Theodūtē (a Syriac form of the Greek name Theodotos, no doubt adopted at the hellenized Syrian Orthodox Monastery of the Eagles’ Nest, qēn neshrē, on the Euphrates, where Theodūtē became a monk) died in the province of Dārā in 698, leaving his disciple Joseph, a monk of the monastery of Zāqūn on the Tigris, north of Amīd, in charge of the monastery which he had founded above the village of Qelleth. Remains of this tiny monastery can still be seen. The local Christians, who speak Arabic, call it dayr waṣaʿ raʾs, ‘the head-ache monastery’. Sufferers from migraine spend the night in the burial chamber in the hope of a cure. Theodūtē healed people with headaches in his lifetime, according to the memoir dictated by his disciple soon after his death. Joseph, not himself a writer, dictated this memoir to the priest and precentor Shemʿūn (=Symeon, Simon) of Samosata.1

1 A.N. Palmer, ‘Saints’ Lives with a difference: Elijah on John of Tella (d. 528) and Joseph on Theodotos of Amīda (d. 698)’, in IV Symposium Syriacum 1984: Literary Genres in Syriac Literature, ed. H.J.W. Drijvers, R. Lavenant, C. Molenberg and G.J. Reinhink (Orientalia Christiana Analecta 229), Rome, 1987, pp. 203-16; idem, ‘Semper vagus: the anatomy of a mobile monk’, in Studia Patristica, 18:2, ed. E. Livingstone, 1989, pp. 255-60; idem, ‘The Garšûni version of the Life of Theodotus of Amīda’, Parole de l’Orient 16, 1990-1, pp. 253-60; idem, Monk and Mason on the Tigris Frontier: The Early History of Tur ‘Abdūn (University of Cambridge Oriental Publications 39), Cambridge, 1990, pp. 25, 76, 88-91, 163, 165-8, 183; Robert Hoyland, Seeing Islam as Others SAW IT: A Survey and Evaluation of Christian, Jewish and Zoroastrian Writings on Early Islam (Studies in Late Antiquity and Islam 13), Princeton, 1997, pp. 156-60. I am editing the Life of Theodūtē. The edition will be based on one Syriac MS, no. 12/17 (12th century) of the Syrian Orthodox Patriarchate at Damascus, which I have seen and photographed by courtesy of His Holiness Mūr Ignatios Zakka I ‘Īwās, having begun to work on it with photographs taken by Dr Sebastian Brock. The lacunae can be filled from the Arabic translation made from this same MS by the monk Bishāra in 1733, before it was damaged; this, too, I saw and photographed in 1986 by courtesy of His Grace Mūr Dionysios Bahnām Jejjāwī, then Metropolitan Bishop in residence at St. Mark’s Syrian Orthodox Monastery in the Old City of
The first part of my discussion here centres on a chapter from this source, which shows that the people of Claudia, a region on the west bank of the Tigris north of Samosata, had little if any direct contact with their Arab rulers. For them, the conquest meant exposure to the new danger of raids from nearby Melitene or Anzitene, which were still in Roman hands. It also subjected them to the exactions of tax-collectors who did not spare the many poor people who lived in the region, some of whom emigrated for this reason to the Roman Empire. It is typical that one of the few things they borrowed from the Arabs in the early years was a new word for tax: *jizya*, which became *gźithā* in Syriac.

The second part is mainly about Theodūṭē’s time in Āmīd. So far as we know, it was only when Theodūṭē became bishop of Āmīd that he had direct dealings with the Arab authorities. At first it was a horrible experience: Theodūṭē, it seems, was physically abused in the mosque, where presumably the seat of judgment was, but his Arab judge seems to have been satisfied that he was not an enemy spy, in spite of the evidence that he had corresponded—presumably in Greek—with the commanders of the Roman garrisons in the castles of Anzitene. Later, if we can believe the vicariously boastful Joseph, Theodūṭē was recognized by the Arab authorities as the best man to act as judge in cases which concerned only Christian members of the population. The order that Theodūṭē should be regarded as leader of all the Christians of Āmīd is said to have been issued by the Arab plenipotentiary in the East, which ought to mean al-Ḥajjāj.²

The final part is about the fact that Joseph says nothing about the Chalcedonians of Theodūṭē’s diocese of Āmīd, whereas he says quite a bit about Theodūṭē’s encounter with the Chalcedonians of Ùrhōy (Edessa), even though that encounter was a brief one. Does this mean that the Arabs did not tolerate Chalcedonians in this border-province? After all, Theodūṭē, though no Chalcedonian, was suspected for a letter he wrote to someone in the Roman Empire. Or does it mean

---

² Robert Hoyland feels, no doubt for a good reason, that it would have been a lower official. Typical of the *Life* is the absence of a name. The only Arab mentioned by name in the life is Jaydar, a much-feared leader of raids over the frontier with Anzitene, who is otherwise unknown. Even the commander of the garrison in Āmīd, who acquitted Theodūṭē of the charge of treason, is not named.