A Visit to Urmia, Van, and Mosul

Travels of Henri Hyvernat and Paul Müller-Simonis in 1888-1889

Materials from the Semitics/Institute of Christian Oriental Research Library

The Catholic University of America

The May Gallery, John K. Mullen Library

June 21-August 30, 2015

Map of Van (inserted between pp. 190-191). Map of Armenia and Kurdistan (loose) in back cover pocket.
Preface

This exhibition was prepared for the Seventh North American Syriac Symposium (NASS), which met at The Catholic University of America June 21-24, 2015. It draws attention to the university’s first teacher of Syriac, Rev. Dr. Henri Hyvernat, and to his travels in 1888-1889 in the Middle East—especially to Urmia, Van, and Mosul, now in northwestern Iran, southeastern Turkey, and northern Iraq. Hyvernat was interested in the French Roman Catholic Missions there—the Lazarists in Urmia and the Dominicans in Van and Mosul.

Hyvernat made an effort to acquire materials from these travels for use in teaching and research at the new university in Washington. His extensive collection of Arabic, Syriac, and Chaldean printed works from the Dominican Press in Mosul made CUA a major depository of these imprints.

Syriac manuscripts in the exhibition pay tribute to the importance of the ancient Monastery of Rabban Hormizd and of its Chaldean successor, the Monastery of Our Lady of Seeds near Alqosh, as centers of East Syriac and Chaldean manuscript production. Some of the 17 Syriac manuscripts brought back by Hyvernat were copied between 1887 and 1889 by members of the Congregation of Rabban Hormizd in Alqosh. The exhibition provides an opportunity to view and compare these examples of scribal work (see, e.g., Hyvernat Syriac mss. 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12). Hyvernat Syriac ms. 15, a collection of poetry in Sureth, the local Neo-Syriac dialect by Israel of Alqosh (fl. end 16th c.-early 17th c.) and Joseph of Telkepe (fl. 2nd half of 17th c.) serves as a reminder that Alqosh was a center for Neo-Syriac writing as early as the late 16th century.

The exhibition also is intended to be a greeting to members of the Chaldean community in Detroit who travelled to the NASS to participate in the “Forum on Creating a Syriac Cultural Archive” organized by Prof. Robin Darling Young, CUA School of Theology and Religious Studies. Many Detroit Chaldeans came to the United States from Alqosh and Telkepe. Special thanks are due to Prof. Shawqi Talia of CUA’s Department of Semitic and Egyptian Languages and Literatures, also a member of the Detroit Chaldean community. Prof. Talia suggested that the Syriac Heritage Project http://syriacheritage.cua.edu/, which seeks to establish a digital repository for the preservation and dissemination of the cultural record of Christian Syriac communities, contact Chaldeans in his hometown to participate in the Project’s inaugural field work.

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Bibliography

Du Caucase au Golfe Persique


Henri Hyvernat


The exhibit descriptions of Hyvernat’s Syriac manuscripts are taken from his handwritten notes.
Background

Henri Hyvernat (1858-1941) was the first professor appointed to the Faculty of the new Catholic University of America. He served as Professor of Oriental Languages and Biblical Archaeology (1889-1895/96), Professor of Semitic Languages and Biblical Archaeology (1895/96-1910/11), and Professor of Semitic Languages and Literatures (1911/12-1940/41). He held the Andrews Chair of Biblical Archaeology from 1889 until his death in 1941. Hyvernat spent fifty-two years in distinguished service to The Catholic University of America. He is remembered with affection as “The Grand Old Man of the University.”

In 1877 Hyvernat went to the Seminary of Saint-Sulpice to study theology for two years at Issy and three more years at Paris. He was introduced to the eminent biblical scholar Abbé Fulcran Vigouroux, S.S. Inspired by Vigouroux’s remarks about the Church’s need for linguists with proficiency in Semitic and Egyptian languages, Hyvernat learned Hebrew and Syriac. Hyvernat was ordained a priest in Lyons on June 3, 1882. In 1882 he assumed the duties of Chaplain of the Church of Saint-Louis-des-Français in Rome (1882-1885), while taking courses in theology, canon law, and Semitic languages at the Pontifical University of Rome. In 1885 he received a doctoral degree in theology (Doctor of Divinity). He was appointed professor of Assyriology and Egyptology at the Saint Appollonari Pontifical School of Higher Studies (1885-1888), serving at the same time as Interpreter of Oriental languages (Coptic, Syriac, and Arabic) for the Sacred Congregation De Propaganda Fide, Rome. Already in 1886 Vigouroux had been asked to consider coming to the newly established Catholic University of America to teach Sacred Scripture and scriptural languages. Vigouroux suggested the name of his former student Hyvernat instead. In 1887 Bishop John Keane, the Rector of the University, met with Hyvernat in Rome and invited him to accept the Scriptural studies position. Hyvernat accepted the appointment. The University would not be open for classes until almost a year later in November 1889. He proposed to spend most of the intervening time in the Middle East.

The Académie des Inscriptions et Belles-Lettres and the Ministère de l’Instruction Publique of France had commissioned Hyvernat to investigate and study cuneiform inscriptions in the Lake Van area. He was accompanied by his friend Paul Müller-Simonis, a fellow alumnus of the Seminary of St. Sulpice. An account of their travels was published in 1892. It includes a narrative written as a travel-diary by Müller-Simonis, as well as a catalog of cuneiform inscriptions from Armenia and various historical and scientific appendices by Hyvernat. The travels described in Du Caucase au Golfe Persique began on August 1, 1888 at Constantinople and ended at the Persian Gulf on February 2, 1889.

Hyvernat intended to bring back books, manuscripts, and antiquities from the travels for the new university in Washington. His students would benefit greatly from access to a study collection of antiquities for use in language and history classes. He returned to Washington with many materials. These “Oriental collections”, supplemented by later acquisitions and donations, became the cornerstone of his research collections. Today, most of the “Oriental collections” are housed in the Semitics/ICOR library.

Exhibition materials were acquired by Hyvernat in Urmia, Van and Mosul and their environs. An accompanying slide show of photographs, photostats, and postcards from his travels, many of which illustrated the book, serve as a backdrop to the exhibition.
On display in Cabinet 1 are a few examples from the study collections he brought back: Hyvernat Syriac ms.13, a Syriac incantation bowl, a Chaldean brass cup with bird ornament, and Sasanian and Hellenistic seals. Shown here are:

Hyvernat Syriac ms.13 [CUA ICOR Syriac ms.13]. Syriac-Arabic Lexicon. 14th-16th century. Paper codex; 18.5 cm. x 13.5 cm. Fols. I-II, 1-214, III-IV. 2 cols.; 15 l. The above Arabic foliation includes by mistake a loose leaf of smaller format of different paper and content. This leaf was marked 190. There is no title, no colophon. 15 leaves are missing at the beginning.

The Syriac bowl was first published by James A. Montgomery, “A Syriac Incantation Bowl with Christian Formula,” in The American Journal of Semitic Language 34,2 (Jan. 1918) 137-139. It has been re-edited and studied by Marco Moriggi as Bowl no.2 (pp. 27-31) in his A Corpus of Syriac Incantation Bowls: Syriac Magical Texts from Late-Antique Mesopotamia. Magical and Religious Life of Late Antiquity; v. 3. Leiden: Brill, 2014.

Selected Hellenistic (323-31 B.C.E.) and Sasanian (224-651 C.E.) Seals

33. Sasanian. Cone. White chaledony. 1.7 x 1.3 x 1.1 cm. Eight-rayed star above what may be a fire altar.

36. Sasanian. Four-sided cone. White chaledony. 1.8 x 1.1 x 1.3 cm. Broken at base. Crescent above what may be a fire altar.

45. Sasanian? Scaraboid. Grey chaledony. 2.0 x 1.8 x 1.2 cm. Broken. Winged deity. Perhaps earlier Persian work.

46. Hellenistic. Bezel (cabochon). Carnelian. 1.2 x 1.1 x 0.4 cm. Figure of Artemis of Ephesus standing with arms extended. Two ibexes at her feet lifting their heads up to her and to objects trailing down from her hands.

For more on Hyvernat’s seal collection see

http://guides.lib.cua.edu/exhibitseals
The Monastery of Rabban Hormizd near Alqosh

Some of the 17 Syriac manuscripts acquired by Hyvernat in 1888-1889 were obtained through his friend Rev. Samuel Giamil [Shmu'el Jamīl], 1847-1917), the Superior of the Chaldean Community of the Monastery of Rabban Hormizd near Alqosh in what is now northern Iraq. The ancient Monastery of Rabban Hormizd, founded in the seventh century, became an important center for East Syriac manuscript writing. The scribal tradition was continued by the Monastery as a Chaldean monastic community in the nineteenth century. In 1858 a new Chaldean monastery, Our Lady of the Seeds or Notre Dame des Semences, was built nearer to Alqosh, and the work of manuscript production was conducted there into the early twentieth century.

Description of Hyvernat Syriac ms. 12 [CUA ICOR Syriac ms. 12] in cabinet 2:

Ishoʿdenah, *Livre de la Chasteté* (fols. 1-44v) and *History of the Monastery of Catholic Chaldeans* (Alqosh), 1887. (fols. 45r-59v). Paper codex; 22 x 15 cm. Fols. I-II, 1-58, III-V. 6 quires, all of 10 leaves except the last one of 8. Foliated on verso top outer corner (flush with top line). Nestorian; 1 col.; 21 l. Each leaf bears in the margin of the verso the first word of the following leaf. Bound in Oriental red leather over wooden boards. The ms. was copied by ʿIsa, at the expense and for H. Hyvernat under the supervision of Samuel Giamil, Superior of the Monastery of Rabban Hormizd at Alkosh. See detail of fol. 44v. below.
“… The History of our Catholic Chaldean Community written and abridged by Abbot Samuel Djamil, the venerable Superior General, from the year 1808 of Our Lord, in which the Community was founded by our Father the pious Gabriel Denbou, to the year 1866 in which an end was put to the claims often moved by the family of Mār Johannan Hormizd to take from the brethren the mills and the fields which are truly the property of our Convent of Rabban Hormizd the Persian.”— A.A. Vaschalde, “The Monks of Rabban Hormizd,” The Catholic University Bulletin 8 (1902), 472-482. See detail of fol. 45r below at left.

At right. Image of entrance to the Chaldean Monastery of Our Lady of the Seeds near Alqosh, built to replace the ancient Monastery of Rabban Hormizd.
Flat Case 1.

Hyvernat Syr. ms. 2 [CUA ICOR Syriac ms. 2]. Nestorian Lectionary, Peshitto version. April 23, 1735. Paper codex; 33.5 x 22 cm. Fols. I-III, 1-138, IV-VII. Fol. 138 is a discarded folio which was replaced by another one (now fol. 135). 13 quires of 10 leaves each, except the first one, of 9 and the last one of 8. All quires bear regular signatures at the bottom of their front and last leaves. No original numerotation of leaves or pages. Nestorian; 2 cols.; 26 l. The text is in a red ink frame, double lines all around the page, but single lines on the inner column. Bound in Paris for Hyvernat in black leather tooled and flapped in oriental style. Contents: Fols. 1v-135 v col. 1: Lections from the Gospel for all Sundays and feast days. Begins with first Sunday in Advent, and ends with the fourth Sunday of the Dedication of the church. Fol. 135v, col. 2 and fol. 136: Colophons attesting that this lectionary according to the usage of Mosul was finished on Nisan 23 of the year 2046 according to the Greeks—and it was written in the tow of Espen [Aspin?] in the shadow of Lady Mary who protects and shields its inhabitants from all evils... by the contemptible etc. priest Ishu ... from the town of Gawelan, in the district of Onzal (west of Lake Urmi). Fols. III, IV, 1r, V, VI & VII are covered all more or less with various texts and pen trials.
Hyvernat Syr. ms. 8 [CUA ICOR Syriac ms. 8]. *De causis fестorum*, 1889. Paper codex; 34 x 23 cm. Fols. I-II, 176, III-VIII. Nestorian; 1 col.; 27 l. Bound in oriental red leather over wooden boards. Price of the copying and binding in red oriental leather over wooden boards given as 195 piasters. Copied by Deacon ʿIsa, son of Eshaya, son of Deacon Quyaqos of Eqror, on June 29, 1889, for H. Hyvernat, under the supervision of Samuel Giamil, Superior of the Monastic Community of the Chaldean Catholic Congregation of Rabban Hormizd.

Contents: Treatises on the Feasts of the liturgical year. Inserted at the end is a notice on Thomas of Edessa copied in Rome July 30, 1898 by Fr. Samuel Giamil.


Image: Hyvernat Syr. 8. f.166v [p.331].
Cabinet 2

Cabinet 2 contains Hyvernat Syriac mss. 7, 11 and 15, as well as 12.

Hyvernat Syriac ms. 11 [CUA ICOR Syriac ms. 11]. John of Kaldun, *Life of Rabban Joseph Busnaya*. 1889. Paper codex. 24 x 17 cm. Fols. I-III, 1-176, IV. 18 quires of 10 leaves each except the first one of 9 and the last of 6 leaves. Nestorian; 1 col.; 23 leaves. Bound in Oriental red leather over wooden boards. Contents: History... and admirable life of Rabban Joseph called Busnaya by his disciple John of Kaldun. The *lacunae* of the original ms. from which this was copied were left in blank. The copy was made in 1889 at the expense and for the use of H. Hyvernat under the supervision of Samuel Giamil of Tel Keph, Superior of the Community of Catholic Chaldeans known as the Congregation of Rabban Hormizd and of the Rule of St. Anthony.
Hyvernat Syriac ms. 15 [CUA ICOR Syriac ms. 15]. Neo-Syriac religious poems, 17th-18th c. Paper codex; 17 x 12.5 cm. Fols. I-II, 1-72, III-IV. Nestorian; 1 col.; 15 lines. Bound in Paris for Hyvernat in black leather flapped and tooled in Oriental style. The structure of this ms is correct from fol. 31 on (quires 5-9), excepting a double leaf which remained loose and was included in the modern foliation as being fols. 36-37. Fol. 36 from a signature on its recto seems to have been the first one of a quire B. The place of this double leaf in the ms as well as the order of fol. 1-30, remains to be investigated. The leaves bear no ancient original foliation. Contents: religious compositions in neo-Syriac of Alqosh—chiefly of the durochta and mimra types by the priest Israel, and the priest, Joseph of Tel Kef.
Cabinet 4:


Cabinet 4 continued:

Hyvernat Syriac ms. 5 [CUA ICOR Syriac ms. 5].
Alternating in the cases throughout the exhibition are Hyvernat Syriac mss. 3, 4, 10, and 17, also brought back in 1899 by Hyvernat.


Copied for Hyvernat in 1889, at Alqosh, home of the Prophet Nahum near the Convent of Rabban Hormizd the Persian by ‘Isa, son of Esha‘ya, son of Quryaqos. Contents: commentary on the ecclesiastical services …, and all that belongs to the (divine) economy & the feasts of our Lord, by a Philomath.

Hyvernat Syriac ms. 3 [CUA ICOR Syriac ms. 3]. *Chaldean Ferial Office Book*. 1794. at right.

Paper codex; 36 x 21.5 cm. Fols. I-II, 1-180, III. Nestorian; 1 col.; 29 l. Bound in Paris for Hyvernat in black leather tooled and flapped in oriental style. Copied in the year 2105 of the Greeks, the Wednesday of the Week of the Apostles, the 20 of Hazor, in the town of Kubna in the shadow of Mar Giwargis the glorious martyr. Contents: office of the ferial days. N.B. The first part of this book, up to fol. 91, corresponds in a general way to the first part of vols. I, II, & III of the *Breviarum Chaldaicum* published by Bedjan in 1886. Noting, however, that this book contains the office of the week days only (neither Fridays nor feast days), it begins with Monday of the first week in Advant, corresponding to page 6 of Bedjan’s edition and ends with the Saturday of the week of the Dedication.

Not shown:

Hyvernat Syriac ms. 4 [CUA ICOR Syriac ms. 4]. *Hudra*. Choral office book for the entire year (incomplete). 15th century. Paper codex; 24 x 16 cm. Fols. I-II, 1-241, III-IV. Nestorian; 1 col. 30 l.; 2 hands. Bound in Paris for Hyvernat in black leather, tooled and flapped in oriental style. The ms. presents many irregularities. 35 leaves at the beginning are written in a 16th or 17th century hand; other leaves are missing or out of order. Fols. 1-23, 28-30, 37-39, 48-53 have been substituted for originals. The ms. is incomplete at the end and without colophon.

Cabinets 3-4

On display also are several Neo-Syriac publications of the Roman Catholic Lazarist Mission in Urmia from Hyvernat’s collections. *Qala d-šrara [The Voice of Truth]*, a monthly periodical. [1897]-1915. Shown here is a 1903 issue. *Ktaba d-hugaya*. 1881. A reader bound with a *Catechism* of 1879.
Cabinets 3–4

The Dominican Mission at Van.


Hyvernat Papers, The Catholic University of America

The Dominican Press at Mosul came into being in 1860 in order to provide school books for school and seminary use, beginning with texts written in Arabic, then Syriac in 1868, and in 1885, in neo-Aramaic Sureth.

(1) Syro-Chaldean Seminary of St. John in Mosul, December, 1888.

(2) Dominican School for Boys. Mosul. Below.