Training the Women’s Choir: Ascetic Practice and Liturgical Education in Late Antique Syriac Christianity

Susan Ashbrook Harvey

The transmission of holy wisdom, or religious knowledge, in late antique Christianity took place in a variety of social locations and through diverse methods of pedagogy. Among the most important contexts for such transmission was liturgical celebration in all its different modes. In recent scholarship, the work of liturgy as a pedagogical setting larger than that of the bishop’s sermon has offered fruitful material. Increasingly, scholars look to the role of hymns as a source of instruction for the congregation. Consideration of hymns

---

1 The scholarship here is vast. Samuel Rubenson has been at the frontier of exploring monastic literature from precisely this perspective: see, for example, Samuel Rubenson, The Letters of Saint Antony: Monasticism and the Making of a Saint (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1995); idem, “Wisdom, Paraenesis, and the Roots of Monasticism,” in Early Christian Paraenesis in Context, ed. James Starr and Troels Engberg-Pedersen (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2004), 521–534; idem, “Monasticism and the Philosophical Heritage,” in The Oxford Handbook of Late Antiquity, ed. Scott Fitzgerald Johnson (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012), 487–512. See also, e.g., Arthur Urbano, The Philosophical Life: Biography and the Crafting of Intellectual Identity in Late Antiquity (Washington, DC: The Catholic University of America Press, 2013); Edward Watts, City and School in Late Antique Athens and Alexandria (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006).

2 For example, Mary Cunningham and Pauline Allen, eds., Preacher and Audience: Studies in Early Christian and Byzantine Homiletics (Leiden: Brill, 1998); Jaclyn Maxwell, Christianization and Communication in Late Antiquity: John Chrysostom and his Congregation in Antioch (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006); S.A. Harvey, “Liturgy and Ethics in Ancient Syriac Christianity: Two Paradigms,” Studies in Christian Ethics 26 (2013): 300–316.

3 E.g., Derek Krueger, Liturgical Subjects: Christian Ritual, Biblical Narrative, and the Formation of the Self in Byzantium (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2014); S.A. Harvey, Scenting Salvation: Ancient Christianity and the Olfactory Imagination (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006).

4 E.g., Thomas Arentzen, The Virgin in Song: Mary and the Poetry of Romanos the Melodist (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2017); Sarah Gador-Whyte, Theology and Poetry in Early Byzantium: The Kontakia of Romanos the Melodist (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017); Georgia Frank, “Romanos and the Night Vigil in the Sixth Century,” in A People’s History of Christianity, vol. 3, Byzantine Christianity, ed. Derek Krueger (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress Publishers, 2006), 59–78; Georgia Frank, “Dialogue and Deliberation: The
from this perspective, however, also requires attention to the choirs and chanters who performed them.

In the exchange between chanter, choir, and congregation, sacred knowledge was transmitted and received. Singers adorned the liturgy with beautiful music, but more importantly functioned as teachers whose verses provided essential instruction.\(^5\) The congregation as students participated in a dialogue of verses and refrains, through which to learn, master, and demonstrate Christian truth. For this basic yet crucial pedagogical interaction, we must ask: How were the “teachers” trained to transmit their knowledge? In the ritual context of liturgy, a “classroom” defined by and through a complex sequence of agents, words, movements, exchanges, articulated spaces, and patterned times, what did the choir need to know? How were they trained to be effective? Here, the example of Syriac women’s choirs offers intriguing material.

Late antiquity was an era of expansion for Christian liturgical life across the Mediterranean. A major feature of this development was the emergence during the fourth century of trained choirs for liturgical service, along with new forms of hymnography crafted to highlight their participation.\(^6\) In Syriac churches, these changes included the distinctive establishment of women’s liturgical choirs. Generally comprised of consecrated virgins known as daughters of the covenant, Syriac women’s choirs performed hymns that engaged and instructed the congregation on Bible, theology, and the life of the Christian community.\(^7\) Attested across a variety of late ancient sources, both West and

---

\(^5\) This view of the role and function of liturgical choirs is deeply embedded still in Christians of the Middle East. See, e.g., Renee Hanna Hattar, “Sacred Oriental Music: Preserving the Identity of Middle Eastern Christians,” ParOr 44 (2018): 301–310; Tala Jarjour, Sense and Sadness: Syriac Chant in Aleppo (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018).

\(^6\) See above all Christopher Page, The Christian West and Its Singers: The First Thousand Years (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2010). The account in Eusebius, Ecclesiastical History 7.27–30, regarding the heterodoxy and excommunication of Paul of Samosata in 268, has often been presumed to indicate that women’s choirs were disallowed in ancient Christianity. One of the reasons Paul was condemned was his use of women’s choirs to sing hymns in his honor. However, the story could well indicate the opposite: that women’s choirs were not a problem. The real issue was the hymns themselves, which according to the report were composed to honor Paul rather than Christ.

\(^7\) See S.A. Harvey, “Performance as Exegesis: Women’s Liturgical Choirs in Syriac Tradition,” in Inquiries into Eastern Christian Worship: Acts of the Second International Congress of the Society of Oriental Liturgy, ed. Basilius J. Groen, Stephanos Alexopoulos, and Steven Hawkes-Teeple, Eastern Christian Studies 12 (Leuven: Peeters, 2012), 47–64; Johannes Quasten, “The Liturgical Singing of Women in Christian Antiquity,” Catholic Historical Review 27 (1941): 149–165.
East Syriac, these choirs exercised a significant teaching ministry over some centuries. Explicit evidence for their liturgical role can be found through at least the ninth century. Women’s choirs remain a living tradition in the Syriac-speaking churches of the present day.

Late antique Syriac sources mention these women’s choirs with brief yet vivid references. Jacob of Sarug (d. 521), for example, refers to the women’s choirs as “[female] teachers” (malphanyatha, in the feminine plural), whose singing declared the “proclamation” (karuzutha, corresponding to the Greek keryigma) in the liturgy. He describes them as singing “songs of praise,” “with a serene sound.” According to Jacob, the “pure” voices of these “pious” women sang “instructive melodies,” with “soft tones” and “wonderful tunes” by which heresies were defeated and the truth gloriously performed.

Both Ephrem the Syrian (d. 373) and Jacob of Sarug urged their congregations to pay close heed to the women’s choirs, which, Jacob admonished, were nothing less than a gift from God for the church’s benefit. The more one heard these choirs, Jacob assured his listeners, the more one would become oneself “pure, modest, and full of hope and discernment.” In one homily, he extolled the women’s choir in a prayer, “By the sweet voices of the young women who sing Your praise, [O Christ], / You have captured the world.”

---

8 The major primary sources are discussed in Harvey, “Performance as Exegesis.” While there appears a long silence in the sources after the ninth century, in the late thirteenth century Gregory Bar Hebraeus offered the comment: “As far as women are concerned the Daughters of the Covenant are only ordered by the Canons to sing responsories and doctrinal hymns [madrashe] among themselves in the church.” Bar Hebraeus, Ethicon, Memra 1.3 (ed. Teule, CSCO 534–535 / Syr. 218–219, p. 72 (text), p. 61 (transl.)).

9 See Sarah Bakker Kellogg, “Ritual Sounds, Political Echoes: Vocal Agency and the Sensory Cultures of Secularism in the Dutch Syriac Diaspora,” American Ethnologist 42 (2015): 431–445; eadem, “Perforating Kinship: Syriac Christianity, Ethnicity, and Secular Legibility,” Current Anthropology 60 (2019):475–498; Sarah Aaltje Bakker, “Fragments of a Liturgical World: Syriac Christianity and the Dutch Multiculturalism Debates” (PhD diss., University of California, Santa Cruz, 2013).

10 Jacob of Sarug, Homily on Ephrem, v. 42 (ed. Amar, 34–35).
11 Jacob of Sarug, Homily on Ephrem, v. 99 (ed. Amar, 48–49).
12 Jacob of Sarug, Homily on Ephrem, v. 131 (ed. Amar, 48–49).
13 Jacob of Sarug, Homily on Ephrem, v. 114 (ed. Amar, 52–53).
14 Jacob of Sarug, Homily on Ephrem, vv. 152, 154 (ed. Amar, 64–65).
15 Ephrem, Hymns on the Resurrection 2.6, 8 (transl. Brock and Kiraz, Ephrem the Syrian: Select Poems, 174–175); Jacob of Sarug, On the Partaking of the Holy Mysteries, vv. 131–132 (ed. Harrak, 18).
16 Jacob of Sarug, On the Partaking of the Holy Mysteries, v. 175 (transl. Harrak, 22, Syriac on p. 23).
17 Jacob of Sarug, Homily 4 on Elisha, v. 25 (transl. Kaufman, 176, Syriac on p. 177).
From ecclesiastical canons in both the East Syriac (dyophysite) and West Syriac (miaphysite) traditions and from other attestations, we know that these women’s choirs sang in civic churches in villages, towns, and cities.\(^\text{18}\) According to the anonymous sixth-century *Life of Ephrem*, these choirs sang at the daily morning and evening services, at Sunday liturgies, on feast days, and at funerals.\(^\text{19}\) Where Greek churches of the same era sometimes included choirs of nuns or consecrated virgins who sang the Psalms,\(^\text{20}\) Syriac churches—according to ecclesiastical canons as well as the anonymous *Life of Ephrem* and Jacob of Sarug—assigned the choirs of daughters of the covenant to sing the *madrashe*. These were doctrinal hymns which, as the anonymous *Life of Ephrem* describes, contained “words of subtle meaning and spiritual knowledge about the birth and baptism and fasting and the entire economy of Christ; the passion and resurrection and ascension; and about the martyrs and repentance and about the deceased.”\(^\text{21}\)

References such as these give the strong impression that Syriac women’s choirs were, in fact, trained choirs, having received some education beyond the melodies and tunes they sang (all of which have been lost to us). The so-called Maruta Canons, for example, which appear to date to the early fifth century, mandate that both sons and daughters of the covenant should “be educated in doctrine and in instruction” and then assigned to assist in churches and monasteries (canon 26); further, that daughters of the covenant should be assigned to civic churches and “instructed in the Scripture lessons, and particularly in the service of the Psalms” (canon 41).\(^\text{22}\) These canons, at least, indicate that choirs

---

\(^{18}\) The sources are collected and discussed in Harvey, “Performance as Exegesis.”

\(^{19}\) *Life of Ephrem* 31 (ed. and transl. Amar, *CSCO* 629–633 / Syr. 242–243, pp. 71–73 (text) and 77–80 (transl.)).

\(^{20}\) As described in Egeria, *Diary* 24 (transl. Gingras, 89–93). Key passages are included in James McKinnon, *Music in Early Christian Literature* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), nos. 242–254, pp. 112–117, with helpful commentary.

\(^{21}\) *Life of Ephrem* 31 (transl. Amar, 79–83). Further references that specify women’s choirs singing *madrashe* include, e.g., Ephrem, *Hymns on the Resurrection* 2.6, 8 (transl. in Brock and Kiraz, *Ephrem the Syrian*, 174–175); Rabbula, *Canons for Priests and Covenanters* 20 (ed. and transl. in Phenix and Horn, *The Rabbula Corpus*, 106–107); Jacob of Sarug, *Homily Against the Jews* 7.538 (ed. and transl. Albert, *PO* 38.1 (1976), 271); Jacob of Sarug, *Homily on Ephrem*, vv. 96–116 (ed. and transl. Amar, 48–53). East Syriac sources of a later date (seventh through ninth centuries) continue to mention the *madrashe* assigned to the women’s choirs: for example, an anonymous liturgical commentary ascribed to George of Arbela, and Canon 9 of the Synod of Catholicos George 1 in 676. These are discussed in Juan Mateos, *Lelya-Ṣapra: Essai d’interprétation des matines chaldéennes*, OCA 146 (Rome: Pontificium Institutum Orientalium Studiorum, 1959), 408–410.

\(^{22}\) *Canons of Maruta* 26, 41 (ed. and transl. Vööbus, *CSCO* 439–440 / Syr. 191–192, pp. 76, 85 (text), 65, 72 (transl.)).
as liturgical agents required knowledge of doctrine, scripture, and various services. What was their training, and how did it happen?

Most of the sources that might help address these questions date between the fourth and sixth centuries, with the clearest evidence falling in the sixth century. While it is difficult to argue that the evidence might be broadly applied throughout Syriac churches of the late antique period (or beyond), I suggest that these sources present a plausible account for understanding Syriac women’s choirs as both educated and educating in their work.

Three Syriac sources, all apparently from the sixth century, provide glimpses: Jacob of Sarug’s *Homily on Ephrem the Syrian* (which may be from the late fifth century, but in any event predates Jacob’s death in 521), the anonymous *Life of Ephrem*, and John of Ephesus, *Lives of the Eastern Saints*. All three of these describe—however poetically—the instruction and rehearsing of female choirs for proper liturgical performance. Jacob and the author of the *Life of Ephrem* include these descriptions in their hagiographical accounts of Saint Ephrem, but they were writing more than a century after Ephrem’s death in 373 and their accounts accord better with other evidence of their time than with that of Ephrem’s day.

The *Life of Ephrem* provides in chapter 31 a fairly detailed description in all three of its extant recensions. The text describes Ephrem’s method for training the daughters of the covenant. Here, as in Jacob of Sarug, the author alleges that Ephrem’s decision to train the women as a choir was motivated by his determination to fight heresy, and to do so by counteracting heretical hymns with his own orthodox compositions, to be sung by women’s choirs. The account indicates the importance of the task:

> [Ephrem] prepared troops for battle against those heresies ... He appointed [female] teachers [*malphanyatha*] among all the Daughters of the Covenant who regularly came to the holy, catholic church, and taught

---

23 *Life of Ephrem* 31 (ed. and transl. Amar, 71–73 (text), 77–80 (transl.)). As Amar has demonstrated in this critical edition, the *Life of Ephrem* is a compilation of disparate Byzantine ascetic sources with little connection to the historical person of Ephrem. Because the three primary recensions are closely related but nonetheless distinct in their accounts, Amar’s edition presents all three versions in parallel. The three are primarily based on manuscripts Vatican Syriac 117 dating to 1100 CE, Paris Syriac 235 copied early in the thirteenth century, and Damascus Syriac Orthodox Patriarchate 12/17, dated 1184/85. See the discussions in Amar, *The Syriac Vita Tradition*, cSCO 629 / Syr. 242, v–xvi; and cSCO 630 / Syr. 243, v–xxix. See also Sebastian P. Brock, “St. Ephrem in the Eyes of Later Syriac Liturgical Tradition,” *Hugoye* 2 (1999): 5–25; Bernard Outtier, “Saint Éphrem d’après ses biographies et ses œuvres,” *ParOr* 4 (1973): 11–33.
them hymns. Evenings and mornings they would gather in church before the liturgy on the feasts of martyrs, and for funeral processions, and they would sing.\textsuperscript{24}

According to this anonymous text, Ephrem saw the women’s choir as teachers (\textit{malphanyatha}), and to that purpose met with them daily. Both the \textit{Life of Ephrem} and Jacob of Sarug describe Ephrem as conducting the women “like an eagle perched among doves.”\textsuperscript{25} The \textit{Life} implies that music was only part of what they needed to know: “All the Daughters of the Covenant would come down regularly to the church. [Ephrem] established instruction for them and taught them hymns as well.”\textsuperscript{26} The \textit{Life} also indicates that Ephrem practiced with the women the kind of dialogical singing that characterized a variety of Syriac hymnography, not only in the pattern of alternating verses with sung refrains, but also the form of antiphonal choirs evidenced in the dialogue hymns favored by Syriac composers. Indeed, the most fulsome recension of the \textit{Life} presents an entire range of liturgical hymnography mastered by the women’s choir, and indicates the dialogical patterns involved:

Seeing that all the people were attracted to singing and that (human) nature was drawn (to it), blessed Ephrem ... assembled and organized the Daughters of the Covenant and taught them hymns (\textit{madrashe}) and songs (\textit{seblatha}) and antiphons (\textit{‘onyatha}) and intercessions (\textit{ba’watha}). He arranged songs (\textit{qinyatha}) and verses (\textit{mushhatha}) in rhythmic measures and transmitted his wisdom to all the learned and wise women. And he mixed in the hymns and chants sweet melodies which were pleasing and delightful to their hearers. He put in the hymns words of subtle meaning and spiritual knowledge .... Every day the Daughters of the Covenant would gather in the churches on the feasts of the Lord and on Sundays and for the commemoration of the martyrs. And he, like a father, would stand among them (as) a harpist of the Spirit, arranging various songs for them and demonstrating and teaching and alternating melodies until the entire city gathered around him.\textsuperscript{27}

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{24} \textit{Life of Ephrem} 31 (transl. Amar \textit{CSCO} 630 / Syr. 243, pp. 77–78, following D).
\item \textsuperscript{25} \textit{Life of Ephrem} 31 (transl. Amar, 78 (D)); Jacob of Sarug, \textit{Homily on Ephrem}, vv. 98–101 (ed. and transl. Amar, 48–49).
\item \textsuperscript{26} \textit{Life of Ephrem} 31 (transl. Amar, 78 (P)).
\item \textsuperscript{27} \textit{Life of Ephrem} 31 (transl. Amar, \textit{CSCO} 630 / Syr. 243, pp. 79–80 (V)). The different terminology for hymns in this passage may simply be literary elaboration: the words all signify
\end{itemize}
The results were impressive. According to Jacob of Sarug, “[Ephrem] taught the swallows to chirp, / and the church resounded with the pure voices of pious women.”

From other sources we know that Ephrem did indeed teach sons and daughters of the covenant and others who served the church in different capacities. A number of his extant works attest to his labors in this regard. Several of his prose commentaries on biblical books survive and indicate that he led his students in close study of scripture and in exegetical method. His *Commentary on the Diatessaron* shows evidence of repeated use, adaptation, and development by subsequent generations of students. His polemical prose works show similar traits. Some of the hymns attributed to Ephrem appear instead to be the work of his disciples, both those close to Ephrem’s time and those following his style later. Some of his students went on to become notable teachers and scholars in their own right (though only the names of male students are preserved).

---

28 Jacob of Sarug, *Homily on Ephrem*, vv. 98–101 (ed. and transl. Amar, 48–49).
29 Jeffrey Wickes, “Between Liturgy and School: Reassessing the Performative Context of Ephrem’s Madrāšê,” *JECS* 26 (2018): 25–51.
30 Examples would be Ephrem’s *Commentary on Genesis* and his *Commentary on Exodus*. These are translated with fine introductions and commentary in Joseph P. Amar and Edward G. Mathews, Jr., *St. Ephrem the Syrian, Selected Prose Works*, FC 91 (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 1994).
31 Christian Lange, *The Portrayal of Christ in the Syriac Commentary on the Diatessaron*, CSCO 616 / Subs. 118 (Leuven: Peeters, 2005), especially 162–173. For the reconstruction of Ephrem’s commentary, see Carmel McCarthy, *Saint Ephrem’s Commentary on Tatian’s Diatessaron*, Journal of Semitic Studies Supplement 2 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993).
32 E.g., C.W. Mitchell, A.A. Bevan, and F.C. Burkitt, eds. and transl., *S. Ephraim’s Prose Refutations of Mani, Marcion, and Bardaisan*, 2 vols. (London: Williams and Norgate, 1912–1921, reprint Farnborough: Gregg, 1969).
33 Thus for example, did Edmund Beck consider all but the first four hymns in the cycle attributed to Ephrem on the holy man Julian Saba: Edmund Beck, *Des heiligen Ephraem des Syrers Hymnen auf Abraham Kidunaya und Julianos Saba*, CSCO 322 / Syr. 140, pp. v–xi, and CSCO 323 / Syr. 141, p. xv. For an example of the difficulties in differentiating authentic work by Ephrem from that perhaps composed by students soon after, see Sebastian P. Brock, “Ephremiana in Manuscript Sinai Syr. 10,” *Le Muséon* 129 (2016): 285–322.
34 Sozomen, *Ecclesiastical History* 3.16, states: “It is said that [Ephrem] wrote three hundred thousand verses, and that he had many disciples who were zealously attached to his doctrines. The most celebrated of his disciples were Abbas, Zenobius, Abraham, Moras, and Simeon, in whom the Syrians and whoever among them pursued accurate learning make a
Ephrem’s own writings hence provide a sense of the curriculum needed for liturgical training in a local church, as he himself designed it: how to read and interpret scripture; and how to understand “orthodox” theology over and against the teachings of heretics and Jews; how to perform and compose hymns. Jeffrey Wickes has argued that many of Ephrem’s madrashe, such as the eighty-two *Hymns on Faith*, were composed for instructional rather than liturgical purposes. In Ephrem’s extant corpus, then, we see music as both a method of education (for example, in the *Hymns on Faith*), and also, in the form of liturgical hymns (such as the *Hymns on the Nativity* or the *Hymns on the Resurrection*), a means to disseminate that education to the congregation in a public liturgical context. What I am arguing here supports Wickes’ thesis and applies it further, extending it to the liturgy’s performance as a complex ritual event. For those women and men who served as liturgical agents—as readers, chanters, singers, in addition to the diaconate and priests—it was important to perform one’s ritual function effectively, and also to be able to understand church teaching correctly. Skilled singing was not sufficient for the task of choir or chanter; one had to know the content one was singing, and to understand it rightly. Proper performance of liturgy required serious biblical and theological training. Women’s choirs, no less than other liturgical agents, needed that training. Ephrem’s surviving corpus, as well as the brief testimonies in the anonymous *Life of Ephrem* and in Jacob of Sarug’s homily on Ephrem, all attest that such was the case.

This picture is confirmed by the sixth-century hagiographer John of Ephesus in his account of Simeon the Mountaineer, a recluse who stumbled on a “heathen” semi-nomadic village at the eastern edge of the Roman Empire. As a first act in establishing their church, Simeon rounded up eighteen boys and twelve girls whom he tonsured as sons and daughters of the covenant. Then,

---

35 Wickes, “Between Liturgy and School.”
36 Clearly intended for liturgical use, for example, were Ephrem’s *Hymns on the Nativity* and *Hymns on the Resurrection*. These were sung during the vigil service prior to the liturgy of the feast, and the verses occasionally refer to the service and the occasion. By contrast, Ephrem’s *Hymns on Faith* appear to indicate a non-liturgical, study-oriented setting, see Wickes, “Between Liturgy and School.”
37 John of Ephesus, *Lives of the Eastern Saints* 16 (ed. and transl. Brooks, PO 17 (1923), 229–247).
he proceeded to train them. The process was not quick, but rather an education over some years:

[For these girls and boys] he made tablets for writing, and wrote for them; and thus he would sit with patience as in a school (eskolē), and would teach them, boys and girls together. And down to the time when they reached an age at which they might receive harm from one another, within four or five years, they learned the psalms and the scriptures; and thenceforward loud choirs were to be heard at the [church] service [teshmeshta].

When Simeon died many years later, his covenanters were well established in their liturgical service, and engaged in training the children who followed after them: “when he was old and decrepit and these disciples of his also had become grown women and men, and they were now becoming readers and daughters of the covenant, and they were themselves teaching others also as well.” John’s narrative is important because of its portrayal of the sons and daughters of the covenant as foundational to the liturgical life of the Christian community. But it is also significant as an account of the education necessary for their work of liturgical song to be performed well and effectively.

To my knowledge, these are the only Syriac sources that describe the training necessary for women’s liturgical choirs. I suggest that we amplify the picture from three other areas for which we have more abundant Syriac evidence: (1) female literacy relevant to liturgical needs; (2) psalmody as an ascetic practice; and (3) the liturgical training provided to boys by the School of Nisibis and related village schools, where liturgical music was essential throughout the curriculum.

First, on female literacy and liturgical needs: there is strong Syriac evidence for women’s literacy as part of ascetic training in late antiquity. Syriac sources on women ascetics indicate the ability to read scripture, hagiography, ascetic and theological literature, and the ability to chant psalms and prayers of the daily offices with knowledgeable skill. The sixth-century widow Euphemia

38 John of Ephesus, Lives of the Eastern Saints 16 (ed. and transl. Brooks, 246–724).
39 John of Ephesus, Lives of the Eastern Saints 16 (ed. and transl. Brooks, 247).
40 On women’s literacy in ancient Christianity generally, see Kim Haines-Eitzen, The Gendered Palimpsest: Women, Writing, and Representation in Early Christianity (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012); Amelia Brown, “Psalmody and Socrates: Female Literacy in the Byzantine Empire,” in Questions of Gender in Byzantine Society, ed. Bronwen Neil and Lynda Garland (Farnham: Ashgate, 2013), 57–76. Specifically on the literacy and training...
provided exactly this kind of instruction for her daughter Maria in the city of Amida, where their religious knowledge was widely admired in the civic community.\textsuperscript{41} Some decades later, the solitary Shirin was renowned throughout northern Iraq for the sound of her long hours of psalmody and sung prayer services in her solitary dwelling, and also for the breadth and depth of religious reading through which she instructed the crowds of faithful who approached her for spiritual counsel.\textsuperscript{42} Hagiography of women saints mentions reading together as a valued practice of women’s monasteries, taking place in the context of sung prayer services as well as at other times of communal gathering; the \textit{Life of Febronia} is a good example.\textsuperscript{43}

A telling case of female literacy is that of the East Syriac nun Hanah-Ishoʿ, who, late in the sixth century, oversaw the education of her younger brother, the future saint Rabban Bar-ʿIdta, after they were orphaned. Over the course of his childhood and in two different schools, Hanah-Ishoʿ ensured that his training included liturgical music, hymnography, and the order and occasions of services.\textsuperscript{44} The role of mothers and sisters in the education of children was a common theme in Syriac hagiography, as in Greek.\textsuperscript{45} Still, it points to a culture where women valued and cared about serious religious education, including

\textsuperscript{41} John of Ephesus, \textit{Lives of the Eastern Saints} 12 (transl. in Brock and Harvey, \textit{Holy Women of the Syrian Orient} (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998), 122–133, esp. 126, 128, 129).

\textsuperscript{42} Sahdona (Martyrios), \textit{Book of Perfection} 69–79 (transl. Brock and Harvey, \textit{Holy Women}, 177–181).

\textsuperscript{43} An especially prominent theme in the \textit{Life of Febronia} (transl. Brock and Harvey, \textit{Holy Women}, 153–176). For this aspect of Syriac women’s monasticism, see Florence Jullien, “Le monachisme feminin en milieu syriaque,” in \textit{Le monachisme syriaque}, ed. F. Jullien, Études Syriques 7 (Paris: Guéthner, 2010), 65–87; Clémence Hélou, “La vie monastique féminine dans la tradition syriaque,” in \textit{Le monachisme syriaque du VIIe siècle à nos jours}, Patrimoine Syriaque: Actes du colloque, VI, vol. 1 (Antélias, Lebanon: Centre d’Études et de Recherches Orientales, 1999), 85–118.

\textsuperscript{44} \textit{Life of Bar ʿIdta}, lines 59–120 (ed. and transl. Budge, 115–118 (text), 167–171 (transl.).

\textsuperscript{45} Compare the accounts in the \textit{Life of John Bar-Aphtonia}, sections 3–6 (ed. and transl. Nau, 114–118 (text), 123–130 (transl.)); Elias, \textit{Life of John of Tella} (ed. and transl. Brooks, CSCO 7–8 / Syr. 7–8, pp. 39–43 (text), 27–30 (Latin transl.)); Thomas of Marga, \textit{The Book of Governors} 2.34 (ed. and transl. Budge, 116–117 (text), 251–252 (transl.)). For comparative rabbinic evidence, see Susan Marks, “Bayit versus Beit Midrash: Jewish Mother as Teacher,” in \textit{A Most Reliable Witness: Essays in Honor of Ross Shepard Kraemer}, ed. S.A. Harvey, Nathaniel P. DesRosiers, Shira Lander, Jacqueline Z. Pastis, and Daniel Ulluci (Providence, RI: Brown Judaic Studies, 2015), 195–204.
knowledge of liturgy and its music, in addition to that of the classical curricula. The women themselves had to have appreciation for this kind of knowledge if they were to guide their youth to its pursuit.

Secondly, singing was an important part of ascetic practice for Syriac Christians in any social location. Constant singing and reading or intoning aloud for purposes of disciplined prayer and devotional practice also provided the opportunity for training, expertise, and the mastering of large bodies of liturgical song: hymns, prayers, psalms, litanies, invocations, supplications. Syriac sources mention that the sound of holy women singing their psalms and prayers was often heard by others.46 I would suggest we understand resonance between this kind of singing and that of women's liturgical choirs. Further, I think we should hear these two kinds of singing—that of choirs in the church, and that of female ascetics performing their devotions—as interactive in the quality of authority they conveyed, and in the institutional recognition of that authority conferred by the ecclesiastical structure. Singing sacred song was a recognized part of the public activity of late antique Syriac women.

The third area of evidence pertinent here is the place of liturgical music within late antique Syriac religious education. The sizable corpus of materials extant for the (East Syriac) School of Nisibis affirms the importance as well as the challenges of instruction in liturgical music.47 Statutes of the School identify liturgical music as a core part of the curriculum throughout a student’s tenure. As was apparently the case for Ephrem’s students, singing here was both

46 For example, John of Ephesus, Lives of the Eastern Saints 12, on Euphemia and Maria (transl. Brock and Harvey, Holy Women, 122–133, esp. 126, 128, 129); and John of Ephesus, Lives of the Eastern Saints 31, on Elijah and Theodore (ed. and transl. Brooks, PO 18, 581–583). See also Sahdona’s account of Shirin (transl. Brock and Harvey, Holy Women, 183); the Life of Mary of Qidun (transl. Brock and Harvey, Holy Women, 27–37, esp. 29, 36). The Daughter of Ma’nyo was remembered for the hours she spent singing prayers and hymns: Sogitha, v. 5 (transl. Sebastian P. Brock, “The Daughter of Ma’nyo: A Holy Woman of Arbela,” Annales du Département des Lettres Arabes 6-B (1991–1992 [1996]): 122.) The martyr Anahid sang psalms in the prison all night (transl. Brock and Harvey, Holy Women, 93–94).

47 Adam H. Becker, Fear of God and the Beginning of Wisdom: The School of Nisibis and the Development of Scholastic Culture in Late Antique Mesopotamia (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2006); idem, Sources for the Study of the School of Nisibis, TTH 59 (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2008); Arthur Vööbus, The Statutes of the School of Nisibis, PETSE 12 (Stockholm: ETSE, 1961). Becker’s groundbreaking work is now significantly supplemented by Ute Possekel, “Selbstverständnis und Bildungsauftrag der Schule von Nisibis,” ZAC 19 (2015): 104–136; eadem, “Go and Set Up for Yourselves Beautiful Laws’: The School of Nisibis and Institutional Autonomy in Late Antique Education,” in Griechische Philosophie und Wissenschaft bei den Ostsyrern. Im Gedenken an Mār Addai Scher (1867–1915), ed. M. Perkams and A.M. Schilling (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2019), 29–47.
a mode of academic study and also a skill to be gained, refined, and mastered. Lessons were recited and sung with the students in formation as a choir; knowledge was conveyed in dialogic fashion through the singing or chanting of verses and responses. Faculty associated with the School over different centuries produced important scholarly works on the liturgy, including its different musical expressions.48

Teaching and learning were a musical exchange at the School of Nisibis. The great poet Narsai of Nisibis (ca. 399–502), older contemporary and rival of Jacob of Sarug, served as head of the School for twenty years, “while daily leading the choir and giving interpretation.”49 Subsequently Abraham of Bet Rabban “led the assembly for a period of sixty years, while interpreting, leading the choir, and resolving questions.”50 The maqryane were teachers of recitation and chant, and were among the distinguished ranks of instructors in the School.51 The “recitation of the choirs” was required of the students in their studies, but evening and morning services were also mandated, as well as memorials for the dead. None were optional, except in cases of sickness or serious exigency.52 According to the fourteenth-century Nomocanon of ‘Abdisho’ bar Brika, the three-year curriculum at the School of Nisibis comprised mastery of the lectionary, the different services for Sundays, feasts, and commemoration days, the Psalms, and liturgical hymns including funeral hymns. These areas were distributed over the three years, with the final year including the reading of biblical commentaries by earlier theologians.53 Learning the music of liturgy was hence deeply interwoven with learning the different services, their rubrics and correct celebration. It was also inextricable from learning correct (“orthodox”) biblical interpretation and doctrinal instruction.

48 Becker, Fear of God, 89–94.
49 Barḥadbeshabba, The Cause of the Foundation of the Schools (ed. Scher, PO 4.4, 383:11–14, transl. Becker, Sources, 150–151); also cited and discussed in Becker, Fear of God, 89.
50 Barḥadbeshabba, Ecclesiastical History 31, also comments on the musical qualities of Narsai’s instruction (ed. Nau, PO 9.5, 612, transl. Becker, Sources, 69).
51 The maqryane are notably included among those who signed authorization and agreement to the different collections of canons that governed the School. See Vööbus, Statutes of the School of Nisibis, 52, 88, 92, 103–104; see also 83, n. 41.
52 Canons of Narsai 8 and 9 (ed. and transl. Vööbus, Statutes, 79); see also 79, n. 29; Canons of Henana 5 and 11 (ed. and transl. Vööbus, Statutes, 94, 97).
53 For the portion of ‘Abdisho’, Nomocanon, labeled “On the School of Nisibis,” as well as discussion of the historical problems apparent in the text, see Vööbus, Statutes, 107–111; and Becker, Fear of God, 92–94.
Related to the famed School of Nisibis were local, village schools (again, the surviving data here is East Syriac). These appear to have functioned with different degrees of sophistication, but at the least included basic literacy, study of the psalms, and liturgical education. Church leaders not only participated in the education offered by the School of Nisibis, but also in the oversight and governance of these smaller village schools. Local monks complained about the noise level when they heard students practicing their lessons and their “songs of hallelujahs, the psalms, the responses, [and] the harmonies of the youths and the vigilants.” Rival West Syriac church leaders complained about the sounds, as well as the efficacy, of these schools and their musical impact on local villagers and townspeople.

Ephrem’s teaching had included women, whereas the School of Nisibis was exclusively for male students. In fact, late-sixth-century canons from the School forbid the brothers of the community to teach women, or to interact with them, including daughters of the covenant. Yet some kind of analogous instruction must have been available for the women’s choirs and for those who served as their directors, including women deacons. Convents may have provided it: the canons of John of Tella, like those ascribed to Maruta, encourage the education of sons (and daughters?) of the covenant in monastic schools. But it seems likely that instruction also would have taken place in the local church, just as Ephrem had provided in the fourth century and as John of Ephesus in

---

54 Becker, Fear of God, 163–166. Becker argues persuasively for a typology of East Syriac schools in three categories: independent schools, monastic schools, and village schools (pp. 155–168). Music as a mode of study and as a skill to be mastered was important in all these locations: Becker, Fear of God, 89–90, 92–93, 189, 204–209.
55 Becker, Fear of God, 164–165.
56 Thomas of Marga, Book of Governors 2.8 (ed. and transl. Budge, 75–76 (text), 148–150 (transl.)). I cite following the translation in Becker, Fear of God, 170. Throughout the accounts in Thomas of Marga’s Book of Governors, excellence of (liturgical) singing recurs as a skill or talent which could be edifying or problematic, inspiring or distracting to the monks of the different monasteries. In this case, of course, it was male voices that were the source of wonder or disturbance. E.g., Thomas of Marga, Book of Governors 2.2, 2.8, 2.11, 3.1, 3.2, 4.20, 5.47.
57 Life of Maruta, 6510–662, transl. as cited in Becker, Fear of God, 90.
58 Canons of Henana 18 (ed. and transl. Vööbus, Statutes, 100); see Becker, Fear of God, 86.
59 On the consecration and training of the daughters of the covenant, including their supervision by members chosen to be deaconesses: Canons of Maruta 26, 41 (ed. and transl. Vööbus, cSCO 439–440 / Syr. 191–192, pp. 76, 85 (text), 65, 72 (transl.)).
60 Canons of Johannan bar Qursos (John of Tella) 27 (ed. and transl. Vööbus, The Synodicon in the West Syrian Tradition, cSCO 367–368 / Syr. 161–162, p. 156 (text), p. 151 (transl.)).
the sixth century attributed to the monk Simeon the Mountaineer. We must presume transmission of local traditions, consonant with the music, melodies, and performative patterns that generally prevailed or were popular across the regions in which Syriac liturgies were conducted.

Were the women's choirs always well trained? Apparently not. Syriac church canons admonish against poorly trained or uneducated clergy. So, too, a liturgical commentary, attributed to George of Arbel but probably dating to the ninth century, twice likens the women's choir typologically to those who enslaved the people of God in the Hebrew Bible. The commentary compares the congregation seated at evening prayer to the humiliated Hebrew slaves, stating that the women's singing signified the enemy captors, Babylonians or Egyptians. Did the commentator suffer an ill-trained or under-rehearsed women's choir? The passage stands in striking contrast to the happy description from the Life of Ephrem,

My friends, who would not be astounded and filled with fervent faith to see the athlete of Christ [Ephrem] amid the ranks of the Daughters of the Covenant as they chanted songs, hymns, and melodies? Their songs resemble the songs and ethereal melodies of spiritual beings who chant to the spirits of humans with the sweetness of their songs.

Our surviving evidence gives only the faintest glimpse of challenges and needs at the local parish level. Yet the insistence in late antique sources that Syriac women's choirs were valued for their ministry of teaching is itself indication of their education and training.

In an important article on the training of girls' choirs in Archaic Greece, Wayne Ingalls pointed out that choral training was not only a matter of preparing for performance. It was also a means of education for one's own place in society. The myths and local legends sung by young Greek girls served also to provide models for understanding their own significance, contributions, and roles in their communities. The same could be said about the Syriac women's

---

61 John of Ephesus, Lives of the Eastern Saints 16 (ed. and transl. Brooks, PO 17 (1923), 229–247).
62 Consider the evidence in the rules distributed by John of Tella: Volker Menze, “Priests, Laity, and the Sacrament of the Eucharist in Sixth Century Syria,” Hugoye 7 (2007): 129–146; idem, “The Regula ad Diaconos: John of Tella, his Eucharistic Ecclesiology and the Establishment of an Ecclesiastical Hierarchy in Exile,” OrChr 90 (2006): 44–93.
63 Ps.-George of Arbel, as cited by Mateos, Lelya-Ṣapra, 408.
64 Life of Ephrem 31 (transl. Amar, CSCO 630 / Syr. 243, 80 (V)).
65 Wayne Ingalls, “Ritual Performance as Training for Daughters in Archaic Greece,” Phoenix:
choirs. Often the hymns they performed told stories of biblical women, in terms that spoke to the needs, desires, and obligations of the present congregation. As such, women’s choirs and the women’s stories they sang, highlighted women’s significance for the church’s health and flourishing, both liturgically and in the social order.

Women’s choirs mattered in Syriac liturgies: it is important to understand how and why. While Syriac references to women’s liturgical choirs are not frequent in the ancient sources, they are consistent in their indications that musical sound alone was not the value of these choirs. Theirs was not only an aesthetic adornment to worship. Rather, their offering was twofold. It comprised both the words they sang—the content of their hymns—and the manner of their expression: the sung performance. Theirs was a teaching ministry of song. As such, their contributions required—and deserved—a steady foundation, humbly gained through long hours of study, training, rehearsing, and well-practiced skills.

Acknowledgements

I am grateful to Ute Possekel for her valuable comments on an earlier draft of this essay, and for sharing her generous knowledge of the School of Nisibis. Any remaining errors are my own.

---

Journal of the Classical Association of Canada 54 (2000): 1–20. In Archaic Greece, the girls learned to sing the stories of important female figures of (often local) Greek mythology. Such stories contributed to the moral formation of these girls, inscribing messages of their proper place and conduct in society. These were reinforced through the bodily disciplines of memorization, melody, and dance. At the same time, these Greek hymns instilled in the girls’ choirs a sense of their own significance: the importance of women for ensuring the continuation and healthy survival of their community, and the valuation of their performance for the community’s wellbeing. See also Claude Calambe, Choruses of Young Women in Ancient Greece: Their Morphology, Religious Role, and Social Functions, transl. Derek Collins and Janice Orion (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2001), 221–244.

66 E.g., S.A. Harvey, “Bearing Witness: New Testament Women in Early Byzantine Hymnography,” in The New Testament in Byzantium, ed. Derek Krueger and Robert Nelson (Washington, DC: Dumbarton Oaks Research Library and Collection, 2016), 205–219.
Bibliography

Primary Sources
Barḥadbeshabba ʿArbaya. Ecclesiastical History. Ed. with French transl. François Nau, La seconde partie de l’Histoire de Barhadbešabba ʿArbaïa. PO 9.5. Paris 1913. Partial English transl. in Adam Becker, Sources for the Study of the School of Nisibis, 47–85. Barḥadbeshabba ʿArbaya. The Cause of the Foundation of the Schools. Ed. with French transl. Addai Scher, Mar Barhadbeshabba Arabaya, Cause de la fondation des écoles. PO 4.4. Paris, 1908. English transl. in Adam Becker, Sources for the Study of the School of Nisibis, 86–160.
Becker, Adam, transl. Sources for the Study of the School of Nisibis, TTH 50. Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2008.
Brock, Sebastian P., and Susan Ashbrook Harvey, transl. Holy Women of the Syrian Orient. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998.
Canons of Johannan bar Qursos (John of Tella). Ed. with English transl. in Arthur Vööbus, The Synodicon in the West Syrian Tradition. Vol. 1. cSCO 367–368 / Syr. 161–162. Louvain: Secrétariat du CorpusSCO, 1975.
Canons of Maruta. Ed. with English transl. in Arthur Vööbus, The Canons Ascribed to Maruta of Maipherqat and Related Sources. cSCO 439–440 / Syr. 191–192. Louvain: Peeters, 1982.
Canons of Rabbula. Ed. with English transl. in Robert R. Phenix, Jr. and Cornelia B. Horn, The Rabbula Corpus: Comprising the Life of Rabbula, His Correspondence, a Homily Delivered in Constantinople, Canons, and Hymns. Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2017.
Egeria. Diary. English transl. George E. Gingras, Egeria, Diary of a Pilgrimage. ACW 38. New York: Paulist Press, 1970.
Elias. Life of John of Tella. Ed. with Latin transl. in E.W. Brooks, Vitae virorum apud Monophysitas celeberrimorum. cSCO 7–8 / Syr. 7–8. Paris: E typographeo republicae, 1907.
Ephrem. Commentaries on Genesis and Exodus. English transl. in Joseph P. Amar and Edward G. Mathews, Jr., St. Ephrem the Syrian, Select Prose Works. FC 91. Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 1994.
Ephrem. Commentary on the Diatessaron. English transl. Carmel McCarthy, Saint Ephrem’s Commentary on Tatian’s Diatessaron. Journal of Semitic Studies Supplement 2. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993.
Ephrem. Hymns on Faith. Ed. with German transl. Edmund Beck, Des heiligen Ephraem des Syrers Hymnen de Fide. cSCO 154–155 / Syr. 73–74. Louvain: Secrétariat du CorpusSCO, 1955. English transl. Jeffrey Wickes, St. Ephrem the Syrian: The Hymns on Faith. FC 130. Washington, DC: The Catholic University of America Press, 2015.
Ephrem. Hymns on Julian Saba. Ed. with German transl. Edmund Beck, Des heiligen
Ephraem des Syrers Hymnen auf Abraham Kidunaya und Julianos Saba. CSCO 322–323 / Syr. 140–141. Louvain: Peeters, 1972.

Ephrem. *Hymns on the Nativity*. Ed. with German transl. Edmund Beck, *Des heiligen Ephraem des Syrers Hymnen de Nativitate (Epiphania)*. CSCO 186–187 / Syr. 82–83. Louvain: Secrétariat du CorpusSCO, 1959. English transl. in Kathleen McVey, *Ephrem the Syrian: Hymns*. Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 1989.

Ephrem. *Hymns on the Resurrection*. Ed. with German transl. Edmund Beck, *Des heiligen Ephraem des Syrers Paschahymnen (de azymis, de crucifixione, de resurrectione)*. CSCO 248–249 / Syr. 108–109. Louvain: Secrétariat du CorpusSCO, 1964. Partial English transl. in Sebastian P. Brock and George A. Kiraz, *Ephrem the Syrian: Select Poems*. Provo, UT: Brigham Young University Press, 2006.

Ephrem. *Prose Refutations*. Ed. with English transl. C.W. Mitchell, A.A. Bevan, and F.C. Burkitt, *S. Ephraim's Prose Refutations of Mani, Marcion, and Bardaisan*. 2 vols. London: Williams and Norgate, 1912–1921; reprint Farnborough: Gregg, 1969.

Gregory bar Hebraeus. *Ethicon, Memra I*. Ed. with English transl. Herman G.B. Teule, *Gregory bar Hebraeus, Ethicon, Memra I*. CSCO 534–535 / Syr. 218–219. Leuven: Peeters, 1993.

Jacob of Sarug. *Against the Jews*. Ed. with French transl. Micheline Albert, *Jacques de Saroug, Homélies contre les Juifs*. PO 38.1. Turnhout 1976.

Jacob of Sarug. *Homily 4 on Elisha*. Ed. as *Homily 119 in Bedjan, Homiliae selectae*. Vol. 4, pp. 318–332. English transl. (with Bedjan's Syriac text) Stephen A. Kaufman, *Jacob of Sarug's Homilies on Elisha*. Piscataway, NJ: Gorgias Press, 2010.

Jacob of Sarug. *Homily on Ephrem*. Ed. with English transl. Joseph P. Amar, *A Metrical Homily on Holy Mar Ephrem by Mar Jacob of Sarug*. PO 47.1. Turnhout, 1995.

Jacob of Sarug. *On the Partaking of the Holy Mysteries*. Ed. as *Homily 95 in Bedjan, Homiliae selectae*. Vol. 3, pp. 646–663. English transl. (with Bedjan's Syriac text) Amir Harrak, *Jacob of Sarug's Homily on the Partaking of the Holy Mysteries*. Piscataway, NJ: Gorgias Press, 2009.

Jacob of Sarug. *Select Homilies*. Ed. Paul Bedjan, *Homiliae selectae mar-Jacobi Sarugen-sis*. 5 vols. Leipzig: Harrassowitz, 1905–1910. 2nd ed. in 6 vols. by Sebastian P. Brock. Piscataway, NJ: Gorgias Press, 2006.

John of Ephesus. *Lives of the Eastern Saints*. Ed. with English transl. E.W. Brooks. PO 17–19. Paris, 1923–1925.

*Life of Bar-ʿIdtā*. Ed. with English transl. in E.A. Wallis Budge, *The Histories of Rabban Hormizd the Persian and Rabban Bar-ʿIdtā*. 2 vols. Luzac's Semitic Text and Translation Series 9–10. London: Luzac, 1902.

*Life of Ephrem*. Ed. with English transl. Joseph P. Amar, *The Syriac Vita Tradition of Ephrem the Syrian*. CSCO 629–630 / Syr. 242–243. Leuven: Peeters, 2011.

*Life of John bar-Aphtonia*. Ed. with French transl. in François Nau, “Histoire de Jean bar Aphtonia.” *Revue de l’ Orient Chrétien* 7 (1902): 97–135.
McKinnon, James W., transl. *Music in Early Christian Literature*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987.

_Sogitha on the Daughter of Ma’nyo_. English transl. in Sebastian P. Brock, “‘The Daughter of Ma’nyo’: A Holy Woman of Arbela,” *Annales du Département des Lettres Arabes 6-B* (1991–1992 [1996]): 121–128.

_Sozomen. Ecclesiastical History_. English transl. Chester D. Hartranft, in *Socrates, Sozomenus: Church Histories*. NPNF, 2nd ser., vol. 2 (1890); reprint Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1995.

*Statutes of the School of Nisibis*. Ed. with English transl. Arthur Vööbus, *The Statutes of the School of Nisibis*. PETSE 12. Stockholm: ETSE, 1961.

_Thomas of Marga. The Book of Governors_. Ed. with English transl. E.A. Wallis Budge, *The Book of Governors: The Historia Monastica of Thomas Bishop of Marga A.D. 840*. 2 vols. London, 1893; reprint Piscataway, NJ: Gorgias Press, 2003.

**Secondary Sources**

Arentzen, Thomas. *The Virgin in Song: Mary and the Poetry of Romanos the Melodist*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2017.

Bakker Kellogg, Sarah. “Ritual Sounds, Political Echoes: Vocal Agency and the Sensory Cultures of Secularism in the Dutch Syriac Diaspora.” *American Ethnologist* 42 (2015): 431–445. doi:10.1111/amet.12139.

Bakker Kellogg, Sarah. “Perforating Kinship: Syriac Christianity, Ethnicity, and Secular Legibility.” *Current Anthropology* 60 (2019): 475–498.

Bakker, Sarah Aaltje. “Fragments of a Liturgical World: Syriac Christianity and the Dutch Multiculturalism Debates.” PhD diss., University of California, Santa Cruz, 2013. http://escholarship.org/uc/item/4r75t94m.

Becker, Adam H. *Fear of God and the Beginning of Wisdom: The School of Nisibis and the Development of Scholastic Culture in Late Antique Mesopotamia*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2006.

Brock, Sebastian P. “St. Ephrem in the Eyes of Later Syriac Liturgical Tradition.” *Hugoye* 2 (1999): 5–25.

Brock, Sebastian P. “Ephremiana in Manuscript Sinai Syr. 10.” *Le Muséon* 129 (2016): 285–322.

Brown, Amelia. “Psalmody and Socrates: Female Literacy in the Byzantine Empire.” In *Questions of Gender in Byzantine Society*, ed. Bronwen Neil and Lynda Garland, 57–76. Farnham: Ashgate, 2013.

Calame, Claude. *Choruses of Young Women in Ancient Greece: Their Morphology, Religious Role, and Social Functions*. Translated by Derek Collins and Janice Orion. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2001.

Cunningham, Mary, and Pauline Allen, eds. *Preacher and Audience: Studies in Early Christian and Byzantine Homiletics*. Leiden: Brill, 1998.
Frank, Georgia. “Romanos and the Night Vigil in the Sixth Century.” In *A People's History of Christianity*. Vol. 3, *Byzantine Christianity*, ed. Derek Krueger, 59–78. Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress Publishers, 2006.

Frank, Georgia. “Dialogue and Deliberation: The Making of the Sensory Self in the Hymns of Romanos the Melodist.” In *Religion and the Self in Antiquity*, ed. David Brakke, Steve Weitzman, and Michael Satlow, 163–179. Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2005.

Gador-Whyte, Sarah. *Theology and Poetry in Early Byzantium: The Kontakia of Romanos the Melodist*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017.

Garland, Lynda. “‘Till Death Do Us Part?’ Family Life in Byzantine Monasteries.” In *Questions of Gender in Byzantine Society*, ed. Bronwen Neil and Lynda Garland, 29–55. Farnham: Ashgate, 2013.

Haines-Eitzen, Kim. *The Gendered Palimpsest: Women, Writing, and Representation in Early Christianity*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012.

Harvey, Susan Ashbrook. “Bearing Witness: New Testament Women in Early Byzantine Hymnography.” In *The New Testament in Byzantium*, ed. Derek Krueger and Robert Nelson, 205–219. Washington, DC: Dumbarton Oaks Research Library and Collection, 2016.

Harvey, Susan Ashbrook. “Liturgy and Ethics in Ancient Syriac Christianity: Two Paradigms.” *Studies in Christian Ethics* 26 (2013): 300–316.

Harvey, Susan Ashbrook. “Performance as Exegesis: Women’s Liturgical Choirs in Syriac Tradition.” In *Inquiries into Eastern Christian Worship: Acts of the Second International Congress of the Society of Oriental Liturgy*, ed. Basilius J. Groen, Stephanos Alexopoulos, and Steven Hawkes-Teeples, 47–64. Eastern Christian Studies 12. Leuven: Peeters, 2012.

Harvey, Susan Ashbrook. *Scenting Salvation: Ancient Christianity and the Olfactory Imagination*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006.

Hattar, Renee Hanna. “Sacred Oriental Music: Preserving the Identity of Middle Eastern Christians.” *ParOr* 44 (2018): 301–310.

Hélou, Clémence. “La vie monastique féminine dans la tradition syriaque.” In *Le monachisme syriaque du VIIIe siècle à nos jours*. Patrimoine Syrienne: Actes du colloque, v1. Vol. 1, pp. 85–118. Antelias, Lebanon: Centre d’Etudes et de Recherches Orientales, 1999.

Ingalls, Wayne B. “Ritual Performance as Training for Daughters in Archaic Greece.” *Phoenix: Journal of the Classical Association of Canada* 54 (2000): 1–20. doi:10.2307/1089387.

Jarjour, Tala. *Sense and Sadness: Syriac Chant in Aleppo*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018.

Jullien, Florence. “Le monachisme feminin en milieu Syriaque.” In *Le monachisme syriaque*, ed. F. Jullien, 65–87. Études Syriennes 7. Paris: Guethner, 2010.
Krueger, Derek. *Liturgal Subjects: Christian Ritual, Biblical Narrative, and the Formation of the Self in Byzantium*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2014.

Lange, Christian. *The Portrayal of Christ in* the Syriac Commentary on the Diatessaron. *CSCO* 616 / Subs. 118. Leuven: Peeters, 2005.

Marks, Susan. “Bayit versus Beit Midrash: Jewish Mother as Teacher.” In *A Most Reliable Witness: Essays in Honor of Ross Shepard Kraemer*, ed. Susan Ashbrook Harvey, Nathaniel P. DesRosiers, Shira Landers, Jacqueline Z. Pastis, and Daniel Ullucci, 195–204. Providence: Brown Judaic Studies, 2015.

Mateos, Juan. *Lelya-Ṣapra: Essai d’interprétation des matines chaldéennes*. OCA 156. Rome: Pontificium Institutum Orientalium Studiorum, 1959.

Maxwell, Jaclyn. *Christianization and Communication in Late Antiquity: John Chrysostom and his Congregation in Antioch*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006.

Menze, Volker. “Priests, Laity, and the Sacrament of the Eucharist in Sixth Century Syria.” *Hugoye* 7 (2007): 129–146.

Menze, Volker. “The *Regula ad Diaconos*: John of Tella, his Eucharistic Ecclesiology and the Establishment of an Ecclesiastical Hierarchy in Exile.” *OrChr* 90 (2006): 44–90.

Outtier, Bernard. “Saint Éphrem d’après ses biographies et ses œuvres.” *ParOr* 4 (1973): 11–33.

Page, Christopher. *The Christian West and Its Singers: The First Thousand Years*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2010.

Possekel, Ute. “Selbstverständnis und Bildungsauftrag der Schule von Nisibis.” *ZAC* 19 (2015): 104–136.

Possekel, Ute. “‘Go and Set Up for Yourselves Beautiful Laws’: The School of Nisibis and Institutional Autonomy in Late Antique Education.” In *Griechische Philosophie und Wissenschaft bei den Östsyrrern: Im Gedenken an Mār Addai Scher* (1867–1915), ed. M. Perkams and A.M. Schilling, 29–47. Berlin: de Gruyter, 2019.

Quasten, Johannes. “The Liturgical Singing of Women in Christian Antiquity.” *Catholic Historical Review* 27 (1941): 149–165.

Rubenson, Samuel. “Monasticism and the Philosophical Heritage.” In *The Oxford Handbook of Late Antiquity*, ed. Scott Fitzgerald Johnson, 487–512. New York: Oxford University Press, 2012.

Rubenson, Samuel. “Wisdom, Paraenesis, and the Roots of Monasticism.” In *Early Christian Paraenesis in Context*, ed. James Starr and Troels Engberg-Pedersen, 521–534. Berlin: de Gruyter, 2004.

Rubenson, Samuel. *The Letters of Saint Antony: Monasticism and the Making of a Saint*. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1995.

Urbano, Arthur. *The Philosophical Life: Biography and the Crafting of Intellectual Identity in Late Antiquity*. Washington, DC: The Catholic University of America Press, 2013.
Watts, Edward. *City and School in Late Antique Athens and Alexandria*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006.

Wickes, Jeffrey. "Between Liturgy and School: Reassessing the Performative Context of Ephrem’s Madrāšè." *JECS* 26 (2018): 25–51.