

*ANAGENESIS: MIGRATION, CONVERSION, AND THE MAKING OF HISTORY IN
JUDAISM, CHRISTIANITY, AND ISLAM*

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Anagenesis: Migration, Conversion, and the Making of History in Medieval Judaism, Christianity, and Islam explores new approaches to the shared sources and concerns of medieval literary traditions as part of the project of a Global Middle Ages. I propose an alternative paradigm of periodization, which I call *anagenesis*, to demonstrate how Jewish, Christian, and Muslim communities constructed history through the imagined recovery of a scriptural past and a monotheistic creation. *Anagenesis* confronts the cultural consequences of religious conversion and mass migration – two major phenomena in the Medieval World. Acts of miraculous re-discovery and re-birth create a new hybrid history of pre-conversion and pre-migration cultural traditions with the idea of a universal monotheistic history that lies before, behind, and beneath communities. In a series of case studies, I explore forms of *anagenesis* that highlight the exchange of narrative traditions between Jewish, Christian, and Muslim communities, situating Early English literature in this cross-cultural context. I study *Beowulf* in comparison with other accounts of “pagan” heroes who paradoxically discover religious relics signifying the conversions of their future descendants; I situate Old English and Anglo-Latin accounts of the “Seven Sleepers of Ephesus” within a broader collection of legendary figures whose re-emergence after centuries of sleep highlight the distinctions between historical eras; I place the anti-Semitic depictions of “Gog and Magog” in Matthew Paris and Mandeville’s *Travels* within the broad ambit of narratives about enclosure and escape in Jewish, Christian, and Islamic tradition, highlighting how such ideas provided an outlet of anxieties about migration, invasion, and geographical ignorance. *Anagenesis* provides a framework for tracing the intellectual discourses across cultural boundaries in the *longue durée*. It emphasizes how both medieval and early modern thinkers deployed narratives of genealogy and invention to forge claims of cultural continuity across space, time, and different strands of literary tradition.

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Patrick Naeve is a scholar who primarily focuses on literature in Old English, Old French, Latin, and Arabic, though he endeavors to engage with sources and materials from a wider variety of languages and locales to contribute to the project of a “Global Middle Ages.” In 2014 he earned a BA in English, History, and Plan II Honors from the University of Texas at Austin, where his thesis, “To Reckon the Far-Off Origins of Men: The Historical and Geographical Poetics of *Beowulf*,” looked at the relationship of the Old English poem to historiographical works of Late Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages. In 2015 he earned an MA in English from the University of Toronto and joined the Medieval Studies Program at Cornell. His dissertation, “*Anagenesis: Migration, Conversion, and the Making of History in Judaism, Christianity, and Islam*,” offers an alternative assessment of the spatial, temporal, and religious periodization of “Antiquity” and the “Middle Ages” by studying the evolution and adaptation of shared motifs across religious and cultural barriers.

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Note on Transliteration: In the text of the dissertation, I have relied on Brill's Simple Arabic Transliteration System, and use other Brill transliteration systems for Greek, Hebrew, Syriac, and several other languages that appear. In the bibliography, however, I repeat whatever transliterations were used by authors and publishers, in order to make these sources easier for readers to find.

Introduction: Anagenesis

I: Earths upon Earths, Times upon Times

Orosius and the Metamorphic Seashells

This dissertation is primarily a study of little stories imbedded within big ones, so it is perhaps best to begin with a brief meditation on fossilized seashells in the *Seven Books of History Against the Pagans* (Lat. *Historia Adversum Paganos Libri Septi*) of Paulus Orosius (ca. 375-418 CE).¹ Spurred on by the entreaties of his mentor, the famous bishop and theologian Augustine of Hippo (354-430 CE), Orosius composed this history to counter the idea that the Visigothic sack of Rome in 410 CE had stemmed from the wrath of Rome's traditional gods against the empire's adoption of Christianity.² For Orosius, such beliefs came from a lack of historical perspective. Only those "who do not look to the future and have forgotten or are ignorant of the past" could be fooled into thinking that the calamities of their own moment were particularly bad.³ Reassessing the narratives of imperial history, Orosius asserts that the recent attack on the city paled in comparison to the calamities suffered by Rome, its rivals, and its predecessors in the supposedly glorious histories of antiquity. As a historian, Orosius is a revisionist, suspicious of the longstanding narrative of Rome's rise to supremacy and dedicated to discovering within the methods and narratives of ancient history an affirmation of his own Christian beliefs.

The process by which Orosius conceptualizes time and constructs historical narratives is evident in his brief digression on seashells as a sign of a universal flood and, by extension, the

¹ Orosius, *Pavli Orosii Historiarvm adversvm paganos libri VII*, ed. Karl Friedrich Wilhelm Zangemeister (Vindobonae: C. Geroldi, 1882); *Seven Books of History Against the Pagans*, trans. Irving Raymond (New York: Columbia University Press, 1936); *Orosius' Seven Books of History against the Pagans*, trans. A.T. Fear (Liverpool University Press, 2010).

² On the contexts of the *Historia's* production, see Fear, 6-7; Orosius' history was designed as a shorter complement to Augustine's theological compendium *On the City of God against the Pagans* ("*De Civitate Dei Contra Paganos*"), which similarly addressed the sack of Rome in 410 CE as an occasion to reassess and reaffirm the basis of Christianity.

truth of biblical history. Against accusations that the “new” Christian religion had wrecked the old empire, Orosius claims that while Roman religion may appear to have preceded the emergence of Christianity in history, Christianity was in fact the senior faith. He portrays Christianity as preserving and renewing belief in a God who was both the “author of the ages” (*auctor temporum*) and the author of the Hebrew and Greek scriptures that provide the “truest” (*veracissimi*) and “clearest” (*evidentissime*) record of history.⁴ In making such claims, Orosius transforms contemporary conflicts between different religious communities into a battle of beginnings: a contest for true narratives of origins that leads back to the beginnings of empire, to the earth’s creation, and to the ultimate relationship between time and eternity.

If such a narrative of history is ultimately based in the Christian scriptures, Orosius suggests it can also be intimated from nature. Between his geographic survey and the beginning of his narrative history of imperial powers from Ancient Assyria to his own time, Orosius invokes the story of the flood as proof of a common past between Christian and pagan worlds:

The most reliable authors [of the scriptures] very clearly state that the sea was poured over all the land and a deluge unleashed upon it, so that the world became entirely sea or sky, and that the human race was entirely destroyed, save for a few kept safe in the ark as a reward for their faith and in order to create a new race. Even those who know nothing of times gone by, or of the Author of those times, have born witness that this was so, learning of it by putting together the evidence and hints given by stones which we see on far-flung mountains encrusted with sea- and oyster shells and which often show signs of being hollowed out by the waves.⁵

For Orosius, proof of the universal flood lies embedded in both the textual records of “pagan” authors and in the material record of the earth itself. Rather than parallel flood narratives of

³ Orosius, *Historia*, Prologue.9, ed. Zangemesiter, 2; trans. Fear, 32.

⁴ Orosius, *Historia*, I.3, trans. Fear, 50.

⁵ Orosius, *Historia*, I.3, trans. Fear, 50. The Latin is as follows: *Refuso in omnem terram mari inmissoque diluio, cum toto orbe contecto unum spatium caeli esset ac pelagi, deletum fuisse uniuersum humanum genus, paucis in arca fidei suae merito ad substituendam originem reseruatis, euidetissime ueracissimi scriptores docent. Fuisse tamen etiam illi contestati sunt, qui praeterita quidem tempora ipsumque auctorem temporum nescientes, tamen ex indicio et coniectura*

figures like Noah and Deucalion, Orosius chooses the image of shells as relics of the flood that can still be seen in the present day.⁶ While ignorant of the biblical past, Orosius’ “pagan” sages nonetheless recorded these intimations into the depth of time because the earth – by preserving the relics of the sea where the sea no longer stands – bears its own witness to this universal cataclysm. By placing the idea of history in relation to the biblical record, Orosius imagines that he can see deeper into the past than his predecessors who had encountered these antediluvian artifacts but could not grasp their full significance.

Orosius’ presentation of the seashells as proof of a biblical flood rests on an idea of the materiality of history – a physical remnant of an earlier geological epoch that can be seen and touched. The “far off mountains” where one finds such shells are given no name, nor does Orosius explicitly name “those men” (Lat. *illi*) who unwittingly “bore witness” to these artifacts of the flood. Discussions of fossilized shells likewise appear in the works of Latin authors of antiquity. Orosius is most likely referencing a line from Ovid’s (43 BCE – 17/18 CE) *Metamorphoses*, a poetic compendium of Greco-Roman myth and history that stretches from the creation of the earth to the death of Julius Caesar.⁷ A single line in the poem’s final book mentions “sea-shells lying far from the ocean” (Lat. *et procul a pelago conchae iacuerunt marinae*).⁸ Both Ovid and Orosius are deeply invested in connecting through geology and

lapidum, quos in remotis montibus conchis et ostreis scabros, saepe etiam cautos aquis uisere solemus, coniciendo didicerunt.

⁶ See Gian Andrea (Zizers) Caduff, “Deucalion,” in *Brill’s New Pauly* (Leiden: Brill, 2006). The Greek myth of Deucalion contained a flood story similar to the narratives of the Bible and earlier Near Eastern traditions (e.g. the *Epic of Gilgamesh*), a parallel noted by both Christian and polytheistic writers.

⁷ See Fear, *History Against the Pagans*, p. 50 n. 137; Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, trans. Frank Justus Miller, LCL 42–3 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1916), XV.259-272; Pliny the Elder (23/4 CE – 79 CE) includes extensive discussion of fossils, gemstones, and other forms of minerals in his natural history, see Pliny, *Natural History, Volume X: Books 36-37*, trans. D.E. Eicholz, LCL 419 (Cambridge, Ma.: Harvard University Press, 1962); Pomponius Mela (1st cent. CE) also mentions the presence of fossilized coral in the Eastern Mediterranean, along with Phoenician cities who trace their foundations “before the flood,” *Pomponius Mela’s Description of the World*, trans. F. E. Romer, (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1998), 1.64-5, p. 53. For a summary of classical approaches to fossils and early ideas about evolution, see R.J. Forbes, *Studies in Ancient Technology*, 2nd ed., vol. 7 (Leiden: Brill, 1966), 61-7.

⁸ Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, XV. 264-5. Ovid does not portray this commentary on seashells as his own words, but of

cosmology the creation of the earth to the ages and the stages of human history. Yet where Ovid presents seashells as an example of the world's eternity and endless volatility, Orosius sees them as a sign of temporal order. As the relics of a specific event in time that had global consequences, the seashells signify in turn the mastery of a single God over a finite creation. Through the appeal to a shared witnessing of history – mediated through the earth, Orosius both invokes the authorities of antiquity and erases them. For all their apparent materiality, Orosius' seashells are only the impression of an impression, entangled in a chain of authors and stories.

Orosius' metamorphosis of Ovid's seashells into a proof of the biblical flood is a handy example of what I term *anagenesis*, the subject of this study. *Anagenesis* does not define a distinct, delimited historical period but rather a *process* of time-making: the narrative resequencing of disparate histories – oral, written, local, national, imperial – into a single chronology of sacred history. Made in the wake of great cultural shifts, *anagenesis* asserts a “retroactive continuity” between different lineages of historical memory.⁹ Acts of *anagenesis* attempt to resolve the multiplicities of history with claims of legibility, continuity, and hierarchy. Their solution is that everything new is old. This process is accomplished through “inventions” of history, narratives of imagined discovery.¹⁰ *Anagenesis* hinges on the recognition of objects, persons, people, places, words, etc., describing different times and spaces as separate in order to

attributes them to the Greek philosopher Pythagoras (ca. 570 BCE – 495 BCE). For Ovid's version of Pythagoras, these shells are not connected to the story of a universal flood, but rather a sign of how “nothing, I feel sure, lasts long under the same appearance (*sub imagine eadem*), XV, 260. Pythagoras' speech echoes the opening of *The Metamorphoses*, where Ovid had recounted the beginnings of the universe and humankind and – following the example of Hesiod's *Works and Days* – transmutes the ages of human society into forms of metal. Eternal volatility displays itself in both the natural world (the transformation of earth and sea) and in human history (mythologized as ages of metal).

⁹ The terms “retcon” and “retroactive continuity” were first used to describe the introduction of prequels, origin stories, and other “backstories” that reflexively changed the understanding of earlier narratives. See Andrew J. Friedenthal, *Retcon Game: Retroactive Continuity and the Hyperlinking of America* (Univ. Press of Mississippi, 2017), 3-15. Friedenthal, 4, compares these acts of revisionism to the dictum from Orwell's *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, “Oceania was at war with Eurasia: therefore Oceania had always been at war with Eurasia.” Otter, *Inventiones*, 36, similarly emphasizes how the founding narratives of English monasteries “explain how a current state of affairs came about — they are necessarily retroactive: they are projected back from a present end point to an imagined origin.”

bring them together (fig. 1).

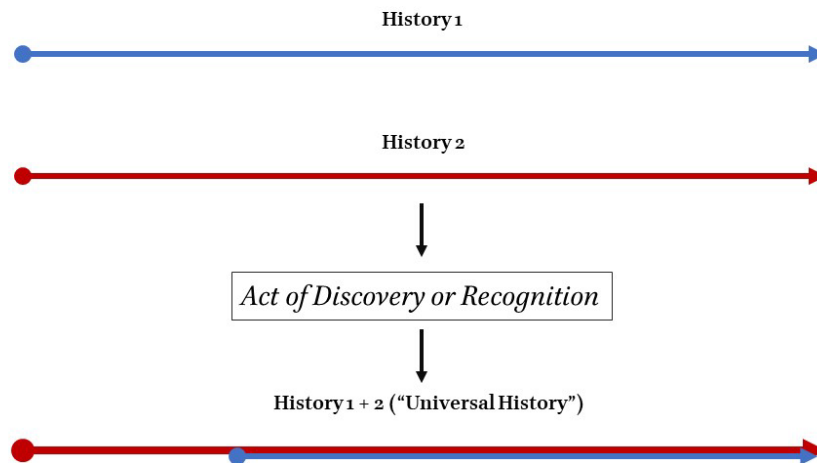


Figure 1: Simple model of *anagenesis*

In the case of *History against the Pagans*, Orosius re-evaluates history through the discovery of a “biblical” world that lies beneath the more recent “pagan” past. In composing the *History*, Orosius owes much to his “pagan” predecessors, who instituted the methods and models of writing history and geography that he employs on behalf of Christianity. He opens his *History* with a geographical survey enumerating the different regions of the world according to “*maiores nostri*” (“our ancestors”).¹¹ When Orosius proceeds to the narrative portion of his history, which

¹⁰ By invention, I mean establishment of new narratives about the past, and the portrayal of those narratives as occasions of miraculous discovery. See Monika Otter, *Inventiones: Fiction and Referentiality in Twelfth-Century English Historical Writing* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1996).

¹¹ Orosius, *Historia*, I. 1.2, ed. Zangemesiter, 5; trans. Fear, 36. See A. H. Merrills, *History and Geography in Late Antiquity* (Cambridge University Press, 2005), 35-99. While the precise sources of Orosius’ geography are unknown,

traces the passage of imperial power from Ancient Assyria to the Roman Empire of his own time, he reckons the passage of years in relation to the *urbe condita* (“foundation of the city”), using the traditional birth-date of Rome (753 BCE) as the “zero-point” of his chronology.¹² Yet, just as Orosius acknowledges this common ground between advocates of Christianity and polytheism among the “Latins and Greeks” of his own day, he ultimately seizes upon such shared traditions to advocate for the seniority and superiority of Christianity. He describes his opponents as “aliens to the City of God... called ‘pagans’ because they come from the countryside (*ex pagis*) and the crossroads of the rural districts.”¹³ This portrayal of the “pagans” as living beyond the city – and, by extension, “behind the times” – underscores Orosius’ wider attempts to re-order space and time for his emergent Christian audience. By constructing distinctions between Christian and pagan history, Orosius is suggesting that there is such a thing as “Pagan” history even as he seeks to dismiss it as an antiquated and ignorant way of seeing the world.

While *anagenesis* revises history on a macrocosmic scale, it works through small, individual acts of discovery and recognition that signify a broader restructuring of time and space. The medium through which *anagenesis* acts is an element of narrative, often a tiny or seemingly insignificant detail – a little thing that does a big thing. In the case of Orosius’ history, the seashells provide a specific link between the world of the Bible, the world of “pagan” antiquity, and the world of material reality and quotidian experience. The seashells recollected

Merrills notes its affinities to the works of Strabo (64/3 BCE - ca. 24 CE), Pliny the Elder (23/4- 79 CE), and Ptolemy (ca. 100 - 170 CE) and other influential geographical texts from the Greco-Roman tradition.

¹² Orosius, *Historia*, I.4.1, ed. Zangemesiter, 17; trans. Fear, 36.

¹³ Orosius, *Historia*, Prologue.9, ed. Zangemesiter, 2; trans. Fear, 32. In the fourth and fifth centuries, many remaining advocates of polytheism were not from “the countryside,” but members of the Mediterranean world’s longstanding urban institutions, such the Roman Senate and the philosophical schools of Athens and Alexandria. See Jaclyn Maxwell, “Paganism and Christianization,” in *The Oxford Handbook of Late Antiquity*, ed. Scott Fitzgerald Johnson (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 850–68, 853-5. Other terms for polytheists, such as Martin of Braga’s (520-579 CE) “*Rustici*” (“Rustics”) carry similar spatial and social judgements. See Virginia Day, “The Influence of the Catechetical Narratio on Old English and Some Other Medieval Literature.” *Anglo-Saxon England* 3 (December 1974): 51–61.

by ancient authorities, Orosius suggests, have been acknowledged by both Christians and pagans alike as remnants of a universal flood. Christians, however, can see beyond their pagan predecessors by recognizing the shells as signs of the biblical deluge, the scriptural narrative recounted in Genesis 6-8. For Orosius, this biblical history is not only written into the fabric of the earth itself but also written in the literary tradition of “our ancestors,” hidden in plain sight. Orosius appeals to the memory of Ovid and other representatives of the “pagan” tradition but obscures the specificity of those sources in his appeals to continuity. This act of recognition and reinterpretation makes the whole ambit of “Pagan” history – itself an invention of Orosius and other Christian apologists – subordinate and embedded within a Christian record of time (fig. 2). By portraying pagan authorities as unwitting witnesses to a Christian truth, Orosius compiles contradictory sources to construct a single narrative of history: one that is attested by all but understood by only a chosen few. Reaching for an intimation of eternity, Orosius offers a vision of his present as already existing, predetermined by the past.

Through the idea of *anagenesis*, I aim to offer new insights into the theory and practice of periodization in medieval studies. The traditional tryptic dividing history into “Ancient,” “Medieval,” and “Modern” periods has come under increasing scrutiny in the past decades as scholars reassess whether a schema invented for Europe should be applied across the globe. While scholarly discussions of periodization have often focused upon questions of *when* were the Middle Ages and *where* were the centers and limits of medieval culture, my study of *anagenesis* focuses instead on questions of *how*: *how* did different individuals and communities negotiate different narratives about time from within time? By identifying different examples of *anagenesis* and tracing their legacies across Jewish, Christian, and Islamic traditions, I contribute to the project of a “Global Middle Ages,” expanding the study of medieval history and literature

beyond their traditional temporal, geographical, linguistic, and religious boundaries.

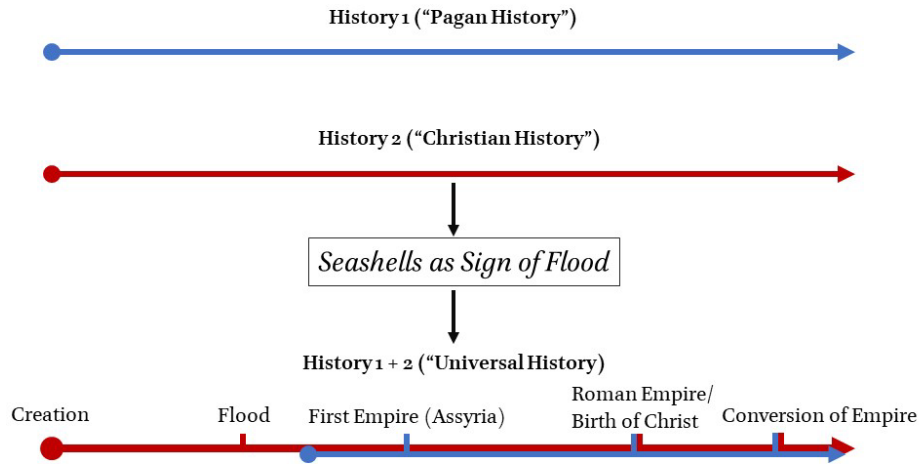


Figure 2: An act of *anagenesis* in Orosius’ *History Against the Pagans*

Al-Tha‘labī and the Letters at the Ends of the Earth

Considering the “Global” aspects of the “Middle Ages,” it is important to note that *anagenesis* does not merely operate in contexts of predominantly Western and Christian tradition but also reflects a larger process of combining and transforming cultural traditions throughout the world. Another example of *anagenesis* that similarly reconciles disparate stories of history and the nature of the earth appears in the *Arā’is al-Majālis fī Qiṣaṣ al-Anbiyā’* (*Chosen Discourses on the Stories of the Prophets*) of the Persian Muslim scholar Aḥmad b. Muḥammad al-Tha‘labī (d. 427/ 1035).¹⁴ In *Stories of the Prophets*, al-Tha‘labī follows a chronological

¹⁴ Al-Tha‘labī, *Qiṣaṣ al-Anbiyā’*: *al-musammā ‘Arā’is al-majālis* (Cairo: Dār Iḥyā’ al-Kutub al-‘Arabīyah, n.d.); English translation in *‘Arā’is Al-Majālis Fī Qiṣaṣ al-Anbiyā’, or: Lives of the Prophets*, ed. and trans. William Brinner (Leiden: Brill, 2002). Drawn from a vibrant tradition of “storytellers” (Ar. *Quṣṣās*) that were first transmitted orally in the

succession of “prophets” (ar. *anbiyā*) who appear in the Qur’ān and Islamic exegesis, demonstrating how their lives and lineage anticipated the coming of Muḥammad.¹⁵ Al-Tha‘labī is not so much the author of this work as its authorizer. He compiles a cluster of traditions passed down by generations of Muslim storytellers and scholars, identifying their purported sources (when he can) and presenting those he believes worthy of record.

First, however, al-Tha‘labī must account for the creation of the world itself. The Qur’ān does not contain an introductory cosmogony like the book of *Genesis*, but it does contain numerous references to God’s creation of the heavens and the earth throughout its corpus of one hundred and fourteen sūrahs.¹⁶ Al-Tha‘labī compiles a selection of these scriptural passages alongside an expansive exegetical tradition to offer a “Qur’ānic” narrative of creation. He relates how “the narrators have told – in varying ways but agreeing in conception – that when God desired to create the heavens and the earth,” the universe first consisted of a single mass, and then the heavens and earth were each split into seven separate parts.¹⁷ These opening movements have clear Qur’ānic sources (Q 21:30, Q 65:12) that al-Tha‘labī dutifully cites. Yet as the account of creation continues, new participants begin to appear. Once divided, the earth is placed upon the back of an angel, who bore the East and West in his arms.¹⁸ When this angel discovers he has no place to stand, God creates “an ox with seventy thousand horns and forty thousand legs” and places a “green gem from the highest levels of paradise” upon its back as a “resting

generations following the death of the Prophet Muḥammad (d. 632 CE), this genre of Islamic exegesis focused on the prophetic figures who appear throughout the Qur’ānic corpus, placing them in a chronological order and providing detailed and engaging accounts of their lives. Al-Tha‘labī also compiled an extensive *tafsīr*, a verse-by-verse commentary on the Qur’ān. This section has been adapted from a portion my forthcoming article, “How Does the Earth Speak in Islamic Literature? Stories of Discovery and Self-Disclosure” in *The Four Elements: Earth*, edited by Magennis et al. (Brill, Forthcoming), 9-16.

¹⁵ On the development of the genre, see Brinner, *Lives of the Prophets*, xviii-xxii.

¹⁶ See Daniel Carl Peterson, “Creation,” in *Encyclopaedia of the Qur’ān*, Ed. Jane Dammen McAullife (Brill).

¹⁷ *Qiṣaṣ al-Anbiyā*, 4; *Lives of the Prophets*, 6. The shift from one earth to seven combines two Qur’ānic descriptions of creation. Q 21:30 describes the heavens and earth as “one solid mass which We tore asunder” (here quoted by al-Tha‘labī), while Q 65:12 describes “seven heavens, and of the earth their like.”

¹⁸ *Qiṣaṣ al-Anbiyā*, 4; *Lives of the Prophets*, 6.

place.”¹⁹ When this Ox too lacks a foothold in the abyss, God sends down a great green stone “the thickness of seven heavens and seven earths.”²⁰ This stone in turn is placed atop a fish, “the great whale of which was Lūtiyah, its nickname Balhūt, and its by-name Bahamūt.”²¹ The whale then rests on “the sea,” the sea on “the back of the wind,” and the wind – lest the cycle fall into infinite regress – rests on the “power” of God.²²

Just as the *Stories of the Prophets* depicts several layers of the earth’s foundation, al-Tha‘labī’s cosmography provides an interesting window into the many layers of culture that had been incorporated into Islamic exegesis by the eleventh century CE. The sevenfold division of the earth resonates with divisions of the globe into seven “climes” (Gk. *klimata*, Ar. *aqālīm*), a practice adopted from Ptolemy (2nd c. CE) and carried over into the Islamic geographic tradition.²³ The angel, bearing the earth on his back, resembles the mythic Greco-Roman figure of Atlas, while the earth, water, and wind evoke three of the four traditional elements in Hellenistic philosophy. The names given to the fish appear to derive from the biblical account of Job 40-41, where “Leviathan” and “Behemoth” appear among the wondrous signs of God’s creation.²⁴ The form and function of these animals, however, appear more closely tied to the legend of Tiamat, an ancient Babylonian cosmological sea monster, and to Iranian traditions in which the earth resting on the horns of a bull causes the earth to quake when the bull shakes its

¹⁹ *Qiṣaṣ al-Anbiyā’*, 4; *Lives of the Prophets*, 6.

²⁰ *Qiṣaṣ al-Anbiyā’*, 4; *Lives of the Prophets*, 6.

²¹ *Qiṣaṣ al-Anbiyā’*, 4; *Lives of the Prophets*, 7. On this multi-layered form of the Islamic cosmos, and its connections to other traditions see Karen C. Pinto, *Medieval Islamic Maps: An Exploration* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2016), 162-72. Similar sequences are recorded in other compilations of the *Stories of the Prophets* and Zakarīyā al-Qazwīnī’s 13th century encyclopedia *Ajā’ib al-Makhlūqāt* (“*The Wonders of Creation*”); see Muḥammad ibn ‘Abd Allāh Kisā’ī, *Tales of the Prophets: Qiṣaṣ al-Anbiyā’*, trans. W.M. Thackston (Chicago: Great Books of the Islamic World, 1997), 8-11; Zakarīyā Ibn-Muḥammad al-Qazwīnī, *Kosmographie: Die Wunder der Schöpfung*. Ed. Ferdinand Wüstenfeld (Göttingen: Dieterich, 1849). For a German translation based on Wüstenfeld’s edition, see Hermann Ethé, *Zakarīyā b. Muḥammad al-Qazwīnī’s Kosmographie* (Leipzig: Fues, 1868).

²² *Qiṣaṣ al-Anbiyā’*, 4; *Lives of the Prophets*, 7. This sequence resembles the classic philosophical problem of “turtles all the way down.” See Ross Cameron, “Infinite Regress Arguments” in *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (2018) <https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/infinite-regress/>; Clifford Geertz, “Thick Description - Toward an Interpretive Theory of Culture,” in *The Interpretation of Cultures: Selected Essays* (New York: Basic Books, 1973), 3–30, 28-9.

head.²⁵ The many layers described in this account of creation seem to reflect the confluence – and tensions – of multiple cosmological traditions in the Islamic world. Similar cosmic schemes appear in vivid detail in copies of Zakarīyā al-Qazwīnī’s 13th-century encyclopedia *The Wonders of Creation* (*Ajā’ib al-makhlūqāt*), situating al-Tha’labī’s efforts within a wider Islamic project to incorporate, order, and reconcile the many different traditions of thought inherited by the Muslim rulers of the Near East (fig. 3).²⁶

²³ Travis E Zadeh, *Mapping Frontiers across Medieval Islam: Geography, Translation, and the ‘Abbāsīd Empire* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2011), 23-4.

²⁴ “Leviathan” and “Behemoth” have been interpreted by modern biblical scholars as referring to the hippopotamus and crocodile. Al-Tha’labī’s later account of Job (Ar. *Yūb*), *Qiṣaṣ al-Anbiyā’*, 135-44; *Lives of the Prophets*, 254-271, includes material that appears to have been directly translated from the biblical book. Al-Tha’labī does not record a name for this bull, but it appears in al-Kisā’ī, *Tales of the Prophets*, 10, as *al-Rayyan*, and in al-Qazwīnī as “*Kīyūbān*,” which the translator Ethé, *Kosmographie*, 488, interprets as a scribal corruption of “Leviathan.” See a Kristine Chalyan-Daffner, “Natural Disasters in Mamlūk Egypt (1215-1517): Perceptions, Interpretations, and Human Responses” (University of Heidelberg, 2013), 204-239.

²⁵ Chalyan-Daffner, “Natural Disasters,” 238-9; Daniel Balland et. al, “Earthquakes” in *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, online edition.

²⁶ On Islamic adaptations of Iranian and Hellenistic tradition, Dimitri Gutas, *Greek Thought, Arabic Culture: The Graeco-Arabic Translation Movement in Baghdad and Early ‘Abbāsīd Society* (London: Taylor & Francis Group, 1998); on *Ajā’ib*, see Zadeh, *Mapping Frontiers*, 3.

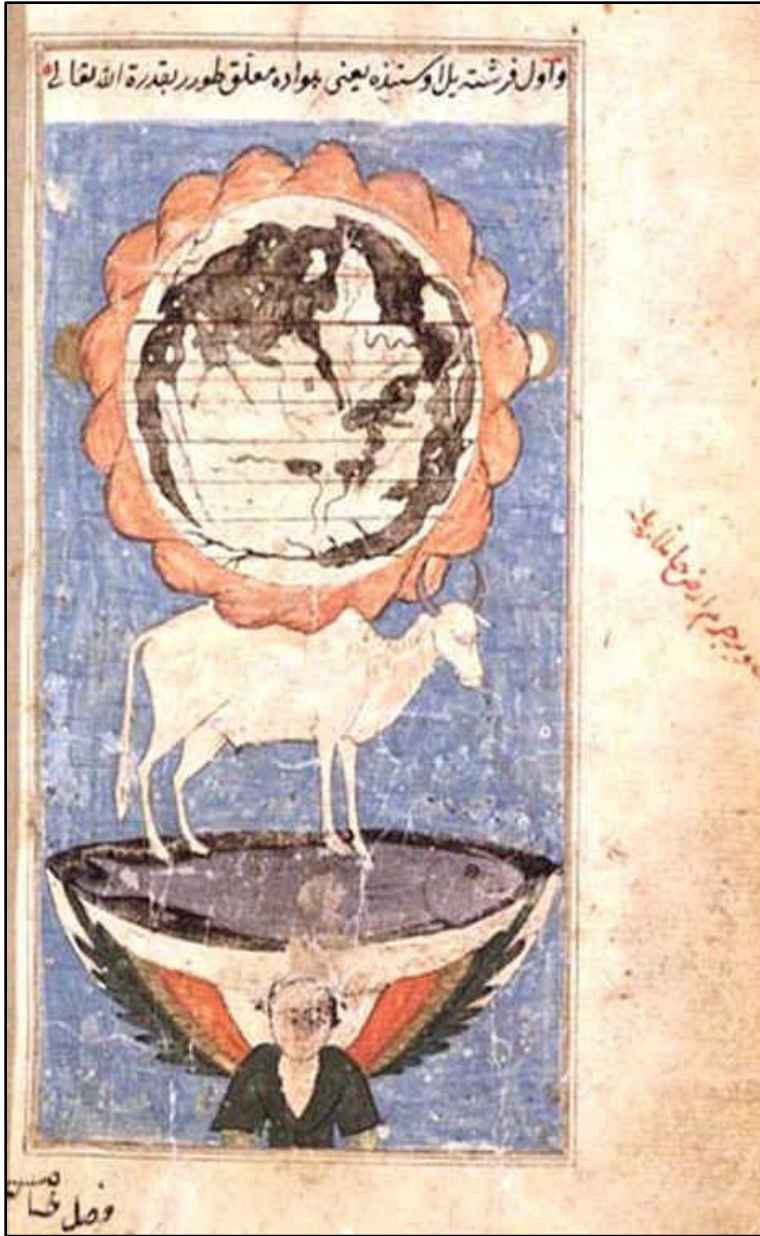


Figure 3: An image of the earth from a 16th century Turkish translation of al-Qazwīnī’s *Wonders of Creation*, Library of Congress Turkish Manuscript 185. This representation displays a similar layering of the earth’s foundation as the one outlined in al-Tha’labī *Stories of the Prophets*, albeit in a different sequence. The earth is displayed with the south at the top. Beyond the ocean, we see *Jabal Qāf*, the bull, the fish, and then an angel named *Rūh* (“Spirit” or “Wind”) in al-Qazwīnī’s text.)

Al-Tha’labī, like many other Persian scholars, readily incorporated elements of Iranian literature and religious tradition into his view of a universal history. As a Muslim, however, al-

Tha‘labī was ultimately committed to finding a Qur’ānic basis for his cosmological beliefs. Just as Orosius imagines that seashells can prove that a biblical layer of history lies beneath the pagan world, al-Tha‘labī too searches for an opportunity to negotiate and reconcile this multitude of cosmological traditions. While the procession of the angel, bull, stone, fish, and the like do not seem at first to possess any Qur’ānic basis, al-Tha‘labī’ devises an ingenious solution to discover a fundamentally Islamic origin for these different layers of creation. To establish the Qur’ān’s foundations of his cosmological model, al-Tha‘labī invokes the opening of the scripture’s sixty-eighth surah: “Nūn, and by the pen that writes!”²⁷ Nūn (ن) is a letter of the Arabic alphabet. In Q 68:1, it appears as one of “the disconnected letters” (Ar. *al-hurūf al-muqatta‘a*) that occur at the beginning of several Qur’ānic surahs.²⁸ While these letters, which do not belong to recognizable words, have puzzled Muslim scholars since the compilation of the scriptural corpus, al-Tha‘labī deploys them to provide a Qur’ānic foundation for his many layered story of the earth. Since “Nūn,” – taken as a word rather than a letter – can mean “fish” in Arabic and other Semitic languages, al-Tha‘labī asserts that the enigmatic “Nūn” at the beginning of Q 68:1 refers to the giant “fish” that dwells at the bottom of the world. The two strokes of the pen that make up the letter ن resemble an image of fabled fish stretched out beneath the disk of the world.

Al-Tha‘labī’s incorporation of many different strata into his Islamic narrative of creation is not complete, because he has another separate story to consider. This additional narrative, attributed to the testimony of ‘Alī b. Abī Ṭālib, Muhammad’s son-in-law, adds yet another layer to his cosmological scheme:

As soon as God created the Earth, it cried out and said (Ar. *‘ajjat wa qālat*): “O Lord! You will place the sons of Adam upon me, who will commit sins upon me and perform abominations on me,” and it started shaking. So God fastened it to

²⁷ *Qiṣaṣ al-Anbiyā’*, 4; *Lives of the Prophets*, 7.

²⁸ Keith Massey, “Mysterious Letters,” in *Encyclopaedia of the Qur’ān*, ed. Jane Dammen McAuliffe (Leiden: Brill).

the mountains and made it stable.²⁹

By describing the earth as “shaking” in fear of the coming of humankind, the story provides an explanation for Qur’ānic verses describing mountains as “firm” (Ar. *rawāsiya*) as well as the natural phenomenon of earthquakes.³⁰ The reluctance of the earth to become the material basis of humankind precipitates the creation of the Jabal Qāf:

God created a huge mountain from a green chrysolith from which the greenness of the heavens came. This (mountain) was called Jabal Qāf [the mountain of Qāf], and He surrounded (the chrysolith) all around with mountains. That is by what God swore when He said: “*Qāf, By the glorious Qur’ān*” (Q 50:1).³¹

Like the angel, bull, and fish, the roots of this mythic mountain are elsewhere. Scholars have pointed out the parallels between this “Jabal Qāf” and the traditions of the Iranian *al-Burz/Hara-berezayti*, the Hindu *Lokaloka*, and the Buddhist *Chakra-vāda* mountains, all cosmological promontories situated beyond the encircling ocean at the limits of the human world.³² As with the fish (*Nūn*), al-Tha‘labī explains the incorporation of the Jabal Qāf into his cosmic scheme through the appearance of the letter *Qāf* (ق) as one of the “disconnected letters” at the beginning of Q 50:1.

Al-Tha‘labī’s act of *anagenesis* rediscovers and amalgamates these disparate layers – of the cosmos itself and of different traditions about its composition – in the mysterious letters of

²⁹ *Qiṣaṣ al-Anbiyā’*, 5; *Lives of the Prophets*, 8-9. I have modified Brinner’s translation here to emphasize that the Arabic uses two separate words for speech and the earth’s description of “mankind” as the “sons of Adam” (Ar. *banū Ādam*). The earth’s complaint echoes the sentiment of the angels in the Qur’ān, who worry that humankind “will work corruption therein and shed blood” (Q 2:30).

³⁰ See, Q 79:32 “And [God] made the mountains firm,” Cf. Psalm 124:5.

³¹ *Qiṣaṣ al-Anbiyā’*, 5; *Lives of the Prophets*, 9.

³² A. Miquel and M. Streck, “Qāf,” in *Encyclopaedia of Islam, Second Edition*, ed. P. Bearman et al. (Leiden: Brill); Pinto, *Medieval Islamic Maps*, 165; Chalyan-Daffner, “Natural Disasters,” 238-9. Muslim authors, including the Persian poet ‘Attār (c. 1145 – c. 1241), depicted Mount Qāf as a site of imaginative spiritual ascent. Dante’s depiction of Purgatory as mountain on the far side of the Earth may be based in some respects Islamic traditions of Mount Qāf. See Enrico Cerulli, *Il “Libro della scala” e la questione delle fonti arabospagnole della Divina commedia* (Città del Vaticano: Biblioteca apostolica vaticana, 1949), 182-4, 507-18.

the Qur'ān, using this scriptural anchor to bring them together.³³ Al-Tha'labī (and his predecessors) did not create these stories of the mountain and the fish to make sense of their appearance in the Qur'ān. Instead, the presence of the letters *Qāf* and *Nūn* in the Islamic scripture provided a space in which revisions of tradition could be enacted. In this case, al-Tha'labī links the establishment of successive, syncretic foundations to the Earth's vocal protestations against its role in human creation. Where Orosius looks to the earth for signs pointing to the truth of the Bible, al-Tha'labī looks to the Qur'ān for signs pointing to the truth of his construction of the earth. If Ovid and Orosius' disparate accounts of the seashells display a battle of beginnings between Christian and polytheists for the story of creation and the fulcrum of history, then al-Tha'labī's account reveals that even when the source of creation is supposedly settled, such narratives inevitably incorporate and appropriate many layers and legacies of the past. By imagining history as the recognition and rediscovery of links to a scriptural beginning, acts of *anagenesis* can obscure the lineage of their own literary sources and rewrite the history of their own making. Orosius' seashells and Tha'labī's letters contain many of the features of *anagenesis* that can define such stories across a broad expanse of culturally, geographically, and temporally diverse locales.

³³ Al-Kisā'ī, *Tales of the Prophets*, 9-10, includes mount Qāf alongside the bull and fish in his account of the world's creation, but he does not mention "the disconnected letters."

II: From Periodization to Process:

Dividing Time, Dividing Space

The curious episodes described above and the concept of *anagenesis* I advance in this dissertation dwell in broader questions about the practice of *periodization*: the arbitrary divisions of time and space that render history distinct and comprehensible. While “periodization,” as a word and concept, may be unfamiliar to many readers of this work, they will certainly be familiar with its manifold forms in the world: terms like “the Middle Ages,” “Tang China,” “The Renaissance,” “the Twentieth Century.” These terms and many others all take time, whose capacity for division is theoretically infinite, and render it into simpler categories that can be taught, learned, recalled, and discussed. Since time – as a dimension in the physical world and as a concept expressed in human language – is inevitably linked to space, periodizations, as Antoine Borrut observes, “do not impact only the temporal structures we use but also the spaces associated with time periods.”³⁴ Periods may be very broad in their spatial and temporal reach (e.g. “the Stone Age”) or localized and discrete (e.g. “Weimar-era Berlin”); they may refer to small and specialized academic terminology (e.g. “pre-Middle-Bronze IIA”), or they may be used popularly across the world (e.g. “the Modern Era”).³⁵ In any academic discipline that seeks to understand the development of phenomena over time, periodization is a necessary, if fraught, method of conveying ideas and information. The ubiquity of periodization makes it almost invisible. Since it attempts to divide and describe both time and space, periodization inevitably

³⁴ Antoine Borrut, “Vanishing Syria: Periodization and Power in Early Islam,” *Der Islam* 91, no. 1 (2014): 37–68, 38.

³⁵ The example here is taken from Israel Finkelstein, “Toward a New Periodization and Nomenclature of the Archaeology of the Southern Levant,” in *The Study of the Ancient Near East in the Twenty-First Century: The William Foxwell Albright Centennial Conference* (Eisenbrauns, 1996), 103–24, 107. Finkelstein finds terms like “pre-Middle-Bronze IIA” indicative of “terminological chaos” and proposes an alternative model. While it gained new applications in archaeology during the 19th century, the terminology of “Bronze Age” is adapted from the ancient model of “world ages” described by Hesiod and Ovid.

becomes entangled with broader philosophical questions that run the ambit from physics to phenomenology.³⁶ We need such distinctions and categories to heuristically grasp any notion of temporal difference, especially when considering moments in the past that are beyond our own experience. According to William Green, periodization's inevitability makes it "one of the most prominent and least scrutinized theoretical principles of history."³⁷

While time is in one respect fundamentally linear, a sequence of successive events, memory's associative quality introduces a variety of other dimensions into periodization.³⁸ Looking to the temporal models of Aristotle and Augustine and their exploration by Paul Ricoeur in his *Time and Narrative*, Carruthers considers the reckoning of time "bound up in the paradox that in order to perceive past and future, one must plot time spatially in the present. And in a specific kind of present at that, the present of the mind recollecting, that of inventive *memoria*."³⁹ Carruthers suggests that the phenomenological experience of time can be transferred beyond an individual's consciousness to create a sense of "collective memory," in which the space and time of outside world become conflated with the space and time within the mind.⁴⁰ Since memories can be transmitted from one person to another by the recounting and retelling of their contents, they extend far beyond personal and lived experience. Through the repeated recollection of historical events in narrative, "history, 'the past,' thus is marked in some way also as 'my past.'"⁴¹ Periodizations, like other forms of historical memory, allow individuals and communities to define themselves in relation to the many different spaces and

³⁶ See Paul Ricoeur, *Time and Narrative*, 3 vols. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990), vol. 1, 3-51; Carolyn Dinshaw, *How Soon Is Now?: Medieval Texts, Amateur Readers, and the Queerness of Time* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 2012), 7-20.

³⁷ William A. Green, "Periodization in European and World History," *Journal of World History* 3, no. 1 (1992): 13-53, 13.

³⁸ Mary J. Carruthers, "Meditations on the 'Historical Present' and 'Collective Memory' in Chaucer and Sir Gawain and the Green Knight," in *Time in the Medieval World*, ed. Chris Humphrey and W. Mark Ormrod (York: York Medieval Press, 2001), 137-55; for further discussion of the role of memory in medieval culture, see Carruthers, *The Book of Memory*, 2nd ed. (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008).

³⁹ Carruthers, "Meditations," 149.

⁴⁰ As Carruthers, "Meditations," 149.

times.

In addition to marking and mapping time and space, periodization is engaged with what Johannes Fabian, Kathleen Davis, and many other scholars have termed “the politics of time.”⁴² The determination of what a historical period is, who belongs within it, and what our impressions of that period should be inevitably establishes hierarchies across different times and the people who are imagined to belong within them. As Davis states, periodization is “not simply the drawing of an arbitrary line through time, but a complex process of conceptualizing categories, which are posited as homogeneous and retroactively validated by the designation of a period divide.”⁴³ Once a periodic division is established, it becomes a surprisingly resilient idea. Looking back on a particular period of the past, we are compelled to see the beginnings of the new and the ends of the old in each successive era in order to populate our memories with signs that can tell us how one time is different from another. By arranging the temporal, spatial, and cultural limits of different communities, periodization implicitly constructs who is part of “my past” and who is part of “their past.” Though periodization ostensibly expounds an idea of change over time, it can also reinforce “essentialisms” that insist on eternal and irreconcilable differences between cultures.⁴⁴

Different political aspects of periodization can be relatively explicit.⁴⁵ Naming a period in history “*La Belle Époque*,” “the Troubles,” or “the Century of Humiliation” directs a particular emotional interaction with a corner of the past and invites sympathies for one party or

⁴¹ Carruthers, “Meditations,” 152.

⁴² Johannes Fabian, *Time and the Other: How Anthropology Makes Its Object* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1983), xl; Kathleen Davis, *Periodization and Sovereignty: How Ideas of Feudalism and Secularization Govern the Politics of Time* (University of Pennsylvania Press, 2012), 2.

⁴³ Kathleen Davis, *Periodization and Sovereignty*, 2.

⁴⁴ Aziz Al-Azmeh, *Times of History: Universal Topics in Islamic Historiography* (New York: Central European University Press, 2006), 16.

⁴⁵ Such is the case of the “Republican Calendar” introduced in 1793 during the French Revolution, which renamed and re-structured the reckoning of weeks, months, and years to distance the newly established republic from the enduring

another in the midst of political struggles.⁴⁶ Other political connotations can be more subtle or diffuse, such as the shift from *Anno Domini* to the *Common Era*, which both secularizes a Christian tradition of reckoning and suggests it is “common” to all peoples of the world.⁴⁷ Since any periodic division compartmentalizes one part of history, it always carries the shadow of other periods, past and future. When two eras are named and compared, they can imply a historical narrative that emphasizes the superiority of one age over another, as the “Dark Ages” anticipates a later, superior “Enlightenment.” In some cases, one historical period is subordinated to another by a prefix, defining times as “pre” and “post” (e.g. Pre-Modern, Modern, Post-Modern).⁴⁸ All of these divisions, implicitly or explicitly, evoke the perceived differences that distinguish periods from times “before” and “after.” In his *Times of History: Universal Topics in Islamic Historiography*, Aziz Al-Azmeh describes the problematic implications of “naming” in the writing of history:

Naming is not an innocent activity, but lies at the very heart of ideology, one of whose principal mechanisms is the operation of classificatory tokens that determine the memberships of socio-political groups... The concrete images put forward as factually paradigmatic— the Golden Age, the glories of the Arabs, the Middle Ages in some European romanticisms and nationalisms, the idyllic rusticity of Heidegger, of African nativist philosophers, or westernised Indian sages— serve as iconic controllers of identities and take on general values generated by a truncated and telescoped history.⁴⁹

While al-Azmeh highlights some periodizations as being especially problematic, his insights show how all acts of periodization collapse the complexities of historical eras and human

influences of France’s monarchical and Christian past. See Matthew Shaw, *Time and the French Revolution: The Republican Calendar, 1789 - Year XIV* (Woodbridge: Royal Historical Society, 2011).

⁴⁶ See Alison Adcock Kaufman, “The ‘Century of Humiliation,’ Then and Now: Chinese Perceptions of the International Order,” *Pacific Focus* 25, no. 1 (2010): 1–33.

⁴⁷ See Davis, *Periodization and Sovereignty*, 3. Renaming the “Anno Domini” (AD) system of reckoning as “Common Era” (CE) presents a more subtle (and palatable) form of secularization than the revolutionary model, but it also, as Davis observes, “does little to diminish the effect of a globalized Christian calendar, and in fact privileges its order under a rubric that appears both secular and universal.”

⁴⁸ These schemes imply that only the modern period is important enough to be named, while others simply orbit around it. For a critique of the term “Postcolonial” along these lines, see Anne McClintock, *Imperial Leather: Race, Gender, and Sexuality in the Colonial Contest* (Routledge, 1995), 9-17.

cultures. In all these cases, periodization implicitly or explicitly identifies what parts of history are worth remembering, what parts are worth forgetting, what parts are good, and what parts are bad.

Periodization and the “Middle Ages”

The politics of time and the legacies of different forms of time-making are key to exploring acts of *anagenesis* and re-examining the periodization of the “Middle Ages.”⁵⁰ Like other periodizations, the idea of the “Middle Ages” traffics in political expressions of both time and space that are shaped by its own historical emergence and subsequent development as a discursive category. It begins as a term used by European historians to define a period of European history, both temporally against other periods of European history and spatially against other cultural traditions beyond Europe. Traditionally, historians delineated the beginning and end of the Medieval period with dramatic events, e.g. the death of Romulus Augustulus, the “last Roman Emperor,” in 476 CE, the “fall of Constantinople” in 1453 CE, or Christopher Columbus’ “discovery” of the Americas in 1492 CE.⁵¹ The “Middle Ages” are subordinate in such schemes: the milestones remain focused on the lingering legacy of the Roman world and its resurgence in a “Triumph of the West” that engendered the global hegemony of European powers during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. The English historian Edward Gibbon

⁴⁹ Al-Azmeh, *Times of History*, 25.

⁵⁰ On periodization and the limits of the Middle Ages, see Kathleen Davis and Michael Puett, “Periodization and ‘The Medieval Globe’: A Conversation,” *The Medieval Globe* 2, no. 1 (2016): 1–14; Jennifer Summit and David Wallace, “Rethinking Periodization,” *Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies* 37, no. 3 (September 1, 2007): 447–51; Torgeir Landro, “Periodization and Temporal Boundaries - Defining the Middle Ages,” in *Discussing Borders, Escaping Traps: Transdisciplinary and Transspatial Approaches*, ed. Franck Orban and Elin Strand Larsen (Waxmann Verlag, 2019), 17–34; Catherine Holmes and Naomi Standen, “Introduction: Towards a Global Middle Ages,” *Past & Present* 238, no. suppl_13 (November 1, 2018): 1–44.

⁵¹ Landro, “Periodization and Temporal Boundaries,” 19–20.

lamented the “darkness and confusion of the Middle Ages” in comparison to the age of the Roman Empire, which at its zenith “comprehended the fairest part of the earth and the most civilized portion of humankind.”⁵² In many cases, the “modern” age is portrayed as self-consciously advancing beyond a “medieval” stasis by either rediscovering the knowledge of the ancient past – a “Renaissance” or by abandoning the religious traditions and institutions of Christianity for new models of scientific and political development – an “Enlightenment.”⁵³ If the idea of “Europe” is privileged by such periodizations, the idea of the “Medieval” is not; this vast stretch of time exists primarily as an “in-between,” distinguished by its difference from “Antiquity” and “Modernity,” rather than any positive value.

European and Global Conceptions of the “Middle Ages”

These considerations of the spatial and temporal limits of the Middle Ages all show the extent to which periodization is a question of inclusion and exclusion. What times, spaces, and peoples are considered to be part of an age? Who is left behind or beyond the limits of a particular period? Just as periodization attempts to shape history, it is shaped by the history of its own making. This history remains critical to the idea of the “Middle Ages,” which emerged as a conceptual category in European scholarship to describe a historical period whose focus was predominantly European.⁵⁴ Mindful of the continuing historical and geographical limitations of medieval studies, scholars in the past several decades have begun to reassess both the spatial and

⁵² Edward Gibbon, *The History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, 7 vols., ed. J.B. Bury (London: Meuthen & Co, 1896-8), vol. 1, vi, 1.

⁵³ E.g. Stephen Greenblatt, *The Swerve: How the World Became Modern* (W. W. Norton & Company, 2011), 8-12; Fabian, *Time and the Other*, 24; Green, “Periodization in European and World History,” 14-21, Davis, *Periodization and Sovereignty*, 1, 15; See also Talal Asad, *Formations of the Secular: Christianity, Islam, Modernity* (Stanford University Press, 2003), 1-21.

⁵⁴ In Anglophone scholarship on the Middle Ages, the “European” character of the period is delineated even further, since the focal points of study are dictated by the departmental organization of universities.

temporal boundaries of the era and imagine what a periodization of a “Global Middle Ages” might look like.⁵⁵ Janet Abu Lughod’s 1989 *Before European Hegemony* inaugurated many questions about the possible global reach of medieval history by adopting Immanuel Wallerstein’s “World Systems” theory to describe several major trade networks active before 1350 CE.⁵⁶ Amitav Ghosh’s *In an Antique Land* (1994) also serves as an early touchstone for the connections between a “Global Middle Ages” and threads of postcolonial scholarship. Ghosh’s memoir intertwines his experience as an Indian anthropologist in rural Egypt during the 1970s with a micro-history of a 13th-century Jewish merchant and his Indian slave drawn from documents of the Cairo Genizah, re-examining both past and present networks of exchange and ideas of cultural difference.⁵⁷ These works challenge the consensus that “globalization” and the emergence of capitalism were “modern” phenomena driven solely by European maritime exploration and exchange.

The scholarly consideration of a “Global Middle Ages” has proceeded cautiously. Most scholars interested in global and comparative studies are aware of how exporting the idea of “medieval” to describe societies present or past might reify the categories of Eurocentric historiography as the standard by which the whole world can be judged. Davis rejects the application of “medieval” to any culture and discourages the use of periodization in general since

⁵⁵ On the origins and theory of the “Global Middle Ages” see Geraldine Heng, *The Global Middle Ages: An Introduction* (Cambridge University Press, 2021), Geraldine Heng and Lynn Ramey, “Early Globalities, Global Literatures: Introducing a Special Issue on the Global Middle Ages,” *Literature Compass* 11, no. 7 (July 1, 2014): 389–94 and Geraldine Heng, “Early Globalities, and Its Questions, Objectives, and Methods: An Inquiry into the State of Theory and Critique,” *Exemplaria: A Journal of Theory in Medieval and Renaissance Studies* 26, no. 2–3 (2014 Summer-Fall 2014): 234–53; Robert I. Moore, “A Global Middle Ages?,” in *The Prospect of Global History*, ed. James Belich, John Darwin, and Chris Wickham (Oxford University Press, 2016), 80–92, Candace Barrington and Louise D’Arcens, “Introduction [to ‘The Global Middle Ages and Global Medievalisms’, a Special Issue],” *Digital Philology: A Journal of Medieval Cultures* 8, no. 1 (July 19, 2019): 1–13; Holmes and Standen, “Introduction,” 1–4.

⁵⁶ Janet L. Abu-Lughod, *Before European Hegemony: The World System A.D. 1250-1350* (Oxford University Press, 1991). On Abu-Lughod, Wallerstein, and the applicability of “world-systems theory” in the Global Middle Ages, see Heng, *Global Middle Ages*, 40-54. For the relationship between the Global Middle Ages and other forms of “global studies,” see Holmes and Standen, “Introduction,” 5-8.

⁵⁷ Amitav Ghosh, *In an Antique Land: History in the Guise of a Traveler’s Tale* (New York: Vintage, 1994). For further discussion of Ghosh’ memoir see Davis, *Periodization and Sovereignty*, 115-123, and Heng, *Global Middle Ages*, 26-7.

she sees the process as inescapably entangled in hierarchies of power.⁵⁸ Robert Moore is also reluctant to suggest that the term “medieval” applies to the world beyond Europe 500-1500 CE; he uses terms like “age of global intensification” and “great diversification” to combat the “stasis” that is often used to define the Middle Ages against Modernity.⁵⁹ Alternative definitions of global studies between 500-1500 CE have also appeared. Geraldine Heng, part of the original group of scholars who proposed the term “Global Middle Ages,” later suggested a complementary term “Early Globalities,” which emphasizes the “plurality of time, of temporalities that are enfolded and co-extant within a single historical moment.”⁶⁰ Rather than a single “Modernity” that emerges first in the West and guides it to hegemony over the rest of the world, this plurality of time views history “as oscillating between ruptures and re-inscriptions, as phenomena tagged ‘modern’ or ‘premodern’ recur over the *longue durée*, each time with difference, each time not identically as before across the vectors of the world.”⁶¹

Despite the limitations and problems introduced by the term “medieval,” many scholars see the utility in adapting and expanding upon the idea rather than dismissing it entirely. Candace Barrington and Louise D’Arcens suggest that the periodization of the “Medieval” may be used as a “resuscitated *theoretical* term ... divested of its spatial component and signifying a chronological period across coeval cultures without the corresponding Eurocentric value judgments.”⁶² Catherine Holmes and Naomi Standen argue that the “Global Middle Ages” is more important than defining it: “however great the methodological, terminological and political difficulties associated with an approach termed the ‘Global Middle Ages’, the plentiful evidence for behaviour and interaction on a global scale in the millennium before 1500 deserves sustained

⁵⁸ Davis, *Periodization and Sovereignty*, 132-4.

⁵⁹ Moore, “A Global Middle Ages?,” 92; Moore, “The First Great Divergence?,” *Medieval Worlds* 1, no. 1 (2015): 16–24.

⁶⁰ Heng, “Early Globalities and its Questions,” 237-8. See also Heng, *Global Middle Ages*, 18-23.

⁶¹ Heng, “Early Globalities and its Questions,” 237.

⁶² Barrington and D’Arcens, 7.

and precise analysis.”⁶³ Heng similarly emphasizes the distinction between “medieval” being applied by “euromedievalists” “willy-nilly” to other regions of the world and the conceptions of “Medieval India” and “Medieval Japan” “issuing from *within* non-European studies and attached by their scholarly proponents to *their own* zones and periods of study.”⁶⁴ Michael Puett in turn proposes greater attention to “*emic*” forms of periodization: how did historical cultures conceptualize time on their own terms, and how were these ideas themselves dynamic forms of discourse that could be shaped and reshaped by different actors within each cultural system.⁶⁵ These disparate articulations of a “Global Middle Ages” both acknowledge the risks of such periodic terms and necessitate a broader exploration of historical disciplines beyond the limits defined by previous generations of scholars.

From Periodization to Process: Anagenesis

If today’s scholars want to arrive at a better periodization of the Global Middle Ages, it is helpful to consider and compare how historical practices of periodization relate both to one another and to our present ideas about naming and dividing time. Delving into the historiographical traditions of the past several centuries to retrace the intellectual development of contemporary scholarship on the “Middle Ages,” we inevitably find other forms of time-making trailing back indefinitely into the past. These various attempts to embrace, reject, or modify the definition of the “Middle Ages” demonstrate the need to engage seriously with the intellectual foundations of periodization, understanding both their claims and their history. By introducing the idea of *anagenesis*, I aim to shift scholarly focus from questions of periodic categories in

⁶³ Holmes and Standen, “Introduction,” 2-3.

⁶⁴ Heng, “Early Globalities, and its Questions,” 236-7, [emphases in original]; Heng, *Global Middle Ages*, 21.

⁶⁵ Davis and Puett, “Periodization and ‘The Medieval Globe,’” 7-8.

present scholarship to the historical practices of periodization and their legacies in the wider world. The periodic practices of the medieval world should not be introduced merely to be dismissed but rather should be taken as objects of serious study. While the perception of different periods might shift greatly over time, and even when the names of periods are changed to reflect shifting attitudes in academic or popular circles, the legacies of different periodizations remain influential. Before the term “Middle Ages” was used to define the period of ca. 500-1500 CE, the people who lived in this time had many names for their own temporal moments and the eras that preceded them. These “medieval” people lived within time and conceived of time according to their own cultural, historical, and geographical situations. Just like today, the names and dates that defined different times emerged out of diverse systems of reckoning and a multitude of political and religious schemes that overlapped with one another. Rather than being a naïve and apolitical process, medieval forms of time-measuring and time-making were deeply invested with many dynamic senses of meaning and possibility.

The study of periodization *within* the “medieval” period and across the divides of different medieval communities has already been undertaken by several scholars. Insisting on the ways medieval practices of periodization could be deployed to political ends, Davis draws attention to the works of the Northumbrian monk Bede (672/3 - 735 CE): *On the Reckoning of Time* (Lat. *De Temporum Ratione*) and *The Ecclesiastical History of the English People* (Lat. *Historia Ecclesiastica Gentis Anglorum*).⁶⁶ In her work *Clepsydra: Essays on the Plurality of Time in Judaism*, Sylvie-Anne Goldberg traces several different quotidian and universal conceptions of “space-time” used by Jewish communities throughout history, which together

⁶⁶ Davis, *Periodization and Sovereignty*, 103-114. Bede Venerabilis, *De Temporum Ratione Liber*, ed. C.W. Jones, CCSL 123B (Turnhout: Brepols, 1977), 263-544; For an English translation see *The Reckoning of Time*, trans. Faith Wallis (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 1999). For an edition of the *Ecclesiastical History* with facing page English translation, see Bede, *Bede's Ecclesiastical History of the English People*, ed. and trans. Bertram Colgrave and R. A. B. Mynors (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1969).

“promoted the feeling of uniqueness of Jews amid the sociability of the world in which their lives unfolded.”⁶⁷ Barbara Freya Stowasser has likewise explored the similarly nested temporalities in Islam.⁶⁸ She focuses on the polymath al-Bīrūnī (362-440 AH / 973-1048 CE) whose *Remaining Signs of Past Centuries* (Ar. *al-Āthār al-bāqiyah ‘an al-qurūn al-khāliyah*) compared Jewish, Christian, and Islamic calendars alongside Hellenistic, Sassanian Persian, and Indian examples.⁶⁹ Stowasser demonstrates that at the conclusion of the 1st millennium CE, al-Bīrūnī and other Muslim scholars were well aware of both a multitude of temporal models and their political and religious consequences.⁷⁰ Other scholars have not only paid attention to the development of Islamic calendars but have also used critical approaches to periodization in order to question the categories of traditional Islamic historiography.⁷¹ Borrut, for instance, follows Davis’ insights into periodization while demonstrating how the tripartite sequence of caliphal dynasties (Rashidun, Umayyad, Abbasid) – long accepted by scholars – represents the shaping of history by Abbasid scholars against alternative periodizations proposed by their political and religious opponents.⁷² In the *Times of History*, Al-Azmeh likewise demonstrates that the typological elements of Islamic historiography reinforce the claims of social and juridical authority among Muslim scholars.⁷³ These scholars all show how we can better approach the

⁶⁷ Sylvie Anne Goldberg, *Clepsydra: Essay on the Plurality of Time in Judaism*, trans. Benjamin Ivry (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 2016), 2. On Rabbinical practices of periodization and attitudes towards the past, also see Isaiah Gafni, “Concepts of Periodization and Causality in Talmudic Literature,” *Jewish History* 10, no. 1 (1996): 21–38.

⁶⁸ Barbara Freya Stowasser, *The Day Begins at Sunset: Perceptions of Time in the Islamic World* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2014).

⁶⁹ Stowasser, *The Day Begins at Sunset*, 57-140; Muḥammad ibn Aḥmad al-Bīrūnī, *al-Āthār al-bāqiyah ‘an al-qurūn al-khāliyah*, (Tehran: Mīrās-i Maktūb, 2001); For an English translation *The Chronology of Ancient Nations; an English Version of the Arabic Text of the Athār-Ul-Bākiya of Albīrūnī, or “Vestiges of the Past,”* trans. C. Edward Sachau (London: W.H. Allen and co., 1879); See also Michio Yano, “Al-Bīrūnī,” in *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 3rd ed. ed. Kate Fleet et al. (Brill, 2016).

⁷⁰ Stowasser, *The Day Begins at Sunset*, 102-3. Al-Bīrūnī’s exploration of this plurality of times was further embedded in Islamic projects of conversion and colonization on the Indian subcontinent.

⁷¹ E.g. Konrad Hirschler and Sarah Savant, “Introduction - What Is in a Period? Arabic Historiography and Periodization,” *Der Islam* 91, no. 1 (May 1, 2014): 6–19.

⁷² Borrut, “Periodization and Power in Early Islam,” 41-2.

⁷³ Al-Azmeh, *The Times of History*, 67-100..

problems surrounding contemporary questions of periodization by acknowledging that historical peoples enacted their own complex forms of time-making and that these historical periodizations necessarily shape our own perceptions of the past.

In order to re-evaluate the temporal and geographical scope of the “Middle Ages,” we can re-examine the periodization practices found in historical sources and unpack their complex and politically charged philosophies of time. Understanding these multiple temporalities requires attuning ourselves to the multiplicity of religious claims upon methods of reckoning and categorizing time and the scope of world history. Jews, Christians, and Muslims developed a variety of models and methods for keeping track of time and remembering history, and these models were shared across confessional divisions. In addition to the scriptural traditions of each people and the exegetical authorities who mediated the meaning of sacred commands to the community, such acts of time-making were influenced by the cultural legacies of the Roman and Persian Empires, as well as the historical memories of Germanic, Slavic, and Turkic, and many other peoples who adopted these initially Near Eastern religions as their own. By unpacking the periodization practices of these religious traditions, we can better understand the development of our own historiographical perspectives and identify the expanse and the extent of the “medieval” as a historical category.

III. Dimensions of *Anagenesis*

Anagenesis Defined

Anagenesis is not a neologism – it is already used in evolutionary science to describe the development of species along a single line of descent.⁷⁴ I am offering a new application of the term, noting its etymological function as a Greek calque of “Renaissance” (*ana* + *genesis* = return to birth). Echoing both the stories of biblical beginnings and the language of biological reproduction, *anagenesis* emphasizes how Jewish, Christian, and Muslim traditions reimagined geography, history, and identity by portraying new ideas as the “rebirth” of forgotten knowledge. If *Renaissance* signifies the recovery of “classical” traditions from Antiquity that ushered in a new era of artistic, scientific, and social revolution, then *anagenesis* signifies a complementary phenomenon: the rediscovery of a “scriptural” history lying before, behind, and beneath other strands of cultural memory. The reconfigurations of time that define *anagenesis* often occur in the wake of conversion, migration, conquest, or revolution, when historical contingency is rewritten as historical destiny. *Anagenesis* enacts religious syncretism through the medium of periodization. The result is a *hybrid* narrative of history, one that insists on the legibility of the present state of things in the time before.⁷⁵

⁷⁴ To my knowledge, no other scholar has applied *anagenesis* in a sense similarly to the one I am proposing in this dissertation. For scientific applications of anagenesis, see Warren D. Allmon, “Coming to Terms with Tempo and Mode: Speciation, Anagenesis, and Assessing Relative Frequencies in Macroevolution,” in *Evolutionary Theory: A Hierarchical Perspective*, ed. Niles Eldredge et al. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2016), 260–81; Douglas J. Futuyma, “On the Role of Species in Anagenesis,” *The American Naturalist* 130, no. 3 (September 1, 1987): 465–73; Alan Bilsborough, “Anagenesis in Hominid Evolution,” *Man* 7, no. 3 (1972): 481–83.

⁷⁵ In using the term “hybrid” I am touching on both the theoretical concept of “hybridity” in post-colonial theory, and the imagination of the “hybrid” in science and technology studies. On “hybridity,” see Homi K. Bhabha, “Signs Taken for Wonders: Questions of Ambivalence and Authority under a Tree Outside Delhi, May 1817,” *Critical Inquiry* 12, no. 1 (October 1, 1985): 144–65. Like the idea of “hybridity” proposed by Homi Bhabha, these narratives still burdened with the tension and multiplicity of competing temporalities (oral vs. written / ancestral vs. adopted / pre-conversion vs. post-conversion) even as they insist upon their reconciliation. For an application of Hybridity in the context of Medieval history and literature, see Sprenkle, Abigail. “Hybridity and Identity in Old English Law Codes.” Cornell University, 2021. On the concept of the “hybrid” in science and technology studies, which blurs distinctions between human and non-human actors and ideas, see Bruno Latour, *We Have Never Been Modern*, trans. Catherine Porter (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University

Since I aim to shift perspectives from contemporary scholarly discussions of periodization to historical discourses of time-making, I arrive at my conception of *anagenesis* constructively from historical sources. From this perspective, I primarily describe *anagenesis* in terms of individual *acts* as I identify them within historical sources. In its broadest sense, an “act of *anagenesis*” refers to whenever and wherever a claim reconciling and reinventing disparate cultural traditions is invoked, adapted, or repeated. Each act of *anagenesis* can be analyzed in terms of its *contexts* (within an exegetical culture, within a historical moment, within a literary tradition), its *components* (the device e.g. a word, a quote, or a narrative trope; the medium through which recognition is made), and its *claims* (how does the assertion of continuity and equivalence advance particular assertions of primacy and hierarchy for one version of history over another or one community over another). Describing *anagenesis* in terms of acts is necessarily reductive and heuristic. In some cases, we might be able to identify the actors or authors behind different periodizations, but we cannot necessarily uncouple what components of the act are introduced by them and what components are carried over from a previous idea or tradition. Yet this terminology allows us to identify the development of a broader conceptual framework out of individual empirical examples.

On other levels, I speak of forms of *anagenesis* and anagenetic narratives grouping together collections of individual acts. These stories may be linked to one another through specific genealogies of literary influences, or they may be separate from one another. While noting likely avenues for the transmission of different traditions and specific narrative elements is helpful in categorizing the specific contexts of each act, it is not the sole end of my study. At another level, I refer to a *framework of anagenesis*. This framework broadly denotes the various

Press, 1993), 1-3, 34-7; Sheila Jasanoff, *States of Knowledge: The Co-Production of Science and the Social Order* (Routledge, 2004), 15-9, 22-3.

practices and principles that might be categorized together as part of this process of periodization. In some cases, I refer to *anagenesis* as a theoretical concept, identifying what interventions it might offer to particular subfields of scholarship in the present day. Such occurrences appear in the introductions of different parts and chapters, and I aim to guide readers on where my perspectives converge or diverge from previous approaches to different topics.

By studying a succession of acts of *anagenesis* in different versions of a shared narrative tradition, I identify changes and continuities across temporal and cultural boundaries. Such comparative examination inevitably relies on the legacies of semiotics, structuralism, and discourse that have been a major part of historical scholarship since the “linguistic turn” in the latter half of the twentieth century. As Travis Zadeh suggests in *Mapping Frontiers*,

The illusion of the anecdote lies in its simple reduction of ontology into a bounded and closed narrative form. Such sleight of hand is only possible through the interpretive communities that make given narrative meaningful. Thus the original articulation of any account depends upon the larger context of its production. Yet such original contexts of production do not predetermine meaning across the polysemous expanse of diachronic dissemination, itself animated through a process of interpretation and translation.⁷⁶

Exploring *anagenesis* requires attention to the “original articulation” of acts of *anagenesis*: a “thick description” of the contexts of their production, the specific time-lines and traditions they sought to reconcile, the way such moments of discovery function within the arc of a specific narrative.⁷⁷ It also requires recognizing how such webs of meaning might be changed over time, as traditions are forgotten, rediscovered, and interpreted by different exegetical cultures.

Exploring *anagenesis* also uncovers alternative ways of thinking about time and history. Looking for similar structures of describing history, we can also see how radically different

⁷⁶ Zadeh, *Mapping Frontiers*, 2.

stories can do very similar things; situating different narratives into structures and sequences that privilege a certain “universal” past over other traditions. We can identify or hypothesize philological links between texts without privileging the primacy of originals.⁷⁸ Instead of considering stories about cross-cultural exchange worth studying only when one can establish a direct line of transmission, I suggest that scholars pay attention to the variety of parallel branches that emerge from a shared antiquity, noting where they diverge and where they curiously remain alike.

Having defined *anagenesis* as a method of reconciling multiple histories through narratives of discovery, and having sketched some of the ways we will describe and identify examples of *anagenesis* in historical sources, let us proceed to elaborate on some of the theoretical foundations that describe this process of periodization. In one respect, we need to be able to think *within* the framework of *anagenesis*, understanding the assumptions, logic, and systems of reference that allow authors and authorities to engage in acts of re-shaping history. We also need to be able to think *outside* of the framework of *anagenesis*, recognizing how different instances of periodization change over time and are governed by specific cultural contexts and adaptations of pre-existing sources. To do so, I want to focus on concepts that resonate with a variety of different meanings across time. Acts of *anagenesis* seek to merge different strands of cultural memory so that a community can imagine itself in possession of a true narrative of history and a privileged relationship with the creator of the universe. In this way, *anagenesis* may be contemplated alongside Mary Carruthers’ considerations of “collective memory.” Acts of *anagenesis* direct religious communities to “remember” a specific version of the past, preserving certain elements of culture, obscuring others, and inventing new ones. This

⁷⁷ Zadeh, *Mapping Frontiers*, 2; On “Thick Description” see Geertz, “Thick Description”, 6-8.

⁷⁸ See Lowin, *The Making of a Forefather*, 1-30.

process allows for multiple strands of history to be constructed as separate from one another and merged together as part of a universal chronology (fig .4).

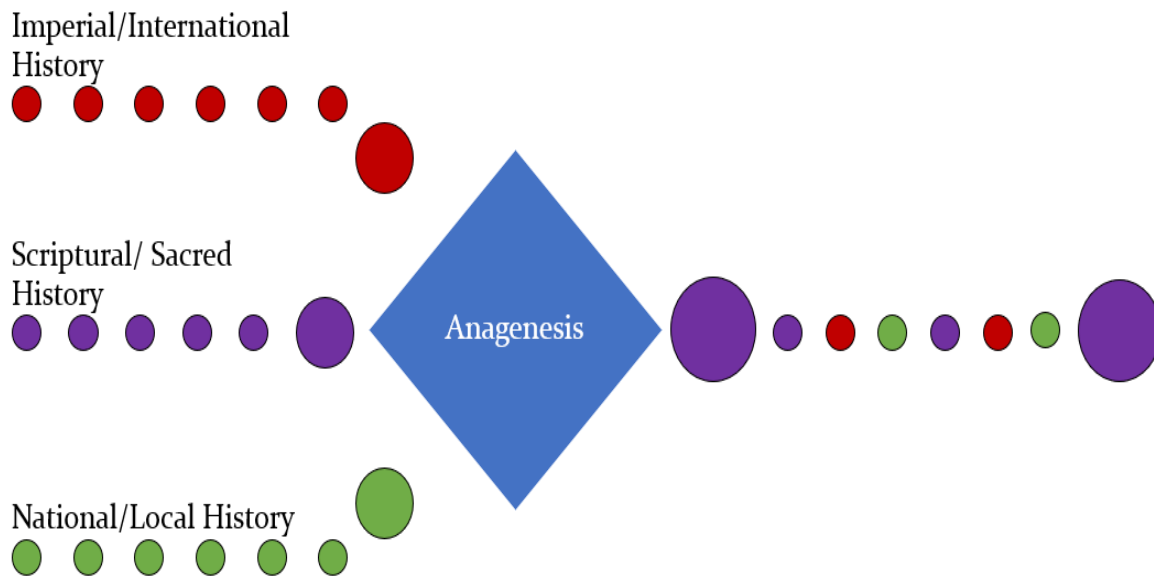


Figure 4: Making a Hybrid History: Multiple temporalities are re-sequenced into a single “universal” timeline. Jewish, Christian, and Muslim communities emphasize the finitude of time and monotheistic creation, so this sequence privileges scriptural and extra-scriptural narratives as being the earliest and most significant events in universal history. While some events in the different timelines may occur in parallel, they are encompassed by the religious framework of creation and eschaton.

Dimensions of Anagenesis: Typologies

Another critical term that describes the flexible forms of time making that operate within *anagenesis* is that of typology. In one sense, typology describes the process of grouping things into a system of classification, i.e., sorting them into different “types” so that they can be

compared with one another.⁷⁹ There are many different applications of typology across academic disciplines to describe systems of classification in biology, linguistics, sociology, anthropology, and many other fields. In *Time and the Other*, Fabian uses the term “Typological Time” to denote the “use of Time which is measured, not as time elapsed, nor by reference to points on a (linear) scale, but in terms of socioculturally meaningful events or, more precisely, intervals between such events.”⁸⁰ Fabian lists the distinctions devised by anthropologists to categorize development between and within different societies, deploying types such as “preliterate vs. literate, traditional vs. modern tribal vs. feudal... rural vs. urban, etc.”⁸¹ Placed in these comparative frameworks, time is “divested of its vectorial, physical connotations” and is reconfigured instead into “states” of being. Rather than reckoning contemporaneous societies as “coeval” because they inhabit the same historical moment, this form of thinking divides one from one another by their differential status in typological time; different spaces of the same historical moment become the respective dominion of different “times.” As Davis observes, this kind of typological thinking is essential to periodizations of both the European past and the global present.⁸² Though ostensibly static formations, such states reaffirm a temporal narrative of progression and hierarchy.⁸³

Fabian’s conception of typological time shows how periodization contains both spatial and temporal characteristics, an important foundation for the idea of *anagenesis*. Yet Fabian’s narrative obscures in some respects the historical valence of the word “typology” as a theological term. Al-Azmeh describes a different but related form of typological time envisioned by Jewish,

⁷⁹ “Typology, n.”. OED Online. June 2021. Oxford University Press.

⁸⁰ Fabian, *Time and the Other*, 23. Fabian adopts this sense “typology” from the sociologist Max Weber’s theories of “typology of authority” (Ger. *Herrschaftstypologie*) and the “ideal type” (*Idealtypus*), and he traces its continuing influence in the anthropological writings of the twentieth century. [Add bibliographical note to Weber].

⁸¹ Fabian, *Time and the Other*, 23.

⁸² Davis, *Periodization and Sovereignty*, 4-5.

⁸³ Fabian, *Time and the Other*, 23.

Christian, and Muslim authorities, one that interpreted scriptural traditions as “removed from history and transposed into the ‘perspective of eternity.’”⁸⁴ The term “typology” was initially coined to describe a form of Christian hermeneutics that arranged narratively and temporally separate passages of scripture into an allegorical framework centered around the figure of Christ.⁸⁵ For Christian interpreters, typology was the medium through which the Hebrew Bible, a scriptural canon shared with Jewish communities, became definitively Christian. By interpreting events, characters, and numbers from the Hebrew Bible as “types” and “figures” (Greek. *typos*, Lat. *typus*, *figura*, or *praefigura*) of Christ and the Church, Christians not only claimed that the various messianic prophecies of the scriptures had been fulfilled, but also insisted that the entirety of time gravitated around the figure of Christ and the narrative of his life, death, and resurrection. Typology transformed the Hebrew Bible into the “Old Testament,” a scripture whose hermeneutic key lay in the “New Testament.” The historical anteriority of the Hebrew Scriptures became retroactively subsumed into the subsequent Christian revelations and Christian re-interpretations, which facilitates a transformative claim upon the Bible through a rediscovery of its hidden significations. This is not to claim that the idea of *anagenesis* is coterminous with typology, but rather that acts of *anagenesis* deploy typological relationships between different times to encompass disparate histories within claims of universal continuity.

While it is necessary to identify the historical relationship between “typology” and Christian hermeneutics, it is also vital to emphasize that such forms of thought are not exclusively a Christian invention. Rather, Christian interpreters adapted and exploited an approach to time and narrative that, in many respects, already had been incorporated into the

⁸⁴ Al-Azmeh, *Times of History*, 32. See also Erich Auerbach, “Figura,” in *Scenes from the Drama of European Literature*, trans. Paolo Valesio (Minneapolis: U of Minnesota Press, 1984), 11–76, 42. By insisting that “figural” thinking is typical of medieval (i.e. Christian) thought, Auerbach’s study reifies the divisions between the Ancient, Medieval, and Modern eras.

⁸⁵ See Rudolf Suntrup. “Typology,” in *Brill’s New Pauly*.

biblical canon by its authors and editors. For instance, the deeds of the sons of Jacob in the Book of Genesis, especially the prophecies uttered by the patriarch on his deathbed, are shaped to anticipate the social and political positions of their descendants in the later history of Israel's settlement, monarchical formation, and dissolution.⁸⁶ Ideas of pre-figuration and trans-temporal resonances are prevalent in subsequent Jewish traditions and shape the understanding of time in both the Qur'ān and Islamic exegesis. The Qur'ān deploys the term *mathal* ("parable" or "likeness") to equate the relationship between its speaker and audience to earlier encounters between prophets and peoples throughout history.⁸⁷ Muslim exegetes drew parallels between the life of Muhammad and the lives of earlier prophets to portray their messenger and his revelation as the culmination of religious history.⁸⁸ Just as Christian exegetes re-interpreted the Hebrew Bible through the New Testament, Muslim scholars considered Qur'ān, *ḥadīth*, and *sīra* as the loci through which all history should be re-focused.⁸⁹

Through typology, allegory becomes a tool for collecting and comparing moments across time and placing them into a new sequence of narrative meaning. Al-Azmeh observes how individual acts of typological identification contribute to an overarching sense of time's function:

Typology, of course, is "a figure of speech that moves in time." But it is also more than that... it presupposes a time that is inert; a chronometric continuum which is accentuated by significant events of a greater ontological weight on account its affiliation to eternity, such as successive appearances of prophecy or other moments of divine intervention, such as the Flood. It is a vast *longue durée* coterminous with time itself and anterior to it, derived from the Type and the re-enactments of the Type.⁹⁰

It is perhaps helpful to imagine typology as constituting an additional *dimension* beyond space-

⁸⁶ See Genesis 49; see also Samantha Zacher, *Rewriting the Old Testament in Anglo-Saxon Verse: Becoming the Chosen People* (New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2014), 57-9.

⁸⁷ Tayeb El-Hibri, *Parable and Politics in Early Islamic History: The Rashidun Caliphs* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2010), 2.

⁸⁸ Al-Azmeh, *Times of History*, 29.

⁸⁹ Peter Wright, "Critical Approaches to the 'Farewell Khutba' in Ibn Ishaq's Life of the Prophet," *Comparative Islamic Studies* 6, no. 1-2 (2010): 217-49, 221-2.

time where the proximity and distance between different events does not follow the same proportions as in the physical world. Where “chronometric” time, which measures time in sequences of seconds, hours, days, and years, follows a regular and continuous rhythm, typology imposes a different order entirely, one governed by principles of memory and association.⁹¹ Although typology does not follow the physics of the natural world, it nonetheless has its own internal logic. As Carolyn Dinshaw observes, “Such allegory therefore depends on both chronology and “a time out of time” in which the text becomes legible in its completeness.”⁹² Al-Azmeh describes typology as a “*connected multiplicity*, hence a space made into a model for time.”⁹³ People, places, and things that are spatially or temporally distant from one another may nonetheless be placed in close proximity within the imagined “space” of memory and the mind. To forge such connections across time, typology ultimately rests on the authority of scripture and the idea of its divine and eternal status, a power that allows it to speak in different ways about space and time precisely because it is imagined as existing beyond them.

Dimensions of Anagenesis: Exegetical Cultures

While typologies imply connections between two temporally distinct objects in efforts to display the “perspective of eternity,” such time-bending ideas ultimately rest on desires to define a present community. Yet the question remains: who is responsible for identifying typological parallels in sacred history, and who decides how they are extended into other pasts, presents, and futures? As we have seen in the works of Orosius and al-Tha‘labī, the authority of “scripture” can be deployed broadly and creatively. Exploring *anagenesis* requires careful attention to the

⁹⁰ Al-Azmeh, *Times of History*, 116.

⁹¹ Al-Azmeh, *Times of History*, 32.

⁹² Dinshaw, *How Soon?*, 46.

⁹³ Al-Azmeh, *Times of History*, 73.

individuals, communities, and methodologies that lie behind these acts of time-making. In *Before and After Muhammad*, Garth Fowden uses the term “exegetical cultures” to emphasize the broader connections and continuities between Jewish, Christian, and Islamic traditions.⁹⁴ He observes that even the establishment of closed canons of scripture constituted only an intermediary stage in religious development:

Not in Judaism, Christianity, or Islam did these texts add up to anything remotely resembling an ordered theology or systematic creed – the prophetic experience usually resists systematization. But speculation, debate, and teaching, both concurrent with and subsequent to the scriptural phase, do gradually elicit and nurture a doctrine, typically through the composition of commentaries on canonical texts.⁹⁵

While scripture was interpreted as the eternal speech of God, the consideration of which oral and textual traditions constituted scripture – and how they could be interpreted – were questions approached by human communities within time. The self-definition of these religious communities was forged through exchanges and debates that addressed religious narratives drawn from scripture, shared exegetical traditions, and antique legal and philosophical discourses. Exegetical authorities were responsible not only for teaching the community about the interpretation of scripture but also for understanding how the “then” of the scriptural (and extra-scriptural) worlds applies to the “now” of specific cultural and historical moments. Al-Azmeh also emphasizes “the maintenance of canonicity, and specifically, the canonicity of living Tradition— including practice— which had become textual corpus, ratified over the space of many generations and centuries by consensus.”⁹⁶ In Al-Azmeh’s view, the establishment of a such “canons” is not so much about what traditions count as authoritative as much as *who* gets to

⁹⁴ Garth Fowden, *Before and After Muhammad: The First Millennium Refocused* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2013), 53-57. See also John C. Reeves, *Trajectories in Near Eastern Apocalyptic: A Postrabbinic Jewish Apocalypse Reader* (Society of Biblical Lit, 2005), 1-25.

⁹⁵ Fowden, *Before and After Muhammad*, 57.

⁹⁶ Al-Azmeh, *The Times of History*, 113.

decide what counts. The construction of typological time privileges God's role in history as well as the communities of human beings who claim the ability to interpret and enforce the will of God in the present world.⁹⁷

Claims upon the nature of time both reified and blurred the boundaries between different communities of Jews, Christians, and Muslims.⁹⁸ Judaism, Christianity, and Islam had different ideas about which specific traditions constitute "scripture" and how those traditions might be interpreted and applied to life. Even so, they shared a fundamental narrative of monotheistic creation. Where scriptural traditions diverged, exegetical narratives that were used to elaborate upon scripture were often exchanged across religious communities. They shared scriptures, stories, and philosophies and deployed them against one another. Groups within each religious community were aware of the many differences that separated them from other groups that made claims to practice the same faith or worship the same God. The stakes were high: defining the nature of history, time, reality, the universe, and God. Defining the limits of the Self and the Other took many forms yet ultimately gravitated around a shared collection of narratives and beliefs that made such boundaries permeable in the very moment of their making.

Just as Jews, Christians, and Muslims used typology to define their narratives of sacred history and ideas of community and authority, they also applied typological techniques to situate the other peoples and places of the world within their understanding of the "perspective of eternity." Bede, for instance, explains the Jewish rejections of Jesus as Messiah, and, by

⁹⁷ Al-Azmeh, *The Times of History*, 88-90,

⁹⁸ On examples of inter-religious dialogue and rivalry, see David Nirenberg, *Neighboring Faiths: Christianity, Islam, and Judaism in the Middle Ages and Today* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2014); Katharina Heyden, "Dialogue as a Means of Religious Co-Production: Historical Perspectives," *Religions* 13, no. 2 (February 2022): 150; Robert C. Gregg, *Shared Stories, Rival Tellings: Early Encounters of Jews, Christians, and Muslims* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015); Shari L. Lowin, *The Making of a Forefather: Abraham in Islamic and Jewish Exegetical Narratives* (Boston: Brill, 2006), 14-18. Lowin highlights the evolving Islamic perceptions of the *isrā'īliyyāt*, stories that we believed to derive from Jewish tradition, and the traditionist Ka'b al-Aḥbār (d. c.32/652), a converted Jew who is accused of "Judaizing" Islamic belief. See also Lowin, "Isrā'īliyyāt," in *Encyclopedia of Islam: Three*, eds. Fleet et al, (2019); For the episode involving Ka'b, see al-Tha'labī, *Qiṣaṣ al-Anbiyā'*, 15-20; *Lives of the Prophets*, 29-40.

extension, Christian Hermeneutics, as pre-figured in the writings of the Old Testament.⁹⁹ Here, religious typologies can intersect with Fabian's concept of "typological time," which organizes different regions of the world into different "states of being."¹⁰⁰ Parallel dichotomies of "socioculturally meaningful events" can be mapped onto religious ideas of the self and the other: "Israel vs. The Nations," "Christian vs. Pagan," "Believers vs. Unbelievers," "Orthodox vs. Heretic," "At Home vs. In Exile," "Ascendant vs. Persecuted," or "Redeemed vs. Punished." Typological categories mark periodic divisions both within and between different communities. They are also thresholds that can be crossed, moving across a cultural epoch and thus into a new state of being. Through such typologies, Jewish, Christian, and Muslim historians claimed knowledge of a universal history and geography under the dominion of God. Since the whole world belongs to God, its creator, all moments of space and time are essentially equal, but since only certain individuals and communities recognize this God, some parts of the world inevitably imagine themselves as more equal than others. Typologies facilitate the mapping of time onto space in order to distinguish territories that belong to the faithful from those beyond the bounds of belief.¹⁰¹ New encounters can be collapsed into existing models of conversion and conflict. When apostates, renegades, and heretics inevitably appear to challenge the presumed consensus of a community, they are portrayed as falling backwards, paradoxically, into a state *before* belief. There they may be re-incorporated into the community of believers through another conversion or punished for attempting to reverse the flow of history.

⁹⁹ For Bede, like other "Fathers of the Church" before him, a handy method to combat internal Christian opponents was to insist that their beliefs were actually "Jewish" in origin, part of an outdated method of understanding scripture. See Andrew P. Scheil, *The Footsteps of Israel: Understanding Jews in Anglo-Saxon England*, (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2004), 46-9; Heyden, "Dialogue," 6-8.

¹⁰⁰ Fabian, *Time and the Other*, 23.

¹⁰¹ E.g. the perception of "Christendom" as described by Nirenberg in *Neighboring Faiths*, 15-7.

Dimensions of Anagenesis: Epistemic Tension

Just as periodization operates according to principles of memory, both individual and collective, it also tries to characterize (and hierarchize) the thought processes of humans in the past. In addition to “space-time,” an idea of “mind-time” is prevalent in many forms of periodization; heady concepts like *zeitgeist*, *mentalité*, *paradigm*, *weltanschauung*, and more commonplace turns of phrase like “the way people thought back then” or “the way people *were* back then” acknowledge the history of ideas, but they can also reduce the irrecoverable interiority of past human lives into forms that can satisfy our own limited imaginations of history’s expanse. The epistemology that *anagenesis* assumes is one of revelation and recognition. In attempts to form communities across history, typologies suggest that all hermeneutics are temporally and phenomenologically contingent. Knowledge of history is already complete from the “perspective of eternity,” and God chooses when to reveal knowledge of the past and the future to human beings. A believer can only “understand” the meaning of a particular scriptural episode if they are in the right place, time, and state of knowing, i.e. they have been taught the correct form of belief that allows one to know the true meaning of the text. Temporality is defined not only by geographical distinctions and spatial metaphors but also by psychological assumptions about the availability of knowledge in time.

In various instances of *anagenesis*, the narratives of discovery and acts of naming that make the reconciliation of history possible rely on what I call “epistemic tension.” The term evokes both Michel Foucault’s idea of the episteme (Fr. *épistémè*) and Augustine’s conception of time as “the tension of the soul” (Lat. *distensio anima*).¹⁰² In *The Archeology of Knowledge*, Foucault proposes the *épistémè* as an alternative to the more rigid forms of periodization with

¹⁰² Michel Foucault, *The Archeology of Knowledge: And the Discourse on Language* (New York: Vintage, 1982).

explicit spatial and temporal limits. Rather than explicit divisions in space and time, the *épistémè* represents “something like a world-view, a slice of history common to all branches of knowledge” that “makes it to grasp the set of constraints and limitations which, at a given moment, are imposed on discourse.”¹⁰³ In the *Confessions*, Augustine defines time as a feeling of tension between present experience, memory of the past, and anticipation of the future.¹⁰⁴ For Augustine, this sense of disjunction is formed when one struggles to hold two times together in the mind’s presence. As the fundamental experience of temporality for human beings, this “tension of the soul” is contrasted to the imagined experience of time from God’s perspective, who dwells outside of the world in eternity, and has knowledge of all moments in history simultaneously.¹⁰⁵ Taken together, or rather, placed in tension with one another, the term “epistemic tension” highlights how periodizations can be constructed through the emphasis on the difference in human knowledge in different spatial, historical, and cultural contexts.

Epistemic tension establishes periodic differences and, by extension, communal identities, by placing emphasis on the ways that knowledge within the world has changed.¹⁰⁶ In the midst of narrative, moments of epistemic tension operate as a form of dramatic irony: the audience of a particular story, situated in a different moment of history from the past the story reflects, can recognize the significance of objects, events, and characters that remain hidden from the actors in the story itself. In forms of *anagenesis*, these epistemic tensions are often situated around the fulcrum of religious conversion, demonstrating the “ignorance” of peoples in the past

¹⁰³ Foucault, *Archaeology of Knowledge*, 191-2.

¹⁰⁴ Augustinus, *Confessions*, trans. Carolyn J.-B. Hammond, LCL 26-7 (Harvard University Press, 2016), XI.23-31, vol. 2, pp. 234-59; For discussions of the *distention animi*, see Ricoeur, *Time and Narrative*, vol. 1, 16-30; Carruthers, “Meditations,” 153-4; Dinshaw, 13-4.

¹⁰⁵ Augustine, *Confessions*, XI.12; Al-Azmeh, 3, begins with Augustine’s passage as a fundamental example of “typological” thinking about history.

¹⁰⁶ Foucault, *Archaeology of Knowledge*, 59, identifies one important element of discourse as the “field of memory”: “statements that are no longer accepted or discussed, and no longer define either a body of truth or a domain of validity, but in relation to which relations of filiation, genesis, transformation, continuity, and historical discontinuity can be established.”

before they had access to the revelations of scripture. Yet epistemic tension can also be used to incorporate pre-conversion figures and traditions into a community's sense of history. Focusing on the psychological experience of characters within narratives and the audiences outside of them, *anagenesis* creates a sense of "collective memory" that negotiates how these multiple pasts are brought together to form a community.

In *anagenesis* narratives, epistemic tension is linked typologically to the recovery of truths that are both historical and eternal; i.e. "they thought that way *then*, we think this way *now*, precisely because God has revealed to us knowledge that always has been true, and always will be." By emphasizing the differences between the knowledge of a "present" audience located outside of a narrative and the "past" actors within it, epistemic tension constructs a sense of historical consciousness and periodic difference. Such an audience can do this from their own historical moment because they have a better sense of the past than their predecessors; they have access to a scriptural tradition that is itself eternal or reflects the intentional creation of an eternal being.

IV. An Outline of the Study

In the dissertation, I explore the different iterations and functions of *anagenesis* in three case studies that cut across the entrenched linguistic, religious, geographical, and disciplinary divisions of Medieval Studies. Most of the materials discussed in this study date from the years between ca. 500 and 1500 CE. The exploration of their historical antecedents necessarily extends back into antiquity, demonstrating both the continuities and evolutions of literary traditions across successive generations of preservation and reinterpretation.

In my first case study, "The Archaeology of Ignorance," I consider narratives in which artifacts unearthed from the deep past serve as symbols of future conversion. I begin with a key

moment in *Beowulf*: when the titular hero duels with Grendel's mother in her underwater lair, he is saved from death by the fortunate appearance of a "titanic ancient sword" OE. "*ealdsweord eotensic*"). Beowulf presents the hilt of this sword as a sign of his victory to the Danish king Hrothgar, and the poet describes how the hilt's inscriptions serve as a material testament to the Noachic flood, revealing the biblical conflicts lying before and beneath the "heathen" time of the poem's setting. I then consider an episode in the *Biography of Muhammad* in which Muhammad's grandfather, 'Abd al-Muṭṭalib, unearths the sacred spring of "Zamzam" near the *Kā'ba*. Excavating in the Meccan sanctuary at the behest of a dream, 'Abd al- Muṭṭalib uncovers an "original" Abrahamic layer of history beneath the contemporary "pagan" settlement, linking both Muhammad and Arab peoples to the story and genealogy of the ancient patriarch. I conclude with a similar motif in accounts of the Turkic Khazar kingdom's adoption of Judaism in the 9th century CE. In one narrative, a debate in the Khazar court between Jewish, Christian, and Muslim missionaries is resolved through another fortuitous discovery: Jewish sages recognize that a collection of scrolls found in a Khazar sacred cave are, in fact, a copy of the Torah. The Khazars convert to Judaism after learning that they have long possessed and venerated the scriptures of this faith. These stories are not related in terms of literary heritage but rather parallel considerations of migration, conversion, and models for reconciling the past. By highlighting the "epistemic tensions" between the epochs before and after conversion, these acts of *anagenesis* incorporate pre-conversion ancestors into sacred history by making them participants in the religious destiny of their descendants.

In the second case study, "Sleepers: Discovering History in the Search for Lost Time," I examine legends about figures who awake after long periods of supernatural sleep. By closely following the perspective of an unsuspecting time-traveler, these narratives emphasize how life

radically changes in the aftermath of moments of exile, conversion, and colonization. First, I examine Jewish stories about figures who slept through the Babylonian Exile and the destruction of the Temple of Jerusalem, then Christian hagiographies concerning the “Sleepers of Ephesus,” and, finally, the treatment of the “Companions of the Cave” (Ar. *aṣḥāb al-kaḥf*) in Qur’ān 18:9-26. Jewish, Christian, and Muslim exegetes recognized the parallels between these stories about long-sleep, and they negotiated this shared literary heritage to demonstrate the primacy and correctness of their respective religious identities. I conclude by surveying how textual accounts of the legend were reinscribed into physical sites of pilgrimage. As Christianity and Islam contested ownership of the sleeping saints, they continually “rediscovered” the bodies of the long sleeping saints and established new shrines, claiming a “dormant” history for their faiths in new spaces of conversion and colonial expansion.

In my third study, “Apocalyptic Ethnography: Encountering Peoples through *Anagenesis*,” I explore the incorporation of peoples into longstanding geographical traditions through the discovery of their “original” or “equivalent” identities in the Bible, the Qur’ān, and the exegetical and geographical literature. As migrating peoples established new settled states, they adopted and rehabilitated these “rediscovered” identities to situate themselves within new cultural and religious traditions. I first trace the shifting identities of the Gothic people, from their associations with the classical *Getae* to their apocalyptic identification as the biblical “Gog and Magog.” Such narratives shifted as the Goths established kingdoms within the Roman world and then lost them to the advance of Islam. Shifting perspective from peoples to places, I explore how imaginative settings of “enclosure and escape” – the Maeotic Swamp, the Barrier of Alexander, the Sambatyon River, and the Kingdom of Prester John – provide etiological explanations for the phenomenon of migration. By closing peoples off from the rest of the world,

these tropes addressed the absence of newly encountered ethnic groups from geographical tradition and then reincorporated them as forgotten descendants of biblical and classical ancestors. Lastly, I look at depictions of the Mongols in Christian and Islamic accounts of the 13th and 14th centuries. Accounts of the Mongols' origin and rise to power show how the ethnographic identities and strategies once applied to the Goths evolved to address new peoples and new historical contexts. Once distinct traditions of enclosure and escape – describing Alexander's Gate and the Lost Tribes of Israel – were conflated to portray the Mongols as apocalyptic enemies awaiting divine destruction. The adaptation of these narratives by agents of the Mongol Empire, and their combination with Central Asian cultural traditions, transformed these narratives to portray the Mongols as a new global empire engineered by the will of God.

My conclusion, "The Battle of Beginnings," discusses the limits of *anagenesis* as a paradigm of periodization, exploring when and how claims of continuity with scriptural history continued to emerge and operate in Modernity. Examining Robert Filmer's *Patriachia* and John Locke's *Two Treatises of Government*, I show how ideas of *anagenesis* were both advanced and challenged in the seventeenth century, both in attempting to locate the origins of sovereignty and in understanding, reinterpreting, or denying the histories of the indigenous peoples of the Americas. By considering periodization as a process – available to historical communities as well as contemporary scholars – we can better understand how instances of time-making enacted by people in the past continue to shape the way we imagine periodization today.

Part 1: The Archaeology of Ignorance

Introduction to Part 1: Josiah and the “Book of the Law”: Origin, Oblivion, and Restoration

Anagenesis makes history by telling a story of the past’s re-discovery; it establishes something new by insisting it was already there, hidden in space and time, and patiently awaiting its return. Like Orosius’ seashells, many such revisions of history are enacted through virtual encounters with the material remnants of the past: the unearthing of ancient relics, saintly bodies, and forgotten books whose recovery and recognition construct continuities across time. In this first part of the study, I examine three stories involving “unknowing archaeologists.” Each of these narratives includes a key “excavation” scene: discoveries of remarkable landscapes and recoveries of religious artifacts that both signify important events in the past and anticipate future moments of revelation and conversion. Such episodes appear in the Old English poem *Beowulf*, in Islamic traditions concerning ‘Abd al-Muṭṭalib, grandfather of the Prophet Muhammad, and in narratives describing the adoption of Judaism by Khazar Khagans in the ninth century CE.¹⁰⁷ Like other instances of *anagenesis*, these discoveries merge different cultural traditions by intertwining people and places of ancestral oral histories into an overarching narrative of a monotheistic past embedded in the scriptural record. These episodes – set in a space and a time before the revelation of new religious traditions or the conversion of peoples to a new faith – suggest that a primal past has been forgotten and must be rediscovered.

Such narratives of invention have deep roots in the scriptural traditions of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. One influential narrative that exemplifies the paradigm of rediscovery is the biblical story of “Josiah’s Reform,” recounted in the II Kings 22-23 and II Chronicles 34-

¹⁰⁷ Unlike the stories of long-sleepers and apocalyptic peoples which will follow in the second and third part, these opening narratives are not linked by explicit chains of sources or exchanges of tradition. Instead, the accounts of *Beowulf*, ‘Abd al-Muṭṭalib and the Khazars demonstrate how the diverse historical instantiations of Jewish, Christian, and Muslim literature nonetheless gravitated towards similar claims upon the nature of time.

5.¹⁰⁸ This episode describes the religious reforms instituted by King Josiah of Judah (r. ca. 639–609 B.CE) after the monarch and his ministers discovered a “book of the Law” (Heb. *Sefer Torah*) within the Temple of Jerusalem.¹⁰⁹ When the recovered text is read to the king and his court, Josiah, fearing “the wrath of the LORD... because our ancestors did not obey the words of this book,” institutes a sweeping and violent program of religious reform.¹¹⁰ First, he removes all images from the Temple of Jerusalem and destroys Judah's “high places” (Heb. *bamot*), killing their priests and burning them on their altars.¹¹¹ Having restored the “original” faith of Judah through these acts of iconoclasm and violent purification, Josiah then commands the people to “Keep the Passover of the LORD your God as prescribed in this book of the covenant.”¹¹² Like his predecessor Moses, Josiah attempts to restore the unique covenant made between God and his ancestors by bringing his people back in line with the words of the scripture. Scholarly attempts to identify this enigmatic “book of the Law” – and by doing so to reconstruct the historical composition of the Biblical canon – emphasize the striking power the appearance of this textual artifact has on readers of the narrative.¹¹³

¹⁰⁸ Lauren A. S. Monroe, *Josiah's Reform and the Dynamics of Defilement: Israelite Rites of Violence and the Making of a Biblical Text* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011).

¹⁰⁹ 2 Kings 22:8. Unless otherwise stated, all biblical quotations are from *The New Oxford Annotated Bible with Apocrypha: New Revised Standard Version*, ed. Michael D. Coogan, Marc Z. Brettler, and Carol Newsom, Fourth edition (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010). For a survey of episodes of “Book-finding” in Greco-Roman and Judeo-Christian literatures, see [Add source from Carrel].

¹¹⁰ 2 Kings 22:13. In II Chronicles, these events precede the discovery of the book.

¹¹¹ 2 Kings 23:1-20,

¹¹² 2 Kings 23:21.

¹¹³ See Monroe *Josiah's Reform*, 201–35; Christoph Levin, “Josia in Deuteronomischen Geschichtswerk,” in *Fortschreibungen: Gesammelte Studien Zum Alten Testament* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2003), 198–216; Scholars often interpret this “book of the Law” as a reference to the book of Deuteronomy, an *Ur-Deuteronomy*, a portion of Leviticus, or another part of the Biblical canon. See Levin, “Josia,” 198-201; Monroe, *Josiah's Reform*, 4-7. The term *sefer Torah* can refer to the first five books of the biblical canon, or the Hebrew Bible in its entirety; but the *Torah* in its present form, shaped by the Babylonian exile and the subsequent establishment of the second Temple, did not likely exist in the same form during the reign of Josiah. Monroe, *Josiah's Reform* 14-21, asserts the “Book of the Law” is likely a version of the “Holiness Code” recorded in Leviticus 17-26. Scholars have also questioned whether the scene records a genuine rediscovery and return to marginalized textual traditions, the surreptitious introduction of a newly minted scripture forged by Josiah's priests, or an invented narrative that did not emerge until many generations after the king's reign. See Juha Pakkala, “Why the Cult Reforms in Judah Probably Did Not Happen,” in *One God - One Cult - One Nation: Archaeological and Biblical Perspectives*, ed. Richard G. Kratz and Heinrich Spieckermann (New York: De Gruyter, 2010); Much like these treatments of Josiah's reform, many studies of *Beowulf*, the *Life of The Messenger of God*, and the

In the framework of *anagenesis*, the account of Josiah and the “book of the Law” demonstrates an influential model of making time. Such un-earthings of holy artifacts, bodies, and spaces – material signs that confirm religious claims upon the past – constitute a major part of the transfer and incorporation of sites of worship from one religious tradition to another.¹¹⁴ Josiah’s reform is predicated upon a tripartite periodization that divides time into eras of original faith, corruption, and restoration. The narrative describes a historical transition to monotheistic worship, but it locates the existence of Israel’s belief in one God in a historical period that is *anterior* to polytheistic and imagistic practices. (fig. 1.1).¹¹⁵ The introduction of idols to the Temple and the establishment of the “high places” are explicitly placed in the reigns of Josiah’s predecessors, Solomon and Jeroboam.¹¹⁶ In contrast to these shifts, the “Book of the Law” does not undergo any change. In the intervening time, it has been “lost” within the Temple, waiting to be rediscovered. As a relic and record of a more perfect era, the rediscovered book locates the source of monotheistic faith further back within the past, allowing Josiah’s actions to be considered as an act of restoration rather than an innovation.

stories of the Khazar conversion have similarly attempted to identify and isolate different *strata* of extant narratives in order to propose historical and philological models for the development of the texts. Such attempts to place the texts within a specific historical context can risk flattening or obscuring what these texts own constructions of history.

¹¹⁴ For instance, the legendary rediscovery of the “True Cross,” the instrument of Jesus’ Crucifixion, precipitated the conversion of a Roman Temple of Venus into the Christian Church of the Holy Sepulcher, and likewise re-christened the Roman colony of *Aelia Capitolina* with its former name, Jerusalem. See Jan Willem Drijvers, *Helena Augusta: The Mother of Constantine the Great and the Legend of Her Finding the True Cross* (Leiden: Brill, 1992), 84-118; Paul C. Dilley, “The Invention of Christian Tradition: ‘Apocrypha,’ Imperial Policy, and Anti-Jewish Propaganda,” *Greek, Roman, and Byzantine Studies* 50, no. 4 (2010): 586–615. Re-evaluating the terminology of “apocrypha”, Dilley traces how the *inventio* narratives applied to the bodies of Christian Martyrs became transferred to the discovery of new textual traditions which likewise claimed to be “relics” of early Christian history. Many of these rediscoveries were enacted to appropriate the spaces of Jewish synagogues by claiming they had in fact been churches for several centuries. All such inventions could be considered acts of *anagenesis* since they dramatically reconcile multiple histories through the mediation of the earth rediscovery of one past within another. Where stories of “unconscious archaeologists” differ from these traditional narratives of *inventio* is in setting their scenes of rediscovery before the time of belief and conversion.

¹¹⁵ Describing the reinstatement of the “Passover of the Lord,” the texts of 2 Kings 23 offers explicit historical markers for these periodic shifts: “No such passover had been kept since the days of the judges who judged Israel, even during all the days of the kings of Israel and of the kings of Judah; but in the eighteenth year of King Josiah this passover was kept to the LORD in Jerusalem,” II Kings 23:22-3.

¹¹⁶ II Kings 23:13-15; For the institutions of idolatry by Solomon and Jeroboam, see I Kings 11-13. In the account of Jeroboam’s construction of the *bamot*, in 1 Kings 13:1-5, “man of God come from Judah” prophesies that “a son named

1.1

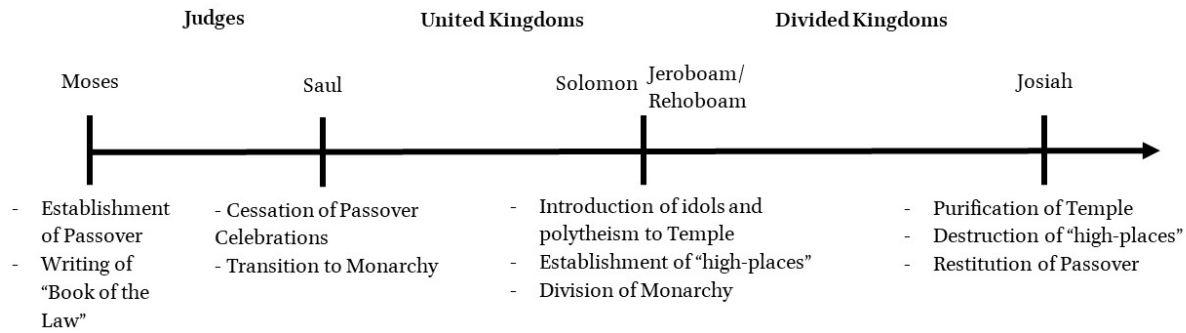


Figure 4.1: Linear Model of Josiah's reform in context of earlier biblical history. By specifying and circumscribing the origins of Israelite idolatry within the preceding centuries, the account portrays polytheistic and imagistic practices as subsequent and subordinate to monotheistic belief and ritual.

In addition to this linear and local progression of history, the narrative sketches a larger, cyclical model of history that functions throughout biblical narrative (fig. 1.2). Josiah's reinstatement of Passover and the destruction of idols resembles the actions of his predecessor Moses, reiterating the idea that his reform is a "refounding" of the ancestral faith of Judah and Israel.^{116F¹¹⁷} The scene also resonates with a future cycle of loss and recovery: the destruction of the Temple in Jerusalem in 587 BCE and the construction of the Second Temple 70 years later by returning exiles. Successive cycles of exile and return, punishment and reconciliation, occur

Josiah will be born to the house of David" who will ultimately destroy the altar. The altar's fate is sealed at the very moment of its construction.

throughout the Hebrew Bible. This typological pattern is enacted through the rediscovery of the “book of the Law,” a material artifact whose privation outside of time has preserved it from the corrupting influences of the intervening era (fig. 1.3). The book is both an object recovered from history and a window into eternity.

1.2



Figure 1.2: Cyclical model of covenant in biblical narrative.

¹¹⁷ Cf. the institution of Passover in Exodus 12, and the destruction of the “Golden Calf” in Exodus 32:19-20.

1.3

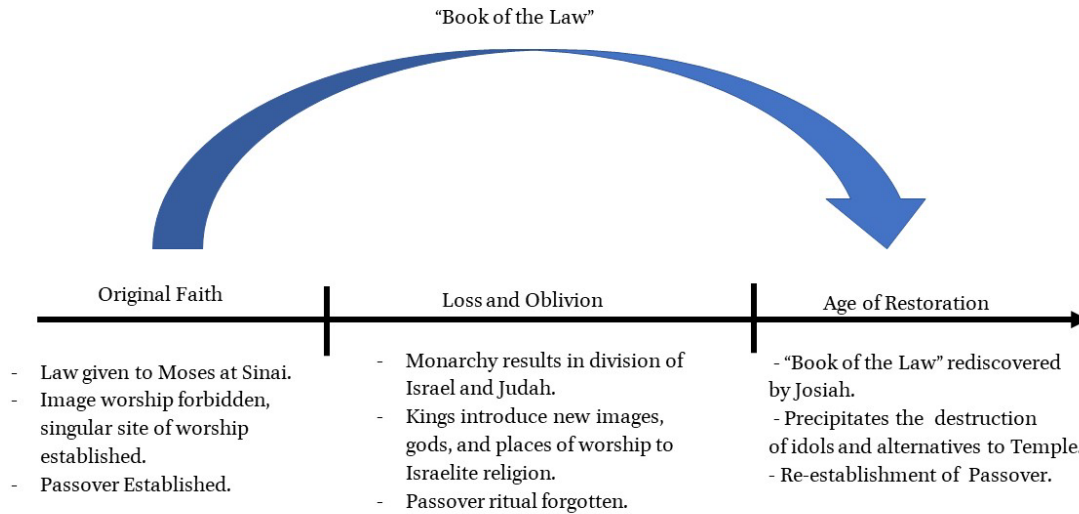


Figure 1.3: As an artifact of an earlier age, the book leaps over the intervening ages to enact a reconciliation with the "original" order of the past.

The story of Josiah demonstrates how periodizations of history can be constructed referentially within narratives of discovery. In the accounts of "unknowing archaeologists," there are additional elements of epistemic tension. The stories of Beowulf, 'Abd al-Muttalib, and the Khazars emphasize the preservation and concealment of a religious truth that already existed but was unknown to or unheeded by ancestral generations. As acts of *anagenesis*, these narratives mingle disparate strands of historical memory into a singular timeline, placing one past beneath another and then staging that past's rediscovery. Yet by setting scenes of rediscovery before the time of their people's belief and conversion, the significance of these discoveries is deferred or divided, emphasizing the gap between past and present. Whereas Josiah and his court quickly recognize the significance of their discovery and move at once to bring their faith back in line

with the words of the book, “unknowing archaeologists” struggle to understand what they have found. Living in the age before the conversion, Beowulf and ‘Abd al-Muṭṭalib do not fully recognize the significance of what they have recovered from the past. In the accounts of the Khazar conversion, which most closely resemble the model of Josiah’s reform, such epistemic tensions are resolved at the climax of the narrative, when the Khazars and the rabbis each discover the missing links that will allow them to understand their shared past. These acts of *anagenesis* privilege their audience's ability to recognize the typological links that are latent in these discoveries. The fact that the audience can recognize the significance of these inventions (while the figures within the narratives do not) highlights the epistemic tensions which construct periodic divisions in terms of “what we knew then” and “what we know now.”

By constructing a kind of double-vision of the past, these stories allow their audiences to both recognize the typological significance of such discoveries and the temporal and cultural divides that separate them from their ancestors. Many Jewish, Christian, and Muslim converts struggled with the cultural and religious status of their ancestors and their ancestral traditions. Damnation and eternal punishment were often conceived as the consequences of unbelief, even if one never had an opportunity to encounter the “true” faith in their lifetime.¹¹⁸ At the same time, narratives of “unknowing archaeologists” portray pre-conversion ancestors in a positive light by linking them to the portentous discoveries that anticipate the religious destiny of their descendants. Such stories do not necessarily “save” their ancient discoverers from the presumed punishments of unbelief. Yet they do incorporate them as key actors in the narrative arc of sacred history (Ger. *heilsgeschichte*), insisting that these ancestors were ultimately agents in the future conversion of their peoples, whether they knew it or not. In these ways, *anagenesis* portrays the

process of conversion as the recovery of forgotten beliefs whose origins stretch back to the very beginnings of time. It is foretold through the recovery of material artifacts – texts and treasures – that have been waiting within the earth. The earth holds that which heroes cannot, a memory of the world's beginnings that will rise again to remake humankind.

¹¹⁸ See Alban Gauthier, *Beowulf au Paradis: Figures de Bons Païens dans l'Europe du Nord au Haut Moyen Âge* (Paris: Éditions de la Sorbonne, 2017); Jean Seznec, *The Survival of the Pagan Gods: The Mythological Tradition and Its Place in Renaissance Humanism and Art* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1972).

1.1 *Beowulf* and the Relics of the Flood

Beowulf is both a poem and an artifact. The pride of place granted to the *Beowulf* Manuscript in the British Museum's 2018-9 "Anglo-Saxon Kingdoms" exhibition demonstrates the continued treatment of this poem as a national treasure.¹¹⁹ As the most influential remnant of English literature antedating the Norman Conquest of 1066 CE – an event of great significance for English self-fashioning – the Old English poem *Beowulf* plays a crucial role in academic and popular conceptions of "Anglo-Saxon England" and many other periodizations of a *time before*, even as it remains a historical conundrum.¹²⁰ Composed sometime between the earliest stages of Christianization among the Germanic peoples of Britain in the seventh century and the production of the sole extant manuscript of the poem (BL Cotton Vitellius A XV) early in the eleventh century, the poem has spurred many academic debates about where, when, and how to place it in within literary history.¹²¹

Beowulf's status as a relic and venerable ancestor of the English literary tradition is itself an invention of history, one made after a succession of rediscoveries and reassessments of both the physical text and its narrative significance. Two major discourses have been recurrent throughout *Beowulf* scholarship since the rediscovery of the poem by scholars at the beginning nineteenth century: One attempts to define the relationship between "Christian" and "Pagan"

¹¹⁹ Claire Breay, and Joanna Story, eds. *Anglo-Saxon Kingdoms: Art, Word, War* (London: British Library, 2018).

¹²⁰ Like other forms of periodization, placing the poem *Beowulf* within – "Anglo-Saxon," "Early English," "Insular," or "Early Medieval," history – invites number of inclusions and exclusions, entangling present perceptions of the "Medieval" past with the intellectual legacies that contributed to the foundation of "Anglo-Saxon" studies. See Haruko Momma, *From Philology to English Studies: Language and Culture in the Nineteenth Century* (Cambridge University Press, 2013), 60-94; Nicholas Howe, *Migration and Mythmaking in Anglo-Saxon England* (University of Notre Dame Press, 1989), 1-5; Adam Miyashiro, "'Our Deeper Past': Race, Settler Colonialism, and Medieval Heritage Politics," *Literature Compass* 16, no. 9–10 (2019), 1-11, 5-6.

¹²¹ On the dating of *Beowulf*, see Colin Chase, *The Dating of Beowulf*, (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1981); R. D. Fulk, *A History of Old English Meter* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1992), 381-92, John D. Niles, "Locating *Beowulf* in Literary History," *Exemplaria*: 5, no. 1 (1993): 79–109; Roberta Frank, "A Scandal in Toronto: 'The Dating of 'Beowulf' " a Quarter Century On," *Speculum* 82, no. 4 (2007): 843–64; Leonard Neidorf, ed., *The Dating of Beowulf: A Reassessment* (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 2014). Attempts to date the poem, on linguistic, paleographic, or

cultural traditions in the poem's narrative: another attempts to situate the poem's invocations of gold, splendor, and treasure hordes in relation to the material realities of Anglo-Saxon England and Early Medieval Scandinavia, as evidenced by archeology.¹²² By viewing *Beowulf* through the perspective of *anagenesis*, I demonstrate how these two questions are linked. The poem's complex conceptions of space and time are simultaneously genealogical, archaeological, and typological. The *Beowulf*-poet not only seeks to reconcile "Christian" and "Pagan" traditions of cultural memory among the early English peoples but arranges these traditions in a conscious sequence so that its audience may discover a "Christian" history before and beneath the "Pagan" age of the poem's setting.

This process is dramatically displayed in a critical scene of archaeological discovery when Beowulf encounters a "titanic ancient sword" (OE. "*ealdsweord eotonisc*") during his combat with Grendel's mother in her underwater lair.¹²³ Beowulf's dive into the water and his discovery of a "hostile hall" ("*niðsele*") beneath its depths draws out these different geological strata of history, contrasting an ancestral past known in oral-poetic tradition with an antediluvian world known from scripture.¹²⁴ When the Danish king Hrothgar "examines the hilt" ("*hylt sceawode*") of the blade after Beowulf's victory, the poet reveals that the artifact depicts the destruction of the giants in the Noachic flood.¹²⁵ The hilt constitutes a material link between the biblical world and *Beowulf's* ancestral northern homeland, and its unsettling presence reiterates the *Beowulf*-poet's identification of Grendel and his mother as descendants of "the lineage of

contextual grounds, reflect broader concerns with what constitutes the space and time of a community whose linguistic and cultural heritage is envisioned as the origins of the English language and English people.

¹²² See Roberta Frank, "The Beowulf Poet's Sense of History," in *The Wisdom of Poetry: Essays in Early English Literature in Honor of Morton W. Bloomfield* (Kalamazoo: Medieval Institute Publications, 53-65); John D Niles, *Beowulf and Lejre*, (Tempe, Ariz.: ACMRS, 2007).

¹²³ R. D. Fulk, Robert E. Bjork, and John D. Niles, eds., *Klaeber's Beowulf, Fourth Edition* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2008), ln. 1492-1662.

¹²⁴ *Beowulf*, 1513a.

¹²⁵ *Beowulf*, 1687b.

Cain” (“*Caines cynne*”).¹²⁶ In the *Beowulf*-poet’s scheme of *anagenesis*, Cain’s murder of Abel becomes the point of origin for the poem’s antagonists and other monstrous creatures of Pre-Christian Germanic tradition. It also begins the cycles of retributive violence that engender the primary conflict between men and monsters over the hall of Heorot and the internecine struggles between humankind.

Like Josiah’s “Book of the Law,” the sword-hilt is a rediscovered relic that points to the existence of a monotheistic history before and beneath later idolatrous innovations. Its material presence ties the disparate genealogies of the poem’s heroes and antagonists into the singular timeline of “Christian” history. Yet *Beowulf*’s presentation of the sword’s hilt to Hrothgar emphasizes the inability of the poem’s pre-Christian heroes to “read” these signs of the past. Striving to place the “Pagan” memories of the Germanic peoples who migrated to Britain within an overarching “Christian” history, the *Beowulf*-poet emphasizes the difference between elements of the past known to its heroes and those that can be known by its “present” audience outside of the poem’s space and time. This epistemic tension, embodied in *Beowulf*’s discovery of the relic-blade and Hrothgar’s frustrated attempts to read its markings, accentuates how the migration of the ancestors of the “English” peoples into Britain and their subsequent conversion to Christianity fundamentally changed their understanding of the past and perception of the present. While the poem’s heroes cannot comprehend the chain of consequences that engenders their present troubles, their struggles with the enemies of God lead them towards the future promised to their descendants.

Creation Remembered, Creation Forgotten

While *Beowulf* was composed in a form of the “Old English” language during the era of

¹²⁶ *Beowulf*, 107a.

Germanic settlement and Christianization on the island of Britain, the poem's action occurs in a more distant space and time. Nicholas Howe describes *Beowulf's* setting as "the homeland before conversion," a nostalgic image of Scandinavia as seen from across the periodic breaks of a future migration to Britain and adoption of Christianity.¹²⁷ As a young man, Beowulf travels to the land of the Danes and succeeds in combat against the cannibalistic Grendel and his vengeful mother.¹²⁸ Fifty years later, as the king of the Geats, he falls in a mutually fatal duel against a hoard-haunting dragon.¹²⁹ As Beowulf navigates the realms of men and monsters, the story does not simply progress from start to finish. Instead, a series of "digressions" depart from the primary timeline of the narrative to consider other persons, places, and things, past and future.¹³⁰ The poet weaves these different strands together by darting back and forth in time, passing from the present action of the narrative to locate the origins of objects, enemies, and enmities in generations past. This complex temporality sets Beowulf's personal struggles against Grendel, Grendel's mother, and the dragon within broader cycles of conflict that define humankind's relationship to God, nature, evil, and each other. Our interest here is to understand how this complex and referential temporality is deployed against the backdrop of a universal, monotheistic history.

Genealogy provides an important avenue for the *Beowulf*-poet to perform acts of *anagenesis*, bringing together Christian and Pre-Christian records of the past. The poem opens with the founding of the Danish kingdom by "Scyld Scefing" ("Shield, the son of Sheaf) and then describes the sequence of Danish kings who preceded Hrothgar, the ruler of the poem's

¹²⁷ Howe, *Migration and Mythmaking*, 147.

¹²⁸ *Beowulf*, 1-2199.

¹²⁹ *Beowulf*, 2200-3182.

¹³⁰ On the narrative style of *Beowulf* see Fulk, *Klaeber's Beowulf*, lxxix-ciii; Adrien Bonjour, *The Digressions in Beowulf* (Blackwell, 1950); John D. Niles, "Ring Composition and the Structure of Beowulf," *PMLA* 94, no. 5 (1979): 924-35; Fred C. Robinson, *Beowulf and the Appositive Style* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1985); R. M. Liuzza, "The Sense of Time in Anglo-Saxon England," *Bulletin of the John Rylands Library* 89, no. 2 (March 1, 2013): 131-53.

“present” story.¹³¹ The names of Hrothgar’s ancestors, such as Scef (“wheat-sheaf”) and Beow (“barley”), bring to mind Scandinavian agricultural deities, but the *Beowulf*-poet portrays these figures as human rulers.¹³² As Thomas D. Hill and Daniel Anlezark have observed, this opening lineage resembles efforts to integrate the ancestral figures of Germanic legend into the catalogues of biblical genealogy among early English kings in the ninth century CE.¹³³ By euhemerizing Germanic deities as historical humans, the early English continued to celebrate their purported descent from Woden, Beow, and Scef while incorporating these figures into genealogies that stretched back to the biblical figures of Noah and (ultimately) Adam.¹³⁴ While some claims of Noachic descent required the interpretation of ancestral figures as “equivalent” to biblical personalities recorded in the “Table of Nations” of Genesis 10, other accounts expanded beyond the biblical record by granting Noah additional sons and daughters.¹³⁵ Since biblical patriarchs preceded Germanic deities in time, these genealogies displayed the primacy of monotheism over a Germanic polytheism that only emerged after its “historical” humans were erroneously worshipped as gods (fig 1.4).

¹³¹ *Beowulf*, 1-67.

¹³² R. D. Fulk, “An Eddic Analogue to the Scyld Scefing Story,” *The Review of English Studies* 40, no. 159 (1989): 313–22.

¹³³ Daniel Anlezark, “Scef, Japheth and the Origins of the Anglo-Saxons,” *Anglo-Saxon England* 31 (2002): 13–46; Thomas D. Hill, “The Myth of the Ark-Born Son of Noe and the West-Saxon Royal Genealogical Tables,” *The Harvard Theological Review* 80, no. 3 (1987): 379–83. On the broader tradition of Noachic genealogies, see Benjamin Braude, “The Sons of Noah and the Construction of Ethnic and Geographical Identities in the Medieval and Early Modern Periods,” *The William and Mary Quarterly* 54, no. 1 (1997): 103–42.

¹³⁴ See Kenneth Sisam, “Anglo-Saxon Royal Genealogies,” *Proceedings of the British Academy* 39, (1953): 287–348. On practices of Euhemerism in Early English history, see David F. Johnson, “Euhemerisation versus Demonisation: The Pagan Gods and Ælfric’s *De Falsis Deis*,” in *Pagans and Christians*, ed. Tette Hofstra, Luuk Houwen, and Alasdair Macdonald (Egbert Forsten, 1995), 35–70; The Icelandic scholar Snorri Sturluson (1179-1241) similarly euhemerized the Germanic pantheon, called the “Æsir” in Old Norse, as former human inhabitants of “Asia” and heroic refugees of the Trojan war; See Jacob Hobson, “Euhemerism and the Veiling of History in Early Scandinavian Literature,” *The Journal of English and Germanic Philology* 116, no. 1 (2017): 24–44.

¹³⁵ Hill, “Ark-Born Son,” 381-3, notes that while some royal genealogies considered “Scef” equivalent to the biblical “Shem,” others considered him a fourth, separate, son of Noah. He traces the Anglo-Saxon tradition to the story of Noah’s fourth son, “Jonitus” in the Seventh Century *Apocalypse of Pseudo-Methodius*, which was translated from Syriac into Latin and Greek during the eighth century CE. Anlezark, “Scef,” 29-33, suggests that the tradition is related instead to the 6th-century Syriac *Book of the Cave of Treasures*, which was likely familiar to Archbishop Theodore of Canterbury; See also Stephen Gero, “The Legend of the Fourth Son of Noah,” *The Harvard Theological Review* 73, no. 1/2 (1980): 321–30.

1.4

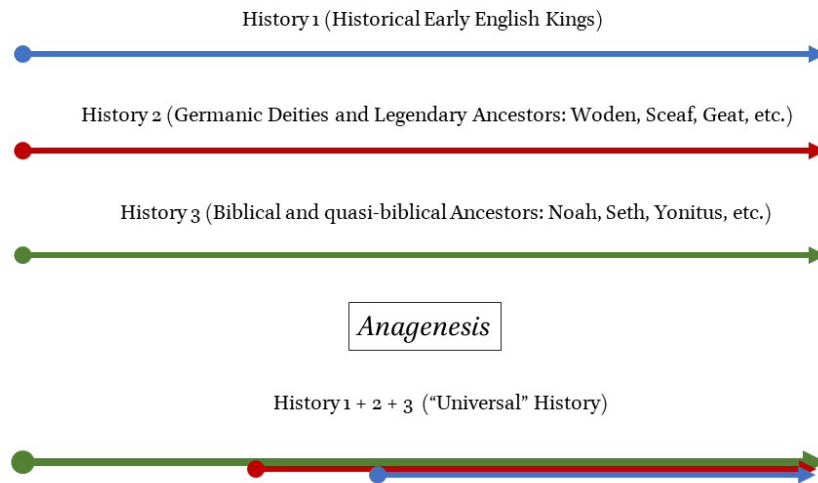


Figure 1.4: Combination of Genealogies Between Historical English Rulers, Legendary Germanic Ancestors, and Patriarchal Figures from Biblical and Exegetical Tradition

Since the precise date of *Beowulf*'s composition is unknown, it is unclear if the poem was influenced by these hybrid genealogies or was responsible for their creation, or if such narratives of the Danes' "Noachic" descent had not yet been established.¹³⁶ Yet, the religious beliefs attributed to Hrothgar, Beowulf, and the other heroes of the poem gesture towards such genealogical connections. The heroes of *Beowulf* are not "pagans" in the sense that their beliefs accurately reflect the ancestral religion of Germanic peoples. Instead, they are "pagans" because, like the "pagans" of Orosius' *History*, their religious beliefs have been cast as "Other," subordinate and subsequent to Christianity. Hill suggests that the *Beowulf*-poet portrays Hrothgar

¹³⁶ Anlezark, *Water and Fire: The Myth of the Flood in Anglo-Saxon England* (Manchester University Press, 2006), 296-7, argues that *Beowulf* likely inspired the incorporation of Scyld and Sceaf into the dynastic lists, rather than vice versa, but concludes that "the fact that in *Beowulf* the legendary Germanic past and primeval biblical myth seem largely reconciled does not tell us much about the poem's date, but only that the poet and audience share a culture whose origin myths combine these strands."

and the other heroes of the poem as followers of a “Noachite” religion of primitive monotheism that endured in the wake of the flood.¹³⁷ By depicting the poem’s heroes as primordial monotheists, *Beowulf* passes over any disjunctions between a Christian Genesis and the creation narratives actually held by the early English peoples’ continental ancestors, suggesting instead that both groups *originally* acknowledged a monotheistic creation.¹³⁸

The poem’s Christian audience can recognize these parallels and understand the epistemic tensions that divide their own place and time from that of their ancestors. At first, Hrothgar and his Danes seem to live in concord with the Christian world. Following the construction of the hall of Heorot, the king and his hall companions live in a kind of prelapsarian bliss. To celebrate the completion of the building, Hrothgar’s *scop* – “*se þe cuþe frum-sceaft fira feorran reccan*” (“he who knew how to reckon the far-off origins of mankind”) – sings of earth’s creation.¹³⁹ The *scop* recounts “*þæt se ælmihtiga eorðan worhte*” (“that the almighty one created the earth”), detailing successive stages of creation that resemble, though imperfectly, the sequence of days recounted in Genesis 1.¹⁴⁰ Though lacking scriptural revelation, the occupants of Heorot still remember these aspects of the Judeo-Christian narrative of creation, suggesting that memories of monotheistic cosmology are part of the natural order of existence. The Danes, Geats, and the other peoples of the poem are primed for a future Christian conversion since the

¹³⁷ Thomas Hill, “The Christian Language and Theme of *Beowulf*,” in *Companion to Old English Poetry*, ed. Henk Aersen and Rolf Bremmer (Amsterdam: VU University Press, 1994), 63–77, reprinted in Daniel Donoghue and Seamus Heaney, eds., *Beowulf: A Verse Translation: Authoritative Text, Contexts, Criticism* (New York: Norton, 2002), 197–211; Hill, 207, further notes that Irish and Norse sources preserved similar strategies of incorporation to insist that Christian beliefs lay behind or even beneath the traditional practices of their ancestors. See also Anlezark, “Sceaf, Japheth and the Origins of the Anglo-Saxons,” 20. If Sceaf is a son of Noah in the poem as he appears in the Anglo-Saxon Chronicles and Asser, then a patriarchal lineage of “Noachic” belief can be drawn between the first of the Scylflings and Hrothgar.

¹³⁸ In contrast, Old Norse accounts of creation, such as the *Völuspá*, appear to preserve more traditional elements of pre-Christian belief (e.g. the names of Norse gods), but also display elements of Christian influence and comparisons with the “paganism” of Greco-Roman tradition. See Terry Gunnell and Annette Lassen, eds., *The Nordic Apocalypse: Approaches to Völuspá and Nordic Days of Judgement* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2013).

¹³⁹ *Beowulf*, 90b–91. The creation song in *Beowulf* also resembles the story of Caedmon, considered to be the first Old English religious poet. See Robert Stanton, *The Culture of Translation in Anglo-Saxon England* (Rochester, NY: Boydell & Brewer Ltd, 2002), 116–8. Caedmon is first inspired by an angelic revelation, then receives monastic instruction to situate his poetic compositions within Christian doctrine.

cosmological memory of Christian creation already resides within their thoughts and hearts.

The emphasis on creation in these opening lines – both in the song of the king’s court poet and in the ancestral legacies of the Danes’ enemy – connects the story that follows to questions of who and what belongs at the beginning. Yet there is something missing from the Dane’s triumphant narrative of creation. The scop’s song draws in another listener from beyond the hall: the figure of Grendel. Whereas the connections between Hrothgar’s ancestors and the biblical patriarchs are allusive rather than explicit, the *Beowulf*-poet draws an elaborate connection between the lineage of Grendel, the biblical Cain, and the myriad forms of monstrous *untýdras* (“misbegotten things,” lit. “untimely ones”) that haunt the world.¹⁴¹ When Grendel is introduced to the story, the poet shifts to his knowledge of scriptural tradition, observing that the fiend and his kind have been exiles and enemies of humankind:

Syþðan him scyppen	forscrifen hæfde
in Caines cynne	þone cwealm gewræc
ece Drihten,	þæs he Abel slog;
ne gefeah he þære fæhðe	ac he hine feor fowræc,
Metod for þy mane	man-cynne fram.
þanon untydras	ealle onwocon,
Eotenas ond ylfe	ond orc-neas,
swycle gigantas,	þa wið Gode wunnon
lange þrage;	he him ðæs lean forgeald.

Since the Creator had condemned him [Grendel] among the kin of Cain; when the eternal Lord avenged the murder upon the one who slew Abel; He [Cain] did not flourish in that feud, but the Ruler drove him far away from mankind in recompense for that crime. Thence awoke all misbegotten things, ogres and elves and sea monsters, likewise giants, which warred with God for a long time; He paid them their deserts for that.¹⁴²

¹⁴⁰ *Beowulf*, 92-98.

¹⁴¹ On the sources and analogues of the Grendelkin, see Ruth Mellinkoff, “Cain’s Monstrous Progeny in *Beowulf*: Part I, Noachic Tradition,” *Anglo-Saxon England* 8 (December 1979): 143–62; idem, “Cain’s Monstrous Progeny in *Beowulf*: Part II, Post-Diluvian Survival,” *Anglo-Saxon England* 9 (1980): 183–97; David Williams, *Cain and Beowulf: A Study in Secular Allegory* (University of Toronto Press, 1981); Andy Orchard, *Pride and Prodigies: Studies in the Monsters of the Beowulf-Manuscript* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2003), 58-85; On “*untýdras*”, see Orchard, *Pride and Prodigies*, 70-2.

¹⁴² *Beowulf*, 107-114. My Translation.

In this passage, the *Beowulf*-poet looks deeper into the past to discover the origins of the poem's creatures and conflicts. This digression resembles nothing so much as practices of glossing upon scripture, such as those performed by the "Canterbury school" of Archbishop Theodore (668-690 CE), a departure from the "present" text that provides another layer of context and interpretation.¹⁴³ Yet, the *Beowulf*-poet is not merely glossing his poem with a biblical reference to Genesis 4 but also triangulating both his present narrative and its appeals to scripture through broader exegetical accounts of sacred history. While Genesis 4 describes Cain's murder of Abel, his punishment by God, and the subsequent generations of Cain's lineage, it does not explicitly describe his children as gigantic or monstrous. In this vein, several scholars have noted the connection between the *Beowulf*-poet's perception of the "kin of Cain" and exegetical traditions of shared Jewish and Christian provenance, attested in "apocryphal" and "pseudepigraphical texts" such as I Enoch and the Book of Jubilees.¹⁴⁴ These texts and others, which record fragments of wider exegetical traditions that circulated orally in the centuries after the formation of the biblical canon, identify Cain as the progenitor of giants, and conflicts that precipitated the biblical flood.¹⁴⁵

Similarly, the *Beowulf*-poet deploys the lineage of Cain to trace figures of Germanic myth back to beginnings in a biblical world. "*Eotenas ond ylfe ond orc-neas*," creatures of Germanic origins, are enumerated as consequences of Cain's sin and placed alongside the

¹⁴³ Bernhard Bischoff and Michael Lapidge, *Biblical Commentaries from the Canterbury School of Theodore and Hadrian* (Cambridge University Press, 1994). Though the Canterbury glosses do not trace the first murder to the origin of monsters, they do suggest that the flood was a consequence of the sins of Cain. See *Biblical Commentaries*, 312-6.

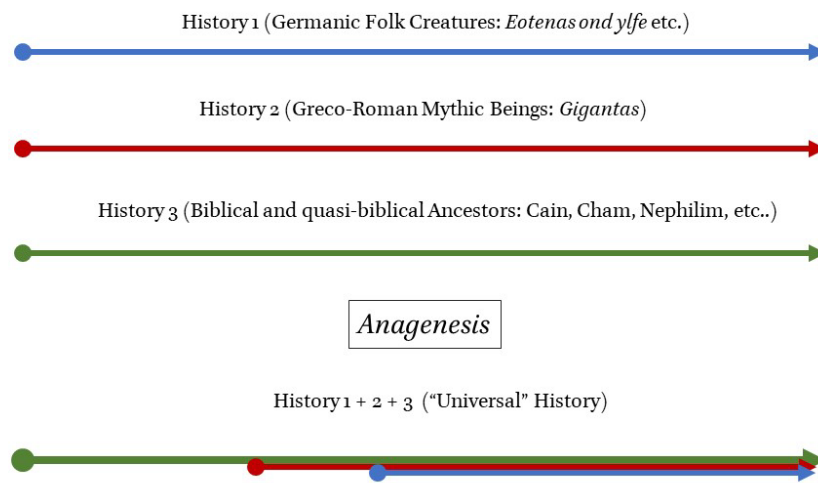
¹⁴⁴ Mellinkoff, "Cain's Monstrous Progeny ... Part I" 145-8; Anlezark, *Fire and Water*, 298-304. Mellinkoff, 148, hypothesizes that the *Beowulf*-poet was influenced by a no longer extant "Noah Book" that served as the basis for the Ethiopian I Enoch and similar fragments in Jubilees and the Dead Sea scrolls. For translations and commentaries of I Enoch and Jubilees, see James H. Charlesworth, *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha: Apocalyptic Literature and Testaments*, (Hendrickson Publishers, 2010).

¹⁴⁵ These exegetical narratives were partially generated by attempts to explain the passage of Genesis 6:2, which describes the "sons of God" having intercourse with the "daughters of men," and Genesis 6:4, which remarks "the *nephilim* (lit. "fallen-ones") were on the earth in those days." I Enoch explain the origins of the enigmatic biblical figures known as the

“*gigantas*” adopted from Latin (and originally Greek) tradition. While the characters within the poem refer to “*enta*” and “*eotena*,” the word “*giganta*,” Greek in origin, is used solely by the poet. In this hybrid equation of Greek giants, Germanic monsters, and biblical murderers, we have another example of *anagenesis*: the poet uses genealogy to trace the origins of the poem’s first antagonist and the motivations behind his actions back into a biblical past (fig. 1.5). As the first murderer, Cain is not only the progenitor of monsters but also the progenitor of feud. The cycles of violence and retribution that govern both Beowulf’s battles with monsters and the wider wars between humankind that appear in the poem’s “historical digressions” can be traced back, typologically, to this first murder. The story of *Beowulf* is “revealed” to its Christian audience to be more than an oral account of a local hero’s encounter with a Germanic bugbear; it is a written record of an ancestral people’s continuing conflict with the original and universal enemies of the biblical world.

Nephilim (lit. “Fallen-ones”) and *Rephaim* (“Giants”) by tracing their origins back to either Cain, or to fallen angels who copulated with human women.

1.5



*Figure 1.5: Combination of Genealogies in *Beowulf*'s identification of Grendel and *untýdras* as descendants of Cain.*

As an act of *anagenesis*, the poet's gloss on Grendel's origins highlights the epistemic tension between what may be known by the audience of his poem and what may be known by their mythic ancestors within the text (fig. 1.6). Marijane Osborn underscores the use of "synchesis" in the transition between the two narratives about creation: the description of "eadig" ("blessed") life of the "drihtguman" ("troop of men") interrupted by a "feond on helle" ("fiend from hell") establishes a typological parallel between the story of Eden and the introduction of Grendel into the present tale.¹⁴⁶ By shifting from Hrothgar's hall into the "fifelcynnes eard," ("land of monstrous kin"), the poet highlights the incompleteness of the Dane's memory of creation and provides his own gloss on the origins of Grendel and the other monsters of Germanic myth. Like the monstrous offspring of Cain who "onwocon" ("awoke") as consequence of Cain's murder, Grendel is "awoken" by the sounds of the hall and goes on to resurrect an ancient feud that has slept for generations.

¹⁴⁶ *Beowulf*, 100-1; Marijane Osborn, "The Great Feud: Scriptural History and Strife in *Beowulf*," *PMLA* 93, no. 5 (1978): 975.

1.6

Known by Hrothgar's Scop ("Heathen"/ Pre-Christian)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- "Almighty" Created Earth- Created Sun and Moon- Created Vegetation- Created Animals <p><i>Beowulf</i>, 90-9, (cf. <i>Genesis</i> 1)</p>
Known by <i>Beowulf</i> -Poet (Christian)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Cain Kills Abel, is Outlawed from Mankind- Origin of monsters from Cain- Giants' Strife with God causes Flood <p><i>Beowulf</i>, 105-14 (cf. <i>Genesis</i> 4, <i>Genesis</i> 6: 2-3, <i>Enoch</i>, etc.)</p>

Figure 1.6: Epistemic tensions between the poem's characters and the poet are formed by different levels of knowledge about creation.

Grendel's intrusion into the hall of Heorot marks the first intervention of the "scriptural world" into the poem. Yet while this rude awakening may interrupt the Danes from "living in joy" (*dreamum lifdon*), it does not arouse them from the slumber of their ignorance. By building Heorot, Hrothgar naively seeks to establish a new sense of order and creative force in his kingdom, only to have the old world come knocking on his door. When attacked, the Danes misread both the origins and solutions to their problem. They begin sacrificing to idols so "*þæt him gastbona geoce gefremede*" ("that some soul-slayer would offer aid to them").¹⁴⁷ The poet condemns them for turning to "*hæpenra hyht*" ("hope of heathens") at this moment.¹⁴⁸ Just as the narrative Josiah and the "Book of the Law" does not seek to establish the *first time* that the Israelites had fallen into idolatry. Instead, it seeks to construct a cycle of revelation, corruption,

¹⁴⁷ *Beowulf*, 177.

and renewal that places monotheistic and aniconic rituals as anterior and superior to all other forms of worship.

In the same way, the *Beowulf*-poet uses this scene to portray the Danes as slipping further away from their original, monotheistic belief. The resemblance between Hrothgar's newly built hall to the Tower of Babel in Genesis 11:1-9 – regarded by Christian exegetes as an etiological origin for the diversification of human languages, the beginning of human migrations throughout the earth, and the institution of idol worship – provides another important typological parallel for what Roy Liuzza terms “the loss of the past.”¹⁴⁹ Rather than recognizing Grendel as a descendant of Cain who must be defeated with the help of God, the Danes try to invent a new deity to rescue them from their unknown enemy.

These *anagenetic* claims of biblical connection do not establish an absolute chronology for *Beowulf's* setting. Since Hrothgar, along with many of the poem's other references to historical figures and peoples, can be broadly dated to the sixth and seventh centuries CE, the prospect of its characters living in a “Noachic age” much deeper in the past risks an uncomfortable and anachronistic double-vision of time. Yet such temporal tensions resolve if one departs from thinking of the *Beowulf*-poet's “sense of history” in terms of an absolute chronology and historical facticity. As Anlezark suggests,

Such loose affinities do not signal that the action of the earlier part of *Beowulf* is ‘set’ in the time immediately following the Flood. Rather the action of the early part of the poem suggests parallels with those parts of Genesis which account for the shared origins of the human race. In a work describing the pagan North Germans in the time before the gospel found them, the poet draws on these myths to explain the origins of the world in which his characters find themselves.¹⁵⁰

¹⁴⁸ *Beowulf*, 179a.

¹⁴⁹ Roy Liuzza, “The Tower of Babel: The Wanderer and The Ruins of History,” *Studies in the Literary Imagination* 36, no. 1 (Spring 2003): 10; see also Tristan Major, *Undoing Babel: The Tower of Babel in Anglo-Saxon Literature* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2018); Andrew P. Scheil, “Babylon and Anglo-Saxon England,” *Studies in the Literary Imagination* 36, no. 1 (Spring 2003): 37–58.

¹⁵⁰ Anlezark, *Water and Fire*, 304.

The *Beowulf*-poet does not integrate the time of his poem into the strict chronometry of a Christian count of years but rather relies on a form of “typological time,” like those described by Fabian and Al-Azmeh.¹⁵¹ As in the story of Josiah and the “Book of the Law,” the poet constructs history in terms of origin, oblivion, and restoration (fig. 1.7). Knowledge of the Bible and its exegetical elaborations gives the *Beowulf*-poet the ability to introduce connections to a universal Christian history in the poem’s story and step outside the temporality of his narrative to comment upon these relationships.

1.7

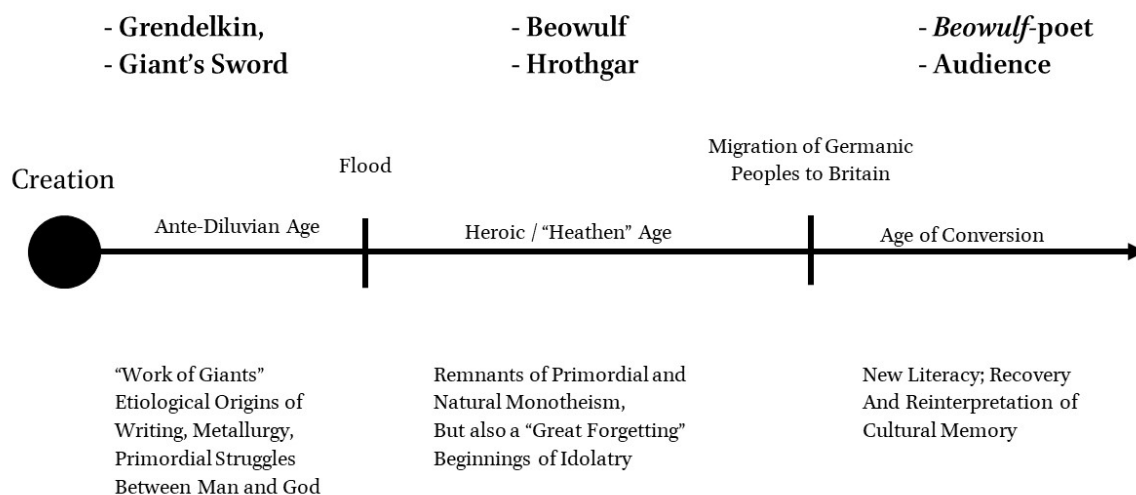


Figure 1.7: Typological periodization in *Beowulf*. Different characters are emblematic of different ages, and their perspective on events is related to their knowledge or ignorance of sacred history.

¹⁵¹ The *Beowulf*-poet does not follow the schematic periodization of Christian history into “ages of creation” that was popular among Christian chronographers and theologians like Augustine and Bede. See Green, “Periodization in European and World History,” 17-9, see Bede, *The Reckoning of Time*, V.66, trans. Faith Wallis (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 1999), 157-8. Andy Orchard, *Pride and Prodigies: Studies in the Monsters of the Beowulf-Manuscript* (University of Toronto Press, 2003), 69-73, notes parallels between *Beowulf* and an 11th century Irish text, the *Six Aetates Mundi* (*Six Ages of the World*), but he does not suggest that *Beowulf* explicitly references the “six ages” schema. Nor is there any attempt to reckon the passing years with Christian or pre-Christian chronometric systems: there are no invocations of *anno domini*, *anno mundi*, *ab urbe condita*, etc. The days, months, and years that pass within the poem are always placed in relation to other figures and events within its world.

Into the Depths

The genealogical acts of *anagenesis* that the *Beowulf*-poet uses to connect the worlds of Christian and Germanic tradition reappear in the discovery of the “*ealdsweord eotonisc*,” a material artifact that establishes the continuity of these two separate pasts. The placement of the sword within Grendel’s mother’s underwater lair and its appearance in the climactic moment of her battle against Beowulf invokes the history of the flood to reiterate the alliance of the poem’s pagan heroes and Christian God. When Beowulf’s defense of Heorot and defeat of Grendel seems to have resolved the feud that has threatened the Danes and their hall, Grendel’s mother appears, starting a new cycle of violence. She takes vengeance for her son’s death by attacking Heorot and carrying off Hrothgar’s court favorite, Æschere.¹⁵² In introducing Grendel’s mother,

Se þe wæteregesān	wunian scolde
cealde streamas,	sipðān Cain wearð
to ecgbānan	angan breþer

she who must dwell among the dreadful waters, the cold streams, ever since Cain came to be the edge-killer of his own brother.¹⁵³

the poet rehearses again the “biblical” origins of the poem’s antagonists, tracing them to the “*geosceaftgaste*” (“ancient spirits”) who “*woc*” (“sprang up, awoke”) from the lineage of the first murderer. Hrothgar, who does not know this history, tells Beowulf “*foldbuende no hie fæder cunnon*” (“The dwellers of our land, they do not know [Grendel’s] father”).¹⁵⁴ The epistemic tension between what the Danes know about the origin of their enemies and what the Christian audience of the poem can surmise continues to be a problem for the heroes, who cannot fathom the deep history of their present feud.

¹⁵² *Beowulf*, 1279-1337a.

¹⁵³ *Beowulf*, 1260-2.

Beowulf and Hrothgar are still unaware of the nature of their enemies, yet they follow a trail of blood left by the fleeing Grendel back to the entrance of his mother's underwater lair.¹⁵⁵ The battle between Beowulf and Grendel's mother in a "hostile hall" (*niðsele*) deep beneath his haunted pool reverses the scene and setting of Grendel's initial invasion of Heorot.¹⁵⁶ The space is also evocative of the unknowns and deep histories that lie beneath the poem's conflicts. Many scholars of Old English have noted the ways in which this "mere" of Grendel's Mother resembles an entrance to the underworld, comparing the scene to the sixth book of Virgil's *Aeneid* or to the frozen hellscape of the Old English *Blickling Homily XVI* and its Latin Christian Source, the *Visio Sancti Pauli*.¹⁵⁷ Reading the mere alongside descriptions of Hell in Old English and Latin analogues, Anlezark observes that the landscape evokes both the waters of the biblical flood and the fires of eschatological judgement.¹⁵⁸ The waters that separate the *niðsele* ("hostile hall") of Grendel's mother from the world above echo the waters of the flood that separated the antediluvian world from the present creation.

Beowulf dives in undaunted, and it is "the better part of a day" before he reaches the bottom.¹⁵⁹ The hero's sojourn in the depths invites comparisons to the Harrowing of Hell, the underworld jaunts of Aeneas and Odysseus, and many other examples that can be found in a copy of *The Golden Bough*.¹⁶⁰ Yet, according to the logic of *anagenesis*, this descent functions

¹⁵⁴ *Beowulf*, 1355.

¹⁵⁵ *Beowulf*, 1399-1424.

¹⁵⁶ *Beowulf*, 1513.

¹⁵⁷ See Fulk, *Klaeber's Beowulf*, pp. 200-1, n. 1357; Allen Cabaniss, "'Beowulf' and the Liturgy," *The Journal of English and Germanic Philology* 54, no. 2 (1955): 195-201. Cabaniss suggests that Beowulf's dive echoes the descent of Christ into hell, described in Old English in the translation of *The Gospel of Nicodemus*, as well as elements of the liturgy of baptism.

¹⁵⁸ Anlezark, *Fire and Water*, 318-24. The *Beowulf*-poet uses the word *flod* ("water, flood") five times to describe the waters of the *mere*, lns. 1361, 1366, 1422, 1497, 1516. While OE *flod* has a wider range of meanings than its modern English equivalent, *flood*, *flod* appears again in *Beowulf* to denote the biblical deluge of Genesis 6-9, precisely when discussing the origins of the sword hilt, 1689.

¹⁵⁹ *Beowulf*, 1373b, 1495b. Beowulf's apparent ability to hold his breath for a whole day has been a point of contention in the text; see Oren Falk, "Beowulf's Longest Day: The Amphibious Hero in His Element ('Beowulf', II. 1495b-96)," *The Journal of English and Germanic Philology* 106, no. 1 (2007): 1-21.

¹⁶⁰ See Fulk, Bjork, and Niles, *Klaeber's Beowulf*, 200-1, n. 1357.

as a different kind of journey: one deep into time. Considering Fabian’s sense of “Typological Time,” we should remember how space and time are figured in the imaginary of colonialism; as Marlow remarks in *Heart of Darkness*, “going up that river was like traveling back to the earliest beginnings of the world.”¹⁶¹ Beowulf’s aquatic journey operates on a similar principle. By descending into the “mere” to do battle with the descendants of Cain, Beowulf crosses the periodic barrier that separates the antediluvian world from his own “heathen” age. Beowulf’s encounter with Grendel’s mother thus takes place in a space that recalls the transformations of the earth that – in the Christian schema – separate the different epochs of typological time.

When Beowulf faces Grendel’s mother, the hero does not fare as well as he had against his first opponent. Like her son, Grendel’s mother appears impervious to ordinary weapons, and Beowulf cannot harm her with his sword.¹⁶² When he tries to fight her hand to hand, Grendel’s mother overpowers Beowulf and pins him to the floor.¹⁶³ Seeking to avenge the killing of her “*angan eaferan*” (“only heir”), she stabs him with her “*seax*” – a kind of long knife, yet Beowulf is protected by the combined efforts of his “*heaðobyrne*” (“battle shirt”) and “*halig God*” (“holy God”).¹⁶⁴ It is at this moment, after God’s role in the battle has been reaffirmed, that the giant’s sword appears as *gladius ex machina* to conclude the combat:

Geseah ða on searwum	sigeeadig bil,
ealdsweord eotenisc	ecgum þyhtig,
wigena weorðmynd;	þæt wæs wæpna cyst
buton hit wæs mare	þonne ænig mon oðer,
to beadulace	ætberan meahte,
god ond geatolic,	giganta geweorc.

He [Beowulf] saw there among the crafts a victory-blessed blade, an etten-like ancient sword, keen of edge, a dear memory of wars; that was the best of

¹⁶¹ Joseph Conrad, *Heart of Darkness* (New York: Signet Classics, 1983), 102.

¹⁶² *Beowulf*, 1518-28. The sword in question, “Hrunting,” is loaned to Beowulf by Unferth, Hrothgar’s councilor. See Peter S. Baker, *Honour, Exchange and Violence in Beowulf* (DS Brewer, 2013), 77-102.

¹⁶³ *Beowulf*, 1529-45a.

¹⁶⁴ *Beowulf*, 1552-6.

weapons, but it was larger than any other man might bear to battle, good and richly made, the work of the giants.¹⁶⁵

The sword, like God, has been there all along. Still, the poet's shift in focus at this critical moment of "discovery" emphasizes the difference between the hero's perception of time-within-time and the poet's perception of time from without.¹⁶⁶ The sword is both "etten-like" (*eotenisc*) and "the work of giants" (*giganta geweorc*), bringing to mind the catalogue of creatures who appear among the kin of Cain. Since the sword is too large for an ordinary man to wield, it has awaited the arrival of the preternaturally strong Beowulf to put it to its ultimate use. Beowulf has little time to think about the origins of this fateful sword in the heat of battle but seizes the ancient weapon and swiftly wields it to decapitate Grendel's mother.¹⁶⁷ By killing Grendel's mother, Beowulf ends the possibility that another family member will arise again in the future and enact vengeance. Just as the sons of Cain first brought violence into the world, and forged the first weapons of war, now their own arms will put an end to the last remnant of their existence.¹⁶⁸

Hidden beneath the flood of waters that separates the homes of men and monsters, the sword's dwelling place reinforces the idea that Grendelkin's hall is a remnant of the antediluvian world, one that will now be put to an end. The resolution of this struggle underscores God's power over all spaces and times and his ability to manipulate both in typological terms.¹⁶⁹ After using the sword to kill Grendel's mother, Beowulf decapitates Grendel's corpse. As Grendel's poisonous blood melts the sword's blade, the poet likens its melting edge to the passing of winter to spring. His blood brings about the violent end of this feud between God and Cain, Grendel and

¹⁶⁵ *Beowulf*, 1557-9, 62.

¹⁶⁶ Anlezark, *Water and Fire*, 308-9, suggests the "light" (*leoma*) that Beowulf sees when first coming into the hall, ln. 1512b-17, is in fact made by the shining sword, though the hero recognizes the source only at the critical moment.

¹⁶⁷ *Beowulf*, 1563-9.

¹⁶⁸ Orchard, *Pride and Prodigies*, 66-7.

the Danes.¹⁷⁰ After Beowulf swims back up through the waters to the world above, bearing the signs of his victory, he discovers them cleansed and transformed by the death of his foes.¹⁷¹ Filled with treasures from the antediluvian past, the home of creatures who skirted the destruction in the flood, the hall of Grendel's mother is a time-capsule of another age. Its existence inserts the world of biblical time before and beneath the world of Beowulf's "heathen age." Killing Grendel and his mother and bringing the treasures to the surface proves that Beowulf, in spite of his own imperfect faith, is destined to play his own part in God's inevitable victory over all enemies.

Reading the Giant's Hilt

The *anagenesis* of the Christian and Pagan worlds – and the epistemic tension between them – is redoubled when Beowulf returns to the world above and offers the hilt of the antediluvian sword to Hrothgar “as a token of victory.”¹⁷² The fortuitous appearance of the giant's sword may seem at first a sign of God-given favor and absolute triumph. Beowulf has plumbed the depths of the past and defeated its demons, returning with emblems of his victory – Grendel's head and the sword's hilt – that provide a connection between the worlds of Christian exegesis and Germanic legend.¹⁷³ Seth Lerer argues that the recovery of the hilt, with its inscribed testaments to the flood and the race of Giants, serves to “counterpoint the scop's song of creation at the poem's opening, offering a written document of destruction in contrast to an

¹⁶⁹ The poet remarks on God at the moment of the sword's melting, “He has power over the seasons and the hours; that is the true measurer,” (*se geweald hafað / sæla on mæla; þæt is soð metod*), *Beowulf*, 1610a-11.

¹⁷⁰ *Beowulf*, 1605b-11. The “coming of spring” in this scene is likened by Cabaniss, “Beowulf and the Liturgy,” 196 to the vernal associations of Easter. It also resembles the role of springtime in ending the feud within the Finnsburg episode of *Beowulf*, 1066-1159, see Baker, *Honour, Violence, and Exchange*, 168-9.

¹⁷¹ *Beowulf*, 1612-22.

¹⁷² *Beowulf*, 1654.

¹⁷³ See Alexandra Bolintineanu, “Declarations of Unknowing in Beowulf.” *Neophilologus* 100, no. 4 (October 1, 2016): 631–47. Bolintineanu suggests that *Beowulf* uses a series of “declarations of unknowing” adapted from homiletic *topoi* to establish the divisions between monstrous creatures and spaces. She contends that these unknowns are “resolved” by the exploration and conquest of these spaces and bodies when “Beowulf returns from the lake with a sword hilt that testifies to the fate of Grendel's ancestors in the Flood,” 643.

oral narrative of origins.”¹⁷⁴ Yet the full effect of this discovery is lost upon both Beowulf and Hrothgar. While Beowulf recognizes that the Creator was on his side against the Grendelkin, he does not understand the whole story, which is left for the poet to tease out.

Beowulf acknowledges that both God and the sword had a hand in his victory, but he does not seem to understand the origins of the blade, which he calls an “*ealdsweord eacen*” (“great old sword”) rather than a “*giganta geweorc*” (fig. 1.8).¹⁷⁵ Hrothgar then examines the hilt, and the poem introduces new details about the artifact brought back from beneath the earth and the flood:

Hroðgar maðelode; ealde lafe. fyrngewinnes; gifen geotende frecne geferdon. ecean dryhtne; þurh wæteres wylm Swa wæs on ðæm scennum þurh runstafas geseted ond gesæd, irena cyst wreoþenhilt on wyrmfah.	hylt sceawode, On ðæm wæs or writen syðþan flod ofsloh, giganta cyn, þæt wæs fremde þeod him þæs endlean waldend sealded. sciran goldes rihte gemearcod, hwam þæt sweord geworht ærest wære,
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Hrothgar spoke; he examined the hilt, the heirloom of the old ones. On it was inscribed the origin of the ancient strife; thereafter the flood, the rising waters, slew the race of giants; they fared wretchedly. That was a people hostile to the eternal lord; the ruler paid them back for that through the water’s surge. The name of he who had first wrought that sword was set within and declared on the handle in shining gold, properly marked in rune-letters wrapped around the hilt in serpentine patterns, the best of iron-works.¹⁷⁶

While the passage begins with the formulaic invocation “Hrothgar spoke,” the king’s speech is interrupted by the poet’s gloss upon the “writing” of the hilt. The *Beowulf*-poet intervenes, departing from the present of his narrative to remark on the scriptural past that he has placed

¹⁷⁴ Seth Lerer, *Literacy and Power in Anglo-Saxon Literature* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1991), 159.

¹⁷⁵ *Beowulf*, 2069-2143. See Lerer, *Literacy and Power*, 183-6.

before it. These remarks reiterate the role of God in Beowulf's victory over Grendel's mother and the genealogical links between the Grendelkin, the descendants of Cain, and the story of the flood. The giant's hilt confirms in writing what the poet has already told his audience in his glosses upon Grendel's lineage: that the written world of scriptural tradition lies before and beneath the ancestral homeland of *Beowulf*, even in the northern reaches of the world, far removed from the heartland of biblical history.

1.8

Known by Beowulf: ("Heathen"/ Pre-Christian)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Beowulf nearly died in battle "had God not protected me" (1659) - Hrunting could not harm Grendel's mother "though the weapon was good" (1661) - Giant's hilt came from a "grand ancient-sword" (<i>ealdsweord eacen</i>, 1663a), no mention of ancient giants. <p style="text-align: center;"><i>Beowulf</i>, 1651-1676.</p>
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Known by <i>Beowulf</i> -Poet (Christian)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Beowulf would have died had not both his armor and God protected him (1550-6). - Grendel's mother and Grendel are immune to normal blades because of enchantments. (801-804) - "Ancient Ettenish-Sword" (<i>ealdsweord eotenisc</i>, 1558) is "choice" among weapons, a "work of the giants" or "gigantic work" (<i>giganta geweorc</i>, 1562). - When presented to Hrothgar, sword again described as "the ancient work of giants," "the work of fantastical smiths" (1679a, 1681a). <p style="text-align: center;"><i>Beowulf</i> 1550-1610, 1679-81. (cf. <i>Genesis</i> 4, <i>Genesis</i> 6: 2-3, <i>Enoch</i>, etc.)</p>
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Figure 1.8: *Beowulf's* knowledge of the sword and its origins are contrasted with the poet.

As an act of *anagenesis*, the discovery of the hilt both materially and symbolically links the histories of the "pagan" and "Christian" worlds, emphasizing the complete perspective of history offered by the latter. Yet, as Lerer notes, the scene is also "an allusive, and perhaps,

¹⁷⁶ *Beowulf*, 1686-98a.

willfully obscure passage.”¹⁷⁷ It is unclear to what extent Hrothgar is capable of “reading” the hilt’s writing and recognizing the historical significance of its images. Gillian Overing similarly asks, “Is Hrothgar actually *reading* the sword as text, or is he making it his own text, or are we as readers claiming it as our text?”¹⁷⁸ The hilt’s “*runstafas*” identify who made the ancient sword, but this name is never revealed by the *Beowulf*-poet.¹⁷⁹ Hrothgar’s speech, which follows his frustrated attempt to read the hilt, highlights the values and beliefs shared between Christian and pre-Christian times and the revelations that are withheld from those who live in the age before conversion. As Osborn observes, “the speech is most relevant to the poem as a whole because it shows, through contextual allusion, how the highest conduct of Germanic heroes is not in opposition to that of any hero aligned with God’s forces in the Great Feud.”¹⁸⁰ As the poem’s foremost example of earthly wisdom and its limitations, Hrothgar demonstrates the constraints of knowledge in a world without scriptural revelation.¹⁸¹ By placing the artifact in Hrothgar’s lap as he tries to set the world in order, the *Beowulf*-poet emphasizes the disjunctions of knowledge between Christian and Pagan epochs (fig. 1.9). Since God rules over both periods, members of this earlier age can serve as agents of a universal divinity in spite of their limited knowledge.

¹⁷⁷ Lerer, *Literacy and Power*, 193.

¹⁷⁸ Gillian R. Overing, *Language, Sign, and Gender in Beowulf* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1990), 61. As Anlezark, *Water and Fire*, 304-11, observes The *Beowulf*-poet’s gloss on the text has its own difficulties. In a potential anachronism, the sword, described as the “work of giants” (*giganta geweorc*), depicts the extinctions of the giants by the flood.

¹⁷⁹ While some of these difficulties may be generated by the historical distance of the poem and its language, and others by the precarious state of its text, the passage demonstrates the continued limits of human knowledge in spite of religious conversion. As Lerer, *Literacy and Power*, 193, observes, the hilt is a kind of “riddle”, one that points out both the benefits of conversion and literacy in recovering a narrative of history, as well as the ultimate limitations of human knowledge. As artifact and text, the sword’s excavation and enigmatic reading reflects the many attempts of scholars to recover the “meaning” of *Beowulf*, and through the poem a memory of a forgotten age.

¹⁸⁰ Osborn, “Great Feud,” 798.

¹⁸¹ Anlezark, *Water and Fire*, 333, links Hrothgar’s sermon to the apocryphal Book of Wisdom and its purported author, the biblical king Solomon.

1.9

Known by Hrothgar: ("Heathen"/ Pre-Christian)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- "Mighty God distributes Wisdom, Earth, and Earl-ship to mankind" (1725-27a)- Men who neglect God fall from Grace: fame is fleeting, death inevitable.- Grendel was "<i>edwenden</i>" (catastrophe), "<i>ingenga mine</i>" (my invader). <p><i>Beowulf</i>, 1700-84.</p>
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Known by <i>Beowulf</i> -Poet (Christian)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Origin of "ancient strife" "written" on hilt.- Flood slays the "<i>Giganta Cyn</i>" paying "<i>endlean</i>" in feud.- "<i>Runstafas</i>" identify the maker of sword. <p><i>Beowulf</i> 1688b-1698a.</p> <p>(cf. <i>Genesis</i> 4, <i>Genesis</i> 6: 2-3, <i>Enoch</i>, etc.)</p>
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Figure 1.9: Hrothgar examines the hilt and begins to speak thereafter. His "sermon" outlines many ethical principles in line with Christian tradition, but he ultimately does not seem to recognize the specific genealogies of strife that the Beowulf-poet observes are written upon the sword.

The significance of Beowulf's discovery is obscured from him, even as he uses it to save himself and Hrothgar's people and to defeat the enemies of God. Beowulf's excavation of the sword does not "resolve" the problems of terrestrial strife upon which Hrothgar meditates, and his defeat of the Grendelkin does not prevent either the Danes or Geats from encountering further violence. Beowulf's continued ignorance will ultimately spell disaster for the hero and his people. In the poem's final part, the hero follows his pre-Christian ethos to his death against a dragon. Whether Beowulf is saved, damned, or left to an ambiguous fate at the end of the poem remains a point of contention among scholars, but his funeral is unapologetically "pagan,"

recalling the apotheosis ritual of the Roman emperors and Attila the Hun.¹⁸² In a reversal of Scyld's funeral at the poem's beginning, *Beowulf* ends with a settled corpse and an unmoored people. Following the loss of their hero-king, the Geats anticipate their scattering and destruction. The speeches of kings and heroes that have appeared throughout the poem give way to the lament of an anonymous woman, who stands by Beowulf's seaside tomb and prophesies "hynðo ond hæftnyd" ("strife and captivity") for the "Wedra leode" ("people of the Geats").¹⁸³

From the perspective of the characters in the story, this is all bad news. Yet, typologically, the woman's lament recalls "weeping by the rivers of Babylon" in Psalm 137 and a grim reversal of Miriam's celebrations after crossing the Red Sea in Exodus 15.¹⁸⁴ While these biblical parallels are only allusive in the poem, Bede's *Ecclesiastical History of the English People* and many other Old English and Anglo-Latin texts draw explicit parallels between the English and the biblical model of Israel.¹⁸⁵ For many of the Early English, the "exodus" of the Germanic peoples to the island of Britain precipitated their encounters with Roman and Irish Christianity and makes their conversion possible.¹⁸⁶ Since the Germanic peoples migrate to Britain before converting to Christianity, *Beowulf's anagenesis* must ultimately point to how the descendants of the poem's people might make it their future home. The cause behind such migrations are often brutal defeats and the displacements of people, which appear in both historical records of Late Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages and are reflected further through scriptural typologies of exile and exodus. As in the Old English poems *The Wanderer* and *The*

¹⁸² Thomas D. Hill, "Beowulf's Roman Rites: Roman Ritual and Germanic Tradition," *The Journal of English and Germanic Philology* 106, no. 3 (2007): 325–35.

¹⁸³ *Beowulf*, 3155–7.

¹⁸⁴ On the significance of this scene in the Old English poem *Exodus*, see Zacher, *Re-Writing the Old Testament*, 52–3, 80, n.15.

¹⁸⁵ See Andrew P. Scheil, *The Footsteps of Israel: Understanding Jews in Anglo-Saxon England*, (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2004); Malcolm Godden, "Biblical Literature: The Old Testament," in *The Cambridge Companion to Old English Literature* (Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 214–33.

¹⁸⁶ See Samantha Zacher, *Rewriting the Old Testament*, 24–8, and "Judaism and National Identity in Medieval England," in *The Routledge Companion to Literature and Religion*, (Abingdon, England: Routledge, 2016), 367–78.

Seafarer, exile brings suffering and death, but it also offers the opportunity to become part of a new people and to find new homes on both earth and in heaven.¹⁸⁷ In this way, the melancholy end of *Beowulf*, with its dead king and fearful people, links to the narrative of a future conversion promised by the giant's hilt. The pagans of *Beowulf* are halfway home, though they do not know it yet.

By considering *Beowulf* in terms of *anagenesis*, our aim is not to sever the poem from its integral role in the history of English literature and culture but rather to re-situate the study of Early English, Insular, and Germanic literary traditions within a broader ambit of Jewish, Christian, and Islamic claims upon the monotheistic order of history. In its extant form, the poem is the product of an "exegetical culture," a Christian intellectual community that desired to reconcile – rather than reject – its ancestral traditions and poetic forms.¹⁸⁸ Many elements of *Beowulf's* negotiations between the "Christian" and "Pagan" worlds are neither strictly Christian nor strictly biblical.¹⁸⁹ Instead, the poet's glosses on the biblical origins behind his heroic narrative rely on the wider ambit of exegetical narratives that were circulated among Jews, Christians, and Muslims. By examining *Beowulf's* acts of *anagenesis* and its analogues in exegetical tradition, we can trace how methods of reconciling and rewriting history traveled from the Mediterranean and Near East centers of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam to the expanding peripheries of monotheistic missions across the broader world. Placing *Beowulf's* eponymous hero and his time-bending discoveries alongside those of figures like 'Abd al-Muttalib and the Khazars, we can better understand how different instantiations of *anagenesis* functioned in

¹⁸⁸ See Patrick Wormald, "Bede, *Beowulf*, and the Conversion of the Anglo-Saxon Aristocracy," in *The Times of Bede*, (London: Blackwell, 2006), 30-105. Wormald, 43-5, discusses the famous question asked by Alcuin, an Anglo-Latin scholar in the Carolingian court: "What does Ingeld have to do with Christ?" Since authorities like Alcuin rejected the circulation of "*fabula*" drawn from Germanic traditions, Wormald suggests that the *Beowulf*-poet aimed to add "Christian coloring" to his pre-Christian narrative, making it attractive to Christian converts who were less stringent.

diverse contexts to meet similar demands in the wake of migration and conversion.

¹⁸⁹ Wormald, “Bede, *Beowulf*, and the Conversion,” 39, notes the remark of translator John Clark Hall that there is little in the poem to offend “a pious Jew.”

1.2 Digging up Blessings: The well of Zamzam and the Genealogy of Islam

Through its imagined discovery of links between its heathen tales of heroism and a universal history that begins and ends on Christian terms, *Beowulf* reflects the broader cultural shifts that accompanied the migration, settlement, and Christianization of various communities. Yet the phenomena of migration and conversion were far from exclusive to Northern Europe or the “Christian” lands of the West. The emergence of Islam in the latter half of the first millennium CE precipitated many parallel cultural transformations and spurred the establishment of new social and ethnic hierarchies within the Islamic world. Like the Germanic peoples who settled in Britain, adopted Christianity, and came to recognize themselves as “English,” many Arabic-speaking communities underwent cultural transformations, both in terms of religious conversion and migration.

In response to such shifts in identity and memory, Muslim scholars produced narratives of *anagenesis*. One such episode occurs in the *Life of the Messenger of God* (Ar. *Sīrat Rasūl Allāh*), a compilation of traditions about the career of the Prophet Muhammad and the history of Mecca, Islam’s holiest city. Compiled by Ibn Ishāq (c. 85–150/704–767) and redacted by Ibn Hishām (d. c. 215/830), the *Life* preserves in writing a collection of history that was first conveyed orally by members of the early Muslim community.¹⁹⁰ In one of its early scenes, the *Life* recounts how ‘Abd al-Muṭṭalib, the grandfather of the Prophet, is instructed in a series of dreams to “dig up Zamzam” (*iḥfar Zamzam*).¹⁹¹ Unsure of what this “Zamzam” is, ‘Abd al-

¹⁹⁰ For an Arabic text, see Ibn Hishām, *Kitāb sīrat Rasūl allāh: Das Leben Mohammed’s*, ed. F. Wüstenfeld, 2 vols. (Göttingen, 1858–60); for an English translation see Albert Guillaume, trans., *The Life of Muhammad* (Karachi: Oxford University Press, 1967). On the genre and its conventions, see Pavel Pavlovitch, “The Sira,” in *Routledge Handbook on Early Islam*, ed. Herbert Berg (Routledge, 2017), 65–78; Guillaume, *Life of Muhammad*, xiii, xli-iii. Beginning with a history of the Arabian Peninsula before the Prophet’s birth, the *Life* describes the start of the Prophet Muhammad’s revelations of the Qur’an, the formation of the community of Muslims, and the struggles between Muhammad and representatives of Judaism, Christianity, and Arabian polytheism. The *Life* also addresses the relationship of Islam and the Qur’an to the texts and traditions of the other “Abrahamic” faiths of Judaism and Christianity.

¹⁹¹ Ibn Hishām, *Sīra*, vol. 1, 91-2; Guillaume, *Life of Muhammad*, 62.

Muṭṭalib follows a chain of supernatural commands to the Ka‘ba, the central sanctuary of Meccan worship. There he digs and discovers a spring first struck by the angel Gabriel to save the lives of Hagar and Ishmael – identified as the ancestors of the Arabs in Jewish, Christian, Islamic traditions. By digging into the ground, ‘Abd al-Muṭṭalib uncovers an “original” Abrahamic history of the Meccan sanctuary that was hidden beneath the “pagan” settlement of his own time. Like *Beowulf*, the *Life* depicts a figure from one moment of the past – shortly before the birth of the Prophet Muhammad (ca. 570 CE) – who discovers the relics of another, far deeper past. In this act of *anagenesis*, the *Life* uses ‘Abd al-Muṭṭalib to mediate between Islamic and pre-Islamic history, placing him in a series of typologically charged scenes that tie Mecca back to an Abrahamic past and anticipate the city’s Islamic future.

Set in the time before the revelation of the Qur’ān, the first part of the *Life* contributes to the idea of the *Jāhiliyyah*, a periodization of the pre-Islamic world devised by Muslim historians.¹⁹² Though frequently translated in English as the “age of ignorance,” the word *Jāhiliyyah* appears to have had several meanings and connotations among different communities of Muslims in the generations after the death of the Prophet. As Peter Webb observes, *Jāhiliyyah* appears four times in the Qur’ān, where it describes the ignorance of its audience before they joined the community of “believers.”¹⁹³ Webb considers this initial conception of *Jāhiliyyah* as “suggestive of a state of being rather than a precise period of time,” but notes that later Muslim historians treat it as a “colligatory process that periodizes history.”¹⁹⁴ As both a “state” of being

¹⁹² Peter Webb, “Al-Jāhiliyya: Uncertain Times of Uncertain Meanings,” *Der Islam* 91, no. 1 (May 1, 2014): 69–94; Alfons Teipen, “Jāhilitic and Muslim Women: Questions of Continuity and Communal Identity,” *The Muslim World* 92, no. 3–4 (September 1, 2002): 437–59; Barbara Freyer Stowasser, “Women and Politics in Late Jahili and Early Islamic Arabia: Reading behind Patriarchal History,” in *Gulf Women*, ed. Amira Sonbol and Kira Dreher (Doha: Bloomsbury Academic, 2012), 69–103.

¹⁹³ Webb, “Uncertain Times,” 72–3.

¹⁹⁴ Webb, “Uncertain Times,” 73. Webb, 71, describes how this periodization collapses time into simpler categories: “the *Jāhiliyyah* idea takes the centuries of Arabian history prior to Muhammad’s prophethood and enforces a unity between them, melding all the discrete and disparate events of its history into one homogenized conceptual construct.” While

and a historical period, the *Jāhiliyyah* functions as form of typological time, dividing space and history in terms of knowledge.

Just as typological thinking was critical for Christian apologists to negotiate their relationship to “Jewish” and “Pagan” narratives of history and systems of belief, the idea of *Jāhiliyyah* was critical for negotiating the “genealogy” of Islam – in terms of both its genetic ancestry and cultural heritage. It allowed Muslim scholars to reconcile the historical relationships of Islamic traditions and practices with Arabian, Jewish, and Christian communities while claiming an eternal and original understanding of history.¹⁹⁵ The *Jāhiliyyah* offered an “Islamic” periodization of the pre-Islamic world, one that eschewed seeing Islam as subordinate and subsequent to Judaism or Christianity. Instead, the idea of the *Jāhiliyyah* posits Arabia as one of the original settings of sacred history and pushes the history of Islam back to the beginning of time.¹⁹⁶ While some Muslims scorned the *Jāhiliyyah* as an age of polytheistic corruption and barbaric violence, others celebrated it as an era of heroes and epic feuds, a wellspring of poets whose desert spirit was imitated but unmatched by later court-poets of the Islamic age.¹⁹⁷

Whether treated with nostalgia or disgust, the *Jāhiliyyah* – like Christian conceptions of the “Pagan” world – represented the spaces and times before conversion in a way that anticipated the

Muslim historians initially used the term *Jāhiliyyah* to denote the space and time of pre-Islamic Arabia, this relatively discrete definition was expanded upon until multiple versions of the *Jāhiliyyah* were imagined as existing beyond the bounds of the Islamic world.

¹⁹⁵ See Lowin, *Making of a Forefather*, 7-17; Wright, “Farewell *Khutba*,” 222-4; Gregg, *Shared Stories*, 198. The Qur’ān presents its own scriptural message as reclaiming and perfecting the original religion of Abraham, making it ostensibly “older” than Judaism, Christianity, and other monotheistic faiths. Early generations of Muslim scholars debated whether to consult Jewish and Christian authorities to contextualize Qur’ānic allusions to the figures of Abraham, Jesus, and other prophets, or to rely on exclusively Islamic authorities. Insisting upon the Arabian origins of the Qur’ānic passages and Islamic practices diverted attention from their connections to Jewish and Christian law and exegesis. Insisting on Islam’s separation from these faiths also elevated the authority of Muslim scholars to determine which beliefs and traditions belonged inside or outside of the Islamic community.

¹⁹⁶ G. R. Hawting, *The Idea of Idolatry and the Emergence of Islam: From Polemic to History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 1-10.

¹⁹⁷ Rina Drory, “The Abbasid Construction of the *Jahiliyya*: Cultural Authority in the Making.” *Studia Islamica* 83 (1996): 33–49. See also Jaroslav Stetkevych, *Muhammad and the Golden Bough: Reconstructing Arabian Myth* (Indiana University Press, 1996), 7-11. Stetkevych surveys the multiple uses of *jahl* in pre-Islamic poetry and describes the term as reflective of “a kind of heroism that also contains its own tragic flaw.”

ultimate triumph of the Islamic religion.

Just as the *Beowulf*-poet sought to rehabilitate the ancient heathen characters by portraying them as destroyers of God's enemies, Muslim story-tellers celebrated the genetic predecessors of the Muslim Arabs as unwitting agents of God. While 'Abd al-Muṭṭalib serves as a protector of the young Prophet after the death of his parents, he also worships idols and invokes the names of Mecca's "traditional" gods. The *Life* sometimes admonishes 'Abd al-Muṭṭalib for his polytheism and sometimes sympathizes with his devotion to antiquated legal and religious customs. Like the unwitting heroes of *Beowulf*, 'Abd al-Muṭṭalib and his fellow Meccans do not understand the full significance of their discovery. They squabble over who discovered these treasures and which god is responsible for their unearthing. As the story of an "unknowing archaeologist," the account of 'Abd al-Muṭṭalib discovery of Zamzam stresses the epistemic tensions that divide the pre-Islamic Arabia of the *Jāhiliyyah* from the age of Islam.

Zamzam Found and Lost

Before the *Life* addresses the lifetime of Muhammad, it attempts to trace the history of Arabia and its peoples back to the beginning of time. The *Life* opens with a genealogy of Muhammad, tracing his lineage across forty-nine generations through 'Abd al-Muṭṭalib, Ishmael, and Abraham, back to Adam, the first man and first Prophet.¹⁹⁸ Like the ancestral lists of the Anglo-Saxon kings, which go back through pagan deities to meet biblical patriarchs, this genealogy similarly ties the ancestral records of Arabic tribes into a universal line of genetic descent. In the framework of *anagenesis*, the *Life's* appeal to Abrahamic heritage is used to claim the historical primacy of Islam over both Meccan polytheism and "Abrahamic" religions

such as Judaism and Christianity. While this opening genealogy presents a tidy and legible claim of Islam's precedence throughout history, it is the story of 'Abd al-Muṭṭalib and Zamzam that transforms the claim of continuity into a story of discovery.

Like *Beowulf*, the *Life* eschews strict chronology for a broader idea of the "time before" Islam. After its introductory genealogy, the *Life* provides a general history of Arabia, the city of Mecca, and its central shrine, the Ka'bah, in the times before the "sending down" of the Qur'ān. As the *Life* tacks back and forth between the time of the Himyarite rulers of Yemen and the age of Abraham, the generation before the birth of the Prophet and Muhammad's own youth, genealogy and geography unite its disparate timelines and heterogenous narrative sources.¹⁹⁹ The *Life* reiterates claims throughout that the Ka'bah and the *hajj* were first instituted by the Prophet Abraham, recording prophecies that the shrine will return to its original form when a new prophet arrives among his descendants. 'Abd al-Muṭṭalib contributes to this process both materially – by digging up the well of Zamzam and adding the treasures of Jurhum to the Ka'bah's treasury, and genealogically – by serving as the ancestor of the Prophet and many other significant figures in the coming Islamic age.

The well of Zamzam draws upon this original Abrahamic history of Mecca, its loss, and its recovery. Before the *Life* connects the story of Zamzam directly to 'Abd al-Muṭṭalib, it explains the spring's origins. Following their expulsion from Abraham's camp, the prophet's son

¹⁹⁸ Ibn Hishām, *Sīra*, vol. 1, 3-7; Guillaume, *Life of Muhammad*, 3-4. This opening appears to be modeled on the genealogy of Jesus in the Gospel of Matthew.

¹⁹⁹ *Life of Muhammad*, 1-106. The first narrative sequence, 3-33, describes the role of Mecca in the regional struggles between the Himyarite Kings of Yemen, the Aksumite forces of Ethiopia, and the Sassanian Persian Empire. In this first section, 25-6, 'Abd al-Muṭṭalib appears as a diplomat on behalf of the Meccan forces on the "Day of the Elephant," an attack on the city by the Ethiopian general Abraha that was connected by Muslim exegetes to Q 105 and 106. The second sequence, 34-45, explains the origins of idolatry in Mecca and offers an ethnological survey of Meccan deities and religious practices in the pre-Islamic era. The third section, 45-89, describes the origins of Zamzam in the time of Abraham, the shifting control over governance of the Ka'bah, the ancestry of 'Abd al-Muṭṭalib, the recovery of the well, and the Prophet's birth and life before his revelations. The temporal sequence shifts again at the end of Part I, 90-107, to highlight the various prophecies of Jewish, Christian, and Arabian authorities about Muhammad's coming.

Ishmael and his mother Hagar head into the wilderness and reach the environs of Mecca.^{200F} When Ishmael is dying of thirst, Hagar runs between the hills of al-Ṣafā and al-Marwah, imploring God for deliverance.²⁰¹ She receives her wish when Gabriel appears and strikes the earth with his heel, revealing the spring of “Zamzam.”²⁰² The pair choose to settle beside the spring, and Ishmael marries a woman from the nearby tribe of the Jurhum, establishing a new line of “Arabizing Arabs” who serve as guardians of the Ka‘ba and the ancestors of the Prophet.^{204F}²⁰³

Little of this historical layer appears in the Qur’ān. Instead, as Reuven Firestone and Robert Gregg observe, the narrative shares many details with the accounts of Hagar and Ishmael in Genesis 16 and 21.²⁰⁴ In Genesis 21:8-21, Hagar and Ishmael are exiled into the desert at the command of Sarah, Abraham’s first wife.²⁰⁵ When Hagar fears that she and her son will die of thirst, an “angel of God” reveals a well to her, giving them the means to survive.²⁰⁶ Like the account in the *Life*, the biblical account is concerned with genealogy. According to Genesis, Ishmael and his descendants dwelt in the “Desert of Paran,” splitting into “twelve tribes” that parallel the twelve sons of Israel.²⁰⁷ Though the biblical account does not mention the “Arabs” as one of Ishmael’s descendants, Jewish and Christian communities in Late Antiquity equated Arabic-speaking peoples as descendants of Ishmael before the emergence of Islam.²⁰⁸ The *Life*’s narrative of Zamzam thus appears to be based on the narrative in Genesis, filtered through

²⁰⁰ Ibn Hishām, *Sīra*, vol. 1, 71-100; Guillaume, *Life of Muhammad*, 45-69.

²⁰¹ Ibn Hishām, *Sīra*, vol. 1, 71; Guillaume, *Life of Muhammad*, 45.

²⁰² Ibn Hishām, *Sīra*, vol. 1, 71; Guillaume, *Life of Muhammad*, 45.

²⁰³ Ibn Hishām, *Sīra*, vol. 1, 71-2; Guillaume, *Life of Muhammad*, 45-6.

²⁰⁴ Reuven Firestone, *Journeys in Holy Lands: The Evolution of the Abraham-Ishmael Legends in Islamic Exegesis* (Albany, N.Y.: State University of New York Press, 1990), 62-75; Gregg, *Shared Stories*, 145-186. 154-186.

²⁰⁵ Firestone, *Journeys*, 72.

²⁰⁶ Genesis 21:18.

²⁰⁷ Genesis 21: 15-21, 25:12-18.

²⁰⁸ On Arab genealogies and the origins of the word “Saracen” see Irfan Shahîd, *Rome and the Arabs*, 121-41.

contacts with Jewish and Christian exegetical traditions.²⁰⁹

In the *Life*, the story of Zamzam's origins integrates these elements of Jewish exegetical tradition and resituates them within the context of Mecca and its history. As Firestone observes, Muslim scholars equated the "Desert of Paran" with the Hijaz of the western Arabian Peninsula, placing the biblical setting in a space known in their own time.²¹⁰ Hagar's running between al-Şafā and al-Marwah institutes one of the rituals of the *hajj*, just as Abraham and Ishmael will be identified as the builders of the Ka'ba.²¹¹ The *Life* also uses the event to forge a "genetic" link between the scriptural patriarchs and the peoples of Mecca. Whereas in the biblical account Ishmael marries an "Egyptian woman," in the *Life* he marries into the tribe of the Jurhum.²¹² Pre-Islamic traditions may have regarded the Jurhum as the original founders of Mecca and builders of the Ka'ba, but the *Life* describes this tribe as "rulers of the temple and judges" inheriting their role as the "maternal uncles" (Ar. *akhwāl*) of Ishmael.²¹³ While traditions identifying Ishmael as the ancestor of the Arabs preceded the emergence of Islam, they often disparaged nomadic Arabic speakers as inferior to settled Jewish and Christian communities.²¹⁴ Islamic narratives, in contrast, reclaimed this "Ishmaelite" heritage as a point of cultural pride. The local history of Mecca is tied to the wider world by this marriage, and the beginnings of the Ka'ba are assigned to Abrahamic institution and divine command. By transforming a local Meccan landmark into the site of a biblical story, the *Life* lays a claim upon the history of Mecca as an originally

²⁰⁹ Firestone, *Journey's in Holy Lands*, 65.

²¹⁰ Firestone, *Journeys*, 64-5.

²¹¹ The *sa'y*, or walking between Şafā and Marwah, is one of the rituals of the *hajj*, and is referenced in Q 2:158. Gregg, *Shared Stories*, 192-3, observes that the Qur'ānic passage does not explicitly mention Hagar or Ishmael. Firestone, *Journeys*, 68-71, suggests the passage may have been included to endorse a pre-existing element of the rituals of the *hajj* and *'umrah* in the Pre-Islamic era.

²¹² Ibn Hishām, *Sīra*, vol. 1, 73; Guillaume, *Life of Muhammad*, 46; The model of exogamous marriage between a "foreign" male and "indigenous" female is a common feature of stories of national origin. See Marshal Sahlins, "The Stranger-King or, Elementary Forms of the Politics of Life." *Indonesia and the Malay World* 36, no. 105 (July 1, 2008): 177-99.

²¹³ Ibn Hishām, *Sīra*, vol. 1, 73; Guillaume, *Life of Muhammad*, 46.

²¹⁴ Scarfe-Beckett, *Anglo-Saxon Perceptions of the Islamic World*, 70-149; Heng, *Invention of Race*, 111-2.

Muslim city and adapts a well-known exegetical tradition shared by Jews and Christians.

After establishing Mecca's Abrahamic heritage, the *Life* explains how its people came to forget these monotheistic beginnings. Like Josiah's discovery of the "Book of the Law" and the idolatrous sacrifices instituted by the Danes in their frustrated attempts to defeat Grendel, the *Life* follows its account of Zamzam's creation with the story of the landmark's loss and oblivion. Following the death of their father, the "sons of Ishmael" first remained in the city, but "when Mecca became too confined," the sons of Ishmael departed from the city to spread out into the wider world.²¹⁵ The departure of the better part of the Ishmaelites from the city – and of God's favor with them – explains the gradual loss of Mecca's monotheistic history. After the Ishmaelites leave, the Jurhum "behaved high-handedly in Mecca and made lawful that which was taboo" until they were challenged by the tribes of the Kināna and Khuzā'a.²¹⁶ The Jurhum were forced to flee from Mecca to the Yemen, and the *Life* recounts how one man among them, named 'Amr b. al-Hārith "brought out the two gazelles of the Ka'ba and the cornerstone and buried them in the well of Zamzam."²¹⁷ The burial of these treasures and the concealment of the spring of Zamzam signifies the end of this epoch in Meccan history.

²¹⁵ Ibn Hishām, *Sīra*, vol. 1, 73; Guillaume, *Life of Muhammad*, 46. This narrative of emigration imagines Mecca to be the "center" of Arab genealogy and religion even as the Arabic-speaking peoples settled elsewhere in the Arabian Peninsula and the Near East. It portrays the *hajj* pilgrimage as a return to the ancestral homeland of all Arabs, foreshadowing the future spread of Islam from the city into the other lands of the Arabs and then beyond into the wider world.

²¹⁶ Ibn Hishām, *Sīra*, vol. 1, 73; Guillaume, *Life of Muhammad*, 46.

²¹⁷ Ibn Hishām, *Sīra*, vol. 1, 73-4 Guillaume, *Life of Muhammad*, 46-7. 'Amr follows this burial with an lament reminiscent of an exilic Psalm, or *Beowulf's* famous "Lay of the Last Survivor":

"We were the lords of the temple after Nābit,
We used to go round the temple
Our prosperity great to see...
We reigned in power, how great was our rule!
No other tribe there could boast.
Did you not marry a daughter to the best man I know?
His sons are ours, we being brothers by marriage."

The elegy emphasizes the sufferings of the Jurhum and the depredations of fate, but it also emphasizes the tribe's genealogical connections to the family of Abraham. Nābit appears as Ishmael's firstborn son in in the *Life's* introductory genealogy; the line "did you not marry a daughter to the best man I know?" alludes to Ishmael's union with the Jurhum. It also links together the two separate stories of Zamzam's excavation.

A new layer of time, the *Jāhiliyyah*, is then built on top of these hidden foundations.²¹⁸ The burial of Zamzam also alludes to another early episode in the *Life*, which identifies ‘Amr b. Luḥayy as the progenitor of “idolatry” in Mecca.²¹⁹ After the sons of Ishmael departed from Mecca to settle the rest of Arabia, ‘Amr brought a stone idol named Hubal from Syria and set it up in the vicinity of the Ka‘ba to be worshiped.²²⁰ Coupled with the story of Zamzam, such etiological narratives insist that polytheism and image-worship emerged in Mecca only *after* an original age of “Abrahamic” purity. Since the *Jāhiliyyah* was – in one respect – an “age of ignorance,” it could explain how Arabs had lost the thread of their Abrahamic heritage while unconsciously preserving elements of the “original” religion of Abraham, hiding them beneath a polytheistic faith.²²¹

Not Quite a Prophet: The First Account

Just as the burials of Zamzam and the treasures of the Jurhum signify a loss of Mecca’s original history, their rediscovery by ‘Abd al-Muṭṭalib heralds the gradual transition to a new era of history (fig. 1.10). In the generations after the Jurhum fled, the responsibility of managing the Meccan sanctuary passed to Muhammad’s tribe, the Quraysh. ‘Abd al-Muṭṭalib performs “the duties of watering and feeding the pilgrims” during the *ḥajj*, a task that will be made

²¹⁸ See G. R. Hawting, “The Disappearance and Rediscovery of Zamzam and the ‘Well of the Ka‘ba,’” *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London* 43, no. 1 (1980): 44–54; Hawting suggests that just as the creation of Zamzam was inspired by Jewish exegetical narratives about Hagar, these narratives of burial and rediscovery of the treasures in the *Life* are likely adaptations of Jewish and Samaritan traditions. Hawting, “Disappearance” 46-7, notes an episode in II Maccabees 2:4-8, where the prophet Jeremiah “at the time of the fall of Jerusalem, took out ‘the tent, the ark, and the incense altar’ and buried them in a cave on the mountain from which Moses had viewed the Promised Land.” He also includes an account in Josephus “concerning a Samaritan rebel who, in the time of Pontius Pilate, attempted to win the support of his co-religionists by claiming to be able to uncover the sacred vessels hidden on Mount Gerezim.”

²¹⁹ Ibn Hishām, *Sīra*, vol. 1, 51; Guillaume, *Life of Muhammad*, 35. On ‘Amr b. Luḥayy, see Hawting, *Idolatry*, 103-4.

²²⁰ Ibn Hishām, *Sīra*, vol. 1, 53-4; Guillaume, *Life of Muhammad*, 37.

²²¹ Hawting, *Idolatry*, 1-6.

considerably easier following the miraculous discovery of a well adjacent to the sanctuary.²²²

The *Life* includes two accounts of ‘Abd al-Muṭṭalib’s unearthing of Zamzam, derived from two different sources, though these reports appear to be composites of a broader oral tradition (fig. 1.11). In both versions of the narrative, ‘Abd al-Muṭṭalib is impelled to seek out Zamzam after encountering an enigmatic visitor in his dreams.²²³

1.10

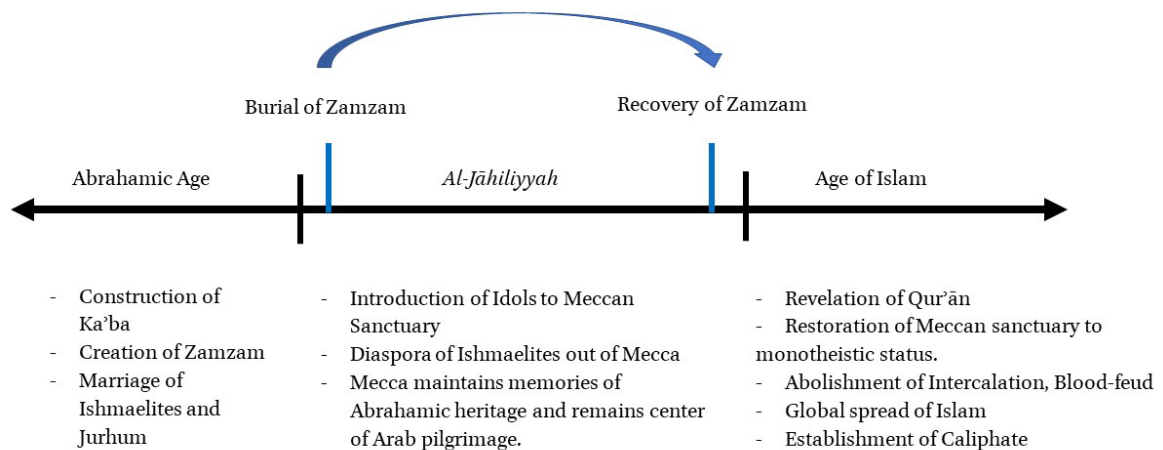


Figure 1.10: The loss and recovery of Zamzam occurs in the midst of the transitions between different eras of Arabian history.

The first account is presented as the first-person testimony of ‘Abd al-Muṭṭalib himself and transmitted on the authority of his descendant, ‘Alī ibn Abi Ṭālib, the Prophet’s son-in-law:

“I was sleeping in the *hijr* when a supernatural visitant came and said, “Dig Ṭība”. I said “And what is Ṭība?”; then he left me. I went to bed again the next day and slept, and he came to me and said “Dig Barra”; when I asked what Barra was he left me. The next day he came again and said “Dig al-Maḍnūna”; when I asked

²²² Ibn Hishām, *Sīra*, vol. 1, 91; Guillaume, *Life of Muhammad*, 61.

²²³ *Life of Muhammad*, 62, n.2, 709, n. 109.

what that was he went away again. The next day he came while I was sleeping and said “Dig Zamzam”. I said, “What is Zamzam?”; he said:

*‘Twill never fail or ever run dry,
‘Twill water the pilgrim company.
It lies ’twixt the dung and the flesh bloody,
By the nest where the white-winged ravens fly,
By the nest where the ants to and fro do ply.’*²²⁴

The enigmatic exchange between ‘Abd al-Muṭṭalib and this mysterious “visitant” (“*Āt*”, literally “one who comes”) brings to mind the *Life*’s later account of Muhammad’s first revelation, a critical episode in the biographic tradition.²²⁵ While ‘Abd al-Muṭṭalib’s discovery of Zamzam takes place *before* the birth of Muhammad, it seems that his story has been shaped to resemble that of his descendant. Like ‘Abd al-Muṭṭalib’s dream about Zamzam, the account of the “first revelation” is formulated as Muhammad’s own words:

‘He came to me,’ said the apostle of God, ‘while I was asleep, with a coverlet of brocade whereon was some writing, and said, “Read!” I said, “What shall I read?” He pressed me with it so tightly that I thought it was death; then he let me go and said, “Read!” I said, “What shall I read?” He pressed me with it again so that I thought it was death; then he let me go and said “Read!” I said, “What shall I read?” He pressed me with it the third time so that I thought it was death and said “Read!” I said, “What then shall I read?”-and this I said only to deliver myself from him, lest he should do the same to me again. He said:

*“Read in the name of thy Lord who created,
Who created man of blood coagulated.
Read! Thy Lord is the most beneficent,
Who taught by the pen,
Taught that which they knew not unto men.”*²²⁶

Both scenes begin with a dream and a supernatural visitation. Muhammad is given an emphatic

²²⁴ Ibn Hishām, *Sīra*, vol. 1, 91; Guillaume, *Life of Muhammad*, 62. Hawting “Disappearance,” 44, suggests that the enigmatic nature of the account grows out of difficulties in the transmission of the legend: “While such designations may obviously have been introduced into the tradition to increase the atmosphere of mystery, they do not really indicate the nature of the thing to be uncovered, not even that it was a well, and there seems to be some difficulty about introducing the name Zamzam into those traditions in which it does appear.”

²²⁵ On the significance of this passage in the formation of the *Sīra* tradition, see Andreas Görke, Harald Motzki, and Gregor Schoeler, “First Century Sources for the Life of Muḥammad? A Debate,” *Der Islam* 89, nos. 1–2 (2012): 2–59, 22–33.

²²⁶ Ibn Hishām, *Sīra*, vol. 1, 152–3; Guillaume, *Life of Muhammad*, 105–6.

command, “Read!” (Ar. *Iqra*), to which he replies with a question, “What shall I read?”; ‘Abd al-Muṭṭalib is commanded to “Dig!” (*Iḥfir*), and responds with questions that display his reluctance and ignorance.²²⁷ Whereas Muhammad’s questions ultimately lead to the revelation of Q 96:1-5, ‘Abd al-Muṭṭalib receives an enigmatic collection of verses that will guide him to the spot where Zamzam lies hidden beneath the earth.

In resembling this first occasion of Qur’ānic revelation, ‘Abd al-Muṭṭalib’s dream emphasizes the epistemic tensions between the *Jāhiliyyah* and Islam. As Ibn Hisham remarks in his notes on the *Life*, the verses that appear here at the beginning of the story of Zamzam are *saj*’, a form of rhymed prose that was associated with the oracles of pre-Islamic Arabia.²²⁸ Many Muslim scholars noted the similarity between *saj*’ and early revelations of the Qur’ān (including Q 96:1-5), though these scholars insisted that the language of the Qur’ān is divine and distinct from other Arabic models.²²⁹ ‘Abd al-Muṭṭalib’s visitor speaks in a code that resembles Qur’ānic language but does not possess the clarity of a complete revelation. Muhammad learns the name of his messenger immediately after receiving his first revelation: “O Muhammad! Thou art the Apostle of God, and I am Gabriel.”²³⁰ ‘Abd al-Muṭṭalib never learns the identity of his “visitant.” Yet since his account resembles the “first revelation,” and it was Gabriel who created the well of Zamzam in the past, the *Life* likely intimates that it is Gabriel who guided Muhammad’s grandfather to rediscover the well. ‘Abd al-Muṭṭalib is almost – but not quite – a Prophet. While Muhammad recites, ‘Abd al-Muṭṭalib digs, recovering a fragment of the past that anticipates his descendant’s future revelations.

²²⁷ The resemblance between this narrative and the story of Caedmon in Bede’s *Ecclesiastical History* [cite section] has been noted by several scholars. See Klaus von See, “Caedmon Und Muhammed,” *Zeitschrift Für Deutsches Altertum Und Deutsche Literatur* 112, no. 4 (1983): 225–33; Connell Monette, “Mystery of Revelation: ‘Caedmon’s Hymn’ and the Qur’ān 96: 1-5,” *Comparative Islamic Studies* 4, no. 1/2 (June 2008): 131–46.

²²⁸ *Life of Muhammad*, 62, n.2, 709, n. 109; see Devin J. Stewart “Saj’ in the “Qur’ān”: Prosody and Structure.” *Journal of Arabic Literature* 21, no. 2 (January 1, 1990): 101–39.

²²⁹ Stewart “Saj’,” 102-3.

The riddle of Zamzam’s location in the *saj*‘ passage intimate how disjunctions in time and knowledge create continuities and discontinuities of space.²³¹ The Muslim readers of the *Life* already know what ‘Abd al-Muṭṭalib is yet to learn: that Zamzam is a well in Mecca. The *saj*‘ passage indicates this irony through enigmatic references to past markers of the Meccan landscape that have since been lost. Rubin, for instance, observes that the line locating Zamzam “twixt the dung and the flesh bloody” (Ar. “*bayna al-farth wa al-damm*”) alludes to the sacrificial rituals performed before the idols of Isāf and Nā’ila.²³² In its earlier discussion of the origins of Meccan idolatry, the *Life* reports that Isāf and Nā’ila were “a man and a woman of Jurhum ... who were guilty of sexual relations in the Ka‘ba, and so God transformed them into two stones.”²³³ Just as the Jurhum covered the well of Zamzam and hid knowledge of its existence from future generations of Meccans, they left behind other signs of their disobedience to God, which were subsequently misinterpreted as deities themselves. Like the story of ‘Amr b. Luḥayy, these idols serve as etiological landmarks in the progression of Meccan polytheism, placing such beliefs after an Abrahamic age.

In contrast to the two idols that mark the spot of Zamzam, the other verses in the passage emphasize that the sacred space has remained under God’s command despite the human failings of the *Jāhiliyyah*. This idea of continuity is accomplished through allusion to the Qur’ānic scriptures yet to be revealed. “The ravens” (*al-gharāb*) and “the ants” (“*al-namal*”) who guide ‘Abd al-Muṭṭalib to the site of the well play small but significant roles in the Islamic scripture. In

²³⁰ Ibn Hishām, *Sīra*, vol. 1, 152-3; Guillaume, *Life of Muhammad*, 105-6.

²³¹ Uri Rubin, “The Ka‘ba. Aspects of Its Ritual Functions and Position in Pre-Islamic and Early Islamic Times.” *Jerusalem Studies in Arabic and Islam* 8 (1986): 97–113, 109. ‘Abd al-Muṭṭalib receives this visitation while sleeping in the *hijr*, a part of the Meccan sanctuary that was considered by many Muslims to be the burial place of Ishmael. Later in the *Life* the Prophet Muhammad himself will “receive the vision of the *isrā’* (“night journey”) while sleeping in the *hijr*.” This location is linked to a number of visionary dreams in the *Life* and in the broader Islamic tradition. Rubin, 112, notes Muhammad’s mother Āmina “dreamt in the *hijr* that she would give birth to ‘Aḥmad,’ the lord of mankind.” Other Islamic accounts set in the *hijr* describe either ‘Abd al-Muṭṭalib or al-Naḍr b. Kināna, another ancestor of Muhammad, dreamt of a “cosmic tree” emerging from their loins.

²³² Rubin, “The Ka‘ba,” 109.

Q 27:18-19, an ant warns its fellow creatures to retreat beneath the earth lest they be crushed to death by Solomon's armies of men, birds, and jinn; in Q 5:31, God sends a raven to teach Qabīl (Cain) how to bury his brother's corpse in the earth.²³⁴ Just as he cannot grasp the resemblance between his vision and the prophetic inspiration of his grandson, 'Abd al-Muṭṭalib cannot recognize these typological allusions to Qur'ānic narrative. Nonetheless, these creatures serve as guides to his recovery of Zamzam and the Abrahamic layer of Mecca's history that lies beneath the idols of the *Jāhiliyyah*.

The unearthing of Zamzam anticipates a similar resurgence of "Abrahamic" faith in Mecca, but, for the time being, it is still the *Jāhiliyyah*. After 'Abd al-Muṭṭalib digs up Zamzam, the trials and tribulations that follow his discovery reflect on the Age of Abraham and look forward to events in the lifetime of the Prophet. Like his grandson, 'Abd al-Muṭṭalib struggles with members of the tribe of Quraysh who seek to appropriate his discovery for themselves. One account in the *Life* claims that 'Abd al-Muṭṭalib and other members of the Quraysh fought over the rights to the waters of Zamzam. Seeking someone to arbitrate the dispute, the two factions journey together to Syria to meet a *kāhina* ("priestess"), a prophetess of the *Jāhiliyyah*.²³⁵ When both parties run out of water in the desert, 'Abd al-Muṭṭalib encourages them to press on, claiming that God will save them from thirst.²³⁶ As he mounts his camel to search for a well, "a flow of fresh water broke out from beneath her feet," a discovery evocative of Zamzam's creation in the age of Hagar and Ishmael.²³⁷ Although the account does not make any mention of angelic intervention, it implies that natural and supernatural forces are working to ensure the

²³³ Ibn Hishām, *Sīra*, vol. 1, 54; Guillaume, *Life of Muhammad*, 37.

²³⁴ The Qur'ān explicitly associates ants with the earth; in *sūra* 27:17 God commands the ants to flee to their homes underground so that they are not crushed by Solomon's host. This *sūra* is now referred to as "the Ant" after that memorable verse, though it was not necessarily called that in the time of the composition of the *Life*.

²³⁵ On the *kāhina* in the construction of the *Jāhiliyyah*, see Toufic Fahd, *La Divination arabe: études religieuses, sociologiques et folkloriques sur le milieu natif de l'Islam*. (Leiden: Brill, 1966), 86-8; Stowasser, "Women," 79-80.

²³⁶ Ibn Hishām, *Sīra*, vol. 1, 92-3; Guillaume, *Life of Muhammad*, 63.

survival of the lineage that will culminate in Muhammad. ‘Abd al-Muṭṭalib shares this water with the other members of the Quraysh, and they acknowledge: “He [God] that has given you water in this wilderness is He who has given you Zamzam. Return to your office of watering the pilgrims in peace.”²³⁸ They return home without consulting the *kāhina*, eschewing the judgment of the prophetess for the signs before them.

The Twice-Averted Sacrifice: The Second Account

At this point in the *Life’s* story of Zamzam, the story returns to the beginning to offer a second account of ‘Abd al-Muṭṭalib’s vision, discovery, and dispute.²³⁹ In this second version of the narrative, there is little to suggest that the object ‘Abd al-Muṭṭalib seeks is a well, beyond a repetition of the *saj’* lines indicating that Zamzam “Twill never fail or ever run dry, / ‘Twill water the pilgrim company.”²⁴⁰ Instead, the account focuses on ‘Abd al-Muṭṭalib’s discovery of swords, armor, a pair of golden gazelles, and the “cornerstone” (Ar. *rukṅ*) of the Ka‘ba.²⁴¹ According to the *Life*, these are the treasures that ‘Amr b. al-Ḥārith had buried within Zamzam when the Jurhum fled Mecca.²⁴² Since the *Life* and other accounts of Zamzam do not mention the well when speaking about treasures, G.R. Hawting suggests that the traditions about the buried well and the buried artifacts discovered at Zamzam were initially separate.²⁴³ Like the story of Zamzam as a well, the idea that Zamzam is a treasure also is etiological. It explains the origin of some of the “treasures” that once were stored within the Meccan shrine, as well as the black stone that remains part of the Ka‘ba to this day.²⁴⁴ The intimations of these different strands of history further demonstrate how the story of Zamzam, in its present form, functions as

²³⁷ Ibn Hishām, *Sīra*, vol. 1, 93; Guillaume, *Life of Muhammad*, 63.

²³⁸ Ibn Hishām, *Sīra*, vol. 1, 93; Guillaume, *Life of Muhammad*, 63.

²³⁹ Ibn Hishām, *Sīra*, vol. 1, 93-4; Guillaume, *Life of Muhammad*, 64.

²⁴⁰ Ibn Hishām, *Sīra*, vol. 1, 93-4; Guillaume, *Life of Muhammad*, 64.

²⁴¹ Ibn Hishām, *Sīra*, vol. 1, 93-4; Guillaume, *Life of Muhammad*, 64.

²⁴² Ibn Hishām, *Sīra*, vol. 1, 73-4; Guillaume, *Life of Muhammad*, 46-7.

²⁴³ Hawting, “Disappearance,” 44-5.

an act of *anagenesis*. Both strands identify ‘Abd al-Muṭṭalib as the agent who recovers these different pasts and merges them into a single genealogical and historical narrative. By linking the stories of the well and the treasure into a single narrative of discovery, the *Life* finds an avenue to combine the legacy of the Jurhum with the legacy of Abraham.

As in the first account, other members of the Quraysh claim ‘Abd al-Muṭṭalib’s discoveries for themselves, consulting the religious authorities of the *Jāhiliyyah* in search of justice. The two parties cast lots with arrows before the idol of Hubal, but the lots award all of the spoils to either Ka‘ba’s treasury or to ‘Abd al-Muṭṭalib, who donates his share back to the sanctuary. While ‘Abd al-Muṭṭalib and the Quraysh both acknowledge that Mecca belonged to “our father Abraham,” they do not grasp what the Muslim audience of the *Life* can discern from their own historical and religious perspective: the unearthing of Zamzam foretells the coming conversion (or reversion) of Mecca and the Arabs to Islam.

These epistemic tensions between the *Jāhiliyyah* and Islam culminate in a scene in which ‘Abd al-Muṭṭalib, like Abraham before him, attempts to sacrifice his son to God. In the *Life*, ‘Abd al-Muṭṭalib conceives this idea “when [‘Abd al-Muṭṭalib] was digging Zamzam” typologically connecting it to other motifs of the Abrahamic past in the *Jāhiliyyah*. While unearthing the spring, ‘Abd al-Muṭṭalib vows that if he has ten sons in the future, he will sacrifice one of them to “God at the Ka‘ba.”²⁴⁵ When ‘Abd al-Muṭṭalib is blessed with a tenth son, he goes before the “idol of Hubal” – i.e., the “idol” of ‘Amr b. Luhayy – and commands that lots be cast with arrows to determine which of his sons will be sacrificed.²⁴⁶ The lots fall on ‘Abdāllah, ‘Abd al-Muṭṭalib’s “favorite son” and Muhammad’s future father.²⁴⁷ Determined to

²⁴⁴ Hawting, “Disappearance,” 54.

²⁴⁵ Ibn Hishām, *Sīra*, vol. 1, 97-100; Guillaume, *Life of Muhammad*, 66-8.

²⁴⁶ Ibn Hishām, *Sīra*, vol. 1, 98; Guillaume, *Life of Muhammad*, 67.

²⁴⁷ Ibn Hishām, *Sīra*, vol. 1, 98; Guillaume, *Life of Muhammad*, 67.

fulfill his oath, ‘Abd al-Muṭṭalib then takes ‘Abdāllah between the idols of “‘Isāf and Nā’ila,” the customary place of ritual slaughter and the newly rediscovered site of Zamzam.²⁴⁸ Despite ‘Abd al-Muṭṭalib serving as a herald of Mecca’s approaching restoration through his rediscovery of the well of Hagar and Ishmael, his circuit around the different idols of the sanctuary emphasizes the persistence of the city’s idolatrous beliefs and the dangers posed to the not yet nascent religion of Islam by the forces of the *Jāhiliyyah*.

If ‘Abd al-Muṭṭalib succeeds in carrying out this vow, Muhammad will never be born. The prospect of this alternative history is raised to be thwarted, emphasizing God’s plan to bring the Prophet and the Qur’ān into the world. In this episode, the other members of the Quraysh intervene to save a member of their tribe from death and prevent a blood feud, not to claim ‘Abd al-Muṭṭalib’s treasures for themselves.²⁴⁹ One of ‘Abdāllah’s maternal uncles offers to ransom the boy, and he goes along with ‘Abd al-Muṭṭalib to “consult” a “*kāhina*” in Yathrib about alternative means of fulfilling the sacrificial oath.²⁵⁰ The *kāhina* instructs the two men to return to Mecca and cast lots again, this time to determine how many camels might serve as a suitable offering in lieu of the boy’s life.²⁵¹ The system of lots that had marked ‘Abdāllah as the chosen victim now saves him from sacrifice, and a hundred camels are slaughtered in his place.²⁵² In the end, the Quraysh and other polytheists save the life of ‘Abdāllah so that he might father the man who will be their undoing.

By vowing to sacrifice his son, ‘Abd al-Muṭṭalib unknowingly creates a typological echo between himself and Abraham. While both ‘Abd al-Muṭṭalib and his Qurashi opponents recognize the legacy of Abraham and Ishmael in the discovery of Zamzam, they are ignorant of

²⁴⁸ Ibn Hishām, *Sīra*, vol. 1, 98; Guillaume, *Life of Muhammad*, 67.

²⁴⁹ Ibn Hishām, *Sīra*, vol. 1, 98; Guillaume, *Life of Muhammad*, 67.

²⁵⁰ Ibn Hishām, *Sīra*, vol. 1, 99; Guillaume, *Life of Muhammad*, 68.

²⁵¹ Ibn Hishām, *Sīra*, vol. 1, 99; Guillaume, *Life of Muhammad*, 68.

²⁵² Ibn Hishām, *Sīra*, vol. 1, 99; Guillaume, *Life of Muhammad*, 68.

the full significance of the discovery and unwittingly enact repetitions of these episodes from the Abrahamic past. Each time ‘Abd al-Muṭṭalib casts lots, the *Life* mentions “before Hubal he prayed to Allah,” emphasizing the continuing devotion of the Arabs to the true and original God despite their confusion of polytheism. Like ‘Abd al-Muṭṭalib’s not quite Qur’ānic instructions to dig up Zamzam and the mundane discovery of water beneath his camel’s feet, everything in this story of averted sacrifice is played on a lower register of recognition, albeit in anticipation of the revival of the original Abrahamic faith through the continued lineage of the Patriarch’s children. As the uncoverer of Zamzam and the unwitting recreator of Abraham’s deferred sacrifice, ‘Abd al-Muṭṭalib serves as both the discoverer of Mecca’s hidden history and an example of how the Arab people were unable to recognize their ultimate destiny before the coming of Islam.

In the *anagenesis* at Zamzam, history is simultaneously genealogical, archaeological, and typological. In the *Life*’s depiction of Mecca’s environs, an original layer of Abrahamic artifacts and traditions is buried beneath the Mecca of the *Jāhiliyyah*, which has been covered over by the idols of Hubal, Isāf and Nā’ila, and their polytheistic practices. By digging Zamzam, ‘Abd al-Muṭṭalib pierces through the intervening periods of history and “innovation,” initiating a upspringing of a religious antiquity that can recast the Meccan pilgrimage in Abrahamic terms. By recovering the well and the artifacts of Jurhum, he brings forth a material testament to the patriarchal history that Islam will construct as the primary layer of Arab genealogy and religious practice. Through the dramatic irony of these excavations of an ancient and eternal truth, the *Life* connects Abraham to the Arab people and to Mecca. As an example of *anagenesis*, the story of Zamzam is part of the *Life*’s broader efforts to create a vivid idea of Mecca’s physical presence in a Muslim world that was spreading further and further from this perceived center of Islamic space and time. In the centuries that followed, Zamzam would continue to serve as a part of the

hajj pilgrimage and as a site for further narratives to be integrated into Islamic history. Like the Arabs, the conversion of other peoples to Islam was subsequently imagined as *already* promised in the past.²⁵³

1.3 The Khazar Conversion: Returning to a New Faith

In our last case of “unknowing archaeologists,” we will consider the development of several traditions concerning the adoption of Judaism by the rulers of the Khazars, a Turkic people who controlled the Northern Caucasus and the Ukrainian steppe from the seventh to tenth centuries CE.²⁵⁴ At some point in the late eighth or early ninth century, the leaders of the Khazar state converted to Judaism. They adopted Hebrew names, welcomed Jewish merchants and settlers from abroad, and minted coins with Jewish iconography and declarations that “Moses was the prophet of God.”²⁵⁵ As news spread that this Turkic kingdom had embraced the Jewish faith, many Jews, Christians, and Muslims used acts of *anagenesis* to situate the origins of the Khazar people within scriptural exegesis and sacred history. Among rabbinical Jews, who welcomed the Khazar conversion with excitement and (in some cases) apocalyptic expectation,

²⁵³ Other accounts of Zamzam made the treasures that ‘Abd al-Muṭṭalib discovered not relics of the ancient Arabs, but proof that ancient Persian kings recognized the sanctity of the Ka’ba in the time before Islam. See Rubin, “The Ka’ba,” 116-8. In Mas’udi’s *Meadows of Gold* and the *Kitāb al-Buldān* of Ibn al-Kalbī (d. 204 AH/ 819 CE), the treasures that ‘Abd al-Muṭṭalib discovers in Zamzam are described as votive offerings of the ancient Persian king Bābāk b. Sāsān. Just as the *Life* attempts to reconcile pre-Islamic Arabian religion with the Qur’ān and broader Abrahamic tradition, these accounts add another layer of hybrid and revisionist history, claiming that the Persian rulers also recognized the sanctity of Mecca and played a role in the ultimate “coming of Islam” in centuries before the birth of the Prophet. Bābāk b. Sāsān was reputed to have stopped at the Ka’ba on the way to Yemen. Recognizing the holiness of the shrine, he deposited the swords and gazelles as offerings in Zamzam, where they would later be discovered by ‘Abd al-Muṭṭalib. These traditions resemble the *Life*’s account of the Abū Karib Tibān As’ad’s visit to the Ka’ba. They also resemble the imaginative depiction of Alexander the Great visiting Mecca in Firdawsī’s *Shāhnāma* (ca. 1010 CE); since the city was already a place of worship in the “age of Abraham”, Muslims could depict famous figures from other times as pilgrims to the Ka’ba.

²⁵⁴ On the history of the Khazars, see D. M. Dunlop, *The History of the Jewish Khazars* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1954); Kevin Alan Brook, *The Jews of Khazaria* (Northvale, N.J.: Jason Aronson, 1999).

²⁵⁵ On the conversion of the Khazars to Judaism, see Dunlop, *The Jews of Khazaria*, 89-170; Peter B. Golden, “The Khazar Conversion to Judaism,” in *The World of the Khazars: New Perspectives*, ed. Peter B. Golden, Haggai Ben-Shammai, and András Roná-Tas (Boston: Brill, 2007), 123-62; Constantin Zuckerman, “On the Date of the Khazars’ Conversion to Judaism and the Chronology of the Kings of the Rus Oleg and Igor: A Study of the Anonymous Khazar Letter from the Genizah of Cairo,” *Revue Des Études Byzantines* 53, no. 1 (1995): 237-70; J. T. Olson, “Coup d’état, Coronation and Conversion: Some Reflections on the Adoption of Judaism by the Khazar Khaganate,” *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society; Cambridge* 23, no. 4 (October 2013): 495-526; and Brook, *The Jewish Khazars*, 113-156.

two key narratives emerged, both of which recounted the conversion of the Khazar kings to Judaism and located the origins of this Turkic people within a “biblical” past (Fig 1.12). In one narrative, the Khazar rulers embraced the faith when advocates of Judaism succeeded in a courtly debate against representatives of Christianity and Islam. In another version, which resembles Josiah’s recovery of the “Book of the Law” and the fortuitous discoveries of Beowulf and ‘Abd al-Muṭṭalib, the Khazars convert when they identify a collection of ancient scrolls in a sacred cave as a forgotten copy of the “Torah.” These two stories became intertwined in the “Schechter Document,” a letter written by an anonymous Khazarian Jew preserved in the Cairo Genizah. The “Schechter Document” casts the Khazars’ conversion as a return to an ancestral faith and rediscovery of a sacred genealogy that merged elements of Turkic religious tradition with biblical typologies of revelation and revision. By exploring the Khazar conversion, we can see the function of *anagenesis* within Jewish traditions. It shows how stories of “unknowing archaeologists” influenced the expansive milieu of ethnography, exegesis, and apocalyptic interpretation that would link Jewish, Christian, and Islamic traditions, ensuring that acts of *anagenesis* could leave behind enduring legacies of repetition and re-interpretation.

Like the other stories of “unknowing archaeologists,” the accounts of the Khazar conversion play with genealogy, typology, and archaeology. In Beowulf’s recovery of the giants’ sword and ‘Abd al-Muṭṭalib’s excavation of the well of Zamzam, choice heroes of a “Pagan” age discover objects that point backwards in time to a preceding era of monotheistic history, and forwards to the conversion of their future descendants. While such un-earthings integrate the heroes of the pre-conversion tradition into the grand narratives of sacred history, the epistemic tensions that separate actor and audience in these narratives privilege the perspective of the converted over their venerable but ultimately ignorant ancestors. In the accounts of the Khazars’

adoption of Judaism, however, discovery precipitates the act of conversion itself. These narratives hinge on a resolution of epistemic tensions. These miraculous revelations of knowledge, mediated through the discovery of material remnants of the past, depict the Jews and Khazars as coming to recognize one another as one people in the understanding of their shared past and future.

Like *Beowulf*'s depiction of "the homeland before conversion" and the *Life of Muhammad*'s account of pre-Islamic Arabia, the extant accounts of the Khazar conversions are removed in space and time from the "historical" setting of the events they depict.²⁵⁶ The most famous and influential account of the conversion, the *Kitab al-Kuzari* of the Iberian Jewish philosopher and poet Judah Halevi (ca. 1075-1141 CE), dates the conversion "some four hundred years ago," several centuries before the probable date of the historical conversion in the ninth century CE.²⁵⁷ Among the earlier documentary sources on the conversion are a purported exchange of letters between Ḥasday ibn Shaprūt, a prominent Jewish vizier to the Caliph 'Abd al-Raḥmān III (r. 911-61 CE), and a Khazar king named "Joseph," ca. 960 CE.²⁵⁸ Scholars commonly call these documents "The Letter of Ḥasday" and "The Reply of King Joseph," and the latter survives in two recensions.²⁵⁹ Another key account of the Khazar conversion, discovered among the documents in the Cairo Genizah, is a letter written by an unknown Khazarian Jew, commonly called the "The Schechter Document" or "The Letter of an Unknown

²⁵⁶ For a concise summary of the sources on the Khazar conversion, see Olsson, "Coronation," 498-504.

²⁵⁷ See Judah Ha Levi, *The Kuzari: In Defense of the Despised Faith*, trans. N. Daniel Korobkin, (Jerusalem: Feldheim Publishers, 2009). Though he takes advantage of this temporal distance to construct an imaginative philosophical dialogue to depict the conversion in terms of an imaginative philosophical dialogue, Judah claims "the king's story is faithfully recorded in history books," and his account relies on earlier letter traditions for its narrative details.

²⁵⁸ On the Khazar correspondence, see Dunlop, *Jewish Khazars*, 125-70; Pritsak, *Khazarian Hebrew Documents*, 81-95; Brook, *Jews of Khazaria*, 131-3; Golb, "Maḡārīya," 350-1. For an English translations of both letters, see Franz Kobler, ed., *Letters of Jews through the Ages: From Biblical Times to the Middle of the Eighteenth Century* (London: Ararat Pub. Society, 1952), vol. 1, 97-115.

²⁵⁹ E.g. Olsson, "Coronation," 500-1.

Khazar Jew.”²⁶⁰ Reading the “Shechter Document” alongside other documents in the Genizah, Norman Golb and Orlin Pritsak date it to the mid-tenth century and argue that it was composed as a separate reply to Ḥasday’s message, one likely composed by a Jew of Khazaria outside the king’s court.²⁶¹ These exchanges highlight the perceived distance between Khazaria and the other regions of the Jewish diaspora while also mapping the networks of knowledge and exchange that linked Jewish communities across the world. The temporal and geographical distance between the historical event and its narrative retelling facilitates the acts of *anagenesis* that shaped Jewish perceptions of Khazar conversion. It provides a fluid space in which multiple narratives and thematic resonances can be introduced and merged. Whether these letters are authentic products of the mid-tenth century or reflect pseudepigraphical legends of the 11th and 12th centuries, they make manifest the fascination of Jewish communities across the Mediterranean with the Khazar conversion, which endured after the historical Khazar kingdom ceased to exist.

Biblical Models of Exile and Rediscovery

Jewish narratives of the Khazar conversion aimed to make this historic event legible to Jewish communities both inside and outside the kingdom of Khazaria. Situating the story of the Khazars within the ongoing history of the Jewish people, these narratives identify genealogical connections between the Khazars and specific peoples of biblical origin, relying broadly on biblical typologies and narrative models. The letter of Ḥasday ibn Shaprūt inquiring after the

²⁶⁰ Cambridge MS Cambridge University Library T-S 35.38; for an edition and translation of the document, see Solomon Schechter, “An Unknown Khazar Document,” *Jewish Quarterly Review* 3 (April 1913): 181–219; Norman Golb and Orlin Pritsak, *Khazarian Hebrew Documents of the Tenth Century* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1982), 106–21.

state of the Khazar kingdom includes an account of the Torah's loss, rediscovery, and recognition, which the Andalusian vizier claims to have heard in his attempts to learn more about the distant kingdom and its people. Unsure if he can believe the many things he had heard about this Jewish kingdom at the northern reaches of the known world, Ḥasday cautiously inquires after the state of the Khazar kingdom, the nature of their beliefs, and their knowledge of prophetic events. The Andalusian vizier then recounts a story he has heard from "our fathers" which, he believes, might explain the origins of the Khazar's faith:

Our fathers told us that the place in which they originally settled was called Mount Seir, but my Lord knows that Mount Seir is far from the place where you dwell; our ancestors say that it was, indeed, persecution, and by one calamity after another, till at length they became fixed in the place where they now dwell. The ancients, moreover, inform us that when a decree of fierce persecution was issued against the Jews on account of their transgressions, and the army of the Chaldaeans rose up furiously against them, they hid the Book of the Law and the Holy Scriptures in a certain cave. For this reason they prayed in a cave and taught their sons to pray there morning and evening. At length, however, through distance of time and days, they forgot, and lapsed into ignorance as to the meaning of this cave and why they prayed in it; while they still continued to observe the custom of their fathers, though ignorant of the reason for it. After a long time there came a certain Israelite who was desirous of knowing the true meaning of this custom, and when he entered the cave he found it full of books which he brought out. From that time they resolved to study the Law. This is what our fathers have related to us as it was handed down from ancient times.²⁶²

Like other stories of "unknowing archaeologists," this narrative of discovery brings to mind the account of II Kings 23 concerning King Josiah, the recovery of the "Book of the Law," and the restoration of the Jewish faith. This biblical episode inspired a succession of narratives in later Jewish tradition, which portrayed the recovery of ancient scriptures as the sign of a new epoch

²⁶¹ Golb and Pritsak, *Khazarian Hebrew Documents*, 94. After examining the Taylor-Schechter collection of Genizah fragments, Golb and Pritsak, 75-95, hypothesize that T-S 35.38 was initially part of a larger codex of correspondence with Ḥasday.

²⁶² Kobler, *Letters of Jews*, 103. See Dunlop, *History of the Jewish Khazars*, 166-7. See also Norman Golb, "Who Were the Maḡārīya?" *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 80, no. 4 (1960): 347-59, 349.

when God's favor had returned to the Jewish people.²⁶³ The caves in the Khazar narrative, like the Temple in the biblical account of Josiah's reform, serve as a repository for the preservation of holy knowledge and a site for its future recovery. The discovery divides the history of Khazaria's Jews into eras of knowledge, ignorance, and restoration.

In the "Letter of Ḥasday," the model of the holy scriptures that are hidden, forgotten, and recovered is tentatively applied to explain the emergence of the Khazar kingdom. The rediscovery of the Jewish scriptures explains when and how Jews first settled in Khazaria, and how the Jewish faith might have been lost and recovered within the kingdom. The arrival of Jewish people in the region is traced to a significant event in Jewish history: the diaspora, which followed the Babylonian attack on Jerusalem and the destruction of the first Temple (587 BCE). Just as *Beowulf's* Noachic ancestors turned to idolatry, and the Meccan Arabs set up new gods on the grounds of the Ka'ba, the descendants of Jewish exiles gradually forgot the Jewish tradition. Whereas the Jews of the Babylonian captivity returned to Jerusalem, rebuilt the Temple, and restored their holy texts, other Diaspora communities did not return home and lost their grip on the past. In the "Letter of Ḥasday," the image of scrolls forgotten within the cave signifies this loss but provides an opportunity for rediscovery, precipitating the restoration of knowledge among the Jewish people after a long period of ignorance. Whereas *Beowulf* and 'Abd al-Muṭṭalib do not fully comprehend the implications of their discoveries, the unnamed Israelite of Ḥasday's story, like Josiah's scribes, is able to read the rediscovered scriptures and to realign his people with the practices of the perfect past.

Ḥasday seems uncertain if "Mount Seir," situated on the borders of the Jewish homeland,

²⁶³ See Golb, "Maḡārīya," 350-1; Hawting, "Zamzam," 46-7; In the case of apocryphal and pseudepigraphical traditions, such stories of discovery may also explain the attribution of newly written religious texts to authorities from generations or centuries past. Cf. Dilley, "The Invention of Christian Tradition," 595-6.

is the location of this sacred cave, or if this event happened somewhere in Khazaria after Jews settled there. It is also unclear if the Jews described by Ḥasday are the ancestors of the Khazars themselves or if they are a separate community who introduced the Khazars to Judaism at a later point. Ḥasday hopes that the Khazar king himself will be able to explain the “condition of the Israelites, and how they came to dwell” in Khazaria, but the anecdote provides a typological model for the Khazars to accept, reject, or adapt. In *anagenesis*, such gaps in knowledge provide the space for the original state of history to be miraculously recovered and reinscribed in new places and new times. Since these narratives are concerned not only with claiming the Khazars as new converts to Judaism but also with giving the Khazars a Jewish past, the story of the scriptures and the cave serves as an important site for connecting the Khazar people to Jewish genealogy and biblical history.

Uniting Two Peoples

Whereas Ḥasday’s account reflects the perceptions of the Khazar conversion from the western edge of the Mediterranean, the “Reply of King Joseph” and the “Schechter Document” reflect the conversion from the perspective of the Khazars themselves. These reports also have a distance of (at least) one century from the historical events in question. They are similarly fashioned to make the Khazars and their history legible to Jewish communities throughout the world. Both letters include an account of a debate at the Khazar court between advocates of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. While Ḥasday’s letter locates the story of the loss and recovery of the Jewish scriptures in the distant past, the “Schechter Document” portrays a similar episode as the resolution of this religious debate. Although King Joseph’s account depicts the Khazars as living separate from the Jewish people, the “Schechter Document” casts the union between the

Jewish and Khazar peoples as the main impetus behind the conversion. Both responses incorporate their own acts of *anagenesis*, connecting the Khazars genealogically to either the Israelites or other “biblical” peoples and invoking the typological resonances of biblical narrative to cast the Khazar conversion as a process that reflects the historical journey of the Jews themselves.

“King Joseph’s Reply” begins by establishing the heritage of the Khazar people, incorporating them into biblical narratives of descent. He informs Ḥasday that his people are descendants of “Japheth through his son Togarmah,” referencing figures who appear in the “Table of Nations” in Genesis 10.²⁶⁴ Like the genealogies in *Beowulf* and the *Life of Muhammad*, this act of *anagenesis* forges a genealogical connection between biblical history and Khazar ancestry. While Genesis 10 does not elaborate on Torgamah’s descendants, King Joseph observes that “the genealogical books of our father” enumerate Torgama’s ten sons, including his people’s eponymous ancestor “Cusar.”²⁶⁵ The precise relationship between the Khazars and the other Turkic peoples of the Göktürk Empire and the origins of their ethnonym “Khazar” continue to challenge historians to this day, but King Joseph’s letter provides a handy explanation for Khazar ancestry that invokes the authority of scripture and expands on its exegetical limits.²⁶⁶ As in *Beowulf* and the *Life of Muhammad*, this link to the Noachic heritage establishes a genealogy of monotheistic belief, one that the Khazars are able to recover in a future age.

“The Schechter Document” treats the question of the Khazars’ ancestry in biblical terms. At one point, its author suggests that “they say in our land [i.e. Khazaria] that our fathers were of

²⁶⁴ “Reply of King Joseph,” in *Letters of the Jews*, vol. 1, 107.

²⁶⁵ “Reply of King Joseph,” in *Letters of the Jews*, vol. 1, 107.

²⁶⁶ On the name of the Khazars, see Dunlop, *Jewish Khazars*, 34-40; Golden, “Achievements and Perspectives,” in *The World of the Khazars*, 16-17.

the tribe of Simeon.” This genealogical link would make the Khazars descendants of Israel in their own right and thus close relatives of the Jews who rediscovered their ancestral faith. Yet the author of the “Schechter Document” is cautious, observing that “we cannot insist on the truth of this matter.”²⁶⁷ Like Ḥasday’s account, the “Schechter Document” attempts to trace the migration of Jews into Khazaria. The Khazars begin to reconstruct their lineal relationship to Judaism by welcoming Jewish communities into their land. The beginning of the extant text describes how a group Jews, “unable to bear the yoke of idol-worshippers,” fled from “Armenia” and crossed the Caucasus mountains, where they were received into the land of the Khazars.²⁶⁸ These Jews begin to marry and intermingle with the Khazars until the two nations “became one people.”²⁶⁹ As in Ḥasday’s letter, these Jewish refugees are left “at first without Torah” and have forgotten many of their religious customs.²⁷⁰ Nonetheless, they maintain some remnants of their faith; the men of Khazaria practice the “covenant of circumcision,” and a “portion” of them continue in “observing the Sabbath.”²⁷¹ Eventually, these traces of Jewish ancestry and Jewish religious practice allow the Khazars to revitalize their ancient faith after an era of political and religious turmoil.

While the Khazars in King Joseph’s reply are of “Japhetic” descent, the typological dimensions of their path to conversion bring them closer to their fellow Jews. King Joseph identifies one of his ancestors, named “Bulan,” as the chief force behind the Khazars’ adoption of Judaism.²⁷² Before Bulan learns about his destiny from the agents of God, he has already

²⁶⁷ “Schechter Document,” fol. 1v, lns. 20-1. Trans. Golb in *Khazarian Hebrew Documents*, 112-3.

²⁶⁸ “Schechter Document,” fol. 1r, lns. 1-3. Trans. Golb in *Khazarian Hebrew Documents*, 106-7. The first pages of the letter are missing, and it is not known to whom it was addressed, or whether it contains an account of the Khazar’s ancestry or a history of how they came to rule their kingdom in the Caucasus. Zuckerman, “On the Khazar Conversion,” 241, suggests that the flight of the Jews here recounts the historical persecutions of the Jews during the reign of Heraclius, ca. 630-2 CE, and he hypothesizes as much was stated in the letter’s missing pages.

²⁶⁹ “Schechter Document,” fol. 1r, ln. 6. Trans. Golb in *Khazarian Hebrew Documents*, 106-7.

²⁷⁰ “Schechter Document,” fol. 1r, ln. 3. Trans. Golb in *Khazarian Hebrew Documents*, 106-7.

²⁷¹ “Schechter Document,” fol. 1r, lns. 6-7. Trans. Golb in *Khazarian Hebrew Documents*, 106-7.

²⁷² “Reply of King Joseph,” in *Letters of the Jews*, vol. 1, 108.

“expelled wizards and all idolators from the land, and trusted in God alone.”²⁷³ Bulan’s natural monotheism points back to King Joseph’s claim that the Khazars had Noachic roots. It also reflects a common strategy of *anagenesis* used by Christians and Muslims to spread their faith among the Turco-Mongolian peoples of the steppe. Diplomats and missionaries from both Christian and Islamic lands claimed an equivalence between “Kök-Tengri” (“Eternal Heaven”), the highest figure in Turco-Mongolian pantheon, and the “Immortal God” of the Abrahamic faith.²⁷⁴ While many other aspects of Turco-Mongolian practice were condemned as idolatry, the worship of Tengri was embraced as a remnant of these people’s original monotheistic faith. No extant Jewish texts make an explicit claim of equivalence between Tengri and the Abrahamic God. Like Abraham, who is portrayed in both Jewish and Islamic exegetical traditions as a self-taught monotheist and zealous idol-breaker, Bulan arrives at the first steps of monotheistic belief on his own terms.²⁷⁵

Like the “Reply of King Joseph,” the “Schechter Document” portrays the “return” of the Khazars to Judaism in a narrative that typologically mirrors the different eras of biblical history. Living “without Torah and scriptures” but maintaining the practices of circumcision and some manner of belief in the Jewish God, the Khazars seem to have receded in some respects to a stage of “Abrahamic” faith that preceded the giving of Mosaic Law. Whereas the “Reply of King Joseph” portrays Bulan as a “king” of the Khazars before the conversion, the “Schechter Document” insists that there was at first “no king in the land of Khazaria.”²⁷⁶ This sorry state of affairs shifts when a “certain Jew” is declared “chief officer” of the Khazars after leading his people to a great victory.²⁷⁷ D.M. Dunlop proposes that this (yet unnamed) figure is equivalent to

²⁷³ “Reply of King Joseph,” in *Letters of the Jews*, vol. 1, 108.

²⁷⁴ See Golden, “Khazar Conversion,” 131-3; Brook, *Jews of Khazaria*, 123-6.

²⁷⁵ See Lowin, *Making of a Forefather*, 87-139.

²⁷⁶ “Schechter Document,” fol. 1r, lns. 6-7. Trans. Golb in *Khazarian Hebrew Documents*, 106-7.

²⁷⁷ “Schechter Document,” fol. 1r, lns. 8. Trans. Golb in *Khazarian Hebrew Documents*, 106-7.

King Joseph's Bulan, but the "Schechter Document" withholds his name until the moment of his conversion.²⁷⁸ While this "chief officer" is already described as a "Man of Judah" (Heb. *Dabar Yehudah*) when he leads the Khazars, the author of the "Schechter Document" suggests that his faith is far from perfect. He rules the Khazar people for "many days" before "the Lord took mercy and stirred the heart of the chief officer to return" to his faith.²⁷⁹ Citing this passage and others, Constantine Zuckerman observes that the "Schechter Document" consistently "uses the terms of 'return' (*yishuba*) which designate the repentance of the Jews who strayed from their ancestral law."²⁸⁰ In addition to God's mercy, the author of the letter credits the entreaties of the officer's "wife, whose name was Sarah," the guidance of her father, and the fact that he was already circumcised.²⁸¹ This "Sarah" is one of the few figures explicitly named in the "Schechter Document" and her name brings to mind the wife of Abraham. Although the Khazars have fallen into a state of ignorance relative to their previous knowledge of their faith, they possess the capacity to recover their beliefs, enter again into God's favor, and rediscover their lost Law.

Similarly, in the "Reply of King Joseph," the events of Bulan's life progress from an Abrahamic to a Mosaic stage. After expelling the idolaters from his land, Bulan is visited in his dreams by an "angel of the Lord" who instructs him on the path towards his conversion.²⁸² The angel's commands include several scriptural allusions from Exodus and Deuteronomy. Like Moses, Bulan is instructed to "rise up early in the morning" and follow God's commands, and he is promised that if his people follow the "precepts, statutes, and judgements" of the Lord, "I will bless thee and multiply thee."²⁸³ When Bulan fears that he will not succeed in teaching his

²⁷⁸ Dunlop, *Jews of Khazaria*, 158-60; See also Golb and Pristak, *Khazarian Hebrew Documents*, 22.

²⁷⁹ "Schechter Document," fol. 1r, lns. 13-4. Trans. Golb in *Khazarian Hebrew Documents*, 108-9.

²⁸⁰ Zuckerman "On the Date," 242. Cf. Golden, "The Khazar Conversion," 157-8.

²⁸¹ "Schechter Document," fol. 1r, lns. 13-15. Trans. Golb in *Khazarian Hebrew Documents*, 108-9.

²⁸² "Reply of King Joseph," in *Letters of the Jews*, vol. 1, 108.

²⁸³ "Reply of King Joseph," in *Letters of the Jews*, vol. 1, 108; Cf. Exodus 8:20, 9:13; Deuteronomy 8:11-13.

people about the Lord, the angel picks a “prince and leader” to serve as his Aaron.²⁸⁴ At this point in his life, Bulan does not yet possess any knowledge of the Hebrew scriptures. Still, the audience of the “Reply of King Joseph,” who ostensibly include Ḥasday and his fellow Jews in al-Andalus, can readily observe how these biblical formulae connect the Khazar king to Moses.

Once the Khazars have accepted Bulan’s God, the king is commanded to “build thou a house to My name.” Then, urging Bulan to “Be strong and of good courage,” the angel tells him to adventure into “Land of Dariel” and “Land of Erdevil,” where “I [God] have destined for you two treasures, one of silver, and another of gold.”²⁸⁵ This passage likely alludes to the many campaigns of the Khazars and their Göktürk predecessors across the Caucasus. Invoking the militant language of Joshua, the angel suggests that – like the Israelites before them –the Khazars now engage in a holy war. The “treasures” destined for Bulan’s people in this campaign are not relics from the monotheist past, like the scrolls of the Torah, Beowulf’s antediluvian sword, or ‘Abd al-Muṭṭalib’s Abrahamic well. Yet the king transforms the mundane material of his plunder into another typological touchstone for his people’s journey to Judaism. King Joseph recounts that his ancestor used the plunder of this campaign to construct “a tabernacle, ark, candlestick, table, altar, and sacred vessels, which are preserved and remain with me to this day.”²⁸⁶ Whether the Khazars, still lacking the scriptures, can follow the strict instructions for making these holy implements is not considered. Rather than representing a genuine replacement for the Tabernacle or Temple, the Khazars’ reconstruction of these biblical objects is yet another re-enactment of Jewish sacred history, typologically transplanted onto the space and time of the Turkic kingdom.

²⁸⁴ “Reply of King Joseph,” in *Letters of the Jews*, vol. 1, 108.

²⁸⁵ “Reply of King Joseph,” in *Letters of the Jews*, vol. 1, 109. On the campaigns of the Khazars south of the Caucasus, see Dunlop, *Jewish Khazars*, 28-30.

²⁸⁶ “Reply of King Joseph,” in *Letters of the Jews*, 109.

In both the “Schechter Document” and the “Reply of King Joseph,” a religious debate at the Khazar court serves as the final step in the Khazars’ journey to Judaism. Like other aspects of this story, this debate may very well reflect the historical events of the mid-ninth century.²⁸⁷ Yet, in its literary form, the debate is a foregone conclusion, one that seeks to prove how Jewish sages were destined to win the hearts of the Khazars. Ventriloquizing the voices of Christian and Muslim authorities offers an opportunity to re-articulate the relationship between their faith and its counterparts, proving that Judaism is both the original and best form of worship. While the Khazars begin their journey to Judaism on their own, the consummation of their conversion requires access to both the scriptures of the Jewish faith and the instruction of Jewish authorities.

“The Reply of King Joseph” emphasizes the agency and intelligence of Bulan in the debate. When the fame of Khazars spreads in the wake of their victory, representatives of the Byzantines and Abbasids arrive at the Khazar court “with great riches and many presents, adding some of their wise men with the object of converting them to their religion.”²⁸⁸ The king invites “the wise men of Israel” to come to his court to debate against the advocates of Christianity and Islam. Rather than focusing on the efforts of these Jews, the “Reply of King Joseph” insists that it is Bulan himself who coaxes the representatives of Christianity and Islam to admit that “the religion of the Israelites is best and truest.”²⁸⁹ The Khazar king then publicly declares his (long-held) preference for “the religion of the Israelites, which is that of Abraham,” undergoes circumcision alongside “all his servants,” and invites “the wise men of Israel,” “who explained to

²⁸⁷ Another account of the Khazar debate appears in the *Life of Constantine*, a Greek hagiography of the saints Cyril (Constantine) and Methodius who visited the Khazar court in the 860s as part of their missionary efforts in Northeastern Europe. See Olsson, “Coronation,” 498-9. For a translation of the *Life of Constantine*, see Marvin Kantor, *Medieval Slavic Lives of Saints and Princes* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1983). In the *Life of Constantine*, it is the Christians, rather than the Jews, who succeed in the debate.

²⁸⁸ “Reply of King Joseph,” in *Letters of the Jews*, 109.

him the Law and the precepts,” to dwell at his court.²⁹⁰ While the king remains the driving force behind the Khazar conversion, the conclusion of the scene acknowledges that he needs the help of Jewish authorities. After the Khazars have been taught the “Bible, Mishna, and Talmud, and the order of divine service,” they can at last fully recognize how their peoples’ journey to God reflects the sacred history of their Jewish co-religionists.²⁹¹

The “Schechter Document” combines its account of the religious debate with a miraculous discovery that parallels Hasday’s hidden scriptures. The account of the debate is similar to the “Reply of King Joseph.” News of the Khazars “returning to the belief of the Jews” angers the “kings of Macedon” and the “kings of Arabia” (i.e., the Byzantine Emperor and the Abbasid Caliph), who stir up dissension among the “princes” in Khazaria.²⁹² To resolve these foreign and domestic dissensions, the Khazar leader, now called a “great prince,” proposes that the “wise men of Israel... the wise men of Greece, and ... the wise men of Arabia” gather together in his kingdom to debate the correctness of each religion.²⁹³ The debate goes well for these Jewish sages, who find the “Greeks” willing to side with them on many points against the “Arabs,” and the “Arabs” willing to support them in many contentions with the “Greeks.”²⁹⁴ As in the “Reply of King Joseph,” all three parties agree on the general arc of history “from days of creation” to the Israelites and their kingdom.²⁹⁵ By focusing on the shared origins of Jewish, Christian, and Islamic history, the Jewish advocates cast their opponents as unwelcome innovators. These claims to the “continuity” of the Jewish faith play into the coming rediscovery of the Khazar’s Jewish treasures.

²⁸⁹ “Reply of King Joseph,” in *Letters of the Jews*, 110.

²⁹⁰ “Reply of King Joseph,” in *Letters of the Jews*, 111.

²⁹¹ “Reply of King Joseph,” in *Letters of the Jews*, 111.

²⁹² Schechter, “Khazar Document,” 206, 214; Golb and Pristak, *Khazarian Hebrew Documents*, 108-9.

²⁹³ Schechter, “Khazar Document,” 206, 214; Golb and Pristak, *Khazarian Hebrew Documents*, 108-9.

²⁹⁴ Schechter, “Khazar Document,” 208, 215; Golb and Pristak, *Khazarian Hebrew Documents*, 110-1.

²⁹⁵ Schechter, “Khazar Document,” 208, 215; Golb and Pristak, *Khazarian Hebrew Documents*, 110-1.

In the “Schechter Document,” the climax of the Khazars conversion occurs in a scene of miraculous discovery that resembles the story of the hidden scriptures in the “Letter of Ḥasday.” Since the accounts of the religious debate and the re-discovery of the Torah exist independently elsewhere, this abrupt shift from court to cave in the “Schechter Document” suggests that one narrative has been grafted onto another. If, as Golb and Pritsak claim, the “Schechter Document” is a reply to Ḥasday, it may be that its author appropriated Ḥasday’s narrative and adapted it to fit as the climax of the conversion story:

The officers of Qazaria said, “There is a cave in the plain of TYZWL [Heb. ת'זול]; bring forth to us the books which are there and expound them before us.” They did so. They went into the midst of the cave: behold, books of the Torah of Moses were there, and the sages of Israel explained them according to the previous words which they had spoken. Then returned Israel, with the people of Qazaria, (to Judaism) completely.”²⁹⁶

In this scene, the epistemic tensions that mark the difference between different spaces and times of belief are collapsed and resolved in a kind of divine comedy. The books serve as material proof of the Khazars’ Jewish heritage. Viewed in relation to the biblical narratives of Josiah’s reform and the giving of the Law to Israel on Mount Sinai, the discovery signals a periodic shift to a new era of Jewish history. While the Jewish ancestors of the Khazars suffered persecution and oblivion, losing their scriptures and memories in the process, the scrolls of the Torah were waiting patiently in the cave for this fateful moment of recognition.

The term ‘return’ (*yishuba*) signifies the Khazar’s embrace of Judaism as the recovery of their former faith. The intermediate steps taken by the Khazars towards their destined conversion – tolerance of Jewish communities, intermarriage, circumcision – are now transformed into “perfect repentance” for both Jews and Khazars. While the Khazars have long had a copy of the physical text of the Torah (and an indeterminate knowledge of its significance), they lacked the

²⁹⁶ “Schechter Document,” fol. 1v, lns. 9-13. Trans. Golb in *Khazarian Hebrew Documents*, 110-11.

capacity to read its words or understand their meaning. Now joined with the kingdom of the Khazars, the visiting Rabbis can provide the Khazars with both the means to read their ancestral scriptures and the “oral Torah” that governs its interpretation. As an act of *anagenesis*, the episode joins the two peoples together by making the revelation of the scroll’s identity a shared experience, one that allows the Khazars to “return” to their Jewish heritage and allows the Jewish sages to “return” to a new homeland that will accept their faith.²⁹⁷

The placement of the Khazar’s conversion within a cave provides an opportunity to reconcile Jewish and Khazar traditions.²⁹⁸ In one respect, the author of the “Schechter Document” might be adapting Ḥasday’s account and moving the story’s setting from “Mount Seir” to a place more readily associated with the Khazars. On the other hand, the cave provides an apt setting for this scene of *anagenesis* since – like many cultures – both Jewish and Turkic traditions venerate caves as sacred spaces. Golb and Hawting enumerate many episodes where caves serve as refuges or repositories of holy texts in Jewish tradition.²⁹⁹ Looking for intimations of Turkic tradition in the story of the Khazar conversion, Golden observes that ideas about an “ancestral cave” were central to the ritual and ideology of the first Türk empire and likely would have been transplanted by the Khazar rulers to their new kingdom.³⁰⁰ If the Khazars possessed an “ancestral cave” in the Caucasus, then a narrative of the Torah’s discovery within that region

²⁹⁷ Zuckerman, “On the Date,” 242, notes how a scene of collective conversion can resolve some of the legal difficulties of conversion: “The Jewish law considers a convert as a new-born, with no links left to his people and to his family of origin. Thus, given that the spread of Judaism among the Khazars was, in reality, more gradual and slow than the Letter would admit (though in no way limited to the upper class), applying the proper halakic notion of conversion to this process would split the people and the clans. Declaring all Khazars to be Jews from birth was, by contrast, a not very elegant in historian’s view but a practical way to save the cohesion of the Khazar people. The existing links remained valid regardless of the fact whether one or other Khazar “returned” or not to his “ancestral” rite.”

²⁹⁸ In one respect, the cave is a likely setting for such a story; the caverns of Qumran and Dunhaung demonstrate that such places can be a very practical and effective site for the preservation of texts.

²⁹⁹ Golb, “Maḡāriya,” 47-53; Hawting, “Disappearance,” 46-7.

³⁰⁰ Golden, “The Khazar Conversion,” 157-8. As Golden, “The Khazar Conversion,” observes “The ethnogenic myth of the Türks centered on the ancestral cave in which the Ashina were conceived from the mating of their human ancestor and a wolf ancestress.” This Turkic ancestral myth focuses on a sexual union between male and female (and human and animal) that engenders the nation. It emphasizes the similarity between “birth cave” and the womb, the biological space of

could transform this holy space into a site of Jewish worship while retaining some of the genealogical and ideological connotations of its former tradition.

The “Schechter Document” engages with the themes of migration and dislocation. In joining Jewish and Khazar history, this act of *anagenesis* brings the ancestral cave of Turkic tradition into the Khazars’ new homeland of the Caucasus, then transforms it into the site of an altogether different religious and genealogical tradition.

Then returned Israel, with the people of Qazaria, (to Judaism) completely; the Jews began to come from Baghdad and from Khorasan, and from the land of Greece, and they strengthened the men of the land, so that (the latter) held fast to the covenant of the “Father of a Multitude.”³⁰¹

By invoking “the covenant of the “Father of the Multitude,”” the “Schechter Document” deploys the figure of Abraham to connect the Khazars with the many Jews who come from afar to join them in their homeland. This joining of peoples is portrayed as the foundation of a new hybrid state. The men of Khazaria appoint one of the “appointed one of the sages as a judge,” called “*Kagan*” in the language of the Khazars.³⁰² At the same time, the chief officer is raised to the rank of “king” and adopts a new Hebrew name, “Sabriel,” to finalize his conversion.³⁰³ The conversion thus provides an etiology of the Khazar kingdom’s diarchic system of governance, a curiosity commented upon by many contemporary observers.³⁰⁴ The “Schechter Document” description of the two leaders as “judge” (Heb. *Shofet*) and “king” (Heb. *Melek*) suggests that Israel’s monarchy begins in the book of Samuel. The wars of the Khazars against the Byzantines, Alans, Rus, and other Turkic tribes, which occupy the intervening years between the

reproduction. The renegotiation of the Khazars’ heritage around the discovery of the Torah seems to remove many of these allusions to sexual reproduction, and privileges instead the patriarchal authority of the Khazar officers and the Rabbis.

³⁰¹ “Schechter Document,” fol. 1v, lns. 14-15. Trans. Golb in *Khazarian Hebrew Documents*, 110-11. Golb and Pristak insert “(to Judaism)” into their translation to suggest this “return” is to the proper Jewish (i.e. rabbinical) practice, but this interpolation elides other resonances of the “perfect return” promised to “Israel.”

³⁰² “Schechter Document,” fol. 1v, lns. 17-8. Trans. Golb in *Khazarian Hebrew Documents*, 112-3.

³⁰³ “Schechter Document,” fol. 1v, lns. 19. Trans. Golb in *Khazarian Hebrew Documents*, 112-3.

³⁰⁴ Olsson, “Coronation,” 504-9.

establishment of the Khazar kingdom and the present time of the letter's composition, are cast in terms of biblical warfare. God's favor for the new Jewish kingdom determines whether the Khazars see victory or defeat.³⁰⁵

In another transposition of important spiritual places to a new center, *anagenesis* makes the Khazar kingdom a center for Jews of all nations, heralding an eschatological future promised by the biblical past. Ḥasday's Letter concludes by inquiring if the Khazars possess any particular knowledge of the eschaton, though he does not mention any specific theories or details.³⁰⁶ The "Reply of King Joseph" likewise acknowledges Ḥasday's question and then avoids any precise predictions about the arrival of the end-times.³⁰⁷ The "Schechter Document's" meditation on the theme of "return" and description of the ingathering of peoples "from Baghdad and from Khorasan, and from the land of Greece" into the land of the Khazars suggests that the kingdom serves as a site of "return" for Jews throughout the world – not to their "original" home in Judah, but to a new home that can fulfill the promises of the scriptures. The "Schechter Document's" remark that the Khazars may be descendants of the "tribe of Simeon" gestures in this eschatological direction since Simeon was one of the "Lost Tribes of Israel" destined to return at the end of time in many apocalyptic traditions. The prospect of Israel's eschatological reunion and redemption, as we will see, is a major motif in tracing different communities in space and time throughout the medieval era.³⁰⁸

³⁰⁵ See Golb and Pritsak, *Khazarian Hebrew Documents*, 113-19.

³⁰⁶ "Letter of Ḥasday," in *Letters of the Jews*, vol. 1, 106.

³⁰⁷ "Reply of King Joseph," in *Letters of the Jews*, vol. 1, 113.

³⁰⁸ See Part 3.2 Below

Eschatology and Legacy in the Khazar Conversion

In these accounts of the Khazars, the spatial, temporal, and cultural dislocations of migration and conversion were mediated through the establishment of a new myth of origins. Like most acts of *anagenesis*, these narratives are ambitious in their scope, universalizing in their claims about time, and doomed to be challenged by a new historical situation. The loss of the Khazars' dominions in Ukraine to the Rus' at the end of the tenth century drastically changed the kingdom's fortunes.³⁰⁹ While these defeats initially inspired Jews to insist upon the universal and eschatological importance of the Khazar kingdom, the further diminishing of the Khazar state over the next two centuries ended both the political ambitions and the ethnic identity of the Khazar people.³¹⁰ However, even as the historical moment that made this reconstruction of time became another past, the cultural legacy of that act of *anagenesis* endured. This influence can be seen in the *Book of the Khazars* (Ar. *Kitāb al-Khuzārī*), where the Jewish mystic and philosopher Judah Ha-Levi uses the frame narrative of the Khazar conversion to advocate for the logical and philosophical superiority of Judaism over Christianity and Islam.³¹¹ Judah takes advantage of the historical and geographical distance of the Khazar conversion to transform it into an imaginative space of philosophical dialogue. The apocalyptic dimensions of the Khazar conversion seem to have captured the attention of Christian and Muslims, and it endured as an undercurrent in Jewish belief even after the Khazar state declined and disappeared.³¹²

³⁰⁹ Dunlop, *Jewish Khazars*, 205-10; Golb and Pritsak, *Khazarian Hebrew Documents*, 60-71.

³¹⁰ Dunlop, *Jewish Khazars*, 237-265. For later messianic documents on Khazars, see Dunlop, 255-6, and A. Neubauer, "Egyptian Fragments. II." *The Jewish Quarterly Review* 9, no. 1 (October 1896): 24-38.

³¹¹ Dunlop, *Jewish Khazars*, 116-123. Like Golden "Khazar Conversion", 149, Ha-Levi also claimed that in his own day Khazar Jews had fled their native land to settle in Toledo, reversing the geographical nodes of exile and return in order to suggest that Iberia, rather than Khazaria, might be the center of a new redemptive Jewish return.

³¹² See Leonid Chekin, "Christian of Stavelot and the Conversion of Gog and Magog: A Study of the Ninth-Century Reference to Judaism among the Khazars," *Russia Mediaevalis* 9, no. 1 (1997): 13-34. Olsson, "Coronation," 495. Dunlop, *Jews of Khazaria*, 254-5 describes a messianic movement growing in the remaining regions of "Khazaria" during the late 11th and 12th centuries, after the Rus had expelled the Khazars from Ukraine.

The narratives of the Khazar conversion readily integrated the Turkic people into ideas of biblical ancestry and temporal cycles of oblivion and rediscovery. The idea that the Khazars were “lost” or “latent” people – like the legendary “lost tribes of Israel” – allowed their story to be adapted and redeployed as a mythic solution to questions of Jewish origins in the modern era.³¹³ This legacy of the Khazars endures in Arthur Koestler’s *The Thirteenth Tribe*, where the Turkic people are presented as a simple solution to the genetic origins of Ashkenazi Jews.³¹⁴ From the vantage of the present moment, the perception of the Khazars has been shaped by the legacies of Nationalism, Anti-Semitism, and the Cold War to the extent that some scholars have rejected the narrative of the Khazar conversion as a complete fiction.³¹⁵ So writes Norman Davies, “Of all the transient realms of the European plain, none has aroused more controversy than that of the Khazars.”³¹⁶ While Golden, Golb, and Pritsak have done much to prove the historical presence of Judaism among the Khazars and the authenticity of many documentary sources, in considering the narratives of the Khazar conversion as an example of *anagenesis*, we

³¹³ On the Lost Tribes of Israel in Jewish tradition and *anagenesis*, see section 3.2 below.

³¹⁴ Arthur Koestler, *The Thirteenth Tribe: The Khazar Empire and Its Heritage*, version 1st American ed., 1st American ed. (New York: Random House, 1976). Before Koestler had popularized the theory, Dunlop, *Jewish Khazars*, 263, had already dismissed it: “to speak of the Jews of Eastern Europe as descendants of the Khazars seems to involve the Ashkenazim in general, i.e., by far the greater part of the Jewish people in the world today, and would be to go much beyond what our imperfect records allow.” Brook, *The Jews of Khazaria*, 227-232, dismisses many of Koestler’s speculations on the lineal relationship between different isolated Jewish Communities and the Khazars, but he ultimately endorses the connection between the Khazars and modern Ashkenazim, insisting “As the twenty first century dawns, those of us who are Ashkenazic Jews have the right, as well as the obligation, to rediscover and reclaim our unique, mixed heritage. Many of us are, indeed, heirs to the great Khazar Empire that once ruled the Russian steppes,” 305-6. Koestler, *The Thirteenth Tribe*, 16-7, suggested that his work would combat anti-Semitism by rejecting a “Semitic” origin for Ashkenazi Jews, but his work was appropriated by anti-Semites who saw it as an opportunity to sever Jewish people from any claim of lineal descent from the biblical people of Israel. For a discussion of how Anti-Semitic assessments of the Khazar empire shaped Soviet-Era Scholarship on the Khazars, see V. A. Shnirelman, *The Myth of the Khazars and Intellectual Antisemitism in Russia, 1970s-1990s* (Jerusalem: Vidal Sassoon International Center for the Study of Antisemitism, Hebrew University of Jerusalem, 2002). For the continued influence of Anti-Semitism in perceptions of the Khazars, see James Wald, “The New Replacement Theory: Anti-Zionism, Antisemitism, and the Denial of History,” In *Anti-Zionism and Antisemitism: The Dynamics of Delegitimization*, edited by Alvin H. Rosenfeld, 3–29, Indiana University Press, 2019.

³¹⁵ For a skeptical treatment of the material relating to the Khazar conversion, see Shaul Stampfer, “Did the Khazars Convert to Judaism?,” *Jewish Social Studies* 19, no. 3 (2013): 1–72. Stampfer rejects most textual sources as “pseudepigraphic” and interprets archeological evidence as pointing to Jewish communities living within Kiev and other parts of Khazar territory, but not any adoption of Judaism by the Khazars themselves.

³¹⁶ Norman Davies, *Europe: A History*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996, 236.

are not so much concerned with facticity or the dating of the events described in medieval records. Rather, *anagenesis* explores how these accounts retroactively reshaped the story of conversion to suggest that the Khazars' adoption of Jewish belief had long been part of God's designs for history. In joining together the history of the Khazars and the Jews, these medieval accounts established an enduring myth, one that succeeded in concealing its own novelty.

Conclusion to Part 1

In the framework of *anagenesis*, these narratives about “unknowing archaeologists” present a method of mapping time by insisting that artifacts of an original monotheistic history had been discovered by ancestral heroes before the act of conversion, even if the discoverers themselves were incapable of recognizing the significance of their finds (fig 1.13). Each narrative involves an important migration – past or future – that displaces peoples from their homeland – but also incorporates them into a global narrative of origins tied into the scriptural and exegetical traditions surrounding Abraham, Noah, and other “patriarchs” of the Jewish, Christian, and Muslim traditions. These stories highlight the various strategies used in acts of *anagenesis*: archaeological, genealogical, and typological. Artifacts display the material continuity of past and present and provide an opportunity for relics of history to be discovered again. The idea of *anagenesis* as an archaeological invention will recur in the study of the “long-sleepers,” where the rediscovered artifacts are living beings. Genealogical discoveries re-arrange the social/religious relationships between different communities by going back in time to forge ancestral links between people. The genealogical aspects of *anagenesis* will similarly be the focus of the third part of this, where apocalyptic ethnographies deploy genealogical traditions to integrate present peoples into a shared past.

Whereas the religious and historical significance of these artifacts remains hidden from their discoverers, it is legible to the “converted” readers of the text. The written word, associated with the scriptural traditions of the Bible and Qur’ān, serves as an anchor in eternity that ensures monotheistic creation lies behind and before all other histories. The fluid space and time of typology imbue the localized histories of each corner of the past with a referential language that

can signify the overarching scope of history. The rhythms of history and the intentions of eternity can be recognized by those who possess the privileged knowledge of the holy scriptures.

While acts of *anagenesis* often insist on the legibility of a connection to the past through appeals to “scripture,” the true sources of these ideas are often scattered across a web of exegetical referents. Rather than being rendered moot by the appearance of the Torah, the intellectual victory at the debate before the Khazar court lays the foundation for the exegetical instruction that the rabbis perform within the cave. They, and not the Torah, are the ultimate agents of revelation. ‘Abd al-Mutallib’s digging connects the Abrahamic and Arabic histories together, but it does so by deploying exegetical stories tied to Jewish tradition rather than direct quotations of Qur’ānic scripture. Beowulf finds a treasure that signals the biblical origins of his enemies, but the story it tells is more a product of the pseudepigraphical Book of Enoch than the canonical Book of Genesis. The scriptural foundations that undergird the ability of *anagenesis* to perform its radical revisions of history are not based directly in the scriptures themselves, but in the vast wilderness of exegetical traditions – both oral and written – inscribed and embodied – that make and remake the meaning of the sacred text. Like Josiah’s enigmatic “Book of the Law,” the scripture is always more and less than it appears to be, a site for hybridity rather than a single voice of divine authority.

1.11 Comparative Table of Zamzam Narratives in the *Life of the Messenger of God*

	Zamzam Narrative A (<i>Life</i> 62-3)	Zamzam Narrative B (<i>Life</i> 63-4)
Isnād (Source of tradition)	“Yāzid b. Abū Ḥabīb al-Miṣrī from Marthad b. ‘Abdullah al-Yazanī from ‘Abdullah b. Zurayr al-Ghāfiqī told me that he heard ‘Alī b. Abū Ṭālib telling the story of Zamzam.”	"I [Ibn Hishām?] have heard one report on ‘Abd al-Muṭṭalib's authority." ³¹⁷
Account of Visitation	“Visitor” comes to ‘Abd al-Muṭṭalib while sleeping in the [<i>Hijr</i>]. ‘Abd al-Muṭṭalib commanded to “dig”, to which he responds with questions. ³¹⁸	‘Abd al-Muṭṭalib receives initial command to “Dig Zamzam” but does not learn its location. He informs the Quraysh and is advised to return to bed and await a second visitation, since: “if it really came from God It would be made plain to him; but if it had come from a demon he would not return to him.” ³¹⁹
Saj‘ Prophecies (Shared verses highlighted)	<i>‘Twill never fail or ever run dry, ‘Twill water the pilgrim company. It lies ‘twixt the dung and the flesh bloody, By the nest where the white-winged ravens fly, By the nest where the ants to and fro do ply.</i> ³²⁰	Then pray for much water as crystal clear To water God's pilgrims at the sites they revere As long as it lasts you've nothing to fear. Dig Zamzam, 'twill not to your hopes give lie, Tis yours from your father eternally. <i>‘Twill never fail or ever run dry, ‘Twill water the pilgrim company</i> Like an ostrich flock a fraternity, Their voice God hears most graciously. A pact most sure from days gone by Nought like it canst thou descry, <i>It lies 'twixt the dung and the flesh bloody.</i> ³²¹
Location of Zamzam	No additional details of location given beyond Saj‘ passage.	‘Abd al-Muṭṭalib finds “ant’s nest” and “raven pecking... between the two idols Isaf and Na'ila.” ³²²
Contents of	‘Abd al-Muṭṭalib discovers “well,” which is	‘Abd al-Muṭṭalib first finds the “stone top of

³¹⁷ When first introducing the subject of Zamzam, Ibn Hisham gives the following Isnād identifying his sources: “Ziyād b. ‘Abdullah al-Bakkā’ī told me [Ibn Hisham] on the authority of Muḥammad b. Ishāq al-Muṭṭalibi, i.e. [Ibn Ishaq].” Al-Bakkā’ī was a student of Ibn Ishaq who provided Ibn Hisham with the copy of his teacher’s history that Ibn Hishām edited and adapted to compose the *Sīra*.

³¹⁸ Ibn Hishām, *Sīra*, vol. 1, 91; Guillaume, *Life of Muhammad*, 62. Cf. to first encounter between Gabriel and Muhammad in Ibn Hishām, *Sīra*, vol. 1, 152-3; Guillaume, *Life of Muhammad*, 106.

³¹⁹ Ibn Hishām, *Sīra*, vol. 1, 93; Guillaume, *Life of Muhammad*, 63. Cf. Muhammad consulting his wife Khadija about the validity of his revelation in Ibn Hishām, *Sīra*, vol. 1, 153-4; Guillaume, *Life of Muhammad*, 106-7.

³²⁰ Ibn Hishām, *Sīra*, vol. 1, 91; Guillaume, *Life of Muhammad*, 62.

³²¹ Ibn Hishām, *Sīra*, vol. 1, 93; Guillaume, *Life of Muhammad*, 63-4.

³²² Ibn Hishām, *Sīra*, vol. 1, 94; Guillaume, *Life of Muhammad*, 64.

Discovery	identified by Quraysh as “the well of our father Ishmael.” ³²³	the well,” and then more treasures: “As digging went further, he found the two gazelles of gold which Jurhum had buried there when they left Mecca; He also found some swords and coats of mail from Qal‘a.” ³²⁴
Disputes with Quraysh	Quraysh demand a “share” in the discovery of Zamzam.	Quraysh first try to prevent ‘Abd al-Muṭṭalib from digging “between the idols where they sacrificed.” Once treasures are found “Quraysh claimed that they had a right to share in this find.”
Resolution of Disputes	‘Abd al-Muṭṭalib and Quraysh agree to travel to Syria to consult a (Kāhina) about their dispute. When they nearly die of thirst in desert, miracle of water in the desert recreates original creation of Zamzam, convinces Quraysh to give ‘Abd al-Muṭṭalib authority over the well.	‘Abd al-Muṭṭalib agrees to resolve dispute with “sacred lots.” He “prays to God” while lots are cast by a priest (Kāhin) in front of the idol Hubal. The lots award the treasures to either ‘Abd al-Muṭṭalib or the Ka‘ba, leaving the Quraysh with nothing. ‘Abd al-Muṭṭalib donates his own portion of the treasure to the sanctuary and is responsible for the “first golden ornament of the Ka‘ba.” ‘Abd al-Muṭṭalib takes charge of supply of Zamzam water to the pilgrims.

1.12: Comparative Table of Khazar Conversion Narrative

	<i>Khazar Correspondence:</i> Hasday’s Letter	<i>Khazar Correspondence:</i> Replies of King Joseph	<i>Schechter Letter</i>	<i>Kitab al Kuzari</i>
Origins of Khazars	Khazars possibly descendants of Jewish refugees, from Mount Se’ir.	Khazars descended from “Khazar,” son of Torgamah, son of Japheth [Cf. Gen 10:3]	Khazars origin unclear? First pages of letter missing.	Khazars descendants of Japheth.
Sequence of Conversion/ Return to Judaism	(1) Jews flee from Chaldean persecution, hide their scriptures in cave.	(1) Khazar king Bulan visited by an “angel” in and given promise of a “fruitful” progeny and great	(1) Jews flee across mountains and resettle in Khazaria [timeline of narrative missing,	(6) Khazar king receives dream from angel who informs him: “Your intentions are desirable

³²³ Ibn Hishām, *Sīra*, vol. 1, 92; Guillaume, *Life of Muhammad*, 62.

³²⁴ Ibn Hishām, *Sīra*, vol. 1, 94; Guillaume, *Life of Muhammad*, 64, cf. burial of the Jurhum’s treasures in Ibn Hishām, *Sīra*, vol. 1, 73-5; Guillaume, *Life of Muhammad*, 46--8.

	<p>(2) Jews continue to worship in cave but forget significance of scriptures.</p> <p>(3) A “man of Israel” rediscovers the scrolls and moves them out of the cave. The people then “commit themselves to study the Torah.”</p>	<p>kingdom. [Cf. Covenant of Abraham]</p> <p>(2) Angel visits Bulan “to give you statutes and ordinances.” Bulan asks that his “highest officer” be chosen as his helper. The pair assemble “the entire nation” and “the people embraced this religion and entered under the wings of the Divine Presence.”</p> <p>(3) Angel appears a third time, commands Bulan “build a temple in my name.” Bulan wins spoils in war and used them to build “Tent, Ark, Menorah, the Table, the Altars, and the holy vessels.” [Cf. Establishment of the Tabernacle]</p> <p>(4) Bulan is asked by</p>	<p>Zuckerman suggests Heracleian persecutions of early 7th century CE.].</p> <p>(2) Jewish population intermarries with Khazars, begin to teach Khazar kings Jewish faith and practices.</p> <p>(3) Khazar king is circumcised following the instructions of his [wife serah].</p> <p>(4) Khazars invite representatives of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam to Khazar court.</p> <p>(5) Debate ends with demand to identify “the books” hidden in cave sacred to Khazars.</p>	<p>to the Creator, but not your deeds.”</p> <p>(7) Khazar king first seeks answers in Khazar religion, then questions philosopher, a Christian, and a Muslim without finding satisfaction.</p> <p>(8) The king questions a Rabbi and begins to learn about Judaism.</p> <p>(9) The king tells of his dreams to his “chief officer” and together they follow the dreams instructions to travel to the “Warsan mountains.” The two Khazars discover a cave “where Jews used to observe the Sabbath every week.” There “they revealed themselves</p>
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		<p>Christian and Muslim rulers to adopt their faith; Bulan calls representatives of three religions together for debate. King convinces Christian and Muslim sages to declare Judaism better than each other's faith, and then chooses Judaism.</p> <p>(5) After debate, King circumcises himself and invites "Jewish sages, who explained the Torah to him and presented all the commandments to him.</p>		<p>to the Jews and converted to Judaism – which included being circumcised in that very cave.”</p> <p>(10) The two Khazars initially conceal their faith, “until finally they revealed their secret to the public and prevailed upon the rest of the Khazar population to convert to Judaism.</p> <p>(11) “They brought in Jewish sages and books from different countries and learned the Torah from them.”</p>
Important Distinctions	No mention of religious debate narrative in Hasday's letter.	This narrative lacks any mention of the cave discovery story. The “debate” narrative only appears in the “long version” of the reply.		Halevi's 12 th century account appears to combine materials from the different branches of Khazar correspondence.

1.13: Comparative Table of “Unknowing Archaeologists” Narratives

	<i>Beowulf</i>	Zamzam Narrative	Khazar Conversion
Monotheistic Origins	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Scyldings and Grendelkin traced back to “biblical” ancestors (<i>Beowulf</i>, 4-19, 102-14, 1261b-6). - Danes recognize “Almighty crafted earth” (92-98). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Zamzam spring created by Angel Gabriel to rescue Hagar and Ishmael (<i>Life</i>, 45). - Ishmael marries into Meccan tribe of Jurhum (45). Arabs are Ishmael’s descendants (4, 45). - Abraham travels to Mecca, builds Ka’ba (9). Jurhum become keepers of Meccan sanctuary (45). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Khazars are linked to biblical ancestors: either given Japhetic origin (“Reply of King Joseph”, 107) - Presence of Jewish communities north of the Caucasus tied back to biblical-era “transgressions,” invasions of “Chaldeans” (“Letter of Hasday”, 29-30).
Oblivion and Corruption	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Danes are unaware of Grendel’s lineage from Cain (1345-57a) - Danes appeal to idols for help against Grendel (175-88) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Jurhum abuse stewardship of Ka’ba, lose control of Mecca to Khuzā’a tribe (47-8). - Jurhum hide the well of Zamzam, bury treasures within it (47). - Member of the Khuzā’a, ‘Amr b. Luḥayy, introduces idol worship into Meccan sanctuary (35-7). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Because of persecution, Jews of Khazaria “hid the book of the Law and the Scriptures” in cave (“Letter of Hasday”, 103). - Descendants of Jews continue to worship God in cave, but “lapsed into ignorance of why they worshipped in this cave and why they prayed in it.” (“Letter of Hasday”, 103)

<p>Fortuitous Discovery</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Beowulf dives into mere, discovers relics of antediluvian world in its depths (1492-1650). - Giant's sword bears material and "written" record of antediluvian past. (1687-98a) - Hrothgar and Beowulf do not grasp full implications of giant's sword, which are revealed in poet's glosses on the narrative. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 'Abd al-Muttalib guided by supernatural visitor (Gabriel?) to dig up Zamzam (62-5). - 'Abd al-Muttalib uncovers well and treasures of Jurhum, adding to a partial restoration of Ka'ba (64-5) - 'Abd al-Muttalib and Meccans acknowledge Abrahamic history of Ka'ba but not its original monotheism. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - In "Letter of Hasday", rediscovery of scriptures makes Khazars "resolved to study the Law" (104), bringing them back to Rabbinical Judaism. - In "Reply of King Joseph," Bulan promised treasures in angelic dream. Uses treasure from war to create "tabernacle" and other implements of worship (111). - In "Schechter Document", the identification of the cave's sacred scrolls as "The Torah" by foreign rabbis ends the Khazar debate (110-1).
<p>Migration and Conversion</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Christian conversion will only occur after migration to Britain; Danes and Geats remain "heathens" at poems conclusion, Beowulf receives non-Christian burial (3077-182). - Woman's lament at Beowulf's funeral suggests biblical themes of exodus and 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Zamzam's discovery emphasizes that the Arabs both originate from the descendants of Abraham, and from the region of Mecca. - Descendants of Ishmael emigrate from Mecca to settle wider world, but return for <i>hajj</i> (46), resembling Muhammad's own <i>hijra</i> (221-32) and return (649-52). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - In <i>Schechter Letter</i>, debate is followed by discovery. Conversion occurs at moment of identification. - Turkic traditions of cave-worship syncretized with Jewish traditions. - Gathering of Jews from around the world resembles eschatological narratives of Israel's reunification, return of "Lost Tribes."

	exile, anticipating future migrations (3150-5).	- Conversion awaits revelation of the Qur'ān during the life of Muhammad; Muhammad's first revelation (104-7) resembles 'Abd al- Muṭṭalib's dream (62).	
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Part 2: Sleepers

Introduction to Part 2: Time is An Allusion

Another strand of *anagenesis* narratives involves accounts of “long-sleepers” figures who – like Washington Irving’s *Rip Van Winkle* – slumber for supernatural lengths of time to awake in different historical eras.³²⁵ Like the accounts of “unknowing archaeologists” discussed in the previous part, these sleeper stories enact *anagenesis* through narratives of the past’s re-discovery. Yet there is also a crucial difference in these accounts: here, the relics of the forgotten past are themselves living beings, who can see and speak, and who struggle to make sense of their dislocation from time just as much as those who witness their miraculous return. Among Jews, Christians, and Muslims, such stories of long-sleeping individuals are deployed to create a sense of time, highlighting both its historical periods and its apocalyptic conclusion. The story of a time traveler waking up in a new era is used to impress the audience with an idea of God’s ability to overturn the natural rules of temporality from the vantage of eternity. Yet the story also provides a unique perspective into time, encouraging its audience to envision history not backwards from the perspective of the present, but forward from the perspective of an even deeper past.

Stories of people experiencing extraordinary or supernatural lengths of sleep precede Jewish, Christian, and Islamic accounts by several centuries.³²⁶ One of the earliest attested versions of the legend appears in the *Physics* of Aristotle (384-322 BCE).³²⁷ While describing

³²⁵ The principal studies of the tradition are John Koch, *Die Siebenschläferlegende, ihr Ursprung und ihre Verbreitung, eine mythologisch-literaturgeschichtliche Studie* (Leipzig: Reissner, 1883), and Michael Huber, *Die Wanderlegende von den Siebenschläfern: eine literargeschichtliche Untersuchung* (Leipzig: O. Harrassowitz, 1910). For a more recent study of the Greco-Roman tradition, see Pieter W. van der Horst, “Pious Long-Sleepers in Pagan, Jewish and Christian Antiquity.” In *Studies in Ancient Judaism and Early Christianity* (Leiden: Brill, 2014), 248-266. “Seven Sleepers” also appears as an entry in Stith Thompson, *Motif-Index of Folk Literature*, vol. 2 (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1955), D 1960.1.

³²⁶ Koch, 24. Chapter II, “Die Sage von Langen Schlaf,” pp. 24-49, offers a survey of the other long-sleeping legends and related motifs that appear throughout classical antiquity and in folklore traditions throughout the world.

³²⁷ Van der Horst, 249.

and categorizing the concept of time, Aristotle makes a numinous allusion to the “heroes of Sardinia,” providing a brief glimpse into a larger corpus of Greek tradition. Aristotle considers ordinary and extraordinary experiences of sleep that suspend the faculties of human perception and leave one vulnerable to misinterpreting the passage of time:

Time is not a movement ... but then neither does time exist without change, for when we ourselves do not change in our thought or do not notice that we change, then it does not seem to us that time has passed, just as it does not seem to have done so to the fabled sleepers among the heroes in Sardinia when they wake up. For they join together the earlier now to the later now and make them one, omitting what is in between because of their lack of perception.³²⁸

Aristotle’s brief allusion to the “heroes in Sardinia” is a fitting place to begin because it demonstrates how legends of long-sleep are used to meditate on the nature of time and to highlight the limitations of human experience in reckoning these phenomena.³²⁹ Based essentially in change, time requires observation and measure to confirm its existence. In the absence of the ability to identify such change, sleep becomes lost time, or no time at all. Time is something made within the self, an operation of the mind at work. Yet it also begins before any one of us, and extends beyond the vantage of any individual’s capacity to reckon it. So we need stories – allusions, exempla, histories – to tie in the world outside; lest we end up lost in time.

If time is governed by perception, it is also governed by allusion. Too short-sighted to perceive the future legacy of his work, Aristotle himself is laconic in the details of his reference to “heroes in Sardinia,” expecting his students to readily know what he was talking about. The identity of these heroes would puzzle later generations of readers, and commentators such as Philoponus (490-575 CE) and Simplicius (490-560 CE) would attempt to expand and explain the

³²⁸ Aristotle, *Physics*, Translated by C. D. C. Reeve. (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, Inc., 2018), 4.11, 218b20-26.

³²⁹ See Dinshaw, 10-12, 40-2. Dinshaw highlights Aristotle’s allusion as an “asynchronicity story” that upends the apparent logic of time and nature to deconstruct the experience of temporality.

allusion.³³⁰ Philoponus describes the Sardinian cave as a place of healing, where the sick would sleep five days beside the heroes and awake healed, but with no knowledge of their lost time.³³¹ Simplicius describes a place of prophecy, casting the heroes of sons of Hercules whose bodies are preserved in an eternal sleep in a Sardinian cave.³³² As knowledge of this miracle grew, travelers joined them in sleep to receive prophetic dreams or else passed in the same state of endless slumber. Recorded some eight centuries after Aristotle wrote his *Physics*, it is impossible to know if either of these descriptions reflects the story that the philosopher himself intended or if they were invented long after his death in an attempt to resolve a lost reference with a new narrative.³³³ Other stories of long-sleeping individuals in Greek and Roman tradition point to the opportunity for the evolution and cross-pollination of these narratives over the centuries that followed Aristotle's initial reference.³³⁴ What is clear however, is that stories of long-sleeping individuals would continue to capture the imagination of readers in the generations that followed, demanding the elaboration and explanation of their histories from exegetical authorities. As Garth Fowden observes, Aristotelian commentary presents an important "exegetical culture" that served as a site of both contact and conflict between the religiously and linguistically diverse

³³⁰ Dinshaw, 9-11. See also Fowden, *Before and After Muhammad*, 128-163. Fowden compares Aristotelianism to the other "exegetical cultures" and sees them as an important parallel to the religious and legal discourses which also governed literary and intellectual life in the "first millennium" (0-1000 CE).

³³¹ Van der Horst, 250, n. 5.

³³² Dinshaw, 10.

³³³ Alive in the early sixth century, Philoponus and Simplicius may even have been exposed to the earliest versions of the "Seven Sleepers of Ephesus" narrative, which was developing in both Greek and Syriac Christian traditions.

³³⁴ Van der Horst, 248-51, enumerates several further sources from classical Greek literature. Diogenes Laertius, Pausanias, and Pliny the Elder, all allude to stories of individuals sleeping several decades at a time, "Pious Long Sleepers. The most popular of these legends concerns Epimenides, a Cretan youth sent by his father to find a stray sheep. He pauses his search to sleep "in a cave," and ends passing by generations of time. Thinking he has only slept briefly, Epimenides returns to his home in Cnossos to find his father missing and his family estate in different hands. The confusion is only resolved when Epimenides meets his brother, now "an old man." In this early version of the narrative the long sleep already occurs within a cave. The different accounts of Epimenides' life offer disparate reckonings of precisely how much time has been past in sleep: Diogenes recounts "fifty-seven years" while Pausanias "states very briefly in passing that 'people say' (*legousin*) that Epimenides slept for forty years". These elements point towards how the story of the Seven Sleepers could have emerged out of a broad corpus of oral legend. They also demonstrate some of the discrepancies of oral transmission that would re-appear in the attempts to reckon both the number of sleepers and the years of their sleep. Van der Horst pays particular attention to Diogenes' declaration that Epimenides "was believed to be

communities of intellectuals throughout the First Millennium CE.³³⁵

The attempts of figures like Philoponus and Simplicius to find an explanation for the “heroes of Sardinia” would mirror the similar demands of exegetes in trying to manage the proliferation of sleeper legends among Jewish, Christian, and Muslim communities. By claiming to identify the original setting of the narrative and resolve questions of ambiguity or multiplicity, accounts of the long-sleeper narrative often re-situated the story into a new temporal, geographical, or religious framework that fit more readily with the concerns present community. While the narrative framework of long-sleeping stories remained curiously attuned to the psychology of the woken sleeper as he stumbled through the future world, the setting of the story in each iteration is highly open to change. The site of the miracle, the time when it occurred, the length of the sleep, the fate of the sleeper after his revelation, and the religious identity of the story’s central figure(s) are adapted in each version to satisfy the concerns of each community. The proliferation of different versions of the sleeper legend ultimately inscribed themselves into the landscapes and cityscapes of different communities, as rediscovered sites of miracles of long-sleep were discovered and patronized by believers. By tracing some key sources and scenes within this process, I demonstrate how the story of long-sleep provided an avenue for many different forms of *anagenesis*, revising and renegotiating the disparate forms of the story to make particular claims to God, time, space, and human communities. In this way, stories of long-

especially loved by the gods (*theophilestatos*),” 251. While it is never explicitly stated, the contrast between Epiminedes and his aged brother suggests that the former has not aged in his sleep but been preserved by some miraculous force.

³³⁵ Fowden, *Before and After Muhammad*, 128. Attempts to claim Aristotle’s thought as ultimately belonging to one religious or linguistic tradition above all others resulted in the proliferation of many myths about the transmission of the philosopher’s work. Fowden includes one tradition that places Aristotle’s death in the city of Alexandria, making this key city in the transmission and translation of the Aristotelian corpus into Arabic into a funerary monument to the philosopher, 148-152. Also exploiting the Alexandrian legacy in Aristotelian thought is the Persian narrative that all the “Greek” sciences were plundered from their own tradition by Alexander the Great. Alexander supposedly translated the wisdom of the ancient Persians into Greek after conquering the empire, and then destroyed the originals to hide his theft. See Gutas, 34-45.

sleepers were both deployed in defining the limits of different historical eras, but also in defining the limits of exegetical culture.

2.1: Awaking to the Future: Legends of Long Sleep and *Anagenesis*

Introduction

In this first chapter, we will explore the foundational narrative accounts of the long-sleeper tradition in Judaism and Christianity. In Jewish stories about Abimelech the Ethiopian and Honi the Circle Drawer, composed in the 1st and 2nd centuries CE, figures who have slept seventy years through the destruction of the Temple of Jerusalem (586 BCE) and the subsequent Babylonian Exile awake to find the Temple rebuilt and their fellow Jews returned to their homeland.³³⁶ These Jewish narratives were also adopted by early Christian communities and later influenced the 5th-century legend of the saintly “Sleepers of Ephesus,” a group of seven or eight young Christians who fled to a cave outside their city during the persecutions of the emperor Decius (r. 249-51 CE), only to return after centuries of supernatural sleep during the rule of the Christian emperor Theodosius II (r. 408-50 CE).

These narratives all closely follow the psychological experience of the sleeper as he stumbles through the future world, eventually reaching a revelation of their travel through time. By focusing on the phenomenological experiences of the sleepers as they awake to the future and struggle to make sense of its many signs, these narratives serve as an effective avenue for

³³⁶ Van Der Horst, 258, and Herzer, 86-9, both discuss the relationship between the Jewish traditions of Abimelech in the *Paraleipomena Jeremiou* and Honi and the Jerusalem Talmud and the Greek legend of Epimenides of Crete, which is recorded in the Diogenes Laertius (fl. 3rd Century CE). While Herzer, 87-8, is convinced the Greek tradition influenced the Honi narratives, which then in turn influenced the portrayal of Abimelech the *Paraleipomena Jeremiou*. Neither considers that the account of Honi’s sleep in the Babylonian Talmud in fact represents the closest parallel to the Epimenides story, since it does not involve the historical framework of the Temple’s destruction, and Honi’s interaction with his grandson parallels the meeting of Epimenides and his brother.

anagenesis, creatively mediating between subjective and objective perspectives of temporality and emphasizing the overarching power of God over “time” both individual and collective. In some accounts, the story is explicitly inserted into historically and geographically specific locales so that the miracle of long-sleep can be transformed into a historical commentary on a specific era or event. In others, the idea of long sleep becomes a sign of God’s mastery not only over time, but also over life and death.

Jewish Sleeper Narratives: Long Sleep as Deliverance from History

Accounts of long-sleeping individuals appear briefly in the works of Aristotle and other writers of Greek and Roman Antiquity, suggesting a broader presence of the long-sleeping motif in folkloric traditions throughout the world. The adaptation of the story into a form of *anagenesis* begins in sources composed around the first and second centuries of the Common Era.³³⁷ Both the Babylonian Talmud and Jerusalem Talmud contain accounts of the seventy-year sleep of “Honi the Circle Drawer” (Heb. *Honi ha-me’aggel*), a Jewish sage reputed to have lived around the first century BCE.³³⁸ These Talmudic accounts deploy the story of long sleep as an Aggadic Midrash, a form of Jewish literature that expounds scriptural passages through exegetical (and

³³⁷ On the dating of the texts and relationship between the sources, see Herzer, *4 Baruch*, xxx-xxxvi, 84-90; Ron, “The Death of Honi the Circle Maker,” 235–50; Van Der Horst, 252-261, and Huber, *Wanderlegende*, 403-426. Scholars have observed the connections between these three versions of the long-sleeper motif and earlier Greek narratives, but no consensus exists on the philological relationship between these different sources, save that they likely post-date the destruction of the Second Temple in 70 CE, and precede later Christian accounts of the Sleepers of Ephesus and the Islamic narrative of the Companions of the Cave. Because these written witnesses likely emerged out of earlier oral exegetical traditions and lost exemplars, the “original” versions of these long-sleeping legends cannot be recovered and re-sequenced into an absolute historical chronology.

³³⁸ BT, *Ta’anit* 23a; JT, *Ta’anit* 3:9.IV.A-J. For a translation of both episodes, see Jens Herzer, ed., *4 Baruch* (*Paraleipomena Jeremiou*), (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2005), 84-9; Herzer, *4 Baruch*, 84-9. For a comparison of the two episodes, see Zvi Ron, “The Death of Honi the Circle Maker,” *Review of Rabbinic Judaism* 20, no. 2 (August 3, 2017): 235–50; Michael Berenbaum and Fred Skolnik, eds., “Honi Ha-Me’aggel,” in *Encyclopaedia Judaica* (Detroit, MI: Macmillan Reference USA, 2007).

often folkloric) narratives.³³⁹ The two accounts introduce the story of Honi and his supernatural sleep in relation to the opening verse of Psalm 126: “When the Lord brought back those who returned to Zion, we were like those who dream.”³⁴⁰ Where the Psalmist expresses this experience in terms of a simile (Heb. *ke-hōlemîm*), the Talmudic accounts invoke the legend of long sleep to provide a different kind of equivalence. In acts of *anagenesis* that synchronize multiple traditions, the story situates the folkloric narrative of long-sleep within a system of scriptural reference to elaborate and comment upon biblical tradition.

The Talmudic narratives involve the same figure and address the same biblical verse, but the stories differ significantly in their portrayal of Honi and the setting of his supernatural sleep. The narrative in the Babylonian Talmud begins with Honi reading Psalm 126 in the *beit midrash* (“house of study”), the place where Jewish communities both keep and discuss the scripture. Incredulously musing, “how it possible for a man to dream a seventy-year dream?” Honi goes outside and encounters an old man planting a carob tree.³⁴¹ Displaying a general lack of care for the future, Honi mocks the man for planting something that he will not live to see bear fruit, then goes to sleep beneath it. Honi awakes to find the tree fully grown. Bewildered, he inquires of a passerby and learns the tree was planted seventy years before by the man’s grandfather. Astonished, Honi then returns home to find his son dead and his grand-son – born in Honi’s absence – in possession of his household. The episode concludes with Honi visiting the “*beit midrash*” where he once studied and discussed the scriptures with fellow scholars. While many people recall his name and reputation, all those who knew him have since died so that no one present recognizes Honi or believes the story of his miraculous sleep. An exasperated Honi prays

³³⁹ See Galit Hasan-Rokem, *Web of Life: Folklore and Midrash in Rabbinic Literature* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 2000), 2-3; Joseph Gutmann, “Aggadah or Haggadah,” in *Encyclopaedia Judaica*.

³⁴⁰ BT, *Ta’anit* 23a, JT, *Ta’anit* 3:9.IV.A. Psalm 126 is a “Song of Ascent,” (Heb. “Shir Ha-Ma’lot”) x part of the sequence of psalms 120-34 that celebrate the Temple in connection with pilgrim festivals. See “Shir Ha-Ma’lot.” In *Encyclopaedia Judaica*.

for death, and God grants his wish. The story ends with a proverbial statement of another rabbi: “Hence the saying, ‘Either companionship or death.’”³⁴² In this account, Honi doubts the possibility of “dreaming a seventy-year dream,” only to experience first-hand God’s powers to upend the temporal norms.

The Jerusalem Talmud, in contrast, presents a more positive depiction of Honi and the story of his long sleep. Setting the episode “near the time of the destruction of the Temple,” the Jerusalem Talmud anachronistically transports the sage several centuries further into the past.³⁴³ In this version, Honi ventures into a cave where he falls asleep, remaining “until the Temple was destroyed and it was rebuilt a second time.”³⁴⁴ Emerging from the cavern to find the world “completely changed,” Honi asks the people of the countryside for news.³⁴⁵ Confused by his ignorance of recent events, the people ask him his name. When he replies that he is “Honi the Circle Drawer,” the people inform him, “We heard that when he [i.e. Honi] would go into the Temple courtyard, it would be illuminated.”³⁴⁶ Honi enters the court of the rebuilt Temple and fulfills his prophecy. The Temple becomes “illuminated” by divine light, and Honi recites the opening verse of Psalm 126 “concerning himself.”³⁴⁷ As in the Babylonian Talmud, Honi embodies the experience of the Psalmist’s simile “like those who dream.” In this case, however, Honi’s seventy-year sleep aligns precisely with the historical period of the Temple’s absence.³⁴⁸

³⁴¹ BT, *Ta’anit* 23a, in Herzer, *4 Baruch*, 85.

³⁴² For an example of proverbial etiologies in Islamic tradition, see David Powers, “Demonizing Zenobia: The Legend of al-Zabba’ in Islamic Sources,” in *Histories of the Middle East: Studies in Middle Eastern Society, Economy and Law in Honor of A. L. Udovitch*, ed. Petra M. Sijpesteijn, Roxani Eleni Margariti, and Adam Sabra (Leiden: Brill, 2010), 144-56.

³⁴³ JT *Ta’anit* 3:9 IV.A. Several Jewish texts confront this anachronism by claiming Honi had an eponymous ancestor who had lived in in an earlier era. See

³⁴⁴ JT *Ta’anit* 3:9 IV.B.

³⁴⁵ JT *Ta’anit* 3:9 IV.C. Honi marvels at the transformation of the agricultural landscape beyond the city “an area that had been planted with vineyards now produced olives, and an area planted in olives now produced grain,” *Ta’anit* 3:9 IV.C. The constant in this plurality of times is a God who controls both man and nature, possessing the power to preserve both outside of their traditional temporal boundaries to employ them as signs of divine dominion over history.

³⁴⁶ JT *Ta’anit* 3:9 IV.I

³⁴⁷ JT *Ta’anit* 3:9 IV.J.

³⁴⁸ As a historical text, the opening line of Psalm 126 suggests a date of composition after the return from Babylon, describing the experience of the exile from the vantage of having returned to Jerusalem. Yet in the canonization of the

As Honi unknowingly embodies the biblical verse, the divine words transcend temporal boundaries to appear as both prophecy, history, and personal prayer.

In this act of *anagenesis*, Honi's miraculous sleep functions not only as a form of exegesis but also as a form of periodization. The time-traveling aspect of the story is embedded within a specific frame of "sacred history:" the destruction of the First Temple in Jerusalem (586 BCE), the subsequent Babylonian captivity, and the return of the Jewish people and restoration of the Temple seventy years later (516 BCE). Threaded through biblical typologies of exile and return, the time-traveling story of long-sleep becomes a way to understand both the experiences of the Jewish people across time and God's plans for them in the future. The intervening time between the two Temples (ca. 586-516 BCE), when a portion of the Jewish people were forcibly deported to Babylon, represents an important era in Jewish history and memory. The destruction of the Temple both challenges and affirms the status of the Jewish people as God's chosen nation; the overarching biblical cycles of exile and return, punishment and redemption, follow the compilation and redaction of the biblical corpus in the wake of the captivity. In Honi's fortuitous absence from the destruction of the city and the subsequent period of captivity, we see the preservation afforded by long-sleep extends beyond protecting the human body from the natural process of aging. It also protects the sleeper from historical calamities and from the interruptions of an overarching historical narrative. Honi leaps over the temporal problem of the Temple's seventy-year absence in its entirety.

In terms of typological time, the story is not only concerned with the cyclical patterns of Temple's past, but also the prospect of a new Temple returning in the future.^{351F}³⁴⁹ In Judaism,

scriptural tradition in the centuries that followed, the psalm be re-temporalized into an earlier historical moment – transforming it into a prophecy of return. As words emerging from divine inspiration, it would also be eternalized, existing alongside God outside of time.

³⁴⁹ 4 Baruch 5:32. When Abimelech comes to understand his miraculous experience, he exclaims "I will bless you, O Lord, God of heaven and earth, the Rest of the souls of the righteous in every place." By referring to God as the "Rest"

the construction and destruction of the two Temples in Jerusalem functions as a key marker of epochal change, with the loss of the Second Temple in 70 CE serving as a “zero point” in the reckoning of years.³⁵⁰ Honi’s fortuitous appearance in the rebuilt temple court demonstrates that the building’s reconstruction had been foreordained in the very moment it had been destroyed, an accentuated by the insertion of scripture into the scene. The story of long sleep offers consolation to the faithful, suggesting that times of suffering – even those that last as long as an entire human life – represent a divinely ordained intermezzo that would ultimately find resolution on earth or in heaven.

Acts of *anagenesis* emplacing the folkloric story of the long sleeper in terms of the Temple’s loss and restoration also emphasize the eschatological possibilities of the time-traveling narrative. In the apocryphal book of 4 Baruch, a Greek elaboration upon the story of the biblical Prophet Jeremiah, a figure named Abimelech the Ethiopian sleeps for “sixty-six” years in a similar episode.³⁵¹ Like the Talmudic accounts, 4 Baruch’s story of Abimelech emplaces the motif of long sleep into the temporal framework of the First Temple’s destruction and recovery and within an exegetical expansion upon a biblical story. Where the Talmudic accounts comment on the opening verse of Psalm 126, 4 Baruch addresses the book of Jeremiah. “Abimelech the Ethiopian” is likely intended to be equivalent to the biblical character “Ebed-Melech the Cushite,” who appears in Jeremiah 38-39.³⁵² A court-official in the kingdom of Judah, Ebed-Melech rescues Jeremiah after he is cast into a cistern for prophesying the doom of Jerusalem.³⁵³ A thankful Jeremiah then promises Ebed-Melech that he will escape the destruction of the city

(Gk. “*anapaysis*”) of souls, Abimelech draws a parallel to his own miraculous sleep, while also reaffirming the deity’s power “in every place” – Jerusalem, Babylon, and all other lands occupied by the righteous of mankind.

³⁵⁰ See Goldberg, *Clepsydra*, 132.

³⁵¹ For text and Translation, see Herzer, *4 Baruch*, 2-39. The text is also called by the Greek name *Paraleipomena Jeremiou*, “The Continuation of Jeremiah” or “The Rest of the Words of Jeremiah.”

³⁵² On the relation between the Greek *Ethiopia* and Hebrew *Kush*, see Goldenberg, *The Curse of Ham*, 18-23.

unharméd, but the biblical account does not elaborate further on Ebed-Melech's story, nor does it describe the death of its titular prophet.³⁵⁴ As a "Continuation to Jeremiah," the apocryphal story fills this narrative absence by claiming that Jeremiah, the scribe Baruch, and Abimelech all live to see the return of the Jewish people from Babylon, the latter miraculously spared from Jerusalem's destruction by an act of supernatural sleep.

Learning from God that Jerusalem's doom is near, Jeremiah sends Abimelech out of the city to collect some figs from the "vineyard of Agrippa."³⁵⁵ This errand causes Abimelech to be absent from the city when the "Chaldeans" arrive to destroy the Temple and carry Jeremiah and the Jews away in captivity.³⁵⁶ After fetching the figs, Abimelech pauses beneath the shade of a tree to escape the sun's heat. There "he fell asleep and slept for sixty-six years, and was not awakened from his sleep."³⁵⁷ When he awakes and returns to the vicinity of the city, Abimelech finds the region desolate and changed. He learns from an old man that it has been "sixty-six years today since the people were taken into captive to Babylon."³⁵⁸ The old man recognizes the significance of Abimelech's miraculous nature, telling him "O my son, you are a righteous man and God did not want to show you the desolation of the city, so God brought this trance upon you."³⁵⁹ Because of his faithfulness to Jeremiah, Abimelech has been spared from this historical calamity, preserved in long sleep so that he may witness the approaching redemption of the Jewish people.

When Abimelech at last understands his supernatural experience, he recognizes it carries

³⁵³ Jeremiah 38:7-13, Van Der Horst, 255. On Ebed-Melech/Abimelech's role in biblical and post-biblical depictions of Kushites and Ethiopians, see Goldenberg, *Curse of Ham*, 38-9, 136-7.

³⁵⁴ Jeremiah 39:15-18.

³⁵⁵ 4 Baruch, 3:10, 15, in Herzer, *4 Baruch*, 8-11. This anachronism, which may refer to the Herodian ruler Agrippa II (28-92 CE), seems to point to typological parallels between the destructions of the First and Second Temple.

³⁵⁶ 4 Baruch, 4:1-2, ed. Herzer, 10-11.

³⁵⁷ 4 Baruch, 5:1, ed. Herzer, 12-13.

³⁵⁸ 4 Baruch, 5:30.

³⁵⁹ Herzer, *4 Baruch*, 84-9, includes a translation of both Honi episodes from the Babylonian Talmud (BT, *Ta'anit 23a*) and the Jerusalem Talmud (JT, *Ta'anit 3:9.IV.A-J*).

divine significance, crying out “I will bless you, O Lord, God of heaven and earth, the Rest of the souls of the righteous in every place” (5:32).³⁶⁰ In his equation of the divinity to “rest” of souls, Abimelech draws a parallel to his own miraculous sleep, while reaffirming the God’s power “in every place” – Jerusalem, Babylon, and all other lands occupied by the righteous. Abimelech gives “a few of the figs” to the old man, praying that “God will lead you by his light to the city above, Jerusalem” (5:34).³⁶¹ In addition to the city past and present, Abimelech alludes to a “Jerusalem above” in his concluding prayer, entangling the temporally distinct earthly iterations of the city with a celestial and eschatological model. Through mention of a “heavenly Jerusalem,” the sleeper looks forward to a future that is beyond both his own disjointed present and beyond the “present” world of the text’s readers, who anticipate in kind another restoration at the end of time.

Such a future need not be far off. When the Roman Empire destroyed the Second Temple, history had repeated itself; subsequent generations of Jewish communities would look towards yet another restoration of the temple in the future. Jens Herzer suggests that 4 Baruch was likely composed in the decade before 140 CE, the years leading up to the 70th anniversary of the Second Temple’s destruction.³⁶² As this potentially significant moment approached, Jews in Judea looked to biblical and extrabiblical texts that promised not only the rebuilding of the Temple but also the arrival of a Messiah who would usher in the end of time. Simon bar Kokhba, leader of a Jewish revolt against the Roman Empire in Judea (ca. 132-136 CE), was envisioned by his followers to be this messianic figure.³⁶³ The story of Abimelech’s long sleep speaks to this

³⁶⁰ Herzer, *4 Baruch*, 18-9.

³⁶¹ Herzer, *4 Baruch*, 18-9.

³⁶² See Herzer, *4 Baruch*, xvi-xxvi, for a discussion of the text’s relationship to other sources and his hypothesis its date of composition. Herzer suggests a limit “no later than 140 CE,” xxx, for the composition of the text, and believes its was most likely composed in the period preceding the Bar Kokhba War, “117-132 CE,” xxiv.

³⁶³ Herzer, *4 Baruch*, xvi-xxvi.

feeling of eschatological imminence. Whereas Honi sleeps for seventy years and awakes to the Temple already rebuilt, Abimelech awakes with the rebuilding of the Temple still to happen in the very near future. Such a perspective allows Jewish communities eager to restore the Temple and welcome the Messiah to imagine their own age as a lost time that some saint might be sleeping through at that very moment.

Rather than establishing a new Temple and ushering in a Messianic age, the bar Kokhba War was reminiscent of the First Jewish Revolt, ending in a Roman victory and precipitating a new wave of persecution against Jews throughout the empire. The disappointment of such prophetic expectations does not necessarily expose the failure of the text, but provides an opportunity for the reinterpretation of prophecy and its re-situation to new historical and eschatological horizons. Just as the authors of 4 Baruch sought to add to scriptural tradition with a rediscovered conclusion to Jeremiah's life, so too was the text open to further interventions in successive generations. The story of Abimelech and Jeremiah in 4 Baruch was contested between Jewish and Christian communities, and the latter would add a new chapter onto the text's end that would radically revise the significance of Abimelech's long-sleep.³⁶⁴ In the last chapter of the 4 Baruch, Jeremiah finds himself attacked by other members of the Jewish community once he returns to Jerusalem. Left for dead by all but Baruch and Abimelech, Jeremiah returns to life three days after and informs his faithful companions about the "Son of God who awakens us, Jesus Christ."³⁶⁵ Dating these additions to the text after the failure of the Bar Kokhba revolt,

³⁶⁴ See Van Der Horst, 252-261, and Huber, *Wanderlegende*, 403-426. The emergence of these narratives appears to post-date the destruction of the Second Temple in 70 CE. Though the extant version of the *Paraleipomena Jeremiou* contains an explicitly Christian scene where Jeremiah is described as "as a preacher of the Gospel," van der Horst, 256-7, follows other scholars in asserting that these elements represent interpolations into an earlier Jewish source. While the *Paraleipomena Jeremiou* has been dated to the first half of the first century CE, it is possible that the account in the Jerusalem Talmud, as Van Der Horst suggests, emerged around the same time, or even reflects an earlier form of the long sleeping legend that was transferred from the anachronistic figure of Honi to the historically appropriate Abimelech, "Pious Long Sleepers," 259.

³⁶⁵ Herzer, *4 Baruch*, 155.

Herzer suggests that Christians ventriloquized Jeremiah to condemn a false “Jewish” messiah, dismissing an eschatological moment that failed to reach fruition and advancing an alternative Christian timeline instead. As another act of *anagenesis* added to the text, Jeremiah’s “awakening” anticipates Jesus’s future resurrection, tying both the biblical prophet and his long sleeping companion typologically to this Christian Messiah. The addition resituates Abimelech’s earlier sleep in a specifically Christian context. It enables Christian readers to refocus the story from the restoration of the Temple to the resurrection of the dead. This addition to the story demonstrates how acts of *anagenesis* can be added to a pre-existing narrative to radically re-center its interpretation. It also exemplifies the exegetical and eschatological concerns of the long-sleeper story that would make the narrative a well-spring of further *anagenetic* traditions for Christians and Muslims.³⁶⁶

Through the Eyes of the Martyr, Through the Eyes of the Emperor: Early Christian Narratives of the Seven Sleepers of Ephesus

By situating the narrative of long sleep in the historical context of the Temple of Jerusalem, the narratives of Honi and Abimelech become a form of *anagenesis*, deploying the tale’s time-bending perspective to comment on historical events and gesture towards an eschatological future. Influenced by the Talmud and 4 Baruch versions, another adaptation of the long-sleep legend emerged. In the story of the “Sleepers of Ephesus,” seven or eight young Christians flee to a cave outside their city during the persecutions of the emperor Decius (r. 249-51 CE). The men return to their city after centuries of supernatural sleep to resolve the doubts of the Christian Emperor Theodosius II (r. 402-50 CE) concerning the doctrine of resurrection. The

³⁶⁶ Herzer, *4 Baruch*, 155.

tale of the “Sleepers of Ephesus” adapted the trope of long sleep to fit the form of a Christian *inventio*, becoming a foundational narrative for a church on the outskirts of Ephesus that would become a global center of pilgrimage and patronage.³⁶⁷

While the narratives of Honi and Abimelech reckon with the loss of Jerusalem’s Temple(s) and the eclipsing of Jewish political power, the Ephesian narratives reflect the ascendancy of Christianity as the most prominent and powerful religion in the Roman Empire. As Louis Massignon observes, “The ‘discovery’ of the Seven Sleepers ought to be placed in context of the religious psychology of the ‘*inventio* narratives of the bodies of saints and relics’ which were produced in the Fourth and Fifth centuries, following the victory of Constantine and the expedition of Saint Helen [to Jerusalem].”³⁶⁸ For Christians, this epochal change marked the transition from life as a minority sect, treated with suspicion and occasional persecution by the Roman state, to a time of imperial sponsorship and growing hegemony over the other religious practices of the empire. The “*inventio*” of the saints’ remains and the traditional narrative of martyrology granted Christian communities possession over the pasts of their own cities and peoples. Though the Christian community’s ancestors were more likely pagans and persecutors unknowing or actively hostile to Christianity, the community uses the figure of the saint as a form of *anagenesis*, rewriting the Christian “present” into the collective memory of the past. The dramatic unearthing of the saint’s relics becomes the material proof of this hidden, forgotten, or wholly invented narrative of the past, allowing Christian communities to imagine themselves as the descendants of generations of martyrs rather than persecutors.³⁶⁹

³⁶⁷ On *onventio*, see Otter, *Inventiones*, 21; Carlà, 199-203.

³⁶⁸ Louis Massignon, *Les sept dormants d’Éphèse; (Ahl-al-kahf) en Islam et en chrétienté Recueil Documentaire et Iconographique* (Paris: P. Geuthner, 1958), 94. “L’*invention*’ des Sept Dormants doit être replacée dans le cadre de psychologie religieuse des ‘inventions de corps saints et de reliques’ que se sont produites aux Ives-Ves siècles en Orient chrétien, à la suite de la victoire de Constantine et des recherches de Ste-Hélène.”

³⁶⁹ See Peter Brown, *The Cult of the Saints: Its Rise and Function in Latin Christianity* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1981), 7-8. Brown emphasizes that the veneration of saints transformed the urban fabric of Late-Antique settlement,

While Christianization inspired new understandings of Ephesus' relationships to its religious past, differences in belief between Christians became a major source of political contention. As a city associated with Mary, John, and other figures of the early Church, Ephesus had a storied Christian history. The story of the Ephesian sleepers appears to reflect a desire not only to re-invent the city's Christian past but also to resolve contemporary theological disputes about the nature of eschatological resurrection. In this way, Ernst Honigmann emphasizes "the immense difference between the miracle of the Seven Sleepers and the frequent discoveries of relics."³⁷⁰ "Far from being skeletons which everybody could identify to the best of his convictions," he observes, "the bodies of the seven youths were alive and testified to an event unparalleled in the whole history of mankind."³⁷¹ Honigmann proposed that the origin of the Ephesian Sleepers legend "must be based on a real event which occurred at Ephesus itself during the last years of Theodosius II."³⁷² He theorizes that Bishop Stephen of Ephesus staged a miracle within the city to refute the "Origenist heresy," the controversial position of the theologian Origen of Alexandria (185-254 CE) on the doctrine of the resurrection.³⁷³ More likely, the Christians knew the long-sleep narrative from classical Greek texts, the Jewish stories of Honi and Abimelech, and folkloric traditions and adapted the story to invent a living relic, one that could affirm God's power to preserve (and reconstitute) human bodies against the destructive effects of time.³⁷⁴ If Honigmann is correct, the Ephesian tradition emerged as an *anagenetic* effort to import long-sleep legends into the physical world; this reinvention stages its story of

upending the traditional distinctions between the abodes of the living and the dead in the city. On the political aspects of *inventio* narratives within and between cities, see Carlà, 204-9.

³⁷⁰ E. Honigmann, "Stephen of Ephesus and the Legend of the Seven Sleepers," *Patristic Studies*, 1953, 125-68, 141.

³⁷¹ Honigmann, 141.

³⁷² Honigmann, 131.

³⁷³ Honigmann, "Stephen of Ephesus," 153-5. Like the Christian chronicles that located the Euhemeristic origins of "pagan" deities, the association of "un-orthodox" beliefs with heresiarchs – Origenist, Marcionite, Arian, Nestorian, etc. – offers its own important claim upon history. It insists that the genesis of alternative theological opinions can be traced back to an individual, and thus a point of historical emergence. Orthodoxy, by contrast, is eternal, even if it has to wait for the results of several ecumenical councils to be set in order.

discovery in a specific moment to miraculously resolve disputes in the civic (and imperial) Christian community.

The story transformed the Church of the Sleepers in Ephesus into a major center of pilgrimage to visit the bodies recognized to be the sleeping saints – physical relics that signified proof of both the story’s historical occurrence and its theological implications. It also made the Ephesian legend one of the most popular and far-reaching in the Christian world.³⁷⁵ During the late-5th and early-6th centuries, written accounts of the Sleepers of Ephesus were disseminated in Greek, Latin, and Syriac accounts.³⁷⁶ From these three initial strands of the story, the legend of the martyrs would be translated, expanded, and alluded to in writings in Armenian, Arabic, Ethiopian, Coptic, English, French, German, Italian, Irish – practically every language used by Christian communities.³⁷⁷ The flexibility of this work of translation made the story an effective device for reconciling the diverse and growing Christian community into a singular history. For

³⁷⁴ Honigmann, 142.

³⁷⁵ E. Honigmann, “Stephen of Ephesus and the Legend of the Seven Sleepers,” *Patristic Studies* 173, (1953) 125-158.

³⁷⁶ For Latin accounts of the original three recensions of the legend, see “De SS. Septem Dormientibus,” in *Acta Sanctorum*, Novissima, vol. 33 (Paris: V. Palmé, 1868), 375–97. This early collection of the narratives is the first to identify the three major versions of the text initially recorded in Syriac, Latin and Greek. For an edition of the Syriac text and an Italian translation of the homily in its two major recensions, see Ignazio Guidi, *Testi orientali inediti sopra i Sette dormienti di Efeso* (Tipografia della R. Accademia dei Lincei, 1885), 16-32. For an edition of the Greek tradition, called the *hypomnemata* or *acta longiora*, see J.P. Migne, ed., *Patrologiae Graeca*, vol. 115 (Paris: Garnier, 1899), vol. 155, cols. 427-48. For an English translation of the *hypomnemata* tradition, albeit made from a later Latin source, see Hugh Magennis, ed., *The Anonymous Old English Legend of the Seven Sleepers* (Durham: Durham Medieval Texts, 1994), 65-85. For the Latin version of Gregory of Tours, see “Gregorii Turonensis Passio VII Dormientum Apud Ephesum,” *Analecta Bollandiana*, ed. Bruno Krush, vol. 12 (Société des Bollandistes, 1893), 370-87; for an English translation, see W.C. McDermott, trans., *Gregory of Tours: Selections from the Minor Works* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1949), 78-87. On the sources and evolution of the Ephesian tradition, see Koch, 81-122; Huber, 1-127, and Appendix below.

³⁷⁷ The number of translations and recensions of the “Seven Sleepers” legend in the Christian tradition is staggering; Huber’s *Wanderlegende*, 1-18, 37-71, 128-214, surveys approximately seventy different legends, recensions, and references to the Sleepers of Ephesus in different Christian tradition. For a bibliography of the different versions of the legend, see Huber, xvi-xix. Huber catalogues versions of the story in Syriac, Arabic, Persian, Armenian, Coptic, Ethiopian, English, German, Norse, French, Italian, and Spanish. In most of these cases, there is more than one version or translation. Magennis, 5, identifies the Old English version as the earliest “western vernacular version” of the text, 5, but also observes the existence of an Irish version of the legend. See also Bartłomiej Grysa, “The Legend of the Seven Sleepers of Ephesus in Syriac and Arab Sources -- A Comparative Study,” *Orientalia Christiana Cracoviensia* 2 (2010): 46. Grysa includes a list of extant manuscripts, though his lacking in records of the English and other Vernacular traditions (save Middle Irish). While knowledge of the Seven Sleepers also appears to be present among Slavic speaking Christians and depictions of the Seven Sleepers are recorded on amulets bearing Old Church Slavonic have been discovered, see Jeffrey Spier, “Medieval

most Christians who would encounter the story, Ephesus was an elsewhere, and for many who lived in later centuries, the Roman empire was an elsewhere too.

Despite the vast number of recensions and translations of the Ephesian Sleeper's legend throughout the Christian world, many narrative details are relatively stable across traditions. The story begins when Emperor Decius (r. 249-51 CE) arrives in Ephesus to hold a festival in honor of the Roman gods. Decius demands sacrifices to his gods from all the city's citizens, threatening to torture those who refuse. A group of seven (or eight) young Christians, sons of the city's foremost families, refuse the emperor's orders. After an encounter with the irate ruler, the youths seek refuge in a mountain cave beyond the city's wall. As they pray within the cave for deliverance from persecution, God places the young men into a deep sleep to preserve them from harm. Learning of the youths' escape, Decius follows their trail to the mountain cave, where he orders the entrance to the cave be walled up. Two other Christian witnesses bury a tablet beside the sleepers' would-be tomb, recording the date of their internment and the significance of their actions.

The story then jumps ahead to an age when Christianity has become the favored faith of the Empire. In spite of this historical success, Christians now face internal disputes. The Emperor Theodosius is tempted by doubts about the doctrine of bodily resurrection and appears poised to embrace the "heresy of the Sadducees."³⁷⁸ In the midst of this controversy, the sleepers' cave is opened by a shepherd searching for stones, and the youths awaken, believing they have slept only a single night. Fearing Decius, they send one of their number named "Malchus" into Ephesus to purchase supplies.³⁷⁹ When Malchus returns to his former home, he marvels at the

Byzantine Magical Amulets and Their Tradition," *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 56 (1993): 31, I have heretofore been unable to find any study mentioning an Old Church Slavonic or Slavic vernacular account of the legend.

³⁷⁸ E.g. Gregory of Tours, *Passio*, ed. Krush 382; trans. McDermitt, 83.

³⁷⁹ Usually "*Iamblichos*" in Greek, "*Malchus*" in Latin and Western Vernacular Versions, and "*Yamlīḥā*" or "*Tamlīḥā*" in Arabic versions. Cf. Huber, *Wanderlegende*, 91-6.

changes that have occurred, including the open display of the cross upon the city's gates. He wonders if he has arrived at a different city entirely. When he attempts to buy bread with a coin bearing the face of Decius, the people of Ephesus are convinced that Malchus has discovered an ancient "treasure" and has concealed its riches for himself.³⁸⁰ A mob seizes Malchus and nearly kills him, but the city authorities intervene, and the saint and citizens together soon arrive at a realization of his centuries-long sleep.

Once the miracle has been discovered, the citizens and Bishop of Ephesus summon the emperor Theodosius, and Malchus leads them to meet his companions and see the cave that has preserved them. When the seven youths are reunited and realize they have slept for centuries, they die, but not before explaining to Theodosius that their long sleep is a symbol of the resurrection awaiting all human souls at the end of time. Unlike the earlier Greek and Jewish forms of the narrative, the Christian story transitions rapidly from the youths' waking to their death. The tablets buried at the site are then rediscovered, confirming the length of the sleepers' internment. The emperor, now firm in his faith in the resurrection, establishes a church at the site to venerate the saints. Once their symbolic act of awakening is witnessed and recorded, the sleepers can return to the natural order of time and go the way of all flesh.

As in other accounts of the long-sleeper legend, connections between the Ephesian narrative and earlier Jewish traditions are easy to identify but quite difficult to confirm since there are many possible strands of the narrative. The account of Abimelech in 4 Baruch was known to both Jews and Christians, and the name is "Malchus" derived from the same Semitic root (*m-l-k*) as the long sleeping companion of Jeremiah.³⁸¹ When Malchus returns to the city, the story curiously shifts to a singular perspective, one which resembles the individual

³⁸⁰ *Gk.* and *Lat.* "*thesauria*", *Syr. gazzo*.

³⁸¹ Van Der Horst, 265.

adventures of Honi and Abimelech. Parallels can also be drawn to the Greek accounts recorded by Aristotle and Diogenes Laertius, and several scholars have suggested that the Christian Ephesus sleepers narrative may reflect a local Ephesian version of the long-sleeper folktale.³⁸² Although the sleepers escape death at the hands of Decius, the story is also heavily influenced by the generic conventions of Christian hagiography and martyrology, whose literary roots intertwine with Jewish tradition. Many elements in the first half of the story –the age, number, and gender of the saints and the opening interrogation of the youths by the emperor Decius – match elements in the account of the “Maccabean Martyrs,” a pre-Christian prototype of martyr literature.³⁸³ The Ephesian legend represented a new generation of *anagenesis*, which resituated the terms and traditions of previous Jewish and Christian texts to address the concerns of Christians in the fifth century.

Just as Aristotle used the “heroes of Sardinia” as a pedagogical tool for understanding the necessity of consciousness for reckoning time, Dinshaw sees the Christian adaptations of the long-sleeping narratives as a way to explore the “multiple temporalities of the Christian Doctrinal world.”³⁸⁴ The errant wanderings of the sleepers emphasize the contrast between humankind’s quotidian experience of time and the overarching typological time of “scriptural

³⁸² See Koch, 51-80; Jacques Bonnet, *Artémis d’Éphèse et la légende des sept dormants* (Paris: P. Geuthner, 1977); surveying a variety of syncretic associations between the Ephesian patron deity and other maternal and/or virginal goddesses throughout the antique Mediterranean, Bonnet reaches deep into the past. He suggests that by claiming a particular cave as the site of the sleeper’s resurrection, the church possibly appropriated one of the “sanctuaries à l’époque paléolithique, entre dix et trent mille ans avant notre ère,” 150.

³⁸³ 2 Maccabees 6:18–7:42 records of the story of a Jewish woman who saw her seven sons tortured and executed by the Hellenistic king Antiochus Epiphanes (r. 175–164 BCE) for refusing to break the laws of *Kashrut*. On later Christian traditions, see Jan Willem van Henten, “The Maccabean Martyrs as Models in Early Christian Writings,” in *The Jew as Legitimation: Jewish-Gentile Relations Beyond Antisemitism and Philosemitism*, ed. David J. Wertheim (Cham: Springer International Publishing, 2017), 17–32. Since the story is a major influence upon all Christian martyr narratives (including those in the New Testament), the resemblance between the two “interrogation” scenes does not necessarily imply a direct connection between the traditions. Nonetheless, the age and number of the saints is the same as in the earlier Jewish text, and the earliest account of a visit to the shrine, that of the Latin pilgrim Theodosius, describes the seven youths as being buried beside their mother. See below.

³⁸⁴ Dinshaw, 46.

history.”³⁸⁵ As Dinshaw sees it:

Scriptural history understands the world as God’s “discourse,” as Michel de Certeau puts it: God is an allegorist, a rhetorician, and God – “in a single gesture,” eternally—creates and disposes all things in sequences of before and after. Such allegory therefore depends on both chronology and “a time out of time” in which the text becomes legible in its completeness.... This is the way God deploys the rhetoric of temporality; this is the way God writes history (thus “*scriptural* history”)—God to whom past, present, and future exist simultaneously.³⁸⁶

The story, which culminates in a revelation of temporal multiplicity known to God all along, points towards the way that “scriptural history” has hermeneutical potential to speak both literally and allegorically to temporally – and geographically – diverse audiences. The irony is that the story of the Seven Sleepers, which affirms the eternal and multifarious authority of the Christian scripture, is not actually *scriptural*, but rather *exegetical*. Like the Jewish narratives of Abimelech and Honi, the Christian narratives of the Seven Sleepers of Ephesus comment on Christian doctrine and scriptural interpretation by imagining miraculous interventions of God in the world that reaffirm particular interpretations of the holy text.

Unlike the *inventio* narratives about the recovery of martyrs’ remains, the long-sleepers legend of the youths of Ephesus transforms the negotiation between past and present into an act of self-discovery. When the sleepers awaken in the age of Theodosius, all but one of the sleepers remain in their cave. The narration follows Malchus on a journey into the city to purchase food for his companions.³⁸⁷ The audience experiences the epistemic tensions between different historical periods through Malchus’ return to the city after his centuries long sleep. This shift in focus from the collective to the individual moves the story closer to the models of Honi,

³⁸⁵ Dinshaw, 46.

³⁸⁶ Dinshaw, 45. The quotations come from the description of *allegoria* in Michel de Certeau, *The Mystic Fable, Volume One: The Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries*, trans. Michael Smith (University of Chicago Press, 1992), 92-3.

³⁸⁷ In the various accounts of the Sleepers of Ephesus, the first part of the story – set in the reign of Decius – follows the saints as a group. Although one, “Maximianus” (Gk. *Maximianos*), speaks on behalf of the group to the emperor Decius, most of the saints’ actions and decisions are made collectively.

Abimelech, and the Greek Epimenides, drawing attention to the psychological and phenomenological experience of the awakened sleeper. The sleeper's wanderings contrast the mortal individual's sense of time, constrained by the conscious mind, against the eternity of God. In his assessment of the legend, Roy Liuzza draws attention to "the affective quality of temporal dislocation, the terror and marvel that accompanies a recognition of time's passing."³⁸⁸ Upon his arrival in Ephesus, Malchus is bewildered by an array of signs that he recognizes but cannot explain, such as crosses displayed above the city's gates and "the name of Christ" in the mouth of all in the marketplace.³⁸⁹ Experiencing the city through the eyes of the saint, the audience is compelled to consider a time when the most familiar symbols of faith – which now permeate the quotidian experience of life – were furtive and hidden things. The recognition and misrecognition of different signs of the times create the epistemic tensions experienced by Malchus within the story as well as the audience without.³⁹⁰

Although the narrative initially focuses on Malchus' attempts to interpret the incongruous signs he witnesses in the city, his effort to buy bread in the marketplace presents the citizens of the now "Christian" Ephesus with their own semiotic conundrum, one that they attempt to solve by repeating the persecution of their "pagan" forefathers. The coin signals the continued presence of the emperor Decius, whose face is remains impressed upon it. The merchants in the marketplace interpret the artifact as a sign of deception, convincing them that Malchus has discovered a "treasure" from the past buried and hidden on the outskirts of the city.³⁹¹ The events that follow are troublingly familiar to the sleeper. From Malchus' perspective, the crowd

³⁸⁸ Roy Liuzza, "The Future Is a Foreign Country: The Legend of the Seven Sleepers and the Anglo-Saxon Sense of the Past," in *Medieval Science Fiction*, ed. Carl Kears and James Paz (London: King's College London, Centre for Late Antique & Medieval Studies, 2016), 71.

³⁸⁹ E.g. Gregory of Tours, *Passio*, ed. Krush, 383; trans. McDermitt, 84.

³⁹⁰ See also Eileen Joy, "The Old English Seven Sleepers, Eros, and the Unincorporable Infinite of the Human Person," in *Anonymous Interpolations in Ælfric's Lives of Saints* (Medieval Institute Publications, 2011), 71–96.

³⁹¹ Gregory of Tours, *Passio*, viii, ed. Krush 385; trans. McDermitt, 85.

gathered against him appear to be followers of Decius. Greedy for a rediscovered treasure they suppose is being kept from them, the citizens begin to repeat the persecuting impulse of their ancestors, gathering together in search of a wrong-doer they can dispossess. The interrogation escalates because of the misinterpretations of each party. Emulating the paranoia and persecution of the “pagan” Ephesus past, the Christian citizens nearly carry out the martyrdom Malchus had avoided in the age of Decius.

Only the late-arriving revelation of the miracle diffuses the tension within the community. In each version of the story, a representative intervenes to ask Malchus the questions that ultimately expose his miraculous travel through time.³⁹² The Christians now recognize the irony behind their accusations that Malchus has concealed “treasure.” They have indeed discovered a “treasure,” but – as Jacob of Sarug puts it– it is the “treasure of life” made “manifest” in the sleepers themselves.³⁹³ This sense of discovery is reinforced by the excavation of the tablet at the mouth of the cave. While this artifact has no intrinsic value, it confirms the miraculous identity of the sleepers and anticipates their resurrection in the moment of their burial. Its discovery is a collective and ritual act that is enhanced by the presence of an additional figure in the story’s final act: the emperor.

Just as the story of the Sleepers of Ephesus follows the hagiographic models of martyrology to emphasize the difference of time between Christian persecution and Christian hegemony, it uses the figure of the emperor to reexamine the relationship between church and

³⁹² In Jacob the interlocutor is a “Sophist”. In Gregory it is “the Bishop Marinus.” In Greek “Marinus.” In Gregory of Tours’s version, it is Marinus who recognizes the break in time, but Malchus who is the first to identify its theological significance: “I thought that I with my brothers had slept only one night, but, as I hear, the course of many years has passed during our sleep. And the Lord has aroused me with my brothers that every age might know that the resurrection (*resurrection*) of the dead will come to pass. Therefore follow me and I will show you the brothers who have arisen (*resurrexerunt*) with me,” trans. McDermott, *Gregory of Tours: Minor Works*, 81. He sees the miracle as a symbolic act for “every age” (“*omne seculum*”), gesturing not only to the unfamiliar “present” before him, but also to the readers of the text, for whom Ephesus and Theodosius are a far away memory.

³⁹³ Guidi, *Testi Orientali*, 22-3, 27-9; “Acta Antiquora,” 388F, 389A.

state in the Late Antique empire. The awakening of the sleepers is preceded by the fear of a heresy that challenges the reality of a bodily resurrection, threatening to destabilize the newly converted Christians of the Empire. According to Gregory to Gregory of Tours, the sleepers awake at the time in which “that unclean sect of the Sadducees arose, wishing to destroy the hope of resurrection, saying that the dead do not rise.”³⁹⁴ Here we have another act of *anagenesis*, as a 5th-century approach to Christian doctrine is associated with the “Sadducees,” a Jewish sect prominent at the end of the Second Temple period who rejected the idea of Eschatological resurrection. Playing on the various forms of the word *surgere* (“to rise”) in Latin, Gregory ironically suggests that this heresy that denies the resurrection is itself a resurgence of Christ’s biblical opponents. By conflating Judaism and Christian “heresy,” Gregory relies on a long-standing strategy of Christian polemic, placing both groups in opposition to an eternal, original form of faith. Christians who deny this doctrine are cast as receding back into a “Jewish” past. So are Jews themselves, despite the fact that the Rabbinical communities of Jesus’ time and of Gregory’s era also believed in the resurrection. In drawing such equivalences across time, such acts of *anagenesis* often collapse more categories and communities than those explicitly invoked.

This conflict is presented as both global and personal since the emperor Theodosius II himself is wracked with doubt about the nature of resurrection. Though Decius has passed into history and Christianity has become the dominant religion of the empire, a new risk of persecution looms in the prospect of a heretical emperor. The fortuitous emergence of the sleepers resolves this conflict and allows the emperor to witness the truth of the doctrine of bodily resurrection firsthand. The emperor is both an individual and a symbolic representative of

³⁹⁴ Gregory of Tours, *Passio*, v, ed. Krush, 382; trans. McDermitt, 83; “Cujus in tempore immunda illa Saducaeorum secta surrexit, volens evertere spem resurrectionis dicens: Quia mortui non resurgunt.”

Roman rule. In the story, he is “Theodosius,” often assumed by scholars to be Theodosius II (401-450 C.E).³⁹⁵ After learning of the sleepers’ miraculous preservation, the emperor arrives in Ephesus and joins Malchus and the Bishop in a procession to the holy cave. In Gregory of Tours’ account:

While [the Emperor and the people of Ephesus] were ascending the mountain, the sainted martyrs came out to meet Augustus, and their faces gleamed with virtue like the sun. And Augustus fell to the earth and worshipped them, glorifying God. And rising he kissed them and wept on the neck of each one of them, saying: ‘I see your faces as if I saw my Lord Jesus Christ when He called Lazarus from the tomb, to Whom I offer unlimited thanks because He has not withdrawn from me the hope of resurrection.’³⁹⁶

In this critical passage, the resonances are both personal and universal, historical and eschatological. As Theodosius comes face-to-face with the saints, the narrative ceases to use his personal name or his common title of *imperator* and refers to him instead as “Augustus.”

Theodosius is made to echo the empire and the first bearer of the title “Augustus,” Octavian Caesar (d. 14 CE), whose reign is famously linked in Christian history with the birth of Jesus. The heresy which, Gregory claims, has been troubling Theodosius and threatening the empire is identified as that of “the Sadducees,” the priestly opponents of Jesus in Jerusalem. The denial of the resurrection is portrayed as a theological challenge from the age of Christ, rising again. In the “present” to threaten the church in a moment of tenuous success and continued vulnerability. As the first “pagan” emperor, Augustus evokes the memory of Decius; Theodosius – if turned heretic – risks sliding back into the persecutions of the past. However, coming face-to-face with the risen saints dispels the emperor’s doubts. In his genuflection before the risen saints,

³⁹⁵ In some later sources, Theodosius II is confused or conflated with his grandfather Theodosius I (r. 379-395 CE). See below.

³⁹⁶ Gregory of Tours, *Passio*, 11, ed. Krush 386; trans McDermitt, 85: “Ascendentibus autem illis omnibus, egressi sunt Sancti martyres in obviam Augusto, & factæ sunt facies eorum tamquam sol in virtute fulgentes; ceciditque Augustus in terram: & adoravit eos glorificans Deum. Et surgens osculatus est eos, ac flevit super collum uniuscujusque eorum dicens: Sic video facies vestras, tamquam si videam Dominum meum Jesum Christum, quando vocavit Lazarum de monumento; cui immensas gratias refero, quod non fraudavit me spe resurrectionis.”

Theodosius becomes the generic representative of the empire twinned in time with the life of Christ and the spread of the Christian faith. Echoing the memory of Octavian, Decius, and all *Augusti* past, present, and future, Theodosius' words and deeds demonstrate that the secular order must defer to sacred rule.

Looking at the risen sleepers, Theodosius remarks, "I see your faces as if I saw my Lord Jesus Christ when He called Lazarus from the tomb." Like the invocation of "*Augustus*" and the "Sadducees," this statement *anagenetically* transports the emperor into the landscape and "timescape" of the Bible, referring to the episode in John 11 where Jesus miraculously summoned a recently deceased man to emerge from his tomb. However, Theodosius' words reverse the structure of the Gospel narrative.³⁹⁷ As the risen dead come out from the cave, the sleepers would seem to be the typological equivalent of Lazarus in the story, but instead, they are compared to "Christ." The "hope of resurrection," displaced into the future, is granted to Theodosius himself, making him the "Lazarus" of the occasion. The several shining faces of the sleepers reflect such a "face-to-face" encounter, one promised ultimately to each Christian but mediated here through the figures of saints and emperors. Each of the sleepers is Christ but not quite, and Theodosius is a multitude: Augustus, Lazarus, Decius, himself, and a model of the "Christian" ruler who stands on the precipice of becoming a new tyrant.

Using acts of *anagenesis*, the Christian legend of the sleepers of Ephesus adapts and appropriates the folk motif of long sleep to teach a lesson about temporality. While the religious landscape was radically transformed between the ages of Decius and Theodosius, the political hegemony of the empire remained. The emperors had transformed from persecutors to patrons of

³⁹⁷ The Apostle Paul, in a Platonic turn of phrase, contrasts the present and promised worlds: "We see now through a glass in a dark manner; but then face to face" ("*Videmus nunc per speculum in aenigmate: tunc autem facie ad faciem,*" 1 Corinthians 13:12). A similar scriptural quotation is Revelation 22:4, where believers are assured they will "see the face of

the Christian faith, a change the narrative of conversion in the Sleepers legend tries to reconcile. The legend begins by establishing the age “before,” when the political fortunes of Christianity (“the true religion”) are still under the heel of pagan rulers. It then contrasts this age with a Christian “present,” though one in which the control of an “orthodox” faith is more tenuous and precarious than one would hope. The story plays on the tensions that threaten a multitude of communities whose sense of collective identity extends across both space and time: the Roman Empire, the citizens of Ephesus, and the tenuously “universal” Christian church. The return of the sleepers is an intrusion of the “time of martyrs” into a present rife with ecclesiastical conflict, heretical threat, and risk of new imperially-led persecutions. This miraculous occurrence affirms the emperor’s belief in the “right” faith, showing that God will ultimately provide present (and future signs) of orthodox belief to his community. Preserved in the cave but outside of time, the sleepers are a manifest artifact of the past who show the citizens the reality of their present faith and their potential to re-enact the same cycles of violence and sin as their predecessors.

The resolution of the story is both historical and eschatological: the *inventio* of the tablet, attesting to the sleepers’ history, allows the community to recognize them as a living relic and as a sign of a future resurrection that will eliminate ignorance and heresy by bringing the world together into a single communal act of judgement. The coin that signifies a “treasure” lying in wait outside the city’s walls and the tablet whose discovery confirms the sleepers’ untimely internment in the age of Decius are the key material testament to the miraculous privation of the sleepers from the flow of time. Through their miraculous translation from one time to another, the sleepers highlight the distinction between these different historical times and their uncomfortable familiarity. The suspension of time allows the sleepers to appear in a “present” that risks slipping back into the violence and uncertainty of the past. By *anagenetically* recasting

God” at the resurrection.

the long-sleepers story into an *inventio* narrative about the discovery of martyrs in the midst of a turbulent city, the story of the Sleepers of Ephesus affirms God's control over His church and people even as they risk dissension and dissolution.

Conclusion

These stories play on the epistemic tensions brought by one past into another so that the Christian community, threatened by its own propensity to dissolution and persecution, is reconciled by a reminder of its ultimate unitary resurrection. Yet the insertion of the story of the sleepers into a specific place and historical moment – and the expectation that the supernatural narrative can be immediately interpreted as an affirmation of exegetical authority – invited several worldly challenges to this otherworldly occurrence. The popularity of the legend resulted in the outgrowth of several different strands of the narrative both in textual sources and in parallel oral traditions, all providing variant answers to some of the most fundamental questions. Discrepancies developed between the names and number of the saints, the location and name of the cave which they fled to outside of Ephesus, and the length in years of the sleepers' slumber.³⁹⁸ While the appearance of the Sleepers of Ephesus promised a miraculous resolutions

³⁹⁸ While in the cave the sleepers can comfortably exist out of times' flow, their return to the world must be timed just right to fulfill historically their divinely ordained destiny. The most commonly reported number for the length of the saints sleep, "372 years," – preserved in Jacob of Sarug's account and the descendants of the Greek version – exceeds the distance between Decius' and Theodosius' reigns by more than a century. By this reckoning, the sleepers have actually overslept. Many of the transmitters of the legend were aware of this inconsistency, but chose to preserve the figure given in their sources. *The Chronicle of Zuqnin* and the *Chronicle of Eutychius* both split the story according to the "historical" dates of the emperor's reigns. Yet *The Chronicle of Zuqnin*, 316, includes a reckoning of "309" years for the , equivalent to the Qur'anic account. Different manuscripts of Eutychius' Arabic Christian chronicle include either "372," or else "148" a number which that be closer to the reign of the Theodosius I (r. 379-395 CE). See Bredey, *Annalenwerk Des Eutychios*, 88 n. 10. In the 13th century, Jacobus de Voragine felt compelled to address this temporal inconsistency in his *Golden Legend*; while he reported the figure of "370 years" in the narrative, in a postscript he reconciled the length of the sleep with the distance between the emperors' reigns, concluding "the saints must have slept only 195 years" (*Golden Legend*, 401-4). Louis Massignon, *Les Sept Dormants*, 64, suggests interpreting the number mystically, comparing dates from the mid-fifth century with earlier events in Christian history, such as the "persécution de Néron" or "la Dormition de la Vierge, qui est figure par la Caverne".

to problems of doctrinal and hermeneutical ambiguity, the message of the miracle was challenged by the contradicting witnesses of the Ephesian narrative, not to mention the specters of other sleepers in the wider world of literature and folklore. The troubling multiplicity of the stories recorded threatened to overturn its assertions of the churches' ultimate unity. It is in the midst of these mercurial traditions concerning long sleepers that the episode of the "*aṣḥāb al-kahf*" ("companions of the cave") appears in the 18th *Surah* of the Qur'ān.³⁹⁹

In following different strands of the sleeper's narrative across Jewish, Christian, and Islamic traditions, our concern is not to overly fixate on which versions of the story came first or which specific accounts are responsible for influencing others. This choice is not meant to dismiss the temporal evolution of the story and plentiful evidence of cross-pollination, which inevitably appear in the course of the study. In theorizing an idea of *anagenesis*, I am more concerned with how the story was claimed to belong to one faith or to all and how these conscious or unconscious negotiations of tradition were used to advance claims upon both the identity of the sleepers and the nature of time itself. These stories were also invested in the formation and the maintenance of exegetical cultures, redeploying the story of long-sleepers to advance particular interpretations of scriptural passages or religious doctrine. The proliferation of these stories, in turn, made them into exegetical objects themselves.

³⁹⁹ For a translation of the Quran with a collection of classical commentaries, see Seyyed Hossein Nasr et al., eds., *The Study Quran: A New Translation and Commentary* (New York: Harper One, 2015), 731-9.

2.2 Claiming the Sleepers and Negotiating Authorities in Islamic Tradition

Introduction

The titular story of *sūrat al-kahf* (*surah of the Cave*), Q 18:9-26, tells of a group of young men who were born into the wrong time, believing in one God in the midst of a polytheistic age. Seeking refuge in a cave to practice their faith freely, these men are “struck” by God and placed into the cave “for a number of years” until they are “resurrected” (18:11-12). When the youths awake, they believed they have only slept “a day or part of a day” (18:19), but the Qur’ān reckons the length of their sleep at three-hundred and nine years (18:25). The Qur’ān acknowledges the many disparate details that its audience might have heard concerning these “companions of the cave,” but it emphasizes the eschatological meaning of the miracle instead. The sleepers awake “that they might know that God’s promise is true, and that there is no doubt about the Hour” (18:21). This “Hour” (ar. *al-sā’ata*) is the last moment of time, the “Day of Judgement” and “Day of Resurrection.” Then “God’s promise” will be fulfilled: the souls of the dead will be returned to living flesh, and all humankind will stand together in judgement before God.

While acts of *anagenesis* seek to rediscover clues, equivalences, and continuities to different times and signs in sacred history and scriptural tradition, the Qur’ān claims the authority of direct revelation, an assertion that offers an absolute line of communication between God and an emergent community of “believers.”⁴⁰⁰ In its utterances, however, the scripture also seeks to resolve questions about theology and history.⁴⁰¹ Many passages of the Qur’ān self-

⁴⁰⁰ On the original audience of the Quran, See Fred M. Donner, *Muhammad and the Believers* (Harvard University Press, 2010); Donner, 58, contends that the term “believer” (*mu’amin*) rather than “Muslim” served as the primary term of self-identification in the early Islamic community that coalesced around the preaching of the Quran.

⁴⁰¹ For a recent study on the state of Qur’anic scholarship, see Devin Stewart, “Reflections on the State of the Art in Western Qur’anic Studies,” in *Islam and Its Past: Jāhiliyya, Late Antiquity, and the Qur’an*, ed. Carol Bakhos and Michael Cook (Oxford University Press, 2017), 4–68..

consciously address what John Wansbrough termed the “sectarian milieu”; the Qur’ān evaluates the theology and traditions of Jews, Christians, and other religious communities in the Near East and settles debates with its present revelation.⁴⁰² The scripture portrays itself as a resolution to the multiplicities that have emerged in monotheistic belief, revealing and reaffirming the original form of faith in preparation for an approaching eschaton.

As Sidney Griffith and Gabriel Said-Reynolds have observed, the narrative recounted in the Qur’ānic appears related to the early Syriac account of the Sleepers of Ephesus, especially the one attributed to Jacob of Sarug.⁴⁰³ Like the Ephesian story, the Qur’ān describes the sleeper’s flight from the persecution from those who would have them worship other gods (18:14-16); the miraculous preservation brought upon their bodies by God (18:17-8); their ignorance of the passing of time, and the furtive journey of “one among them” into the city bearing money to buy food, and the continued fear among the sleepers that they will be persecuted for their beliefs after awaking (18:19-20). Other features in the Qur’ānic narrative, such as the presence of a dog watching over the sleeping youths (18:18), do not appear directly in the Syriac tradition but are referenced in accounts of pilgrims visiting the shrine in the 6th century CE.⁴⁰⁴ In its presentation of the story as one whose details are disputed, the Qur’ān

⁴⁰² See John E. Wansbrough, *The Sectarian Milieu: Content and Composition of Islamic Salvation History* (Oxford University Press, 1978). While Wansbrough’s late date for Qur’anic composition has been rejected by a re-evaluation of manuscript evidence, many scholars continue to support theories of multiple authors and incremental composition of the Qur’anic Canon. See Charles J. Adams, “Reflections on the Work of John Wansbrough,” *Method & Theory in the Study of Religion* 9, no. 1 (January 1, 1997): 75–90. On further connections between the Quran and Jewish and Christian traditions, see Angelika Neuwirth, *Scripture, Poetry, and the Making of a Community: Reading the Qur’an as a Literary Text* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014); John C. Reeves, *Bible and Qur’an: Essays in Scriptural Intertextuality* (Leiden: Brill, 2004).

⁴⁰³ Sidney Griffith, “Christian Lore and the Arabic Qur’ān: The ‘Companions of the Cave’ in the Surat al-Kahf and in Syriac Christian Tradition,” in *The Qur’ān in Its Historical Context*, ed. Gabriel Said Reynolds (London: Routledge, 2008), 109–38. 124-5; Gabriel Said Reynolds, *The Qur’ān and Its Biblical Subtext* (London: Routledge, 2010), 167-185.

⁴⁰⁴ Griffith, “Christian Lore,” 127, suggests that the inclusion of the dog may have emerged out of Jacob of Sarug’s declaration that God placed “watcher” (Syr. *’irā*) to look after the sleepers’ bodies while they slept, Reynolds, *Qur’an Seminar Commentary*, 217, similarly observes that while this term might initially refer to an angel, Jacob of Sarug continually refers to the metaphor of Christ as “Good Shepherd” throughout the hagiography and casts the persecutors of the sleepers as “wolves”. As a protector of the saints from wolves, it is possible that the “watcher” was imagined to first metaphorically – and then literally – to refer to a sheep-dog. Mention of a dog also appears in a pilgrimage itinerary of a

seems to acknowledge multiple oral sources rather than a singular textual exemplar.⁴⁰⁵

While the Qur'ān here (and elsewhere) acknowledges the connections of the narratives it discusses to the accounts of other religious traditions, its account of the Companions of the Cave detaches the figures it describes from a Christian tradition. Instead of calling the sleeping youths Christians, the Qur'ān describes them as “young men who believed” (“*fiṭ'yatun āmanū*” 18:13).⁴⁰⁶ Like Abraham, Jesus, and the other prophets enumerated by the Qur'ān, the sleepers are disassociated from a Jewish or Christian identity and depicted instead as part of a prophetic tradition that has maintained the true tenants of religion since the beginning of time. The Qur'ān mentions the establishment of a religious shrine upon the site of the cave itself to commemorate this miracle (18:21), yet the building is described as *masjid* (“mosque”) rather than a Christian structure.⁴⁰⁷ While the Qur'ān's emphasis on eschatological resurrection and judgement is similar to the theme of Ephesian tradition, it further distinguishes its position on the nature of God: No “Son of God” will preside over the final reckoning according to the Qur'ān's account. The assertion that God “makes no one a partner unto Him in His Judgement” (18:26) at the end of the narrative ensures that the ultimate eschatological solution of the Sleeper's riddle is an Islamic one.

Just as it attempts to resolve the questions that the emerging community of Muslims has

Latin Christian pilgrim named Theodosius. See Theodosius, *Theodosius de situ Terrae sanctae im ächten Text*, ed. J. Gildemeister (Bonn: Adolph Marcus, 1882). Stopping in Ephesus on his way to the Holy Land, Theodosius remarks that the city contains the shrine of “the seven sleeping brothers and their pet *Viricanus* at their feet,” §76.

⁴⁰⁵ Theodosius, *Theodosius de situ Terrae sanctae im ächten Text*, ed. J. Gildemeister (Bonn: Adolph Marcus, 1882), §76.

⁴⁰⁶ Donner, *Believers*, 58, contends that the term “believer” (*mu'amin*) rather than “Muslim” served as the primary term of self-identification in the early Islamic community that coalesced around the preaching of the Quran.

⁴⁰⁷ Qur'ān22:40 mentions of several different spaces of worship. “*Kanīsa*” (“Church”) and *ṣawāmi'* (“Monastery”) appear to refer to Christian places. *Masjid* means “a place where performs prayers of prostration” (*sajada*). On the development of mosques in early Islam and their relationship to other houses of worship, see Jeremy Johns, “The ‘House of the Prophet’ and the Concept of the Mosque,” in *Bayt Al-Maqdis: Jerusalem and Early Islam*, ed. Julian Raby and Jeremy Johns (Oxford University Press, 1999), 59–112. There is a “dispute” that appears in various versions of the Christian tradition; Theodosius initially considers carrying the bodies of the saints to a church within the city, but the sleepers appear to the emperor in a dream to insist they would prefer to stay within their own cave and that a new church should be established there.

about these other religious traditions, the Qur'ānic account of the sleepers is both allusive and decisive. In this chapter, I explore how traditions of long-sleep continued to expand, evolve, and be deployed in forms of *anagenesis* in connection to the Qur'ān and the emergence of Islam. Whereas the legends of long-sleepers in Judaism and Christianity appear in exegetical texts and hagiographies, the account of the Companions of the Cave appeared within the central and canonical scripture of Islam. This scriptural source made identifying and understanding the sleepers' story and its religious significance paramount for Muslims. The Qur'ān's referentiality and compositional complexity produced a new set of questions about the story of the sleepers that, in turn, would precipitate a new exegetical tradition to explain its message.

Interpreting the meaning of the Qur'ānic account presented problems for the diverse and rapidly expanding communities of Muslims who lacked the same "epistemic space" as the Qur'ān's initial audience.⁴⁰⁸ In their attempts to explain the meaning and context of the Qur'ānic story, Muslim exegetes encountered and appropriated the from other Near Eastern traditions. Since the story of the Companions of the Cave much more closely resembled the Christian story of the Sleepers of Ephesus than the Jewish narratives of Honi and Abimelech, Islamic exegesis of the story primarily adapted narrative material from Christian sources. Yet, in an effort to define a true "Islamic" narrative against a multitude of disparate traditions identified by the Qur'ānic text, Muslim scholars also asserted that Jewish communities believed in the story of the Companions of the Cave as well, even suggesting it was part of the "Torah" itself. Among Muslim scholars, different forms of *anagenesis* offered solutions for understanding the contexts and meanings of the scriptural narrative. They also enabled the renegotiation of connections between narrative traditions, re-locating the sources of various long sleeping traditions within the

⁴⁰⁸ Angelika Neuwirth, "Locating the Qur'ān in the Epistemic Space of Late Antiquity," in *Books and Written Culture of the Islamic World: Studies Presented to Claude Gilliot on the Occasion of His 75th Birthday*, ed. Andrew Rippin and

Qur'ānic text, and constructing a genealogy of Islamic authority that could obscure and replace connections to other religious communities.

Placing the Sleepers' Story in Islamic History

As discussed above, the acts of *anagenesis* deployed within the Christian story of the Sleepers of Ephesus rested on the “conversion” of the Roman Empire and emphasized the periodic shift between Roman imperial persecution and Roman imperial sponsorship of Christianity. This temporal logic made little sense in an Islamic history. While the Qur'ān did not identify a specific historical context for the story, Muslim scholars placed the episode in relation to different chronometric systems and in relation to other figures and events referenced in the scripture. A key early source in this development is Ibn Ishāq.⁴⁰⁹ A pioneer in the genre of *tārīkh* (“history”), Ibn Ishāq composed a chronicle spanning the period between the creation of the world and the life of Muhammad.⁴¹⁰ In an effort to emplace the story of the Companions of the Cave within this universal history, Ibn Ishāq's account relies on Christian traditions of the Sleepers of Ephesus, sharing many affinities with a Syriac version of the legend preserved in the *Chronicle of Zuqnin*.⁴¹¹ This resemblance is especially clear in the specific forms of personal

Roberto Tottoli, 2015, 159–79.

⁴⁰⁹ For versions of Ibn Ishāq's account, see Al-Ṭabarī, *Jāmi' al-bayān 'an ta'wīl āy al-Qur'ān*, 26 vols. (al-Riyād: Dār 'Ālam al-Kutub, 2003), 18:19, vol. 15, 196-207, and Al-Tha'labī, *Qiṣaṣ al-Anbiyā'*, 378-386; trans. Brinner, *Lives of the Prophets* 702-716. Al-Ṭabarī also included excerpts of Ibn Ishāq's narrative in his own universal history; See Al-Ṭabarī, *Ṭārīkh al-Ṭabarī: tārikh al-rusūl wa-al-mulūk*, 11 vols. (al-Qāhirah: Dār al-Ma'ārif, 1990) vol. 3, 5-10. For an English translation, see Al-Ṭabarī, *The History of Al-Tabari Vol. 4: The Ancient Kingdoms*, trans. Moshe Perlman (SUNY Press, 1987), 155-9. Guillaume, *Life of Muhammad*, xxx-xxxi, includes a summary of authors who use material from Ibn Ishāq.

⁴¹⁰ Guillaume, *Life*, xxvii. A pioneer in the genre of *tārīkh* (“history”), Ibn Ishāq composed a universal chronicle spanning from the creation of the world through the life of Muhammad.

⁴¹¹ See Amir Harrak, ed., *The Chronicle of Zuqnin: Parts I and II. From the Creation to the Year 506/7 AD*, (Piscataway: Gorgias Press, 2017). The Chronicle was erroneously attributed to Dionysius of Tel Mahre (d. 845 CE), a Syriac Patriarch of Antioch, though is now believed to have been compiled at the monastery of Zuqnin, ca. 775 CE. account of the Seven Sleepers in the *Chronicle of Zuqnin* presents itself as a translation of an earlier Greek version attributed to John of Ephesus (505-585 CE), Huber, *Wanderlegende*, 37-8. For further discussion of the *Chronicle of Zuqnin*, see below.

names and toponyms that occur throughout the story.⁴¹² In many respects, these Christian connections lead to a setting and a story quite similar to earlier accounts of the Sleepers of Ephesus. The Companions live in the city of Ephesus (Ar. *Ifisūs* or *Afsūs*); they go to sleep during the reign of “the king of Rome, Duqyānūs [Decius],” and awake in the age of “Tandūsīs,” – just in time to resolve a religious controversy concerning the doctrine of resurrection.⁴¹³ As in the Christian narratives, the buried tablets are key element of the story, serving as an additional confirmation of the sleepers’ miracle and providing a fastidious register of the saints’ names.⁴¹⁴ In his study of the various strands of the sleeper tradition, Michael Huber goes so far as to assert that Ibn Ishāq’s narrative “is to be classified among the pure (Ger. *rein*) Christian texts, because Ishāq has merely bedecked his Christian source with additions from the Arabic tradition.”⁴¹⁵

Yet such an assessment gives Ibn Ishāq too little credit since his narrative does far more than simply incorporate a few Qur’ānic quotations into the Christian legend at the appropriate moments. While Ibn Ishāq (and his earlier Muslim informants) must have relied on Christian sources to compose his account, several acts of *anagenesis* within the narrative reconcile those Christian traditions with a Qur’ānic insistence that Islam was both the original and eternal form of religious belief. This narrative is set in the time before the life of Muhammad and the revelation of the Qur’ān, yet it is also set in a time when Muslims are imagined as already existing alongside Christians, Jews, and pagans.⁴¹⁶ Ibn Ishāq’s account begins as follows:

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⁴¹³ Al-Tha‘labī, *Qiṣaṣ al-Anbiyā’*, 378, trans. Brinner, *Lives*, 703. Al-Ṭabarī, *Tafsīr*, vol. 15, 196, on 18:19.

⁴¹⁴ Al-Tha‘labī, *Qiṣaṣ al-Anbiyā’*, 384. Trans. Brinner, *Lives of the Prophets*, 712. In Al-Ṭabarī, the edition of the History presents and numbers nine separate figures (vol. 4, p. 156), while the Tafsīr records eight (18:10). The orthography of these unfamiliar names is unstable in the various Arabic records, and no systematic study of the manuscript traditions has been undertaken to my knowledge to identify what version of Ibn Ishāq’s register possibly represents the closest account to the original.

⁴¹⁵ Huber, *Wanderlegende*, 18.

⁴¹⁶ An articulation of this idea appears in Q 2:135-6, which instructs Muslims what to reply when questioned by Jews or Christians: “And they say, ‘Be Jews or Christians and you shall be rightly guided.’ Say, ‘Rather, [ours is] the creed of Abraham, a *ḥanīf* (“monotheist,”) and he was not of the idolaters.’ Say, ‘We believe in God, an in that which was sent down unto us, and in that which was sent down unto Abraham, Ishamael, Isaac, Jacob, and the Tribes, and in what Moses

The people of the Gospel became disordered, sins increased among them and kings oppressed them, so that they worshiped idols and sacrificed to false gods. Among them there were remnants who followed the religion of the Messiah holding fast to the worship of God and to His unity.⁴¹⁷

This is the same narrative of Roman persecution and forced polytheism that begins the Christian accounts, but in this case, the struggles display the instability of Christian belief. The “people of the gospel” (*ahl al-Injīl*), who prove weak in the face of persecution, are contrasted to those who still hold the “religion of the Messiah” and acknowledge the “unity” (*tawḥīd*) of God.⁴¹⁸ Jesus and his followers are imagined as those who reject the testimony of a “Gospel” that proclaims him the Son of God and insist instead upon the unity of God, a cornerstone of the Qur’ān’s attack on Christian trinitarian doctrine.⁴¹⁹ In an act of *anagenesis*, the Islamic account inserts this key distinction between the “religion of Jesus” and “Christianity” into the sleepers narrative, driving a wedge between the faith of the prophet and the faith of his future followers. Christian faith in Jesus’ divinity is given a separate and subsequent beginning, one envisioned as a backsliding into idolatry that originated out of the weakness of its community to resist persecution.

Throughout the story, the religious identity of the principal characters is shifted from Christians to “believers,” and the trappings and institutions of Christianity are excised or replaced. While the figures in the Christian account bury a tablet at the site of the cave more as a memorial of the youths’ death than an expected confirmation of their resurrection, their Muslim equivalents are described “believing men in the court of king Duqyānūs,” possess their own preternatural sense of the scene’s significance, hoping “perhaps God will disclose about the lads to a believing people before the Day of Resurrection, and this will inform the one whom God has

and Jesus were given, and in what the prophets were given from their Lord. We make no distinction among any of them, and unto Him we submit (“*wa-naḥnu lahu muslimūn*”).”

⁴¹⁷ Al-Tha‘labī, *Qiṣaṣ al-Anbiyā’*, 378, trans. Brinner, *Lives of the Prophets*, 702.

⁴¹⁸ Al-Ṭabarī’s version, *Tafsīr*, vol. 15, 196, on. 18:19, describes “the command (*Amr*) of Jesus, the son of Mary” rather than the “religion of the Messiah.”

given victory, about their story when they read this tablet.”⁴²⁰ As predicted, the world is troubled by questions of the eschaton the sleepers awake in the age of Tandūsīs: “during his reign the people split into sects, among them those who believed in Almighty God and learned that the Hour was true, and others who denied it.”⁴²¹ The theological dispute is put in the language of the Quranic narrative, describing the belief in bodily resurrection in terms of “the Hour” (18:21). Rather than different categories of Christian or a “heresy of the Sadducees” there are “those who believe” and those who do not.

In this way, the story of the Companions can be imagined as recovered evidence of Islam in the age before revelation, so that Christian narratives about their lives can be appropriated as originally Islamic stories. Ibn Ishāq’s account also emphasizes the epistemic tensions in the story. He suggests that Tamlikhā makes many clandestine journeys from the cave into the city to buy food before Duqyānūs has learned of their flight.⁴²² By making Tamlikhā’s adventure into the city one of habit, the narrative highlights the disjuncture between past and present when he leaves the cave after his long-sleep and expects to follow his regular routine. These epistemic tensions are punctuated with signs of the world’s (and the narrative’s) Islamic transformation: “When Tamlikhā saw the gate of the city,” for instance, he does not see a cross, but rather “a banner of the believing people.”⁴²³ Ibn Ishāq’s account thus displays how the earliest Islamic exegetical narratives concerning the Companions of the Cave readily adopted details from the Christian traditions while also *anagenetically* reshaping terms and times used in the story to place it within an overarching Islamic history.

While Ibn Ishāq’s history emplaced the sleepers’ story within a singular narrative of time,

⁴¹⁹cf. Q 4:171-2.

⁴²⁰ Al-Tha‘labī, *Qiṣaṣ al-Anbiyā’*, 380-1, trans. Brinner, *Lives of the Prophets*, 706. These characters are named Tandarūs and Rubās, equivalent to Athenodorus and Arbus in the *Chronicle of Zuqnin*, 222-3.

⁴²¹ Al-Tha‘labī, *Qiṣaṣ al-Anbiyā’*, 381, trans. Brinner, *Lives of the Prophets*, 706-7.

⁴²² Al-Tha‘labī, *Qiṣaṣ al-Anbiyā’*, 380. Trans. Brinner, *Lives of the Prophets*, 705.

his account now survives only in fragments. As Peter Wright asserts, the redaction of Ibn Ishāq’s material reflected a “revisionist” movement among Muslim scholars, one that aimed to dissociate Islamic tradition from the Christian and Jewish sources that had been readily embraced by earlier generations.⁴²⁴ Rather than a single answer to the historical context of the story, a multitude of other potential settings emerged. While the number of stories about the Companions provided a troubling multiplicity for understanding the original account of the scripture, each potential explanation also reinforced the overarching emphasis on the authority of the Quran and its interpreter. Al-Ṭabarī’s *Tārīkh* includes a condensed version of Ibn Ishāq, and sets it alongside other potential explanations for the historical context of the Quranic episode. In attempting to locate the moment in time that Companions lived, died, and rose again, Al-Ṭabarī states:

Some assert that their story and withdrawal to the cave took place before Christ, that Christ told his people about them, and that God awakened them from their sleep after Christ’s ascension. That is, God awakened them during the interval between Christ and Muhammad. God knows best how it happened. Muslim scholars are agreed that it took place after Christ. No scholar vested in antiquity will deny that it happened in the period of the regional princes.⁴²⁵

Al-Ṭabarī here reports that some Muslims believe the sleepers slept before the life of Jesus, though he himself appears unconvinced; he does not identify a specific source for the suggestion and ends the report with “God knows best,” the classic formula of expressing doubt. One Islamic narrative that does endorse this position appears in Al-Tha‘labī’s *Qiṣaṣ al-Anbiyā’* attributed to the testimony of Ali. In this version of the tale, Tamlikhā learns of his miraculous sleep when he is recognized by his own grandson, now an old man:

Then the old man fell down on Tamlikhā’s hands and feet, kissing them, and said, ‘This is my grandfather, by the Lord of the Ka’bah, and he was one of the youths who fled from Duqyānūs, the tyrannical king, to the Powerful One of Heaven and

⁴²³ Al-Tha‘labī, *Qiṣaṣ al-Anbiyā’*, 382. Trans. Brinner, *Lives of the Prophets*, 708.

⁴²⁴ Wright, “Farewell *Khutba*,” 223,

⁴²⁵ Al-Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, vol. 3, 6-7. Trans. Perlman, *History*, vol. 4, 156.

Earth. Jesus told us their story and that they would return to life.’⁴²⁶

Much happened in two generations (and 309 years). Here the sleepers’ flight from Decius precedes the life of Jesus, who later teaches of their concealment and future return. This timeline renegotiates the relationship between the sleepers and both Jesus and Christianity. As in the Qur’ān and later exegesis, the narrative emphasizes the disparity between Jesus and the Christian religion which purports to follow him. The sleepers’ re-appearance confirms that believing Muslims preceded the prophet Jesus, and that Jesus himself prophesied a story that would appear within the Qur’ān. The sleepers, Jesus, and their knowing descendants, are all imagined as adherents of Islam and worshippers of the “Lord of the Ka’aba.” By *anagenetically* setting the sleepers’ story before the life of Christ, and by turning Jesus into a prophet of their return, this story situates all three historical moments in an Islamic history that is imagined as “before” any account of Christian hagiography.

Al-Ṭabarī is much more confident about the time in which the sleepers arose. The “period of the regional princes” is roughly the fifth century CE as in the Christian narrative. However, al-Ṭabarī defines this period not by Roman history, but by the “regional princes” who ruled the Lakhmids, Ghassanids, Himyarites, and other Arab kingdoms on the border between the Roman and Persian empires. Even when Muslim scholars placed the miracle within the same relative historical moment, “the era of the regional princes,” the story was no longer occurring within the timeframe of an imperial Christian chronology, in the midst of an era of Arab religious and political dissension that anticipated a united Islamic alternative. Even when the narrative of the Companions of the Cave remained set in the city of Ephesus, the time and space of the story were re-evaluated by Muslim scholars to incorporate it into their own periodization of the world before Muhammad.

⁴²⁶ Al-Tha‘labī, *Qiṣaṣ al-Anbiyā’*, 377. Trans. Brinner, *Lives of the Prophets*, 699.

The Riddle of al-Raqīm

Inventing a new genealogy of Islamic tradition meant shifting the locus of scholarly study in new directions. Another major site in the development of the Islamic sleeper's tradition was the genre of *tafsīr* ("interpretation"), or verse-by-verse commentary of the Qur'ān. Since the Islamic version of the long sleepers' narrative appears in the Qur'ān itself, its scriptural authority made identifying and understanding the sleeper's story and its religious significance paramount for Muslims. In the many forms of glosses in the *tafsīr* tradition, Muslim scholars offered explanations for scriptural cruxes, expanded and contextualized allusions and brief narratives presented in the Qur'ānic text, and described the "occasions of revelation" (*asbāb al-nuzūl*) which established when specific verses were revealed to the Prophet Muhammad.⁴²⁷ While the narrative details included in the *tafsīr* tradition are polyphonic and diffuse compared to the relatively straightforward narrative of Ibn Ishāq, the exegetical treatment of the Qur'ānic narrative likely represented the primary point of engagement with Muslims for understanding the story of the sleepers.

Like Ibn Ishāq's history, the *tafsīr* tradition served as a site for the transmission of details from the Christian narrative of the Sleepers of Ephesus into the Islamic narrative of the Companions of the Cave. At the same time, the generic conventions of *tafsīr* provided avenues for other forms of *anagenesis*, which renegotiated the genealogy of narrative traditions to reinforce a sense of exclusive Islamic authority. Since Muslim scholars preferred interpretations that could be traced back to Muslim transmitters, details that were adapted from Jewish and

⁴²⁷ This biographical element of Qur'anic exegesis was especially important in resolving contradictory instructions from different parts of the scripture. By identifying the historical "occasions of revelation" of different Qur'anic passages, scholars could identify which verses of the scripture were "abrogated" at a later point in time during the Prophet's life, and

Christian traditions were granted new literary pedigrees that attributed them to the companions of the Prophet. In other cases, new narratives about the sleepers emerged to dissociate the Qur'ānic narrative from the Christian tradition, placing it instead in the context of Arabian or Persian history.

Individual glosses in *tafsīr* can include extensive historical narratives; Ibn Ishāq's account, described above, appears in this way, parceled throughout the *tafsīr* of al-Ṭabarī (224–310/ 839–923). Yet such glosses could also construct ideas of history – and perform acts of *anagenesis* – in more diffuse forms of interpretation. Consider, for instance, the opening verse of the Qur'ānic passage that introduces the sleepers' narrative Q. 18:9: The verse mentions both “the companions of the cave and the *raqīm*” (“*aṣḥāba al-kaḥfi wa-l-raqīmi*,” 18:9), declaring both are among of the “signs” (*ayatinā*) God has placed in the world.⁴²⁸ *Al-raqīm*, is a *hapax legomenon* that appears nowhere else in the Qur'ānic corpus nor in any other example of early Arabic literature. The enigmatic term has garnered considerable attention from the earliest Muslim scholars of the Qur'ān through contemporary times.⁴²⁹ In advancing different interpretations of *al-Raqīm* and its significance, some Muslim scholars provided explanations that brought the story of the Companions closer to Christian tradition, while others set the Qur'ānic narrative apart from these predecessors. In the *tafsīr* tradition, the most popular interpretation of *al-raqīm* treats the word as meaning an “inscription,” referring – as in the

which verses were still in effect. See Andrew Rippin, “Abrogation,” in *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 3rd ed.

⁴²⁸ Arabic “*ayah*” (sign) is also the word used to refer to verses in the Qur'an.

⁴²⁹ Mehdy Shaddel, “Studia Onomastica Coranica: *Al-Raqīm*, Caput Nabataeae,” *Journal of Semitic Studies* LXII, no. 2 (2017): 303–18. [Cited above] Shaddel, “Caput Nabataeae” 304-5, has a helpful breakdown of the five major interpretations of the term in traditional exegesis. *Ar-raqīm* can be considered as a toponym, either referring to the city of the companions of the cave (1), the city of a different group of sleepers with a similar story (2), or the site of the cave itself (3). The most popular interpretation, “clearly inspired by Christian lore” is that *ar-raqīm* refers to a tablet placed at the site of the cave (4). The last interpretation suggests that *ar-raqīm* is the name of the companion's dog (5). Many modern scholars suggest emendations of the Qur'anic text to resolve the issue. See James A. Bellamy, “Al-Raqīm or al-Ruqūd? A Note on Sūrah 18:9,” *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 111, no. 1 (1991): 115–17, and Christoph Luxenberg, *The Syro-Aramaic Reading of the Koran: A Contribution to the Decoding of the Language of the Koran* (Berlin: H. Schiler, 2007), 80-85.

Christian tradition – to a book or tablet buried at the site of the cave by other faithful witnesses to the event.⁴³⁰ This is the sole interpretation offered in the *Tafsīr* of Muqātil ibn Sulayman (d. 150/CE). Muqātil claims *al-raqīm* refers to the “book written by the two pious judges” who were present “within the council of *Diqūs* the tyrant.”⁴³¹ As in the Christian legend and in Ibn Ishāq’s account, these judges, whom Muqātil names “Mātūs” and “Asūs,” write a record of the sleepers on a “tablet of lead” and bury it at the cave.⁴³² Muqātil’s interpretation connects the term to details in the sleeper’s narrative absent from the Qur’ānic account, but included in both Ibn Ishāq and the Christian legend.⁴³³ He supports this interpretation by observing that the Arabic root *r-q-m*, means “to mark, to count, to write,” Q 83:9 to reinforce this interpretation. This verse mentions a “*kitāb marqūm*,” (“book already written”) from which the good and evil deeds of mankind will be read at the last judgement.⁴³⁴ This example also alludes to the eschatological resonances in the Companions’ story by comparing the record of their burial to the book written by God for the eschaton. Muqātil’s excursus on *al-raqīm* offers only one potential solution, but it touches on the ways in which the Qur’ānic narrative might be read through multiple exegetical lenses. Like Al-Tha’labī’s interpretation of the “mysterious letters” as signs of the cosmos’

⁴³⁰ See Muqātil ibn Sulaymān al-Balkhī, *Tafsīr Muqātil ibn Sulaymān*, 3 vols. (Bayrūt, Lubnān: Dār al-Kutub al-‘Ilmīyah, 2003). The early *Tafsīr* of Muqātil ibn Sulaymān identifies “*ar-raqīm*” as the “book which was written by the two judges,” alluding to the tablet left at the cave in the Christian tradition. Muqātil ibn Sulaymān, *Tafsīr*, 18:9, vol. 2, p. 280. Muqātil considers the presence of this tablet at the site of the cave as a historical record devised by God to ensure that the sleeper’s identities are remembered. Yet he also interprets it as an analogical sign that the deeds of all will be recorded in a “*kitāb marqūm*,” (Qur’ān 83:9) and presented to mankind at the last judgement. Al-Ṭabarī, *Tafsīr*, 18:9, vol. 15, 159, similarly records an interpretation attributed to Ibn ‘Abbās that *ar-raqīm* refers to a piece of writing (“*kitāb*”), particularly a stone tablet (“*lah min al-ḥiḡāra*”) that was “placed upon the door of the cave” (“*ḍa’uhu ‘ala bāb al-kaḥf*”).

⁴³¹ Muqātil ibn Sulayman, *Tafsīr*, vol. 2, p. 280, v. 18:9.

⁴³² Muqātil ibn Sulayman, *Tafsīr*, vol. 2, p. 280, v. 18:9.

⁴³³ While the additions to the sleepers’ story are much sparser in Muqātil’s *Tafsīr* than in Ibn Ishāq’s account, they also show a clear connection to the Christian tradition. Rather than explicitly mentioning Ephesus or any other city, Muqātil refers generically to “the village” (ar. *al-qarya*) where the story is set, Muqātil *Tafsīr*, vol. 2, p. 280, v. 18:9. His *Tafsīr* names only two of the sleepers: “Maksalamīnā, who was the oldest among them” and “Tamlīkhā” who is sent into the city with “dirhams” to buy food for his companions, *Tafsīr*, vol. 2, 284, v. 18:19. As in Ibn Ishāq, the spellings of these names match closest with the Syriac tradition, and point to a parallel with the *Chronicle of Zuqnīn*. When Tamlīkhā comes to “the village,” they recognize his money as the “dirhams of Diqūs the Tyrant,” *Tafsīr*, vol. 2, 284, v. 18:20. The builder of the “structure” upon the cave is called “*Bandāsīs*,” an apparent corruption of Theodosius’s name, Tandūsīs, as it appears in other Arabic texts, *Tafsīr*, vol. 2, 284, v. 18:21.

⁴³⁴ Cf. Edward William Lane, *An Arabic-English Lexicon*, 1867, vol. 1, pt. 3, 1138-9. s.v. r-q-m.

primal wonders, this act of *anagenesis* treats the Qur’ān as a self-affirming foundation. This conception allows Muqātil to portray narrative details from the long-sleeper tradition as already encompassed within the Qur’ānic scripture. Exploiting the referentiality within the Qur’ān, Muqātil interprets *al-raqīm* to authorize elements of exegetical tradition and reinforce the eschatological expectations that define the Muslim community’s hope of justification at the end of time.

By the time of the composition of the magisterial *Tafsīr* of al-Ṭabarī in the 3rd/9th century CE, interpretations of Q18:9 had expanded into a polyphonic collection of potential solutions to scriptural cruxes.⁴³⁵ While Muqātil uses *isnād* intermittently in his *Tafsīr*, al-Ṭabarī includes multiple sources for nearly all of his principal interpretations, each with its own chain of transmission. Like Muqātil, al-Ṭabarī’s *Tafsīr* also states that *al-raqīm* could refer to a book or piece of writing (“kitāb”), particularly a stone tablet (“lawḥ min al-ḥijāra”) that was “placed upon the door of the cave.”⁴³⁶ In addition to identifying *ar-raqīm* as the tablet in the tale, Al-Ṭabarī offers several alternative interpretations of the word as a toponym related the setting of the Companions’ story.⁴³⁷ Al-Ṭabarī includes several reports stating that “*al-raqīm*” is the name of either a village (*qarya*), a valley (*wādī*), or a mountain (*jabal*). Since the Qur’ān includes no specific reference to the city of Ephesus or any other location for the Companions’ narrative, some of these glosses attempted to identify the location of *ar-raqīm* within the Islamic world.⁴³⁸

⁴³⁵ Al-Ṭabarī, *Tafsīr*, vol. 15, 157-161, v. 18:9.

⁴³⁶ Al-Ṭabarī, *Tafsīr*, vol. 15, 159, v. 18:9. As mentioned above, Al-Ṭabarī incorporates material attributed to Ibn Ishāq throughout his narrative, but in this passage he includes an *isnād* connecting the idea to Ibn ‘Abbās (d. ca. 68 AH / 687–8 CE), a cousin of the Prophet and famed early transmitter of *hadith*.

⁴³⁷ To highlight when the word is being used as a proper name and toponym, I am capitalizing it in these cases. Capitals are not distinguished in Arabic.

⁴³⁸ Several modern scholars also have agreed with the early Islamic traditions identifying *ar-Raqīm* as a toponym for the site of the cave specifically separate from the city of Ephesus. Shaddel, “Caput Nataeae,” 307-11, proposes the Nabatean city of Petra in Jordan, whose Semitic name is identified as “Rekem” in several classical sources. Since the story of the long sleepers was a folk motif known in Jewish and Greek traditions before the dissemination of the Christian narrative centered on Ephesus, it is possible alternative sites associated with long-sleeping figures already existed at the time of the Qur’ān’s composition.

One version, also attributed to Ibn ‘Abbās, describes *al-raqīm* as a “valley near the city of *Aylat*” (i.e. Roman *Aelia*, modern Eilat in Israel on the coast of the Red Sea).⁴³⁹ Based on his knowledge of Arabic grammar, Al-Ṭabarī ultimately endorses the understanding of *al-raqīm* as a written document as the “best solution.”⁴⁴⁰ Yet Al-Ṭabarī’s record of the multifarious interpretations of *al-raqīm* demonstrates how the Qur’ānic term was deployed to distance the Islamic traditions from their connections to Christian legends, relocating the site of the narrative in alternative spaces to the city of Ephesus.⁴⁴¹ As we shall see, the absence of a clear geographical setting in the Qur’ānic narrative – combined with this enigmatic term that served as an open signifier for a multitude of meanings – would provide fertile ground for further acts of *anagenesis*, in which Muslim communities rediscovered the testaments to sacred history within reach of their own homes.

Occasions of Revelation and the Negotiation of Authorities

In addition to defining the space and time referenced within the scripture, Muslim exegetes aimed to identify “occasions of revelation” (*asbāb al-nuzūl*), which identified the specific historical moments in the life of Muhammad when a particular verse of the Qur’ān was revealed to the Prophet.⁴⁴² In the framework of *anagenesis*, such narratives provided an opportunity to link together Qur’ānic passages to the biographic narrative of the Prophet’s life,

⁴³⁹ Al-Ṭabarī, *Tafsīr*, vol. 15, 158, on 18:9. The same tradition is mentioned in Al-Tha‘labī, *Qiṣaṣ al-Anbiyā’*, 371. Trans. Brinner, *Lives of the Prophets*, 690.

⁴⁴⁰ Al-Ṭabarī, *Tafsīr*, vol. 15, 161, on 18:9.

⁴⁴¹ On the location of the cave and the city of the sleepers, in the Islamic tradition, see chapter 3 below. Al-Ṭabarī includes the material from Ibn Ishāq’s account, though he includes additional *isnād* connecting the material from Ibn Ishāq back to Ibn ‘Abbās that do not appear in al-Tha‘labī’s version of the story. Al-Ṭabarī, *Tafsīr*, vol. 15, 161-2, v. 18:10. In some editions of al-Ṭabarī’s text, the list of potential locations for the cave is further expanded to include several alternatives, such as “Ṭarsūs,” or “Daqsūs.” Al-Ṭabarī, *Tafsīr*, vol. 15, 196, n. 3. The editors suggest “Daqsūs” is a mistaken form of “Daqyanūs,” the Arabic name for Decius.

⁴⁴² On “occasions of revelation,” see Wansbrough, *The Sectarian Milieu*, 28-33.

giving a historical setting for when the words of scripture first entered into the world. Such narratives were both etiological and exegetical. They provided a narrative form that could be deployed to *anagenetically* negotiate the potential connections of Qur'ānic passages to other religious traditions, reinforcing the originality and authority of Islamic scripture. Both Ibn Ishāq and Muqātil include such a narrative at the beginning of their treatments of Q 18:9-26.⁴⁴³

According to this account, the revelation concerning the Companions of the Cave occurred during the Meccan period, before the Prophet immigrated to the city of Yathrib (Medina).

Expanding upon the idea of inter-religious debate intimated in Q: 18:22, these accounts depict the revelation emerging in a theological contest between the prophet Muhammad and his opponents. In the account, the Meccan tribe of Quraysh is unhappy with Muhammad, a member of their family. The Prophet's preaching against polytheism and idol worship threatens his tribes' management of the shrine of Mecca and the city's pilgrimage festivals. Recognizing the connection between Muhammad's revelations and the beliefs of Jews and Christians, a prominent member of the Quraysh named Abū Jahl asks three Jews from Yathrib to help him question Muhammad and determine whether the man is a "prophet" (*nabī*) or "liar" (*kadhhdhāb*).⁴⁴⁴ The Jews suggest they test the Prophets' knowledge with questions on three issues: "the Companions of the Cave," "the Two-Horned One" and the "Spirit."⁴⁴⁵ Muhammad tells Abū Jahl he will have the answer for him "tomorrow," but since the prophet forgets to say "in shā' Allāh" (God willing), he is left waiting without a revelation.⁴⁴⁶ After three days, the Angel Gabriel arrives and gives the Prophet answers to these questions, beginning with the

⁴⁴³ Muqātil, *Tafsīr*, vol. 2, 281-2, on 18:9. Trans. Guillaume, *Life of Muhammad*, 136-8.

⁴⁴⁴ Muqātil, *Tafsīr*, vol. 2, 281, on 18:9. In in Muqatil the figure is "Abū Jahl," while Ibn Ishāq names him "al-Naḍr ibn al-Ḥārīth," *Life of Muhammad*, 136.

⁴⁴⁵ Muqātil, *Tafsīr*, vol. 2, 281, on 18:9.

⁴⁴⁶ Muqātil, *Tafsīr*, vol. 2, 281, on 18:9.

verses of Q 18:9-26.⁴⁴⁷ The revelation convinces Muslims that Muhammad’s answers must come from God, but the Quraysh and the Jews of Medina are not impressed by his delay. They remain antagonists to the upstart prophet.

Setting the “occasion of revelation” for Q. 18:9-26 in the midst of an interreligious contest provides context for the Qur’ān’s own allusive treatment of the story. By identifying the specific interlocutors who challenged the prophet as Medinan Jews, and Meccan Polytheists, Muqatil and Ibn Ishāq suggest the story of the Companions of the Cave is a well-known narrative shared between the many different religious communities of the Arabian Peninsula. Yet while Jewish communities certainly circulated stories of long-sleep, the narrative described in the Qur’ān – nor any of the later Islamic narrative expansions concerning the long sleeping People of the Cave – resemble the Jewish tales of Honi and Abimelech; all the Islamic narratives seem to appropriate elements from the Christian tradition. Ibn Ishāq’s *Life* presents the occasion as part of the continual of Muhammad’s life and the growth of his prophetic mission. As the sources of the religious questions, the Jewish rabbis of Medina are brought into the story as challengers to the prophet even before he makes his fateful *hijrah* to the city in 622 CE. The framing of the “occasion of revelation” also draws attention away from the dependence of both the Qur’ānic account and the exegetical on sources drawn from the Syriac Christian tradition. While Islamic exegesis engages with a “sectarian milieu” that includes many sects of Jews, Christians, and Muslims throughout the expanse of the caliphate in the second century of Islamic hegemony, these debates and details are retroactively imagined as part of the original environment of the Qur’ān’s “historical” revelation in Arabia. In this framing of the Qur’ānic passage, the debates

⁴⁴⁷ Tommaso Tesei, “The Chronological Problems of the Qu’ran: The Case of the Story of Du l-Qarnayn (Q 18:83-102),” *Rivista Degli Studi Orientali* 84, no. 1/4 (2011): 457–64. Tesei, 461, describes both the story of Muqatil and similar version of this “occasion of revelation” that appears in the later *Tafsīr* of al-Qummī (d. 310/923). In al-Qummī’s account, the three questions presented instead by the Christians of Najrān, and last question concerns not “the spirit” but the story Moses and al-Khidr (18:60-82), the third major narrative pericope from Q. 18. [Further discussion of this passage, which

over the sleepers' story described in the Qur'ān become the basis for imagining the story as a confirmation of Muhammad's prophetic validity and as a repudiation of his religious opponents.

Just as setting the revelation of the Q 18:9-26 in the midst of an interreligious debate was deployed to emphasize the authority of both prophet and scripture against alternative communities of belief, parallel narratives framed the prophets' family and companions as important exegetical authorities as well. Yet while Muhammad was recognized as an unassailable figure in Islamic tradition, the legacies of his successors became volatile as Muslims began to define themselves not only against non-Islamic communities but also against different parties within Islam. This phenomenon can be observed in another exegetical frame of the long sleepers' story recorded in the *Stories of the Prophets* of Al-Tha'labī. In this account, 'Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib (d. 40 AH/ 661 CE) serves as the chief authority on questions concerning the Companions of the Cave.⁴⁴⁸ As Muhammad's son-in-law, the fourth Caliph, and the first Imam in the Shia tradition, 'Alī has a familial pedigree that bolsters his exegetical authority.⁴⁴⁹ During the caliphate of 'Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb (r. 634-644 CE), three “rabbis of the Jews” approach the commander of the faithful and — like the Queen of Sheba in the court of Solomon — present a series of riddles to measure the faith of the Muslims against their own.⁴⁵⁰ When 'Umar is confounded by their questions, Salmān al-Fārsī summons 'Alī to his aid. Eager to face these rival exegetes, 'Alī tells the rabbis, “the Prophet taught me one thousand chapters of knowledge, and one thousand chapters separated from each chapter.”⁴⁵¹ He agrees to answer the

also relates to Gog and Magog and the Alexander legend, will appear in Part 3, chapter 2.]

⁴⁴⁸ Al-Tha'labī, *Qiṣaṣ al-Anbiyā'*, 371-377. Trans. Brinner, *Lives of the Prophets*, 691-700. Al-Tha'labī introduces this version of the story without attributing it to a specific scholar.

⁴⁴⁹ Some later Shi'i would consider the Imam as the sole authority for the exegesis of the Qur'an. See Farhad Daftary, *The Ismā'īlīs: Their History and Doctrines*, 2nd ed. (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 221-2.

⁴⁵⁰ Al-Tha'labī, *Qiṣaṣ al-Anbiyā'*, 371. Trans. Brinner, *Lives of the Prophets*, 691. For an analysis of the riddle contests between Solomon and the Queen of Sheba, see Jacob Lassner, *Demonizing the Queen of Sheba: Boundaries of Gender and Culture in Postbiblical Judaism and Medieval Islam* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993).

⁴⁵¹ Al-Tha'labī, *Qiṣaṣ al-Anbiyā'*, 371. Trans. Brinner, *Lives of the Prophets*, 691-2.

rabbis' challenge on the following terms: "If I inform you according to what is in your Torah, you will enter our religion and become believers."⁴⁵² The Jews agree, and 'Alī answers several of their riddles, impressing two of the three rabbis enough that they vow to convert to Islam.

The last of three rabbis offers a final, definitive, challenge: he asks 'Alī to tell him "about a folk in ancient times who were dead for three hundred and nine years and then God revived them, and what happened in their tale."⁴⁵³ 'Alī recognizes that the question refers to the "People of the Cave" and offers to read out the Qur'ānic account. The Jew replies, "How often have we heard your reading! If you are learned, then tell me their names, their father's names, the names of their city, of their king, of their dog, of their mountain, their cave, and tell us the story from beginning to end."⁴⁵⁴ The Qur'ān itself does not mention these details, but 'Alī is undaunted. Wrapping himself "in the mantle of the Messenger of Allah," he recites an extensive account of the Companions of the Cave that answers each of these challenges, as well as additional questions the Rabbi introduces throughout his narration.⁴⁵⁵ 'Alī's fills in many lingering questions about the companions' story, emphasizing the superior knowledge of Islamic tradition. When 'Alī concludes the interrogation, he asks the rabbi:

'I ask you by God, Jew, does this correspond to what is in your Torah?' and the Jew said, 'You did not add one letter or omit one letter, Abu al-Hasan. Do not call me a Jew, for I bear witness that there is no god but Allah, and that Muhammad is His servant and messenger, and that you are the wisest of this community.'⁴⁵⁶

'Alī's knowledge of the Qur'ān, transmitted to him through his unique familial and social bonds with Muhammad, is powerful enough that he can dictate the "Torah" to Jewish authorities and

⁴⁵² Al-Tha'labī, *Qiṣaṣ al-Anbiyā'*, 372. Trans. Brinner, *Lives of the Prophets*, 692.

⁴⁵³ Al-Tha'labī, *Qiṣaṣ al-Anbiyā'*, 372. Trans. Brinner, *Lives of the Prophets*, 692-3.

⁴⁵⁴ Al-Tha'labī, *Qiṣaṣ al-Anbiyā'*, 372. Trans. Brinner, *Lives of the Prophets*, 693.

⁴⁵⁵ Al-Tha'labī, *Qiṣaṣ al-Anbiyā'*, 372. Trans. Brinner, *Lives of the Prophets*, 693. [Identify what some of these answers are]

⁴⁵⁶ Al-Tha'labī, *Qiṣaṣ al-Anbiyā'*, 377. Trans. Brinner, *Lives of the Prophets*, 701.

win them over to his religion.⁴⁵⁷ In this contest of wits and religious knowledge, ‘Alī proves his superior knowledge not only over Jewish authorities but also ‘Umar, then the appointed leader of the Muslim community. ‘Alī’s depiction as the foremost Qur’ānic authority potentially reflects the growing gulf between *Sunnī* and *Shī‘ī* factions in the Islamic community. Al-Tha‘labī, a Sunnī Muslim of the Shāfi‘ī school, does not himself appear comfortable with ‘Alī’s supposedly definitive answers.⁴⁵⁸ While Al-Tha‘labī shapes this account of the sleepers around the frame of ‘Alī’s debate with the rabbis, he repeatedly cuts away from the story to propose alternative answers to the questions raised about the sleepers’ story.⁴⁵⁹ These interpolations are attributed to other Islamic authorities – especially Ibn ‘Abbās.⁴⁶⁰ While Al-Tha‘labī considered the frame-story of ‘Alī worth including in his work, he consistently challenges the account’s insistence that ‘Alī’s knowledge exceeds all other Muslim exegetes. For Muslim writers like Al-Tha‘labī and Al-Ṭabarī, who had each accumulated and evaluated a vast corpus of oral and written traditions, negotiating these authorities served as a major concern for determining who had the knowledge (and right) to define sacred history, both within one’s faith and without.

Conclusion

The Qur’ān portrays itself as a resolution to the conflicts and confusions of Jewish, Christian, and other varieties of monotheistic belief in preparation for the approaching eschaton.

⁴⁵⁷ The use of the term “torah” (ar. *tawrah*) in Islamic sources does not necessarily correspond to the Jewish meaning of the term, which primarily signifies the first five books of the Hebrew Bible but can also refer to the entirety of the Tanakh. Here it might instead refer to the “oral torah” of Jewish exegetical tradition, which would have been more available to Muslim scholars incapable of reading Hebrew texts but capable of conversing with Arabic speaking Jews. One element in the story does connect more closely to the Jewish tradition than the Christian accounts. Tāmlīkha learns of his long sleep from his own grandson, who tells him Jesus had prophesied of his return. The encounter between the long sleeper and his grandson is a detail that appears in the Honi story of BT, *Ta’anit 23a*, though in that case Honi’s grandson does not recognize him. The relevant passage is quoted below.

⁴⁵⁸ Brinner, *Lives of the Prophets*, xxiv-v.

⁴⁵⁹ E.g. Al-Tha‘labī, *Qiṣaṣ al-Anbiyā’*, 372. Trans. Brinner, *Lives of the Prophets*, 693.

⁴⁶⁰ In comparison, Al-Tha‘labī only interrupts his account of Ibn Ishāq once when, on the authority of Ibn ‘Abbās, he

Rather than collapsing the growing branches of long-sleeping legends into a single, definitive tale, the Qur'ān encouraged further adaptations and disseminations of the narrative as Muslims spread across the world and came into new contexts and conflicts with other peoples. These traditions would engage in further acts of *anagenesis*, shifting the identity of the sleepers, the location of their cave, and the time of their miraculous sleep. The multitude of conflicting exegetical traditions about Companions of the Cave was not in any way a challenge to the story of the Qur'ān; instead, they supported the scripture's acknowledgment of many stories and many potential answers. While they acknowledged connections between Qur'ānic narratives and Jewish and Christian stories, the Islamic accounts diverted attention from the original sources of their own exegetical expansions to emphasizing Muslim authorities as the sources and arbiters of exegetical tradition. As Jews, Christians, and now Muslims recognized the story's import for questions of time, death, and resurrection, these relocations and reimaginings of the narrative would define which community could claim the true form of the sleepers' story for themselves. These conflicts and conversations over the sleeper's story would not only play out in the realm of exegetical commentaries and stories of the past but also in the question of the sleeper's continued presence within the world.

introduces the detail of the dog Qitmīr speaking to the sleepers.

2.3: Virtual Visitations and Re-Inscriptions of the Sleeper's Cave within the World

Introduction

Claiming the sleepers as members of one's own religious community also meant staking a claim to their bodies and their tomb, signs of their story that could still be seen in the present. In the account of the Companions of the Cave attributed to Alī that appears in Al-Tha'labī's *Stories of the Prophets*, the contentious relationship between Christianity and Islam in the story of the sleepers is dramatized in a battle over the cave itself. "Two Kings," one "Christian" and one "Muslim," appear in place of Theodosius.⁴⁶¹ The two men interrogate Tamlikhā together and follow him back to the cave to discover his companions:

The two kings drew near, circled the cave for seven days and did not find an entrance to it, nor any opening or path, and thus confirmed the kindness of the deed of All-generous God, that their situation was an example which God showed the people. The Muslim said, "They died in my religion. I shall build a mosque at the entrance to the cave." The Christian said, "No. On the contrary, they died in my religion, and I shall build a monastery at the entrance to the cave." So the two kings fought each other and the Muslim overcame the Christian, and built a mosque at the entrance to the cave, for that is His word, "*Those who prevailed said, 'We shall build a mosque over their sepulcher [Q. 18:21].'*"⁴⁶²

In this account, Muslims win possession of the cave and the bodies of the saints, confirming their right to transform the site of the miracle into one of explicitly Muslim worship. While this account imagines Muslim claims to the sleepers and their sepulcher as *anagenetically* established at the very moment of their miraculous discovery, other traditions depict the contest over the cave playing out in other times.

⁴⁶¹ Al-Tha'labī, *Qiṣaṣ al-Anbiyā'*, 377; Trans. Brinner, *Lives of the Prophets*, 699.

⁴⁶² Al-Tha'labī, *Qiṣaṣ al-Anbiyā'*, 377. Trans. Brinner, *Lives of the Prophets*, 699.

As we have seen above, much of the early exegesis of the Qur'ānic story of the cave adopted the location and historical setting of the earlier Christian tradition, while other accounts introduced new sites and settings for the story to explain questions about the Qur'ānic narrative, such as the enigmatic *al-raqīm*. The disassociation of the legend from the city of Ephesus allowed the narrative and its eponymous cave to be shifted from this traditional setting and emplaced in new locations.⁴⁶³ In seeking to rediscover and confirm the original, unitary site of the sleepers' story, Christian and Muslim authorities encouraged the proliferation of new sites throughout the globe and the further cross-pollination of different traditions among their communities.

The final section of this chapter will focus on accounts of Christians and Muslims visiting and evaluating different sites believed to be the cave of the long-sleeping miracle or the resting place of the sleepers' bodies. These accounts display interest in the empirical evaluation of the material bodies – details of sight, sound, smell, and touch that allow the visitor to evaluate the state of the bodies as living or dead, miraculously sleeping or surreptitiously embalmed. While these sources emphasized the materiality of the long-sleeping miracle, they too were stories, virtual visitations whose provenance, details, and conclusions were open to manipulation in the textual tradition. In *Mapping Frontiers*, Zadeh analyzes Islamic examinations of the cave within

⁴⁶³ Massignon, *Sept Dormants*, I, 72. Massignon identified sites associated with the legend stretching from Andalusia in the west to Chinese Turkestan in the east. In addition to Ephesus, Massignon initially discussed ten Islamic sites purporting to be the cave of the sleepers. For his initial list, see *Sept Dormants*, I, 79-91. After his original study, Massignon identified an additional seven more Islamic sites, bringing his total to seventeen potential locations for the miracle, *Sept Dormants* IV, 6. He further identified eighteen additional Christian sites either claiming to be the site of the dormition, the site of a copycat miracle, bearers of the seven sleeper's relics, or otherwise dedicated to the saints (IV, 6). Considering the contested relationship many Islamic traditions have with the veneration of the dead, Massignon, 75 observes that the shrine of the sleepers may constitute an important exception. While the Qur'anic mention of a *masjid* constructed over the tomb (18:21) may be interpreted as pejorative, it can also be interpreted for the commemoration of such a shrine as one of the few such licit places of sepulchral veneration. Lacking the geographic specificity of the Christian narrative, this Islamic tradition provided an opportunity for Muslims to localize events from the Qur'anic history in their own communities. Further study of the extant pilgrimage traditions was undertaken by Hermann Kandler, *Untersuchungen zu Legende und Kult in Schriftum, Religion und Volksglauben unter besonderer Berücksichtigung der Siebenschläfer-Wallfahrt* (Bochum: Universitätsverlag Dr. N. Brockmeyer, 1994). Kandler's study includes fourteen major sites and focuses on the identification of Tarsus as an alternative to the city of Ephesus in the Islamic tradition,

a broader “logic of descriptive geography” that aims to render distant and wondrous places through narratives of purported eye-witnesses: “The sacred Ka‘ba of Mecca, the pyramids of Giza, and the wall of Gog and Magog are all sites to be erected linguistically through the illusion of direct ocular perception captured in language.”⁴⁶⁴ In many respects, these narratives resemble the story of the rabbis encountering the Torah in the cave of the Khazars. Yet where those narratives of discovery sought to tie two disparate peoples together through a belief in a single faith, these acts of *anagenesis* – set in spaces and concerning figures contested between different communities – were rejected as often as they were embraced. When such shrines were assessed as inauthentic and their *anagenetic* claims were rejected, it was to assert the privileges of one group of exegetical authorities over others.

Evaluating the Validity of the Cave in Islamic Tradition

Evaluations of the cave’s potential locations emerged from the traditions of Islamic exegesis and demonstrated similar concerns with authority. Al-Ṭabarī’s account of the Companions in his *History* concludes with a story of Ibn ‘Abbās appearing to encounter the site of the narrative.⁴⁶⁵ While “on a raid” in foreign lands, the Prophet’s nephew “passed by a cave and, lo and behold, there were bones in it.” A man at the site informs him that these remains “are the bones of the men of the cave.”⁴⁶⁶ This scene of discovery could readily be an auspicious act of *anagenesis*: a confirmation of Qur’ānic truth and a sign that Muslims once dwelled in these lands awaiting reconquest. But Ibn ‘Abbās shuts this claim down, retorting, “their bones

especially after the Ottoman conquest of Anatolia, 82-97.

⁴⁶⁴ Zadeh, *Mapping Frontiers*, 36-7.

⁴⁶⁵ Al-Ṭabarī, *Ṭārīkh*, vol. 3, 6-7. Trans. Perlman, *History*, vol. 4, 159. This story does not mention explicit geographical location for the cave, though its mention of a “raid” suggest that it occurred in Roman or Persian territory.

⁴⁶⁶ Al-Ṭabarī, *Ṭārīkh*, vol. 3, 6-7. Trans. Perlman, *History*, vol. 4, 159.

disappeared over three hundred years ago.”⁴⁶⁷ Such skepticism appears in many Islamic narratives concerning the sleepers’ shrine, reinforcing a particular genealogy of exegetical authority. Just as Ibn ‘Abbās was “one of the few” with authority to interpret the Qur’ānic account, his reputation as a member of the Prophet’s family, a companion of Muhammad, and a transmitter of *ḥadīth* allows him to assess the apparent physical relics of the scriptural story and find them wanting.

Discussion of the Companions of the Cave in Islamic exegesis spurred a parallel phenomenon in the emerging genre of Islamic geography, which demonstrates similar concerns with interpretation and authority. Narratives describing firsthand encounters with potential sites of the Qur’ānic cave appear in the earliest extant geographies, beginning with Ibn Khurradādhbih’s *Book of Routes and Kingdoms* (*Kitāb al-Masālik wa-l-Mamālik*) in the 9th Century CE.⁴⁶⁸ Instead of the chains of transmission that went back to the Companions of the Prophet, the authorities in these investigations of the shrines are Muslim scholars who claimed to have visited the cave firsthand. Locating the cave of the “Companions of al-Raqīm” in western Anatolia, Ibn Khurradādhbih records a visitation to the shrine that he has heard directly from an “astronomer” named Muḥammad ibn Mūsa.⁴⁶⁹ As Zadeh observes, this Muḥammad is reputed to have created the first “Sūrat al-Arḍ,” a map of the world that would become an exemplar for later Islamic mapping traditions.⁴⁷⁰ Dispatched by the Caliph al-Wāthiq (r. 812-847 CE) to investigate the shrine, Muḥammad is welcomed by the Byzantine ruler, who provided a guide to conduct

⁴⁶⁷ Al-Ṭabarī, *Ṭārīkh*, vol. 3, 6-7. Trans. Perlman, *History*, vol. 4, 159. This story does not contain any explicit geographical location for the cave, though the mention of a “raiding” (ar. *Ghazān*) suggests that the Muslims have presumably entered Roman or Persian territory. What would constitute enemy territory as opposed to part of the Caliphate would be temporally variable depending on what point in Ibn ‘Abbās’ life this event supposedly occurred, which is here unclear.

⁴⁶⁸ Ibn Khurradādhbih, *Kitāb al-Masālik w’al-Mamālik* in *Bibliotheca geographorum Arabicorum: Liber viarum et regnorum / auctore Abu al-Kasim Obaidallah ibn Abdallah ibn Khordadbeh*, ed. and trans. Michael Jan de Goeje (Leiden: Brill, 1889), 106-107. A French translation is available in the second part of the same volume, p. 77-8.

⁴⁶⁹ Ibn Khurradādhbih, *Kitāb al-Masālik w’al-Mamālik*, 106. Trans. de Goeje, 78.

⁴⁷⁰ Zadeh, *Mapping Frontiers*, 23-4.

him to the shrine.⁴⁷¹ Four days journey from the Byzantine fortress of Qorra, Muḥammad and his guide climb a mountain, descend into a subterranean passage, and walk “three-hundred paces” before arriving in an area open to the sky and filled with many niches carved into the rock.⁴⁷² When Muḥammad arrives at the cave, he desires to see and touch the bodies, but the shrine’s keepers protest that he will be stricken with a “curse” (*āfah*).⁴⁷³ He nonetheless enters the tomb and touches one of the corpses with his hand, discovering the skin had been treated with “aloe, and myrrh, and camphor to preserve it.”⁴⁷⁴ Convinced that he will relay this information to the Byzantine emperor, the guardian of the shrine attempts to poison Muḥammad, but the scholar escapes with his life and his tale.⁴⁷⁵ In denying any *anagenetic* equivalence between this cave and the site recorded in scripture, the anecdote contrasts the sophistication of Islamic exegetical culture over a Christian community full of fraud and superstition. The account celebrates the sense and sensibilities of the scholarly Muḥammad, whose macrocosmic knowledge of the heavens and the earth allows him to see how the local shrine he visits deviates from its Qur’ānic archetype.⁴⁷⁶

Other geographical accounts endorsed *anagenetic* connections between physical shrines and the cave described in the Qur’ān. In his *Best Divisions of Knowledge of Regions (Aḥsan al-taqāsīm fī ma’rifat al-aqālīm)*, the Palestinian scholar al-Muqaddasī (c. 336-380 / 945/6 – 991) identifies Tarsus, one of the popular locations of the *tafsīr* tradition, as the site of both “the

⁴⁷¹ Van Donzel and Schmidt, *Gog and Magog*, 208 n. 7, observe that al-Mas’ūdī’s included a similar account of al-Wāthiq dispatching out an embassy to inquire after the validity of the purported sleeper’s caves in a place called “Germa,” but this event was recorded in his now lost “Middle Book”. This name may refer to Göreme in Cappadocia, which is the site of many famous Christian cave-churches.

⁴⁷² Ibn Khurrādādhbih, *Kitāb al-Masālik w’al- Mamālik*, 107. Trans. de Goeje, 79.

⁴⁷³ Ibn Khurrādādhbih, *Kitāb al-Masālik w’al- Mamālik*, 107. Trans. de Goeje, 79.

⁴⁷⁴ Ibn Khurrādādhbih, *Kitāb al-Masālik w’al- Mamālik*, 107. Trans. de Goeje, 79.

⁴⁷⁵ Ibn Khurrādādhbih, *Kitāb al-Masālik w’al- Mamālik*, 107. Trans. de Goeje, 79.

⁴⁷⁶ Zadeh, *Mapping Frontiers*, 37-8, observes that the Byzantine guide who leads Musa on this journey slips into the background as the account was transmitted into the works of other geographers, “history effaces these go-betweens, preferring the illusion of immediacy to the filters of mediation”.

cave,” and the “tomb of Decius.”⁴⁷⁷ Al-Muqaddasī presents a more credulous account attributed to a Mujāhid ibn Yazīd, who visited the cave alongside a companion “when he was sent on an embassy to the [Byzantine Emperor] in the year 102/720.”⁴⁷⁸ Journeying into a subterranean passage called *al-Hawiyyah* (“the pit”) in the vicinity of Tarsus, Mujāhid discovers the bodies of thirteen men. He details the clothing worn by the sleepers, adding, “I uncovered the face of one of them, and lo, there was the hair of his head, and that of his beard altogether unchanged; the skin of his face was radiant, and the blood in his cheeks evident, as if they had lain down but just a moment before.”⁴⁷⁹ In this version, the Muslim visitors encounter no hostility from the people who tend to the bodies in the shrine. In fact, the shrine-keepers do not know the identity of the bodies they venerate: “We then asked for an account of these people and their origins, but they declared that they knew absolutely nothing about the matter, saying only; ‘We call them prophets.’”⁴⁸⁰ Here al-Muqaddasī ends the report, observing that “Mujāhid and Khālid themselves are of the opinion that these are the Companions of the Cave – but God knows best.”⁴⁸¹ Having not seen the cave with his own eyes, al-Muqaddasī has some doubt about the validity of his witnesses’ conclusions, if not their experience.⁴⁸²

The Persian polymath al-Bīrūnī (362 – after 442 / 973-1050) provides another example of how such accounts emphasized questions of embodiment and authority. In his *The Remaining Signs of Past Centuries* (*Kitāb al-āthār al-bāqiyah ‘an al-qurūn al-khāliyah*), Al-Bīrūnī also

⁴⁷⁷ Al-Muqaddasī, *Bibliotheca geographorum Arabicorum: Descriptio imperii Moslemici / auctore Schamso 'd-din Abu Abdollah Mohammed ibn Ahmed ibn abi Bekr al-Banna al-Basschari al-Mokaddasi*, ed. Michael Jan de Goeje (Leiden: Brill, 1870), 153. For English translation see *The Best Divisions for Knowledge of the Regions: A Translation of Ahsan al-Taqasim Fi Marifat al-Aqalim*, trans. Basil Anthony Collins (Reading, UK: Garnet Publishing Limited, 1994), 140.

⁴⁷⁸ Al-Muqaddasī, *Ahsan al-taqāsīm*, 153. Trans. Collins, *The Best Divisions*, 140. Al-Muqaddasī includes a full *isnad* for this account tracing the line of transmission back to Mujāhid.

⁴⁷⁹ Al-Muqaddasī, *Ahsan al-taqāsīm*, 153. Trans. Collins, *The Best Divisions*, 140.

⁴⁸⁰ Al-Muqaddasī, *Ahsan al-taqāsīm*, 154. Trans. Collins, *The Best Divisions*, 141.

⁴⁸¹ Al-Muqaddasī, *Ahsan al-taqāsīm*, 153. Trans. Collins, *The Best Divisions*, 141.

⁴⁸² On Al-Muqaddasī’s principles of authenticity, see Zadeh, *Mapping Frontiers*, 10.

mentions the story of Muḥammad ibn Musa visiting the cave “in the city of Ephesus (Ifisūs).”⁴⁸³ While al-Bīrūnī does not repeat the account since it is “known to everybody,” he emphasizes the importance of Muḥammad’s embodied experience, remarking, “we must observe that he who touched them himself makes the reader doubt whether they are really the corpses of those seven youths or other people – in fact, some sort of deception.”⁴⁸⁴ Al-Bīrūnī cites a report attributed to “‘Alī, son of Yaḥyā the astronomer.”⁴⁸⁵ Like, Muḥammad, ‘Alī touches the sleepers’ bodies and finds them remarkably preserved.⁴⁸⁶ Al-Bīrūnī considers ‘Alī’s reckoning of thirteen sleepers within the tomb, which disagrees with either the “Muslim” count of “seven” youths and the “Christian” count of “eight.”⁴⁸⁷ Al-Bīrūnī speculates that “some monks have been added who died there in the same spot” out of veneration for the original figures.⁴⁸⁸ He also explains the life-like state of their bodies: the ascetic practices of the monks, combined with the region’s dry climate, have desiccated the corpses and naturally preserved them.⁴⁸⁹ Where al-Muqaddasī refrains from endorsing his report in full, Al-Bīrūnī is comfortable expanding on the conclusions of his witness, speculating on the nature of bodies he has only “seen” through ‘Alī’s story.

The emphasis in each account is upon the authority of witnesses, all men and all scholars, who are able to see and touch the sleepers. In each report, epistemic tensions emphasize the disparate knowledge of Christians and Muslims. Just Qur’ānic story highlighted the disparity in knowledge between the monotheistic youths and their “people” who had taken up other gods (18:14-16), a new gap in knowledge characterizes these stories of investigation. When the bodies

⁴⁸³ Al-Bīrūnī, *al-Āthār al-bāqiyah ‘an al-qurūn al-khāliyah*, (Tehran: Mīrās-i Maktūb, 2001), 360-1. For an English translation, see *The Chronology of Ancient Nations; an English Version of the Arabic Text of the Athār-Ul-Bākiya of Albīrūnī, or “Vestiges of the Past,”* trans. C. Edward Sachau (London: W.H. Allen and co., 1879), 285-6.

⁴⁸⁴ Al-Bīrūnī, *al-Āthār al-bāqiyah*, 360. Trans. Sachau, *Chronology*, 285.

⁴⁸⁵ Al-Bīrūnī, *al-Āthār al-bāqiyah*, 360. Trans. Sachau, *Chronology*, 285.

⁴⁸⁶ Al-Bīrūnī, *al-Āthār al-bāqiyah*, 361. Trans. Sachau, *Chronology*, 285.

⁴⁸⁷ Al-Bīrūnī, *al-Āthār al-bāqiyah*, 361. Trans. Sachau, *Chronology*, 285.

⁴⁸⁸ Al-Bīrūnī, *al-Āthār al-bāqiyah*, 361. Trans. Sachau, *Chronology*, 285.

⁴⁸⁹ Al-Bīrūnī, *al-Āthār al-bāqiyah*, 361. Trans. Sachau, *Chronology*, 286.

of the sleepers are judged to be false, Muslim scholars recognize the signs of fraud that credulous Christians cannot. When the bodies of the sleepers are judged to be genuine, it is at the expense of the keepers of the shrine. The local people may venerate the bodies in the cave but are unaware of their true identities. Only Muslim scholars, who possess the true form of the sleepers' story in the Qur'ān, are able to recognize the "Companions of the Cave" for who they really are. Whether the location of the cave is accepted or rejected as the true site of the Qur'ānic narrative, these accounts confirm the authority of Muslim religious scholars to properly understand the shrine. At the same time, Christians who possess the spaces and bodies themselves are portrayed as either ignorant or malicious. In this way, whether acts of *anagenesis* linking the sleepers to specific places and times are embraced or rejected, claims upon the "true" version of sleepers' story and the authority of one community to know its significance are constructed in these accounts.

Ibn Khurradādhbih's and al-Bīrūnī's accounts may seem the most plausible to modern audiences with their naturalizing conclusions about the preservation of human remains from decay. Yet we should also consider how the emphases on skepticism and empiricism in these texts ultimately reinforce the idea that only an authoritative witness – one learned in Islamic tradition – can present a valid judgement on a place that the reader will likely never see. Such accounts emphasize the universal reach of Islamic truth by recounting Muslim scholars passing beyond the bounds of their own lands to assert their authority over the wider world. While these various accounts are attributed to different people, different locations, and different times, there are several parallels in these descriptions of the shrine and from the shared frame of the caliphal embassy to overlapping passages.⁴⁹⁰ Moreover, these accounts leave open the possibility that the

⁴⁹⁰ For instance, when describing the entrance to the shrine, Al-Biruni, *al-Āthār al-bāqiyah*, 360, records "One enters into a hollow in the earth, the length of three hundred paces, and you come out into a chamber within the mountain with carved

cave is located elsewhere in the world. When the sleepers' shrines are considered to be genuine location of the Qur'ānic miracle, this confirmation endorses the *anagenetic* belief that these places – while not yet part of the political dominion of the Islamic world, nonetheless belong to the universal dominion of God.

New Frontiers: Virtual Visitations in Christian Literature

Muslims sought to challenge Christian claims to possess the bodies of the long sleeping saints or else to insist that Christians could not recognize these figures' true, Qur'ānic, origin. In these disputes, Christians reaffirmed their commitment to the Ephesian legend and circulated new accounts of long sleeping saints dwelling in other locations near and distant. After the turn of the first millennium CE, several versions of the legend stories appeared in the west, including the *inventio* of the Seven Sleepers of Marmoutier, the story of the monk Felix, and the legend of a king, usually Charlemagne, sleeping under a mountain.⁴⁹¹ In this proliferation of new sleeper stories and shrines, Christian accounts adapted elements from Islamic tradition, *anagenetically* incorporating them into their own understanding of the legend and its religious significance.

Rather than surveying the expanse of the Christian, I will focus on those Christian adaptations of the legend that appear closely tied to the Islamic traditions discussed above. These narratives depict the sleepers not in terms of their past miracle but in an imagined present state dwelling within their cave; they too offer a kind of virtual visitation, “erected linguistically

columns, and within it are a number of little houses.” Ibn Khurradādhbih, *Kitāb al-Masālik w'al- Mamālik*, 79, reads “We walked within [the mountain] for the length of three hundred paces, and we came to the place which we had looked down upon from above, a chamber within the mountain with carved columns, and within it a number of houses.” Including the Arabic is helpful here to identify precisely how many of the same words are used. Al Biruni: “يدخل فيمير في خسف من الارض, “فصرننا الى الموضوع الذي فمشينا فيه مقدار ثلثمائة خطوة” Ibn Khurradādhbih: “اشرفنا عليه رواق في الجبل على اساطين منقورة وقيه عدة ابيات

⁴⁹¹ See Huber, *Wanderlegende*, 355-371; Dinshaw, 45-54.

through the illusion of direct ocular perception captured in language.”⁴⁹² In this way, Christians performed acts of *anagenesis* by relocating the site of the long sleeping to new frontiers and using it to advance new claims upon the figures of the saints and their role within the past, present, and future. In his *History of the Lombards*, Paul the Deacon (c. 720-779 CE) describes the sleepers as dwelling at the northern edges of the world:

I do not think it is without advantage to put off for a little while the order of my narrative, and because my pen up to this time deals with Germany, to relate briefly a miracle which is there considered notable among all, as well as certain other matters. In the farthest boundaries of Germany toward the west-north-west, on the shore of the ocean itself, a cave is seen under a projecting rock, where for an unknown time seven men repose wrapped in a long sleep, not only their bodies, but also their clothes being so uninjured, that from this fact alone, that they last without decay through the course of so many years, they are held in veneration among those ignorant and barbarous peoples. These then, so far as regards their dress, are perceived to be Romans. When a certain man, stirred by cupidity, wanted to strip one of them, straightway his arms withered, as is said, and his punishment so frightened the others that no one dared touch them further. The future will show for what useful purpose Divine Providence keeps them through so long a period. Perhaps those nations are to be saved some time by the preaching of these men, since they cannot be deemed to be other than Christians.⁴⁹³

The narrative “history” of how the sleepers reached the cave and the mystery behind their preservation have both been passed over, and Paul focuses instead on the present state of the saints. Situated among wave-washed cliffs at the northern edges of the world, the setting of the cave resembles more the landscapes of *Beowulf* than those of the Anatolian uplands. As an act of *anagenesis*, Paul identifies a new location for the long sleeping miracle at the “farthest boundaries of Germania.” This translation of the saints’ shrine brings it into a new set of temporal and geographical contexts, providing the opportunity to construct new meanings for the long sleeping miracle.

⁴⁹² Zadeh, *Mapping Frontiers*, 11.

⁴⁹³ Paulus Diaconus, *Historia Langobardum*, ed. L Bethman and G. Waitz, MGH SS rer. Lang. 1, (Hanover, 1878), IV, 16, p. 49. English translation in *History of the Langobards*, trans. William Dudley Foulke (Philadelphia: Dept. of History, University of Pennsylvania, 1907), 5-7.

In Paul's assessment, the sleepers' presence does not so much signify the past as the future. This future not only pertains to an eschatological resurrection, as in the hagiographical accounts but also to a global mission of evangelization. The "Roman vestments" of the sleepers suggest they are part of the age of martyrs that preceded Christian hegemony in the west, but their continual preservation within an ostensibly "pagan" land – and their protection from the meddling of those who would desecrate their shrines – suggests that their missionary purpose is still yet to be revealed. The cave's presence at the margins of the world reflects an evangelical mission that has been accomplished first among the "Germanic" peoples within the boundaries of the Roman world and will now expand to the lands of their ancestors.

Such a depiction of the sleepers reflects a growing sense of "Christendom" as a territorial entity within the wider world and one that is both evangelically and militarily expansive. It also likely reflects the perceived challenges of Islam to Christian geopolitical power and the claims of Muslim communities upon the story of the sleepers. Written at the end of the 8th century CE, Paul's *History of the Lombards* precedes any extant Islamic source proposing alternative sites for the cave. Yet many of the details of Paul's account intersect closely with the descriptions of the cave in Islamic geographies, such as the continued incorruptibility of the youths, their veneration by "ignorant" peoples, the descriptions of their vestments, and their identity as "Romans." Paul's remark that these men "cannot be other than Christians" is especially interesting. Like the Islamic scholars who investigated the shrines of the sleepers, Paul contrasts the naive veneration of the local "ignorant and barbarous peoples" ("*indociles... et barbaras nationes*") with his own powers to judge the religious significance of the shrine. It also protests, albeit silently, against Islamic claims upon the legend of the sleeping youths and upon dominion over the globe. Paul insists that despite being far from the shrine where these sleepers rest, Christian readers "know"

what others cannot: the true identity of the sleepers and the possibilities this sign of a Christian past opens up for a Christian future. Where Islamic expansions in the 7th and 8th centuries had encompassed many regions formerly under Roman control and put many others in jeopardy, Paul depicts “Germania” remains a place where Christians might succeed in winning new converts to their cause, aided by the genealogical connections between the peoples of the north and the rulers of Christian Europe. Whether Paul’s account contains an influence or awareness of Islamic traditions about the sleepers cannot be established through any direct textual source. Yet the account’s act of *anagenesis* emphasizes the parallel transformations of the long sleeping tradition among Christians and Muslims, from a “historical” event to a dynamic presence of a saintly shrine situated at the margins of space and time.

Paul’s account, together with the investigations of shrines by Muslim scholars, point to an important element in the shifting role of the sleepers: their continuing *incorruptibility*.⁴⁹⁴ While the preservation of dead bodies from decay can be accomplished by natural or artificial means, as several accounts observe, this common trope of saintly bodies was *anagenetically* enfolded into the idea of “long sleep.” No longer considered merely relics of a past wonder, the saints were portrayed intermittently capable of “stirring” from their slumber to perform new miracles on behalf of faithful worshippers. Another Latin narrative concerning the Seven Sleepers English Edward the Confessor (r. 1042-1066 CE) describes another virtual visitation to the sleepers’ shrine, accomplished by the king from his dinner table in England.⁴⁹⁵ In this account, the sleepers’ shrine remains in Ephesus, yet – through the visionary powers of King Edward – the sleepers are able to convey supernatural knowledge of events of global and local

⁴⁹⁴ On the “incorruptibility” of saint’s bodies, see Charles Freeman, *Holy Bones, Holy Dust: How Relics Shaped the History of Medieval Europe* (New Haven: University Press, 2011), 15-23.

⁴⁹⁵ Frank Barlow, “The Vita Æwardi (Book II); The Seven Sleepers: Some Further Evidence and Reflections,” *Speculum* 40, no. 3 (1965): 385–97.

import. In this act of *anagenesis*, the sleeping saints are employed to new ends, endorsing the sanctification of the English king and prophesying turning points of English history.

This episode appears in *The Life of King Edward who rests at Westminster (Vita Edwardi Regis qui Apud Wesmonasterium requiescit)*, composed in the late 11th or early 12th century CE.⁴⁹⁶ As the title of the work suggests, it promotes Edward's reputation as a saint and portrays the abbey of Westminster, which the King had established west of the city of London, as the center of his cult. The second book of the *Life* records a series of miracles attributed to the king during his life and after his death. Edward's godly senses give him the ability to see the disasters that will confront the world in the wake of his death. In the year 1060, King Edward is at Westminster to celebrate Easter. After taking the sacrament, the king and his court have a feast, which takes a turn for the strange when the usually somber Edward bursts out laughing. Earl Harold Godwinson – the ill-fated future king who will die at Hastings in 1066 – asks the king the meaning of his laughter after the feast. Edward replies:

For more than 200 years, the Seven Sleepers have rested on their right sides in a cave on Mount Cheilaion at Ephesus; but just now, after we started dinner, they have turned on to their left sides and will lie thus for seventy-four years. This change signals a dread omen for mankind. For those things that the Lord threatens in the Gospels will come to pass in many ways during these seventy-four years. For 'Nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom; and great earthquakes shall be in divers places, and famines, and pestilences; and fearful sights and great signs shall there be from Heaven' [Luke 21:10-11].⁴⁹⁷

While it has been centuries since the youths awoke at Ephesus, the saints depicted in Edward's vision appear to possess a new predictive power. The prophecy pivots on the image of the youths of Ephesus turning from one side to another, using the direction of the sleeper's bodies to signify

⁴⁹⁶ Frank Barlow, ed. and trans., *The Life of King Edward Who Rests at Westminster* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992). Barlow asserts the episode involving the sleepers appears to be a later interpolation into Edward's *Vita*, inserted at some point later in the 12th century. Several 12th century writers, including Florence of Worcester (d.1118), William of Malmesbury (1080-1143), and Osbert of Claire (d. 1158), included extracts from a version life in their own histories and hagiographies. For a summary of the "Literary Tradition" which was adapted the *Vita*, see Barlow, *Life of King Edward*, xxxiii-xliv.

a general shift in the tenor of history. This motif has roots in Islamic tradition. Describing the companions' state of preservation within the cave, the Qur'ān mentions, "we turned them to the right and to the left" (18:18).⁴⁹⁸ In his *tafsīr*, Muqātil ibn Sulaymān cites a tradition that Gabriel turned the sleepers from one side to another "twice each year, so that the earth did not consume their flesh."⁴⁹⁹ In the intervening centuries, the motif of the sleepers' turning must have percolated into Christian legends, likely through Eastern Mediterranean sources closer to the Islamic world.⁵⁰⁰ These elements of Islamic tradition are *anagenetically* employed to new ends. Rather than being turned by Gabriel, the sleepers appear to move of their own volition, but this apparent vivacity is not nearly as important as the significance of the turning. The sleepers continue to act from their liminal position between sleep, death, and resurrection, which can in turn be understood by a saintly ruler like Edward as symbolizing a periodic shift in the course of history.

"Stupefied" (*obstupuerunt*) by the king's vision and ignorant of the story of the Seven Sleepers, Harold and the priests ask to know more. The king continues with a summary of the sleepers' lives and one of the traditional records of their names in the Latin tradition.⁵⁰¹ The English decide to send an embassy to "Maniches, emperor of Constantinople" to confirm the king's vision.⁵⁰² Edward's embassy to Byzantium is reminiscent of the Islamic missions to

⁴⁹⁷ *The Life of King Edward*, II.7, pp. 104-5.

⁴⁹⁸ "*Wa-nuqallibuhum dhāta al-yamīni wa-dhāta al-shimāli.*" Guillaume Dye, *Qur'an Seminar Commentary*, 215, identifies this detail as one of the unique elements included in the Qur'anic account. There is no parallel the Syriac tradition.

⁴⁹⁹ Muqātil ibn Sulaymān, *Tafsīr*, 18:18, vol. 2, 283.

⁵⁰⁰ Barlow, "*Vita Ædwardi: The Seven Sleepers*," 393, suggests "Edward's vision of the Seven Sleepers, the investigation, and perhaps the prophecy of woe could have originated among expatriate Englishmen at Constantinople, especially since the Byzantine general George Maniaces had disposed of the Varangian regiment during his Sicilian campaign of 1038." Such a story could have been brought back by English pilgrims or returning exiles, who could probably have provided the Byzantine proofs."

⁵⁰¹ "*Maximianus, Malchus, Martinianus, Dionisius, Iohannes, Serapion, et Constantinus.*" This is the same list as in the charm "Against a Dwarf" and one of two registers included in the version of Gregory of Tours. See Huber, *Wanderlegende*, 92-3.

⁵⁰² "*Manicheti Constantinopolitano imperatori,*" Barlow, *Life of Edward*, 106-7. Barlow asserts the passage refers to

investigate the shrine initiated by the caliph al-Wāthiq.⁵⁰³ Yet while Islamic accounts questioned the validity of the shrine and affirmed the superior knowledge of Islamic authorities, the *Life* stages the investigation as a confirmation of Edward's visionary power. Like the keepers of the shrine in the Islamic narratives, the people of Ephesus are "unwitting" (*nescientibus*) of the miraculous event until they learn of Edward's "secret" knowledge. Arriving in Ephesus, the ambassadors are led by the bishop of that city into the sleepers' shrine, where they learn that Edwards' vision has come to pass: the bodies have turned of their own accord. Together the English visitors and the citizens of Ephesus "praised God who had clearly revealed to a king dining in London what he had performed for his saints in the secrecy of the Cheilaion cave and had published through the overseas Saxons to the unwitting Ephesians how it went with their comrades."⁵⁰⁴ While the location of the cave would shift from Ephesus to other sites in both the Islamic and Christian traditions, the embassy of the English to the Ephesian shrine effectively becomes a *translation* of Edward's knowledge to the keepers of the cave. The king's privileged connection to these famous saints enhances the reputation of his own sepulcher at Westminster, linking the two cities through this shared miracle.

The *Life* deploys this vision of sleepers turning to establish Edward's saintly reputation and mark a periodic shift in local and global history. The author of the episode observes how recent events have confirmed the king's interpretation of this sight as a harbinger of calamity. In the years that followed, the rulers of many Christian kingdoms died unexpectedly, and the "Saracens and Arabs, Turks and Commagenians [Syrians] and other barbarian nations opposed

"George Maniaces, a famous soldier who rebelled in Italy in 1042 against [Emperor] Michael V and marched on Constantinople, but was defeated and killed in 1043," p. 107 n. 266. Maniaces' position as a commander of the Varangian guard, which recruited Anglo-Saxon and Scandinavian soldiers, may have boosted his reputation in England.

⁵⁰³ Huber, *Wanderlegende*, 228. In Ibn Khurradādhbih, *Kitāb al-Masālik w' al-Mamālik*, 161-71, the Caliph al-Wāthiq sends another embassy mission to the east to check in on Alexander's barrier against Gog and Magog after he dreams of cracks in the wall: see Van Donzel and Schmidt, *Gog and Magog*, 130-4. [Add Zadeh]

⁵⁰⁴ Barlow, *The Life of King Edward*, 107.

to Christ arose against the Christians and devastated Syria and Lycia and other neighboring kingdoms, destroyed churches and oppressed the Christians with many wrongs.”⁵⁰⁵ Yet the clearest manifestation of Edward’s prophecy is found in England itself, where the whole order of the country has been turned upside down:

And what shall I say about England? What shall I tell generations to come? Woe is to you England, you who once showed bright with holy angelic progeny, but now with anxious expectation groan exceedingly for your sins. You have lost your native king and suffered defeat, with much spilling of the blood of many of your men, in a war against the foreigner. Pitiably your sons have been slain with you. Your counsellors and princes are bound in chains, killed, or disinherited. And all the many misfortunes we have described, warfare, famine, pestilence, and other evils, that have occurred in those provinces which we know because of their proximity, no doubt also certainly took place, in accordance with the prophecy, in other regions which, because of their remoteness, we know less well.⁵⁰⁶

The calamities suffered by the English in the wake of the Norman Conquest now follow a biblical model, recalling the sufferings of the people of Judah and Israel in the age of captivity.⁵⁰⁷ As an ostensibly secular ruler who witnesses the power of the saints, Edward occupies a position similar to the emperor Theodosius in the first generation of Christian legends. He also resembles the caliph al-Wāthiq in Islamic accounts of visitations to the shrine. As the last legitimate “Anglo-Saxon” king and the relative of William the Conqueror, he is a liminal figure in English history. The king’s status as a saint entombed at his own site of pilgrimage further links him with the sleepers, and the vision serves to *translate* the knowledge and the power of these saintly figures to a holy site more accessible to the English people.

As an act of *anagenesis*, Edward’s vision of the sleeping saints seems to incorporate elements of all the traditions we have surveyed in the story of the sleepers, nesting several layers

⁵⁰⁵ Barlow, *The Life of King Edward*, 108-9.

⁵⁰⁶ Barlow, *The Life of King Edward*, 110-11.

⁵⁰⁷ The proposed length of time before the sleepers, return to their right sides, “74 years” has not been adequately identified by any scholars of the *Life* as signifying a particular event. This may well be because that portion of the legend remained prophetic for the recorders of the legend.

of folk tradition and historical, visionary, and eschatological motifs. Most importantly, the trope of the sleepers' turning enacts its own form of "periodization" and prophecy. It signifies both the end of a historical era and the prophetic potential for a future shift in political fortune. The sleepers' power is no longer restricted to their first sleep but continues to signify moments of historical transformation and apocalyptic expectation until they awake again on the day of resurrection. Their turning heralds the fulfillment of biblical prophecy so that the calamities promised by Jesus as preludes to the kingdom of heaven will now play out on the world stage.

Rediscovering the Sleepers in al-Andalus

Paul the Deacon's account of the Seven Sleepers imagines the figures as a latent promise that the furthest reaches of Germania would be incorporated into Christendom. At the same time, many Christian regions of the former Roman Empire had come under the rule of Muslim authorities and were consequently being re-imagined as part of an Islamic world. While Muslim visitors to the sleepers' shrines in lands under Christian rule tended to reject the authenticity of such sites, those in lands under Islamic hegemony employed *anagenetic* discoveries of the cave to appropriate the sacred spaces of other religious traditions and re-write the history of conquered lands. In al-Andalus, Muslims disseminated unique narratives concerning the companions of the cave, relocating the site to a village called Loja in the Iberian Peninsula.⁵⁰⁸ Just as Christian

⁵⁰⁸ Antonio Olmo, "Loja islámica. Historia y leyenda: la Cueva de los Durmientes," *Miscelánea de Estudios Árabes y Hebraicos. Sección Árabe-Islam* 51, no. 0 (2002): 161-189. In his survey of sleeper caves in the Islamic world, Massignon, "Les Sept Dormants," 91, identifies two in Iberia: one at "*Yanān al-Ward*" near the city of Córdoba, and another at village of Loja near Granada. See Olmo, "Loja Islámica," 172, n.32, the geographer Yaquut al-Hamawi (574-626 AH / 1179-1229 CE) places *Yanān al-Ward* in the vicinity of Toledo instead. It is likely no accident that these shrines are both located in the hinterlands of three of the most politically important cities of Islamic Spain; the capital of the revived Umayyad court in the early centuries of al-Andalus (756-1031 CE), and the site of the Nasrid Emirate which would be the last of the sovereign Muslim states on the peninsula (1238-1492 CE). An extensive and highly original version of the sleepers narrative was also discovered in al-Andalus. See José Vázquez, "Una Versión Árabe Occidental de La Leyenda de Los Siete Durmientes de Éfeso," *Instituto de Estudios Islámicos VII-VIII* (19596-60): 40-117.

traditions borrowed elements of the Islamic narrative in an effort to make the Ephesian narrative relevant to their local communities, so too the Islamic accounts of the cave at Loja appropriated elements of Christian tradition.

Descriptions of Loja appear in the geographical treatises of several Muslim scholars from al-Andalus and the western Mediterranean from the 11th through 14th centuries CE. These descriptions follow many of the same traditions and methodologies as the earlier geographers' examinations of the cave in the Near East. The earliest account of the cave, that of al-'Udhri (393-478 AH / 1103-1075 CE), describes "four" bodies in a cavern outside the town of Loja, remarks on their veneration by the local populace, and expresses doubts concerning the site's connections to the Qur'ānic companions.⁵⁰⁹ Later descriptions endorsed the authenticity of Loja's shrine, emphasizing connections to the Qur'ānic narrative and its exegetical expansions.⁵¹⁰ Abū Ḥamīd al-Gharnāṭī (fl. 6th c. AH / 12th c. CE) provides a brief description of the site, mentioning the presence of "seven youths" and "a dog" bowing at the feet of one of the bodies.⁵¹¹ Al-Gharnāṭī further claims the light outside the cavern behaves in the curious manner mentioned by Qur'ān 18:17, appearing on the right side of the cavern at sunrise and on the left at sunset.⁵¹² The Roman past of Iberia, evident in historical records and in ruins scattered throughout the peninsula, offered an efficacious historical setting that was *anagenetically* imagined as equivalent to the site of the Qur'ānic account. The historian al-Ḥimyarī (ca. 13th c. CE) mentions a *masjid* constructed on the site of the cave, and a "Roman construction, called *al-*

⁵⁰⁹ Al-'Udhri, *Nuṣūṣ 'an Al-Andalus Min Kitāb Tarṣī' al-Akhbār Wa-Tanwī' al-Athār, Wa-al-Bustān Fīgharā'ib al-Buldān Wa-al-Masālik 'ilī Jamī' al-Mamālik*, ed. 'Abd al-'Aziz al-Aḥwānī (Madrid: Instituto de Estudios Islámicos, 1965), 92-3. See Olmo, "Loja islámica," 172-3.

⁵¹⁰ Olmo, "Loja islámica," 175, observes that later authorities who quote al-'Udhri's narrative excise parts of his account "which place doubt upon the verisimilitude of the history of the Cave."

⁵¹¹ Al-Gharnāṭī, *Tuhfat al-albāb*, (Madrid: Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas, Instituto de Cooperación con el Mundo Árabe, 1990), 81-2. The sleepers' canine companion – absent from the earlier Islamic accounts in the east, but present in Theodosius' visit to the shrine at Ephesus – has reemerged as a figure of veneration at the shrine as a veritable Qur'ānic connection.

Raqīm, appearing in the form of a circular castle.”⁵¹³ Both al-Ḥimyarī and al-Gharnāṭī identified Granada as the “city of Decius,” re-inscribing the present city with a “historical” name that connected it to the setting of the legend.⁵¹⁴ The narrative enabled Muslims to acknowledge the layers of the religious and cultural history of the Iberian Peninsula – Gothic, Roman, and Celto-Iberian, Christian, Jewish, and Pagan – that preceded Islamic times and remained in material witnesses to the region’s past.

Mindful of their own legacy of migration, Muslim authors also used the story of the Companions and the identification of their resting place as a way of staking claim to their new home. Muḥammad ibn Abī Bakr al-Zuhrī (fl. 1130-1150 CE) includes the most extensive account of the cave at Loja in his *Book of Geography (Kitāb al-Ja’rāfiyah)*.⁵¹⁵ Like the account of al-‘Udhri, the *Book of Geography* claims that “the author” (Ar. *al-mu’alaf*) visited the cave himself in the year 532 / 1137-8.⁵¹⁶ Having established his authority as a witness to cave firsthand, Al-Zuhrī follows his own account with a series of stories depicting Loja as a critical site in the conquest of *al-Andalus* and its incorporation into the Muslim world.⁵¹⁷ Placing the original Qur’ānic narrative of the companions of the cave deep in the past, al-Zuhrī emphasizes

⁵¹² Al-Gharnāṭī, *Tuḥfat al-albāb*, 81.

⁵¹³ Al-Ḥimyarī, *Kitāb ar-rawd al-mi’tar*, 78.

⁵¹⁴ Al-Ḥimyarī, *Kitāb ar-rawd al-mi’tar*, 78. Olmo, 178-9, suggests that while the descriptions of the cave suggest potential “Roman constructions... possibly a Pagan or Christian hermitage or oratory,” whatever remains may have existed in the site at Loja would have been centuries old by the time of Al-‘Udhri’s description.

⁵¹⁵ Muḥammad ibn Abī Bakr al-Zuhrī, *Kitāb al-Ja’rāfiyah: wa-mā dhakaratuḥu al-ḥukamā’ fihā min al-‘imārah wa-mā fī kull juz’ min al-gharā’ib wa-al-‘ajā’ib, taḥṭawī ‘alā al-aqālīm al-sab’ah wa-mā fī al-arḍ min al-amyāl wa-al-farāsikh wa-billāh al-tawfiq wa-minhu al-hidāyah ilā sawā’ al-ṭarīq*, ed. Muḥammad Ḥājjī Ṣādiq (Dimashq: al-Ma’had al-Faransī bi-Dimashq, 1968). For a Spanish translation of the work, see Dolores Bramón, *El mundo en el siglo XII: estudio de la versión castellana y del “original” árabe de una geografía universal, “El tratado de al-Zuhrī”* (Sabadell, Barcelona: Editorial AUSA, 1991).

⁵¹⁶ Al-Zuhrī, *Kitāb al-Ja’rāfiyah*, 95; trans. Bramon, *El Mundo in el Siglo XII*, 167-8.

⁵¹⁷ The description of the cave in al-Zuhrī – and especially dog lying at the feet of the companions – is very close to the description provided in the geography of the Sicilian scholar al-Idrisi (1100-1165 CE), which likewise claimed its “author” visited the cave of the sleepers in 510 A.H./ 1117 CE, albeit in Anatolia. See al-Idrisī, *Géographie d’Edrisi*, trans. Pierre-Amédée Jaubert (Paris, Impr. royale, 1836), vol. 2, 299-30. Al-Idrisī claims that Ephesus is the site traditionally associated with the cave, but he follows Ibn Khurradādhbih in declaring it is actually situated between the cities of Nicea and Amouria in western Anatolia. He further mentions that the people of Al-Andalus consider the city of Loja as the site of the shrine.

how the presence of the cave anticipated the land's role as a Muslim kingdom in the west:

When the Muslims entered al-Andalus in the year 91 AH [709-10 CE], they asked the Christians about the cave and about those who were inside. The Christian sages and their bishops professed, "We know nothing of them; only that our fathers told us that, when a people would come to take this country from the Goths, who lived in it before us, they would ask us about the cave and about the people who were in it." The people responded: "We do not know their history, and so we found them when we invaded the country of those Khazars (Ar. *al-Ḥazaran* [sic]) who were here since the age of Abraham – peace be upon him. The author continued – God have mercy upon him! The most extraordinary thing I have seen and the most marvelous that I have observed in the matter of this cave is that, when one looks attentively at its interior and applies his faculties of reason, the clear result is the proof [of the existence] of the people of the Cave."⁵¹⁸

Like the narrative of the saints' ominous turn in the *Life of King Edward*, the rediscovery of the sleepers by the Muslim conquerors signifies a periodic shift in both local and global history. Yet rather than a narrative of calamity and crisis, the story of the sleepers in Loja is used to justify the incorporation of the Iberian peninsula into the Islamic world. As earlier traditions in the east, al-'Udhri and al-Gharnāfi treated the veneration of the cave's inhabitants as a local custom but left it to Muslim scholars to evaluate the site's authenticity. In Al-Zuhri's account, the locals' ignorance of the sleepers' significance – and the ability of Muslim authorities to recognize the truth – is now staged as a second awakening of the saints. The arrival of Muslims resolves the mystery of the sleepers' identity, the epistemic tensions that have kept Iberia's inhabitants unwitting of their land's true beginnings. As an act of *anagenesis*, this rediscovery of the sleepers offers an opportunity to map the different generations of Iberia's religious history and to prove that Islam preceded all other faiths.

As Andulusi Muslim authors became more secure in the belief that the cave at Loja was in fact the site of the sleepers' shrine, the bodies that rested within the cave were invested with

⁵¹⁸ Al-Zuhri, *Kitāb al-Ja'rafīyah*, 96; Bramon, *El Mundo in el Siglo XII*, 168-9. The reference to the Khazars in Spain is unattested elsewhere, but may reflect some attempt to emplace Jewish settlement in Iberia back into the ancient past as

new powers and meaning. As in the Christian accounts of the *History of the Lombards* and the *Life of King Edward*, the sleepers remained powerful figures even in their liminal state between death and sleep, capable of manifesting new moments of divine destiny. While other Islamic accounts distinguished the skeptical eye of the observer from those of adoring locals, another anecdote in al-Zuhri's work distinguishes the Muslim believers of Granada from the impious natives who live beyond the city's walls. In this narrative, the re-dedication of the cave achieves what the other stories of the Sleeper's waking have sought to avert: a vigorous dose of authoritarian violence:

A group of people of the depraved and shameless life gathered together in the city of Loja, which one encounters near the Cave, and offered a recompense to whoever journeyed into the Cave and returned with a clear sign that he had been within it. The deed had to take place during the night. One man from Granada went out from among these people, and guided himself to the Cave with fear and terror; for no one enter it during the daytime with several people out of fear; but when the night came, he regained his courage and brought himself within until he reached the [body] in the center; and he cut off an ear and came back with it to his companions. When he arrived among them with the ear, a great scream (“*ṣāḥ ṣā’ih*”) was heard that spread throughout all of Loja; there was no one there, great or small, who did not despair. The voice which screamed declared: “You have cut off the ear of Tamlikhā, one of the companions of the Cave.” For this, the city shook. The people, led together by a leader, came to the same place and banged on their door; the leader among them saying: “Where is the ear which you have cut?” The men answered: “This is the one who took it” signifying the particular man and recovering the ear. Then Muḥammad ibn Sa’āda, who was the commander of the police in Granada, seized those criminals and struck them with whips until they died. At dawn Muḥammad ibn Sa’āda conducted himself to the Cave with a group of his companions, and they discovered that the ear of the one who was in the center, recognized to be Tamlikhā, had been cut off. They sewed it in place again with thread and water. Then Muḥammad ibn Sa’āda commanded the reconstruction of al-Raqīm, which was over the Cave. There were traces of an ancient *masjid* that had been destroyed. He had it rebuilt, directing the mihrāb towards the qiblah. [Reported] in the aforesaid year of 532 [1137-8 CE].⁵¹⁹

Like the story of Paul the Deacon, the sleeper's bodies in this account are preserved not only

well.

⁵¹⁹ Al-Zuhri, *Kitāb al-Ja’rāfiyah*, 97, tran. Bramon, *El Mundo in el Siglo XII*, 168-9.

from the depredations of time, but also from the potential blasphemies of the impious. The proof of their holiness precedes them through new stories of their continued power. This account's unique fixation upon the "ear of Tamlikhā" points to a conflation of the long sleeping figure with a "Malchus" in Christian tradition. This figure, a servant of the "high priest," has his ear cut off by Peter during Jesus' arrest and is thereafter miraculously healed by Jesus.⁵²⁰ The "scream screaming" ("ṣāḥ ṣā'ih"), which alerts the city to the theft, is reminiscent of *al-ṣayḥatu* ("the shriek"), a term that appears several times in the Qur'ān to describe God's destruction of disobedient peoples, as well as the future terrors of the end-times.⁵²¹ Whereas the Gospels' story offers an admonition against violence, al-Zuhri's account depicts Malchus' lost ear as a blasphemous act that demands vengeance.

As an act of *anagenesis*, this rediscovery and rededication of the sleepers' shrine heralds a long-awaited awakening of the Iberian Peninsula to its "original" Islamic faith. The sleep experienced by the youths has been extended figuratively from the initial cycle of sleeping and waking presented in the Qur'ānic narrative to new moments of discovery that confirm the inauguration of a new historical period. The tradition of the sleepers as refugees fleeing the persecution of an unjust tyrant has been elided into a celebration of the "chief of Police," who arrives from Granada to execute the offenders and reestablish order in the periphery of the Islamic capital. The threat of unbelief persists within the borders of Islamicate al-Andalus, and those who disrupt or desecrate the sacral space – threatening the return of an ancient catastrophe

⁵²⁰ Luke 22:50-1 mentions that in the midst of Jesus' arrest, one of his disciples cut off the ear of a servant of the high priest, which Jesus then healed. John 18:10-11 identifies the assailant as Peter and the servant as "Malchus."

⁵²¹ The Qur'anic shriek is not so much a warning of destruction as destruction itself; several ancient peoples have disappeared after God punished them in this manner. It shares the same Arabic root "ṣād yā ḥā" / ص ح ي. *Aṣ-ṣayḥatu*, is mentioned in the Qur'an as coming upon ancient peoples before the flood (23:41), as well as destroying the ancient cities of 'Ād, Thamūd (11:67), al-Ḥijr (15:83), the "people of Lot" (15:73) and Midian (11:94). The Qur'an further declares "*ʾIla ṣayḥatān wāḥidān*" ("there will be single cry") yet to come in the future, bringing the people of the world all together for judgement (36:53-4).

in the process – must be punished and killed by the state. By reenacting the Qur’ānic construction of a *masjid* at the site within the time-scape of al-Andalus, these Muslims restore the land to its former faith and avoid the threat of their own destruction. *Anagenesis* narratives became entangled within a logic of retributive violence and religious antagonism; the reclamation and rediscovery of religious relics were invoked to seize the places of worship and justify the persecution of other religious communities.

Conclusion

In the proliferation of new locations of the sleepers’ cave and new narratives about the sleepers themselves, we can observe how different communities of Christians and Muslims sought to insert themselves into the *longue durée* of history, articulating their relationship to both past and future through the medium of these time-traveling figures. In the midst of this relocation of the physical site of the miracle, the temporal dimension of the long sleeping legend was also transformed. The sleeper’s miraculous power did not conclude with their death and enshrinement. Instead, they continued to signify new acts of historical consequence, as well as standing as a material reminder of the resurrection. The doubled narrative of supernatural sleeping and waking, first placed in the past and again at the end of time, transforms the sleepers into a kind of cosmic clock that turns over in cycles throughout history. As emblems of the end of time still suspended within the world, the story of the sleepers, their bodies, and their tombs became contested centers in a struggle to define which communities would be the true inheritors of a shared sacred history.

Conclusion to Part 2

Anagenesis is a method of managing multiplicity. While the stories of “unknowing archaeologists” contained parallel narratives of discovery and parallel concerns with connecting pre-conversion ancestors back to a “scriptural” history, the cases considered in the first part of this study are not directly linked in terms of literary influence. In contrast, the stories of long sleepers that circulated among Jews, Christians, and Muslims were deeply interconnected. Parallel names, settings, narrative details, and theological doctrines point both to the shared origins in the Abrahamic traditions and the further cross-pollination of different iterations of the tale among these different faiths. In the transmission and translation of the long sleeper narrative, different accounts preserved and reinforced the acts of *anagenesis* that appeared in previous versions of the narrative, or else they transformed these aspects of the story to make it suitable for new contexts and communities.

In the case of the Jewish, Christian, and Islamic traditions, long sleep is an act of God; the sleepers are not only unwitting of their long-sleep, but miraculously preserved from age and death. The awakening of the sleepers signifies an ultimate continuity in God’s intentions for history, despite the cyclical threats of exile, persecution, and oblivion. As a sign of future resurrection and judgement, the story also emphasizes who God will choose to save from death at the end of time. In the next part of the dissertation, we will explore how different forms of *anagenesis* mustered signs of the past and future not only to incorporate the stories of saints and sleepers into an ambit of sacred time but also entire peoples.

Part 3: Apocalyptic Ethnography

Introduction to Part 3: *Anagenesis* as tragedy in *The Book of John Mandeville*

In addition to sacred artifacts and sleeping saints, the time-bending principles of *anagenesis* could be imaginatively applied to entire peoples. We have touched on some of the ways that scriptural genealogies were imaginatively reconstructed in the stories of Beowulf, the Life of Muhammad, and the accounts of the Khazar conversion to redefine community by incorporating local ancestors and traditions into a universal genealogy of Abrahamic, Noachic, and ultimately Adamic descent. In the final part of this dissertation, we will explore how similar forms of *anagenesis* were thrust upon people from without. While merging the schemes of scriptural genealogy and classical geography gave a capacious number of ways to see the world, as Jews, Christians, and Muslims expanded throughout Africa, Eurasia, and the Islands of the Indian Ocean, they encountered peoples little mentioned or wholly unknown in the ostensibly complete records of history. Such encounters were not only spurred by the expansive efforts of evangelism and empire but also came out of the migrations of different peoples into the regions of the “known” world and the formation of new ethnicities and identities unrecorded in previous history.

Such forms of *anagenesis* reflect a kind of “apocalyptic ethnography,” explaining the encounters and emergences of new nations outside the traditional register of classical geography through recourse to the eternal words of scripture. Migration became cast as a phenomenon of re-emergence from the past, from the numinous margins of the temporal and geographical frontier into the “real” time of the civilized world, where the records of history are kept and known. Rather than acknowledging the novelty of peoples who had either existed beyond the bounds of a limited tradition of geographic knowledge or who had only emerged as a community in recent

time, ethnographic forms of *anagenesis* portrayed such encounters as moments of *recognition*.

In the *longue durée*, such forms of *anagenesis* could become detached from the original contexts of their creation and transferred to new peoples real or fictional. A telling example occurs in the *Book of John Mandeville*, a 14th-century travel account that Benjamin Braude reckons as the “the single most popular European work of secular literature in the late medieval, early modern period.”⁵²² The book’s author was not “John Mandeville” but an “armchair traveler” who stitched together the experiences of a nonexistent knight from an impressive library of travel narratives and geographical compendiums.⁵²³ This dedication to repeating and recycling other authoritative traditions made the *Book of Jean Mandeville* immensely successful, Anecdotes and images adapted from *Mandeville* appear in many early maps and atlases, and the book served as a trusted guide for Christopher Columbus and Martin Frobisher on their expeditions, leaving its mark upon on Early Modern European attempts to encompass the “new world” within the terms and traditions of the old.⁵²⁴ As Braude suggests, “The book not only represents a summa of medieval European knowledge and prejudice about the rest of the world, but it is also essential for tracking the transformation of European understanding of the Other.”⁵²⁵

Among the most influential and the most troubling of the legacies of *The Book of John Mandeville* is the work’s dedicated Anti-Semitism.⁵²⁶ As the book traces its imaginative and embodied itinerary through the vast literary landscapes of medieval Christian history and

⁵²² Braude, “Sons of Noah,” 106. For an edition of the Medieval Anglo-Norman text of the *Book of John Mandeville*, thought to be the earliest version see *Le livre de Jehan de Mandeville: une “géographie” au XIV^e siècle*, ed. Christiane Deluz (Louvain-la-Neuve: Institut d’études Médiévales de l’Université Catholique de Louvain, 1988). For an English translation of the Anglo-Norman text, see *The Book of John Mandeville, with Related Texts*. Ed. Iain Macleod Higgins. (Indianapolis: Hackett, 2011).

⁵²³ Braude, “Sons of Noah,” 115.

⁵²⁴ On Mandeville’s influence upon understandings of the Americas, see Heng, *Invention of Race*, 350-1; Higgins, *Writing East*, 2-6.

⁵²⁵ Braude, “Sons of Noah,” 116.

⁵²⁶ Heng, *Inventions of Race*, 86-91; Westrem, “Against Gog,” 68-71; Zacher, “Judaism and National Identity,” 367-78.

geography, its journey to the geographical ends of the earth inevitably intersects with the temporal limits of Christian history, arriving at the looming apocalypse. The traveler comes to the land of the “Jews of the ten tribes... which men call Goth and Magoth.”⁵²⁷ According to *Mandeville*, these people have been enclosed between the mountains and the Caspian Sea by the combined efforts of Alexander the Great and God almighty. *Mandeville* declares they will remain there until the “time of the Antichrist,” when the peoples shut within a wall built by Alexander will escape and unite with their fellow Jews throughout the world. Then “Christians will be then subject to them, even more than they have been subject to Christians,” overturning the (imagined) order of the world in the last days.⁵²⁸ The focus on this past enclosure and future invasion is threaded through a fear of present conspiracy. Locked in their mountains since the age of Alexander, the Lost Tribes “know no language except Hebrew.”⁵²⁹ In order to communicate with a few members who have slipped through the mountains ahead of schedule, “All the Jews who live throughout all parts of the earth for these reasons learn to speak Hebrew.”⁵³⁰ From *Mandeville*’s perspective, Jews who continue to practice their language and cultural heritage distinct from Christian Europe do so in order to act as a fifth column for the apocalyptic forces waiting on the world’s edge.

Mandeville’s vision of the “enclosed peoples” has been studied by many scholars and situated with the narratives of Alexander literature in Jewish, Christian, and Muslim traditions, in connection with the traditions of anti-Semitism, Othering, and Race-Making thought that occurred across the *longue durée* of the Middle Ages.⁵³¹ In the framework of *anagenesis*, it

⁵²⁷ *Mandeville*, ed. Deluz, 428; Higgins, 157: “Juys de X lienés... qe homme appelle Goth et Magoth.” The translations here are my own.

⁵²⁸ *Mandeville*, ed. Deluz, 430; Higgins, 159

⁵²⁹ *Mandeville*, ed. Deluz, 430; Higgins, 159; “ne scievent langage fors que ebrieu.”

⁵³⁰ *Mandeville*, ed. Deluz, 430; Higgins, 159; “touz le Juys qe demoerent par toutes terres apprendent toutdis a parler ebrieu.”

⁵³¹ On *Mandeville*’s portrayal of the Jews as “Goth and Magoth,” and as a form of “religious race,” Heng, *Invention of*

represents one of the most prolific iterations of a long tradition of apocalyptic ethnography, one that stretches back before the Common Era and developed into distinct traditions among Jews, Christians, and Muslims in the millennia that followed. The names “Gog” and “Magog” appear briefly in the scriptures of all three faiths, mentioned in the Hebrew prophecies of Ezekiel, the Christian Book of Revelation, and the 18th sura of the Qur’ān.⁵³² Out of these scriptural origins, these numinous signifiers would be *anagenetically* imagined as both historical ancestors of different peoples in the world, as an invading army who would appear at the end of time to do battle with the forces of God, and as both at once.⁵³³ In the 7th century CE, the figures “Gog and Magog” would be imported into a legend Alexander enclosing a barbarian people within the mountains of the Caucasus, imbuing this initially separate story with a sense of apocalyptic import.⁵³⁴ The elastic and enigmatic name of “Gog and Magog” became the most prolific and popular expression of apocalyptic ethnography, applied to any number historical or literary antagonists over the course of two millennia – including Goths, Huns, Franks, Khazars, Turks, Mongols, and – in Mandeville’s case – Jews.⁵³⁵

Race, 379-83; See also Higgins *Writing East: The Travels of Sir John Mandeville* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1997), 178-89; Suzanne Conklin Akbari, “Placing the Jews in Medieval English Literature,” in *Orientalism and the Jews*, ed. Ivan Davidson Kalmar and Derek Jonathan Penslar (Waltham, MA: Brandeis University Press, 2005), 32–50, 45-9.

⁵³² On Gog and Magog in biblical tradition and modern biblical scholarship, see Sverre Bøe, *Gog and Magog: Ezekiel 38-39 as Pre-Text for Revelation 19,17-21 and 20,7-10* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2001), on Gog and Magog in the Quran, see Keith Lewinsein, “Gog and Magog,” in *Encyclopaedia of the Quran*; For the legend’s influence on the Qur’ān, see Kevin Van Bladel, “The Alexander Legend in the Qur’ān 18: 83-102,” in *The Qur’ān in Its Historical Context*, ed. Gabriel Said Reynolds (London: Routledge, 2008), 175–203.

⁵³³ For surveys of the legend Gog and Magog, see Andrew Runni Anderson, *Alexander’s Gate, Gog and Magog, and the Inclosed Nations* (Cambridge, MA: The Medieval Academy of America, 1932)); E. J. van. Donzel and Andrea Schmidt, *Gog and Magog in Early Syriac and Islamic Sources: Sallam’s Quest for Alexander’s Wall* (Leiden: Brill, 2011); A. A. Seyed-Gohrab, Faustina Clara Wilhelmina Aerts, and Sen McGlinn, eds., *Gog and Magog: The Clans of Chaos in World Literature* (Amsterdam: Rozenberg, 2007).

⁵³⁴ On the convergence of Gog and Magog with the Alexander Romance tradition, see Anderson, *Alexander’s Gate*, 15-57; Van Donzel and Schmidt, *Gog and Magog*, 16-32; On the legend of Gog and Magog in Islamic and Arabic sources, see van Donzel and Schmidt, *Gog and Magog*, 51-117; Zadeh, *Mapping Frontiers*, esp. 2-5, 142-160; Faustina Doufikar-Aerts, *Alexander Magnus Arabicus: A Survey of the Alexander Tradition through Seven Centuries: From Pseudo-Callisthenes to Suri* (Paris ; Walpole, MA: Peeters Publishers, 2010) For a general history of Alexander Legends in the Middle Ages, see Z. David Zuwiyya, ed., *A Companion to Alexander Literature in the Middle Ages* (Leiden: Brill, 2011).

⁵³⁵ On the legend’s connection to forms of Anti-Judaism and Anti-Semitism, see Andrew Colin Gow, *The Red Jews: Antisemitism in an Apocalyptic Age, 1200-1600* (Leiden: Brill, 1995); Scott Westrem, “Against Gog and Magog,” in *Text*

In this part of the dissertation, we will unpack some of the elements of Mandeville's narrative to show how *anagenesis* functions in defining the past, present, and future of human communities. While the people of Gog and Magog were primarily understood as forces of apocalyptic evil, changes in the perceptions of the people imagined as their *anagenetic* equivalents could also engender radical re-writings of these imagined ancestors as heroic peoples. Gog and Magog were often moved from the future to the present, to the past, and back to the future again, as different acts of *anagenesis* were deployed to re-sequence the details surrounding their identity, location, and role in sacred and secular history. These successive reapplications and re-imaginings of the identity intersected with many other stories about migration, geographical margins, and eschatological expectations but ultimately provided a prophetic expression of the very real threats posed by successive waves of mass migration and invasion which passed from Central Asia into the regions of Europe and the Middle East from the collapse of the Roman frontiers in the 4th and 5th centuries to the conquests of Timur in the 15th century. As Andrew Runni Anderson, the first modern scholar to gather together the various strands of the legend, observes, "the legend of Alexander's Gate and of the enclosed nations is in reality the story of the frontier in a sublimated mythologized form."⁵³⁶

and Territory: Geographical Imagination in the European Middle Ages (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1998), 54–75, 69–73. Akbari, "Placing the Jews," 45–9.

⁵³⁶ Anderson, *Alexander's Gate*, 8.

3.1: The Game of Names: The Goths and Gog and Magog in Apocalyptic Ethnography

Introduction

While the biblical people were known as “Gog” and “Magog,” *Mandeville* records the names of two tribes as “Goth” and “Magoth.”⁵³⁷ Though the author of *Mandeville* identifies “Goth” and “Magoth” as equivalent to the “Jews” and “Ten Tribes of Israel,” this curious spelling preserves the legacy of prior forms of apocalyptic ethnography begun nearly a thousand years earlier. As refugees of Hunnic migrations and state formation in the Ukrainian Steppe came into conflict with the Roman Empire in the last decades of the 4th century CE, several of the Empire’s prominent Christian theologians, led by Ambrose of Milan, equated the people known as “Goths” with the figures of “Gog” and “Magog” recounted in the books of Genesis, Ezekiel, and Revelation. By discovering a biblical origin for this contemporary people, this act of *anagenesis* situated the migrations of the Goths and their relationship with the Roman within the spatial, temporal, and hermeneutical frameworks of Christian exegesis. Inviting prophetic and eschatological interpretations of contemporary events, this form of apocalyptic ethnography was highly controversial; other Christian scholars, such as Jerome and Augustine, identified alternative explanations of the origins of the Goths and advanced understandings of “Gog and Magog” that attempted to dissuade such apocalyptic speculations. Although contested at the moment of its creation, the identification of the Goths with the people of “Gog” incorporated an apocalyptic valence into Gothic history that would endure centuries after such prophecies were introduced and were expected to be fulfilled.

Arriving within the Roman Empire in the midst of both the Christianization of its state

and people and the dissolution of its military hegemony and European frontier, the story of the Goths “as a people” was told and retold by successive generations in the midst of major political and social shifts. The negotiation of the Gothic peoples’ origins, history, and identity was carried out by allies, enemies, and Goths themselves. Reinterpretations and reapplications of the relationship between the Goths and Gog and Magog would again transform the Goths, this time from a force of eschatological evil to a noble people with a venerable biblical history. As Gothic rule in Italy, France, and Spain gave way to new kingdoms, the legacy of Gothic history was reimagined again, transformed into new prophetic forms to advance the spread of Christianity into Northern Europe and to shore up the narratives of Crusade and Reconquista that imagined new conflicts and divisions between “Christendom” and the Islamic world. In these various instantiations across the *longue durée*, the case of the Goths displays both the legacy and the flexibility of such acts of *anagenesis*. Such acts of *anagenesis* display an entanglement between etymology and etiology, claiming that the origins of words highlight the essence of their signifiers – that *nomen est omen*. Forms of apocalyptic ethnography could be redeployed to recognize new peoples as the equivalents of biblical figures, eliding the present with both the scriptural past and introducing various conceptions of typological time. The valences of such religious identifications could be shifted in subsequent generations, leaving an important legacy for the later incorporation of other migrating peoples into eschatological narratives.

Goth, Gog, or Geat? Anagenesis and its ancestors in the Game of Names

The various approaches to Gothic origins and the meaning of “Gog and Magog” all functioned in the framework of *anagenesis*. Earlier models of Greek and Roman ethnography

⁵³⁷ Mandeville, ed. Deluz, 427; trans. Higgins, 157.

had similarly aimed to understand present peoples by “recognizing” them as equivalent to other peoples already known within a geographical tradition and placing them within an overarching framework of monotheistic creation and scriptural reference. The story of the Goths in the Roman Empire instead began with an entirely different people. Before they were given a “biblical” prophetic identification, the Goths had already been shoe-horned into the ethnographic categories available to Greek and Roman historians. Herodotus of Halicarnassus (c. 484-425/413 BCE) provided a catalog of “Scythian” nations in his *Histories* that entangled legendary peoples of Greek myth — such as the Amazons — with contemporary populations encountered by the Greek colonists of the Black Sea. Among the many peoples Herodotus described are one called the *Getae* and another the *Massagetae*.⁵³⁸ As Jane Leake observes, these *Getae* were initially distinguished by Herodotus as being Thracians rather than inhabitants of the larger and more numinous region of Scythia to the north-east, but later sources would collapse these differences and portray various relations or equivalencies of the *Getae* with the Scythians, *Massagetae*, *Dacians*, *Colchians*, *Amazons*, *Sarmatians*, and many other marginal peoples.⁵³⁹ Later Latin references to the *Getae* in the poetry of Virgil (70 BCE-19 BCE) and Ovid (43 BCE -17/18 CE), as well as the geography of Strabo (64/63 BCE - c. 24 CE), continued their reputation as a powerful people located beyond the imperial frontier.⁵⁴⁰ Though nomadic peoples periodically thwarted the expansionist designs of empires or crossed their frontiers to cause devastating invasions, the descriptions of peoples on the margins of Scythia did not follow the same temporal logic as those within the space of the “known” world. The reckoning of contemporary peoples was entangled with mythic histories and a crystallized ethnographic tradition that looked to

⁵³⁸ Herodotus. *The Persian Wars, Volume I: Books 1-2*. Trans. A. D. Godley. LCL 117-20 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1920-5); On the *Massagetai*, see I.204-216, vol. 1, 256-71; On the *Getae*, see IV.93-9, vol. 2, 294-9;

⁵³⁹ Leake, *The Geats of Beowulf*, 16-23.

⁵⁴⁰ Jane Acomb Leake, *The Geats of Beowulf: A Study in the Geographical Mythology of the Middle Ages* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1967), 14.

“recognize” newly emergent peoples through its existing categories of ethnographic knowledge.

When the Gothic people became a consequential force in Roman history, they would be imagined in terms of these earlier barbarian typologies.⁵⁴¹ In the mid-3rd century CE, when Gothic incursions into the Mediterranean resulted in the destruction of the famous Temple of Artemis at Ephesus, Roman sources began to emphasize the connection between the “*Gothi*,” and the *Getae* as well as other phonologically similar ethnonyms.⁵⁴² The future emperor Julian (r. 361-3 CE) equated the *Getae* and *Gothi*, using the name in a panegyric to his predecessor Constantius II (r. 337-361 CE) to spice his accounts of a Roman victory over the Goths with a classicizing flair.⁵⁴³ Late Antique Glossaries similarly celebrated Virgil’s *Aeneid* as both timeless and timely by identifying his allusions to the *Getae* as a sign that the Gothic people were well known to their ancestors.⁵⁴⁴ Such identifications were advanced by both followers of traditional Roman religion, like Julian, and by Christian writers who embraced the books of Greco-Roman geography alongside their scriptural traditions. While this equivalence was made in terms of phonological resemblance, it ultimately was used to insist that the Goths were simply another iteration of the prototypical Scythians. These claims operated on a temporal logic much like *anagenesis*. Equating these two peoples’ names also equated their origins and histories, situating them in terms that emphasized the continuing authority of Greco-Roman geographic tradition to classify and understand the peoples beyond the borders of the empire. From the Roman perspective, Herwig Wolfram suggests, “there were really no new barbarians.”⁵⁴⁵

The claim of equivalence between “Goth” and “Geat” was then challenged by – or

⁵⁴¹ Herwig Wolfram, *History of the Goths*, trans. Thomas J. Dunlap (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988,) 19-29. According to Wolfram, the first records of the Goths in Roman writings call them “*Guthones*,” reflecting both an earlier form of the name, and alternative transliteration.

⁵⁴² Wolfram, *History of the Goths*, 28.

⁵⁴³ Julian, *The Orations of Julian 1-5*. Trans. Wilmer C. Wright, LCL 13 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1913), I, 9D, 24-5; Cf. Leake, *The Geats of Beowulf*, 25.

⁵⁴⁴ Leake, *The Geats of Beowulf*, 25.

encompassed within – the claim of equivalence between “Goth” and “Gog.” This etymology fit firmly in the logic of *anagenesis*, seeking to anchor the origins of the Gothic people to scriptural record and typological time of Christian tradition. In the late 4th century CE, Roman relations with Gothic refugees on the Danube frontier deteriorated, and Ambrose of Milan compiled an excursus *On the Christian Faith* (Lat. *De Fide*) on behalf of the Western Emperor Gratian (r. 367-383 CE) as he set out on a campaign against them.⁵⁴⁶ By the time the second book of Ambrose’s work was complete, the Romans had already suffered a catastrophic defeat at the battle of Adrianople in 378 CE, one that had resulted in the death of the Eastern emperor, Gratian’s uncle Valens.⁵⁴⁷ Ambrose informs Gratian not to despair since both the recent defeat and coming victory over the Goths have already been written:

For Ezekiel, in those far-off days, already prophesied the diminishing of our people, and the Gothic wars, saying: “*Prophesy, therefore, Son of Man, and say: O Gog, thus saith the Lord – Shalt thou not, in that day when My people Israel shall be established to dwell in peace, rise up and come forth from thy place, from the far north, and many nations with thee, all riders upon horses, a great and mighty gathering, and the valor of my hosts? Yeah, go up against my people Israel, as clouds to cover the land, in the last days*” [Ezekiel 38:14-16].⁵⁴⁸

Ambrose quotes verses of Ezekiel’s prophecy that emphasize Gog’s origins in the Northern parts of the world and their penchant for fighting on horseback. Such details invoke the timeless image of the Scythian, but Ambrose further brings the prophecy to bear on a particular people and a particular time:

⁵⁴⁵ Wolfram, *History of the Goths*, 11.

⁵⁴⁶ Ambrose, *De Fide*, ed. O. Faller, CSEL 78 (Vienna: Hoelder-Pichler-Tempsky, 1962); For English translation, see Ambrose, *On the Christian Faith*, in *A Select Library of Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church.*, ed. Phillip Schaff and Henry Wace, vol. X, (New York: The Christian Literature Company, 1896), 199-314.

⁵⁴⁷ In the introduction to, *De Fide*, 5-8, Faller examines the first two books of the text and concludes they were completed by the end of 378 CE.

⁵⁴⁸ Ambrose, *De Fide*, II.xvi.137; trans. Schaff and Wace, 241: *Namque et futuram nostri depopulationem et bella Gothorum Ezechiel illo iam tempore profetauit. Sic enim habes: Propter hoc profetiza, fili hominis, et dic Gog: Haec dicit dominus: Non in die illa, cum constituetur habitare populus meus Istrahel in pace, surges? Et uenies de loco tuo ab extremo aquilone, et gentes te cum multae, sessores equorum omnes, congregatio multa et magna et uirtus copiosa. Et ascendes ad populum meum Istrahel ut nubes operire terram in nouissimis diebus, et cetera.*

That Gog is the Goth, whose coming forth we have already seen, and over whom victory in days to come is promised, according to the word of the Lord: “*And they shall spoil them, who had been their despoilers, and plunder them, who had carried their goods for a prey,*” [Ezekiel 38:12] saith the Lord. “*And it shall be in that day, that I will give to Gog*” – that is to the Goths – “*a place that is famous, for Israel an high-heaped tomb of many men, of men who have made their way to the sea, and it shall reach round about, and close the mouth of the valley, and there [the house of Israel shall] overthrow Gog and all his multitude, and it shall be called the valley of the multitude of Gog: and the house of Israel shall overwhelm them, that the land may be cleansed* [Ezekiel 39:11-12] in the seventh month.⁵⁴⁹

Like the equation of the Goths with the Geats and Scythians, this act of *anagenesis* understands the people’s past, present, and future in terms that reinforce the relevance of Christian tradition to contemporary moments. Since Ezekiel states, “the house of Israel shall overwhelm [Gog], that the land may be cleansed,” Ambrose assures his imperial patron that an ultimate victory over the Goths has already been foreseen. Ambrose’s claim not only encompasses the Goths within a Christian framework of history but also advances a typological interpretation of “Rome” as the successor of the historical “Israel.” Just as many books of the Hebrew bible interpreted the destruction of the kingdoms of Israel and Judah for their faithlessness to their God, so Ambrose deploys this prophetic logic to identify the present Roman defeat as a punishment for the “Arian” faith of the emperor Valens and the continued prominence of Arian beliefs in the Eastern Roman Empire and among the Gothic peoples themselves. In establishing this second prophetic equivalence, Ambrose challenges the claims of Jews and “Arian” Christians to possessing and understanding the biblical scriptures, striving to displace them from their social and political standing in the empire. Ambrose demonstrates how such an act of *anagenesis* can be used to reinforce the religious, ethnographic, and geopolitical beliefs of society precisely at the moment

⁵⁴⁹ *De Fide*, II.xvi.138; trans. Schaff and Wace, 241: *Gog iste Gothus est, quem iam uidemus exisse, de quo promittitur nobis futura uictoria dicente domino: Et praedabunt eos, qui depraedati eos fuerant, et despoliabunt eos, qui sibi spolia detraxerant, dicit dominus. Erit que in die illa, dabo Gog - hoc est Gotis - locum nominatum, monumentum in Istrahel,*

it is challenged by a migrating people.

Deeply disturbed by the implications of Ambrose's conjecture, other Christian authorities cautioned against the identification of the Goths as Gog and the broader practice of trying to match present events to apocalyptic narratives. One major challenger was Jerome (347-420 CE), hard at work on his Latin "Vulgate" translation of the bible. Jerome used attention to the original language of the Bible as a counterweight to other scriptural hermeneutics. Jerome does not reject the idea that Magog can be reckoned as an ancestor of many of the world's peoples. Following the Jewish Historian Josephus, he identifies Magog as the ancestor of the Scythians.⁵⁵⁰ Yet in the midst of continuing this tradition of *anagenesis*, Jerome cautions against applying such connections to bring biblical prophecies into the realm of contemporary politics:

I know that a certain man has referred Gog and Magog, both as regards the present verse in Ezekiel, to the account of the Goths who were recently raging in our land: whether this is true is shown by the outcome of the actual battle. But in fact all learned men in the past had certainly been accustomed to calling the Goths Getae rather than Gog and Magog.⁵⁵¹

This "certain man" is likely Ambrose, though Jerome seems uncomfortable with calling out a venerated contemporary who was ingratiated with the imperial court.⁵⁵² Against these "recent" speculations on the biblical identity of the Goths lies the antiquity and authority of the Getic alternative and the unanimous consent of "all learned men" (*omnes eruditi*). Like Ambrose,

multorum uirorum congestum, qui superuenerunt ad mare; et per circuitum saepit os uallis et obruit illic Gog et totam multitudinem eius, et uocabitur Ge poliandrium Gog, et obruit eos domus Istrahel, ut purgetur terra in septem mensibus.

⁵⁵⁰ Jerome, *Hebraicae quaestiones in Libro Geneseos. Liber interpretationis hebraicorum nominum.*, ed. Lagarde P., CCSL 72 (Turnhout: Brepols, 1959); For an English version, C.T.R Hayward, trans., *Saint Jerome's Hebrew Questions on Genesis*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995).

⁵⁵¹ Jerome, *Hebraicae quaestiones*, 14, trans. Hayward, 39: *Scio quendam gog et magog tam de praesenti loco quam de ezechiel ad gothorum nuper in terra nostra uagantium historiam rettulisse: quod utrum uerum sit, proelii ipsius fine monstratur. et certe gothos omnes retro eruditi magis getas quam gog et magog appellare consueuerant.*

⁵⁵² Completing the *Hebrew Questions on Genesis* around 393 CE, the defeat Jerome mentions seems to suggest the battle of Adrianople in 378 CE, which had already occurred before Ambrose made his claim equating the Goths with Gog in *On the Christian Faith*. While earlier Latin authorities like Virgil do mention the Getae, they do not, as Jerome claims, associate them with the Goths; that process only began in the third century; See Wolfram, *Goths*, 28, Leake, *Geats*, 25.

Jerome deploys forms of *anagenesis* to integrate the peoples of the world into a universal history that begins and ends with the promises of scripture, but he does so in a way that discourages any simple equivalence between the Goths and Gog.

Many other Christian writers within the Empire followed, recognizing the Goths as *Getae* as an alternative to Ambrose's assertion that they were the embodiment of Ezekiel's prophecy. Orosius' *History against the Pagans* uses this classicizing identity of *Getae* to link the Goths to the ancient Scythians and Amazons.⁵⁵³ Within his wider project of *anagenesis*, Orosius views Goth and Roman, envisions a unification of Roman and Barbarian through a universal Christian future, and strives to show how – compared to their fierce Amazonian ancestors – the patriarchal Goths are quite merciful to their fellow Christians.⁵⁵⁴ Jordanes' mid-6th century history of the Goths, tellingly termed the *Getica*, similarly endeavors to connect the Gothic people to back to both classical antiquity and Christian history by identifying their descent from the *Getae*, the Amazons, and the children of Hercules.⁵⁵⁵ While Jordanes too briefly notes Josephus' connection between the Scythians and the biblical people of Magog, he considers the Goths to be separate from this lineage and thus absent from Josephus' history.⁵⁵⁶ Engaging in their own forms of *anagenesis*, these authors did not aim to suggest that classical ethnographies provided more authoritative sources of history than their biblical counterparts. Instead, they aimed to combine classical and Christian traditions in ways that refuted apocalyptic hermeneutics that rushed to

⁵⁵³ Orosius, *Historia*, I.xvi.2., ed. Zangemesiter, 28; trans. Fear, 66.

⁵⁵⁴ Orosius, *History*, I.xvi.2 ed. Zangemesiter, 28-9; trans. Fear, 65-7.

⁵⁵⁵ Jordanes, *Iordanis Romana et Getica*, ed. Theodore Mommsen, MGH, Auct. ant. V. (Berlin: Weidmann, 1882). For an English translation, see *The Origin and Deeds of the Goths: In English Version*, trans. Charles Christopher Mierow (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1915). Writing on behalf of the Emperor Justinian amid a Byzantine Reconquista of Ostrogothic Italy, Jordanes portrays his account as an epitome of the lost history of the Goths composed by Cassiodorus Senator for the Ostrogothic court at Ravenna. His viewpoint potentially reflects the earlier effort of Cassiodorus to “make the history of the Goths Roman”, but Walter Goffart, *The Narrators of Barbarian History (A.D. 550-800)* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1988), 23-31, argues that Jordanes' work is only tenuously related to Cassiodorus' history, and reflects instead a Byzantine attempt to reshape Gothic history to their own liking.

⁵⁵⁶ Jordanes, *Getica*, IV.29, ed. Mommsen 61; trans. Mierow, 9.

judgment on contemporary history.

Opponents of the Gog/Goth equation also sought alternative explanations for the significance of the terms Gog and Magog in scripture. In his *Book of the Interpretations of Hebrew Names (Liber Interpretationis Hebraicorum Nominum)*, Jerome claimed both “Gog” and “Magog” were originally Hebrew terms, with Gog signifying “roof” or “housetop” (“δῶμα [doma], id est tectum”) and Magog “de tecto” (“from the housetop”).⁵⁵⁷ In another act of *anagenesis*, Jerome insists that these terms were not foreign ethnonyms but originally Hebrew terms, providing an alternative to the phonological and apocalyptic associations between Gog and Goth.⁵⁵⁸ Jerome’s *Commentary on Ezekiel (Commentariorum in Hiezechielem Libri XIV)* mustered these etymologies as part of an “ecclesiastical interpretation” of the biblical book that suggested its prophecies do not describe discrete future events but rather the figure of the church.⁵⁵⁹ Jerome identifies Gog as a signifier of both Satan and all propagators of heretical doctrine, while Magog denotes those who follow their teachings.⁵⁶⁰ He concludes, “by these names, therefore, is shown all pride and falsely named knowledge that raises itself up against the knowledge of truth.”⁵⁶¹ Rather the prophetic identity of a single people, Jerome sees Gog and Magog as a signifier of any potential opponents of the church.

In his *The City of God (De Civitatum Deum Contra Paganos)*, composed in the decade

⁵⁵⁷ Jerome, *Liber interpretationis hebraicorum nominum*, ed. Lagarde, 8.

⁵⁵⁸ While more recent biblical scholarship has suggested that “Gog” and “Magog” are likely transliterations of foreign ethnonyms into the Hebrew, Jerome’s advancement of the “original” Hebrew meaning for the word performs an act of *anagenesis* that shifts its referent from a particular people to a more symbolic concept. See Bøe, *Gog and Magog*, 98-9, 133-4; Anderson, *Alexander’s Gate*, 6-7.

⁵⁵⁹ Jerome, *Commentariorum in Hiezechielem Libri XIV*, ed. F. Glorie, CCSL 75 (Turnhout: Brepols, 1964); For English Translation, see *St. Jerome: Commentary on Ezekiel*, trans. Thomas P. Scheck (New York: Newman Press, 2017). Writing from his home in Bethlehem written between 410-14 CE, Jerome attempted to address the Visigoth’s sack of Rome in 410 and the flood of Roman refugees across the Mediterranean into the holy land. Rather than a sign of the old gods’ anger or the coming end-times, Jerome considered the fall of the city as a sign of a fundamentally transitory world. He does not deign to address the specific role of the Goths in the attack, and commentary on the figures of Gog and Magog in Ezekiel 38-9 is absent any mention of the Goths as well.

⁵⁶⁰ Jerome, *Commentariorum*, XI.38; trans. Scheck, 428.

⁵⁶¹ Jerome, *Commentariorum*, XI.38; trans. Scheck, 428.

after the Gothic Sack of Rome of 410, Augustine arrives at a similar figural interpretation of Gog and Magog's role in Revelation 20.⁵⁶² He explicitly rebuffs those who identify the scriptural as the "Getas" and "Massagetas" because of the resemblance of the letters in each of these names.⁵⁶³ Adopting the same "Hebrew" etymologies deployed by Jerome, Augustine interprets the terms *tecto* and *de tecto* as both describing Satan's abode in the "bottomless pit" and expressing that idea the devil is also enclosed within the hearts of evil people everywhere.⁵⁶⁴ Rather than a single nation, Gog and Magog represent all opponents of the church, Jews, heretics, and unbelievers, since the "camp of the saints and the beloved city" described in Revelation "are simply the Church of Christ Spread Throughout the Whole Earth."⁵⁶⁵ Such interpretations challenged attempts to identify a specific people, place, or time in acts of apocalyptic recognition.

Although Augustine and Jerome offered alternative interpretations of the meaning of Gog and Magog and discouraged other Christians from trying to assemble the pieces of an eschatological puzzle from the people and places of recent history, they advanced an understanding of Christian exegesis and Christian community that was constructed against a specter of amorphous alterity. In the introduction to his *Commentary on Ezekiel*, Jerome rails against "the Jews and our Judaizers" who "think that Gog refers to the Scythian nations, immense and countless in number, which are beyond the Caucasus Mountains and Lake Maeotis

⁵⁶² Augustine, *De Civitate Dei*, ed. B. Dombart and A. Kalb, 2 vols., CCSL 48–9 (Turnhout: Brepols, 1955); *The City of God against the Pagans*, ed. and trans. R. W. Dyson, (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1998).

⁵⁶³ Augustine, *De Civitate Dei*, XX, 11; ed. Dombart and Kalb, vol. 1, 720; trans. Dyson 993; Though these two people were not associated with one another in their initial appearances in Herodotus, the phonological affinity of *Getae* and *Massagetae* similarly twinned that of *Gog* and *Magog*, encouraging the ethnographic and etymological conflation of both with the Gothic people.

⁵⁶⁴ Augustine, *De Civitate Dei*, XX, 11; ed. Dombart and Kalb, vol. 1, 720; trans. Dyson 993.

⁵⁶⁵ Augustine, *De Civitate Dei*, XX, 11; ed. Dombart and Kalb, vol. 1, 721; trans. Dyson 994: *castra sanctorum et dilecta civitas... nisi Christi ecclesia toto terrarum orbe diffusa*.

and that reach all the way to India because of the Caspian Sea.”⁵⁶⁶ Christians who advance such interpretations are defined as “Judaizers,” trying to introduce “Jewish” innovations to an original, eternal scripture. In translating the Vulgate and providing commentary on many of its major books, Jerome relied on the instruction of Jewish teachers in both the Hebrew language and Jewish traditions of exegesis. In spite of this relationship (or perhaps because of it), Jerome challenged alternative interpretations of Gog’s identity in anti-Judaic terms, centering the question of scriptural interpretation around the idea of who might be included within or excluded from the community of the church. Scott Westrem observes how Augustine’s effort to deflect the apocalyptic animus from people like the Goths was deployed by subsequent generations of Christians to cast suspicions on Jews; Augustine’s interpretation of Gog and Magog as “the citizenry of Satan, ubiquitous in the world and threatening the church everywhere... allowed Medieval Christians to locate the agent of Satan within the European community rather than anticipate an invasion from the horizon.”⁵⁶⁷ While such ideas did not succeed in convincing other Christians to abandon the association between the Goths and Gog, they had a lasting legacy in future generations of apocalyptic interpretation and Christian hostility to Jewish communities.⁵⁶⁸

Visigothic Spain and the Rehabilitation of Gog

As Christian authors were debating the validity of identifying the Gothic peoples as Gog

⁵⁶⁶ Jerome, *Commentariorum*, XI, 38; trans. Scheck, 428: *igitur iudaei et nostri iudaizantes putant gog gentes esse scythicas immanes et innumerabiles quae trans caucasum montem et maeotim paludem et propter caspium mare ad indiam usque tendantur*. On the coining of the term “Judaize” by Paul in Galatians 2:13-14, see Nirenberg, *Neighboring Faiths*, 7.

⁵⁶⁷ Westrem, “Against Gog and Magog,” 67.

⁵⁶⁸ On Jerome and Augustine’s opinions on Jews and Judaism, see Nirenberg, *Anti-Judaism*, 120-38; Jeremy Cohen, *Living Letters of the Law: Ideas of the Jew in Medieval Christianity* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999), 23-71.

and Magog and incorporating them into both a biblical history and a prophetic future, the Goths themselves continued to prevail militarily and politically over the Romans, becoming the hegemonic overlords of several regions of the fragmented Western Empire. While many major Christian authors in the Latin West contested Ambrose's declaration that the Gothic peoples were the "Gog" of Ezekiel 38, the tradition of the Goths' descent from this biblical people paradoxically endured precisely in the lands that came under Gothic rule in the fifth and sixth centuries.⁵⁶⁹ As the rule of Gothic kings expanded from their own migrant armies to settled peoples in the Latin West, many – like the Ostrogothic king Theoderic – were invested in preserving the institutions and traditions of the Roman past; some even portrayed themselves as the renovators and restorers of Roman glory.⁵⁷⁰ This search for continuities with the past encouraged new negotiations of the Goth's *anagenetic* ancestry on biblical and classical terms. While initially imposed from without by writers apparently hostile to the Goths, the insistence of the Getic and Gogic associations gave Gothic elites an opportunity to claim an antiquity parallel to their Roman counterparts. The historical distance of this antiquity also made it highly malleable. As Wolfram suggests, "Just as the Christian conception of Rome had to come a long way from regarding Rome as the whore of Babylon to seeing it as the earthly Jerusalem, so the mere mention of the 'Gothic peoples Gog and Magog' offered the possibility of turning their original negative meaning into a positive one."⁵⁷¹ Such transformations required authors capable of navigating and manipulating disparate corpora of ethnography, poetry, prophecy, and rumor and extracting from these many conflicting sources a coherent and ideologically dense narrative.

While the rehabilitation of both the Gothic history and Gogic identity occurred under the

⁵⁶⁹ On the transformation of Gothic traditions in this context see Suzanne Teillet, *Des Goths à la nation gothique: les origines de l'idée de nation en Occident du Ve au VIIe siècle*. (Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 2011); Jamie Wood, *The Politics of Identity in Visigothic Spain: Religion and Power in the Histories of Isidore of Seville* (Leiden: Brill, 2012).

⁵⁷⁰ See Jonathan J. Arnold, *Theoderic and the Roman Imperial Restoration* (New York, NY USA: Cambridge University Press, 2014).

rule of Gothic kings, much of the impetus came from Latin writers either eager to please their patrons or eager to demonstrate that the Roman Empire had given sway to a worthy opponent. The most influential of these authors was Isidore of Seville, whose encyclopedic *Etymologies* became one of the most influential teaching texts in the Latin Christian tradition and cemented the reputation of its author as a scholar and saint in his native Spain.⁵⁷² Isidore was the most prolific of players in the “game of names,” using his seemingly endless (and often erroneous) knowledge of the origins of words to construct a referential narrative of the universe’s order. In book IX of his work, *Isidore* provides an *anagenetic* catalogue of peoples past and present, connecting the resident characters of Greco-Roman geography back to the sons of Noah and other biblical figures. Jerome’s *Hebrew Questions on Genesis* and *Book of the Interpretation of Hebrew Names* serve as the major sources for Isidore, and he follows Jerome’s classicism and skepticism in the question of Gothic ancestry:

The Goths are thought to have been named after Magog, the son of Japheth, because of the similarity of the last syllable. The ancients called them Getae rather than Goths. They are a brave and most powerful people, tall and massive in body, terrifying for the kind of arms they use. Concerning them, Lucan [*Civil War* 2.54]: “Let here a Dacian press forward, there a Getan (*Getes*) rush at the Iberians.”⁵⁷³

Isidore displays some discomfort with this supposed descent of the Goths from Magog, using words like “putantur” (“it is believed”), yet his language also softens Jerome’s refutation of equating the two peoples. Isidore does, however, expand on Jerome’s “Getic” interpretation by providing a classical source to support this collapsing of several past identities into a single present people. In terms of *anagenesis*, Isidore’s quotation of Lucan attests to an “ancient”

⁵⁷¹ Wolfram, *History of the Goths*, 29.

⁵⁷² Isidore, *Isidori Hispalensis Episcopi Etymologiarum sive originum libri XX*, ed. W.M. Lindsay, 2 vols. (Oxford: Clarendon, 1911); for an English translation, see *The Etymologies of Isidore of Seville*, ed. and trans. Stephen A. Barney et al. (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2006).

⁵⁷³ *Etymologiae*, IX.ii.89; ed. Lindsay, vol. 1, 380; trans. Barney, 197: *Gothi a Magog filio Iaphet nominati putantur, de similitudine ultimae syllabae, quos ueteres magis Getas quam Gothos uocauerunt; gens fortis et potentissima, corporum*

history linking Goths as Getae, while it also serves as a kind of prophecy fulfilled within the present. The Goths had not yet succeeded in bringing about the end of the world, but they had indeed “rushed at the Iberians” and conquered their land in Isidore’s lifetime.⁵⁷⁴ The Goths are still seen as a “ferocious” people, but the negative eschatological valences associated with this term – and brought upon the Goths by earlier writers like Ambrose – had been either buried or changed to a form of begrudging respect. In engendering this shift of times and connotations, Isidore *anagenetically* reverses the orders of descent from peoples past to present, so that peoples like the Dacians are now understood as offshoots of the Goths rather than vice versa.

While Isidore was in some respects the author of this new interpretation of the Goth’s *anagenetic* connections to the classical and biblical past, he also appears to be reacting to Visigothic understandings of their own sense of identity. In the *History of the Goths, Vandals, and Sueves*, Isidore returned again to the etymological origins of the Goths, crafting a more positive vision of the Gothic peoples’ potential biblical ancestry.⁵⁷⁵ Isidore’s history appears to have been written at the behest of the Visigothic king Sisebut (r.612-621 CE) and expanded in the reign of his successor Swinthila (621-631 CE).⁵⁷⁶ Unlike Isidore’s other universal chronologies and historical discourses embedded in his encyclopedic works, this history was focused on the origins and histories of the specific “nations” (*gentes*) who had come to inhabit and rule over Spain in the preceding century. Isidore begins by addressing the origin of the Goths:

It is certain that the Goths are a very old nation. Some conjecture from the similarity of the last syllable that their origin comes from Magog, son of Japhet,

mole ardua, armorum genere terribilis. De quibus Lucanus: Hinc Dacus premat inde Getes occurrat Iberis.

⁵⁷⁴ *Etymologiae*, IX.ii.89; ed. Lindsay, vol. 1, 380; trans. Barney, 197.

⁵⁷⁵ Isidore, *Historia vel Origo Gothorum*, ed. Th. Mommsen, MGH Scriptores Auctores antiquissimi, vol. XI, (Berlin, 1894) 268; For an English Translation, *History of the Kings of the Goths, Vandals, and Suevi*, trans. Guido Donini and Gordon B. Ford (Leiden: Brill, 1966).

⁵⁷⁶ Wood, *Politics of Identity*, 72-4.

and they deduce this mostly from the work of the prophet Ezekiel. Formerly, however, the learned were accustomed to call the two heroes Getae rather than Gog and Magog. The translation of their name into our language is *tecti* (protected), which connotes strength (*fortitudo*); and with truth, for there has not been any nation in the world that has harassed Roman power so much. For these are the people who even Alexander declared should be avoided, whom Pyrrus dreaded and Caesar greatly feared.⁵⁷⁷

Isidore still maintains some ambivalence on whether the Goths are Getae, descendants of Magog, or both. The elements of Isidore's treatment incorporate the language of Jerome's etymology and Orosius' narrative of conflicts with heroes of the Greco-Roman tradition, but the overall tone of his treatment of Gothic origins has shifted to a positive portrayal of the people. Whereas Jerome and Augustine sought to distance "Magog" from a literal people by suggesting laboriously that "tectum" referred to the devil, Isidore modifies the etymological interpretations by changing the form of the word "tectum" to the past participle "tecti" ("roofed," "covered," "protected"). The Goths are now "protected," as Isidore will demonstrate in his history, by a divine destiny and national fortitude that will see them cross the expanse of the world to settle in the kingdom of Spain. A *Recapitulatio* appears in a revised, second recension of the *History of the Goths and* displays no further reservations in declaring that the Goths are the descendants of "Magog the Son of Japheth."⁵⁷⁸ It is followed with a panegyric on the virtues of the Goths and the other hyperborean peoples, jumping between "Getae" and "Gothi" at will.⁵⁷⁹ It seems that this *anagenetic* conflation of the Goths with Gog and Magog was part of the Visigothic king's own preferred narrative of ancestry and that Isidore's eventual erasure of doubt about the genetic link

⁵⁷⁷ Isidore, *Origo Gothorum*, 268; trans. Donini and Ford, 3; *Gothorum antiquissimum esse gentem [certum est]: quorum originem quidam de Magog Iafeth filio suspicantur a similitudine ultimae syllabae; et magis de Ezechiele propheta id colligentes. retro autem eruditi eos magis Getas quam Gog et Magog appellare consueverunt. Interpretatio autem nominis eorum in lingua nostra tecti quod significatur fortitudo: et re vera. nulla enim gens in orbe fuit, quae Romanum imperium adeo fatigaverit. isti sunt enim quos etiam Alexander vitandos pronuntiavit, Pyrrhus pertimuit, Caesar exhorruit.*

⁵⁷⁸ Isidore, *Origo Gothorum*, 293.

⁵⁷⁹ Isidore, *Origo Gothorum*, 293; See also Lucas of Tuy, *Chronicon Mundi*, Ed. Rey, E. Falque, CCCM 74 (Turnhout: Brepols, 2002), II.xx. Lucas' incorporation of Isidore's *History of the Goths* into his own world 13th century *Chronicon*

between the people reflects the desires of his royal patrons.

The apocalyptic identification of the Goths, which had been popularized by Ambrose to assure the emperor Gratian of their rapidly approaching defeat, had changed significantly in the ascendancy of the Gothic peoples into the aristocratic rule of multiple Western Roman successor states. This apocalyptic identity had been transformed into a narrative of past lineage, portraying Gothic connections to the biblical Magog as a mark of aristocratic pride and admirable ferocity rather than a call to war, opposition, and destruction. It becomes “certain” to Isidore that they were “a very ancient people.”⁵⁸⁰ Through *anagenesis*, this Gothic link to the biblical past may even be imagined as stronger than the Romans since they still ostensibly bore the name of their Noachic ancestor Magog. While Ambrose had first proposed the connection between Gog and the Goths in the midst of contemporary prophecy that rapidly proved untenable, his ephemeral commentary endured through Isidore, whose encyclopedic legacy cemented the continuation of the tradition.

Gothic Origins in Islamic Reckoning

The origins and identity of the Goths would be reimagined yet again in the seventh century CE, when Gothic kingdoms of Southern France, Northern Italy, and the Iberian Peninsula were conquered and assimilated into the realms of the Franks, Lombards, and Umayyads. Among both Christians and Muslims in the centuries that followed, perceptions of the Goths shifted from those of “present” people to one “past.” They were incorporated into Christian and Islamic conceptions of space and time, defined in terms of dominions lost or

Mundi (Chronicle of the World), renders the names in this passage as *Got* and *Magoth*, bringing the orthographic and phonological resemblance of the peoples even closer together.

⁵⁸⁰ Isidor, *Origo Gothorum*, 268; *Gothorum antiquissimum esse gentem [certum est]*.

conquered. In the midst of these renegotiations of Gothic history and identity, the act of *anagenesis* linking the Goths to the biblical Gog would be either embraced or dismissed by those who succeeded the Goths in the rule of their former domains.

The claimed connection between Goths and Gog was carried over into Arabic literature through Islamization and Arabization of the Iberian Peninsula, yet this tradition ultimately gained little traction among Muslim scholars. Many prominent Islamic traditions, such as the purported expedition of Sallam the Interpreter (Ar. *Sallām al-Tarjumān*) to the land of Gog and Magog during the reign of the caliph al-Wāthiq (r. 842-7 CE), located the apocalyptic people in a distant northern clime far removed from the Iberian peninsula.⁵⁸¹ The identification of the Goths as Gog and Magog was ill-suited to encompass these parallel Muslim traditions, nor did the eschatological role of Gog and Magog in Islam fit into Muslim perceptions of the Goths as a people already displaced into the past. Nonetheless, some Muslim scholars, relying on the Arabic translations of Latin texts made by the Mozarab Christians of *al-Andalus*, adapted and reinterpreted these local histories of the Goths to justify Islamic hegemony over the Iberian Peninsula. Others incorporated the Gothic people into an alternative branch of Noachic narratives that located the beginnings of history in the Arabian Peninsula. Muslim ethnographers practiced their own forms of the “game of names,” identifying alternative Noachic lineages for the Goths and performing acts of *anagenesis* that placed the ancestry and history of nations within Arabic and Islamic loci of origin.⁵⁸²

The association between the Goths and Gog and Magog passed into Islamic sources as Muslim scholars translated and reimagined the history of Iberia on their terms. The works of

⁵⁸¹ Ibn Khurradādhbih, *Kitāb al-Masālik w'al-Mamālik*, 162-170; For English translations, see Van Donzel and Schmidt, *Gog and Magog*, 132-51, which also includes a facsimile of De Goeje's Arabic edition; Zadeh, *Mapping Frontiers*, 193-207, includes English translations of multiple recensions of the story.

Isidore and Orosius represented a continued object of study for Arabic speaking “Mozarabic” Christians in *al-Andalus*.⁵⁸³ The tradition portraying the Goths as descendants of “Magog” was adapted and incorporated into an Arabic translation Orosius’s *History against the Pagans* known as *Kitāb Hurūshiyūsh* (“Book of Orosius”).⁵⁸⁴ As Mayte Penelas has argued, this translation was likely initially composed by an Arabic speaking Christian community living under Islamic rule, but it became a major source for Muslim historians who sought to understand the history of the Iberian Peninsula and the wider Roman Empire in the age before Islam.⁵⁸⁵ While the Latin original of Orosius’ *History* makes no mention of the sons of Noah, the Arabic versions include an extensive catalogue of Noachic genealogies. Some are translated directly from the ninth book of Isidore’s *Etymologies*, while others address peoples unmentioned in Isidore who were either carried over from Islamic geographic sources or were newly invented by the translators.⁵⁸⁶ “Concerning Magog (*Māghūgh*),” the *Kitāb Hurūshiyūsh* observes, “his descendants are the Goths (*al-Qūṭ*) and the people of China (*ahl aṣ-Ṣīn*).”⁵⁸⁷ This lineage of the Goths both repeats Isidore’s tradition and reckons the Goths as the close relatives to another people on the opposite side of the world. Since other Islamic accounts of *Yājūj* and *Mājūj* place them at the far

⁵⁸² On Islamic perceptions of the Goths and other peoples of the Latin West, see Daniel G. König, *Arabic-Islamic Views of the Latin West: Tracing the Emergence of Medieval Europe* (Oxford University Press, 2015).

⁵⁸³ On the Mozarabs, see Cyrille Aillet, *Les mozarabes: christianisme et arabisation en al-Andalus (IXe - XIIIe siècle)* (Madrid: Casa de Velázquez, 2010); Christian C. Sahrner, *Christian Martyrs under Islam: Religious Violence and the Making of the Muslim World* (Princeton University Press, 2018), 71-77; Mozarab communities lived in relative peace under Muslim rule until the mid-ninth century, when conflict with the Umayyad Caliphs saw the execution of several “voluntary martyrs” in the city of Córdoba; this violence resulted in the exodus of some Mozarabs to the Christian kingdoms in the north of the peninsula.

⁵⁸⁴ For a study of adaptation of the work into Arabic, see Christian Sassenscheidt, *Orosius Arabus: die Rezeption und Transformation der Historiae adversum paganos des Orosius im Kitāb Hurūshiyūsh* (Berlin: Peter Lang, 2018).

⁵⁸⁵ See Penelas’ introduction to the *Kitāb Hurūshiyūsh*, 67-79, and Penelas, “A Possible Author of the Arabic Translation of Orosius’ *Historiae*,” in *Al-Masāq: Islam and the Medieval Mediterranean* (Turnhout: Brepols Publishers, 2001), 113–35.

⁵⁸⁶ See Penelas’ introduction to the *Kitāb Hurūshiyūsh*, 56-7, 101.

⁵⁸⁷ *Kitāb Hurūshiyūsh*, I.vi.161, ed. Penelas, 48; It is important to note here that the form “*Māghūgh*” does not reflect the common Islamic term for Magog, which always appears in the paired formula “*Yājūj wa-Mājūj*,” but seems instead to reflect a direct transliteration of Isidore’s Latin “*Magog*.” The inclusion of the Chinese perhaps shows the expansion of the geographical horizons in connection to Islamic expeditions in East Asia during the 8th/2nd and 9th/3rd centuries. Dwelling in what was imagined as either vast and numinous “North” – or else the “sixth clime” in the Climatic geographical tradition carried over from the ancient Greeks – China was pegged as being part of an expansive Japhetic realm.

boundaries of the North or East, the twinning of the Goths and the Chinese in this text may reflect an attempt to encompass the multitude of proposed locations for the apocalyptic people on both sides of the world. Adapted from Isidore, attributed to Orosius, and modified to present the new geographical traditions of the Islamic world, the *Kitāb Hurūshiyūsh* displays many new acts of *anagenesis* to tie together present and past peoples.⁵⁸⁸

The *Kitāb Hurūshiyūsh* served as an avenue for passing this account of Gothic origins into Islamic tradition. Yet when Muslim scholars addressed potential connections between the Goths and Gog and Magog, they often doubted or dismissed such claims.⁵⁸⁹ The Algerian al-Maqqarī (c. 986- 1041 AH/ c. 1578–1632 CE) cites the assertions of the Andalusī scholar al-Rāzī (274-344 AH / 888-955 CE) that “the Goths are among the offspring of *Yājūj*, son of Japheth, son of Noah, but it is said otherwise as well.”⁵⁹⁰ Other Andalusī writers, such as Abū ‘Ubayd al-Bakrī (d. 487 AH / 1094 CE), consulted the *Kitāb Hurūshiyūsh*. He used it liberally in his geography, but he did not bother to repeat its origin for the Goths.⁵⁹¹ In *Best Divisions For Knowledge of Regions*, the Palestinian geographer Al-Muqaddasī mentions, “some say that the rampart of *Yājūj* and *Mājūj* is beyond al-Andalus; others say it is at the mountain pass of Khazarān, and that Gog and Magog are the Khazars,” but he expresses no particular inclination

⁵⁸⁸ The list of Japheth’s descendants, for instance, is modified to include several peoples unaddressed in Isidore’s *etymologies* but relevant to contemporary Islamic Iberia, such as the Slavs (*as-Ṣaqlab*) and the Franks (*al-Ifranj*). See *Kitāb Hurūshiyūsh*, I.vi,161, 48.

⁵⁸⁹ One early adopter appears to be the Andalusī Muslim historian Aḥmad al-Rāzī (274-344 AH / 888-955 CE), who lived during the time of the *Kitāb Hurūshiyūsh* original translation and dissemination. See R.G. Khoury, “al-Rāzī,” in *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 2nd ed. While al-Rāzī’s original work is lost, he appears as a source for several other Muslim geographers, and his text was ultimately translated into Spanish.

⁵⁹⁰ Al-Maqqarī, *Nafḥ al-ṭīb*. (al-Qāhirah: al-Dār al-Miṣrīyah lil-Ta’līf wa-al-Tarjamah, 1966), 140. Al-Rāzī and al-Maqqarī uses the Qur’ānic form of the name rather than the Latinized transcription recorded in Orosius, so the potential apocalyptic significance of this ethnic marker appears to be understood. This comment occurs as the coda to the history of Ishban — the eponymous first king of ruler of Spain in Islamic tradition — and the reign of the Gothic kings. The emphasis on the differentiation between the Goths and the other “native” peoples of Spain is used to reinforce the Muslim narrative of Conquest. Rather than seizing rule from the indigenous people of al-Andalus, the Muslims defeated a cadre of tyrannical foreigners.

⁵⁹¹ Abū-‘Ubayd al-Bakrī, *Kitāb al-Masālik wa-’l-mamālik*, ed. A. P Van Leeuwen, 2 vols. (Tūnis: al-Dār al-‘Arabīya lil-Kitāb, 1992). For a description of al-Bakrī’s use of the Arabic Orosius, see Penelas, “A Possible Author,” 113–35.

towards either interpretation.⁵⁹² Later in this work, Al-Muqaddasī interpolates the account of Sallam’s journey to the land of Yājūj and Mājūj from Ibn Khurradādhbih’s *Book of Routes and Realms*, which declares “contradicts the report of anyone who should assert that the rampart is in *al-Andalus*.”⁵⁹³ The Tunisian scholar Ibn Khaldūn concludes his catalogue of the sons of Japhet in the *Book of Lessons (Kitāb al-‘Ibar)* with the stray observation that “*Hurūshiyūsh* [i.e. Orosius], the historian of the Romans, said that the Goths and the Latins (*al-Laṭīn*) are descendants of Magog (*Māghūgh*).”⁵⁹⁴ Ibn Khaldūn seems to consider this remark a historical curiosity rather than a definitive element of Noachic tradition. Laying out his historiographic principles in *The Introduction (Al-Muqaddimah)* to the *Book of Lessons*, he expresses doubt concerning stories that trace people’s attitudes, appearance, and attributes to their Noachic ancestors.⁵⁹⁵ Rather than embracing or adapting the stories of the Goth’s descent from Magog, most Muslim historians appear to have preferred the authority of narratives already extant within Islamic tradition over those of Iberian provenance.

As in other questions of Noachic genealogy, most Muslim interpreters preferred locating the Goths within a narrative of origins that emphasized the priority and precedence of Islam over other forms of monotheism. One early Islamic story on the origins of the Goths appears in the *Crowns of the Kings of Himyar (Al-Tijān fī-l Mulūk Ḥimyar)* of Ibn Hishām (d. 218 AH/823 CE).⁵⁹⁶ Just as Ibn Hishām advances *anagenetic* claims of Islam’s Abrahamic and Arabian origins in his recension of the *Life of Muhammad*, his accounts of Noah’s sons aim to locate the

⁵⁹² Al-Muqaddasī, *Aḥsan al-Taqāsīm*, 46; trans. Collins, *Best Divisions*, 49.

⁵⁹³ Al-Muqaddasī, *Aḥsan al-Taqāsīm*, 346; trans. Collins, *Best Divisions*, 320.

⁵⁹⁴ Ibn Khaldūn, *Kitāb al-‘Ibar*, vol. 2, 12; On Ibn Khaldūn and the Goths, see König, *Arabic-Islamic views*, 173-6.

⁵⁹⁵ Ibn Khaldūn, *The Muqaddimah, an Introduction to History*, ed. N. J. Dawood, trans. Franz Rosenthal (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1969), 59-60.

⁵⁹⁶ ‘Abd al-Malik Ibn Hishām, *Kitāb al-Tijān fī mulūk Ḥimyar*, 3 vols. (Ṣan‘ā’: Markaz al-Dirāsāt wa-al-Buḥūth al-Yamanī, 2007). Al-Muqaddasī, *Aḥsan al-Taqāsīm*, 46; trans. Collins, *Best Divisions*, 49.34 AH/ 654-5 CE). See K.G. Khoury, “Wahb b. Munabbih,” in *Encyclopaedia of Islam, Second Edition*, ed. P. Bearman et al. (Leiden: Brill, 2012). In Arabic sources, the Goths were most commonly referred to as “*al-Qūṭ*,” though alternative forms such as “*al-Ghūṭ*” and “*al-Qūṭiyyūn*” also appear.

origins and order of all human communities within an originally Arabian context. According to Ibn Hishām, the descendants of Noah first settled in Yemen after the flood, and it was there that different nations first came into being. In the framework of *anagenesis*, this Noachic narrative provides an alternative etiology of human migration and ethnic differentiation that preceded (and thus superseded) the story of the “Tower of Babel,” (ar. Babīl), envisioning the Arabian Peninsula as both the center of the globe and the center of historical consequence.⁵⁹⁷

Like many other branches of Noachic tradition, Ibn Hishām’s *Crowns* provides a simple scheme for reckoning the peoples of the present world and tracing them back to their eponymous descendants. While some of these names in Ibn Hishām’s account derive from equivalent figures in Genesis 10, others were more recent inventions. Ibn Hishām assigns both the Goths (“*al-Qūṭ*”) and Gog and Magog as descendants from Noah’s son Japheth (ar. Yāfith), though he places them into two separate branches of Japheth’s kin.⁵⁹⁸ In addition to describing the Goth’s lineage, Ibn Hishām describes how the Goths departed from the land of Yemen and came to dwell in the wider world. According to the *Crowns*, the Goths first lived alongside the Children of Ham, working the land until the conflict between the two peoples resulted in the expulsion of the Goths from the Yemen after which they settled in the region of “Babīl” (Babel).⁵⁹⁹ Thereafter Qaḥṭan, the eponymous ancestor of a southern Arabian tribe, gathers all people of the “Arabic Language” together into one body to make war on the rest of Noah’s descendants.⁶⁰⁰ The children of Japheth, including “the Goths, the Saxons and the Franks,” are defeated by Qaḥṭan in

⁵⁹⁷ While some Muslim scholars embraced the story of Babel and adapted into new legends, others rejected for lacking a clear Qur’ānic foundation and being too clearly linked to Jewish and Christian tradition. On Babel in Islamic tradition see Caroline Janssen, *Bābil, the City of Witchcraft and Wine: The Name and Fame of Babylon in Medieval Arabic Geographical Texts* (Ghent: University of Ghent, 1995).

⁵⁹⁸ Ibn Hishām, *At-Tījān*, 33. One of Japheth sons, “*Ajlān*,” is assigned as the ancestor of Gog and Magog, the Turks and the Khazars, while the other, “*Awjān*,” has three sons whose names – “*Qūṭ bin Awjān*,” “*Ṣaqālib bin Awjān*” (Slav) and “*Saksa bin Awjān*.”

⁵⁹⁹ Ibn Hishām, *At-Tījān fi’l Mulūk Himyar*, 38.

⁶⁰⁰ Ibn Hishām, *At-Tījān fi’l Mulūk Himyar*, 54-55. The passage seems to imply that Qaḥṭan, like other early prophetic figures, is possessed with a prodigiously long life.

the region of Azerbaijan, precipitating their flights into the west.⁶⁰¹ By writing the people and politics of the present back into the past, the narrative is an act of *anagenesis*. The descendants of Qaḥṭan display the superiority over the Arabs over the rest of Noah’s children in the early ages of the world, and this ancient nobility is imagined as a mandate for contemporary acts of conquest and colonization. The Goths are reckoned in the midst of this alternative narrative of antiquity imposed from without. Their story begins in Yemen, and their migration to Spain is precipitated by a Yemenite patriarch, Qahtan, whose campaigns of conquest anticipate the return of a later Arab empire.

Yet not all acts of *anagenesis* are consciously constructed ideologies of empire; many emerge to imbue the confusing consequences of oral and textual transmission with a retroactive sense of meaning. Another prominent account of the Goth’s ancestry appears to have evolved out of a typographical error in the adaptation of exegetical narratives into Islamic tradition. While Ibn Hishām primarily assigns the Goths a lineage that connects them to Japheth and the Saxons, Slavs, and Franks, he also mentions a “Qūṭ bin Hām” as the ancestor of the “Ḥabasha” (“Ethiopians”).⁶⁰² While Genesis 10 mentions a *Pūt* (Heb. פּוּט) among Ham’s principal descendants, several early Islamic historians, including Ibn Qutaybah (213-276 AH/ 828-889 CE) and al-Ṭabarī (224–310 AH/ 839–923 CE), speak of “Qūṭ bin Hām” (ar. قوط), though this tradition is often emended in modern translations and editions of the texts.⁶⁰³ Ibn Qutayba names

⁶⁰¹ Ibn Hishām, *At-Tijān fi’l Mulūk Ḥimyar*, 54-55.

⁶⁰² Ibn Hishām, *At-Tijān fi’l Mulūk Ḥimyar*, 355.

⁶⁰³ Ibn Qutaybah, *Kitāb Al-Ma’ārif* (al-Qāhirah: al-hayy’ a al-maṣriyya al-’āmah l’al-kitāb, 1997), vol. I, 25-6; The earliest western printed edition *Ibn Coteiba’s Handbuch der Geschichte: Kitāb al-ma’ārif*, ed. Ferdinand Wüstenfeld (Göttingen : Bei Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht, 1850), records “*Fūṭ b. Hām*” though it is possible the editor corrected the MS readings from knowledge of the equivalent biblical figure; Al-Ṭabarī, *Ṭārīkh al-Ṭabarī*, vol. 1, 206; In Al-Ṭabarī, *The History of Al-Tabari Vol. 2: Prophets and Patriarchs*, trans. William Brinner (SUNY Press, 1987), Brinner, 11 n. 37, observes that “*Qūṭ* appears throughout the Arabic text,” though he amends his translation to “Put.” One possible answer for this conflation may lie in the differences between transliteration in Eastern and Western versions of Arabic script: the diacritical marks for the letter *qāf* (ق) in Western (“*maghrabī*”) script included only one dot above the character, making it equivalent to the Eastern (“*mashriqī*”) rendering of *fā* (ف) that became the standard form of the letter in modern Arabic

the lineage of Qūṭ immediately after describing how Ham was first “White” and “Beautiful in his face and body” before God changed the color of him and his descendants at the behest of his Father Noah, an early version of the “Curse of Ham” narrative that would be deployed as a “biblical” justification for trans-Atlantic slavery many centuries later.⁶⁰⁴ While Al-Bakrī avoids discussing the ancestry of the Goths at length in his *Kitāb al-Masālik wa-’l-Mamālik* (*Book of Roads and Realms*), he does identify the figure of “Qūṭ bin Ḥām” as the progenitor of the peoples of the Indian subcontinent and a “Ṣalā bin Qūṭ,” as “one of the famous kings of the Earth,” apparently referring to the legendary ancestor of the contemporary Hoysala dynasty in Southern India.⁶⁰⁵ The Damascene scholar al-Dhahabī (1274-1348 CE) describes the “Kings of the Goths” who ruled “al-Andalus” as “descendants of Qūṭ bin Ḥām bin Nūḥ.”⁶⁰⁶ Al-Qalqashandī (756-821 AH/ 1355/6 – 1418 CE), an Egyptian follower of Ibn Khaldūn, displays explicit awareness of multiple traditions, remarking of the Goths “They are a people of Al-Andalus in Old Times. Orosius said: They are among the offspring of *Māghūgh*, son of Japheth. And it is said they are among the offspring of *Qūṭ*, son of Ham, son of Noah.”⁶⁰⁷ To what extent the traditions of Gothic lineage from either Magog or Qūṭ bin Ḥām shaped perceptions of the Goths as descendants of Ham rather than Japheth is difficult to determine. Yet since many Muslim scholars used Noachic ancestors to dictate the status of people in the present, such arbitrary shifts in ancient ancestry could easily be deployed to portray a people as above or

typography and type-setting. See Nico Van den Boogert, “Some Notes on the Maghrebi Script,” *Manuscripts of the Middle East*, no. 4 (1989), 30–43.

⁶⁰⁴ Ibn Qutaybah, *Kitāb Al-Ma’ārif*, vol. 1, 25; for an English translation, see Goldenberg, *Black and Slave*, 73. Goldenberg records “Fūṭ” and does not mention any alternatives. Ibn Qutayba’s etiology of blackness, which he attributes to Wahb, does not possess what Goldenberg calls the “double curse” of attributing both slavery and blackness to the same episode. These two traditions would be combined in Islamic sources beginning around the tenth century. See Goldenberg, *Black and Slave*, 87-104.

⁶⁰⁵ Al-Bakrī, *Kitāb al-Masālik wa-’l-mamālik*, vol. 1, 88.

⁶⁰⁶ Muḥammad ibn Aḥmad al-Dhahabī, *Tārīkh al-Islām wa-wafayāt al-mashāhīr wa-al-a’lām*, ed. Umar Tadmuri (Beirut: Dār al-Kitāb al-‘Arabī, 1993), Vol. 26, 384.

⁶⁰⁷ Aḥmad ibn ‘Alī al-Qalqashandī, *Kitāb Ṣubḥ al-a’shā fī šinā’at al-inshā* (Cairo: al-Hay’ah al-Miṣrīyah al-‘Āmmah lil-Kitāb, 2006), vol 1., 423.

below others in the order of the world.

In the Islamic world, the understanding of “Goth” as a name, a people, and a marker of history was ultimately emplaced within a periodic succession of peoples which anticipated the arrival ascendance of Islam in the Iberian Peninsula.⁶⁰⁸ Islamic narratives of the history of Al-Andalus resulted in the importation and invention of new narratives about the land and its people. This included accounts of an eponymous ancestor of *Hispania*, “*Ishbān*,” whose story prefigured the Muslim conquest of the peninsula by depicting the past in decidedly Islamic terms.⁶⁰⁹ One of the famous and enduring legends of the conquest tells of Roderick, the last king of the Goths, unlocking a forbidden chest to discover an account of the Arab’s invasion contained within.⁶¹⁰ Like the story of the sleepers of Loja, whose presence established an ancient Islamic claim to Iberia before the age of the Romans and their successors, such acts of *anagenesis* retroactively imagined the fall of the Goths as an event already written into history, awaiting its discovery in the moment of its making. For Muslim scholars, the prospect of equating the past rulers of Spain with the apocalyptic people of Gog and Magog was not very enticing since this particular enemy had already been defeated.

New Prophecies of Gog in Iberia and Beyond

While many Muslims in the Iberian Peninsula and elsewhere seemed unaware or uninterested in the *anagenetic* traditions connecting the Goths to Gog and Magog, Christian communities embraced new interpretations of this ethnographic legacy to either claim continuity

⁶⁰⁸ On the broader writing and re-writing of Gothic and Iberian history in Al-Andalus, see Kiley Foster, “Reinterpreting the Conquest: 9th-13th Century Portrayals of Andalus History,” PhD Diss, (Cornell University, 2020).

⁶⁰⁹ Foster, “Reinterpreting the Conquest.”

⁶¹⁰ Zadeh, *Mapping Frontiers*, 46; On the evolution of the Roderick legend and its redefinition in terms of Spanish identity, E. Drayson, *The King and the Whore: King Roderick and La Cava* (Springer, 2007).

with the fallen Visigothic kingdom or to engineer new claims of ancient “Gothic” heritage across the European continent. These continuations and reinterpretations of Gothic origins and identity appear to have coalesced among the Christian kingdoms in the northern part of the Iberian Peninsula, which saw themselves as the last remnant of Spain’s Christian past and the agents of its eventual restoration.⁶¹¹ Composed in Oviedo at the the court of Alfonso III (r.866-910 CE), a text known as the *Prophetic Chronicle* (Sp. *Crónica Profética*) offered a new interpretation – or rather adaptation – of Ezekiel’s prophecy to realize the ambitions of the King of Asturias and self-proclaimed “Emperor of Spain.”⁶¹² Spanish Christians embraced the prophetic potential of the enduring belief in the descent of the Gothic people from Gog. The fact that Gog appeared to be on the bad side of any apocalyptic battle was remediated by a radical resequencing of the names within the prophetic text one that re-imagined the prophetic destiny of Gog as one of conflict with another biblical figure: Ishmael.

Like many texts that deploy acts of *anagenesis* that obscure their source material, the *Prophetic Chronicle* presents itself as the “dicta Ezechielis profete” (“the words of the Prophet Ezekiel”) rediscovered in the “libro Pariticino,” (“the book of Paraticinus”), an unknown source.⁶¹³ The opening lines of the text explicitly echo the opening of Ezekiel 38: 1-3, the same chapter that Ambrose had used to address the invasions of the Goths in the fourth century CE.

⁶¹¹ Other *anagenetic* rediscoveries in the ninth century signified this new understanding of Spain’s Christian history and destiny, such as the unearthing of the purported body of Saint James in Compostela, an act that established a new center of pilgrimage within the Peninsula and transformed the biblical apostle into Santiago Matamoros (“Saint James the Moor-Killer”) patron saint of Spain and its struggle against the Saracens. See Marilyn Stokstad, *Santiago de Compostela: In the Age of Great Pilgrimages* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1978).

⁶¹² On the *Prophetic Chronicle*, see Rodrigo Furtado, “The Chronica Prophetica in MS Madrid RAH Aem. 78,” in *Forme di accesso al sapere in età tardoantica e altomedievale*, ed. Lucio Cristante and Vanni Veronesi, Polymnia 19 (Trieste: Edizioni Università Di Trieste, 2016), 75–100; Helena de Carlos Villamarín, “Alejandro En El Códice de Roda (Madrid, RAH MS 78),” *Troianalexandrina*, no. 8 (2008): 39–58. The *Prophetic Chronicle* appears in two recensions, attached connected to historical miscellanies known as the *Chronicle of Albeldense* and the *Chronicle of Alfonso III*, both originating in the regions of Northern Spain. For the different recension of the text, see Yves Bonnaz, ed., *Chroniques Asturiennes (fin IXe siècle)* (Paris: Editions du Centre national de la recherche scientifique, 1987).

⁶¹³ Furtado, “Chronica,” 89, suggests that “*in libro Pariticino*” may be a garbled version of “*in libro Pataracinus*” – i.e. “in the book of [St. Methodius of] Patara.”

The word of the word came unto Ezekiel, saying, Son of Man, set thy face against Ishmael, and speak to them, saying: “I rendered unto you the most powerful of nations, I made you multiply, I made you strong, and I placed in your right hand a sword and in your left hand arrows so that you might scourge the nations; and they fell before your face like straw before the face of flame. And you entered into the land of Gog with a firm stride, and you cut Gog to pieces with your sword, and you placed your foot upon his neck, and you made them to be your tribute-giving slaves. Nevertheless, because you have forsaken your Lord God, I will turn you about, and I will forsake you, and I will give you into the hand of Gog, and you will perish at the borders of Libya, you and all of your armies, by his sword. Just as you have done to Gog, so I will do to you. After you have possessed them in servitude for 170 years, I will give to you your lot just as you have done to them.”⁶¹⁴

The prophecy evokes both the form and language of the biblical text, but seems somewhat unconcerned that its readers will turn to the bible itself to confirm the legitimacy of its predictions.⁶¹⁵ The prophecy itself is followed by an *explanatio* that spells out the significance of its symbolism. The doubling of prophecy and exegesis is unique in this text, since — unlike the earlier efforts of Ambrose on behalf of the Emperor Gratian — author and interpreter may very well be the same person. This interpreter begins by informing readers that in biblical prophecy, one can often stand for all; so “Gog” and “Ismael” signify not only individual biblical patriarchs, but also their contemporary descendants.⁶¹⁶ Citing the lineage of the Goths from Isidore’s *Chronica Gothorum*, — which not so coincidentally appears in many of the same manuscripts as the prophecy, the interpreter identifies the “Gog” named in the prophecy as the people of the

⁶¹⁴ *Prophetic Chronicle*, 1; “*Factum est uerbum Domini ad Ezechiel dicens. Fili hominis pone faciem tuam Ismael et loquere ad eos dicens: Fortissimum gentibus dedi te, multiplicauit te, corroborauit te et posui in dextera tua gladium et in sinistra tua sagittas ut conteras gentes; et sternuntur ante faciem tuam stipula ante faciem ignis. Et ingredieris terram Gog pede plano, et concides Gog gladio tuo, et pones pedem in ceruicem eius, et facies eos tibi seruos tributarios. Verumtamen, quia dereliquisti Dominum Deum tuum, circumagam te, et derelinquam te, et tradam te in manu Gog, et finibus Libyae paries, tu et omnia agmina tua, in gladio eius. Sicut fecisti Gog, sic faciet tibi. Postquam possideris eos seruitio CLXX tempora, reddet tibi uicem qualem tu fecisti ei.*”

⁶¹⁵ For instance the Vulgate version of Ezekiel 39:3 prophesies to Gog “*Et percutiam arcum tuum in manu sinistra tua, et sagittas tuas de manu dextera tua dejiciam,*” (“*And I will strike the bow from your left hand, and I will make you cast out the arrows from your right*”) while the author of this prophecy remarks to Ismael “*posui in dextera tua gladium et in sinistra tua sagittas*” (“*I have placed a sword in your right hand and arrows in your left*”).

⁶¹⁶ *Prophetic Chronicle*, 2.1.

Goths and “terra Gog” (“land of Gog”) as “Spania.”⁶¹⁷ The Ishmaelites, in turn, are identified as the “Saracens” (“*Sarrazeni*”), connecting Muslim claims of ancestry from Abraham’s son to a popular Christian distortion of this lineage.⁶¹⁸ While Spain has suffered “on account of the sins of the Gothic people” (“*propter delicta gentis gothicae*”), the Ishmaelites, like Gog in the biblical version of Ezekiel 38-9, will soon be utterly destroyed when God decides to redeem against them.⁶¹⁹

Like earlier invocations of Ezekiel’s prophecy that speculate on contemporary histories, the account of the *Prophetic Chronicle* ultimately aims to deploy the typological narrative of punishment and redemption to herald a new era of Gothic restoration. Whereas Ambrose equated the Goths with Gog and the Romans with Israel, the author of the prophecy picked out further passages from Ezekiel 38 and 39, changing the object of derision and defeat from Gog to Ismael. Though the Goths were first punished with Ishmaelite invasion, they will rise again to divine favor and temporal victory. The Goths occupy the equivalent place of Israel in the prophecy of Ezekiel 38-9, rather than that of the biblical Gog. One phrase in the *Prophetic Chronicle* adapted from Ezekiel 39:2 “circumagam te” (“I will turn them about”) emphasizes the reversal of the prophetic referents in the original text. The *Prophetic Chronicle* portrays Goths as both Gog and Israel; the Muslim “Ismaelites” are shifted to Gog’s role of a (temporarily) successful invader. Much like the dramatic encounters between the ancestors of the Goths and Arabs in Ibn Hishām, the *Prophetic Chronicle* sees these ancestral conflicts as typological models for all future battles

⁶¹⁷ *Prophetic Chronicle*, 2.1.

⁶¹⁸ *Prophetic Chronicle*, 2.1.

⁶¹⁹ *Prophetic Chronicle*, 2.1.: The interpreter insists that the “Saracens” too have discerned through “prodigies and signs of stars” that the “restoration of the Gothic kingdom” is fast approaching. In several versions, the prophecy and its interpretation are followed by a “genealogy of the Saracens,” 2.3, and a “Life of Muhammad the false-Prophet,” 2.4, likely taken from the work of the Mozarabic Martyr Eulogius of Cordoba (800-857 CE). These texts would allow the reader to both “know their enemy,” and interpret the prophecy, since circular sequence of Islamic rulers allows the reader to calculate that the date of redemption promised by “Ezekiel”.

between nations.⁶²⁰ In this act of *anagenesis*, the present rulers of Asturias are imagined as both the lineal and spiritual successors of the Visigothic kings, the descendants of the biblical Gog, and the agents of an emergent Christian Reconquista.

Rather than a contemporary interpretation of a biblical prophecy, the *Prophetic Chronicle* seems very much to have emerged as a contemporary prophecy and contemporary interpretation invented together in the age of Alfonso III. The closing words of the prophecy provide an explicit numerical reckoning of when this restoration will take place: 170 years after the arrival of the Muslims in Iberia. Yves Bonnaz uses the *Prophetic Chronicle's* temporal and geographic specificity to hypothesize it was composed “in 883, directed from Oviedo by the euphoria of a period of ephemeral victories against Islam.”⁶²¹ Furtado suggests this presentist political program appears to be particularly clear in the Codex Rotensis, MS Madrid AEM 78, which explicitly identifies the agent of Gog’s redemption as “princeps noster, gloriosus domnus Adefonsus” (“our prince, the glorious lord Alfonso”).⁶²² The Codex Rotensis, which Furtado argues represents the closest version of the *Prophetic Chronicle* to its original form, was itself copied in the eleventh century, several centuries after the purported date of Gog’s final victory in 883.⁶²³ The various manuscripts that include the *Prophetic Chronicle* appear to bolster this interpretation by presenting the prophecy alongside accounts of local and universal history that allow the reader to recognize the connections between of the Goths and Gog and the Saracens and Ishmael. Coupled with other records of Gothic origins and history, the prophecy points to an overarching

⁶²⁰ For a full summary of the contents of the Codex Rotensis, see Furtado, “Chronica Prophetica,” 75-77; Bonnaz, *Croniques Asturiennes*, viii-ix; Other texts in the codex include Isidore of Seville’s *Chronicle* and *History of the Goths*, an excerpt from the *Apocalypse of Pseudo-Methodius*, and the *Chronicle of Alfonso III*, which culminates in the reign of the titular king. The codex also contains an unique excerpt from *The Apocalypse of Pseudo-Methodius* – adapted not from the extant Latin version, but translated from a Greek or Syriac source. This excerpt conflates the episodes describing exile of the “Ishmaelites” to the land of “Erribon” (i.e. *Yathrib*) and Alexander’s construction of a wall to enclose Gog and Magog, so that rather than Gog and the Goths being enclosed within, it is the Ishmaelite’s own ancestors who are the sinful. De Carlos, “Alejandro En El Códice de Roda,” 46.

⁶²¹ Bonnaz, *Chroniques Asturiennes*, lxxxviii.

⁶²² *Prophetic Chronicle*, 2.2.; cf. MS Madrid AEM 78, fol. 186v-7r, quoted in Furtado, “Chronica Prophetica,” 83.

narrative of the Goths as an ancient and biblically established people, who – like the descendants of Israel – have experienced their share of reward and punishment at the hands of God but are ultimately promised triumph.

While the *Prophetic Chronicle* seems quite specifically attuned to mustering the legendary equivalence of Goth and Gog to dabble in the contemporary politics of the late ninth century, it endured past the age of its “ephemeral” creation. By offering an explicit date for the realization of Spanish victory, the *Prophetic Chronicle* might have been quickly rejected and forgotten when its predictions of victory did not materialize.⁶²⁴ While the *Prophetic Chronicle* seems quite specifically attuned to mustering the legendary equivalence of Goth and Gog to dabble in the contemporary politics of the late ninth century, it endured past the age of its “ephemeral” creation. The numbers of the prophecy could be changed or reinterpreted, and the identity of “dominus Adefonsus” could be reapplied to any Spanish king who bore this name in the future. As in Ambrose’s failed prediction of Gratian’s victory over the Goths, failure to fulfill the original prophecy did not necessarily end the appeal of apocalyptic acts of *anagenesis*; instead, they created a formula that allowed their legacies to endure as the eschatological horizon was displaced again into the future.

Conclusion

The *Prophetic Chronicle*’s reimagining of Gog and Ishmael also expanded beyond Spain. It would continue to be incorporated in further acts of *anagenesis* that connected other peoples to the glorious past invented for the Goths and to prophecies elsewhere within the world. In *History*

⁶²³ Furtado, “Chronica Prophetica,” 75.

⁶²⁴ In spite of these disappointments, the climactic battle between Gog and Ishmael was displaced to the future, another recension of the *Prophetic Chronicle*, Madrid MS Escorial d.I.2, added another century onto the “170 years,” of the

of the *Archbishops of Bremen*, the 11th-century historian Adam of Bremen interpreted Ezekiel's prophecy of a "fire" coming from heaven upon the people of God to refer not to divine punishment but to the conversion of the Swedes to Christianity.⁶²⁵ On the eve of the Third Crusade (1189-92), Godfrey of Viterbo presented a modified version of the *Prophetic Chronicle* that suggested all Germanic peoples might be traced to the lineage of Magog, and thus the Germans of the Holy Roman Empire might be the agents of God's vengeance against Ishmael.⁶²⁶ The apocalyptic urgency of Ambrose's declarations that "Gog is that Goth" had been mediated by several centuries of historical change, which saw the Goths become a lasting part of the Roman Empire and the kingdoms that succeeded it. Like the Roman Empire itself, the departure of the Goths from present history made their name and legacy open to new acts of *anagenesis* that could meet the caprice of any historian. Further definitions and understandings "Goth" and "Gothic" in subsequent centuries— to denote forms of art and architecture, foundational legal liberties, literary genres and themes, ideations of racism and nationalism, and countercultural music scenes— display the layers of cultural memory that can be contained and contested within the space of a single term.⁶²⁷

The case of the Goths is also important because it sketches a wider process of a "game of names." By situating peoples in the terms of biblical genealogies and apocalyptic symbols, acts of *anagenesis* both deployed geographical knowledge to confirm a particular understanding of scriptural history and provided a flexible system of interpretation that could evolve or erase

original prophecy so that the defeat and expulsion of the Muslims would not happen until 983 CE., see Furtado, "Chronica Prophetica", 79; Bonnaz, *Chroniques Austuriennes*, xxxvii-xl.

⁶²⁵ Adam of Bremen, *Gesta Hammaburgensis ecclesiae pontificum*, MGH SS rer. Germ. 2 (Hanover: Hahn, 1917) I.28, p. 31. For an English translation, see Adam of Bremen, *History of the Archbishops of Hamburg-Bremen*, trans. Tschan Francis (Columbia University Press, 2002), 30-31.

⁶²⁶ Godfrey of Viterbo, *Pantheon*, ed. G. P.ertz, MGH SS 22 (Hanover: Hahn, 1872), 107-307, XXVII.1, 267; On Godfrey's life and relationship to Frederick I, see Simone Finkele, "Gottfried of Viterbo", in *Encyclopedia of the Medieval Chronicle*.

⁶²⁷ See OED entries for "Goth," "Gothic," and other related terms for only a brief sketch of this phenomenon in English.

different connotations in subsequent generations. Apocalyptic and ethnographic applications of *anagenesis* provided narratives of a peoples' past, present, and future that exploited the revelatory nature of biblical prophecy. It saw the fulfillment of present historical concerns and promise of near-future events as reaffirmations of overarching religious beliefs about the nature of time and global history. Following the Goths, a succession of other peoples – including Huns, Alans, Khazars, Magyars, Turks, and Mongols – would be similarly compared with Gog and Magog. Like the Goths, such declarations of recognition were first made in moments of anxiety and apocalyptic expectation. Furthermore, these narratives could be transformed from condemnation into veneration as political circumstances changed and different traditions were adopted and adapted by other communities. As in other accounts of the “game of names,” access to textual traditions, phonological affinities, invented etymologies, and accidents of translation and transmission could end up dictating the imagined origins of a people.

At the same time, the example of the Goths demonstrates how such practices were contested by other exegetes who desired to dissociate contemporary history from the eschatological interpretation. Augustine's admonition against ethnographic interpretations was by far the most commonly repeated account of Gog and Magog in Christian exegesis but did not succeed in dismissing such apocalyptic speculations from future generations. While Augustine and Jerome aimed to dissuade other Christians from placing the onus of Gog upon a single people, their reliance on the stock catalogue of Christianity's familiar Others – Jews, Pagans, Heretics, etc. – did little to dissuade the possibility that these communities would continue to be reckoned as enemies of the Church when new historical crises resurrected the specter of apocalyptic anxiety. Whether embraced or dismissed, these different narratives of Gothic origins and identity were ultimately about defining the limits of different communities. The legendary

reputation of the Gothic people and their mercurial identity as the potential descendants of the biblical Magog continued to refresh the well of prophetic speculation that fueled the political aspirations of Christian communities and their attempts to define themselves in relation to Jews, Muslims, and one another.

3.2: Enclosure and Escape: Migration, Apocalypse, and Origins outside of Time

Introduction

Enumerating the parallel histories of other peoples reputed to be the descendants of Magog – or those who claimed the mantle for themselves – shows how the traces of the Goth’s history re-emerged in successive ethnographic encounters of later generations. This chapter will continue to explore how narratives of migration and genealogy relied on acts of *anagenesis* to incorporate new communities into their pre-existing understandings of space, time, and global genealogy, noting how *places* also play a critical role in the imagined narratives of people’s origins.^{629F}⁶²⁸ Many narratives of *anagenesis* are topographical. In addition to the game of names that governed the genealogical grafting of new ethnic groups onto old ethnographic identities, there existed a parallel tradition of geographical *topoi* that explained the presence or absence of different peoples from the corpora of authoritative knowledge. As Veronica Della Dora suggests in her *Landscape, Nature, and the Sacred in Byzantium*, a “*Topos* is not simply a geographical location, a pause in space, or a node within a network; it is a dynamic rhetorical figure.”⁶²⁹ Just as authors of ethnographic forms of *anagenesis* deployed genealogical narratives and etymological acrobatics to yoke unfamiliar foreign peoples to a familiar past, they also sought to construct spaces that could explain their present purpose in the world, and their troubling *absence* from the corpora of authoritative knowledge.

In identifying the “original” locations of migrating peoples, *anagenesis* narratives contrived spaces and places where time functions differently. As we have noted in the many stories of Long-Sleepers, the setting of the cave provides both a liminal space where a

miraculous privation of time can occur, as well as an archetypal landscape in the physical world that can be re-imagined as the location of the narrative. In stories of migration and the origin of peoples, *anagenesis* narratives expanded the scale of both these liminal topographies and of the human actors preserved within them. Etiologies of *enclosure* and *escape* emerged to explain the phenomenon of migration, so that migrating peoples were depicted as shut-off from participation in the geo-political contest of history until a portentous event thrust them into the world. In stories of migration, the scale was global; rather than a cave to hold a handful of companions, spaces needed to be conceived that could preserve an entire people outside of history until the moment of their precipitous return arrived.

In this chapter, I identify three significant narratives of enclosure and escape. The *Palus Maeotis* (“Maeotic Sea” or “Maeotic Swamp”), a fixture of classical geographies, was deployed to explain the absence of knowledge of the Hunnic people from history. In subsequent generations, the story of the Huns’ escape from the swamp through a fortuitous hunting expedition provided an opportunity to cast the people as agents of good or evil. The river *Sambatyon* presents an apocalyptic barrier, one that excludes the Lost Tribes of Israel from history by both limiting their contact with the world beyond and preserving them a state of divinely ordained security until an eschatological moment of reunion with their Jewish relatives. The most prevalent and significant *topos* of this type was the barrier of Alexander the Great. As an imaginary place that made sense of very real threats, the location of Alexander’s barrier and identity of the people enclosed within it shifted in many successive acts of *anagenesis*. It became entangled with the apocalyptic legend of Gog and Magog and ultimately became one of the most prominent and popular narratives concerning this apocalyptic people. The story of Alexander’s

⁶²⁸ See also Geraldine Heng, “The Invention of Race in the European Middle Ages II: Locations of Medieval Race,” *Literature Compass* 8, no. 5 (May 1, 2011): 332–50.

Gate expanded and endured because it readily adopted the narrative elements from other *topoi* of enclosure and escape, which similarly imagined the privation of peoples past and future.

The Maeotic Swamp, Huns, and Hungarians

Ancient geographers reckoned the *Palus Maeotis* or Maeotic Swamp, the Modern Sea of Azov, as part of the northern boundary of Europe, though the dimensions and nature of this place were somewhat indistinct.⁶³⁰ These geographers usually situated the swamp, like its modern counterpart, at the mouth of the river Don (Tanais). Observing that the river Don flows into the sea, Herodotus called the “Maeotic lake” the “mother of the Pontus” and erroneously described it as nearly equivalent in size to the Black Sea.⁶³¹ Pliny the Elder – noting the conflicting accounts of his own sources – was similarly uncertain as to whether the Maeotic Swamp was connected to the Caspian Sea, or constituted part of the Encircling Ocean.⁶³² While the Maeotic Swamp its geographical distance from the imagined centers of geographical tradition left its exact spatial dimensions somewhat indistinct.

Associated first with the Scythians and the Amazons, the Maeotic Swamp earned new attentions in Late Antiquity as authors attempted to explain the arrival of the Huns on the frontiers of the Empire. In the work of the 4th-century historian Roman Ammianus Marcellinus, the Maeotic Swamp appears as a kind of geographical threshold, a distant twin of Rome’s Danube Frontier.⁶³³ In the concluding books of his history Ammianus lamented that the Huns

⁶²⁹ Veronica della Dora, *Landscape, Nature, and the Sacred in Byzantium* (Cambridge University Press, 2016), 2.

⁶³⁰ See “Maeotis” in *Brill’s New Pauly*; Strabo, *Geography, Volume I*, trans. Jeffrey Henderson, LCL 49 (Cambridge, Ma: Harvard University Press, 1917), II.31, names the Maeotis as one of the dividing points between Europe and Asia. Isidore, *Etymologiae*, XIV.iii.31, similarly places the *palus Maeotis* as one of the western frontiers of Scythia.

⁶³¹ Herodotus, *Histories*, IV.86.

⁶³² *Natural History*, II.67.

⁶³³ Ammianus Marcellinus, *History*, trans. John C. Rolfe, vol. 3, LCL 331 (Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 1939).

were “the seed and origin of the ... various calamities afflicted by the wrath of Mars,” who had precipitated the Gothic flight and the catastrophe of Adrianople in 378 CE.⁶³⁴ Ammianus also lamented that the Huns presented a historical conundrum, since they were a “people... little known from ancient records,” which is to say, not at all.⁶³⁵ While the Goths could be shoe-horned into history through etymological games, the Huns presented a larger problem since their name was utterly “unknown” to the geographical tradition of antiquity. Their migration into the territory of the Goths, Alans, Sarmatians, and other *known* barbarians drew attention to the breadth of the unknown, a challenge to the empire’s perceived dominion over what it conceived to be the better part of the globe, if not in size then in consequence.⁶³⁶

Ammianus accounts for the Hun’s obscurity by describing them “dwelling beyond the Maeotic Sea near the ice-bound ocean.”⁶³⁷ Though the Huns’ name received little mention in ancient writers, Ammianus’ ersatz ethnography of the mysterious people resurrects the stock tropes of Herodotus’ Scythians, so that nothing seems to have changed in the land beyond Maeotis in the intervening millenium.⁶³⁸ As a believer in Rome’s traditional pantheon, Ammianus opens his discourse on the Goths and Huns with “many true predictions of seers and augurs” that prophesied the migration of these peoples and the disastrous outcome of the battle at Adrianople.⁶³⁹ He contrasts the wisdom of these ancient authorities with the foolish choices of the Christian emperor Valens and his clerics, upon whom he lays the better part of the blame for this fated catastrophe. Ammianus further envisions the hand of the divine in the movement of

⁶³⁴ Ammianus Marcellinus, *History*, XXXI.2.1, pp. 380-1.

⁶³⁵ Ammianus Marcellinus, *History*, XXXI.2.2, pp. 380-1.

⁶³⁶ Scholars continue to speculate on both the origins of the Hunnic people and the ethnonym “Hun.” Some the term to the *Xiongnu* confederacy that was a major opponent of China’s Han Dynasty in the Second Century BCE, and thereafter became a stock term for Nomadic peoples akin to Scythian. See Peter B Golden, “Ethnogenesis in the Tribal Zone: The Shaping of the Türks,” *Archivum Eurasiae Medii Aevi* 16 (September 2008): 73–112, 83-4; Hyun Jin Kim, *The Huns, Rome and the Birth of Europe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 28-9.

⁶³⁷ *History*, XXXI.2.2, pp. 380-1.

⁶³⁸ Ammianus Marcellinus, *History*, XXXI.2.2-12, pp. 380-7.

⁶³⁹ Ammianus Marcellinus, *History*, XXXI.1.2, pp. 376-7.

peoples, but not in the terms of *anagenesis*.

While Ammianus' own religious tradition would be abandoned by later generations of historians within the Roman Empire, the Maeotic Swamp would remain an important *topos* in imagining the peoples of the distant North. The narrative underwent an *anagenetic* incorporation into Christian conceptions of Roman imperial history. This development appears in Jordanes' *Getica*, a sixth-century history that attempts to push both Gothic and Hunnic history further back into a classical past. Like Ammianus, Jordanes approaches the mysterious origins of the Huns by yoking them to a more familiar people and by using the setting of the Maeotic Swamp to explain their disappearance – and eventual re-emergence – from time. According to the *Getica*, the Huns first emerged as a people when an ancient Gothic king, Filimer, cast out a host of “sorceresses” (“*magas mulieres*” called “*halirunnae*” in Gothic) from among his people.⁶⁴⁰ Cast forth into the Maeotic Swamp, these witches encountered “unclean spirits” in the “wilderness” and copulated with them, giving birth to the “scarcely human” people who “first dwelled among the marshes.”⁶⁴¹ Like other ethnographic forms of *anagenesis*, this narrative negotiates the origins of the Hunnic peoples in terms that dictate their ultimate place in the world. Jordanes explains the “descent” (lat. *Stirpe*) of the Huns from another known people – in this case the Goths.

As an act of *anagenesis* concerned with the phenomenon of migration, this narrative also presents a clear *etiology of enclosure*. It explains where a people “unknown” to the historical record has come from and why they have gone unmentioned in the authoritative traditions of classical geography. While the Goths are afforded a heroic history that sees them interacting with the legendary of Troy and the great figures of the Roman past, the Huns are confined outside of time within the Maeotic swamp. If the Greeks and Romans had been ignorant of the Huns for

⁶⁴⁰ Jordanes, *Getica*, XXVII.122, ed. Mommsen 89; trans. Mierow, 39.

⁶⁴¹ Jordanes, *Getica*, XXVII.123, ed. Mommsen 89; trans. Mierow, 39.

several hundred years, then the Huns must have been ignorant of them as well, confined in some place where history is essentially timeless. They might as well be sleeping, like the people of the cave.

By confining the Huns within the Maeotic swamp, the narrative explains their absence from the historical record until the fateful moment of their adventus in the lands of the Goths. Jordanes then passes from an *etiology of enclosure* to a complementary story, an *etiology of escape*. He explains how the Huns were suddenly able to exit their temporal stasis and enter into history:

“At one time, while hunters of their tribe were as usual seeking for game on the farthest edge of Maeotis, they saw a doe unexpectedly appear to their sight and enter the swamp, acting as guide of the way; now advancing and again standing still. The hunters followed and crossed on foot the Maeotic swamp, which they had supposed was impassable as the sea. Presently the unknown land of Scythia disclosed itself and the doe disappeared. Now in my opinion the evil spirits, from whom the Huns are descended, did this from envy of the Scythians. And the Huns, who had been wholly ignorant that there was another world beyond Maeotis, were now filled with admiration for the Scythian land. As they were quick of mind, they believed that this path, utterly unknown to any age of the past, had been divinely revealed to them. They returned to their tribe, told them what had happened, praised Scythia and persuaded the people to hasten thither along the way they had found by the guidance of the doe. Like a whirlwind of nations they swept across the great swamp and at once fell upon the Alpidzuri, Alcildzuri, Itimari, Tuncarsi and Boisci, who bordered on that part of Scythia.”⁶⁴²

While the “Maeotic Swamp” is not a literal gate, it presents a physical barrier that must be “unlocked” before the Huns can enter into Scythia. Such an explanation avoids examining the

⁶⁴² Jordanes, *Getica*, XXVII.124-5, ed. Mommsen 89; trans. Mierow, 39: *Quam secuti venatores paludem Meotidam, quem inpervium ut pelagus aestimant, pedibus transierunt. Mox quoque Scythica terra ignotis apparuit, cerva disparuit. Quod, credo, spiritus illi, unde progeniem trahunt, ad Scytharum invidia id egerunt. Illi vero, qui praeter Meotidam alium mundum esse paenitus ignorabant, admiratione ducti terrae Scythicae et, ut sunt sollertes, iter illud nullae ante aetati notissimum divinitus sibi ostensum rati, ad suos redeunt, rei gestum edocent, Scythiam laudant persuasaeque gente sua via, qua cerva indice dedicerant, ad Scythiam properant, et quantoscumque prius in ingressu Scytharum habuerunt, litavere victoriae, reliquos perdomitos subegerunt. Nam mox ingentem illam paludem transierunt, ilico Alpidzuros, Alcildzuros, Itimaros, Tuncarsos et Boiscos, qui ripae istius Scythiae insedebant, quasi quaedam turbo gentium rapuerunt. Halanos quoque pugna sibi pares”*

world beyond the traditional frontiers of Greco-Roman geography. The story further concerns itself with the agency of the Huns' escape, making several additional assumptions about the psychology of such an enclosed people. It downplays the Huns' participation in their own migration narrative, suggesting that their confinement and subsequent migration were both accidents of the natural world. And while Jordanes reports that the Huns' purported escape is reckoned by the Huns themselves as an act of divine destiny, he suggests that it was really "evil spirits" – the demonic ancestors he details in his "discovery" of the Hun's genealogy – who had engineered the nomadic invaders' irruption into the known world. If God could lead the Israelites across the Red Sea, then perhaps demonic forces could engineer a lesser exodus. As Jordanes aims to rehabilitate the Goths by reimagining their heroic history, he envisions the Huns as a kind of evil twin to these good barbarians. The story of the Huns' partially demonic ancestry deprives them of any prospect of peace with the Romans, the Goths, or any Christian people.

Yet like the connections between the Goths and Gog, Jordanes' account of the Huns' demonic origins in the Maeotic Swamp could be reimagined as a positive narrative through further generations of *anagenesis*. The question of Hunnic origins was a deeply important question for the Latin Christian Kingdom of Hungary.⁶⁴³ Though the Hungarians were primarily descendants of the Finno-Ugric Magyar people who had migrated into Eastern Europe at the end of the ninth century, they saw the earlier Hunnic conquests as part of their own settlement in the Carpathian Basin.⁶⁴⁴ The thirteenth-century Hungarian chronicler Simon of Kéza opens the prologue of *Gesta Hunnorum and Hungororum* by critiquing the story of the Huns' demonic

⁶⁴³ On the formation of the kingdom of Hungary in the Middle Ages, see Nora Berend, Przemysław Urbańczyk, and Przemysław Wiszewski, *Central Europe in the High Middle Ages: Bohemia, Hungary and Poland, c.900–c.1300* (Cambridge University Press, 2013).

⁶⁴⁴ On the formation of Hungarian Identity, see Berend et al., *Central Europe*, 63-80.

origin in the Maeotic swamp.⁶⁴⁵ Simon claims that the story is patently false because its presentation of cross-breeding between demonic and human violates the principles of scripture that “that which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the spirit is spirit” (John 3:6). But Simon does not reject the story in its entirety. Instead, he proposes a corrective narrative of both Hunnic and Hungarian (Magyar) origins by returning to the story of the Maeotic swamp and giving it a happy beginning. Invoking the “table of nations” in Genesis 10, Simon describes two brothers “Hunor” and “Magor” as descendants of “the giant Menrot, the son of Japheth.”⁶⁴⁶ Born in Havilah, a place Simon equates with Persia, the two brothers later journey to Scythia, where they happen upon a fortuitous discovery:

“Now it happened one day when they had gone out hunting in the Meotis marshes that they encountered a hind in the wilderness. As they went in pursuit of it, it fled before them. Then it disappeared from their sight altogether, and they could not find it no matter how long they searched. But as they were wandering through these marshes, they saw that the land was well suited for grazing cattle. They then returned to their father, and after obtaining his permission they took all their possessions and went to live in the Meotis marshes. The Meotis region borders on their Persian homeland, and except from one very small ford it is cut off on all sides by the sea; it has no rivers and abounds in grass, trees, birds, fish, and animals; access and exit to this land is difficult.”⁶⁴⁷

After five years in the swamp, the two brothers leave and discover a nearby camp of women and children left undefended. Like the Roman story Rape of the Sabine Women and many other accounts of ethnogenesis through sexual coercion, the brothers attack them and seize “two daughters of Dula, prince of the Alans” to be their child-brides. “To these women,” remarks Simon, “all the Huns owe their origin; And as they stayed on in the marshes, they gradually grew into a very powerful people, and the land was not large enough to contain them or to feed

⁶⁴⁵ Simon Kézai, *Gesta Hungarorum*. Edited by László. Veszprémy, Frank. Schaer, and Jenő. Szűcs (Budapest: Central European University Press, 1999), I.2, pp. 3-9.

⁶⁴⁶ *Gesta*, I.4, pp. 10-11. Menrot’s name, stature, and construction of the tower of Babel evoke Nimrod of Genesis 11, but the biblical figure is the descendant of Kush, son of Ham. Since Japheth is associated with Northern nomadic peoples (and ultimately “Europe” as a continent) he fits as the presumed ancestor for both Huns and Magyars.

⁶⁴⁷ *Gesta*, I.5, pp. 14-17.

them.”⁶⁴⁸ It is unclear if the Hungarians are supposed to wholly approve the violent deeds of their ancestors. Whether Jordanes’ story was an ungenerous adaptation of an original Hunnic legend, Simon constructs his story to reject this previous Latin authority. Rather than the exile of wicked women who couple with evil spirits, Simon imagines the Maeotic Swamp settled and populated through the initiative of powerful men with biblical pedigrees.

Simon portrays the Maeotic Swamp not as a destination from which to escape but as an attractive sight to settle, whose isolation provides protection and “purity” to the nascent Hungarian people:

“For the pure Hungarian nation comprises one hundred and eight kindreds and no more; any additional ones are immigrants or the descendants of captives, for 108 clans were begotten by Hunor and Mogor in the marsh of Meotis without any admixture.”⁶⁴⁹

If the Maeotic Swamp of Jordanes’ *Getica* kept the Huns excluded from historical knowledge until the precipitous moment of their escape, the Maeotic Swamp of the Hungarian tradition serves a barrier of permanent enclosure between the “original” Hungarian people and all others, a hermetically sealed genetic past whose claims must be navigated in order to assert present legitimacy.⁶⁵⁰

Where the historical Huns and Magyars represent two linguistically and historically distinct migrations into the region of Hungary, the hybrid nature of Hungarian descent is briefly evoked in the two brothers Hunor and Mogor only to then be collapsed in the assertion of a singular Maeotic genesis. The incursions and settlement of the Huns in the fifth century, and the Magyars nearly half a millennia later, are imagined as all part of a singular history by uniting these disparate peoples in a distant place and time. The Maeotic Swamp is envisioned as a

⁶⁴⁸ *Gesta*, I.5, pp. 16-17.

⁶⁴⁹ *Gesta*, I.6, pp. 22-3.

collective womb for the entire “Hungarian” people; its geographical boundaries ensure the exclusivity of their lineal descent. This space of shared ancestry moreover becomes the imaginative sight of contemporary justifications of feudal privilege, an ancestral homeland whose memory still governs the status of those inhabitants of the new settlements in Europe. This further application of *anagenesis* to the Maeotic myth does not merely reconcile its imagined inhabitants to the “good side” of history; it also becomes the justification of their contemporary architecture of aristocratic power.

The Sambatyon River and the Lost Tribes of Israel

Whereas the Maeotic Swamp primarily serves as an enclosure for historical or contemporary irruptions of people into the wider world, the corpus of traditions describing the river known as the *Sambatyon* or *Sabbatikon* concern a geographical barrier whose enclosure of peoples resonates with religious meaning and eschatological expectation. Mentions of a river imbued with peculiar powers and associated with the Jewish custom of the Sabbath first appear in the first century CE.⁶⁵¹ In later rabbinical traditions, Jewish sages invoked the example of the river to shore up their own sense of sacral time. In his study of the early accounts of the Sambatyon, Daniel Kokin draws attention to the function of Sambatyon “as nature’s water

⁶⁵⁰ Since such a boundary is of course mythic and porous, Simon immediately follows his list of the 108 pure Hungarian families by observing they are far from the only people of consequence in the realm, and the “family histories of these newcomers will be listed at the end of this book,” *Gesta*, I.6, pp. 24-5.

⁶⁵¹ Daniel Stein Kokin, “Toward the Source of the Sambatyon: Shabbat Discourse and the Origins of the Sabbatical River Legend,” *AJS Review* 37, no. 1 (2013): 1–28. In his *Natural History*, 31.24, Pliny the Elder (d. 79 CE) remarks that “in Iudea is a stream that dries up every Sabbath,” one of many aquatic wonders spread throughout the earth, see *Natural History, Volume VIII: Books 28-32*, Translated by W. H. S. Jones. LCL 418 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1963), 392-3. Josephus also mentions the river in the midst of his *Jewish War*, 7:96-9, recounting that the future Roman Emperor Titus (r. 79-81 CE) crossed this “sabbatical river” (“Σαββατικὸν”) near Lebanon. See Josephus. *The Jewish War, Volume III: Books 5-7*. Translated by H. St. J. Thackeray, LCL 210. (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1928), 336-7.

clock.”⁶⁵² He notes that in a Talmudic episode during “a dialogue between Rabbi Akiva (50-135 CE) and an imagined Roman official, ‘Tyranus Rufus’, the Jewish sage rejected Roman doubts that Jews had chosen God’s holy day by declaring ‘let the river Sambatyon prove it.’”⁶⁵³ The river’s resting on the day of the Sabbath proved that the Jewish community was in temporal concord with the Creator and his laws.

In the narratives from the centuries that followed, the Sabbatical River was relocated from the environs of the Holy Land to other regions of the world, where it would become intermingled with the mercurial eschatological legends transmitted and contested between Jews and Christians in Late Antiquity. In these apocalyptic and *anagenetic* re-inscriptions of the Sambatyon onto new places throughout the globe, the river also became a site of enclosure. The river was reimagined as an important geographical barrier dividing a particularly holy community from the rest of the globe, preserving them from the wars and deportations that Jewish Antiquities Volume I: Books 1-3 characterized the life of Jewish minority communities in the “real world”, while also protecting them from the corruptions of religious schism and heretical belief.

The most common identification of the people beyond the Sambatyon was the “Lost Tribes of Israel.”⁶⁵⁴ This tradition emerged out of the historical deportation of peoples from the Northern Kingdom of Israel by the Assyrian Empire in the 8th Century B.C.E. recorded in the

⁶⁵² Kokin, “Toward the Source of the Sambatyon,” 15.

⁶⁵³ Kokin, “Toward the Source of the Sambatyon,” 15. The episode appears in the Babylonian Talmud, (Trac. Sanh. 65b). As Konin observes, the name “Rufus” i.e. “Red”, equates the Roman official with the biblical Esau/Edom, the Roman’s purported Noachic ancestor.

⁶⁵⁴ On the legends of the Lost Tribes, see Zvi Ben-Dor Benite, *The Ten Lost Tribes: A World History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009); Gow, *Red Jews*, 59; Reeves, *Trajectories*, 200-224. I am using the term “Lost Tribes” here as shorthand for a collection of different imagined communities of people who appear in Jewish, and later Christian and Muslim sources. Among other names, they are sometimes referred to as the “Ten Tribes” of the Northern Kingdom of Israel, sometimes the “Sons of Moses,” and sometimes the “Rechabites,” a specific group of ascetics who appear in Jer. 35:1-19. Some texts, such as those attributed to Eldad the Danite, distinguish between the descendants of the ten tribes, who are depicted as scattered throughout the earth, and the “sons of Moses”, who remain separate and enclosed behind the Sambatyon.

Biblical account of II Kings 16.⁶⁵⁵ Just as the Jewish people had returned from the Babylonian Captivity, biblical prophecies from Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel intimated a parallel resolution of divinely-guided return for these “Lost Tribes” from the Northern Kingdom.⁶⁵⁶ At the beginning of the Common Era, new traditions emerged among both Jewish and Christian communities describing the condition of the tribes in the intervening years since their exile. These traditions elaborated on the role of their eschatological struggles for the fate of the world. Like their less-savory counterparts Gog and Magog, the precise whereabouts of the Lost Tribes was an open question, one that several travel narratives and visionary texts sought to answer with acts of *anagenesis*.

Merging the story of the Lost Tribes with that of the Sabbatical River, these new legends provided an etiology of enclosure that explained the people’s continued absence from history and that foresaw their return in a moment of eschatological exodus. One text that would serve both Jewish and Christian apocalyptic expectations, the pseudepigrapha *IV Ezra*, claimed that the Lost Tribes had been transported by God:

“to a remote country where none of the human race had lived since time began, for there they might even observe their laws which they neglected to observe in their homeland. They began (their journey) by the narrow entrances of the Euphrates, for then the Most High performed wonders for them (and) blocked the passages of the river until all of them had crossed over, so that they traveled on dry ground. That place (where they dwell) is called Arzaf, at the end of the world. They live there until the final age, then they are destined to come here again. The Most High will again block the passages of the Euphrates river so they will be able to cross it.”⁶⁵⁷

God’s miracle of blocking the waters of the river evokes the earlier biblical partings of the Red Sea (Exodus 14-5) and the Jordan (Joshua 3:14-17), showing the continued role of the Creator in

⁶⁵⁵ On the Lost Tribes in Biblical history and Prophecy, see Ben-Dor Benite, *Ten Lost Tribes*, 31-55.

⁶⁵⁶ Ben-Dor Benite, *Ten Lost Tribes*, 53; Reeves, *Trajectories*, 201.

⁶⁵⁷ *Apocalypse of Ezra*, 13:44:7, qtd. and trans. Reeves, *Trajectories*, 201-2. The text is also commonly called *The Apocalypse of Ezra* or II Esdras. For a complete translation, see B.M. Metzger, “The Fourth Book of Ezra,” in *The Old*

guiding the migrations of his chosen people. This etiology of enclosure also allows for a space of ritual and religious purity that could not be maintained amid the dangers of the terrestrial world. According to *IV Ezra*, it would ultimately be the duty of the Messiah to gather “the ten tribes, which were led away from their own land in the time of Hosheah the king” and bring them back to Israel at the end of time.⁶⁵⁸

In *IV Ezra*, the location of this apocalyptic enclosure and sacred river beginning to shift to a numinous frontier. The river that allows the privacy and preservation in *IV Ezra* is identified as the Euphrates, one of the major waterways in the Near East, and a resonant space in biblical tradition.⁶⁵⁹ Although the headwaters of the Euphrates were not very far from the “known world,” the idea of an uninhabited mountain valleys separated by rushing waters created a suitable topography for enclosure that could conceal the Lost Tribes until their release. As Zvi Ben-Dor Benite and John Reeves both observe, the name of this land of enclosure, called “Arzaf” or “Arzareth,” appears to have emerged out of a “corrupted transliteration” of the Hebrew “*Eretz Ahereth*” (“Another Land”), a phrase that appears in a prophecy of exile in Deuteronomy 29:28.⁶⁶⁰ A general term made unique by an error in transmission, the location of “Arzareth” would become another apocalyptic puzzle for subsequent generations of exegetes.⁶⁶¹

The identity of this enclosing river would shift from the Euphrates to the Sambatyon as

Testament Pseudepigrapha, ed. J. H. Charlesworth, 2 vols. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1983), vol. 1, 517-59, 553.

⁶⁵⁸ *IV Ezra*, 13:40; While the two traditions would ultimately be conflated, Gog and Magog and the Lost Tribes imagined as were distinct entities on opposite sides of the final battle at Armageddon. Anderson, *Alexander's Gate*, 59-61, notes the appearance of the lost tribes in the *Sibylline Oracles* as well as the *Carmen Apolageticum* of the early Christian poet Commodianus (fl. 250 CE). Commodianus expected the lost tribes to rescue both Christians and Jews from the Antichrist, who would then be chased to “in Borea partem” (“into the northern parts,” *Carmen Apolageticum*, 974, the realm associated with Gog Magog by Ezekiel.

⁶⁵⁹ See Raphael Kutscher and Pinhas Artzi, “Euphrates,” in *Encyclopaedia Judaica*, ed. Michael Berenbaum and Fred Skolnik, 2nd ed. (Detroit, MI: Macmillan Reference USA, 2007); Ben-Dor Benite, *Ten Tribes*, 62-4. The Euphrates first appears in the bible in Genesis 2:14, as one of the four rivers that water the garden of Eden.

⁶⁶⁰ Ben-Dor Benite, *Ten Tribes*, 62; Reeves, *Trajectories*, 202 n. 6. In describing the transcription error, Reeves mistakenly attributes it to the previous verse, Deuteronomy 29:27.

⁶⁶¹ Ben-Dor Benite, *Ten Tribes*, 62-5.

the imagined site of the Lost Tribes' enclosure displaced from the local geography of the Near East and shifted the edges of the world. The Jerusalem Talmud mentions "the river Sambatyon," as one of the "three exiles" experienced by the "Lost Tribes," and a succession of other Jewish texts would follow this tradition.⁶⁶² The description of the *Sambatyon* that appears in these eschatological accounts grew increasingly fantastical; instead of merely flowing or stopping on the Sabbath, it became a river of sand, stones, or precious gems, with pillars of fire that protected or prevented crossing.⁶⁶³ These attributes were likely adopted from the appearance of a "river of sand" at the world's edge in the 4th-century *Alexander Romance* of Pseudo-Callisthenes and other accounts of far-off marvels.⁶⁶⁴ They also pass across religious divides, as early Muslim scholars, such as Muqatil ibn Sulayman, also recorded accounts of the "sons of Moses" dwelling beyond a river of sand.⁶⁶⁵ Incorporating these legendary elements of the Alexander traditions to transform the biblical history of exile into an apocalyptic promise of return, these various acts of *anagenesis* envisioned the Sambatyon as a fantastic river that could be relocated and rediscovered in many places throughout the world.

As an etiology of enclosure, the river became an explanation for how a people could be both absent from the world, one that nonetheless preserved their community for a future rediscovery. The continuing *anagenetic* evolution of the Sambatyon tradition can be witnessed in the purported account of a Jewish traveler named Eldad ha-Dani, which began to circulate

⁶⁶² Jerusalem Talmud, Sanh. 10.6, 29c, qtd in Reeves, *Trajectories*, 203. Reeves, *Trajectories*, 200-224 identifies further episodes involving the Lost Tribes and People of Moses which include the Sambatyon in the *Lamentations Rabbah*, the *Pesqita Rabbati*, *The Chronicles of Yerahme'el*, *Bereshit Rabbati*, Adolph Jellinek's compilations of the *Bet ha-Midrash*, and several fragments from the Cairo Genizah.

⁶⁶³ Reeves, *Trajectories*, 206.

⁶⁶⁴ Reeves, *Trajectories*, 206; David Kaufman, "Le Sambation," *Revue des Études Juives* 22 (1891): 285-87, provides an alternative explanation of the river's sandy nature on the basis of folk-etymologies between different Semitic terms for sand and Sabbath.

⁶⁶⁵ See Silverstein, "Enclosed", 300-2, and Reeves, *Trajectories*, 206-7. Reeves observes how at mention of the "people of Moses" (ar. "*qaym Mūsā*") in Q 17:104, Muqātil "locates these lost tribes in China on the far side of a 'river of sand' bearing the name Ardaf." [cf. Syriac *Arzaf*, which appears in IV Ezra as the location of the Lost Tribes.]

among Jewish communities at the end of the 9th century C.E.⁶⁶⁶ Rather than envisioning the descendants of the Ten Tribes confined together in a single space, Eldad’s account envisions them as settled in different regions throughout the earth. Eldad himself claims to hail from “the ancient Havilah,” where the tribes of Dan, Naphtali, Gad, and Asher dwell together amongst the other peoples of Ethiopia.⁶⁶⁷ In his myriad adventures, the Eldad encounters many members of other the “Lost Tribes” scattered throughout different regions of the earth, and in the “Letter” he enumerates their present locations for his audience. Eldad’s list of the Tribes’ new homes corresponds to many of the places that the Jewish diaspora had reached by the ninth century CE, including Eastern Africa, India, Khazaria, and – as Adam Silverstein understands the “Letter of Eldad” – the port cities of southern China.⁶⁶⁸ By portraying these different communities not as other Jews, but *anagenetically* imagining them as the rediscovered descendants of the Lost Tribes, the “Letter of Eldad” maps their settlements backs into the biblical past and anticipates an eschatological reunion of the different tribes from all corners of the globe.

In the framework of *anagenesis*, Eldad’s journey also becomes a way to resituate the Sambatyon tradition within this global image of Jewish community, locating the river at the furthest margins of space and time. The “Letter of Eldad” culminates in the traveler’s description

⁶⁶⁶ Azriel Shochat, “Eldad Ha-Dani,” in *Encyclopaedia Judaica*, 2nd ed, vol. 6, 293-4. For a Hebrew edition of the sources related to Eldad, see *Eldad ha-Dani: Šippāraw we-Hilkhatow*, ed. A. Epstein (Pressburg, 1891); for an English translation, see Adler, *Jewish Travelers in the Middle Ages*, 4-15. For a recent study of the Eldad tradition, see Micha J. Perry, *Eldad’s Travels: A Journey from the Lost Tribes to the Present* (London: Routledge, 2019). Like Odysseus or Sinbad the Sailor, Eldad’s narrative is a sequence of fortunate misfortunes—shipwrecks, enslavements, sojourns among cannibals—that ultimately brings the traveler a wealth of treasure and knowledge about the world.

⁶⁶⁷ “Letter of Eldad,” §13; trans. Adler, *Jewish Travelers*, 11.

⁶⁶⁸ “Letter of Eldad,” §6-10; trans. Adler, *Jewish Travelers*, 7-9; Adam Silverstein, “From Markets to Marvels: Jews on the Maritime Route to China ca. 850 - ca. 950 CE,” *Journal of Jewish Studies* 51, no. 1 (2007): 91–104. At the opening of his narrative, Eldad describes being captured first by a group of cannibals and then carried off by an army of “fire worshippers” who took him across the sea to “the province of Azania,” *Letter of Eldad*, §4, trans. Adler, *Jewish Travelers*, 7. As Silverstein, “From Markets to Marvels,” 97, observes, “the most obvious interpretation of these letters would be the Hebrew equivalent of the Arabic *al-Šm*, China.” Adler and other scholars chose to present Eldad sailing to a mythical land called “Azania” rather than China because they did not believe the traveler would have been capable of sailing to China in the late ninth century, when political unrest and massacres of merchants ended much of Jewish and Muslim involvement in East Asian trade, or else because the term points to a potentially Arabic and potentially Islamic literary source for the narrative.

of a holy people dwelling within a supernatural enclosure. Rather than all ten of the Lost Tribes, these people are identified as the “sons of Moses.” This enigmatic people dwell “three months” distance beyond the frontiers of Eldad’s own distant land of Ethiopia and are further separated from the rest of the world by the Sabbatical River.⁶⁶⁹ In Eldad’s account, the Sambatyon’s size and attributes have grown more miraculous:

The breadth of that river is 200 cubits bowshot, and the river is full of large and small stones and the sound of them rumbles like a great storm, like a tempest at sea ... The river runs and the stones and sand rumble during the six working days, but on the seventh day it rest and is tranquil until the end of Sabbath. And on the other side of the river, on the side where the four tribes’ dwell, is a fire which flames on Sabbath and no man can approach within a mile.⁶⁷⁰

Though separated by the Sambatyon’s terrible power, the Sons of Moses manage to communicate with their fellow co-religionists by sending messenger pigeons and by shouting in choice locations over the roar of the river.⁶⁷¹ In this way “they see no man and no men see them except these four tribes, who dwell on the other side of the rivers of Ethiopia.”⁶⁷² In the case of the Sons of Moses, the exclusion made by the river Sambatyon is obviously spatial, but it is also tellingly temporal. The river’s many wonders prevent the Sons of Moses from going forth into the world, but this enclosure has also preserved them from the world’s many dangers. Like the inhabitants of the Maeotic Swamp, the Sons of Moses are envisioned as undiluted in lineage or language on account of their enclosure; they are “all Levites,” and their “Talmud is all in Hebrew.”⁶⁷³ Ritually pure, preternaturally long-lived, and fantastically rich, the Sons of Moses live in an egalitarian society that presents an ideal model of Jewish exegetical culture.⁶⁷⁴ Isolated

⁶⁶⁹ “Letter of Eldad,” §16; trans. Adler, *Jewish Travelers*, 12.

⁶⁷⁰ “Letter of Eldad,” §19; trans. Adler, *Jewish Travelers*, 14.

⁶⁷¹ “Letter of Eldad,” §19; trans. Adler, *Jewish Travelers*, 14.

⁶⁷² “Letter of Eldad,” §19; trans. Adler, *Jewish Travelers*, 14.

⁶⁷³ “Letter of Eldad,” §17-18; trans. Adler, *Jewish Travelers*, 13.

⁶⁷⁴ “Letter of Eldad,” §16-8; trans. Adler, *Jewish Travelers*, 12-3. Tellingly, the “Letter” does not ever explicitly mention whether any women exist among the “Sons of Moses,” though since they are imagined to only live “120 years,” they must have some form of reproduction.

from the course of history, which has left both the Jews and the Lost Tribes scattered throughout the world and flawed, the sons of Moses are “perfect in their faith,” guided by the scriptures and an uncorrupted chain of oral tradition that passes “our Rabbis, from the mouth of Joshua the son of Nun, from the mouth of our father Moses, from the mouth of the Almighty.”⁶⁷⁵

This otherworldly community does not so much resemble the rebellious people of the biblical past as the harmonious community envisioned in an eschatological future. While the Sons of Moses signify the promise of an eschatological reunion awaiting in the present world, the various Jewish accounts of “The Letter of Eldad” contain no particular indication on the date of this coming end. Nor is any mechanism described to explain when or how this holy people might cross the Sambatyon when the time comes.⁶⁷⁶ Yet by describing the Sons of Moses’ presence within the world and placing them within a wider geography the Lost Tribes scattered throughout the earth, “The Letter of Eldad” suggests that while Jewish communities elsewhere struggle with the life in the secular world, the Sons of Moses maintain a “perfect” form of their faith that will be shared with all when the scattered descendants of Israel return to their home in the future.

It is not possible to determine from the extant sources whether Eldad was a real Ethiopian Jew, an impostor, or a literary invention like Jean Mandeville.⁶⁷⁷ Such doubts were already circulating among Jewish communities when the “Letter of Eldad” first appeared, but Eldad’s story spread in spite of such opposition.⁶⁷⁸ As a member of the tribe of Dan and a witness to the

⁶⁷⁵ “Letter of Eldad,” §17; trans. Adler, *Jewish Travelers*, 13. The next sentence in the “Letter” notes a potential anachronism in this claim “But they know not the Rabbis, for these were of the Second Temple and they did not reach them.”

⁶⁷⁶ It is possible some prophetic elements have been removed from the text during later redactions. Perry, “Imaginary War,” 11, similarly observes that Eldad’s distinctions between the Ten Tribes and the Sons of Moses were subsequently collapsed in later sources, putting all Ten Tribes again beyond the Sambatyon. Perry believes that “their enclosure and their banishment back to the realm of the imagination may suggest disillusion after a messianic phase.”

⁶⁷⁷ On scholarly debates about the authenticity of various sources and Eldad himself, see Perry, *Eldad’s Travels*, 10-20.

⁶⁷⁸ Adler, *Jewish Travelers*, 16-24, includes another early source. The “Case as to Eldad the Danite” is another letter, purportedly offered by Gaon R. Zemach (d. ca. 890 CE), head of a Rabbinical school in Iraq, to a Jewish community in

Earth's many places, Eldad portrays himself as one of a privileged few who can communicate with this enclosed community. This liminal position allows Eldad to serve as herald of their existence beyond the border of the Sambatyon, of the global reach of Israel's descendants, and of the ultimate reunion of these peoples at the eschaton. Eldad concludes his letter with an impressive signature of his own name, recording all thirty-nine generations of men that connect him back to "Dan ben Jacob our father, on whom be peace and on all Israel."⁶⁷⁹ In the *anagenetic* traditions of apocalyptic ethnography, such claims of genealogical continuity grant an authority to witness the world and mediate a communal understanding of past, present, and future.

By providing a compelling account of the Sabbatical River and the people beyond its banks, the "Letter of Eldad" encouraged the proliferation of the legend of the Sambatyon. It inspired further accounts in Jewish traditions, as well as new adaptations of the legend among Christian and Muslims who strived to emplace the wondrous river within the terms of their own apocalyptic traditions.⁶⁸⁰ One key *anagenetic* re-inscription of the Lost Tribes and the River Sambatyon carried over from the "Letter of Eldad" appears within a 12th-century Latin text known as the "The Letter of Prester John."⁶⁸¹ One of the most influential texts in the marriage of geographical and eschatological horizons, the letter presents itself as a purported correspondence

North Africa who claims to have met Eldad. Answering questions about whether Eldad's account of the "Sons of Moses" could be both accurate and in accordance with Jewish tradition, the letter endorses Eldad's tale as true. See also Perry, *Eldad's Travels*, 1-8.

⁶⁷⁹ "Letter of Eldad," §19; trans. Adler, *Jewish Travelers*, 14-5.

⁶⁸⁰ On other examples of Eldad's influence on the Jewish tradition, see Perry, *Eldad's Travels*, 94-5.

⁶⁸¹ On Prester John see, Keagan Brewer, *Prester John: The Legend and Its Sources* (London: Ashgate, 2015). On the relationship between the Eldad narrative and the Prester John Legend, see David Wasserstein, "Eldad Ha-Dani and Prester John," in *Prester John, the Mongols, and the Ten Lost Tribes*, ed. Bernard Hamilton and C. F. Beckingham (Brookfield, VT: Variorum, 1996), 213-36; Perry, "Imaginary War," 5-10. For a critical edition of the Latin letter that identifies the major recensions of the text see Friedrich Zarncke, *Der Priester Johannes* (S. Hirzel, 1879), vol. 1, 909-934. For an English translation and annotated edition of the *Letter*, see Christopher Taylor, "The Letter of Prester John," Last Edited March 21, 2021 <https://scalar.usc.edu/works/prester-john/index2?path=index>. I would be remiss to not also mention the imaginative novelization of the narrative's invention in Umberto Eco, *Baudolino*, trans. William Weaver (New York: Harcourt, Inc., 2002).

between the Byzantine Emperor “Manuel” (Manuel I Komenos, r. 1143-1180 CE) and one “Presbyter Johannes,” a mythical Christian priest king dwelling far to the East.⁶⁸² In describing his kingdom and customs to the west, Prester John surveys the extent of his domain and enumerates both the peoples who dwell within his kingdom and those who submit to his power beyond his borders. The eastern king boasts of the many marvels that make up his domain – animal, vegetable, and mineral – drawing from a stock of geographic legends that combines classical, Christian, and Jewish sources.⁶⁸³ At one border of his kingdom lies a “certain sea, not of water, but of sand” whose source is a river made “precious stones” that flows only three days a week.⁶⁸⁴ “Beyond that river of stones are the Ten Tribes of Jews, who, although they are under their own laws, are subject to us and pay us tribute.”⁶⁸⁵ The inclusion of the Lost Tribes and the River Sambatyon in the “Letter of Prester John” resituates the people and place into a Christian temporal and geographical framework. Prester John occupies the equivalent role of El-Dad and his companions in the tribe of Dan by serving as mediator between the Lost Tribes (and a host of other fantastical peoples) and the western Christian audience of his missive.

The Jewish peoples’ enclosure by the river of stones does not prevent the Christian king from demanding their fealty; in fact, their geographical enclosure seems to reflect their subjugation to an idealized Christian sovereign whose realm encompasses many wonders.⁶⁸⁶ The avenue of their escape is of no concern to the Christian text. It is interested instead in the

⁶⁸² See Brewer, *The Legend and Its Sources*, 8-11. Originally written in Latin, the text was likely not intended for Manuel I, but rather address the political and religious ambitions Holy Roman Emperor Frederick I. On potential connections between the mythic Prester John and historical Christian rulers in Central Asia, see Igor de Rachewiltz, *Prester John and Europe’s Discovery of East Asia* (Canberra: Australian National University Press, 1972).

⁶⁸³ On the earlier sources of the legend and influences behind the tradition, see Brewer, *The Legend and Its Sources*, 29-96.

⁶⁸⁴ *Letter of Prester John*, §31; trans. Taylor; ed. Zarncke, 914.

⁶⁸⁵ *Letter of Prester John*, §41; trans. Taylor; ed. Zarncke, 915; *Ultra illud autem flumen lapidum sunt decem tribus Judeorum qui quamvis fingant se legem habere tamen servi nostri sunt et tributarii.*” The sections of the letter describing the “Ten Tribes” are considered by Zarncke and Taylor both to be part of the earliest version of the letter, dating ca. 1165 CE.

⁶⁸⁶ The shift in the river’s time-table, flowing three days a week instead of six, disassociates it from the Jewish veneration of the Sabbath and allows more opportunities for the Christian king to exert his control across the River.

subordination of Jewish eschatological tropes to its newly devised representation of distant Christianity. The narrative of the enclosed peoples is appended to a larger eschatological promise. As Christopher Taylor suggests, this vision of two branches of Christianity, east and west, envisions a “global enclosure” of the world within Christian bounds that will ultimately overcome rival Jewish and Muslim communities.⁶⁸⁷ The *Letter* suggests that Christianity has already reached the edges of the world, even if its Latin proselytes have not. Such ambitions both echo the global diaspora of the Lost Tribes depicted in the “Letter of Eldad” and shift its promise of eschatological triumph to a different faith. Prester John’s conclusion “If you can count the stars in heaven and the sand of the sea, then you can calculate the extent of our kingdom and our power” echoes the blessing granted to Abraham in the wake of his averted sacrifice of Isaac, “to make your offspring as numerous as the stars of heaven and as the sand that is on the seashore” (Gen 22:17).⁶⁸⁸ The Christian king has not only been placed over the authority of the Ten Tribes, but takes the language of Jewish promise as the seal of his own power. This process of adoption, adaptation, and transformation of apocalyptic traditions across confessional communities does not of course end with a simple narrative of Christian supersession and dominion over the legend of the Lost Tribes. As Perry observes, Jews later translated *The Letter of Prester John* into Hebrew, but the relationship between the Christian King and the enclosed peoples was renegotiated again in the process.⁶⁸⁹ As an apocalyptic people situated in an imaginative space, the Lost Tribes became a medium through which different religious communities could implant their own hopes of justification before God. Perry conceives of this tradition as an “Imaginary

⁶⁸⁷ Christopher Taylor, “Global Circulation as Christian Enclosure: Legend, Empire, and the Nomadic Prester John.” *Literature Compass* 11, no. 7 (2014): 445–59, 446–7.

⁶⁸⁸ *Letter Of Prester John*, §100, trans. Taylor; ed. Zarncke, 924: “*Si potes dinumerare stellas caeli et harenam maris, dinumera et dominium nostrum et potestatem nostram.*”

⁶⁸⁹ Perry, “Imaginary War,” 10–12. In the Hebrew translations of the letter, the tax paid by the enclosed peoples to Prester John is either transformed into “payment for his maintenance of their common border,” or the enclosed peoples are stripped of their Jewish identity and their subjection to the king kept intact.

War” for the ends of the earth and ends of time, one that he identifies as entangled with both the Anti-Semitic fantasies of *Mandeville’s Travels*, and real acts of violence against Jewish communities in Europe.⁶⁹⁰

Alexander’s Wall and the Enclosure of Gog and Magog:

As sites of etiological enclosure and escape, the Maeotic Swamp and the River Sambatyon helped explain the migration and emergence of different peoples through the logic of *anagenesis*. Authors insisted that any unexpected encounter or event could be readily rediscovered in the authoritative accounts of geography and history. Combining both the ethnographic concerns of the Maeotic Swamp and the eschatological expectations of the Sabbatical River, the legend of Alexander’s Gate and the people of Gog and Magog ultimately emerged as the most prolific model of enclosure and escape. In the midst of migrations that destabilized both the polities of settled states and the ideological backing of their superior knowledge over the barbarian world, the story of Alexander’s Gate offered a site for reconciling the margins of geographic knowledge in the present with those of a legendary past. Whereas early versions recount the Macedonian king’s barrier to keep a barbarian threat enclosed in the Caucasus, successive acts of *anagenesis* saw the gate relocated to numerous places throughout the world, and the identity the people enclosed within was conflated with the apocalyptic enemies of Gog and Magog.

Like the Maeotic Swamp, the story of Alexander’s Gate began as an ostensibly historical explanation for invasions and encounters with peoples at the boundaries of the civilized world. While scattered references to “Alexander’s Gates” or the “Caspian Gates” appear throughout

⁶⁹⁰ Perry, “Imaginary War,” 18, 23.

historical and geographical texts of Greek and Latin antiquity, the earliest allusion to an explicit narrative of Alexander and the enclosed peoples appears in the *Jewish War* of Flavius Josephus (37-100 CE).⁶⁹¹ In 73 CE, the same year as the famous siege of Masada, Josephus records a devastating invasion of the land of Media, then part of the Persian Empire of the Parthians:

The Alans — a race of Scythians, as we have somewhere previously remarked, inhabiting the banks of the river Tanais and the lake Maeotis— contemplating at this period a predatory incursion into Media and beyond, entered into negotiations with the king of the Hyrcanians, who was master of the pass which king Alexander had closed with iron gates. Being granted admission by him, masses of them fell upon the Medes, who suspected nothing, and plundered a populous country, filled with all manner of livestock, non-venturing to oppose them.⁶⁹²

Like other etiologies of enclosure and escape, Josephus' anecdote seeks to explain the origins of the Alans, their absence from ethnographic tradition, and the forces behind their present migration. While a people named the "Alans" only began to appear in Greek and Roman sources a few decades before, Josephus uses the story of the Gates to displace their origins several centuries backwards to the time of Alexander.⁶⁹³ The idea that the people were enclosed by Alexander and subsequently allowed to escape by the "King of Hyrcania" collapses the historical complexities that drove such intermittent incursions across the Caucasian frontiers, reimagining them as the simple matter of opening a door. Whereas the story of the Maeotic Swamp depended on a fortuitous discovery of a path through the Marshes and the River Sambatyon might be stopped or started by the power of God, traditions about Alexander's Gate often sought out human actors who were imagined as responsible for letting the enclosed peoples loose.⁶⁹⁴

⁶⁹¹ On the earliest traditions and purported locations of the gates, see Andrew Runni Anderson, "Alexander at the Caspian Gates." *Transactions and Proceedings of the American Philological Association* 59 (1928): 130-63; Anderson, *Alexander's Gate*, 91-2; Van Donzel and Schmidt, *Gog and Magog*, 11.

⁶⁹² Josephus, *Jewish War*, VII.vii.4, trans. 376-9; see also Van Donzel and Schmidt, *Gog and Magog*, 10-12.

⁶⁹³ The name *Alan* is cognate to *Aryan* and *Iran*, and nomadic peoples speaking Indo-Iranian language had long been present in the Northern Eurasian steppes, but Greek and Roman authors only begin to use this terminology in the first Century CE. See V. I. Abaev, H. W. Bailey, "Alans," in *Encyclopædia Iranica* (London: Routledge, 1981), I:8 801-803; Agustí Alemany, *Sources on the Alans: A Critical Compilation* (Leiden: Brill, 2000).

⁶⁹⁴ On apocalyptic thinking in the Seventh Century, see Lutz Greisiger, *Messias, Endkaiser, Antichrist: politische Apokalyphtik unter Juden und Christen des Nahen Ostens am Vorabend der arabischen Eroberung* (Wiesbaden:

As in other cases of apocalyptic discourse, such *anagenetic* equations were highly contested. In terms of *anagenesis*, Josephus further deploys the story to trace the genetic origins of the Alans back to the Scythians, whom he considers as the descendants of Magog in his other work, the *Jewish Antiquities*.⁶⁹⁵ Yet Josephus does not seem to consider this biblical pedigree a sign of apocalyptic import, nor does he portray the escape of the Alans from these legendary gates in eschatological terms. Writing in the wake of the Roman destruction of Second Temple and the collapse of the First Jewish Revolt, Josephus' forms of *anagenesis* aim to reconcile Jewish, Greek, and Roman traditions in terms that could secure the survival of his people within the Empire. Where eschatological traditions might inspire further resistance to Roman rule and inspire further acts of Roman retaliation, Josephus turned instead to positive representatives of empire, portraying Alexander as a God-sent conqueror sympathetic to Jewish belief.⁶⁹⁶

Later Christian authorities with similar reservations toward eschatological interpretations saw the story of Alexander's Gates as an attractive alternative. Jerome had attacked "Jews and our Judaizers" for equating the Goths with Gog and Magog in interpreting the prophecies of Ezekiel, yet he displayed no such reservations associating the Huns with the "Scythians" of "Alexander's Wall" in a letter written in 399 CE.⁶⁹⁷ Like the alternative tradition equating the Goths and the Getae, Jerome invokes the authorities of both Josephus and Herodotus to place the Huns' origins in the vicinity of the Maeotic Swamp and trace their escape through site

Harrassowitz Verlag, 2014); Wolfram Brandes, Felicitas Schmieder, and Rebekka Voß, *Peoples of the Apocalypse: Eschatological Beliefs and Political Scenarios* (Berlin: De Gruyter, Inc., 2016); Stephen J. Shoemaker, "'The Reign of God Has Come': Eschatology and Empire in Late Antiquity and Early Islam," *Arabica* 61, no. 5 (2014): 514–58.

⁶⁹⁵ Flavius Josephus, *Jewish Antiquities Volume I: Books 1-3*, trans. H. St. J. Thackeray, LCL 242 (Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 1930), I.123, pp. 58-61. Van Donzel and Schmidt, *Gog and Magog*, 10.

⁶⁹⁶ Saskia Dönitz, "Alexander the Great in Medieval Hebrew Traditions," in *A Companion to Alexander Literature in the Middle Ages*, ed. Z. David Zuwiyya (Leiden: Brill, 2011), 21–40, 22-3.

⁶⁹⁷ Jerome, *Epistula* 77.8; For a Latin edition, see *Sancti Evsepii Hieronymi Epistvlae*, ed. I. Hilberg, CSEL 55, (Vienna: Österreichische Akademie der Wissenschaften, 1996), vol. 2, 45; For an English translation, see Philip Schaff and Henry Wace, eds., *A Select Library of Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church. Second Series* (New York: The Christian Literature Company, 1893), vol. 6, 161. Van Donzel and Schmidt, *Gog and Magog*, 13, quote this text and

Alexander's Gates.⁶⁹⁸ For Jerome, the story of Alexander's Gate seemed to still be an essentially secular narrative, though his representation of it may have been composed in an effort to suppress apocalyptic interpretations. Writing from his home in Bethlehem when the Huns crossed the Caucasus in 399 CE, he states that among locals "it was generally agreed that the goal of the invaders was Jerusalem, and that it was their excessive desire for gold which made them hasten to this particular city."⁶⁹⁹ By seeking "historical" origins and practical explanations for rumors of a Hunnic advance towards Jerusalem, Jerome avoids comparing the event the biblical prophecies of war in the holy land.

Jerome's approach to Alexander's Gates did not prevent other authors from using the barrier to explain the emergence of new nomadic threats in eschatological terms. The apocalyptic transformation of Alexander's Gates grew out of the broader incorporation of the historical conqueror into a legendary figure through various acts of *anagenesis*.⁷⁰⁰ Through Near Eastern traditions of the "Alexander Romance," the Macedonian conqueror was first syncretized with the ancient Mesopotamian folk-hero Gilgamesh and subsequently incorporated into the emerging religious legends of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. The Greek conqueror was reimagined as either a "virtuous pagan" unknowingly served the designs of a monotheistic God, or as a conscious monotheist in his own right who had been granted prophetic powers in addition

portray St. Jerome as endorsing the equation of the Huns to the Biblical Gog in terms of the Book of Revelation but their characterization ignores Jerome's vocal opposition to interpreting such equivalences eschatologically.

⁶⁹⁸ Jerome, *Epistula* 77.8; ed. Hilberg, vol. 2, 45; trans. Schaff and Wace, vol.6, 161.

⁶⁹⁹ Jerome, *Epistula* 77.8; ed. Hilberg, vol. 2, 45; trans. Schaff and Wace, vol.6, 161.

⁷⁰⁰ On the apocalyptic versions of the Alexander Legend, see Lutz Greisiger, "Opening the Gates of the North in 627: War, Anti-Byzantine Sentiment and Apocalyptic Expectancy in the Near East Prior to the Arab Invasion," in *Peoples of the Apocalypse: Eschatological Beliefs and Political Scenarios*, ed. Wolfram Brandes, Felicitas Schmieder, and Rebekka Voß (Boston: De Gruyter, 2016), 63–80; Garret J. Reinink, "Heraclius, the New Alexander: Apocalyptic Prophecies during the Reign of Heraclius," in *The Reign of Heraclius (610-641): Crisis and Confrontation*, ed. Garret J. Reinink and Bernhard H. Stolte, vol. 2, Groningen Studies in Cultural Change (Leuven: Peeters, 2002); For the legend's influence on the Qur'ān, see Kevin Van Bladel, "The Alexander Legend in the Qur'ān 18: 83-102," in *The Qur'ān in Its Historical Context*, ed. Gabriel Said Reynolds (London: Routledge, 2008), 175–203; Tommaso Teisei "The Chronological Problems of the Qur'ān: The Case of the Story of Dū-l-Qarnayn (Q 18:83-102)." *Rivista Degli Studi Orientali* 84, no. 1/4 (2011): 457–64.

to military genius.⁷⁰¹ Incorporated into monotheistic traditions and their accompanying ideologies of empire, Alexander further became a typological figure, a just king and God-guided conqueror whose story could reflect the global ambitions of later rulers.⁷⁰²

This additional layer of *anagenesis* transformed the barrier from a historical landmark that could cyclically explain the emergence of new nomadic threats, into an eschatological device whose opening heralded the potential end of the world. The conflation of Gog and Magog and Alexander's Gate occurred in the Near East during the opening decades of the 7th century CE. The period was a historical moment rife with wide scale destruction and eschatological expectation, which Byzantine Historian James Howard Johnston tellingly names a "World Crisis."⁷⁰³ It began with a catastrophic war between the Byzantine and Sassanian Persian Empires, instigated by the Sassanian *Shahنشah*, Khusrau II Parwez (r. 590-628) (602-628 CE). While the Sassanians at first succeeded in conquering large portions of the Byzantine Realm and bringing the Eastern Empire to the brink of its collapse, the war concluded with a rapid reversal of fortune. In 626, the Byzantine Emperor Heraclius (r. 610-641) succeeded in defending the Byzantine capital of Constantinople from a joint Persian and Avar Siege.⁷⁰⁴ In the following year, he secured an alliance with a general of the Göktürk Khaganate, allowing Turkic forces to cross the Caucasus and attack Christian kingdoms allied to the Sassanians.⁷⁰⁵ With Turkic forces

⁷⁰¹ On the Alexander Romance as a reflection of the Gilgamesh epic and ancient Near Eastern traditions, see Adam Silverstein, "Enclosed beyond Alexander's Barrier: On the Comparative Study of 'Abbāsīd Culture," *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 134, no. 2 (2014): 287–306, 294; Tommaso Tesei, "Some Cosmological Notions from Late Antiquity in Q 18:60-65: The Qur'ān in Light of Its Cultural Context," *Journal of the American Oriental Society; Ann Arbor* 135, no. 1 (March 2015): 19–32.

⁷⁰² Fowden, *Empire to Commonwealth*, 151; Garret J. Reinink, "Heraclius, the New Alexander: Apocalyptic Prophecies during the Reign of Heraclius," in *The Reign of Heraclius (610-641): Crisis and Confrontation*, ed. Garret J. Reinink and Bernhard H. Stolte, vol. 2, Groningen Studies in Cultural Change (Leuven: Peeters, 2002), 81-94; Greisger, *Messias*, 183-95.

⁷⁰³ James Howard-Johnston, *Witnesses to a World Crisis: Historians and Histories of the Middle East in the Seventh Century* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 1-7. On apocalyptic thinking in the Seventh Century, see Greisger, *Messias*, 1-14.

⁷⁰⁴ On the Avar-Persian Siege, see Howard Johnston, *Witnesses*, 22-3; Fowden, *Empire to Commonwealth*, 35.

⁷⁰⁵ Greisger, "Opening the Gates," 69-71; For an account of the Göktürks and their successors, see Peter B. Golden, *Central Asia in World History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 35-50.

harassing the Caucasus, Heraclius struck out for the Sassanian capital of Ctesiphon and seized the city in 628, a victory that convinced a group of Sassanian nobles to murder Khusrau II and sue the Byzantines for peace.⁷⁰⁶

The breadth and the brutality of the Byzantine-Persian war encouraged eschatological speculations on both sides of the conflict, fostering antagonism, suspicion, and persecution of different religious and ethnic groups living within and caught between the Byzantine and Sassanian domains.⁷⁰⁷ The conflation of Alexander's Gates and the story of Gog and Magog occurs in the midst of this eschatological foment. The *Syriac Alexander Legend*, the earliest extant source that explicitly links the two stories, is dated by scholars to around 630 CE, immediately after Heraclius' victory and before the beginnings of the Arab conquests.⁷⁰⁸ In its extant form, the *Legend* presents several problems to scholars. Like many other prophetic texts, it appears to have been redacted multiple times to make the content of its prophecies more fitting to particular historical moments and political concerns.⁷⁰⁹ It appears that *anagenetic* equivalence between the two narratives was first established to condemn Heraclius for "opening the Gates" of Alexander to Turkic forces, reimagined as "Gog and Magog," yet the extant form of the text encourages Syriac Christians to see God as the ultimate force behind the people's escape.⁷¹⁰

The result is an ambivalent portrayal of the enclosed people, yet one that ultimately encourages the *anagenetic* application of apocalyptic ethnography to both confront the anxieties of nomadic invasions and revise and reorder the traditions of prophecy in their wake. The text first generally identifies the people enclosed within Alexander's gates as the "Huns" (Syr.

⁷⁰⁶ Shoemaker, "Reign of God", 538-9.

⁷⁰⁷ Greisiger, "Opening the Gates, 69-71; Shoemaker, "Reign," 537.

⁷⁰⁸ For text and translation of the *Legend*, see E. A. Wallis Budge, "A Christian Legend Concerning Alexander." In *The History of Alexander the Great* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1889), 145-58. Van Donzel and Schmidt, *Gog and Magog*, 17-21; On the dating of the text, see Greisiger, "Opening the Gates," 67; Tessei, "Chronological Problems," 460.

⁷⁰⁹ On textual problems and the possibility of redactions, see Greisiger, "Opening the Gates," 75-6.

(Hūnāyē), and then enumerates an elaborate register of their kings, beginning with “Gog and Magog” (Syr. “Āgōg” and “Māgōg”).⁷¹¹ The *Legend* considers the name of the “Huns,” unknown a few centuries before, to be the *typical* term for northern barbarians. These enclosed peoples are further described with a *mélange* of ethnographic tropes about northern nomadic peoples; “some of them have blue eyes, and their women have but one breast apiece; and the women fight more than the men”; they wear skins and eat raw flesh, each owns several horses, and in war they commit various of atrocities against their enemies, such as cooking pregnant women over a fire until “her belly bursts open and the child comes forth roasted.”⁷¹² Like the Huns of Jordanes, magical and demonic powers seem to lay behind these people’s military might, but the *Legend* further emphasizes “The Huns go not forth to spoil except where the anger of God goes.”⁷¹³ As sorcerers, man-eaters, and Amazons, these Huns embody many of the stock tropes of Scythian ethnography, overlain with an additional layer of apocalyptic horror.

Alexander in turn is depicted in the *Legend* as a believer in the Christian God and a possessor of prophetic knowledge. When he builds his brazen gates to shut the “Huns” within, Alexander inscribes them with a prophecy that declares when and how the barrier will be re-opened:

“The Huns shall go forth and conquer the countries of the Romans and of the Persians.... Also I have written that, at the conclusion of eight hundred and twenty-six years, the Huns shall go forth by the narrow way which goes forth opposite [Haldris], whence the Tigris goes forth like the stream which turns a mill, and they shall take captive the nations, ... And again I have written and made known and prophesied that it shall come to pass, at the conclusion of nine hundred and forty years, another king, when the world shall come to an end by the

⁷¹⁰ See Greisiger, “Opening the Gates,” 66-7; and Reinink, “A New Alexander,” 83-4.

⁷¹¹ *Syriac Alexander Legend*, ed. Budge, 150. Many future texts will follow the *Legend* in including a register of the “kings” or “nations” of the enclosed peoples. While these lists will vary in their contents, they will always begin their registers with “Gog and Magog,” which sets the stage for the eschatological prophecy to follow.

⁷¹² *Syriac Alexander Legend*, ed. Budge, 151; Van Donzel and Schmidt, *Gog and Magog*, 19; Greisiger, “Opening the Gates,” 75.

⁷¹³ *Syriac Alexander Legend*, ed. Budge, 152.

command of God the ruler of creation [sic].⁷¹⁴ Two sets of dates are given in the text, a sign that, like the many forms of *Prophetic Chronicle*, the *Legend* had been edited and re-edited on multiple occasions to fit contemporary moments.⁷¹⁵ While the first date appears to address an invasion in the early sixth century, the second date refers to the year 826 (628/9 CE) in the Seleucid calendar, matching Heraclius' alliance with the Turks and his subsequent campaign against the Sassanians.⁷¹⁶ Such temporal specificity suggests that the *Legend* identifies Heraclius' Turkic allies as the people of Gog and Magog even as it fails to recognize them as people distinct from the "Huns" of past centuries. Yet the accretive quality of the extant text also demonstrates how this act of *anagenesis* has been edited and reinscribed several times, troubling any singular interpretation of this act's apocalyptic significance.

The Syriac *Legend* ultimately attributes the Huns' escape to the will of God, cementing its identification of the equivalence between the enclosed peoples and "Gog and Magog" as one of apocalyptic portent. Alexander's prophecy inscribed upon the gate further describes the terms of the barrier's destruction and the Huns' escape:

"And the Lord will gather together the kings and their hosts which are within this mountain, and they shall all be assembled at His beck, and shall come with their spears and swords, and shall stand behind the gate, and shall look up to the heavens, and shall call upon the name of the Lord/ saying, 'O Lord, open to us his gate.' And the Lord shall send His sign from heaven and a voice shall call on this gate, and it shall be destroyed and fall at the back of the Lord, and it shall not be opened by the key which I have made for it. And a troop shall go through this gate which I have made."⁷¹⁷

In the ensuing war, Alexander prophesizes that "the kingdoms of the Huns and of the Persians

⁷¹⁴ *Syriac Alexander Legend*, ed. Budge, 157.

⁷¹⁵ Greisiger, "Opening the Gates," 66-7; Van Bladel, "The *Alexander Legend* in the Qur'ān," 183. The Seleucid era remained the most common system of reckoning among eastern Christians in the sixth and seventh centuries. The first set of dates corresponds to 514/5 CE and an incursion by the Sabirs across the Caucasus, while the second has been interpreted as 626, 628, and 629.

⁷¹⁶ Van Bladel, "The *Alexander Legend* in the Qur'ān," 183.

shall be desolated the one by the other.”⁷¹⁸ This mutually assured destruction presents an opportunity for the “Romans,” imagined as the heirs of “house of Alexander the son of Philip the Macedonian,” to “go forth and destroy the earth and the ends of the heavens.”⁷¹⁹ Though the *Legend* does not wholly embrace Gog and Magog as righteous figures like the *Prophetic Chronicle*, it does seem to revise the perception of northern invaders in terms that prove God’s support for the Romans and their Emperor, *anagenetically* imagined as the descendant of Alexander in spirit, if not flesh.

The *Legend* displays both how much history had changed in the half century since the Roman Empire had been reckoned as the new Babylon in the Book of Revelation, as well as how swiftly newly written apocalyptic narratives could be turned on their heads in the wake of shifting political fortunes. As Garret Reinink observes, “Apocalyptic eschatology which predicted the end of the Roman empire was supplanted by imperial ideology using eschatological imagery in order to typify the auspicious new beginning of the empire.”⁷²⁰ By typologically twinning Rome and Greece, Heraclius and Alexander, the *Legend* considers military victory as the ultimate proof of divine favor. It grants the Romans license to rewrite prophecy as history, including the very pieces of propaganda that had envisioned the empire’s end. Eschatological fervor was not exclusively a tool of imperial propaganda, but also one of resistance; Jewish and Christian communities antagonistic to the Romans had their own interpretations how contemporary events might precipitate the world’s end.⁷²¹ It was a political strategy on all fronts,

⁷¹⁷ *Syriac Alexander Legend*, ed. Budge, 154. Alexander declaration that the gate “shall not be opened by the key which I made for it,” but rather by the power of God, seems intended to exonerate any other human agents from direct responsibility in the people’s release.

⁷¹⁸ *Syriac Alexander Legend*, ed. Budge, 156.

⁷¹⁹ *Syriac Alexander Legend*, ed. Budge, 156.

⁷²⁰ Garret J. Reinink, “Heraclius, the New Alexander: Apocalyptic Prophecies during the Reign of Heraclius,” in *The Reign of Heraclius (610-641): Crisis and Confrontation*, ed. Garret J. Reinink and Bernhard H. Stolte, vol. 2, Groningen Studies in Cultural Change (Leuven: Peeters, 2002). See also Greisiger, “Opening the Gates,” 70-71. [Recited as above.]

⁷²¹ See Greisiger, “Opening the Gates,” 66-8, *Messias*, 46-63.

one that became a way to interpret shifts of fortune both temporary and permanent; and one that could be reinterpreted and reimagined in subsequent generations to meet new political ends. The tension between the roles of the emperor and the enclosed peoples in the *Syriac Alexander Legend* displays the extent to which this corpus of apocalyptic people, places, and symbols could be contested between different communities. *Anagenetic* re-engineering of each identity and role in the eschatological drama could be rapid.

Heraclius staged his victory over the Sassanians in *anagenetic* and eschatological terms, proceeding in triumph from Ctesiphon to return the “True Cross” to Jerusalem in to fulfill Sibylline prophecies of a “Last Emperor.”⁷²² While Heraclius might seize upon apocalyptic traditions to write his successes back into the past, the emperor ultimately had little more control over these narratives than his opponents. Scholars such as Stephen Shoemaker and Tommaso Tesei have observed narratives similarly inspired by this apocalyptic discourse in the emergence of Islam.⁷²³ The Qur’ān provides another of the earliest descriptions of the enclosure and escape of “Gog and Magog” (ar. *Yājūj wa-Mājūj*) (18:83-102) in the same surah as the story of the Companions of the Cave (18:9-26).⁷²⁴ Although Western scholars, beginning with Theodor Nöldeke, have identified connections to the *Syriac Alexander Legend* in the Qur’ānic account, it is likely that the Islamic scripture addresses an earlier form of the Syriac tradition than the extant, pro-Heraclian account of 630 CE.⁷²⁵ Like the story of the Companions of the Cave, the

⁷²² Shoemaker, “Reign of God,” 539; Greisiger, *Messias*, 132-80.

⁷²³ Shoemaker, “Reign,” 524-35.

⁷²⁴ On the Qur’ānic episode, see Van Donzel and Schmidt, *Gog and Magog*, 50-4; Van Bladel, “The *Alexander Legend* in the Qur’ān,” 175-6;

⁷²⁵ On connections between the Qur’ān and the *Legend*, see Van Bladel, 183-8, and Tommaso Tesei, “The Prophecy of Dū-l-Qarnayn (Q 18:83-102) and the Origins of the Qur’ānic Corpus.” *Miscellanea Arabica*, no. 2013–2014 (n.d.): 273–90. Since the *Syriac Alexander Legend* has been dated to 629-30CE, two years before the traditional date of Muhammad’s death, several scholars have used this connection to question the traditional Islamic dating of the Qur’ānic corpus. Yet since Greisiger “Opening the Gates,” 77-8, observes that the elements of the *Alexander Legend* referring to 628-630 CE likely constitute a Heraclian redaction of the text. Another version of the legend likely existed earlier in the seventh century. The *Legend’s* account of a first opening of the Gate in 514 CE, corresponding to an attack of the Sabrs, suggests that a form of the text could have even been circulating in the sixth century. Van Bladel, 183, suggests however that,

Qur'ān acknowledges a variety of exegetical narratives circulating about the narrative and proceeds to offer an account that emphasizes the eschatological import of the barrier.⁷²⁶

Though much shorter than the Syriac *Legend*, the Qur'ānic account echoes the chief narrative movements. Rather than attributing the act of enclosure explicitly to Alexander, the Qur'ān calls the builder of the barrier Dhū' l-Qarnayn "The Two-Horned One," an epithet for Alexander that also appears in the Syriac *Legend*.⁷²⁷ Dhū' l-Qarnayn begins his journey surveying the edges of the earth, first traveling to the land of the sun's setting in a "murky spring" (18:85-88), then to the place of the sun's rising (18:89-91).⁷²⁸ He then heads for a third limit of the world, this one temporal as well as geographical:

92. Then he followed a means. 93. Till he reached the place between the two mountain barriers. He found beyond them a people who could scarcely comprehend speech. 94. They said, "O Dhū'l-Qarnayn! Truly Gog and Magog are workers of corruption in the land. Shall we assign thee a tribute, that though mightiest set a barrier between them and us? He said, "That wherewith my Lord has established me is better; so aid me with strength. I shall set a rampart between you and them. 96. Bring me pieces of iron.' Then, when he had leveled the two cliffs, he said, "Blow!" till he had made it fire, he said, "Bring me molten copper to pour over it." 97. Thus they were not able to surmount it, nor could they pierce it.⁷²⁹

What is immanently important about the Qur'ānic account of the enclosed peoples is its transformation of the referential language of the episode from historical and geographical specificity to the flexible signifier of apocalyptic language. Where the *Syriac Alexander Legend*

"evidently this invasion, which holds no importance in the narrative, serves just as a key for the contemporary [seventh century] audience of the text to verify the accuracy of the second, more elaborate prophecy associated with a later date."

⁷²⁶ *Syriac Alexander Legend*, ed. Budge, 146., and Van Bladel, 180; The opening of the Qur'ānic passage "And they question thee about Dhū' l-Qarnayn. Say 'I shall recite unto you a remembrance of him'" (Q 18:83), addresses an audience apparently familiar with this figure. See Tesei, "The Chronological Problems of the Qur'ān: The Case of the Story of Dhū'l-Qarnayn (Q 18:83-102)." *Rivista Degli Studi Orientali* 84, no. 1/4 (2011): 457-64. Traditional Islamic exegetes consider the "occasion of revelation" of the passage to have occurred during Muhammad's preaching in Mecca (610-621 CE). As mentioned in the first part of this work, the narrative is linked with the story of the "Companions of the Cave," which appears earlier in the same *surah*. In Ibn Ishaq and Muqatil, Muhammad is challenged by visiting Jewish sages to produce revelations explaining "The Companions of the Cave," "The Two-Horned One", and "The spirit." See Muqātil, *Tafsīr*, vol. 2, 281, on 18:9, and Ibn Ishāq, *Life of Muhammad*, 136

⁷²⁷ On the name Dhū' l-Qarnayn, see Van Bladel, 181-3; Van Donzel and Schmidt, *Gog and Magog*, 50.

⁷²⁸ Cf. *Syriac Alexander Legend*, ed. Budge, 144-8; Van Bladel, 181.

first calls the enclosed peoples “Huns” and then numbers “*Āgōg*” and “*Māgōg*” among their kings, the Qur’ānic account defines the enclosed peoples exclusively as “*Yājūj wa-Mājūj*”. The location of the gate is similarly flexible. While the *Legend* situated it in the vicinity of “Armenia,” the Qur’ān describes the gate “between the two mountain barriers” in the vicinity of “a people who could scarcely comprehend speech.” By referring to builder of the barrier solely as “Dhū’ l-Qarnayn” the Qur’ān likewise opens up the identity of this world-encompassing adventurer to new identifications. Dhū’ l-Qarnayn acknowledges a single God and concludes his construction of the enclosure by prophesying its future destruction:

98. He said, “This is a mercy from my Lord. And when the Promise of my Lord comes, He will crumble it to dust, and the Promise of my Lord is true.” And we shall leave them on that day, to surge against one another like waves. And the trumpet shall be blown, and We shall gather them together. 100. And we shall present Hell, on that day, as an array before the disbelievers.⁷³⁰

In its etiology of escape, the Qur’ān too is insistent that the destruction of the wall and the arrival of Gog and Magog are ultimately acts of God. What is tellingly absent from this Qur’ānic passage is any insistence on a terrestrial victor – Roman or otherwise – in the devastation to follow.⁷³¹ The image of nations “surg[ing] against one another like waves” is trumped by the arrival of the final judgment.⁷³² With the re-naming and re-presentation of Alexander and his northern foes, the Qur’ān situates the story of enclosure and escape entirely within the flexible signifiers of apocalyptic tradition. Once again, stories of the last days and final judgement of the world reflect upon a religious community’s desire to assert the authority of its revelation and the

⁷²⁹ Q 18:92-97, trans. Nasr, 758-9.

⁷³⁰ Q 18:98-100, trans. Nasr, 759-60.

⁷³¹ In contrast to another Qur’ānic episode, see Tesei, “‘The Romans Will Win!’ Q 30:2–7 in Light of 7th c. Political Eschatology.” *Der Islam* 95, no. 1 (2018): 1–29.

⁷³² Van Bladel, 192-4, suggests the language here is not explicitly connected to the Syriac *Legend*, but rather wider traditions of Christian prophecy associated with the Göktürk invasion of 628-30. The Armenian History of Movses Dasxurants’i describes Turkic incursions in the Caucasus as a “floods” of peoples. This language adapts the prophecies of Luke 21:25, where Jesus prophesizes that “nations will be in anguish and perplexity at the roaring and tossing of the sea” at the end of time.

correct nature of its interpretations against all contenders.

As part of the Qur'ānic corpus, the story of the barrier constituted a fundamental scene of Islamic eschatology. As in the parallel story of the “Companions of the Cave,” the referential and laconic language of the Qur'ānic account demanded interpretation and explanation so that Muslim communities could situate themselves in time and recognize where they stood in relation to the end. This need encouraged Muslim exegetes to appropriate earlier identifications of the people of Gog and Magog, the builder of the barrier, and the location of its construction. It also allowed Muslims to invent new acts of *anagenesis* that would distance their narrative from the Jewish and Christian understandings.⁷³³ The interpretation of this Qur'ānic passage among the earliest Muslims may well have been quite close to the *anagenetic* equivalencies of the Syriac tradition, equating Alexander with Dhū' l-Qarnayn, his barrier with the Caucasus mountain, and the Göktürk Khagans (and the Khazars who followed them) with the present embodiment of an eschatological enemy.⁷³⁴ Like the story of the River Sambatyon, this apocalyptic transformation of the story of Alexander's Gate made both the geographical location and the ethnographic identity of the people enclosed within it all the more fluid and porous. As the identity of Gog and Magog shifted across centuries of tradition, the location of the gate itself became “itinerant,” migrating from its initial locations in the Caucasus mountains to be relocated and rediscovered in new places throughout the world.⁷³⁵ Topographical features of the enclosure account – a narrow mountain pass, an ancient fortress, and, in some cases, an inland sea – were first drawn from the

⁷³³ See Van Donzel and Schmidt, *Gog and Magog*, 55-79; David Cook, *Studies in Muslim Apocalyptic* (Princeton, N.J.: The Darwin Press, 2002), 182-9.

⁷³⁴ While some Muslim exegetes would continue to identify the figure with Alexander, other interpretations would cast the figure as an ancient Yemenite or Turkic king, incorporating the pre-Islamic traditions of these peoples into a narrative of universal Islamic history.

⁷³⁵ Anderson, *Alexander's Gates*, 25, 87-104. In the *Syriac Alexander Legend*, the site of the barrier is situated north of “Inner Armenia,” which Anderson and other scholars have interpreted to be the pass of Darial (“Gate of the Alans”), in the central Caucasus. See Anderson, *Alexander's Gates*, 15; “Alexander at the Caspian Gates,” 142-53. In subsequent iterations of the legend, the gate was shifted to the pass of Derbent on the Caspian sea, where a Sassanian era fortress of the 5th century CE was retroactively re-imagined as the work of Alexander.

geographical environs of the Caucasus and the Caspian but were later transformed into broader topoi that could be used to mark spaces both real and fictional as the site of Alexander's monument.⁷³⁶

The prominence given to the story of Gog and Magog's enclosure in the Islamic tradition no doubt encouraged the further propagation of the narrative among Christian communities. Christian authors reflected their anxieties about the emergence of Islamic hegemony in the Near East through their own new forms of apocalyptic antagonism. While the *Syriac Alexander Legend's* prophecies of total Roman triumph were quickly rendered obsolete, new adaptations of its narrative emerged in the decades that followed that incorporated the victories of the "Ishamaelites" backwards into the compounded narrative of Alexander, Gog and Magog, and the end of time.⁷³⁷ The Syriac Christian *Apocalypse of Pseudo-Methodius*—composed at the close of the seventh century and passed off as a rediscovered revelation by of the Church Father Methodius of Patara (d. 311 CE)—presented its own version of the narrative that emphasized the eschatological aspects of enclosure and escape.⁷³⁸ Though initially written in Syriac, *Pseudo-Methodius* was appealing enough to Christians to rapidly be translated into both Greek and Latin, spreading across the better part of the Christian world by the end of the eighth century.⁷³⁹ Just as the Qur'ānic episode would inspire a highly mutable and mobile tradition of apocalyptic ethnography among Muslim exegetes, *Pseudo-Methodius* would encourage the proliferation and

⁷³⁶ Anderson, "Alexander at the Caspian Gates." *Transactions and Proceedings of the American Philological Association* 59 (1928): 130-63.

⁷³⁷ Van Donzel and Schmidt, *Gog and Magog*, 22-6; New adaptations of the *Syriac Alexander Legend* appeared after the arrival of Islam: the *Alexander Poem* attributed to Jacob of Sarug (451-521 CE) and the *Sermon on the End of the World* attributed to Ephrem the Syrian (306-373 CE), appeared in the mid-seventh century. So too did the *Chronicle of Pseudo-Fredegar*, a 7th century Merovingian history that mentions of Alexander's distant gate. See Van Bladel, "Alexander in the Qur'ān," 187.

⁷³⁸ *Apocalypse. An Alexandrian World Chronicle*. Translated by Benjamin Garstad. Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 2012. Garstad includes an edition and translation of both the Greek and Latin versions of the Apocalypse. For a Syriac edition of the text with German translation, see *Die Syrische Apokalypse des Pseudo-Methodius*, ed. G. J Reinink (Lovanii: Peeters, 1993); Van Donzel and Schmidt, *Gog and Magog*, 26-28.

re-situation of Alexander's gates in terms that would meet the concerns and anxieties of different Christian communities.

In the wake of the 7th century, such Christian concerns and anxieties now included Islam, and *Pseudo-Methodius* answered in new acts of *anagenesis*. Situating its eschatological speculations within a universal chronicle, the author of *Pseudo-Methodius* includes Muslims within the drama of the end times by going back to the beginning. *Pseudo-Methodius* traces the "Ishmaelites" from their first appearance in the book of *Genesis* so that the struggle between Christianity and Islam was *always* part of the ultimate resolution of the world. The author of the *Apocalypse* interprets the 7th-century conflict between a Christian "Israel" and the Islamic "sons of Ishmael" as both a repetition of the brotherly rivalries of *Genesis* and as heralding the end of the world. As in Ambrose's interpretations of Ezekiel and the *Prophetic Chronicle*, these revisionist histories seize the biblical name of "Israel" for Christians' use, displacing Jewish people from their genealogical claims to the biblical past and offering alternative interpretations of Hebrew scriptures.

The enclosed peoples are imagined as another enemy entirely, whose apocalyptic representation similarly reaffirms Christian claims upon Abrahamic inheritance. With the Persians replaced by the Muslims as the imagined terrestrial foe in this Christian eschatological tradition, Alexander's act of enclosure is deployed to introduce more etiological elements into the story of the barrier and cement the connections between God, the ancient Conqueror, and the eschatological legend of the "Last Emperor." The enclosed peoples of *Pseudo-Methodius* are no longer called "Huns" but "sons of Japheth," and the reckoning of their kings begins again with

⁷³⁹ On the translations and popularity of *Pseudo-Methodius*, see Garstad, *Apocalypse*, vii-xii; Scarfe-Beckett, *Anglo-Saxon Perceptions of the Islamic World*, 140-60.

“Gog and Magog.”⁷⁴⁰ Alexander chases the people “into the lands beyond the north” where “there is neither way in nor way out.”⁷⁴¹ He finds the mountain pass too far apart to build his storied gates and devises a novel solution, one that inaugurates a new element of enclosure and escape within the Christian branch of the narrative:

“As soon, therefore as Alexander called upon God, the Lord God heard his prayer and commanded two mountains, whose name is the Paps of the North, and they drew as close as twelve cubits to one another.”⁷⁴²

Where other texts had emphasized God’s role in engineering the escape of Gog and Magog, *Pseudo-Methodius* also adds a supernatural element to their enclosure, linking the imagined power of God and the emperor to dictate the movement of peoples. This earth-shaking shift enters the Alexander legend from Christian hagiography, where various saints were reputed to have miraculously proved Jesus’s claim that anyone with faith “the size of a mustard seed” should be able to command mountains to move.⁷⁴³ Alexander’s act put this terraforming power to practical use, shutting up a people so that they may return at the end of time. It is also worth noting that, considering historical chronology, Alexander performed this miracle hundreds of years before the gospel of *Matthew* recorded Jesus’ remark that mountains could be moved. This

⁷⁴⁰ Beginning with “Gog and Magog,” *Pseudo-Methodius* enumerates a register of the “twenty-two” peoples whom Alexander enclosed, demonstrating the intermingling of Greek and Jewish ethnographic traditions, combining and confusing historically-attested groups with the legendary peoples of the Scythian frontier. “Gog and Magog and Anug and Ageg and Ashkenaz and Dephar and the Photinaeans and Libians and Eunians, and Pharizaeans and Declemans and Zarmats and Theblaeans and Zarmatians and Chachonians and Amazarthans and Garmiadans and the cannibals called Cynocephalans (Dog-Heads) and Tharbians and Alans and Phisolonicians and Arnaeans and Asalterians.” *Apocalypse*, 8.10, ed. Garstad, Gk. pp. 26-7, Lat. pp. 100-101. These invaders will “eat the flesh of men” and “slaughter infants, even producing them from their wombs” before being attacked and defeated by the “King of the Romans,” ie. the “Last Emperor,” *Apocalypse*, 13.20-1, Gk. pp. 62-3, Lat. 100-1.

⁷⁴¹ *Apocalypse*, 8.10, ed. Garstad, Gk. pp. 26-7, Lat. pp. 100-101

⁷⁴² *Apocalypse*, 8.7, ed. Garstad, Gk. pp. 24-5, Lat. 98-99.

⁷⁴³ Matthew 17:20 trans. NRSV. A parallel scene in another Synoptic Gospel, Luke 17:6 similarly features faith “the size of a mustard seed,” but replaces the moving mountain with a “mulberry tree” NSRV. This image of the earth leaping into action echoes early biblical motifs of “mountains ... skipping like Rams” in the Psalm 144 and the geological cataclysms predicted in the prophecies of Isaiah (e.g. 40:3-5), but Jesus’ words can be read to suggest that transformation of the landscape is a power not only available to God, but open to human command. See Jennifer Pruitt, “The Miracle of Muqattam: Moving a Mountain to Build a Church in Fatimid Egypt,” in *Sacred Precincts: The Religious Architecture of Non-Muslim Communities Across the Islamic World*, ed. Gharipour Mohammad (Leiden, Netherlands: Brill, 2014), 277–90. Most of these narratives appear to have an Egyptian Christian origin and are associated especially with Saints living in the time of Islamic hegemony over Christian communities. See also Marco Polo, *The Description of the World*, trans. Sharon Kinoshita, (Indianapolis: Hackett, 2016), § 26-9, pp. 21-24.

supernaturally augmented act of enclosure thus converts the Roman Empire to a Christian destiny, before the existence of either the Roman Empire or Christianity.

Like the Qur'ān, *Pseudo-Methodius* eschewed the historical and geographic specificity of earlier narratives of enclosure and escape for the open signifiers of apocalyptic tradition. Like *The Syriac Alexander Legend*, it sees “the Last Emperor” as the terrestrial agent of eschatological victory.⁷⁴⁴ As in other texts, the Alexander’s religious and ethnic identity shifts at will to satisfy the needs of the community which has chose to adopt him as one of their own. The further elevations of Alexander’s power and faith is reflected upon the growing significance of his typological twin. No longer fixed to the person of Heraclius and the reversal of Byzantine fortunes in the wake of their fleeting victory, the Last Emperor becomes the primary actor in *Pseudo-Methodius’* eschatological coda. The Emperor defeats in succession the forces of the Ishmaelites, Gog and Magog, and lastly the “Anti-Christ,” imagined to be a Jew from the “the Tribe of Dan.”⁷⁴⁵ Mustering the apocalyptic triumvirate of Gog and Magog, the Last Emperor, and the Anti-Christ, *Pseudo-Methodius* directed its antagonism not only against Gog and Magog but also against those communities which made their own claims upon the scriptural past and the story of the Macedonian king. Despite being orchestrated by God and ending in his return, *Pseudo-Methodius* envisioned that these wars of the end would first be fought by the different forces of humankind. In this way, *Pseudo-Methodius* offered a kind of cold comfort to Christians, suggesting that any unanticipated threats of migration, invasion, and conquest would ultimately be resolved in an eschatological Christian victory.

⁷⁴⁴ In linking Alexander to the “Last Emperor,” Alexander’s *anagenetic* incorporation is also genealogical. In the *Apocalypse* of Pseudo-Methodius, Alexander’s father is the historical Phillip II of Macedon (r. 359-336 B.C.E.), but his mother is recorded as “Chouseth, the daughter of King Phol of Ethiopia. *Apocalypse*, 8.2, ed. Garstad, Gk., 22-3, Lat., 96-7. Alexander’s part-Ethiopian heritage links him to the “Last Emperor,” an eschatological Christian ruler who (no longer fixed to the figure of Heraclius) will descend from both Ethiopian and Roman heritage, uniting Christians of north and south within his blood, see *Apocalypse*, 13.11-5, ed. Garstad, Gk., 57-61, Lat., 126-31.

⁷⁴⁵ *Apocalypse*, 14.5, ed. Garstad, Gk., 66-7, Lat. 134-5.

Conclusion

Stories of enclosure and escape regulated the movements and identities of nomadic peoples by insisting they were ultimately under the control of God and thus under the control of those states who claimed to be the legitimate representatives of heaven on earth. As they became more established as elements of geographic tradition, these topoi actually became more flexible. They were relocated from their “original” and relatively “definite” positions on the globe and moved to the margins of the known world or *terra incognita*. While the Maeotic Swamp remained relatively fixed in its location, the Sambatyon and Alexander’s Gate became malleable entities, shifting from their initial locations in the Near East to frontiers throughout the world and, in later accounts, to the “New World” of the Americas. These movements preserved the spaces of enclosure and the peoples within them as essentially “timeless,” allowing them to be consistently re-deployed in new iterations of *anagenetic* discovery. By imagining and anticipating peoples dwelling in a liminal space halfway, *anagenesis* provided a handy explanation for any troubling “unknown” among the peoples of the earth. Etiological enclosures could endure as long as convenient and be redeployed in successive generations to match the cycles of history as they turned. Even when considered as an incarnation of pure evil, the arrival of Gog and Magog was interpreted as a somewhat comforting development; it was a confirmation that contemporary history was playing out in accordance with eschatological prophecy, and these events would ultimately end in a triumph and reaffirmation of the faithful.

Like the etymological acrobatics of the “Game of Names,” such etiologies flourished through both their memorability and their mutability. In their origins, such stories were echoes of the real geographical bottlenecks which governed the movement of peoples in world history along the perennial avenues of trade, migration, and invasion from the earliest periods of

recorded history. The great transition in the treatment of these topographical narratives – key for their incorporation into the concept of *anagenesis* – is their *dislocation* from historical and geographical specificity and their transformation into a narrative space that could be located and re-located in different places and times throughout the globe. Just as people’s historical and fantastical movements were retroactively incorporated into the lineal histories of the Goths and peoples like them, sites of enclosure and escape vacillated between real and unreal as they were mapped and re-mapped onto different locations. These translations and relocations encouraged the shift of spaces of enclosure and escape to an apocalyptic tradition of interpretation; the inhabitants enclosed within them were increasingly considered to be as the *dramatis personae* of eschatological narratives which could be assigned time and time again to new historically, culturally, and geographical specific concerns. It should not be surprising that these various narratives of enclosure and escape that I have separated here continually combine with one another in successive centuries. Just as the enclosed peoples of Alexander’s Gates were conflated with Gog and Magog in the seventh century CE, the Lost Tribes of Israel would also be collapsed into the story of the barrier. The circulation of these three stories of enclosure and escape emerged important “discoveries” of peoples in the Middle Ages, the emergence of the Mongol Empire.

3.3 Encounter, Entente, and the Legacies of *Anagenesis* in the Mongol Empire.

Introduction

In the preceding chapters of this part, we have seen how narratives of ethnographic descent and enclosure and escape were re-deployed by different peoples once they had established their own domains of political and cultural hegemony. In the final chapter, we will see how the emergence of the Mongol Empire in the 13th century inspired and transformed the traditions of apocalyptic ethnography. As we have done throughout this study, it is necessary to shift perspective from examining questions of periodization in contemporary historiography, to exploring the function of periodization as a process in historical texts. Instead of telling the story of the Mongol Empire looking *forward* to the emergence of “Modernity,” our aim here is to look *backward* to understand how the emergence of this new global power was incorporated into established narratives of history, geography, and ethnography.

In one respect the Mongols were definitively “outside” the bounds of the great corpus of geographical and historical knowledge which linked Jewish, Christian, and Islamic traditions from Western Europe to Central Asia. The name “Mongol” does not appear in these traditions before the armies of Chinggis Khan crossed the eastern borders of the Khwārazmian Empire in 1218 CE; as a people they were “new” to the world if not to themselves. On the other hand, like the Göktürks who had aided Heraclius in the Seventh Century CE, the Mongols were the most recent and most successful in a long list of nomadic confederations that intermittently appeared to control a vast expanse of the northern Eurasian pastoral zone and enact subsequent conquests on the sedentary societies beyond the steppe. Even after several generations of contact and

conquest, the Mongols would not be known to many regions of the Christian by their own given name for their people, but by a collection of ethnonyms – “Tatars, Tartars, Turks,” etc. – whose distinctions from the Mongols were either not known or not regarded important. As had happened in previous generations, the Mongol’s political fortunes and social mores would be filtered through the vast and venerable discourses of nomadic ethnography, which by the thirteenth century had colored with the apocalyptic expectations conflated the peoples of Alexander’s Gate and the biblical figures of Gog and Magog into a single numinous representative of the unreached frontier. As might be expected, the reaction to the Mongols constituted a new iteration of *anagenesis*, where yet again new and foreign people was treated as a re-emergence of something ancient and familiar, retroactively interpolated into the universal histories of Jewish, Christian, and Islamic tradition.

For Jews, Christians, and Muslims, understanding the Mongols place in contemporary geo-politics meant inventing, the origin of the people and their empire. Like those of centuries past, these new instances of *anagenesis* relied on the venerable playbook of apocalyptic ethnography. Some accounts of Mongol origins incorporated etiologies of enclosure and escape in new forms and in new locations. Others relied on the many tricks of the game of names to link the unencountered ethnonym of “Mongol” back to more comfortable and familiar terms, like Tatar, Turk, and Gog and Magog. In some cases, these acts of *anagenesis* incorporated material derived from Mongolian self-conceptions of history, genealogy, and identity; Many were the product of the empire itself, devised by the Mongols and their agents, who recognized the political expedience framing their global ambitions within the respective worldviews of the empire’s many subjects, partners, and rivals. As the *anagenesis* of the Mongols emerged from sources new and old, located within the empire and without, it was cross-pollinated by the

different avenues of information that crossed the expanse of Eurasia and their diverse religious, ethnic, and linguistic communities. The Mongols' liminal position outside the traditional boundaries of religious identities also made them a vector for re-assessing the relationships between Jewish, Christian, and Islamic communities, as they considered the threats and opportunities presented by the arrival of a new global power.

Shifting perceptions of the empire across the expanse of the 13th century resulted in both positive and negative portrayals of the Mongols. In some contexts, the rapid expansion of the Mongol Empire and the devastation it brought with it encouraged many to recognize the Mongols as the latest, greatest iteration of nomadic invaders, a foreign threat whose existence stirred fear of other enemies within, and a sign of the world's approaching end. From other perspectives, many saw the Mongol Empire as an opportunity, for bureaucratic advancement, mercantile exchange, international alliance, religious evangelism, and for ending the world the right way. *Anagenesis* shows the way attitudes towards Mongols transformed among Christians and Muslims, as well as how the Mongols enacted their own revisions of history. *Anagenesis* became a tool of agents of the Mongol empire to deploy the cultural traditions of their subjects, rivals, and potential allies to their advantage. While such evolving traditions would result in the rehabilitation of the Mongols in the eyes of many, the legacies of apocalyptic anxiety forged in the moments of Mongol threat would be preserved in traditions and projected onto further targets.

Conspiracies for Good or Ill: Early Rumors of the Mongol Expansion

The emerging Mongol empire, especially viewed from afar, seemed capable of establishing the kind of global supremacy that many Christian and Muslim leaders had claimed

in concept but had little hope in realizing in reality, the prospect of new participants in the global religious and geopolitical order demanded an explanation. By the time knowledge of the Mongols reached Jews, Christians, and Muslims, Chinggis Khan had already amassed a formidable empire, having unified the disparate peoples of the Inner Asian Steppe.⁷⁴⁶ The first mentions of the Mongols in Christian and Islamic records appear the beginning of the 1220s, when the armies of the Mongols, moved westward conquering the Qara-Khitai Khaganate and then inflicting a devastating blow the Khwārazmian Empire, then the most powerful state in the Islamic world.⁷⁴⁷ As in previous generations, the prospect of a nomadic threat emerging from the margins of the known world offered new faces for the old mirror of apocalyptic expectation.

Many Muslim writers describe the Mongols' first encounters with the Islamic World by evoking the familiar tropes of Alexander or Dhū' l-Qarnayn, Gog and Magog, and the end of the world. Yet while they recognized the portentous possibilities of the Mongol's arrival, many authors also display a reticence to fully embrace these apocalyptic identifications, choosing to leave them in the realm of simile, metaphor, and allusion. These practices are clear in the *al-Kāmil fī al-Ta' rīkh* ("The Complete History") of 'Izz al-Dīn ibn al-Athīr (d. 630 AH/1233 CE).

⁷⁴⁸ Ibn al-Athīr considered the destruction brought by the Mongols to be unprecedented, stating "Perhaps humanity will not see such a calamity, apart from Gog and Magog, until the worlds comes to and end and this life cease to be."⁷⁴⁹ Since similarly equations had been made between

⁷⁴⁶ Under the direction of Temüjin, proclaimed Chinggis Khan ("Oceanic Ruler" or "Hard Ruler") in the year 1208 CE, the Mongols had spent several decades consolidating power by defeating and absorbing other confederations of peoples in the Mongolian Steppe. On the establishment of the Mongol Empire, see Peter Jackson, "The Mongol Age in Eastern Inner Asia," in *The Cambridge History of Inner Asia: The Chinggisid Age*, ed. Allen J. Frank, Nicola Di Cosmo, and Peter B. Golden (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 26–45. On the peoples and state of the Inner Asian Steppe before Mongol Hegemony, see Peter B. Golden, "Inner Asia c. 1200," in *The Cambridge History of Inner Asia: The Chinggisid Age*, ed. Allen J. Frank, Nicola Di Cosmo, and Peter B. Golden (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 9–25.

⁷⁴⁷ On the Mongol's westward expansion, see Jackson, *Mongols and Islamic World*, 71-93.

⁷⁴⁸ Ibn al-Athīr, *Al-Kāmil fī al-Tārīkh*. Edited by Carolus Johannes Tornberg, 12 vols. (Báyrūt: Dar Šáder, 1965). For an English translation of the relevant section of the chronicle, see *The Chronicle of Ibn Al-Athīr for the Crusading Period from al-Kāmil Fī'l-Ta' rīkh*. Translated by D. S. Richards (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2008).

⁷⁴⁹ Ibn al-Athīr, *Al-Kāmil fī al-Tārīkh*, vol. 12, p. 358; *The Chronicle of Ibn al-Athīr*, trans. Richards, vol. 3, p. 202.

Gog and Magog and the Turks and Khazars, Ibn al-Athīr appears compelled to conjure the familiar image of hosts of the end times. Yet he makes an effort to distance the present situation from that of the eschaton. The devastation may be worse than the tribulations of the end times themselves, since “as for the Anti-Christ, he will spare those who follow them and destroy those who oppose him, but these Tatars did not spare anyone.”⁷⁵⁰ While Ibn Al-Athīr refuses to identify the Mongols themselves as a harbinger of the end times, the elements of his account show the inundation of ethnographic stereotypes from the long reaching traditions of the Nomadic past. Ibn Al-Athīr mentions the Mongols “split open the bellies of pregnant women and killed the foetuses,” an atrocity often assigned to Gog and Magog. He also shares a report of women serving in the Mongol ranks, invoking the legends of the Amazons that were similarly conflated with the other legendary inhabitants of the nomadic north.⁷⁵¹ Ibn Al-Athīr identifies the invading peoples not as Mongols, but as “Tatars,” (ar. *at-Tattar*), associating them with a more familiar Turkic people.⁷⁵² This initial, mistaken, understanding of the approaching people’s name would endure as the primary term for the Mongols in Jewish, Christian and Muslim accounts for the next several centuries, inspiring many *anagenetic* attempts to explain Mongol origins through folk etymologies of this other people’s name. Ibn al-Athīr likely struggled to construct a clear picture of the Mongols in the midst of many conflicting reports and rumors brought by refugees of the conquests. The stories he chooses to record and endorse display a continued reliance on old tropes of timeless barbarians in the face of an unprecedented threat.

The breadth of the Mongol conquests also brought to mind the memory of Alexander. Ibn al-Athīr claims that brutality of the “Tatars” allowed them to surpass Alexander in the speed and

⁷⁵⁰ Ibn al-Athīr, *Al-Kāmil fī al-Tārīkh*, vol. 12, p. 358; *The Chronicle of Ibn al-Athir*, trans. Richards, vol. 3, p. 202

⁷⁵¹ Ibn al-Athīr, *Al-Kāmil fī al-Tārīkh*, vol. 12, p. 380; *The Chronicle of Ibn al-Athir*, trans. Richards, vol. 3, p. 202, 216-217.

⁷⁵² On the Tatars, see Golden, “Inner Asia,” 19-20.

scope of their conquests. Alexander, by contrast, “did not kill anyone” during his conquest of the world, but merely “accepted the allegiance of the people.”⁷⁵³ Other sources less sympathetic to the collapse of Khwārazm also invoke the time-honored tradition of Alexander and his barrier when searching for apt comparisons to the Mongol conquests. In explaining how this force had been drawn into the Islamic World, several Muslim historians alluded to the story of Dhū’ l-Qarnayn by describing the kingdom of the Qara-Kitai as a “barrier” (ar. *sadd*.) that had held back the Mongols, until it was foolishly opened by the Khwārazm-Shah Muhammad. According to several Muslim historians, The Mongols had been shut up safe behind the realm of the Qara-Kitai, until the arrogant Khwārazm-Shah Muhammad had let them loose by destroying “barrier” (ar. *sadd*.) that had held back the Mongols, using the word that describes the wall of Dhū’ l-Qarnayn in Q 18:94.⁷⁵⁴ The story was both appealing to Muslims still beyond the Mongol’s reach, and ultimately to some Khwārazmians absorbed into the Mongol Empire. The *History of the World Conqueror* (per. *Tārīkh-i jahāngushā*) of ‘Aṭā Malik Juvaynī (d. 681/1283 CE), written in the court of Hülegü during the Mongol campaign towards Baghdad in the 1250s CE, likewise cast the downfall the Kwarezm-Shah in terms of the apocalyptic barrier.⁷⁵⁵ According to Juvaynī, when Muhammad declared himself to be “the second Alexander” (per. “Iskandar-i thānī”) after his initial victories against the Qara-Khitai, a Sufi master named “Sayyid Murtaza,” who lamented:

“beyond these Turks [i.e. the Qara-Khitai] are a people stubborn in their vengeance and fury and exceeding Gog and Magog in the multitude of their numbers. And the people of Khitai were in truth the wall of [Dhū’ l-Qarnayn] between us and them. And it is unlikely, when that wall is gone, that there will be any peace within this

⁷⁵³ Ibn al-Athīr, *Al-Kāmil fī al-Tārīkh*, vol. 12, p. 359; *The Chronicle of Ibn al-Athir*, trans. Richards, vol. 3, p. 203.

⁷⁵⁴ Jackson, *Mongols in the Islamic World*, 59; For examples, see *Al-Kāmil fī al-Tārīkh*, vol. 12, p. 361, *The Chronicle of Ibn al-Athir*, trans. Richards, vol. 3, p. 204; Minhāj Sirāj Jūzjānī. *Ṭabaqāt-i Nāṣirī*. 2 vols. (Lahore: Markazī Urdū Bord, 1975) vol. 2, 97. For an English translation, see *The Tabakat I Nasiri: A General History of the Muhammadan Dynasties of Asia*, trans. Raverty, H.G., 2 vols. (London: Gilbert and Rivington, 1873), vol. 2, 937.

⁷⁵⁵ ‘Aṭā Malik Juvaynī, *Genghis Khan: The History of the World Conqueror*, trans. J.A. Boyle, 2 vols., (Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 1958).

realm or that any man will recline in comfort and enjoyment. Today I am in mourning for Islam.”⁷⁵⁶

Juvaynī includes these anecdotes not to emphasize the perfidy of the Mongols, but the folly of the Kwarezm-Shahs, who first weaken their buffer against the Mongol Empire, and then invite their own destruction by disrespecting the envoys of Chinggis Khan.⁷⁵⁷ While keeping the story of the wall and the equivalence between the Mongols and the Gog and Magog in the realm of metaphor, this tradition nonetheless constructed an etiology of enclosure and escape. These accounts avoid the strongest and most controversial claims of apocalyptic ethnography, yet such approaches still might be considered a subtler form of *anagenesis*. The encounter with the Mongols is still conceived in the terms of reinforcing the frameworks of sacred history as the ultimate measures of judging events and peoples past and present.

While primarily expressed in metaphor, these passages seem to allude to more direct claims of apocalyptic equivalence that most Muslim writers were not comfortable committing to writing. Ibn al-Athīr refrained from mentioning the Mongols *Complete History* for several, and when he did so at last in 617 AH (1220-1 CE), he admitted his reluctance: “this disaster... horrified me and I was unwilling to recount it.”⁷⁵⁸ Many other such stories were likely circulating as the Mongols advanced. It appears some of the reluctance of Muslim historians to record the origins of the Mongols the reasons behind their assault were driven by the political consequences of apocalyptic speculation. While Ibn al-Athīr claims the war between the Mongols and the Khwārazmians was precipitated Khwārazm-Shah Muhammad’s decision to kill Mongol envoys to his court – a narrative that corresponds the justifications of the invasion presented in the *Secret History of the Mongols* – he also alludes to another potential cause of the

⁷⁵⁶ Juvaynī, *History of the World Conqueror*, vol. 1, 347; see Jackson, *Mongols in the Islamic World*, 59-60.

⁷⁵⁷ Jackson, *Mongols and the Islamic World*, 72-5.

⁷⁵⁸ *Al-Kāmil fī al-Tārīkh*, vol. 12, 360, *The Chronicle of Ibn al-Athir*, trans. Richards, vol. 3, p. 204.

conflict “such as not to be mentioned within the covers of books.”⁷⁵⁹ Five years later, writing on the death of the ‘Abbasid Caliph Al-Nāṣir (r. 1180-1225 CE), Ibn Al-Athīr concludes his brief biography of the ruler by revealing what he had earlier considered unspeakable: “His role in what the Persians attribute to him was correct, namely that he is the person who roused the Tatar’s ambition for the lands of Islam and wrote to them about that.”⁷⁶⁰ Where some authors metaphorically suggest that the Khwārazm-Shah had destroyed the wall of Dhū’ l-Qarnayn to let the Mongols loose, this account places direct responsibility for the invasion upon the caliph. As Peter Jackson observes, Ibn al-Athīr’s attribution of this conspiracy theory to “the Persians” may suggest it may have emerged as “Khwārazmian Propaganda” to disparage the ‘Abbasids and deflect accusations that the deceased Khwārazm-Shah Muhammad was responsible for the invasion.⁷⁶¹ From the Khwārazmian perspective, al-Nāṣir had reason to conspire with the Mongols. The Khwārazm-Shah Muhammad had appointed a rival Caliph from the line of Ali and prepared to march on Baghdad in the year 614/1217-8, but this invasion never panned out, and by the next year Muhammad was embroiled in the fatal war with the Mongols that would lead to his death and the collapse of the Khwārazmian Empire.⁷⁶² Ibn al-Athīr’s endorsement of the narrative after Al-Nāṣir’s death shows it succeeded in convincing many other Muslims that the ‘Abbasids were the real precipitators of the Mongol calamity. Claims that the Khwārazm-shah had metaphorically broken the barrier of Dhū’ l-Qarnayn, or that that the Abbasid Caliph had invited the Mongols to invade his rivals identified a familiar figure to blame in the midst of an extraordinary threat. Such stories echo early accusations that Heraclius had opened the gates of

⁷⁵⁹ *Al-Kāmil fī al-Tārīkh*, vol. 12, 361, *The Chronicle of Ibn al-Athir*, trans. Richards, vol. 3, p. 205, and n.12.

⁷⁶⁰ *Al-Kāmil fī al-Tārīkh*, vol. 12, p. 361; *The Chronicle of Ibn al-Athir*, trans. Richards, vol. 3, p. 261.

⁷⁶¹ Jackson, *Mongols and the Islamic World*, 57.

⁷⁶² Jackson, *Mongols and the Islamic World*, 57. In Juvayni, *History of the World Conqueror*, vol. 2, 452-8, the fugitive Khwarezm-shah Jalal al-Din (r. 1220-1231 CE), tries to convince Muslim rulers to aid him against the Mongols by declaring that “I am to you as the wall of Alexander.” Such claims are unconvincing, and within the next few pages Jalal al-Din is defeated and presumed dead, ambushed by Mongols while sleeping off his cups.

Alexander to recruit Gog and Magog in his war against the Persians . but it also reflects the real diplomatic negotiations between Heraclius' and the Göktürks; diplomacy is conspiracy whenever one's enemies unite.

Where Muslim historians in this era tried to keep stories of apocalypse and conspiracy at a safe distance, the story of the caliph's invitation to a Mongol invasion appears in a very different form in the Latin Christian records of the Crusader States. News of the Mongols reached the Latin West in the midst of the Fifth Crusade (1217-1221 CE), as attempts to recover Jerusalem branched out into new colonial enterprises in Egypt and the lands of the Byzantine Empire.⁷⁶³ Crusader forces seized the city of Damietta from the Ayyubid Sultanate, a victory which was then bolstered by prophetic expectations of a "second front" emerging against the Muslims from Christian allies at the margins of the world. Some prophecies circulated among the Crusaders predicted the Christian kings of "Absime" (i.e., *al-Habasha*, Ethiopia) would launch an attack against the Ayyubids from the south and destroy the Islamic holy city of Mecca.⁷⁶⁴ Others looked to the east. The earliest Latin Christian reports of the Mongols, preserved in a collection of texts known as the *Relatio de David* ("Relation of David"), mistakenly believed that the growing empire in the East was self-consciously Christian.⁷⁶⁵

⁷⁶³ On the earliest Latin accounts of the Mongols, see Peter Jackson, *The Mongols and the West : 1221-1410* (Taylor and Francis, 2005), 50-2. On the fourth and fifth crusades, see Jonathan Simon Christopher Riley-Smith, *The Crusades: A History* (Yale University Press, 2005), 149-60, 176-80.

⁷⁶⁴ Paul Pelliot, "Mélanges Sur l'Époque Des Croisades." In *Prester John, the Mongols, and the Ten Lost Tribes*, 113–37. According to Pelliot, 114-7, These prophecies appear to have initially been written in Arabic, and emerged out of the Arab Christian communities living in the Near East under the hegemony of different Crusader and Islamic states. The attribution of these prophecies to "Hannaan son of Isaac," suggested that the purported author of these texts may have initially been imagined as the famous Arab Christian philosopher and translator Hunayn ibn Ishaq, but Latin authors seemed to prefer the idea of the prophecy coming from a "Saracen" rather than a co-religionist.

⁷⁶⁵ Jean Richard, "The Relatio de Davide as a Source for Mongol History and the Legend of Prester John." In *Prester John the Mongols and the Ten Lost Tribes*, 139–58, 140. The text is also known as the *Historia Gestorum David Regis Indorum* (*History of the deeds of David, King of the Indies*). Jacques de Vitry, (c. 1160/70-1240 CE), bishop of the crusader stronghold of Acre and author of the *Historia Orientalis* (Eastern History), claims the *Relatio* first appeared in the court of Bohemund IV of Antioch (1187-1233), conveyed to the Crusader prince by spies in his employ. Jacques de Vitry and Pelagius, the papal legate stationed among the armies of the Fifth Crusade at Damietta, passed this along to Pope Honorius III (r. 1216-1227) and the secular rulers of Europe, informing them that the Crusaders would soon be aided in their designs by the arrival of King David and his Army.

Appearing in 1221 CE, the *Relatio de David* heralded the approach of a Christian king named “David” who had risen to the title of “*Chanachana videlicet regum Persarum*” and set out on a great campaign westward against the “Saracens.”⁷⁶⁶ While Prester John presided over a kingdom populated almost entirely by fantastical peoples, the knowledge of Christian communities and Christian leaders in the *Relatio de David* is a *mélange* of history, rumor, and legend. The *Relatio* reflects both the nature of networks through which information about the east flowed west, and the *anagenetic* desire of Latin Christians to fit such information into their longstanding world-views.

Portraying “King David” as a born Christian whose rise to rule typologically echoes the career of his biblical counterpart in I and II Samuel, the *Relatio*’s *anagenetic* understanding of the political landscape of Central Asia is at times surprisingly accurate.⁷⁶⁷ The prospect of Christian potentate uniting the peoples of the Steppe was not merely a fantastic projection of the Latin West, but an ambition of several Christian communities within Central Asia itself.⁷⁶⁸ The account of “King David” also contains several details that correspond to the ancestry and biography of the Naiman prince Küchlüg (d. 1218 CE), a refugee from the Mongol conquests who became the last Gür-Khan of the Qara-Khitai in 1211 CE.⁷⁶⁹ While Küchlüg was born a

⁷⁶⁶ *Relatio de Davide*, §24, in *Der Priester Johannes*, edited by Friedrich Zarncke, 45-59, Vol. 2. Leipzig: S. Hirzel, 1876. According to Richard, 141, David’s title of “*Chanachana*” is a transcription of “*khan i-khanan*” (“Khan of Khans”) one of the titles adopted by the Qara-Khitai Gür-Khans in the second half of the twelfth century. It also resembles the Persian title “*Shāhanshāh*” (“King of Kings”), which seems to explain the Latin gloss of the term as *regum Persarum*.

⁷⁶⁷ Igor de Rachewiltz, *Prester John and Europe’s Discovery of East Asia* (Canberra: Australian National University Press, 1972), 8-10.

⁷⁶⁸ See Mark Dickens, “Syriac Christianity in Central Asia.” In *The Syriac World*, edited by Daniel King. (Routledge, 2018), 583-624, 605-612. Christianity was brought by Syriac Christians of the “Church of the East” (Nestorian) along the Silk road as early as the seventh century CE, and by the twelfth century CE, it held adherents in both the cities of the region as well as steppe nomads among the Uyghur, Naiman, Kereit, and Öng’üt peoples.

⁷⁶⁹ Richard, “The *Relatio de David*,” 141; Jackson, *The Mongols and the Islamic World*, 59, 66; The King David of the *Relatio*, is the youngest of seven brothers, just like his biblical archetype (I Samuel 17:12); like the biblical David who marries the daughter of Saul (I Samuel 18:17-30), Küchlüg married the daughter of the Qara-Khitai ruler. The *Relatio* names one of David’s ancestors as “*Bulgaboga de Nestorinorum*” (“Bulgaboga of the Nestorians”), likely referring to Inach Bilgä-buqa, the great-grandfather of Küchlüg who had reigned over the Naimans in the previous century. De Rachewiltz, “Prester John”, 8, suggests that “David” may have been Küchlüg’s chosen Christian name. If the news of “King David” originated among Christians of Central Asia before being conveyed to Iraq, then it may reflect an attempt to

Christian had likely converted from his ancestral faith to Buddhism when he ascended the throne of the Qara-Khitai in 1211 CE.⁷⁷⁰ By the time news of King David and his conquests reached the Crusaders on the edge of the Eastern Mediterranean in 1221 CE, the no-longer Christian Küchlüg was no longer alive either. The impressive record of his exploits against Khwārazm in the *Relatio* and the news of continued advances against “Saracen” princes describe the armies of Chinggis Khan instead.⁷⁷¹ The spatial distances which governed knowledge of Eastern events created a problem of time, one that *anagenetically* subsumed the careers of multiple historical rulers into a single person and folded them into more familiar religious types – the biblical David, the quasi-apocalyptic Prester John.⁷⁷²

Passing through Christian communities of Iraq on its way to the Crusader States, the *Relatio* further incorporated the rumors of the al-Nāṣir’s purported pact with the Mongols. Since the approach of “King David” was reckoned as a good thing, the *anagenetic* revision of this narrative portrayed the caliph’s actions as virtuous rather than vicious, seeking to add Christian agents into the conspiracy as well. In the *Relatio*, King David, initially makes a treaty with the “*Chavarsmisan*,” i.e. the *Khwārazm-Shah* Muhammad.⁷⁷³ The Khwārazm-Shah proceeds with an army to the city of “*Baldach*,” (“Bagdad”), where he demands the surrender of the “*Caliphas*...

justify contentious nature of Küchlüg’s by playing up the typological parallels to the biblical king, since David too was a usurper of the throne from the house of Saul. For a description of Küchlüg’s life, see Li Tang, “Medieval Sources on the Naiman Christians and Their Prince Küchlüg Khan.” In *Hidden Treasures and Intercultural Encounters: Studies on East Syriac Christianity in China and Central Asia*, edited by Dietmar W. Winkler and Li Tang (Münster: LIT Verlag, 2009) 257–66.

⁷⁷⁰ Tang, “Küchlüg Khan,” 260-1.

⁷⁷¹ Confusion between Küchlüg and Chinggis Khan also appears in early Islamic Sources. Jackson, *Mongols and the Islamic World*, 21, observes that the *Al-Tarikh al Mansuri*, an account written by the Muslim author al-Hamawi in the 1230s CE, at one point refers to the head of the Mongol armies as ‘Kushlü,’ pointing to a broader confusion between the Gür-Khan of the Qara-Khitai and the man who conquered and defeated him. The description of the king’s conquests which follows his coronation is an amalgam of the military campaigns of Küchlüg, the Khwarazm-Shah Muhammad, and Chinggis Khan.

⁷⁷² As Pelliot, 126-9, observes, the prophecies concerning an Ethiopian king and those concerning “roi David” were originally distinct, but were ultimately conflated together in the years following 1221 CE. The fact that both Eastern Africa and East Asia was intermittently categorized by western Christian geographers as “India,” or as one among a multitude of “Indies,” encouraged the appearance of Prester John and similar salvific Christian kings in both regions. See Charles Beckingham, “The Achievements of Prester John,” in *Prester John, the Mongols, and the Ten Lost Tribes*, 14-8.

qui vocatur Allnanzer Ledinalla” (“The Caliph who is called, [*al- Nāṣir Li-Dīn Allāh*]”).⁷⁷⁴

Fearing the end of his rule and the destruction of the city, the Caliph rides in secret at night to “*Patriarcham Nestorinorum*” (“Patriarch of the Nestorians”) for help.⁷⁷⁵ He warns the patriarch that the Khwārazmians will kill all the Christians in Iraq if they succeed in conquering the land, and entreats him: “I ask you, therefore, to send a request to King David through your letters and messengers, that he might make war against the Khwārazm-shah, and thus put an end to our troubles.”⁷⁷⁶ The patriarch obliges, King David attacks Khwārazm, the army is forced to retreat, and the Caliph rewards the Christian leader with a “great quantity of Gold.”⁷⁷⁷ When the Khwārazm-Shah returns to his country to fight against David, the Christian king utterly destroys his army; the Khwārazm-shah himself is missing and presumed dead.⁷⁷⁸ Emboldened by this victory, David sets out against the other “Saracen” kingdoms to the west, eager to unite his forces with the Christians of Iraq and the Crusader states. As Jackson observes, these events recounted in the *Relatio de Davide* look very similar to the accusations of collusion between the Caliph and the Mongols that circulated among Muslims to explain the downfall of the Khwārazm-Shah.⁷⁷⁹ Yet while the Islamic accounts portrayed the Caliph as treacherous and

⁷⁷³ *Relatio*, § 33, ed. Zarncke, p. 50.

⁷⁷⁴ *Relatio*, § 35, ed. Zarncke, p. 50.

⁷⁷⁵ *Relatio*, §§ 36-7, ed. Zarncke p. 51. The Church of the East, also known as the Assyrian Church of the East or the Eastern Syriac Church, was called “Nestorian” by western Latin sources who associated its Christological doctrines with the Patriarch and “Heresiarch” Nestorius of Constantinople (c. 386-450 CE). See Dietmar W. Winkler, “The Syriac Church Denominations.” In *The Syriac World*, edited by Daniel King, (Routledge, 2018), 119–33. Winkler, 120-21, observes that the Christological position of the Church of the East, which emphasizes the separation between the humanity and divinity of Jesus Christ, as better characterized as developing from the “Antiochene” school of exegesis rather than explicitly being associated with Nestorius.

⁷⁷⁶ “*Rogo ergo vos, ut per literas et nuncios vestros regi David praecipiendo mittatis, ut guerram moveat contra Chavarsmisan, et sic cessabit a molestacione nostra.*” *Relatio*, § 39, ed. Zarncke pp. 54-5.

⁷⁷⁷ *Relatio*, § 32, ed. Zarncke p. 52.

⁷⁷⁸ *Relatio*, §§ 45-6, ed. Zarncke pp. 52-3.

⁷⁷⁹ Jackson, *Mongols and Islamic World*, 73-4. See also 449 n.23, which comments on the positions of various scholars on the veracity of the idea of communication between the Caliph and the Mongols, the Qara-Khitai, and other rivals of Khwarazm. Richard, 143, suggests that Muhammad’s initial advance on Baghdad was spurred by information that the Caliph had already made overtures to the Qara—Khitai. Juvayni, *History of the World Conqueror*, vol. 2, 390-1, describes “the causes of the estrangement” between the Khwarazm-Shah Muhammad and the Caliph Al-Nāṣir, including the accusation that “the Caliph had been constantly sending clandestine messages to the Khans of Qara-Khitai calling upon them to attack Sultan Muhammad, and he had also on many occasions dispatched letters to the Sultans of Ghur to the same

foolish in his attempts to incite “infidel” armies against fellow Muslims, the *Relatio de Davide* portrays this act as admirable diplomacy accomplished through the networks of the Eastern Church.

The forms of *anagenesis* in the *Relatio de Davide* both seek to explain the origins of the Mongol people and the agents behind their advance, while also renegotiating the relationship between different communities of Christians and Muslims in light of this approaching people. While *Relatio* delights in the idea that the religious leader of Islam would be forced to supplicate himself before his Christian counterpart, the Caliph is ultimately portrayed as a protector and patron of the Christian communities, upholding the traditional status of Christians as *dhimmis* against more antagonistic Muslim rivals.⁷⁸⁰ Conveyed to Crusading forces who believed in the supremacy of the Roman Pontiff and the doctrine of the Latin Church, the *Relatio* further stresses that the leaders of the “Nestorians” are valuable allies despite their doctrinal differences, capable of influencing both ‘Abbasid Caliph and the powerful Christian rulers who are imagined as dwelling further east. Rather than assigning blame for a catastrophic invasion, the *Relatio* envisions how the order of different established communities in the Near-East will be transformed by the arrival of a new military power. To make this narrative legible and attractive to Christian communities across Central Asia, Iraq, the Crusader States, and Europe, these Christian narratives reached into the shared history of scriptural tradition, portraying the present monarch as the *anagenetic* re-emergence of a biblical king.

By interpreting the approaching armies of the east as a salvific Christian force, the *Relatio de Davide* naturally proved a disappointment. The Crusader’s lost their foothold in Egypt

effect. These secrets were revealed when the Sultan came to Ghaznin [Ghazna], and a search being made in their treasuries the correspondence came to light.”

⁷⁸⁰ Richard, 146. For the role of the caliphs as protectors of Christians, see David Wilmurst. “The Church of the East in the ‘Abbasid Era.” In *The Syriac World*, 189–201, 193.

in 1222, and the arrival of Mongol forces in the Caucasus demonstrated they were just as willing to devastate Christian kingdoms as well as Islamic ones.⁷⁸¹ The monastic chronicler Alberich of Trois Fontaines (d. ca. 1252 CE) reported in 1222 that the retreat of Crusaders from the city Damietta was due to the fact that “King David and his army ... whom the Hungarians and Cumans call ‘Tartars’” had not arrived to aid their fellow Christians but had “returned to their own country.”⁷⁸² Other sources claimed that the ruler of the “Tatars” was not Christian after all, but another Muslim monarch.⁷⁸³ By shifting the hope of success against Muslim forces to the arrival of a salvific ally, the Crusaders downplayed their own military failures and looked forward to a victory that could still be realized at a point in the future.

Rather than an immanent Christian aid to the crusaders, “King David” and his people began to be imagined in more ambivalent and eschatological terms. This shift reflected the recent legend back on the older forms and features of apocalyptic ethnography, encouraging new *anagenetic* confluences of the *Relatio* with earlier traditions. Latin Christians began to equate “King David” with the figure of Prester John, inventing a genealogy that connected the contemporary ruler back to the legendary monarch of the previous century, or else imagining that the name of “Prester John” was a title passed on through successive generations.⁷⁸⁴ This conflation encouraged the merging of both parties into other legends of the geographical periphery. Since the *Letter of Prester John* had claimed that the king ruled over the many strange

⁷⁸¹ On Mongol campaigns against the Christian Kingdoms in the Caucasus, see Bayarsaikhan Dashdondog, *The Mongols and the Armenians (1220-1335)* (Leiden: Brill, 2011).

⁷⁸² “*Rex David et exercitus... quos Hungari et Comani Tartaros vocabant ... in patriam suam reverterunt*”. qtd. in Zarncke, *Der Priester Johannes*, Vol. 2, p. 12.

⁷⁸³ Jackson, *Mongols and the West*, 66.

⁷⁸⁴ Sophia Menache, “Tartars, Jews, Saracens and the Jewish–Mongol ‘Plot’ of 1241,” *History* 81, no. 263 (1996): 319–42, 327–8. As Richard, 147, notes, the earliest forms of the *Relatio de David* seem to be distinct from the legend of Prester John, whose reputation in the Latin world seems to be unfamiliar to the majority of Eastern Christians. Prester John is only explicitly mentioned in the *tertia charta* (“third letter”) attributed to King David, where the contemporary monarch claims to be the descendant of Prester John, and Jacques de Vitry attributes the conflation of the two figures as a “vulgar” confusion. Awareness among the Nestorians and Armenians of Prester John appears to emerge in the subsequent

and monstrous peoples of classical ethnography, an idea developed that a contingent of man-eaters was present in King David's army who would devour Muslims whole.⁷⁸⁵ Other sources reassessed the religious identity of "King David," as Sophia Menache recounts:

"In two epistles that reached the University of Paris and the Austrian Prince Leopold, respectively, [King David's] title of *rex Indorum* was changed, either unconsciously or not, to the no less esoteric appellation of *rex Iudaeorum*. The harmonious amalgam between King David and Prester John thus created a precious meeting point between Jews and Mongols in the world of myth, in which the Mongols fostered the eschatological expectations of medieval Christendom."⁷⁸⁶

In shifting from a "King of the Indians" to the "King of the Jews," King David flowing back into his biblical archetype. This transformation was precipitated by Prester John's numinous relationship to the "Ten Tribes," as well as Christian reckonings of the Khazar conversion. Like the emergence of Qūṭ bin Hām, this shift ultimately relied on the mercurial consequences of the game of names, a shift of a few letters that enacted a radical re-location of a peoples' place in space and time.⁷⁸⁷ As the valence of Christian eschatological treatments of the Mongol Empire vacillated between hope and fear, Jewish communities within Latin Europe would find themselves a familiar target for these anxieties surrounding a foreign power.

Conspiracy and Apocalypse: The Conflation of the Mongols and the Lost Tribes of Israel

While the early intimations of a new empire emerging in Central Asia had garnered hope of a new ally against Islamic forces in the Holy Land, a new generation of Mongol incursion

generation of the 1240s, as Christians under Mongol rule began to serve as diplomatic representatives of the Mongol empire to Latin West. See De Rachewiltz, "Prester John and the Discovery of East Asia," 69-70.

⁷⁸⁵ Jackson, *Mongols and the West*, 66. On Mongols as cannibals, see Heng, *Invention of Race*, 290-5. See also Heng, *Empire of Magic: Medieval Romance and the Politics of Cultural Fantasy* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2003), 17-64.

⁷⁸⁶ Menache, "Jewish Mongol Plot," 328.

⁷⁸⁷ See Chapter 2 above.

against the Christian kingdoms of Europe in the 1230s and 1240s shifted the perceptions of the steppe empire towards panic and apocalyptic foreboding.⁷⁸⁸ The monarchs of the Latin west were at first ill-informed of the Mongol's progress and unconvinced of the present danger, and failed to present a united front against the invaders in spite of the pleas of refugees and witnesses of the Mongol advance.⁷⁸⁹ When the Mongols inflicted a devastating defeat upon the armies of the Hungarian monarch Béla IV (r. 1235-1270) in 1241, Latin Christians feared they would soon over-run the entirety of Europe.⁷⁹⁰ This feared conquest ultimately failed to materialize, as Mongol forces and ambitions in the West were relatively insubstantial compared to those leveled elsewhere.⁷⁹¹ Yet the prospect of Mongol conquest in the 1240s remains an deeply significant cultural event in the West, since this moment of insecurity and catalyzed new acts of *anagenesis* in an effort to understand the Mongols, their origins, and their intentions for the world.

As the severity of the Mongol threat began impressing upon Europeans, Menache observes the “need of many chroniclers to find a convincing explanation of the actual situation and, no less important, some acceptable target to which they could direct their many fears.”⁷⁹² Just as Ibn Al-Athīr had considered composing an account of the Mongols' progress dangerous and difficult, the prospect of conquest imbued some European chroniclers with a reticence to record anything in the midst of so many fears and unknowns.⁷⁹³ Others readily speculated on the

⁷⁸⁸ Jackson, *Mongols and the West*, 42-3. In 1236 CE, Chiggis Khan's successor Ögödei (r. 1229-1241) authorized a major campaign in the Western Steppes under the leadership of his nephew Batu (the future founder of the Ulus Jochi/Altan Örda, i.e. “Golden Horde”), and the general Sübe'etei (ca. 1175-1248 CE). After defeating Cumans, Bulgars, and the Uralic peoples of “Greater Hungary” by the end of 1240 the Mongols had seized Kiev, the principal city of the Rus, and were encamped on the borders of Latin Christianity, the kingdoms of Poland and Hungary. In 1241, The Mongols inflicted a devastating defeat upon the armies of the Hungarian monarch Béla IV (r. 1235-1270) leaving the path open to strike further west. The Danube river froze over around Christmas day of 1241, allowing further contingents of the Mongol's to cross over easily, so that the armies were poised to mount an attack into the regions of Austria, Bohemia or even across the Tyrolian Alps in the coming spring.

⁷⁸⁹ Jackson, *Mongols and the West*, 66-9, 72-5.

⁷⁹⁰ Jackson, *Mongols and the West*, 71-2.

⁷⁹¹ Jackson, *Mongols and the West*, 70-2. The Mongols, more concerned on further punitive expeditions against Béla than attacking the, continued to focus their efforts on Eastern Europe in 1241-4.

⁷⁹² Menache, “Jewish-Mongol ‘Plot,’” 324.

⁷⁹³ Jackson, *Mongols and the West*, 141.

origins of the Mongols and the significance of their arrival. One source who lacked any such reservations was the English Monk Matthew Paris (ca. 1200-1259 CE).⁷⁹⁴ In his *Greater Chronicle* (Lat. *Chronica Maiora*). In his *Greater Chronicle*, Mathew recorded many conflicting theories concerning the origins of the “Tartars” (Lat. *Tartari*) and the significance of their appearance. Writing from the Abbey of St. Albans in England, Matthew Paris was removed from any immediate threat that was faced by inhabitants of the continent at the outset of the 1240s. The *Greater Chronicle*, with its combination of contemporary reports from abroad with the contents of Matthew’s monastic library provides an excellent example of how the “news” of the Mongol advance was encountered through the ensconced traditions of the Latin West.

For Matthew and many other members of the Latin world, much of the vulnerability revealed by the Mongols was an insecurity of knowledge:

“As there are only seven climes in the whole extent of the world, namely, those of the Indians, Ethiopians or Moors, Egyptians, Jerusalemites, Greeks, Romans, and French, and there are none so remotely situated in the whole of the habitable part of the world, that merchants will not find their way among them, as the poet [Horace] says:

“To India far the merchant finds his way”. [*Hor. 1. Epist. 1. 45*]

Where have such a people, who are so numerous, till now lay concealed? Why is there now such a crafty and secret conspiracy amongst them?”⁷⁹⁵

Still measuring the world in the meters of Latin poetry, Latin Christians appeared to have learned little new about the growing Mongol empire in the two decades since rumors of “King David” were passed along from the Holy Land. As forms of *anagenesis*, reports of the Mongols insisted the new people were the reappearance an already known entity, cordoned off from time and

⁷⁹⁴ Matthew Paris, *Matthæi Parisiensis, Monachi Sancti Albani, Chronica Majora*. Edited by Henry Richards Luard. Vol. IV. *Rerum Britannicarum Medii Aevi Scriptores* 57. (London: Longman and Co., 1877). For a complete English translation of the text see *Matthew Paris’s English History From the Year 1235 to 1273*. Translated by J. A. Giles. 3 Vols.(London: H.G. Bohn, 1852). For a concise description of Matthew’s oeuvre, see Lisa Ruch, “Matthew Paris.” In *Encyclopedia of the Medieval Chronicle*, edited by Graeme Dunphy and Cristian Bratu, (Brill, 2016).

⁷⁹⁵ “*Et cum sint in totius mundi capacitate septem climata, videlicet Indorum, Ethiopum vel Maurorum, Egiptiorum, Jerosolimitanorum, Græcorum, Romanorum, et Francorum, nec sint tam remoti in tota nostra habitabili, quos mercatores navigando non rimentur, unde poeta Oratius, “Impiger extremos curris mercator ad Indos,” ubi tot et tales*

knowledge until the moment they re-emerged into the world. In an entry at the beginning of the year 1241 CE, Matthew offers a laundry list of classic techniques for “knowing” the Mongol other.⁷⁹⁶ Taking the misnomer of “Tartar” as the name of the Mongols, Matthew records a variety of examples of the Game of Names; are called “Tartars” because they come from “Tartarus,” they are the man-eaters of Herodotus’ Scythia, they are named after a river called “Tartarus” or something similar.⁷⁹⁷ Most of these acts of *anagenesis* that Matthew records attempt to explain the origins of the Mongols either refer peoples and places that either never existed, or else reflect crystallized elements of ethnographic tradition. Matthew does not consider these hypotheses mutually exclusive, nor does he endorse any of them as certain. Nonetheless, Matthew remained fixed in the belief that an answer could be discovered in what was already known. This devotion to *anagenetic* explanations for contemporary events invited etiologies of enclosure and escape, yoking those etiologies to questions of *agency* about the Mongol’s arrival.

While many Latin Christians recognized the need for an unprecedented alliance to face the Mongol armies, the conflict had exacerbated the longstanding divisions between the many sacred and secular leaders of Europe, and several were eager to pass the blame for past and

hactenus latuerunt? ut quid tam fraudulenta intereos et tam occulta conjuratio?,” Chronica Majora, vol. IV, p. 120. Trans. Giles, vol. I, p. 348.

⁷⁹⁶ On Matthew’s depiction of the Mongols, see Noreen Giffney, “Monstrous Mongols,” *Postmedieval* 3, no. 2 (2012): 227–45; Heng, *Invention of Race*, 290–5.

⁷⁹⁷ *Chronica Majora*, vol. IV, p. 77. Like early Islamic sources that lived beyond the regions of Mongol reach, Latin authors called the Mongols “Tartars,” a misnomer for the “Tatar” Turkic people who constituted one of the earliest rivals, and subsequently subjects, of the Mongol Empire. The connection between “Tartars” and “Tartarus” is repeated in an anecdote Matthew tells of the French King St. Louis IX in an entry of 1241. When Louis’ mother pleads to him to muster his forces for a Crusade against the Tartars, Louis agrees and declares “*Quia si superveniant ipsi, vel nos ipsos, quos vocamus Tartaros, ad suas Tartareas sedes unde exierunt, retrudemus, vel ipsi nos omnes ad caelum subvehent*” (“If these people, whom we call Tartars, should come upon us, either we will thrust them back into the regions of Tartarus, whence they emanated, or else they shall send all of us to heaven.”) *Chronica Majora* vol. IV, p. 111, trans. Giles vol. 1, p. 341. In reality, Louis never mounted any action in defense of Europe, and in the latter half of the 1240s he entertained the prospect of alliance with the Mongols, who he was told by multiple sources were on the verge of converting to Christianity. See Jackson, *Mongols and the West*, 103–7. In his letter on the invasion recorded in the *Chronica Majora*, the Emperor Frederick II similarly hopes “*ad sua Tartara Tartari detrudentur,*” (“that the Tartars shall be cast back into their Tartarus”) *Chronica Majora*, vol. IV, p. 118. While these invocations of Tartarus appear to be *bon mots* rather than theories of actual origin – puns brought to bear against the enemy in lieu of actual armies – yet the slippage between the metaphorical and literal appears to have contributed to perceptions of Mongols as Satanic and monstrous figures. See Heng, *Invention of Race*, 35–6.

future catastrophes. Europeans now redoubled their efforts to discover the familiar behind the foreign; who really was behind (and before) the Mongol invasion? As Matthew's remarks above suggests, many such explanations hinged on accusations of conspiracy. Accusations of aiding the Mongols through either negligence or conspiracy were leveled at various European leaders, including Pope Gregory IX (r. 1227-1241), the Holy Roman Emperor Frederick II (r. 1220-1250), and the king of Hungary Béla IV (r. 1235-1270).⁷⁹⁸ Other major targets of suspicion were the Cuman refugees who had fled from the Mongols and been resettled by Béla IV in Hungary, as well members of populist religious movements like the *Pastoreux*.⁷⁹⁹ This climate of paranoia became a kind of self-fulfilling prophecy, as conflicts between the various European powers and peoples ultimately aided the success of the Mongol campaigns of 1240-44.

Jewish communities living under Christian hegemony in Europe numbered among the most widespread and vulnerable targets for anxieties about the Mongol threat. In the *Greater*

⁷⁹⁸ See Menache, "Jewish-Mongol 'Plot'", 323-4, and Jackson, *Mongols and the West*, 68-9, 141-2. Accusations of aiding the Mongols through either negligence or conspiracy were leveled at various European leaders, including Pope Gregory IX (r. 1227-1241), the Holy Roman Emperor Frederick II (r. 1220-1250), and the king of Hungary Béla IV (r. 1235-1270). In a 1241 letter of Frederick II, copied in Matthew's *Chronica Majora*, the emperor offers an ungenerous account of Béla's defeat and flight. The Hungarian king is depicted as "an idle and careless man" and whose people were "caught sleeping" by the Mongols despite an ultimatum announcing their coming, *Chronica Majora*, vol. IV, pp. 112-119, trans. Giles vol. 1, pp. 341-7. Frederick blames Béla, the pope, and his own "rebellious" vassals for failing to establish a united front against the enemy. Though Matthew Paris himself was sympathetic to Frederick II, he follows the letter by recording the many suspicions of the emperor and his account of events. Some claimed Frederick, "There were some who said that the emperor had, of his own accord, plotted this infliction of the Tartars, and that by this clever letter he basely cloaked his nefarious intent, and that in his grasping ambition he was, like Lucifer, or Antichrist, conspiring against the monarchy of the whole world, to the utter ruin of the Christian faith," *Chronica Majora*, vol. IV, p. 117, trans. Giles, vol. 1, p. 348. Quoted in Menache, "Jewish-Mongol Plot," 324. Frederick's imputed ambitions – the submission of the kingdom of Hungary to the empire – are relatively modest, but these accusations elides conspiratorial culpability into world spanning and world-ending terms. See Jackson, *Mongols and the West*, 69, 74-5. While Béla ultimately did swear fealty to Frederick in exchange for help, he received only a show of military assistance. In 1245 Pope Innocent IV (r. 1243-1254 CE) absolved the Hungarian ruler from his oath on the grounds that the emperor had not substantially aided him. See Jackson, *Mongols and the West*, 69, 74-5.

⁷⁹⁹ Jackson, *Mongols and the West*, 67-9. The Cumans had been welcomed into Hungary by Béla IV, who, seeing an opportunity to bolster his own reputation and power, sponsored the baptism of the Cuman leader Köten and added the appellation "King of the Cumanians" to his own list of titles. Some among Béla's Hungarian subjects, both unhappy with the ambitions of their king and viewing the pastoralist Cumans with distrust, accused the refugees of working in secret to support the Mongol advance, or even being Mongols in disguise. Köten was murdered by an angry mob in 1241, and his followers then retaliated against the Hungarians. These suspicions may have been inspired in part by an ultimatum from Batu Khan to Béla. Batu referred to the Cumans as "my slaves" and intimated that the nomadic people would have a better chance of escaping his wrath than the settled Hungarians. Descriptions of the "Cumanii et Tartarii" as joint partners in the

Chronicle, Matthew's most elaborate engagement with apocalyptic ethnography points to how etiologies of enclosure and escape had coalesced in the West into a new strain of anti-Semitic myth:

It is believed that these Tartars [*Tartari*], of whom the memory is detestable, are those of the ten tribes, who, having forsaken the laws of Moses, went off after golden idols: And the same people Alexander of Macedon once shut up in the Caspian mountains with walls of Bitumen.⁸⁰⁰

Most of Matthew's observations on the Tartars are lifted from the *Historia Scholastica* of Petrus Comestor, written half a century before the beginnings of the Mongol Empire.⁸⁰¹ Matthew acknowledges this source, using its authority to buttress his eschatological interpretation of contemporary events, "as it is written in the *Scholastic History*, they will come forth at the end of the world to commit a great slaughter of men."⁸⁰² Just as Latin Christian authors had consulted the works of Jerome and Church fathers determine the origins of Islam – looking to Christian authorities who preceded the life of Muhammad by several centuries – Matthew looks to an authority whose work preceded the existence of the Mongol Empire, discovering an old story in which to fit these new peoples. As a form of *anagenesis*, this particular story of enclosure and escape not only explains the origins of the Mongols within religious parameters of ethnography and history but also re-negotiates the identity of Jews around eschatological antagonism. By invoking the "Ten Tribes" as agents of apocalyptic destruction, Matthew yoked fear of the Mongols not only to a legendary people of Jewish tradition, but also to the very real communities

devastation of Hungary further collapsed the distinctions between the two groups, and both peoples would be incorporated together in the narratives that claimed the Mongols were of Jewish descent.

⁸⁰⁰ *Chronica Majora*, vol. IV, p. 76. "*Creduntur isti Tartari, quorum memoria est detestabilis, fuisse de decem tribubus, qui abierunt, relicta lege Mosaica, post vitulos aureos; quas etiam Alexander Macedo primo conatus est includere in praeruptis montibus Caspiorum molaribus bituminatis.*" The translation here is my own. Cf. *Chronica Majora*, vol. IV, p. 78 trans. Giles, vol. I. p. 314. The walls of "Bitumen" is introduced by Petrus Comestor, who likely struggled to understand the material of "asyncite," *hapax legomenon*, that Alexander smears upon his wall to make it fire-proof the Greek and Latin versions of the *The Apocalypse of Psuedo-Methodius*, 8.7. See W.J. Aerts, "Alexander's Wondercoating." In *Media Latinitas, a Collection of Essays to Mark the Occasion of the Retirement of L.J. Engels*, (Brepols, 1996), 159–67.

⁸⁰¹ Menache, Jewish Mongol Plot, 331. On Petrus Comestor's role in the conflation between the Lost Tribes and Alexander's Gates, see Anderson, *Gog and Magog*, 64-6.

of Jews living within Christian Europe.

Such an *anagenetic* conflation of manifold peoples real and imagined does not appear to be solely Matthew's idea, since other contemporary sources on the Mongol were likewise advancing apocalyptic identities for the invaders, portraying them as either descendants of Ishmael, the former inhabitants of Alexander's Gate, or both at once.⁸⁰³ Influenced by the *Apocalypse of Pseudo-Methodius*, Russian clerics who reported to the Latin West on the progress of the Mongol advance described the invading peoples as either descendants of Ishmael, the former inhabitants of Alexander's Gate, or both at once.⁸⁰⁴ The common doubling between Muslims, Jews, and alternative "others" in Western Christian rhetoric likely drove the conflation of these groups with the enclosed peoples.⁸⁰⁵ Nor does the identification of the Mongols as the Lost Tribes appear to only a Christian endeavor. The year 1240 CE was reckoned as 5000 AC in the Jewish Calendar, and some Jews, like their Christian and Muslim counterparts, attempted to interpret contemporary events through the lens of their particular version of the eschatological drama.⁸⁰⁶ As Menach observes, the transformation of the *Relatio's* "King David" from "*rex Indorum*," to "*rex Iudeorum*" appears to have been embraced by Jewish communities, the register of biblical names included in his pedigree readily interpreted as a sign of Jewish

⁸⁰² *Chronica Majora*, vol. IV, p. 78 trans. Giles, vol. I. p. 314

⁸⁰³ For a summary of various eschatological interpretations, see Jackson, *Mongols and the West*, 144-154. Remarking that "modern scholars sometimes treat the West as if it were hermetically sealed from the non-Christian world" Jackson, 149, draws attention to "reports current within the Islamic Near East and the Mongols' own notions about their origins." He proposes that Islamic traditions invoking Gog and Magog and the wall of Dhu'l-Qarnayn for measures of the Mongol catastrophe may have been taken literally by Christians who had passed reports along from the Holy Land. Accounts of Turkic and Mongol ethnogenesis that the narrative logic of enclosure and escape were also being circulated in the Mongols own self-presentations of their origins, and these stories – as we shall see – would ultimately be re-shaped to incorporate narrative elements of the Alexander legend.

⁸⁰⁴ Menache, "Jewish Mongol-Plot," 330, Jackson, *Mongols and the West*, 149-50.

⁸⁰⁵ Menache, "Jewish Mongol-Plot," 329-331. On conflation of Jewish and Muslim Other, see Suzanne Conklin Akbari, *Idols in the East: European Representations of Islam and the Orient, 1100–1450* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2009), 112-54. While Menache provides several sources that emphasize the identification of the Mongols as "Ishmaelites" was noted in Latin Europe, her claim that the *Chronica Majora* also describes the Mongols as "Saracens" appears to be based on an error in Giles translation, vol. 1, 314. The Latin of the text, *Chronica Majora* vol. IV, 77, here reads *Tartari*, not *Saraceni* at this point, and no variant readings are given.

heritage.⁸⁰⁷ In recounting the progress of the Mongols and their attempted negotiations with the monarchs of Europe, a letter from a Jew in Sicily refers to the invading people as the “Enclosed”, an epithet Menache interprets as referring to the “ten-tribes.”⁸⁰⁸ Remarking on persecution of Jews throughout the thirteenth century, Israel Yuval notes that Christian anxieties often contains reflections of Jewish eschatological beliefs in, as Jewish communities in Europe often envisioned the violent over-turning of oppressive Christian states as an act of divine retribution.⁸⁰⁹

Whether the belief that the Mongols were descendants of the Lost-Tribes was widely known or circulated among Jewish communities or not, the imputation of such belief was wielded by Christians as a weapon for persecution. A second entry in Matthew Paris’ *Greater Chronicle*, placed later in 1241, describes the foiling of a supposed plot by the Jews of Cologne to aid the Tatars in their world-conquest. When Jewish communities were similarly accused of being agents of the “Tartars,” the generic conventions of Anti-Semitic conspiracies were re-staged around the narrative of Jewish-Mongol kinship:

During all this time, numbers of the Jews on the continent, and especially those belonging to the empire, thinking that these Tartars and Cumanians were a portion of their race, whom God had, at the prayers of Alexander the Great, shut up in the Caspian mountains, assembled on a general summons in a secret place, where one of their number, who seemed to be the wisest and most influential amongst them, thus addressed them: 'My brothers, seed of the illustrious Abraham, vineyard of

⁸⁰⁶ Menache, “Jewish-Mongol Plot,” 334.

⁸⁰⁷ Menache, “Jewish-Mongol Plot,” 328. It is in Paris, the site of the disputation over the Talmud in 1240, that the manuscripts of the *Relatio de Davide* presenting the ruler as a “king of the Jews” appear. Menache, p. 328 n. 43, further observes that the name of “David” was also associated with the tradition of Alexander’s gates through the monarchs of the Caucasian kingdom of Georgia. King David II of Georgia (r. 1089-1125) was described by a Crusader priest as a ruler “qui cum suis praedecessoribus portas Caspiae tenuit et custodivit, ubi sunt inclusi Gog et Magog” (“who, like his predecessors, held and guarded the Caspian Gates, where the people of Gog and Magog were enclosed”). A re-reading of the *Relatio de Davide* as a tradition proclaiming a coming Jewish king appears to have been behind a remark in the German Chronicle *Annales Marbacenses* that Jews believe the Mongol leader to be the “son of David,” *Annales Marbacenses, MGH, SS Rer. Ger.*, vol. ix, p. 89. This passage is quoted in Menache, “Jewish-Mongol Plot,” 337, but her citation does not appear correct.

⁸⁰⁸ Menache, “Jewish-Mongol Plot” 334, and n. 73. See also Perry, “Imaginary War,” 20-1.

⁸⁰⁹ Israel Jacob Yuval, “Jewish Messianic Expectations Towards 1240 and Christian Reactions,” in *Toward the Millennium*, ed. Mark Cohen (Brill, 1998), 105–21, Yuval contends “on the eschatological level, Judaism was more aggressive than Christianity; this was, of course, a natural response to the reality in which Jews were a subject minority.”

the Lord of Sabaoth, whom our God Adonai has permitted to be so long oppressed under Christian rule, now the time has arrived for us to liberate ourselves, and by the judgment of God to oppress them in our turn, that the remnant of Israel may be saved. For our brethren of tribes of Israel, who were formerly shut up, have gone forth to bring the whole world to subjection to them and to us. And the more severe and more lasting that our former suffering has been, the greater will be the glory that will ensue to us. Let us therefore go to meet them with valuable gifts and receive them with the highest honour: they are in need of corn, wine and arms.⁸¹⁰

Menache remarks that the narrative “all the accoutrements necessary for a good mystery tale in the mental atmosphere of thirteenth-century Christendom: the Jews’ secret meetings for purposes of conspiracy; the Jews’ diabolical wisdom, reflected anew in their elaborate plot; and the opportune intervention of providence which safeguarded innocent Christians from both.”⁸¹¹ No other account of such records of any such event in Cologne during 1241 exist, so it seems that both Matthew’s conspiracy and its prosecution are fictional. Records of riots against Jews in Frankfurt in 1241, and the famous trial of the Talmud in Paris during the previous year demonstrate a wave of persecutions against Jewish communities that occurred in parallel with Mongol advances.

In the frame of *anagenesis*, this second account is a repetition of the *Historia Scholastica*, which had enclosed the Lost Tribes within Alexander’s Gates. Where this second account draws on the same strands and logic of apocalyptic ethnography, it displaces such acts of *anagenesis* from their Christian sources to Jewish communities instead. Additions of words like “Adonai,” the “Lord of Sabaoth” make the account sound “Jewish” to a Christian audience, a ventriloquism of Jewish authorities that suggests that the *anagenetic* claim of Jewish-Mongol kinship is a Jewish invention. Eschatological anxieties that were developing in connection with the Mongol

⁸¹⁰ *Chronica Majora*, vol. IV, 131-3; trans. Giles, vol. I, 357-8. In addition to the Jews, this account of Jewish-Mongol kinship also incorporates the Cumans, who had fled from the Mongols as refugees only to encounter suspicions of being Mongol agents.

⁸¹¹ Menache, “Jewish-Mongol Plot,” 339.

advance intermingled with the long-standing traditions of enclosure and escape, emerging as a chimerical conspiracy that relied on the discovery of Mongol origins, and through these origins an apocalyptic scenario that was further imputed to Jewish belief. In this way, the story of Jewish Mongols need not be considered *real* to be considered dangerous, inciting Christians to punish the imagined pre-crimes and thought-crimes of Jews before they might come to apocalyptic fruition. While the story of this pogrom in Cologne may very well be fictional, such narratives of conspiracy, discovery, and revenge provided mythic models for very real acts of persecution waged against Jewish communities. When a generation of Western Christian authors re-evaluated their *anagenetic* assessments of the Mongol Empire, Jewish communities of Europe were not so readily rehabilitated from their erroneous association with the Mongols; the enduring legacy of the conspiratorial accusations would re-shape the traditions of Anti-Semitism long after the Mongol empire had abandoned its designs on the West.

Matthew Paris' *anagenetic* construction of shared lineage between Jews, Mongols, and Gog and Magog provides the foundations for *Mandeville's* depiction of an ongoing conspiracy between the Jews of Europe and their relatives still enclosed within Alexander's Gates. Removed from the context of its initial historical emergence and returned to the edges of the world once more, *Mandeville* portrays this conspiracy as an ongoing plot among all Jews, one that will remain a threat to Christians until the end of the world. Yet while *The Book of John Mandeville* adapts the tradition of the "Jewish-Mongol plot" to shape his understanding of the enclosed peoples, the author has obscured any reference to the Mongol's themselves in the account. As described in the opening of this chapter, *Mandeville* presents a positive assessment of the Mongol Empire, one that envisions their role in an impending Global Christian dominion. To understand *Mandeville's* choice to rehabilitate the Mongols at the expense of the Jews, and the

origins of alternative account of Mongol enclosure and escape, we must examine the further *anagenetic* renegotiations of Mongol identity in the latter half of the thirteenth century.

Mountain-Moving and Mountain-Melting: Enclosure and Escape in the Mongol Empire's Syncretic Origins

When Mongol attacks on Europe had relented by the end of the 1240s, this shift was accomplished not by Western resistance, but by the death of Ögödei Khan (r. 1229-41 CE), which triggered a new power-struggles within the family of Chinggis Khan and a redoubled focus on the wealthier prizes in the Islamic world.⁸¹² While the Mongol's remained a present threat to the Polish and Hungarian kingdoms on the frontier, as the violence of the Mongol Empire pivoted again to the "enemies of Christendom" in the Near East, Christian rulers of Western Europe again entertained the idea of alliance with Mongol Ilkhanate to retake the Holy Land.⁸¹³ This shift became especially prevalent in the second half of the thirteenth century, as Mongol advances into the European interior ceased and as the unity Mongol State itself began to splinter, encouraging the different branches of Chinggis Khan's family to seek new allies outside their dominions.⁸¹⁴ In the 1250s, Hülegü Khan launched a new campaign against the Islamic world which resulted in the destruction of Baghdad in 1258 and the formation of the *Ilkhanate*, the south-western arm of the Mongol empire.⁸¹⁵ As Hülegü's conquests reached the borders of the Mamlūk Sultanate in Syria, Christians agents of the Mongol Empire made overtures to the

⁸¹² Jackson, *Mongols and the West*, 203-34.

⁸¹³ The mutual hostility between the Ilkhans and the Ulus Jochi / Altan Orda which was based in North-Eastern Europe also made the alliance more attractive. See Jackson, *Mongols and the West*, 167.

⁸¹⁴ On the divisions in the Mongol Empire and its gradual split into four separate states, see Jackson, *Mongols and the Islamic World*, 182-209.

⁸¹⁵ See Jackson, *Mongols and the Islamic World.*, 125-151. From the Mongol's established position in Khwarazm, Hulegu preceded westward across the Iranian plateau, aiming to destroy the fortresses of Nizari Ismailis (called "Assassins," "Batini" or "Mulahid" by their opponents) in the Alburz mountains and un-seat the 'Abbasid Caliph. The principal source

French King Louis IX and other crusading forces in the Near-East, hoping to recruit them as allies by portraying the Mongols as on the cusp of adopting Christianity.⁸¹⁶ At the same time, Muslim authors from the lands already incorporated into the Mongol Empire, including the Khwārazmian Juvaynī, wrote new histories that portrayed the devastation wrought by the Mongols past and present as just punishment carried out by God against arrogant and heretical Muslim princes.⁸¹⁷ By the end of the thirteenth century, the Mongol Empire seemed to have become permanent part of the global order, and portrayals of the religious and economic opportunities presented by the Mongol state abounded. Christian and Muslim understandings of the Mongols were incorporated into an eclectic re-presentation of Mongol history and identity that reflected and exploited the different cultural expectations of the diverse exegetical cultures within the empire and without. In this context, *Anagenesis* became a tool of agents of the Mongol empire to deploy the cultural traditions of their subjects, rivals, and potential allies to the Mongol's advantage.

In the final section of this chapter, I explore two accounts of Mongol origins that reflect this new iteration of *anagenesis*, one that merges Turkic and Mongolian etiologies of enclosure and escape and combines with elements of the Alexander legends that circulated in Jewish, Christian, and Islamic traditions.⁸¹⁸ The *Compendium of Chronicles* (Ar. *Jāmi' al-tawārīkh*) of Rashīd al-Dīn Faḍl-Allāh al-Hamadānī (ca. 1247-1318 CE), tells the story of “Ärgänä-qun,” a remote mountain refuge that serves as the birth-place of the Mongol people.⁸¹⁹ When the nation

on the campaign in Juvayni, who was appointed governor of Baghdad following the death of the Caliph and devastation of the city in 1258.

⁸¹⁶ Jackson, *Mongols and the West*, 214-6; Heng, *Invention of Race*, 298-316;

⁸¹⁷ See pages above; Juvaynī was rewarded for his efforts with the title of governor of Baghdad.

⁸¹⁸ Jackson, *Mongols and the West*, 151, While Jackson identifies some broad parallels between these episodes and links them to the “Syriac Alexander Legend”, there is room for further expansion and analysis of the relationship between these traditions in the terms of *anagenesis*.

⁸¹⁹ Rashīd al-Dīn Ṭabīb, *Jāmi' al-tawārīkh*, eds. Muḥammad Rawshan and Muṣṭafā Mūsavī, 2 vols. (Tehran: Nashr-i Alburz, 1373). For an English Translation, see Rashiduddin Fazlullah (Rashīd al-Dīn Ṭabīb), *Compendium of Chronicles*,

grows too large for this isolated home, the people engineer an escape from the mountains that combines legendary narratives of Turkic origins with the Qur'ānic account of Dhū 'l-Qarnayn.⁸²⁰ A similar scene of enclosure and escape appears in the *The Flower of Histories of the Eastern World*, (Fr. *La Flor des estoires de la terre d'Orient*), written by the Armenian Monk Hayton of Corycus (c. 1240 – 1310 CE) at the beginning of the fourteenth century to muster support for a French-Mongol alliance and a new crusade.⁸²¹ Combining elements of the *Apocalypse of Pseudo-Methodius* with Mongol traditions, Hayton depicts “*Changuis Can*” (“Chinggis Khan”) as a new Alexander, leading his people in prayer to move a mountain so that they may pass out of their homeland and conquer the world in the name of the “*Deu l'inmortel* (“the immortal God”).”⁸²² These two works, one Muslim, one Christian, each attempt to integrate Mongol history into the longstanding traditions of universal history inflected by scriptural exegesis and classical geography. These narratives constitute a further evolution of *anagenesis* of the Mongol's origins and identity, one that transforms past associations of the Mongol, Gog and Magog, and Alexanders, reimagining the elements of apocalyptic ethnography into stories of divinely guided exodus and heavenly mandates to conquer the world.

Rashīd al-Dīn 's *Compendium* emerges from the court of work Ghazan Khan (r. 1295-1304 CE), the first among rulers of the Ilkhanate to adopt Islam upon ascending the throne in 1295.⁸²³ Ghazan's conversion was more an act of politics than passion, but it fulfilled an expectation of the Mongol's historical destiny that had been promised by Muslim propogandists

trans. W.M. Thackston, (London: I.B. Tauris, 2012). Rashīd al-Dīn is also commonly known as Rashīd al-Dīn Ṭabīb “The Doctor”.

⁸²⁰ Rashīd al-Dīn, *Jāmi' al-tawārīkh*, 145-53; trans. Thackston, *Compendium*, 56-9.

⁸²¹ Hayton, *La Flor des estoires de la terre d'Orient*, ed. C. Köhler, Recueil des historiens des Croisades. Documents arméniens 2 (Paris: Imprimerie nationale, 1906), 113-253. In this text, I am using the French form of Hayton's name, rather than the Armenian *Heth'um*, since the author uses this form in his own work.

⁸²² Hayton, *La Flor Des Estoires*, III.6; ed. Köhler, p. 152.

⁸²³ On Ghazan's conversion, see Jackson, *Mongols and the Islamic World*, 341-4, and Thackston's introduction to *Compendium*, vii-x. The kind of “triumphalist” narrative presented by Rashīd al-Dīn and anticipated by Juvaynī forty

of the Mongol regime, such as Juvaynī.⁸²⁴ Composing a new history of the world on behalf of Ghazan, Rashīd al-Dīn heralds the conversion of his patron as the culmination of God’s plans for humankind. According to the *Compendium*, the Mongols are God’s chosen, both correcting the Islamic faith in its ancestral homelands and inciting its ultimate expansion throughout the rest of the world at the hands of a new global empire.

To make this rehabilitation of the Mongols from distant pagan barbarians to agents of God more legible to the historical perspective of the Islamic world, Rashīd al-Dīn relies on many forms of *anagenesis*. He first threads the history of the Mongols to that of the Turks, finding in the story of this more familiar people – longstanding target of apocalyptic ethnography – a route back to the sons of Noah.⁸²⁵ In accounts of geography, ethnography, history, and eschatology, perceptions of the “Turk” cycling over generations from an enemy of the faith (and a potential descendant of Gog and Magog) to an integral participant in the Islamicate world. Since many Turkic peoples had become Muslims and become rulers within the realms of Islam, the idea of the Turk provided a ready model for the incorporation of another nomadic people whose history and traditions were heavily influenced and intermingled with Turkic language and beliefs.⁸²⁶ Rashīd al-Dīn reasons that since the Mongols are Turks, and “all the Turks are descended from Japheth, the son of the prophet Noah,” he can securely identify the genetic origins of the people, in spite of the fact that the “Turks had no books or writing” and thus “have no reliable ancient history.”⁸²⁷ This gap in “Turkic” history provides room for more claims of *anagenetic* descent

years prior more so reflects the ambitions of Persian Muslim courtiers to legitimize their rulers than to reflect the religious fervor of the Mongols themselves.

⁸²⁴ E.g. Juvaynī’s metaphoric account of Dhū ’l-Qarnayn and the Mongols, see above.

⁸²⁵ Rashīd al-Dīn, *Jāmi’ al-tawārīkh*, 145-53; trans. Thackston, *Compendium*, 56-9.

⁸²⁶ See, for instance, Ulrich W. Haarmann, “Ideology and History, Identity and Alterity: The Arab Image of the Turk from the Abbasids to Modern Egypt.” *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 20, no. 2 (1988): 175–96. For an eschatological perspective, see David Cook, “The Image of the Turk in Classical and Modern Muslim Apocalyptic Literature.” In *Peoples of the Apocalypse: Eschatological Beliefs and Political Scenarios*, edited by Wolfram Brandes, Felicitas Schmieder, and Rebekka Voß, 225–38. Boston: De Gruyter, 2016.

⁸²⁷ Rashīd al-Dīn, *Jāmi’ al-tawārīkh*, 147; trans. Thackston, *Compendium*, 56.

and equivalence between the Turks, Mongols, and the fundamental narratives of Islamic history.⁸²⁸

Rashīd al-Dīn's *anagenetic* connections between the Mongols and the Turks also emerges out of a renegotiation histories that had been advanced by the Mongols themselves while they incorporated other peoples into their Empire.⁸²⁹ Rather than operating upon the story of monotheistic creation and Noachic genealogy that typified the ethnographic forms of *anagenesis*, this parallel strand of revisionist history, which Atwood terms an "antiquarian revolution," reframed the origins and identities of the world's peoples around a fulcrum of Mongol genealogy and imperial destiny.⁸³⁰ This form of revisionist time-making appears prominently in *The Secret History of the Mongols*. As several scholars have noted, the *Secret History's* genealogies and etiologies echo forms and figures that appear in Chinese accounts of *Xiongnu*, Turks (Ch. *Tujue*) and other steppe peoples from several centuries prior to the Mongol empire, suggesting that these accounts derive from long-standing traditions originating from the different peoples of the Steppe, and projected upon them from the imperial.⁸³¹ The *Secret History* recasts these shared myths of genetic origins and personal relations, reforming them around a narrative of Mongol supremacy and destiny that is realized in the career of Chinggis Khan. While Rashīd al-Dīn insists that the genealogical foundations of the *Compendium* emerge out of Noachic genealogy, his enumeration of different Turkic and Mongolian tribes primarily

⁸²⁸ Rashīd al-Dīn also describes the Mongols as descendants of the Oghuz Khan, the eponymous ancestor of the Oghuz Turkic peoples, who was apparently able to arrive at the belief in a singular God despite living among an idolatrous people, see Rashīd al-Dīn, *Jāmi' al-tawārīkh*, 49-51 trans. Thackston, *Compendium*, 20-1.; Rashīd al-Dīn portrays Oghuz as a kind of Turkic Abraham, and applies the same principles to Chinggis Khan, comparing him to the ancient Patriarch and suggesting that the Mongol conqueror had arrived at the principles of Monotheism entirely on his own. The ability of these figures to arrive at beliefs akin to the fundamentals of Islamic faith intimates that such a religious outlook is the original state of the world, while the focus on the Patriarchal aspect of Abraham suggests that the genetic predisposition to faith is latent within these peoples, waiting for its moment of action

⁸²⁹ Atwood, "Historiography and transformation," 514-5.

⁸³⁰ Atwood, "Historiography and transformation," 527.

relies on these genealogies adopted from Mongolian tradition.⁸³²

These two strands of ethnographic, Islamic and Mongol, meet in the *Compendium*'s account of Mongol enclosure and escape. According to Rashīd al-Dīn the Mongols became a distinct people only extinguished by rival tribes among the Turks:

It is related by trustworthy sources that the other tribes overcame the Mongol tribes and so slaughtered them that no more than two men and two women survived. Fleeing from their enemies, those two households went to a harsh place surrounded by mountains and forests, with only one narrow, rugged road leading in on every side, which made access very difficult.⁸³³

Hidden within these mountains is “a grassy plain called Ärgänä-qun” that provides sustenance for the refugees and allows them to start anew.⁸³⁴ Like most etiological narratives of ethnic origin, the account mediates both the unique-ness of the Mongol people, and the capacity for diversity within the group: “For years their progeny remained there, multiplying through intermarriage. Each branch of them became known by a specific name and epithet, and they became an *omāq* (“nation”).”⁸³⁵ Like the brothers Hunor and Magor in the *Gesta Hungororum*, which linked the successive migrations of the Huns and Magyars back to a shared origin, the two men of Rashīd al-Dīn's account, Nüküz and Qiyan, serve as ancestors of different Mongol tribes. The wives of the pair are left unnamed, and instead the landscape of Ärgänä-qun serves as a collective womb for the people.⁸³⁶ Like the Maeotic Swamp, which was seen by the Hungarians as the protector of both their people and their genetic similarity, the isolation of Ärgänä-qun allows for a new people to grow up concealed from their former enemies and uninfluenced by

⁸³¹ See Hinsch, Bret. “Myth and the Construction of Foreign Ethnic Identity in Early and Medieval China.” *Asian Ethnicity* 5, no. 1 (February 1, 2004): 81–103; Denis Sinor, “The Legendary Origin of the Turks.” In *Studies in Medieval Inner Asia*, (Aldershot: Ashgate, 1997), 223–57.

⁸³² Christopher P. Atwood, “Rashīd Al-Dīn's Ghazanid Chronicle and Its Mongolian Sources,” in *New Approaches to Ilkhanid History* (Leiden: Brill, 2020), 53-121, 54.

⁸³³ Rashīd al-Dīn, *Jāmi' al-tawārīkh*, 148; trans. Thackston, *Compendium*, 57-8.

⁸³⁴ Rashīd al-Dīn, *Jāmi' al-tawārīkh*, 148; trans. Thackston, *Compendium*, 57.

⁸³⁵ Rashīd al-Dīn, *Jāmi' al-tawārīkh*, 148; trans. Thackston, *Compendium*, 57.

⁸³⁶ The likening of ancestral caves to figurative wombs appears to be part of the Turkic khaganates rituals which commemorated the anniversary of the people's birth. See Sinor, “Establishment and Dissolution,” 296.

exogamous relations. The cradle of the mountains serves as the site of both unity and differentiation between different Mongol tribes, so that their distinctions can be imaginatively traced to a mythic space where these groups could become distinct from one another without influence from the world without.

Describing this moment of Mongol origins also gives Rashīd al-Dīn a chance to engage in the Game of Names, further connecting this people to the Turks and overarching Islamic traditions of apocalyptic ethnography. Combining etiology and etymology, Rashīd al-Dīn uses the story to define several important Mongolian words for his readers, including the Mongol's name. Rashīd al-Dīn explains that this flight to Ärgänä-qun precipitated the ethnonym of *Mongol*, because: "The word Mongol was originally "*mong ol*," which means "left behind" and "simpleton."⁸³⁷ While this etymology purports to be based on words taken from the Mongolian language, it shares an clear affinity with an Arabic folk-etymology of "Turk" coming out of the Semitic root "Ta-ra-ka" (to depart), a tradition that emerged in associated with the belief that the Turks were those "left out" of Dhū 'l-Qarnayn's wall.⁸³⁸ The model of Turkic ethnography, and its connections to the story of continues to govern Rashīd al-Dīn 's incorporation of Mongol tradition into his universal history.

While the plain of Ärgänä-qun serves as a safe place for the genesis of the Mongols, the enclosure of the mountains must be removed for the emergent tribe to return to wider world and fulfill their ultimate destiny of conquest:

"When this group became numerous in those mountains and forests, and the land was constraining them, they took counsel with each other to figure out how to get out of that narrow prison. They found a place in the mountains where there was an iron mine, where they always used to smelt iron. They gathered together and

⁸³⁷ Rashīd al-Dīn, *Jāmi' al-tawārīkh*, 148; trans. Thackston, *Compendium*, 57.

⁸³⁸ See Van Donzel and Schmidt, *Gog and Magog*, 84-5. In accounts more generous to the Turks, they were left out of Dhu'l Qarnayn's wall for believing in God.

brought loads of kindling and charcoal from the forest. Then they killed seventy horses and oxen, skinned them, and made ironsmiths' bellows from them. They placed the huge amount of kindling and charcoal at the base of the cliff and so arranged it that they could cause the seventy large bellows to blow at once, and thus the cliff was melted, producing immeasurable quantities of iron and opening a road, through which they moved out. From that stricture they emerged into the spacious plain."⁸³⁹

By melting the side of the mountain, the people within both provide themselves with both a way and means to future glory, iron to make the implements of war, and a road to conquer the world beyond. In stories of Turkic origins preserved in Chinese records, the Turks first rose to power by discovering a vein of iron within a helmet-shaped mountain.⁸⁴⁰ Learning the crafts of smelting and blacksmithing, they forged weapons of war that allowed them to defeat their neighboring rivals and begin amassing an empire.⁸⁴¹ In the wake of this success, the people renamed themselves *Tujue*, "helmet," in memory of the helm-shaped mountain upon which they dwelled.⁸⁴² On one level, this episode seems to reflect a Mongol adaptation of earlier Turkic origins stories, possibly threaded through the literary records of Chinese historiography. By resituating their own ancestors within classic traditions of Turkic origins and imperial destiny, the Mongols could render their past, present, and future in term familiar both to other peoples of the steppe, and to the several Chinese influenced sedentary states of East Asia.

Rashīd al-Dīn, however, is interested in portraying his narrative Mongol history in the terms of Islamic world, so this already-hybrid story of enclosure and escape is reflected further through forms of *anagenesis*. In the *Compendium*, the story of Ärgänä-qun also resonates with the narrative of the Dhū 'l-Qarnayn and the wall built against Gog and Magog. In Q 18:96, Dhū 'l-Qarnayn commands the construction of his "rampart" (ar. *Radm*) to enclose Gog and Magog

⁸³⁹ Rashīd al-Dīn, *Jāmi' al-tawārīkh*, 148; trans. Thackston, *Compendium*, 57.

⁸⁴⁰ Hinsch, "Myth," 54-5; Sinor, "Origins," 296. This story is connected to the first Göktürk empire.

⁸⁴¹ Hinsch, "Myth," 54-5; Sinor, "Origins," 296.

⁸⁴² Hinsch, "Myth," 54-5; Sinor, "Origins," 296.

thus: “‘Bring me pieces of iron’. Then when he had leveled the two cliffs, he said, ‘Blow!’, till when he had made it fire, he said, ‘Bring me molten copper to pour over it’.”⁸⁴³ The Mongols in the *Compendium of Chronicles* similarly level a cliff, using masses of molten metal and an army of blowing bellows in a great act of engineering that accomplishes their escape, rather than their enclosure. As we have seen above, several Muslim historians invoked the image of the wall to describe the origins of the Mongols and the impetus behind their conquests. Such story may acknowledge rumors of the past association between the Mongols and Gog and Magog, *anagenetically* merging them with accounts of Mongol tradition, and reimagining the story in terms that portrays the Mongols origins in positive terms. Rashīd al-Dīn again returns to this imagery when he describes the Great Wall of China, noting “Because the Rulers of Cathay were constantly vexed by the Mongols, they took every precaution against them, like constructing a wall like Alexander’s Dam (per. *sadd i-Iskandar*) between Cathay and the tribes.”⁸⁴⁴ Here again is a barrier, likened to the wall of Alexander, that is destined to be crossed by the Chinggis Khan in his divinely ordained conquest.

While the agency of this escape seems to be placed on the ingenuity of the Mongols, these Qur’ānic echoes of Dhū ’l-Qarnayn reiterate the idea that God is ultimately responsible for the origins of peoples, their movement through the world, and their destiny in history. The enclosure offered by Ärgänä-qun gives Rashīd al-Dīn a starting-point for Mongol genealogy that he reflects in other forms of *anagenesis*. He endorse the story of the Chinggis Khan’s ancestor Alan Qo’a, who had purportedly conceived three sons after the visitations of a miraculous “resplendent yellow man,” by quoting the Qur’ān and alluding to story of Mary and Jesus.⁸⁴⁵

⁸⁴³ Q 18:96, trans. Nasr.

⁸⁴⁴ Rashīd al-Dīn, *Jāmi’ al-tawārīkh*, 215; trans. Thackston, *Compendium*, 80.

⁸⁴⁵ Rashīd al-Dīn, *Jāmi’ al-tawārīkh*, 222; trans. Thackston, *Compendium*, 82. While Rashīd al-Dīn does not directly invoke the example of Mary, he describes of Alan Qo’a’s descendants as “a race descending the one from the other,” a quotation from *sūrat ‘Imrān*. In the context of the *sūrat ‘Imrān*, this phrase alludes to the exceptional positions given by

Recalling both narratives of Prophetic pre-existence and ethnographic depictions of Turks as “pearls,” Rashīd al-Dīn describes Alan Qo’a in terms that imagine the future of the Mongols engendered in the miraculous conception of the past: “With its perfect power, destiny made Alan Qo’a’s pure womb the oyster shell for the precious pearl of Genghis Khan’s existence and created his true life spark therein from pure light.”⁸⁴⁶ From the perspective of the *Compendium*, the actions of these Mongols ancestors keep echoing the prophetic genealogy of Islam, and the language that describes their deeds elides into that of the Qur’ān. In contrast to their Turkish forebearers, Rashīd al-Dīn claims that the Mongols are peculiar in that they, like the Arabs, have a “perfect” genealogical memory, so he can confidently trace Mongol history from the exodus of Ärgänä-qun to the present monarch Ghazan, who “has revived every portion of the Islamic code and custom that had fallen into lassitude with the passage of time.”⁸⁴⁷ These acts of *anagenesis* take the Mongol’s own incorporative and revisionist vision of their origins and to imagine them as a unique people, one God has placed in history and preserved from harm for a purpose that is unfolding in the present.

Rashīd al-Dīn’s *Compendium* displays the ways that the Mongol Ilkhanate sought to integrate its history into the Islamic worldview of its Muslim majority. At the same time, the story, legitimacy, and destiny of the Mongols was expressed in different terms by and for the Christian

God to the families of prophets: “Truly God chose Adam, Noah, the House of Abraham, and the House of ‘Imrān above the worlds, as progeny from one another. And God is Hearing, Knowing”, with the “House of ‘Imrān” being the family of Mary, her parents, and the miraculously conceived Jesus. Q 3:33-4, trans. Nasr. In the Timurid era, later Muslims would explicitly use the language of the Qur’anic nativity story in their accounts of Alan Qo’a, describing her as “not unchaste,” Q 19:20, and depicting the “resplendent yellow man” as “the likeness of a perfect man,” Q 19:17. See Nilgün Dalkesen, “The Cult of Alan-Gho’a and the Unique Position of Women in the Chinggisid Dynasties.” *Avrasya Uluslararası Araştırmalar Dergisi* 5, no. 10 (January 15, 2017): 191–201, and Azrfar Moin “Akbar’s ‘Jesus’ and Marlowe’s ‘Tamburlaine’: Strange Parallels of Early Modern Sacredness.” *Fragments: Interdisciplinary Approaches to the Study of Ancient and Medieval Pasts* 3 (2013-4).

⁸⁴⁶ Rashīd al-Dīn, *Jāmi’ al-tawārīkh*, 223; trans. Thackston, *Compendium*, 82. Here Rashid al-Din adapts a metaphor commonly used to describe the “Turk.” Jackson, *Mongols and the Islamic World*, 52-3, draws attention to Turks being compared to pearls in al-by Al-Tha’labi and other Muslim authors: “The Turk is like a pearl that lies in the oyster in the sea. For as long as it is in its habitat, it is devoid of power and worth; but when it leaves the oyster and the sea, it acquires value and becomes precious, decorating the crowns of kings and adorning the neck and ears of brides.”

⁸⁴⁷ *Compendium of Chronicles* 1.2.1, p. 82.

communities who played a significant role in the Mongol Empire. Like Rashīd al-Dīn as well, Hayton of Corycus was a subject of the Ilkhanate, and an agent for its designs upon the wider world. A veteran of Ghazan Khan's campaigns against the Mamluks in 1300-3 CE, Hayton fled subsequent struggles in his homeland of Cilician Armenia to become a monk on the Crusader controlled Island of Cyprus, and from there he travelled to France in an attempt to stir up further support for a new Crusade.⁸⁴⁸ Composed at a papal Residence in Potiers in 1307 and dedicated to the pontiff Clement V (r. 1305-14 CE), the *Flower* attempted to muster support for a new crusade and a Frankish, Armenian, and Mongol Triple Alliance against the Mamluk Sultanate.⁸⁴⁹ Dismissing Ghazan's adoption of Islam as a temporary setback, Hayton insisted that the Ilkhans were on the cusp of openly embracing Christianity. While similar promises had been made by many ambassadors and advocates of the Mongol empire throughout the second half of the thirteenth century to little effect, *The Flower* makes the case for such a future by insisting it had already happened in the past.

In the *Flower*, Hayton offers an account of Mongol history and conquest that intimated the ultimate destiny of the people as Christian monarchs. Hayton claims that Hülegü, founder of the Ilkhanate, had been baptized his ancestor, the Cilician Armenian King Het'um I, turning a visitation of political submission into an evangelical triumph.⁸⁵⁰ Yet more significant still is Hayton's portrayal of *Changuis Can* ("Chinggis Khan"), as a heroic figure and an unconscious agent of the Christian God. Since the Khan's rise to power takes place in the homeland of the

⁸⁴⁸ David Bundy, "Het'um's La Flor Des Estoires de La Terre d'Orient." *Revue Des Études Arméniennes* 20 (July 1986): 223–35, 223. The work was quickly translated back into French and into Spanish as well. It eventually found its way and back into Hayton's native Armenian and also into English. Excerpts of the *Flor des Estoires* appeared in English as episodes in *Mandeville's Travels*, discussed below (pages), and then in a complete translation by [source] in the 16th century.

⁸⁴⁹ Bundy, "Het'um's La Flor" 223.

⁸⁵⁰ The visit of king Het'um I the court of Mongke in 1253 portrays the Armenian ruler as demanding rather than submissive. The king insists that the Mongols cease any violence against Christians and accept baptism, and the khan happily obliges (III.16 p. 163-4, qtd. in Osipian 94-5). This episode is one of many erroneous baptisms in western

Mongols, the account moreover gives Hayton the opportunity to integrate land and legends of Mongol origins into the language and logic of Christian geography. Like Rashīd al-Dīn, the *Flower of Histories* of Hayton offered a vision of the Mongol's global future by threading the Empire's history with acts of *anagenesis*, reframing Mongol origins and traditions in the terms of Christian apocalyptic ethnography.

As the founder of the Mongol Empire, Chinggis Khan serves as the nexus for this negotiation of the Mongol's own religious and cultural traditions with those of Christian belief. In the *Flower*, Chinggis's mission to unite his people begins with a supernatural visitation that highlights the many layered influences in the story:

“It happened that an old man, a poor old blacksmith, who had the name Chinggis, saw in a dream a vision; for he saw a knight in arms sitting upon a white horse who called him by his name, and said to him: ‘Chinggis, it is the will of the immortal God that you ought to be the governor and lord of the seven tribes of the Tartars who are called Mongols.’”⁸⁵¹

Invoking the name “immortal God,” (fr. *Dieu L’Immortel*,) Hayton further strives on reconciling the language of the Mongol Empire's own invocations to “Eternal Heaven” (“*Möngke Tengri*”) with that of a Christian cosmos.⁸⁵² The figure of heavenly mentor of the further seems to be an amalgam of the many different influences that meet in Hayton's account. In connection to Mongol traditions, the visitor recalls the “resplendent yellow man” who comes to Alan Qo'a, as well as the Shaman Teb-Tengerri, who informs Chinggis Khan that his Empire represents the will of “Eternal Heaven.”⁸⁵³ Another potential parallel lies in Christian traditions native to

accounts of the Mongols, but it provides an interesting example of how Hayton conceives of the Armenians as equal (or even senior) partners in the alliance he aims to form with the Mongols and Franks.⁸⁵⁰

⁸⁵¹ *Flor des Histoires*, III.1, p. 148 : “*Il avint que un veillant, povre home fevre, qui avoit non Canguis, vit en songe un avision; car il vit un chevalier armez sur un cheval blanc qui l'apela par son non, et luy dit: “Canguis, la volenté de l’immortel Deu est que tel que tu doies estre gouvernor e seignor sur les VII nacions des Tartars qui sunt dites Mogols.”* While Hayton incorrectly identifies “Canguis” as the Mongol ruler's name rather than title, his portrayal of the man as a “fevre” (“blacksmith”) gestures at the Khan's birth name, Temüjin.

⁸⁵² See Brian Baumann, “By the Power of Eternal Heaven: The Meaning of Tenggeri to the Government of the Pre-Buddhist Mongols.” *Extrême-Orient Extrême-Occident*, no. 35 (May 2013): 233–84.

⁸⁵³ *Secret History*, 1.10-24, 10.244; trans. De Rachewiltz, 4-5, 158. Jackson, *Mongols and the West*, 220, observes that in Hulegu's overtures towards Christians and Muslims during the 1250s-1260s, Teb-Tengri was cast as a *Pontifex* between

Central Asia. Atwood describes the legends of the Christian Ong'ut people concerning the fourth century soldier-saint Sergius, who appears in visions both to the Ong'ut khans and their patron the (Jürchen) Jin Emperor, who mistakenly believes the Christian saint to be “a manifestation of the Buddha.”⁸⁵⁴ Whatever the ultimate inspiration for this Chinggis Khan's supernatural guide, Hayton ultimately depicts him in forms of *anagenesis* that will appeal to his audience of French Christian. In this way Hayton relies on the same variety of epistemic tension and dramatic irony that operate in the stories of 'Abd al-Muṭṭalib, Alexander the Great, and “virtuous pagans” who serve as half-conscious agents of a monotheistic deity. The French audience of the *Flower* can readily recognize in the vision of this “white knight” the trappings of several militant Christian saints – such as Saint James the Greater, Saint George, and Saint Mercurius – who had been reported to miraculously appear riding in the sky to bring victory to Christian forces in battle against the “Saracens.”⁸⁵⁵ Inspired to unite his people by the guidance of this militant saint, Chinggis Khan himself is imagined as a warrior for the “Immortal God,” and a Crusader in his own right – even if though lacks full knowledge of the Christian faith.

This form of *anagenesis* allows Hayton to forge further connection between Chinggis Khan and the Christian God by emphasizing the Mongol conqueror's resemblance to Alexander the Great. Alexander provides a literary archetype of “world conqueror,” that Hayton sees as re-appearing in Chinggis Khan. Alexander further serves as another model of a “virtuous pagan” who ultimately serves a Christian God in spite living before – or in Chinggis's case beyond – the bounds of Christendom. Hayton's to Alexander are not only used to portray Chinggis Khan as

Mongol beliefs and other religious traditions. He appears with much fanfare as a half-conscious disciple of Allah in Juvayni's *History of the World Conqueror*, and a letter from the *Ilkhan* to Christian rulers adapted the opening of the Epistle of Hebrews to claim “God, Who at sundry times and in divers manners spoke in time past unto the fathers by the Prophets, hath in these last days *spoken unto our grandfather Chinggis Khan through Teb-Tenggeri.*”

⁸⁵⁴ Atwood, “Historiography and Transformation,” 520-1.

typological resurgence of the ancient conqueror, but also to insist that the famous peoples and places of Mongol provenance have always been part of Western Christian knowledge, locked away in a corner of the Alexander tradition. Perhaps the most important of these details is the sacred “*montaigne de Belgian*” (“mountain of Burqan”), which Hayton insists is well recorded in “*les estoires d’Alixandre*” (“the histories of Alexander”).⁸⁵⁶ This is Burqan Qaldun, a holy mountain recognized as the birthplace of the Mongol people and the spiritual center of their empire.⁸⁵⁷ No such “Belgian” exists in any Alexander tradition before this point, but Hayton’s claim *anagenetically* emplaces this Mongol landmark within the record of famous mountains that appear throughout the Alexander Romance tradition, including those which enclose Gog and Magog.

In the *Flower of Histories*, the mountain “Belgean” ultimately serves as a site of enclosure and escape for the Mongol people, one that allows Hayton to resequence the narrative elements of Christian accounts of Alexander’s wall in a form that depicts Chinggis Khan’s inauguration of the Mongol empire as a divinely guided exodus;

Once Chinggis Khan had gained lordship over all the countries around the Mountain of Belgian, it happened one night that the white knight came to him again, and said: Chinggis Khan, the will of Immortal God is that you should pass beyond the Mountain of Beligan [MS L “towards the west”], and conquer the kingdoms and lands of diverse nations, and place them under your power. And so that you know that what I say to you comes from the Immortal God, arise and go to the Mountain of Belgian with all your people, and when you shall come to the place where the sea joins the mountain, there you shall descend, you and your people, **and you shall bow nine times towards the east**, praying to the Immortal God that he will show you the way to go; and He shall show you the way, and you and your people shall be able to pass.

When Chinggis Khan awoke, he believed the vision true, and immediately he commanded his people that they ride, for he wished to pass the mountain of

⁸⁵⁵ Many Islamic traditions imagine similar encounters between Alexander and the Angels of God, and a mounted Gabriel arrives in similar fashion in an Andalusian Islamic account of “Companions of the Cave” to do in the emperor Decius. See Vázquez, “Siete Durmientes de Éfeso,” [40–117].

⁸⁵⁶ *Flor des Histoires*, III.1, p. 147.

⁸⁵⁷ [Note needed on Burqan Qaldun]

Beligan. Then all rode until they came to the sea, and they were not able to pass over it, for there was no ford there great or small. And right away Chinggis Khan descended from his horse, and made all his people dismount, and nine times they bowed towards the east, and they prayed to the all-powerful and non-mortal God that he show them the way to pass. All that night Chinggis Khan and [his people] passed [in prayers, and the following morning] Chinggis Khan saw that the sea was now nine paces further (*mer estoit esloignée*) from the mountain, and it had left a large and good path. When Chinggis Khan and his people saw this happening (*aventure*), they marveled at it and rendered thanks unto Our Lord (*Nostre Seigneur*), and crossed over to the lands of the west.⁸⁵⁸

Like Matthew Paris and other Latin Christian authors, Hayton uses the narrative trope of the “enclosed peoples” to etiologically explain why the Mongols had been absent from history until their recent emergence, and the depth and breadth of the Alexander traditions provide room for this accommodation.⁸⁵⁹ The connections between Gog and Magog and the Lost Tribes of Israel are also readily apparent in Hayton’s adaptation. The appearance of the “nine-foot path” between the mountain and sea further makes it difficult to determine which of the two geographical features has moved on behalf of the Mongols’ prayer. If it is the sea that has moved, then the story is a typological echo of the climatic crossing of Exodus 13-15, and Chinggis Khan is a Mongol Moses. If it is the mountain that has moved, then Chinggis Khan is a

⁸⁵⁸ Hayton, *La Flor Des Histoires de La Terre Oriente*, III.6-7, pp. 152-4; *Quant Changuis Can ot conquise la seignorie de toutes les contrées qui estoient deça la montaigne de Belgian, une nuit li avint qu’il vit en avision autre foiz le chevalier blanc, e dit: “Changuis Can, la volenté de l’immortel Deu est que tu doies passer la montaigne de Belgian, [vers occident], e conquerras les roiaumes e les terres de diverses nacions, e auras sur eaus la signories. E à ce que tu saches que ce que jeo te di est par l’immortel Deu, lève sus, e va au mont de Belgian, o toute ta gent; e quant tu seras venu la ou la mer es joignant à la montaigne, tu descendras, tu et ta gent, e ix foiz t’agenoilleras vers orient, e prieras le Deu immortel qu’il te monstre voie d’aler, e il te mounstrera chemin, e porras passer tu e ta gent. Quant Changuis Can fu esveillez, il crust bien à la vision, e tant tost commanda à sa gent que chevauchassent, car il voloit passer le mont de Belgian. Donc touz chevauchierent tan qu’il vindrent à la mer, e ne pooient outre passer, car il n’i avoit pas ne grant ne petit. E tan tost, Changuis Can descendist de son chevau, e fist descendre toute sa gent, e vers orient s’agenoillèrent ix foiz, e prièrent le tout puissant e non mortel Deu que leur demonstrast voie à passer. Tote cele nuit demor Changuis Can [et sa gent en oroisons; et landemain matin,] Canguis Can vit que la mer estoit esloignée de la montaigne ix piès, et avoit laissée voie large e belle. Quant Changuis Can e sa gent virent ceste aventure, se merveillerent, e rendirent graces à Nostre Seigneur, e passerent vers les parties d’occident.*

⁸⁵⁹ Cf. Jūzjānī, *Ṭabakāt-i-Nāṣirī*, 937-54. See also Jackson, *Mongols and the Islamic World*, 19-22. The closest parallel to Hayton’s variation of enclosure and escape is an episode that appears in the *Ṭabakāt-i Nāṣirī* of Al-Jūzjānī, written in the distant Delhi Sultanate. The sequence of events and shared details between the two accounts is close enough to suggest a shared written source, but Al-Jūzjānī depicts the scene in terms that suggest Chinggis Khan is a charlatan. are portrayed as misguided rather than miraculous.

new Alexander. Either way, structural elements of these narratives have been reversed to fit the historical conditions of the Mongol conquests. In the framework of *Anagenesis*, the figure is both Moses and Alexander. He is a prophet for his people leading them on a journey to a recovery of their ancestral God, one who is secretly everyone's ancestral God. He is also a conqueror and crusader, inspired by that same God to transform the political and cultural landscape of the whole globe and pave the way for the ultimate triumph of the Christian faith.

Chinggis Khan's genuflections are both *anagenetic* reflection of Alexander's mountain-moving prayer, but they also represent an ethnographic etiology of Mongol religious practices, ones that are imagined by the Mongols themselves as instituted by their venerable ancestor. In the *Secret History*, the young Temujin, who has not yet earned his title as Chinggis Khan, takes shelter at Burqan Qaldun to escape members of the rival Merkit tribe.⁸⁶⁰ In gratitude to the mountain for serving as his place of refuge, Temujin institutes a nine-fold prayer of thanksgiving to the mountain and declares that his descendants should follow suit:

Thanks to Qaldun Burqan
My life, a grasshopper's life,
Was indeed shielded!
But I was greatly frightened.

Every morning I will sacrifice to Burqan Qaldun, every day I will pray to it: the offspring of my offspring shall be mindful of this and do likewise!' He spoke and facing the sun, hung his belt around his neck, put his hat over his hand, beat his breast with his fist, *and nine times kneeling down towards the sun, he offered a libation and a prayer.*⁸⁶¹

In *The Flower of Histories*, the Mongol's continued veneration of Burqan Qaldun is imagined as a link back to this moment of divinely guided exodus, a miracle whose ultimate source is a Christian God. While Hayton fostered a parallel between Christian and Mongol belief throughout

⁸⁶⁰ *Secret History*, II.102, trans. De Rachewiltz, 31

⁸⁶¹ *Secret History*, II.103, trans. De Rachewiltz, 33.

the history, he completely collapses this distinction in the moment of the mountain-moving miracle. In Contrast, Hayton's translations of "immortal God," emphasize the deity as shared between the actors in the story and the audience without, and when Chinggis and his people witness the path that has been cleared for them, they render thanks to "*Nostre Seigneur*." The "Immortal God" who leads the Mongols in their Exodus is now revealed to be "Our lord": the God of Hayton the Armenian Christian, and the God of the French court whom he hopes to win to his cause.⁸⁶²

In relationship to the *Apocalypse of Pseudo-Methodius* and the other Christian iterations of Alexander's Gates, the Mongols are not enclosed by a moving mountain and a world conqueror, but rather liberated from their confinement.⁸⁶³ These reversals address the apocalyptic fears circulating about the Mongols – depicting them both as the Lost Tribes and as Gog and Magog – and turn the narratives on their head, portraying the migrant people in a positive light instead. Hayton implies that if Alexander, following God's command, was responsible for enclosing the Mongols in the mountains, then it is only so that Chinggis Khan might liberate them at the divinely appointed time. Chinggis Khan becomes the eschatological twin of Alexander, and while the people he brings out of the mountains are destined to conquer the world, they will do so on behalf of the Christian faith. Although Hayton does not imaginatively baptize Chinggis Khan the way he does with his descendants, he casts the figure as a semi-conscious agent in the plans of an "immortal God" who has already been revealed to the Christians of the West and is now being revealed to the rest of the world. By using these several forms of *anagenesis*, Hayton it is Christians, who can "recognize" the Mongols for who they

⁸⁶² This is not merely an act of rapprochement of suggesting that the two faiths are compatible with one another, but one that claims Chinggis as a semi-conscious servant of a distinctly Christian God. Though the Christian forces are militarily inferior to their Mongol counterparts, the fact that they have already recognized the "True God" of the Universe and his plan at work in history means that they nonetheless occupy a position of superiority in the narrative.

really are, and so Christians (French, Armenian, and Nestorian alike) will be responsible for leading the Mongols to their ultimate political and historical destiny.

Conclusion

Hayton's geo-political vision was so expansive precisely because its practical application was dead in the water by the time his book was complete. Since he had left Armenia and traveled to France, the Mongol Ilkhans of Persia had continued to adopt Islam and began pursuing a policy of rapprochement with the Mamluks. With Acre lost in 1291, no staging ground existed for a large Crusader force to land, and no foothold would ever re-established in Palestine. While Hayton's account failed to precipitate its hallowed alliance or any successful military action against the Mamluk sultanate, his account of the Mongol Empire, its origin, and its dominions, further intensified the interest of the Latin West in this distant power.

Hayton's *Flowers of History* was more effective as an imaginative "lost cause" for later generations than an adequate proposal for contemporary alliance. Thus it appeared as the chosen account of Mongol origins in the *Book of Jean Mandeville*, whose ambitions of a Global Christian future had grown to fantastic proportions precisely because the practical prospects of further crusading adventures had diminished. Both Hayton and Rashīd al-Dīn functioned quite similarly in the way they portrayed the origins of Mongol people and Mongol power. Their stories of enclosure and escape serve as sites for incorporating Central Asian traditions into a "global history" that remains firmly established in longstanding authorities and expectations. These enduring fantasies did not simply reflect the singular gaze of "the West" upon "the East"; they were intentionally reflected and exploited by agents of the Mongols and their allies to

⁸⁶³ Moreover, it is not only the actions of the leader, but the entire people that earn this blessing. For a similarly inspired

secure the alliance and submission of Christian and Muslim communities, incorporating them within empire that increasingly imagined itself as universal in its extent.

These texts are thus indicative of the broad reaction to the rise of the Mongols throughout the 13th century: while they failed to anticipate the trajectory of the empire's present and future significance for the world, its amalgamation of the new and old added to the long legacy of ethnographic myth that would continue to dictate the hopes and fears of the Other in traditions to come. As fears of apocalyptic destruction and an immanent end gave way to the realities of an established Mongol dominion in the generations that followed, depictions of the Mongols nonetheless preserved this legacy of ethnographic revelation, even as they moved into new directions. Both positive and negative portrayals of nomadic peoples become crystallized in the textual records of the geographic margin, which remain in a liminal space somewhere between historical time and an atemporal barbarian otherworld. ; these tropes returned with each subsequent threat of invasion or hope of deliverance by a nomadic invader. Hayton's transformation of the mountain moving motif from a story of divinely sanctioned enclosure to one of divinely sanctioned exodus demonstrates the ways that shared narratives were adapted and transformed through a whirligig of written and oral sources, addressing the shifting concerns of medieval communities while remaining curiously familiar.

Conclusion to Part 3

What I have strived to show in this long-form sketch of the different reactions to migrations and invasions, is the flexible valence of these accounts to match the contingencies of history and the perspectives of different writers, patrons, and peoples. In our exploration of these

collective miracle, cf. the story of the destruction of Jericho in Joshua 6:1-27.

various forms of apocalyptic ethnography, we have assembled many of the pieces that combined across centuries to form the particulars of *Mandeville's* account; the conflated name of “Goth and Magoth,” the moving mountain, the conflation between eschatological agents of salvation and destruction. The voracious appropriation of textual sources results in a curious doubling of the narratives of enclosure and escape drawn from the *Pseudo-Methodius* tradition. Hayton’s depiction of Chingis Khan leading his people in prayer to escape the bounds of “Mount Belgean” is repeated nearly verbatim in *Mandeville's* account of the Mongol Empire, which sees the eastern kingdom as a site of boundless wealth and evangelical opportunity.⁸⁶⁴ In *Mandeville*, the distant empire of the Mongols has been rehabilitated through Hayton’s efforts, its Christian future ensured through its God-driven past. The praised lavished upon the Mongols by *Mandeville* is only exceeded by that granted to the lands of Prester John, imagined as a still living monarch, offering further promise for riches and reward at the margins of the world. Between these two kingdoms lies “Jews of the ten tribes... which men call Goth and Magoth.”⁸⁶⁵ While *Mandeville* offers a promising portrait of the Mongols with the help of Hayton, the Jewish communities of Europe, in contrast, remain trapped in conspiratorial associations with the unrealized Mongol threat of the 1240s. As Heng suggests in her study of “Race-making” in different European accounts of the Mongols throughout the 13th and 14th centuries, the Mongol Empire provided European Christians with an image of an expansive and incorporative empire, that was projected by *Mandeville* onto a potential Christian future of conversion and conquest.⁸⁶⁶ While “Saracens,” “Tartars,” and other “pagan” peoples are presented as potential partners in trade, allies in war, or converts to the Christian faith, the collapsing of antagonism and difference between these different peoples was predicated on further elevating the distinction

⁸⁶⁴ *Mandeville*, ed. Deluz, 380-6; Higgins, 136-8.

⁸⁶⁵ *Mandeville*, ed. Deluz, 428, Higgins, 157.

between Christians and Jews.⁸⁶⁷ *Mandeville* envisions the contest between Judaism and Christianity as the defining conflict in all regions of the earth, imagining a return of Jewish temporal power through a massive barbarian invasion as a fitting coda to world history.

Rather than insisting on the inevitability of the anti-Semitic combination of these different narratives names, and connections – tracing these different forms of *anagenesis* displays how this portrayal was consciously constructed by *Mandeville*'s author out of his collection of traditions. While the account of Hayton – carried over relatively unchanged in *Mandeville*'s text – strips the negative elements of the *Pseudo-Methodius Legend* to make Chinggis Khan a hero, the author of *Mandeville* amplifies the Anti-Semitic material in his account of the Lost Tribes and Gog and Magog. The author of *Mandeville* preserves the conflation of Petrus Comestor and the conspiratorial twists of Matthew Paris while scrubbing any mention of the Mongols from this tradition, while avoiding the observations of the texts other his other major sources, like Vincent Beauvais, who had rejected the association between the Jews and Gog and Magog.⁸⁶⁸ *Mandeville* moreover shifts the entire Noachic descent of the Jewish people from their biblical ancestor, Shem, to Japhet, the reputed father of Magog.⁸⁶⁹ The careful negotiation of these many strands of tradition is engineered to deny and dispossess any Jewish claims to sharing the same scriptures or history with Christians.

If an etiology of enclosure imagines a distant people as dwelling somehow outside the bounds of time, then this is perhaps the most significant (and devastating) legacy of this tradition is its reflection to create similar temporal divisions within medieval societies. The preservation of Jewish language and Jewish difference is portrayed as a sign of apocalyptic conspiracy, while at

⁸⁶⁶ Heng, *Invention of Race*, 378-9.

⁸⁶⁷ Heng, *Invention of Race*, 383.

⁸⁶⁸ For Vincent's rejection of Petrus Comestor, see Anderson, *Alexander's Gate*, 71.

⁸⁶⁹ On the significance of this genealogical shift, see Akbari "Placing the Jews," 37-8.

the same time the Jewish inhabitant of Christian cities were further subject to literal and ideological enclosures.⁸⁷⁰ These practices reinforced a semiotic system of difference that forever associated Jewish figures with the past (the Old Law of the sign of the ten commandments), the future (the fear of the Judaized Gog and Magog), and the absence of time. Such projections reflect the “denial of coevalness” that Fabian claims are used by typological to divide the peoples of the world into different stages of development and different values of existence.⁸⁷¹

Yet even this conflation of the Lost Tribes and Gog and Magog, born out of an antisemitic twist on the parallel stories of enclosure and escape could be turned on its head. Andrew Gow’s study of the “Red Jews” in late Medieval and Early Modern Germany displays how vernacular translations and adapt of this legends were both deployed by German Christians to stir up suspicion and justify acts of persecution against Jewish communities, and by Jews themselves, who hoped for eschatological deliverance from Christian persecution and oppression.⁸⁷² These “Red Jews” were even briefly embraced by Christians as a narrative of their own deliverance in the latter half of the 16th century, when pamphlets circulated in German lands that a the people would arrive to save the people of Christendom from the threat of the Ottoman Empire.⁸⁷³ Yet ultimately the legacy of these successive iterations of identity making and migratory anxiety tended to settle on those who were deemed easy targets of suspicion. While *Mandeville* describes an imaginary place inhabited by an imaginary people, these impositions of anxiety and distance have the power to reflect themselves back on much closer and much more vulnerable communities at home. Such stories are far from relics of the past.

⁸⁷⁰ For the way Christian ideas of supersession contributed to the *temporalization* of Jewish belief, see Zacher [pages].

⁸⁷¹ Fabian, *Time and the Other*, 37-8.

⁸⁷² Gow, *The Red Jews*, 1-12. On 21st century Islamic interpretations of the Jews as Gog and Magog, via their purported descent from the Khazars, see Cook, *Studies of Muslim Apocalyptic*, 102-3, 206-7,

⁸⁷³ Gow, *The Red Jews*, 162-175.

Conclusion: The Battle of Beginnings

Where Anagenesis Fits into a Global Middle Ages

Anagenesis offers an avenue of inquiry in the project of a “Global Middle Ages.” The conception of Global Middle Ages that emerges for this dissertation is one that crosses many different divisions of space, time, language, religion, state, nation, and so forth, but also aims to construct those very boundaries to give communities a sense of purpose and continuity across time. The specificity of *anagenesis*, as I have defined it in this dissertation, is limited by my own knowledge and personal perspective. I have tried to exercise caution in any application of the term in which such claims of continuity and connection might be used to erase, rather than acknowledge, the diversity of human communities. *Anagenesis* is not the sole method for constructing time during the “Middle Ages”, nor does its definition in terms of monotheistic creation and the exegetical narratives of Jewish, Christian, and Islamic traditions suggest that the mantle of the “medieval” might be extended only to these subjects and no further. The discussion of the Mongol Empire in the concluding chapter of this dissertation intimates that *anagenesis* — as I have defined it — was one of many forms of revisionist history the Mongol Empire deployed to make its conquests and claims to rule legible to different cultures. Mongol incorporations of Turkic origin stories, also thread through the traditions of Chinese historiography, present another process of periodization that re-ordered the world in terms both new and old. Like any theoretical term, *anagenesis* may prove useful to other scholars in their own research or encourage them to devise alternative ideas that better describe their objects of study.

The idea of *anagenesis* suggests a critical role that narratives of migration and conversion played in the Global Middle Ages. Episodes of migration and conversion mark periodic breaks in the narrative histories of peoples, since they reflect geographical and phenomenological

dislocations that transform a community's perception of itself and its place in space and time. When a community settles in a new place, adopts a new faith, or coalesces under a new name and identity – whether by choice or by force – they must consider how their cultural memories fit (or did not fit) into hegemonic narratives of history. As a result of conversion or migration, communities enter a new period of their history and enter into a new network of ideas thrust upon them by their new faith or new geopolitical status. To confront the challenges of these complex phenomena, accounts of conversion and migration collapse geographical dislocations and religious changes which many communities undergo into simple, comprehensible stories. In stories about the baptisms of famous kings, monarchs signify the collective conversion of their people. Accounts of nations moving compactly and completely like “billiard balls” (as Peter Heather describes them) from one landmark to another before settling in a promised land do not represent the reality of migration and the cultural changes that occurred over generations.⁸⁷⁴ Yet such narratives should not be dismissed as myths unworthy of historical study. Instead, they should be recognized as attempts to define identities through the construction of shared narratives. Such simple stories have staying power, and “modern European countries trace themselves back, if at a pinch, to a new political community which came into existence at some point in the mid- and later first millennium.”⁸⁷⁵ In *anagenesis*, the significance of “conversion” and “migration” is expanded far beyond explicit accounts of such periodic breaks. Referential echoes of the old homeland and old faith appear in stories set in the new world, while stories about the “time before” conversion and migration are re-shaped to anticipate the changes that

⁸⁷⁴ Peter Heather, *Empires and Barbarians: The Fall of Rome and the Birth of Europe* (Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press, 2010), 12-13.

⁸⁷⁵ Heather, *Empires and Barbarians*, xv. See also Patrick J. Geary, *The Myth of Nations: The Medieval Origins of Europe* (Princeton University Press, 2003).

wait in the future.⁸⁷⁶ By revising the past, *anagenesis* reifies the process of “conversion” and acculturation that has accrued over generations of acculturation to a new hegemonic religious tradition.

In deconstructing and challenging narratives of European exceptionalism, a Global Middle Ages also requires critical attention to ideas of Race, Gender, Ethnicity, and other hierarchies in the construction of identity. In addition to highlighting themes of migration and conversion, the exploration of *anagenesis* displays the importance of these themes in its imagined claims of historical and genealogical continuity. Acts of *anagenesis*, mediated through “exegetical cultures,” often reinforce the social and political hierarchies that underscore these communities’ privileged claims to making the past. As disparate communities of scholars insisted on the ultimate authority of scripture over questions of law, philosophy, science, and history, they also emphasized their own authority, claiming exclusive rights to the interpretation of sacred text. In searching for sites in which to merge multiple pasts, *anagenesis* often enacts its hybrid histories through ideas about human gender and genealogical difference. Rewriting the origins of peoples and the migrations and conversions that transformed their identities, acts of *anagenesis* often “write women out,” shifting focus from female bodies and biological reproduction to masculine heroes and patriarchal communities who are granted the privileges of knowing and rediscovering history.⁸⁷⁷ *Anagenesis*’ forms of “time-making” – combining multiple historical traditions – can also be intertwined with acts of “race-making,” to use Geraldine Heng’s term, hierarchizing different human communities around an imagined moment of genetic transformation or rupture in the past.⁸⁷⁸ In attempting to explain how “foreign”

⁸⁷⁶ Warren Walker, “Triple-Tiered Migration in the Book of Dede Korkut,” in *The Literature of Emigration and Exile*, ed. James Whitlark and Wendell M. Aycock (Texas Tech University Press, 1992), 23–32.

⁸⁷⁷ Patrick J. Geary, *Women at the Beginning : Origin Myths from the Amazons to the Virgin Mary* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2006), 26–42.

⁸⁷⁸ Heng, *The Invention of Race*, 33.

peoples fit into familiar narratives of human origins, some acts of *anagenesis* mapped scriptural genealogies onto geographical regions, or exegetically expanded on scriptural episodes to forge etiological narratives of racial difference.⁸⁷⁹ Others projected current attitudes of ethnic and religious antagonism back into past. Christian interpretations of Muslims as “Ishmaelites,” “Saracens,” and “Hagarenes” imagined the origins of conflict between these two religious communities as emerging not in the 7th Century CE, but in the disputes of Abraham’s family described in the book of Genesis.⁸⁸⁰ Keeping in mind the particular cultural expectations and institutional organizations of different “exegetical cultures” is key in understanding the broader implications of different instances of *anagenesis*, and how they attempt to discover a historically specific present within a universally imagined past.

Orosius and the Sea-Shells: Another Perspective

Anagenesis is a process of periodization, one of many methods of making claims upon the past. I began this dissertation with the story of Orosius and the sea-shells, conceiving the disparate interpretations of these signs of the past as part of a discursive “battle of beginnings”: stories about the world’s creation signified wider cultural conflicts that challenged claims to political, social, and cultural unity within the bounds of the Roman world and beyond. By finding evidence of the biblical flood within the records of Roman tradition, Orosius performed an act of *anagenesis* that sought to establish the primacy of Christian history over all other accounts of the world’s beginning. By claiming a deeper and clearer picture of the past, Orosius

⁸⁷⁹ The idea of the “Curse of Ham,” for instance, etiological explained both the origins of “blackness” and the enslavement of African peoples to an episode in Genesis 9:20-7. See David Goldenberg, *The Curse of Ham: Race and Slavery in Early Judaism, Christianity, and Islam* (Princeton University Press, 2009); *Black and Slave: The Origins and History of the Curse of Ham* (De Gruyter, 2017).

⁸⁸⁰ Gregg, *Shared Stories*, 117-222; Katharine Scarfe Beckett, *Anglo-Saxon Perceptions of the Islamic World* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 92-108; Irfan Shahîd, *Rome and the Arabs: A Prolegomenon to the Study of Byzantium and the Arabs* (Washington, D.C.: Dumbarton Oaks Research Library and Collection, 1984), 123-41.

encompassed the rival traditions of the Roman world – and the communities who possessed them – within Christian time and Christian terms. I return to this scene again, and to the “battle of beginnings,” to consider how *anagenesis* relates to the ideas of the “Middle Ages,” “Modernity,” and other periodizations that are the building blocks and stumbling blocks of historical scholarship.

From the vantage point of the twenty-first century, Orosius’ recollection of sea-shells embedded within a distant mountain gestures towards very different narratives of the world’s beginning and different systems of ordering and interpreting the world. These shells may be reckoned as remnants of a past that points back not to a biblical flood, but to geological epochs far deeper and more distant than Orosius himself ever imagined. As the sciences of geology and paleontology developed out of the tradition of “natural history,” such fossils have played a central role in revising estimates of the earth’s age, pushing its origin back by millions and eventually billions of years.⁸⁸¹ From this perspective, Orosius, like his “pagan” opponents, was correct in concluding that the shells signify that these mountains were once covered by the seas, but unable to recognize the length and depth of this historical event. In the vast expanse of geological time, many of the inland regions of contemporary human settlement around the Mediterranean Sea were indeed underwater. The movement of tectonic plates resulted in the formation, desiccation, and rehydration of the entire Mediterranean basin across a span of several hundred million years before the beginnings of human evolution and the subsequent migration to and settlement of the region.⁸⁸² By invoking an object of “natural history”, Orosius sought to step outside the social and political conflicts of his contemporary moment to place the truth of

⁸⁸¹ See Frank H. T. Rhodes, *Origins: The Search for Our Prehistoric Past* (Cornell University Press, 2016), 4, 16-23; Carlo Ginzburg, “Medals and Shells: On Morphology and History, Once Again,” *Critical Inquiry* 45, no. 2 (December 17, 2018): 380–95.

⁸⁸² Peregrine Horden and Nicholas Purcell, *The Corrupting Sea: A Study of Mediterranean History* (Oxford, Wiley-Blackwell, 2000), 299.

scripture as more important than questions of historiography. As a historian, Orosius recognized the utility of shaping the earth as a way of telling time, conjuring a numinous and semi-imaginary space in which proof of biblical history manifests itself to those who believe. He writes the earth so that it can be read. Yet this earth and its inhabitants persist outside the world of texts and continue to offer new possibilities for discovery. From this perspective, Orosius appears as *naive* as his predecessors, failing to see *then* what we know *now*, unwittingly embedding within his narrative of history a sign of its future undoing.

The narrative of an “old earth” does not point merely to the “beginning” of the earth. It can also be used as the foundation for the narrative of a “new beginning” within human history. In *Time and the Other*, Fabian identifies this rediscovery of the earth’s pre-human past as a “naturalization of time,” the beginning of a “modernity.”⁸⁸³ As scholars in the resurgent tradition of “natural history” struggled to reconcile their findings in the field with scriptural accounts of the earth’s age, figures like Charles Lyell and Charles Darwin conceptualized new fields of study, such as geology and evolutionary science, that could provide satisfying answers to the apparent depth of times evidenced by fossils.⁸⁸⁴ According to Fabian, such discoveries resulted in the “achieved secularization of time,” transforming the earth from a depthless biblical mirror to a many-layered object of science.⁸⁸⁵ Severed from the “incorporative” legacies of medieval Christian tradition and its concerns with the “circum-Mediterranean,” “modern” time operates in terms of difference, dividing the world into disparate stages of quasi-evolutionary development.⁸⁸⁶ In contrast to the “mythic” time of the “premodern era,” Fabian reckons “modern” time as political, spurring the efforts of European empires to expand across the globe,

⁸⁸³ Fabian, *Time and the Other*, 11.

⁸⁸⁴ Fabian, *Time and the Other*, 12-3; Rhodes, *Origins*, 24.

⁸⁸⁵ Fabian, *Time and the Other*, 11.

⁸⁸⁶ Fabian, *Time and the Other*, 25-7.

ostensibly on a noble mission on behalf of the disparate peoples of the world to bring them up to speed with the *now* of the modern present.⁸⁸⁷ Or so Fabian puts it.

Whereas *anagenesis* operates on assumptions of a universal monotheistic creation, other forms of periodization define absolute or relative beginnings. Through beginnings, moments of creation, rupture, or rediscovery, they envision an overarching order to time. Fabian's claim to a new beginning—like other narratives of rupture and difference that define the “medieval” and the “modern”—can be contested. As Kathleen Davis observes,

Fabian posits a foundational, qualitative break in the nature of time that is apparently outside politics. Rather than considering the narrative of “secularized time” as political, as part of a process that, like anthropology, “at once constitutes and demotes its objects,” Fabian considers it simply “achieved.”⁸⁸⁸

To distinguish the medieval and modern in terms of “sacred” and “secular” ideas of time, Fabian does not dwell on the political implications of the two periods; rather, he acknowledges the medieval epoch to quickly dismiss it from discussion. Rather than treating these divisions between “medieval” and “modern” and “sacred” and “secular” as a crucial rupture in the history of thought, Fabian's ideas about the “politics of time” are comparable to those of the Venerable Bede, according to Davis:

Like Bede, [Fabian] thereby grounds a political order by attaching it to a relation with the sacred, at the point of a division in time. The fact that this attachment to a relation with the sacred takes the form of a claim to detachment does not alter this fundamental similarity.⁸⁸⁹

With secularization already “achieved,” Fabian can conduct his examination of anthropology and imperialism without considering how religious beliefs and religious communities continued to exert influence upon these “modern” institutions. He ignores that religious ideas continue beyond

⁸⁸⁷ Fabian, *Time and the Other*, 24.

⁸⁸⁸ Davis, *Periodization and Sovereignty*, 3.

⁸⁸⁹ Davis, *Periodization and Sovereignty*, 2.

their discursive development.⁸⁹⁰ Similarly, Orosius dismisses “pagan” claims upon the past so that he might *naturalize* whatever sources and methodologies of pre-Christian and non-Christian tradition he finds useful for his history. Like Davis’ *Periodization and Sovereignty*, Bruno Latour’s *We Have Never Been Modern* deconstructs the expectations of objectivity in scientific and historical inquiry. By offering an “anthropological” analysis of the “modern,” Latour espouses the myth of a “Modern Constitution” in which the “natural” world of scientific inquiry and the “social” world of human communities are severed from one another and available to intellectual dissection.⁸⁹¹ This false dichotomy enables a “proliferation of hybrids,” intersections between ideas, objects, institutions, ecological and economic zones, etc. that inevitably cross the imagined boundaries between nature and society as well as between then human and non-human worlds.⁸⁹²

This discussion of Orosius and Fabian is not meant to reify the difference between “medieval” and “modern” forms of thought, or between *anagenesis* and other processes of periodization. I do not mean to criticize Orosius for forgetting to consult his Darwin alongside his Ovid, or to take Fabian to task for not mentioning Orosius in his excellent critique of 20th-century anthropology. Rather, I am highlighting the similarities between acts of *anagenesis* and other processes of periodization that operate within alternative systems of reference but maintain similar narrative structures. Rather than a perspective on the past being absent, Orosius’s work marks the divisions between “Christian” and “pagan” time as a matter of knowledge, interpretation, and phenomenology; he uses the very forms of *being in time* and *making time*

⁸⁹⁰ Fabian does not consider how the “incorporative” colonial activities of Christian missionaries continued alongside the “secular” imperial projects that gave rise to the development of natural history and anthropological science. Only in a brief footnote, 190, n. 23, does Fabian observe that many anthropologists were either missionaries themselves or were supported by missionary societies.

⁸⁹¹ Bruno Latour, *We Have Never Been Modern*, trans. Catherine Porter (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1993), 13-15.

from within time that many scholars have claimed are the sole province of the modern era.⁸⁹³ For Fabian, as for Orosius, the discovery of a new order of ages refers to a beginning deep in the past and to a new beginning at a turning point in history. Other forms of periodization refer to their own locus of beginning (absolute or relative) to establish the origins of objects, ideas, peoples, and institutions in a space and time that relies upon the continuity of things across time.

This “battle of beginnings” demonstrates that *anagenesis* functioned as one of many mutable processes of periodization past and present. Acts of *anagenesis*, like other forms of periodization, sought to establish present narratives in relation to “beginnings” that define the order of history and the limits of human communities. In the case of *anagenesis*, such claims were set in reference to an “absolute” beginning of time and a God who acted upon history “from the perspective of eternity.”⁸⁹⁴ Other forms of periodization might select different beginnings or order those beginnings in different ways. Be that as it may, such beginnings will continue to be shaped and reshaped by the changing attitudes, methodologies, and technologies of exegetical cultures. Fault lines are drawn between different stories of self and other, then and now, and these divisions reference different loci where difference and continuity can be shown as parts that stand for the whole.

Filmer and Locke: *Anagenesis* and its Challengers in the Emergence of Modernity

To conclude, I follow the idea of *anagenesis* across the divide between the “medieval” and “modern” periods, looking at the establishment of new “beginnings” that operate outside of the temporal terms set by *anagenesis* and also at cases where *anagenesis* narratives were

⁸⁹² Latour, *We Have Never Been Modern*, 39-41, 138-145.

⁸⁹³ E.g. Fabian, *Time and the Other*, 24-6.

⁸⁹⁴ Auerbach, “Figura”, 42; cf. Al-Azmeh, 32; Dinshaw, 45.

reinterpreted and reinvigorated by communities seeking to connect their present institutions back to the “beginnings” in scriptural and sacred history. When new periodic narratives diverge from the temporal logic of *anagenesis*, they often displace the exegetical authority from scriptural reference to alternative sites of etiology. In his *Two Treatises of Government*, the English philosopher John Locke (1632-1704 CE) places his theories on the foundations of society and sovereignty in reference to the *Patriarcha* of the English monarchist Robert Filmer (1588-1653 CE).⁸⁹⁵ Filmer’s *Patriarcha* presents a new form of *anagenesis* that acts within the contexts and concerns of 17th-century English political theory by inventing a scriptural origin and genealogy for its articulation of absolutist monarchy.⁸⁹⁶ Locke’s *Two Treatises*, in turn, envisions an alternative “beginning” for political society. By contesting Filmer’s interpretations of the Bible, Locke subordinates all scriptural traditions to a level of secondary authority. He encompasses them within a larger idea of world history that is first and foremost described by “Reason,” which he imagines as preceding “Revelation.” By criticizing Filmer’s theory of Adamic sovereignty, Locke removes the origins of government writ large from narratives of biblical beginning. Departing from the temporal order of *anagenesis*, Locke constructs his new narrative of history – and its understanding of present political concerns – by discovering and interpreting the evidence of an alternative beginning: the “State of Nature.” Taken as another instance of the “battle of beginnings,” these two texts show that some acts of *anagenesis* continued to emerge to address new cultural contexts, and that other forms of periodization inherited elements of the form even as they sought alternative sources of temporal order.

Filmer wrote *Patriarcha* in 1638 in the year before the conflicts between King Charles I

⁸⁹⁵ John Locke, *Two Treatises of Government*, ed. Peter Laslett, Student ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988); Robert Filmer, *Patriarcha and Other Political Works of Sir Robert Filmer*, ed. Peter Laslett (Oxford: Blackwell, 1949).

⁸⁹⁶ On the contexts of the work’s composition and publication, see Laslett’s introduction in *Patriarcha*, 3-5, 33-43.

(1600-1649), the Scottish Presbyterians, and the English Parliament broke out into the wars that resulted in the king's execution, the establishment of Cromwell's commonwealth, and Filmer's own death in prison in 1654. While Filmer considers the legal peculiarities of English history and the conflicts between king and parliament, the overarching thrust of his argument lies in locating the beginnings of political society. Filmer claims that the original government of the world was monarchical, modeled after God's own dominion over the universe. Equating the "right of fatherhood" with the "royal authority of kings," Filmer claims that monarchy was introduced into the world at Adam's creation and that this first "Patriarch" was granted "Private Dominion" over the world entire.⁸⁹⁷ As an act of *anagenesis*, Filmer's *Patriarcha* attempts to locate the origins of its present society with claims of continuity to a scriptural past. Because monarchical and paternal power were joined at creation, they are both "natural," passed down genetically to the present in a continuous line reaching back to Adam.

Filmer treats his assertions of Adamic monarchy as a rediscovery of the scripture's true meaning and the world's original order that has only recently been neglected and obscured. He argues that the idea that "Mankind is naturally endowed and born with freedom... and at liberty to choose what form of government it pleases" is a perfidious innovation "hatched" by "Schoolmen and other divines" of the "last hundred years" who have forgotten "that the desire of liberty was the cause of the fall of Adam."⁸⁹⁸ As might be expected, Filmer spends much more time attacking the opinions of other scholars than he does explaining how his claims of Adamic monarchy might derive from the scriptures. When other political theorists diverge from his views, as do the "heathen philosophers," it is their "ignorance of the creation" which

⁸⁹⁷ *Patriarcha*, I.8, ed. Laslett, 63-4; cf. *Two Treatises*, I.iii.23, 157.

⁸⁹⁸ *Patriarcha*, I.1, 53.

“occasioned” such “errors.”⁸⁹⁹ Filmer’s insistence on the scriptural foundations of royal and paternal authority turned all later monarchies into resonances and re-instantiations of this original grant to Adam, whether they be discovered in the biblical text, the histories of Greece and Rome, or the events of more recent English history. His discussion of Adam becomes a history of the English Parliament, in which he suggests that the institution has always served at the grace of the king, and any alternative example (e.g. the *Magna Charta*) was a crime against God and nature.⁹⁰⁰ Filmer’s *Patriarcha* presents a form of *anagenesis* at work many centuries after the ends “Medieval” era; the problems it addresses are those of English government in the first half of the seventeenth century, its solutions are made by appealing to the beginnings of Genesis to overturn centuries of legal and political theory.

The *Patriarcha*’s invention of Adamic monarchy possesses a legacy beyond its ephemeral (and unsuccessful) formulation in the days before the English Civil War. When Filmer’s work was first published in print in 1680, its claims of tracing monarchy to human creation, divine institution, and genetic continuity were seen as freshly relevant in the wake of the Exclusion Crisis, a major challenge to the English monarchy two decades after its Restoration.⁹⁰¹ As Parliament debated whether it had the votes and power to disinherit James, Duke of York, from succeeding his brother King Charles II on account of the duke’s Catholic faith, advocates of royal power renewed popular consciousness of the *Patriarcha*. Filmer’s appeal to patriarchal continuity aims to both naturalize and sacralize political power, deriving it from the biological act of reproduction and the authority of scripture. As a relic written by royalist martyr, it served as an admonition from a pre-Lapsarian age before the English Revolution whose sins now risked being repeated. As members of Parliament considered

⁸⁹⁹ *Patriarcha*, I.12, 80.

⁹⁰⁰ *Patriarcha*, III.13, 117.

whether to intervene in the line of succession, *Patriarcha* offered an argument in favor of the supremacy of kings and the fundamentally “natural” power of succession. The present and political meaning of the *Patriarchia* was precisely what inspired Locke to challenge Filmer’s text and to seek an alternative beginning for the origins of society that would support his own political beliefs.

While not published until after the “Glorious Revolution” of 1688, Locke’s *Two Treatises* was inspired by the Exclusion Crisis.⁹⁰² Locke composed the text at the behest of his patron, the earl of Shaftesbury, in order to support the claim that a community had the right to dethrone its ruler.⁹⁰³ To respond to these contemporary controversies, Locke considers the depths of space and time to “understand Political power right, and derive it from its Original.”⁹⁰⁴ Seeking a proponent of the old order to argue against, he finds an easy target in Filmer. In the *First Treatise of Government*, Locke deconstructs Filmer’s claims of sacral continuity between the beginning and the now, discovering an alternative locus of political origins in the process. Whereas Filmer “erects” his theory of Sovereignty upon a “double foundation, viz. that of *Property*, and that of *Fatherhood*,” Locke insists that these institutions have separate and sequential origins – both in biblical narrative and in a “state of Nature” that exists beyond scripture.⁹⁰⁵ Locke seeks to prove his case by a re-examining the biblical passages that form the ostensible foundations of Filmer’s philosophy. He devotes more of his *First Treatise* to interpreting and unpacking *Patriarcha*’s biblical sources than Filmer had done himself, reviewing Hebrew etymology and grammar to show that he possesses a better grasp of the

⁹⁰¹ See Laslett’s introduction in *Patriarcha*, 36-8.

⁹⁰² On the history of the printing of the *Two Treatises*, see Laslett’s introduction to *Two Treatises*, 3-15; On the timeline of its composition, see Laslett, 45-66.

⁹⁰³ See Laslett’s introduction to *Two Treatises*, 25-37.

⁹⁰⁴ *Two Treatises*, II.ii.4, 269.

⁹⁰⁵ *Two Treatises*, I.ix.84 ,204.

verses' meaning than his predecessor.⁹⁰⁶ Locke's major interpretive method, however, is to insist that the meaning of scripture is readily available to a reasonable reader.

Locke's attacks on the *Patriarcha* rely primarily on problems of time, challenging Filmer's attempts to construct *anagenetic* continuities between sacred history and more recent eras. For instance, he rejects Filmer's "*de facto*" argument that Adam's royal authority was already present at the moment of his creation: "He could not *de facto* be by Providence Constituted the Governor of the World at a time, when there was actually no Government, no Subjects to be governed."⁹⁰⁷ Whatever powers Locke grants or reserves from "Providence," he ultimately rejects the idea that God's intentions are present in time until they are brought into being. Locke takes similar issue with Filmer's claims that the "Right of Nature" can confer upon Adam such authority "in habit" before its enactment:

What is this Right of Nature? A Right Fathers have over their children by begetting them; *Geneatione jus acquiritur parentibus in liberos*, says our A—out of Grotius, [O. 223] The right then follows the begetting as arising from it; so that, according to this way of reasoning or distinguishing of our author, Adam, as soon as he was created, had a title only in habit, and not in act, which in plain English is, he had actually no title at all.⁹⁰⁸

Locke seeks to sever the connection between the natural, the political, and the sacred. He criticizes the idea that God's will can be appealed to as a "beginning" of things before they come to exist in the world itself. In this case, Locke conceives of time as sequential rather than typological. Whereas Filmer envisions every ruler as a typological repetition of Adam, the first king and father, Locke contends that Adam could not have been a king until there were subjects, and Adam could not have been a father until he had children. Even if God already envisioned these institutions from the vantage point of eternity, they could not be proven to exist since the

⁹⁰⁶ *Two Treatises*, I.iv.25-8.4, 156-61.

⁹⁰⁷ *Two Treatises*, I.iii.16, 152.

⁹⁰⁸ *Two Treatises*, I.iii.18, 154.

beginning of humanity's creation but only from the moment of their entrance into time.

In some respects, Locke reads the biblical text literally in order to unravel Filmer's claims, yet he does not insist on the reality of scriptural history. By critiquing Filmer and his grasp of the scriptures, Locke seeks to replace the infinite origin of etiologies of paternity, property, and political with a finite one. He takes issue with Filmer's claim that Adam was given the title of monarch "by Donation from God" in Genesis 1.28: "God blessed them [humankind], and God said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth and subdue it; and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the air and over every living thing that moves upon the earth."⁹⁰⁹ Filmer suggests that this scriptural passage is addressed exclusively to Adam and grants him a "Private Dominion" over the earth. Locke retorts that its words are "so far from proving Adam sole proprietor, that, on the contrary, it is a confirmation of the original community of all things amongst the sons of men."⁹¹⁰ He interprets the scriptural passage as confirming a common right to transform the abundance of the earth into one's own possessions; it is not the beginning of monarchy, but the beginning of property.

But is not the original beginning for Locke. Returning to the passage in a later chapter, he notes that the universality of God's donation of the earth to humans past, present, and future precedes any biblical confirmation of its existence:

God, I say, having made man and the world thus, spoke to him, (that is) directed him by his senses and reason, as he did the inferior animals by their sense and instinct, which were serviceable for his subsistence, and given him as the means of his preservation. *And therefore I doubt not, but before these words were pronounced, i. Gen. 28, 29. (if they must be understood literally to have been spoken) and without any such verbal donation,* man had a right to an use of the creatures, by the will and grant of God: for the desire, strong desire of preserving

⁹⁰⁹ *Two Treatises*, I.iv.21-4, 156-7. While Filmer claims this speech was directed to Adam, Adam does not appear until Genesis 2 and the Hebrew uses plural rather than singular pronouns.

⁹¹⁰ *Two Treatises*, I.iv.40, 169. In this respect, Locke is following the opinions of Francisco Suarez (1548-1617) and Hugo Grotius (1583-1648), whom Filmer disparages as "school men."

his life and being, having been planted in him as a principle of action by God himself, *reason, which was the voice of God in him*, could not but teach him and assure him, that pursuing that natural inclination he had to preserve his being, he followed the will of his maker, and therefore had a right to make use of those creatures, which by his reason or senses he could discover would be serviceable thereunto. And thus man's *property* in the creatures was founded upon the right he had to make use of those things that were necessary or useful to his being.⁹¹¹

Whether the events recounted in Genesis 1:28-9 happened or not, Locke portrays them as *subsequent* to the original grant of property, which occurred not through a verbal donation by God but through the “planting of human beings” at creation. This claim of precedence does not reject the authority of scriptural narrative. Rather, it subordinates the holy text to an alternative form of “divine” speech. For Locke, “Reason, which was the voice of God in him,” is the guiding principle in the interpretation of biblical texts and the broader understanding of the world. While Locke rejects the idea that sovereignty, monarchy, or paternity was established by God at humankind's creation, he suggests that reason was already present at this beginning and that the “rights” gained by humankind from God proceed from this original source.

Locke's ideas about scripture and the sacred resemble what Latour calls the “Crossed-Out God of the Moderns.”⁹¹² This tradition seeks “to settle the question of God by removing Him forever from the dual social and natural construction, while leaving Him presentable and usable nevertheless.”⁹¹³ For Locke, nature and reason exist prior to scriptural tradition, and thus are better foundations for recognizing the Creator's intentions for humankind than the easily-misconstrued scriptures. Yet whenever revelation does agree with reason, Locke has his scriptures ready at hand to imbue his portrait of the world with an intimation of divine order. By imagining reason as prior to scripture, Locke can deduce an alternative locus of human

⁹¹¹ *Two Treatises*, l.ix. §86, ed. Laslett, 205. Emphasis mine.

⁹¹² Latour, *We Have Never Been Modern*, 33-5.

⁹¹³ Latour, *We Have Never Been Modern*, 34.

beginnings: the State of Nature.

Whereas Filmer's act of *anagenesis* attempted to leap over the preceding generations of political philosophy to recover an original confirmation of monarchy at the beginning of time, Locke insists that the chaotic succession of historical states upends any claims of strict continuity between the present and the biblical past. He devotes the final section of his *First Treatise*, entitled "Who Heir?" to facetiously tracing the succession of Filmer's Adamic monarchy from creation to the present. Locke identifies several discontinuities in biblical history — the Flood, the tower of Babel, the Babylonian captivity, the missing centuries between "Old" and "New" Testaments — that upend any clear succession of Adam's inheritance. Locke spurns the attempts of past generations to trace the many peoples of the world back to biblical antecedents, a key element of the "Game of Names." Passing beyond biblical history, Locke notes that claims of monarchical authority have long been expressed in terms of lineal descent, but by authorities other than Adam.⁹¹⁴ For Locke, the only connections between Adam and the present state of humankind are so universal that they upend any claim to monarchical privilege. Locke claims that rather than defending the uniqueness of monarchical rule by tying it to "Adam's Paternal Power by Right of Divine Institution", Filmer's system "makes Civil Obedience as due an *Usurper* as to a lawful king."⁹¹⁵ Royal authority can be placed "in [the] Hands of a Cade, or a Cromwell..." since they are as much sons of Adam as any king.⁹¹⁶ Situating Filmer's biblical readings in the context of recent English history, Locke invokes the specter of civil war that the posthumous publication of the *Patriarcha* attempted, retroactively, to un-write from English politics. This final section emphasizes the difficulty and dangers of tracing the continuity of history from a biblical creation to the present. The *Patriarcha* is "not only *apocrypha*, but utterly

⁹¹⁴ *Two Treatises*, Lix.121, 229-30.

⁹¹⁵ *Two Treatises*, Lix.141, 244.

impossible.”⁹¹⁷

By dismissing Filmer’s genealogy of Adamic Monarchy, Locke rejects the idea that scripture is the locus of origins for political power. This shift allows Locke to turn to the project of the *Second Treatise*, namely to discover an alternative way to “understand Political power right and derive it from its Original.”⁹¹⁸ Here, Locke envisions a new origin of political institutions derived out of the “State of Nature” using reason as his guide. Although Locke has dismissed the typological times of sacred history when he rejects the *Patriarcha*, this “State of Nature” offers its own mythic space and its own typological time. Locke imagines the “State of Nature” as a separate space existing simultaneously and coextensively with that of human history, located between the boundaries of human societies and beyond the regions of human cultivation.

When describing this “State of Nature,” Locke identifies the ideas, practices, and institutions that might be considered “pre-political” and those that emerge only after the establishment of societies. For Locke, the critical concept of property is present in a “Law of Nature” that exists before the formation of a political community. While the potential of property is displayed in Genesis 1:28, it precedes and extends beyond the grants of scripture and is ultimately determined by the dictates of “Reason.” Having rejected Filmer’s Adamic origins of “private dominion,” Locke endeavors to establish where, when, and how human beings come to possess individual property out of this universal common:

No body has originally a private dominion, exclusive of the rest of mankind, in any of them, as they are thus in their natural state: yet being given for the use of men, there must of necessity be *a means to appropriate* them some way or other, before they can be of any use, or at all beneficial to any particular man. The fruit, or venison, which nourishes the wild *Indian*, who knows no inclosure, and is still

⁹¹⁶ *Two Treatises*, I.ix.121, 229.

⁹¹⁷ *Two Treatises*, I.ix.143, 246.

⁹¹⁸ *Two Treatises*, II.ii.4, 269.

a tenant in common, must be his, and so his, *i. e.* a part of him, that another can no longer have any right to it, before it can do him any good for the support of his life.⁹¹⁹

Since no one “originally” possesses property of their own, Locke asks how one might acquire it, shifting the origins of property from a universal to a particular one. The locus of “beginnings” of human departs from biblical narratives and moves instead to the lifestyles of the “wild Indian,” a figure who is a contemporary example but is imagined as existing in close proximity to the “State of Nature” at the beginnings of time and human society. Using the language of English customary law – “inclosure” and “common” – and deploying these terms to define an imagined state of being among peoples of the Atlantic, Locke describes this sense of difference in terms of space, time, and knowledge. The “State of Nature” allows Locke to situate different human communities in proximity to this beginning. While the philosopher describes his understanding of this “State” as naturally derived from “Reason,” his descriptions of this locus of origins resemble an imaginary version of the Americas, drawn from his musings on different literary descriptions of the newly “discovered” continents.⁹²⁰

This typological vision of the Americas inflects Locke’s narrative of human foundations. The “beginning” of property does not yet include all forms of possession, and Locke elaborates upon the “chief matter of Property” the “Earth itself.” “I think it is plain,” he writes, “that *Property* in that too is acquired as the former,” adding that no one can possess land until they have improved it. He contrasts the cultivation of England with the ostensible wilderness of America:

⁹¹⁹ *Two Treatises*, II.v.26, 286-7.

⁹²⁰ While his idea of America has a numinous, undifferentiated quality, Peter Laslett, *Two Treatises*, n. I.v.58, 182, observes that Locke was particularly enamored of a 1633 French translation of the *Commentarios Reales de los Incas*, written by the Peruvian-Spanish author Inca Garcilaso, aka Garcilaso de la Vega; see further James Fuerst, “Locke and Inca Garcilaso: Subtexts, Politics, and European Expansion,” in *Inca Garcilaso & Contemporary World-Making*, ed. Sara Castro-Klarén and Christian Fernández (Pittsburgh, Pa.: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2016), 269–96.

There cannot be a clearer demonstration of anything, than several nations of the *Americans* are of this, who are rich in land, and poor in all the comforts of life; whom nature having furnished as liberally as any other people, with the materials of plenty, *i. e.* a fruitful soil, apt to produce in abundance, what might serve for food, raiment, and delight; yet for *want of improving it by labour*, have not one hundredth part of the conveniences we enjoy: and a king of a large and fruitful territory there, feeds, lodges, and is clad worse than a day-labourer in *England*.⁹²¹

By establishing that property is ensured by natural law but created within time by use, Locke begins to construct the logic of colonial dispossession. After suggesting that the “wild Indian” possesses the fruit of his labor which he has taken directly from the “State of Nature,” Locke argues that indigenous societies have not – by his measure from across the Atlantic – improved the earth sufficiently to claim it as their property. Whereas property might be determined by the laws and customs of European states, the land of the Americas is imagined as remaining open to whoever might bring them from out of the state of nature to that of profitable cultivation.

Despite establishing an alternative “beginning” to the biblical narratives of Genesis, Locke insists that “Revelation” may serve as a confirmation of “Reason,” which results in a curious projection of biblical beginnings back onto his colonial imaginings of the Americas. Locke merges the two beginnings to reinforce his idea of an unclaimed America. When discussing how “the measure of Property” was first set by the limitations of Nature, he writes:

supposing a man, or family, in the state they were at first peopling of the world by the children of *Adam*, or *Noah*; let him plant in some in-land, vacant places of *America*, we shall find that the *possessions* he could make himself, upon the *measures* we have given, would not be very large . . . though the race of men have now spread themselves to all the corners of the world, and do infinitely exceed the small number was at the beginning.⁹²²

While biblical examples have been displaced as the origins of political society, they offer Locke a historical framework upon which to compare the present state of the Americas. The conflation of these two temporalities is done in terms that emphasize the “State of Nature” as the primary

⁹²¹ *Two Treatises*, II.v.41, 296.

locus of origins. Locke appropriates scripture's etiological and typological elements and implants them within this new locus of origin. With the biblical world encompassed in terms of "reason," the divine commission of Canaan to Abraham becomes a universal grant of land to whoever has might, and the military expeditions of the patriarchs become models for the planters of the Caribbean and the conquistadors of Peru.⁹²³ This transference is most evident in his quasi-biblical declaration, "Thus in the beginning all the World was *America*."⁹²⁴

This project reaches into the very terms that Locke uses to make his arguments. Throughout *Two Treatises*, Locke asserts the reasonability of his arguments — first against Filmer, and then in constructing the "State of Nature" —insisting that his observations are either "clear" or "plain." These rhetorical terms set the language of reason in terms of transforming and cultivating land. Locke envisions reason itself as "planted" in the mind of humankind by God at creation. "Planting" is the language by which God places humankind upon the earth and ideas within the human mind; it is the language of ecological transformation that transforms land into a property, and it is the language of colonization. Locke envisions the process of reasoning itself in terms of clearing forests, planting farms, and taking things from those who have not used them profitably.

While Locke expresses concerns about the state of English politics, the powers of kings and the consent of the governed, he assumes that some regions of the world still await the beginning of politics. His examples include the figure of the "Indian" who is imagined as dwelling in close proximity to nature and thus further "back in time" than his English

⁹²² *Two Treatises*, II.v.36, 293.

⁹²³ *Two Treatises*, II.v.38-9, 295-6.

⁹²⁴ *Two Treatises*, II.v.239, 296.

counterpart.⁹²⁵ The temporal logic here is reminiscent of *anagenesis*, albeit with a new locus of origins; while the indigenous peoples of the Americas might be reckoned as possessing the land in the generations preceding European contact and colonization, the idea that their lands remain essentially within the “State of Nature” now renders them open to be transformed into property, ostensibly for the *first* time.

This treatment of Filmer and Locke considers new acts of *anagenesis* that emerged in the centuries after 1500 CE and that debated alternative conceptions of time and origins. Locke’s attacks on Filmer’s articulation of the divine right of kings and his elaboration of the “state of nature” may be incorporated into a narrative of the “secularization” of Western political discourse. Yet, as Latour observes, the text displays a hybrid image of nature and society that operates precisely on the claimed division of its parts and incorporates religious tradition as an example of both natural and political modes of being. As Orosius had done with his “pagan” predecessors, Locke utilizes the forms of *anagenesis* for new ends precisely as he displaces scriptural history from its claims to be the “beginning” of all things.

Davis and Latour conceive of periodization – “modern” and otherwise – as something that is “juridical”; divisions of time into different periods are negotiated by human actors and institutions, but they inevitably appeal to origins and universals, sources of “sovereignty” outside of the social order.⁹²⁶ Whether imagined as granted by God or rejected by God, such systems of sovereignty rely on establishing beginnings, stories about where human ideas and institutions emerge, and from where they derive their power. Filmer’s *Patriarcha* and Locke’s *Two Treatises* are two entries in a wider “battle of beginnings,” which seeks to advance present ideas by

⁹²⁵ On the conception of indigenous peoples as living “back in time” compared to their Modern counterparts, see Fabian, *Time and the Other*, 26-8; Anne McClintock, *Imperial Leather: Race, Gender, and Sexuality in the Colonial Contest* (New York: Routledge, 1995).

⁹²⁶ Davis, *Periodization and Sovereignty*, 4; Latour, *We Have Never Been Modern*, 29-32.

rediscovering their origins in a place before or outside the order of ages.

Beginning and Belonging

By suggesting that acts of *anagenesis* can be registered across the chronological bounds assigned to the “Medieval” and “Modern,” I seek to challenge some of the presumed divisions between “Medieval” and “Modern” but do not reject the use of periodic divisions outright. Throughout this study, I have attempted not to reify *anagenesis* as a particular time or space-time, but rather to describe it as a *process* of periodization – a particular method for placing different spaces and times in relation to ideas of monotheistic creation and sacred history. (I have also aimed – not entirely successfully – to avoid the reflex of describing things in terms of “Medieval,” “Ancient,” or “Modern”). In the same way, I want to emphasize “Medieval” and “Modern” may be examined in terms of periodization as *process*: as ideas that have a past, present, and future, and a multitude of different meanings, depending on their context within different instantiations throughout time. When identifying the history of a periodic term, and the limits of its applicability, scholars should always account for the alternatives that proceed and extend beyond its presumed boundaries. When exploring different instances of periodization across history, I encourage scholars to consider, for instance, the following questions:

1. Who, what, where, and when constitutes the locus of “beginning”?
2. What community is envisioned as being created by this “beginning”?
3. What authority does this narrative suggest and who can order or measure time?
4. What forms of *inclusion* and *exclusion* are established by this locus?
5. What ideas, things, phenomena, etc. are established as *outside* time?

Such considerations are not simply a matter of rediscovering historical context or original intent. Rather, they should aim to reveal the ideas, allusions, and methodologies that point backward and outward to other strands of the intellectual tradition, while anticipating how such stories contain the potential for future re-interpretations. This is far from a novel concept, as the studies of Fabian, Foucault, Davis, Latour, and Al-Azmeh have shown.⁹²⁷ Yet it is one that often proceeds along lines that reaffirm the temporal exceptionalism of different periodic divisions precisely as they seek to deconstruct them. Many critical histories of the “Modern” begin by dismissing everything that came before it, or by describing everything outside of its bounds in negative terms rather than fixed things that must be embraced or cast away.⁹²⁸

The understanding of the “Medieval” also creates problems. Although it might not be helpful to refer to all societies between 500 and 1500 CE as “medieval,” including regions previously included in the periodization can help challenge the traditional and institutional boundaries of medieval studies. By insisting that “medieval” is a strictly European category, scholars discourage their colleagues and the public from venturing beyond the comfort of a canonical Eurocentric historical tradition. When scholars limit the association of “medieval” with regions beyond Europe, even out of a desire to let non-European communities dictate their “own” history, they discourage any comparative awareness or analysis of contemporaneous societies. Such isolation reinforces narratives of “exceptionalism” that reiterate hierarchies of European primacy in the absence of knowledge to the contrary. When the “medieval” period is treated as a site of romantic nostalgia, “European” exceptionalism is often used to shore up myths of a past defined by religious homogeneity and ethnic or racial purity. This romantic conception of the medieval world intimates an imagined recovery of “pure” folk traditions tied to

⁹²⁷ See in introduction.

an “Indo-European,” “Indo-Germanic,” or “Aryan” racial heritage.⁹²⁹ The reluctance of western medievalists to venture beyond the boundaries of European expertise (and comfort) has left contemporary scholarship vulnerable to recapitulating the same narratives of canonicity and national insularity that stoked the nationalist and colonialist ambitions that accompanied the emergence of the discipline in the 19th and 20th centuries.

Ideas about the mythic homogeneity of the medieval heritage continue to influence modern political discourse about immigration and religious pluralism in Europe, the Americas, and the British Commonwealth.⁹³⁰ The recent display of medieval iconography and language – long an undercurrent in White Supremacist discourse – in public acts of intimidation and insurrection has made clear the extent of this problem.⁹³¹ Troubling attempts to collapse or erase religious and ethnic diversity are emerging throughout the world, as authoritarian regimes cast the erosion of civil liberties and intellectual freedom as nostalgic recoveries of national pride and tradition. The Russian invasion of Ukraine – precipitated in part upon claims that origins of the Russian people in the “Kiev Rus” grants them a prior, stronger claim to this land than its present people – demonstrates how the “medieval” is used to justify acts of violence and international aggression at the present time. Although such claims upon the “medieval” past may collapse under historical scrutiny, to deny the “medieval” is to leave this periodization vulnerable to those who would exploit it. Scholars must acknowledge both past and present uses of the “medieval” to justify acts of violence, dispossession, exclusion, and genocide. They must pay careful attention to where such traditions emerged and consider how they might best be contested. By

⁹²⁸ E.g. Fabian, *Time and the Other*, 26; Latour, *We Have Never Been Modern*, 141-2, ultimately describes the alternatives to Modern thought as Nonmodern.

⁹²⁹ H. Momma, *From Philology to English Studies*, 144-49, describes the emergence of this lexicon in the context of Germanic and British descriptions of European and Colonial history.

⁹³⁰ Miyashiro, “Our Deeper Past,” 1-3.

⁹³¹ See the Public Medievalist’s Series: Paul B. Sturtevant, et. al “Race, Racism and the Middle Ages: Table of Contents,” *The Public Medievalist*, accessed March 6, 2021, <https://www.publicmedievalist.com/race-racism-middle-ages-toc/>.

developing an alternative understanding of the period, a broader and more inclusive sense of a “Global Middle Ages,” scholars can contest simplistic and surreptitious uses of the past. As al-Azmeh asserts, “Collective historical ‘memory’ is no substitute for the history of this memory and for the study for its conditions of possibility.”⁹³²

⁹³² Al-Azmeh, *The Times of History*, 60.

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