

NINTH-CENTURY ARABIC CHRISTIAN PERCEPTIONS OF 'OTHERNESS' UNDER MUSLIM RULE¹

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Introduction

There has been considerable research on late medieval and early modern perceptions of “others”, among them Muslims, and the Western perceptions of Islam, while the “otherness”/“othering” of Christianity under Muslim rule is far less investigated. In my paper, I seek to present the ways Christians perceived alterity in an Islamic society in the ninth century, with Christian doctrine articulated in the Arabic language for the first time and in a new frame of reference – set by Islam (Griffith 1994:42–43). I consider the ways “others” – Muslims, Jews and other, mostly Christian communities living under Muslim rule – are represented, with reference to the names/forms and concepts related to “otherness” in the works of three authors: the Melkite theologian Theodore Abū Qurra (d. ca. 820–825), the Jacobite theologian Ḥabīb ibn Ḥidma Abū Rā'iṭa (d. probably soon after 830), and the Nestorian 'Ammār al-Baṣrī (d. ca. 840), i.e. the first known Christian theologians who wrote in Arabic. In parallel to this, I seek to identify Christian definitions of “self” and reflect on the extent to which Christians perceived of themselves as “others” under Muslim rule.

The first Arabic Christian theologians aimed to defend Christian teachings challenged by Muslims, i.e. the doctrine of the Trinity and divine filiation. In this apologetic literature, the theme of the true religion (*ad-dīn al-ḥaqq*, *ad-dīn al-qawīm*) and of the motivation underlying commitment to false religions frequently recur. I find that the true religion is a prevalent notion both in the way Christian communities defined themselves and in the way they perceived of others or otherness i.e. in the delimitation from the “other”.² Therefore, in identifying the indicators of and reasons

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² As for religion and (ethnic) identity in general under the rule of Islam c.f.: Hodgson, 1977:306–307: “by Abbasi times, the *dhimmi* communities [...] were becoming identified with individual ethnic groups. When we speak of ethnic groups, we mean not nationalities as such, [...] but any groups with a common cultural affiliation into which individuals are born,

for demarcation, I mostly interpret “otherness” in terms of difference or deviation in faith/religion.

1 “True religion” and its role in othering

For an examination of any “deviation”/“difference,” the first step is the identification of the point of reference from which it is considered, i.e., in this case, the true religion. However, given that these texts were not written with the scope of transmitting theoretical knowledge with defined theological and philosophical concepts, but, as M. Swanson (2010:398) suggests, “to formulate pastorally useful arguments, in the period of and in regions under Abbasid rule in which rates of conversion to Islam were accelerating because of the pro-conversion policies”, there are no definitions in most cases. The meaning of religion and the *true* religion can be deduced from the context. All authors present *religion* as a set of the following components: a messenger who claims to be sent by God with a revealed Scripture containing His doctrine – on the divinity, His commands, or prohibitions, and reward and punishment. As for the *true* religion, instead of definitions, we find strategies for its recognition. The shared approach of these three authors is the assertion that there are negative elements that can discredit a religion or unworthy incentives to commit to a religion other than the true one, and the ones they present largely overlap. They emphasize that these causes cannot justify the spread of Christianity, which is therefore the true religion, verified by miracles and prophecies (Griffith 2002; and Stroumsa 1985). Sets of negative criteria as tools in their argumentation clearly delimit what the true religion is not; i.e. what Christianity is not, and who the Christians are NOT.

As a telling example, let us only cite Abū Rāʾiṭa, who explains the falseness of these causes with divergence and separation from God’s religion, i.e. the true religion, lying outside of obedience to God.

“[But] these six types [of reasons] diverge from the religion of God (*ḥāʾida ʿan dīn Allāh*) and lie outside of obedience to Him (*ḥāriḡa ʿan ṭāʾatihi*), and so are separated from His religion (*mufāriqa dīnahu*) because of the depravity which possesses them, and the contradictions inherent in them. ... We find that the believers of the Christian religion reject (*munābiḏūn*) the six types [of

and in particular those smaller, more cohesive groups that have a common language or dialect and a sense of common loyalty as against outsiders, though they may not be living in a single homogeneous area. Religious communities between Nile and Oxus had long tended to be identified with such ethnic groups, and now the identification became more rigorous. Almost every ethnic group that did not adopt Islam came to be identified by its own special religious allegiance even more than by its language. [...] The piety of each of the dhimmi religious bodies naturally retained its distinctive character.”

reasons to convert to another religion] foreign to the will of God (*al-ḥāriḡa 'an irādat Allāh*), His remembrance is exalted! [and] contrary to the religion of truth (*muḏādida [sic!] li-dīn al-haqq*)."³

For a better understanding of the relations between phrases and concepts, we may turn to the parallel structures that are evident in this passage. Given that parallelism had become the leading style in Arabic prose writing by the ninth century (Beeston 1974:134–146, Idem 1983:180–185, Sperl 1989:5), we may deduce synonymies taking into consideration the arrangement of the ideas. It is then clearly seen that *deviation* from the religion of God (*ḥā'ida 'an dīn Allāh*) also means lying outside of it (*ḥāriḡa 'an ṭā'atihi*), being separated from it (*mufāriqa dīnahu*) or being contrary, i.e. opposing to it (*muḏādida li-dīn al-haqq*). Explicit references to divergence, separation, and being on the outer side testify the author's perceptions of difference and otherness; at the same time, these verbalizations of demarcation, delineation are examples for othering.

2 The semantics of otherness

Otherness and othering are already witnessed in the strategies for recognizing the true religion, but in the works of Arabic Christian authors, otherness and alterity are expressed in ways that are best demonstrated by a lexico-semantic approach. There is no explicit mention of the "other" by terms that we would expect on the basis of contemporary common usage (e.g. *al-āḥar*, [*al-*]ḡayr). We can find instead references to "others" by way of words indicating difference, opposition, deviation. I am enlisting the most frequently used ones, and then bring a couple of representative examples to shed light on their connotations and denotations with regard to the semantics of otherness.

The most frequently used words are derived from the radicals *ḥ-l-f* and include:

- iḥtilāf: *difference, dissimilarity, diversity, controversy, dissent*
- iḥtalafa: *differ, vary*
- muḥtalif: *diverse, different, various*
- ḥilāf: *difference, diversity, opposition*
- muḥālif: *different, diverse, adversary*

Besides, use of forms derived from the stem *f-r-q* prevails:

³ Keating's translation (Keating 2006:85), vs. Arabic text: (Abū Rā'iṭa, *Die Schriften* 132): *wa-hāḏihi s-sitta l-aqsām ḥā'ida 'an dīn Allāh, wa-ḥāriḡa 'an ṭā'atihi wa-mufāriqa dīnahu li-mā ya'tarihā min al-fasād wa-yaltahiq 'alayhā min at-tanāquḏ. Fa-ammā l-qism as-sābi' allaḏī bihi yaqūm al-burhān wa-'alayhi mu'tamad al-īmān min ta'yīd Rabb al-'izza bi-mā ya'ḡiz al-'aql 'an taḥṣīlihi wa-yamtani' al-ḥalq 'an fi'lihi illā li-ahli l-ḥaqq al-muršadīn waḡadnā mu'taqidī dīn an-naṣrāniyya munābiḏīn al-aqsām as-sitta al-ḥāriḡa 'an irādat Allāh ... al-muḏādida li-dīn al-haqq.*

- farq: *separation, division, partition*
- faraqa – yafuqu: *separate, divide; distinguish; differ*
- mufāraqa: *opposition*
- iftaraqa – yaftariqu: *be separated*
- iftirāq: *separation*

Other examples include forms derived from *ḥ-y-d*:

- ḥā'id: *deviant*

‘*n-d*:

- ‘anada – ya‘nidu/ya‘nudu: *deviate, divagate*
- mu‘ānid: *deviant, opponent*

b-r-y:

- barrāniyyūn: *outsiders*

and *ḥ-ṣ-r*:

- ḥāṣir: *loss, perdition*

2.1 *ḥ-l-f*

2.1.1 The issue of religion

To start with the most frequently used roots, *ḥ-l-f*, we may cite ‘Ammār al-Baṣrī’s example that uses them to set forth difference between peoples, but bases the distinction on doctrine/religion and not ethnicity:

“They proclaimed to the peoples of the world that their Creator, about Whom they differed (*iḥṭalaḥū fīhi*), and concerning Whom their teaching multiplied, (*kaṭurat aqāwīluhum fī amrihi*) and from Whom their desires were separated (*tafarraqat aḥwā’uhum ‘anhu*), and Whose name they gave to others (*waḍa’ū ismahu⁴ ‘alā ḡayrihi*) among stars and idols and other things, and thus they opposed (*nāqaḍa ba’duhum ba’dan fī sababihi*) each other over Him, and the majority of them were confused (*taḥayyara aḡtaruhum fī amrihi*) concerning Him, because they neither saw Him nor comprehended Him.⁵

Two-two elements of this list are always arranged in a parallel structure, and we have every reason to believe that these pairs, among them the first two: difference and multiplicity of teachings (*iḥṭalaḥū fīhi* – *kaṭurat aqāwīluhum fī amrihi*) are

⁴ The use of the verb *waḍa’a* is remarkable if we take into consideration the discussions on the origins of language that took place contemporaneously to ‘Ammār’s writing his treatises. C.f. Vesteeh 1997:80. See also: Weiss 1987:341–342.

⁵ Mikhail’s translation (Mikhail 2013:395) vs. Arabic text (‘A. al-Baṣrī, *Kitāb al-Burhān* 72): *fa-baṣṣarū ahl al-‘ālam bi-anna Ḥāliqahum allaḏī iḥṭalaḥū fīhi wa-kaṭurat aqāwīluhum fī amrihi wa-tafarraḡat aḥwā’uhum ‘anhu, wa-waḍa’ū ismahu ‘alā ḡayrihi min an-nuḡūm wa-l-aṣnām wa-ḡayrihā wa-nāqaḍa ba’duhum ba’dan fī sababihi wa-taḥayyara aḡtaruhum fī amrihi id lam yarawhu wa-yudrikūhu.*

structured this way intentionally to offer variations on the same idea: in synonymous parallelism, the second member repeats the content of the first in different words. Another pair follows when separation from God and idolatry (calling other things by the name of God) (*tafarraqat ahwā'uhum 'anhu – waḍa'ū ismahu 'alā ḡayrihi*) are intended to express the same idea. Finally, the thought of difference and multiplicity concerning the teachings on God, as well as separation from Him and idolatry is taken further and completed in the final pair of synthetic parallel expressions (opposition and confusion) (*nāqada ba'ḍuhum ba'ḍan fī sababihi – taḥayyara akṭaruhum fī amrihi*). The overall passage suggests that the world's peoples are divided along doctrinal lines.

Another example further demonstrates how 'Ammār al-Baṣrī uses the root *ḥ-l-f* to express doctrinal-religious differences; and we can see in this passage that stem III (*yuhālif*) is used as a synonym for stem VIII.

"If we suppose a certain city from among [the] cities, [each] having [different] types of religions (*aṣnāf min al-adyān*), our minds cannot imagine the collusion of one of them to corrupt their Book, because of the multiplicity of peoples' opinions (*iḥtilāf ārā' an-nās*) and the lack of their compliance with each other (*qillat inqiyād ba'ḍihim li-ba'ḍ*), without someone uniting them all on one thing. The proof of this is that we see groups of interpretation in all religions, as they differ from each other (*yuhālif ba'ḍuhā ba'ḍan*) and they do not follow one another (*ḡayr munqāda ba'ḍuhā li-ba'ḍ*). If it were possible that people agreed to gather together (*ittifāq an-nās 'alā l-iḡtimā'*) to corrupt the revealed [text], it would not have been possible that their interpretations would differ (*la-mā iḥtalafat fī t-ta'wīl*). Their different interpretations (*iḥtilāfuhā fī t-ta'wīl*) demonstrate the impossibility of what has been slandered concerning their [the religious sects'], agreement (*ittifāquhā*) in corrupting the revealed text."⁶

The synonymy of the two forms *iḥtilāf* – *ḥilāf* can be seen in the passage in that in both cases the terms are set in parallel structures with the infinitive or participle of the verb form *inqāda*: multiplicity (i.e. difference) of peoples' opinions (*iḥtilāf ārā' an-nās*) with the lack of their compliance with each other (*qillat inqiyād ba'ḍihim li-ba'ḍ*); their difference from each other (as indicated by the phrase *yuhālif ba'ḍuhā ba'ḍan*) with their failure to follow one another (as expressed by *ḡayr*

⁶ Mikhail's translation (Mikhail 2013:368–369) vs. Arabic text ('A. al-Baṣrī, *Kitāb al-Burhān* 42): *fa-idā tawahhamnā madīnatan min al-madā'in fihā aṣnāf min al-adyān lam yumkin 'uqūlanā tawātu' ṣanf minhā 'alā taḥrīf kitābihi li-iḥtilāf ārā' an-nās wa-qillat al-inqiyād ba'ḍihim li-ba'ḍ dūna man yaḡma'uhum 'alā amr wāḥid. Wa-d-dalīl 'alā dālika an narā fī kull dīn firaqan min ta'wīl yuhālīf ba'ḍuhum ba'ḍan ḡayr munqāda ba'ḍuhā li-ba'ḍ. Fa-law kāna yumkin ittifāq an-nās 'alā l-iḡtimā' 'alā taḥrīf at-tanzīl la-mā iḥtalafat fī t-ta'wīl. Wa-iḥtilāfuhā fī t-ta'wīl yūḍih muḥāl mā uddu'īya 'alayhā min ittifāqihā fī taḥrīf at-tanzīl.*

munqāda ba‘duhā li-ba‘d), i.e. the repetition of the antithetical parallel structures gives evidence for it. Later, difference and agreement are also opposed in the text, which implies that difference in interpretation (*iḥtilāf fī t-ta‘wīl*) demarcates the line of division.

‘Ammār al-Baṣrī is not the only author to use these roots to refer to doctrinal-religious difference. Abū Rā’iṭa’s following extracts refer to the same idea, even more explicitly, given that he places also *milla*, “religious community” by its side.

“...because the word of someone who is your opponent in religion (*muḥālīfukum fī l-milla*) is unacceptable to you (*kalāmuhu ladaykum ḡayr maqbūl*).”⁷

and

“Now it is necessary for us to notice in the teaching about analogy that “God” is not counted as a single one, in keeping with the witnesses of the [sacred] books, cautioning the one who differs from us (*man ḥālāfanā*), and strengthening with support the one who follows us (*ṣāya‘anā*), even if the ones who differ from us on it (*muḥālīfūnā laḥā*) declare it to be false (*mukaḍḍibūn*) when they claim we have altered [the sacred books] by adding to them and taking away from them.”⁸

The first example is of interest given that it reflects how Christians perceived of themselves as others under Muslim rule: “us” is defined as “opponent in religion” or in religious community in face of the other (*muḥālīfukum fī l-milla*). In the second one, the “other” is called “opponent,” both by a verbal and a participial reference (*man ḥālāfanā*; *muḥālīfūnā laḥā*). Difference in religion then implies mutual othering and opposition, while those who belong to the same confessional group (as indicated by *ṣāya‘a*) are strengthened. In both phrases, the Christian as other perceives himself as someone whose word and Scriptural evidence are not credited and are refused.

Dichotomies frequently recur, as e.g. in another example by Abū Rā’iṭa:

“so that no one may have grounds to reproach us concerning [our teachings about] God, whether he agrees or disagrees (*muwāfiq – muḥālīf*) with us, is peaceful or obstinate (*musālim – mu‘ānid*).”⁹

⁷ Keating’s translation (Keating 2006:173) vs. Arabic text (Abū Rā’iṭa, *Die Schriften* 5): *li-anna man kāna muḥālīfakum fī l-milla kāna kalāmuhu ladaykum ḡayr maqbūl*.

⁸ Keating’s translation (Keating 2006:201) vs. Arabic text (Abū Rā’iṭa, *Die Schriften* 19–20): *wa-qad yaḡib ‘alaynā an nutbi‘ al-qawl fī l-qiyās bi-anna Allāh laysa ‘adad wāḥid fard [sic!] bi-ṣahādāt min al-kutub tayaqquḏan li-man ḥālāfanā wa-taṣḍidan mimman ṣāya‘anā wa-in kāna muḥālīfūnā la-ḥā mukaḍḍibīn bi-mā idda‘aw min taḥrīfinā iyyāḥā bi-z-ziyāda fīhā wa-n-naqṣān minhā*.

⁹ Keating’s translation (Keating 2006:223) vs. Arabic text (Abū Rā’iṭa, *Die Schriften* 27): *li-kay-lā ya’ḥuḍ minnā fī Allāh lawmat lā‘im muwāfiqan kāna la-nā aw muḥālīfan – musāliman aw mu‘ānidan*.

Group coherence is seen to be based on agreement in doctrine (i.e. in this case teachings on God), while the demarcation is difference in creed, i.e. disagreement. The parallel structures (*muwāfiq* – *muḥālif* and *musālim* – *muʿānid*) display agreement as a pair to peacefulness, while the contrasting terms place difference/disagreement as a pair term to obstinance/aggression. This implies the synonymy of the terms involved.

Difference, opposition, i.e. “otherness” in religion also entails exclusivity, as the idea that salvation may only be the share of the community that pertains to the true religion suggests.

“If they say: “What about the salvation you have mentioned, are you saved, apart from your opponents (*muḥālif*)? We see that death is obviously upon you, just as [it affects] the rest of the peoples who are your opponents (*muḥālif*)?”¹⁰

Even though in the end death is seen to affect both parts – the group proper as well as the opponents, the very emerging of the question attests to the presence of exclusivist tendencies.

Abū Rāʾīta's following passage places the term *ḥālafa* in a wider semantic context.

“May He put both of us among those who seek His truth (*yaltamis ḥaqqahu*) and His light, who are led by (*yanqād*) the light of His lamps of knowledge, and those who follow (*yatba*) His bright lights, which show the way to those who seek enlightenment by means of them, to a grasp of the true things. They are the ones persisting in [what is true] (*muwāzibūn*), clinging fast to His precepts (*mutamassikūn bi-farāʾidhi*), and the obligation of His laws (*lāzimūn bi-šarāʾihi*), fighting for His ways (*mutaḥarribūn li-sunanihi*), holding fast to His Word (*āḥidūn bi-kalāmihi*), rejoicing in His religion (*fariḥūn bi-dīnihi*), spurning those who differ from Him (*rāfidūn li-man ḥālafahu*), avoiding those who anger Him (*muḡtanibūn li-man ašḡaṭahu*), rejecting the unbeliever and the Deceiver (*ḡāḥidūn al-kufr wa-ṭ-ṭāḡūt*), giving credence to God and to what comes from Him (*mušaddiqūn bi-Allāh*).”¹¹

¹⁰ Keating's translation (Keating 2006:243) vs. Arabic text (Abū Rāʾīta, *Die Schriften* 37): *fa-in qālū wa-mā al-ḥalāš alladī ḡakartum annahu ḥalaqakum dūna muḥālifikum fa-qad narā l-mawt zāḥiran ʿalaykum ka-sāʾir al-umam al-muḥālifa lakum.*

¹¹ Keating's translation (Keating 2006:165) vs. Arabic text (Abū Rāʾīta, *Die Schriften* 1): *wa-ḡaʿalanā wa-īyyāka mimman yaltamis ḥaqqahu wa-nūrahu, wa-yanqād bi-ḡiyāʾ sarḡihi al-ʿilmiyya wa-yatbaʿ mašābīḥahu an-nayyira al-muršida li-man istanāra biḥā ilā idrāk ḥaqāʾiq al-umūr muwāzibīn ʿalayhā mutamassikīn bi-farāʾidhi lāzimīn li-šarāʾihi mutaḥarribīn li-sunanihi āḥidīn bi-kalāmihi fariḥīn bi-dīnihi rāfidīn li-man ḥālafahu muḡtanibīn li-man ašḡaṭahu ḡāḥidīn al-kufr wa-ṭ-ṭāḡūt mušaddiqīn bi-llāh wa-bi-mā ḡāʾa min ʿindahu.*

Here the form, as we can see, refers to people pertaining to other religions, i.e. the ones who differ from God or oppose Him. However, a whole chain of words and parallel phrases are used to indicate a coherence of a community of those who belong to/follow God, while oppose those who oppose Him. A dichotomy is evident here. Belonging together or separation depends on whether one follows the “true religion.” Those who follow (*yatba*), seek God’s truth (*yaltamis haqqahu*), are led by Him (*yanqād*), persisting in [what is true] (*muwāḏibūn*), cling fast to His precepts (*mutamassikūn bi-farā’idihi*), and the obligation of His laws (*lāzimūn li-šarā’ihi*), fight for His ways (*mutaḥarribūn li-sunanihi*), hold fast to His word (*āḥidūn bi-kalāmihi*) rejoice in his *dīn* (*fariḥūn bi-dīnihi*) – spurn those who differ from Him or oppose Him (*rāfiḏūn li-man ḥālafahu*), avoid those who anger Him (*mutaḡannibūn li-man aṣḥaṭahu*), reject unbelief and deception (*ḡāḥidūn al-kufr wa-t-ṭāḡūt*).

Taking into consideration ‘Ammār al-Baṣrī’s second example quoted above,¹² we may note a regularity in the use of *inqiyād* which expresses compliance or obedience (‘Ammār’s phrase *qillat inqiyād ba’dihim li-ba’d* was translated as ‘lack of their compliance with each other’ – while Abū Rā’iṭa’s *yanqād* as ‘being led by Him’). Being led by God and/or being inclined to follow each other then reflect a sense of belonging, while its lack indicates difference, demarcation.

Finally, let us turn to Theodore Abū Qurra, whose examples on doctrinal-religious difference include the following:

“One day, a certain need compelled me to descend to civilization and to the community of my fellow human beings, and I observed that they adhered to a variety of religions (*adyān muḥtalifa*).”¹³

And:

“There is great difference between the religions (*iḥtilāf kaṭīr fī l-adyān*).”¹⁴

And:

“And yet, there are many messengers and many books, and they disagree (*iḥtilāf*) with one another!”¹⁵

Finally:

¹² Mikhail’s translation (Mikhail 2013:368–369) vs. Arabic text (‘A. al-Baṣrī, *Kitāb al-Burhān* 42).

¹³ Lamoreaux’s translation (Abū Qurra, *Theologus autodidactus* 1) vs. Arabic text (Abū Qurra, *Maymar fī wuḡūd al-ḥāliq* 200): *fa-nazaltu yawman li-ḥāḡa ‘araḡat lī, ilā l-madā’in wa-ḡamā’at an-nās. Fa-ra’aytuḥum fī adyān muḥtalifa*.

¹⁴ My translation. vs. Arabic text (Abū Qurra, *Maymar fī wuḡūd al-ḥāliq* 217): *wa-hunāka iḥtilāf kaṭīr fī l-adyān*, c.f. Lamoreaux’s translation (Abū Qurra, *Theologus autodidactus* 9): In the real world, there are yet other religions and still more disagreement.

¹⁵ Lamoreaux’s translation (Abū Qurra, *Theologus autodidactus* 6) vs. Arabic text (Abū Qurra, *Maymar fī wuḡūd al-ḥāliq* 212): *wa-qad ḡā’a man ḡā’a min kaṭrat ar-rusul wa-l-kutub wa-iḥtilāfihā*.

"After meeting all these people, I began to reflect on what each had said and realized that all of them both agreed (*ḡumlatuhum muttafiqūn*) and disagreed (*muḥtalifūn*) about three things. As for what they agreed on (*ittifāquhum*) ... As for what they disagreed on (*iḥtilāfuhum*), they disagree with one another (*yaḥtalifūn*) as to the ..."¹⁶

In this bunch of short examples, the roots *h-l-f* recur referring to difference, which is never ethnic, racial, etc., but is taken into consideration in religious terms, as the other meaning, disagreement implies it. The last example clarifies the nature of the difference – i.e. the fields of disagreement, as well as it places difference as an antithetical pair of agreement (*ittifāq – iḥtilāf*).

Theodore Abū Qurra's last example makes a connection between deviation and difference in that it clarifies the meaning of deviation as the opposition/difference from right guidance:

"If what I have said is true [...], it is you who are astray (*ʿindak ḍalāl*). Indeed, there can be no doubt that guidance for you consists of the precise opposite of all this (*al-hudā ʿindak ḥilāfuhu*)."¹⁷

So far, the wider contexts of the examples have suggested that difference from other religious communities are intended; doctrinal difference is seen to be the reason of demarcation.

2.1.2 Intra-Christian differences

However, differences may also be found among different Christian denominations. We can mostly find references to these in the works of Abū Rāʾiṭa, as we will see in what follows:

"Examine what the wise Abū Qurra says – may the Messiah guide him with [all the others] who oppose/differ from the truth (*man ḥālafa l-ḥaqq*)"¹⁸;

which expresses the acknowledgement of interdenominational difference, whence deviation means the opposing of the truth. The nature of difference is usually given and specified, as we can read it in the following example:

¹⁶ Lamoreaux's translation (Abū Qurra, *Theologus autodidactus* 6) vs. Arabic text (Abū Qurra, *Maymar fī wuḡūd al-ḥāliq* 211): *fa-lammā laqiyanī ḥāʾulāʾi kulluhum bi-ḥayt tafakkartu fī qawl kull wāḥid minhum raʾayt ḡumlatahum muttafiqīn fī ṭalāṭat ašyāʾ, wa-muḥtalifīn aydan fihā ... wa-ammā ittifāquhum ... wa-ammā iḥtilāfuhum fa-innahum yaḥtalifūna fī šifāt ālihatihim wa-fī ḥalālihīm wa-ḥarāmihīm wa-fī ṭawābihīm wa-ʾiqābihīm.*

¹⁷ Lamoreaux's translation (Abū Qurra, *Theologus autodidactus* 45) vs. Arabic text (Abū Qurra, *Maymar fī wuḡūd al-ḥāliq* 267): *fa-in kāna ḥādā, yā ḥādā, ʿindak ḍalāl fa-lā šakka anna l-hudā ʿindak ḥilāfuhu.*

¹⁸ My translation. vs. Arabic text (Abū Rāʾiṭa, *Die Schriften* 86): *fa-imtaḥin [...] qawl Abī Qurra al-ḥakīm ḥadāhu l-Masīḥ wa-ḡayrahu mimman ḥālafa l-ḥaqq.*

“The *Sanctus* of Abū Qurra and those who adhere [to the same doctrine] (*ašyā’uhu*), I mean Nestorius and all the dualists, the Jews, and the first and last opponents among them, has become the very same *Sanctus*, not a different (*muḥtalif*) one.”¹⁹

Here the difference regards the practice of “sanctification” (*taqdīs*), i.e. any difference from the Jacobite Trisagion. In this respect, Abū Rā’īṭa considers his denomination different from any other denominations and religious communities, i.e. a practice, a way of saying the *Trisagion* defines a Jacobite conception of “us” in contrast to everything else; but the practice also reflects doctrinal differences.²⁰ In this respect, Nestorians, Melkites, Jews, and dualists are considered as “them” who adhere to something in common, as the word *ašyā’uhu* indicates. As far as this practice is concerned, it is important for the author to demonstrate that it is not an innovation on the Jacobites’ behalf, but a logical continuation of Patristic tradition:

“The opponent (*al-muḥālif*) might claim that the *Sanctus* to which the Cross is added is an innovation and an invention (*ḥadīṭ muḥtada*) that was not used by the forefathers (*aslāf*) in old times, and the Ancient Pure Fathers, who were close in time to the messengers or any other Christian leaders took no steps towards it.”²¹

Here the opponent is any other denomination that attacks the Trisagion containing the addition: “who wast crucified for us,” the most famous characteristic of the Jacobite Rite. Opposition-difference are understood in this case rather as deviation, as the terms “innovation and invention/novelty” vs. the “forefathers” indicate. As far as the idea of innovation-heresy and the corresponding words are concerned, the

¹⁹ My translation. vs. Arabic text (Abū Rā’īṭa, *Die Schriften* 76): *šāra taqdīs Abī Qurra wa-ašyā’ihī a’nī Naštūr wa-ašḥāb al-maṭnawīyya kāffatan wa-l-yahūd ma’a dālika wa-l-muḥālīfīn al-awwalīn minhum wa-l-āḥīrīn taqdīsān wāḥīdan ḡayr muḥtalif*.

²⁰ C.f. Brock (1985). Especially: 29. “It is clear that originally different geographical areas understood the Trisagion in different ways. At Jerusalem, Constantinople and in the West, it was taken to be addressed to the Trinity, whereas in Syria, parts of Asia Minor and Egypt it was understood as referring to Christ. The addition in Syria, by Peter the Fuller, patriarch of Antioch (d.488), of the words ‘who was crucified for us’, in order to enforce a christological interpretation, only made the matter more inflammatory, especially in the eyes of those who disapproved of theopaschite language. Eventually, because Constantinople represented the centre of Chalcedonian orthodoxy in the East, and Syria the stronghold of opposition to the chalcedonian definition that ‘the Incarnate Christ is one *in* two natures’ this division of opinion, originally a purely geographical matter, took on ecclesiastical overtones, and a trinitarian interpretation of the Trisagion came to be seen as a hallmark of Chalcedonian orthodoxy.”

²¹ My translation. vs. Arabic text (Abū Rā’īṭa, *Die Schriften* 78): *wa-‘asā l-muḥālīf an yadda’i anna ḥādā t-taqdīs al-muḥādīf ilayhi š-šalb ḥadīṭ muḥtada’ wa-laysa yusta’mal min al-aslāf fī qadīm ad-duḥūr wa-lā yaḥtaḍū bihi ḥadwan al-ābā’ at-tāhira al-qadīma al-qarīb ‘ahduhā bi-l-mursalīn wa-mā dūnahum min a’immat an-naṣrānīyya*.

influence of Islamic phraseology is clearly seen. Abū Rā'īta then goes on in the following way:

“Were this Trisagion to which the cross is added told only by those who are called Jacobites and by none of their opponents who are contrasting them (*dūna ġayrihim min al-muḥālifīn al-muḍaddidīn* [sic!] *lahum*) [...], your claim would be accepted. But as it is found to be used and told by several groups and different religious communities (*milal muḥtalifa*) that do not accept one another (*ġayr qābil ba'ḍuhā min ba'ḍ*) [...] no one who takes their religions (*adyānahum*) into consideration can doubt that this [practice] is adopted from an ancient source (*aṣl qadīm*), previous traditions (*ātār sābiqa*) and a *sunna* in practice preserved by God's community (*sunna ġāriya maḥfūza fī bī'at Allāh*).”²²

This passage is of interest due to more reasons. On one hand, the Jacobites' introducing a doctrinal difference as an innovation is negated here. On the other hand, this negation is carried out through the presentation that the contested practice is not exclusively the Jacobites' own but is shared by other religious groups as well – it is remarkable that this argument resembles the one generally used by Christian authors when contesting the accusation of *tahrīf*. When referring to the different religious groups (*milal muḥtalifa*), their difference is emphasized in terms of opposition, contrast, lack of mutual acceptance (*ġayr qābil ba'ḍuhā min ba'ḍ*). Given that the shared practice is then traced back to a shared source and tradition (*aṣl, sunna*), difference between these groups may also be understood as deviance. The first sentence of the extract presents opposition and contrast as synonymous, as *al-muḥālifīn al-muḍaddidīn* indicates it. Reference to the doctrinal innovation introduced is a tool for othering – while sticking to the sources and the *sunna* is part of the construction of belonging. Those who preserve tradition are called God's community, here indicated by the form *bī'at Allāh*. Innovation as a theme will be visited on its own later on, in point IV, among the constructions of otherness.

So far, we have seen that the terms listed mainly refer to demarcation in terms of religious difference or deviation. We should add, however, that “difference” occasionally appears also regarding linguistic, ethnic, or geographical diversity. However, identity i.e. the construction of “us” is always based on religious affiliation in these texts, and other differences are solely mentioned when the universal nature of Christianity is contrasted to it.

²² My translation. vs. Arabic text (Abū Rā'īta, *Die Schriften* 78): *law kāna [...] hādā t-taqdīs al-muḍāf ilayhi aṣ-ṣalb maqūlan min al-musammiyyīn* [sic!] *al-ya'qūbiyya ḥāṣṣatan dūna ġayrihim min al-muḥālifīn al-muḍaddidīn lahum fī ġall da'watihim kān yuqbal fī da'watikum fa-ammā idā wuġida musta'malan maqūlan min firaq šattan wa-milal muḥtalifa ġayr qābil ba'ḍuhā min ba'ḍ [...] lam yašukk aḥad mimman i'tabara adyānahum anna dālika muqtabas min aṣl qadīm wa-ātār sābiqa wa-sunna ġāriya maḥfūza fī bī'at Allāh kāffatan.*

2.1.3 Linguistic, ethnic, and geographical division

Most examples concerning difference in language and ethnicity/community are to be found at ‘Ammār al-Baṣrī, as we can see in the following:

“As far as the Christian religion is concerned, I did not see it in a people of one house or one country, [among] a people speaking one language so that they might be in collusion over one thing which they desire, [...]; nor in one kingdom in which they might [have a common] opinion, where the king could gather them together in one religion, [...]; [nor] with what was accepted on account of [a common] opinion [...]; nor in one kingdom with one language where they might be compelled by the sword to accept it, [...]. Rather, in every kingdom, every language and tongue in the east and west, [...], among the whites and blacks, in nations that dislike each other’s language, they became enemies and could not be united to be in collusion or be established by the compulsion of the sword, or set up in the world by feverish fanaticism, or by bribery or payment. Separated by their languages (*al-muḥṭaliḥin bi-luḡātihi*), living apart in their countries (*al-mutabā‘idīn fī buldānihi*), opposed in their kingdoms and the situation of their world (*al-mutaḍāddīn fī mamālikihim wa-amr dunyāhum*), situated apart from each other by the seas which God made as a barrier lest they join themselves together and destroy each other because of the diversity of their kinship (*li-tabā‘ud qarābatihim*) and the differences of their races and skin colors (*iḥtilāf aḡnāsihim wa-alwānihi*).”²³

The passage aims to demonstrate that the unworthy incentives that make one embrace a religion are not found in Christianity. In order to prove that no collusion, coercion, ethnic solidarity or material gain can justify the spread of Christianity, it is necessary to show the diversity of circumstances among which it was accepted. Fields of diversity include community/country or geography, language, race. We can find the variants of the root *ḥ-l-f* twice in the paragraph, first in a participial form (*al-muḥṭaliḥin bi-luḡātihi*), then as an infinitive (*iḥtilāf aḡnāsihim wa-alwānihi*). Parallel structures render geographical distance (*mutabā‘idīn fī buldānihi*), enmity (*al-mutaḍāddīn fī mamālikihim wa-amr dunyāhum*) as synonyms for the first; and distance/diversity of kinship (*li-tabā‘ud qarābatihim*) to the second: i.e. geographical distance and enmity between kingdoms appear together with linguistic differences,

²³ Mikhail’s translation (Mikhail 2013:360–361) vs. Arabic text (‘A. al-Baṣrī, *Kitāb al-Burhān* 32): ... *bal fī kull mamlaka kull lisān wa-umma fī l-maṣriq wa-l-maḡrib [...] fī l-abyaḍ wa-l-aswad, fī umam yanfur ba‘ḍuhā min luḡat ba‘ḍ ta‘ādat ‘an an taḡtami’ li-waṣfihi tawāṭiyan* [sic! instead of *tawāṭu’an*] *aw li-iḥbātihi bi-s-sayf qahran aw li-naṣabihi fī d-dunyā ‘aṣabiyyatan wa-ḥimyanatan aw bi-raṣī aw maṣāni’, al-muḥṭaliḥin bi-luḡātihi al-mutabā‘idīn fī buldānihi, al-mutaḍāddīn fī mamālikihim wa-amr dunyāhum, allaḍīna ḥāla bayna ba‘ḍihim wa-ba‘ḍ buḥūr ḡa‘alahā Allāh baynahum ḥudūdan li-an-lā yaṣila ba‘ḍuhum ilā ba‘ḍ fa-yuhlik ba‘ḍuhum ba‘ḍan li-tabā‘ud qarābatihim wa-iḥtilāf aḡnāsihim wa-alwānihi.*

while difference of race and colour implies diversity of kinship. It then shows that the author perceived otherness, alterity, or diversity also in these terms, however, its display is intended to contrast it to the universality of Christianity. Other examples of 'Ammār al-Baṣrī for ethnic diversity include:

"[Given the fact that] the innumerable nations in the east and the west (*umam lā tuḥṣā*) could not agree (*ittifāq*) without communicating or meeting or getting together (*ta'āruf – iğtimā' – iltiqā'*) from [their] different kingdoms (*iḥtilāf al-mamālik*) [that are] in opposition to each other (*muḍādda ba'ḍuhum ba'ḍan*), (in all parts of the world and faraway countries (*tabā'ud al-buldān*) and different languages and races (*iḥtilāf al-luġāt wa-l-aġnās*)), [all] testify that those who proclaimed to them this religion were weak fishermen with no rule and no sword; they could not have compelled them all by the sword."²⁴

And:

"Thus, since we have seen these great kingdoms (*al-mamālik al-'aẓīma*), numerous nations (*al-umam al-kaṭīra*), and different languages (*al-alsun al-muḥtalifa*) agreeing together (*muttafiqa*) despite their different countries, kingdoms, and languages (*'alā iḥtilāfihā*) about the acceptance of the Book, [the Christian Scriptures], and since those who proclaimed it to them had performed great miracles, we [must] conclude that they had done such [great miracles]."²⁵

In the first extract, the related notions of difference, opposition (*iḥtilāf – muḍādda*) and distance (*tabā'ud*) are contraposed with agreement (*ittifāq*), communication and meeting (*ta'āruf – iğtimā' – iltiqā'*); while in the second, multiplicity (*kaṭīra*) and difference (*muḥtalifa*) are contrasted to agreement (*muttafiqa*). The arrangement of the ideas confirms the semantic vicinity of distance-difference-opposition (as also seen in the previous example) and complements the semantic field not only through the contrary notions, but also implying that agreement in a general sense can not be realized without communication and coming together. Taking this idea one step further, it is also evident that the lack of the latter

²⁴ Mikhail's translation (Mikhail 2013:363) vs. Arabic text ('A. al-Baṣrī, *Kitāb al-Burhān* 34): *yašhad bi-anna dīn an-naṣrāniyya lam yuṭbat bi-s-sayf wa-inna d-du'āt ilayhi yasta'milūhu – li-annahu lā yumkin ittifāq umam lā tuḥṣā fī l-maṣriq wa-l-maġrib 'alā ġayr ta'āruf wa-lā iğtimā' wa-lā iltiqā', li-iḥtilāf al-mamālik muḍādda ba'ḍuhum ba'ḍan fī amr addunyā wa-tabā'ud al-buldān wa-iḥtilāf al-luġāt wa-l-aġnās – yašhad anna llaḍīn da'awhum ilā hādā d-dīn ṣayyādūn ḍu'afā' lā mulk lahum wa-lā sayf, wa-qad qaharūhum bi-aġma'ihim bi-s-sayf.*

²⁵ Mikhail's translation (Mikhail 2013:367–368) vs. Arabic text ('A. al-Baṣrī, *Kitāb al-Burhān* 41): *fa-id ra'aynā hādhihi l-mamālik al-'aẓīma wa-l-umam al-kaṭīra wa-l-alsun al-muḥtalifa muttafiqa bi-aġma'ihā 'alā iḥtilāfihā fī l-buldān wa-l-mamālik wa-l-alsina 'alā t-tadayyun bi-kutub fī aydīhim 'alā anna llaḍīn dafa'ūhā ilayhim qad fa'alū bi-him al-āyāt al-'izām, qaḍaynā annahum qad fa'alū ḍālika.*

is due to opposition or enmity between kingdoms and the linguistic and racial differences; i.e. there is causality between these features. The passages fit the larger context of denying unworthy incentives for the spreading of Christianity, which, as a religion, is homogeneous, is characterized by agreement, and its universality manifests itself above the level of geographical-linguistic-racial difference or plurality.

Finally, ‘Ammār al-Baṣrī’s remarkable comment on the difference of languages as a sign of God presents division and variety as something that may eventually accord to God’s will:

“He sent messengers to all the people of the world in their different languages which He had created for them (*bi-alsinatihim al-muḥtalifa allatī ḥalaqa lahum*), so that people would know that the One who divided the languages and made them different (*farraqa l-alsun wa-ḡa’alahā muḥtalifa*) is the One who calls them to know Him.”²⁶

The passage introduces *ḥilāf* and *farq* as synonyms, both referring to an alterity that is originated in God; this proof is based on the fact that with this multiplicity, the Unity of its originator stands in obvious contrast.

Abū Rā’iṭa’s reflections on Christian universality despite ethnic-linguistic-geographical difference presents the term in a similar semantic context:

“So [motivation for] the peoples’ acceptance of the Christian religion is clear, in spite of the diversity of their inclinations (*taṣṭīt ahwā’ihim*) and the break from their origins (*inqiṭā’ nasabihā*) [such an acceptance necessitated], [in spite of] differences in their values (*iḥtilāf aḥlāqihā*), great distance between their lands (*tanā’ī buldānihā*), the divergence of their intentions (*tabā’ud himamihā*), not to speak of their [diverse] practices [!] and word usages (*alsinatihā wa-alfāẓihā*), [they accepted it] without [prompting by] worldly desires or fear, without aspiring to a known afterlife, without approval and embellishment, without licentiousness or permissiveness, without collusion to revive the prestige of [one’s heritage] in order to attain what is hoped for.”²⁷

²⁶ Mikhail’s translation (Mikhail 2013:394) vs. Arabic text (‘A. al-Baṣrī, *Kitāb al-Burhān* 72): *wa-ba’aṭa rusulan fī l-‘alam kullihī bi-alsinatihim al-muḥtalifa llatī ḥalaqa lahum li-yu’limahum anna llaḏī farraqa l-alsun wa-ḡa’alahā muḥtalifa huwa llaḏī da’āhum ilā ma’rifatihi*.

²⁷ Keating’s translation (Keating 2006:93) vs. Arabic text (Abū Rā’iṭa, *Die Schriften* 135–136): *fa-iḏ qad wuḏiḥa wa-bāna qabūl al-umam dīn an-naṣrāniyya ‘alā taṣṭīt ahwā’ihā wa-inqīṭā’ nasabihā wa-iḥtilāf aḥlāqihā wa-tanā’ī buldānihā wa-tabā’ud himamihā faḍlan ‘an alsinatihā wa-alfāẓihā bi-lā raḡba dunyawīyya wa-lā rahba*. I cited S. T. Keating’s translation, but based the interpretation of the extract also on the original texts: see e.g. *alsinatihā* which is “their languages” – as it is also more coherent with the rest of the passage – and not “their practices” as in the quotation.

The passage renders difference (*iḥtilāf*) synonymous to diversity, separation, geographical distance, and divergence in intentions and languages (*taštūt, inqitāʿ, tanāʿī, tabāʿud*). Acceptance of Christianity as well as the morals or law observed by its followers is presented in a way that expresses how Christians consider or perceive of themselves as others, as well as it is an example for othering features that were mostly attributed to Muslims: worldly desires, fear, aspiration to a known afterlife, approval and embellishment, permissiveness, and collusion are among the unworthy incentives to accept a religion, as well as they are common accusations against Islam.

2.2 *f-r-q*

The second group of radicals that appears frequently in references to difference/otherness is *f-r-q*. It is mostly a synonym for the first one, as it is seen e.g. in the next example by ʿAmmār al-Baṣrī.

“And we have seen people in our day disagreeing about their religions (*muḥtalifūn fī adyānihim*), divided in their sects (*mutafarriqūn fī milalihim*), and each claiming that his religion is the religion of God, and that what contradicts it (*ḥālafahu*) is not from God.”²⁸

The sentence displays difference in religion and division in sect/denomination in a synonymous parallel structure (*muḥtalifūn fī adyānihim – mutafarriqūn fī milalihim*), indicating similarity in denotation. Division is then caused by difference; and – as usual – the indicator as well as the cause is religious affiliation, not ethnicity.

Abū Rāʾīta uses the word to denote religious-sectarian difference, as well:

“Were our *Sanctus* (*taqdīs*)²⁹ and prayers in the name of God [...] without the True Believers’ mentioning the Cross [...] at the end, it would not be a division/difference (*faraqa*) between them and the Jews and “The People of the South”.³⁰

Or:

“It has always been a usage found at and told by the people of the blessed proclamation, and [has] also [been always] told and accepted by our opponents

²⁸ Mikhail’s translation (Mikhail 2013:353) vs. Arabic text (ʿA. al-Baṣrī, *Kitāb al-Burhān* 26): *wa-qad raʾaynā n-nās fī dahrinā muḥtalifīn fī adyānihim mutafarriqīn fī milalihim wa-kull wāḥid minhum yaddaʿī anna d-dīn alladī huwa ʿalayhi dīn Allāh wa-inna mā ḥālafahu min ʿinda ḡayr Allāh.*

²⁹ I.e. reference is made to the practice according to which Monophysites add to the *Trisagion* – which comes after the lessons from the Old Testament – the words “Who was crucified for our sake,” the most characteristic feature of the Jacobite Rite.

³⁰ My translation vs. Arabic text (Abū Rāʾīta, *Die Schriften* 76): *fa-law anna taqdīsanā [...] wa-ṣalawātīnā kānat bi-ism Allāh al-quddūs min ḡayr an taḥtim ḡikr aṣ-ṣalb al-muḏāf ilayhi min al-muʾminīn aṣ-ṣādiqīn la-mā faraqa ḡālika baynahum wa-bayna l-yahūd wa-bayna ahl at-tayammun.*

(*muḥālīf*). This is the dividing line (*farq*) between all the believers and the non-believers.”³¹

Based on the context, Abū Rāʾīta uses this form more in the sense of a division, a demarcation caused and indicated by difference in religion, doctrine or practice. Though Jews, and “People of the South” are mentioned in the first extract, the names are used in a religious and not an ethnic sense. Division is twofold: in the first example, there is “us” on the one side, and Jews and Muslims on the other. The second example places “us” and some of our opponents (who also accept a shared practice) on the one side, while all non-believers (i.e. everyone who refuses the practice) on the other.

2.3 *ḥ-y-d*, *ʿ-n-d*, *b-r-y*, and *ḥ-ṣ-r*

The third word comes from the root *ḥ-y-d* and is found at the Jacobite author in participial form usually meaning ‘deviating from’ the (true) religion. For the sake of brevity, I am discussing it together with another root, *ʿ-n-d*, given that it is also a part of Abū Rāʾīta’s vocabulary, and is mostly placed by the side of *ḥāʾid*, “deviant”. We can then take it into consideration as a reference to deviance, too.

As for *ḥāʾid*, we may turn back to our first example concerning the unworthy incentives for accepting a religion³² and recall that *deviation* from the religion of God also means lying outside of it, being separated from it or being contrary to it, so the term may refer to other religions. However, in the majority of cases, it refers to other Christian groups:

“... the view of Nestorius, who deviated from the true community (*al-ḥāʾid ʿan al-milla aṣ-ṣādiqa*),³³

“We need to follow the testimonies of Moses [and] the sayings of the Pure Saint Fathers, who were the pillars of the Church/community as they

³¹ My translation vs. Arabic text (Abū Rāʾīta, *Die Schriften* 82): *lam yazal ḡāriyan mawḡūdan maqūlan min ahl ad-daʿwa l-mubāraka maqūlan maqbūlan ayḍan min muḥālīfīnā. Wa-huwa l-farq bayna al-muʾminīn kāffatan wa-bayna l-kuffār.*

³² “[But] these six types [of reasons] diverge from the religion of God (*ḥāʾida ʿan dīn Allāh*) and lie outside of obedience to Him (*ḥāriḡa ʿan ṭāʿatihi*), and so are separated from His religion (*muḥāriḡa dīnahu*) because of the depravity which possesses them, and the contradictions inherent in them. ... We find that the believers of the Christian religion reject (*munābiḏūn*) the six types [of reasons to convert to another religion] foreign to the will of God (*al-ḥāriḡa ʿan irādat Allāh*), His remembrance is exalted! [and] contrary to the religion of truth (*muḍāḏida li-dīn al-haqq*).” Keating’s translation (Keating 2006:85) vs. Arabic text (Abū Rāʾīta, *Die Schriften* 132)

³³ My translation vs. Arabic text (Abū Rāʾīta, *Die Schriften* 106): *raʾy Naṣṭūr al-ḥāʾid ʿan al-milla aṣ-ṣādiqa.*

combatted (*ḡāḥadū*) those who deviate (*al-ḥā'idīn*) from the religion of the Messiah."³⁴

"As Kyrill [...] said of the Incarnation to Nestorius, the deviant, who rejects the truth (*al-ḥā'id al-mu'ānid*), and who is weak of reason."³⁵

"the Trisagion of the honest/devoted believers and their addition of the Cross to it is different from the Sanctus of every community that deviates from and resists the truth (*ḥā'ida mu'ānida li-l-ḥaqq*) ..."³⁶

"those peoples who resisted the religion of God (*umam mu'ānida li-dīn Allāh*)"³⁷

We may say, that *ḥā'id*, when used alone, in the majority of cases, means Christian deviation; and, as the second example suggests, such deviation from Moses, or the Church Fathers, i.e. the tradition, is a cause of demarcation, contestation, dissent (as *ḡāḥada* suggests). When *mu'ānid* is placed by the side of *ḥā'id*, the two terms together still seem to refer to this deviation. When *mu'ānid* is used independently, the meaning is more general, i.e. an opposition, or even aggression might be detected in the meaning, and difference is not necessarily interdenominational. (We may also recall Abū Rā'īṭa's previously cited example,³⁸ where *mu'ānid* was seen to be a synonymous pair to *muḥālīf*, opponent, and an antonym to peaceful, *musālim*).

The form derived from *b-r-y*, i.e. *barrāniyyūn* – to the best of my knowledge – is only present in Theodore Abū Qurra's usage among the three authors examined here. The use of this form is already noticed by Griffith, who says that "Abū Qurrah uses the term *al-barrāniyyīn*, i.e. "outsiders", [...] to designate Muslims and Jews. It is a transliteration of the Syriac word *barrāyānā*, often used for "heathens" or even desert

³⁴ My translation vs. Arabic text (Abū Rā'īṭa, *Die Schriften* 125): *wa-qad yanbagī an natba' šahādāt Mūsā qawl al-ābā' al-qiddīsīn aṭ-ṭāhirīn alladīn kānū li-l-b'r'a a'mida wa-da'ā'im bi-mā ḡāḥadū al-ḥā'idīn 'an dīn al-Masīḥ*.

³⁵ My translation vs. Arabic text (Abū Rā'īṭa, *Die Schriften* 70–71): *ka-mā qāl [...] 'alā t-taḡassud wa-t-ta'annus Kīrillus aṭ-ṭāhir li-l-ḥā'id al-mu'ānid li-l-ḥaqq al-āḡīz ar-ra'y Nasīṭur wa-ašyā'ihī*.

³⁶ My translation vs. Arabic text (Abū Rā'īṭa, *Die Schriften* 76–77): *wa-taqdīs al-mu'minīn al-muḥliṣīn [...] iḡan mirāran ṭalāṭa wa-ilḥāquhum aṣ-ṣalb bi-hi muḥālīf taqdīs kull milla ḥā'ida mu'ānida li-l-ḥaqq aw bid'a ka-mā waṣaftu*.

³⁷ Keating's translation (Keating 2006:97) vs. Arabic text (Abū Rā'īṭa, *Die Schriften* 138): *tilka l-umam al-mu'ānida li-dīn Allāh*.

³⁸ "so that no one may have grounds to reproach us concerning [our teachings about] God, whether he agrees or disagrees (*muwāfiq – muḥālīf*) with us, is peaceful or obstinate (*musālim – mu'ānid*)."³⁸ Keating's translation (Keating 2006:223) vs. Arabic text (Abū Rā'īṭa, *Die Schriften* 27).

nomads.”³⁹ Griffith’s identification of *al-barrāniyyīn* with Jews is justified by the following example:

“We marvel at the outsiders (*barrāniyyūn*); they believe in the scriptures of the Old [Testament], while they find fault with the mysteries of the Christians, due to the disapproval of the bodily-minded,”⁴⁰

given, that here the outsiders are those who accept the Old Testament, but, as implied, refute the New one, and the Christian mysteries. However, “outsiders” can be understood in a more general sense, too, as can be seen in the following examples:

“I praise your solicitude, and I think it is appropriate to comply with your request, not in reliance on myself, that I should be able to set up the least goal for anyone of the Christians in his religion, or to protect them when anyone of the outsiders (*al-barrāniyyūn*), people of perdition, error and rudeness (*ahl al-ḥasāra, wa-d-ḡalāla wa-l-fazāza*), moves his tongue for Satan to cause them doubts.”⁴¹

This idea, i.e. whoever follows another religion, has lost [his soul], is gone astray and is a rude one (as *ḥasāra, wa-d-ḡalāla wa-l-fazāza* indicate it) is similar to the one seen previously e.g. in Abū Rā’īta’s use (c.f. the first citation of this paper concerning the six false motivations for adhering to a religion, where *ḥārīg* alluded to being an outsider, or to exclusion); but which is more, he is depicted as evil, seeking to please Satan by confusing Christians. Outsiders are also alluded to as a threat, against whom Christians are to be protected. Another example by Abū Rā’īta shows further parallels:

“The obvious demonstration that our teaching is the truth (*qawlunā huwa l-ḥaqq*) and our religion is the correct one (*dīmunā huwa š-šawāb*) (and that the one who follows another [religion] is among those who are lost (*wa-man ittaba’a ḡayrahu fa-huwa min al-ḥāširīn*)), is in your confession and your assent to our teaching in which we describe God by His true description.”⁴²

³⁹ Abū Qurra, *Veneration* 30, footnote 78. Griffith cites the following: “See R. Payne Smith, *Thesaurus Syriacus* (2 vols.; Oxford, 1879–1901, VOL. I, COL. 578.”

⁴⁰ Griffith’s translation (Abū Qurrah, *Veneration* 35) vs. Arabic text (Abū Qurra, *Maymar fī ikrām al-īqūnāt* 99): *nu’ḡib min al-barrāniyyīn alladīn yu’mīnūn bi-kutub al-’atīqa, ḥaytu yu’ayyibūna asrār an-našārā li-inkār al-’uqūl al-ḡusdāniyya iyyāhā*.

⁴¹ Griffith’s translation (Abū Qurra, *Veneration* 30) vs. Arabic text (Abū Qurra, *Maymar fī ikrām al-īqūnāt* 89): *fa-ḥamīdu ‘ināyataka, wa-ra’aytu iḡābataka, lā tiqatan bi-naḡsī annī uqīm adnā ḡaraḡ li-aḡad min an-našārā fī dīnihi, aw azburu ‘anhum aḡā man ḡarraka š-šayṡān lišānahu li-tašḡikihim min al-barrāniyyīn, ahl al-ḡasāra wa-d-ḡalāla wa-l-fazāza*.

⁴² Keating’s translation (Keating 2006:166) vs. Arabic text (Abū Rā’īta, *Die Schriften* 3): *fa-d-dalīl al-wāḡiḡ anna qawlanā huwa l-ḡaqq wa-dīnanā huwa š-šawāb wa-man ittaba’a ḡayrahu fa-huwa min al-ḡāširīn bi-iqrārikum wa-tašḡīqum li-qawlinā fīmā waḡafnā Allāh bi-hi min ḡaqq šifatihi*.

The basis of the definition of "us" is explicitly that "our" teaching is the truth (*qawhunā huwa l-ḥaqq*) and our religion is the correct one (*dīnunā huwa ṣ-ṣawāb*); while the construction of the Other is based on that he follows another religion (*ittaba'a ḡayrahu*) and thus comes to be called a "lost" one (*ḥāṣir*).

The allusion to the threat of the outsiders is carried on in the next example, where Abū Qurra writes:

"Therefore, the Christian should not disapprove of the outsiders' calling the spiritual, divine, heavenly mysteries of Christianity (*asrār an-naṣrāniyya ar-rūḥāniyya*) foolish (*taḥmīq*). For, the most skilful of these people in their own wisdom is but someone animalish, satanic, utterly foolish (*naḥsānī, ṣayṭānī, aḥmaq*)."⁴³

The outsider is extremely othered and denigrated here: he is presented as someone who calls Christian mysteries foolish; and, at the same time is animalistic, satanic, and foolish. The opposition between Christians and outsiders is emphasized by the contrastive use of the two adjectives *rūḥānī*, 'spiritual' vs. *naḥsānī*, 'animalish'.

There are other similarities between Abū Qurra's and Abū Rā'īta's usages: e.g. when the former writes this way:

"A person who refrains from making the prostration to the icons because of its repulsiveness (*qubḥ*) to the outsiders (*al-barrāniyyūn*) must disregard (*yarfud*) other mysteries of Christianity too, because of their loathsomeness (*samāḡa*) to these same people;"⁴⁴

this outsider here may be compared to Abū Rā'īta's previously seen "opponent" (*muḥālīf*) who was presented as one who does not accept Christian teachings (as true). Abū Rā'īta's references to the lack of acceptance and considering the other as a liar (*ḡayr maqbūl – mukaddīb*) are here paragoned by repulsiveness (*qubḥ*) and loathsomeness (*samāḡa*).

The last example of this section also offers parallels:

"Because of the dullness of the ancients, God used to discharge his mysteries among them only by means of such miracles as their eyes could see in connection with them. Christians do not need anything like this. Nevertheless, for the sake of the outsiders (*al-barrāniyyūn*), and the lowest rank of the Christians (*safalat an-naṣārā*), God continues to manifest miracles in behalf

⁴³ Griffith's translation (Abū Qurra, *Veneration* 34) vs. Arabic text (Abū Qurra, *Maymar fī ikrām al-īqūnāt* 98): *īdan lā yunkiranna an-naṣārā taḥmīq al-barrāniyyīn asrār an-naṣrāniyya ar-rūḥāniyya, li-anna aḥḍaq ūlā'ika bi-ḥikmatihim innamā huwa naḥsānī ṣayṭānī, aḥmaq*.

⁴⁴ Griffith's translation (Abū Qurra, *Veneration* 30) vs. Arabic text (Abū Qurra, *Maymar fī ikrām al-īqūnāt* 90): *innahu kāna yanbaḡī li-man imtana'a min as-suḡūd li-ṣ-suwar li-qubḥihi 'inda al-barrāniyyīn an yarfuda wa-ḡayr dālika min asrār an-naṣrāniyya li-samāḡatihi 'inda ūlā'ika*.

of the mysteries of Christianity, and in behalf of the strong relationship of the icons with those of whom they are the icons.”⁴⁵

It can be compared to Abū Rāʾīṭa’s classification: we can remember that in case of the *taqdīs*, he placed Melkites, Nestorians, Jews and other opponents together in contrast to those true believers who accepted the Jacobite Trisagion. Similarly, Abū Qurra uses the veneration of icons as a dividing line between the Christians on the one hand and outsiders and the lowest rank of the Christians on the other.⁴⁶

3 Circulation of the *adversos Judeos* heritage and its manifestation in an Arabic Christian language

A specific case for othering is when the authors are referring to an adherent to another religion as an enemy. Apart from Theodore Abū Qurra’s general remark on enmity and violence inherent in various religious groups,⁴⁷ the most specific case is

⁴⁵ Griffith’s translation (Abū Qurra, *Veneration* 72) vs. Arabic text (Abū Qurra, *Maymar fī ikrām al-īqūnāt* 170): *inna Allāh, li-ḡalaṣ al-awwaliyyīn, innamā yaḥull asrārahu ʿindahum bi-mā kāna yarā aʿyunuhum min al-aʿḡīb fihā. wa-inna n-naṣārā lā yaḥtāḡūna ilā miṭla ḡālīka, maʿa anna Allāh lā yazāl, fī ḥāl al-barrāniyyīn wa-safalat an-naṣārā, yuḏhir al-aʿḡīb fī asrār an-naṣrāniyya, wa-fī šiddat waṣlihi aṣ-ṣuwar bi-mā hiya la-hu.*

⁴⁶ Another parallel would be offered as far as the topic of miracles previously presented by God but then discontinued is concerned. As seen e.g. in the *Kitāb al-Burhān* 27, evidentiary miracles were necessary for the establishment of the religion, but later generations of Christians do not need it – given that intellectual reflection is enough. (C.f. Stroumsa, 1999:31).

⁴⁷ C.f. Lamoreaux’s translation (Abū Qurra, *Theologus autodidactus* 20): “With respect to this second subject, we see that not one of the other religions recognized or commanded such things. Indeed, the situation is quite the opposite. They permitted their followers to cling to the world and pandered to their desires for it and to their enjoyment of its sweetness. This was something that slew their nature and made it ill, barring it from love for the creator and from love for one another. Like wild animals, they commanded nothing of virtue, but only vengeance and revenge. Indeed, they were not satisfied with vengeance, but went even further. They abuse, but do not accept abuse, and if abused, they strike, and if struck they kill. Nor do they limit themselves to this, but they take their swords and go forth to those who have done them no harm, killing and taking them as booty. All the religions consider this acceptable.” vs. Arabic text (Abū Qurra, *Maymar fī wuḡūd al-ḥāliq* 246): *wa-fī ḥādā n-nawʿ at-tānī wa-lam nara aḥad ḥāʾulāʾi l-adyān ʿarafahā wa-lā amara bi-hā wa-lākin ʿalā l-ḥilāf, innahum raḥḥaṣū li-aṣḥābihim ittiḥād ad-dunyā wa-faraṣū la-hum šahawātihim wa-t-tamattuʿ fī laḡḡātihā, bi-amr qad qatalū fīhi ṭ-ṭabʿa wa-amraḏūhā bi-hi, wa-ḥālū baynahā wa-bayna ḥubb al-Bārī, wa-baʿḏuhum baʿḏan. Wa-lam yaʿmurū ayḏan bi-ṣayʿ min al-faḍl, wa-lākin bi-aḥḍ al-qīṣāṣ, wa-l-intiqām ka-s-sibāʿ, li-annahum lam yardaw bi-l-qīṣāṣ, wa-lākin bi-z-ziyāda ʿalayhi. Innahum yaṣtamūna wa-lā yaqbalūna š-ṣatm. wa-in šutimū ḍarabū wa-in ḍuribū qatalū. wa-lā yaqṭaṣirūna ʿalā ḥādā ayḏan, wa-lākinnahum yaḥḍūna*

dubbing the Jew as enemy, as it can be seen in Abū Rā'īṭa' following explicit reference:

"Now, if they deny this teaching, and reject it, saying: "The prophets did not say this, rather, you have altered the words from their places, and you have made [the prophets] say what is false and a lie," it should be said to them: If these books were only in our possession, and not [also] in the hands of our enemies the Jews (*a'dā'unā l-yahūd*), then, By my life! one could accept your teaching that we have changed [them] and substituted [words for other words]."⁴⁸

Here, without further reasoning and clarification, merely the phenomenon that Jews are considered as enemies is visible. The presence of such a reference is not surprising, since, as S. Griffith states it: "The inclusion of anti-Jewish elements in these tracts was intended to generate sympathetic vibrations among members of the two communities who held a common prejudice against Jews. It also gave Christian polemicists the opportunity to score debate points against Muslims by associating Islamic doctrines with Jewish ideas" (Griffith 1998:66). Here, given that the passage seeks to reject the charge of *tahrīf*, according to which Christians and Jews have distorted their scriptures, handling Jews as enemies with whom, however, some of the Scriptures are mutually accepted, is a mere rhetorical tool.⁴⁹ In the majority of cases, however, the reason for considering Jews as enemies is given: namely the charge of deicide, as the following examples indicate.

"[...] this was confirmation of His becoming human, and raising His evidence against Satan and the Jews, who carried out His crucifixion and death."⁵⁰

And:

suyūfahum wa-yahruḡūna ilā man lam yu'dīhim, fa-yaqtulūnahu wa-yastabīhūnahu wa-hāḏā ra'y ḡamīr al-adyān.

⁴⁸ Keating's translation (Keating 2006:207, 209) vs. Arabic text (Abū Rā'īṭa, *Die Schriften* 23): *fa-in ankarū hāḏā l-qawl wa-ḡaḥadūhu wa-qālū inna l-anbiyā' lam tanṭuq bihi wa-innamā ḥarraftum al-kalām 'an mawḏi'hi wa-taqawwaltum 'alayhim az-zūr wa-l-kaḏīb. Yuqāl lahum innahu law kānat hāḏihi l-kutub fī aydīnā min ḡayr an yakūn fī aydī a'dā'inā l-yahūd, kāna li-'umrī yuqbal qawluhum in ḡayyarnā wa-baddalnā.*

⁴⁹ This is a frequently recurring argument, see also e.g. Patriarch Timothy, who "cited the enmity existing between Christians and Jews as proof that neither group could get away with altering or distorting their scriptures, as the Muslims claim, because they would have had to agree on it, since they know each other's scriptures. [...] it would be impossible for them to agree with one another about any such momentous issue," due to the enmity (Griffith 1988: 68).

⁵⁰ Keating's translation (Keating 2006:285) vs. Arabic text (Abū Rā'īṭa, *Die Schriften* 59): *fa-dālika taḡḡīq li-tanāsihi [sic!] wa-qawām li-ḡuḡḡatihi 'alā š-šayṭān wa-l-yahūd alladīna wallaw šalbahu wa-qatlahu.*

“As for His raising evidence against Satan and the Jews, [this] is so that they will not excuse themselves from [the crime] they have committed in killing Him,”⁵¹

Finally:

“Peter says concerning the *Acts* (*ibriksīs*) to the Jews, the God-killers. He said “the beginning and the provider of life – you have killed him, who has resurrected from among the dead. And he has dissolved the chain of death that could not seize him.” Inform us, who is the beginning of life whom the Jews killed if not God, the Word?”⁵²

Apart from the abundant references by Abū Rāʾīta,⁵³ we also find allusions by the other two authors that include e.g. the following example by Theodore Abū Qurra:

“The Jews crucified Him”⁵⁴

and by ʿAmmār al-Baṣṛī a reference to Christ as the one killed by the Jews in the Book of the Questions and answers:

“as for the [hypothesis] that different communities (*umam muḥtalifa*) and scattered peoples (*šuʿūb mutašatta* [!]) [different] kinds/races of communities (*aḡnās umam*) and differing kingdoms (*mamlakāt mutaḡwita*) should all agree on ethnic solidarity (*taʿaṣṣub*) and the submission to the worship of someone killed by the Jews (*ḥudūʿ li-ʿibādat qatīl yahūd*), notwithstanding a kind of insults,⁵⁵ hatred/detestation, wars, and enmity (*sibāb, baḡḍa, ḥurūb*,

⁵¹ Keating’s translation (Keating 2006:287) vs. Arabic text (Abū Rāʾīta, *Die Schriften* 59): *wa-ammā qawām ḥuḡḡatihi ʿalā š-šayṭān wa-l-yahūd fa-li-an-lā yaʿḍirū anfusahum fīmā irtakabūhu min al-ḡanb fī qatlihi*.

⁵² My translation vs. Arabic text (Abū Rāʾīta, *Die Schriften* 90): *wa-Buṭrus yaqūl fī l-Ibriksīs li-l-yahūd qātilat al-ilāh: qāl raʿs al-ḡayāt wa-wāhibuhā qatalumūhu allaḡī qāma min bayn al-amwāt. Wa-ḡalla wiṭāq al-mawt wa-lam yastaṡīʿ [!] an yaḡbuṭahu. fa-ʿarriḡfūnā man raʿasa l-ḡayāt allaḡī qatalūhu l-yahūd illā Allāh al-Kalima? C.f. Acts 2, esp. 2,23.*

⁵³ Similar examples include also: Keating’s translation (Keating 2006:289). “That which is related to the Jews in the killing of the Messiah is their act against Him and that which is related to Him in His killing is His deliverance of them, and His suffering what they [committed] against Him, without interfering with what they wanted.”; and Keating’s translation (Keating 2006:295): “The Jews are punishable for His crucifixion and His killing, because they intended His annihilation, even if He is exalted above this, glory be to Him! because His *ousia* rises above killing and death”

⁵⁴ Lamoreaux’s translation (Abū Qurra, *Theologus autodidactus* 46) vs. Arabic text (Abū Qurra, *Maymar fī wuḡūd al-ḡāliq* 269): *innahu ḡīna atā l-hind karazahum dīn an-naṣrāniyya fa-qāla: inna Allāh baʿaṡa ibnahu min as-samāʾ ilā d-dunyā fa-taḡassada min imraʾa ʿaḡrā wa-wulida minhā insānan wa-inna al-yahūd ṣalabathu. Fa-māta wa-duḡīna wa-baʿad taḡlāṡat ayyām qāma min al-mawtā wa-šaʿida ilā s-samāʾ wa-ḡalasa ʿan yaḡīn al-Ab.*

⁵⁵ The text reads as *s-b-b*. Because of the context, I read it as *sibāb*, plural of *sabb/subba*, i.e. insult, cursing, abuse.

šahṇā') that is between them and the Jews, this is inconceivable for anyone who's intelligent, but also for any ignorant [person]."⁵⁶

The presence of references to Jewish deicide is relevant. As S. Griffith states it, in Christian apologetics, from the second century, the claim was made that Jesus was crucified by the Jews, and in anti-Jewish polemics, the charge that the Jews killed the Messiah, came to be a standard topic. Epithets like "Christ-killer (*christoktōnos*)", "Christ-murderer (*christophónos*)", and sometimes "God-killer (*theoktónos*)" began to be used from the fourth century, and then became commonplace in Christian writings in the Byzantine Empire and elsewhere (Griffith 1988: 74). This usage can be a continuation of the earlier polemical heritage and illustrates its circulation and translation into the Arabic Christian theological language.

The theme recurs with minor additional details, e.g. when the Jews are depicted as collaborators of Satan: as it can be seen in Abū Rā'īṭa's following example:

"The witness that this ([that is], what we have mentioned about His beseeching [God]) is a confirmation of His becoming human and cuts off the arguments Satan and the Jews put forward with their evil hearts (*sū' ḍamīrihim*) and their defective inclinations (*naqṣ aḥwā'ihim*), is [that] He rebuked some of His disciples when He told them..."⁵⁷

Here, according to the author's claim, arguments are presented jointly by Satan and the Jews, and the link is in the evil heart and defective inclinations. The depiction recalls Abū Qurra's previously seen demarcation from outsiders, *barrāniyyūn*, who were seen as animalish and evil. We can then see, that should there be an "other", an outsider in general, or a specific group, such as the Jews, defectiveness, evil, and threat for Christians are among the features that play an important part in his othering.

The Jew is often depicted as dull, as e.g. the following example by Abū Qurra illustrates:

"This is a sufficient justification from the Old [Testament] and the New [Testament], for the act of prostration in the way of honor that the icons of the

⁵⁶ My translation vs. Arabic text ('A. al-Baṣrī, *Kitāb al-Masā'il wa-l-aḡwiba*. 141): *ammā an takūn umam muḥtaliḡa wa-šu'ūb mutašatta* [!] *wa-aḡnās umam wa-mamlakāt mutaḡāwita iḡtama'at bi-asrihā 'alā t-ta'aṣṣub wa-l-ḡuḡū' li-'ibādat qatīl yahūd, ma'a mā baynahā wa-bayna l-yahūd ḡaṣṣatan min as-s-b-b wa-l-baḡḡa wa-l-ḡurūb wa-š-šahṇā', wa-hāḡḡā mā lā yatawawhamuhu 'aḡīl wa-lā ḡāhīl.*

⁵⁷ Keating's translation (Keating 2006:287) vs. Arabic text (Abū Rā'īṭa, *Die Schriften* 59): *wa-š-šāhid 'alā ḡālika mā ḡakarnā min iltimāsihi taḡqīq tanāsihi* [sic!] *wa-ḡasm aš-šayṡān wa-l-yahūd 'an al-ḡuḡaḡ fīmā ātaw bi-sū' ḡamīrihim wa-naqṣ aḡwā'ihim zaḡara ba'ḡ talāmīḡiḡi ḡayṡu ḡāla.*

saints deserve. It would be better for anyone of the Christians not satisfied with it to become a Jew, due to the dullness of mind⁵⁸

This approach has also been seen above, at Abū Qurra himself, when the *barrāniyyūn* were depicted as bodily-minded and foolish. The demarcation due to a practice can be paralleled to Abū Rā'īta's approach, as he was seen to define "us" according to the acceptance of the Jacobite Trisagion, while grouped everyone else (e.g. Abū Qurra, i.e. the Melkites and the Jews, etc.) as "them", who differ from it.

4 Further constructions

In course of the lexical examination, we have already seen examples for constructions of the self and constructions of the other; and we could see sharp contrasts when series of phrases sought to describe "us" in face of the "opponents," i.e. those "who differ from us." In the following, I will briefly take into consideration further ideas, notions and corresponding forms that are used to create division, demarcation, and thus contribute to the construction of otherness.

The first notion is ignorance, *ḡahl*; by which true believers can be distinguished from others, i.e. the ignorants. Such division can be seen in the following remark of Abū Rā'īta:

"By our sanctification (*taqdīs*) of God, we especially refer to the Son, priding ourselves (*iftihāran* [!] *minnā*) [in it] and rejecting the ignorant (*raddan 'alā l-ḡuhhāl*): Jews and others (*al-yahūd wa-ḡayruhum*), who negate and take it as a lie (*al-munkira al-mukaḏḏiba*) that the Crucified is God – Sanctus – omnipotent and immortal."⁵⁹

The division made by the Jacobite author due to the question of the Trisagion has been noted before; the forms mentioned here for "us" and "them" echo the previous ones. "Priding ourselves," *iftihāran minnā* resembles "strengthening with support the one who follows us" *tašdīdan al-yaqīn mimman šāya'anā*, while "rejecting the

⁵⁸ Griffith's translation (Abū Qurra, *Veneration* 75) vs. Arabic text (Abū Qurra, *Maymar fī ikrām al-īqūnāt* 175): *wa-kafā bi-hādā taḥqīqan min al-'atīqa wa-l-ḥadīṭa, li-mā tastahiqq šuwar al-qiddīsīn min as-suḡūd 'alā waḡh al-karāma. Wa-man lā yaqna' bihi min an-našārā, fa-aḥrā bihi an yakūna yahūdīyyan, li-ḡalaz 'aqlihi*. See also another example (from Ibid., 41): "We are constrained by the rule of reason to consent to everything pertaining to Christianity, which we mentioned above that the Jews and others, in the blindness of their minds, find repulsive."

⁵⁹ My translation. vs. Arabic text (Abū Rā'īta, *Die Schriften* 77): *qaṣadnā fī taqdīsīnā Allāh al-Ibn ḡaṣṣatan iftiḡāran bi-dālika minnā wa-raddan 'alā l-ḡuhhāl min al-yahūd wa-ḡayrihim al-munkira al-mukaḏḏiba bi-anna al-maṣlūb Allāh quddūs qawī ḡayr mā'it*. Given that the context supports this meaning and version, I translated *iftihāran* instead of *iftiḡāran*, present in the text.

ignorant," *raddan 'alā l-ḡuhhāl* recalls "cautioning the one who differs from us" (*tayaqquḡan li-man ḥālāfanā*).⁶⁰ Jews and others are presented as the ignorant, who, "negate and take it as a lie" *al-munkira al-mukaḏḏiba* – as previously seen in case of the opponents.⁶¹

Another basis for defining the self, i.e. by the adherence to the true religion while delimiting the other is the idea of being in line with previous tradition. Thus, innovation (*bid'a*) takes part in the construction of otherness. Abū Rā'īta writes:

"It is a duty of every faithful (*mu'min*) who seeks what is at his Lord to adhere/remain faithful to his religion (*at-tamassuk bi-dīnihi*), [to have] great carefulness of his faith (*al-iḥtirāz bi-īmānihi*), i.e. to make efforts [to avoid] doubtful matters (*ṣubuhāt*) that possess the refusers and the erroneous (*ahl an-nakl wa-l-aḡālīt*) and that commend the heretics and defamators/liars (*aṣḥāb al-bida' wa-t-taḥarruṣ*) with their eloquent tongues and the beautiful order and harmony of their expressions. [A faithful is someone who] trusts Him (*ittikāl minhu*) and restricts himself to who/[what] had come in God's previous books (*iqtiṣāran 'alā man sabaqa ilayhi fī kutub Allāh*) – ancient or new – that clarify the right faith (*al-mūḏiḥa al-īmān aṣ-ṣaḥīḥ*) and the just and correct religion (*ad-dīn al-'adl al-mustaqīm*) with easy speech (*sahl min al-qawl*), [books] that are simple, with easy letters, easy meanings, close to the source (*qarībat al-ma'ḥaḏ*), clear, understood with an understanding of approval (*fahm at-taṣḏīq*) and not with an understanding of the comprehension of the "how" (*fahm al-iḥāṭa bi-kunh al-kayf*) [...] and this is because of the failure and straying of the mind/intellect [*wa-ḏālīka li-faṣal al-'aql wa-ḏalālihi*] and its distance from encompassing the knowledge of what exceeds every [other kind of] knowledge (*bu'duhu min al-iḥtiwā 'alā ma'rīfat at-tafāwut li-kull ma'rifa*)."⁶²

⁶⁰ See above in detail. C.f. Keating's translation (Keating 2006:201) vs. Arabic text (Abū Rā'īta, *Die Schriften* 19–20).

⁶¹ C.f. Keating's translation (Keating 2006:173) vs. Arabic text (Abū Rā'īta, *Die Schriften* 5); and Keating's translation (Keating 2006:201) vs. Arabic text (Abū Rā'īta, *Die Schriften* 19–20).

⁶² My translation vs. Arabic text (Abū Rā'īta, *Die Schriften* 66): *fa-inna min al-wāḡib 'alā kull mu'min ṭālib li-mā 'inda rabbihi [...] at-tamassuk bi-dīnihi wa-l-iḥtirāz bi-īmānihi bi-ḡuhdihi 'an aṣ-ṣubuhāt al-muḥtawīya ahl an-nakl wa-l-aḡālīt al-munawwiha aṣḥāb al-bida' wa-t-taḥarruṣ bi-alsinatihim al-ḏāliqa wa-ḥuṣn nuḡum alfāḏihim wa-ittisāqihā kā'in man kān ittikālan minhu wa-iqtiṣāran 'alā man sabaqa ilayhi fī kutub Allāh al-qadīma wa-l-ḥadīṭa al-mūḏiḥa al-īmān aṣ-ṣaḥīḥ ad-dīn al-'adl al-mustaqīm bi-sahl min al-qawl wa-basīṭa bi-aḥruf yasīra ma'ānī sahla qarībat al-ma'ḥaḏ wāḏiḥa maḥmūma fahm at-taṣḏīq lā fahm al-iḥāṭa bi-kunh al-kayf wa-ḏālīka li-faṣal al-'aql wa-ḏalālihi wa-bu'dihi min al-iḥtiwā 'alā ma'rīfat at-tafāwut li-kull ma'rifa.*

The extract maintains the twofold division between true believers and others. True believers remain faithful to their religion (*at-tamassuk bi-dīnihi*), are careful of their faith (*al-iḥtirāz bi-īmānihi*); and make efforts (*ḡuhd*) to avoid doubtful matters (*šubuhāt*). This approach recalls an-Nawawī's sixth *ḥadīṭ*⁶³ that was transmitted both by al-Buḥārī and Muslim, i.e. widely circulating by the ninth century, which displays a similar idea and phrasing. But while the *ḥadīṭ* text uses either *umūr muštabiḥāt* or *šubuhāt*, here, doubtful matters are merely referred to by the latter phrase. The *ḥadīṭ* text speaks of being wary of these unclear matters (*ittaqā š-šubuhāt*), which means absolving one's religion and honor (*istabra'a li-dīnihi wa-irḍihi*), which can be paralleled to the faithfulness to religion/carefulness of faith and making efforts to avoid doubtful matters mentioned by Abū Rā'īta.

The doubtful matters, *šubuhāt* are the first step in building up a division, as from here Abū Rā'īta goes on to describe the others: refusers and the erroneous (*ahl an-nakl wa-l-aḡālīṭ*), as well as the heretics and defamators (*aṣḡāb al-bida' wa-t-taḡarruṣ*), who are possessed or commended by the doubtful matters (as *muḡtawīya* and *munawwiha* indicates it). Once again, a contrast follows: Abū Rā'īta turns back to the description of the faithful believer *mu'min*, who is characterized by trust in God (*ittikāl minhu*), but more importantly for the present examination: by restricting himself to what is from God: His scriptures and messengers (*iqtiṣār 'alā man sabaqa ilayhi fī kutub Allāh*), i.e. by an implicit refusal of innovation. God's scriptures clarify the right faith (*al-mūḡḡiḡa al-īmān aṣ-ṣaḡīḡ*) and the just and correct religion (*ad-dīn al-'adl al-mustaḡīm*), and thus can be understood with approval (*fahm at-taṣḡīḡ*). This is contrasted to the understanding of the comprehension of the "how" (*fahm al-iḡāta bi-kunh al-kayf*), which is impossible due to the failure and straying of the mind/intellect (*faṣal al-'aql wa-ḡalālīhi*) and its distance from encompassing the knowledge of what exceeds every [other kind of] knowledge (*bu'duhu min al-iḡtiwā 'alā ma'rīfat at-taḡāwut li-kull ma'rīfa*). Believers are juxtaposed with the refusers and the erroneous (*ahl an-nakl wa-l-aḡālīṭ*) as well as the heretics and liars (*aṣḡāb al-bida' wa-t-taḡarruṣ*). Also here, a *ḥadīṭ* text is recalled, namely that of an-Nawawī's No. 28 one: "Beware of newly-introduced matters, for every innovation (*bid'a*) is an error (*ḡalāla*)."⁶⁴ This one was transmitted by Abū Dāwūd and at-Tirmidhī, i.e. was in circulation in the ninth century, and, as we can see, the formulation of Abū Rā'īta's argument is in line with Islamic thought. The question of "orthodoxy" v.s. innovation can be interpreted in multiple contexts. On one hand, it might be an interdenominational question (given that Abū Rā'īta is seen elsewhere to refer to Church Fathers accepted by all (see in the next extract), and the synod of

⁶³ C.f. an-Nawawī, *les Quarante Hadiths* 19: *inna l-ḡalāl bayyin, wa-inna l-ḡarām bayyin, wa-baynahumā umūr muštabiḥāt lā ya'lamuhunna kaṡīr min an-nās, wa-man ittaḡā š-šubuhāt, fa-qad istabra'a li-dīnihi wa-irḡihi, wa-man waḡa'a fī š-šubuhāt waḡa'a fī l-ḡarām*.

⁶⁴ C.f. an-Nawawī, *les Quarante Hadiths*, 71.: *wa-īyyākum wa-muḡḡaṡāt al-umūr fa-inna kull bid'a ḡalāla*.

Chalcedon, associated with the innovation of the heretic group, i.e. the Melkites (see below), but refused by Jacobites), as well as an interreligious one. Its being directed against Islam would be supported by the fact that Islamic terminology and concepts are used, e.g. Abū Rā'īṭa's formula *iḥāṭa bi-kunh al-kayf* also alludes to the Islamic *bi-lā kayf* approach.

This extract also used the idea of the true (i.e. just and correct) religion, *ad-dīn al-'adl al-mustaqīm* as a point of reference for the definition of the self and the other. Deviation, as an important tool for othering, is present here in the more specific form of *bida'*, which was structured parallel to lie, refusal and error.

Abū Rā'īṭa's examples on doctrinal differences between Christians also include the following:

"As the Pure Gregory the Theologian [...] ⁶⁵ and other Fathers said who are accepted by all (*al-muḡtama' 'alayhā*) and concerning whose authority there is no difference (*lā al-muḡtalaf fihā*)..." ⁶⁶

In this case, reference is made to the authority of Church Fathers accepted by all Christian denominations, in order to show that Abū Rā'īṭa considers his confessional group the direct follower of the Orthodox tradition; and accordingly, the other groups are to be considered as innovators and deviants. In an interdenominational context, we may see that consensus, *iḡtimā'* is the antonym of difference/disagreement, *iḥṭilāf*; the use of the former term reflecting the influence of Islamic terminology. This is even more evident in the following passage:

"And we have to explain our intention and doctrine concerning our Trisagion and our addition of the Cross that saved us. [We should do that] as an exhortation for the believers (*tanbīhan li-l-mu'minīn*) and a rebuke/reproach for the innovators and liars (*faḥran wa-tabkītan li-aṣḥāb al-bida' wa-t-taḥarruṣ*). Our sanctification of God by a unique *Sanctus* that befits those who profess this blessed second proclamation (*taqdīs ḥāṣṣ yalīq bi-ahl hāḍiḥi d-da'wa*) – it is by it that those who profess it are distinguished (*mumayyaz*) from all the opposing religious communities (*al-milal al-muḥālifa lahā*)."⁶⁷

It shows the importance of being rooted into tradition, as well as the demarcation from any innovation, heresy, as implied by the term *bida'*, which reflects Islamic

⁶⁵ Gregory of Nazianzus, also known as Gregory the Theologian.

⁶⁶ My translation. vs. Arabic text (Abū Rā'īṭa, *Die Schriften* 69): *ka-mā qāla dū n-nuṭq al-ilāhī Aḡrīḡūrīūs aṭ-tāhir wa-ḡayruhu min al-ābā' al-muḡtama' 'alayhā lā al-muḡtalaf fihā*.

⁶⁷ My translation. vs. Arabic text (Abū Rā'īṭa, *Die Schriften* 76): *wa-qad yaḡib 'alaynā ayyuhā as-sayyid an našrah ḡaraḍanā wa-maḡhabanā fī taqdīsīnā Allāh mirāran talāṭa wa-iḍāfatanā ilayhi aṣ-ṣalb al-munqīḍ la-nā tanbīhan li-l-mu'minīna wa-faḥran wa-tabkītan li-aṣḥāb al-bida' wa-t-taḥarruṣ taqdīsunā li-Allāh [...] taqdīsan ḥāṣṣan yalīq bi-ahl hāḍiḥi d-da'wa t-tāniyya al-mubāraka wa-bi-hi takūn mumayyaza bayna ahlihā wa-bayna ḡamī' al-milal al-muḥālifa la-hā*.

usage, as well. Here the dichotomy is between believers on the one hand, and innovators, liars on the other; and then between those who profess the blessed proclamation and the opposing/differing communities. We may presume that the pairs are intended to refer to the same idea, i.e. believers and the adherents of the proclamation are contraposed with opponents and innovators-liars. Innovation and lies are verbalizations and tools for othering.

The last example:

“The well-known Christian groups are three: the Jacobites, the Melkites and the Nestorians. ... We find the Melkites who are founded upon the innovation (*bida'*) of the hypocrite (*munāfiq*) assembly, the synod of Chalcedon”⁶⁸

shows *bida'* and hypocrisy (i.e. *nifāq*) as the ground upon which interdenominational difference and separation are based.

5 Concluding remarks

After examining individual extracts and their comparison, let us sum up forms, notions and techniques of othering in a more general way.

A key notion in othering is difference (*iḥtilāf*, or other forms derived from the same roots) which was detected in many fields and was rendered coherent and linked to even more. We could notice the difference of religions in general (*adyān muḥtalifa*, *iḥtilāf kaṭīr fī l-adyān*), that of religious communities (*milal muḥtalifa* – synonymous to *mutafarriq fī l-milal*), which came together with opposition (as indicated either the presence of the form *taḍādd* or its variant, or by the form referring to the opponent in religion, i.e. the *muḥālif*). Construct structures then let the reader understand in what semantic area this difference, or opposition originates. E.g. we can see the difference of opinions, i.e. *iḥtilāf al-ārā'* as well as their plurality, *kaṭrat al-ārā'* in general, or more specifically e.g. the difference of exegesis *iḥtilāf at-ta'wīl*. The difference of language and race (*iḥtilāf al-luḡa/alfāz/alsun*; *iḥtilāf al-aḡnās/al-alwān*) – linked to the distance of countries and kingdoms, their difference, (*tabā'ud/tanā'ī al-buldān*, *taḍādd al-mamālik wa-dunyāhum*, *iḥtilāf al-mamālīk*) as well as the looseness or lack of tribal or family ties (*tabā'ud al-qarāba/inqīṭā' an-naṣab*) are seen parallel on the one hand to the plurality of communities in general (*umam kaṭīra*) but contrary to the universality of Christianity that is present everywhere in the same form, with the same Scriptures.

⁶⁸ My translation. vs. Arabic text (Abū Rā'īta, *Die Schriften* 78–79): *innamā l-firaq al-maṣhūra bi-n-naṣrāniyya ṭalāṭa al-ya'qūbiyya a'nī wa-l-malkiyya wa-n-naṣṭūriyya. [...] wa-qad naḡid al-malkiyya allaḡīn qad ṭubitū 'alā bida' al-ḡam' al-munāfiq maḡma' Ḥalqadūniyya al-mu'ayyan lahu wa-l-qayyim bi-ṣa'nihi [...].*

The form derived from the same roots, *muḥālīf* refers to the one who adheres to another religion/sect or is even an opponent. This is enhanced by such constructions of otherness as the indications that opponents do not accept the teachings, scriptures or speech in general of each other (as *kalāmuḥu ḡayr maqbūl*, *takdīb*, *ḡayr qābil ba'duhum min ba'd* indicate). In face of the *muḥālīf*, caution (*tayaqquḡ*) is required, which stood in contrast with the construction of belonging: the ones who belong to the same group (*šāya'*) were strengthened (*tašdīd*).

Difference often appears together with confusion (*taḥayyur*), error (*dalāl*), disperse or separated aspirations (*taštīt al-ahwā'*). At the same time, it is antonymous to agreement (either as *iḡtimā'*, or *ittifāq*) and peacefulness (as indicated by the usage of *musālim*), while synonymous to obstinance (as visible in the choice of the word *mu'ānid*, which, in turn is used mostly together with the truth and the so-called religion of God, *mu'ānid li-l-ḥaqq/li-dīn Allāh*). Christians are also presented as opponents of who differs from/opposes God, or angers Him (*man ḥālafahu*, *ḡāhadahu*, *aḡṭahu*).

The root *f-r-q* was used in similar ways but implying also separation mostly concerning a specific practice (as e.g. in case of the *taqdīs*); or, separation from God (*tafarruq al-ahwā'* 'anhu) may be parallel to idolatry (*waq' ismahu 'alā ḡayrihi*).

Another way for othering was seen in case of the forms *ḥā'id*, deviant and *barrānī*, outsider. The former implied being on the outer side (as implied by *ḥāriḡ*) and separation (as indicated by *mufāriq*). The two forms then share this sense of "outsiderness", which is enriched in case of the latter with being lost/a loser (*ḥāšir*), references to the outsiders' considering Christian mysteries as foolish (*taḥmīm*); as well as references to *qubḥ* and *samāḡa*) – which is then a recurring element in constructing otherness, as seen also in the case of *takdīb* – and which turns outsiders into a threat – also a recurring tool c.f. the references to cautioning, etc.).

Ways of othering include references to leaving tradition behind, introducing changes, heresy, and synonymously lies (as the use of terms/names like *ḥadīṭ*, *mubtada'*, *bida'*, *taḥarruḡ* implies). The selection of lexicon is seen to be influenced by Islamic phraseology, just as in case of related fields, like entering into doubts (*šubuhāt*), or even apostasy (*kufṛ*, *tāḡūt*, *ahl an-nakl wa-l-aḡālīt*), or hypocrisy (*nifāq*).

An important element of the construction of the other was his presentation as ignorant (see *ḡahl*), apt to err (as mentioned above: *dalāl*), one who fails to reason (as indicated by expressions like *fašāl al-'aql*) and incapable to comprehend a knowledge that is different from their own (*bu'd min al-iḡtiwā' ma'rifat at-tafāwut*).

The other usually converts new followers by way of violence, which in the examples I analysed was referred to through compulsion by the sword;⁶⁹ in other

⁶⁹ The Christian perception of Islam as a religion of the sword is the topic of another current research, the first results of which were presented at the international conference

cases, conversion may come through ethnic solidarity (*ta'aṣṣub*) and the common opinion of the community.

Mention should be made of Jews as enemies, who were also presented as ignorant and dull (i.e. as any "other"); but were also introduced more specifically as collaborators of *Šayṭān*, having evil hearts, defective inclinations (*sū' ad-ḍamīr*, *naqṣ al-ahwā'*). The deliberate and explicit denigration and othering of the Jew is based on his presentation as Christ-killer or God-killer.

After summarizing the aspects of the description of the other, we may complete the conclusion by drawing attention to how complementary the features of the self were in these discourses. The construction of the self is based on the belonging to the group that is defined through the idea of adhering to the so-called true and just religion (*dīn 'adl*, *mustaqīm*). This adherence was seen in forms like *yaltamis haqqahu*, *yanqād ilayhi*, *yatba'*, *muwāḏib*, *mutamassik*, *lāzim*, *āḥid*, *fariḥ bi-dīnihi*, *iḥtirāz bi-īmānihi*. Apart from these positive traits, there are some negative ones that define the self by delineating, counter-acting in face of the other, as seen in the case of *mutaḥarrib*, *rāfiḍ*, *mutaḡannib*, *ḡāhid* and *tabkīt*. Such an adherent community is referred to as God's community, *bī'at Allāh*, and induces pride (as *fahṛ* indicates).

Complementary features include the following: if the other was presented as deviant, the follower of the so-called true religion, i.e. Christianity, is characterized by right guidance, i.e. *hudā*. If the other differs and separates from the group (*ḥālafa*, *fāraqa*), the adherent follows it (*šāya'a*); and is characterized by *iḡtimā'*. If the other is a heretic or an apostate, the Christian is a believer, *mu'min*. If the other is forced or forces others to convert, the believer does it voluntarily, through an understanding of approval, *fahm at-taṣdīq*. If the other is a threat or needs caution, the believer is strengthened and informed (*taṣdīd*, *tanbīh*).

Finally, if the other is deviant, relies on false sources, or introduces innovations, the true believer is seen to restrict himself to God's revelation (*iqtīṣār 'alā kutub Allāh*), which is illuminating the true religion and belief, and which belongs exclusively to the community (*ḥāṣṣ*, *yaltīq bi-ahl ḥāḍiḥi d-da'wa*, *mumayyaz*). The sources are indicated as ancient (*aṣl qadīm*, or even as *āthār sābiqa*), that of the forefathers (*aslāf*) and the Church Fathers.

To conclude: we could see both in argumentation and terminology how the cohesion and self-identification of the communities as well as the delineation from others are determined by the understanding of religious belonging. Following the true religion was a part of the construction of "us", at the same time, it was a marker of distinction and differentiation from others (who in turn define "us" by embodying what we are not). Religion was also a major factor in the perception of alterity: resulting in separation and opposition, manifesting on the level of the communities pertaining to them.

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Based on the terminological approach, we could see that the concept of otherness as well as a term indicating it, was not present, however, a set of lexical items, terms, and notions were used to refer to perceptions of difference on multiple levels (religious, linguistic, racial, etc.), as well as they were tools for othering. A whole web of ideas could be identified either in case of the constructions of otherness, or in case of those of belonging.

As an outcome of the research, it may be mentioned that this essay addresses the contemporary and increasing debate on the perception of Islam/the Muslim as other. On the one hand, this paper offers data related to an early phase of this perception; on the other, the challenge of the research lies in the geographic area: the Christian authors examined here lived together with Muslims, so the so-called Saidian "oriental other" based on the Western othering is not applicable.

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