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PAPERS

A LIGHT FROM "THE DARK CENTURIES": ISḤAQ SHBADNAYA'S LIFE AND WORKS

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ABSTRACT

Isḥaq Shbadnaya is an important if almost entirely unknown author of the Church of the East in the fifteenth century. This article brings together the few and contradictory references to him in the secondary literature and uses manuscript evidence to adjudicate the different dates and names assigned to him. It also gathers what biographical information we can glean about him and describes his works: one major exegetical work, three liturgical 'onyatha, and a previously unknown short poem. The article concludes by demonstrating Isḥaq Shbadnaya's continued importance in the East Syrian community from the fifteenth into the twentieth century.

OBSCURITY: CITATIONS OF ISḤAQ SHBADNAYA

Very little is known about the Church of the East in the fifteenth century. Assemani's *Bibliotheca Orientalis* mentions only one East

Syrian author from this period and conflates him with an earlier author.[1] Wright's history ends in the fourteenth century with the death of Catholicos Timothy II.[2] Baumstark mentions perhaps four East Syrian authors from the fifteenth century, and very little of their corpus has been edited,[3] while Rudolf Macuch moves one of these four authors earlier by a century and one later by a century.[4] David Wilmshurst comments on the Church of the East after 1318, "Very little is known of its history in the following century and a half," and "Any historical narratives written between 1318 and 1552 have not survived, giving this period the fascination of a dark age."[5] Wilhelm Baum labels the period beginning in the middle of the fourteenth century as "the dark centuries."[6]

Isḥaq Shbadnaya, one of the four authors whom Baumstark assigns to the fifteenth century, has received a handful of citations in modern scholarship. Portions of two of his poems were excerpted in Qardahi's *Liber Thesauri de Arte Poetica Syrorum*, and a selection of another work was given in *The Book of Crumbs*.[7] Addai Scher included him in his list of additional East Syrian authors

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[1] Assemani conflates Metropolitan Ishoyahb bar Mqaddam of Arbel, who wrote hymns for the funeral liturgy, with a tenth-century Metropolitan Ishoyahb of Arbel mentioned by the historian Amr: Giuseppe Simone Assemani, *Bibliotheca Orientalis Clementino-Vaticana*, vol. III, part 1 (Rome: Typis Sacrae Congregationis de Propaganda Fide, 1725), 540.

[2] William Wright, *A Short History of Syriac Literature* (London: A. and C. Black, 1894), 290.

[3] Anton Baumstark, *Geschichte der syrischen Literatur, mit Ausschluss der christlich-palästinensischen Texte* (Bonn: A. Marcus und E. Weber, 1922), 329-31, 334.

[4] Rudolf Macuch, *Geschichte der spät- und neusyrischen Literatur* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1976), 33-36.

[5] David Wilmshurst, *The Ecclesiastical Organisation of the Church of the East, 1318-1913*, Corpus Scriptorum Christianorum Orientalium, vol. 582; Subsidia, t. 104 (Louvain: Peeters, 2000), 1.

[6] Wilhelm Baum and Dietmar W. Winkler, *The Church of the East: A Concise History* (London: RoutledgeCurzon, 2003), 104.

[7] Gabriel Qardahi, *Liber thesauri de arte poetica Syrorum nec non de eorum poetarum vitis & carminibus* (Rome: Typographia Polyglotta, 1875), 128-29, 168-71; *Ktabūnā de-Partūṭē* (Urmi, Iran: Archbishop of Canterbury's Mission Press, 1898), 143-49.

previously unknown to Western scholars.[8] Isḥaq Shbadnaya is mentioned in the histories of Syriac literature by Butrus Nasri, Baumstark, Pera Sarmas, Albir Abuna, and Macuch,[9] but he is sometimes dated to the fourteenth instead of the fifteenth century, and almost nothing further is known about him. Arthur Vööbus used Shbadnaya as a source for traditions about the School of Nisibis, but uniquely assigned this author to the ninth century.[10] Gerrit Reinink has compared some quotations of Mar Aba II contained in the *Gannat Bussame* with overlapping quotations in a work by Shbadnaya,[11] and Erik ten Napel most recently analyzed Shbadnaya's quotations of Emmanuel bar Shahhare's *Hexaemeron*.[12]

This paper will explore the manuscript evidence for Isḥaq Shbadnaya's works in order to resolve the contradictory dates assigned to him by scholars, and to determine what we can know about this author. The corpus of works ascribed to Isḥaq

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[8] Addai Scher, "Étude supplémentaire sur les écrivains syriens orientaux," *Revue de l'Orient Chrétien* 11 (1906): 31.

[9] Buṭrus Naṣrī, *Kitāb dhakhīrat al-adhʾhān fī tawārīkh al-mashāriqah wa-al-maghāribah al-suryān*, vol. 2 (al-Mawṣil: Dayr al-Ābāʾ al-Dūminikīyīn, 1913), 80; Baumstark, *Geschichte*, 330; Pērā Sarmas, *Taśʿītā de-seprāyutā ātōrāytā* (Tehran: Maṭbaʿtā de-Hūnain, 1962), 202-3; Albīr Abūnā, *Adab al-lughah al-arāmīyah*, 2nd ed. (Bayrūt: Dār al-Mashriq, 1996), 463-64; Macuch, *Geschichte*, 33.

[10] Arthur Vööbus, *History of the School of Nisibis*, Corpus Scriptorum Christianorum Orientalium, vol. 266; Subsidia, t. 26 (Louvain: Secrétariat du CorpusSCO, 1965), 191.

[11] Gerrit J. Reinink, *Studien zur Quellen- und Traditionsgeschichte des Evangelienkommentars der Gannat Bussame*, Corpus Scriptorum Christianorum Orientalium, vol. 414; Subsidia, t. 57 (Louvain: Secrétariat du CorpusSCO, 1979), 49-60. Reinink's work is the source for Lukas van Rompay's very brief mention of Shbadnaya in his survey of medieval Syriac exegesis: Lukas van Rompay, "Development of Biblical Interpretation in the Syrian Churches of the Middle Ages," in *Hebrew Bible, Old Testament: the history of its interpretation*, vol. 1, *From the beginnings to the Middle Ages (until 1300)*, part 2, *The Middle Ages*, ed. Magne Sæbø (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2000), 572.

[12] Erik ten Napel, "Some Remarks on the Quotations from Emmanuel bar Shahhare's *Hexaemeron* in Isḥaq Šbadnaya's Prose-Commentary on the Divine Providence," *Studia Patristica* 20 (1989): 203-210.

Shbadnaya consists of a theological compendium entitled ܡܐܡܪܐ ܕܒܬܪ ܡܕܒܪܢܘܬܐ ܕܡܢ ܫܘܪܝܐ ܥܕ ܠܥܠܡ ("Poem on the Divine Economy from in the Beginning until Eternity")[13] and three shorter poems for liturgical occasions.[14] In addition to the

[13] This work is extant in at least eight manuscripts: Cambridge Add. 1998 (16th C.); Harvard Syr. Ms. 152 (17th C.); Berlin orient. fol. 1201 (1725); Bodleian Syr. c.9 (1726); Hyvernat Syr. Ms. 7 at Catholic University of America (1889); British Library Or. 9358 (1895); Mingana Syr. 57 (1895); and Bodleian Syr. c.13 (1903), of which I have been able to consult all but Hyvernat Syr. Ms. 7. Baumstark also cites one manuscript each in Séert (Scher 121 from the sixteenth century), Mosul (Scher 88 dated 1700), and Notre Dame des Semences, although in the last case he erroneously cites Notre Dame des Semences (Scher) 35 dated 1875 instead of Notre Dame des Semences (Scher) 34 dated 1888: Baumstark, *Geschichte*, 330; Addai Scher, "Notice sur les manuscrits syriaques conservés dans la bibliothèque du couvent des Chaldéens de Notre-Dame-des-Semences," *Journal Asiatique* X[e] serie, 7 (1906): 492. The Séert manuscript is probably lost, but the other two were extant in the last century. Mosul (Scher) 88 was cited by Vööbus as Ms. Baghdad 6024: Vööbus, *School*, 331. Notre Dame des Semences (Scher) 34 is now Baghdad (Haddad) 926, and Haddad lists another manuscript of the same work dated 1884 as Baghdad (Haddad) 925: Buṭrus Ḥaddād, *Al-Makḫṭūṭāt al-Suryānīyah wa-al-'Arabīyah fī Khizānat al-Rahbānīyah al-Kaldānīyah fī Baghdād* (Baghdād: al-Majma' al-'Ilmī al-'Irāqī 1988), 409-10. Vat. syr. 592, f. 41a-92b, uniquely contains the commentary portions of this text without the poetic sections: Arnold van Lantschoot, *Inventaire des Manuscrits Syriaques des Fonds Vatican (490-631): Barberini Oriental et Neofiti* (Città del Vaticano: Biblioteca apostolica vaticana, 1965), 119.

[14] Baumstark lists twenty-seven manuscripts of one or more of these poems, but he erroneously includes Mosul (Scher) 88, which is a manuscript of Shbadnaya's largest work, and omits Mosul (Scher) 80: Baumstark, *Geschichte*, 330, n. 6. For this paper I have been able to consult the following: *olim* Sachau 178 (16th C.; now in the Biblioteka Jagiellońska in Krakow); Berlin orient. fol. 620 (probably 1537; only contains the second poem); Cambridge Add. 1983 (1550; only contains the first poem); British Library Or. 4062 (1674; restored 1699); British Library Or. 4063 (18th C.); Mingana Syr. 28 (1720); Cambridge Add. 1991 (1729); Mingana Syr. 20 (19th C.); Cambridge Add. 2813 (19th C.); Mingana Syr. 130 (1849); and Mingana Syr. 149 (1893). I have also been able to consult a reproduction of manuscript 55 of the Church of the East Archbishopric of Baghdad, dated 1746, which I have cited as Baghdad Arch. 55. Although I have not been able to consult them, it bears noting that Notre

contents of these works, which will be described in the section below on Isḥaq Shbadnaya's literary output, the rubrics which introduce and conclude these texts in the manuscripts are the primary evidence upon which all our knowledge of this author rests.

WHAT'S IN A NAME?

The first question to resolve is the author's name. The secondary literature cites Shbadnaya with two different first names, Isḥaq (i.e. Isaac) and Asko, and two forms of his last name, Shbadnaya and Eshbadnaya. Qardahi listed Isḥaq Shbadnaya and Asko Shbadnaya as two separate people, commenting that the former died in 1480, while he did not know when Asko lived.[15] On the other hand, Sachau, Scher, and Baumstark[16] proposed that these are two different names of the same person, and they were followed by Abuna and Macuch.[17] This is confirmed by the manuscript tradition of his trio of shorter poems, which frequently ascribe the poems to "Isḥaq" in the rubrics at the beginning and to "Asko" in the rubrics in between the texts, or vice versa.[18] The fact that Isḥaq is the original form is shown by the author's two acrostic signatures, one at the end of his poem in commemoration of St.

Dame des Semences (Scher) 74 is now Baghdad (Haddad) 258, Notre Dame des Semences (Scher) 86 is now Baghdad (Haddad) 328, and Baghdad (Haddad) 924 contains the first and third of Shbadnaya's poems: Ḥaddād, *Baghdad*, 119-20, 140-41, 408-9.

[15] Qardahi, *Liber Thesauri*, 129, 171.

[16] Eduard Sachau, *Verzeichniss der syrischen Handschriften der königlichen Bibliothek zu Berlin* (Berlin: A. Asher, 1899), 257; Scher, "Étude supplémentaire," 31; Baumstark, *Geschichte*, 330.

[17] Abūnā, *Adab*, 463; Macuch, *Geschichte*, 33. Sarmas does not mention the name Asko in his entry on Isḥaq Shbadnaya: Sarmas, *Taš'ītā*, 202-3.

[18] Eg. *olim* Sachau 178, f. 113a and 115b; BL Or. 4062, f. 122b and 125a; BL Or. 4063, f. 129b and 131b; Mingana Syr. 28, f. 146b and 148b; Cambridge Add. 1991, f. 106a and 108a; Baghdad Arch. 55, f. 178a and 181a; Mingana Syr. 20, f. 80b and 85b; Mingana Syr. 130, f. 140a and 143a; Mingana Syr. 149, f. 177a and 185b.

George,[19] which spells out ܝܫܘܥ, and one at the end of his "Poem on the Divine Economy,"[20] which spells out ܐܝܟܢܐ ܕܝܫܘܥ. "Asko" may be a diminutive form of this name.[21] *The Book of Crumbs* and Sarmas[22] mention that his largest work was known as "Eskôl," perhaps a shortening from the name "Eskôliôn" found in the colophon of Bodleian Syr. Ms. c. 9, and it is unclear if there is a relation between the nickname "Asko" and the name of Isḥaq's major work.[23]

Isḥaq's last name is variously spelled Shbadnaya[24] or Eshbadnaya[25] in both the secondary literature and the manuscripts,

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[19] Berlin orient. fol. 620, f. 343a; *olim* Sachau 178, f. 122a-b; BL Or. 4062, f. 132b; BL Or. 4063, f. 138b-139a; Mingana Syr. 28, f. 157a-b; Cambridge Add. 1991, f. 114a-b; Baghdad Arch. 55, f. 192a; Mingana Syr. 20, f. 85a; Mingana Syr. 130, f. 154b; Mingana Syr. 149, f. 185b. On the other hand, the antiquity of the nickname "Asko" is shown by its citation in Berlin orient. fol. 620, f. 337b, which probably dates from 1537: Sachau, *Verzeichniss*, 163.

[20] Berlin orient. fol. 1201, f. 107a; Bodleian Syr. c.9, f. 127b; BL Or. 9358, f. 111a; Mingana Syr. 57, f. 111a; Bodleian Syr. c.13, f. 87b-88a.

[21] *Ktabūnā de-Partūṭē*, 149, explains "Asko" as a diminutive form of the name Isḥaq.

[22] *Ktabūnā de-Partūṭē*, 143; Sarmas, *Taš'ītā*, 202.

[23] Although all the manuscripts of his largest work which I have consulted give his name as Isḥaq, not Asko, *Ktabūnā de-Partūṭē*, 149, explicitly connects the names in a parenthetical remark after its excerpt of this work: "We wrote the name of this book 'Eskôl,' according to current custom, but the proper name is 'Asko,' the diminutive name of Isḥaq" (my translation).

[24] Among scholars this form is used by Qardahi, *Liber Thesauri*, 128; Sachau, *Verzeichniss*, 257; Scher, "Étude supplémentaire," 31; Vööbus, *School*, 71; Abūnā, *Adab*, 463; and Ten Napel, "Quotations," 203, 210. This form is preferred in the manuscripts of his trio of shorter poems: *olim* Sachau 178, f. 113a, 115b, 122b; Berlin orient. fol. 620, f. 337b; Cambridge Add. 1983, f. 71a; BL Or. 4062, f. 122b; BL Or. 4063, f. 129b; Mingana Syr. 28, f. 98a and 146a; Cambridge Add. 1991, f. 106a; Baghdad Arch. 55, f. 178a; Mingana Syr. 20, f. 29b; Mingana Syr. 130, f. 140a; Mingana Syr. 149, f. 177a; Cambridge Add. 2813, f. 58b.

[25] This form is used by Sarmas, *Taš'ītā*, 202; Reinink, *Gannat Bussame*, 49, 51; van Rompay, "Biblical Interpretation," 572, as well as the manuscripts I have consulted of Shbadnaya's largest work: Cambridge Add. 1998, f. 1b; Harvard Syr. 152, f. 1b; Bodleian Syr. c.9, f. 1b; Mingana Syr. 57, f. 1b; BL Or. 9358, f. 1b; Bodleian Syr. c.13, 1b. Scher's catalogue

and Baumstark and Macuch give both forms of the name.[26] In this case, the form of the author's name is fixed by a six-line riddle attributed to Isḥaq which typically accompanies his trio of shorter poems.[27] The riddle is an acrostic on the name ܐܫܒܕܢ, which resolves the issue in favor of the shorter form of the name. The prosthetic *alaf* may have been added at the beginning of the name to keep the second letter, the *beth*, hard in a classical Syriac pronunciation. Without the initial *alaf*, the *beth* would go soft in classical pronunciation, resulting in "Shevadnaya." But if "Shevadnaya" were the correct pronunciation of the author's name, it would not tempt anyone to add a prosthetic *alaf*, so we may assume that the *beth* should be hard in the name "Shbadnaya." Therefore, on the basis of his own acrostic signatures, this author's name is probably most accurately given as Isḥaq Shbadnaya.

GLIMMERS OF BIOGRAPHY

Almost nothing is known about Isḥaq Shbadnaya. In most manuscripts, the rubric preceding his trio of liturgical poems states that he composed them in the year 1751 of the Greeks (i.e. AD 1439/40),[28] which provides the only known date for his life. This

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entry for Mosul 88 gives the shorter form of the name, which may indicate the existence of a manuscript of the largest work which does not use "Eshbadnaya": Addai Scher, "Notice sur les mss. syriaques conservés dans la bibliothèque de patriarcat chaldéen," *Revue des Bibliothèques* 17 (1907): 249. A note in BL Or. 9358, f. 111b and Mingana Syr. 57, f. 111b also uses the form "Shbadnaya."

[26] Baumstark, *Geschichte*, 330; Macuch, *Geschichte*, 33.

[27] It is found in *olim* Sachau 178, f. 133a; BL Or. 4062, f. 143a; BL Or. 4063, f. 148b-149a; Cambridge Add. 1991, f. 123a; Baghdad Arch. 55, f. 206b; Mingana Syr. 130, f. 170a; and Mingana Syr. 149, f. 194b. Only the first four lines of the riddle are found in Mingana Syr. 28, f. 171a. The short riddle's negative descriptions of Shbadnaya, for example that he is "sad and troubled" (ܕܡܝܢ ܡܗܝܦ), indicate that he composed it himself and not a later scribe in his honor.

[28] This date is found in *olim* Sachau 178, f. 113a; BL Or. 4062, f. 122b; BL Or. 4063, f. 129b; Mingana Syr. 28, f. 98a, 146b; Cambridge Add. 1991, f. 106a; Baghdad Arch. 55, f. 178a; Mingana Syr. 130, f. 140a; Mingana Syr. 149, f. 177a. No other date is ever given for the composition of these poems, and although some manuscripts omit the

note also proves that (*pace* Sarmas) he was not a contemporary of Catholicos Timothy II. The fourteenth century date assigned to Shbadnaya is probably exclusively due to the fact that Timothy II is the latest author he cited by name in his larger work. Qardahi claims that Shbadnaya died in AD 1480,[29] but it is not clear whether he has seen evidence for this, or whether he simply added forty years to the date of composition of the shorter poems.[30]

Shbadnaya's place of origin cannot be identified with certainty, but its location can be narrowed. On the basis of his name Sachau guesses that he might be from a place called Shbadh.[31] Scher gives his place of origin as "Schebedan in the diocese of Zakho,"[32] and Nasri as "Shbad in the region of the Sendaye."[33] I have not been able to locate any other reference to a place named "Shbad" or "Shbadan."[34] In a few manuscripts Isḥaq Shbadnaya is said to be

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date, the composition date of 1439/40 is already given in a manuscript from the sixteenth century. Ten Napel gives this date with reference to Shbadnaya's largest work, but no manuscript of the largest work contains this (or any other) date: Ten Napel, "Quotations," 203.

[29] Qardahi, *Liber Thesauri*, 129. Qardahi is followed, with a question mark, by Abūnā, *Adab*, 463; Ten Napel, "Quotations," 203.

[30] Out of sixty authors discussed, Qardahi gives a precise year of death in 54 instances (90%), even when Baumstark, for example, does not know the year of an author's death. In the case of "George, the disciple of Jacob of Serug," whose existence Baumstark calls into question, Qardahi assigns his death to the year 560, which happens to be the nearest round number to forty years after Jacob of Serug's death in 521: Baumstark, *Geschichte*, 159; Qardahi, *Liber Thesauri*, 37-39.

[31] Sachau, *Verzeichniss*, 925.

[32] Scher, "Étude supplémentaire," 31.

[33] Naṣrī, *Kitāb dhakhīrat*, 2:80.

[34] In particular, there is no *Šabad, Šabād, Šubad, Šubād, Šibad, Šibād,* or similar name in Yāqūt's geographical dictionary, the closest name being *Šibdāẓ*, which is both linguistically and geographically irrelevant: Yāqūt ibn ʿAbd Allāh al-Ḥamawī, *Muʿjam al-buldān* (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-ʿIlmīyah, 1990), 3:361. Luke Yarbrough kindly pointed me to a town named "Shabadin" in Siwnikʿ in south-eastern Armenia, but I have not been able to find a reference to it before the late nineteenth century: R. H. Hewsen, *Armenia: A Historical Atlas* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 2001), 215, 219. This Armenian Shabadin also could not be in "the region of the Sendaye" as localized by the later scribe, and it would be a surprising textual corruption for "Siwnikaye" to be transformed to

ܒܝ ܒܗܕܢ ܕܡܬܝ (“from the region of the Sendaye”),[35] which indicates that Nasri may have identified Shbadnaya’s home town on the basis of his name and the manuscript tradition rather than from personal experience of a village with that name. Furthermore, Mingana localizes the region of the Sendaye as “northeast of Zakho,” possibly on the basis of a nineteenth-century scribe from the village of Eqror, which is also said to be in “the region of the Sendaye.”[36] This may be the same reasoning used by Addai Scher to locate “Schebedan” in the vicinity of Zakho, and may indicate that he also may not have known of such a village from experience but only from the form of Shbadnaya’s name. It is probable, however, that Shbadnaya was from the same region as Eqror, northeast of Zakho.

Other than these facts, we know that all the manuscripts refer to Isḥaq Shbadnaya as a priest,[37] which suggests that he was never made a bishop. Mingana suggested that he had previously been a smith because some manuscripts call him ܚܕܝܣܐ, i.e. ‘smith’ or ‘craftsman.’[38] It is possible that Isḥaq was an artisan before

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“Sendaye.” Therefore it seems unlikely that Shabadin in Siwnik‘ is Shbadnaya’s place of origin.

[35] *Olim* Sachau 178, f. 133a; BL Or. 4063, f. 149a; Mingana Syr. 149, f. 194b.

[36] Alphonse Mingana, *Catalogue of the Mingana Collection of Manuscripts now in the Possession of the Trustees of the Woodbrooke Settlement, Selly Oak, Birmingham*, vol. 1 (Cambridge: W. Heffer, 1933), col. 347, citing Mingana Syr. 149, f. 194b. Mingana Syr. 58 and Mingana Syr. 61 were copied by a scribe named ʿĪsa from Eqror in “the land of the Sindaye”: Ibid., 1:cols. 159, 162.

[37] He is called both ܫܒܕܢ and ܡܫܒܕܢ in *olim* Sachau 178, f. 113a; BL Or. 4062, f. 122b; BL Or. 4063, f. 129b; Mingana Syr. 28, f. 146b; Cambridge Add. 1991, f. 106a; Baghdad Arch. 55, f. 178a; Mingana Syr. 20, f. 49b; Mingana Syr. 130, f. 140a and 143a; Mingana Syr. 149, f. 177a; and Cambridge Add. 2813, f. 58b. He is called ܡܫܒܕܢ in Berlin orient. fol. 620, f. 337b; Cambridge Add. 1983, f. 71a; and Mingana Syr. 28, f. 98a. He is called ܫܒܕܢ in all the manuscripts of his largest work: Cambridge Add. 1998, f. 1b; Harvard Syr. 152, f. 1b; Bodleian Syr. c.9, f. 1b; BL Or. 9358, f. 1b; Mingana Syr. 57, f. 1b; and Bodleian Syr. c.13, f. 1b.

[38] Mingana, *Catalogue*, 1:col. 347, on the basis of Mingana Syr. 149, f. 177a. The identification is also given in *olim* Sachau 178, f. 113a; BL Or. 4062, f. 122b; BL Or. 4063, f. 129b; Baghdad Arch. 55, f. 178a.

becoming a priest, but we cannot rule out the possibility that ܡܕܒܚܢ may instead indicate that he came from a family known for its artisans.[39] Shbadnaya's numerous quotations from Syriac and Greek authors suggest that he had access to a library and a high level of education, although we know neither what education a parish priest typically received in his day, nor what institutions existed at this time for educating priests. In addition to the classical Syriac in which he composed, even the earliest manuscripts of his largest work include a number of Arabic glosses to difficult Syriac words, so it is probable that he knew Arabic.[40] One of the most distinctive features of his largest work is the number of Greek words which he includes in his poetry in Syriac characters. He uses many Greek words which are not otherwise attested as loanwords in Syriac.[41] Shbadnaya sometimes wrote the Greek word in an inflected form, which suggests some knowledge of the Greek language rather than borrowing isolated words.[42] Although knowledge of Greek in this region in the fifteenth century is certainly surprising, a parallel in the previous century might be provided by the West Syrian scribe Daniel of Mardin (d. after 1382), who acquired some rudimentary knowledge of Greek in his travels.[43] But beyond the facts that Isḥaq Shbadnaya was a

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[39] Although family names as such did not exist at this time, the thirteenth-century author Khamis bar Qardahe may provide a near parallel case.

[40] Cambridge Add. 1998, f. 181a, for example, has several Arabic glosses, and there is another on f. 196a.

[41] E.g. BL Or. 9358, f. 3b has ܐܬܠܘܣ (ἀτελος) glossed ܫܠܡ ܠܐ ܒܗ. BL Or. 9358, f. 9b has ܣܝܡܝܪܘܢ (σήμερον) glossed ܗܫܬܐ; ܟܠܝܣܛܘܣ (κάλλιστος) glossed ܫܦܝܪ ܒܝܬ ܝܬܝ; ܦܘܢܘܣ (πόνος) glossed ܥܡܠܐ; and ܐܒܘܣܘܣ (ἄβυσσος) glossed ܥܡܝܩ ܠܡܐܢ.

[42] Cambridge Add. 1998, f. 56a has ܐܝܠܐܠܝܣܝܢ (ἐλάλησεν), glossed by ܡܠܠ. BL Or. 9358, f. 8b has ܣܟܝܢܝ (σκηνήν, glossed by ܡܫܟܢ), and BL Or. 9358, f. 10a has both ܣܐ (σε, glossed by ܠܟ) and ܐܢܐܣܬܐ (ἀνάστα, glossed by ܩܘܡ).

[43] Hidemi Takahashi, *Barhebraeus: A Bio-Bibliography* (Piscataway, N.J.: Gorgias Press, 2005), 106-7, n. 406. An East Syrian example is provided by Macuch, but it is doubtful. He cites M. S. Amīrā for the claim that a late fourteenth-century East Syrian "prince" named Malek Shallita of "Niniveh" travelled to Cyprus, learned Greek language and literature, and

highly educated priest from the area northeast of Zakho in the middle of the fifteenth century, who knew Syriac, probably Arabic, and perhaps some Greek, nothing else is known of this author outside of the works themselves.

THE WORKS

Shbadnaya's known works include one very large poem, divided into sections, entitled "Poem on the Divine Economy from in the Beginning until Eternity," and three shorter poems for liturgical occasions. The large work, which is called in one manuscript "Eskôliôn,"[44] is conventionally described as divided into 29 *sedre* (or sections), each beginning with a subsequent letter of the alphabet (with a few repetitions),[45] but it also has a short *sedra* of only five lines on Pentecost which brings the total number of *sedre* to thirty.[46] The poem starts with a section on the holy Trinity, six sections on the creation, and further sections on the first nine chapters of Genesis. The next sections discuss the

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wrote a refutation of Chalcedonian theology before returning home to rule: Macuch, *Geschichte*, 32, citing M. S. Amīrā, *Taš'ītā d-'Ātōr* (Tehran: Sʿita Saprayta da-ʿlayme ʾAtoraye, 1962), 276ff. Even if "Nineveh" is an archaizing reference to Mosul, the most an East Syrian *malek* could have ruled from Mosul at this time is the East Syrian population of that city itself. I have been unable to find any other reference to a "Malek Shallita" of this period.

[44] Bodleian Syr. c.9, f. 129b.

[45] E.g. William Wright and Stanley Arthur Cook, *A Catalogue of the Syriac Manuscripts Preserved in the Library of the University of Cambridge* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1901), 440; Baumstark, *Geschichte*, 330.

[46] This is labeled as a separate *sedra* in Berlin orient. fol. 1201, f. 103b; BL Or. 9358, f. 103b; and Mingana Syr. 57, f. 103b. The other manuscripts also implicitly recognize this small section on Pentecost as a separate *sedra*, even though they do not explicitly label it as such where it occurs, because the headings of subsequent *sedre* count this brief section as the first *sedra* of the letter *tau*: Cambridge Add. 1998, f. 209a; Harvard Syr. 152, f. 209a; and Bodleian Syr. c.13, f. 82b all label the subsequent *sedra* as "The second *sedra* of *tau*," while Bodleian Syr. c.9, f. 126a labels the *sedra* following that one as "The third *sedra* of *tau*." Scher, "Étude supplémentaire," 31, also describes the work as containing thirty *sedre*.

incarnation and the life of Christ, inserting a section "Against Heretics" between the accounts of Christ's miracles and the Passion narrative. A section each on baptism and the Eucharist are put in the context of Christ's baptism and the Last Supper, respectively. Following a section on the Ascension, the final sections discuss Pentecost, summarize eschatological events, and conclude with a prayer for the Church. Clearly this is a very mixed work, with sections devoted to biblical exegesis, explaining the sacraments, theological systematization, eschatology, and prayers. I have included a translation of the titles of the individual *sedre* in the Appendix.

The fact that one manuscript calls the work "Eskôliôn" may recall Theodore bar Koni's work of that name, and raises the question how Shbadnaya's "Poem on the Divine Economy" compares to other synthetic theological works in the East Syrian tradition. Shbadnaya's long poem, however, is very different from the earlier "Eskôliôn." Theodore bar Koni's work is a prose commentary on troubling passages of the whole Bible, with a section on philosophical Christology in the middle and some assorted systematic material at the end.[47] Shbadnaya's poem, on the other hand, seems to select topics for centrality to Christian doctrine and practice, and almost entirely omits the Old Testament after the first nine chapters of Genesis. Thus, while Shbadnaya uses Theodore bar Koni's work in the commentary described below, their two works differ in genre, scope, and purpose. Solomon of Basra's *The Book of the Bee*, although it is a prose work, in many ways provides a closer parallel to Shbadnaya's learned poem than does Theodore bar Koni's work: both works address the different days of creation individually, lightly skim over the Old Testament, dwell on the different events of the life of Christ, summarize the history of the Church since the apostles, and finally turn to eschatology.[48] A few of the *sedra* titles are nearly identical

[47] Theodore bar Koni, *Liber Scholiorum*, ed. Addai Scher, Corpus Scriptorum Christianorum Orientalium, vol. 55; Scriptores Syri, t. 19 (Paris: Typographeo Reipublicae, 1910), 5-6; Theodore bar Koni, *Livre des Scolies*, trans. Robert Hespel and René Draguet, Corpus Scriptorum Christianorum Orientalium, vol. 431; Scriptores Syri, t. 187 (Louvain: Peeters, 1981), 56-57.

[48] Ernest A. Wallis Budge, *The Book of the Bee* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1886), 3-6 and ܒ-ܗ.

between the two works as well.[49] There remain, however, significant differences: Shbadnaya's poem is more concerned with ritual matters and the sacraments than *The Book of the Bee*, which does not give those topics separate sections but does discuss Old Testament and historical subjects omitted in the "Poem on the Divine Economy." A full assessment of this work's place in the larger East Syrian literary tradition, of course, is impossible until an edition is completed.

To this very long poem, Shbadnaya himself apparently attached a prose commentary justifying certain decisions he made in his presentation.[50] The authorities he cites in this commentary are earlier Syriac and Greek authors, ranging on the Syriac side from ancient authors such as Ephrem and Narsai to more recent authors such as John bar Zo'bi, and among Greek authors from Irenaeus to John Chrysostom. Pride of place, of course, goes to Ishodad of Merv among Syriac authors and above all to Theodore of Mopsuestia, the "Universal Interpreter." Among the more interesting citations are those of the Diatessaron (twice), Josephus, and Cyril "from before he separated."[51] Some of these citations only mention a name in a list of previous authorities supporting a

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[49] For examples, *The Book of the Bee* has two sections entitled ܟܬܒ ܡܢܗܪܐ ܕܒܗܘܢ ܡܣܬܟܠܐ ܒܬܪ ܫܡܝܐ ܘܐܪܥܐ and ܟܬܒ ܡܢܗܪܐ ܕܒܗ ܒܬܪ ܫܡܝܐ ܘܐܪܥܐ, while Shbadnaya titles the corresponding sections ܟܬܒ ܡܣܬܟܠܐ ܒܬܪ ܫܡܝܐ ܘܐܪܥܐ and ܟܬܒ ܡܢܗܪܐ ܕܒܗ ܒܬܪ ܫܡܝܐ ܘܐܪܥܐ: Budge, *Bee*, 4-5 and ٢٩-٣٠.

[50] The ascription of this commentary to Shbadnaya is found in *Ktabūnā de-Partūṭē*, 143; Naṣrī, *Kitāb dhakhīrat*, 2:80; Baumstark, *Geschichte*, 330; Sarmas, *Taš'ītā*, 203; Macuch, *Geschichte*, 33. Although I have not found this asserted explicitly in a manuscript of the larger work, the commentary contains many sections labeled ܡܪܡܪ ('the author'), which Sachau interprets as opinions of Shbadnaya himself: Sachau, *Verzeichniss*, 316. Rarely the commentary speaks in the first person, for example on BL Or. 9358, f. 108b, which may also suggest that the author of the commentary is the author of the poetry as well, but I have not yet found a passage which implies this with certainty.

[51] BL Or. 9358, f. 103b. Lists of the authors cited by Shbadnaya are given in the manuscript catalogues: Wright and Cook, *Cambridge*, 441-44; Sachau, *Verzeichniss*, 315-16; Mingana, *Catalogue*, 1:cols. 156-57. Each of these lists is incomplete, and they have some contradictory information, but a comprehensive study of Shbadnaya's citations will need to await an edition of his text.

particular opinion, while others quote up to a hundred lines of poetry from earlier poets. Clearly this commentary contains a wealth of material, even if the citations are uneven. It remains to be studied, of course, which specific works are cited and how accurately Shbadnaya cited these earlier works. It is a further question which of these citations Shbadnaya collected directly from the source and which were mediated to him through earlier authors such as Ishodad of Merv.[52] Some of his citations are so long, however, that they are unlikely to have been gathered by Shbadnaya from an intermediate work.[53]

In terms of poetics, the verse *sedre* are all in simple twelve-syllable meter (with the exception of a short nine-syllable line which closes each *sedra*), and all the lines in a single *sedra* rhyme with each other. Twenty-two of the *sedre* contain alphabetic acrostics in a few different patterns, usually variations on ascending alphabets, descending alphabets, or both alternating. This is clearly Shbadnaya's masterpiece, in which he showed off his poetic tricks. The most surprising poetic feature of this text, as mentioned above, is the very large number of Greek words used in the poetry. These Greek words are provided with Syriac glosses, sometimes marginal or interlinear but other times written into the poetic line with red ink. The glosses are sometimes unexpected, such as when the Greek word μυστήρια is glossed by ܡܗܝܡܝ ܒܥܡܩܐ, "mysteries,

[52] Shbadnaya's citations of Irenaeus and Josephus are not mediated through Eusebius of Caesarea's *Ecclesiastical History*, as one might expect. For the former, Shbadnaya cites Irenaeus in support of the opinion that Christ was crucified before the Passover was eaten (BL Or. 9358, f. 56a), unfortunately without quoting Irenaeus verbatim, but Eusebius does not mention Irenaeus' views on this subject. Rather, Irenaeus states the contrary view, namely that Christ ate the Passover before he died, in *Adversus Haereseos* II.xxii.3. Shbadnaya presents his citation of Josephus as a quotation, but it seems to be rather a paraphrase which does not match any passage in Josephus. Erik ten Napel has explored Shbadnaya's citations of Emmanuel bar Shahhare, and concluded that his quotations do not derive directly from a copy of bar Shahhare's *Hexaemeron* but from "handbooks, collections of chains, or other works with a strongly compilative character": Ten Napel, "Quotations," 210.

[53] For example, he cites 32 lines of a poem by John bar Zo'bi in BL Or. 9358, ff. 68b-69a, and 85 lines of prose ascribed to Hnanisho Msharya (presumably Patriarch Hnanisho I) in BL Or. 9358, ff. 66a-67b.

and also peoples."[54] It is not clear whether these glosses come from Shbadnaya himself or from a later scribe.[55] In some places, the frequency of Greek words becomes so high that Scher comments that the poem "is very bizarre… sounding very bad."[56] Not all of the glossed words are Greek, however, for rare Syriac words are also glossed. This practice of using obscure words in poetry is also known from Abdisho of Nisibis (d. 1318), who supplied a commentary to his own poems collected under the title *The Paradise of Eden*,[57] and from Sargis bar Wahle (fifteenth century?),[58] whose verse biography of Rabban Hormizd also includes interlinear glosses for obscure words.[59]

Far easier to read are Isḥaq Shbadnaya's three poems for liturgical occasions. They are often included in the collection of liturgical poetry known as the "Khamis" after the prolific thirteenth-century poet Khamis bar Qardahe. The first poem of this trio is for the fast known as the Rogation of the Ninevites (ܚܡܫܐ ܕܢܝܢܘܝܐ), which opens the season of Lent in the East Syrian liturgical year. This is the shortest of Shbadnaya's three poems,

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[54] BL Or. 9358, f. 35b.

[55] The glosses are ascribed to Shbadnaya in *Ktabūnā de-Partūtē*, 143. The fact that some glosses are written in the lines themselves, for instance in Cambridge Add. 1998, f. 181a, may suggest that they originate with the author, but they might have become incorporated from interlinear glosses of earlier copies. Another factor in favor of ascribing some of the glosses to Shbadnaya himself is their stability from the earliest manuscripts onwards, since many of the glosses that I have checked are the same in all manuscripts of his larger work that I have been able to consult, although others are only found in one or a few of the manuscripts. A systematic study of the glosses will have to await an edition of the work.

[56] Scher, "Étude supplémentaire," 31.

[57] Assemani, *Bibliotheca Orientalis*, 327; Wright, *A Short History of Syriac Literature*, 287-88.

[58] Baumstark, *Geschichte*, 330.

[59] Ernest A. Wallis Budge, *The Life of Rabban Hormizd and the Foundation of His Monastery at Al-Kosh*, Semitistische Studien 2-3 (Berlin: Emil Felber, 1894). An English translation was published as Ernest A. Wallis Budge, *The Histories of Rabban Hôrmîẑd the Persian and Rabban Bar-'Idtâ*, vol. 2, part 2, *The Metrical Life of Rabban Hôrmîẑd by Mâr Sergius of Âdhôrbaâîjân*, Luzac's Semitic Text and Translation Series 11 (London: Luzac and Co., 1902).

consisting of an initial quatrain and 46 stanzas whose initial letters form two interleaving alphabetic acrostics, one progressing forward in the alphabet from *alaf* and the other regressing in the alphabet from *tau*. The meter of this poem is called ܐܝܕܝ ܕܪܘܚܐ ("the arms of the Spirit"): each stanza consists of a couplet with 4+7 and 7+7 syllables. The three seven-syllable half-lines in a given couplet rhyme, and in the first twenty-five stanzas these lines end with the corresponding letter counting from the other end of the alphabet. For the next twenty stanzas of the poem (the rest of the poem except for the last acrostic stanza and a final unmetered couplet), each of the rhyming half-lines ends with the same letter as the stanza began. The second poem in the trio, composed in the same meter and rhyme, is for the feast day of St. George, but it is much longer (166 stanzas, in addition to the initial quatrain and the concluding unmetered couplet) and includes a few different acrostic patterns as well as a long non-acrostic section. As mentioned above, this poem ends with an acrostic on the author's name, Isḥaq. The third poem, the longest of the three (462 lines, plus an initial quatrain and five final lines in different meters), is for the Feast of the Finding of the Cross, and is composed in the same twelve-syllable meter as Shbadnaya's "Poem on the Divine Economy." Its sections, which vary greatly in size (from four to forty-eight lines), correspond to the letters of the alphabet, and all the lines within the same section rhyme. Usually transmitted with these three liturgical poems is a six-line "riddle"[60] which is an acrostic on the name Shbadnaya, in twelve-syllable meter with rhyming couplets, affirming his wretchedness and praying for God's teaching.

These are all the works ascribed to Isḥaq Shbadnaya by the histories of Syriac literature, but there is an additional short poem contained in a single manuscript of Shbadnaya's largest work. Because of the size of Shbadnaya's magnum opus, that work was typically copied into a codex by itself,[61] but following the text in

[60] It is entitled ܐܡܣܓܐ in Mingana Syr. 130, f. 170a.

[61] The only other codex I know of which contained texts in addition to Shbadnaya's masterpiece is Mosul (Scher) 88, which also contained Sargis bar Wahle's verse biography of Rabban Hormizd: Scher, "Patriarcat," 249. BL Or. 9358 also contains works of Isaac of Nineveh, but the present codex in this case is obviously a recent binding of what were in origin two separate codices.

one eighteenth-century manuscript is a short poem ascribed to "the splendid priest Isḥaq, the perfect and pure presbyter." It has a short introduction of twelve lines, an acrostic main section comprising twenty-six two-line stanzas whose first letters ascend through the alphabet to end with five stanzas beginning with *tau*, and a concluding section of ten lines. Except for the last line of the introduction and of the conclusion, the poem is in 7+7 meter throughout. All the half-lines in each stanza rhyme, as do all the lines in the introduction and those in the conclusion. This poem is essentially a prayer that God would save his people from the awful circumstances and neighbors that they have to endure. The name "Shbadnaya" does not occur in the rubric heading of this poem, but only "the priest Isḥaq." The poem mentions neighbors who are Turks, Kurds, and "Ishmaelites" (i.e. Arabs), with no mention of the Mongols, which would fit a date of composition in the fifteenth century, but also any time from the mid-eleventh to the early thirteenth century, and from the late fourteenth century to the early eighteenth, when the manuscript was copied. Although there is a single, vague mention of schisms in the poem, this poem does not repeatedly include schism in the afflictions of Christ's people, which may argue in favor of a date before the 1553 schism between John Sulaqa and the Catholicos Shem'on VII Ishoyahb. The fact that this poem is included in a manuscript of Shbadnaya's magnum opus, whose colophon follows this additional element, argues in favor of understanding "the priest Isḥaq" to be Shbadnaya, but one cannot prove the point with certainty. An edition of this poem is in progress.

SHBADNAYA'S SIGNIFICANCE

One might well ask why we should care about this obscure priest with a penchant for alphabetic acrostics. One answer, of course, is the window he gives us into the thought and religion of his own community in the fifteenth century, a period particularly lacking in sources of any kind. Isḥaq Shbadnaya wrote just as the Church of the East was starting to rebuild after the disasters of the fourteenth and early fifteenth centuries, and his long theological poem with commentary especially testifies to an attempt to synthesize the theological tradition of the Church of the East and present it in a

single volume. By reading Shbadnaya's "Poem on the Divine Economy" in comparison with other East Syrian theological syntheses, one can see the development of doctrine and identity within the Church of the East. Shbadnaya's liturgical poetry, along with that of his contemporary Ishoyahb bar Mqaddam, reveals a desire to augment the traditional liturgy of the Church of the East to respond to its new situation in a post-Mongol world.

But in addition to giving us a window on his own period, Shbadnaya's work takes its place in the subsequent intellectual history of the East Syrian community until our own period, and this is seen in the manuscript evidence. The multitude of manuscripts containing Shbadnaya's trio of liturgical poems is probably due to its inclusion in a standard collection of liturgical poetry. His "Poem on the Divine Economy," on the other hand, usually required a codex of its own, so someone had to desire Shbadnaya's masterpiece specifically in order to obtain a copy of it. And yet it was copied. Cambridge Add. Ms. 1998 dates from the sixteenth century, perhaps a century after the work's composition, and the sloppy script and occasional deletions of text and recopying signify that this was a copy for personal use, while the dimensions of the manuscript (7 $^{1}/_{4}$" x 5 $^{7}/_{8}$") suggest that it was intended to be conveniently portable.[62] Another sixteenth century manuscript belonged to the episcopal library at Séert before that library's destruction.[63] There is a seventeenth-century manuscript of this work in Harvard, and another manuscript of Shbadnaya's magnum opus, now in Baghdad, was copied in 1700.[64] Two copies survive from the eighteenth century (one in Oxford's Bodleian Library and one in Berlin), and a later manuscript includes a note that it was copied from a manuscript of 1795.[65] Two nineteenth-century manuscripts are now in Europe (one in the Mingana collection in Birmingham, the other in the British library), one is in North America (at the Catholic University of America in Washington, D.C.), and two more are in the Chaldean Patriarchate

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[62] Wright and Cook, *Cambridge*, 428.

[63] Séert (Scher) 121 according to Baumstark, *Geschichte*, 330, n. 7.

[64] This latter manuscript was cited as Ms. Baghdad 6024 by Vööbus in 1965: Vööbus, *School*, 331.

[65] Bodleian Syr. c.13, f. 88a gives the date of the manuscript from which it was copied as "2106 of the Greeks".

in Baghdad.[66] The most recent copy of the entire work, housed in Oxford's Bodleian Library, was copied in 1903, and a copy of the commentary alone was completed in 1918. Thus we know of at least thirteen complete copies and one partial copy in under five centuries, with no century unrepresented.

At the end of the nineteenth century, this work was important enough to the Church of the East to be excerpted in *The Book of Crumbs*. The editor of *The Book of Crumbs* also indicates that there was a "current custom" as to how to refer to Shbadnaya's poem at that time, independent of the title given by the author, which suggests that the work was widely known.[67] In the Chaldean Church at the end of the nineteenth century, T'oma Audo's dictionary quotes Shbadnaya's "Poem on the Divine Economy" for occurrences of rare Syriac words,[68] and Addai Scher mentions that Shbadnaya's largest work is preserved in many manuscripts at Séert, Rabban Hormizd, and Mosul.[69] Shbadnaya's importance in the twentieth century is indicated by the fact that he is one of only two East Syrian authors discussed by Sarmas in the period 1300-1800.[70] Of course, we will have to wait until there are editions of Shbadnaya's texts in order to find specific quotations or allusions to Shbadnaya in later Syriac literature, but the manuscript tradition alone speaks of a consistent interest in this work. In this context, calling the work the "Eskôliôn," as one eighteenth-century manuscript does, or the "Eskôl," as *The Book of Crumbs* and Sarmas do, may perhaps indicate that this text was used as a "school" text

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[66] Baghdad (Haddad) 925 and 926: Ḥaddād, *Baghdad*, 409-10. The latter is Notre Dame des Semences (Scher) 34.

[67] *Ktabūnā de-Partūtē,* 149.

[68] Although T'oma Audo does not name Shbadnaya in his list of quoted authors in his introduction, there is a three letter abbreviated citation ܥܚܕ which occurs over a dozen times with quotations of Shbadnaya's masterpiece: T'oma Audo, *Dictionnaire de la langue chaldéenne* (Mosul: Imprimerie des pères dominicains, 1897), 1:14 and s.vv. ܢܓܘܟܐ, ܒܬܟܐ, ܒܝܟܘܝܐ, ܒܟܒܫ, ܒܟܝܐ, ܒܝܟܫܐ, ܒܓܗܐ, ܒܟܒ, ܒܕܘܕܐ, ܒܕܘܟܐ, ܒܕܘܟܢܒܐ, ܒܕܘܟܐ. I have not compiled a complete list of Audo's citations of Shbadnaya.

[69] Scher, "Étude supplémentaire," 32.

[70] The other East Syrian author is Abdisho of Gazarta in the 16th C., a metropolitan appointed by John Sulaqa: Sarmas, *Tasʿītā*, 203. The only other authors Sarmas mentions in this period are the Assemani clan, but they are Lebanese Maronites: Ibid., 203-5.

to train generations of priests for ministry in the Church of the East, although we cannot be certain.

It is always tricky to base conclusions of a text's importance on the vicissitudes of manuscript preservation. To assess the legacy of Isḥaq Shbadnaya, however, the manuscript tradition is the only evidence we have before the end of the nineteenth century. The manuscript tradition of Shbadnaya's works bespeaks a sustained use of both his liturgical poetry and his masterpiece in the subsequent East Syrian community, and it is even possible that his major work may have attained the status of a theological handbook, influencing later East Syrian theology. In any event, Isḥaq Shbadnaya clearly stands out as a theologian and poet in a period for which we have very few sources indeed, and thus he shines as a light from "the dark centuries."

APPENDIX:

Isḥaq Shbadnaya's *Poem on the Divine Economy from in the Beginning until Eternity*

Table of Contents:[71]

1: ܐ On the holy Trinity.

2: ܒ On the creation of the world, angels, light, and the firmament.

3: ܓ On the third day of the week, on the sprouting of seeds, on trees, and on Paradise.

4: ܕ On the creation of marine reptiles and birds, on the fifth day of the week.

5: ܗ On the creation of wild animals and livestock and all reptiles on the sixth day.

6: ܘ Apologia, etc., and the creation of Adam.

7: ܙ On the creation of Eve, and that they transgressed the divine command, and their expulsion from Paradise.

8: ܚ On the ten generations and the Flood, and the building of the tower.

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[71] I have chosen to provide here a more literal translation of the section titles given in the text than that given in Wright and Cook, *Cambridge*, 429-40. The Syriac titles may be found in Wright and Cook's catalogue, although they do not regard *sedra* 27 as a separate *sedra*.

9: ܒ Prologue of the dispensation in Christ.
10: ܓ On the conception of our Lord Christ.
11: ܕ On the birth of our Lord in the flesh.
12: ܗ On the Nativity of our Lord, and on the coming of the shepherds.
13: ܘ On the Epiphany of our Lord.
14: ܙ On Holy Baptism, and ten chapters.
15: ܚ On the fast of our Lord and his contests with Satan, and the mighty victory which he decreed for us.
16: ܛ On the choice of the disciples, and on the miracles and signs which our Lord did in the three years of his dispensation, in brief.
17: ܛ Against heretics.
18: ܝ On our Lord's entrance into Jerusalem.
19: ܟ On the Passover and the Holy Mysteries.
20: ܠ On the Passion of our Lord.
21: ܡ On the Sabbath day.
22: ܢ Prayer and praise, and on the worshipped Cross.
23: ܢ On the Resurrection of our Savior.
24: ܣ On the Messianic dispensation in brief, rather, on the Resurrection and Ascension.
25: ܣ On the Ascension of our Lord to heaven.
26: ܥ On the descent of the Spirit upon the Apostles.
27: ܦ On Pentecost.
28: ܦ On the coming of the Son of Perdition.
29: ܦ On the Resurrection and the Renewal.
30: ܦ Prayer and intercession for the holy Church of Christ.

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