Eylül Çetinbaş

A BRIDE OF CHRIST AND AN INTERCESSOR OF MUHAMMAD: COMPARATIVE SAINTS' CULTS OF ST CATHERINE OF ALEXANDRIA AND RABI'A OF BASRA IN THE MIDDLE AGES

MA Thesis in Late Antique, Medieval and Early Modern Studies

Central European University

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June 2020

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by

Eylül Çetinbaş

(Turkey)

Thesis submitted to the Department of Medieval Studies,
Central European University, Budapest, in partial fulfillment of the requirements
of the Master of Arts degree in Late Antique, Medieval and Early Modern Studies.

Accepted in conformance with the standards of the CEU.

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I, the undersigned, **Eylül Çetinbaş**, candidate for the MA degree in Late Antique, Medieval and Early Modern Studies, declare herewith that the present thesis is exclusively my own work, based on my research and only such external information as properly credited in notes and bibliography. I declare that no unidentified and illegitimate use was made of the work of others, and no part of the thesis infringes on any person's or institution's copyright. I also declare that no part of the thesis has been submitted in this form to any other institution of higher education for an academic degree.

Budapest, 2 June 2020

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Eylül Çetinbaş

Abstract

This thesis is an attempt to fathom the ways through which the female sanctity was manifested in the medieval Christian and Islamic religious practice and thought. The hagiographical productions on the lives of St. Catherine of Alexandria and Rabi'a of Basra from the late sixth to the fifteenth centuries retransformed the notion of female sainthood and appropriated the changing hagiographical dynamics for the turning points in the Byzantine society and the Islamic world that are the Byzantine Iconoclasm, the Byzantine-Arab wars, the Arab conquest of the Byzantine East, and the Crusades. Following the scrutiny of the hagiographical sources, the thesis will trace the cults of St. Catherine and Rabi'a through hagiography including the *manaqib*, *tabaqat* and *tadhkirah* writings, onomastics, church dedications, theological treatises and pilgrimage accounts. The final comparison achieved by applying the Freiberger-method will attest to the formidable scale of the cults of St. Catherine and Rabi'a, and their extension to the Christian and Muslim societies. The mosaic of religious values embodied in the female saints, moderate and hostile cultural interactions evolving around the religious *ne plus ultras* will prioritize the need for re-evaluation and recognition of comparative hagiology and cult of saints.

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كما أشكر ربيع التي صليت معها لسنوات عديدة. شفاعتها وعلاقتها بالله كانتا أجمل الأمثلة .

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I hope I shall be worthy of all your affection someday.

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Introduction

Recent scholarly trends on comparative research have also affected the realm of the cult of saints. So far there have been a number of effective studies on the Jewish-Christian saintly veneration of saints, yet sadly not enough on the Christian-Muslim counterpart.[1] Therefore, it is fruitful within this study to ponder as to the kind of elements that could direct attention that is significant to both sides and contribute to our further understanding of the female saints. From a comparative point of view at its outset, the study attempts to situate several generic questions and more crucially, to tackle these questions through an impartial lens of comparative methodology by means of inquiring: What is the Christian and Muslim theological basis for medieval veneration of saints and in which ways are the Christian and Muslim saints venerated? If apparently interchangeable Abrahamic prophets or salient religious figures denote indeed similar significance in terms of the esteem in which they are being presented or represented by both communities alike, how does one become a saint? While the church both as an ecclesiastical and spiritual authority selects its own saints with the help of various prerequisites; who or which apparatus, if any, performs this same action for the case of Islam? Can these religious figures serve a fully interreligious purpose under the denotation of common reverence at their interreligious tombs? What is the apparent level of religious relationship between the Christians and Muslims?

The cult of saints in general is a very widely researched phenomenon from late antiquity to our modern times and, as is evidently seen, already unearths and promises vast amounts of both qualitative and quantitative data to work on. Within the Christian context, the foundations are already very well-established, employing possibly essential

[1] Ignác Goldziher, *Muslim Studies,* trans. C. R. Barber and S. M. Stern, ed. S. M. Stern, 2 vols (London: George Allen, and Unwin, 1967-71); Josef W. Meri, *The Cult of Saints among Muslims and Jews in Medieval Syria* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002).

interdisciplinary methods of study which the researcher could opt for, with a view to attain optimum insights into the various aspects of a societal ethos. There is indeed still much work to be done on the Muslim cult of saints, however. The application of more microcosmic studies wherein the researcher brings the hagiographies and cults of two selected saints of different religious origins under a close scope is still not yet very prevalent. Which factors engender such an environment for a cult to flourish? Certainly, some saints became prominent figures throughout the Middle Ages; and, are still highly venerated even today. Attestations as to the extent of the spread of this phenomenon within medieval societies are proven through the mediums of hagiographical writings, shrines, relic worship, pilgrimage, prayers, and examples of Christian and Muslim intercession and attested miracles as an eventful background for this saintly collation.

This study, ergo, aims to prepare a different background to the study of comparative hagiology and cult of saints between the Abrahamic religions of Christianity and Islam. Saints of God, both in the Christian and Islamic theology have become the public and visible manifestations of piety through which they have been communicated with the conversation of God. The iconic relationship between the saints and those interceded by the saints were reciprocal, universal and everlasting. Female saints, as well as the male saints, provided the intercession of God, spiritual comfort throughout the most difficult times such as wars, famines and natural disasters, protection by dint of their relics, and miracles at their tombs and pilgrimage sites. Therefore, cherry-picking two highly prominent female saints from the Christian and Islamic belief systems that are St. Catherine of Alexandria and Rabi'a of Basra, lead the discourse into from local and regional cults to a broader world. There are multifarious stories that these saints and their cults can tell about the societies, ontologies of the two belief systems, agencies of religion, and the interrelationship between the different social and religious groups. In hindsight, the cults of Catherine and Rabi'a pave quite a

suitable way to the cliché generalizations of saints' cults, but they concurrently conceive redefinitions on the ethnographies of God and the holy figures, and how the theological viewpoints of these various societies observed God and the saints or "friends of God". Such observances under a closer scope also reveal the intellectual life in the multi-cultural and multi-religious communities along with how the two religions related themselves with one another.

The cult of St. Catherine spread widely from Sinai or Palestine to the Western Europe and stretched towards Scandinavia by the late twelfth century, whereas that of Rabiʿa supposedly emerged in Basra and spread among Anatolia, Afghanistan, Cairo, Damascus and Jerusalem. What were the effects in development then in the association of St Catherine with an interreligious site, the Monastery of St Catherine in Sinai as her focal cultic *locus* inclusive of the other sites in Asia Minor and the Eastern Mediterranean, and that of Rabi'a with her apparently more controversial hub within the compound of the interreligious Chapel/Mosque of the Ascension in Jerusalem, labelled and venerated as belonging to Rabi'a yet attributed by some to be that not of Rabi'a Basra but another Rabi'a of Jerusalem. Further spread of the cult in the case of Rabi'a was based on the existence of tombs than that of other relics and dedicated buildings. For example, the existence of the expansion of her cult to Anatolia is attested in the hagiographical account of Nezihe Araz who attributes the thirteenth-century Seljuk turbe in the Hasan Basri district, Erzurum to Rabi'a.[2]

St. Catherine and Rabi'a exquisitely come together in being the "cluster saints" transformed or inspired by a formerly existent holy figure regardless of whichever belief systems. All the A, B, C *vitae* variations of St. Catherine which is argued to have been authored by the Sinai abbot Anastasios of Sinai in the late sixth and seventh centuries as a pro-Constantinian and pro-Christian propaganda against the pagan emperors and the

[2] Nezihe Araz, *Anadolu Evliyaları*. (İstanbul: Atlas Kitabevi, 1966), pp. 107–120.

Muslims, demonstrate textual similarities with the documented Greek biographies and letters concerning the Pagan philosopher Hypatia of Alexandria (c. 350/70-415) and the certain Christian lady from Alexandria, Dorothea. These Christian and Pagan hagiologies provide further support for the hypothesis that St. Catherine was transformed and appropriated from the Christian-Pagan conflict of the late antique Roman Empire.[3] The hagiographies and treatises written on Rabi'a are similarly comparable in complexity to those on Catherine. Her origins might also have been derived from an early Antiochian saint, Pelagia the Harlot or Mary of Egypt, or even both for that matter.[4] Albeit the Islamic chain (*isnad*) tradition attempted to testify the existence and sayings of Rabi'a, the chain tradition possesses its own limitations. That is not to say that Rabi'a was thoroughly remodeled after her Christian coequals, yet such similarities broaden the horizons of the cultural inspiration and interactions in interpreting the lives and impact of holy figures.

Another heretofore understudied applications of comparison to the microcosmic case studies are the miracles for the Christian context, and *karāmāt* performed by the Muslim saints. Islam distinguishes miracles from prophets (*mu'jizât*) and the miracles of the saints (*karâmât*), whereas Christianity does not categorize miracles between the holy figures.[5] On the case-by-case basis, the transference of Catherine's body to Mount Sinai by the angels begot the first miracle, and thence the second miracle occurred when the relics and icons stored inside the Monastery of St. Catherine dripped sweet and holy oil with healing properties. The Byzantine miracle-collections do not contain Catherine's any other miracles, unlike the European miracle collections such as Rouen, BM, MS U.22 which epitomized

[3] Rudolf Asmus, "Hypatia in Tradition und Dichtung," in *Studien zur vergleichenden Litteraturgeschichte* 7 (1907): 11-44; 18.
[4] Julian Baldick, "The Legend of Rabi'a Of Basra: Christian Antecedents, Muslim Counterparts," *Religion* 20 (1990): 233-247.
[5] Denise Aigle, ed., *Miracles and Karama, Hagiographies médiévales comparées* 2. (Turnhout: Brepols, 2000), 13-36.

Catherine's central veneration in Normandy.[6] The hagiographer of Rabi'a Farid al-Din al-'Attar (d. 1220 CE), on the other hand, put an emphasis on her saintly attributes, hence the visions and *karāmāt*, instead of *mu'jizât*, through which she had an illuminating light above her head and conversed with God both directly and indirectly through *hātif*, the divine voice.[7]

Pilgrimages as the religious centres of interrituality between Christianity and Islam plays a crucial role in defining the interreligious relations and the so-called common reverence of the female saints among the different communities. More generally, the typical pilgrim behavior is based on the eternal and universal practice. The pilgrim walks towards and around the sanctuary on foot, circumambulates around the *sarcophagi* or tombs, touches and kisses the site if permitted, burns candles, offers money or food, attaches clothes to the tomb or the trees.[8] The pilgrim also undertakes the supplicatory gestures, such as taking off one's shoes at the entrance to the sanctuary as in the site of the Burning Bush and the chapel inside the Monastery of St. Catherine, bowing before the tomb or the relics, and smells and kisses the relics again if permitted by the authorities. Sleeping with the saint, for example, that is called "incubation," involves spending the night in a sanctuary to obtain the healing of the saint, who then appears generally in a dream, can be attested in the sources since the late antiquity in both Christian and Muslim cases, although the Islamic examples naturally come later. Pilgrimages undertaken at the tombs of St. Catherine and Rabi'a in Sinai and Jerusalem

[6] Christine Walsh, *The Cult of St. Katherine of Alexandria in Early Medieval Europe*. (Burlington, VT: Ashgate Publishing Company, 2007). See Appendix C for the BM, Rouen, MS U.22 miracles, 173-182.
[7] Heidi A. Ford, "Hierarchical Inversions, Divine Subversions: The Miracles of Râbiʿa Al-ʿAdawîya," *Journal of Feminist Studies in Religion* 15, no. 2 (1999): 5-24.
[8] Although these are ancient practices occurring in the context of cult of saints, the modern religious institutions might forbid such exercises. For instance, the Turkish Directorate of Religious Affairs has put up warning posters adjacent to the *türbes* (tombs) to prevent such activities near the tombs listing what is religiously forbidden. The list, originally in Turkish, comes from my visit to the Tomb of Shams Tabrizi in Konya, Turkey and every modern principle denotes exact contradictions to those of the ancient and medieval ritualism: "1. Must not dedicate (money, animal, worship) / 2. Must not sacrifice (an animal) / 3. Must not burn candles / 4. Must not tie rags / 5. Must not posit stones or money on the tomb / 6. Must not throw coins / 7. Must not leave things to eat / 8. Must not rub hands or face / 9. Must not seek health or cure / 10. Must not whirl around the tomb / 11. Must not sleep in environs of the tomb."

contain analogous interritual practices ranging from arriving at the sites on foot, removing one's shoes, bowing before the tombs and relics, prayers offered adjacent to the tombs either personally or communally, to the explanations claiming the ways how the "other" venerates the same saints together with the original religious community.

In the absence of popularized research regarding the microcosmic case studies, this study focuses on the motivations, and interconnects the challenges with the preliminary results of the comparative saints' cults of Catherine and Rabi'a, and attempts to open new doors for the taxonomies of the female sainthood, the points of emergence in the different religious environments and periods, the hagiographical manifestations accomplished through polemical propagandas, and the embodied religious values at the pilgrimage sites of our female saints and the extension of their cults to the "other".

Chapter 1: The Cult of St. Catherine of Alexandria

She saw, with a great light, the Virgin Mary accompanied by countless virgins, and among them was Catherine to whom she was devout… Indeed, Catherine said: "Remain constant, my dearest, because I reserve this crown for you in heaven.

The *Vita* of Villana de' Botti, fol. 76vb[9]

1.1. The "Real" Catherine

Although the origins of St. Catherine's cult can be traced back to Byzantium, her δουλεία in Ancient Greek and *dulia* in Latin spread throughout every corner of the Western Europe.[10] Unlike other major patrons of the most established mendicant orders, St. Catherine's existence is hitherto unattested. It is frequently assumed that she is not a genuine historical figure. In lieu of the existent narrations on the sainthood of Catherine, non-Christian female scholar Hypatia of Alexandria (c. 350/70-415)—allegedly killed by the Christian mob of the *Parabalani*—is thought to have been the inspirational source for the saint by dint of re-transfiguring Hypatia's paganistic portrait into the beautiful, virtuous, educated, wise, and this time Christian, Catherine.[11] Although the re-transformation of Catherine from a cluster pagan figure has been discussed by scholars, there was no comparison and contrast between the extant textual accounts of Catherine and Hypatia. The only non-hagiographical account of her life was written by her contemporary, Eusebius of

[9] Eliana Corbari, *Vernacular Theology: Dominican Sermons and Audience in Late Medieval Italy* (Berlin: De gruyter, 2013), 160.

[10] The Greek word *dulia* herein refers to theological term which means ''veneration given to the saints.'' Orlando O. Espín and James B. Nickoloff, *An Introductory Dictionary of Theology and Religious Studies* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2007), 374. For further explanation and its function in theological studies, see Sylvester Joseph Hunter, *Outlines of Dogmatic Theology* (New York: Benzinger, 1894), 465-79.

[11] Rudolf Asmus, "Hypatia in Tradition und Dichtung," *Studien zur vergleichenden Litteraturgeschichte* 1 (1907): 11-44; 18.

Caesarea, around 340 CE.[12] When Rufinus of Aquileia (c. 340-410) translated Eusebius *Ecclesiastical History* from Greek into Latin in 401, he referred to this Alexandrian Christian lady in the text as Dorothea rather than Catherine.[13]

1.2. The *Lives* of St. Catherine

Among the hagiographical *florilegia*, the most widely recognized work to contain St. Catherine's *passio* dates to the mid-tenth century written originally in Greek by Symon Metaphrastes (d. after 985), Byzantine theologian and the figurehead of Greek hagiography. Most of the Latin versions were translated from his *menologia*, in which he compiles a collection of saints, arranged and categorized according by date; in the case of *menologia*, by the month. *Menelogium Basilianum* of Basil II (r. 976-1025) and *Synaxarion* of Constantinople are the late tenth-century sources to contain the Catherine *vita*. *Menelogium* commences with a dedicatory poem for Basil II and conveys imperial messages in support of Basil II's political and military pursuits. It also portrays Catherine in the likeness of Byzantine nobility, thus, the scene in which she triumphs over fifty philosophers is a literary instrument utilized by Basil II metaphorically both within and outside the Byzantine borders. The translation of the story in the *Menologium* is as follows:

> The martyr Katharine came from Alexandria, and she was daughter of a rich and famous nobleman. She was very lovely. And being gifted, she learned Greek grammar and became wise, also learning the languages of all nations. Now a festival was celebrated among the Greeks to honor the idols, and seeing the animals being slaughtered, Katharine suffered. And she went to King Maximin and argued with him, asking why he had abandoned the living God and worshipped lifeless idols. He rebuked her and took vengeance on her severely. And then the king brought in fifty sages and said to them that they should dispute with Katharine and win her over: "For if you do not prevail over her, I shall incinerate you all with fire." They,

[12] Book 8, line 14, in Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History*, vol. 2, *Books 6-10*, trans. J. E. L. Oulton, Loeb Classical Library 265 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1932), 309.
[13] Torben Christensen, *Rufinus of Aquileia and the Historia Ecclesiastica, Lib. VIII-IX, of Eusebius* (Copenhagen: Kongelige Danske videnskabernes selskab, 1989), 161.

> when they saw that they were defeated, were baptized as Christians and so were burnt. And Katharine was also beheaded.[14]

In the eleventh century, the *Theodore Psalter* (c.1066) authored by the Studite monk Theodore for his abbot, Michael, was signed and dated by its maker, whose motivation was spiritual rather than imperial. Each saint has a unique psalm associated with them, on which one could meditate. Psalm 120 is suitably chosen for St. Catherine and her victory against the philosophers.[15]

Despite the widely circulated assumption that the Metaphrastes version of the *vita* has been the earliest extant source, the suggestion is tenuous. The focus on the Metaphrastes version has become a definitive academic tradition that is hard to sidestep because of the text's authorship but this focus should not side-line the scholarly attention to earlier attested texts. The various versions of the earliest Catherine-*vitae* are categorized into four sections: A, B, C, and D. In 1897, Viteau accordingly listed four Greek versions of the *Life of St. Catherine* alongside their Latin translations and inserted alphabetical letters in parallel with their purported chronology—version A having been written the earliest, sometime between the second half of the sixth century and early seventh century as following:

1. Text A: does not contain proper speeches (BGH 30)
2. Text B: contains extravagant and extraordinary speeches (BHG 30a)
3. Text C: contains rational discourses and arguments; reworking of the Text B (BHG 31)
4. Text D: reworking of the Text C by Metaphrastes (BHG 32)[16]

[14] The translation uses Maximin to denote Μαξιμῖνος. Bruce A. Beatie, "Saint Katharine of Alexandria: Traditional Themes and the Development of a Medieval German Hagiographic Narrative." *Speculum* 52, no. 4 (1977): 789. In *Vita Constantini* I. 47, Eusebius also confuses Maximian with Maximin possibly due to his own reproduction of the texts. See Averil Cameron and Stuart G. Hall, *Eusebius: Life of Constantine*, Clarendon Ancient History Series (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1999), 7-8. In this case, he does not refer to the father of Maxentius, Μαξιμιανὸς but Μαξιμῖνος who was the Maximinus II Daia (c. 270-313).

[15] "I call on the Lord in my distress / and he answers me. / Save me, Lord, / from lying lips / and from deceitful tongues." NIV, Psalm 120:1-2.

[16] Joseph Viteau, ed., *Passions de saints Écaterine et Pierre d'Alexandrie, Barbara et Anysia: Publiées d'après les manuscrits grecs de Paris et de Rome avec un choix de variantes et une traduction latine*. (Paris, 1897), 2.

Among all A, B, and C versions, text A stands out with its brevity, whereas texts B and C are comparable in their sequence of events and grammatical structures. Even though these three texts sustained each other, text D, that is the reproduction by Metaphrastes himself, was more likely to have utilized text C for its updated narrative and stylistic changes. In a similar context, Metaphrastes celebrating the feast of St. Catherine on November 24, duplicates a good number of paragraphs from text C and makes no additions or removals to the original text C.[17] The close examination of the third version demonstrates why text C is of paramount importance even before the Metaphrastes's reworking. Apparently, the verses have acquired intertextual qualities by dint of direct and indirect quotations from the Scriptures, John Malalas, Homer, Diodorus, Plutarch, Pluto, the Orphic fragments (frs. 62, 233, 1025), and the Greek version of *Barlaam and Josaphat*.[18] While the intertextual dependency is evident between the *Passio Catharinae* and the sources above, much has been written about it so I will not delve too much into the question of authorship and textual analysis. Instead, I will contextualize the philosophical and oracle references in the passio relating to possibly the earliest development of the cult through the textual sources.[19]

What about the polyglot versions in the Eastern parts of the Byzantine Empire? The Arabic translation (BHO 26) of the Greek BHG 30 that is the text B, was scrutinized by Paul Peeters in the early twentieth century. Peeters transcribed the manuscript, translated into Latin, and presented the bilingual Arabic-Latin version in a succinct article. Through the Arabic manuscript (BHO 26) corresponding with Vat. Ar. 696 (92), Peeters concludes that both the Latin Passio (M) and the Arabic version (BHO 26) derived from the text B and thus, the earliest version of the texts A, B, C, D does not necessarily refer to the text A but to the

[17] E. Klostermann, and E. Seeberg, "Die Apologie der Heiligen Katharina," *Schriften der Königsberger Gelehrten Gesellschaft* 2 (1924): 31-87; 37-40.
[18] Ibid., pp. 37-40n, 57.
[19] See E. Klostermann, and E. Seeberg, "Die Apologie,"; Giovanni B. Bronzini, "La Leggenda di S. Caterina d'Alessandria," *Atti della Accademia Nazionale dei Lincei* 9 (1960): 257-416; Tina Chronopoulos, "The Passion of St. Katherine of Alexandria: Studies in its Texts and Tradition," Ph.D. diss. (King's College London, 2006).

text B.[20] The Georgian manuscripts at Sinai follow a similar pattern, three Georgian *vitae*—Georg. 6, Georg. 61, and Georg. 71, are thought to have been translated in the late tenth century from the Greek versions A and B.[21] Georgian 6, the earliest manuscript among the three others dating back to the tenth century, could have been translated from Arabic.[22] Considering that the Arabic texts were translated from the Greek A and B versions, the polyglot variations of the *Passiones* and *Vitae Catharinae* ultimately originate from their *terminus post quem* Greek prototypes.

Another matter to reconsider when dating the earliest Greek prototypes is the literary use of works by John Malalas (c. 490-570). Chronopoulos quotes J. Bidez to repeat the claim that the anonymous author of the *vitae* and *passiones* of Catherine drew several block quotations though slightly altered, from Malalas's Χρονογραφία.[23] But what if Malalas extracted his ancient, philosophical and rhetorical passages from the Christian *vitae* and *passiones* or other popular and scholarly circulated sources of the sixth century, and inserted them into his own Χρονογραφία? The second thesis is more likely and approved by several distinguished scholars working on Malalas.[24] Malalas could have extracted the classical discussions on philosophy, power, rhetorics, and oracles from the Greek *Life of St. Catherine.* The references in the *vitae* and *passiones*, and Malalas's chronicles previously resonate with three sources: *Excerpta Barbari* which was a Latin translation of the Greek chronicle composed during the reign of Anastasius (r. 491-518), and an unknown man called

[20]Paul Peeters, "Une version Arabe de la Passion de Sainte Catherine d'Alexandrie," *Analecta Bollandiana* 26 (1907): 5-32; 5-13.

[21] Chronopoulos, "The Passion of St. Katherine of Alexandria," p. 57.

[22] David Thomas, and Barbara Roggema, eds., *Christian-Muslim Relations. A Bibliographical History, Volume 1 600-900* (Leiden, The Netherlands: Brill, 2009), 408.

[23] In 1902, Bidez left more room for doubt and for the new findings in the upcoming research as in the past decades. Chronopoulos, "The Passion of St. Katherine of Alexandria," p. 42; J. Bidez, "Sur diverses citations, et notarnment sur trois passages de Malalas retrouves dans un texte hagiographique," *Byzantinische Zeitschrift* 11 (1902): 388-94.

[24] Elizabeth Jeffreys, "Malalas' Sources," in *Studies in John Malalas*, eds. Elizabeth Jeffreys, Brian Croke and Roger Scott (Leiden, The Netherlands: Brill, 2017), 167-216; 171; Pier Franco Beatrice, *Anonymi Monophysitae Theosophia*: *An Attempt at Reconstruction.* Supplement to *Vigiliae Christianae* 56 (Leiden: Brill, 2015), xxiv; S. Costanza, "Sull' utilizzazione di alcune citazioni teologiche nella cronografia di Giovanni Malala e in due testi agiografici," *Byzantinische Zeitschrift* 52 (1959): 247-52.

Timotheos about whom no reliable or unreliable information survived outside Malalas's quotations. Firstly, the *Excerpta Barbari* or the *Chronographia Scaligeriana* (Chron. Scal.) to use Burgess's terminology, contains corresponding sentences from sections 1, 2, and some parts of section 3.[25] The anonymous author of the same *Chronographia* makes multifarious allusions to the city of Alexandria, the main setting of the *Life of St. Catherine*—though the Catherine vita takes place in the fourth century A.D. during the reign of Maxentius (r. 306-312), presents the Alexandrian incidents and buildings, the bishops of Alexandria, and *praefecti augustales* (governors of Egypt).[26] The *Chronographia* encapsulates the history of Alexandria dating back to the Hellenistic period and even earlier through focusing on Alexander in particular and listing the twelve cities named after Alexander:

> [33B] … Alexander founded 12 cities, which are still inhabited:
> [34B] Alexandria in Pentapolis, Alexandria in Egypt, Alexandria by the (?) Harpasus, Alexandria Cabiosa, Alexandria (?) Scythia, in (?) Aegaei, Alexandria by Porus, Alexandria on the river Cypris, Alexandria in the Troad, Alexandria in Babylonia, Alexandria in (?) the Mesasgages, Alexandria in Persia, Alexandria the strongest and then he died.[27]

Secondly, regarding the persecution of the Manicheans by the Persian King, Malalas quotes the unknown Timotheos in Antioch and informs his reader that he acquired this piece of information from a former Persian courtier who became a Christian and took up the name Timotheos.[28] Among the other citations from Timotheos, oracles, gnostic discussions and hence Orphic fragments represent all three types of texts that were included in the *Life of St. Catherine*. The references employed by Timotheos, however, pose the third compilation in terms of the sources. *The Tübingen Theosophy*, written in c. 500 as an appendix to the lost

[25] W.R. Burgess, "The Date, Purpose, and Historical Context of the Original Greek and the Latin Translation of the So-Called 'Excerpta Latina Barbari'," *Traditio* 68 (2013): 1-56; 3, 18.
[26] Burgess, "The Date, Purpose, and Historical Context," 3.
[27] *Excerpta Latina Barbari*, 33B-35B, trans. from Schoene's text (Eusebius, Appendix VI) by Andrew Smith. Attalus. <http://www.attalus.org/translate/barbari.html>
[28] Brian Croke, "Malalas, the Man and his Work," in *Studies in John Malalas*, eds. Elizabeth Jeffreys, Brian Croke and Roger Scott (Leiden, The Netherlands: Brill, 2017), 1-25; 13-14.

treatise *On True Belief*, moreover, might correspond with the Timotheosian allusions to the classical treatises and oracles.[29] Jeffreys eventually concludes her argument on the intertextuality of these threefold texts suggesting that the theological, philosophical and historical ideas was likely to have independently wandered in the sub-theological circles in the sixth century and therefore, the scholarly attribution of works by specific individuals is less relevant in the case of these texts.[30] The same thematic and contextual patterns were deployed by Cyril of Alexandria in the fifth century and perhaps by Timetheos of Gaza who may or may not be identical with the Persian Timotheos cited by Malalas.[31] Different from the first two cases of derived sources, the third type of source might attest to the thesis that it was Malalas who replicated the classical Greek and Roman treatises, literature and oracles from the *passiones* of saints. The *Passio of St. Lucia* from the fifth and sixth centuries epitomizes the interchangeable Greek quotations from the *Passio of St. Catherine* and Malalas. Three quotations of Apollo, Homer and Orpheus in the *Passion of St. Catherine* and Malalas correspond with those in the *Passion of St. Lucia* though arranged in a different order. The references to Sophocles refer to the written fragment of nine verses in the Catherine passion and Malalas, but to the fragment of only three verses in the Lucia passion. The Catherine passion and Malalas quote several parts of Diodorus but the Lucia passion attributes the same references to Plutarch.[32] Constanza thus concludes that the *Passion of St. Catherine* could have originated in the *Passion of St. Lucia* for two reasons: one is the lack of references to Plato and the oracle of Apollo in the supposedly earlier Lucia passion, which means that they were inserted later in the Catherine passion; second, it is possible that the

[29] Pier Franco Beatrice, "Pagan Wisdom and Christian Theology According to the Tübingen Theosopy," *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 3, no.4 (1995): 403-418.
[30] Elizabeth Jeffreys, "Malalas' sources," p. 195.
[31] Ibid.
[32] S. Costanza, "Sull'utilizzazione di alcune citazioni teologiche nella Cronografia di Giovanni Malala e in due testi agiografici," *Byzantinische Zeitschrift* 52, vol. 1 (1959): 247-252; 247, 250.

classical references in both *passiones* were not directly borrowed from Malalas since they do not follow the same pattern in the Χρονογραφία.[33]

To sum up, all derived textual variations in the Catherine *vitae*, suggest that the original Greek prototypes have permeated both the Byzantine and Latin hagiographical traditions through the four dimensions (A, B, C, D) of patchworked texts. These patchworked texts clearly espouse the multidimensional juxtaposition of Christian apologetical literature and non-Christian philosophical and religious features—the latter discredited and confuted by the saint herself in the presence of the emperor, his court, and the hoi polloi. Taking the problems on the derivatives into account, it is an exceptionally onerous task to reach an informed conclusion about the sources of the *Life of St. Catherine*, if that ever happened at all as suggested by Constanza.

Having investigated the references to Malalas, the unknown Timotheos, *Excerpta Barbari*, the *Tübingen Theosophy*, and even to some extent, the *Passion of St. Lucia*, the earliest confluence of the three textual versions A, B, and C cannot be dated to the eighth century but to the sixth century.[34] It is not a coincidence that all five texts reflecting ideas widely circulated in different types of literary genres and texts came together simultaneously in the *Passio of St. Catherine* during the sixth century. I do not base this assumption on the existence or lack of the literary productivity spread throughout the hagiography of Late Antiquity and the 'Dark Age' (ca. 650-800).[35] The *vitae* and *passiones* of Catherine of Alexandria, however, bear strong resemblance to the 'hagiography of the city' of Late Antiquity, commencing with the descriptive attributions of Catherine, the detailed pagan feast

[33] Ibid., pp. 251-252.

[34] The Metaphrastic text D is not included with the three main texts because the date for its recomposition and recompilation is attested to pinpoint the tenth century.

[35] For the hagiography of the 'Dark Age', see Stephanos Efthymiadis, "Hagiography from the 'Dark Age' to the Age of Symeon Metaphrastes (Eighth–Tenth Centuries)," in *The Ashgate Research Companion to Byzantine Hagiography*, vol. 1, *Periods and Places*, ed. Stephanos Efthymiadis (Farnham: Ashgate, 2011), 95-142; Soliman S. Farouk, "Reassessing Views Regarding the 'Dark Ages' of Byzantium (650-850)," *Byzantion* 76 (2006): 115-52.

in the city of Alexandria, followed by Catherine warning the emperor not to conduct pagan animal sacrifices any further. Pertinently, the theme of future female martyrs deprecating the pagan emperor and authority figures also occurs in the lives of the late antique saints Euphemia and Martina. The *Passio of Saint Euphemia* (BHG 620) recounts that Euphemia died in 303 during the Great Persecution of Diocletian, and the church in which her martyrium was located in Chalcedon, Bithynia, hosted the Council of Chalcedon in 451.

The narrative pattern is not unlike that of Catherine: she had Roman aristocrat parents, witnessed the persecuted Christians for not participating in the sacrifices to Ares and refused to do the same herself, confessed her faith to the judge and the proconsul. Having been thrown into prison and tortured in many ways, including the breaking wheel, she was finally thrown *ad bestias.*[36] The last hagiographical prose of the same group, the Latin *Passio of Saint Martina* (BHG 1176) from the late sixth and early seventh centuries, tells the story of Saint Martina whose patronage was posthumously selected to preside over the Senate house in Rome. During the reign of Severus Alexander (r. 222-235), Martina was arrested for publicly declaring her faith and was dragged to a statue of Apollo and then Diana, and finally to Jupiter, causing the statues to fall apart and all the temples to collapse, due to an earthquake or lightning sent by God. The exposure to the beasts was also in vain, since the ferocious lion unleashed against her miraculously seemed tame and crouched at her feet in the likeness of an ordinary pet. She was thence subjected to torments, particularly hooks which depicts her torments in her iconography, and finally beheaded at the tenth mile of the Via Ostiense where a church was erected.[37] The Latin *Passio of Saint Martina* (BHG 1176) was, in fact, copied in Rome and later came to be known as the "plagiarized" version of the

[36] François Halkin, "La Passion Ancienne de Sainte Euphémie de Chalcédoine," *Analecta Bollandiana* 83 (1965): 95-120; 100-120; Elizabeth A. Castelli, "Asterius of Amasea: Ekphrasis on the Holy Martyr Euphemia," in *Religions of Late Antiquity in Practice,* ed. Richard Valantatis (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000), 464-468.

[37] Fabio Gasti, *La Passione di Santa Martina* (Pisa: Edizioni ETC, 2014), 29-38.

earlier Greek *Passio of Saint Tatiana* (BHG 1699), with Tatiana's name replaced by Martina.[38]

The repetitive thematic pattern of the young noble Christian women professing their Christian faith against the pagan emperors martyrizing them, and the uncertainty of the order of influence among the lives and passions, were not uncommon in late antique hagiography. Returning to the *Passio of St. Catherine,* choosing Maxentius (Maximianus in some later versions) as the antagonist, the promoter of public pagan practises, and the persecutor of the Christians re-enact the biblical trial of Christ and the order of crucifixion by the Roman prefect Pontius Pilate. Even though the Abyssinian Church venerates Pontius Pilate as a converted saint, the diversity of his representations in historical texts and the Gospels demarcate from what kind of personality and stance towards Jesus he could truly have outside the literary sources. Philo describes his government as oppressive, Josephus reckons that his attempts were to promote the imperial rule in Rome, Mark's gospel emphasizes his superior and dominant side, Matthew puts the *de facto* blame on the Jewish people rather than on him, and finally, Luke criticises his weakness in letting the Jewish people influence him to crucify an unconvicted man.[39] In the Metaphrastes-text (Text D), the re-enactment commences with the counter-pagan figure Maxentius (Pontius Pilate) against the innocent and wise Christian Catherine (Jesus), and proceeds with the trial by fifty philosophers (the Jews), and the conversion of the emperor's wife (Pontius Pilate's wife, later called Procula) and his *stratopedarches* Porphyrios (Longinus). The story comes to a victorious conclusion with the martyrdom scene (crucifixion). The narrative patterns of the *Passion of St. Catherine* in parallel with most of the hagiographical traditions are not detached from the biblical events, but Catherine's story has two more elements which the other hagiographies do not: the fifty

[38] F. Halkin, "Sainte Tatiana: légende grecque d'une 'martyre romaine," *Analecta Bollandiana* 89 (1971): 265-309; 267-268.
[39] Helen K. Bond, *Pontius Pilate in History and Interpretation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 203-207.

philosophers, the wife and *stratopedarches* of the emperor.[40] In the battle between Catherine and Maxentius, Catherine was destined to become victorious from the very beginning: first, she was a Christian against the idolater pagan, and secondly, she defeated the emperor's most trusted people and institutions in his own territory—his intellectual court, army and soldiers, and family. This is one of the literary qualities that elevated Catherine among the most significant and prominent saints.

The historical setting with the emperor Maxentius and the imperial polemics between Constantine and Maxentius reside at the centre of the *Passio of St. Catherine*. Marcus Aurelius Valerius Maxentius (c.280-312) was the son of the Pannonian general Maximianus (c. 240-310) who was appointed as acting co-emperor by Diocletian in 286. In 307, Maxentius successfully repelled the attacks of Severus in Rome and Galerius in Italy, and began to rule over Africa and Italy uncontestably. The death of Galerius in 311 led to a series of battles between the new co-emperors, and the war between Constantine and Maxentius resulted in the Maxentius's defeat and death. Eusebius, praising Constantine's pro-Christian family throughout his entire work, endowed Constantine with the imagery of Moses including the Mosaic law and deeds.[41] The battle scene in *VC* I. 37-8 depicts Maxentius as the tyrant Pharaoh raging against Constantine, the righteous Moses, on the battlefield, the battle coming to its victorious and destined end:

[40] The numerology of fifty poses interesting questions in the biblical exegesis. In Genesis 18:23-25, Abraham asks "What if there are fifty righteous ones in the city? Will you really sweep it away and not spare the place for the sake of the fifty righteous ones who are there?" The chapter Exodus 26:4-11 repeatedly instructs how to compose tabernacle coverings that is possible through fifty loops and fifty golden clasps: "Make fifty loops on the edge of the end curtain of both sets, so that the loops line up opposite one another. Make fifty gold clasps as well, and join the curtains together with the clasps, so that the tabernacle will be a unit…"

[41] Constantine's father, Constantius, is depicted have different views about the persecutions of Christians than Licinius, Maximianus, and Maxentius. Constantine's mother, Helena, built churches in Palestine and Jerusalem, she was pious, generous, and humble. See Eusebius, *Life of Constantine*, pp. 115, 135-139. In some medieval legends dating back to the tenth century such as The *Annals of Eutychius* and the hagiography of the Christian couple Galaction and Episteme in the *Menologion* of Basil II, the tower dedicated to Theotokos near the Burning Bush was built by Empress Helena. See Daniel Caner, Sebastian P. Brock, Kevin Thomas Van Bladel, and Richard Price, *History and Hagiography from the Late Antique Sinai: Including Translations of Pseudo-Nilus' Narrations, Ammonius' Report on the Slaughter of the Monks of Sinai and Rhaithou, and Anastasius of Sinai's Tales of the Sinai Fathers* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2010), 17, n. 67. According to the local traditions today, the church at the site of the Burning Bush was ordered to have been built by Empress Helena upon the request of the Sinai monks.

> Accordingly, just as once in the time of Moses and the devout Hebrew tribe 'Pharaoh's chariots and his force he cast into the sea, and picked rider-captains he overwhelmed in the Red Sea' (Exodus 15: 4), in the very same way Maxentius and the armed men and guards about him 'sank to the bottom like a stone' (Exodus 15: 5), when, fleeing before the force which came from God with Constantine, he went to cross the river lying in his path.[42]

The tyrant and evil depiction of Maxentius, however, was not delimited to the Battle of the Milvian Bridge, the final conflict with Constantine. Resembling his father Maximianus, the three subsections in the chapter 'Crimes of Maxentius' (*VC* I. 33-6) are devoted only to the misdeeds of the "tyrant." Maxentius is accused of committing crimes such as adultery, particularly against Christian women, magic, sorcery, cutting pregnant women open, and slaughtering lions. Eusebius recalls how the wife of a prefect killed herself to protect her chastity from Maxentius's intention "to satisfy his unrestrained and insatiable appetite."[43] The *Vita Constantini* amalgamated with Constantinian propaganda, inspired later hagiographical works to use these negative representations of Maximianus and Maxentius, analogous to the images in the Catherine legend where both Maxentius, and in several versions, his father Maximianus, practise pagan magic, sorcery, summon demons and openly declare their concupiscent interest in Catherine.

Placing Christians in Alexandria, Thebais, and Egypt positioned Alexandria and its environs as one of the epicentres for the Diocletian persecutions. The Christians in Egypt "were martyred in their own land, where countless numbers, men, women and children, despising this passing life, endured various forms of death for the sake of our Saviour's teaching."[44] In Alexandria, the situation was no different. Augmenting his own credibility, Eusebius quotes graphic words by Phileas, a bishop in Lower Egypt, about the persecutions of Alexandria in order to:

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[42] Eusebius, *Life of Constantine*, 84.
[43] Ibid., pp. 82-83.
[44] Book 8, ch. 8 in Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History*, 275.

> Some with both hands bound behind them were suspended upon the gibbet, and with the aid of certain machines stretched out in every limb; then, as they lay in this plight, the torturers acting on orders began to lay on over their whole body, not only, as in the case of murderers, punishing their sides with the instruments of torture, but also their belly, legs and cheeks. Others were suspended from the porch by one hand and raised aloft; and in the tension of their joints and limbs experienced unequalled agony. Others were bound with their face towards pillars, their feet not touching the ground, and thus their bonds were drawn tight by the pressure upon them of the weight of the body.[45]

One of the persecuted victims was an unnamed woman from Alexandria, whom Rufinus (c.354-410), a translator of the Eusebian works calls Dorothea. Rufinus not only translated the text but also elaborated on the Eusebian context, expanded the sentences, and added an exchange between the so-called Dorothea of Alexandria and Maximin occurring possibly around 305/6:[46]

> […] the most famous and distinguished among those at Alexandria alone of those whom the tyrant ravished conquered the lustful and licentious soul of Maximin by her brave spirit. Renowned though she was for wealth, birth and education, she had put everything second to modest behaviour. Many a time he importuned her, yet was unable to put her to death though willing to die, for his lust overmastered his anger; but punishing her with exile he possessed himself of all her property.[47]

A retrospective discussion on the personalities of Catherine and Dorothea by sixteenth-century Italian historian Caesar Baronius (c.1538-1607) suggests that Catherine and Dorothea stood for the same person, Catherine (Hecaterina) being her former pagan name, and Dorothea (the gift of God) the name given to her at the time of baptism.[48] This postulation generates even more entanglements raising the empirical dilemma between hagiographical and historical research. If Catherine was indeed the same person as Dorothea, then she was

[45] Book 8, ch. 10 in Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History*, pp. 281-283.

[46] For the full examples and discussions, see Torben Christensen, *Rufinus of Aquileia and the Historia Ecclesiastica, Lib. VIII-IX, of Eusebius* (Copenhagen: Kongelige Danske videnskabernes selskab, 1989), 160-164.

[47] Book 8, ch. 14 in Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History*, pp. 310-311.

[48] Caesar Baronius, *Annal. Eccl. Tom.* III. ad an. 307, xxxi.

not persecuted by Maxentius but only forced into exile, probably in Arabia.[49] Had the story and cult of Catherine been locally prominent already in the fourth century, both Eusebius, and notably Rufinus, who received his education in Alexandria and went on a pilgrimage from Jerusalem to Egypt in 394, would have used the name Catherine in their sources extensively.[50] It is more likely that the hagiography of Catherine was re-created by blending that of the Alexandrian noble lady Dorothea who was not martyred, and the eminent woman scholar Hypatia of Alexandria (c.370-415) who was 'martyred' by the Christian predecessors of the Alexandrian Christianity under the reign of Arcadius (r. 395-408). The extant texts dealing with the life of Hypatia corresponds to the Catherine legend from beginning to end. The historian Socrates (c.380-450) records the wisdom of Hypatia as following:

> The daughter of the mathematician Theon was so learned that she surpassed all the philosophers of her age. She continued the Platonic tradition as this had been mediated by Plotinus, and she introduced into all the philosophical disciplines those who were willing to learn.[51]

The incomplete entry in the Suda lexicon attributed to Damascius (ca.460-538) and his *Life of Isidore*, on the other hand, delves into her characteristics such as philosophical and scientific wisdom, beauty, chastity, virginity combined with ῥητορεία, and the public image of Hypatia:

> She was born and raised and educated in Alexandria. Having a nobler nature than her father's, she was not satisfied with his mathematical instruction, but she also embraced the rest of philosophy with diligence. Putting on the philosopher's cloak although a woman and advancing through the middle of the city, she explained publicly to those who wished to hear either Plato or Aristotle or any other of the philosophers. In addition to her teaching, attaining the height of practical virtue, becoming just and

[49] According to Kamal Salibi, the similar sequence of events occurred in the case of Jesus, who ended up not crucified, and Paul went to visit him in Arabia. See Kamal Salibi, *Who was Jesus? A Conspiracy in Jerusalem* (London: I. B. Tauris, 1998).

[50] For the journey of Rufinus and his fellow monks, see Rufinus of Aquileia, *Inquiry about the Monks in Egypt*, trans. Andrew Cain (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 2019).

[51] Socrates, *Church History*, PG 67, 766. The same English translation can be found in Kari Vogt, (1993) "The Hierophant of Philosophy: Hypatia of Alexandria," in *Women's Studies of the Christian and Islamic Traditions*, ed. K. E. Boerresen and Kari Vogt (Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 1993), 155-174, 156-157.

> prudent, she remained a virgin. She was so very beautiful and attractive that one of those who attended her lectures fell in love with her.[52]

In the following the three passages show how the *Passio of St. Catherine*, the story of Dorothea, and the entry from the life of Hypatia come together.

[52] "Hypatia," *Suda Online*, trans. Catharine Roth, last modified on December 9, 2002, http://www.stoa.org/sol-entries/upsilon/166.

	The Metaphrastic version of the *Passio of St Catherine*	Dorothea of Alexandria in Eusebius's *Ecclesiastical History*	Damascius's *Life of Isidore* in the Suda lexicon
Personal attributes and life	The martyr Katharine came from Alexandria, and she was daughter of a rich and famous nobleman. She was very lovely. And being gifted, she learned Greek grammar and became wise, also learning the languages of all nations.	The most famous and distinguished among those at Alexandria alone of those whom the tyrant ravished conquered the lustful and licentious soul of Maximin by her brave spirit. Renowned through she was for wealth, birth and education, she had put everything second to modest behaviour.	Having a nobler nature than her father's, she was not satisfied with his mathematical instruction, but she also embraced the rest of philosophy with diligence. […] she explained publicly to those who wished to hear either Plato or Aristotle or any other of the philosophers. In addition to her teaching attaining the height of practical virtue, becoming just and prudent, she remained a virgin. She was so very beautiful and attractive.
Trial, banishment, or death	Now a festival was celebrated among the Greeks to honor the idols, and seeing the animals being slaughtered, Katharine suffered. And she went to King Maximin and argued with im, asking why he had abandoned the living God and worshipped lifeless idols. He rebuked her and took vengeance on her severely. And then the king brought in fifty sages […] Then, when they saw that they were defeated, were baptized as Christians and so were burnt. And Katharine was also beheaded.	Many a time he importuned her to death though willing to die, for his lust overmastered his anger; but punishing her with exile he possessed himself of all her property.	Cyril who was bishop of the opposing faction, passing by the house of Hypatia, saw that there was a great pushing and shoving against the doors, "of men and horses together," some approaching, some departing, and some standing by. When he asked what crowd this was and what the tumult at the house was, he heard from those who followed that the philosopher Hypatia was now speaking and that it was her house. When he learned this, his soul was bitten with envy, so that he immediately plotted her death, a most unholy of all deaths.

The versions and derivations of the *Passio of St. Catherine*, thus, certainly suggest that an anonymous author produced the earliest version of the *Passio of St. Catherine* (Text B) sometime during the sixth and seventh centuries, and brought the literary character of St Catherine to life through the intermingling of sixth-century philosophical and theosophical texts including the life of Hypatia of Alexandria, Dorothea, and the *Passion of St Lucia*.[53] In addition to the intertextual evidence, further developing Tina Chronopoulos's brief note on the last sentences of texts A and B also underpins the suggested dating. In these concluding lines the author reveals himself as Anastasios, the short-hand writer:

> ταῦτα ἐγώ Ἀναστάσιος, ὁ ταχύγραφος ἅμα δοῦλος ὑπάρχων τῆς κυρίας μου Αἰκατερίνης, συνεγραψάμην τὰ ὑπομνηματα τῆς κυρίας μου ἐν πάσῃ ασφαλεία.[54]

Chronopoulos claims that although the ambiguity of the name Anastasios is not possible to resolve, this Anastasios may be identical with Anastasios of Sinai, a seventh-century abbot of the Monastery in Sinai. She points out the unlikely non-existence of any hagiographical works produced by Anastasios of Sinai.[55] In the current state of research, this attribution is not at all untenable, particularly since the late seventh-century monastic hagiographical compilation *Tales of the Sinai Fathers, and Edifying Tales* has also been attributed to the abbot.[56] The work conforms with the early apologetical literature and the arduous attempts to defend Christianity at the time of encounters between the Christians and Muslims after the

[53] Viteau's very brief review in the *Analecta Bollandiana* suggests that it is futile to examine a fabulous, forged text such as the three versions of the *Life of St. Catherine*. Instead of presenting textual and historical examples to argue against his point, the review simply concludes that the evidence elusive. Even if the texts were forged, which they indeed were as discussed above, attempting to unearth the literary and historical motivations behind the forgery and in the development of the cult offer more fruitful avenues of research than Viteau proposes. See *AB* 18 (1899): 69-70.

[54] Viteau, *Passions de saints Écaterine*, 39.

[55] Chronopoulos, "The *Passion of St. Katherine of Alexandria*," 51, n. 55.

[56] For a more recent, but less established work arguing that the *Tales* were written earlier than Anastasios, between 600 and 629, see Karl-Heinz Uthemann, *Anastasios Sinaites: Byzantinisches Christentum in den ersten Jahrzehnten unter Arabischer Herrschaft*, 2 vols., Arbeiten zur Kirchengeschichte 125 (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2015).

Arab conquests.[57] Searching for the keywords in the quotation above—servanthood, (δοῦλος) and "with all safety; quite securely" (ἐν πάσῃ ασφαλεία)— in Anastasios's other theological treatises shows surprising correspondences. In his *erotapokriseis* translated as *Questions and Answers*, Anastasios incorporates δοῦλος at least thrice outside the context of slavery which he discusses in a separate chapter, but in reference to becoming a slave of God, i.e. δοῦλος τοῦ Θεού.[58] The abbot also utilizes the word ασφαλεία four times in a context similar to the ending of the Catherine vita.[59]

Another possible argument for Anastasios's authorship of the vita is found in the previous section recording the event that took place after Catherine's martyrdom:

> Καὶ εὐθέως κατελθόντες ἀγγελοι τέσσαρες ἀνεῖλαν το σῶμα αὐτης καὶ ἀπέθεντο ἐν τῷ ὄρει Σινᾶ. Καὶ πολλοὶ ἰδόντες ἐδόξαζον τον Κύριον.[60]

The author is quite specific about how "the four angels immediately came down and laid her dead body down on the Mount Sinai, and many having seen this, they glorified God," which strongly suggests that the author has a Sinaitic background and decided to opt for the summit of Mount Sinai for this reason. Finally, Anastasios's authorship is also supported by his glorification of Constantine and the theme of persecution used for both the pagan and Muslim counter-groups in his *erotapokriseis*.[61] Re-creating a saint from the background of the Christian and non-Christian conflict suitably fits into the grand defensive narrative through which Christianity—together with its confessors and martyrs—emerged triumphant.

[57] David Thomas and Barbara Roggema, eds., *Christian–Muslim Relations: A Bibliographical History*, vol. 1, *600–900*, History of Christian–Muslim Relations 11 (Leiden: Brill, 2009), 193–199.
[58] Anastasios Sinaites, *Quastiones et responsiones,* (PG 89. 327-825).
[59] Ibid.
[60] Viteau, *Passions de saints Écaterine,* pp. 38-39.
[61] For the English translated version of the text, see Joseph A. Munitiz, *Anastasios of Sinai, Questions and Answers*, Corpus Christianorum in translation (Turnhout: Brepols, 2011), 66, 69, 167, 190-191.

1.3. The Monastery of St. Catherine in Sinai

Following the hagiographical manuscripts of the Catherine *vitae*, the remaining sources for the cult commence with the remarkable foundation of the Monastery of St. Catherine in Sinai. Mount Sinai is of great importance in the Old Testament: it was here where Moses, after crossing the Red Sea, received the Ten Commandments. When Moses came down from Mount Sinai, however, he saw the Hebrews, under the leadership of his brother Aaron, worshiping a golden calf; angered, he broke the Tables of the Law on a rock and had to return to the top of Mount Sinai to rewrite the tables in order to conclude the covenant between the Israelites and God. This episode of the Old Testament contains strong symbolic images embodying the omnipotence of the Creator through thunder, lightning, flames, and thick smoke covering the mountain:

> and the glory of the Lord settled on Mount Sinai. For six days the cloud covered the mountain, and on the seventh day the Lord called to Moses from within the cloud.[62]

The Qur'an also refers to the mountain in Surah 95 [at-Tin]: 1-8 as one of the two locations through the intercession of which God promised people to sustain them:

> By the fig and the olive and [by] Mount Sinai and [by] this secure city [Makkah], we have certainly created man in the best of stature. Then We return him to the lowest of the low Except for those who believe and do righteous deeds, for they will have a reward uninterrupted. So what yet causes you to deny the Recompense? Is not Allah the most just of judges?[63]

According to the *tafsir* of Ibn-Kathir, this verse unites Moses, Jesus, and Muhammad under Jerusalem, Sinai and Mekkah and lays the fundamental bases of future transreligious reverence: "Ibn-Abbas, Mujahid and some scholars said that Allah had sent three of his most

[62] Exodus 24:16, NIV.
[63] Qur'an 95: 1-8. Sahih International. <https://quran.com/95>

important Messengers to each of these three places and it was to them (Moses, Jesus and Muhammad) that Allah revealed the major scriptures."[64]

The monastery was built upon Justinian's order in the mid-sixth century and it was not yet associated with Catherine at the time of its construction. Concerning the impetus behind the building, Procopius and Eutychius (Sa'id Ibn Batriq) offer two different accounts: Procopius claims that the compound in Sinai was built mainly for defensive and annonary purposes against the Muslim attacks. Four hundred years later, Eutychius suggests that it was built because there was a need for a monastic establishment with a defense system, again, against the raiders coming from the East.[65] Both reasons echo the petition of the Sinaitic monks to Justinian to build a church encircled by defensive wall structures so that the monks could be sheltered from the incoming raids, arguing that some monks were killed by the local "Saracens" around 370 and 400.[66] The monks in Sinai claimed that the angels had brought the body and relics of Catherine to this compound: the monastery received and would shelter the certified relics of Catherine in the late tenth century, and became one of the most charismatic centres for medieval pilgrimage, attracting a flood of pilgrims from the eleventh to the late fifteenth century.[67]

The aesthetics of the landscape mentioned in the earlier pilgrimage accounts attests to how the first pilgrims to Mount Sinai were astonished by the grandeur of the mountain and the desert. Besides being significant as the epicentre of the Mosaic cult, Sinai had been associated with holiness even before Catherine. This long-standing association with holiness helped the Catherine-cult flourish more rapidly and steadily from the time of the attribution

[64] Zagloul Al Najjar, *Wonders of the Ever-Glorious Qur'an: Miraculous signs in the Noble Qur'an and their scientific implications* (Cairo: Dar al-Tarjama, n.d.), 5.
[65] Philip Mayerson, "Procopius or Eutychius on the Construction of the Monastery at Mount Sinai: Which Is the More Reliable Source?" *Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research*, no. 230 (1978): 33-38.
[66] Denys Pringle and Peter E. Leach, *The Churches of the Crusader Kingdom of Jerusalem: A corpus 2.2* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 49-50.
[67] A. Kazhdan and N. Patterson-Sevcenko, eds., "Catherine of Alexandria." in *Oxford Dictionary of Byzantium* 1 (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991), 392-393.

of the monastery to Catherine in the tenth century onwards. In the late fourth century, the famous woman pilgrim Egeria describes Sinai en route to the Holy Land and calls Jabal Musa as the Mountain of God, but no allusions to St. Catherine:

> We were walking along between the mountains and came to a spot where they opened out to form an endless valley—a huge plain, and very beautiful—across which we could see Sinai, the holy Mount of God. Next to the spot where the mountains open out is the place of the 'Graves of Craving'. When we arrived there our guides, the holy men who were with us, said, 'It is usual for the people, who come here to say a prayer when first they catch sight of the Mount of God,' and we did as they suggested. The Mount of God is perhaps four miles away from where we were, right across the huge valley I have mentioned.[68]

Writing two centuries after Egeria, between AD 560 and 570, Antoninus Martyr attests to the completed building of the monastery surrounded by walls, and the presence of the monastic communities with three polyglot abbots educated in Latin, Greek, Syriac, Egyptian and Persian.[69] Like Egeria, there is no mention of Catherine and her patronage over the monastery. Shortly before 820, the visitations of Epiphanios Hagiopolites to the *loca sancta* and particularly Sinai did not contains any references to Catherine either.[70] In the tenth century however, *Life of Paul of Latros* (d.956) records the story of the anchorite who lived on Sinai before his retirement to Italy and how he would be thrilled with spiritual joy whenever he thought of Saint Catherine:

> Et aliorum quidem sanctorum memoriae hilaritatis ansam Paulo dabant; martyris vero Aecatherinae non solum voluptate sanctum replebat, sed propemodum exsultatione et tripudio. Etenim celebrabat illam non corporis tantum sensu, sed admixta simul spirituali laetitia.[71]

[68] John Wilkinson, *Egeria's Travels to the Holy Land* (Warminster: Aris & Phillips, 1999), 91-95.
[69] Antoninus Martyr, *Of the Holy Places Visited by Antoninus Martyr*, trans. Aubrey Stewart (London: Palestine Pilgrims' Text Society, 1887), 29.
[70] Herbert Donner, "Die Palästinabeschreibung des Epiphanius Monachus Hagiopolita," *Zeitschrift Des Deutschen Palästina-Vereins* 87, no. 1 (1971): 42-91.
[71] Ch. 39 in Vita Pauli Junius, *Analecta Bollandiana* 11 (1892): 136-182; 153.

The earliest extant pilgrimage accounts referring to the veneration of Catherine in the tenth century may suggest that the passions cannot date back as early as to the seventh century. Other references come from even later. The compound was called as the Church or Monastery of St. Mary until the early fourteenth century, and among the list of popes who gave protection and financial benefactions to Sinai, Pope John XXII (1316-1334) was the first pope to refer to it as the Church of St. Catherine in pilgrims' indulgences.[72] But thankfully, two seventh-century hymns exalting Catherine by Anatolios and Babylas (?) shed light on the existence of the Catherine-*vitae* and her veneration before the ninth and tenth centuries.[73]

As regards pilgrimage, Sinai was on a par with other *loca sancta* such as Jerusalem. Moreover, both the monastery and its pilgrims were protected by a "honorific pseudo-order," the knights of Saint Catherine of Mount Sinai (also known as the Order of the Knights of Saint Catherine), at the time when Sinai and the monastery were under Mamluk domination.[74] The alleged Ashtiname of Muhammad granting protection to Sinai and the Sinaitic monks is still housed in the monastery's collection today. Though probably a forgery, it was used by the Sinaitic monks to attest to the prophet's protection and instigate later Sultans to perform the same oath. The document is very probably a product of forgery, although John Andrew Morrow seems to believe in its authenticity and promote it, just as in

[72] Georg Hoffmann, *Sinai und Rom* (Rome: P. Institutum orientalium studiorum, 1927), 229, 252.

[73] Chronopoulos, "The Passion of St. Katherine of Alexandria," p. 47.

[74] D'Arcy Jonathan Dacre Boulton, *The Knights of the Crown: The Monarchical Orders of Knighthood in Later Medieval Europe, 1325-1520* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1987), xix. For an overview of pilgrim accounts and further interfaith reverence, see Anastasia Drandaki "Through Pilgrim's Eyes: Mt. Sinai in Pilgrim Narratives of the Thirteenth and Fourteenth Centuries," *Deltion of the Christian Archaeological Society* 27 (2006), 491-504; "The Sinai Monastery from the 12th to the 15th century," in *Pilgrimage to Sinai: Treasures from the Holy Monastery of Saint Catherine*, exhibition catalogue, Benaki Museum, 20 July – 26 September 2004, ed. A. Drandaki (Athens: Benaki Museum, 2004), 26-45; Nancy Patterson Ševčenko, "The 'Vita' Icon and the Painter as Hagiographer," *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 53 (1999): 163-65, and notes.

the case of Dan Gibson attempting to prove that the early Muslims did not take Makkah as their Qibla, but the ancient city of Petra.[75]

The struggle for influence between Christianity and Islam around the mountain where Moses received the Law is best illustrated by the presence of mosques at the top of Mount Sinai and inside the monastery. These buildings—signs of the presence of Islam in this high place of Christian pilgrimage—date back to the Fatimid period (969-1171). The construction of the monastery mosque took place in the reign of Caliph Al-Hakim (996-1021). The monks might have forged the covenant of Muhammad in the eleventh century to prevent the destruction of the monastery by the Caliph and his troops. Although, according to Ademar, the caliph drove out his troops from Bethlehem and the Monastery of St. Catherine because he took the plague ravaging his caliphate as a sign from God.[76]

1.4. The new cult?

Regarding the beginnings of the Catherine cult, by the late twelfth century it appears to have widely spread throughout Western Europe and stretching towards Scandinavia. The cultic origins of Catherine of Alexandria in Byzantium are of utmost significance for the later historical development of the *cultus*. At the same time, the beginnings are obscure, and few studies of Catherine's cult outside Byzantium, and especially in Western Europe, pay critical attention to the most often quoted sources, thus perpetuating confusing assumptions or outdated observations. Tina Chronopoulos conducted full-scale research based on textual evidence of the cult, both Greek and Latin versions, noticing differences and similarities between the hagiographical variations.[77] She is the first scholar to have proven that Christine Walsh's references to the cultic beginnings of Catherine in a seventh-century Melkite litany

[75] John Andrew Morrow, *The Covenants of the Prophet Muhammad with the Christians of the World* (Tacoma, WA: Angelico Press, Sophia Perennis, 2013). For Dan Gibson, it is possible to find his exhaustive amount of videos in Youtube.

[76] Ademar de Chabannes, *Chronique*, ed. Jules Chavanon (Paris: Alphonse Picard,1897), 167–71.

[77] Chronopoulos, "The *Passion of St. Katherine of Alexandria.*"

text were simply fictitious and the Melkite litany which encapsulates Catherine among the list of prayers addressed to the saints does not date back to the seventh century.[78]

Did St. Catherine's cult emerge from Constantinople and spread throughout the Eastern Mediterranean or follow an antithetical pattern from Palestine towards Anatolia, and eventually Constantinople and its environs as Chronopoulos suggests? I have not yet encountered a study which interconnects the cultic *loci* such as Athens, Cyprus, Cappadocia, Constantinople, Palestine, Rhodes, Sinai, Thessaloniki and further areas towards the Balkans, so it remains imperative to conduct in-depth research into this possibility.

The *Cult of Saints* database of Oxford University refers to three database entries of St. Catherine: First, in the seventh- or eighth-century church of Panagia Drosiani on the island of Naxos, an inscription in a preiconoclastic painting of a female saint is recorded. But the inscription is so poorly preserved that while it may be the name of this figure [+ ἡ ἁγία Αἰκατε]ρί[νη (?)], other interpretations are equally convincing, such as Dimitrios Pallas's reading of [Νύμφη Χ]ρι[στοῦ] as an allegory of the Church.[79] The database identifies further two references to a saint Catherine in tenth-century calendars. One of them, Ioane Zosime lived in the tenth century, but he extensively used much earlier material from *Calendar of Jerusalem*, *Calendar of St Saba Monastery* and *Greek Calendar*, so the feasts mentioned could have been already celebrated between the fifth and seventh centuries. The second entry refers to November 24, featuring Agapios of Palestine, the Old Testament Prophet Micah, and Merkourios of Cappadocia; but in the third entry of November 25, Catherine is clearly associated with Bishop Peter of Alexandria, and is styled as a martyr of Alexandria.[80]

[78] Christine Walsh, *The Cult of St. Katherine of Alexandria in Early Medieval Europe* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate Publishing Company, 2007).
[79] Paweł Nowakowski, Cult of Saints, E01271.
[80] Nikoloz Aleksidze, Cult of Saints, E03936 & E03937.

Another set of sources that have not yet been explored in the existing literature concerning prosopographical data: Αἰκατερίνα (9) and Κατερίνα (5) are the name variations that I could discover so far dates back as early as the ninth century. Αἰκατερίνα**,** who was the abbess of Lukas Monastery in Thessaloniki, died approximately between 837 and 853 (BHG 1737).[81] If the name Αἰκατερίνα can be proven to have been used hagionymically rather than as secular personal names as early as the ninth century, then the first personal name evidence as observed in the example of the abbess of Thessaloniki play a major role in the cultic development. Depending on the temporal and spatial spread of the cult, there is another question that shares concerns with the political and apocalyptic motivations behind the Iconoclastic controversy: did the cult of St. Catherine come into being and gain popularity during (and perhaps on account of) the Saracen raids in Sinai and the Arab-Byzantine wars or is it that there is more data about her cult from the seventh century onwards.[82]

1.5. Catherine(s) in Byzantium: Onomastics

Onomastics/anthroponymy as a *sui generis* field deals with both the countless numbers of names and small groups of names. At the outset, the quantity of the names and other relevant biographical information compromises the quality of the onomastic/anthroponymic research, especially in cases where historical documents contain few names and even less context. This empirical dilemma between the quantitative and qualitative priority applies to the Byzantine onomastics of the name "Catherine." The quantitative problem is easier to disentangle because there is simply not much a scholar can do in the scarcity of sources. The qualitative problem, on the other hand, arises from having

[81] "Aikaterina." In *Prosopographie der mittelbyzantinischen Zeit* (Berlin, Boston: de Gruyter, 2013).

[82] For the compilation of the translated texts, see Daniel Caner, Sebastian P. Brock, Kevin Thomas Van Bladel, and Richard Price, *History and Hagiography from the Late Antique Sinai: Including Translations of Pseudo-Nilus' Narrations, Ammonius' Report on the Slaughter of the Monks of Sinai and Rhaithou, and Anastasius of Sinai's Tales of the Sinai Fathers* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2010).

to establish whether the name bears a hagionymic character.[83] Identifying hagionymic names based on the religious and ethnical origins of the society does not entirely obscure the hagionymic nature of personal and place names. The personal and place names, therefore, attest to the spatial and temporal spread of the veneration of saints and show the extent of areas affected by the cults in various historical periods.

Another qualitative problem is when the methodology disregards the pre-existence of non-aristocratic names and the prosopographical models to which Lawrence Stone alludes as the "elite prosopography." "Elitist/elite prosopography" encapsulates the analysis of the prosopographical data in terms of how small groups maintain power through politics, marriage, kinship and economic relations.[84] Bearing the "elite prosopography" in mind, all extant Byzantine entries demonstrate the aristocratic power relations, marriages, and economic interactions between the Byzantines and imperial enemies such as the "Saracens." Examining hagionymic names among the non-aristocratic population is presently beyond the possibilities of research.

The hagionymic name "Catherine/Katherine" encapsulates a gamut of multilinguistic name variations from the ninth century onwards: Greek Ἀικατερίνη, Ἑκατερίνα and Latin *Aecaterina, Haecaterina, Ecaterina* along with latter vernacular versions *Katerina, Caterina, Catherina, Katherina, Catharina* and *Catherine*.[85] Simonne D'Ardenne offers multifold historical and linguistic explanations as to whence the name might have originated: the first three concerns the prefix -Ἀι, which may stand for the Greek female definite article ἡ; or the abbreviated version for ἁγία, "holy, saint"; or denote the word αἰκία, "torture, suffering".

[83] The homonymic dilemma that burdens the study hagionymic names in sources from medieval Europe and Britain—whether Catherine refers St. Catherine of Alexandria or of Siena—is not an issue in Byzantine prosopography.
[84] Lawrence Stone, "Prosopography," *Daedalus* 100, no. 1 (1971): 47.
[85] Simonne D'Ardenne, "Tentative Etymology of the Name Catherine," *Studia Germanica Gandensia* 12 (1970): 111-8; 111.

Alternatively the name altogether may either derive from a goddess of Greek mythology, *Hecate* or *Hecateus*; or simply mean "long-nosed woman", through the adjective κατάρρῖν, ὁ, ἡ.[86] The most popular etymological consensus, however, contextualizes the Greek adjective καθαρός, ά, όν, "pure, free from moral pollution" in Catherine's hagiographical narrative.[87] The Greek variations may be further unpicked to the level of their Indo-European origins, that is the Hittite and Cuneiform forms, *kat-te-ra-* and *kat-te-e-ra-* in the Middle Script with *kat-te-er-ra-* in the New Script, meaning 'lower, inferior'.[88] On the whole, what these linguistic considerations attest to is how the name "Catherine" was a choice with a universal, timeless and familiar character.

The *terminus post quem* for prosopographical and personal name entry is found within the *Life of St. Theodora of Thessalonike* (BHG 1737) in which Aikaterine (d. ca. 837-853) is a relative of Theodora and the abbess of the convent of St. Luke in Thessalonike. Anthony the confessor, the hero of the hagiographical story, was Aikaterine's brother and archbishop of Thessalonike for a short period of time in 843.[89] Aikaterine received Saint Theodora's six-years-old daughter to her own convent and thereafter, Aikaterine had the six-year-old daughter tonsured. Surprisingly, previous literature concerning the Catherine cult failed to discuss Abbess Aikaterine, even though she attests to the existence of the saintly veneration in Thessalonike and of the personal name from the ninth century onwards. Although it is unknown whether Aikaterine received her name at birth or adopted her "new monastic identity" by choosing a hagionymic name for her monastic vows, the rare use of the

[86] D'Ardenne, "Tentative Etymology," p. 112-7.
[87] Henry George Liddell and Robert Scott, *A Greek-English Lexicon: Based on the German work of Francis Passow* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1846), 683.
[88] Alwin Kloekhorst, *Etymological Dictionary of the Hittite Inherited Lexicon* (Leiden, The Netherlands: Brill, 2007), 83.
[89] Alice-Mary Talbot, ed., *Holy Women of Byzantium: Ten Saints' Lives in Translation*. (Washington, D.C.: Dumbarton Oaks, 1996), 160-171.

name proves its hagionymic value.[90] Importantly, as will be shown in the following subchapters, Thessalonike became a major epicenter for the Catherine cult.

The second relevant mention of Αἰκατερίνη is a Bulgarian princess and later "τὰ βασίλεια."[91] She was the daughter of Ivan Vladislav, the last tsar of Bulgaria (d. 1018), and his spouse Maria. Αἰκατερίνη was married to Isaac I Komnenos (c. 1007-1060) as early as in 1025.[92] She was weeping and lamenting upon Isaac's decision to abdicate in 1059 and his retreat into the monastery of Stoudios in the following year. According to Michael Psellos, she delivered an acrimonious yet sorrowful monologue to the emperor and prompted him to reconsider his dramatic decision thus:

> The deepest darkness can cover me, the outer fire can burn every bit of me — I would welcome it. And you — have you no pity now for us in our desolation? What sort of feeling have you, to take away yourself from the palace, and leave me behind, condemned to a widowhood full of sorrow, and your daughter, a wretched orphan? It may be some pitiless fellow will shed the blood of your dear ones. No doubt you will live on after you enter the Church, or perhaps you will die nobly, but what will be left for us? — a life worse than death![93]

This Aikaterine did not share the imperial power with Constantine X for long: taking up the monastic name *Xene*, she retired to the monastery of Myrelaion where she resided until her death around 1063.[94]

Each of the remaining eighteen personal names and biographical information in the *Prosopographisches Lexikon der Palaiologenzeit* (PLP) come from between the dates 1283

[90] For "the new monastic identity", see Dion C. Symthe, ed., *Strangers to Themselves: The Byzantine Outsider*; *Papers from the Thirty-Second Spring Symposium of Byzantine Studies, University of Sussex, Brighton, March 1998* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2000), 13.
[91] Book 7, Chapter 79 in *Michaelis Pselli Chronographia*, ed. Diether Roderich Reinsch (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2014), 246.
[92] Konstantinos Varzos, *Η Γενεαλογία των Κομνηνών: Τομος Α* (Thessaloniki: Centre for Byzantine Studies, 1984), 41.
[93] Book 7, ch. 82, in Michael Psellos, *Fourteen Byzantine rulers: the Chronographia of Michael Psellus*, trans. E. R. A. Sewter (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1966), 335-8;
[94] Varzos, *Η Γενεαλογία των Κομνηνών*, 45-7.

and 1442, out of which six entries refer to Greek nuns, one to the Latin empress of Constantinople Ἐκατερίνα ντὲ Λεονέσα, one to the second wife of Constantine XI Palaiologos (c. 1405-1453) Γατελιούζαινα Αἰκατερίνα, one to a "neighbour" from Macedonia; and the other eleven names were Greek and non-Greek aristocratic women who held lands in various parts of the empire or married to aristocrats. After the ninth-century name in the *Life of St. Theodora of Thessalonike* and the eleventh-century name of the Bulgarian princess and later Byzantine empress, another eleventh-century name Εικατερίνης enters our list of onomastics. She was the wife of Lazarus, the taxpayer of 26/48 of a *nomisma* for his household in Radolibos village belonging to the theme of Serres.[95] In the twelfth century, another Αἰκατερίνη of unspecified origins was married to a certain Καμαράσις. In 1125, another aristocratic figure, Theodora, the wife of Ioannes, daughter-in-law of Anna Komnene and Nikephoros Bryennios, took up the monastic name Αἰκατερίνη. Theodora waited for her husband to return from military campaign, and she was ill during these eight months. Finally, when her husband returned, she took up the monastic name Αἰκατερίνη and died.[96]

Later occurrences include five nuns from the fourteenth, and one from the early fifteenth century in different parts of the empire. Around 1313, a Κατερίνα was recorded to reside in Sebaste, Crimea; in 1314, an Αἰκατερίνη is recorded in an unknown location; in 1324, an Αἰκατερίνη in Thessaloniki; in 1343, another Αἰκατερίνα in an unknown location; in 1347, Κατερίνα, the benefactress of the Church of Theotokos in Prodromi, Crete, and in 1405, certain Αἰκατερίνα lived in Skirmalo, Paphos.[97] The existence of the name variations

[95] M. Jeffreys et al., "Aikaterine 102," *Prosopography of the Byzantine World*, (King's College London, 2016-7) available at <https://pbw2016.kdl.kcl.ac.uk.>
[96] "Theodora 25001," *Prosopography of the Byzantine World.*
[97] Erich Trapp and Christian Gastgeber, eds., *Prosopographisches Lexikon der Palaiologenzeit*. CD ROM-Version (Vienna: Verlag der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 2001), no. 91095-6.

Αἰκατερίνη/α among nuns attests to their veneration to the extent that they decided to devote their lives to her example.

Another reference to an Αἰκατερίνα from the Byzantine theme of Macedonia comes from Doxompus, Serrhai in which the parökin Αἰκατερίνα, who was a resident with no or less civil rights, was habited around 1317.[98] Apart from the nuns, she is the only example of non-aristocratic secular bearer of the name, all the remaining Catherines are either wealthy benefactresses, or wives and daughters of κῦρῖοι. For example, in 1327, Κα<τερίνα> was the benefactress of the Church of the Michael the Archangel in Kandanos, Crete as the epigraphy on the church walls testifies: δέησις (της δού)λης του Θεου κα(τερίνης).[99] In the late thirteenth century, there are three women called Κατερίνα from the Southern Italy out of which Κατερίνα was also a landowner in Korana, Southern Italy. And to quote examples from as late as the fifteenth century, one of the two entries refers to the second wife of Constantine XI Palaiologos, Γατελιούζαινα Αἰκατερίνα from Lesbos in 1442, and the other, from 1447, to Αἰκατερίνη, the wife of Μούτουνας Μαστροδημήτριος, hailing from an unknown location.[100]

1.6. Tombs and Church Dedications

Examining tombs and church dedications are nascent sub-disciplines which received sporadic attention before, so the two tomb attributions to the saint, one in Sinai and the other in Cyprus, have not been contextualized along with the onomastic data in tracing the historical route of the Catherine cult. In the ninth century, the monks of Sinai allegedly collected the Catherine's body from the summit of Jabal Katharina, one of the highest mountains in the region, brought the saint into the monastery and kept some of the relics

[98] *Prosopographisches Lexikon der Palaiologenzeit*, no. 91096.
[99] Giuseppe Gerola, *I Monumenti Veneti dell'isola di Creta*, vol.4 (Venice: Istituto Veneto di Scienze, Lettere ed Arti, 1932), 454.
[100] *Prosopographisches Lexikon der Palaiologenzeit*, no. 91095-6.

within the monastery walls. Surprisingly, none of the contemporary accounts from the ninth century onwards mention the relics of St. Catherine, at least not prior to the thirteenth century. Her arm was contained in Santa Maria, Aracoeli, Italy, and her hair in Santa Maria, Traspontina. In the eleventh century, a Sinai monk, Symeon, brought her finger to Rouen, Normandy where the Catherine cult subsequently became one of the cult centres in medieval Europe. The relics travelled as far as the British Isles and appeared in church inventories and missals in the mid-fifteenth century.[101] The first eye-witness account, however, was recorded in 1217, when Magister Thietmar described his visit to the tomb and body in Sinai before travelling back to Acre:

> The tomb is indeed short ad nobly made of the whitest marble. Its lid is raised just like a coffin, and it is opened and closed. When the bishop of that place learnt my wishes and the reason for my coming, after preparing himself with devotion, prayers and chant, and with lighted lamps and thuribles, he went to the sarcophagus of the blessed Catherine, opened it and bade me look inside. And I saw clearly, face to face and without doubt, the body of the blessed Catherine, and I kissed her uncovered head. The limbs and bones indeed, held together by sinews, still float in the self-same oil, which exudes not from the tomb but from the individual joints, just as in a bath sweat erupts in droplets from the pores of the human body.[102]

Thietmar's intimate experience of visiting the body of St. Catherine suggests that the tomb was opened ceremoniously for pilgrims visiting Sinai. The marble lid of the tomb, probably designed to be moved with ease, was a small technical detail which would allow the steady flow of pilgrims to stay there for brief periods of time, long enough to observe the tomb and pray with the monastic community. "The bishop had prepared himself" with the ritual gestures representative of the monastery, upon Thietmar's arrival because most of the pilgrims in this period would arrive from the West. Thietmar embarked on his pilgrimage for penitence and accordingly, the monastic community was probably used to penitent pilgrims

[101] Eylül Çetinbaş, "Réalta an Chruinne Caitir Fhíona': The Cult of St. Katherine of Alexandria in Late Medieval Scotland," Master's Thesis (Bilkent University, 2019), 12-13.

[102] Denys Pringle, and Peter E. Leach, *The Churches of the Crusader Kingdom of Jerusalem: A Corpus 2.2* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 52-53.

sojourning the mountains and deserts of Sinai and praying for the intercession of Catherine through her tomb and, later, her relics.[103]

The second tomb, also known as the prison of St. Catherine, situated in the northern outskirts of the Salamis ruins in Cyprus, was re-investigated in 1965, and the latest archaeological findings concluded that the megalithic monument is from the seventh century BC. During the fourteenth century, the vaulted room and the funeral chamber previously served as the chapel of Saint Catherine.[104] Although this building and the sliding door leading to the inner complex could have also been utilized as a prison for someone like Saint Catherine, it seems unlikely.[105] St. Catherine was linked to Cyprus starting from the fourteenth and fifteenth century onwards, not in the early versions of the *vitae* and *passiones* insofar as we have seen in the above-presented sections, but in the late medieval translated versions of the hagiographical texts. Three fifteenth-century Latin manuscripts kept at Wrocław University Library in Poland fill the narrative gap in the earlier texts claiming that Catherine was born in Cyprus. According to the later legends, Catherine was the daughter of Costas, who may have been the step-brother of Constantine the Great:

> By right of inheritance Catherine held her father's kingdom, which was, as some rather authentic writings attest, the kingdom of Cyprus. And actually the kings of Cyprus claim to be kinsmen of St Catherine.[106]

The mid-fourteenth century pilgrim's account by a German priest, Ludolph Von Suchem, is one of the earliest accounts of the Cypriot Saint Catherine. Ludolph explicitly writes that St.

[103] "I, Thietmar, seeking pardon for my sins, armed myself with the sign of the cross, and left my home as a pilgrim with my companions." Hunt Janin, Four paths to Jerusalem: Jewish, Christian, Muslim, and secular pilgrimages, 1000 BCE to 2001 CE (Jefferson, NC: McFarland, 2002), 114.

[104] Ludolph von Suchem writes: "Ex hac civitate (Famagusta) etiam sancta Katharina fuit orta, et adhuc ibidem stat capella." L. de Mas Latrie, *Histoire de l'île de Chypre sous le règne des princes de la maison de Lusignan,* 3 vols (Paris, 1852–1861, reprinted Famagusta, 1970). Vol. II, 214.

[105] Vassos Karageorghis, "Note sur Les Tombes Royales de Salamine," *Revue Archéologique*, Nouvelle Série, vol. 1 (1969): 57-80; 65-67.

[106] Lorenzo Calvelli, "Cypriot Origins, Constantinian Blood: The Legend of the Young Saint Catherine of Alexandria," in *Identity/Identities in Late Medieval Cyprus*, eds. Tassos Papacostas and Guillaume Saint-Guillain (Nicosia, 2014), 361-390; 365.

Catherine the Virgin was born in the city of Constantia or Salamia near Famagusta.[107] By 1328, a Genoese merchant had founded a pilgrim's hostel in Famagusta, in other words, the "transit station" through which the pilgrims *en route* to St. Catherine's Monastery and Jerusalem could circumnavigate the port from the sea.[108] By the early thirteenth century, the fame of Saint Catherine among the Latin city-states of the Eastern Mediterranean had been established. The archbishop of Crete granted the Sinai monks a property worth of 400 ducats per annum in 1203, and the Venetians compensated the losses of Sinai when they captured Crete in the following year: by the year 1384, around 400 people living in the monastery and the environs were fed with food prepared in the enormous Venetian cauldrons.[109] The accounts of the Cypriot origins attributed to Saint Catherine proceeded in the sixteenth century by Stephen of Lusignan (c.1537-1590), a native of Nicosia, who claimed to have read the Greek life of St. Catherine at Famagusta and recorded the "real" version of the Greek life. According to this Greek life located in Cyprus, St. Catherine's father, Costa, was the king of Cyprus transferred to Alexandria in 290 and left a daughter Catherine behind when he died there. The emperors Diocletian and his son, Maxentius, fearing the Christians and Catherine's Christian faith, later brought her to Salamis and then to Paphos where she was put in prison. When she finally returned to Alexandria, Catherine, "the queen of Cyprus," approached the cruel Maxentius to confront his tyranny and was martyred in Alexandria.[110]

[107] Ludolf von Suchem, *Ludolph Von Suchem's Description of the Holy Land, and of the Way Thither: Written in the Year A.D. 1350*, ed. and trans. Aubrey Stewart. Cambridge Library Collection (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 42.

[108] Renate Blumenfeld-Kosinski and Kiril Petkov, *Philippe de Mezieres and His Age: Piety and Politics in the Fourteenth Century* (Leiden: Brill, 2012), 417.

[109] Joan Mary Braun, "St. Catherine's Monastery Church, Mount Sinai: Literary Sources from the Fourth through the Nineteenth Centuries," PhD Diss. (University of Michigan, 1973), 11.

[110] "Caterina. La leggenda et tutti li historiografi pongono ehe ella fusse di Alessandria, ma li Famagostani hanno una leggenda greca, laquale dice esser di Cipro, da Famagosta vecchia, et era figliuola del Re Costa, dai quale la citta fu chiamata da Salamina Costantia, et in essa citta, come habbiamo detto di sopra, e la sua prigione, et poi condutta a Paffo, et posta in prigione, et degli in Alessandria, fu martirizata. Circa li anni del nostro Signore go in Cipro era Re Costa, il quale fece chiamare la citta di Salamina Constantia, dove esso faceva residentia, et li suoi Re predecessori. Era in questo tempo Diocletiano Imperatore, et in Egitto regnava Achilleo, il quale si ribello dall' imperio Romano, onde Diocletiano ando da Roma in Egitto, et vinse Achilleo et gli diede

Today, Nicosia is still home to the Church of St. Catherine or "the Bishop's Church," a flamboyant late fourteenth-century church built during the Lusignan period and converted into the mosque of Haydar Pasha Camii in 1570 by the Ottomans.[111] Another island, Rhodes, encapsulates the long-standing cult of St. Catherine which probably sprung from the fourteenth and fifteenth-century revised narratives of the Catherine vita. Among the patronage of lands attributed to the father of St. Catherine, Costos/Costas, the island of Rhodes appeared together with Cyprus, and held a specific place as one of the epicentres of the cult:

> Costos was the father of St Catherine, the king of Cyprus, Syria, Greece, Alexandria, and lord of Rhodes, who used to live in a town that was named after him, called Costa in the kingdom of Cyprus.[112]

There are three buildings, a gate, church, and a hospice dedicated to St. Catherine and located near the current touristic harbour of the island. Entering the Old Town through the St. Catherine's Gate, the Hospice of St. Catherine faces the Hellenistic fortification on the left and the fourteenth-century Church of Panagia tou Borgou on the right. The hospice was first built by an Italian knight, Dominic de Alamania, in 1392 and rebuilt by Constant Oberti in

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la morte, et la citta la mise a sacco. Allhora chiamo il Re Costa da Cipro, et gli diede il governo del regno di Egitto, il qual lascio nel regno di Cipro un suo fratello, et essendo in Alessandria, mori, et lascio una figliuola Catherina, laquale cosi giovinetta, divento delli arti liberali sapientissima. II regno di Alessandria fu preso da Maxentio figliuolo* di Diocletiano Imperatore. Catherina, essendo morto il padre, fu condotta in Cipro al zio Re, il quale stantiava in Salamina, over Constantia. Costui vedendo la nepote essere Christiana, temendo Maxentio, + et Diocletiano della loro crudelta verso li Christiani, mise in prigione Catherina in Salamina, la qual prigione, come dicemmo, sta in piedi, et dipoi la volse mandare a Maxentio in Egitto, o per revocarla o per castigarla, perche era bellissima giovane et sapientissima. La cavo dalla prigione, et la mando a Paphos per imbarcarla, et quivi di novo fu posta in prigione fin ehe la nave fusse preparata, et poi la condussero in Alessandria. Ella ando nel palazzo del padre, et vedendo un giorno Maxentio, ehe perseguitava gli Christiani, ando da lui, et lo riprese, et la martirizo, come per I'historie e noto, et perche e martirizata in Alessandria tutte le historie latine eccetto Pietro Calo da Chioza dicono essere Alessandrina. Cosi fu martirizata Caterina, come habbiamo detto. Pietro calo da Chiosa chiama Chaterina Regina de Cipro nella sua historia, and di cio esser Cipriota vedesi nel dominio piu di fotto." Stefano Lusignano, *Chorographia: Et Breve Historia Universale dell'Isola de Cipro Principiando al Tempo di Noè per in Sino al 1572* (Bologna, 1573), 25 (b).

[111] George E. Jeffery, *A Description of the Historic Monuments of Cyprus: Studies in the Archaeology and Architecture of the Island* (Nicosia, 1918), 90-91; Gordon Home, *Nicosia: Capital of Cyprus Then and Now* (London: J. M. Dent & Sons, 1960), 122-124.

[112] Calvelli, "Cypriot Origins, Constantinian Blood," p. 364. Lorenzo Calvelli translates from a manuscript in Budapest; for the original work, see Á. Sziládi, *Temesvári Pelbárt élete és munkái* (Budapest, 1880), 90.

1516.[113] The Church of St. Catherine was adjacent to the hospice of which only some marbles remain today. In 1494, the hospice was involved in the case of a sodomy occurred six times between the Spanish priest Fr. Juan de Villagan of the same hospice and Fr. Nicholas Barro, a Dominican monk in St. Augustine's, inside the vestry of the Church of St. Catherine adjacent to the hospice of which only some marbles remain today. The grand master and the council found both priests found guilty and sent them to solitary exile in Lindos Castle without any definite spatial confinement.[114]

[113] The building is still undergoing renovation after the first complete restoration in 1996.
[114] Simon Philips, "Maligno spiritu ductus et sue professionis immemor': Conflicts within the Culture of the Hospitaller Order on Rhodes and Cyprus," in *The Military Orders: Culture and Conflict*, vol. 6.2, eds. Jochen Schenk and Michael Carr (Farnham: Ashgate, 2017), 89-99; 93-95.

Figure 1: The Hospice of St. Catherine, Rhodes, photo taken by the author, 2017

The second Church of St. Catherine or Agia Ekaterini positioned on the other side of the touristic port, within the Jewish quarter and closer to St. John's Gate was established during the post-Byzantine period in the fourteenth century. The frescoes of the southern aisle, including vivid scenes from the life of Catherine date to the last quarter of the fifteenth century.[115] The building itself was the first church converted into a mosque, hence the Turkish name Ilk Mihrap (first altar facing Mecca).[116] In the island of Crete, the Catherine-cult was also prevalent among the Venetians who erected the Church of St. Catherine in Heraklion in the sixteenth century. Between 1550 and 1640, many notable men attended the

[115] *Archaiologikon Deltion: Meros A' –Meletai*, Volumes 44-46 (Athens: Ypourgeio Politismou, 1996), 173.
[116] Zeki Çelikkol, *Rodos'taki Türk Eserleri ve Tarihçe* (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu Basınevi, 1992), 83; İsmail Bıçakçı, Yunanistan'da Türk Mimari Eserleri (İstanbul: İslam Tarih, Sanat ve Kültür Araştırma Merkezi, 2003), 284-285.

Monastery of the Saint Catherine of Sinaites which functioned as a prominent university during the Venetian rule.[117]

Figure 2: The Church of Agia Ekaterini, Rhodes, photo taken by author, 2017

In 1402, the Knights of St. John took control of Halicarnassus, Bodrum and soon after, a German knight, Henry Schlegelholt, built the castle of St. Peter whose five towers corresponded with the various languages spoken by the formidable occupants of the region.[118] The four holy figures chosen to protect the Castle of St. Peter were Saint Catherine of Alexandria along with Virgin Mary, Mary Magdalene, and St. Peter, to whom the castle was dedicated in the early fifteenth century. One century later, Suleiman the Magnificent conquered Rhodes in 1523, Bodrum and Rhodes passed into the Ottoman rule, and the knights left for Malta where Mattia Preti (c.1613-1699) painted the scenes of martyrdom

[117] Athanasios D. Paliouras, *The Monastery of St. Catherine on Mount Sinai* (Glyka Nera Attikis: E. Tzaferi, 1985), 10-11.
[118] Charles Thomas Newton and Richard Popplewell Pullan, *A History of Discoveries at Halicarnassus, Cnidus and Branchidae*. Vol. 2. Cambridge Library Collection – Archaeology (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 74.

inside the church dedicated to St. Catherine by the Knights of St. John in the late sixteenth century.[119]

Figure 3: Heraldic arms of the Knights of St. John protected by four saints: Virgin Mary, Mary Magdalene, St. Peter, and St. Catherine on the below right, photo taken by the author, 2017.

Regarding the island dedications, the most perplexing reference to Catherine is a preiconoclastic painting of a female saint in the seventh or eighth-century church of Panagia Drosiani on the island of Naxos. The epigraphy on the paintings have been interpreted in the fragments of either as [+ ἡ ἁγία Αἰκατε]ρί[νη (?)] referring to Saint Catherine, or in Dimitrios Pallas's reading, as [Νύμφη Χ]ρι[στοῦ], as an ecclesiastical allegory.[120] While both interpretations are equally likely, other dedications on the island suggest the latter hypothesis, simply because the insular evidence is available from the fourteenth century onwards, except for the local traditions which are not identifiable at the current state of research.

[119] See for the analysis of the artwork, Cynthia de Giorgo and Sante Guido, *Mattia Preti: St. Catherine of Alexandria, the Patron Saint of the Italian Langue of the Knights of Malta* (Malta: The St. John's Co-cathedral Foundation Publ., 2005).
[120] Paweł Nowakowski, *Cult of Saints*, E01271.

The remaining church dedications to Catherine can be found in Athens, Thessaloniki, Cappadocia, Palestine, and Alexandria from the beginning of the ninth century to fourteenth century. The earliest church associated with Catherine is the convent of Saint Loukas dedicated to Saint Luke, which had existed from the beginning of the ninth century, perhaps even earlier, near the agora on the street leading to the Cassandrian Gate.[121] The *Life of St. Theodora of Thessaloniki* takes place in the convent of Saint Luke whose abbess was called Aikaterine (d. ca. 837-853) and her brother Anthony served as an archbishop of Dyrrhachion and Thessaloniki in 843. This detail is particularly relevant here, because from the second century BC onwards, Dyrrhachion was the ancient starting point of the Via Egnatia connecting Dyrrhachion with Constantinople via Thessaloniki.[122] The Via Egnatia along Eastern Thrace was renovated by Justinian in the mid-fifth century, and served as the commercial, cultural and social thoroughfare between the different geographical regions.[123] The cult of Catherine, already recognized in Constantinople by the mid-eighth century, is likely to have travelled backwards through the Via Egnatia to Thessaloniki. Alternatively, the cult travelled from Thessaloniki to Constantinople which is less likely considering the hypothesis that the first veneration originated in Sinai or Palestine. There is another church dedicated to St. Catherine from the fourteenth-century Palaiologan period two kilometres away from the street leading to the Cassandrian Gate, but the historical origins of the church and the Byzantine name are still unknown. The complex was converted into a mosque, the Yakup Pasha Camii, by the Ottomans on March 29, 1430.[124]

After the convent of Saint Loukas, the second Athens church associated with Catherine was erected in the eleventh or twelfth-century. Formerly known as the Church of

[121] Raymond Janin, *Les Églises et les Monastères des Grands Centres Byzantins: Bithynie, Hellespont, Latros, Galèsios, Trébizonde, Athènes, Thessalonique* (Paris: Institut français des études byzantines, 1975), 395.
[122] I am indebted to Prof. Luca Zavagno for pointing out the role of Via Egnatia.
[123] Yannis Lolos, "Via Egnatia after Egnatius: Imperial Policy and Inter-regional Contacts," *Mediterranean Historical Review* 22, no. 2 (2007): 273–293; 274, 279.
[124] Janin, *Les Églises et les Monastères des Grands Centres Byzantins*, 346.

St. Theodore and constructed by Irene, the wife of Theodosius II in the fifth century, its current form dates to the year 1767 when the church was renamed and donated to the Monastery of Sinai.[125] Therefore, despite the early history of the building itself, the veneration and dedication to the saint occurred in the late eighteenth century. The third Church of St. Catherine (Chapel 21) is situated between the Dark Church and Çarıklı Kilise and may be traced back to the eleventh century. A pilgrim, Ignatios, and a certain George deacon visited the Church of St. Catherine and left their remarks around 1055.[126] The vivid iconography of Sts. Helen and Constantine, as well as the Doctors of the Church, St. George, and St. Theodore, suggests that the Sinaitic tradition uniting the three holy figures, Helen, Constantine and Catherine, under one roof must have been locally acknowledged at least in the Cappadocian region. Another church, Karabaş Kilise, built in the early tenth century, was repainted by the Laskaris family. One of the donors was a nun called Catherine and she was depicted on the church walls with a portrait of Saint Catherine.[127] Lastly, in another Cappadocian church, the New Church at Tokatlı Kilise had an apse added to the building in the early eleventh century, which depicts Catherine with the inscription [Η ΑΓΙΑ ΕΚΑΤΕΡΙΝΑ] on the intrados of the arch .[128]

In Alexandria, purportedly the native city of the saint, the Chalcedonian church of St. Sabas dating from the seventh century was also denominated as the Church of St. Catherine on the account of the tomb stored inside the church. Abu al-Makarim states that the tomb belongs to Abu '1-Fada'il who was the brother of the Shaikh Abu '1-Barakat Yuhanna,

[125] Ibid., 309-10.

[126] J. Eric Cooper and Michael J. Decker, Life and Society in Byzantine Cappadocia (Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012),

[127] Natalia B. Teteriatnikov, *The Liturgical Planning of Byzantine Churches in Cappadocia*. Orientalia Christiana Analecta, 252 (Roma: Pontificio istituto orientale, 1996), 126-127.

[128] Jane Annabel Wharton, *Tokalı Kilise: Tenth-century Metropolitan Art in Byzantine Cappadocia* (Washington, D.C.: Dumbarton Oaks Research Library and Collection, 1986), 67.

the scribe, son of Abu '1-Laith, in the caliphate of Al-Amir.[129] Some travellers, thinking that the tomb inside the church belonged to Saint Catherine of Alexandria, named the church after Catherine.[130]

Finally, some medieval church dedications to the saint are found in Bethlehem, Acre and Jerusalem. The Augustinian convent building in Bethlehem, now run by the Franciscans, was attached in the twelfth century to the northern wall of the seventh-century Church of Nativity and designated as the Church of St. Catherine.[131] The Prior Church of St. Catherine in Acre, as noted by John of Ibelin, could have been erected on the date of the feast of St. Catherine and in the year of the Battle of Mongisart, that is 25 November 1177, corresponding with the Latin victory of Baldwin IV against Saladin.[132] The Monastery Church of St. Catherine in Jerusalem located to the west of the Holy Sepulchre was one of the thirteen Orthodox monasteries of Jerusalem after 1187. The church was under the Georgian control in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries until Selim I (c. 1470-1520) returned it to the Greek patriarchate sometime before 1530.[133]

A modern dedication to the saint, the agiasma (holy water) of Agia Ekaterini adorned with the icons and sculptures of the saint inside various cabinets, including the platform of votive candles, can currently be accessed through the restaurant facing the former Moda port in Kadıköy, İstanbul. According to local tradition, that the agiasma was discovered by the

[129] Abu Salih the Armenian, *The Churches and Monasteries of Egypt*, trans. B. T. A. Evetts and ed. Alfred J. Butler (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1895), 150-151. The book was wrongly attributed to Abu Salih the Armenian, in fact, it was written by a Coptic priest at Alexandria, Abu al-Makarim (d.1209). Aziz S. Atiya, ed., "Abu al-Salih the Armenian," *The Coptic Encyclopedia*, *Volume 1* (New York: Macmillan, 1991), 33a.
[130] Judith McKenzie, *The Architecture of Alexandria and Egypt, c. 300 B.C. to A.D. 700* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2007), 257.
[131] Pringle, *The Churches of the Crusader Kingdom of Jerusalem*, vol. 1, 149.
[132] Ibid., vol. 4, 73.
[133] Ibid., vol. 3, 158.

Greek fishermen around 1924, by which time the well had already been dedicated to St. Catherine.[134] The holy spring was renovated and given its current form in 1950.

Figure 4: The Agiasma (Ayazma) of Saint Catherine, Moda, İstanbul, photo taken by the author, 2019.

Gathering all the data above, three possible routes of the Catherine cult emerge, which require a more nuanced look:

1. The cult was originated in Constantinople and spread all around the Eastern Mediterranean and the Southern Italy

2. The cult travelled from the East Mediterranean region and spread towards Constantinople and Asia Minor

3. The cult emerged in the Byzantine East, remained a local cult in Egypt and Palestine, and disseminated to Sinai and environs, during the peak of foreign invasions, that is the eighth and ninth centuries, throughout the Arab conquests and the Iconoclastic period, thence travelled to Asia Minor, Constantinople and the Eastern Mediterranean—or in another scenario in relation with the discussion of the Catherine

[134] "İçinde kilise olan meyhane," Hürriyet, last modified February 1, 2000, accessed May 15, 2020 <https://www.hurriyet.com.tr/gundem/icinde-kilise-olan-meyhane-39130307>

vita, the lives were authored by one of the Sinaitic monks and are associated with the monastery.

The church dedications and onomastic data point toward the third hypothesis, suggesting that the multi-layered versions of the Catherine *vitae* were produced in the seventh and eighth centuries in Sinai or environs. Thessaloniki abbess was the earliest known person to receive Catherine as her personal name in the ninth century, and soon Constantinople followed the same pattern in the tenth century with the inclusion of the *vitae* and *passiones* in the Metaphrastes compilations, *synaxaria* of Constantinople, and further personal names. On the Anatolian mainland, Cappadocia was home to the first late tenth and early eleventh-century churches where a nun named Catherine was recorded to celebrate becoming a nun. From here, the cult may have spread scattered towards the north east, Crimea, and the north west, Thrace, in the early fourteenth century, followed by the insular cult of Crete around 1327. The Southern Italian cult must have emerged simultaneously after the crusades as attested to by the onomastic evidence from 1375 in Apulia and other cities from 1390. Finally, the latest pieces of evidence highlight the insular cults in the Eastern Mediterranean, as well as the eastern and western shores of Cyprus from the mid-fourteenth and early fifteenth century onwards, the city of Patras in 1425, and Lemnos in the mid-fifteenth century.

Chapter 2: The Cult of Rabi'a of Basra

The Koran-bride will keep on her veil
until she sees faith's dominion free of strife.
No wonder if the only thing you find in her is patterns!
A blind eye sees nothing of the sun but warmth.

Rising Places of Faith, 43

2.1. Sainthood in Islam

The term "wilāya" substitutes the concept of Christian sainthood, although literally denotes the meaning of "political or religious authority: state" and "guardianship; friendship". "Wali" represents the one who exercises that power or relation, thus often translated as "friend of God". The "friends of God" have their own unique charisma and demonstrate the means of how they can attain this distinctive religious and social status. The common characteristic to most of the *awliyā* is that they have performed *karamat* at least once in their lifetime. Notwithstanding the scarcity of extant sources, early Sufi saints from the eighth century onwards practised an accumulation of religious experiences: *tawba* (penitence), *sabr* (patience), *shukr* (gratitude), *raja'* (hope), *khawf* (fear of God), *faqr* (renunciation of wealth), *zuhd* (asceticism), *tawakkul* (complete trust in God), and *dhikr* (remembrance and recollection).[135] The believers being aware of this variety of religious experiences await *bakara* (spiritual power; blessing) through the intercession of the saints and thus perform *ziyarat* (visitation) in the saints' tombs.

[135] Erik Ohlander, *Sufism in an Age of Transition: ʿUmar al-Suhrawardī and the Rise of the Islamic Mystical Brotherhoods* (Leiden, The Netherlands: Brill, 2008), 171 and notes.

The concept of *awliya* finds its various echoes in the Qur'an 5 [al-Ma'idah]: 51-57. The verse 51 does not discuss "friends of God" yet the "allies or friends of Jews and Christians" which might lead to certain discourses into polemical writing:

> O you who have believed, do not take the Jews and the Christians as allies (*awliya*). They are [in fact] allies (*awliya*) of one another. And whoever is an ally to them among you - then indeed, he is [one] of them. Indeed, Allah guides not the wrongdoing people.[136]

In this context, the spiritual commentary on the "friends of God" does not overlap with the rather polemical representation of the Jews and Christians. The verse strictly forbids the Muslim tribes from allying politically with "People of the Book" (*ahl al-kitab*) in lieu of befriending them on political grounds. The constantly quoted verse 10 [*Yunus*]: 62 deploys the concept of friendship with God in the Qur'an: "Verily, the Friends of God have nothing to fear, nor they are sad!"[137] The Sufi mystics have long commented that this verse originally intermingles intimacy and friendship as quintessential values on the path of personal relationship with God.

The Qur'an makes no more than one or two direct references to Islamic sainthood. In the opposite case, the Hadith 38 as compiled by Imam Nawawi, offers a descriptive and exclusive form of interpretation:

> The Messenger of Allah (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said, "Verily Allah has said: 'Whosoever shows enmity to a *wali* (friend) of Mine, then I have declared war against him. And My servant does not draw near to Me with anything more loved to Me than the religious duties I have obligated upon him. And My servant continues to draw near to me with *nafil* (supererogatory) deeds until I Love him. When I Love him, I am his hearing with which he hears, and his sight with which he sees, and his hand with which he strikes, and his foot with which he walks. Were he to ask

[136] Qur'an 5:51. Sahih International. <https://quran.com/5>
[137] Qur'an 10:62. Sahih International. <https://quran.com/10/>

> [something] of Me, I would surely give it to him; and were he to seek refuge with Me, I would surely grant him refuge."[138]

The Nawawi Hadith 38 emphasizes the strict protection of a *wali* and warns the enemies of the same *wali* not to demonstrate any signs of enmity towards them. The dynamic relationship between the *wali* and God has been sealed with love and protectiveness, thus the *wali* entirely dedicates both the corporeal body and the spiritual self to God with an overflowing sense of mutual trust. While in the thirteenth century, Imam Nawawi, a Sunni jurist and Hadith scholar, inserted additional vocabulary and commentary to the Hadith 38; Sahih al-Bukhari of the ninth century as related by Imam Bukhari had neither authorized such version presented above, nor utilized the same vocabulary:

> Narrated Abu Huraira:
>
> Allah's Apostle said, "Allah said, 'I will declare war against him who shows hostility to a pious worshipper of Mine. And the most beloved things with which My slave comes nearer to Me, is what I have enjoined upon him; and My slave keeps on coming closer to Me through performing Nawafil (praying or doing extra deeds besides what is obligatory) till I love him, so I become his sense of hearing with which he hears, and his sense of sight with which he sees, and his hand with which he grips, and his leg with which he walks; and if he asks Me, I will give him, and if he asks My protection (Refuge), I will protect him; (i.e. give him My Refuge) and I do not hesitate to do anything as I hesitate to take the soul of the believer, for he hates death, and I hate to disappoint him."[139]

The conclusion to derive from the canonical sources regarding the Islamic sanctity of saints does not conform with the book authority, thus the scriptural references to sainthood remain elusive. Al-Bukhari highlights the special status given to "a pious worshipper" instead of "a *wali* of God". Every pious worshipper could consequently form this interactive loving and devotional relationship with Allah on condition that they perform *nawafil* and spiritually lose themselves in faith.

[138] 40 Hadith Nawawi 38. Sunnah. <https://sunnah.com/nawawi40/38>
[139] Al-Bukhari, *Sahih Bukhari*, volume 8, book 76, number 509. trans. M. Muhsin Khan, ed. Mika'il al-Almany (Houston: Darussalam Publications, 1997).

What were the theological concepts and intellectual discussions before the thirteen century that influenced Imam Nawawi to intertextualize the concept of *wali* (pl. *waliya*) within the ninth-century Hadith collection Sahih al-Bukhari? Ibn Arabî (1165-1240), one of the main thinkers of Sufism and a ninth-century mystic, took up the doctrine of Hakim Tirmidhi and explained that the *walaya* (holiness), unlike prophethood ("*nubuwwa*" or "*risâla*"), is not confined to spatial and temporal limitations. The concept is eternal, hence also a manifestation to designate God's divine attributes. He also established essential connections between holiness and prophethood. According to this connection, the *walaya* and *nubuwwa* are two interwoven attributions, so every prophet is eminently holy. Ibn Arabi follows the thought process of Hakim Tirmidhi, Tirmidhi relating the hierarchy of the saints thus:

> Afterall, the Messenger of God is the chief of the Friends of God, and after him [Abu Bakr] al-Sıddıq, belongs to the chiefs of the Friends of God, and after him 'Umar…And thus, He declared [25/75]: "Because of their patience they shall be rewarded with an upper-floor chamber." That is to say: because ,they possessed these characteristics and lived with their hearts before God, and their carnal souls were unable to get control over them.[140]

Ibn Arabi blends this cosmological hierarchy of saints with the Muhammadan light (Nur Muhammadi) and therefore, the saints receive this very light from the prophet himself and reflect it upon the believers. The performances of *karamat* which occur through the *wali,* cautiously attest to the sanctity and further sainthood under the effect of the divine will and publicly address the spiritual contiguity to God and His will. While the prophet's mission is to bring a recent revelation and to revolutionize the societies out of their former habits and schemes, the *wali* arrives to unite mankind and God and to provide intercession to whoever pleads for this world or the afterlife.

[140] Berndt Radtke and John O'Kane, *The Concept of Sainthood in Early Islamic Mysticism: Two Works by Al-Hakim Al Tirmidhi* (Surrey: Curzon, 1996), 128-9.

2.2. Cults of Saints in Islam

Similar to the concept of sainthood, the cult of saints first developed in Islam around the figure of the Prophet Muhammad. While the latter had not presented himself during his life other than as a messenger, the Messenger of God, with the sole mission of transmitting divine revelation to men, the ninth-century texts were the first to grant him superior qualities. The prophet was a human being, but intermediating between the path of humanity and divinity, his tomb was informally sacralized in parallel to the tombs of his family and his companions after his death from the seventh century onwards. An entire group of people recognized as "saints" were developing, which primarily included the prophets, but also others coming after the prophet. The pilgrimages started the cults especially at the tombs, and thence in other places where the revered figures hallmarked their sanctity have thus become places of pilgrimage. The cults were advised by the Qur'an or by the Hadith or Sunnah, and rapidly posed a major theological problem because worshiping the tomb of the saint apparently contravened a Hadith of the Prophet, who dictated not to raise a burial tomb or site above the ground and especially, not to decorate it, so that the believers would avoid idolatry, and only then the prayers of worship and supplications could be addressed to God without any saintly intermediation.[141]

The Sufi philosophy and circles widely spread the cult of saints, especially in the countryside where the Sufis had a significant influence. The festivals, processions and ceremonies allowed a solid social anchoring of Islam through the community and communal reverence. The Sufi circles assumed the significant task of Islamization but mostly they were also accused of spreading the performance of anti-Islamic rites, those of the veneration of the family or tribal ancestors. To contradict the accusations of paganism brought against this cult,

[141] See the whole article on the ritual and practices, Marc Gaborieau, "Le culte des saints musulmans en tant que rituel: controverses juridiques," *Archives de Sciences Sociales des Religions* 85 (1994): 85-98.

it is possible to witness the establishment of rituals specific to Muslims – in particular the absence of physical contact with the grave and the prohibition of the association of piety and virtue with the places of worship to avoid sinking into the accused idolatry.

For the above reasons, in the thirteenth century, the cult of saints aroused from the outset a vehement opposition, based on two fundamental points: first, the rejection of any form of idolatry, which is similar to worship rendered to someone other than God; second, the absence of scriptural foundations for this practice, which is encouraged neither by the Qur'an nor by the Hadith and Sunnah conforming to the above-discussed Quranic verses and Hadith. From the beginning of the fourteenth century, Ibn Taymiyya –who later claimed to be Muhammad Ibn 'Abd al-Wahhab – voiced harsh criticism of the cult of saints. Without calling into question the existence of sainthood and saints, and admitting the demonstrations of respect surrounding the tomb of any eximious Muslim figures, he condemned the solicitation of saints refurbished with miraculous powers. Addressing an intermediary through the saintly intercession and not God alone is, according to him, a blameworthy associationism and builds a road of returning to polytheism. In his view, this is an innovation that is "*bid'a*" resulting from "the pernicious influence of Jews, Zoroastrians, Sabeans and especially Christians".[142] His ideas, based on canonical and historical arguments, were taken up in the eighteenth century by the Wahhabi movement, which advocated a return to the "pure" and "authentic" Islam of the first Muslims. While Ibn Taymiyya proposed, as a solution to avoid deviations from the worship of the saints, to reset the level of the graves with the earth and to make them invisible, the proponents of the Wahhabi doctrine recommended erasing the very memory of saints from the memory of believers. Conforming to its idealization of the Wahhabism movement, Saudi Arabia has prohibited all activity of the mystical brotherhoods and circles within its borders and reset the level of the graves

[142] Ahmad Ibn-'Abd-al-Halim Ibn Taimiya, *Ibn Taimiya's Struggle Against Popular Religion*, translated and edited by Muhammad Umar Memon (Berlin, Boston: De Gruyter, 1976), 165.

inside the Saudi borders.[143] The ideas of Wahhabism have also influenced contemporary Salafism, the nineteenth century movement which walks on the ideological path of Ibn Taymiyya, condemning the veneration of saints and observing their cults.

2.3. Hagiographical Sources

Rabi'a al-'Adawiyya of Basra (135/752-185/801) was and still is a very prominent saint in Muslim societies. Her influence helped to promote Islam throughout the region, and among contemporary Sufi masters. For the foremost studies on Rabi'a, the examples are Margaret Smith's *Rābiʿa the Mystic A. D. 717-801 and Her Fellow-Saints in Islam* (1974) and 'Abd al-Rahman Badawi's Shahidat al-'ishq al-ilahi (The Martyr of Divine Love). Smith initiated the first detailed project on Rabi'a and contemporary saints' cults in Islam and provided an extensive range of primary sources. It was not until 2013 that Rkia Elaroui Cornell posited Rabi'a within the series of quandaries on her Early Islamic historicity and role among the Sufi literary circles and meticulously translated some core versions of the source materials. Her book *Rabi'a from Narrative to Myth*, based on her PhD dissertation of 2013, was published in January 2019. However, the ground-breaking studies of Rkia Cornell attempted to search Rabi'a as one of the prominent historical Sufi women and examined her literary personification interwoven within the "mythical" texts, she did not clarify the position of the female saint among other Muslim saints, including her hagiography and cult in Muslim or non-Muslim societies.

The most widely recognized Persian Sufi hagiographer of Rabi'a, Farid al-Din al-'Attar states that Rabi'a became an orphan because of a famine in Basra and was thence sold as a slave for six dirhams. After all the hard work of labour and suffering, her master set Rabi'a free upon having seen the projected light above her head illuminating the entire

[143] Bernard Haykel, Thomas Hegghammer, and Stéphane Lacroix, eds., *Saudi Arabia in Transition: Insights on Social, Political, Economic and Religious Change* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2015), 153.

house.[144] 'Attar's vita, stressing the hagiographical nature of his text in contrast with earlier attempts by biographers of Rabi'a that signalled a promoted historicity and tradition of isnad within their own writings, also includes a succinct section which contains a small supplication prayer made by Rabi'a. God thus converses with her directly, reminding how Moses had also been in doubt until God revealed himself on Mount Sinai. After her pilgrimage to Mecca, she offers an extensive range of anecdotes and didactic spiritual conversations with the state and religious officials and Hasan al-Basri.

The first matter to discuss in relation with the hagiographical depictions and hence the sainthood of Rabi'a should be her being a "cluster saint". "Cluster saint(s)" beget one facet of the terminology I have coined to denominate the trans-religious saints, who travelled from one former belief system to another, i.e. Hypatia to St. Catherine of Alexandria or St. Mary of Egypt and Pelagia the Harlot to Rabi'a of Basra. The "cluster saints" could have been directly borrowed as the symbols of sanctity or indirectly based on the inspirations from different societal and religious ethnographies. In this respect, The origins of Rabi'a derived from either the early Antiochian saint, Pelagia the Harlot, the desert mother Mary of Egypt, or even both in the hagiographical productions.[145] Albeit the Islamic chain (*isnad*) tradition attempted to testify the existence and sayings of Rabi'a, the chain tradition possesses its own limitations. I disagree with Julian Baldick, who claims that the hagiographic model of the afore-listed Christian saints changed the figure of Rabi'a into a pseudo-Muslim saint; yet such an empirical approach when cautiously applied, broadens the horizons of cultural inspiration and interactions in interpreting the lives and impact of holy figures on Christian and Muslim societies. In the light of this argument, the stories related to Rabi'a and the

[144] Farid al-Din Attar, *Muslim Saints and Mystics: Episodes from Tadhkirat al-Awliya*, trans. A. J. Arberry (Iowa: Omphaloskepsis, 2000), 29-47.
[145] Julian Baldick, "The Legend of Rabi'a Of Basra: Christian Antecedents, Muslim Counterparts," *Religion* 20 (1990): 233-247.

Christian hagiographies share only an infinitesimal part of their literary themes and hagiographical motifs. If Rabi'a became a slave-girl, belly dancer, courtesan or prostitute as the popular movie representations and modern folk stories in Egypt have depicted her, there is no such indication within the existent sources more than that she was forced to become a slave in exchange for six dirhams and had to work in hard labour. The actions of Pelagia and Mary of Egypt, on the other hand, reflect the themes of physical pleasures and glorification of the senses including the love of what is material, such as gold and further adornments. The slavery of Rabi'a is involuntary, caused by acute economic crisis and famine. The Christian narratives proceed with repentance out of self-shame and guilt, and the Islamic narrative with repentance out of independence, freedom and further exercise of piety found in asceticism.

The second understudied application of comparison to the microcosmic case studies is the miracles for the Christian context, and *karāmāt* performed by Muslim saints. Comparative miracle studies typically raise the themes common and different to Christianity and Islam. The theological debates discuss the fundamental explanations of the miracle concerning whether it is possible, valuable, and crucial on the path of sanctity. The miracle studies, moreover provide ardour attempts at examining who actually initiates the miracles, God or the saint, and how these miracles function on the societal level by healing from sickness or death, protecting against the dangers and misfortunes of life, and granting intercession for God's divine love. Overall, the term 'miracle' does not denote the same meaning, because in simple terms, Islam distinguishes the miracles of the prophets (*mu'jizât*) and the miracles of the saints (*karâmât*), whereas Christianity does not categorize this way miracles of the holy figures.[146] On the case-by-case basis, the hagiographer 'Attar put an emphasis on her saintly attributes, hence the visions and *karāmāt* of Rabi'a, how she was

[146] Denise Aigle, ed., *Miracles and Karama*, *Hagiographies médiévales comparées* 2. (Turnhout: Brepols, 2000), 13-36.

conversing with God both directly and indirectly through *hātif*, the divine voice whilst having lost herself in spiritual suffering and ecstasy.[147] Right after she breaks her hand and prays to God simultaneously, "yet for all this I do not grieve; all I need is Thy good pleasure, to know whether Thou art well-pleased or no," the divine voice replies: "do not grieve, tomorrow a station shall be thine such that the cherubim in heaven will envy thee." We hear another audible divine voice when Rabi'a again makes a supplication prayer stating that she needs God with her at that moment. God reminds Rabi'a of the vision of Moses and how he had witnessed the revelation on Mount Sinai: "Hast thou not seen how Moses prayed for the vision of Me? And I cast a few motes of revelation upon the mountain, and the mountain shivered into forty pieces. Be content here with My name!" On every occasion of the *hatif*, God comforts Rabi'a and 'Attar consecutively introduces a new-born event or anecdote.

According to the extant sources, Cornell unearthed the first reference to Rabi'a during the ninth century within the Basran Sufi circles. Sufi Al-Muhasibi of Baghdad (d. 857) introduced a supposed verbatim of Rabi'a and her night prayer in *Al-Qasd wa-l-Ruju'ila Allah*:

> The night has arrived, the darkness has mingled, and every lover is left alone with his beloved. Now I am alone with you, my Beloved.[148]

The night prayer Al-Muhasibi attributed to Rabi'a has found similar literary and thematic echoes to that of the Sapphic Fragment 52. The only difference is that Rabi'a confides in God by means of her mystical appeal, whereas Sappho denotes love and yearning for another person in relation with the literary motif of astronomical occurrences:

[147] Heidi A. Ford, "Hierarchical Inversions, Divine Subversions: The Miracles of Râbiʿa Al-ʿAdawîya," *Journal of Feminist Studies in Religion* 15, no. 2 (1999): 5-24.
[148] Cornell, *Rabi'a from Narrative to Myth*, 39-40. Cornell translates from Abu 'Abdullah al-Harith ibn Asad al-Muhasibi, *al-Qasd wa-l-ruju' ila Allah*, ed. 'Abd al-Qadir Ahmad 'Ata (Cairo: Dar al-Turath al-'Arabi, 1980), p. 104.

The moon has set, and the Pleiades;
it is midnight, the time goes by, and I lie alone.[149]

The second yet not an extant work *Kitab al-Ruhban* produced by Al-Burjulani of Baghdad (d. 852) in the ninth century has only been ascertainable through the references found in other works. The third group of sources was authored by the Basran Al-Jahiz (d. 868), that are *Kitab al-Hayawan* and *Kitab al-Bayan wa-l-Tabyin* which depict Rabi'a as an extreme ascetic who would remain in solitude and refuse all "worldy things".[150] In the works of the tenth century, Abu Talib al-Makki (d. 996) was a student of Ibn al-A'rabi in Mecca and his most influential work, *Qut al-Qulub* represents Rabi'a practising an exemplary love towards the divine.[151] This divine love seems to encapsulate two kinds of love. "A passionate love" encapsulates the love of God to such extent that Rabi'a is metaphorically impassioned at whatever she does in the earthly world because she dedicates everything to Him.[152] The other facet of divine love begets the love "worthy of God" and unfolds the series of progressing interactions between Rabi'a and God. In this process, God "removes the veil so that Rabi'a may see Him" and thus, the two could freely and lovingly expose themselves to one another.

The last extant source written by as-Sulami (d. 1021) comes chronologically right before 'Attar's *Memorial of the Saints* in which he managed to compile seventy-five Sufi biographies. *Dhikr al-Niswa al Muta'abbidat al-Suffiyat* includes not only Rabi'a from Basra but other Basran and Syrian female saints. Akin to 'Attar, Al-Sulami was also from Nishapur in the Khorasan region, which indirectly explains the geographical and literary changes in the hagiographical narratives compared to the Basran works. The major difference in the

[149] Sappho, *Alcaeus. Greek Lyric, Volume I: Sappho and Alcaeus*, ed. and trans., David A. Campbell. Loeb Classical Library 142 (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1982), 173.
[150] Abu 'Uthman 'Amr ibn Bahr al-Jahiz, *al-Bayan wa al-tabyin*, ed. Ibrahim ibn Muhammad al-Daljamuni (Beirut: reprint of 1900 first edition, n.d.), vol. 3, p. 110, n. 2.
[151] Ahmet T. Karamustafa, *Sufism: The Formative Period* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2007), 87.
[152] Cornell, *Rabi'a from Narrative to Myth*, 197. I use Cornell's literal Arabic translation because the former translations by the Western scholars translated ''passionate love'' as ''selfish love'

depiction of Rabi'a between As-Sulami and 'Attar stems from the inclusive chain (*isnad*) transmission. While 'Attar does not occupy his work with the testability of his statements on Rabi'a, Al-Sulami attempts to authenticate the reported evidence of her existence and encounters with famous Sufis or central and religious officials:

> Abu Ja'far Muhammad Ibn Ahmad b. Sa'id ar-Razi repored from al-'Abbas ibn Hamza through Ahmad ibn Abi al-Hawari through al-'Abbas ibn al-Walid al-Mashriqi that Shayban al-Ubulli related: I heard Rabi'a say…[153]

The *tabaqat* of As-Sulami therefore attests to Rabi'a being a spiritual Sufi leader and a wise source of ascetic inspiration. She does not perform any *karamat*, yet she constantly teaches, and serves people with her apothegmatic lessons. Al-Sulami's portrayal of Rabi'a draws parallels with the *apophthegmata* of the Desert Fathers and Mothers. The narrative of 'Attar, on the other hand, possesses many more hagiographical qualities such as *karamat*, visions, Muhammad and his prophetic authority, more abstract themes and corresponding character partners, the appropriation of anachronistic holy figures such as Hasan al-Basri, and henceforth Rabi'a as one of the most influential Muslim saints.

2.4. Tombs and Cult of Rabi'a of Basra

Having examined the surviving biographical and hagiographical sources from Basra and Nishapur, we move on to Jerusalem, the Mount of Olives where the supposed tomb of Rabi'a is in the interreligious site Chapel/Mosque of the Ascension. The site encapsulates three saints of Christianity, Judaism and Islam: Hulda the Prophetess, St. Pelagia and Rabi'a al-'Adawiyya. The four layers categorized under the unique buildings belong to the Byzantine, Crusader, Ayyubid and Ottoman periods. In the mid-fourteenth century, the author of Muthir al-Gharam, wrote that the tomb of Rabi'a al-'Adawiyya was on the Mount

[153] Abu 'Abd ar-Rahman as-Sulami, *Early Sufi Women: Dhikr an-niswa al-muta'abbidat as-sufiyyat*, ed. and trans. Rkia E. Cornell (Louisville, Kentucky: Fons Vitae, 1999), 74-80.

of Olives and witnessed thereto many people going on the pilgrimage.[154] In the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, the travellers al-Harawi and Yakut explain that the tomb on the top of Mount of Olives did not belong to Rabi'a al-'Adawiyya but Rabi'a, the wife of the Sufi Ahmad Ibn Abu el-Huarri of the Ayyubid period.[155] The explanation of al-Hawari and Yakut confirms the tomb of Rabi'a as an Ayyubid construct. In the mid-16th century, however, a Muslim travelling guide to Jerusalem authored by Nasir al-Din, Muhammad b. Khidr al-Rumi lists the sites on the Mount of Olives and the tomb of Rabi'a al-'Adawiyya. He observes that many visitors frequently perform the tomb *ziyarat* and gives directions to the tomb of Rabi'a thus:

> The visitor enters the burial place through the gate, goes down and turns toward the grave from the south. At this place, at the top edge of the grave is the Footprint. It may be possible, and only God knows best, that this is the Footprint of one of the Prophets. After he has finished his prayers in this place, the Muslim goes on and ascends the stairs…[156]

The whereabouts of the other tombs in Afghanistan, and Cairo are unknown. In Basra, based on the enquiries of an Iraqi friend, local Iraqis point out the tomb on the outskirts of Basra. The tomb which was confused to have been located in Afghanistan, however, could refer to the Persian poet Rabia Balkhi, instead of Rabi'a al-Adawiyya. Rabi'a bint Ka'b al-Quzdari (c.856-926), widely known as Rabia Balkhi was a writer, poet, businesswoman and an artist who lived during the Persian Samanid dynasty (c.819-1005). The holiness attributed to Rabia Balkhi comes from her being the first female poet in the Persian literature through her tomb

[154] Elad Amikam, *Medieval Jerusalem and Islamic Worship: Holy Places, Ceremonies, Pilgrimage*. Islamic History and Civilization 8 (Leiden: Brill, 1999), 145.
[155] Jon Seligman, Rafa Abu Raya, "A Shrine of Three Religions on the Mount of Olives: Tomb of Ḥulda the Prophetess; Grotto of Saint Pelagia; Tomb of Rabi'a Al-'Adawiyya." *'Atiqot* 42 (2001): 221-236; 221.
[156] Amikam, *Medieval Jerusalem and Islamic Worship*, pp. 170-171.

located adjacent to the shrine of Khwaja Abu Nasr Parsa (d.1460) in the northern parts of Balkhi.[157]

From Basra and Jerusalem, the cult gradually travelled to south-eastern Anatolia, to Erzurum. Nezihe Araz re-writes the hagiography of Rabi'a but there is no indication from where she would extract the story, and adapt it into the peculiar region of south-eastern Anatolia. The only explanation refers to the existence of the local cults of both Rabi'a and Hasan al-Basri with the Seljuk *turbe* attributed to the thirteenth century in the Hasan Basri district, Erzurum. According to the folk legend, the cruel man (*zalim*) in 'Attar's hagiography, who had previously bought Rabi'a as a slave, took her to his *konak* (mansion) in Erzurum. The changes in the setting are not finished with the mansion; the caravans travel from Basra towards Erzurum, rather than to Mecca as in the original story. The attitude of the master also goes through a significant change. The master does not exercise physical abuse, and he is afraid of Rabi'a in the sense that he does not wish to be disrespectful. Here, Rabi'a rests on the ground to contemplate, with the holistic light above her head illuminating the entire room when one night the master watches Rabi'a out of curiosity. Rabi'a ecstatically prays almost all the time: "*fakat kendinde olmadığı da bellidir*," "yet it is obvious that she is not conscious."[158] After some time, she must choose whether to marry the master and become the lady of the house, or the master will grant him a compact house and most significantly, her independence. At this moment, Rabi'a proclaims that she cannot live without her celibacy, without receiving the voice/calling and news from God. In the interim parts of the main plot, Rabi'a observes every being as if she beheld God, hence she tells them: "*seni gördüm, Allah'ımı gördüm*," meaning "I saw you and I saw my God."[159] The anonymous author anachronistically depicts "gentle *sofi*" the Basran Sufi master Hasan al-

[157] George Morrison, *History of Persian Literature from the Beginning of the Islamic Period to the Present Day, Handbuch der Orientalistik* (Leiden: Brill, 1981), 21.
[158] Nezihe Araz, *Anadolu Evliyaları*. (İstanbul: Atlas Kitabevi, 1966), pp. 107–120.
[159] Ibid.

Basri as having fallen in love with Rabi'a, which results Rabi'a not responding to this love and Hasan bursting into tears by asking why she would not return his love. Rabi'a, in return, calmly explains that she cannot deceive her Rabb, there is a way from His heart to her heart, therefore He knows and sees what is there in our hearts.[160] This folk legend, later put into writing by Araz together with the tomb of Rabi'a in the Hasan Basri district, attests to the veneration of both Sufi saints Rabi'a and Hasan al-Basri in Erzurum as early as the thirteenth century.

The interesting detail, however, is that the folk legend intermingles the veneration of Rabi'a of Basra with Rabia Hatun, a thirteenth century Seljuk poet to whom the tomb in Erzurum most probably belongs rather than to Rabi'a of Basra. Rabia Hatun, the first female Turkish poet, wrote poems extensively on love, affection, missing (*vuslat*), and maturity. Some researchers have thought Rabia Hatun to be the wife or daughter of Rukn al-Din Khurshah (d.1256), the nephew of Kay-Qubad I (r. 1220-1237).[161] Rabia Hatun, then, lived during the exact period or aftermath of the Mongol invasions of Anatolia, among which Erzurum took a striking blow by the forces of the Mongol military commander Baiju (d.1260) in 1242.[162] The veneration of the two female figures, one a Sufi mystic and the other an inspiring poet, demonstrates the impetuses behind the local traditions and resistance against the Mongol troops at the time of the siege. Some verses of Rabia Hatun are still sung with pleasure and harmony in Erzurum and its surroundings. The local traditions also enjoy the anachronistic correspondence between Rabia Hatun and Hasan al-Basri on account of the confusion between Rabia Hatun and Rabi'a of Basra.

Today, most traditionalist Sufi scholars claim that Rabi'a truly existed as a historical figure. However, Rabi'a also represents a hagiographical figure; the sole utilization of the

[160] Araz, *Anadolu Evliyaları*, p. 113-115.
[161] Hasan Basri Erk, *Erzurumlu Bilginler* (İstanbul: Işıl Matbaası, 1947), 32-34.
[162] Dimitri Korobeinikov, *Byzantium and the Turks in the Thirteenth Century*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 176-177.

chain transmission cannot attest to her unquestionable existence. Another hypothesis to reconsider would ascertain her historical existence, yet simultaneously recognize that all the surviving compilations of works belong to the travelling Sufi authors. [163] This hypothesis is more likely since Rabi'a has no details on *istinbat* (inference), lacks her own scholarly work, spiritual treatise or interpreting the scriptures. In the historical setting where Baghdad was amid decentralization under the rule of the Abbasid Caliphate, albeit indirectly, the accounts on Rabi'a mirror the socio-political events interwoven with her suffering and faith. The "literary cult" of Rabi'a originated in Basra and certainly disseminated thence towards the Khorasan region where the latter hagiographies were produced. Among the travelling scholars visiting Nishapur between the years of 885 and 1000, there were 47 people predominantly coming from the Iraqi cities, Basra, Baghdad, and Kufa, bringing their intellectual tradition with them.[164] The intellectual relations of Iraq and Nishapur prompted the legends and mystic traditions of Rabi'a to reach Nishapur governed by the Tahirid and Samanid dynasties respectively, then the Umayyad and Abbasid Caliphates until the Seljuk conquest in 1037. Henceforth, the cult of the mystic woman of divine love and a Sufi saint, who lived on the outskirts of Basra, has gained popularity over the ages with heavy reliance on the literary sources that are anecdotes, poetry, travel and pilgrimage accounts accompanied by the ubiquitous tombs scattered around the eastern Anatolia and the Middle East, folk legends and the interreligious pilgrimage compound in Jerusalem.

[163] Karamustafa, *Sufism: The Formative Period*, p. 3.
[164] Richard W. Bulliet, *Conversion to Islam in Medieval Period: An Essay in Quantitative History* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1979), 136.

Chapter 3: Comparative Cult of Saints

If you want to fly to Mount Sinai,
Why weaken your wings with Avicenna?
Fix your heart on Muhammad's words, O Son of 'Ali!
How long will you listen to the Father of 'Ali?
If you have no eye that sees the Way,
better a leader from Quraysh than Bukhara!

Rising Places of Faith, 37

3.1. Comparative hagiology: textual representations

The new studies on "comparative hagiology" redefines the key terms –saint, saintliness, hagiography and hagiology, and offers to re-interpret the hagiography and hagiology, and to move away from the concepts that are innately Christian and Eurocentric towards inter-/cross-cultural and trans-religious "heuristic devices".[165] The Christian and Muslim hagiographical sources, therefore, manifest the historiographical discourses by observing the "hagiographical process" rather than the eximious figures themselves so that there will be better insights as to define how religions and spirituality were transmitted, and how the two societies saw one another, either through polemical writing or dialogue.[166] With a view to achieve this almost perfected status of the comparative hagiological studies, it is necessary although onerous, to examine the textual representations of the two texts from two saints. Oliver Freiberger's reassessment of former comparative methodologies has thus been

[165] Massimo Rondolino, "Some Foundational Considerations on Taxonomy: A Case for Hagiography." *Religions* 10, 538; doi:10.3390/rel10100538.
[166] Ibid.

pivotal.[167] Freiberger quotes and revolutionizes David Freidenreich's rearrangement of "In Comparison a Magic Dwells" authored by Jonathan Z. Smith.[168] On that account, we could initiate the comparison of these two saints upon this same basis, which seems initially to be most conducive to the hagiological studies. The similarities and differences begin with the variations of the hagiographical motifs. The models of sainthood in the earlier hagiographical works attest to the juxtapositions much earlier than the dilatorily spotted cultic patterns in the later literary works, churches, tombs and pilgrimages.

The first category of comparison is "the comparative focus on similarity" which focuses on the similarities between the two textual representations. The foremost similarity between Catherine and Rabi'a begins with the fact that they are both female saints and of high popularity within their own belief systems and beyond, on the interreligious level. The starting points in the narrative that are birth and early stages of childhood hint at their future sanctity. They both possess excessive beauty and wisdom, starting from a young age. The model of orphanhood at a young age establishes the foremost prototypes from the lives of Jesus and Muhammad.[169] Despite Rabia's family being acutely poor, 'Attar links her parental heritage to Muhammad by their tribal confederation of Mudar (Northern Arabs). They possess the talent of rhetoric and eloquence. Both saints suffer at the hands of their hagiographical antagonists Maxentius/Maximin/Maximianus for Catherine and the slave trader for Rabi'a who lead the future saints into their suffering or martyrdom. They possess the talent of rhetoric and eloquence, and therefore they apply this talent while defending their

[167] Oliver Freiberger, "Modes of Comparison: Towards Creating a Methodological Framework for Comparative Studies," in *Interreligious Comparisons in Religious Studies and Theology: Comparison Revisited*, ed. by Perry Schmidt-Leukel and Andreas Nehring. (London: Bloomsbury, 2016), pp. 53–71.
[168] Jonathan Z. Smith, ed., "In Comparison a Magic Dwells," in *Imagining Religion: From Babylon to Jonestown* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1982).
[169] According to the Scriptures, Jesus does not have a biological father. Luke 1:26-38, NIV. Whereas Muhammad had a biological father, the early Islamic sources from the seventh and eighth centuries establish the authority that Muhammad could be considered as an orphan because 'Abdallah died early enough. Baladhuri (d. 279/892) even states that "Messenger of God was a foetus in his mother's womb," when 'Abdallah died at the age of twenty-five. See Michael Lecker, "The Death of the Prophet Muḥammad's Father: Did Wāqidī Invent Some of the Evidence?" *Zeitschrift Der Deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft* 145, no. 1 (1995): 9-27.

faith and asceticism. They are both promised to reach the 'Kingdom of God' and heaven before their death. Both saints have mystical inclinations, notwithstanding that the mystical marriage of Catherine with Christ had not existed in the hagiographical florilegia until the thirteenth century. *Legenda Aurea* interposed Catherine's vision of the hermit, and mystical marriage with Christ in the presence of Virgin Mary.[170] Rabi'a practices the Muslim version of the holy anorexia and continuously fasts not on the Eucharist, but on thick and dry bread.[171] The similarities of Rabia's unconditional and undying love of God overlaps with the *eros* definition of Dionysius the Areopagite: "but Divine Love is ecstatic, not permitting (any) to be lovers of themselves, but of those beloved." [172] Radiating a similar response, Rabi'a says: "I am alone with thee, beloved!"

The second category of comparison discusses "the comparative focus on difference". The foremost difference naturally denotes two saints of unique belief systems under the roofs of Christianity and Islam. The parentage of Rabi'a signals a Muslim background except for a few versions which claim that Rabi'a is of different religious origin, Muhammad appears to her father in a prophetic dream promising him that Rabi'a will intercede for the seventy thousands of his community. In contrast, Catherine's parents were pagans and there are no indications as to their attitude towards Christianity. The socio-economic and political backgrounds of the families offer entirely original portraits to the background story of the hagiographical works. The family of Rabi'a is acutely poor and suffering from famine in Basra leading to the main crisis of the narrative in which Rabi'a becomes a slave to the cruel master, whereas Catherine refuses what she already has in her possession, the imperial possessions and the throne of her father Costas, the King of Cyprus.

[170] Jacobus de Voragine, *The Golden Legend: Readings on the Saints*, trans. William Granger Ryan, with an introduction by Eamon Duffy (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2012), 720-727.
[171] Caroline Bynum, "Women Mystics and Eucharistic Devotion in the Thirteenth Century," *Women's Studies* 11, nos. 1 and 2 (1984): 179-214. For the first usage and contextualization of the term "holy anorexia," see Rudolph M. Bell, *Holy Anorexia* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1985).
[172] Dionysius Aeropagite, "*The Divine Names*," IV.13.712A in *Dionysius Aeropagite, Works*, trans. John Parker (London: James Parker and Co, 1897).

The final difference originates in the representations of the mystical inclinations. The theme of *Sponsa Christi* applies to Catherine through the absence of a wife figure to accompany Jesus except for the gnostic fragments, the historical traditions on the lineage of Muhammad are too well-established to administer such a metaphor.

The third category unearths the "works with a comparative focus on *genu*-species relationship," "to construct and deconstruct" the typologies of female sainthood. The "*genu*" prefix of the noun group refers to female sainthood and the "species" complements the saintly taxonomies categorized into Christian and Muslim typologies of female sainthood. Following the discussion above on the early veneration of saints in Islam and the cults of the prophet, his family and companions, the sainthood of Rabi'a builds upon the same early prophetic cults with the literary *topoi* in her Sufi hagiographa.[173] Rabi'a is the fourth and youngest daughter in the family, hence her name Rabi'a – "fourth". This numerological *topos* obtains its origins from the family of Muhammad, within which the Sufi authors stylize the literary representation of Rabi'a in parallel with Fatima (d. 632), the fourth and youngest daughter of the prophet. The Hadith testifies to the holiness of Fatima through Muhammad because Fatima has unique characteristics in the eyes of the prophet and therefore, the believers must conform to her sanctity in the prophet's example:

> Narrated Al-Miswar bin Makhrama:
> Allah's Messenger said, "Fatima is a part of me, and he who makes her angry, makes me angry."[174]

Fatima has the personal characteristics of purity, innocence, eagerness to help and most significantly fondness of her father, Muhammad.[175] Fatima also had three suitors out of whom Muhammad declined the two, Abu Bakr and Umar, finally choosing Ali ibn Abi Talib

[173] For the term Sufi hagiographa, see J. Spencer Triminghan, *The Sufi Orders in Islam* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), 31.
[174] *Sahih Bukhari*, vol. 5, book 57, Hadith 61.
[175] Abu Nu'aym al-Isfahani, Hilyat al-Awliya, ed., Shariba (Cairo: n.p., 1953), II, 39.

for Fatima's hand in marriage.[176] Although there is no possibility for an anachronistic encounter between Rabi'a and Hasan al-Basri, Rabi'a declined the hands in marriage proposed by Hasan al-Basri. The Shi'i traditions surmise Fatima to have been begotten from the divine light through *Nur Muhammadi* and report that the light on her face would illuminate the entire room.[177] The same scene exclusively appears in the Islamic biographies and hagiographies of Rabi'a, and the scene is a highly common literary incident repeatedly occurring in the Christian *vitae* where the divine light flashes above the head of Rabi'a and lightens up the entire room. Another holy figure who emanates light is the mother of Muhammad, Amina who frequently had visions of the divine light during her pregnancy. Ibn Hisham records that the divine light from the prophet's mother used to illuminate the entire palaces of Busra in Syria.[178]

I will not discuss the models of Christian sanctity in relation with the Catherine-vita any further, but it would be significant to remember that the only difference between the Christian and Muslim typologies of female sanctity have been trial and martyrdom (*shahada*). Trial and martyrdom (*shahada*) were not foregrounded in the early Islamic texts until the twelfth century, because the traditional Sufi texts kept their silence about the martyrs and their lives in an environment where even the trial and death of al-Hallaj (d. 922) was contested to have been righteous or unfair.[179] The absence of the later texts does not denote the meaning that the early examples of female martyrdom did not exist in the literature. Both Ibn Ishaq and Al-Tabari lament the death Sumayyah bint Khabbat (d. 615) the first female

[176] Muhammed Ibn Sa'd, *Al-Tabaqat al-Kubra,* ed., İhsan 'Abbas (Beirut: Dar Sadir, 1968), VIII, 19.
[177] Uri Rubin, "Pre-Existence and Light—Aspects of the Concept of Nūr Muḥammad," *Israel Oriental Studies* 5 (1975), 62–119; 102. For a more detailed investigation of Fatima's cult, see L. Massignon, "Der Gnostiche Kult der Fatima im Schiitischen Islam," *Eranos Jahrbuch* 6 (1938): 161-173; Bärbel Beinhauer-Köhler, *Fatima bint Muhammad: Metamorphosen einer frühislamischen Frauengestalt* (Wiesbaden: Harrosowitz Verlag, 2002).
[178] Rubin, "Pre-Existence and Light," p. 87.
[179] Louis Massignon, *La Passion de Husayn Ibn Mansur Hallaj, martyr mystique de l'Islam execute a Baghdad le 26 mars 922: Etude d'histoire religieuse*, 4 vols., new ed. (Paris: Gallimard, 1975); *The Passion of al-Hallij, and Martyr of Islam*, trans. Herbert W. Mason, 4 vols. (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1982).

martyr in Islam who suffered torture and death during the persecution of followers in Mecca.[180]

The fourth and final category of comparison brings forth "the use of comparison to refocus". This category includes the attempts to explicate one phenomenon in the lens of the other. The examined phenomena do not have to be selected from the same historical period, and relatedly, Freiberger exemplifies the notion through the comparison between the nineteenth century mass suicide in Jonestown and the late antique cult of Dionysius.[181] On that methodological note, opting for the comparison of St. Catherine who supposedly lived in the fourth century with Rabi'a of Basra of the eighth century do not proliferate the chances of failure in an ostensibly anachronistic research. Along the same lines, we cannot logically expect the religious phenomena, signifiers of sanctity, the metaphysical and supernatural to emerge simultaneously in different religious traditions that is, herein, Christianity and Islam. Thereby focusing closely on the hagiographical themes and literary tropes serves this research with the optimum results which allow different scopes called in and brought together ubiquitously, during the process of understanding "saintly behaviour" in both traditions.[182] It is futile to discuss the chronological parameters in this comparison that the earliest hagiographical works dedicated to the life of St. Catherine dating back as early as the eighth century do not equally complement the thirteenth-century hagiography of Rabi'a produced in the narrative style of the Christian precursors, because the religious foundations of Islam had not been already established until the seventh century, and also the Muslim hagiographical traditions, the *tadhkirah* writings were not permanently launched any earlier than the eleventh century. The breadth of past literature dealing with the comparison of Rabi'a and other

[180] Ibn Ishaq, *Sirat Rasul Allah*, trans. and ed. A. Guillaume (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 229; Al-Tabari, *Ta'rikh al-Rusul wa'l Muluk*. Vol. 23. The Zenith of the Marwanid House, trans. and ed. Martin Hinds (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1990), 18.
[181] Freiberger, "Modes of Comparison," p. 62.
[182] Todd E. French, "Saints across Traditions and Time Periods: Methods for Increasing Range and Reading in Comparative Frameworks," *Religions* 10, 577; doi:10.3390/rel10100577

Christian saints, that are John of Dalyatha on the themes of unconditional love, Teresa of Ávila and Margery Kempe on the mystical inclinations, ecstasy, and divine love, suffers from the same unhindered problem, but this problem does not travel beyond the true nature and objectives of the comparison.[183] The same dialectic applies to the study of cults wherefore one simply cannot anticipate to unearth identical types and amount of sources in the cults of Muslim saints. The church dedications, for instance, hallmarked the beginnings of a peculiar Christian spirituality in association with church buildings, their dedicators, and those to whom the churches were dedicated, whereas the Islamic sources do not formulate the mode of mosque dedications in the foreground.[184]

3.2. Cultural relations, polemical writings

Having unearthed the similar and different literary *topoi* within the congruous hagiographies, the historical utilization and contextualization of these hagiographies should be the second step taken on the path of comparative cults. The reciprocal relationships between the different religious groups always bring up both positive and negative historical episodes: incidents, social interactions, polemics, and interreligious venerations. Another reason why I have eschewed the other saints other than Catherine of Alexandria and Rabi'a

[183] Nadira Khayyat, "L'Amour Gratuit chez Rabi'a al-'Adawiyya et Jean de Dalyata," in *Les Mystiques Syriaques*, ed. Alain Desreumaux, Études syriaques 8 (Paris: Geuthner, 2011), 79-86; Ömer Yılmaz, "Basralı Rabia ve Avilalı Teresa'nın Mistik Görüşlerinin Karşılaştırılması," *Cumhuriyet Üniversitesi İlahiyat Fakültesi Dergisi* 17 (2013): 5-31; Claudia Yaghoobi, "Sexual Trauma and Spiritual Experience: Rabi'a al-'A'dawiyya and Margery Kempe," *Persian Literary Studies Journal* 3.4 (2014): 73-92.

[184] As early as the fourth century, Eusebius and St. Augustine record the ceremonious origins of church dedications. In Sermon 336, Augustine deploys a descriptive relation to buildings and the Christian spirituality: "What was going on here when these walls were rising, it is going on here and now when believers in Christ are being gathered together […] but when the people are catechized, baptized, formed it's as though they are being chipped and chiselled, straightened out, planed by the hands of carpenters and masons." Sermo 336.1, *The Works of Saint Augustine: Translation for the 21. Century. Part III: Sermons*. Vol. 9: Sermons 306-340A, on the Saints, ed, John E. Rotelle, trans. Edmund Hill (Hyde Park, NY: New City Press, 1994), 266. The mosque dedications exist in Islam; however, they do not hail from the early periods onwards. I saw a governmental campaign in Ankara once running for the people to choose the name of the recently built mosque. The mosques dedicated to saints would bear the names of the saints themselves, i.e. the fifteenth-century Hacı Bayram Camii (mosque) encapsulates the tomb of the saint adjacent to the main mosque building.

al-Adawiyya, is the extant material which exemplifies this multi-layered relationship between the East and the West from the eighth century to the fifteenth century.

The story of saint Catherine was included in the Arabic literature for the first time during the late eighth and ninth centuries in the Tawaddud tale from the *Thousand and One Nights*, later adapted into the Spanish version *La Doncela Teodor* in the thirteenth century. Tawaddud was a beautiful and wise slave girl owned by the son of a merchant, and she was brought to the court of Harun al-Rashid to demonstrate her skills in debate (*munazara*) against the ten scholars of the caliph. She defeated the ten scholars one by one and managed to impress the caliph who, in return, granted many gifts to her master and receives him into his court.[185] The story of Rabi'a, on the other hand, appears in Western literature from the thirteenth century onwards. During the Seventh Crusade, Jean de Joinville (c. 1224-1317), the author of King Louis IX's biography, recorded Rabi'a running on the streets with a pot of fire and water bucket in Syria:

> On the way from their dwelling to the Sultan's palace, Brother Ives saw an old woman crossing the street, who carried in her right hand a pannikin full of fire, and in the left a flask full of water." What are you going to do with this?" Brother Ives asked her. She answered: That, with the fire she was going to burn up Heaven; and with the water she was going to quench Hell, that there might be no such things any more. And he asked her: "Why do you want to do that?" "Because I want no one ever to do right for the sake of the reward of Heaven, nor for fear of Hell, but simply to win the love of God, which is worth all the rest, and in which consisteth all our good."[186]

The legends of Saint Catherine and Rabi'a were both harmonized with the local traditions and utilized in the new literary movements through the inclusions of Catherine in the Arabic Literature and Rabi'a in the European chronicles.

[185] J.P. Guillaume, 'Tawaddud," in *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, Volumes X, T-U, eds. P.J. Bearman, Th. Bianquis, C.E. Bosworth, E. van Donzel, W.P. Heinrichs (Leiden: Brill, 2000), 375-376. See for the comparison of Tawaddud and Catherine, Gustave E. von Grunebaum, "Greek Form Elements in the Arabian Nights," *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 62, no. 4 (1942): 277-292; 290-291n129.

[186] Ethel Wedgwood, *The Memoirs of the Lord of Joinville: A New English Version* (London: John Murray,1906), 229-230.

The polemical dimension of the hagiographical tropes and cults occur in the rhetorical process of these texts. Both saints become victorious over their didactive and transformative disputes with the philosophers, and religious (*hadith*) scholars thanks to their wisdom and eloquence. The hagiography of saint Catherine revises the existent Constantinian propaganda against Maxentius/Maximianus/Maximin and the pagan beliefs to have been adapted later by the monastery on the frontier of the Byzantine-Arab wars. The semi-hagiographical narrative of Rabi'a written by as-Sulami in his *Dhikr al-Niswa al-Muta'abbidat al-Sufiyyat*, insists on attributing both a non-Muslim and non-Arab heritage to Rabi'a. Rkia E. Cornell explains that she could have been a freed slave promoted by the clan Al 'Atik which was indirectly connected to the Quraysh tribe, the same tribe but of the different clans with the prophet.[187] Relatedly, the Umayyad governor 'Ubaid Allah b. Ziyad recorded one hundred and fifty persons converted to Islam only in Basra as early as the year of 64/684.[188]

In the case that Anastasios of Sinai authored the hagiographical prototype of saint Catherine, he also produced one of the best examples in polemical writing against the Muslims. According to Anastasios, the Saracens put the Sinai fathers in difficult positions, attempted to evoke their hidden temptations, the Arab conquerors subjected Christians to forced conversion, the prisoners and slaves in the hands of Muslim masters were always situated on the front lines and people were being used as preys on the dangerous path to apostasy. Anastasius precedes to explain the main difference between Christianity and Islam, that is the Christians believe in the only true faith through God, while the Muslims are the allies of demons.[189] Christian Sahner's new book on the *Christian Martyrs under Islam*, and his former remarks on the Christians persecuted by the Muslims within the context of

[187] Cornell, *Early Sufi Women: Dhikr an-niswa al-muta'abbidat as-sufiyyat*, p. 74.
[188] Bulliet, *Conversion to Islam in Medieval Period: An Essay in Quantitative History*, p. 81.
[189] See Bernard Flusin, "Démons et Sarrasins: L'auteur et le propos des Diègèmata Stèriktiká d'Anastaste le Sinaïte," *Travaux et mémoires* 11 (1991): 381-409, 390-96.

Anastasios throw another log into the fire of the historical polemics and if we are to take the modern and sensitive religious ethics into consideration in the current level of research, this type of remarks solely based on hagiographical sources should be tackled quite carefully.[190]

Anastasios of Sinai cannot embody the only key figure correlating with either saint Catherine or Rabi'a to initiate polemical writings. One century later, Al-Jahiz (d.869), the Basran native and the author of *Kitab al-Hayawan* and *Kitab al-Bayan wa-l-Tabyin* which extensively represented Rabi'a lost in her overwhelming divine love and 'rhetorical excellence', attacked among many other things, the intellectual Hellenistic heritage of Christians and resembled Christianity to both Manichaeism and atheism with his threefold polemical epistle including polemics against the Jews, "A Reply to the Christians":

> For the books of Logic and De Generatione et Corruptione… etc, were composed by Aristotle, and he was neither Byzantine nor Christian (Arab). And the book Almagest was written by Ptolemaeus, and he was neither Byzantine nor Christian. The book of Euclid is Euclid's, and he again was neither Byzantine nor Christian. And the author of the book of Medicine is Galen, neither Byzantine nor Christian. This holds true also of Democrates, Hippocrates, Plato, etc. All these authors belong to a race that has perished, but whose intellectual impress has endured, and they were the Greeks.[191]

3.3. Interreligious venerations and dialogue either by merit or intent?

While comparing the philosophical discourses of Sufism and Taoism, Toshihiko Izutsu quotes Henry Corbin on the concept of "*un dialogue dans la métahistorie*" which furthermore applies to the historical relations of Christianity and Islam.[192] The concept proves validity for

[190] Christian Sahner, "Old Martyrs, New Martyrs, and the Coming of Islam: Writing Hagiography after the Conquests," in *Cultures in Motion: Studies in the Medieval and Early Modern Periods*, eds. Adam Izdebski and Damian Jasiński (Cracow: Jagiellonian University Press, 2014), 89-112; 95-96. For his most recent book, see *Christian Martyrs under Islam: Religious Violence and the Making of the Muslim World* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2018):

[191] Joshua Finkel, "A Risala of al-Jahiz," *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 47 (1927): 311-334; 326-327.

[192] Toshihiko Izutsu, *Sufism and Taoism: A Comparative Study of Key Philosophical Concepts* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2016), 2.

the philosophical interactions, inspiring or borrowing ideas and harmonizing them with one's own culture, indeed, yet the veneration of saints and cults receive the benefits of such a series of metahistorical and transhistorical dialogues that have not confined to the typical historical periodization. Therefore, the act of inquiring whether there was any dialogue between religions in the middle ages seems too pretentious, because the interreligious and intercultural dialogue began whenever the two or more societies met another.

For the evident case of our two saints and their cults, this dialogue initiated with the Arab conquest of Byzantium and persisted with the Crusades until the fifteenth century. John Damascus, a great Damascene clerk in the Umayyad Caliphate before becoming a monk not later than the year of 720, authored the first canonical discourse based on the book authority, that is the Qur'an, rather than the sole arguments on the false prophethood.[193] In the West, Peter the Venerable, abbot of Cluny (d.1156) translated various Arabic manuscripts among which he included the first translation of the Qur'an into Latin in 1143. In his refutation *Summa totius heresis Saracenorum*, like John of Damascus, he discussed how the Islamic principles and paganism denied the Christian sacraments, therefore particularly Islam was a Christian heresy and should be regarded as such.[194] Two centuries later, Najm al-Din al-Tufi (d.1316), the Hanbali scholar from Baghdad, authored one of the most profound and exhaustive exegesis on the Bible in the environment of post-Crusade Egypt.[195] Similar but unapologetic and unpolemical dialogue occurs in the short fragments of Sinai Arabic MS 434, "Answers for the Shaykh" which, as the title evinces, includes the responses of an anonymous monk to the questions posed by an anonymous shaykh during the ninth or tenth

[193] For the full analysis of his writings and relationship with Islam, see Peter Schadler, *John of Damascus and Islam: Christian Heresiology and the Intellectual Background to Earliest Christian-Muslim Relations* (Leiden, The Netherlands: Brill, 2018).
[194] See James Kritzeck, *Peter the Venerable and Islam* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1964).
[195] Lejla Demiri, *Muslim Exegesis of the Bible in Medieval Cairo: Najm al-Dīn al-Ṭūfī's (d. 716/1316) Commentary on the Christian Scriptures* (Leiden: Brill, 2013).

centuries, when the Sinai monastery was associated with the patronage of saint Catherine. Sidney Griffith translates the three questions posed by the Muslim side:

a. Is the eternal being one of the hypostases?
b. 'What verification do you claim for the [hypostatic] union?
c. 'What proof is there for the veracity of the claim of verification [for the hypostatic union] from the actions of the Messiah, [and] from what might be affirmed on the basis of what is comparable to the claim?[196]

In this situation, the corresponsive relations of the two communities at Sinai were not all hostile and filled with trenchant remarks analogous to the early polemical writings and depictions.

Another sets of dialogue and interreligious veneration can be eventuated at the tombs of saint Catherine and Rabi'a vis-à-vis the pilgrimage accounts. By dint of applying Edith Turner's explication of liminality to the concept of pilgrimage, the liminal pilgrimage as a common ritual process in the Abrahamic religions has a character ''out of this ordinary world'', hence pilgrimage is sacred, unworldly, full of both adventurous and ritualistic or religious excitement.[197] From the beginning to the end of the pilgrimage, the participant grows into another character and puts on ''the Jesus-mask'' or the mask of any other personified saint, either intentionally or inadvertently emulates these religious figures and will have theoretically become someone re-transformed upon his or her return.[198] Magister Thietmar, writing in the early thirteenth century, attests to the common veneration of the Burning Bush inside the Monastery of St. Catherine:

[196] Sidney H. Griffith, "Answers For The Shaykh: A 'Melkite' Arabic Text From Sinai And The Doctrines Of The Trinity And The Incarnation In 'Arab Orthodox' Apologetics," in *The Encounter of Eastern Christianity with Islam*, eds. Emmanouela Grypeou, Mark Swanson and David Thomas (Leiden, The Netherlands: Brill, 2007), 277–309; 286-287.
[197] Edith L. B. Turner, *Heart of Lightness: The Life Story of An Anthropologist* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2006), 92.
[198] Victor Turner and Edith Turner, *Image and Pilgrimage in Christian Culture* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2011), 11.

> In the chevet (*in capitello*) of the same monastery there is also the place where the bush was standing: it is venerated by all, both Saracens and Christians, and is reverently laid out (*preparatus*) and separated within the monastery itself. No one, neither bishop nor monk, Christian nor Saracen, dares enter this place without removing their shoes. Even the great sultan, the king of Cairo [Malik al-'Adil], had presented himself there at that time [1217] and reverently entered that place in humility and in bare feet.[199]

The association of the two saints with the prophethood of Moses and the Mosaic cult remains one of the most remarkable details in their path to sainthood. Since the ninth and tenth centuries the Monastery of St. Catherine have encapsulated the cults of Moses and Catherine, and icon collection of the monastery depicts them together accompanied by the Virgin Mary and the Burning Bush. One of the depictions attributed to Moses is the biblical scene of Exodus in which Moses removes his sandals before approaching the Burning Bush and receiving the revelation of God.

[199] Pringle, *The Churches of the Crusader Kingdom of Jerusalem*, vol.2, pp. 52-53.

Figure 5: "The Virgin, Moses and the Burning Bush, Saint Catherine," The Sinai Icon Collection, accessed May 19, 2020, http://vrc.princeton.edu/sinai/items/show/7016.

In 'Attar's hagiography of Rabi'a, God spoke to Rabi'a directly as He conversed with Moses and urged Rabi'a to remain content with His name through his revelation at Sinai:

> Hast thou not seen how Moses prayed for the vision of Me? And I cast a few motes of revelation upon the mountain, and the mountain shivered into forty pieces. Be content here with My name![200]

In 1341, Ludolph of Suchem limns a vivid interfaith portrait of how the Saracens knelt with the Latins before the relics of St. Catherine 'with the greatest devotion': ''…The Saracen guides and camel-drivers and grooms who come with the pilgrims earnestly beg that they, too, may be allowed to see these holy and wondrous bones, and kneel with the greatest

[200] 'Attar, *Episodes from Tadhkirat al-Awliya,* pp. 33-34.

devotion by the side of the Christians."[201] They must have been very curious about the alleged relics that constituted the core of the monastery and also about the possible reason for why the flood of pilgrims desperately wished to see these relics. Another pilgrim, the Franciscan friar Leonardo Frescobaldi visited the monastery in 1384 and made religious claims as following:

> And be it known that the Saracens reverence the Virgin Mary, St. John the Baptist, St. Katherine, and all the patriarchs of the Old Testament and hold that Christ was the great prophet previous to Mohammad; also that Christ was not born of the flesh, but that the Divine Father, through the lips of an angel, sent the Divine Word, and that in many ways they approximate our faith.[202]

Finally, in 1483-84 the Dominican theologian Felix Fabri who had the chance to discern the relics of Catherine visually, witnessed the Muslims that were helping them reach the monastery venerated the relics of St. Catherine with the pilgrims and the monastic community:

> After the Father of Monastery, all the monks drew near, beginning with the eldest, and kissed the holy relics in the same manner in which the Abbot had done. After the monks we pilgrims went and worshipped the relics in the customary manner, and after us our ass-drivers did the same.[203]

For the confusing incidents and venerations occurring at the alleged tomb of Rabi'a in Jerusalem, we should apply the recently coined term and theory, interrituality, with a view to explicate better the relationship between the interdependent Christian and Muslim pilgrimages. The term interrituality serves interreligious interactions together with interfaith dialogue and denotes the meaning of the shared ritualistic practices and values within the

[201] Ludolph von Suchem, *Ludolph von Suchem's Description of the Holy Land: and of the Way Thither, Written in the year A.D. 1350,* trans. Aubrey Stewart (New York: AMS Press, 1971), 86.
[202] Eckenstein, *Sinai*, pp.161-162.
[203] Felix Fabri, *The Book of the Wanderings of Brother Felix Fabri*, trans. Aubrey Stewart (London: Palestine Pilgrims' Text Society, 1892), 600.

context of the Abrahamic or non-Abrahamic religions through which Christians and Muslim share the liminal state among various other common ritualistic characteristics. There are several questions to pose whilst attempting to classify the rituals. While we cannot list every single question, cherry-picking two crucial questions out of many would lead to the series of more fathomable relationships between the Abrahamic religions: "Where does the ritual occur (spatial dimension): sacred space, shared sacred space, public realm, home? What kind of ritual is performed (prayer, ceremony, worship, pilgrimage, mourning ritual, feast, etc.)?" [204] Even though the alleged tomb of Rabi'a in Jerusalem raised various issues regarding the false tomb attribution to Rabi'a, the spatial context of the pilgrimage rituals denote the same place that is the Chapel of Ascension complex on the Mount of Olives, and insofar as the sources unveil, the pilgrims' ritual ceremonies occurring at these tombs are analogous to one another, such as prayer, pilgrimage, and visitation (ziyarat). Same interrituality of the Christian and Muslim pilgrims can be discussed for the case of the Monastery of St. Catherine, particularly in the example of removing one's shoes before approaching the Burning Bush or bowing before the relics of St. Catherine.

The Christian pilgrims visiting the shrine complex on the Mount of Olives, Jerusalem did not observe any tombs dedicated to the Islamic saint before 1173. Daniel the Abbot, in his pilgrimage of the years 1106 and 1107 to the Holy Land, records his observations of the tomb of St. Pelagia and a very spiritual anchorite man, but not of the Islamic tomb.[205] In 1173, al-Hawari claims that the maqam of Rabi'a al-Adawiyya was situated herein albeit the tomb belonged to Rabi'a al-Shamiya of Jerusalem, the wife of Sufi Ahmad ibn Abi l-Hawari (d.

[204] Marianne Moyaert, "Broadening the Scope of Interreligious Studies: Interrituality," in *Interreligious Relations and the Negotiation of Ritual Boundaries: Explorations in Interrituality*, ed. Marianne Moyaert (Cham: Springer International Publishing, 2019), 1-34; 19-20.
[205] Pringle, *The Churches of the Crusader Kingdom of Jerusalem*, vol.3, p. 343.

845/860).[206] After the Islamic conquest of Jerusalem, Saladin granted the Mount of Olives as a waqf to two shaykhs and their heirs in 1188. In 1344-5, an anonymous English pilgrim states that the whole complex was guarded by the Muslims.[207]

[206] Ibid. See for further explanation, Taufik Canaan, *Mohammedan Saints and Sanctuaries in Palestine* (London: Luzac, 1927), 57.
[207] Pringle, *The Churches of the Crusader Kingdom of Jerusalem*, vol.3, p. 343.

Conclusion

The first chapter of the "Cult of St. Catherine of Alexandria" peppered the extant secondary literature on the cult of St. Catherine with the recent findings, discussing that the earliest *vita* was produced in the late seventh and eighth centuries by Anastasios of Sinai. The chronologically ordered pilgrimage accounts helped flourishing this debate with the first mention of the devotion to Catherine in the early tenth century. Albeit the *terminus post quem* production of the Catherine-*vita* occurred in the late seventh century, there is a gap of two centuries between the written hagiographies and the association of St. Catherine with Sinai. Most probably, this gap was caused by the lack of extant and recently unearthed sources. The monastic compound at Sinai, in any case, adopted this orphan saint Catherine who would have been recreated out of intermingling the philosopher Hypatia of Alexandria with a certain Alexandrian noble, Dorothea. The set of sources which have not been dealt before in the context of the Catherine-cult was the onomastic material found within the prosopographical compilations. The "elitist" prosopographical compilations identified the personal name variations of Αἰκατερίνη, Αἰκατερίνα, Εικατερίνης, Κατερίνα scattered around the various places in the Eastern Mediterranean from Cappadocia to Constantinople, the Greek and Macedonian mainland of Thrace, Thessaloniki and Patras, the Eastern Mediterranean islands including Cyprus, Crete and Lemnos, the Crimean Sebaste in the north, and finally the distant shores of the Southern Italy. The majority of the personal names derived from the nuns who opted for the patronage of Catherine or they were given this name by their birth, instead of the monastic denomination. The remaining small percentage of names were given to the noblewomen both in Byzantium and in South Italy. In parallel with the onomastic data, the tombs and church dedications followed the analogous pattern to the personal names which means that wherever the church dedications were performed in the different parts of the

empire, it was quite possible to discover the names in the same locations. According to the tombs and church dedications, the mainland cult apparently began to emerge earlier than the cult in the islands and the Southern Italian shores. Taking the thesis that the fundamental *vita* was recorded in Sinai into account, the Byzantine East from where the cult was originally sprung, had the utmost significance in disseminating the cult towards the Asia Minor and thence to the capital Constantinople, and another centre of the cult, Thessaloniki. Thessaloniki as a geographical location gave birth to the abbess Αἰκατερίνα in the ninth-century *Life of St. Theodora of Thessaloniki* (BHG 1737) and the church dedications emerged in the later periods during the fourteenth century. This pattern might prove that the cult was initiated on quite a local basis in the Byzantine East and from there, it was widely popularized throughout the empire. The church dedications, moreover, attested to the absence of names even in the places where the dedications were performed. Athens, for instance, contained a twelfth-century church dedication to Catherine, but no information on the personal names. This absence of the personal names, approximating to the silence of two centuries between the first hagiographical productions and the mention of Catherine at Sinai, points out the unavailability in the present sources, hopefully awaiting to be discovered at some point.

The second chapter of the "Cult of Rabi'a of Basra" explicated the theological standpoints behind the Islamic sainthood that is the dynamic notion of "friends of God," and either friendly or hostile attitude to the cult of saints. Ibn Taymiyya of the Hanbalite school in the late thirteenth- and early fourteenth-century Damascus voiced the first reaction against the intercession of saints and their cults. The Sufi authors before Ibn Taymiyya, from the late eighth and ninth century onwards endeavoured to establish the notion of sainthood and elucidated the emergence of the notion through God's both female and male saints. Rabi'a of Basra comprised only a very small part of the wave of female mystic saints in the eighth

century who devoted themselves to *tawba* (penitence), *sabr* (patience), *shukr* (gratitude), *raja'* (hope), *khawf* (fear of God), *faqr* (renunciation of wealth), *zuhd* (asceticism), *tawakkul* (complete trust in God), and *dhikr* (remembrance and recollection). Because the cult of saints in Islam was initiated with the example of the prophet, his family and companions, the saints were similarly appropriated in his likeness. The example of Rabi'a blended the sainthood as embodied by the prophet and his close family, with the early stages of Sufi mysticism. Therefore, the first writings on Rabi'a were authored by the travelling Sufi authors who would bring the intellectual, religious and spiritual traditions with them to wherever they travelled. The hagiographical sources written down on the life of Rabi'a were called "hagiographical" because of the long-existent discussion that the chain tradition could not attest to the true existence of the saints and their sequence of live events. The Islamic hagiographical writings, as a matter of fact, could hardly be differentiated from the biographical writings. The contextual and literary qualities of the 'hagiographical' or 'biographical' texts on Rabi'a, were examined to a limited degree in order to trace the origins of her cult. As to the building dedications, either in the form of tombs or mosques, the chapter discussed how it would be an onerous task to search the mosque dedications to Rabi'a, since the theology of mosque dedications did not weigh on the same level with the Christian church dedications. Notwithstanding the confusion that the tombs were attributed to not only Rabi'a of Basra but also to different Rabias, the dissemination of the tombs presented a more reliable bird-eye's view, testifying to the existence of the veneration and *ziyarat* performed at the tombs in Rabia's name. In this context, the pilgrimage accounts and manuals described the popularity of Rabi'a among the two other Christian and Jewish holy figures in the same holy site of Jerusalem, on the Chapel of Ascension, and instructed how the pilgrim ought to visit the place and perform the pilgrimage to the tomb of Rabi'a. The overall examination of the

sources deduced that the medieval cult sprang from Basra and expanded towards the Khorasan region from which it was also disseminated towards the south-eastern Anatolia.

Finally, the last chapter of "Comparative Cult of Saints" applied the new trends of comparative hagiology and cult of saints to the hagiographies and cults of Catherine and Rabi'a. The Freiberger-method highlighted the similarities, differences, species relationships and refocusing in the hagiographies and fruitfully provided a backbone to the intercultural and interreligious nourishment of religious ideas, holy figures and particularly the female sanctity. The polemical writings in various treatises and the interreligious veneration in the pilgrimage accounts concerning both saints embodied the two sides of the religious dichotomy: what life and death meant, which models of sanctity became more popularized, and also by adopting the models of sanctity, what type of holiness could be achieved by the clergy and the *hoi polloi*.

As an ultimate conclusion, comparative hagiology and cult of saints prompted the present and further research to proceed in a more formidable and peculiar path: the selected saints, either two or even more, do not have to be cherry-picked from the analogous periods, because the trends of sanctity did not occur in every belief system during the same period. Although the hagiographical versions of St. Catherine apparently came at least one or two centuries before the Sufi writings on Rabi'a, the peculiar model of mystic saints hinged upon acute fasting, constant prayer, yearning for loneliness and renunciation, and the profound loving relationship between God and Rabi'a, death caused by not martyrdom but severe illnesses was promoted in the West during the twelfth century. The second significant point of the comparison stresses out an obvious fact that the relics of the Islamic saints should be taken for granted in the medieval context. The relics of the Christian saints, martyrs and mystics can be found quite facilely through the translation of the relics, positions of the relics inside the main centres of the cult, their utilization in the special liturgies and exhibition

during the rituals; whereas the relics of the Islamic saints, except for the personal belongings and occasionally the deceased body of the Sufi shaykhs, have been too onerous to dismantle. This is partly because the iconoclastic movement of Islam which did not give much importance to the religious and devotional objects, and also the majority of the extant Islamic reliquaries and relics, belonged to the prophet, his family and companions, the decorations and protective items posited on the Kaaba (door, keys, locks, gutter, and the guard of Hajar al-Aswad) and the other cardinal prophets. The Apartment of the Relics and the Privy (Has) Chamber inside the Topkapı Palace encapsulate an immense collection for the relics stored in the palace, especially the relics including Hırka-i Saâdet (the Holy Mantle of the Prophet) brought back from the Mamluk Egypt by Sultan Selim I in the sixteenth century. The other items of the prophet, his family and the Abrahamic prophets in the collections contain the Footprint, the Tooth of the Prophet, Sakal-I Şerif (the Blessed Beard), the Bow, Sword, and the Seal of the Prophet. The Mantle of Fatima, after whom the sainthood of Rabi'a was remodelled, bears the inscription that "the object that came from the estate of Fatma Sultan of the Crimean Khan's family to the imperial treasury," in the sixteenth century. The relics attributed to the Abrahamic prophets include the Sword of Prophet David, the Cooking Vessel of Prophet Abraham, and the Staff of Prophet Moses, but there are no signs of relics in the name of any Islamic saints.[208] In this aspect, adopting the thesis of the Hungarian orientalist Ignác Goldziher that the relics in the Islamic theology could not become as highly significant as in the Christian societies, the cults of Islamic saints cannot stem from the direct influence of the relics.[209] Where could the relics have been stored except for the mosques, and what would be the theological and social reactions against the relics which would have been stored inside the mosques analogous to the relics stored in the core of the Christian churches? Therefore, there cannot be a single method to trace the Islamic cults without the

[208] Sevgi Ağca Diker, *Topkapı Palace Museum: Apartment of the Holy Relics* (İstanbul: Bio Ofset, 2018).
[209] Ignác Goldziher, "Le culte des saints chez les musulmans," *Revue de l'histoire des religions* I, tome 2 (1880): 257-35; 259.

propagation of the saints' bones, teeth or hair scattered around many different places, and consequently, the tombs are obliged to substitute the relics. With the replacement of the relic culture with the tombs, then the importance given to the tombs and their *ziyarat* (visitation) in parallel to the *hajj* (pilgrimage to Mecca), must have been paramount. The pilgrimage accounts, in this regard, attest to the tomb *ziyarat,* how popular the female saint, Rabi'a became and in which parts of the world she was venerated, while Catherine's vast number of pilgrims at Sinai sufficiently describes the popularity of the saint. Although the current study is based on a small number of two saints, the strong relationship between Catherine and Rabi'a has been evident as the corresponding examples of the female sanctity in the medieval Christianity and Islam. Both Catherine and Rabi'a emerged as the holy aides in the most difficult times and helped the communities define themselves by observing one another, firstly in the polemical discourse of negative judgements and secondly, on the playground of moderate ideologies formed around the transreligious and cross-cultural saints.

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