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Talmud and Christianity:
Rabbinic Judaism after Constantine, Part 2

Karin Hedner Zetterholm
Jewishly-Behaving Gentiles and the Emergence
of a Jewish Rabbinic Identity

Moshe Lavee
Either Jews or Gentiles, Men or Women: The Talmudic
Move from Legal to Essentialist Polarization of Identities

Catherine Hezser
The Creation of the Talmud Yerushalmi and
Apophthegmata Patrum as Monuments to the Rabbinic
and Monastic Movements in Early Byzantine Times

Daniel H. Weiss
The Christianization of Rome and the Edomization of
Christianity: *Avodah Zarah* and Political Power

Mohr Siebeck

Catherine Hezser

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The Creation of the Talmud Yerushalmi and Apophthegmata Patrum as Monuments to the Rabbinic and Monastic Movements in Early Byzantine Times

Abstract: This paper investigates the compilatory processes that led to the creation of the Talmud Yerushalmi and the Apophthegmata Patrum in early Byzantine Palestine. These encyclopaedic works are based on individual oral traditions that emerged from teacher-disciple networks of rabbis and monks. A comparison of the scholastic settings, editorial processes and structural arrangements highlights the complexity of the Talmud's organizing principles, which did not allow for later accretions in the same way that the Apophthegmata collections did. The development from oral transmission to written compilations had significant consequences. For the first time, multiple individual traditions that were diverse and contradictory were visible together on one and the same page. The reader of the written compilations is offered a synoptic overview of the accumulated anchorite and rabbinic knowledge of one and a half centuries. The early Byzantine compilers commemorated and (re)created the "classical" rabbinic and monastic movements for their own time and place.

Key words: Byzantine compilations, disciple circles, anthologies, Late Antiquity.

1. Creation of Anthologies in Late Antiquity

Late Antiquity seems to have been the heyday of the creation of various types of literary collections such as the Codex Theodosianus, Justinian' Corpus Iuris Civilis, patristic Florilegia, the Apophthegmata Patrum, the Palestinian and Babylonian Talmuds, and Amoraic Midrashim. These anthologies preserve the legal, theological and exegetical knowledge transmitted by various types of experts over centuries and make it available to future generations.[1] Jason König and Greg Woolf have suggested viewing encyclopaedism as a "spectrum" of processes rather than a description of a particular literary genre:

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[1] Scott Fitzgerald Johnson associates the scholarly encyclopaedism of Late Antiquity with the desire to create "icons of knowledge"; see S. F. Johnson, *Literary Territories: Cartographical Thinking in Late Antiquity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016) 1.

> We are interested … in the ways in which a series of different authors made use of a range of shared rhetorical and compilatory techniques to create knowledge-ordering works of different kinds, work that often claimed some kind of comprehensive and definitive status. And we think in terms of an encyclopaedic spectrum, with different texts drawing on shared encyclopaedic markers to different degrees and for very different purposes.[2]

In a similar vein, Cabezón has stressed that scholasticism should be understood "as an analytical category" that is particularly suitable to cross-cultural and comparative analysis.[3] The focus of the anthologies depended on the specific world-view and values of those who created and propagated them. Jurists stand behind the legal collections, church fathers behind patristic anthologies, monks behind the Apophthegmata Patrum, and rabbis behind the Talmud. What the Late Antique compilers shared was the desire to create new entities out of the scattered and polyphonic traditions of the past. These new entities commemorated the respective groups' intellectual tradition and ensured the continuing significance of the preserved knowledge in the present and future.

The examination of rabbinic compilatory processes in the context of Late Antique and early Byzantine scholasticism and encyclopaedism is a scholarly desideratum. It requires a broad interdisciplinary approach that compares the scholastic processes leading to the creation of rabbinic compilations with those that led to the creation of Graeco-Roman and Christian anthologies. The current article is meant as a first step in this direction. Since it is based on a presentation given at a conference on "The Talmud and Christianity: Rabbinic Judaism After Constantine," its focus is on the Talmud in general and the Talmud Yerushalmi in particular. Some considerations may be relevant for other rabbinic documents as well. It is hoped that this line of inquiry will be expanded and applied to other rabbinic, Christian and Graeco-Roman compilations in the future.[4]

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2 Jason König and Greg Woolf, "Introduction," in *Encyclopaedism from Antiquity to the Renaissance*, ed. Jason König and Greg Woolf (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013) 1.

3 José Ignacio Cabezón, "Introduction," in *Scholasticism: Cross-Cultural and Comparative Perspectives*, ed. José Ignacio Cabezón (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1998) 3.

4 For a comparison between the Talmud Yerushalmi and Roman legal compilation in early Byzantine times see Catherine Hezser, "The Codification of Legal Knowledge in Late Antiquity: The Talmud Yerushalmi and Roman Law Codes," in *The Talmud Yerushalmi and Graeco-Roman Culture*, vol.1, ed. Peter Schäfer (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1998) 581–641. For a programmatic call for the study of the Bavli in the context of comparative scholasticism see Adam H. Becker, "The Comparative Study of

For a number of reasons, the Talmud (Yerushalmi and Bavli) and the Apophthegmata Patrum are particularly suitable for a comparison of compilatory processes:[5] they have a similar *Sitz im Leben* in networks of teacher-disciple circles; the creation of written documents is based on a long history of mostly oral transmission; the significance of both teaching and practice is reflected in the traditional forms of sayings and stories; attributions indicate chains of transmission; they have a complex developmental history that resulted in variant versions and a certain textual fluidity; they were created as in-group literature for study and emulation among future rabbis and monks; as such, they enjoyed great popularity and became veritable monuments of remembrance and continued significance for the religious communities that followed the life style they propagated.[6] One may even argue that by creating literary links between the scattered material of earlier periods and by combining the views and practices of so many different rabbis and monks in literary collections, the compilers of the Talmud and the Apophthegmata Patrum created the notion of rabbinic (Palestinian and Babylonian) and anachoretic (mostly Egyptian Scetis-based) group identities, which might otherwise not have been recognized by their contemporaries. The creation of the Talmud initiated rabbinic Judaism's focus on Talmud study and commentary. Similarly, the Apophthegmata Patrum became the basis of subsequent monastic morality and ascetic practice.

'Scholasticism' in Late Antique Mesopotamia: Rabbis and East Syrians," *AJS Review* 34 (2010) 91–113.

5 Earlier comparisons focus on the incorporated literary form of the *apophthegma* or *chreia* rather than on the literary development and editing of the compilations. See Catherine Hezser, "Apophthegmata Patrum and Apophthegmata of the Rabbis," in *La Narrative Christiana Antica. Codici Narrativi, Strutture Formali, Schemi Retorici*, Studia Ephemerida Augustinianum 50 (Rome: Institutum Patristicum Augustinianum, 1995) 453–464; eadem, "Die Verwendung der hellenistischen Gattung Chrie im frühen Christentum und Judentum," *Journal for the Study of Judaism* 27 (1996) 371–439; Michal Bar-Asher Siegal, *Early Christian Monastic Literature and the Babylonian Talmud* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2013). It is not clear why Bar-Asher Siegal focuses on the Bavli rather than the Yerushalmi. A focus on the Bavli should have dealt with the Syriac versions of the Apophthegmata, see Holger Zellentin's review in *Studies in Christian-Jewish Relations* 10 (2015) 2. As far as earlier comparative studies are concerned, Bar-Asher Siegal does not seem to be aware of my 68-page article on the *chreia* in rabbinic literature and in the Apophthegmata Patrum, which already dealt with many of the issues she addresses. See my review of her book in the *Journal of Jewish Studies* 68 (2017) 411–3.

6 The term "monuments of remembrance" is my translation of the German term "Erinnerungsdenkmal," used by Wilhelm Bousset, *Apophthegmata. Studien zur Geschichte des ältesten Mönchtums*, ed. Theodor Herrmann and Gustav Krüger (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1923) 76. The ethical and practical impact of the Talmud and Apophthegmata does not in the same way apply to exegetical collections such as rabbinic Midrashim.

2. Creation of the Talmud Yerushalmi and the Apophthegmata Patrum

The Talmud Yerushalmi and the Apophthegmata Patrum seem to have been created by the adherents of particular forms of Jewish and Christian religious practice in fourth- to fifth-century Byzantine Palestine. The Talmud Yerushalmi contains traditions associated with rabbis until the fifth generation of Amoraim, believed to have lived in the latter half of the fourth century. The Apophthegmata Patrum contain the traditions of desert monks from the beginning of the Scetis settlement in the western Nile Delta in the middle of the 330s until the middle of the fifth century (460s).[7] For both collections the earliest possible time of their editing would be the time of the last generation of named monks/rabbis or – more likely – the generation of their disciples. This leads us to the end of the fourth/beginning of the fifth century for the Yerushalmi and the second half of the fifth century for the Apophthegmata Patrum.

The large majority of the material that the Apophthegmata Patrum comprises stems from Egyptian monastic circles and especially the Scetis region.[8] Nevertheless, the compilation seems to have taken place in Gaza: it includes sayings of monks who had migrated from Egypt to Palestine after the devastation of Scetis.[9] By the middle of the fifth century a significant diaspora community of Egyptian monks existed in Palestine.[10] From the end of the fourth and beginning of the fifth centuries onwards these monks "brought back to Palestine a monastic life they had learnt in Egypt."[11] In the fifth and sixth centuries there was a "considerable flowering of monasticism centred on the region of Gaza and the Judean desert."[12] The Palestinian Talmud also focuses on rabbinic traditions from the editors' homeland, into which Babylonian diaspora traditions are integrated. Within the Land of

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[7] See Bousset, *Apophthegmata*. 60. For a discussion of the date of the compilation, see also William Harmless, *Desert Christians: An Introduction to the Literature of Early Monasticism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004) 170–171.

[8] See Douglas Burton-Christie, *The Word in the Desert: Scripture and the Quest for Holiness in Early Christian Monasticism* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993) 80.

[9] Scetis was attacked by barbarian raiders several times in the fifth century (in 407, 434 and 444); see Harmless, *Desert Christians*, 205–206.

[10] Burton-Christie, *Word in the Desert*, 87. See also Derwas Chitty, *The Desert a City. An Introduction to the Study of Egyptian and Palestinian Monasticism under the Christian Empire* (London and Oxford: Mowbrays, 1966) 67.

[11] Chitty, *Desert a City*, 71.

[12] Graham Gould, *The Desert Fathers on Monastic Community* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993) 186.

Israel certain cities and regions such as Tiberias and Sepphoris in the Galilee and Caesarea in the coastal plain stand out as focal points from which the bulk of the Talmud's Amoraic tradition seems to stem.[13]

We may assume that the late fourth and fifth centuries were a difficult time for all those who were opposed to the political and religious dominance of emerging orthodox Christianity. Both the desert monks and rabbinic Jews would have been aware of their minority status in a Palestinian society in which orthodox Christian clerics asserted their authority. The Galilean hills and the Judean desert were at a certain distance from Jerusalem, the capital of the emerging Christian "Holy Land," but even those areas were increasingly "invaded" by the Byzantine rulers and their church representatives.[14] Scholars of the Apophthegmata Patrum have emphasized the non-dogmatic and anti-Chalzedonian character of the compilation before its later expansion.[15] The Egyptian monophysite monks distinguished themselves from the mainstream church, which became increasingly orthodox and rigid in its beliefs and practices.[16] Within monastic life the cenobitic ideal became more dominant.[17] The anchorites may have felt that their ideals and lifestyle were under threat and in danger of disappearing altogether.[18] Chitty reckons with "physical insecurity and a sense of moral decay" among the remnants of the community.[19] It is easily understandable that under such conditions they would have wanted to preserve "the spirit and memory of the remarkable flowering of the anchorite movement in Egypt."[20]

Palestinian rabbinic Judaism probably also suffered under the Byzantine Christian authorities. In the first half of the fifth century, under the rule of Theodosius II (408–450) the Palestinian patriarchate seems to have disappeared, either because no heir to the position existed or because the Roman government abolished the office by force.[21] Martin Jacobs has pointed to polemics against the patriarchs by representatives of the

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13 Ben-Zion Rosenfeld, *Torah Centers and Rabbinic Activity in Palestine, 70–400 CE: History and Geographic Distribution* (Leiden and Boston, 2010) 224.
14 On the development of these regions and cities in the fifth century see Hagith Sivan, *Palestine in Late Antiquity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008).
15 Chitty, *Desert a City*, 74.
16 Burton-Christie, *Word in the Desert*, 87.
17 Bousset, *Apophthegmata,* 43.
18 Gould, *Desert Fathers*, 16, points to sayings expressing "pessimism about the present state (or future) of the community."
19 Chitty, *Desert a City*, 67.
20 Burton-Christie, *Word in the Desert*, 87.
21 The "patriarchs" are last mentioned in Codex Theodosianus 16. 8. 29.

"orthodox" church such as John Chrysostom, Eusebius and Jerome, a development that may have influenced the emperor's policies toward this office.[22] In a similar vein Peter Schäfer writes about the period from Theodosius I onwards: "the underlying negative tendency could only get stronger the more the emperor in question was prepared to concede to the growing self-assurance of Christianity as its influence spread throughout the empire."[23] On the insistence of Christian bishops the imperial legislation against the Jews became increasingly harsh, so that under Theodosius II "the Jews were left with little but the barest of civil rights."[24] Like the desert monks, rabbis may have considered themselves marginalised by the church authorities. Irrespective of the extent to which anti-Jewish legislation was implemented in Byzantine Palestine, the menace posed by the Christian rulers and the changes Christian bishops, pilgrims and building activities brought to the "Holy Land" may have motivated rabbinic scholars to rescue and preserve the knowledge of previous generations of sages for posterity.[25]

3. Teacher-Disciple Networks as the Social Basis of the Compilations

The Talmud and the Apophthegmata Patrum have a very similar social background or *Sitz im Leben*: personal relationships between teachers and disciples constituting clusters within networks of like-minded Torah scholars and monks. These personal relationships formed the basis of the transmission of traditions associated with named individuals. The compilations were school-literature that developed in the context of studying

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22 Martin Jacobs, *Die Institution des jüdischen Patriarchen, Eine quellen- und traditions-kritische Studie zur Geschichte der Juden in der Spätantike* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1995) 307 and 314–319.

23 Peter Schäfer, *History of the Jews in the Greco-Roman World* (revised edition, London and New York: Routledge, 2003) 186.

24 Hans Willer Laale, *Ephesus (Ephesos): An Abbreviated History From Androclus to Constantine XI* (Bloomington, Indiana: Westbow Press, 2011) 295, who points to Theodosius' Novella III, promulgated in 439, in particular. For an overview of Byzantine laws against Jews see Eli Kohen, *History of the Byzantine Jews: A Microcosmos in the Thousand Year Empire* (Lanham: University Press of America, 2007) 43–44.

25 On the gradual Christianization of Palestine in the early Byzantine period and the fifth century as the time when Christians became the majority of the population see Adiel Schremer, *Brothers Estranged: Heresy, Christianity, and Jewish Identity in Late Antiquity* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2010) 124. See also Holger M. Zellentin, *Rabbinic Parodies of Jewish and Christian Literature* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2011) 169–170.

communities of older and younger sages. They were meant for the education and edification of later generations of scholars and monks.

Graham Gould has stressed that the traditions transmitted in the Apophthegmata Patrum "originated … in the context of the teaching relationship between abba and disciple."[26] Personal relationships between individuals, whether teacher and student, fellow-monks, and – less often – monks and visitors from outside the community "were the basic data of community life" in a society that lacked more formal structures.[27] Burton-Christie points to "conversations" among monks, the "early monastic dialogue" that developed as part of the "give-and-take of everyday life" among the monastic communities as the basis of the emerging tradition.[28] The importance of personal relationships between monks is indicated in sayings and stories.[29] It is also indicated by chains of transmission in which disciples transmit their teacher's sayings, for example, "Abba Peter said that Abba Abraham said that Abba Agathon said."[30] The monastic lifestyle comprised both theory (moral values and virtues) and practice (ascetic habits). The abba served as a model as far as his entire behaviour and outlook were concerned. Monastic ideals had to be actualized in practice. For example, the monk's awareness of his own sinfulness before God was expressed by the so-called *penthos* motif, the description of the weeping monk, which has analogies in rabbinic sources.[31]

All of these aspects – teacher-disciple relationships, chains of transmission, the combination of theory and practice – are also familiar to scholars of rabbinic literature. In both monastic and rabbinic society knowledge was produced in conversations between teacher and disciple and among fellow sages; it was put into practice in everyday life situations. Students were meant to memorize their teacher's sayings and to transmit them in his name. The transmission of traditions from one generation to the next constituted the building stock of smaller and larger collections. Although the Apophthegmata Patrum are not the work of a single monk, Bousset has pointed to Poemen and his circles as crucial for the development of

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26 Gould, *Desert Fathers*, 24.
27 Gould, *Desert Fathers*, 24.
28 Burton-Christie, *Word in the Desert*, 76–77.
29 Gould, *Desert Fathers*, 14.
30 Chitty, *Desert a City*, 68.
31 For a study of the *penthos* motif, see Barbara Müller, *Der Weg des Weinens. Die Tradition des "Penthos" in den Apophthegmata Patrum* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck and Ruprecht, 2000). For rabbinic analogies see, e. g., Leviticus Rabba 26:7 and Catherine Hezser, *Rabbinic Body Language: Non-Verbal Communication in Palestinian Rabbinic Literature of Late Antiquity*, Ch. 4 (Leiden: Brill, 2017).

the alphabetical collection: a large proportion of the material is associated with his name.[32] The disciples and sympathizers of other elders would have kept their traditions alive in their memory. What is important to realize is that the disciples would have preserved their own teachers' traditions only. Before the larger collections came into existence, many individuals at different locations would have been the bearers of bits and pieces of rabbinic and monastic knowledge. The scattered nature of the material could have easily led to its disappearance if the bearer died without disciples of his own.

Harmless has pointed out that the monastic settlement at Scetis consisted of "a colony of hermits, with monks living in individual cells widely scattered about a vast area."[33] Rather than constituting a formally organized community, "small clusters of elders and their disciples formed the basic organization of Scetis."[34] Young monks would approach elders and ask them for a "word" or teaching: "Some would go to attach themselves permanently as disciples."[35] For example, Abba Silvanus is associated with twelve disciples, whereas other abbas would have had less. This social structure of a network of like-minded yet relatively scattered and only loosely attached elders with their respective circles of students is very reminiscent of the rabbinic movement of Late Antiquity. Like the anchorite monks of Scetis, rabbis had their individual circles of students and personal relations to a few colleague-friends. As I have argued elsewhere, this social organization can best be understood as a network that developed in certain regions of Palestine after 70 CE and eventually also spread to Babylonia in Late Antiquity.[36]

The anchorite movement spread to other parts of Egypt and beyond Egypt to the Jordan valley, the Judean Desert and Gaza in the late fourth and fifth centuries, especially after the raids of Scetis, while the Scetis settlement continued to exist.[37]In the late fifth century the focus of both the rabbinic and anchorite movements seems to have shifted to diaspora locations: Babylonia became the centre of the rabbinic movement and Palestine the place in which the monastic movement flourished in the centuries before the Islamic conquest. In both cases this geographical shift was accompanied by an increased institutionalization: Babylonia saw the establishment of

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32 Bousset, *Apophthegmata*, 68–70.

33 Harmless, *Desert Christians*, 173.

34 Harmless, *Desert Christians*, 177.

35 Harmless, *Desert Christians*, 178.

36 See Catherine Hezser, *The Social Structure of the Rabbinic Movement in Roman Palestine* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1997) 155–239, and "Crossing Enemy Lines: Network Connections Between Palestinian and Babylonian Sages in Late Antiquity," *Journal for the Study of Judaism* 46 (2015) 224–250.

37 See Chitty, *Desert a City*, 71; Gould, *Desert Fathers*, 186.

rabbinic academies in the fifth to seventh centuries;[38] in late fifth and sixth-century Palestine so-called cenobite or communal monasteries became the dominant form of monastic life.[39]

In the earlier period, personal relations between individual scholars and monks were most important. Such relations are reflected in the stories and dialogues transmitted in the Talmud and the Apophthegmata Patrum. Like the Apophthegmata Patrum, rabbinic literature in general and the Talmud in particular focus on in-group discourse. Non-rabbis, whether Jewish or Roman, are rarely mentioned in rabbinic sources.[40] When they appear in case stories, for example, they usually remain anonymous.[41] In other stories the fictional encounter with non-Jews usually serves to highlight rabbinic identity.[42] Therefore Gould's observations about the social basis of the Apophthegmata Patrum can be applied to rabbinic literature as well:

> … between several centres and over a few generations communications and memories are maintained in such a way to suggest that the Sayings are the product of a tradition of monastic life which was conscious of its own identity and concerned to preserve evidence of the ties which held it together and connected later generations with the founders of the tradition.[43]

If one replaces "monastic" with "rabbinic" life, this comment is a fitting description of the processes that eventually led to the compilation of the Talmud.

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38 See Jeffrey L. Rubenstein, *The Culture of the Babylonian Talmud* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2003) 22 and 143.

39 See Joseph Patrich, *Sabas, Leader of Palestinian Monasticism. A Comparative Study in Eastern Monasticism, Fourth to Seventh Centuries* (Washington: Dumbarton Oaks Research Library and Collection, 1995) 4–5, 355.

40 Richard Kalmin, *The Sage in Jewish Society of Late Antiquity* (London: Routledge, 1999) argues that Palestinian rabbis are presented as engaging more with non-rabbis than their Babylonian colleagues do. Nevertheless, even in Palestinian rabbinic literature references to non-rabbis are relatively sparse in comparison with the large bulk of material with deals with internal rabbinic discourse. More recent studies of Babylonian rabbinic culture in the context of Sasanian society by Kalmin and others have thrown more light on Babylonian rabbinic interaction with their Persian Zoroastrian environment, see, e. g., Richard Kalmin, *Jewish Babylonia Between Persia and Roman Palestine* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006) esp. 87–102; Shai Secunda, *The Iranian Talmud. Reading the Bavli in its Sasanian Context* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2014); Jason Sion Mokhtarian, *Rabbis, Sorcerers, Kings, and Priests. The Culture of the Talmud in Ancient Iran* (Oakland: University of California Press, 2015).

41 Catherine Hezser, *Form, Function, and Historical Significance of the Rabbinic Story in Yerushalmi Neziqin* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1993) 294–298.

42 See Catherine Hezser, "Strangers on the Road: Otherness, Identification and Disguise in Rabbinic Travel Tales of Late Roman Palestine," in *Journeys in the Roman East: Imagined and Real,* ed. Maren Niehoff (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2016).

43 Gould, *Desert Fathers*, 13.

Bousset has already stressed that circles of students would have been the carriers of the tradition that was eventually included in the larger documents, keeping it alive over generations.[44] He was wrong in assuming, however, that such a wealth of traditional material, transmitted over centuries, could not be found outside of Scetiote monastic circles.[45] Obviously, the bulk of material preserved in rabbinic documents in general and in the Palestinian Talmud in particular is much more voluminous than the traditions of the desert fathers collected in the Apophthegmata Patrum.[46]

4. From Oral Tradition to Written Collections

The Talmud also shares the largely oral nature of the traditional material and the eventual shift from orality to written collections with the Apophthegmata Patrum.[47] Almost all scholars of the Apophthegmata Patrum stress the oral background of most of the material integrated into the earliest versions of the collection. Bousset has already pointed out that the tradition stems from a non-literary environment and reflects the ways in which oral material was transmitted from one generation to the next.[48] Even at a time when small written collections were created by individual disciples, oral communication and transmission continued.[49] Similarly, Burton-Christie surmises that "these words were originally spoken and heard – probably in the Coptic tongue – rather than written and read."[50] The "word-of-mouth" transmission presupposes an "intimate relationship between master and disciple."[51] The disciple remembered his teacher's words because they were meaningful for him: "The elders' words were cherished, collected and transmitted because of the power and meaning they had in the ongoing life of the early desert community."[52]

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44 Bousset, *Apophthegmata*, 71.

45 Bousset, *Apophthegmata*, 80: "Diese Fülle von Wortüberlieferung kehrt ausserhalb dieses Kreises nirgends wieder."

46 When making the statement, Bousset may have thought about Christian circles only.

47 Bar-Asher Siegal, *Monastic Literature*, 76, has also already pointed to the shared oral background of the collections.

48 Bousset, *Apophthegmata*, 77: "Paradigma der Art und des Wesens mündlicher Überlieferung."

49 See Bousset, *Apophthegmata*, 77. Small written collections may have been created from around 400 CE onwards but the oral transmission continued alongside these collections until the 450s or 460s, e. g. among Poemen's circles.

50 Burton-Christie, *Word in the Desert*, 77.

51 Burton-Christie, *Word in the Desert*, 77.

52 Burton-Christie, *Word in the Desert*, 78.

Some smaller written collections of logia probably preceded the large collections and may have circulated at the end of the fourth century already.[53] Nothing more specific is known about them. Whether small Coptic collections ever existed remains uncertain.[54] The earliest versions of the Apophthegmata Patrum, the so-called alphabetical collection and the systematic collection, are written in Greek.[55] Collections from the early fifth century, such as the Asceticon of Abba Isaiah, do not seem to use written material but are based on the author's memories.[56] Similarly the Ethiopian collection, known as the Collectio Monastica, records "the words and actions of the ancients."[57] What is characteristic of the early collections is that "whole groups of sayings are gathered by the same person, who either heard them himself or collected them from the first-hand testimony of several witnesses."[58] Abba Moses is said to have compiled a small collection, the so-called "Seven Headings of Ascetic Conduct," and sent it to Abba Poemen.[59] These early collections were created "relatively close to the early tradition of the desert fathers."[60] The editors of the larger collections of the Apophthegmata Patrum may have used several smaller collections as models.[61] Nevertheless, the bulk of the material they used would have stemmed from the oral transmission of sayings and stories.

Rabbinic literature in general and the Talmud Yerushalmi in particular are also based on the oral transmission of traditions from teacher to disciple. As in the Apophthegmata Patrum, this process of transmission from one generation to the next is indicated by the so-called chain of tradition (e. g., "R. Abbahu said in the name of R. Yochanan," y. *Bava Qama* 4:3, 4b). Martin Jaffee has already stressed the importance of orality in rabbinic as in ancient philosophical culture:

> the tradition surviving among the Sages is transmitted in the original way – by patient repetition, from master to disciple, from mouth to ear, and from ear to memory, without the intervention of a written text.[62]

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53 Burton-Christie, *Word in the Desert*, 79.

54 Bousset, *Apophthegmata*, 90.

55 Per Rönnegard, *Threads and Images. The Use of Scripture in Apophthegmata Patrum* (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 2010) 5; Harmless, *Desert Christians*, 170.

56 Burton-Christie, *Word in the Desert*, 79.

57 Burton-Christie, *Word in the Desert*, 79. with references.

58 Burton-Christie, *Word in the Desert*, 80.

59 See Apophthegmata Patrum, Moses 13 (PG 65: 287–288) referred to by Harmless, *Desert Christians*, 205.

60 Burton-Christie, *Word in the Desert*, 80.

61 Harmless, *Desert Christians*, 205.

62 Martin S. Jaffee, *Torah in the Mouth. Writing and Oral Tradition in Palestinian Judaism, 200 BCE-400 CE* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001) 5.

This process seems to have had a close analogy in monastic circles. It is likewise possible that small and informal written collections of teachings and stories associated with individual Amoraic rabbis circulated among students at a time when orality remained the format of rabbinic instruction. Statements transmitted in the Talmud Yerushalmi repeatedly warn against writing down rabbinic teachings. At the same time they suggest that some written collections, especially of aggadic traditions, existed in Amoraic times.[63] Amoraic rabbis may also have used written tractates of the Mishnah and perhaps also collections of *baraitot*.[64] Small written collections of Amoraic material and written Tannaitic tractates may have been used by the compilers of the Talmud alongside the large bulk of oral tradition, just as the compilers of the Apophthegmata Patrum may have used small collections created by individual monks. Such small collections of Amoraic and anchorite traditions are not preserved, however, and their existence remains a mere hypothesis.[65]

In any case, the shift from the oral transmission of individual traditions to the creation of large written collections in the late fourth and fifth centuries was very significant and had important consequences. In contrast to earlier generations of rabbis and monks who rejected writing, the editors of the compilations operated in a literary environment in which written texts were valued. Werner Kelber has pointed to the transformative impact of writing: "the written medium is intrinsic to the message … Apart from disorienting oral speech forms, this text has reoriented them into a novel textual construct."[66] Integrated into written texts the formerly oral traditions are "destined to survive": "Oral fragility has been overcome by 'the secret of making the word immortal'."[67] The traditions selected for posterity are now "fixed in place to be studied, interpreted, copied and disseminated."[68] For the first time multiple individual traditions that are diverse and partly contradictory are visible together on one and the same page.[69] Rather than accumulating

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63 See Catherine Hezser, *Jewish Literacy in Roman Palestine* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2001) 202, for references. A "book of aggadah" is mentioned in y. *Shabbat* 16:1, 15c.

64 See Hezser, *Jewish Literacy,* and "The Mishnah and Ancient Book Production," in *The Mishnah in Contemporary Perspective,* vol.1, ed. Jacob Neusner and Alan J. Avery-Peck (Leiden: Brill, 2002) 172–84.

65 On small collections, see also Bar-Asher Siegal, *Monastic Literature*, 40.

66 Werner H. Kelber, *The Oral and the Written Gospel: The Hermeneutics of Speaking and Writing in the Synoptic Tradition, Mark, Paul, and Q* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1997) 105.

67 Kelber, *The Oral,* 105.

68 Kelber, *The Oral,* 105.

69 See also Jean-Claude Guy, *Recherches sur la tradition grecque des Apophthegmata*

the wisdom of one particular monk or rabbi, the student of the written text is offered a synoptic view of the anchorite and rabbinic knowledge of one and a half centuries.

The (mostly oral) earlier traditions were not simply reproduced but represented in a creative way: "Received texts are almost ubiquitously treated as sites for the (essentially cognitive) processes of rewriting, organization and re-presentation."[70] The process seems to have started with the desire to preserve traditions of the past. The next step was the active accumulation of earlier traditions, which Johnson associates with scholarly encyclopaedism in Late Antiquity and the desire to create "icons of knowledge."[71] This encyclopaedic tendency does not imply that all early Byzantine compilations followed equal patterns: they rather "show a wide variety in their modes of organization as much as in the purposes for which they were compiled."[72] Rather than being "a sign of a stale and sterile culture," the desire to preserve past knowledge was a "creative and constructive" enterprise,[73] which involved "intense, conscious reception and reworking."[74] Neither the Apophthegmata Patrum nor the Talmud simply reproduced past wisdom; they rather constituted entirely new forms and concepts of memorializing the rabbinic and monastic past that enabled a new halakhic approach and "made possible a new spirituality."[75]

5. Literary Prototypes

Scholars have suggested various possible literary prototypes for the Apophthegmata Patrum that may also be considered prototypes of the Talmud Yerushalmi, since it developed in a similar Late Antique and early Byzantine Near Eastern milieu.[76] These prototypes include biblical and post-biblical

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Patrum, Subsidia Hagiographica 36 (Brussels: Société des Bollandistes, 1962) 231: "Le but en était seulement de réunir en un *corpus* unique des éléments qui, jusqu'alors, avaient leur existence autonome."

70 Johnson, "Apocrypha and the Literary Past in Late Antiquity," in *From Rome to Constantinople. Studies in Honour of Averil Cameron,* ed. Hagit Amirav and Bas ter Haar Romeny (Leuven: Peeters, 2007) 49. See also König and Woolf, "Introduction," 7.

71 Johnson, *Literary Territories*, 1.

72 Johnson, *Literary Territories,* 14.

73 Charles M. Stang, *Apophasis and Pseudonymity in Dionysius the Areopagite* (Oxford: Oxford University Press) 2012, 52.

74 Johnson, "Apocrypha," 49.

75 Harmless, *Desert Christians*, 251.

76 On other ancient collections of sayings and stories, especially those of Hellenistic philosophers, see Hezser, "Verwendung," 374–403, where their integration into

wisdom literature, philosophical collections of stories and sayings, and collections of *chreiai* used in rhetorical education.[77] While none of these literary genres matches the later compendia entirely, the very collection of wise saying and stories was a well-established practice in the context in which the rabbinic and monastic compilations were created. We may assume that the Palestinian rabbis and monks of the late fourth and fifth centuries who created the Talmud and the Apophthegmata Patrum would have been familiar with the wisdom tradition of the Bible. In addition, the rabbinic and monastic movements developed in an intellectual milieu that was heavily infused by Graeco-Roman culture. To the already mentioned biblical, philosophical and rhetorical models of earlier periods the literature of the so-called Third Sophistic of the fourth and fifth centuries may be added, especially since it also developed in a Late Antique context transformed by a politically legitimized and increasingly authoritative Christianity.[78]

The desert monks would have been familiar with certain parts of the Bible from liturgical lectures.[79] Whereas the interpretation of the Bible was not their major concern, "the Bible is often integrated in the teachings."[80] According to Peter Brown, the Apophthegmata Patrum should be seen in the context of ancient Near Eastern wisdom literature such as the book of Proverbs.[81] Garth Fowden, on the other hand, locates the Apophthegmata close to the genre of "anecdotal biography" also found among cenobite monks and exemplified by Pachomius' *Life*.[82] Schoedel points to collections

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the respective literary contexts is examined; Bar-Asher Siegal, *Monastic Literature*, 73;Teresa Morgan, "Encyclopaedias of Virtue? Collections of Sayings and Stories About Wise Men in Greek," in *Encyclopaedism from Antiquity to the Renaissance*, ed. Jason König and Greg Woolf (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013) 108–128.

77 See Hezser, "Verwendung," 373–374; Morgan, "Encyclopaedias," 109–110.

78 On the dating of the Third Sophistic see Ryan C. Fowler and Alberto J. Quiroga Puertas, "A Prolegomena to the Third Sophistic," in *Plato in the Third Sophistic*, ed. Ryan C. Fowler (Boston, 2014) 7–8. Amram Tropper, *Wisdom, Politics, and Historiography: Tractate Avot in the Context of the Graeco Roman Near East* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004) Ch. 4, views Mishnah tractate Avot in the context of the Second Sophistic.

79 See Bousset, *Apophthegmata*, 82. Note, though, that Bousset stereotypes "oriental" culture, which he distinguishes from literate Greek culture: "Der Grieche erst schafft die Literatur, die einfachen orientalischen Kreise, aus denen die Ueberlieferung [sic!] stammt, waren dazu nicht imstande" (90).

80 Rönnegard, *Threads and Images*, 3. Bar-Asher Siegal, *Monastic Literature*, 92–95, investigates attitudes toward the study of Scripture among the desert fathers.

81 Peter Brown, *The Making of Late Antiquity* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1993) 82.

82 Garth Fowden, "Religious Communities," in *Late Antiquity: A Guide to the Postclassical World*, ed. Glen Warren Bowersock, Peter Brown and Oleg Grabar (Cambridge: Belknap, 2000) 93.

of apophthegms and sayings used in rhetorical training from earlier Roman times onwards.[83] Rönnegard considers gnomic compilations such as the Regum et Imperatorum Apophthegmata and the Apophthegmata Laconica, attributed to Plutarch, the most likely analogy.[84] Like the alphabetical collection of the Apophthegmata Patrum, the Apophthegmata Laconica follows an alphabetical order, listing the sayings under the names of their alleged authors. Numerous anecdotes are also integrated in Plutarch's Lives.[85] Rönnegard associates collections of *chreiai* with philosophical schools "and among those wanting to depict philosophers," and arrives at the important conclusion: "The setting of Apophthegmata Patrum, appears to be one where the new kind of philosophers were depicted for didactic purposes for later generations."[86]

Both the Late Antique desert monks and rabbis may have been considered "the new kind of philosophers" of the Near East in early Byzantine times. The editors of the collections would have moulded the traditions in literary forms known from biblical and Graeco-Roman culture, adapting and combining them in innovative ways to suit their respective purposes. Both sayings and story collections appear in a variety of contexts in the ancient world. Sayings collections have a long history in the wisdom tradition (e. g., Proverbs, Job, Qohelet, Sirach, the Q source of the gospels).[87] Collections of *apophthegmata* appear especially in philosophical contexts.[88] Don Cupitt has suggested that

> the earliest "gospels" were collections of the Teacher's sayings, like the Buddhist Dhammapada. Jesus probably taught his followers, and they memorized, a body of short … fictional stories (…) some hundreds of epigrammatic sayings, and a few brief dialogues … The stories and sayings conveyed the special moral insight that concerned him.[89]

The accumulation of sayings, stories and perhaps also short dialogues associated with individual "holy men," transmitted by their followers, can be considered the basic building blocks of the written compilations, whether

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83 William R. Schoedel, "Jewish Wisdom and the Christian Ascetic," in *Aspects of Wisdom in Judaism and Early Christianity*, ed. Robert L. Wilken (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1975) 169–97.

84 Rönnegard, *Threads and Images*, 8.

85 See Rönnegard, *Threads and Images*, 9.

86 Rönnegard, *Threads and Images*, 11.

87 See Leo G. Perdue, *Wisdom Literature: A Theological History* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2007) 224.

88 On the use of the *chreia* or *apophthegma* in Graeco-Roman culture, Hellenistic Judaism and the New Testament, see Hezser, "Verwendung," 373–375.

89 Don Cupitt, *Jesus and Philosophy* (London: SCM, 2009) 22.

the gospels, Philostratus' Lives of the Sophists (3rd c.), Eunapius' Lives of the Philosophers and Sophists (4th c.), the Apophthegmata Patrum, or rabbinic documents are concerned. These forms were ideally suited to transmit the "holy men's" lifestyle in theory and practice. What distinguished the various compilations from each other was the way in which the received material was arranged and edited.

6. Structure and Arrangement

The Apophthegmata Patrum exist in two forms: the alphabetical and the systematic collections.[90] On the basis of extensive research on the textual development of the Apophthegamata Patrum Wilhelm Bousset considered the alphabetical collection to be earlier, a view that is shared by Gould.[91] The systematic collection arranges the material according to subject matter but overlaps with the alphabetical collection with regard to the traditions included.[92] Bousset assumed that the editor of the systematic collection used the alphabetical one, which he rearranged and supplemented by additional material, perhaps based on some other smaller collections.[93] Bousset also suggested that prior to the alphabetical collection there may have been an even earlier, more chaotic arrangement, without distinction between named and anonymous traditions, represented by a Latin collection of only

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90 The Greek text of the alphabetical collection, which also includes anonymous material at the end, has been edited by Cotelier, *Ecclesiae Graecae Monumenta* I, 338–712 (Migne PG 65, col. 71–440). The systematic collection is available in Latin only: Rosweyde, *Vitae Patrum* V and VI (Migne PL 73,74), but was originally written in Greek, as indicated by Photius; some Greek manuscript evidence of this collection exists; see the list in Bousset, *Apophthegmata*, 4. For a critical edition of the systematic collection, see Jean-Claude Guy, *Les Apophthegmes des Pères: Collection Systématique, Sources Chrétiennes* (3 vols; Paris: Cerf, 1993, 2003 and 2005).

91 Bousset, *Apophthegmata*, 7; Gould, *Desert Fathers*, 7. For an English translation of this collection, see Benedicta Ward, *Sayings of the Desert Fathers: The Alphabetical Collection* (Kalamazoo: Cistercian Publications, 1984).

92 For a translation of traditions from the systematic collection, see Benedicta Ward, *Wisdom of the Desert Fathers: Systematic Sayings from the Anonymous Series of the Apophthegmata Patrum* (Oxford: SLG Press, 1986). For the anonymous material, see also Benedicta Ward, *Wisdom of the Desert Fathers: The Apophthegmata Patrum, The Anonymous Series* (Oxford: SLG, 1975), and *World of the Desert Fathers: Stories and Sayings from the Anonymous Series of the Apophthegmata Patrum* (Oxford: SLG, 1986). The anonymous collection has also been edited and translated by John Wortley, *Anonymous Sayings of the Desert Fathers: A Select Edition and Complete English Translation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013).

93 Bousset, *Apophthegmata*, 7.

Scetic material.[94] The assumption of a chronological sequence has been criticized by Jean-Claude Guy, who considers the question of originality inappropriate for such a fluent genre.[95] Rubenson has suggested "to distinguish between dependence in structure and dependence in text."[96] The systematic collection may be dependent on (a version of) the alphabetical collection with regard to some of the textual material but the two "are clearly independent of each other as far as their structure is concerned."[97] As to the text material, the quantity of named traditions in each collection seems to have varied and anonymous material – presented after the named traditions – could have been added at various stages.

Both the alphabetical and the thematic order would have been imposed on the received material by the editors of the collections to enable readers to better orient themselves and find the traditions they were interested in more quickly. The alphabetical arrangement applies to the first letter of the monk's name only; under each letter the order is rather haphazard and varies from one manuscript to another.[98] The editor of the alphabetical collection probably assumed that readers were interested in the traditions associated with particular monks, whereas the editor of the systematic collection thought they were primarily looking for wise sayings and stories on issues such as humility, hospitality and charity. Both editors seem to have prioritized material that mentioned particular monks by name. The anonymous traditions that followed the named traditions seem to have possessed secondary value only. The anonymous collection is also the most variable and prone to later accretions.[99]

Rönnegard has already pointed to the restraints of the editorial process: "These short stories stand independently from each other, without any attempt to connect them, except for such phrases as 'The same Elder also said.'"[100] Harmless has stressed that there is "no theorizing, no train of logical argument, no intricate analysis of biblical texts."[101] The lack of coherence and progression suggests that "sayings and stories are viewed as discrete bits of tradition" and as "instances" of experiences of certain monks

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94 Bousset, *Apophthegmata*, 47–48.

95 Guy, *Recherches*, 232.

96 Samuel Rubenson, *Letters of St. Antony: Monasticism and the Making of a Saint* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1995) 148.

97 Rubenson, *Letters of St. Antony,* 148.

98 See Bousset, *Apophthegmata*, 7–9.

99 Guy, *Recherches*, 232.

100 Rönnegard, *Threads and Images*, 5.

101 Harmless, *Desert Christians*, 171.

or related to very general themes.[102] As such, the Apophthegmata Patrum clearly differ from biographical and historical writings and from more theoretical treatises on monastic life.[103]

While we do not know whether and to what extent the editors (or scribes employed by them) were involved in (re)formulating traditions,[104] their work seems to have mainly consisted of imposing a certain order on the received material, of arranging the traditions like pearls on a string.[105] Far from being systematic in nature, the so-called systematic collection merely gathers traditions according to "stock themes" that reappear in the received material.[106] The main purpose behind the compilation would have been to make the transmitted material available to a contemporary and future readership. The anonymous editors appear as mere facilitators who remain in the background behind their creations. Prominence is given to the named monks of the "classical" period of the Scetic anchorite movement instead. Their wisdom was meant "to inspire, to instruct, and to be imitated by those who want to succeed in the heavenly way of living," as the Prologue states.[107]

Both the alphabetical and thematic arrangement of individual units of tradition can be considered simple organizing principles. The Talmud – and rabbinic literature as a whole – seems to follow a more complex logic.[108] With its division into orders and tractates the Mishnah and Talmud mimic a thematic arrangement but do not follow it slavishly, integrating material

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102 Ward, *World of the Desert*, XII and *Wisdom of the Desert Fathers*, X.

103 See Burton-Christie, *Word in the Desert*, 94.

104 Whether the recurrent pattern, "Abba, give me a word [*rhema*]," was part of the received traditions or imposed by the editors at some stage remains uncertain.

105 For a comparison between the editorial work of the Apophthegmata Patrum and other *chreiai* collections, e. g., by Plutarch, Diogenes Laertius and the Gospel editors, see Hezser, "Verwendung," 388–398.

106 Harmless, *Desert Christians*, 226.

107 PG 65:72a. The Prologue may be a later addition, though, see Rönnegard, *Threads and Images*, 7, who notes that it presents the Apophthegmata Patrum as a "didactic text" and "paraenesis" rather than a historical document. On the Prologue, see also Guy, *Recherches*, 15, who reckons with a secondary editor who added to the Prologue and anonymous traditions.

108 Against Bar-Asher Siegal, *Monastic Literature*, 73, who claims that "[t]here are formal similarities in the way the monastic and rabbinic corpora organize" their received material. She refers (74) to the "anthological nature" of the Talmud and the Apophthegmata as their formal similarity, but this merely concerns the genre, not the way in which the material is organized within it. After mentioning the alphabetical and thematic arrangement of sayings and stories in the Apophthegmata, she repeats that "Rabbinic literature is organized similarly" (75) and then refers to chains of transmission, which have nothing to do with the issue of arrangement. Obviously, rabbinic traditions are not organized alphabetically.

that has only a loose or no connection at all to the overall heading. With its combination of named and anonymous sayings and only rudimentary editing the Mishnah's structure would be closer to the systematic collection of the Apothegmata Patrum than the Talmud's, but even the Mishnah paragraphs are arranged in accordance with an internal logic, in contrast to the Apophthegmata's simple juxtaposition of sayings and stories. Rather than merely presenting individual opinions side by side, the Mishnah and even more so the Talmud create a dialogical and argumentative sequence, inviting the reader to engage in the discussion of specific issues rather than merely absorb and meditate received wisdom. As such, rabbinic texts are more demanding: they require the reader to enter the thinking processes that the editors established by linking individual traditions as if geographically (and sometimes also chronologically) distant rabbis were talking to each other (see the discussion on timelessness below).

It is obvious that the editors of the Talmud Yerushalmi, and even more so the Bavli, intervened much more in the received material than the editors of any of the collections of the Apophthegmata Patrum did. Even the editors of the Bavot tractates of the Yerushalmi, which are considered to constitute the most rudimentary form in which Talmudic *sugyot* exist, were more "hands on" editors than those of the alphabetical and systematic collections: they use introductory formulas to link traditions to the argumentation preceding them; they intervene in the formulation of stories to connect them with their context; they comment on stories and add theoretical continuations.[109] By using these procedures, the talmudic editors seem to have been much more concerned with creating more or less coherent discursive units in which particular halakhic issues are presented from different angles. The very way of combining material in discursive units reveals the editors' own legal, moral and social concerns.

The alphabetical collection of the Apophthegmata Patrum also attributes greater significance to individual monks than rabbinic texts attribute to any rabbi. By arranging the sayings and stories of an individual monk together, they allow readers to focus on the wisdom of a specific "holy man." The Talmud and rabbinic works in general make such a focus impossible. Even if the editors used oral or written collections of stories and sayings associated with specific rabbinic masters, they fragmented them at the time of integration into larger literary contexts. This suggests that they deliberately

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[109] For a discussion of these editorial procedures, see Catherine Hezser, *Form, Function, and Historical Significance of the Rabbinic Story in Yerushalmi Neziqin* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1993) 228–268.

destroyed the earlier division into school affiliations – students transmitting the traditions of their individual teachers – for the sake of a new and larger good: the unity of a rabbinic movement that reached beyond individual rabbinic circles. This approach enabled a completely new perspective: to view individual traditions in relation to others and to establish their commonality as well as diversity.

Scholars of the Apophthegmata Patrum assume that the earliest versions of the larger compilation were created shortly after or perhaps even at the time of the latest generation of monks mentioned in the collection.[110] The time span between the collection and writing down of oral traditions and their combination with other written traditions in a larger compilation would have been relatively short. For that reason, the Apophthegmata Patrum seem to represent oral transmission more than the Talmud Yerushalmi and especially the Bavli, in which the transmitted material seems to have undergone various stages of more or less comprehensive editing. The simple structural principles of the Apophthegmata Patrum would be more similar to the Logia Source (Q) than to the gospels and rabbinic documents. Both the Logia Source and the Apophthegmata Patrum are lists, whereas the gospels and rabbinic documents use traditions for new purposes, to create new literary forms. This more complex editing process would have taken longer than the mere collection and writing down of oral traditions to combine them in a list-format.[111]

7. Polyphony and Timelessness

The Apophthegmata Patrum and the Talmud share two important characteristics: they give expression to a "polyphony of voices" and present them in a timeless manner.[112] The great accomplishment of the compilations is

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[110] Bousset, *Apophthegmata*, 77; Rönnegard, *Threads and Images*, 1; Burton-Christie, *Word in the Desert*, 76–77; Harmless, *Desert Christians*, 205–206.

[111] Scholars have argued that the Bavli was edited much later than the Yerushalmi, despite the fact that five generations of amoraim are mentioned in both. The main reason for dating the Bavli later is the more extensive editing, done by the so-called *stam*, see, for example, Kalmin, *Jewish Babylonia*, 38: "The Bavli's texts passed through many more hands before they reached their final form, and these hands shaped, molded, and sometimes transformed these texts in accordance with contemporary realities, needs, desires, and assumptions."

[112] For the term "polyphony of voices," see Harmless, *Desert Christians*, 226, who states: "The *Apophthegmata Patrum* does not have one theology of the monastic life but many." For the Talmud, see Noah Efron, "Early Judaism," in *Science and Religion*

that they enable the reader to gain access to many different monks' and rabbis' views and practices, to perceive the collective wisdom of the monastic and rabbinic past, rather than to rely on individual voices only. The Apophthegmata Patrum and the Talmud present a forum for a relatively large number of named monks and rabbis to present their opinions in an equal manner, notwithstanding the fact that a disproportionately larger number of traditions may be associated with individuals, such as Abba Poemen and Rabbi. The editors of the collections were keen on giving expression to the extended Scetic and Palestinian rabbinic networks rather than to a few select circles of monks only. In the gradual development of the traditions there seems to have been a continuous expansion: from individual teachers' traditions transmitted by their students to more or less small collections and eventually larger collections that continued to expand after their initial editing. Burton-Christie has stressed the "vastness and diversity of the tradition of sayings which has emerged from fourth century Egyptian monasticism" and pointed to the compilers' desire to create a "large inclusive anthology."[113] He assumes that the purpose of this diversity, which did not conceal an "integrity of outlook," was "to be of benefit to many," as the collection's preface explicitly states.[114] The anthology reflects many different personalities, regions (Scetis, other Egyptian regions, Palestine) and generations, projecting "a spectrum of worlds" rather than a unique or homogenized viewpoint; at the same time, the amalgamated traditions "emerge from the same world and share a similar vocabulary and ethos."[115] This diversity within a shared world-view can be considered "one of the real strengths" of the compilation and part of its "enduring appeal."[116]

Much the same can be said about the Talmud. Shaye Cohen has already stressed that the rabbinic movement should be seen as a "grand coalition" that agreed to disagree.[117] Whether and to what extent individual rabbis would have been aware of the movement's unity and diversity stands to reason. What is clear, though, is that this is the impression that the literary documents are keen to present: that rabbis who lived at different places in

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Around the World, ed. John Hedley Brooke and Ronald L. Numbers (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2011) 26: "The Talmud refracts the views of a great number of people, living in many different places, over the course of centuries … The Talmud speaks in many voices."

113 Burton-Christie, *Word in the Desert*, 86 and 88.

114 Burton-Christie, *Word in the Desert*, 89, with reference to PG 64.73ab.

115 Burton-Christie, *Word in the Desert*, 92–93.

116 Burton-Christie, *Word in the Desert*, 95.

117 Shaye J. D. Cohen, "The Significance of Yavneh: Pharisees, Rabbis, and the End of Jewish Sectarianism," *Hebrew Union College Annual* 55 (1984) 27–53.

Palestine (and Babylonia) and belonged to different generations all shared a common world view prioritizing Torah study and observance.[118] Within that general outlook they came up with different arguments, interpretations and practices. Like the Apophthegmata Patrum the Talmud enables the reader to become aware of a whole range of viewpoints and practices amongst a broad network of like-minded individuals. As in the case of the monastic collection, such an inclusive approach was destined to have a much wider reach than smaller individual collection could ever hope for. Perhaps it also served peace-making purposes among conflicting school traditions, as Harmless has suggested for the monastic collection: "The Apophthegmata seems to be the work of a peacemaker (or of a circle inspired by one)."[119] Similarly, individual Tannaitic and Amoraic traditions reflect conflicts amongst rabbis that could be fierce.[120] By contrast, within the larger context of the Talmud, which presents diverse opinions side-by-side and sometimes harmonizes between them, such disagreements seem minuscule.[121]

The seeming timelessness of the presentation of desert wisdom, with its lack of historical interest and chronological concern, has already been pointed out by Chitty.[122] The compilers of both the Apophthegmata and rabbinic works were interested only in juxtaposing various viewpoints of monks and rabbis of the "classical" period, not their life circumstances and the historical contexts in which they lived. The reason for this approach was probably the wish to make past views and practices useful for the present and future. Those who followed the monastic or rabbinic lifestyle did not take the time-boundedness of the past traditions into account; they rather served as ideals and models for their own outlook and behaviour.

A similar attitude toward the past seems to have existed among other early Byzantine writers. Gulielmo Cavallo has pointed to the "'atemporal' quality of Byzantine literature," which he considers a consequence of the great traditionalism in education: "The models for the highest cultural levels remained the 'classics', not only those of pagan antiquity but also Christian texts, above all the writings of the church fathers … Even the methods adopted for teaching were unchanged."[123] Similarly, Cyril Mango has emphasized that for the Byzantines, "chronology was of no

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118 See Hezser, *Social Structure*, 135–137.

119 Harmless, *Desert Christians*, 250.

120 See Hezser, *Social Structure*, 241–244, for examples.

121 See Hezser, *Social Structure*, 245–251.

122 Chitty, *Desert a City*, 67.

123 Gulielmo Cavallo, "Introduction," in *The Byzantines*, ed. G. Cavallo (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1997) 8–9.

consequence: the apostles lived in timeless communion with the victims of the persecutions of the second to fourth centuries, the desert fathers, the bishops of the patristic age."[124] Charles M. Stang has called this mentality "a 'timeless communion' of the past and present."[125] While Claudia Rapp associates this development with the seventh to tenth centuries,[126] Scott Fitzgerald Johnson identifies its beginnings in the fourth to sixth centuries already and argues that "this tendency towards redaction, collection and republication is endemic to Late Antique literature generally."[127]

8. Textual Fluidity

Both the Apophthegmata Patrum and the Talmud Yerushalmi, as well as other rabbinic works, have a complex history of textual transmission that suggests a certain fluidity in their development. Bousset has conducted the most detailed study of the various textual witnesses of the Apophthegmata Patrum. Whereas he was motivated by the desire to find the most "original" version of the text, other scholars have emphasized that originality did not concern those who compiled and augmented the various versions in and beyond the fifth century.[128] It is likely that a number of versions of the alphabetical collection circulated in the second half of the fifth century and perhaps also some versions of the systematic collection simultaneously. Further anonymous material as well as named material taken from other collections would have been added whenever available to the editors and copyists. Since there was no copyright, the notion of originality did not exist in early Byzantine times. A text could be recopied and emended in accordance with the commissioner's and scribe's wishes. Every copy and manuscript would have been unique.[129] This consideration applies to copies and manuscripts of the Talmud as much as it does to the Apophthegmata collections. Various versions with more or less considerable differences would have existed at one and the same time.

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124 Cyril Mango, "Saints," in Cavallo, *Byzantines*, 256.

125 Stang, *Apophasis*, 51.

126 Claudia Rapp, "Byzantine Hagiographers as Antiquarians, Seventh to Tenth Centuries," *Byzantinische Forschungen* 21 (1995) 31–44.

127 Johnson, "Apocrypha," 49.

128 See Bousset, *Apophthegmata*, 1–60; Guy, *Recherches*, 13–115; Harmless, *Desert Christians*, 248–251; Rönnegard, *Threads and Images*, 5–8; Rubenson, *Letters*, 145–152; Gould, *Desert Christians*, 5–25.

129 See B. A. van Groningen, "ΕΚΔΟΣΙΣ," in *Mnemosyne* series 4, vol. 16 (1963) 7–8.

One aspect of textual development is the issue of accretions. According to classical text-critical criteria, accretions are considered later additions to a text. The shorter text is considered earlier and more "original." Yet it is also possible that the editors of a later version abbreviated the textual prototype they used. Since considerably less named traditions appear in the systematic collection (Rosweyde, *Vitae Patrum*) than in the alphabetical collection (ed. Cotelier) Bousset assumed that the editor of the systematic collection provided only an excerpt of the alphabetical collection that he allegedly used as a primary source.[130] On the other hand, thirty-seven named traditions appear only in the systematic collection as do hundreds of anonymous traditions.[131] In all likelihood the editors of the alphabetical and the systematic collections used whatever material was available from whatever sources they had at hand. Especially the anonymous material seems to have expanded in later periods, as did material associated with monks from outside Scetis.[132] Bousset summarizes the development as follows: "the state of our various collections clearly indicates that in later time periods new traditions gradually crystallized around the already existing written tradition."[133] The various translations and broad dissemination of the compilations in later monastic circles would have increased the diversity of the textual evidence.[134]

Peter Schäfer and Hans-Jürgen Becker have emphasized the fluidity of the Talmud Yerushalmi's textual tradition, reckoning with a gradual development and fluid boundaries.[135] Milikowsky has disputed this view and accused the authors of confusing redactional and scribal processes.[136] In comparison with the various versions and translations of the Apophthegmata Patrum the textual evidence of the Yerushalmi seems to be much more

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130 Bousset, *Apophthegmata*, 7.

131 Bousset, *Apophthegmata*, 7 and 10.

132 See Bousset, *Apophthegmata*, 45; Chitty, *Desert a City*, 67; Guy, *Recherches*, 232.

133 Bousset, *Apophthegmata*, 77 (my translation from the German).

134 On the diffusion of the material, see Burton-Christie, *Word in the Desert*, 87–8. See also Rönnegard, *Threads and Images*, 1: "They were edited and copied during the earliest stages of the monastic movement, and were soon translated and spread widely. They were read, studied, heard and meditated upon in most monasteries."

135 Hans-Jürgen Becker, "Texts and History: The Dynamic Relationship between Talmud Yerushalmi and Genesis Rabbah," in *The Synoptic Problem in Rabbinic Literature*, ed. Shaye J. D. Cohen (Providence: Brown Judaic Studies, 2000) 145–158. See also *Synopse zum Talmud Yeruhalmi,* ed. Peter Schäfer, Hans-Jürgen Becker et al. (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1991–2008).

136 Chaim Milikowsky, "On the Formation and Transmission of Bereshit Rabba and the Yerushalmi: Questions of Redaction, Text-Criticism, and Literary Relationships," *Jewish Quarterly Review* 42 (2002) 512–567.

stable, showing much less differences between the extent manuscript versions. On the one hand, a certain amount of textual fluidity may have been typical of any Late Antique anonymous compilation consisting of mostly orally transmitted material. In contrast to authored texts, the anonymity of the editors may have enabled greater variation between the circulating versions of the text. Since the oral tradition and use of the texts continued when they existed in written form, some of this interpretive material may have entered some manuscript versions between the earliest stage of editing and the extent manuscripts of later centuries.

On the other hand, it would have been easier to add units to the alphabetical and systematic versions of the Apophthegmata Patrum than to the Yerushalmi. As already pointed out above, the Apophthegmata collections have a simple structure and additional material could easily be added at the end of the respective chapters and collections.[137] This was possible because the individual units are not connected argumentatively, as is the case in Yerushalmi *sugyot*, where additions might disrupt the logical flow of the argument. In the case of the Yerushalmi, the later accretion of glosses and comments is more likely than the addition of originally independent textual units. The more complex editing process created a more elaborate compilation whose textual boundaries would have been more evident to copyists.

9. The Creation of a Rabbinic and Monastic Group Identity

By combining traditions associated with monks and rabbis of different locations and generations, the Apophthegmata Patrum and the Talmud Yerushalmi, as well as other works of rabbinic literature, create a monastic and rabbinic group identity that would not have been evident to that extent beforehand. The focus has shifted from individual masters with their circles of disciples and colleague-friends to the Scetic anchorite and Palestinian rabbinic networks and their most prominent representatives. Individual profiles of monks and rabbis are missing; what matters is the collectivity representing a particular anchorite and rabbinic world view. As Bousset has pointed out, "the individual Scetic monks are not original characters whose elaboration would have been worthwhile"; they rather represent the ascetic ideal: "What our source really provides us with is an image of the life of

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137 See Guy, *Recherches*, 232, on this process.

Scetic anchorite monks as a whole."[138] The compilations enable the reader to view a wide variety of views and practices that are diverse and sometimes contradictory. In the Talmud more than in the Apophthegmata masters are presented in discourse and dispute with each other. In both compilations their practices and behaviours are meant to serve as models for future generations of monks and rabbinic scholars.

With regard to the Apophthegmata Patrum, Gould has pointed out that the "relative scarcity of sayings about the relations between monks and lay people or monks and the Church suggest a preoccupation with the monastic community in itself rather than with its wider contacts and influence."[139] The same focus on inner-group relationships is evident in rabbinic documents. Lay people are rarely mentioned and usually remain anonymous. This includes the local Jewish aristocracy who appear as wealthy donors and *archisynagogoi* in synagogue inscriptions. The wider civil and political context is also not properly reflected. The few stories featuring Romans serve to highlight aspects of rabbinic culture. What matters most are inner-group relationships. The late fifth-century editors of the compilations reflect "the community's awareness of its own unity and continuity with its past."[140] Just as the "concern of the *Apophthegmata* [is] to establish the identity of the community which it represents,"[141] the concern of the Talmud Yerushalmi is to establish the identity of the Palestinian rabbinic movement whose views and lifestyle are reflected in the text. The Apophthegmata Patrum and the Talmud Yerushalmi can be considered monuments (*Erinnerungsdenkmäler*) to the Late Antique Scetic and Palestinian rabbinic movements.[142] Each of these compilations constitutes "a corpus of memories and of insights," a practical ethos that formed the basis of the teaching and practice of later generations of monks and rabbis and is still studied today.[143]

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138 Bousset, *Apophthegmata*, 91 (my translation from the German).
139 Gould, *Desert Fathers*, 14.
140 Gould, *Desert Fathers*, 15.
141 Gould, *Desert Fathers*, 17.
142 For the term *Erinnerungsdenkmal*, see Bousset, *Apophthegmata*, 76.
143 Gould, *Desert Fathers*, 185.