

## Some Notes on the Bema in the East and West Syrian Traditions

---

Since the publication of H. C. Butler's *Early Churches of Syria* (Princeton, 1929), archeologists and liturgiologists have shown considerable interest in certain peculiarities in the liturgical disposition of a number of ancient churches in North Syria (<sup>1</sup>).

(<sup>1</sup>) A partial list of recent works dealing with this problem would include: H. C. BUTLER, *Early Churches of Syria*, Princeton, 1929, and *Syria, Publications of the Princeton University Archeological Expedition to Syria in 1904-5 and 1909*, Division II, Section B, Leyden, 1920; R. COQUIN, *Le "bîma" des Églises syriennes*, *L'Orient Syrien*, 10, 1965, 443-447; J. DAUVILLIER, *L'ambon ou bêmâ dans les textes de l'Église chaldéenne et de l'Église syrienne au moyen âge*, *Cahiers Archéologiques*, 6, 1952, 11-30; J. M. FIEY, *Mossoul Chrétienne*, Beyrouth, n.d. (FIEY refers to many Arabic sources which we have been unable to consult); GRABAR, *Les ambons syriens et la fonction liturgique de la nef dans les églises antiques*, *Cah. Arch.*, 1, 1945, 129-233; E. R. HAMBYE, *Les chrétiens syro-malabares et le "bîma"*, *L'Or. Syr.*, 12, 1967, 83-107, and *Les traces liturgiques de l'usage du "bêma" dans la liturgie de l'Église chaldéo-malabare*, *Mélanges de l'Université de S. Joseph* (Beyrouth), 39, 1963, 199-207; D. HICKLEY, *The Ambo in Early Liturgical Planning — A Study with Special Reference to the Syrian Bema*, *Heythrop Journal*, 7, 1966, 407-427; P. HINDO, *Disciplina antiochena antica*, *Siri*, tom. iv: *Lieux et temps sacrés*, etc. (*Fonti Codif. canon. orient. ser. II, fasc. 28*) Rome, 1943, especially the chapter by P. MARX, *Les églises paléochrétiennes de la Syrie*, pp. 13-58; V. JANERAS, *Vestiges du bîma syrien dans les traditions liturgiques autres que syriennes*, *L'Or. Syr.*, 8, 1963, 121-129; J. JARRY, *L'ambon dans la liturgie primitive de l'Église*, *Syria*, 40, 1963, 147-162; J. LASSUS, *Antioch on the Orontes. The Excavations 1933-1936*, Princeton, 1939; *La liturgie dans les basiliques syriennes*, *Studi bizantini e neoellenici*, 8, 1953, 418-428; *Liturgies nestorienne médiévales et églises syriennes antiques*, *Revue de l'Histoire des Religions*, 137, 1950, 236-252; *Sanctuaires chrétiens de Syrie*, Paris, 1947; *Syrie*, *DACL XV*<sup>a</sup>, col. 1855-1942; LASSUS and G. TCHALENKO, *Ambons syriens*, *Cah. Arch.* 5, 1951, 75-122; T. MATHEWS, *P. Bouyer on Sacred Space: a Re-appraisal*, *Downside Review*, 82, 1964.

L. Bouyer even goes so far as to claim that what is now generally accepted as the "Syrian arrangement" was formerly that of the Byzantine rite as well (<sup>1</sup>). Because of the importance of this question for the history of worship, it might be profitable to review the archeological and liturgical evidence.

The most common solution to the problem of church arrangement in both East and West was to place the seats for the clergy in an apse at one end — usually the east — of the church. Before the clergy, at the beginning of the nave (or in the transept, or in the apse itself, depending on the architecture of the church) stood the altar. Beyond, further into the nave, stood the ambon or ambons for the psalmody and readings. The congregation occupied, it seems, not so much the central nave as today, but the side naves, thus leaving the center of the church free for processions and other comings and goings of the ministers demanded by the various rites (<sup>2</sup>).

But modern archeological discoveries have shown that two areas of early Christianity followed a plan of their own: North Africa, and parts of Northern Syria and Mesopotamia. In some of the great basilicas of Roman Africa, the altar was located deep in the nave. The apse was reserved, as usual, for the clergy, and it was probably from the apse that the readings were read and the homily preached (<sup>3</sup>). In the Syrian plan, which is our

---

III-123; U. MONNERET DE VILLARD, *Le chiese della Mesopotamia*, Roma, 1940; R. MOUTERDE et A. POIDEBARD, *Le limes de Chalcis*, Paris, 1945; A. RAES, *La liturgie eucharistique en orient. Son cadre architectural*, *La Maison Dieu* 70, 1962, 49-66; A. M. SCHNEIDER, *Liturgie und Kirchenbau in Syrien*, *Nachrichten der Akad. der Wiss. in Göttingen, Phil.-Hist. Klasse*, no. 3, Jan. 1949, 1-68; G. TCHALENKO, *Villages antiques de la Syrie du Nord*, 3 vols., Paris, 1953-58.

(<sup>1</sup>) L. BOUYER, *Rite and Man*, London, 1963, pp. 180-181. J. MATEOS S. J., accepted this opinion in *The Evolution of the Byzantine Liturgy*, *John XXIII Lectures*, I, New York, 1966, p. 77.

(<sup>2</sup>) Cf. GRABAR, *Les ambons syriens*.

(<sup>3</sup>) On the African arrangement, see MONNERET DE VILLARD, *Chiese*, p. 40; GSELL, *Monuments antiques d'Algérie*, Paris, 1913; R. CAGNAT, and P. GAUCKLER, *Les monuments antiques de la Tunisie*, Paris, 1898. Some illustrations of basilicas built on this plan are given in F. VAN DE MEER and C. MOHRMANN, *Atlas of the Early Christian World*, London, 1966, pp. 354-55. The author has had the opportunity to examine some of these churches personally.



Bema sites in Syria indicated by small black lozenge. The shaded area indicates the North-Syrian limestone massif. Map adapted from G. Tchalenko, E. Baccache, *Églises de village de la Syrie du Nord. Planches* (Institut français d'archéologie du Proche-Orient, Beyrouth-Damas-Amman, Bibliothèque archéologique et historique, Tome CV, Documents d'archéologie: La Syrie à l'époque de l'Empire romain d'Orient, N° 1, Paris 1979) plate 1.

\* For plan of Bema see end of chapter.

main interest here, the disposition of the church was the exact opposite.

In the beginning of our century, H. C. Butler discovered in the villages of North Syria several churches with a curious structure in the middle of the nave. What he unearthed turned out to be the remains, in some instances more or less intact, of a large walled-in, U-shaped platform. Later excavations have filled in the details of this choir-like enclosure<sup>(1)</sup>. On the platform, along the interior of the wall, ran a curved sedilia much like the synthronon found along the curved wall of the apse in many ancient basilicas. Into the axis of the curved west end of the enclosure (i.e. toward the rear of the church), in the center of the synthronon where one would normally expect to find the episcopal throne, was built a stone pulpit or lectern which has been the object of considerable speculation. We shall return to it later. Access to the platform was through an opening — in some instances a chancel — in the flat or east end of the "U", facing the sanctuary. Steps (2, 3, or 4) led from the nave to the entrance, and in some churches there was a small vestibule between the entrance and the main platform, lower than the floor of the platform itself, but above the level of the nave. In two churches, Beḥyō and Reṣāfe, the remains of a ciborium were found on the bema in front of the sedilia in much the same position as the traditional altar ciborium before the sedilia in the apse. Thus the whole structure was not unlike a low-walled, roofless apse, transported to the middle of the church and turned around to face east.

At first the archeologists interpreted these remains in various ways, some of them imaginative, most of them wrong. At present, since the more recent studies of Lassus and Tchalenko and a closer analysis of the liturgical evidence, all scholars agree in identifying this exedra with the bema of which various liturgical texts and commentaries of both Syrian traditions, especially the Eastern, speak<sup>(2)</sup>. This conclusion is correct. The structure is

(1) For the works of BUTLER, see note 1, p. 326. The most detailed study of the N.-Syrian bema, with illustrations, dimensions, etc. is LASSUS-TCHALENKO, *Ambons syriens*. See also the excellent illustrations in TCHALENKO, *Villages*, vol. 2, Pl. IX-XIII, CIII-CXIII.

(2) This identification was proposed by J.-B. CHABOT. *L'Architecture gréco-syrienne*, *Journal des Savants*, 1914, pp. 436-442, and has been accepted by LASSUS, *Liturgies nestorienne médievales*, p. 242, SCHNEIDER,

clearly a bema. But this is the beginning, not the end, of the problem. And in attempting to explain how this bema was used in the liturgy, and to what extent such an exedra was common in the West-Syrian tradition, one must not draw conclusions that are too general, or that go beyond an accurate reading of the liturgical and archeological evidence.

We are not convinced that one is always safe in interpreting West-Syrian archeological remains in the light of Nestorian liturgical commentaries<sup>(1)</sup>. Nor can one infer that whenever West-Syrian sources refer to a bema, they mean an exedra similar in shape and function to the East-Syrian bema. For more than one Syrian text uses "bema" to refer to an ambon of the Byzantine type, and almost all West-Syrian literary sources could, as we shall see, be read in this way.

#### *The East-Syrian Bema.*

Let us examine first the Nestorian tradition, where the evidence is less confusing. There are only two sites in Mesopotamia, Ctesiphon and al-Ḥira, where the remains of early Nestorian churches have been uncovered. And only two of them, both in al-Ḥira, contain the remains of a bema. These bemas have not yet been carefully excavated and studied. But the one in the church of tell XI seems to have been a walled platform set between four of the columns of the central nave, the walls of the bema going from column to column. The west wall is straight and extends beyond the columns into the side naves to form the wall that divides the church into sections for the men and the women. The north and south walls bulge outward, and there were benches built along the inside of these walls. The east wall is straight, pierced by an opening, and two steps lead up from the floor of the nave to this entrance<sup>(2)</sup>.

*Liturgie u. Kirchenbau*, p. 53, etc. For earlier interpretations, see LASSUS, *Sanctuaires*, p. 208.

<sup>(1)</sup> We believe that LASSUS and HICKLEY sometimes push this parallelism too far. Cf. *Liturgies nestorianes médiévales* p. 242; *Ambo*, p. 416.

<sup>(2)</sup> MONNERET DE VILLARD, *Chiese*, p. 39 and fig. 31-32; FIEV, *Mossoul chrétienne*, p. 76. The Cathedral of Kōkē in Ctesiphon also

The archeological evidence is thus quite slim, but not negative. And the liturgical evidence for the existence and precise liturgical use of the bema in the Nestorian tradition is strong enough to be conclusive<sup>(1)</sup>.

The oldest reference to the bema, from the Synod of Seleucia-Ctesiphon (410), states that "On Sunday, in the presence of the bishop, the archdeacon will proclaim the kārōzūtā [= proclamation, litany] in the bema of the kārōzūtā of the deacons, and he will read the gospel"<sup>(2)</sup>. The bishop is seated on his throne, the location of which is not indicated. The "apostle" is also read on the bema<sup>(3)</sup>.

Earlier Chaldean documents are silent on the subject of the bema, but the Synod of 410 does not speak of it as if it were an innovation. There is no indication that this bema was any more than an ambon from which the litanies and lessons were chanted, and nothing is said about its location in the church. But there is also no evidence to indicate that the East Syrians ever used an arrangement of the Byzantine type (ambon in the nave, throne and synthronon in the apse). And all later evidence points to the

had a bema. According to W. Macomber, S. J. of Al-Hikma University, Baghdad, MS Seert 58 (Chaldean funeral rites) shows that this bema had 5 steps. On Kōkē, cf. also FIEV, *Topographie chrétienne de Mahozé, l'Or. Syrien*, 12, 1967, 399-400; 403-406.

<sup>(1)</sup> In addition to the major sources discussed below, we have also consulted: *The Liturgical Homilies of Narsai* († 502), R. H. CONNOLLY ed., *Texts and Studies* VIII, 1, 1916. Homily 17 A (pp. 4-5) speaks of the procession into the sanctuary, hence from the bema, before the creed; 'Abdīšō († 986), *Ordo Judiciorum Ecclesiasticorum*, tract. VI, iii (ed. J.-M. VOSTÉ, *Fonti Codif. Canon. Orient.* ser. II, fasc. 15, Roma, 1940, p. 113), which merely mentions the bema, with Golgotha, in the center of the church; *The Historia Monastica of Thomas of Marga* (9th cent.) in E. A. W. BUDGE, *The Book of Governors*, London, 1893, vol. 1, p. 306, vol. 2, p. 543 (translation) which gives a full description of the church, though BUDGE misinterprets it (cf. SCHNEIDER, *Liturgie u. Kirchenbau*, p. 53 n. 41). The *Historia Monastica* calls the šqāqōnā "šbīlā". W. C. VAN UNNIK, *Nestorian Questions on the Administration of the Eucharist by Isho 'Yahb IV* (c. 1010), Haarlem, 1937, p. 180, also refers to the bema and the Golgotha altar. For a study of the bema and the liturgy, see also the article of DAUVILLIER above, note 1, p. 326.

<sup>(2)</sup> J.-B. CHABOT, *Syndicon Orientale*, Paris, 1902, p. 28 [267]. For other minor references to the bema in Nestorian canonical literature, cf. the index in CHABOT.

<sup>(3)</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 28 [268].

bema as that large construction with throne, sedilia, altar and pulpits, located in the center of the nave, which later commentators have described.

This traditional Nestorian bema is often referred to by the commentators Gabriel Qatraya (c. 615)<sup>(1)</sup> and Abraham bar Lipeh (7<sup>th</sup> c.), and is described fully in the later *Anonymi Auctoris Expositio* (9<sup>th</sup> c.) attributed to George of Arbela<sup>(2)</sup>, the last Nestorian commentary to speak of the bema as still in use. According to the author of the *Expositio*, who claims to be following the liturgical prescriptions of Katholikoi Išo'yahb III († c. 660) and Timothy I († 823), the typical Nestorian church was disposed as follows<sup>(3)</sup>. The building was oriented, and was entered through two doors in the south wall, the door of the temple and the door of the women (I, 112-113 [90], 116 [93], II, 79-80 [73]). The nave was divided by a low wall<sup>(4)</sup> into two sections, one to the east for the men, the back end of the church for the women. The door of the temple, the main entrance of the building, led into the area reserved for the men; the other door was used by the women to enter their more humble preserve in the house of God of those times.

(1) The commentary of Qatraya, a teacher at the theological school of Seleucia, has never been published. It is being edited at present by S. H. Jammo with the collaboration of J. Mateos, Cf. JAMMO, *Gabriel Qatraya et son commentaire sur la liturgie chaldéenne*, *Orientalia Christiana Periodica*, 32, 1966, 39-52; *L'office du soir chaldéen au temps de Gabriel Qatraya*, *L'Or. Syr.*, 12, 1967, 187-210. We are following the opinion of Jammo for the dates of these commentaries.

(2) R. H. CONNOLLY, ed., *Anonymi Auctoris Expositio Officiorum Ecclesiae Georgio Arbelensi vulgo adscripta, accedit Abrahae Bar Lipae Interpretatio Officiorum*, CSCO 64, Paris-Leipzig, 1911-1915. For convenience, we shall refer to the 2 vols. (91-92) as I-II, and references to the *versio* will be enclosed in brackets.

(3) The description of the church is found in I, 112-116 [90-93]. The author himself admits that not all churches are as he describes; he is giving an ideal schema (I, 113 [90]).

(4) The commentary does not speak of a wall, but refers to the 2 parts of the nave as clearly separated. The church of tell XI, al-Ḥira, had a wall (cf. MONNERET DE VILLARD, *Chiese*, p. 39 and fig. 31), and 'ABDIŠO (ed. Vosté, p. 113) says that the bema is in the middle of the church "so that there might be a separation between the men and women". This fits very well the bema of tell XI, which is built right into the wall that divides the nave.

The east end of the church was walled in and divided into three chambers: in the center, the apse or sanctuary; to the north the diaconicon or sacristy; to the south the baptistry<sup>(1)</sup>. Lesser doors connected the sacristy and baptistry to the nave, and the sacristy to the apse. The sanctuary was raised above the level of the nave, and was entered through a great central door and to one side, it would seem, another lesser door<sup>(2)</sup>. Before the sanctuary doors a platform, the qeṣṣrōmā, extended out into the nave. From the center of this platform, before the central door, a narrow pathway, the bēt-šqāqōnā, extended down the center of the nave to connect the qeṣṣrōmā to the bema.

There is some confusion as to exactly what this pathway was. From the text of the commentary (I, 114-115 [91]) it seems that it extended from the bema right up to the apse. But if the bema was usually built as in al-Ḥira<sup>(3)</sup>, with its back to the wall between the men's nave and the gynaeceum, the šqāqōnā would divide the eastern part of the nave in two and cut off access to the north aisle. On the basis of archeological evidence<sup>(4)</sup>, and because it is common sense not to cut off the north aisle of the nave, Fiey limits the šqāqōnā to a narrow, elevated walk leading only part of the distance to the bema, thus permitting passage in front of the bema into the north aisle<sup>(5)</sup>. But perhaps another solution is possible. There is nothing in the text to indicate that the pathway is elevated above the floor of the nave. And the rather cryptic reference to three doors in the pathway, one

(1) We use the term "apse" without implying that it was rounded or projected beyond the east wall of the building. The location of baptistry and diaconicon is not too clear, but from the description of the liturgy it is obvious that the diaconicon could be entered from the sanctuary. We have rejected CONNOLLY's plan (I, 196) in favor of FIEY's (*Mossoul*, pp. 72, 80-81 and Pl. II). See also I, 113 [90], II, 16 [17], 35 [35].

(2) CONNOLLY (I, 196) does not include this door in his plan. FIEY does (*Mossoul*, p. 80 and Pl. II), though with some hesitation, because it is not found in any existing church. The text of the commentary seems to require this door (II, 9-10 [12], 12-17 [14-17]). See also LASSUS, *Liturgies nestoriennes médiévales*, p. 240, n. 1.

(3) Cf. note 4 on preceding page.

(4) The churches of al-Ḥira have only an extended step jutting out from the qeṣṣrōmā. See MONNERET DE VILLARD, *Chiese*, fig. 31-32.

(5) FIEY, *Mossoul*, pp. 75-76.

for the apse, one for the bema, and one in the middle (I, 115 [92]), could be interpreted as meaning that the pathway was bordered by a low wall open at each end to permit access to bema and sanctuary, and broken in the center to permit access across it to the northern part of the nave<sup>(1)</sup>. The step leading off the qeṣṣrōmā into the passage could be longer or shorter depending on the whim of the architect. At any rate it seems out of the question, as Fiey points out, that the nave was divided as in Connolly's reconstruction (I, 196), forcing men to enter by their door, then pass behind the bema through the women's section in order to reach the north aisle. Also, the pathway of the *Expositio* with its three doors may be an elaboration for large cathedral churches, and in smaller churches the šqāqōnā may have been no more than the space between the steps leading up to the qeṣṣrōmā and those of the bema. It is fruitless to seek an exact correspondence between an idealized liturgical commentary and the archeological remains. The general disposition of the church is clear. Whether this or that church had a greater or smaller bema, a longer or shorter šqāqōnā with or without walls, is merely an indication of the inevitable variation within a general liturgical format.

According to the *Expositio*, the bema itself stood in the middle of the church (I, 114 [91]), and was a relatively large, elevated platform facing the sanctuary<sup>(2)</sup>. It contained the bishop's throne — of its location the commentary says only that it faced east —, in the center an altar called "Golgotha" for the gospel and

<sup>(1)</sup> IBN ĠARĪR of Tikrit (cf. *infra*, p. 353) refers to the walls of the šqāqōnā, each one pierced by an opening. If there were no walls, then the 3 doors would be the entrances to the bema, qeṣṣrōmā chancel, and sanctuary, and there would be no problem about free access to the north side of the nave. Cf. LASSUS, *Liturgies nestoriennes médiévales*, p. 240. Perhaps the walls were a peculiarity of the tradition of Tikrit.

<sup>(2)</sup> There is no evidence that it was U-shaped like the N.-Syrian bema. Its size can be judged from the number of ministers it could hold; that it was elevated is seen in the frequent references to the ministers ascending to it (see the description of the liturgy below, (pp. 335-336). The *Expositio* (II, 16-17 [18]) says there were 2 sets of stairs for the readers. These stairs are found only on the bema of St. Sergius in Reṣāfe, which COQUIN mistakenly refers to as a Nestorian church (*Le "bîma"*, p. 450). FIEY (*Mossoul*, p. 77) considers these stairs a fancy of the author of the *Expositio*. Cf. also LASSUS, *Liturgies nestoriennes médiévales*, p. 243)

cross, and "to the right and left" (I, 114 [91]) two elevated pulpits of equal height for the readings of the Old and New Testament<sup>(1)</sup>. The commentary does not explicitly mention seats for the priests, but there are so many references to the priests sitting on the bema with the bishop that it is difficult to see why Fiey considers the benches on the bema in the church of tell XI in al-Ḥira a "particularité" and does not include them in his plan<sup>(2)</sup>. It would be difficult to find an example of liturgical and archeological evidence coinciding more exactly. The texts do not speak of the Chaldean bema as being walled-in, but do refer to a "door" in the bema (II, 15 [16-17], 18 [19], 35 [35]), and the church of tell XI apparently had a wall on the bema<sup>(3)</sup>.

#### *The Use of the Bema in the East-Syrian Liturgy.*

The Nestorian commentators have also provided us with a description of the liturgy sufficiently detailed to give a reasonably complete picture of the use of the bema in the Chaldean rite. Since this ceremonial has been rather fully and accurately described in previous studies<sup>(4)</sup>, we will content ourselves with a very brief summary of the use of the bema in the eucharistic liturgy.

<sup>(1)</sup> The exact location of the pulpits is not clear. CONNOLLY (I, 196) puts them at the NW and SW corners of the bema. FIEY (Pl. II) puts them to the NE and SE, which seems preferable. As LASSUS has pointed out, this is where the shelves for the books are located in N.-Syrian bemas (*Liturgies nestoriennes médiévales*, p. 245). The pulpits were elevated above the level of the bema platform, for the priest came down to put the gospel on Golgotha after the reading. (II, 27 [27-28]).

<sup>(2)</sup> FIEY, *Mossoul*, p. 76. For the bema of al-Ḥira, see p. 330, above. For the priests sitting on the bema, cf. *Expositio* II, 10 [12], 14-15 [16], 32 [33], 82 [75]; BAR LIPEH, *Interpretatio*, II, 172 [158], 175 [161], and QATRAYA.

<sup>(3)</sup> The wall is part of the structure of the bema itself, not extraneous to it and surrounding it as in CONNOLLY (I, 196). LASSUS, *Liturgies nestoriennes médiévales*, p. 246, also rejects CONNOLLY's wall.

<sup>(4)</sup> For a description of the use of the bema in the eucharistic liturgy, cf. *Expositio*, II, 7 [10-40 [39]; *Interpretatio*, II, 171 [157] ff. This material has been summarized in DAUVILLIER, *L'ambon ou bēma*. In QATRAYA's commentary the use of the bema is basically the same as in the *Expositio*, except that there is no mention of a deacon returning to the bema for the anaphora, nor of anyone receiving communion there.

It is evident from the layout of the Chaldean church — nave divided into two sections and obstructed in the middle by a large bema — that a processional introit through a door in the west wall and down the center of the nave to the sanctuary is out of the question in the East-Syrian tradition. And in fact, as we have seen, there was usually no entrance at all in the west wall.<sup>(1)</sup> Nor does it appear that the clergy ordinarily made any processional entrance into the church. The description of the eucharistic liturgy begins with the clergy already in the sanctuary, and the introit procession does not go from nave to sanctuary, but the reverse, from the sanctuary to the bema in the nave (II, 7 [10] ff.). From this introit up until the rite of *accessus ad altare* after the gifts have been placed on the altar — i.e. during the entire liturgy of the Word— the concelebrants remain on the bema, where the readings, chants, litanies, lavabo, etc. take place.

When the gifts have been arranged on the altar, the bishop and priests descend from the bema and enter the sanctuary, where the rest of the liturgy is celebrated. But the deacons come out of the sanctuary to proclaim the diptychs, etc., and one of the two officiating deacons returns to the bema to direct the people during the anaphora, re-entering the sanctuary only at communion (II, 54-56 [52-53], 60 [56], 62 [58], 69-70 [64], 77 [71] ff.). At communion time the "vigilers" mount the bema to chant the communion antiphon, which is called even today the 'ōnīṭā d-bēm (lit. "response of the bema") (II, 85 [77-78]). The *Expositio* also states that in some places the priest brings communion to the clergy — it doesn't specify whom — remaining on the bema. This was prescribed by Išo'yahb III, but the author states that it is not done everywhere (II, 88 [80]).

<sup>(1)</sup> Cf. FIEY, *Mossoul*, pp. 71-72. MONNERET DE VILLARD (*Chiese*, pp. 14 ff, 45, 48, 66) considers the placing of courtyard and doors along a lateral wall a Mesopotamian style resulting from Babylonian influence. LEROUX also appeals to the precedent of the Babylonian temple (*Les églises syriennes à portes laterales, Mélanges Holleaux*, Paris, 1913, p. 129). In some churches (now Jacobite) in the Tur Abdin, sanctuary and doors are along opposite lateral walls — i.e. the whole building is laterally oriented with its greatest axis N-S. This style is called "monastic" by POGNON, BELL, and others, a designation rejected by FIEY (pp. 90-92), who considers the lateral style Nestorian even though these churches are now in Jacobite hands. Cf. also note 2, below, p. 341.

From this brief study it is clear what an important place the bema had in the liturgy of the Nestorian church. When did the bema fall into disuse? Perhaps in the 14<sup>th</sup> century, after the Mongol invasion, when the Nestorian Katholikos took refuge in the mountains of Kurdistan, and the center of gravity of the nation shifted from the great cities of Mesopotamia to the small villages of the north, where the churches were too small or too poor to have a bema<sup>(1)</sup>. The 9<sup>th</sup> century *Expositio* is the last Nestorian commentary we have, but the rite of "adoration of the bema" in the eucharistic liturgy first appears in liturgical MSS of the 16<sup>th</sup> century, which would seem to indicate that the bema was still in use in some churches at that time<sup>(2)</sup>. The disposition of the church of Ṭāhra in Mosul represents perhaps a transitional stage in the decline of the bema. When the church was rearranged in the 18<sup>th</sup> century, the bema pulpits were removed to a platform built into the west end of the church; there is no Golgotha<sup>(3)</sup>. In modern Chaldean churches, the pulpits are located on the qeṣṭrōmā.

#### *The West-Syrian Tradition.*

It is when we turn to the West-Syrian tradition that certain problems appear. There is no doubt whatever that the Syrian liturgical tradition made use of an object that the sources refer to as "bēm, bēmā" or "ambōn, ambōnā"<sup>(4)</sup>. Was this piece of liturgical furniture the same as the Nestorian bema? Let us review the facts.

<sup>(1)</sup> DAUVILLIER, *L'Ambon ou bēmd*, pp. 25-26.

<sup>(2)</sup> We have this information from W. F. Macomber, S. J. who has studied numerous Nestorian liturgical MSS in Europe and the Middle East. These MSS refer to the bema as if still in use right up until the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

<sup>(3)</sup> FIEY, *Mossoul*, p. 78.

<sup>(4)</sup> On terminology see DAUVILLIER, *L'ambon ou bēmd*, p. 11; COQUIN, *Le "bitma"*, pp. 444 ff. COQUIN (p. 445) affirms incorrectly that the Syrians never call the bema "ambon". But ambōn, ambōnā are both found in the Syriac sources. Cf. the references in R. PAYNE SMITH, *Thesaurus Syriacus*, col. 224; J. P. MARGOLIOUTH, *Supplement to the Thesaurus Syriacus*, Oxford, 1927, p. 21. HICKLEY (*Ambon*, p. 410) follows COQUIN in this error.

*The Archeological Evidence.*

Unlike the Nestorian tradition, the Syrian presents us with an abundance of archeological evidence that has been thoroughly studied and described, especially, with respect to the bema, by Lassus and Tchalenko<sup>(1)</sup>. But it should first be noted that one simply cannot speak of a West-Syrian tradition with respect to the liturgical disposition of the church. Varying traditions are found in four regions: I – North and Northeast Syria, II – South Syria and beyond, III – Osrhoëne and beyond (parts of Northern Mesopotamia, the Tur Abdin, etc.), IV – the Maphrianate of Tikrit.

Region I<sup>(2)</sup> comprises Antiochia or the coastal area around Antioch; the limestone massif (Ġebel il A'la, Ġebel Bariša, Ġebel Sim'an, Ġebel Rīha) bordered on the west by the Orontes north of Apamea, the 'Afrīn river on the north, and the Homs-Aleppo railway on the east; two sites to the northeast of Hama (Mir'āye and Firge); Bennāwi in the Ġebel Hāss; Zebed in the Ġebel Sbeit; and Rešāfe in Euphratensis. With the exception of Rešāfe, Mir'āye, and Firge, all these sites are within the ancient province of Syria Prima. Within this region, 32 bemas have been identified<sup>(3)</sup>. Hence the archeologists have discovered strong evidence for the use of a bema in North Syria, i.e. in Antiochia Chalcidica and in the interior plateau to the west of the Euphrates river. But the heaviest concentration of these sites — 25 of them — are in

<sup>(1)</sup> Cf. especially LASSUS-TCHALENKO, *Ambons syriens*; TCHALENKO, *Villages*.

<sup>(2)</sup> See map. For other maps of these regions and the archeological sites, in addition to the works cited in the previous note, see VAN DER MEER-MOHRMANN, *Atlas*, maps 15 a-b; LASSUS, *Sanctuaires*; HINDO, *Fonti Codif. Canon. Or. ser. II, fasc. 28*. In the last 2 works, the maps are at the end of the volume. For a history of the shifting borders in this whole region, see E. HONIGMANN, *Die Ostgrenze des byzantinischen Reiches von 363-1071 nach griechischen, arabischen, syrischen und armenischen Quellen* (tome III of A. A. VASILIEV, *Byzance et les Arabes*) Brüssel, 1935; *Historische Topographie von Nordsyrien im Altertum*, *Zeitschr. des Deutschen Palästina Vereins*, 1923-24; R. DUSSAUD, *Topographie historique de la Syrie antique et médiévale*, Paris, 1927.

<sup>(3)</sup> LASSUS-TCHALENKO, *Ambons syriens*, pp. 94-95, has a complete list of these bemas. Two more have been tentatively identified (*ibid.*, p. 94 n. 2).

the limestone massif between the Homs-Aleppo railroad and the Orontes.

Geographically, Region I is but a small portion of the area formerly under the jurisdiction of the Patriarch of Antioch and, later, of the Jacobite Church<sup>(4)</sup>. And it is within this small area alone that any trace of a structure similar to the Nestorian bema has been found. In this region the evidence is clear. But even here a rather large number of churches have been uncovered; in only 32 of them — or perhaps 31, if we exclude Qausiye — was there a bema, and there are some churches in this region that seem never to have had one<sup>(5)</sup>.

However, it is probable that many churches here had a wooden bema that has quite understandably disappeared without a trace. Tchalenko has discovered in the pavement-mosaic of a 4<sup>th</sup> century church in Rayān (Ġebel Zāwiye) the floor-plan of a bema on which moveable chairs and lecterns were undoubtedly placed during the liturgy<sup>(6)</sup>. And in at least two churches, Mir'āye and the church of North Berīš, the bema consists of a very low stone wall with holes along its top surface in which apparently a wooden superstructure was fixed<sup>(7)</sup>.

<sup>(1)</sup> For a complete list, with historical notes, of all sees of the West-Syrian Church, cf. P. HINDO, *Jurisdiction territoriale du Patriarche de Antioche*, and *Éparchies du Maphrianat* (Appendices I-II in *Disciplina antiochena antica, Siri, III, Fonti codif. canon. or.*, ser. II, fasc. 26, Roma, 1951); HONIGMANN, *Évêques et évêchés monophysites d'Asie antérieure au vi<sup>e</sup> siècle* (CSCO 127, subs. 2) Louvain, 1951.

<sup>(2)</sup> The archeologists give varying lists of the Syrian churches. MARX (*Les églises paléochrétiennes*, in HINDO *Fonti*, ser. II, fasc. 28, pp. 13-58) has enumerated 256, some of which are known only from literary sources. Of these, 176 are in our Region I. Cf. LASSUS-TCHALENKO, *Ambons syriens*, pp. 76 ff, for some of the churches which apparently never had a bema. HICKLEY (*Ambon*, p. 413) says that the possibility of wooden bemas makes it impossible to judge the geographical boundaries of the area in which the bema was used. But it is precisely in the South, where no bemas have been found, that bemas would have been made of stone. Wood was more abundant in the North. Only there was it used in roofing churches. In the South, stone was used even for that.

<sup>(3)</sup> TCHALENKO, *Villages*, III, p. 37; I, p. 334.

<sup>(4)</sup> BUTLER, *Syria* (Div. II, sect. B), p. 69; LASSUS, *Sanctuaires*, pp. 210-211; LASSUS-TCHALENKO, *Ambons syriens*, p. 116.

Two sites in Antiochia, Qausiye and Seleucia-Pieria, are included by Lassus and Tchalenko in their list of 32 bema churches. But it seems that the exedra in the center of the cruciform martyrion of Qausiye was the *confessio* containing the martyr's relics and perhaps a eucharistic altar as well. At least there is no sanctuary in the east end of this church which could have held the altar <sup>(1)</sup>.

But in all the other sites in Region I (we shall reserve Reṣāfe, Fafertin and Seleucia for special comment later) where the ruins are relatively complete, the same type of bema appears, and we have no reason to believe that the bemas in the few sites where the ruins are less complete would show any significant differences. The bemas uncovered in this area are all U-shaped, raised enclosures of the type already described <sup>(2)</sup>. No šqāqōnā or pathway connects the bema to the sanctuary platform. In the middle of the bemas of Beḥyō and Reṣāfe the remains of a ciborium have been found, even though the Jacobite commentator Yahya ibn Ğarīr (c. 1083) explicitly refers to the ciborium as a distinguishing feature of the Nestorian bema <sup>(3)</sup>.

No traces of a Golgotha altar have been found, although Ibn Ğarīr calls the place of the bema "Golgotha", figure of the place where Christ was crucified and where the head of Adam was buried <sup>(4)</sup>. Were there an altar under the ciborium in Beḥyō, it would have to be moveable, since one must pass under the ciborium to reach the pulpit and synthronon. <sup>(5)</sup>

<sup>(1)</sup> LASSUS, *Sanctuaires*, pp. 125 ff; *Liturgies nestorienne médievales*, p. 250, n. 2; TCHALENKO, *Villages*, I, p. 257; MARX, *Les églises paléochrétiennes*, p. 53; RICHARD KRAUTHEIMER, *Early Christian and Byzantine Architecture*, (Baltimore, 1965), pp. 51-52.

<sup>(2)</sup> Cf. p. 329 above.

<sup>(3)</sup> See below, pp. 353-354. ĞARĪR also mentions a šqāqōnā in the church arrangement of Tikrit, and LASSUS believes that traces of this pathway will be found in N. Syria when the churches there have been adequately studied (*Liturgies nestorienne médievales*, p. 249). In the same article (p. 243), L. refers to Reṣāfe and Kalōta, not Beḥyō, as the 2 churches with a bema ciborium, but this is an error (Cf. LASSUS-TCHALENKO, *Ambons syriens*, p. 81). HICKLEY (*Ambon*, p. 415) notes that the bema of Beḥyō has stone nibs at the east end which could have been anchorings for wooden pathway walls.

<sup>(4)</sup> See pp. 353-354.

<sup>(5)</sup> LASSUS-TCHALENKO, *Ambons syriens*, p. 81. We believe LASSUS is wrong in placing a Golgotha altar on the W.-Syrian bema (*Liturgies*

The size of these bemas bears but little proportional relationship to the size of the church. In some smaller churches it is relatively huge in comparison with the size of the building, and it always occupies a large portion of the nave. It is located in the center of the main nave, often closer to the back or west wall of the church than to the sanctuary, its east end coinciding with the central axis of the nave <sup>(1)</sup>.

Finally, these bemas differ from the Nestorian bema in the following details:

- 1) there is a synthronon but usually no episcopal throne
- 2) there is a pulpit in the axis of the west end
- 3) the west end is always curved
- 4) there is no Golgotha altar
- 5) there is generally no ciborium
- 6) there is no šqāqōnā (?)
- 7) they are always enclosed by a wall (not, however, to be excluded in the Nestorian tradition).

As for the other aspects of the arrangement of these churches, the following points should be noted. Because of the size and location of the bema, it is easy to understand why many Syrian churches, like the Nestorian, have no west entrance. Even where there is a west door in North-Syrian churches, it is usually not the principal entrance. Rather, as among the Nestorians, the principal doors are in the south wall: the women's door to the southwest; the main entrance, for the men, to the southeast <sup>(2)</sup>.

*nestorienne médievales*, p. 243). In LASSUS-TCHALENKO, *Ambons syriens* (p. 87), it is suggested that the gospel was read under the ciborium. We believe this to be the proper interpretation of the ciboria that have been discovered; it also agrees with the description of ĞARĪR (cf. below, pp. 353-354).

<sup>(1)</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 80-83, and 96 ff, where plans, photographs, and dimensions of the churches in the Ğebel il A'la are given. The width of the bema varies from about 3 m 50-6 m, depending on the width of the nave, and its length is 4-6m. But the one in Brād is 8m long, that in Reṣāfe 16 m. The bema walls are about 1 m 40 high, sometimes surmounted by a balustrade.

<sup>(2)</sup> On the whole question of doors, see LASSUS-TCHALENKO, *Ambons syriens*, p. 82; LASSUS, *Sanctuaires*, pp. 187 ff; and p. 336 above. SCHNEIDER (*Liturgie u. Kirchenbau*, p. 67) attributes the placing of the

With respect to the place of the laity in the church, the location and dimensions of the bema present some problems. For in two churches (Kalōta and Fafertīn) the whole of the central nave in front of the bema seems to have been closed to the people, who would thus have been relegated to the part of the nave beside and behind the bema <sup>(1)</sup>. But this was surely not true in single-nave churches, where the space beside and behind the bema is sometimes very small <sup>(2)</sup>.

Most of the churches of North Syria have the usual pastophoria <sup>(3)</sup>. The central sanctuary chamber is rectangular, or if apsidal, there is a gradual evolution during the 4-7<sup>th</sup> centuries from a very shallow niche to an extended semi-circle <sup>(4)</sup>. Very few altars have been uncovered in these churches. Two that have been found were deep in the apse — not attached to the east wall, but so close to it (1 m 85 in Brad; 0 m 80 in Ḥarāb Šams)

entrance on the south side to climatic conditions. This may be true for Serḡilla, the town on which he bases his argument, and for other towns in the same region. But in fact there is a great variety in the location of the doors in Syrian churches (on the south, south and west, or on all 3 sides). But the south side is favored in N. Syria, especially in the Ġebel Bariša where Serḡilla is located (Cf. LASSUS, *Sanctuaires*, p. 189). We do not know of any church yet uncovered which had doors only on the south side, and which did not also have a bema. In the ancient Syrian literary sources, the *Testamentum Domini* (p. 23) mentions 3 doors, and the *Didascalia arabica* (35, 1, FUNK II, p. 124) locates these doors on the S, W and N sides.

<sup>(1)</sup> LASSUS-TCHALENKO, *Ambons syriens*, p. 83.

<sup>(2)</sup> Cf. LASSUS-TCHALENKO, *Ambons syriens*, p. 83. In Qirqbize the bema is 3 m 10 from the W. wall, 1 m 50 from the side wall; in Kfeir, 3 m 70 and 1 m 65. But in spite of this, we do not agree with TCHALENKO (*Villages*, I, p. 328 n. 4) that the laity also sat on the bema. The whole of tradition is against this. See for example the Syriac penitential canon which expressly forbids the laity to mount the ambon (DENZINGER, *Ritus Orientalium*, Graz, 1961, I, p. 485, canon 72).

<sup>(3)</sup> But in N. Syria the 2 pastophoria did not remain prothesis and diaconicon as in the Byzantine tradition. One chamber became a martyr's chapel. Cf. LASSUS, *Sanctuaires*, pp. 195 ff; TCHALENKO, *Villages*, I, p. 334 n. 3. SCHNEIDER (*Liturgie u. Kirchenbau*, pp. 57 ff, 64 ff) gives a different explanation of the change that came about in the design of one of the pastophoria. See also Γ. Σωτηρίου, 'Ἡ Πρόθεσις καὶ τὸ Διακονικὸν ἐν τῇ Ἀρχαίᾳ Ἐκκλησίᾳ, Θεολογία (Athens), Series II, vol. 1, 1940, 76-100.

<sup>(4)</sup> LASSUS-TCHALENKO, *Ambons syriens*, p. 83.

that it is clear that the celebrant faced east, and that the clergy did not sit behind the altar on a synthronon <sup>(1)</sup>. In fact a throne or synthronon in the apse is very rarely found in North Syria <sup>(2)</sup>.

Where, then, was the episcopal throne? This presents a problem, for in none of the churches with a bema except Reṣāfe was there a throne in the apse, and on the bema we find a pulpit where one would expect to find a throne — that is, if we presume for the moment that in the West-Syrian liturgy the bishop sat on the bema. Because of the supposed parallelism between Syrian churches and Nestorian liturgy, the bema pulpit was at first interpreted as an episcopal throne <sup>(3)</sup>. But the shape of the pulpit makes this impossible unless the episcopal physique has evolved considerably in the past 1500 years <sup>(4)</sup>.

What has apparently never been taken into account in all the discussion of this pulpit is that, in fact, there was no bishop. No church with this arrangement (pulpit and synthronon on the bema, no synthronon in the apse) has yet been found in any town where there was an episcopal see <sup>(5)</sup>. But this does not solve the problem, for the oldest Syrian church, Fafertīn (372), had a bema

<sup>(1)</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 84; LASSUS, *Sanctuaires*, p. 199; *Syrie (DACL)* col. 1880. In Zerkita the altar is against the east wall.

<sup>(2)</sup> LASSUS, *Sanctuaires*, pp. 198-202; LASSUS-TCHALENKO, *Ambons syriens*, pp. 84-85. BUTLER (*Early Churches*, p. 212) claimed to have discovered evidence of a synthronon in some N.-Syrian churches without specifying where. There was one in Qal'at Sim'an and Reṣāfe (at least a throne in the latter); MARX claims there was one in Qaṣr el Banāt (420), and MATTERN found the ruins of a throne in the sanctuary at Bāqirhā in Ġebel Bariša. Cf. MARX, *Églises paléochrétiennes*, p. 44; J. MATTERN, *A travers les villes mortes de Haute Syrie, Mélanges de l'Univ. de S. Joseph*, 17, 1933, p. 62.

<sup>(3)</sup> Cf. MOUTERDE, *Atti del III congresso internazionale d'archeologia cristiana*, Roma, 1934, p. 469; LASSUS, *Sanctuaires*, p. 214. But it is now generally recognized that the object is a pulpit, not a throne. Cf. LASSUS-TCHALENKO, *Ambons syriens*, p. 87; LASSUS, *La liturgie dans les basiliques syriennes*, p. 421; *Liturgies nestoriennes médiévales*, p. 244.

<sup>(4)</sup> This seems obvious from the shape and design of the pulpit. See the illustrations in CHABOT, *Inscriptions syriaques de Bennaoui, Syria*, 10, 1929, pp. 252-253; LASSUS, *Sanctuaires*, Pl. XL; LASSUS-TCHALENKO, *Ambons syriens*, pp. 96 ff. This pulpit has been found in Bennaoui, Qirqbize and Beḥyō, and there was probably one in other sites that have not yet been thoroughly studied or where the ruins are such that one can not reconstruct the bema completely.

<sup>(5)</sup> Cf. the lists of sees cited above in n. 1, p. 339.

that in this point fits the Chaldean plan. We have been unable to find an adequate study of this exedra, but according to a very brief description by Lassus<sup>(1)</sup> it was square-shaped, with benches on the north and south sides. Across the east end there was a chancel surmounted by small columns and an architrave. And jutting out slightly from the center of the straight west end was a semi-circular throne instead of the more usual pulpit. Do we have here, at last, an episcopal throne? A Syriac inscription found on the ruins of a bema in Zebed (5<sup>th</sup> century), "Ada Raboula made this throne [ṭrōnōs]"<sup>(2)</sup>, indicates that the bema was considered the place of some kind of throne. Nevertheless, neither Fafertin nor Zebed was an episcopal see. Only two towns in Region I had bishop as well as bema: Seleucia-Peria and Reṣāfe. For the martyrion of Seleucia, the evidence is not clear. And in Reṣāfe there was a throne behind the altar in the apse<sup>(3)</sup>.

Lassus, who is a bit over-eager to make the archeological remains of North Syria correspond exactly to the description of the church in the *Anonymi Auctoris Expositio*, considers this question of the pulpit a minor detail, a variation of no importance<sup>(4)</sup>. But for us, it is a crucial point in the whole question of the bema in the West-Syrian tradition: did the bishops and priests sit on it during the liturgy? That is, did they remain there seated, as in the Nestorian tradition, during the whole liturgy of the Word and for parts of other offices? Or was the bema merely a large ambon where the chanters remained to intone the liturgical chants, and which the deacons and lesser clergy ascended for the litanies, proclamations, readings, and other occasional rites? If so, then there is nothing remarkable about the liturgical use of the West-Syrian bema. The Byzantine ambon fulfilled the same purpose, and the bema we have been discussing would thus be peculiar only in shape and size.

As we shall see later when we examine the liturgical sources, all the earliest literary evidence in the Antiochene tradition points

<sup>(1)</sup> LASSUS, *Liturgies nestorianes médiévales*, p. 244 n. 1.

<sup>(2)</sup> L. JALABERT and R. MOUTERDE, S. J., *Inscriptions grecques et latines de la Syrie*. Paris, 1939, vol. 2 no. 313.

<sup>(3)</sup> According to LASSUS-TCHALENKO, *Ambons syriens* (pp. 84-5) this throne may be a later addition. For Seleucia, cf. LASSUS, *Sanctuaires*, p. 314.

<sup>(4)</sup> LASSUS, *Liturgies nestorianes médiévales*, p. 249.

to the more usual arrangement of throne, synthronon and altar in the eastern end of the church. And in one extant church where we have indisputable evidence of both bema and bishop, Reṣāfe, there is also a throne in the apse. True, there is also a synthronon on the exedra. But we are at least faced with a usage that differs from the Nestorian.

What, then, was the purpose of the pulpit in the west axis of the North-Syrian bema? It seems improbable that it was for reading or preaching. It is too small to hold conveniently a large open book, and in some churches it is so close to the rear wall of the church that the minister would be turned away from most of his congregation, and would be facing only the women<sup>(1)</sup>. Since this pulpit is found only in churches where there was no bishop, it was probably meant to hold the gospel, symbol of Christ as the true presiding minister of the liturgical assembly. There is abundant iconographical evidence for this symbolism, especially in the iconography of the Ecumenical Councils, where the conciliar fathers are depicted seated in a semi-circle, flanking the enthroned gospel, on an exedra remarkably like the Syrian bema<sup>(2)</sup>.

<sup>(1)</sup> In N. Beriš the ambon is only 2 m 05 from the west wall, 2 m 50 in Bettir, 3 m 10 in Qirqibize. In the latter church, the dossier of the ambon is only 48 cm wide, large enough to hold (opened) a book of 20 cm only. Cf. LASSUS-TCHALENKO, *Ambons syriens*, pp. 86, 96 ff; TCHALENKO *Villages*, I, p. 328 n. 4.

<sup>(2)</sup> For a discussion of this symbolism, cf. LASSUS-TCHALENKO, *Ambons syriens*, pp. 90-93; JANERAS, *Vestiges du bema*, pp. 121-122. Illustrations of this iconographic theme can be found in DALTON, *Byzantine Art and Archeology*, Oxford, 1911, pp. 240, 241, 645, 662; C. DIEHL, *Manuel d'art byzantin*, Paris, 1923, II, p. 882; A. GRABAR, *La peinture religieuse bulgare*, Paris, 1928, p. 146, and *Le schéma iconographique de la Pentecôte, Seminarium Kondakovianum*, 2, 1928, p. 224; MILLET, *Recherches sur l'iconographie de l'Évangile*, Paris, 1916, pp. 25-26; H. STERN, *Les représentations des conciles, Byzantion*, II, 1936, pp. 141-142; J. LEROY, *Les manuscrits syriaques à peintures conservés dans les bibliothèques d'Europe et d'Orient*, Paris 1964, pl. 97, 1-2; 101, 1, 3; 104, 1; 134, 2; 139, 2; I. ORTIZ DE URBINA, S. J., *Nicée et Constantinople*, Paris, 1963, p. 161. The empty throne is not an exclusively Christian symbol. Cf. J. AUBOYER, *Le trône vide dans la tradition indienne. Cah. Arch.*, 6, 1952, 1-9; C. PICARD, *Le trône vide d'Alexandre dans la cérémonie de cyinda et le culte de trône vide à travers le monde gréco-romain, Cah. Arch.*, 7, 1954, 1-17.

How are we to interpret the evidence thus far? It appears that on the basis of archeological evidence alone, we have not yet found a sure solution to the problem of the episcopal throne. If the arrangement found in Fafertin was typical of the early bema, the main celebrant of the liturgy, even if not a bishop, probably occupied the west throne. The introduction of the bema pulpit may have been a later refinement in non-episcopal churches, a sign that when there was no bishop, the gospel, and not one of the presbyters, presided in the name of Christ. The church of St. Sergius in Reşāfe was a center of pilgrimage, and might represent a mixed or later (6<sup>th</sup> century) tradition. Or, since Reşāfe had a bishop, it might well be that for the pontifical liturgy, the throne of the bishop was in the apse. We do not yet have enough evidence to solve this problem, but to argue from the usages of another tradition is bad methodology when the parallel is just not that clear.

We must still deal with the problem of chronology. If the early literary evidence points to the original Antiochene arrangement as having the synthronon in the apse, when did the bema come into use? The churches in question date from the 4-6<sup>th</sup> centuries. The date of a church is not necessarily that of its bema <sup>(1)</sup>. But the evidence seems to indicate that the exedra of the martyrion of Qausiye was built with the church in 381. The most recent church with bema is the church of North Beriš

<sup>(1)</sup> A list of the bema churches and their dates is given in LASSUS-TCHALENKO, *Ambons syriens*, pp. 94-95. There is a bema in the oldest dated church in N. Syria (Fafertin, 372) but it is not certain that the bema is part of the original structure. In the undated churches in Mir'āye and el Firge the floor mosaics continue under the bema. Hence it is probably a later addition. The bema in Qirqbize was added in the 5<sup>th</sup> century (see p. 347). We are not concerned here with the problem of the origin of the bema. Some have tried to trace it to the synagogue (cf. COQUIN, *Le "bēma"*, pp. 467 ff; HICKLEY, *Ambon*; L. BOUYER, *Rite and Man*, pp. 167 ff; *L'Eucharistie*, pp. 31-32. See also T. MATHEW's attack on BOUYER's thesis: *P. Bouyer on Sacred Space: A Re-appraisal*, *Downside Review*, 82, 1964, 111-123, and BOUYER's acrimonious reply on pp. 277-280 of the same volume). Another line of research might be to follow up a suggestion of LASSUS about the relationship of the bema to the cult of martyrs in the Syrian church. Perhaps the bema resulted from a fusion of the bema-type *confessio* like the one in Qausiye with the basilica. Cf. LASSUS, *Liturgies nestoriennes médiévales*, p. 250, *Sanctuaires*, 125 ff, 162 ff; TCHALENKO, *Villages*, I, p. 263 note.

(late 6<sup>th</sup>-early 7<sup>th</sup> century). Hence at least from the end of the 4<sup>th</sup> century until the Moslem conquest, the bema was in use in North Syria. After this time it would seem that no more bemas were built, and there is some evidence that the bema was even removed from some churches after this period, perhaps under Byzantine influence <sup>(1)</sup>.

But even in Region I the bema does not appear to have been part of the original arrangement of the church. Tchalenko has studied the successive stages in the liturgical disposition of the church of Qirqbize: <sup>(2)</sup>

1) early in the 4<sup>th</sup> century the church was an undivided hall with a platform raised one step at the east end.

2) mid-4<sup>th</sup> century: a triumphal arch is added to divide this platform from the nave.

3) beginning of the 5<sup>th</sup> century: the sanctuary is raised one more step, a chancel with one central door is added, as well as a sanctuary curtain. It is at this time that the bema is built in the center of the nave.

4) mid 5<sup>th</sup>-century: the sanctuary is closed off by a three-door chancel. But the sanctuary remains a single chamber, not divided into altar-room and pastophoria.

One might speculate, then, that the North-Syrian bema was introduced toward the end of the 4<sup>th</sup> century, at a time when the separation between sanctuary and nave was accentuated. Perhaps this new, enclosed sanctuary rendered impracticable the seating of the clergy in the apse, and led to the bema arrangement. But the problems with this idea are many. First, Reşāfe

<sup>(1)</sup> LASSUS-TCHALENKO, *Ambons syriens*, p. 78. The bema was removed from the church of Qalblōze, and LASSUS and TCHALENKO (p. 113) suggest that this took place during the re-occupation by the Byzantine forces of the mountainous region west of Aleppo in the campaigns of Nicephoras Phocas. They were driven out in the 2d Arab conquest. But long before this period (10-11 cent.), in the 7<sup>th</sup> century, 14 years of Persian occupation and later the Arab conquest cut off the trade routes to the West, the oil trade was wiped out, and this whole region in which the bema has been found declined economically and eventually became depopulated. Cf. TCHALENKO, *Villages*, I, pp. 431-438.

<sup>(2)</sup> TCHALENKO, *Villages*, I, pp. 329 ff and II, pl. CV, CVI. Cf. also II, pp. 332 ff, 338. The bema may have replaced an earlier, wooden one (cf. p. 334).

has a throne in the apse as well as bema, and was built (6<sup>th</sup> century) after the enclosed sanctuary had evolved. Secondly, only a limited number of churches had a bema, whereas the evolution of the enclosed sanctuary is general <sup>(1)</sup>. Finally, there is still no certain evidence that the clergy in the West-Syrian tradition ever sat on the bema, or, for that matter, that in churches to which a bema was later added, they had ever been seated in the sanctuary.

One final point before we leave Region I. Tchalenko has noted two important facts: 1) no bema has ever been discovered in a conventual church in this area; 2) where more than one church is found in a village, only one of them has a bema <sup>(2)</sup>. Hence even in Region I the bema was perhaps a usage exclusively of the cathedral rite, and only in the principal church of each town.

If we turn our attention briefly to the provinces of the Syrian rite found in Regions II-III — Syria Secunda, Phoenicia, Osrhoëne, Arabia, North Mesopotamia — not only do we find no trace of the North-Syrian or Chaldean type bema but, rather, clear evidence of another liturgical arrangement. In the sites to the south of Syria Prima, i.e. in Region II, we find a synthronon in the apse, the altar in a sanctuary enclosed by a chancel that extends some distance out beyond the apse, and an off-center ambon or pulpit jutting out into the nave from the chancel enclosure <sup>(3)</sup>. In Deir Şoleib the ambon is not attached to the chancel but stands free, in the middle of the church <sup>(4)</sup>.

<sup>(1)</sup> But other churches may have had wooden bemas (see p. 339). Also one cannot argue that all churches first had an open sanctuary that became progressively separated from the nave. Cf. H. STERN, *Nouvelles recherches sur les images des conciles dans l'Église de la Nativité à Bethléem*, *Cah. Arch.* 3, 1948, pp. 93-98; TCHALENKO, *Villages*, I, 333 n. 2; LASSUS, *Sanctuaires*, pp. 203 ff.

<sup>(2)</sup> TCHALENKO, *Villages*, I, p. 355. There are two bemas in Ruweiha, but the two churches are 2 centuries apart (South Church, 4<sup>th</sup> c., Church of Bizzos, 6<sup>th</sup> c.) and the later one was probably built to replace the former.

<sup>(3)</sup> Cf. J. W. CROWFOOT, *The Christian Churches*, in C. H. KRAELING, *Gerasa*, New Haven, 1938; LASSUS, *Sanctuaires*, pp. 198-99; 207; *Syrie*, *DACL*, XV<sup>3</sup>, col. 1884 n. 6, 1892 ff; SCHNEIDER, *Liturgie u. Kirchenbau*, pp. 64 ff; MOUTERDE, *Le limes de Chalcis*, p. 164.

<sup>(4)</sup> This was initially interpreted as being possibly the place of the altar (cf. J. MATTERN, R. MOUTERDE, et A. BEAULIEU, S. J., *Dair Solaib. 1 - Les deux églises*, *Mélanges de l'Univ. de S. Joseph*, 22, 1939, pp. 12-13). But is clearly an ambon. See also LASSUS, *Sanctuaires*, p. 212; LASSUS-TCHALENKO, *Ambons syriens*, p. 76, n. 2.

To the North, in Region III, the arrangement was similar to the Byzantine. Literary evidence indicates that the cathedral of Edessa had a large ambon in the center of the nave, with throne and synthronon in the apse. The extant churches of the Tur Abdin point to a similar arrangement <sup>(1)</sup>. Whether or not the literary sources call this ambon a "bema" is irrelevant. We cannot argue from words. Region IV, the Maphrianate of Tikrit, will be discussed later when we examine the literary sources. We know of no extant churches of the Maphrianate that have kept the early tradition of this area in the arrangement of the church <sup>(2)</sup>.

Before we move on to the literary evidence in the West-Syrian tradition, we might sum up the archeological evidence as follows:

- 1) The remains of a bema have been found in 31-32 West-Syrian churches.
- 2) All these churches are located in one region, comprising but a small portion of the area of the Syrian tradition.

<sup>(1)</sup> On Edessa, cf. A. DUPONT-SOMMER, *Une hymne syriaque sur la cathédrale d'Edesse*, *Cah. Arch.* 2, 1947, 29-39; A. GRABAR, *Le témoignage d'une hymne syriaque sur l'architecture de la cathédrale d'Edesse au VI<sup>e</sup> siècle et sur la symbolique de l'édifice chrétien*, *Cah. Arch.* 2, 1948, 41-67; H. GOUSSEN, *Über eine "Sugitha" auf die Kathedrale von Edessa*, *Le Muséon*, 38, 1925, 117-136; A.-M. SCHNEIDER, *Die Kathedrale von Edessa*, *Oriens Christianus*, 36, 1938, 161-167; A. BAUMSTARK, *Vorjustinianische kirchliche Bauten in Edessa*, *Oriens Christianus*, 4, 1904, 164-183; I. E. RAHMANI (ed.), *Chronicon civile et ecclesiasticum anonymi auctoris*, Scharfeh, 1904. On the Tur Abdin, see G. L. BELL, *The Churches and Monasteries of the Tur Abdin and Neighbouring Districts*, Heidelberg, 1913; H. POGNON, *Inscriptions sémitiques de la Syrie, de la Mésopotamie et de la région de Mossoul*, Paris, 1907 (esp. p. 92); FIEV, *Mossoul chrétienne*, pp. 87-102; HINDO, *Lieux et temps sacrés (Fonti codif. canon. or., ser. II, fasc. 28)* p. 133 n. 2. There are also many descriptions of churches in O. H. PARRY, *Six Months in a Syrian Monastery*, London, 1895.

<sup>(2)</sup> FIEV, *Mossoul chrétienne* (pp. 98-99) gives what little archeological evidence is available on the bema in this area. FIEV does not take into account the churches of N. Syria in his reconstruction of the ancient Syrian church, but he places throne and synthronon in the apse, and a bema without seats in the center of the nave. Cf. pp. 95-98 and pl. III.

3) All other areas (except Tikrit) seem to have a different arrangement in the churches. The large ambon in these churches may be called "bema" in Syriac, but it is not what has come to be considered the "typical" Syrian bema with seats, etc.

4) Even within the region where the bema is found, there are many churches with no bema, and some which seem never to have had one.

5) In towns with more than one church, only one church has a bema.

6) No bema has ever been found in a conventual church.

7) In the only bema-church where we know there was also a bishop, Reṣāfe, and where the remains are not obscure, there was also a throne in the apse.

8) The evolution of the bema may be linked to the evolution of the enclosed sanctuary.

9) The pulpit in the west axis of the bema was not an episcopal throne, nor does it seem to have been for reading or preaching. It was probably for the enthronement of the gospel.

10) It is possible that from the 4-7<sup>th</sup> century in what we have called Region I the clergy sat on the bema during the liturgy of the Word of the cathedral rite in the principal church of the town. But it is not proven. The bema synthronon could equally well have been occupied by a choir.

11) Consequently, on archeological grounds alone, the presumption that a Chaldean-type bema was *general* in the West-Syrian tradition seems without foundation.

12) The same may be said with respect to the various theories concerning the antiquity of the bema-type church arrangement as the original one in the primitive Christian church<sup>(1)</sup>.

<sup>(1)</sup> Cf. JARRY, *L'ambon dans la liturgie primitive*, esp. pp. 157 ff. The handling of liturgical evidence in this article is valueless. The author presupposes that later liturgical evolution was toward a simplification of the primitive liturgy. And his dating of liturgical sources is naive. He accepts the Migne edition of the liturgy of John Chrysostom as a pre-5<sup>th</sup> century source, the spurious 12<sup>th</sup> century commentary of Sophronius of Jerusalem as 7<sup>th</sup> century, etc. There is no evidence for most of the conclusions he claims to have "established with complete certitude". (p. 161)

### *The West-Syrian Literary Evidence.*

Unfortunately, the liturgical commentators of the Jacobite tradition have not provided us with the same wealth of detailed liturgical information as their Nestorian brethren. The ancient documents of the Antiochene tradition, both Greek and Syriac, place the altar, throne and synthronon in the east end of the church<sup>(1)</sup>. The shape of the ambon is not specified. According to the *Apostolic Constitutions* it was an elevated place in the center of the church<sup>(2)</sup>. The *Testamentum Domini Nostri Jesu Christi* refers simply to a place for the readings a short distance from the altar; the *Didascalia Arabica* adds the precision that it was a bit to the north<sup>(3)</sup>. The arrangement described in the *Apostolic Constitutions* corresponds best to that of the churches in Region III (Osrhoëne, Tur Abdin, etc.). The *Testamentum* and *Didascalia Arabica* correspond better to the southern tradition (Region II)<sup>(4)</sup>. At any rate there is no question of an elaborate bema of the type described in the Nestorian sources.

A text from John of Ephesus' († 586) *Lives of Two Monks* also places the bishop's throne in the apse. He recounts how the devil possessed a woman and had her mount the throne (trōnōs) of the bishop "which is usually placed in the churches or in the chief martyrs' chapels on the dais [qestṛōmā] of the altar [d-

<sup>(1)</sup> *Ap. Const.* II, 57, 4 (FUNK, I, 161); *Didascalia* II, 57, 4-5 (FUNK, I, 158-160); *Testamentum* I, 19 (RAHMANI, p. 24 [25]); *Didascalia Arabica*, 35, 6-10 (FUNK II, 124-125).

<sup>(2)</sup> *Ap. Const.* II, 57, 5 (FUNK I, 161).

<sup>(3)</sup> *Testamentum*, *loc. cit.*; *Didascalia Arabica*, 25, 16 (FUNK II, 125). Another source, the *Didascalia of Addai*, merely states what is to be read in the bema. Cf. HINDO, *Lieux et temps sacrés* (*Fonti*, ser. II, fasc. 28), p. 133.

<sup>(4)</sup> And in Region I, the churches of the Antiochene littoral undoubtedly corresponded to the *Constitutions*, and had an ambon instead of a bema. SCHNEIDER, following a suggestion of CROWFOOT, uses this correspondence between the *Testamentum Domini* and the churches between Bosra and Gerasa to date the text as 5<sup>th</sup> century. Other elements of the *Testamentum* (e. g. the places reserved for men and women in the lateral naves) also correspond to the southern arrangement. Cf. CROWFOOT, *The Christian Churches*, p. 176; SCHNEIDER, *Liturgie u. Kirchenbau*, pp. 64-67; LASSUS, *Liturgies nestorienne médievales*, p. 246. SCHNEIDER (*loc. cit.*) also believes that the *Didascalia Arabica* corresponds best to the churches of the Ḥaurān.

maḏbhā]” (1). John was a monk in the region of Amida, was consecrated bishop of Ephesus c. 558 although there is no evidence he ever resided there, and after 566 became the head of the Monophysites in Constantinople, who had been protected by Theodora and later Justinian. His *Lives* were written in 566-567, so perhaps he is describing the “northern” usage, or at least a usage under Byzantine influence (2).

For the church of Hagia Sophia in Edessa, the evidence indicates a similar arrangement: altar and synthronon in the apse, ambon in the center of the nave (3).

Among the Jacobite commentators on the liturgy, George, “bishop of the Arab tribes” († c. 724) (4), Moses Bar Kepha († 903) and Dionysius Bar Salibi († 1171) do not mention a bema or ambon at all, nor do they give any indication where those ceremonies appropriate to it — the readings, proclamations, etc. — took place. Bar Kepha and Bar Salibi, the latter copying his predecessor, say only that the “orientals”, unlike the westerners, have preserved the custom of having the deacon proclaim the kārōzūtā after the creed. This he does “on the steps” (el dargē), whatever that means (5).

Yahya ibn Ġarīr (c. 1083) and Ya‘qub ibn Šakhō († 1241) are a bit more helpful. Ibn Šakhō in his *Book of Treasures* men-

(1) Or “to the East” [madnhā], reading of Land. Cf. E. W. BROOKS, (ed.) *John of Ephesus, Lives of the Eastern Saints, Patrolog. Orientalis*, 17, Paris, 1923, p. 225; J. P. N. LAND, *Anecdota Syriaca* II, Leyden, 1868, p. 124.

(2) BROOKS, *John of Ephesus*, Introduction, pp. iv ff.

(3) See note 1, above, p. 349.

(4) I. e. bishop of the Arab tribes that had been converted from paganism before the advent of Islam. Their bishop, a suffragan of the Maphrian of Tikrit, had no fixed residence, Cf. HINDO, *Éparchies du Maphrianat*, Appendice II, *Fonti*, ser. II fasc. 26, pp. 518-521. For GEORGE’S commentary, see the following note.

(5) R. H. CONNOLLY and H. W. CODRINGTON, *Two Commentaries on the Jacobite Liturgy by George Bishop of the Arab Tribes and Moses Bar Kepha, together with the Syrian Anaphora of St. James, and a Document entitled the Book of Life*, London, 1913, p. 38; H. LABOURT (ed.) *Dionysius Bar Salibi Expositio Liturgiae*, CSCO, Scr. Syr. ser. II, tom. 93, Paris, 1903, p. 40 [60]. “Orientals” here means the East-Syrian Jacobites of the Maphrianate of Tikrit. BAR KEPHA was himself an “oriental”, and the kārōzūtā he refers to was a warning to the faithful to “stand aright” that came after the creed.

tions a bema without giving any further information as to its form or use (1). Ibn Ġarīr, on the other hand, in his *Kitāb al Muršid*, gives a description of the Jacobite church and even points out how it differs from the Nestorian. Since this work is in Arabic, we have had to rely on the recent French translation of Khouri-Sarkis for the following information (2). According to Ġarīr, the bema was in the middle of the nave and is the figure of Golgotha where Christ died and where the head of Adam was buried [11]. Between the sanctuary and bema there is a walled-in pathway used by the priests and deacons at the time for reading the sacred books. Each one of the walls enclosing this corridor is pierced by an opening, perhaps to permit access across the pathway to the northern side of the nave [13-14]. To the right and left are two places (pulpits?) on the bema for reading the Holy Scriptures [15]. But here the Jacobite tradition differs from the Nestorian. One pulpit is for the Old Testament, one for the epistles of St. Paul and Acts, but the gospel is read “in the middle” [15], and he immediately adds that the Nestorians have in the middle of the bema a ciborium that symbolises the tomb of Adam. Later he returns to the readings. The Old Testament is read on the left side, the New Testament on the right [17]. For the reading of the gospel in the center of the bema, all the priests and deacons mount the bema with the priest who is to read the gospel and surround him like the disciples around the Lord [17-18]. The Old Testament readings are done facing east, but the priest turns west, i. e. toward the assembly, for the gospel, because the gospel is a preaching for the faithful, and should be done facing them [22]. During the reading of the gospel there are also the usual candles and incense [19]. Right after the gospel the priest descends from the bema [21].

In this description the following details should be noted. Nothing is said of the shape of the bema, but it was certainly quite large and, unlike the bemas of North Syria, connected to

(1) Quoted in HINDO, *Lieux et temps sacrés* (*Fonti*, ser. II, fasc. 28) p. 134.

(2) G. KHOURI-SARKIS, *Le “Livre de Guide” de Yahya ibn Jarir, l’Or. Syrien*, 12, 1967, pp. 303-354. The numbers in brackets refer to the paragraph numbers in this translation, the pertinent sections of which are on pp. 319-331. Cf. also HINDO, *Lieux et temps sacrés*, pp. 132-133; COQUIN, *Le “bima”*, p. 454.

the sanctuary by a šqāqōnā. There was no ciborium, but the gospel was read in the center where in the Nestorian tradition the Golgotha is found. This perhaps explains why the bemas of Rešāfe and Behyō had a ciborium but no Golgotha altar. It was under the ciborium that the gospel was read. That the gospel was read facing west seems odd. In the traditional Jacobite arrangement, only the women were west of the bema, and as we have seen, in smaller churches there would have been very little space for anyone in the western end of the nave. There is no indication of a bema throne, or that anyone sat on the bema. In fact the author seems to indicate that the clergy came to the bema for the readings [14] and left right after the gospel [21].

The last Jacobite author to mention the bema is Bar Hebraeus († 1286). Speaking of the consecration of the myron on Holy Thursday, he refers to three choirs, one of which is on the bema. The bishop is seated on a high throne to the east of the altar, not on the bema. The brief description of the liturgy does not mention how the bema fits into the ceremonial. But at the end of the liturgy, the clergy exit to the bema, mount it, and the bishop gives the blessing with the newly consecrated myron (1).

All the Jacobite authors mentioned so far, except Bar Salibi, were East-Syrian Jacobites. That is to say, they lived in that part of Mesopotamia subject to the Maphrian of Tikrit (2). This

(1) A. MAI, *Scriptorum veterum nova collectio*, X, Rome, 1838: *Ecclēsiæ Antiochenae Syrorum Nomocanon a Gregorio Abulpharagio bar-Hebraeo syriace compositus*, pp. 17-18. Two other documents mention the use of the bema during the consecration of the myron: the MSS *Vat. Syr. 51* (1172) and *Borg. Syr. 57* (1686, copied from the former). The clergy are seated not on the bema but in the sanctuary, for the OT readings. They come to the bema for the readings from the NT. Cf. E. R. HAMBYE, *Les chrétiens syro-malabars et le "bima"*, p. 89.

(2) On the Maphrianate, see HINDO, *Éparchies du Maphrianat*, Appendix II in *Fonti*, ser. II, fasc. 26, pp. 517-527. As we have seen, GEORGE was a suffragan of the Maphrian. BAR KEPHA, born in Balad, was later bishop in Mosul and for 10 years visitator of Tikrit. ĞARİR was from Tikrit itself. BAR SALIBI, born in Melitene, became metropolitan of Amida. IBN ŠAKHŌ was born in Bartella near Mosul and was a monk and later bishop in nearby Mar Mattai. BAR HEBRAEUS was born in Melitene and later became Maphrian, ending his life in Mar Mattai. Cf. A. BAUMSTARK, *Geschichte der syrischen Literatur*, Bonn, 1922. On Tikrit, cf. also FIEV, *Tagrit, Esquisse d'histoire chrétienne*, l'Or. Syrien. 8, 1963, 289-342.

is an important point. The Maphrianate was relatively independent of the Jacobite Patriarch, and at least as far as the Office and liturgical year is concerned, had its own distinct rite (1). Hence we cannot too hastily apply to the Western-Jacobite tradition Ğarir's description of the bema of Tikrit.

One final source remains. In 1908 Rahmani published a most interesting Syriac MS describing the rite of reception of a bishop (2). From internal evidence the MS can be dated around the first half of the 6th century, and the strong Greek influence it shows indicates that it is definitely not a Nestorian document. But we cannot therefore conclude that the MS is of Syro-Antiochene provenance. For it also contains evidence of Oriental influence, and hence could well have been written within the Maphrianate of Tikrit (3). Because of its uniqueness, we have reserved discussion of it until now.

According to the document, after the bishop has arrived at the church of the town and has entered it, the deacon proclaims a litany, incense is offered, and then "the bishop mounts to the bema and blesses the assembly with sign of the cross... Coming down from the bema, the bishop goes to the *episcopion*..." (4).

(1) J. MATEOS, *Les matines chaldéennes, maronites et syriennes*, *Or. Christ. Per.*, 26, 1960, pp. 65 ff.

(2) *Ordo quo episcopus urbem inire debet*, ed. I. E. RAHMANI, *Studia Syriaca*, fasc. III, Charfeh, 1908, pp. 1-4 [16-22]. See also the French translation of KHOURI-SARKIS, *Réception d'un évêque syrien au VI<sup>e</sup> siècle*, *l'Or. Syrien*, 2, 1957, 137-184. There is also a Greek translation in J. M. HANSENS, *Institutiones liturgicae de ritibus orientalibus*, Rome, 1932, III, pp. 542-543. RAHMANI's edition is based on a recent copy of an 8-9th century MS belonging to the Jacobite church in Mediā near Mardin. Both RAHMANI and KHOURI-SARKIS date the MS as early, at least before the Moslem conquest. KHOURI-SARKIS places it in the 6th century, a date accepted by P.-E. GEMAYEL (*Avant-messe maronite*, Rome, 1965, p. 152).

(3) KHOURI-SARKIS (*Réception*, p. 145 ff) points out the double influence, Greek and Oriental, in the document, and argues that the MS could have originated in a city such as Mayferqaṭ (near Amida) which borders on areas under both Byzantine and Nestorian influence. This see was not within the Maphrianate, which we prefer as a place of origin for the MS because it was in even closer contact with Nestorianism, and at the same time the Office of Tikrit shows far more evidence of Byzantine influence than its Western sister rite.

(4) RAHMANI, *Studia Syriaca*, p. 2 [17]. COQUIN (*Le "bima"*, p. 450) says it is clear from this document that the bishop entered the

These are the only two places where the bema is mentioned in the whole document <sup>(1)</sup>. However, it seems to be implied in the description of the liturgy of the Word, when the lectors are said to "ascend" for the readings.

Where was the bishop during the readings? According to the document, when the introit procession, led by the archdeacon bearing the gospel, leaves the diaconicon, the introit chant is intoned <sup>(2)</sup>, a prayer is said, and the Trisagion is sung. Then the bishop says the prayer before the readings "and sits in his place, and the presbyters sit according to their rank" <sup>(3)</sup>. During the readings the bishop "remains on his throne, and those that are seated remain in their places" <sup>(4)</sup>. Where was this throne? Apparently not in the sanctuary, because after the dismissals and lavabo "the bishop enters and stands before the altar, and immediately the psalmists begin to sing the alleluia before the mysteries. And as soon as they have arrived at the door of the sanctuary, the veils are opened. And as soon as the mysteries are placed on the altar, the bishop offers incense, and they say the creed" <sup>(5)</sup>. One cannot rule out the possibility that the bishop and priests were seated in the apse and came out perhaps to the bema for the gospel <sup>(6)</sup>, or to the qeṣṭrōmā for the lavabo. But the text offers no foundation for such an interpretation.

---

church by the southeast door. He undoubtedly did, but this is not at all clear from the text.

<sup>(1)</sup> KHOURI-SARKIS in his translation interpolates the word bema in various places where this seems to be the sense of the Syriac text, but the word itself is used only twice in the original.

<sup>(2)</sup> According to the text, "The vigilers begin the office". RAHMANI, p. 2 [17].

<sup>(3)</sup> *Loc. cit.*

<sup>(4)</sup> RAHMANI, pp. 2-3 [19]. There is no mention of ministers going to the sanctuary or diaconicon to fetch the lectionaries, or of any solemn procession with the gospel as in the Chaldean liturgical commentaries.

<sup>(5)</sup> RAHMANI, pp. 3-4 [22]. In today's West-Syrian rite the lavabo takes place after the entrance, but the lavabo has been a mobile element in the Byzantine and Chaldean traditions also. The document (p. 3 [20-21]) also states that the archdeacon, during the dismissals, carries the gospel which was placed "on the altar". Does this indicate that in some places there was a Golgotha altar in the Jacobite tradition, in spite of IBN ĠARĪR?

<sup>(6)</sup> The text (p. 3), merely says that the gospel is read.

The history of the West-Syrian eucharistic liturgy — especially the *ordo communis* — has never been adequately studied, and so it is hard to draw any sure conclusions with respect to the shape of the Jacobite liturgy of the Word <sup>(1)</sup>. The ceremonial described by the document of Rahmani corresponds well to the archeological findings in Region I. And the simplest interpretation of the text would seem to be that the liturgy opened with an introit procession to the bema, where the clergy then sat for the liturgy of the Word. But this interpretation is not certain — and this is the only non-Nestorian literary source that can be interpreted to mean that the clergy sat on the bema for the first part of the mass. As we have seen, there are clear references in Syrian sources to a choir on the bema, or to the readings, but not a word of anyone sitting there for the whole liturgy of the Word.

By the time of Ibn Ġarīr the Jacobite liturgy had developed an extended enarxis or foremass before the readings. It is not clear in Ġarīr whether the ancient introit procession had retained its original place before the readings, or whether the priests came to the bema only for the gospel. But at any rate the text seems to imply that right after the gospel, they returned to the sanctuary. By this time, then, the role of the bema in the liturgy had already been greatly reduced.

And by the time of Bar Salibi it has disappeared entirely, along with the ancient procession, which has been replaced by a procession from the sanctuary, around the church, and back to the sanctuary again, just before the reading of the gospel <sup>(2)</sup>. Bar Salibi is the only one who mentions this procession, and the difficulties to which it gives rise are beyond the scope of our study. Today the Jacobites, like the Byzantines, have retained before the Trisagion a gospel procession as a relic of the old introit, and the apparently misplaced procession of Bar Salibi has disappeared.

<sup>(1)</sup> Cf. A. RAES, S. J. *L'étude de la liturgie syrienne: son état actuel, Miscellanea Liturgica L. C. Mohlberg*, Rome, 1948, I, p. 335. GEMAYEL (*Avant-messe maronite*) has done some preliminary work (pp. 145-201 esp.) but this is only a beginning. His study is concerned mainly with the Maronite mass. He notes (p. 144) that some Maronite sources mention a bema, but there is no evidence as to whether it was merely an ambon, or a true bema.

<sup>(2)</sup> LABOURT, *Bar Salibi Expositio*, pp. 19-20 [46].

*Conclusion.*

In the West-Syrian tradition we find nowhere any unchallengeably clear reference to the fact that the clergy sat or remained on the bema for the liturgy of the Word. And every clear reference to the bishop's throne in the literary sources puts it in the apse, not on the bema. This is the nub of the question.

Nevertheless, the archeological evidence in a small area of the West-Syrian rite proves clearly the existence of a bema on which one could sit. Who sat there can not be proven, but it seems that in this region, from the 4-7<sup>th</sup> centuries, the physical shape of the Syrian liturgy of the Word was similar — but by no means identical — to that of the Nestorian liturgies described in the commentaries of the East-Syrian tradition. We have seen evidence, however, that this arrangement was not universal even in this region.

Since the liturgical influence in Syria and Mesopotamia generally travelled from West to East, it is likely that the bema passed from West Syria into Mesopotamia, where it was preserved by the Nestorians and the Jacobites of Tikrit long after it had fallen into disuse in the West.

This liturgical disposition seems never to have taken hold in the churches to the south of Apamea. Whether it had once spread north into Orshoëne and the region around the Tur Abdin, only to be wiped out by later Byzantine influence, is unknown. That the Jacobites in this region had a large ambon in the center of the church which was called a bema; that this bema was large enough to hold a number of ministers; that it was used by priests and deacons and psalmodists for readings and litanies and antiphons, and on special feasts for other functions — all this is clear enough. But there is nothing peculiarly "Syrian" about any of it, except the fact that perhaps all the clergy came to the bema for the readings<sup>(1)</sup>.

The final solution to the problem of the bema has not yet been found. The case for the Chaldean rite is clear. But the

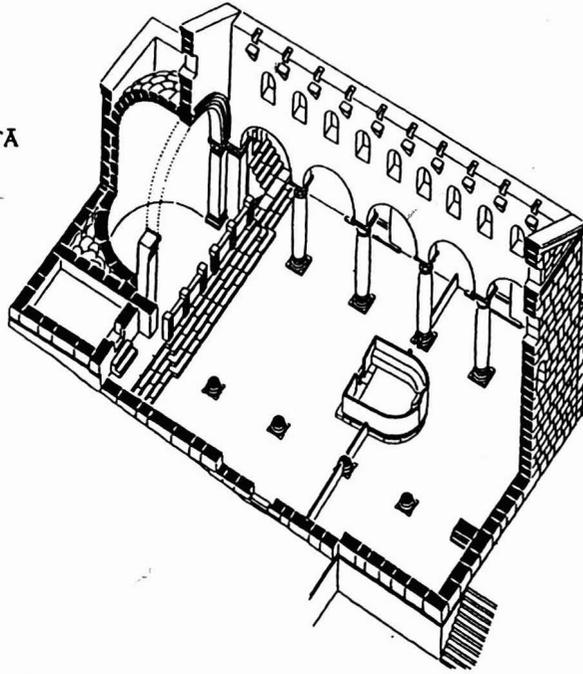
<sup>(1)</sup> SCHNEIDER says that the bema in the church of Mar Azizael in the Tur Abdin proves that the Jacobites and Nestorians had the same foremass ritual. This is precisely what it does *not* prove. Cf. *Liturgie u. Kirchenbau*, p. 62.

evidence in the West-Syrian rite points to more than one tradition in the arrangements of the church, and the evidence for an arrangement of the Byzantine type, with throne in the apse, seems clearer and more constant except in the limestone massif of North Syria.

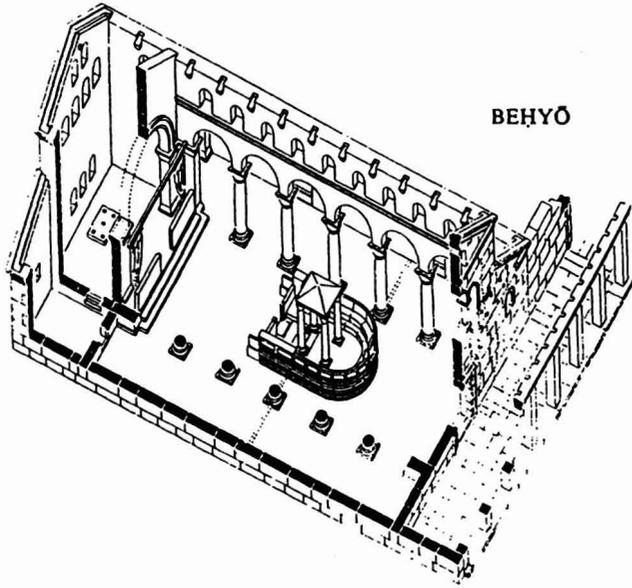
Thus the picture is far from clear, but it is certain that the evidence for the general use in the Jacobite tradition of a church arrangement similar to that described by the Chaldean commentators is far weaker than has been sometimes supposed. And there is not a shred of evidence that such an arrangement was ever adopted in the Byzantine rite<sup>(1)</sup>.

<sup>(1)</sup> As this article went to press, we had occasion to read L. BOUYER'S *Architecture et Liturgie*, Paris, 1967. B. treats extensively the bema and its origins — which do not concern us here — and proposes a bema-arrangement for the Byzantine tradition as well. The lack of critical apparatus makes it difficult to judge the basis for B's thesis, but it is clear that he too readily transfers elements from one tradition to another: e. g. he puts a Golgotha (p. 33) and the Nestorian pulpit arrangement (p. 35) on the Western bema; his plan of the Nestorian church does not correspond to the literary and archeological evidence (p. 30, fig. 2), etc. More serious is his attempt to see a bema-type arrangement in the Byzantine tradition (pp. 54 ff.) The references he gives on p. 56 do not support his theory — and he offers no others. Nor can one argue (p. 59) from the pontifical liturgy. The bishop mounts to the throne *in the apse* at the true introit, the entrance with the gospel; all that precedes is a later addition. The Byzantine church had, of course a large ambon that was used for readings, chants, and other special ceremonies. In Hagia Sophia it was even connected to the sanctuary area by a pathway, as in the E. Syrian tradition. That Syrian architecture and liturgy had its influence in Byzantium is clear enough. The point is, did the clergy remain on the ambon for the whole liturgy of the word? We know of no evidence to support this thesis, attractive as it may seem. True, there are references to Chrysostom at Constantinople preaching seated on the ambon (SOCRATES, PG 67, 673; SOZOMEN, PG 67, 1528), but it is spoken of as something unusual, which Chrysostom did so he could be heard by everyone in the crowded church. There are parallels between the Byzantine rite and the symbolism of the Syrian bema (cf. JANERAS, *Vestiges du bima syrien*), but the bishop's throne was in the apse. Also, we think HICKLEY wrong in identifying the chancel of some Lebanese churches as a bema (*Sobornost*, n° 6, 1968, p. 412).

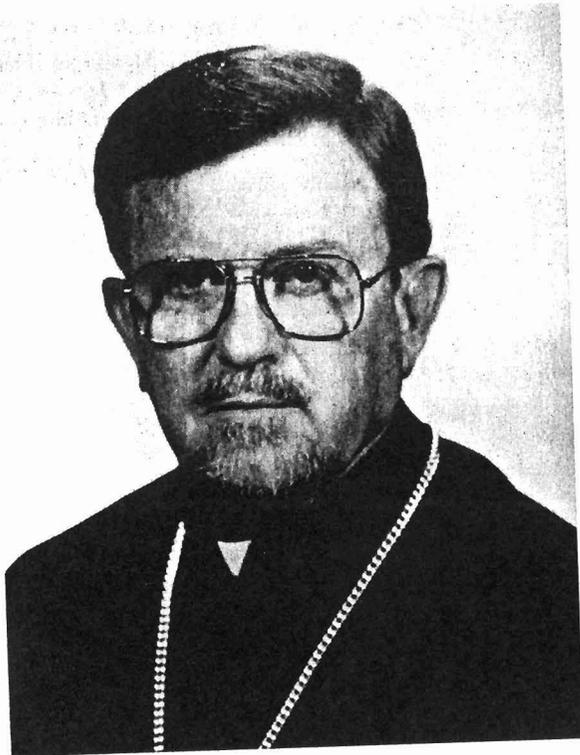
DARQĪTĀ



BEHYŌ



Two types of Syrian bema, adapted from G. Tchalenko, E. Baccache, *Églises de village de Syrie du Nord. Planches* (Institut français d'archéologie du Proche-Orient, Beyrouth-Dam Amman, Bibliothèque archéologique et historique, Tome CV, Documents d'archéologie: La Sy à l'époque de l'Empire romain d'Orient, N° 1, Paris 1979) plates 183, 247.



Professor Robert F. Taft, S.J.

Robert F. Taft

---

Liturgy in Byzantium  
and Beyond

---

**Ashgate**

VARIORUM

*Aldershot*  
*1995*

## ADDITIONAL NOTES AND COMMENTS

The following information is intended to take account of at least the principal works that have appeared since the studies in this anthology were published.

### I. The Liturgy of the Great Church on the Eve of Iconoclasm (1980-1981):

I have now synthesized my views on the entire history of the Byzantine liturgical tradition in R.F. Taft, *The Byzantine Rite. A Short History* (American Essays in Liturgy, Collegeville: The Liturgical Press 1992). There is also newly available an edition with English translation of Germanus' *Historia Ecclesiastica*: St. Germanus of Constantinople, *On the Divine Liturgy*. The Greek Text with Translation, Introduction and Commentary by Paul Meyendorff (Crestwood, N.Y.: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press 1984), with an introduction largely dependent on my study. Furthermore, another fundamental work has now been translated into English: H.-J. Schulz, *The Byzantine Liturgy. Symbolic Structure and Faith Expression* (New York: Pueblo 1986). K. Ch. Felmy, *Die Deutung der Göttlichen Liturgie in der russischen Theologie. Wege und Wandlungen russischer Liturgie-Auslegung* (Arbeiten zu Kirchengeschichte 54, Berlin/New York: Walter de Gruyter 1984), treats the *Nachleben* of Orthodox liturgical commentaries in "Byzance après Byzance," Concerning Iconoclasm as a conservative movement (I 46 note 7; I 72) Thomas F. Mathews has kindly pointed out to me (letter of 30 June 1983) an important earlier article on this issue that I had neglected: Sister Charles Murray, "Art and the Early Church," *JTS* 28 (1977) 303-345.

### II. The Pontifical Liturgy of the Great Church (1979-1980):

After much debate with colleagues concerning some of the principles (II 281) I proposed to follow for the edition of the Greek text in No. II, or when to regularize a text with fluctuating orthography, or whether to correct accentuation in the ms (e.g., ἰδέ vs. ἴδε) that may be acceptable in some but not all levels/periods of Greek, I have decided to leave my edition more or less as is except for the correction of misprints and obvious errors. I do so not from any rash conviction that there is only one acceptable view of such issues, but because this is not the place (nor, indeed, is it within my area of special competence) to debate them.

To the list of primary sources cited (II 89-96) add the late (ca. 1600 AD?) Greek archieratikon in codex *Washington D.C. Library of Congress Ms 37*, which I have since had occasion to study. The ms is described in S. Schutzner, *Medieval and Renaissance Manuscript Books in the Library of Congress. A Descriptive Catalog*. Vol. 1: *Bibles, Liturgy, Books of Hours* (Washington, D.C.: Library of Congress 1989) 237-243. I am grateful to Declan Murphy and Thomas Noonan of the Rare Books Division of The Library of Congress for bringing this ms to my attention and facilitating my research. Important new secondary sources can also be added to the bibliography to complete (or in some minor points modify) what I said on several issues: on Slavonic sources in general, see the dissertation written under my direction and containing material broader in scope than the limitations imposed by its title: L.D. Huculak, OSBM, *The Divine Liturgy of St. John Chrysostom in the Kievian Metropolitan Province during the Period of Union with Rome (1596-1839)*, (Analecta OSBM, series 2, section 1, vol. 47, Rome 1990); on acclamations/diptychs (II 115): Michael McCormick, *Eternal Victory. Triumphal Rulership in Late Antiquity, Byzantium, and the Early Medieval West*

(Cambridge/Paris 1986) and R.F. Taft, *A History of the Liturgy of St. John Chrysostom*, vol. IV: *The Diptychs* (OCA 238, Rome 1991); on the choir at Hagia Sophia (against what I affirm in II 286, note 19): N.K. Moran, *Singers in Late Byzantine and Slavonic Painting* (Byzantina Neerlandica, Fasc. 9, Leiden 1986) esp. ch. 3: "The Byzantine Choir"; on the ektenē (II 293-4; 116): S. Parenti, "L'Ektenē della Liturgia di Crisostomo nell'eucologio St. Petersburg gr. 226," *Eulogema* 295-318; on concelebration (II 101): R.F. Taft, "Byzantine Liturgical Evidence in the Life of St. Marcan the Oeconomus: Concelebration and the Preanaphoral Rites," OCP 48 (1982) 159-70; idem, *Beyond East and West. Problems in Liturgical Understanding* (NPM Studies in Church Music and Liturgy, Washington D.C. 1984) ch. 6; on rogations (ἀιτή) and stational liturgy (II 287, 111-12): J.F. Baldovin, *The Urban Character of Christian Worship. The Origins, Development, and Meaning of Stational Liturgy* (OCA 228, Rome 1987); idem, "A Note on the Liturgical Processions in the Menologion of Basil II (Ms. Vat. Gr. 1613)," *Eulogema* 25-39; on the communion, thanksgiving, and final rites in general (II 298-307, 118-24): R.F. Taft, *Beyond East and West* 182-8; idem, "Reconstructing the History of the Byzantine Communion Ritual: Principles, Methods, Results," *Ecclesia Orans* 9 (1994) 355-377; in particular, on the communion antiphon (II 305, 119-22): Th. Schattauer, "The Koinonicon of the Byzantine Liturgy: An Historical Study," OCP 49 (1983) 91-129; on the zeon (II 118): R.F. Taft, "Water into Wine. The Twice-Mixed Chalice in the Byzantine Eucharist," *Mus* 100 (1987) 323-342; on the clergy communion (II 300-303, 118-19): R.F. Taft, *Beyond East and West*, 101-109; on the ambo and Opisthambonos Prayer (II 306-7; 123): A. Jacob, "Où était récitée la prière de l'ambon?" *Byz* 51 (1981) 306-315; A. Kazhdan, "A Note on the 'Middle-Byzantine' Ambo," *Byz* 5 (1987) 422-426; G. Passarelli, "Osservazioni liturgiche," *BBGG* 33 (1979) 85-91, and the now available study to which he refers: idem, *Macario Crisocéfalo (1300-1382). L'omelia sulla festa dell'Ortodossia e la basilica di S. Giovanni di Filadelfia* (OCA 210, Rome 1980).

### III. The Authenticity of the Chrysostom Anaphora (1990):

This study is reviewed by U. Zanetti, "Histoire de la Liturgie de S. Jean Chrysostome: petit état de la question," *Byz* 63 (1993) 435-437. One announced study (III 17 note 44) has appeared in the meantime: J.R.K. Fenwick, *The Anaphoras of St Basil and St James. An Investigation into their Common Origin* (OCA 240, Rome 1992), concerning which, however, see the serious reservations in the excellent and detailed review of G. Winkler, *OC* 78 (1994) 269-77. On later interpolations into the Chrysostom Anaphora provoked by the fourth-century trinitarian controversies, see now the new study of E. Lanne, "Gli incisi trinitari nell'anafora di San Giovanni Crisostomo e nelle anafore imparentate," *Eulogema* 269-283. To the studies on the Dêr-Balizeh papyrus cited (III, 40), add K. Gamber, "Der liturgische Papyrus von Deir el-Balâi' izah in Oberägypten (6./7. Jh.)," *Mus* 82 (1969) 61-83.

### IV. Mount Athos (1988):

On the formation of the Byzantine liturgical synthesis treated in this and the two following studies (Nos. V-VI), see now R.F. Taft, *The Byzantine Rite. A Short History* (cited above, No. I). There is also newly available a corrected and improved, revised edition of idem, *The Liturgy of the Hours in East and West. The Origins of the Divine Office and its Meaning for Today*, (2nd revised edition, Colledgeville: The Liturgical Press 1993), as well as Italian and French versions of the same: *La Liturgia delle Ore in Oriente e in Occidente. Le origini dell'Ufficio divino e il suo significato oggi* (Testi di teologia 4, Cinisello Balsamo [Milano]: Edizioni Paoline 1988); *La Liturgie des Heures en Orient et en Occident. Origine et sens de l'Office divin* (Mysteria 2, Turnhout: Brepols 1991).

### V. In the Bridegroom's Absence (1990):

On the question of icons — i.e., portable sacred images as distinct from iconographic church decorative programs in fresco or mosaic — and their use in the liturgy, treated here only

tangentially (V 86ff), see the excellent new study of Nancy Patterson Ševčenko, "Icons in the Liturgy," *DOP* 45 (1991) 45-57.

### VII. Some Notes on the Bema (1968):

The problem of the "Syrian Bema" continues unabatedly to exercise the imagination of archeologists and liturgiologists. Though numerous works have appeared on the topic since the appearance of "Some Notes," authors continue to use my study as a point of reference for the liturgical interpretation of this intriguing exedra.

**Archeological:** By far the most exciting news is the discovery in 1989 of a hitherto unknown bema-church at a dig in Iraqi Kurdistan, some 20 km southwest of Sulaimaniya, in the province of the same name. The Gulf War and its aftermath have prevented any adequate study of this new excavation, but I have been able to examine photographs of the site taken by Rev. Ephrem Mati. For this information and the photos, I am indebted to my graduate student Rev. Pauly Maniyattu. The church, provisionally dated by local Iraqi researchers to the 6th century, is part of a much larger building complex thought to be a monastery. Clearly visible in the photos is a large semicircular bema in the center of the nave, elevated above floor level and reached by two steps at the center of its straight front end, which forms the diameter of the semicircle facing the sanctuary to the east. The outer edge of the bema platform is surmounted by a masonry border about 50 cm wide (all measurements are but approximate estimations from the photos), and elevated about 50 cm above the floor of the bema platform, to form a synthronon. This synthronon has a throne — clearly a throne and not a pulpit — at the center of its curved west end. The qestroma or elevated sanctuary platform juts out only about 50 cm in front of the sanctuary enclosure. This enclosure, a solid masonry wall, is pierced by a large central doorway giving access to the sanctuary. Three steps cut into the center of the qestroma platform lead directly up to this sanctuary entrance, at the doorsill of which the sanctuary interior is elevated another step above the level of the qestroma. Of special interest is the šqaqona, which appears from the photos to be a pathway at floor-level enclosed by walls. These walls extend from the front (east) end of the bema to just before the qestroma or sanctuary platform, where they break to allow passage north-south between qestroma and šqaqona, as has been traditionally presumed in hypothetical reconstructions of the East-Syrian church arrangement (VII 333-4). Until the débris at the site are carefully sifted it will not be possible to reconstruct other aspects of the bema (pulpits, Golgotha, etc.). This exciting new discovery confirms, modifies, or nuances views of the East-Syrian bema in the following ways:

1. If the site was indeed a monastery, this would be the first confirmed bema-church in a monastic context (VII 348, 351).
2. The semicircular shape of the bema shows that the curved-end bema was not a West-Syrian peculiarity (VII 330, 334, 342).
3. The clearly visible throne at the center of the curved western extremity of the exedra confirms this aspect of the East-Syrian bema vis-à-vis the more common West-Syrian bema pulpit (VII 341-6, 350).
4. The hitherto hypothetical reconstruction from East-Syrian literary sources (VII 333-4) of the nature and shape of the šqaqona as a floor-level pathway enclosed by walls and extending from the bema to just before the qestroma, where it breaks to allow passage north-south across the nave in front of the sanctuary entrance, is now for the first time confirmed by archeological data.

Most important new studies on the bema-churches have also been archeological. See chiefly the following superb volumes: G. Tchalenko, E. Baccache, *Églises de village de la Syrie du Nord. Planches* (Institut français d'archéologie du Proche-Orient, Beyrouth-Damas-Amman, Bibliothèque archéologique et historique, Tome CV, Documents d'archéologie: La

Syrie à l'époque de l'Empire romain d'Orient, N° 1, Paris 1979); E. Baccache, *Ibid.*, *Album* (*ibid.*, Paris 1980); G. Tchalenko (†1987), *Églises syriennes à bēma. Text* (*ibid.*, Paris 1990); Pauline Donceel-Voûte, *Les pavements des églises byzantines de Syrie et du Liban. Décor, archéologie et liturgie*, 2 vols. (Publications d'histoire de l'art et d'archéologie de l'Université Catholique de Louvain LXIX, Louvain-la-Neuve: Département d'archéologie et d'histoire de l'art, Collège Érasme 1988); Th. Ulbert, *Die Basilika des Heiligen Kreuzes in Resafa-Sergiopolis* (Deutsches Archäologisches Institut, Resafa II, Mainz am Rhein: Verlag Philipp von Zabern 1986). From these studies we learn that

1. Though the lists do not always coincide, some 13 additional bema churches are now identified for Syria (11 in Tchalenko-Baccache and Renhart, plus 2 more in Donceel-Voûte), and 2 once listed as having a bema (Bezîher, Ba'uda) have been dropped from the original Lassus-Tchalenko list of 30 (CA 5 [1951] 94-95). This raises the list of bema-churches outside Mesopotamia to 41. In addition, Tchalenko (*Églises*, 325) lists 5 other probable bema-churches that remain to be studied.
2. The confirmation of a rectangular bema with throne in Fafertin, the discovery of a curved bema at the newly-excavated site in Iraq, and the finding of a bema-altar or credence in two churches (Kafr Nabo, Sergible), relativizes two characteristics my study listed (VII 341) as distinguishing the West-Syrian bema from the East-Syrian: "3) the west end is always curved; 4) there is no Golgatha altar." But I would consider highly questionable the sigma altar reconstructed on the bema of Sugane (Tchalenko-Baccache, *Planches*, p. 63 fig. 117).
3. Mosaic designs in the nave floor of 2 churches (Rayan, Oum Hartaine) seem to indicate a bema-like liturgical disposition even where no permanent stone bema is found (Donceel-Voûte 192ff, 261ff, 521). Such churches could have had a bema of wood. Furthermore, the dimensions of the nave in 2-3 other edifices would permit the possibility of a similar non-permanent bema structure.
4. Though these new discoveries extend somewhat the geographical range of the bema-churches, they continue to be found in Syria and Mesopotamia but not in neighboring Lebanon (cf. Donceel-Voûte) or Palestine (cf. Y. Tsafir, ed., *Ancient Churches Revealed*, Jerusalem 1993. I am grateful to Prof. Tsafir for providing me a copy of this precious study).
5. Furthermore, within the same region of the bema-churches a variety of non-bema liturgical arrangements continue to be unidentified, nor do all bema-churches have the same liturgical characteristics in other respects. On this, in addition to the above works, esp. Donceel-Voûte *passim* and conclusion p. 511, see N. Duval, "Notes sur l'église de Kabr Hiram (Liban) et ses installations liturgiques," CA 26 (1977) 81-104; W. Djobadze, *Archeological Investigations in the Region West of Antioch on-the-Oronites* (Forschungen zur kunstgeschichte und christlichen Archäologie, Bd. 13., Stuttgart: Franz Steiner Verlag 1986).
6. In one bema-church (Bafetin) the bema was later substituted by an ambo (Tchalenko-Baccache, *Planches*, 220-227).
7. J.-M. Fiey tentatively identifies possible bema illustrations in some ms illuminations: "Iconographie syriaque. Hulagu, Doquz Khatun...et six ambons?" Mus 88 (1975) 59-68, esp. 64-68.
8. Donceel-Voûte correctly observes (p. 519) that no archeological remains have been found in Syria to justify considering the šqaqone a sort of solea-pathway connecting sanctuary and bema, and she proposes that what the commentators call the šqaqona may simply have been the narrow space in the nave between bema and sanctuary platform, and its "doors" no more than the accesses to that space at the four points of the compass: E (to/from the sanctuary), W (to/from the bema), and N-S of the nave. This question must now be reconsidered in the light of what is obviously a šqaqona in the Iraqi bema-church discussed above.

9. The bema-church at Resafa, first called "St. Sergius," then, neutrally, "basilica A," is now properly named "The Holy Cross Basilica" (cf. Ulbert, p. ix).

Other problems under debate, such as the dating of the bema-church of Qalbloze in relation to Qalat Siman (G. Tchalenko in *Syria* 50 [1973] 128-136; Ch. Strube in JAC 20 [1977] 181-191; J.-L. Bischoff & J.-P. Sodini in *Syria* 61 [1984] 267-330; related articles in *Reallexikon zur byzantinischen Kunst* III, 854-902) do not affect my argument.

**Liturgia:** For the most recent summary of research on the bema, see Erich Renhart, *Das liturgische Bema. Untersuchungen zum Mittelschiffbema nordsyrischer Kirchen des 4. bis 6. Jahrhunderts* (1991 doctoral dissertation at the University of Graz, Austria, presently in press). R. discusses issues deliberately prescinded from in my essay: the possible non-Christian origins of the bema, and parallels with Manichean and synagogue architecture. But R. confirms (p. 115) the results of my study for the liturgical interpretation of the bema. Note, however, the following:

1. Pace Renhart (pp. 76, 116) I would still insist on the need to keep separate the East and West Syrian archeological and textual evidence, a distinction in no way based on later doctrinal (Monophysite-Nestorian) divisions, as R. seems to imply, but on the fact that we are dealing with two separate liturgical traditions whose distinct provenance (though of course not their later developed form) certainly antedates those doctrinal controversies. So one cannot just presume that the texts of one tradition fit the architecture of the other. On the distinct Syriac traditions and their provenance, see now the important study of W.F. Macomber, "A Theory on the Origins of the Syrian, Maronite and Chaldean Rites," OCP 39 (1973) 235-242.
2. I reaffirm my statement that "the liturgical influence in Syria and Mesopotamia generally travelled from West to East" (VII 358; cf. Renhart, p. 117). In the context I am talking, obviously, of *Christian liturgical influence*, — i.e., about where the Syrian Christian bema might have first appeared, and not about possible earlier non-Christian origins to the East, an issue from which I prescind entirely, following a long-held conviction that not every study must begin with Adam.
3. If I was guilty of the anachronism of relying on later texts to understand the liturgical use of earlier archeological remains, I can only plead that these are the only texts we have.

Other new studies include P. Yousif, "Le lieu de la célébration de la parole dans la liturgie chaldéenne," *Chronique de l'art sacré* 34 (été 1993) 6-10. Regarding the Maphrianate of Tikrit: J.-M. Fiey, "Les diocèses du 'Maphrianat' syrien," *Parole de l'Orient* 5 (1974) 133-164, 331-393; 8 (1977-78) 347-378. On Syriac liturgical commentaries: idem, "De la construction de l'église syrienne occidentale d'après Yahya ibn Jarir," Mus 81 (1969) 357-362; one further, 9th-century text has now been edited and studied, but it says nothing of the bema: *Le «De oblatione» de Jean de Dara*, éd. et trad. par J. Sader (CSCO 308-309 = *Scriptores Syri* 132-133, Louvain 1970); J. Sader, *Le lieu de culte et la messe syro-occidentale selon le «De oblatione» de Jean de Dara. Étude d'archéologie et de liturgie* (OCA 223, Rome 1983). Finally, despite my still valid strictures against it (VII 359 note 1), L. Bouyer's *Architecture et Liturgie*, retains its popularity and was recently reissued in German translation: *Liturgie u. Architektur* (Theologia Romanica XVIII, Freiburg/B.: Johannes Verlag Einsiedeln 1993).

All this leads to the conclusion that the dust is yet to settle on the whole issue of the bema-church, and the liturgy and liturgical disposition of the churches of Late-Antique and Medieval Syria. The dialogue between archeology and liturgy, of which Donceel-Voûte's superb study remains exemplary for its careful and accurate liturgical analysis (*passim* for each church plus pp. 501-541), is still in its infancy. On this see Sible de Blaauw, "Architecture and Liturgy in Late Antiquity and the Middle Ages," ALW 33 (1991) 1-34, for Syria esp. pp. 6-7.