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## The Captive and the Hostage as Missionaries in Late Roman Tradition

### The Case of Pre-Islamic South Arabia

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**Abstract:** Late Roman sources from the fourth century onward, provide us with scattered information on the features of a pattern of early missionaries to which modern scholars have paid little attention. It is what might be called “captive and hostage missionaries.” This pattern is repeated strikingly in source accounts relating to the circumstances of the emergence of Christianity in southern Arabia. Some of these accounts attributed the conversion of its people to captive and hostage missionaries, whether male or female. What is even more surprising is that these accounts seem to have an echo in the relevant Arabic tradition. This research aims to gather the scattered texts available about this pattern, and attempt to reconstruct them in a context from which the historical connotations surrounding it can be deduced. It focuses on two main cases: the hostage Theophilus and the captive Theognosta, but it also does not neglect other cases about which brief references are available, such as cases of the captives Phimion, Frumentius, and others.

**Keywords:** Captive – Hostage - South Arabia – Missionary – Theophilus – Theognosta - Phimion.

## الأسير والرهينة كمبشرين في التقليد الروماني المتأخر

### دراسة حالة جنوب الجزيرة العربية قبل الإسلام

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**الملخص:** تزودنا المصادر الرومانية المتأخرة، منذ القرن الرابع فصاعدًا، بإشارات متفرقة عن سمات نمط مبكر من المبشرين لم يعره الباحثون الحديثون إهتمامًا كبيرًا؛ وهو النمط الذي يمكن تسميته بـ "المبشر الأسير أو الرهينة". ويتكرر هذا النمط بشكل لافت للنظر في الروايات المصدرية المتعلقة بظروف دخول المسيحية إلى جنوب شبه الجزيرة العربية؛ حيث نسبت بعض هذه الروايات دخول المسيحية إلى مبشرين أسرى أو رهائن، سواء كانوا ذكورا أو إناثا. والأمر الأكثر إثارة للدهشة هو أن لهذا النمط، فيما يبدو، صدى في الروايات العربية ذات العلاقة. ومن هنا؛ يهدف هذا البحث إلى جمع النصوص المتفرقة المتاحة عن هذا النمط، ومحاولة إعادة بنائها في سياق يمكن من خلاله استنباط الدلالات التاريخية المحيطة به. ويركز البحث على حالتين رئيسيتين: الرهينة ثيوفيلوس والأسيرة ثيوجونستا، وإن لم يغفل أيضًا حالات أخرى تتوفر عنها إشارات مصدرية موجزة، مثل حالة الأسيرين فيميون وفرومنتوس وغيرهما.

**الكلمات الدالة:** المبشر؛ الأسير؛ الرهينة؛ جنوب الجزيرة العربية؛ ثيوفيلوس؛ ثيوجونستا؛ فيميون.

The official recognition of Christianity during the fourth century launched intense missionary activity to bring neighboring peoples into the Roman Empire. It became one of the emperor's tasks - and the source of his authority at the same time - as a representative of Christ *vicarius Christi* in conveying God's message. It was natural for the church and its clergy to be tools in this activity. As a legitimate heir of Christ, the Church, for its part, sought to compete with the imperial authority to carry out this mission. It developed unconventional patterns of informal missionaries. Since the fourth century, Late Roman sources, provided us with scattered indications on the features of a pattern of early missionaries to which modern scholars have paid little attention. It is what might be called "captive and hostage missionaries." Perhaps specialists in the early history of Christianity, once this term is proposed, will have their minds turned to the case of the ancestors of Ulfilas (c. 310-381 AD), known as the "apostle of the Goths."<sup>1</sup> According to the fourth - century church historian Philostorgius, Ulfilas descended from a Roman lineage, including several Christian ecclesiastics, captured during the Gothic attack on Cappadocia and Galatia in the second half of the third century.<sup>2</sup> In the words of Philostorgius, "These pious captives, by their intercourse with the barbarians, brought over large numbers to the true faith and persuaded them to embrace the Christian religion in place of heathen superstitions. Of the number of these captives were the ancestors of Ulfilas himself".<sup>3</sup> Now as a Roman Goth (c.340 AD), King of the Goths sent Ulfilas as an ambassador and a hostage to Constantinople, where he was ordained bishop, and then returned to preach among his people for 7 years.<sup>4</sup>

Although Ulfilas and his ancestors are the best-known case of captive and hostage missionaries, this pattern is strikingly repeated in source accounts relating to the circumstances of the emergence of Christianity in southern Arabia during the fourth century. Some of these narratives attributed its people's conversion to captive and hostage missionaries, whether male or female. What is even more surprising is that these seem to have an echo in the relevant Arabic tradition. This research aims to collect the scattered texts available about this pattern, and attempt to reconstruct them in a context from which the historical connotations surrounding it can be deduced. It focuses on two main cases: the hostage Theophilus and the captive Theognosta, but it also does not neglect other cases about which brief references are available, such as cases of the captives Phimion, Frumentius, and others.

### **I. Theophilus the Indian:**

Philostorgius is also the earliest evidence of captive and hostage missionaries associated with the conversion of southern Arabia. Although he presents a hostage figure contemporary to Ulfilas, Theophilus, who went on a mission in southern Arabia at about the same time that Ulfilas was preaching among his Goths (c. 341-348 AD), our hostage in this case was never of a Roman origin. According to Philostorgius, Emperor Constantius II (337-361 AD) wanted to explore the religious situation in

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<sup>1</sup> See: Sivan, Hagith. "Ulfila's Own Conversion", *The Harvard Theological Review* 89, no.4 (Oct., 1996): 373-386; Scott, Charles. *Ulfilas, Apostle of the Goths*, Kessinger Publishing., 2009.

<sup>2</sup> The event was recorded by Sozomen without any reference to Ulfilas. According to him, "... many priests of Christ who had been taken captive dwelt among these tribes; and during their residence among them healed the sick ... The barbarian, amazed at the exemplary conduct and wonderful works of these holy men ..." Sozomen, *History of the Church*, trans. E. Walford, London, 1855, 60.

<sup>3</sup> Philostorgius, *Church History*, trans. Ph. A. Amidon, Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2007, 20.

<sup>4</sup> Philostorgius, *Church History*, 20.

southern Arabia and sent an embassy to “the people called of old Sabaeans and now known as Himyarites”. The ultimate goal was to “convert them to the Christianity”.<sup>1</sup> One of the leaders of this embassy, as Philostorgius points out, was Theophilus the Indian. He has been described as follows: “Long before, when he was quite young, during the reign of Constantine [307-337 AD], the previous emperor, he had been sent to the Romans as a hostage by the people known as Divaeans. The island they inhabit is called Diva, and they too are among those known as Indians. Now Theophilus, during the considerable time he spent living among the Romans, formed his character to the highest degree of virtue and his beliefs in accordance with orthodoxy. ...When he undertook the embassy, he received the dignity of bishop from those who shared his beliefs”.<sup>2</sup>

The similarity between the cases of Ulfilas and Theophilus the Indian, as well as the coincidence of their missionary missions, is striking.<sup>3</sup> Both were hostages, although Ulfilas was originally a Roman captive, unlike Theophilus, whose former status cannot be ascertained.<sup>4</sup> Irfan Shahid suggests that he was of royal lineage,<sup>5</sup> as taking barbarian nobles hostage in the Roman royal court was a common practice at the time.<sup>6</sup> Each of them belonged, in whole or in part, to a foreign origin. They were ordained bishops and then assumed the mission of evangelizing among foreign peoples. Most likely, when the same Roman Emperor, Constantius II, assigned each of them their missions, he took into account that they shared the same race, culture, and language with these peoples, and these are all considerations that would contribute to the success of their mission.<sup>7</sup> As I have shown in a previous study, the Roman authorities' reliance on envoys of the same ethnicity as their diplomatic destination was one of the basic criteria for their

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<sup>1</sup> Philostorgius *Church History*, 40; Greek: Philostorgius, *Kirchengeschichte*, Berlin, 1981, 32.

<sup>2</sup> Philostorgius, *Church History*, 40; Greek: Philostorgius, *Kirchengeschichte*, 33.

<sup>3</sup> It is worth noting that Anna Lankina addressed the missions of both Ulifilas and Theophilus without noting any of the similarities between the two, which likely led the Roman authorities to choose them specifically for these missionary destinations. Lankina, Anna. *Reclaiming the non-Nicene Past. Theophilus the Indian and Ulfila the Goth as Missionary Heroes*, MA diss., University of Florida, 2011.

<sup>4</sup> In the context of his treatment of John bishop of Nikiu's account of the case of the captive woman Theognosta, which I will refer to later, he seems to allude to his belief that Theophilus was originally - like Ulfilas - a captive. He says: “John ignores the traditions of the apostle Bartholomew and the missionary Theophilus, a captive converted in Constantinople and sent out by Emperor Constantius, and focuses instead on a holy woman named Theognosta.” Sterk, Andrea. “Mission from Below: Captive Women and Conversion on the East Roman Frontiers”, *Church History* 79, no.1 (March 2010): 11.

<sup>5</sup> Shahid, Irfan. *Byzantium and the Arabs in the Fourth Century*, Washington, D.C.: Dumbarton Oaks, 1984, 96-7.

<sup>6</sup> Allen Joel. *Hostages and Hostage-taking in the Roman Empire*, Cambridge/New York, 2006: 245-53; Kostó A. J. “Transformation of Hostageship in Late Antiquity”, *Antiquité Tardive* 21 (2013): 265-82.

<sup>7</sup> As Alexander Angelov suggests, “Given that the royal conversion is mentioned here, we need to note that Constantius most likely appointed Theophilus as head of the embassy due to his supposed knowledge of the local culture and languages.” Angelov, A.B. *Conversion and Empire: Byzantine Missionaries, Foreign Rulers, and Christian Narratives (ca. 300-900)*, PhD diss., The University of Michigan, 2011, 213.

selection.<sup>1</sup> Most likely, the rule followed by the late Roman emperors in their diplomatic relations, especially with the Arabs, was to send envoys of the same race.<sup>2</sup>

Although the mention of *Διβούξ* by Philostorgius as the motherland of Theophilus seems ambiguous and controversial to modern scholars, especially since he did not specify its location, his designation as *Ἰνδός* can be interpreted in favor of his South Arabian origin. Classical sources used it to refer to various peoples, specifically the Indians, Ethiopians [Abyssinians], and population of southern Arabia.<sup>3</sup> In the same way, way, most texts related to the Christianization of South Arabia refer to it only as India. Jerome (347-420 AD) refers to Pantaeos, who “was sent to India by Demetrius bishop of Alexandria, where he found that Bartholomew, one of the twelve apostles, had preached the advent of the Jesus according to the gospel of Matthew among the Indians known as ‘the Happy’ [Ἰνδοῖς τοῖς καλουμένοις Εὐδαίμοσιν], and on his return to Alexandria he brought this with him written in Hebrew.”<sup>4</sup> The “happy” [Εὐδαίμοσιν] here most likely refers to Ἀραβία Εὐδαίμων [*Arabia Eudaimōn*] or *Arabia Felix*, another name used by classical writers to refer to southern Arabia.<sup>5</sup> Philostorgius himself describes the Indians to whom Theophilus visited as: “Now those belonging to this Indian people were of old called ‘Sabaeans,’ [το δὲ τῶν Ἰνδῶν ἔθνος τοῦτο Σάπας] from their capital, Saba’, while nowadays they are known as Himyarites [τὰ νῦν δὲ Ὀμερίας καλεῖσθαι].”<sup>6</sup>

Various suggestions have been made that Devos island may be the Maldives,<sup>7</sup> Socatra,<sup>1</sup> Ceylon,<sup>2</sup> or another island in the Red Sea.<sup>3</sup> However, Anna Lankina has

<sup>1</sup> Ramadan, Abdelaziz. “Ma ‘āyir Ikhtiyār al-Mab‘ūthīn al-Diblūmāsiyyīn fī al-‘Aṣr al-Bīzantī al-Bākīr” [Selection Criteria of Diplomatic Envoys in the Early Byzantine Era], in *Annals of Center for Research and Historical Studies*, Faculty of Arts, Cairo University, Special Issue, 2016: 11–119.

<sup>2</sup> In the sixth century, for example, Euphrasius's family specialized in diplomatic missions with the Arabs. In 502, he went out on an embassy to negotiate with Al-Harith of Kinda [Arethas]. In 524, his son Abraham went out on an embassy to al-Mundhir, and in another embassy in 528 to the tribes of *Kindioi* and Maadenoi. Finally the grandson Nonnosos participated in an embassy to Kaisus [Qays] in 531. Ramadan, “Ma ‘āyir Ikhtiyār”, 59-60.

<sup>3</sup> Classical sources, from Homer and Herodotus onwards, used the term “Indians” to refer to these peoples. See: Nadeau, J.Y. “Ethiopians”, *Classical Quarterly* 20(1970): 339-349; Dihle, A. “The Conception of India in Hellenistic and Roman Literature”, *Proceedings of the Cambridge Philological Society* 190= new ser. 10(1964): 15-23. This tradition was inherited by early Byzantine sources. See: Mayerson, Ph. “A Confusion of Indias: Asian India and African India in the Byzantine Sources”, *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 113, no.2 (Apr.-Jun., 1993): 169-174; Schneider, P. *L'Éthiopie et l'Inde: Interférences et confusions aux extrémités du monde antique (VIIIe siècle avant J.-C.–VIe siècle après J.-C.)*, École française de Rome, 2004.

<sup>4</sup> Hieronymus. *De Viris Illustribus, Liber ad Dextrum*, PL 23, cols. 683-686; Eng. trans. E.C. Richardson, in: *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, ed. Ph. Scaff, New York, 1893, vol.3, ch. xxxvi.

<sup>5</sup> For example, see: Pliny *HN*, 5.12.65; 6. 31. 38; 12. 30. 51. Text edition used here is: Pliny, *Natural History* ed. with an English translation. H. Rackham, 10 vols. [LCL], Harvard University Press 1986-1999; Kosmas Indicopleustes *Christian Topography* III, 66, 2-3, ed. Wanda Wolska-Conus, *Cosmas Indicopleustes, Topographie Chrétienne*, I-III, Paris 1968-1973, [Sources Chrétiennes 141, 159, 197] vol. I, 505; Harland, Philip. “Arabians: Agatharchides and Diodoros on peoples of Arabia Felix on the eastern coast of the Red Sea (second-first centuries BCE),” *Ethnic Relations and Migration in the Ancient World*, last modified May 7, 2023, <https://philipharland.com/Blog/?p=13760>

<sup>6</sup> Philostorgius, *Church History*, 22.; Greek: Phiostorgius, *Kirchengeschichte*, 18.

<sup>7</sup> Philostorgius, *Church History*, p.40; Fiaccadori, G. “Teofilo Indiano,” *Studi Classici e Orientali* 33(1984): 295–331, esp.315f.

another approach that departs from these suggestions, which is that Theophilus was not known as “the Indian” except because Philostorgius referred to him as such, and that this epithet may have appeared as a result of Theophilus’ association with the regions to which he delegated as a missionary.<sup>4</sup> Lankina’s opinion may seem valid, but Philostorgius’s description of Devos as the homeland of Theophilus, when combined with the reference of the fourth-century historian Ammianus Marcellinus, “The Indian nations as far as the *Divi* and the *Serendivi* vied with one another in sending their leading men with gifts ahead of time”, may indicate the Indian [South Arabian] origin of Theophilus.<sup>5</sup>

Perhaps this may be supported by a reference made by the Cappadocian theologian Gregory of Nyssa (335-394 AD), in his polemical book *Contra Eunomium*, which calls Theophilus a *Βλέμμυς*, and attributes him to the Bedouin Blemmyes tribe.<sup>6</sup> This tribe settled during the period between the fourth and sixth centuries in the Nile Valley of southern Egypt, in the area between the first and fifth cataracts, and spread eastward across the eastern desert adjacent to this region to the Red Sea coast.<sup>7</sup> Thus, the account of Gregory of Nyssa may represent additional evidence of the association of Theophilus with an island or some region on the coast of Red sea.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Klein, R. *Constantius II und die christliche Kirche*, Darmstadt, 1977, 270; Lightfoot, C.S. *The Eastern Frontier of the Roman Empire with Special Reference to the Reign of Constantius II*, PhD dissertation, St. John’s College, Oxford, 1981, 35 n.105; Trimmingham, J.S. *Christianity among the Arabs in Pre-Islamic Times*, London, New York, 1979, 291. For the proposal of either the Maldives or Socotra, see: Dihle, A. “L’ambassade de Théophile l’Indien ré-examinée,” in *L’Arabie préislamique et son environnement historique et culturel: Actes du Colloque de Strasbourg 24–27 Juin 1987*, ed. T. Fahd, Leiden: Brill, 1989, 461; Fernandez, G. “The Evangelizing Mission of Theophilus ‘the Indian’ and the Ecclesiastical Policy of Constantius II,” *Klio* 71 (1989): 361-366, esp.361; Shahid, *Byzantium and the Arabs*, 98.

<sup>2</sup> Shahid, *Byzantium and the Arabs*, 97.

<sup>3</sup> Some researchers find a similarity in the names of Divos Island and Dībā on the Red Sea coast, northwest of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. However, it is difficult to imagine that Theophilus sailed from the south of the Arabian Peninsula to the north and then returned again to cross to Abyssinia. See the extensive discussion: Fiaccadori, “Teofilo Indiano”, 300f

<sup>4</sup> Lankina, *Reclaiming the Non-Nicene Past*, 10 n.8

<sup>5</sup> [inde nationibus Indicis certatim cum donis optimates mittentibus ante tempus ab usque Divis et Serendivis.]. Ammianus Marcellinus, *Res Gestae*, trans. J.C. Rolfe, vol. II, [Loeb Classical Library], London, 2000, 212-213.

<sup>6</sup> Gregory of Nyssa, *Contra Eunomium I*, ed. M. Brugarolas, Brill: Leiden, Boston, 2018, 81.[=PG 82, col. 1072].

<sup>7</sup> Christides, V. “Ethnic Movements in Southern Egypt and Northern Sudan: Blemmyes-Beja in Late Antique and Early Arab Egypt until 707 A.D”, *Listy Filologické* 103, no.3(1980): 129-143; Barnard, H., “Additional Remarks on Blemmyes, Beja and Eastern Desert Ware”, *Egypt and the Levant: International Journal for Egyptian Archaeology and Related Disciplines* 17(2007): 23-31.

<sup>8</sup> On the control of the Blemmyes over parts of the eastern desert coast on the Red Sea since the third century AD, see: Thomas, R.I. “Port Communities and the Erythraean Sea Trade”, *British Museum Studies in Ancient Egypt and Sudan* 18(2012): 169-199, esp. 171. Frank M. Snowden suggests that Gregory of Nyssa is referring here to Theophilus’ Abyssinian origin. Snowden, F.M. *Blacks in Antiquity: Ethiopians in Greco-Roman Experience*, Harvard University Press, 1970, 208. While Gianfranco Fiaccadori believes that calling Theophilus “*Βλέμμυς*” was because he was an Arian who followed Eunomios, and because Gregory devoted his book specifically to attacking this sect, it was natural for him to seek to degrade Theophilus and link him to the pagan Blemmyes who were famous at the time for

Philostorgius refers to the fact that “Theophilus, then, having settled the various matters with the Himyarites as far as was possible in each case, ... sailed off to the island of Diva, which, as has been said, was his homeland. From there, he went on to the rest of the Indian country”.<sup>1</sup> Philostorgius also indicates that the next stop on Theophilus’ mission, after leaving “Greater Arabia” *Arabia Magna*, is that “he set sail for the land of those Ethiopians who are called Aksumites and who live along the nearest shores of the Red Sea”.<sup>2</sup> It can be said with some degree of reassurance that “Devos Island” of Philostorgius is one of the Red Sea islands located between, or at least close to, the coast of southern Arabia and facing the African coast.

This hypothesis is also supported by the fact that Theophilus most likely followed the usual route of Roman merchants and envoys heading to Axum; According to the sixth-century historian John Malalas: “The emperor of the *Axoumitai* is further into the interior than the *Homeritai*, while the emperor of the *Homeritai* is near Egypt. It is through the country of the *Homeritai* that the Roman traders reach Axoum and the Indian empires further into the interior.”<sup>3</sup> There is evidence that may relate to Theophilus's mission itself that supports his travel along the same route. It is a decree issued by Emperor Constantius to the Praetorian Prefect Musonianus [in 356 AD] regarding his envoys in Alexandria heading to the Axumites and Homerites.<sup>4</sup> Thus, it is possible to imagine that Theophilus’ mission began from Egypt to southern Arabia, then one of the ports or islands opposite it on the African coast, and from there to Abyssinia.

The ultimate goal of this embassy, according to Philostorgius, was to convert the people of southern Arabia to Christianity. He says that Emperor Constantius “planned to win over the leader of the people by the magnificence and number of his gifts, and hence to find an opportunity to plant the seeds of faith in him. He also asked that it might be granted to build a church for the Romans who traveled there and for whoever of the local people might convert to the faith. He gave the embassy a generous amount for the cost of construction.”<sup>5</sup> It seems that Philostorgius found that merely referring to the gifts of the Roman Emperor was not sufficient to attract the ruler of the south towards Christianity, so he proceeded in a subsequent reference to detailing these gifts: “Now Constantius fitted out the embassy magnificently and with the utmost splendor, sending with it all of two hundred of the finest breed of horses from Cappadocia

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banditry. That is, Gregory's goal is description per se, not belonging. Fiaccadori, G. “Teofilo Indiano: Parte II. Il Viaggio”, *Studi Classici e Orientali* 34(1985): 271-307, esp. 289-290.

<sup>1</sup> Philostorgius, *Church History*, 42.

<sup>2</sup> Philostorgius, *Kirchengeschichte*, p.35; Eng. trans. Philostorgius, *Church History*, p.43. [Ἐκ δὲ ταύτης τῆς μεγάλης Ἀραβίας εἰς τοὺς Ἀῦξουμίτας καλουμένους ἀπαίρει Αἰθίοπας, οἱ κατὰ τὰς πρώτας ὄχθας καταφκηνται τῆς ῥυθρᾶς θαλάσσης].

<sup>3</sup> John Malalas, *The Chronicle*, trans. E. Jeffreys and R. Scott, *Byzantina Australiensia* 4, Brill: Leiden, Boston, 2017, 251. Concerning the ambassadors, Malalas [p.268] refers to one of the embassies by saying: “The Roman ambassador set sail for Alexandria and reached the Indian Territory by way of the Nile and the Indian Sea.”

<sup>4</sup> *The Theodosian Code and Novels and the Sirmondian Constitutions*, trans. C. Pharr, New York, 1969, p.380. [... *nullus ad gentem axumitarum et homeritarum ire praeceptus ultra annui temporis spatia debet alexandriae de ceter demorari nec post annum percipere alimonias annonarias.*]. [No person who has been instructed to go to the tribe of the Axumites or the Homerites shall henceforth tarry at Alexandria beyond the space of the time limit of one year].

<sup>5</sup> Philostorgius, *Church History*, 40.

conveyed on ships designed as cavalry transports, as well as many other gifts calculated to strike wonder at their sumptuousness and to enchant the beholder.”<sup>1</sup>

Perhaps this detail indicates Philostorgius’ desire to show the extent of the Roman Emperor’s interest in achieving his goal in the mission, or to promote him as a “missionary” who would not skimp on what is precious for the sake of spreading Christianity.<sup>2</sup> Perhaps this was also a prelude to the goal that Philostorgius later sought to hint at, which was that these gifts, although numerous and luxurious - compared to the other attractions inherent in Christianity itself - were not the most effective factor in attracting the ruler of the south to Christianity. In order to pave the way for his subsequent religious propaganda in glorifying the Christian influence - embodied in the person of Bishop Theophilus - in Christianizing the ruler of the south, Philostorgius stops with a paragraph in which he turns to talking about the origin and religiosity of Theophilus and how he chose the ascetic life and rose through the priestly ranks until he was ordained a bishop upon undertaking the mission.<sup>3</sup>

Philostorgius resumes talking about the circumstances of Theophilus’ meeting with the Himyarite ruler, saying: “Upon reaching the Sabaeans, Theophilus tried to persuade their ruler to worship Christ and renounce pagan error. Now the Jews in their usual way tried to counter him, but when Theophilus with his marvelous works showed on more than one occasion how invincible the Christian faith is, the opposition was reduced, however unwillingly, to utter silence.”<sup>4</sup> This text clearly indicates that despite the paganism of the ruler and the people of the south, the Jews enjoyed strong influence and formed a pressure group within the court, to the point of their direct intervention to obstruct Theophilus’ mission. Perhaps Philostorgius may have wanted to explain why the Jews - and not the pagans - took this position by making a veiled reference to their traditional hostility to Christianity. It is also understood from the text that a religious debate took place between Theophilus and his Jewish opponents, although this was not explicitly mentioned, and that he succeeded, thanks to his abilities as a bishop - or as the text indicated, thanks to his “marvelous works”- in achieving victory for Christianity and confirming its superiority. In fact, this propaganda, with its miraculous implications, was a familiar pattern in Late Roman accounts of Christianization.<sup>5</sup> As

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<sup>1</sup> Philostorgius, *Church History*, 40-41. Irfan Shahid comments on the quality of these gifts by saying: “Two hundred Cappadocian horses were an imaginative and appropriate present to a people that prized the horse.” Researchers suggest a strong connection between these gifts and a bronze horse bearing Sabaeans inscriptions preserved in the collection of the Dumbarton Oaks Foundation in Washington. See : Jamme, A. “Inscriptions of the Sabaeans Bronze Horse of the Dumbarton Oaks Collection”, *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 8(1954) :315-330; Ryckmans, J. “The Pre-Islamic South Arabian Bronze Horse in the Dumbarton Oaks Collection”, *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 29(1975), 275-303; Shahid, *Byzantium and the Arabs*, 88. [Fig. I]

<sup>2</sup> On the emperor's task as a missionary, see generally: Christou, P., “The Missionary Task of the Byzantine Emperor”, *Byzantina* 3(1971): 279-286

<sup>3</sup> Philostorgius, *Church History*, 40.

<sup>4</sup> Philostorgius, *Church History*, 41

<sup>5</sup> The same pattern was employed in the accounts related to Christianization among the Arabs of the northern Arabia. Conversion of many Arabs there during the fifth century was attributed to the therapeutic miracles performed by Saints Euthymius and Simeon the Stylite. Shahid, *Byzantium and the*



Irfan Shahid points out: “The miracles performed by Theophilus during his mission in South Arabia went a long way toward converting the South Arabian ruler. The zealous missionary was armed with the gift of the thaumaturge, especially efficacious as an instrument of conversion among the barbarians.”<sup>1</sup>

Although Emperor Constantius's original purpose for the mission was to convert the ruler of the south and build a church for Roman travelers and for any local population who might convert to Christianity, what Theophilus achieved went far beyond that. In this regard, Philostorgius says: “His embassy was successful; the ruler of the nation was converted to the faith in all sincerity, and he built not one but three churches in his country. He did so not from the imperial funds brought by the embassy but from what he himself eagerly donated; so struck was he by Theophilus’s works that he was anxious to rival his zeal. He put up one of the churches in the capital itself of the whole nation, called Tapharon [Zafār]. Another was located in what was the Roman market center, toward the outer ocean. The place is called Aden, and it is where voyagers from Roman territory were accustomed to put in. The third church was in the other part of the country, where there is a well-known Persian market center at the mouth of the Persian Gulf there.”<sup>2</sup>

There is scholarly debate about the extent of religious change brought about by Theophilus' mission in southern Arabia. Most scholars believe that these three churches were intended for foreign merchants and residents in the first place and not for the local population. Amidon - the translator of the text of Philostorgius from Greek to English - suggests that “The three churches, then, were located in the capital and in two coastal centers, just where the resident aliens lived.”<sup>3</sup> Christian Robin suggests that the clear goal of constructing these churches is to be a destination for passing foreigners.<sup>4</sup> Both Albrecht Dihle and Françoise Chatonnet hint at casting doubt on Philostorgius’s account because it did not reach us through any other source.<sup>5</sup> Chatonnet continues by saying: “si l’on admet un fondement authentique à ce récit, il semble que les lieux de culte en question aient plus été obtenus pour les marchands étrangers chrétiens installés plus ou moins provisoirement dans le pays que pour répondre aux besoins de chrétiens locaux”.<sup>6</sup>

This approach may seem valid with regard to the churches of Aden and Hormuz, two ports whose commercial nature may make it difficult to detect the degree of change in the religious situation in them, taking into account that their churches were allocated to foreign merchants who were primarily Christian. However, the presence of a third church in the Himyarite capital, Zafār, dedicated - according to Philostorgius’ account -

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*Arabs*, 89 n.55. On the role of miracles in converting the Arab Queen Mavia/ Mauia, see: Sozomen, *History of the Church*, 307-310. On the use of miracles as a mechanism for Christianization in the Late Roman period, especially among foreign rulers, see: Angelov, *Conversion and Empire*, 10, 64, 100,125, 131, 133.

<sup>1</sup> Shahid, *Byzantium and the Arabs*, 89.

<sup>2</sup> Philostorgius, *Church History*, 41.

<sup>3</sup> Philostorgius, *Church History*, 41 n.10.

<sup>4</sup> Robin, Ch.J. “Najrān vers l’époque du massacre: notes sur l’histoire politique, économique et institutionnelle et sur l’introduction du Christianisme”, in *Le massacre de Najrān II: juifs et chrétiens en Arabie aux Ve et Vie siècles regards croisés sur les sources*, ed. J. Beaucamp et al., Paris, 2010, 64-106, esp.64; Idem, “Le judaïsme de Ḥimyar”, *Arabia* 1(2003): 97-172, esp.103-104.

<sup>5</sup> Dihle, “L’ambassade de Théophile”, 467; Chatonnet, F.B. “L’expansion du christianisme en Arabie: l’apport des sources syriaques”, *Semitica et Classica* 3(2010): 177-187, esp.183.

<sup>6</sup> Chatonnet, “L’expansion du christianisme”, 183.

to the newly Christian ruler and his people prompts questions about the religious impact of Theophilus' mission in the Himyarite interior. This calls us to discuss what Eastern Christian sources, especially the chronicle of John of Nikiu (fl. 680-690 AD), recorded about the emergence of Christianity in southern Arabia.

## **II. Captive nun Theognosta:**

Two later source accounts, from the seventh and eighth centuries, although confusing and ambiguous, agree that the emergence of Christianity in southern Arabia was at the hands of a captive woman. The Syriac chronicle of Zūqnīn, composed in 775 AD, provides a brief reference to “in the year six hundred and sixteen (AD 304/5): The people of Himyar came to the faith of the Christians through a captive woman.”<sup>1</sup>

In the second account, which is more detailed and acceptable for analysis, John the bishop of Nikiu describes the emergence of Christianity as follows: “...After his death [Emperor Constans], the people of Yemen received the knowledge of God, and were illuminated with the light of the praise of our Lord Jesus Christ –praise be unto him- by means of a holy woman named Theognosta. Now she was a Christian virgin who had been carried off captive from a convent on the borders of the Roman Empire and had been conducted to the king of Yemen and presented him as a gift. And this Christian woman became very rich through the grace of god and wrought many healings. And she brought over the king of India to the faith, and he became a Christian through her agency as well as well as all the people of India. Then the King of India and his subjects requested the God loving emperor Honorius to appoint them a bishop. And he rejoiced with great joy because they had embraced the faith and turned to God, and he appointed them a holy bishop, named Theonius ... And so it was also in India, the great India. For the men of that country had formerly received a man named Afrūdīt (i.e. Frumentius). He was of noble birth of the country of India and they had made him their bishop, having been instituted and ordained by Athanasius the apostolic, the patriarch of Alexandria.”<sup>2</sup>

In her study on captive women and conversion on the east Roman borders, Andrea Sterk discusses the story of Theognosta in its legendary context, along with two other cases belonging to Armenia and Georgia,<sup>3</sup> as a model of missions from below. She concluded that the “accounts of captive women missionaries may tell us more about both popular conceptions and concrete realities of evangelization than has normally

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<sup>1</sup> *The Chronicle of Zuqninn, Parts I and II. From Creation to the Year 506/7 AD*, ed. & trans. A. Harrak, Gorgias Press, 2017, 252. A similar Chronicle, also attributed to Pseudo-Dionysius of Tel-Mahre, makes the same vague claim. Nau, F. “Analyses des parties inédites de la chronique attribuée de Denys de Tellmahre,” *Revue de l’Orient chrétien* 2 (1897): 49.

<sup>2</sup> *The Chronicle of John, Bishop of Nikiu Translated From Zotenberg’s Ethiopic Text*, trans. R.H. Charles, Oxford, 1916, 69-70.

<sup>3</sup> The other two stories are about the Christian Roman Rhipsime, who fled from Rome to Armenia during the reign of Emperor Diocletian, and was captured by the pagan Armenian King Trdat, whom she miraculously converted him. And a Georgian female captive who amazed the “barbarians” with her ascetic piety and miracles, including curing the queen. Finally, she miraculously converted the king and the whole nation. At her advice, an embassy is sent to Emperor Constantine requesting priests to instruct the Georgians in their new faith. Sterk, “Mission from Below”, 1-39.

been recognized in presentations of Christianization as a tool of late Roman and Byzantine imperialism”.<sup>1</sup> However, the nature of these narratives led Sterk to acknowledge that “Because of the legendary or romantic quality of this *topos*, historians have tended to neglect such accounts, and to be sure, on one level, they do not take us very far in unraveling the historical details of these nations’ conversions.”<sup>2</sup> In contrast to this approach, in the case of southern Arabia, examining the story of Theognosta in the context of missionary accounts associated with the region, especially Theophilus of India may lead us to conclude some striking parallels about the emergence of Christianity there.

Despite the apparent hagiographic tinge of this story, like many Christianization stories that trace it back to miracles performed by the missionary, it is consistent with Philostorgius's account in several respects. Both stories took place during the reign of Emperor Constantius II. John of Nikiu begins his account by setting the events immediately after the death of Emperor Constans (337-350 AD). The two stories also indicate a clear late Roman influence in the emergence of Christianity in southern Arabia, even if the character of the missionary Theophilus was replaced by a captive nun. More importantly, the two accounts tell us that the Himyarite king converted to Christianity and established places of worship. Philostorgius's account was more specific by referring to the establishment of three churches in Aden, Zafār, and at the mouth of the Persian (Arab) Gulf. The necessity of an ecclesiastical organization and a priestly body in these churches is consistent with John of Nikiu's account regarding the request of the southern king to the [Roman] Emperor to send a bishop to supervise this emerging church institution, most likely in the capital church of Zafār.

As a Coptic bishop wrote more than three centuries after the events, John of Nikiu's confusion in identifying the characters of his accounts may cast a shadow of unreliability on it. He mentions Honorius, who ruled from the capital of the Roman West during the period (395-423 AD), as a contemporary emperor who was asked by the King of the South to appoint a bishop. There is a gap of half a century after the death of Emperor Constans. Also, the remote distance between Ravenna and Zafār does not make it conceivable that there were close relations between the two capitals. All the source evidence, including Philostorgius, indicates beyond a doubt that the Arabian Peninsula was a vital field of interest for the emperors of the East and not the West. Sterk has already noted that southern Arabia had no significant diplomatic relations with the West and was located ecclesiastically and politically between the Aksumite Kingdom of Ethiopia and the Eastern Roman Emperor in Constantinople, but she interpreted this as “In light of the struggle for independence from both nearby Axum and Byzantium, it is not surprising that the king might try to circumvent authorities closer to home”.<sup>3</sup> Here, Sterk accepted the validity of the identity of the emperor determined by John of Nikiu, completely overlooking the account of Philostorgius, which refers to Theophilus’ mission as the first Eastern Roman attempt to Christianize the south during the reign of Constantius and after the death of his brother Constans. She also ignores the half-century gap between the death of Constans and the accession of Honorius, and proposes instead the unreliable hypothesis that the southern king

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<sup>1</sup> Sterk, “Mission from Below”, 39.

<sup>2</sup> Sterk, “Mission from Below”, 29-30.

<sup>3</sup> Sterk, “Mission from Below”, 26-27.

sought to distance himself from both Byzantium and Aksum. It is logical that Philostorgius, a contemporary of the event he records, is more reliable and accurate than John of Nikiu, who wrote more than three centuries after the event.

However, John of Nikiu's account may contain implications indicating the timing of the event. In addition to his introductory reference "after his death", he makes a final note of an earlier event recorded by other contemporary sources by saying that the people of Great India [Aksum] had formerly received a man of noble birth named Afrūdīt (i.e., Frumentius) and made him their bishop, having been instituted and ordained by Athanasius the apostolic, the patriarch of Alexandria".<sup>1</sup> It seems that the unexpected reference of John of Nikiu to Frumentius in the context of John of Nikiu's dealing with the introduction of Christianity into southern Arabia is closely related to one of the tasks that Emperor Constantius II entrusted to Theophilus the Indian, which was to deliver a letter to the King of Aksum, Ezana, requesting the replacement of Frumentius (the Nicene) by Theophilus the Indian (the Arian). ) himself, and sent Frumentius to Alexandria to rehabilitate his faith according to the Arian doctrine, a request that was rejected by the Aksumite king.<sup>2</sup> It is possible that this close relationship between the churches of Alexandria and Aksum prompted John of Nikiu – the anti-Chalcedonian bishop, as Sterk points out - to strip the Arian Emperor, Constantius II, of the virtue of Christianizing the king of the south and his people and attribute this to another personality. In weaving the features of this character, it seems that he was influenced by the model of Frumentius. According to church historians of the fourth and fifth centuries, Frumentius - like the nun Theogonosta - was a captive from Tyre. He was taken to the young king of Aksum, Ezana, and soon won his confidence, and by his miracles succeeded in winning the king and his people to Christianity.<sup>3</sup>

### **III. The impact of the tradition on the eastern Roman frontier:**

Despite the tendency to assume Frumentius, or even Theophilus, as a model that influenced John of Nikiu's account, the tradition of the missionary captive seems to have prevailed on the east Roman frontiers and regions. Rather, since he is a Coptic

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<sup>1</sup> *Chronicle of John of Nikiu*, 69-70

<sup>2</sup> The text of this letter is preserved in Athanasius's *Apologia ad Imperatorem Constantium* [PG 25, cols. 593f]. It seems that the failure of Theophilus' mission in Aksum prompted Philostorgius - in contrast to his dealing with the case of southern Arabia - to ignore further details of the nature of his mission there, and contented himself with a very brief reference, saying: "He did reach the Aksumites, took care of matters there, and then returned to the Roman Empire." Philostorgius, *Church History*, 43

<sup>3</sup> According to the rest of the story, Frumentius used his influence to spread Christianity. He encouraged foreign Christian merchants to practice their rituals openly, and succeeded in Christianizing a number of local population. Then he traveled to Alexandria and asked its bishop, Athanasius, to send a bishop and some priests as missionaries to Aksum, but Athanasius saw that Frumentius himself would be most suitable for this task, so he ordained him a bishop. Frumentius returned to Aksum, and succeeded in converting King Ezana and the rest of his people to Christianity. Sozomen, *History of the Church*, 85-88; Rufinus of Aquileia, *History of the Church*, trans. Ph. R. Amidon, The Catholic University of America Press, Washington, D.C., 2016, 394-396; Socrates Scholasticus, *History of the Church*, London, 1853, 51-52. On the influence of this account on its Ethiopian counterparts regarding the circumstances of the conversion of Ezana to Christianity, see: Vila, M. "Frumentius in the Ethiopic Sources: Mythopoeia and Text-Critical Considerations", *Rassegna di Studi Etiopici -3<sup>rd</sup> Serie* 1 (2017): 87-111.

bishop, it is more likely that his model for the captive nun was most influenced by the Coptic tradition. According to *Coptic Synaxarium*, Theogonsta was a Roman Christian virgin “contemporary of righteous Emperor Honorius and Arcadius”. She was captured by the envoy of the King of India to the two emperors during his return journey home and became the head of the King’s attendants and his wives. Later, she miraculously converted him and his people to Christianity.<sup>1</sup>

Perhaps the prevalence of the tradition led to its plagiarism in many accounts of Christianization. Although the story of the conversion of the Arab Queen Mavia/ Mauia to Christianity is well-known and fully documented,<sup>2</sup> this did not prevent from borrowing the tradition to it. According to the chronicler Theophanes, “in this year [376/7] Mauia, queen of the Saracens, who had done much harm to the Romans, sought peace and asked that a certain Moses, one of the desert ascetics, be made bishop for those of her Saracens who practised Christianity. ... They say that she herself was a Christian and a Roman by race, and that after she had been taken prisoner, she pleased the emperor of the Saracens by her beauty, and consequently she gained control of the empire.”<sup>3</sup> Theophanes here was keen to emphasize that he was conveying a story circulated by some, without judging its reliability. It also seems that he was careful not to explicitly refer to its influence in Christianizing the king and his people, even if he seemed to hint at this. This story remained alive until the thirteenth century, when Michael the Syrian included it in his history, adding that: “This queen was of Roman origin, she had taken captive and the king of the Arabs had grown to appreciate her for her beauty. She did not forsake her faith, and when she became queen, thanks to her a large population converted to Christianity”.<sup>4</sup>

It is important to note - as is clear with Theophilus and Theogonsta - that these cases of the missionary captive were linked to a direct influence and relationship with the south kings, and through their Christianization their people followed them. The captive's ascetic life and his miracles, especially the healing miracles, were always the decisive factor in conversion. However, there are many sources suggesting the spread of this pattern at a lower level.<sup>5</sup> Sterk has already shown how Roman captives had a role in

<sup>1</sup> *Coptic Synaxarium*, Lives of Saints, Oxford: Oxford Publishing House, 2006, 35-36.

<sup>2</sup> For the conversion of the Mavia/Mauia, see: Angelov, *Conversion and Empire*, 275-278; Mayerson, P. ‘Mauia, Queen of the Saracens – A Cautionary Note’, *Israel Exploration Journal* 30 (1980): 123-131; Monferrer-Sala, J.P. “New skin for Old Stories: Queen Zenobia and Mawiya, and Christian Arab groups in the Eastern Frontiers during the 3<sup>rd</sup> -4<sup>th</sup> Centuries CE”, In *Mapping Knowledge: Cross-Pollination in Late Antiquity and the middle Ages*, ed. Ch. Burnett and P. Mantas-España, Córdoba: CNERU-The Warburg Institute, 2014, 72-98.

<sup>3</sup> *The Chronicle of Theophanes Confessor: Byzantine and Near Eastern History AD 284-813*, trans. C. Mango and R. Scott, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1997, 99.

<sup>4</sup> *Chronique de Michel le Syrien*, ed. & trad. J.-B. Chabot, Paris, 1899, I, p. 294.

<sup>5</sup> The fear of being captured by Arabs was one of the concerns expressed in the source accounts. In *The Life of Malchus, the Captive Monk* [4], Jerome wrote: "On the road from Beroa to Edessa adjoining the high-way is a waste over which the Saracens roam to and fro without having any fixed abode. Through fear of them travelers in those parts assemble in numbers, so that by mutual assistance they may escape impending danger. There were in my company men, women, old men, youths, children, altogether about seventy persons. All of a sudden the Ishmaelites on horses and camels made an assault upon us, with their flowing hair bound with fillets, their bodies half-naked, with their broad military boots, their cloaks streaming behind them, and their quivers slung upon the shoulders. They carried their bows unstrung and brandished their long spears; for they had come not to fight, but to plunder. We were seized, dispersed,

spreading Christianity among the Persians in the third and fourth centuries.<sup>1</sup> It is also striking that this tradition seems to have influenced the Arabic narrative related to the beginning of Christianity in the south, specifically in Najran.

A number of historical sources and the biographies of the Prophet Muhammad attribute the emergence of Christianity in Najran to a Christian captive named Fīmīūn [Phimion]. They reported this on the authority of Wahb ibn Munabbih (654-728 AD). Wahb descends from a Yemeni Jewish family that converted to Islam. He delved deeply into ancient and biblical books, and was interested in writing about pre-Islamic times.<sup>2</sup> Unfortunately, most of his works have been lost, but his account about Phimion was preserved by Ibn Ishāq (704-768 AD), and recorded by Ibn Hishām (d.833 AD) and many others. According to Ibn Hishām, Phimion was a wandering ascetic who lived in a village in Syria, and mediated many miracles. One time he went to the Arab border, and some of the Arabs captured him and brought him to Najran, where one of its nobles bought him. Because of his asceticism and his involvement in other miracles, the people of Najran followed him.<sup>3</sup> In a story like this, the Christian influence is clear. It is possible that Wahb, who knew both Hebrew and Syriac as he himself implied in one of his surviving works,<sup>4</sup> may have derived his account of Phimion from one of the circulating stories of the captive missionary's tradition. The striking similarities between it and the stories of Theogonsta and Frumentius suggest this.

Wahb, in his book *The Crowns on the Kings of Himyar*, in the context of talking about a king he called 'Abd Kālīl Ibn Yanūf, mentioned that "he was a believer in the religion of Jesus and concealed his faith." Wahb dates the reign of this king to sixty-four years, making him the sixth king before the reign of Yūsuf Dhū Nūwās, who ruled in the twenties of the sixth century AD, with a time interval of about two centuries.<sup>5</sup> This means that 'Abd Kālīl ruled approximately in the middle of the fourth century. Despite the general mythological character that dominates the book and its clear exaggeration in dating the periods of the rule of the Himyarite kings, such a narrative is not without significance. It may be consistent with the accounts of Philostorgius and John of Nikiu about the presence of a Christian king in southern Arabia at that time. If this assumption is correct, it is possible to link Wahb's two accounts about both King 'Abd Kālīl and the captive Phimion to assume that the latter, according to Wahb, was contemporary in approximately the same period of the hostage Theophilus and the captive Theogonsta.

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and carried in different directions. Jerome, *The Life of Malchus, the Captive Monk*. <https://westminsterabbey.ca/wp-content/uploads/2018/07/Life-of-Malchus.pdf> [access in 12-11-2023]

<sup>1</sup> Sterk, "Mission from Below", 36-37.

<sup>2</sup> Horovitz, J. "Wahb b. Munabbih", *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 1st edition, VIII, 1084a–1085b; Khoury, R.G. "Wahb b. Munabbih", *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 2nd edition, XI, 34a–36a.

<sup>3</sup> Ibn Hishām, *Al-sīrah al-nabawīyah* [Biography of the Prophet], ed. M. al-Saqā et al., Cairo, 1955, 32-34.

<sup>4</sup> Wahb ibn Munabbih, *Kitāb al-tījān fī mulūk Himyar* [The Book of Crowns on the Kings of Himyar], San'a, 1928, 21.

<sup>5</sup> Wahb ibn Munabbih, *Kitāb al-tījān*, 310.

## Conclusion:

It is very difficult to judge the accuracy of these accounts and to determine the identity of the person through whom Christianity entered southern Arabia. There are other accounts that attribute this to a Najrani merchant named Ḥannān who lived in the time of Yazdgrid,<sup>1</sup> or to another Najrani called Ḥayyān who lived in some period during the fifth century, or perhaps the fourth century,<sup>2</sup> or to a Najrani priest, the prisoner Azqir, who lived during the period (c.455-475 AD).<sup>3</sup>

All of these accounts have a clear hagiographic tone, and most of them credit the introduction of Christianity in the context of glorifying the struggle of a captive, prisoner, or persecuted person against pagan or Jewish opponents. Their ultimate goal is to triumph for the side of truth over falsehood and to confirm the superiority of Christianity over other religions. Theophilus the Indian faced opposition from an influential Jewish party in the court of the Himyarite king and defeated them thanks to his miracles. The prisoners Theogonsta, Philion, and Frumentius succeeded in confronting the yoke of the pagans by converting them using the same weapon of miracles. Although he was imprisoned and persecuted by a Jewish king, Azqir was able to convert the people of Najran to Christianity with the same tool. Even the Najrani noblewoman Ḥabṣa, who suffered persecution by the Jewish king Yusuf Dhu Nuwas, had to credit her grandfather Ḥayyān with instilling Christianity in Najran.

It seems that this goal necessitated the use of captives as missionaries in more than one context. It is important to take into account the divergence of the authors and their different origins and backgrounds. Philistorgius chose the character of Theophilus the Indian, a hostage and then a bishop during the reign of Constantius. The Egyptian bishop John of Nikiu chose a Coptic captive nun. The Arab evidence selected a Syrian captive who was a wandering hermit. Therefore, the emergence of Christianity in southern Arabia has been attributed to more than one personality. However, the agreement of these accounts on the fourth century, as the time for the emergence of Christianity in southern Arabia, may suggest that they were woven around some actual historical event shrouded in fog as a result of each side's keenness to employ it for the benefit of his hero and then add his hagiographic flavor.

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<sup>1</sup> *Histoire nestorienne: (chronique de Séert)*, ed. A. Scher, *Patrologia Orientalis* 5 (1910): 219-340, esp.330-331.

<sup>2</sup> Moberg, A., (ed.) *The Book of the Himyarites: Fragments of a Hitherto Unknown Syriac Work*, Acta Regiae Societatis Humaniorum Litterarum Lundensis 7. Lund, 1924, 123

<sup>3</sup> Bausi, A. "Il Gadla Azqir", *Adamantius Rivista del Gruppo Italiano di Ricerca su "Origene e la tradizione alessandrina"*, 23 (2017): 341-380, esp.379.

## Catalogue

**Fig. I**



[Roman-South Arabian horse, 2nd century; bronze;](#)  
[102 × 28 × 106 cm \(40 3/16 × 11 × 41 3/4 in.\). BZ.1938.12](#)



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