) and 'history books' (Text 2).

Text 1: London (B.M. Ms Garshuni 7206)

Know, my brothers, that this holy father Apa Severus was from a noble family and large clan. His grandfather, the father of his father, was called Severus, and he was one of the two hundred bishops who gathered at Ephesus with the Patriarch Cyril and condemned Nestorius the hypocrite, Severus was given his episcopal see at Antioch by the Lord, but he was the victim of extreme fanaticism and persecuted by heretics and driven out of Antioch, according to the information in his *Life*.

At the time of Dadiânus there was a large gathering in the city of Tyre. He sent for the Saint: "I wish you to come that I may see what sort of faith you have." When Severus came into his

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1 Unless it is the person mentioned in the Coptic Synaxary Babah 2nd cf. R. Basset 'Le synaxaire arabe jacobite' *Patrologia Orientalis* 1 (1904) p. 314: دوروتاوس who is described as an ارخن (archon). This text also contains an account of the miracle narrated in Text 3.

2 C.J. Hefele *History of the Councils* 4 (1895) p. 118

presence, the governor received him with great joy and asked him what he thought of Christ and what he said about the three hypostases, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. Severus started to confess the purity of Our Lady Mary the Virgin, the Mother of God, and said: "I say that Mary is the mistress of women . . ."

Text 2: Rome (Vat. Arab. 74)

In the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit

Confession of faith of St Severus the Patriarch of the God-loving city of Antioch. May his prayer be with us. Amen. He said it when Dadîânus invited him to Tyre. The father St Peter Severus<sup>3</sup> said: "Know, my brothers, may God make you fit to obey Him, know that this holy father Severus was of a noble family and noble descent and clan of many saints and martyrs, and the Lord gave him the see of Antioch. He attended many synods with the Fathers and secured<sup>4</sup> them in the word of the Holy Spirit and censured the doctrines of the heretics and the teachings of Bardaisan.<sup>5</sup> Justin<sup>6</sup> the hypocrite decided to expel him from his see, according to the history books. The governor Dadîânus called a gathering in Tyre sent for the St: "I wish your beneficence to come that I may see what kind of faith you have." When Severus came into his presence, the governor received him with great joy and asked him what he thought of Christ and what he said about the three hypostases, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. The reverent St started to confess the purity of the Virgin Mary the Mother of God. He said: "I confess, saying that I say with all my reason that Mary is the Virgin Mother of God, that she is the mistress of women in the world . . ."

Text 3: Berlin (Ms Garshuni Sachau 43)

. . . about St Severus Patriarch of Antioch and spiritual teaching and interpretation of the Holy Scripture on the subject of the Trinity and Unity and Oneness of the Godhead and humanity, he who was driven from his see by the Emperor's party (Melkites) and banished to the land of the Copts and died in the monastery of Zaggâg.<sup>7</sup> One of his miracles was that he entered Egypt<sup>8</sup> and, on his arrival,

3 I cannot identify anyone of this name. If the names are to be read in another way, I do not what way that might be.

4 The verb reproduced in the text **ويد** is unknown to me. Is it perhaps a typographical error for **وتد** ?

5 The form used here transcribes the Syriac name, as distinct from the Arabic Ibn Daisan. He was born at Edessa in 154. Christians regarded him as heretical. The 4th cent. Ephrem devoted some of his writing to attacking the 'Gnostic' tendencies of Bardesan's thought, which was fairly tenacious.

6 Justin I (518-527). Severus was banished from Antioch by Justin in the year of latter's accession and spent the remaining twenty years of his life in Egypt.

7 Known in Greek as Henaton, nine miles from Alexandria

8 The Ar. **مصر** here probably refers to the country and later to the city now known as Old Cairo.

he made his way to the Church of the Virgin known as Mu'allaqa<sup>9</sup> in Cairo. He stood at the door and the metropolitan was on the altar, and while he was making the sign of the Cross over the people in the exercise of his service, the angels took away the paten and chalice from the altar before him. When he turned around, he wanted to complete the Mass and he wept profusely, wondering why this had happened. He then heard a voice,<sup>10</sup> saying: "Because you made the sign of the Cross over the leading Patriarch, the Patriarch of Antioch." He replied: "My lord, I did not know that he was present." The assembled congregation heard this. The metropolitan went up from the sanctuary and knelt on the ground and said to him: "Our father . . . Come in and bless us and say Mass." He replied: "I am not worthy." "But you are our father, the Patriarch of the God-loving city of Antioch, come in, bless us and say Mass, for you are our father the Patriarch." He did not know Coptic. He entered and blessed them. The offering returned to its place as before. Our father Severus completed Mass and offered up the chalice. Love increased between the Copts and the Syrians until the time of John the son of Shûshân of Antioch.<sup>11</sup>

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9 Built above a gatehouse of the Fortress of Babylon. There was probably a church there in the 3rd or 4th cent., rebuilt in the late 7th cent. during the Patriarchate of Isaac. Twent-nine steps have to be climbed before one is able to enter the church.

10 Lit. 'a voice came to him'

11 Patriarch from 1063 to 1072. The estrangement between the two communities was due to differing beliefs and practices in the matter of the Eucharist.