

# The *Kūšāpē*: The Private Priestly Prayers in the East Syrian Anaphoras

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## Introduction

Bryan D. Spinks rightly observed on the *kušāpē* or silent priestly prayers in the East Syrian liturgy that, the silent priestly prayers received very little attention from the scholars since they form the so called “Third Stratum” in the completion of the shape of the liturgy.<sup>1</sup> Apart from an introductory study of Mar Aprem, the observations of W.F. Macomber, Robert Taft, P. Yousif and finally, a well comprehensive study of Bryan Spinks, hardly any further studies have been made on East Syrian *kušāpē*.<sup>2</sup> However, in the East Syrian Eucharistic liturgy these prayers play a vital role in the progression of the course of the celebration. This short study attempts to explore the origin, scope and the relevance of *kušāpē* in the East Syrian liturgy.

## 1. The Silent Priestly Prayers in the East and the West

The silent priestly prayers are not unique to the East Syrians only. In the East the Prothesis prayer of the Byzantines, the prayers of “Access to the Altar” in the Egyptian and the West Syrian rites bear witness to it.<sup>3</sup>

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1 B.D. Spinks, “Priesthood and Offering in the *Kūšāpē* of the East Syrian Anaphoras,” in id., *Prayers from the East*, Washington, DC 1993, 97. Here forward, “Priesthood and Offering.”

2 Mar Aprem, “Kushappe and Slawata in the Liturgical Tradition of the East Syrian Church,” in H.J.W. Drijvers et. al. eds., *SympSyr IV* 1984 (OCA 229, Rome 1987) 435-443; W.F. Macomber, “The Oldest Known Text of the Anaphora of the Apostles Addai and Mari,” OCP 32 (1966) 344-347; R. F. Taft, *The Great Entrance. A History of the Transfer of Gifts and Other Pre-Anaphoral Rites of the Liturgy of St. John Chrysostom* (OCA 200) 2nd ed. Rome 1978, 287; P. Yousif, “Le déroulement de la messe chaldéenne,” in A. Pistoia & A.M. Triacca, *L'Eucharistie: célébrations rites, piétés*, BELS 79 (Rome 1995) 411-416; Spinks, Priesthood and Offering, 97-110.

3 Spinks, “Priesthood and Offering,” 98.

In the West such prayers known as ‘apologies’ or personal penitential prayers of the priests were not seen in the ancient liturgies. It began to appear in the Gallican liturgies of the sixth-seventh centuries but outside the *Ordo Missae* and reached its peak in the eleventh and the twelfth centuries. A sacramentary of St. Denis has seventy-five of them and after twelfth century their number gradually diminishes.<sup>4</sup> According to M. Metzger, these priestly prayers written in the first person are private in character and are linked with the penitential disciplines of the time and the practice of penitential commutations through the celebration of the Masses for the dead. He is of the opinion that “these formulations betray a separation between the priest and the assembly and an overly sacrificial conception of the Mass.”<sup>5</sup> Some authors maintain that the apologies were first adopted into Celtic-Gallican liturgical tradition in imitation of the Eastern liturgies.<sup>6</sup> Some others consider them to be introduced into liturgy as an aftermath of Aryan controversy, resulted in the emphasis on the divinity of Christ, weakening his role as a human mediator. Thus, the priest who stands before the *Mysterium Tremendum* assumed the role of a human mediator and began to confess his unworthiness and to implore divine grace to fulfil his ministry. Secondly, the sacrament of penance was not frequent till the twelfth century and extra-sacramental confessions and apologies in the liturgy were considered the means of forgiveness.<sup>7</sup>

## **2. The Development of the East Syrian *Kūšāpē***

The *kušāpē* are the supplications of the priest said kneeling and in a low voice<sup>8</sup> during the Anaphoral intermissions of the deacon’s proclamation or people’s response. The word *kūšāpā* comes from *kēšp* which means to whisper, to make supplication or to entreat earnestly.<sup>9</sup> In

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4 M. Metzger, “The History of the Eucharistic Liturgy in Rome,” in A.J. Chupungco, *The Eucharist, Handbook of Liturgical Studies III*, Collegeville-Minnesota 1999, 128-129.

5 Ibid.

6 L. Eisenhofer and J. Lechner, *The Liturgy of the Roman Rite*, trans. And E.F. Peeler from the 6th German ed., H.E. Winstone, 1961, 83.

7 <https://www.encyclopedia.com/religion/encyclopedias-almanacs-transcripts-and-maps/apologies-liturgical>. Accessed on May 11, 2018.

8 F. E. Brightmann, *Liturgies Eastern and Western*, Oxford 1896 (1967 ed) 574.

9 Payne Smith (Mrs. Margoliouth), *A Compendious Syriac English Dictionary Founded upon the Thesaurus Syriacus of R. Payne Smith*, Oxford 1903, reprint, 1985, 229.

the Eucharistic liturgy, they are the silent priestly intercessions before each prayer of inclination (*G'hāntā*) in the Anaphora.<sup>10</sup>

The *Kūšāpē* are considered to be a relatively new element in the East Syrian liturgy. Noting the total silence on these supplications in the liturgical commentaries of Narsai (sixth century), Bar Lipeh (seventh century) and Anonymous Commentary of the tenth century, R.H. Connolly concludes that they are later additions into the Anaphora of Addai & Mari and were probably inspired by the intercessions in the Anaphoras of Theodore and Nestorius.<sup>11</sup> It was Edward E.C. Ratcliff who popularized this view in his study on the Original form of the Anaphora of Addai and Mari and scholars like G. Dix and B. Botte endorsed it.<sup>12</sup>

As far as the liturgical texts are concerned W.F. Macomber shows that *kūšāpē* prayers first appear in the twelfth century *Diarbekir Hudrā* whereas they are absent in the tenth-eleventh century *Mar Ešqayā Mss.*<sup>13</sup> But at the same time he never rules out the possibility of the priests having recited some private prayers analogous to the present *kūšāpē* according to their devotion and without any set formula. For him, the pause created by the introduction of the long chants accounts for the emergence of private devotional prayers of *kūšāpē*, which practically filled their lengthy duration. He also points out the attribution of the final *kūšāpā* of the Anaphora of Nestorius to a notable composer Patriarch Elias Abu Halim II (1176-1190) in the sixteenth century priest's ritual in *Chald Patr* 209 as an example of the development of written formula.<sup>14</sup> Thus, Macomber concludes that these prayers were not generally introduced into the liturgy before the end of the thirteenth century, "even though they were in use in somewhat earlier in some places."<sup>15</sup>

B.D Spinks suggests another possibility for the evolution of *kūšāpē* in the liturgy. For him, the finding of Robert Taft on the development of the East Syrian rite of the *Accessus ad Altare* may explain the origin of

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10 Ibid. 212.

11 R.H. Connolly, "The Works of Menezes on the Malabar Liturgy," JTS 15 (1913-1914) 424.

12 E.C. Ratcliff, "The Original Form of the Anaphora of Addai and Mari: A Suggestion," JTS 30 (1928-9) 26; W.F. Macomber, "The Oldest Known Text of the Anaphora of the Apostles," OCP 32 (1966) 344-346; Spinks, "Priesthood and Offering," 99.

13 W.F. Macomber, "The Oldest Known Text," 344-346.

14 Ibid 347.

15 Ibid. 345, 347.

*kūšāpā*. According to the ancient East Syrian practice the main celebrant (one who offers) was selected by the Archdeacon only after the Liturgy of the Word, and the utter bewilderment and deep sense of unworthiness of the just designated priest could have generated the prayer during the Access to the Altar as well as the subsequent *kūšāpē*.<sup>16</sup>

Taking in to account of the spiritual content of *kūšāpē*, Spinks finally proposes that the fourth century Mystagogical Catecheses in Antioch represented by John Chrysostom, Cyril of Jerusalem and Theodore of Mopsuestia and subsequent East Syrian commentary of Narsai which highlight the *Mysterium Tremendum* in the Eucharistic celebration is the “raw material which could give rise to the extemporary prayers and fore-runners of the later written *kūšāpē*.”<sup>17</sup>

### 3. A Review of the Findings

Now let's review the four main findings of the afore-said studies:

- 1) Since there is no mention of the *Kūšāpē* in the East Syrian liturgical commentaries they are to be considered later accretion in the liturgy.
- 2) The findings of W.F. Macomber on the absence of *Kūšāpē* in the tenth-eleventh century *Mar Ešyā Hudra*, and his suggestion of their later incorporation into the liturgy to fill the gaps of diaconal chants in the anaphora.
- 3) The proposal of Robert Taft that *kūšāpē* were evolved in the context of *Accessus ad Altare* after the selection of the celebrant from among the priests, and
- 4) Finally, the suggestion of Bryan Spinks that we cannot rule out the antiquity and worth of these prayers which could have been rooted in the fourth-century mystagogical catechesis.

First of all, it is true that there is no mention of the *kūšāpē* in the liturgical commentaries ranging from that of the sixth-century Narsai to the fourteenth-century Timothy II. Though the *kūšāpē* appear from the twelfth-century manuscripts onwards, why there is not a single mention of them even in the in later commentaries of Bar Zo'bi (13th Century), Abdišo and Timothy II (14th century)? S.P. Spinks shares the views of Douglas Webb that though the commentators tend to pass over *Kūšāpē*, all evidences suggest that they were in existence when those writers were at work.<sup>18</sup>

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16 R.F. Taft, *Great Entrance*, 287; Spinks, “Priesthood and Offering,” 100.

17 Spinks, “Priesthood and Offering,” 101-103.

18 Spinks, “Priesthood and Offering,” 100-101.



One cannot expect the references to the less important private prayers in these commentaries in the East Syrian context of *Disciplina Arcani* that even the explicit references to the G'hanta prayers are scanty in them.<sup>19</sup> It seems that the commentators follow consistently a set of mystagogical explanations on the main courses of the liturgy and that would explain the absence of a mention of the initial "Our Father" even in the later commentaries, though this element was definitely in place by the time of Timothy I (780-823).<sup>20</sup> Nevertheless, I could find an indication of *kūšāpā* of the Sanctus in the most detailed commentary known after George of Arbel (10th century): "But when they finish the sanctification of the Seraphim, 'then the priest proceeds to fill up his service.' And he returns to the course of his g'hanta quietly."<sup>21</sup> The words "then the priest proceeds to fill up his service" refer neither to people's response to Sanctus nor G'hanta, but something that comes in between them, most probably the priest's extemporaneous prayer of *kūšāpā*. Therefore, the absence of a clear mention of the *kūšāpē* in the liturgical commentaries cannot be taken as a proof for the non-existence of these prayers in the East Syrian liturgy.

Secondly, as regards the want of *kūšāpē* in the earliest known manuscript, Spinks shares a valuable information from Douglas Webb's observation on East Syrian manuscripts that he knows no Priests' Ritual in which *kūšāpē* do not occur and they are omitted only in a very few manuscripts, for the tendency of the *Hudra* is to abbreviate. Therefore, the absence of the *kūšāpē* in the earliest known text cannot be taken as a criterion to judge a total absence of *kūšāpē* in the early texts. At the same time Macomber's observation that *kūšāpē* filled the gap of deaconal chant

19 For example, most commentators cite Gabriel Qatraya's (615) words that the priest "recites the whole passage in a low voice and at the end he raises his voice and makes it heard by the people because first it is mystery that is performed and the whole people ought not to know it; second, the words being heard should not be learned by laymen, women and children so that the divine words may not be slighted and despised." Gabriel Qatraya, "Interpretation of the Offices," trans., P. Podipara, in G. Vavanikunnel, ed., *Homilies and Interpretations of the Holy Qurbana* (Changanacherry 1977) 98.

20 *Expositio Officiorum Ecclesiae I & II: Anonymi Auctoris Expositio Officiorum Ecclesiae Georgio Arbelensi vulgo Adscripta. Accedit Abrahæ Bar Lipheh Interpretatio Officiorum*, ed. & trans., R.H. Connolly (CSCO 91-92 = SS 28, 32) Rome 1913, 1915, 121, 153; *Expositio Officiorum II* 82-83; *Išo 'yahb IV, Administration of the Eucharist*, in Van Unnik, *Nestorian Questions*, qs. 105-107, 181.

21 George of Arbel, *A Commentary of the Mass by the Nestorian George Bishop of Mosul and Arbel*, Trans., R.H. Connolly, Robert Matheus ed., OIRSI 243 Kottayam 2000, 98; *Expositio Officiorum II*, 58 (Syr).

is very much feasible, since they occupy such intervals of responses and chants during the liturgy.

Thirdly, how far Robert Taft's observation is viable that *keṣāpē* were evolved from the context of the *Accessus ad Altare*? It is quite natural that the newly designated celebrant-priest may say some prayers reflecting his feeling of bewilderment and sense of unworthiness to offer the mysteries. However, the priestly prayers for preparation for sacrifice and confession of unworthiness is not an East Syrian peculiarity, but a common feature in other eastern liturgies also,<sup>22</sup> where we do not find the practice of an on-the-spot-selection of the main celebrant. Interestingly, in the East Syrian tradition the silent prayer during the genuflections of *Accessus ad Altare* is not classified under *keṣāpē* but *Slothā*,<sup>23</sup> which simply means prayer. Of course, the prayer of the *Accessus ad Altare* reflects the priest's feeling of deficiency and unworthiness to celebrate at the beginning of the offering, but one cannot expect the same till the end of the anaphora. On the contrary, the liturgical texts foresee a gradual growth of the priest's *Parhesya* or confidence in the Anaphoral prayers. Whereas the *Accessus ad Altare* is carried out with deep genuflections, the first G'hanta is said with "folded hands," which is interpreted in the text itself as an expression of the priest's lack of confidence: for "he has not received confidence (*parhesyā*)."<sup>24</sup> However, the following G'hantas are said with "stretched hands," as he has acquired confidence."<sup>25</sup> Besides, the prayer of the *Accessus ad Altare* lacks any trace of a petition,<sup>25</sup> which in turn, is the hallmark of a *keṣāpā*. Therefore, it seems that the question of priest's confidence at the *Accessus to Altare* is not the point here, but we have to look elsewhere for motives for the anaphoral *keṣāpē*.

Fourthly, the line of thoughts of Spinks, that the roots of *keṣāpē* may be sought in the fourth century mystagogy, especially in the commentaries of Theodore and Narsai seems to draw further light into the evolution of *keṣāpē*.<sup>26</sup>

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22 Spinks, "Priesthood and Offering," 98.

23 *The Liturgy of the Holy Apostles Addai and Mari Together with the Liturgies of Mar Theodorus and Mar Nestorius and the Order of Baptism*, trans., K.A. Paul & G. Mookken, Trichur 1967, 20.

24 *Liturgy*, 24; J. Kelayta, ed., *The Liturgy of the Church of the East* (Syr. text) Mosul 1928, 37 (Syr).

25 *Liturgy*, 21.

26 Spinks, "Priesthood and Offering," 103-104.

#### 4. The *Kūšāpe*-Parallels in the Commentaries of Theodore and Narsai

A close look into the commentary of Theodore on *Sanctus* shows a remarkable matching to the *kūšāpā* after the Sanctus in all East Syrian Anaphoras. This *kūšāpā*, which begins with a Trinitarian praise and followed by an illustration of the vision of Isaiah,<sup>27</sup> has almost exact parallel in Theodore. In the Thrice-Holy hymn, Theodore attests that, the “doctrine of the Trinity also was revealed at that time when one Godhead was proclaimed in three persons...”<sup>28</sup> Then he goes on to the vision of Isaiah and his confession of unworthiness. Theodore says: “While Isaiah is sorrowing for all human race, he was astonished at the boundless mercy of God, who granted such a grace to a race full of sins such as these.”<sup>29</sup> He also points to the disposition of humility, what would become the priestly gesture during *kūšāpā*:<sup>30</sup> “...We all stand in reverential fear while we bow our heads, as if unable even to look at the greatness of this service... we bow our heads both before and after we recite loudly the *Sanctus*, and make manifest this fear in a congruous way. In all this the priest also associates himself loudly with the invisible hosts, and prays...”

The XVII Homily attributed to Narsai also makes such Trinitarian paraphrase of the Thrice-Holy analogous almost to the opening of the *kūšāpā* of the Sanctus:

This is what the crying of Holy three times means: but that of “Lord” makes known that the nature of the Deity is one. Holy is the Father, who has the property of fatherhood, and is the cause and begetter, and not the begotten. Holy is the Son who has the property of generation, who from the Father is begotten eternally without procession. Holy is the Spirit, who has the property of procession, who proceeds from the Father, and is beyond all times. With these (words) all the Church cries out and returns to silence.<sup>31</sup>

These early references to the content of the *kūšāpā* of the Sanctus leads us to think that the origins of *kūšāpē* may be sought in the Sanctus itself.

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27 *Liturgy*, 33.

28 Theodore, *Eucharist*: Podipara & Vavanikunnel, *Homilies and Interpretations*, 30.

29 Theodore, *Eucharist*, 31.

30 Theodore, *Eucharist*, 32.

31 *Liturgical Homilies of Narsai*, intro. & trans., R.H. Connolly, Tst 8, Cambridge 1909, 13.

## 5. The Sanctus as a Probable Source and Paradigm of *Kuṣāpē*

Since the prayers of blessings in the Anaphora form the oldest stratum in the Eucharistic rites, it is natural that prayers of the second and third strata are either inspired or influenced by them. In the case of East Syrian *Sanctus*, which ritually makes present an encounter of the 'Numinous,' at the splendour and greatness of the theophany described in the vision of Isaiah 6:1-7 and Gen 28:8, the East Syrian *kuṣāpā* of the Sanctus is nothing but a reverberation and an extension of the *Sanctus* itself. Since it is decisive in the making of all other *kuṣāpē* we cite the text classified into three sections [divisions are mine]:

- a. Holy, Holy, Holy, Lord Mighty God. Heaven and earth are full of His praises and of His being and of the excellency of His glorious splendour; as said the Lord. Heaven and earth are filled by me. Holy art Thou, God the Father of Truth, of Whom all fatherhood in heaven and on earth is named. Holy art Thou, everlasting Son, by Whose hand all things were [made]. Holy art Thou, Spirit of Holiness, by whose hands all things are sanctified.
- b. Woe to me. Woe to me. For, I am perplexed; because I am of unclean lips, and I dwell amongst a people of unclean lips, and my eyes have seen the King, the Mighty Lord. How awful is this place, for today I have seen the Lord face to face. This is none other than the House of God and this is the gate of heaven.
- c. And now let Thy grace be upon us Lord *repeat* and purge our uncleanness and sanctify our lips and mingle, O my Lord, the voices of our needs with the Holies of the Seraphim and the halleluiahs of the angles. Glory be to Thy mercies who hast made creatures of dust partakers with spiritual beings.<sup>32</sup>

Echoing the vision of Isaiah we find three elements in this *kuṣāpā*:

1) A confession of the persons of the Holy Trinity; 2) Acknowledgement of the sins and unworthiness of the celebrant at the theophany; and 3) and the priestly mediation on behalf of the people.

The Sanctus and the sanctification referring to the image of the fiery coal as well as the epiclesis is crucial in the East Syrian anaphoras that they

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32 *Liturgy*, 32-33.

derive their very title, '*Qudāšā*,' or 'Sanctification'<sup>33</sup> from it. The *Sanctus-kūšāpā* offers a paradigm of the entire Eucharistic celebration, in which

- 1) The assembly stands before the heavenly throne and confesses the Triune God;
- 2) It acknowledges its sins and utter unworthiness before and
- 3) Entreats for grace and mercies and participation with the heavenly choir through the participation in the Holy Eucharist.

Moreover, the *Sanctus-kūšāpā* can be treated as model for all other *kūšāpē*, where we find any one or all of these elements of

- a) An acknowledgment and Praise of God;
- b) Confession of unworthiness of the priest as well as the assembly; and
- c) the Priestly mediation on behalf of the people.

Besides, it is remarkable that an imprint of *Sanctus* is traced even in the last diaconal admonition of the *kūšāpā* of the Anaphora of Nestorius:

“Lift up your eyes to the heights above, and gaze with your mind’s eye, ... what is being done at this moment, wherein Seraphim stand in awe before the throne of Christ’s glory and all together with a loud voice, without ceasing, sing praises and halleluiahs to the Body set forth and the cup mixed and gaze on the pleading and entreating and requesting mercies for all the whole world ...”<sup>34</sup>

## 6. Through the *Kūšāpē*: The *Qudāšā* of the Apostles Addai-Mari and *Qudāšā* Mar Theodore

The *kūšāpē* of AM and AT are the same following the same sequence.

### 6.1. The First *Kūšāpā*

The first *kūšāpā* is recited during people’s response to “Pray Brothers.” This is a Christological prayer with an eschatological overtone. It pleads Christ not to look the assembly’s multitude of sins and iniquities against His Lordship, and to accept the sacrifice, and it may gain strength and efficacy to obtain pardon of sins and to find grace and mercies when He appears at the end of times in the humanity He took from us.<sup>35</sup> It’s a mediatory prayer in the third person plural, for the general intentions of the oblation, the pardon of sins and iniquities, emphasising the divine-human mediatorship of Christ in the East Syrian Christological terms.

33 “Quddāšā of the Apostles; “Quddāšā of Mar Theodore;” and “Quddāšā of Mar Nestorius.” *Liturgy*, 24, 58; 85.

34 *Liturgy*, 103. The same is given for the *kūšāpā* before the fourth G’hanta of AM in the Syro-Malabar liturgy: *Order for the Solemn Raza of the Syro-Malabar Church*, Ernakulam 1986, 48.

35 *Liturgy*, 23-24.



Although the prayer addressed to Christ is ancient as the third G'hanta of Addai and Mari shows, the East Syrian two-nature christological overtones in this prayer point to a later origin. The idea of Christ receiving the sacrifice is peculiar to the East Syrian as it is also found in the Pre-Anaphoral offering.<sup>36</sup> Thus, although recited silently, this *kūsāpā* has a character of a public prayer for the general intentions of the Qurbana.

## **6.2. The *Kūsāpā* During the Diptychs**

This *kūsāpā* attributed to Mar Narsai is a Trinitarian priestly prayer said in the first person for making him worthy to offer the holy sacrifice “for the assistance of “the whole body” (*kolle gāvē*)<sup>37</sup> and to the praise of the glorious Trinity.<sup>38</sup>

## **6.3. The *Kūšapa* after the Dialogue Prayer**

This is a mediatory prayer during people's response to the Dialogue Prayer. It beseeches for the “Openness of Face” (*Galiūt apē - Confidence*),<sup>39</sup> picking up the very last theme in the fourth G'hanta,<sup>40</sup> for enabling the assembly “to offer the sacrifice with their consciences pure from all evil and bitterness and to sow peace and concord towards each other and everybody.”<sup>41</sup> This prayer looks forward to the primary goal of the Eucharistic celebration, i.e., the unity and concord evoking the Pauline admonitions to the Corinthians (1Cor 10:17, 11:17-22).

## **6.4. The Sanctus-*Kūšāpā***

We have seen that this *kūšapa*, which is an embolism or paraphrase of *Sanctus*<sup>42</sup> is the central, model and classic priestly private prayer that recaps the inner dynamics of the whole eucharistic celebration as well as that of all other *kūšāpē*: a) The heavenly revelation, b) The Trinitarian

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36 “May Christ Who has scarified for our redemption and Who has sacrificed for our redemption and Who has commanded us to make a commemoration of His death and resurrection; accept this sacrifice at our hands...” *Liturgy*, 15.

37 *Kelaytha* (Syr) 45-46.

38 *Liturgy*, 28.

39 *Kelaytha* (Syr), 48.

40 *Liturgy*, 39; Spinks, “Priesthood and Offering,” 103.

41 *Liturgy*, 30-31.

42 Spinks, “Priesthood and Offering,” 104.



confession, c) The confession of unworthiness, and finally d) An entreaty for the purification and union with the heavenly liturgy.<sup>43</sup>

### 6.5. Intercessory *Kūšāpā*

The two *kūšāpē* before the G'hanta of anaphoral intercessions maintain the same tone, spirit and sequence of the anaphoral intercession. The first *kūšāpā* is a petition to accept the oblation for the various sections of the Church, “the militant, suffering and the triumphant:” “For the just and righteous Fathers,” and “For the prophets, apostles, martyrs and confessors” [the same sequence of the fourth G'hanta of AM];<sup>44</sup> For the needy, sick, afflicted, and for the departed; and finally, for the assembly including the ‘unworthy’ priest.<sup>45</sup>

### 6.6. The Alternate *Kūšāpā* for the Departed

This long *kūšāpā* for the Departed seems to be a combination of two *kūšāpē* in which the first part is a personal admission of the unworthiness of the priest, who is appointed as a “minister and mediator” of the mysteries. It is followed by a series of petitions for different categories of people of all walks of life, as well as for the celebrant’s personal intentions.<sup>46</sup> Although named after the “Prayer for the Departed,” apart from a single mention of them, this *kūšāpā* pleads for the acceptance of Church’s oblation like the sacrifices of Abel, Noah, Abraham, Elijah and the offering of the Widow, the Apostles and the just and righteous Fathers from generation to generation.<sup>47</sup> It is followed by the mention of different categories like the priests and rulers; poor and needy; oppressed and the departed; and all “those who stand before Thy holy altar” [a phrase taken from the fourth G'hanta of AM];<sup>48</sup> and finally, for the country, the village, and for protection from famine, massacre, moth, flying locust and the canker worm etc. The prayer ends where it started, with an acknowledgment of the unworthiness of the priest, which in turn is the hallmark of a standard *kūšāpā*.<sup>49</sup> Taken together, as Spinks rightly observes, these prayers seem to

43 *Liturgy*, 32-33.

44 *Liturgy*, 38.

45 *Liturgy*, 34-35.

46 *Liturgy*, 35-36; Brightmann, LEW, 286-287.

47 *Liturgy*, 35-37.

48 *Liturgy*, 39.

49 *Liturgy*, 36-37.

run like an alternate private G'hanta recited at the same time as the public anaphora of the Church.<sup>50</sup>

## 7. The *Kūšāpē* in the Anaphora of Mar Nestorius

The Anaphora named after Mar Nestorius is the most elaborate Eucharistic prayer, which is assigned to celebrate on five times a year on important feasts.<sup>51</sup> We have a wide range of *kušāpa* petitions in this Anaphora, which incorporate and extend the *kūšāpē* of the other anaphoras.<sup>52</sup>

### 7.1. The *Kūšāpā* of the Second G'hanta

The first and second *kūšāpē* are similar to the other anaphoras.<sup>53</sup> Besides the common one an alternative *kūšāpā* is given for the second G'hanta, anticipating the anaphoral petitions. After a confession of the unworthiness of the priest it goes on to intercede for a number of intentions: For the tranquillity of the world and peace of creation; For the church, priests and faithful; For the remission of sins of the penitents and conversion of the erring and salvation and aid of the all mankind; and For and blotting out of the offences of “Thy servants and handmaids who stand before Thee...”<sup>54</sup>

### 7.2. The *Kūšāpā* of the Third G'hanta

Besides the classical *Sanctus-kušāpā*, its alternative supplicates for “receiving the oblation” for more intentions: For the forgiveness of the sins; Healing, mercy and salvation of the priest as well as the assembly; For the purification from the wickedness and craftiness of the enemy through the mingling of the Holy Body and Blood; For filling the assembly with the truth of faith and knowledge of God’s dispensation and perfect love; and for concord with one soul and soul and spirit.<sup>55</sup>

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50 Spinks, “Priesthood and Offering,” 105.

51 On Epiphany, Friday of John the Baptist, Memorial of the Greek Fathers, The Rogation of the Ninivites’ Fast and on Maundy Thursday: Liturgy, 85.

52 J. Kochuparampil, “Redemptive Economy in the Third East Syrian Anaphora Attributed to Mar Nestorius,” Thomas Padiyath, ed., *Star from the East: Festschrift in Honour of Archbishop Joseph Powathil*, Delhi 2013, 446-466.

53 *Liturgy*, 86, 88.

54 *Liturgy*, 90-91.

55 *Liturgy*, 93-94

### 7.3. The *Kūšāpā* of the Fourth G'hanta

The last two G'hantas are intercessions; each one of them is preceded by a *kūšāpā*, which are recited during deacon's Qulasa or praise. Besides, the common *kūšāpā* an alternative *kūšāpā* is supplied, which is entirely focused on the spiritual preparation of the priest to offer. It admits the utter unworthiness of the priest and asks for mercies: "Now I have begun to speak before Thee, I, Thy sinful, frail and offending servant, a debtor to Thee from the belly, a stranger to Thee from the womb, poverty-stricken from the bowels of my mother."<sup>56</sup> Then it pleads to heal the wounds of his evil deeds and sore of his offences with God's all-healing medicine and to blot out his own and his companions' blemishes and to grant him "Openness of Face" and freedom of speech and to accept him and his sacrifice on behalf of God's pasture.<sup>57</sup>

### 7.4. The *Kūšāpē* of the Fifth G'hanta

There are two options for the *kūšāpā* before the last G'hanta. It looks odd that the second G'hanta leading to *Sanctus* in AM is relegated to a *kūšāpā* of the first option, possibly to tune with the deacons' praise which refers to the heavenly choir of the angles who praises the Body and Blood of Christ.<sup>58</sup>

The alternate *kūšāpā*, the longest one, is a personal entreaty of the priest. The first part of this prayer is a thanksgiving for having shown mercy to be counted among "God's High priesthood and company of priests" and having made him worthy "to intercede confidently" and "to cling to the skirts of his mercies" for his people.<sup>59</sup> After having thus confirmed his role of mediatorship, the priest goes on to turn towards God's erring sheep who have been lost from the flock and ask pardon for their sins and debts too.

The *kūšāpā* evoking a handful phrases of the third G'hanta of AM pleads for all those who are 'assembled' and "stand before" God in his name at this time: Pardon their debts and blot out their sins; heals their pains; overthrow their enemies; fulfil their needs; quicken their mortality;

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<sup>56</sup> *Liturgy*, 98.

<sup>57</sup> *Liturgy*, 99.

<sup>58</sup> *Liturgy*, 103.

<sup>59</sup> *Liturgy*, 104

console their distress; enlighten their darkness; exalt their lowliness, enrich their poverty and solace their afflictions...<sup>60</sup>

The second part of this *kušāpē* turns back to priest's personal petitions leading towards the eschatological fruits of the offering, again evoking the redemptive expressions of the third Ghanta of AM: Come to my help; raise up my humiliations; exalt my lowliness pardon my sinfulness; pass over my transgressions and to enjoy everlasting bliss with the heavenly choir.<sup>61</sup>

On the whole, the *kušāpē* in the Anaphora of Mar Nestorius are more focussed on priest's personal integrity and detailed petitions for the assembly, sometimes even incompatible with their respective G'hantas, confirming the observation of Spinks: "They do not form a sequence, but in fact could be placed anywhere without altering their sense."<sup>62</sup>

### **Conclusions: The Liturgical Role and Relevance of the *Kūsāpē***

Scholars like Edward Ratcliff and Bernard Botte discarded *kušāpē* as devotional prayers and are later accretions since they clearly disrupt the flow of the Anaphora.<sup>63</sup> B.D. Spinks is also of the opinion that "to interrupt the prayer by private hesitations and personal offering with an emphasis on 'I' seems to overturn the whole theological function of the eucharistic prayer, and it invites a distorted view of Christian ministry."<sup>64</sup> At the same time he also notes the sense of holiness and serious nature of the ordained ministry in these prayers.<sup>65</sup> And he invites the modern liturgical composers to heed the spirituality of the "Third Stratum," in which the sacrificial and mystery dimensions of the Eucharist are emphasised.<sup>66</sup>

### **Our foregoing study leads us to the following conclusions:**

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60 *Liturgy*, 105.

61 *Liturgy*, 105-106.

62 Spinks, "Priesthood and Offering," 105.

63 Ratcliff, "The Original Form," 23-32; B. Botte, "L'Anaphore chaldeene des Apotres," OCP 15 (1949) 259-276; W.F. Macomber, "The Ancient Form of the Anaphora of the Apostles," in N. Garsoïan et. al. eds., *East of Byzantium, Syria and Armenia in the Formative Period*, DOP 1980, Washington D.C. 1982, 73-78.

64 Spinks, "Priesthood and Offering," 107-108.

65 Ibid. 108.

66 Ibid. 109.

1. As B.D. Spinks shows the content and spirit indicate that *kūšāpā* prayers have their roots in the fourth century mystagogical catechesis especially that of Theodore of Mopsuestia.
2. As D. Webb and W.F. Macomber point out, except for a single manuscript *kūšāpē* occur in all priestly rituals, pointing to their existence in extemporary form in the early period to the fixed form at least from the thirteenth century. Together with the explanatory metrical hymns, before the readings called *Turgāmē* more and more *kūšāpē* could have been incorporated into the anaphora in the later period where the priests were relatively lacking adequate theological and liturgical formation in the wake of the frequent onslaughts of Islamic various forces.
3. Our study of the texts show that *kūšāpē* never interrupt the flow of anaphoral prayers, for as Macomber points out; they are carried out simultaneously, filling the intervals of deacon's admonition or assembly's response. Thus, liturgically it creates a 'third stratum' running parallel, at the same time reiterating the anaphoral themes, without obstructing the flow of the anaphoral prayers.
4. The *kūšāpē* are not private prayers of the priest in the first person singular. Except for a few cases in Mar Nestorius, most of the *kūšāpē* are in the plural form and are intercessory prayers of the priest for the various intentions of the assembly.
5. Our study suggests that *kūšāpē* seem to have evolved from the context of an encounter of a theophany-experience, ritually celebrated in the Sanctus: The pattern of the divine encounter evocative of Isaiah 6 is fully or partially reflected in almost all *kūšāpē*: a) The heavenly revelation of the Trinity (frequently mentioned as, 'I' or "We Stand before Thee (cf. Deut 10:8; 11:25; 17: 12; 18:7); b) An awareness of the deep sense of unworthiness before it; and c) The assurance of being purified and the sense of priestly mission of mediation.
6. The successive *kūšāpē* are intended for the immediate spiritual preparation of the priest, which keep him always alert, so that the intermissions of responses or chants may not divert his attention; but keeps him always in prayer during the celebration. In other words, the *kūšāpā* prayers ideally reflect the mind of a pious priest who is at the prayer of the Church at the altar. It frequently engages him in

his primary ministry of mediation, with the unique mediation of the divine-human Christ in heaven (Rom 8:34; 1Tim 2:5).

7. The priest's ecclesial identity and spiritual mission are all clearly articulated in these prayers: The priest is chosen from among the "sheepfold of Christ" "to stand before" God's altar and to offer his glorious mysteries and to intercede for all and for all sorts of intentions so that the fruits of the oblation may be obtained for all.
7. Finally, taken together, the *kuṣṣāpā* prayers form a school of prayer and spirituality for priest and for every worshipper. It takes into account the human frailty, the anthropological state of man, expressed in the East Syrian triple formula "lowly, weak and miserable sinners"<sup>67</sup> that needs continual refinement, formation and transformation that happen only through the divine assistance. The sacrifice of the Holy Eucharist is its only medicine and the priest, who offers at the altar, is its unique mediator. The frequent *kuṣṣāpē* that occur at regular intervals of the Anaphora keep the priest ever aware of it.

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67 Spinks, "Priesthood and Offering," 106.