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'Reconstructing babel': Christian missions and knowledge production in the Middle East, nineteenth-twentieth century

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ABSTRACT

How was missionary knowledge received and interpreted by scholars and church historians in Europe and Russia? Many late nineteenth and early twentieth-century academics utilised knowledge production from Christian missions, notably by way of scholarly Orientalism. However, the history of this knowledge is also a history of representations: while missionary knowledge helped showcase the cultural and religious traditions of Eastern Christianity, what were the underlying motives and especially the consequences? This article examines the formulation and circulation of Eastern Christian knowledge on either side of the Mediterranean, especially on the basis of Catholic missionary archives and academic productions, the study of which is sometimes rooted in non-Anglophone academic traditions. The aim is to shed light on how knowledge relating to Eastern Christianity was assimilated in Europe, as well as the role missions played in this process, especially from the last third of the nineteenth century, when the institutions and instruments for the circulation of knowledge emerged. Another objective is to address the circulations and transformations of this knowledge on either side of the Mediterranean: collected and developed in major European libraries and universities, it was integrated by the governance structures of churches, but quite often also returned to the space it originated from, where it was reappropriated and gave rise to patrimonial processes, notably alongside the sometimes tragic experiences of certain communities during the end of the Ottoman Empire and the establishment of new states. Christian missions, at the intersection of East and West, were at the heart of this dynamic .

KEYWORDS

Eastern Christianity; Christian missions; levant; connected history; knowledge production

1. Introduction

How was missionary knowledge received and interpreted by scholars and church historians in Europe and Russia? From the Assyriologist Jean-Baptiste Chabot of Leuven to the German philologists and linguists Eduard Sachau and Anton Baumstarck, the French historian Louis Duchesne, and his Byzantinist colleague Raymond Janin,[1] many late nineteenth and early twentieth-century academics utilised knowledge production from Christian missions, notably by way of scholarly Orientalism (Dhorme 1952; Waché 1992). However, the history of this knowledge is also a history of representations: while missionary knowledge helped showcase the cultural and religious traditions of Eastern Christianity, what were the underlying motives and especially the consequences?

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This article examines the formulation and circulation of Eastern Christian knowledge on either side of the Mediterranean, especially on the basis of Catholic missionary archives and academic productions, the study of which is sometimes rooted in non-Anglophone academic traditions. The aim is to shed light on how knowledge relating to Eastern Christianity was assimilated in Europe, as well as the role missions played in this process, especially from the last third of the nineteenth century, when the institutions and instruments for the circulation of knowledge emerged.[2] This new knowledge was largely based on fieldwork conducted in the Middle East, particularly on manuscripts conserved in the monasteries, churches, congregational centres, missionary societies and patriarchates, and more generally in the literary, linguistic, archaeological, and cartographic heritage of Christian communities living there. Another objective is to address the circulations and transformations of this knowledge on either side of the Mediterranean: collected and developed in major European libraries and universities, it was integrated by the governance structures of churches, but quite often also returned to the space it originated from, where it was reappropriated and gave rise to patrimonial processes, notably alongside the sometimes tragic experiences of certain communities during the end of the Ottoman Empire and the establishment of new states. Christian missions, at the intersection of East and West, were at the heart of this dynamic.

2. The areas of influence of Christian missions in the Middle East: an overview

Beginning in the sixteenth century, an intensive Christian missionary effort flourished in the Middle East (Heyberger and Madinier 2011; Heyberger 1994). This deployment, which was initially Catholic, was organised via health and educational activities (Ozbek 2005). The arrival of Protestant and Orthodox missionaries in the nineteenth century transformed missions by expanding their operational scope to include a broad range of charitable endeavours, ranging from humanitarian emergencies to development and advocacy. This new momentum, which was diverse, competitive, and generally connected to one European diplomacy or another (Prudhomme 2004), nevertheless reveals structural religious values as well as specific strategic visions (Makdisi 2007; Verdeil 2013, 2017; Sharkey 2013; Verdeil et al. 2020). Missions contributed from the inside to the profound contemporary transformations experienced by Middle Eastern societies at the time (Hauser 2015; Sanchez Summerer 2009; Sharkey 2008; Friedrich et al. 2010; Verdeil 2011). They helped to accelerate the institutionalisation of economic and social life, especially through the creation of hospitals (Bourmaud 2012; Sanchez Summerer 2013), schools and universities, which became incubators for the intellectual and civil service milieu of the Ottoman Empire and its successor states (Verdeil 2004, 2005; Bocquet 2006; Turiano 2016b). As a result, missions cannot simply be reduced to a matter of religious conversion or proselytising (Okkenhaug and Sanchez Summerer 2020).

From the Ottoman period until World War II, the influence of missions initially translated on the local level into the appearance and even hardening of religious boundaries (Chatelard 2004; Sharkey 2008), along with the normalisation of practices of worship. While the process of confessionalisation partially resulted from the activity of political authorities, missionary activity was also a catalyst. Missionaries developed relations with governing states that were more or less conflictual. Public authorities, mindful of their sovereignty, looked upon them with suspicion, particularly when they became involved in political matters. At the same time, missionaries played on their own potential ambiguity, between their identification as foreign actors and their mission in the service of local populations, which were not limited to Christian communities. Both the ease with which they became established and the recognition of their churches proceeded from these complex relations.

World War I marked a break within this missionary chronology, with the closing of numerous missions. The establishment of post-Ottoman states brought about a redeployment of strategies: as missionaries were deliberately marginalised and even expelled by Kemalist authorities, their affinities with mandatory authorities actually included them within the administration of states under mandate, where they could serve as experts or counter-experts (Sanchez Summerer 2013). This functional position derived from a specific relationship to knowledge in these countries, whether it was

as teachers, specialists on the populations with whom they interacted, scholars, or researchers engaged in transhistoric study programs. One of the consequences was also an Arabisation and nationalisation of the clergy (Bourmaud and Sanchez Summerer 2019), in addition to an evolution of missionary strategies, notably by the Holy See (Prudhomme 1994; Verdeil 2001; Maggiolini 2012).

While it was to a great extent initiated by missionaries a half century earlier, only in the 1960s, at the Second Vatican Council and its wake, was there a genuine change of paradigm in the Catholic Church regarding the major and necessary contributions of Eastern traditions to the revitalisation of theology, the *aggiornamento* ('updating', meaning both internal spiritual renewal and external adaptation of Church laws and institutions) and the effort to restore Christian unity. At the same time, missionary work was reconsidered; the mission became a constituent element of the Church, and occurred in a dialogue between culture and faith, in which the announcement of the Gospel was not simply adapted to a given culture, but was instead embodied within these cultures. The cultures and message of the Church of Rome circulated, sustaining and interpenetrating one another. From Popes Paul VI to John Paul II, missionaries were encouraged to pursue the path of 'inculturation,' to live amid missionised populations and become steeped in their history and language.[3]

3. The Christian orient: between fantasised alterity, process of objectification, and practices of co-production

For missionaries, the 'Christian Orient' was one Orient among others within a dynamic of discursive construction, whose unilateral character was emphasised by Edward Said in *Orientalism* (1978). However, Said was criticised for limiting himself to the viewpoint of scholars and artists, thereby imposing unity onto diversity (Said 1985). Differentiating the 'Christian Orient' is a process that teaches us as much about its authors as it does about the numerous objects of which it consists. The expression especially characterises an Orient of missionaries and academic institutions, more so than an Orient of local Christian communities, which we know did not live in isolation, but rather in significant interaction within a multi-religious diversity (Heyberger 2003). The question that arises is therefore not so much determining whether the Christian Orient is an Orientalism, but rather identifying which areas are illuminated and which left in the dark when Saidian conceptions are applied to the Christian Orient.

The answer is clearer if we consider the Christian Orient less as a corpus and more as a convergence of actors. The positioning (social, cultural, and geographic) of actors in constructing the Orientality of knowledge gave rise to a vast literature following the publication of Said's *Orientalism*. What emerged is that the individuals observed could foil Orientalism in the sense of an external projection of knowledge, and that the overconfident pretensions to a monopoly over hermeneutics among European Orientalists had become common knowledge following the Renan – al-Afghani debate (1883) (Mitchell 1991; Keddie 1983; Sing 2017). The subjects and objects of knowledge were epistemological illusions that concealed a constant – and on the editorial level asymmetrical – effort toward the 'co-production of expertise' (Jasanoff 2004). The vague hope of understanding the Other under a microscope had had its day, of which those who mixed closely with Europeans were well aware. This was the case for Christian missions: the identification of Orientalist stereotypes circulating among their members firstly exposed them to a blaze of criticism from the communities they created or missionised (Bourmaud 2012, p. 147). The priority of abandoning methodologies founded on European standpoints became apparent according to varying chronologies, and turned into a question for practical missiology. Habits were long in dying, and missions did not all adopt the same organisational principles to govern relations between European missionaries, 'indigenous' missionaries, and missionised communities (e.g. Boulos 2016), although multiple conflicts led to early awareness in missionary circles regarding the repercussions of ethnically verticalised relations.

The Christian Orient was thus more a term adopted by a convergence of various actors – sharing certain intellectual propensities, but driven by their activities and experience – than an intellectual

project. Actor-network theory encourages us to see it as a side formed around positions in the 'question of the Orient' understood as a dispute (Latour 2012) – and as actor-strategists within this dispute – such as builders of empire like Lavigerie,[4] or magnetic figures with a concentration of documentary resources and academic connections, such as Louis Cheikho.[5]

The idea of a Christian Orient was one of the possible declensions of such a convergence, among a diverse range of priorities, some of which were epistemological and sought to organise knowledge on the Orient, and others more operational in nature. The tangled relations between l'Œuvre des Écoles d'Orient (later the Œuvre d'Orient; Legrand and Croce 2010), the White Fathers, and religious higher education institutions in the Middle East offer an illustration. While l'Œuvre was placed upon its foundation under the direction of Father Charles Lavigerie (at the time a professor of church history at the Sorbonne), with a dual objective of intellectual and religious transmission, it united efforts with a much larger purpose. Its close ties with the senior command of the navy (its first presidents were all admirals or vice admirals) provided a basis for action following the French expeditionary corps to Mount Lebanon in 1860.[6] The Jesuits of Syria inherited the humanitarian project conceived in this framework through the transfer of the Domaine Taanayel in 1864, in order to found an agricultural orphanage. Taanayel, which was expanded in 1907 with an observatory and placed under the control of the Jesuit Saint Joseph University, was part of a conception of humanitarian activity that had manifestations within a colonial context, such as the Boufarik/Our Lady of Africa agricultural orphanage founded in Algeria in the 1850s. This institution, which sought to offer spiritual supervision and professional guidance for the most disadvantaged by making them socially and economically independent, anticipated social Catholicism (Kersante 1886, p. 63-77). Father Félix Charmetant (1844-1921) was dispatched by Cardinal Lavigerie, at the time Archbishop of Algiers, to attend to the White Fathers orphanage at the Maison-Carrée (Algiers), and then to manage l'Œuvre d'Orient in Paris. This model was duplicated by replicating a 'missionary-humanitarian-colonial-academic complex' (Schayegh and Arsan 2015). A steady stream of references to the Christian Orient came at the same time: Saint-Marc Girardin mentioned it in the aftermath of the 1860 massacres to describe the contemporary situation of Eastern Christians (Girardin 1862, p. 253-259); beginning in 1875, Father Charmetant published *La Terre Sainte* (The Holy Land) for l'Œuvre des écoles d'Orient, a periodical whose subtitle presented it as a 'Journal of the Christian Orient.'[7] In both cases, the encouragement of Popes Pius IX and Leo XIII for the union of the Eastern Churches with Rome was an important factor in the emergence of this notion, together with the humanitarian purpose of Catholic missions.

Interest in Christianity in the Middle East, both historic and contemporary, united not only humanitarian and religious actors but also academic ones, based on the causes unfolding at the time. The products of missionary, humanitarian, elitist and intellectual circles in France gave priority either to the Eastern Churches, and thereby to the construction of a 'Christian East,' or alternatively to Islam. The Society of African Missions embodied this diversity. While the White Fathers showed an interest in Islam and Islamic-Christian relations, which has endured to the present through their activities in Rome and at the Church of Saint Anne in Jerusalem, they concentrated on Eastern Christians and their heritage. Humanitarian circumstances guided these various projects. If we consider the sociological diversity and disparate aims of these various actors, there emerges – like the 'vast reform network' of the same time period (Topalov 1999) – what could be called a vast network of solidarity with Eastern Christians. It was implicitly conservative, elitist, and limited to a Catholic social world, but asserted working-class affinities and was broad enough intellectually to bring together liberals as well as supporters of integral Catholicism, Gallicans and Ultramontanes, and later modernists and anti-modernists. One characteristic of this vast network was its capacity to move from the mobilisation to the production of knowledge. In doing so, it contributed to the academic recognition of Eastern Churches as subjects of study.

This led to myriad intellectual propensities, hence the utility of studying the intellectual productions of missionary circles in the Middle East in light of the preoccupations that united them and the interests they fashioned. The latter could be exegetical, historical, archaeological,

anthropological and even, as in the case of the *Survey of Western Palestine*, topographical for military purposes (Kamel 2015, p. 188). They contained a strong liturgical aspect, especially with regard to Eastern Churches. They could also be economic; the capitalist circles in Lyon (Perrin and David 2010), Marseille, Turin and Manchester were connected to the Middle East by their investments, as well as driven by a concern to preserve a traditional society apparently untouched by social questions. Conceptions of the Orient linked to these various centres of interest resulted not only in an intellectual mechanism of objectification, but also in the projection of preoccupations, some existing beforehand and some revealed by missionary experiences.

4. The Holy land: A singular space for the production of knowledge

Missionary efforts in the Middle East were closely connected to its ancient history. While this rereading is made against the backdrop of an Islamic empire's domination and its political, cultural and social heritage, to what extent was knowledge on the Middle East guided by the 'rediscovery' of the Holy Land in the nineteenth century? Missions made considerable contributions to developing a genealogy of knowledge connecting the Middle East, both ancient and biblical, with the present and European history. Yet they were not the only ones, as missionaries rubbed shoulders with diplomats, biblical scholars, archaeologists, artists and colonial officers. A new conception of the Holy Land took hold in the early nineteenth century, one that was connected to a reading of the territory no longer centred on moral or allegorical interpretations, but on a historical treatment of religion and the notion of historicism, beginning in 1880 with Friedrich von Schlegel and Novalis (Iggers 1995). Numerous studies seeking to retrace the history of the Bible through the intermediary of archaeology were developed based on this conception.[8]

Protestant and Anglican missionary fervour linked to the late eighteenth-century 'Evangelical Awakening' in favour of restoring the Jewish people to 'its' land in order to speed the coming of the Messiah was connected to the upholding of biblical paradigms in the face of theories of evolution (Porter 2004; Naili 2007). It prompted a certain production of knowledge whose goal was to 'document' the targeted populations. When reconsidered in this manner, fascination with the Holy Land made it central to missionary literature. In 1910, the German theologian Julius Richter, addressing the Board of the Congregational and Presbyterian Churches of America, retraced the work of Protestants in the Middle East, which was preceded in the nineteenth century by new British archaeological excavations to 'rediscover' the Holy Land, along with its implications for the entire region (Richter 1910; Grafton 2019; Grafton 2013; Friedrich et al. 2010; Marten and Tamcke 2006; Murre-van den Berg 2015; Okkenhaug et al. 2011; Sanchez Summerer and Zananiri 2021).

Greek Orthodox missionary initiatives were more discreet for three main reasons: the weak financial and political position of the Greek Orthodox Patriarchate; the custody of holy places, which remained the patriarchate's essential objective in the area; and the development of Greek nationalism as a focal point for patriarchal discourse, despite the mobilisation of Orthodox Arabs (Papastathis 2020). The primarily national interests of various Orthodox initiatives, even halting ones, explain their absence of unity, as well as a production of knowledge that was more prominent in Russian (and relayed in Arabic and vice versa) than in Greek (Mahameed 2015). The production of holy places through buildings and other landmarks, which unfolded according to different temporalities, created a tenuous bond between Christian history and the present, with the Middle East becoming the theatre of eschatological expectations, in which Palestine had a prominent place as the 'Holy Land' (Murre-van den Berg 2010; Bar-Yosef 2005).

5. Methods and protocols for gathering knowledge

Christian missionaries who had become Orientalists contributed abundantly to implementing evolutionary methods in the Middle East, which they described, like the son of the Alsatian Protestant missionary Philip Baldensperger, as the 'Immoveable East' (Baldensperger 1913). However, this

evolutionist perspective was combined with, and even prematurely yielded to, a culturalist perspective, well before the emergence of anthropological research attempting to reconstruct the process of social integration within the unity of specific 'cultures,' such as that of Franz Boas and Ruth Benedict (Deliège 2006, 137).

The specific case of Palestine demonstrates the vivacity of these intellectual productions, the local competition they engendered, and the circulation of knowledge between institutions. Most missionaries were funded by international institutions with local representatives. In Jerusalem, there was a plethora of institutions in the early twentieth century, including the Palestine Exploration Fund, l'École biblique et archéologique de Jérusalem, the American Palestine Exploration Society, the American Colony, the Assumptionists of Notre Dame de France, the Franciscans of the Custody, the Russians of the Imperial Orthodox Palestine Society, etc. Beginning in the 1860s, these institutions launched excavation and exploration campaigns that involved geographers, linguists and archaeologists. The scholars of various missionary institutions had close relationships, and despite a certain amount of competition, methods and knowledge could circulate from one institution to another. Discoveries, especially archaeological ones, were quickly shared and discussed. This raises the need for a relational history of orders, congregations, and missionary societies in the Middle East. In the late nineteenth century, the question of investigative methods became a subject of debate and exchange among missionaries, who sought to establish a protocol for study revolving around field observation and archaeological excavations, epigraphic tracings, sketches, interviews, and the use of photography.

The case of Jordan helps us grasp the cultural, political, and social implications of the development of this knowledge, as well as this growing appeal of ethnography. In the late nineteenth century, Ottoman Transjordan was associated with the Christian Holy Land, and was the subject of expeditions and excavations from early the twentieth century onwards (Musil 1907, 1908). The territory was equated with biblical Edom and Moab, due in part to a major archaeological discovery:[9] in Diban in 1868, the Alsatian missionary Father Klein discovered the Mesha Stele, also known as the Moabite Stone, which bears an inscription including the name of a figure from the Old Testament. It was used to 'prove' the historicity of the Bible and to shed light on its genesis. The scholar Melchior de Vogüe spoke of 'texts illuminated by monuments' (Sargenton-Galichon 1904). The attention paid to heritage and archaeology endured in the mandatory states, linked between the 1920s and 1950s to the government of Transjordan's encouragement of the development of tourist infrastructure. The first initiatives were launched by private companies such as Thomas Cook, which offered visits to archaeological sites as part of trips to the Holy Land. This period was marked by biblical imperialism, an approach that remained central to British policy (Roberts 2010, p. 59). The production of guides for the Holy Land dated back to the nineteenth century, but flourished after World War II. They help grasp the evolution of biblical studies, as well as how this translated to topography. At the same time, in the 1950s Jordan promoted biblical tourism, in the context of its annexation of the West Bank and East Jerusalem and the holy places located there.

Photography also helped fashion a biblical imagination of the region. Research on Palestine has shown the influence that biblical representations of the territory and its populations had on understanding local societies from the late nineteenth century onward (Fournié and Riccioli 1996; Çelik 2015). In the specific example of missionary photography, the images were related to the representational world of photographers, which bore the mark of their religious belonging, academic and scientific influences, and methodological point of view (Neveu and Sanchez Summerer 2021). The Dominican Father Antonin Jaussen (1871-1962) is typical: through using lightweight, portable photographic equipment, he could take unposed photographs, such as processions of pilgrims from Jerusalem to the shrine of Nabi Musa. These images contrast with class poses from missionary schools, or wide-angle biblical landscapes, such as those by the Assumptionists. It was the use of photography as 'proof' from a scientific perspective – rather than as an ideological tool for projecting perceptions onto a given territory – that marked the major methodological turning point of the late nineteenth century (Zananiri 2016).

Jaussen's visual perception echoed his ambitions as an ethnographer. Starting with the publication of his *Coutumes des Arabes au Pays de Moab,* he sought to adopt ethnographic methods by detailing his protocol of study. Cyrille Jalabert has emphasised the paradox of this approach, which claimed to break away from biblical exegesis, but nevertheless referred primarily to its practitioners rather than pioneers of ethnographic studies, such as Edward W. Lane (Jalabert 1999). Jaussen's work is therefore at the intersection of both a nascent ethnography and recollections of the production of biblical and Orientalist knowledge. This is especially reflected in his chosen topics, such as Bedouin life and tribalism. This ethnographic work marked an important turning point in the École biblique's academic activity, and more generally that of the missionary studies that increased after the Great War. Use of ethnography went hand in hand with the study of folklore, which had developed in missionary circles since the early twentieth century. The representatives of this shift included Hilma Granqvist, Gustaf Dalman, Claude Reignier Conder and Philip Baldensperger, whose primary aim was to rediscover the people of the Bible by studying the folklore of the Palestinian peasantry.

Driven by a social and humanitarian principle, this ethnography was coupled with academic legitimacy, as illustrated by the work of the Jesuit Henry Habib Ayrout (1907-1969). In 1938, this Egyptian of Greek-Catholic faith published his doctoral thesis entitled *Mœurs et coutumes des fellahs*, which was written in French and completed at the University of Lyon, and is representative of the ethnographic approaches that began in the nineteenth century with Jaussen among the Dominicans and Michel Jullien among the Jesuits. He especially emerged as the spokesperson for folkloric knowledge (in the romantic sense of the term) in rural areas, documenting their traditions, whilst also firmly committed to improving the living conditions of the inhabitants of the Ṣaʿīd or Upper Egypt. His missionary approach was tinged with a social justice conceived in the light of academic know-how, and was developed in French, at a time when this language was meant to serve the expansion of Catholicism in the Ṣaʿīd (Abecassis 2000, p. 87). This earned him local admiration, as well as genuine support from French and Near Eastern provinces. This was demonstrated, among others, by the creation in 1941 of the Catholic Association for the Schools of Egypt, which he immediately registered with the Ministry of Social Affairs (Abecassis 2000, p. 576), with support from Father Christophe de Bonneville, Vice-Provincial for the Middle East Province (Prudhomme and Saaïdia 2005). The work of Tawfik Canaan (1882-1964) and Aref al-Aref (1892-1973) in Palestine also bears mentioning. Missionaries belonged to these intellectual circles, and influenced local academic production during the interwar period.

6. Circulation, *entre-deux*, expertise

In this environment, intellectual relations between Europeans and indigenous people were often asymmetrical, and demonstrate elements of an uncomfortable 'missionary encounter' (Comaroff and Comaroff 2008, p. 54-59). The resulting intellectual exchange nevertheless occurred in shared fields of interest: understanding was produced not only through elements of shared education on both sides, and even rivalry on the ground with European style education, but through shared interests as well, including economic ones. The ties between modern scholars from the Middle East and missionaries have been explored from an intellectual and academic point of view, but rarely an economic one. However, just as missionaries were aware of the professional considerations of their educational initiatives, their relations had an economic substrate, one that generally remains understudied. For instance, Charles Corm was not only a former student of the Jesuits of Syria, writer, and humanitarian entrepreneur, but also a businessman (Jackson 2015; Tanielian 2017, Kindle 4647–4800). The interface between intellectual circles and money-making linked to European investment in religious institutions calls for further study. The recruitment and education of missionaries nevertheless led to more structural and structuring convergence, both sociological and economic.

In conceiving of these converging interests, it is useful to recall that in the West, ties within missionary circles generally preceded departure for the mission. Western missionary actors were often

from the same families, a phenomenon well-known among American Protestants: the Bliss, Dodd, Post, and Bush families formed enduring missionary and intellectual traditions (VanDeMark, 2012). A similar phenomenon can be found among British missionaries, even though this image is blurred by the arrival of colonial civil servants and militaries en masse in 1917. Estelle Blyth, the daughter of the first Anglican bishop of Jerusalem, for example, served as secretary of the Palestine Exploration Fund from 1914 to 1918. The same trend was present among Catholic missionaries despite clerical celibacy, for example with Christophe and Geoffroy de Bonneville among the Jesuits, in addition to Louis and Henri Jalabert (Libois, 2009). The phenomenon was partly due to the early cultural and linguistic familiarity provided by mission life, with a certain social reproduction occurring as well. Many missionary organisations preferred recruiting personnel from reliable families who already had experience – and hence ideas, including preconceived ones – of the field. Family missionary antecedents provided knowledge of the problems of missions and missionised societies.

If the family was instrumental for missions to the Middle East, it was because the social and religious organisation of societies was viewed from a missiological point of view as a dual compartmentalisation to be overcome: confinement within the private sphere, and if not possible, then in a world involving the most minimal communication with men outside the family, as imposed upon elite Muslim women by respectability; and distrust of missionaries. Female missionaries, many of whom were single, entered the missionary field as wives and missionaries, and were trained and directed toward social spaces unreached by preaching. Until the evolution of criteria of respectability, which appeared particularly in cities during the first half of the twentieth century, female missionaries were leading sources of information for missions regarding the social life and conditions of Middle Eastern women. The idea that women could 'open doors' became a commonplace in missionary literature, with the development from the 1880s onward of an internationalist and evangelical feminism that paid particular attention to the condition of women outside Europe (see for example the Woman's Christian Temperance Union; Tyrell, 1991, p. 63).

It is significant that missionary women were practically absent from the scholarly literature published on the Middle East. This can be explained by the recruitment and discipline of women's missionary congregations in Catholicism, but it is counterintuitive in evangelical Protestant circles, which produced charismatic international activists such as Frances Willard (Tyrell 12-26). Was this caused by a shift in focus? Interest in the Middle East and its history, within a missionary environment such as that of the WCTU, was real as well as instrumental. It often involved finding scriptural inspiration for reforms of society and of women's condition in the present. Women's condition, especially that of Muslim women, was a subject of abundant reflection for woman missionaries, who broached the topic anew and characterised it in culturally (and often colonialistically) specific terms. Exceptions came late during the interwar period, and were conformist with regard to international agendas. They were born on the periphery of the missionary world in circles that supported them, rather than within missions themselves: the sociological study of women's condition in the Muslim world by the American teacher and leading figure of the American YWCA, Ruth Woodsmall, only began in the 1920s, with participation from social science specialists from the American University of Beirut (Woodsmall 1936), at a time when the international status of women had already crystallised the concerns of the social section of the League of Nations (Robinson 2020). The erasure of missionary women in academic production on the Middle East reflects the hierarchical gender relations that characterised the organisation of most missions to the area, even though they sometimes offered escapes from the pre-mission patriarchal order (Gabry-Thienpont and Neveu 2021). The irony is that some of these women, such as Karen Jeppe (Gzoyan 2019; Watenpaugh 2010) or Bodil Biørn (Okkenhaug 2015), are major memorial figures for Christian missions to the Middle East for their humanitarian engagement but not their academic work.

Until now, we have mentioned the factors promoting social coalescence that were specific to Western missionary circles. But what of Eastern '*hommes de l'entre-deux*' or '*passeurs*' (in-between men), 'actors facilitating the circulation of norms' (Geeraert 2020; Heyberger and Verdeil 2009).

They were not part of European missionary circles, but belonged to another, more limited, pool within local churches. The same family names once again appear, either due to demographic weakness in the case of Protestantism, or due to reluctance and institutional obstacles to working with Latin clergymen in the case of united churches. These factors reinforced the genealogical element in recruitment, for instance among the Yazigi, Bustani and later Sayigh families, not all of whom were suppliers of missionaries, but some of whose members collaborated intellectually with missions and established lasting ties. An element of ethno-localism intervened through this connection with missionaries, and later with European scholars. Native *passeurs* concentrated attention on the localities where they could gain admission, beginning with their place of origin or members within their intellectual circle. The articles by the Arab Palestinian doctor and ethnographer Tawfik Canaan, who was raised and educated in a Lutheran missionary environment, were largely fuelled by accounts and observations obtained not only from his coreligionists, but also more generally from the Christian villages of Palestine, especially the places of origin for his intellectual 'circle' of historians and ethnographers, some of whom had been educated at Protestant missionary schools (Tamari 2004). The result was a chiaroscuro image of Palestine, and of the Middle East more generally, that grew out of the networks created by the proximity of missionaries to the places where the faithful of Eastern churches concentrated, as well as by the social capital of those around them, who were often village notables.

7. Knowing the christian 'Other': clerical training and ecumenism

The *passeurs* in these processes of reception and reformulation included local scholars who played a fundamental role during the first half of the twentieth century in elucidating and diffusing new Eastern Christian knowledge. We can cite, for example, Addai Scher,[10] Louis Cheikho, Ephrem Rahmani[11] and Alphonse Mingana,[12] who were famous for their libraries, lengthy volumes, journals, and sometimes for the study centres they helped to found. The same was true for many ecclesiastics and Catholic scholars who wanted to bring Christian churches closer to one another by promoting reciprocal knowledge. For example, Jean-François-Joseph Charon (1878-1959) dedicated his life to Eastern, Arab, and later Slavic Christianity (Croce 2007, col. 670-678). Despite being French and Latin, in 1902 he was ordained as a priest in Damascus by Patriarch Cyril VIII Geha. He joined the Melkite patriarchal clergy of Antioch, taking the name Cyril Korolevsky. He spent a number of years at the Greek Catholic Patriarchal College in Beirut while working on the history of Melkite patriarchates, before turning toward the Russian and Slavic world in an effort to advance his calling for the union of churches. Even though his sojourn in the Christian East was brief – in Lebanon and later in Central Europe[13] – his autobiography bears witness to multiple aspects of an evangelism of knowledge and rapprochement with Eastern Christian churches, Catholic communities in particular. He had permanent ties with Cardinal Eugène Tisserant, the philologist, curator of Oriental manuscripts at the Vatican Library, and later Prefect of the Congregation for the Oriental Churches (Fouilloux 2011), and met with many representatives of Greek, Arab and Slavic Catholicism and Orthodoxy. His recognised expertise in Greek-Slavic ecclesiastical matters – at the Vatican Library beginning in 1919, which he enriched with manuscripts, printed matter and periodicals, and later at the Congregation for the Oriental Churches – was supplemented by his various books, chief among them his lengthy memoirs (Croce 2013; 2007).[14] At the dicastery entrusted with Oriental matters, he successfully imposed a number of his proposals, notably with regard to the training of Eastern clergy, such as eliminating many 'Latinisms', for he believed seminaries had to 'be Oriental in all respects' (Croce 2007, vol. IV, 1746, doc. 540).

Some institutions played a specific role in training the Eastern clergy, and gradually linked European and Eastern actors, such as the Saint Anne Seminary for the Catholic Church of the Holy Land, which was established under the leadership of the White Fathers in the mid-nineteenth century for the Melkite clergy, or the Syriac Abu Ghosh seminary, which was created by the Benedictines in the 1870s (Trimbur 2020). Similarly, the Greek Catholic Patriarchal College in Beirut trained Melkite

clergy, while Maronite clergy were trained in Qurnat Shahwan. Pope Benedict XV (1914-1922), who led a policy of centralisation and Romanisation of the Church and its institutions, was also behind an 'Orientalisation' of Roman institutions, through the creation in 1917 of a new dicastery as well as an institute for intellectual training, whose plans dated back to the late nineteenth century (Pettinaroli 2015, p. 360; Farrugia 2009). The Congregation for the Oriental Churches, which unlike the majority of other dicasteries was directly presided over by the pope rather than a prefect, had authority over all matters relating to Oriental churches, while the mission of the Pontifical Oriental Institute, conceived as a 'home for advanced study of Oriental matters,'[15] was to study and present Eastern Christianity, as well as to train Eastern Catholics and Latin missionaries destined for the Orient. Pius XI (1922-1939) continued this institutional endeavour by launching the sensitive project of codifying Eastern canon law, which was resumed and revamped after the Second Vatican Council (Coco 2013). However, falling victim to the 'Russian mirage,' namely the hope of converting Orthodox Russia and the Slavic world thanks to the end of the imperial regime and Christian persecution under the Soviet regime, the papacy ultimately engaged very little with the churches of the Middle East during the interwar period.

The primary aim of this policy remained Christian unity from a Roman perspective of a return of the separated, which was far from actual ecumenism or unity through the gathering of various churches. As part of this unionist strategy, Oriental Catholic Churches had to favour rapprochement. To this end, Rome wagered on the knowledge and preservation of their original rites (Fouilloux 1982), because they were related to the ancient time of an undivided Church (or at least conceived of as such), and because they were seen as ensuring an immutability of sorts that shielded these churches from modernist influences. It was in this same spirit that the scholarly study of separated Christianities and their history, doctrines, and liturgy was encouraged, in an effort to better distinguish among them, and with a view to their rapprochement (Pettinaroli 2021). Slavic Christianity, and Russian in particular, quickly assumed a prominent role in this conception of the reunion of churches. The Arab East was simultaneously relegated to a subsidiary role, and seen through the prism of the need to preserve a Christian presence in the Middle East (Levant 2021).

Within the more clearly ecumenical movement, which was relaunched after the Great War, the Ecumenical Patriarchate of Constantinople expressed an early desire for rapprochement. In January 1920, its holy synod sent to 'all of the Churches of Christ throughout the world' an encyclical inviting them to renounce mutual suspicion and intra-Christian proselytism, to establish and develop contacts in order to improve mutual knowledge, and to build a 'League of Churches' taking inspiration from the recent League of Nations (Gvosdavo-Golienko 1921, p. 461-470). Rome did not react, although Anglicans launched an 'Appeal to All Christians' from Lambeth (Chadwick 1989). The document, which is clearly ecumenical, took shape in a context of attempted rapprochement between Anglicans and Orthodox from the late nineteenth century onward, which had increased since the end of WW1 due to the persecution of the Russian Church and the Christians of Asia Minor, with the help of British imperialism in the Middle East (Tetrjakewitsch 1990). In 1921, the patriarch recognised Anglican ordinations, a precondition to any Anglo-Orthodox union, followed by the patriarchs of Jerusalem and the Church of Cyprus (Wenger 1954). The movement for unity among Christians gained a firm foothold in the Middle East during these years. A series of regional conferences beginning in 1924 prepared the way for the constitution of a formal organisation, the Near East Christian Council, which initially consisted of Anglicans and Protestants, and gradually integrated the Orthodox, before becoming the Near East Christian Council in the 1960s. The organisation also stood out for its early engagement in Muslim–Christian dialogue (Dorman 1962, p. 42–49; Gordon Melton 2002, p. 1912–1913).

What links existed between missions and ecumenical research in the Middle East? Protestant missions developed in the nineteenth century independently from one another, and did so in a spirit of rivalry. The sense of a shared destiny, the need to coordinate non-European activities, and awareness of the advantages of rapprochement gave rise to both the World Missionary

Conference, held in Edinburgh in 1910, and the organisation that grew out of it in 1921, the International Missionary Council (Ross 2021). Its first congress met in Jerusalem in 1928, and provided an opportunity to establish brotherly ties with the Orthodox churches, as well as to take into account the vitality of local churches and their increased responsibility in governing missions, especially in the Middle East where the border between the Christian West and mission territory had always been porous. In 1961, it integrated the Ecumenical Council of Churches.

During the twentieth century, ecumenism, and to a lesser extent Muslim–Christian dialogue, emerged as a missionary priority. Beginning in the 1960s, Arab churches became a preferred site of experimentation for Roman ecumenism, which focused on the rediscovery and emphasis of their liturgical heritage, as well as a search for a common prayer. There was growing interest in interreligious dialogue beginning in the 1930s, an effort that took hold after the Second Vatican Council as an academic topic and mode of action in the field, leading to studies on the theological content of this rapprochement and Islamology (Chamussy 2008; Dussert-Galinat 2013; Caucanas 2015). Research institutions accompanied this development, such as the PISAI (Pontifical Institute for Arabic and Islamic Studies) in Rome, created by the White Fathers, which in 1975 began publishing the journal *Islamochristiana*, or on the Muslim side with the founding of the Aal al-Bayt Institute in Jordan, which organised numerous congresses and publications.

8. From training to intellectual debates

How did new knowledge on Middle Eastern societies, and more specifically on Christian cultural practices, circulate from the late nineteenth to the early twenty-first century? The missionary redeployment of the nineteenth century coincided with the Ottoman Empire's *Tanzimāt* (reforms), which called for educational reform in order to train competent and loyal men of state. Part of the intelligentsia was educated in missionary schools and universities. In connection with the reforms of the educational system, and in an effort to counter this control over teaching and training, Ottoman authorities developed their own institutions and curricula, especially by emphasising the human sciences and languages, particularly after 1876.

The development of missionary schools was gradual, and involved all territories in the Middle East (Verdeil 2001 and 2017). In 1870, American missions operated 250 institutions in Syria and Anatolia. In 1906, the secretary-general of the Mission laïque française (French Secular Mission) estimated the number of enrolled students in congregationist institutions at 35,000. These schools were for both girls and boys. Professional instruction and boarding schools also developed, such as the Daughters of Charity in Beirut (Hauser 2015), with a silk spinning mill, or the professional schools of the Salesians in Egypt (Turiano 2016a).

These schools were places where knowledge was developed and diffused, with missionary universities extending this function. Among the latter, medical schools such as the Syrian Protestant College and Saint Joseph University in Beirut reflected these triple objectives, namely to establish knowledge, shape minds, and professionalise practice. The number of Muslim students in these institutions rose over time, with the intellectuals educated in missionary schools greatly contributing to the Nahda movement. The Nahda was accompanied by a desire to reform and modernise the Arabic language. These linguistic concerns echoed and responded to those of missionaries; while the latter diffused European languages, this was only one aspect of their relationship to languages. With the support of Protestant and later Catholic missionaries, modernised and standardised forms of vernacular languages served the religious and educational objectives of missionaries, especially in training an Arabic clergy. They were also mediums for proto-nationalist demands by certain groups (Bourmaud and Sanchez Summerer 2019). The use of Arabic was encouraged by missionaries, all the more so when it became possible to print texts and liturgies. Missions thus contributed to maintaining and diffusing the languages and writing of local

communities (Syriac, Coptic, Armenian, etc.), as well as enriching and transmitting the Arabic language (Murre-van den Berg et al. 2020).

Still within this *nahḍawī* dynamic, the development of scholarly societies or institutions dedicated to producing knowledge was accompanied by a multiplication of specialised newspapers and journals, the development of printing in Arabic characters, and by photography studios. For instance, printing of the *Revue Biblique* started in 1892 at the initiative of Father Lagrange, two years after the creation of the École biblique. The journal took special interest in commentaries on biblical texts and the publication of tracings or biblical archaeology from Palestine and the surrounding area. The Palestine Exploration Fund published its *Palestine Exploration Quarterly*, which was deeply marked by millenarist influence. Saint Joseph University published a newspaper in Arabic, *al-Bashir*, as well as a journal, *al-Mashriq*. Beyond knowledge, the readerships of these publications also sketch out the borders between social, religious, and political groups.

Distribution took on growing importance with the development of transportation by land (railways, roads suitable for motor vehicles) and sea (steamships, the Suez Canal). Technology, methods, ideas, knowledge and texts circulated massively and quickly on both side of the Mediterranean (Kozma et al. 2015). Volumes of the Bible translated into local languages were widely diffused via communication channels and missionary itineraries. As the figure of the intellectual took hold, clubs and cultural societies organised conferences and evenings that became spaces for erudition and debate. For instance, the fathers of the *École biblique* in Jerusalem held frequent conferences in Palestine and Europe to present their discoveries, using the projection of images taken during their expeditions to support their demonstrations, though the majority of the audience remained European.

World War I brought an end to this dynamic of knowledge production, as most missionary orders had to leave the area, and then redefine their strategies upon their return. The production of knowledge remained a central concern, as shown by the creation of the Dominican Institute for Oriental Studies in Cairo (1953), or the liveliness of the Oriental Library in Beirut. Arab intellectuals, figures of the *entre-deux*, assumed an increasingly important role within these institutions. With expertise taking root internationally, missionaries occasionally became experts or counter-experts for Mandate institutions and representatives (Bourmaud et al. 2020). While mandatory powers were often seen as offering support to the missionary enterprise, Christian individuals and congregations also had to contend with representatives from the area's newly-created states. The Nahda movement continued in a context of expanding Arab nationalism as well as constraints to mobility imposed by borders, giving prominence to the figure of the intellectual. Research on the close ties between these local intellectuals and missionaries remains patchy.

The second half of the twentieth century was marked by decolonisation and wars, the creation of the State of Israel, Arab nationalism, and the growth of political Islam. In this context, different processes (the affirmation of identity by Christian communities, increased local recruitment by missions, revision of religious barriers) revitalised the considerations and mechanisms relating to the circulation of Eastern Christian knowledge. In post-independence states, certain missionary institutions had to close, such as the Baghdad College of American Jesuits. Mission representatives gradually oriented their activities toward humanitarian work, notably welcoming refugees. They collaborated with and served as experts for UN institutions such as UNRWA and the High Commissioner for Refugees, as well as faith-based NGOs such as Caritas (Okkenhaug and Sanchez Summerer 2020). With greater humanitarian involvement, the content of knowledge evolved, leaving more space for quantification and inventories. The productions also gradually addressed sponsors, and oriented their content strategically in an effort to show the relevance of their activity on the ground.

The evolving character of this production of knowledge on the Middle East, in terms of method and content, implicitly raises the complex question of its reception, as well as the mark it made on the region's societies. While ties with certain intellectuals of the Nahda have been illuminated, the broader question of how this knowledge shaped and continues to shape research from (and about) the region still remains to be untangled (for example Hilma Granqvist on rural Palestine).

The mobilisation of missionary writings as sources in the humanities and social sciences was debated by the region's intellectuals, alternatively being considered as an essential reference, as tinged with the ideological biases of their time, and as an unusable sources given how much these biases altered perception of territories and societies. What actual influence did these productions have on the self-representations of the area's societies?

9. Missionary project and memorial constructions

Finally, missionary initiatives were also linked to dynamics of cultural and heritage valorisation. As such, they were closely involved in implementing the patrimonialisation process according to conceptions and processes that, like the notion of the 'Christian Orient,' should be examined in light of Saidian Orientalism (Said 1978) . While ecclesiastics helped implement Orients that were differentiated, based on a repertoire of characteristics more often imaginary than real (Vatin 2011, p. 7), the time of a unilateral vision of North–South interactions – such as seeing missionaries solely as agents of cultural domination (among others) via religion – had passed. The close ties established with local actors at sites of missionary activity was reciprocal, with the 'cultural use of the religious' (Boissevain and Isnart 2017) in connection with this activity offering a preferred field of study.

'The relationship that European and North American societies maintained with the monuments and memory of the past was based on linking what was seen as a collective heritage with identified and legitimate national groups' (Isnart 2016). At a time of emerging nationalism and reforms at the turn of the twentieth century, missionary activities in the Middle East brought believers together (more than converting them) through patrimonial awareness. Clearly built according to ethnocentric referents, this 'linking what was seen as a collective heritage' was nevertheless well received on the local level, with respect to both its material and immaterial aspects. Music was one of the elements involved in processes of patrimonialisation. In a period marked by the deployment of protocols for study and conservation, the Jesuit missionaries Jules Blin and Louis Badet, in 1888 and 1899 respectively, transcribed the hymns from Saint Basil's mass, one of the three liturgies of Coptic worship, with a view to conserving them and teaching them to seminarians of the Coptic Catholic Seminary (Gabry 2009). The introductions from the two collections inform us of this dual objective, and invokes the unique character of these hymns, which 'do not appear to have […] a foreign physiognomy or appearance' (Blin 1888, introduction). Badet also evokes the 'special cachet' (1899, introduction) of liturgical hymns. Setting out from the Orientalist principle of cultural continuity, and thereby justifying the indispensability of musical notation to preserve the hymns from outside influence, Blin and Badet transcribed all the hymns in order to conserve them for posterity (Gabry-Thienpont 2022). If we pursue this example, noting the process at work, this desire for exhaustiveness helped systematise notation as the method of patrimonialisation for music, from which Raġeb Muftāḥ (1898-2001) later drew inspiration. An instigator of the patrimonialisation of Coptic liturgical hymns, this Egyptian musicologist and specialist on Coptic musical heritage defended the Orientalist premise of cultural continuity. He devoted his life to preserving these hymns, essentially through musical notation and recording, by asserting the pharaonic heritage of the Coptic church. With the British musician Ernest Newlandsmith, Muftāḥ compiled the liturgical hymns into sixteen volumes of previously unpublished transcriptions, which were produced between 1927 and 1936; the originals are held at the Library of Congress, with a copy at the Institute of Coptic Studies in Cairo. The works of the two missionaries were obviously not the only sources of inspiration for Muftāḥ, who also recorded the first 78s of Coptic hymns for the Congress of Arabic Music in 1932. The first of their kind, these Jesuits missionary transcriptions prompted systematic use of musical notation to defend a prestigious legitimacy, history and anteriority, one that was largely fantasised.

The missionary endeavour thus offers new illustrations for inter-Orientalism as presented by Vatin (2011, p. 12). Inter-Orientalism refers to the notion of an Orient created by the Orient (Pouillon and Vatin 2011), in other words of an inner Orientalism, which is both the recovery and recreation of a fantasy Orient consisting of the same commonplaces as those in the Orientalism as defined by Said

in 1978, but designed to fuel nationalist hopes and local cultural identities. It differs from Ussama Makdisi's notion of 'Ottoman Orientalism' to the extent that the latter claims to shed an 'Oriental' but detached light on cultural tropes that it rejects from a more 'civilised' perspective, that of the reformed and educated part of the Empire, while inter-Orientalism works through appropriating and showcasing these tropes, in which nationalism becomes grounded. In a circulatory relation of exchange, Muftāḥ collaborated throughout his life with musicians and musicologists from Egypt (including Michael Ghattas, his successor at the Institute of Coptic Studies) and abroad (especially the American Martha Roy and the Hungarian Margit Toth, with whom he transcribed and published all the hymns from the liturgy of Saint Basil with the American University in Cairo Press in 1998). They all worked to legitimise their patrimonial and academic processes of transcribing and recording hymns by starting out from the same Orientalist topos, namely the great antiquity of hymns of the Coptic rite, which remained unchanged in nature for centuries – a premise that remains very persistent in current texts on these hymns, even though nothing proves such continuity on the musicological level (Gabry-Thienpont 2013).

Through the musical example of the Coptic liturgy, these inter-Orientalist considerations illustrate that the missionary endeavour was involved in cultural and patrimonial fields, by combining the 'emotional mobilisation' and 'historical-cultural rationalisation' of the past (Hervieu-Léger 1993). By concentrating on certain material and immaterial elements specific to Eastern liturgies (liturgical music, painting, icons, architecture, etc.), missionaries were struck by the potential cultural uses of religion, and their connection to the societies in which they were established. The approaches that were pursued – sometimes in isolation due to their particular erudition or specialisation – were nevertheless not without their consequences, as demonstrated by the example of Coptic music.

This patrimonial awareness and the principle of the preservation of knowledge were connected to the creation of bibliographical and archival collections. What has become of these collections today? Some remain carefully maintained, while others have fallen into difficult circumstances for lack of financial and human resources. There is much concern regarding their future, as seen today regarding the libraries of the Franciscan Centre of Christian Oriental Studies and the Jesuit School of the Holy Family in Cairo. At the School of the Holy Family, the library, which includes a substantial bibliography on Coptic, Muslim, and contemporary Egypt as well as more general works intended for students, manuscripts, invaluable prints, and archives on the history of the Jesuits in Egypt (and, incidentally, the manuscript for musical transcriptions of the hymns from the *khulagī*, the Coptic missal, by Father Blin, annotated by the hand of Father Badet), was formatted and organised by Father Maurice Martin. In his turn, Father Jacques Masson took over the archival collection, which he held with an iron fist. The last French Jesuit in Egypt, Masson passed away in 2018, leaving a great deal of uncertainty regarding the future of the library and its invaluable contents, with respect to both on-site and visiting researchers, as well as the school's students. In the Cairo neighbourhood of Mūskī, among the Franciscans, the same concerns absorb Father Vincent Mistrih, who is of a very honourable age, making him extremely pessimistic regarding the future of the Franciscan Centre of Christian Oriental Studies, which was founded in 1954 at the request of the Custody of the Holy Land, and whose abundant collections are devoted to Eastern Christianities. When the founders are no longer with us, there arises the simple question of conservation. Who will attend to such collections? Should these centres of erudition and their holdings remain on site, or should they be taken apart and sent piece by piece elsewhere? If so, to whom and to what ends?

Beyond this thorny question, processes for patrimonial conservation and preservation are also connected to a desire for social action through the arts and culture. Music, painting, sculpture, and other artistic markers of alterity, both presumed and perceived, have sustained many Orientalist fantasies. But they have also and especially accompanied the missionary project from its beginnings. 'True faith must be accompanied by social justice, culture, and the liberation of the disadvantaged from all forms of slavery,' wrote the Egyptian Father William Sidhom in the dedication to his book on the history of the Jesuit presence in Garagos, a small village in Upper Egypt (2018). This presence was

embodied by Fathers Stéphane de Montgolfier and Maurice de Feynol from 1946 to 1967. Sidhom, claiming the heritage of these two Fathers, affirmed the social and cultural heritage, from treks in the desert to film projections, that he received from a very young age in this village, a heritage that he relies on today as part of his social and cultural engagement with Cairene youth. The missionary endeavour must be observed in light of its cultural implications: missionaries worked to produce an 'Oriental' knowledge using their ethnographic, cultural, and artistic approaches, even if it meant (re)defining their outlines.

Exploring the role of missions and missionaries in constructing and circulating knowledge on and in the Orient raises a wide range of questions on the representations produced, their potential reappropriations, and their social mark over the *temps long* of these practices. The study of articulations of this 'apostolate of knowledge' – with the two pillars of the missionary calling, teaching and health – can provide a better understanding of the mechanisms that reinforced or revised religious barriers, as well as the processes of patrimonialisation and affirmation of belonging among local communities in the Middle East. This implicitly raises the questions of the preservation of important archival, textual, visual and audio collections, along with their memorial uses. The latter give rise to questions of an epistemological nature for contemporary researchers, who often find themselves in the situation of archivists entrusted with preserving certain collections and compiling this knowledge. If such reflections on missionary knowledge shed light on 'missionary Orientalism,' and contribute to the revising of Occidentocentric paradigms, it also helps illuminate the contemporary internationalisation of Christianity, as well as the need for a decompartmentalised and transnational approach to such phenomena.

Notes

1. Entry for *Raymond Janin (August 31, 1882–July 12, 1972)*, in *Revue des Études Byzantines*, t. 30, 1972, p. 3.
2. This article partially reproduces the introduction from a French-language work published by MisSMO (*Christian Missions and Societies in the Middle East: Organizations, Identities, Patrimonialization [Nineteenth-Twenty-first Centuries]*) international research program, forthcoming from the Collection de l'École française de Rome: *In partibus fidelium. Missions du Levant et connaissance de l'Orient chrétien (XIXe–XXIe s.)*, 2022.
3. *Ad Gentes,* conciliar decree on the mission activity of the Church, 07.12.1965; Paul VI, *Populorum progressio*, encyclical 'on the development of peoples,' 26th March 1967; John Paul II, *Redemptoris Missio*, encyclical 'on the permanent validity of the missionary mandate 7th December 1990.
4. Bishop of Nancy Charles Martial Allemand Lavigerie (1825–1892) was named Archbishop of Algiers in 1867, and later founded the Pères Blancs (1868, White Fathers) and the Sœurs missionnaires d'Afrique (1869, Missionary Sisters of our Lady of Africa): Cellier 2008.
5. Louis Cheikho (1859–1927) was a Jesuit priest practicing the Chaldean rite, a renown Arabising Orientalist, and a teacher at Saint Joseph University in Beirut.
6. Following the massacres of Christians perpetrated in 1860 in Mount Lebanon and Syria as part of the inter-community tensions of the mid-nineteenth century, France under Napoleon III sent an expeditionary corps tasked with restoring order and providing humanitarian aid.
7. *La Terre Sainte, Revue de l'Orient Chrétien*, Paris, Bureau des Œuvres d'Orient, 1875–1899, which in 1899 became the *Revue Illustrée de l'Orient Chrétien*.
8. E.g. in 1841, Edward Robinson published a foundational text for the study of biblical topography: *Biblical Researches in Palestine, Mount Sinai and Arabia Petraea.*
9. See for example *Coutumes des Arabes au pays de Moab* by Antonin Jaussen (1908), and the two volumes of *Arabia Petrae* by Aloïs Musil *Moab (1907)* and *Heth and Moab (1908),* along with *Edom* by Claude Reignier Conder (2004), and *Land of Moab* by Henry Tristram (1873).
10. Oriental Catholic Archbishop of Siirt (Anatolia), Addaï Scher (1867–1915) was a scholar who visited a large number of ecclesiastical and missionary libraries, helped catalogue their collections, and edited multiple ancient texts in Syriac and Arabic, before falling victim to the persecution in Eastern Anatolia in 1915. See Fiey 1965.
11. The Patriarch of the Syriac Catholic Church, Ephrem Rahmani (1848–1929) was also a scholar with an international reputation.
12. The priest, theologian, and Orientalist Alphonse Mingana (1878–1937) was particularly known for his work as a grammarian and philologist.

13. Cyril Korolevsky remained in the Levant for seven years, and then made a long trip through Central Europe in the early 1920s to collect volumes and manuscripts for the Vatican library.
14. In addition to his memoirs and a biography of Andrey Sheptytsky, the Metropolitan of the Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church (*Le prophète ukrainien de l'unité: Métropolite André Szeptyckyj 1865–1944*, Paris, F. X. de Guibert, 2005, new edition), he left two unfinished works: a *Histoire des patriarcats melkites* (volumes II and III were published in Rome in 1910 and 1911) and *Les Églises orientales et les rites orientaux* (volume I, 1942).
15. Apostolic letter in the form of a *motu proprio* entitled *Orientis catholici* from October 15, 1917, cited by Pettinaroli 2015, p. 360.

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