

Ibn al-Ṭayyib's Fiqh al-Naṣrāniyya: Translating and Recalling Legal Texts of the East Syriac Tradition in an Arabo-Muslim Context

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Abū al-Faraġ ‘Abd Allāh Ibn al-Ṭayyib (10th-11th c.) is one of the most important Christian authors of his time. He was an East Syrian Christian, i.e. belonged to the Church of the East also known as the Nestorian church, and was a physician, philosopher and also theologian. He wrote many works on medicine, commentaries on most of the works of Aristotle, Galen and Hippocrates, exegetical works on most of the books of Holy Scripture and dogmatic treatises. Additionally, he was one among the first East Syrian authors who produced collections of ecclesiastical and civil canons and laws in Arabic. His collection, entitled Fiqh al-Naṣrāniyya, that is, ‘Law of Christianity’, is not a simple translation of ancient and traditional East Syriac sources of ecclesiastical law, like the Synodicon Orientale and other official ecclesiastical documents, but it should be considered a legal source for the East Syrians under the Islamic Caliphate, even if some parts of it are a reworking of other previous collections, like the Nomokanon of Gabriel of Basra. My paper, consequentially, aims to give a general view on the canon law of the East Syriac Church, its sources and development, and then to present Ibn al-Ṭayyib's collection, its contents, and the sources the author used. Moreover, by analyzing two specific themes, namely the re-baptism of heretics and unbelievers as well as divorce, this paper aims to understand how this collection recalled the ancient East Syriac tradition and ‘adapted’ it in the new socio-political context the Christians were living in at the time of its composition.

Hauptautor: EBEID, Bishara (Università Ca’Foscari Venezia)

Vortragende(r): EBEID, Bishara (Università Ca’Foscari Venezia)