Arabic and Aramaic in Iraq: Language and Syriac Christian Commitment to the Arab Nationalist Project (1920-1950)

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Contents

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Note on transcription

Maintaining a consistent way of transcribing the Arabic, Syriac, and Neo-Aramaic terms and names was not an easy task, because many names have both an Arabic and Syriac spelling, and because of the difference between the West and East Syriac phonological systems, which both occur in Iraq.

For names that have commonly appeared in English, I use the most common spelling in English, such as King Faisal or Patriarch Ignatius Ephrem I Barsoum. For other Christian names, I use the English version of these names (such as Joseph) instead of the Arabic or Syriac ones (Yūsuf and Yawsef). For other names that appear both in Arabic and Syriac I use the most frequently attested version.

The Arabic transcription system I use is the one prescribed by the *International Journal of Middle East Studies*. For Syriac, I use a system based on the IJMES system for Arabic. I follow either the West or East Syriac phonological systems, depending on the context in which I encountered the terms or names. Long vowels are only indicated where they contrast corresponding short vowels. *Begadkefat* consonants are represented as soft or hard corresponding to current practice in the West and East Syriac pronunciation traditions of the Middle East.

Introduction

> There is nothing in the custom of patriotism named Muslim, Christian or Israelite, but there is something called Iraq.
> —Faisal I, King of Iraq (1920–1933)

These words were reportedly uttered by King Faisal in 1921 during a visit to leaders of the Jewish community of Baghdad.[1] The quotation has become a famous symbol of Faisal's ideals for the state of Iraq, which had been established under a British mandate a year earlier. In the new country of Iraq, all citizens regardless of religion were supposed to be equal under the umbrella of Iraq as an Arab state, which Faisal embodied because of his major role during the Arab revolt in the Hijaz. This included the small but significant two to four percent of Christians, the great majority of whom belonged to one of the four churches of the Syriac tradition. After Faisal's death, Chaldean Christians proudly repeated the words together with a number of other quotations in an obituary in the Chaldean Catholic journal *al-Najm* (The Star).[2] The Chaldean Catholic Church, which had its patriarchate in Mosul, was the largest of the four Syriac churches in Iraq and staunchly supported the fact that Iraq was an Arab state. *Al-Najm* was the Chaldean patriarchate's official mouthpiece in the years 1928–1938 and throughout its years of publication we find words of support for the new state and its king, as well as expressions of belonging to the Arab nation. In line with these ideas, the journal was published in the

[1] Rashīd al-Khayyūn, "*Mīr Baṣrī yuʾarrikh li-yahūd al-ʿIrāq ayyām al-waḥda al-waṭaniyya*," *al-Sharq al-awsaṭ*, 14 Safar 1427/March 15, 2006, http://archive.aawsat.com/details.asp?article=353029&issueno=9969. All translations from Arabic, Syriac and French in this dissertation are mine.

[2] *Al-Najm* 5:7 (1933): 329–30.

Arabic language only and Arabic was propagated as the language of the Chaldeans, in complete harmony with the state's official ideas.

When taking the current situation of Iraq into account, the apparent optimism of the Chaldean Patriarchate about their future in the country seems remarkable. In addition to that, the 20th-century history of Iraq is full of dark episodes concerning the treatment of its non-Muslim communities. For the important community of Jews of Iraq, the 1940s and the 1950s even led to an end of their presence, starting with a pogrom in Baghdad in 1941 known as the *Farhūd* and culminating in mass emigration to the newly founded state of Israel during the years 1949–1951. At the Christian side, trust in the state of Iraq underwent a major blow in 1933, when more than 600 Assyrian Christians lost their lives in the Simele massacre. Nevertheless, the first couple of decades after World War I were characterized by a great optimism about the future of Iraq as a country in which Jews, Christians and Muslims could live together as equal citizens under the wing of an Arab government. The case of the Jews of Iraq, who formed a third of Baghdad's total population in the beginning of the twentieth century, is especially well studied and shows that integration into Iraqi society and the Arab world was actively strived for by a large share of the country's Jewish elite.[3] But also for many Muslim intellectuals, the state of Iraq offered new horizons for a progressive future of the country.[4] As Orit Bashkin notes for both the Jewish experience and that of the progressive intellectuals of the early years, the sometimes dramatic outcomes of Iraqi history should not blind us when we look at earlier times, when genuine attempts to promote equality of the religions were prevalent in all layers of the Iraqi elite.[5] In other words: we should see the efforts to promote coexistence and equality in the early Iraqi state in their own right.

That being said, even in the early decades of the state of Iraq the theory of religious equality within an Arab nation did not always ma-

[3] Orit Bashkin, *The New Babylonians: A History of Jews in Modern Iraq* (Palo Alto: Stanford University Press, 2012); Aline Schlaepfer, *Les intellectuels juifs de Bagdad: Discours et allégeances* (Leiden: Brill, 2016).

[4] Orit Bashkin, *The Other Iraq: Pluralism and Culture in Hashemite Iraq* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2009).

[5] Bashkin, *The New Babylonians*, 138. In relation to the *Farhūd*, Bashkin calls this tedency the "Farhudization" of Iraqi Jewish history.

terialize. In some cases this led to serious confrontations between the state and specific parts of Iraq's population. The reason for these confrontations can partly be found in the fact that the idea of Iraq as an Arab state accommodated most, but not all elements of Iraqi society. The largest non-Arab group was that of the Kurds, who were formally included in Iraq when the former Ottoman province of Mosul became officially part of the country in 1925. Directly after the League of Nations decision in Iraq's favor, autonomy for this ethnically diverse area was promised together with the recognition of Kurdish as an official language. In the end, however, none of these promises came to fruition: the northern part of the country did not obtain any special status and Arabic remained the only official language.[6] This resulted in several revolts and a lasting separatist movement. On the Christian side, the greatest catastrophe was the Simele massacre of 1933. One year after the independence of Iraq and the end of the British mandate, more than 600 Assyrian Christians were killed in a series of massacres that would forever shape the way the outside world looked at the treatment of the Christians in the country. The attacks specifically targeted the Assyrians who had come as refugees from the Hakkari and Urmia regions outside Iraq. This kept the other Christians out of range, but the massacre went hand in hand with general anti-Christian sentiments in society. Events like these may be seen as indicative of the limits of tolerance within the Arab nationalist ideals of King Faisal and the rest of Iraq's political elite.

The Simele massacre of the Assyrians, which is dealt with in detail in Chapter 1, is the event that most plainly shows how Iraq's Arab nationalist ideology was not fitting for all Christians. It raises the question of how this relates to the apparent harmony between the Chaldean Catholic Church and the state. Why did the Assyrians and the Chaldeans have such different experiences in Iraq? And was Iraqi society genuinely inclusive to the Chaldeans, or was the toleration contingent on forced assimilation, and eventually bound to fail because the anti-Assyrian sentiments in Iraq were in fact anti-Christian in nature? To a certain extent, the Christian situation is similar to that of the Kurds and the other non-Arabs in the country, but at the same time it is more complicated. The Christians in Iraq, who belonged

[6] Peter Sluglett, *Britain in Iraq: 1914–1932* (London: Ithaca Press, 1976), 135.

to the four major denominations of Syriac Christianity (see below), showed great variation in mother tongue and ethnic or national identification. As we saw in relation to Faisal's quotation, the Chaldean Catholic Church did not only propagate allegiance to the state of Iraq and its king, but also embraced the Arab language and the state's Arab character as their own. On the other hand, members of the Assyrian intellectual elite advocated a distinct Assyrian identification by providing education for themselves and by publishing books in the Classical Syriac and Neo-Aramaic languages. Despite being citizens of Iraq, the state's Arabness did not appeal to most of them, and the Simele massacre of 1933 caused mass emigration. The two further groups, the Syriac Orthodox and the Syriac Catholic, generally showed more support for the state but did not go as far as to identify as Arabs.[7] In other words, while the Arab nationalist ideas, upon which the Iraqi state was built, explicitly left room for Christians to take part in it, there was great variation between the different groups as to how they saw themselves as part of, or outside Iraqi Arab society.

By building a state on the ideology of Arab nationalism, non-Arabs are by definition in a precarious position. In that sense, the case of Christians in Iraq is no different than the case of the Armenians in Lebanon in Syria or the Kurds and Turkmens in Iraq. However, what is special about the Syriac Christians in Iraq is that even though they almost all belonged to the Syriac branch of Christianity,[8] many of them identified as Arab or had positive feelings about the fact that Iraq was an Arab state, while others did not. As Syriac Christians, they had a shared history and heritage, which can be traced back to the first centuries of Christianity and possibly earlier, and which is characterized by the use of the Classical Syriac language and a shared liturgical and literary tradition. Taking this into account, the above-mentioned differences in participation in the state's Arab character are striking. Ranging from two extremes – 1) the complete rejection of identification as Arabs to 2) the support of radical right-wing Arab nationalism

[7] The four groups I mention here are loosely defined at this point, but their definitions are problematic as some of the names may have different meanings according to the context. Below I discuss in detail the Christian groups in Iraq and how I categorize them.

[8] Exceptions in Iraq are a number of Armenian Christians and foreign Catholic and Protestant Christians, who are largely left out of this dissertation.

– this dissertation tackles the plentiful differences that arose along this scale.

Language is one of the main keys to look at these differences. Apart from the fact that language is seen in general as an important factor for ethnicity and nationalism, it is usually the main factor given by the main proponents of Arab nationalism itself: an Arab is somebody with Arabic as their native language. For the situation of the Syriac Christians in Iraq, language also serves as an excellent starting point for explaining the differences in participation. The Syriac Christians were not homogeneous as to their mother tongues: those native to bigger cities like Mosul and Baghdad had Arabic as their native language, while those from outside these cities and those who came as refugees from abroad spoke a certain form of Neo-Aramaic. Differences in native languages do not explain everything, however, since there are cases where groups that have similar situations concerning native languages show different tendencies in their identifications and positions towards the state's Arab character. The purpose of this dissertation is therefore to carefully analyze the Syriac Christians' use of and thoughts about both Arabic and other languages, in order to find out how the relation of the various groups of Syriac Christians in Iraq to Arabic and other languages influenced their ability and willingness to participate in the Arab nationalist project as it was being set up in the new state of Iraq.

The Syriac Christians of Iraq are not the only people in the Arab world whose language use is complicated enough to make their position in Arab nationalism undecided. This ambivalence is especially an issue for the region's non-Muslim groups, who all deal with one or more languages other than Arabic. For some groups, this is because of the presence of other languages than Arabic that are spoken as native languages. It is even an issue for groups of which all members have Arabic as their native language, because in virtually all cases there is an ecclesial or liturgical language that performs a function inside the church—an example is the use of Coptic by the Arabic-speaking Copts of Egypt. Finally, educational efforts by European missionary and aid organizations regularly caused Christians and Jews to get closer to European culture by means of language, often to a greater extent than they did with Muslims. The question how language worked as a factor in the complex relationship between the Christians in the

Arab world and Arab nationalism in the period 1920–1950 was the subject of the Leiden research project *Arabic and Its Alternatives: Religious Minorities in the Formative Years of the Middle East (1920–1950)*.[9] The main problem that this project sought to address is the fact that on the one hand the Arabic language, and not Islam, was regarded as the main ingredient of being an Arab, allowing non-Muslims to participate, while at the same time those non-Muslim groups usually spoke or used other languages next to Arabic—hence the name of the project.[10] The present dissertation, which takes the Syriac Christians of Iraq as a case study, is the result of one of its sub-projects, and stands alongside another dissertation about the Jews of Baghdad and a monograph about the Latin Catholics of Palestine.[11]

For the Syriac Christians of Iraq, the ambiguity of their status in Arab nationalism boils down to their use of Neo-Aramaic as a mother language next to Arabic, as well as in the use of Classical Syriac as a liturgical language. Usage of European languages like English and French was limited despite the influence of Catholic and Protestant missionaries, and does not seem to have been a factor that differentiated them from Muslims. Differences in support of Arab nationalism furthermore roughly correspond to ecclesial affiliation, according to the four denominations of Syriac Christianity that were mentioned above. Apart from being separated by religious differences, there is ample evidence that this separation was also visible on social, political, and cultural levels. In other words, the different denominations corresponded to different groups in society. Yet at the same time, these Christians were not unaware of their mutual similarities as Syriac Christians. In the early twentieth century, a wider movement to create cultural and political union between the different groups of

[9] This project was led by Professor Heleen Murre-van den Berg (Radboud University and formerly Leiden University) and was sponsored by the Netherlands Organization for Scientific Research (NWO) for the period 2012–2018.

[10] Heleen Murre-van den Berg, "Arabic and its Alternatives: Language and Religion in the Ottoman Empire and its Successor States," in *Arabic and its Alternatives: Religious Minorities and their Languages in the Emerging Nation States of the Middle East (1920–1950)*, ed. Heleen Murre-van den Berg et al. (forthcoming).

[11] Sasha Goldstein-Sabbah, *Baghdadi Jewish Networks in Hashemite Iraq: Jewish Transnationalism in the Age of Nationalism*, Leiden, Ph.D. dissertation; Karène Sanchez Summerer, *Language and Religion in the Holy Land: Catholics, Nationalism and Language Challenges in Palestine (1918–1948)* (in preparation).

Syriac Christians became active. This movement was described as "unity discourse" by Naures Atto and often known by the Syriac word *umthonoyutho*, and it was so successful that nowadays there is little disagreement that all Syriac Christians belong together as one nation, even if there is disagreement about the name of this nation.[12] In Iraq, however, the effects of this movement seem to have been limited until the second half of the twentieth century. For this reason, a detailed study of the use and the status of Arabic, Neo-Aramaic and Classical Syriac in Iraq in relation to the Arab nationalism of the state of Iraq is not only relevant for the study of Arab nationalism, but also for the development of the unity discourse among the Syriac Christians in the twentieth century.

The treatment of Christians in the historiography of Iraq of the early twentieth century is in many cases limited to the horrible experience of the Assyrians in relation to the Simele massacre of 1933. At the same time, King Faisal's ideal of equality between Muslims, Christians and Jews is often mentioned in Iraqi historiography and all accounts of early Iraqi patriotism highlight the Christian contribution to it. In this dissertation, one of my aims is to show that a close look at multiple kinds of cultural and political expression by the Syriac Christians in Iraq shows that both sides of the coin could exist together. The Syriac Christians developed themselves as citizens of Iraq in multiple ways. Some chose the path of assimilation and identified as Arabs; others chose to highlight their separate identification, stressing their similarity with their coreligionists abroad. These two positions and everything in between can be found in Iraq. The case of the Syriac Christians in Iraq shows the flux in which Arab nationalism remained at the beginning of the twentieth century, and it shows the same of the Syriac unity discourse.

Iraq and Arab nationalism

Iraq has a reputation of having failed as a nation state, which is supposedly evident from its recent troubles in keeping the country uni-

[12] Naures Atto, *Hostages in the homeland, orphans in the diaspora: identity discourses among the Assyrian/Syriac elites in the European diaspora* (Leiden: Leiden University Press, 2011), 263ff.

fied and caused by a set of misguided decisions around the time of World War I, leading to the shattering of various peoples across different countries. The discourse around the Sykes-Picot agreement suggests that the separation of Iraq from other Arab states, especially from Syria, was a Western invention with no rooting whatsoever in the new country's society. But while the role of Great Britain and the Western-initiated League of Nations in shaping the future of Iraq is certainly considerable, the enthusiasm of many intellectuals in the first decades after the creation of the state of Iraq about the possibilities that the new political order promised to provide is remarkable. More importantly, even though many authors expressed their concerns about the British presence, the same authors took for granted that they now lived in a country called Iraq, separate from Turkey and from the other Arab countries. Apparently, the creation of Iraq as a state was not associated with British imperialism. To the contrary, it did not take long until patriotist sentiments based on Arab nationalism developed and consolidated. In this patriotism, the Iraqi nation was seen as part of the Arab nation, and this was not seen as a contradiction. Many Christian and Jewish intellectuals and members of their clerical and secular elites supported and contributed to this patriotism. A main argument of this dissertation is that within the various groups of Syriac Christianity in Iraq there were large differences in the extent to which they supported this patriotism and its Arab nationalist fundaments. Here, I lay out how Iraqi patriotism provided a framework that allowed some Christians to take part in the further development of the Iraqi nation state.

The rise of Arab nationalism in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century has proven to be rather controversial among historians, especially concerning the issue to what extent non-Muslim intellectuals and activists have contributed to its development.[13] However, it is clear that the origins of Arab nationalism can be traced back to the nineteenth century and there are strong indications that even the partition of the Arab Middle East into the different modern-day countries has its origins from before World War I. Today, there is scholarly consensus that Arab nationalism is the eventual outcome of growing

[13] For an overview about the developing historiography, see Hasan Kayalı, *Arabs and Young Turks: Ottomanism, Arabism, and Islamism in the Ottoman Empire, 1908–1918* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997), 6–12.

opposition from the Arab provinces of the Ottoman Empire against the central government in Istanbul. This opposition movement developed at the same time as the rise of the more general liberal opposition against the authoritarian rule of sultan Abdülhamid II (1876–1909), who had cancelled the Ottoman constitution two years after its proclamation. This opposition was known as the Young Turk movement and was a continuation of the Young Ottoman movement.[14] Self-identification as Arabs among speakers of Arabic was on the rise in this period, even though it did not yet translate to demands for independence or even autonomy. The demands from the Arab opposition rather concerned equality of the Arabs and the Arab provinces within the context of the Ottoman Empire. In this period, the development of an Arab identification, which can be called Arabism, was mainly cultural and connected with a rise in literary production known as the *nahḍa* or Arab renaissance.[15] Both the political opposition and the development of an Arab cultural identification were mainly conducted by people from places in Syria and Lebanon. Cities that would come to belong to Iraq, like Baghdad, Mosul and Basra, were less well represented in this movement.

From the mid-nineteenth century, regional feelings in some places translated to ideologies of belonging to a particular homeland. Cem Emrence calls this phenomenon "concentrical homelands" and stresses that rather than searching for autonomy or independence, these homelands (Turkish *vatan*, Arabic *waṭan*) were "envisioned ... within the Ottoman universe."[16] The best-known case of this in the Arab parts of the empire is Syria, which from the end of the nineteenth century featured a movement that Hasan Kayalı called "Syrianism."[17] Here, Syria was envisioned as a *waṭan* (homeland), and as a political movement its goal was the "integration of Syria" within the Ottoman Empire. The best-known spokesperson of this movement was Buṭrus al-Busṭānī (1819–1883), a Protestant from a Maronite

[14] Ibid., 39.

[15] For the distinction between Arabism and Arab nationalism, see Adeed Dawisha, *Arab Nationalism in the Twentieth Century: From Triumph to Despair* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2003), 8.

[16] Cem Emrence, *Remapping the Ottoman Middle East: Modernity, Imperial Bureaucracy and the Islamic State* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2012), 42.

[17] Kayalı, *Arabs and Young Turks*, 42–43.

background from Mount Lebanon who became a staunch supporter of the Ottomanist ideology of the Tanzimat, where all Ottoman citizens were equal regardless of religion. While he was in favor of the Ottoman government—absolutely no separatist tendencies can be discovered in his work—the homeland on which his attention was centered was Syrian rather than the Ottoman Empire.[18] In his thinking, remarkably many ingredients of post-war Syrian nationalism are already present: an identification as Arab based on the Arabic language, Syria as the homeland (and not the Arabic-speaking world as a whole), and equality between the different religious groups. The only important ingredient missing to make it a form of Arab nationalism was the wish to create a separate state. In Iraq, there is evidence that a similar envisioning of an Iraqi "concentrical homeland" was present at the beginning of the twentieth century. In fact, one of its propagators was the well-known Christian author Anastās al-Karmilī, who is discussed in Chapter 5. The existence of these homelands, which correspond to the postwar Arab states, partly explains why national identities could develop so quickly after the war, or at least why the existence of these countries was not questioned.

By World War I, a cultural Arab identification was prevalent and the Arab political opposition to the Ottoman policies was at its peak. Until the last moment it seemed that the Arab oppositional organizations would continue to support the Ottoman state in itself without separatist ideas.[19] Nevertheless, in the year before the war started, the tide turned, and demands for autonomy were uttered more explicitly. Eventually, it was the loyal Ottomanist Sharif Hussein bin Ali of Mecca who led the Arab revolt in 1916 that would be of great significance to the future of the Arab provinces as separate from the Ottoman Empire. He was assisted by two of his sons, including Faisal, who was the de facto leader of the revolt and who would later be installed as King of Iraq. Initially, the revolt was not meant to be separatist, but contacts with Arab nationalists elsewhere and British encouragement eventually caused him to fully embrace the search for independence. With help of the British army, the revolt was a great military success, and

[18] Butrus Abu-Manneh, "The Christians Between Ottomanism and Syrian Nationalism: The Ideas of Butrus al-Bustani," *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 11 (1980): 287–304.

[19] Kayalı, *Arabs and Young Turks*, 174–81.

in 1920 Faisal was able to install himself as King of Syria for a short period.[20] The Syrian revolt did not take place in Iraq, where the British themselves conquered the whole country from the strategic port city of Basra at the end of 1914 to the Ottoman province in 1918, right after Istanbul's signing of the Mudros armistice. The British conquest took place within the framework of Arab nationalist resistance against the Ottoman Empire with a promise of eventual Arab self-rule in Iraq. However, after the war British control was made official by the creation of a League of Nations mandate.

After the French had ousted Faisal as King of Syria after four months of rule, the British nominated him as king of the new mandatory state of Iraq, mainly because of the authority he had for his role in the Arab revolt. While the British kept tight control over the country, Faisal and his government were free to help develop a state based on the basic ideas of Arab nationalism. As such, the years of the mandate (1920–1933) were very important for the country's later future as an independent Arab state. Even if the great majority of the rulers always came from the country's Sunni minority, they consistently invested in state institutions that were relevant for the whole country.[21] This also included the Kurdish north, officially included into the country after a League of Nations decision in 1925, even though the Kurds' cultural (non-Arab) demands were not met within the framework of Arab nationalism. Apart from being an instrument to organize the state, Arab nationalism also implied opposition against the unpopular British presence. Especially after the formal independence of Iraq in 1933, the opposition against the British became stronger, as the latter had formally handed over the authority but still kept influence on key issues such as oil and foreign policy. Especially at the end of the 1930s, the anti-British sentiments were at a high point, culminating in an anti-British coup d'état in 1941, when the new government chose sides with Germany. A more pro-British government was then quickly installed after Britain had invaded the country, but the larger role of nationalism in Iraqi politics in general was not reversed. The late 1940s saw also the rise of pan-Arab nationalism, with explicit solidarity with the

[20] See Ali A. Allawi, *Faisal I of Iraq* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2014), chapters 4–8.

[21] Adeed Dawisha, *Iraq: A Political History from Independence to Occupation* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2009), 6.

other Arab states, especially concerning the events in Palestine, and the wish to create a single Arab state. Iraq took part in both the 1948 war between Israel and the Arab countries and in some endeavours to form a union with Syria.

Arab nationalism in Iraq theoretically allowed the Christian population to assimilate to become Arabs. However, it limited participation on an ethnic basis: the point is whether a Christian identified as an Arab or not. For the Syriac Christians of Iraq, this is a crucial point, because the definitions of Arab nationalism that most thinkers use only allow part of Iraq's Syriac Christians to adopt an Arab identification. George Antonius, one of the most famous theoreticians and a Greek Orthodox Christian himself who was born in Lebanon, but a "true Arab" given the many Arab countries in which he lived, was one of the many who defined an Arab as somebody who speaks Arabic.[22] Antonius explicitly gives a few examples of Christian communities in the Middle East that he recognizes as Arabs, such as the Copts, the Greek Orthodox and Catholic, and the Maronites. Even if it is questionable if these communities unanimously regarded themselves as Arabs, for Antonius it is clear, since there is no question that they speak Arabic.[23] The situation is as clear for the Armenians, who do not speak Arabic and are therefore no Arabs. Of the Syriac Christians, Antonius only mentions the Assyrians, who were not included in his definition.[24] The other Syriac Christians are not explicitly mentioned. Strictly following Antionius' definition based on speaking the Arabic language, in fact only part of the Syriac Christians are included in his definition, since some of the Syriac Christians have Arabic as their mother tongue and some are Aramaic-speaking. The situation

[22] George Antonius, *The Arab Awakening: The Story of the Arab National Movement* (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1938). Antonius accepts the idea that the people who in modern times form the Arab people are descendants of people who originally became Arab through what he calls "linguistic" and "racial Arabisation." This idea, which is significant given the value that was given to race in the thirties when the book appeared, explains why Antonius feels comfortable giving non-racial and non-fixed criteria such as speaking a particular language for the question if one ought to be regarded as an Arab or not.

[23] H. Murre-van den Berg, "The Language of the Nation: The Rise of Arabic among Jews and Christians (1900–1950)," *British Journal of Middle East Studies* 43, no. 2 (2016): 178–79.

[24] Antonius, *The Arab Awakening*, 365. Cf. Murre-van den Berg, "The Language of the Nation": 178n.

for the Syriac Christians is therefore more complicated than for the other Christian groups in the Middle East.

The question whether the Christians in Iraq could count as Arabs has various consequences. One of them concerns the issue whether they would be considered a minority, or rather be counted as part of the majority. Forming just two to four percent of the population, the fact that the Syriac Christians are a minority in Iraq may seem obvious. However, in the early twentieth century the term "minority" was more of a novelty that was highly indicative of the new politics of self-determination, which was developed during World War I and in the period afterwards. Benjamin White points this out in his monograph about minority policies in French mandate Syria, noticing that while most secondary literature about the French mandate uses the word minority for the country's non-Muslim groups for all periods without questioning it, the French administration itself did not use the term until the early 1930s.[25] White argues that by using the word minority for the early mandatory period of Syria, the divide into a Sunni Arab majority and various minorities characterizing the later independent Syrian state is (unconsciously) anachronistically adapted to the French mandate.[26] As the modern conception of the term minority rapidly developed in the period immediately after World War I, it appears that various non-Muslim groups in the Middle East did not wish to be regarded as part of a minority. Vivian Ibrahim shows this for influential groups of Copts. These Christians, who actively took part in the Egyptian struggle for independence of the 1920s, did not want the Copts to be subject to minority protection schemes as they were set up by the League of Nations, and refused to accept proportional representation for Copts in parliament.[27] It can therefore not be taken for granted that recognition as a minority is neccesarily regarded to be in the group's advantage. In relation to Arab nationalism, Arabic-speaking Christians may rather want to stress what they have in com-

[25] Benjamin T. White, *The Emergence of Minorities in the Middle East: The Politics of Community in French Mandate Syria* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 2.

[26] Ibid., 2–3.

[27] Vivian Ibrahim, *The Copts of Egypt: The Challenges of Modernisation and Identity* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2010), 73–75.

mon with the Muslim population in their countries and frame themselves as part of the majority instead.

For Iraq, there is ample evidence that part of the Christians in the country actively sought protection from the League of Nations as a religious and ethnic minority. This is the case for at least part of the Assyrian Christians in the country.[28] As indicated, this is the group most often pointed at in political histories of modern Iraq and therefore their minority discourse is (probably not on purpose) presented as representative for all Christians in Iraq. In addition to that, current discourse on Assyrian and Aramean identification often dismisses the possibility of a Syriac Christian to be an Arab at the same time.[29] Both factors may be responsible for a bias about the possible ethnic or national formations in the past. In this dissertation, I use evidence from mainly literary and religious works to show that ethnic and national identifications of Iraqi Christians have greatly varied over time, and that the responses of the Iraqi Syriac Christians to the developing Arab nationalism show a wider range of possibilities than most general histories show.

Iraq and the Syriac Christians

Syriac or Syrian, Assyrian, Aramean, Chaldean, Nestorian, Jacobite—these are only the most commonly used names for the Christians of Iraq that this dissertation concerns. All terms refer to either part of or all of the "Syriac Christians," as academic literature often refers to them. All of these terms can be found in books, reports, archives, news articles, and on the Internet, and while none of the terms means exactly the same, they are all related and partly overlap with one another. This confusion is partly caused by religious differences—the

[28] Hannah Müller-Sommerfeld, *Staatliche Religionspolitik im Irak gegenüber Juden, Assyrischen Christen und Bahá'í (1920–1958)*, 2015 (unpublished *Habilitationsschrift*), and H. Müller-Sommerfeld, "The League of Nations, A-Mandates and Minority Rights during the Mandate Period in Iraq (1920–1932)," in *Modernity, Minority, and the Public Sphere: Jews and Christians in the Middle East*, ed. S.R. Goldstein and H.L. Murre-van den Berg (Leiden: Brill, 2016), 258–83.

[29] This is not to say that there are no Syriac Christians nowadays who identify as Arab. However, much of the Assyrian and Aramean nationalist discourse presents this as impossible.

Syriac Christians have been divided over five major churches over the centuries since antiquity—and partly because of debates about the proper name for these people as a nation. The presence of this multitude of names for more or less the same group causes two major issues. First, the heated nature of the name debate makes it impossible to find a neutral term. Second, the multitude of names causes confusion with those who are not fully aware of the debates surrounding those terms, including some journalists and non-specialist historians. Employing the term "Syriac Christians" in academic works, as I do in this dissertation, does not solve all problems. One reason is that the term "Syriac Christians" is not completely neutral either. It denies the indisputability of ethnic or national identifications, Assyrian and Aramean, and it highlights the religious element of the category more than can be justified. A more problematic reason, especially for this dissertation, is that this definition takes for granted that all Syriac Christians belong together and that this categorization inherently makes sense. Today, this is a commonly-held view. When I visited the Christian town of Ankawa (Iraq) in 2013, I was told when I asked about the different names for the Syriac Christians that "it was all the same," which implies that they were one people anyway; and indeed this idea was shared by many others. But while this view accepts any name for the Syriac Christians, it does not recognize the possibility that not everybody who belongs to one of the Syriac churches necessarily identifies as belonging to this group in an ethnic or national way as well.

In other words, when looking at the Syriac Christians in more than a purely religious way, one must watch out not to assume that the category has been meaningful at all times and places and that people recognized a connection between the different groups of Syriac Christians. In this dissertation, I explicitly show that in early twentieth-century Iraq not all Syriac Christians identified as being connected to members of one of the other Syriac Christian churches except their own. Moreover, even when they did, this was not always reflected in real acts. Evidence for communication between members of the different churches is often scant: in practice, the different Syriac Christian groups in Iraq often worked in isolation from each other. Despite these considerations, I still use the terms Syriac Christianity and Syriac Christians in this dissertation, while stressing that this term does

not necessarily imply a sense of the concepts "Syriac" and "Christianity" as being inherently compatible. I use this section not only to introduce the Syriac Christians of Iraq in the early twentieth century, but also to explain the problem of the question to which (sub-)groups the Syriac Christians of Iraq belonged to, and under which names, a theme that lies at the heart of this dissertation.

Syriac Christians are people who belong to (or whose families belong to) one of the Syriac Churches, the most important of which are the following: the Syriac Orthodox Church, the Syriac Catholic Church, the Assyrian Church of the East, the Chaldean Catholic Church, and the Maronite Church. The first four of these are found in Iraq. Apart from these five churches, there are also several Syriac Churches in India. The Syriac churches are connected to one another because they share a tradition, a language, and a history dating back to the first centuries A.D. The linguistic situation of this time, as well as the theological discussions that took place in the fourth and fifth centuries, were decisive for the Syriac churches' further development and its results are still visible today. The earliest phase of Syriac Christianity can be traced back to the city of Edessa (modern Şanlıurfa, Turkey) where a local dialect of Aramaic developed into a separate literary language, now known as (Classical) Syriac. The language obtained prestige on its own, creating a situation where both Syriac and Greek were used alongside each other in Christian circles in the area of Syria, most of which was under Roman rule. Further east, in Mesopotamia and the western part of Persia, Christian communities were established under Persian rule. Here too, Syriac became an important language for the written literature that was produced by the Christians. As such, the basis for Syriac Christianity was laid in both the Roman and Persian Empires. The Christian communities in Persia were rather isolated from the rest of the Christian world in this period, which is one of the main causes of the split between the western and eastern branches of Syriac Christianity. Another main cause for this split is the outcome of the theological discussions that took place in the fourth and fifth centuries. These debates resulted in the fixation of the basic foundation of Christian theology as it is in use until today, including the Creed. The part of the debate concerning Christology, however, caused major rifts in early Christianity, resulting in a long-lasting theological schism. Two positions were officially rejected

by the official church sponsored by the Roman Empire. Nestorian dyophysitism was rejected in 431 during the Council of Ephesus, but it became the position of the eastern branch of Syriac Christianity, which continued to develop in relative isolation under Persian rule. Monophysitism (nowadays often called miaphysitism) was rejected in 451 at the Council of Chalcedon, but it remained popular in parts of the Eastern Roman Empire, including Syria, where the western branch of Syriac Christianity was developing. Eventually, the eastern Persian church became a separate church known as the Church of the East, and in the west under Roman rule a separate miaphysite hierarchy was created in the sixth century, which would become the Syriac Orthodox Church. After these developments, the separation between eastern and western Syriac Christianity was complete, as was the separation between the Syriac churches and the rest of Orthodoxy.[30] Both branches of Syriac Christianity were present in Iraq in the beginning of the twentieth century in considerable numbers. Even though both branches are present alongside each other in several places, such as Mosul and Baghdad, they have not merged. The existence of the different branches is in fact, as we see later, of great importance in this dissertation.

From the sixth century until the nineteenth century, the separation between western and eastern Syriac Christianity remained in place, but there have been many factors that made the situation even more complicated. The Arab expansion and the influence of Catholic missionaries are two of them. The Arab expansion caused a major rift in the political and religious landscape with changes that have lasted until today. Islam became the dominant religion in the area that had come under Arab rule. For Syriac Christianity, the new political situation also caused its western branch to be cut off politically from the church under Roman (Byzantine) rule, so that the Syriac Orthodox Church could develop in relative freedom. The connection would be

[30] The current-day Greek Orthodox church in the Middle East is the continuation of the state-sponsored church that accepted the Council of Chalcedon. Besides the Syriac Orthodox Church, the other monophysite churches are the Coptic Orthodox Church, the Armenian Apostolian Church and the Ethiopian Orthodox Church. For an overview of the early history of the Syriac churches, see Lucas Van Rompay, "The East (3): Syria and Mesopotamia," in *The Oxford Handbook of Early Christian Studies*, ed. Susan Ashbrook Harvey and David G. Hunter (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 365–86.

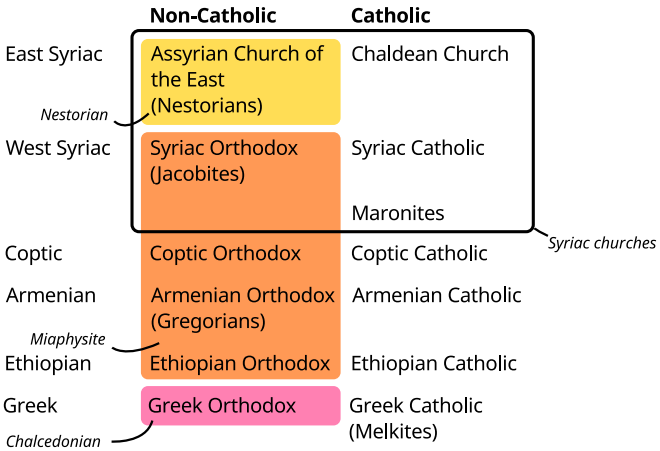

Figure 1: The churches of the Middle East

restored by the emergence of the Ottoman Empire, which connected the Arab lands with Constantinople. On the other hand, thanks to the conquest of Persia by the Arabs, the western and eastern branches were now connected to one another politically. The political connection did not cause a merge of the Syriac Orthodox Church with the Church of the East, however, but rather caused both branches to become part of one single political arena. Crucially, Arab rule brought about a lasting influence on Syriac Christianity from a cultural perspective. Gradually, many (but certainly not all) Syriac Christians also adopted the Arabic language as their spoken language instead of Aramaic, especially in the cities. The use of the Arabic language therefore became something deeply rooted in Syriac Christianity. This is striking, as the Arabic language is nowadays often framed as something alien to Syriac Christian tradition.

The other major factor of complication is the emergence of Catholicism in the Middle East. From the seventeenth century, Catholic missionaries sponsored by the Vatican's newly established *Congregatio de Propaganda Fide* successfully converted large numbers of eastern Christian communities, including communities belonging to the Syriac Orthodox Church and the Church of the East. This led to the creation of new, autocephalous churches, which recognized the Catholic Church of Rome and the authority of the pope while

holding to their own liturgical practices and with their own hierarchies. For the Syriac Churches, this led to the creation of the Syriac Catholic Church (out of the Syriac Orthodox Church) and the Chaldean Catholic Church (out of the Church of the East). Together with the original churches, all four churches were present in Iraq in the early twentieth century. The creation of the Catholic Syriac churches did not immediately change anything to the divide between eastern and western Syriac Christianity, as both branches had (and have) their own autocephalous church. For the situation of the Syriac Christians in Iraq in the early twentieth century, their division into four churches was still highly important, and in this dissertation it becomes clear how this division still played an important role in the ideas of the different groups of Syriac Christians concerning the Arabic language and their positioning towards the state.

At the end of the nineteenth century, a new development complicated the situation of the four Syriac Churches yet another time. This development is the emergence of an identification as Assyrians and Assyrian nationalism. From the end of the nineteenth century onwards, it became accepted among East Syriac Christians in the Hakkari region (the extreme south-east of modern Turkey) and the area around the city of Urmia (right across the border with modern Iran) that these people were the heirs of the ancient Assyrians. As such, these Christians came to be known as the Assyrian nation.[31] In the early twentieth century, the Assyrian national identification developed into a full-fledged nationalist ideology. Increased migration out of the Middle East, especially to the United States, allowed it to develop into a worldwide movement. A large share of the Syriac Christians eventually started to identify in this way, and among them were the Assyrian Christians who would later come into Iraq as refugees—those from the region where the Assyrian identification started. This national or ethnic identification of the Assyrians was also quickly adopted by Western actors, especially in the United States and the United Kingdom, and recognized in Britain's dealing with the Assyrians in Iraq,

[31] The early history of Assyrian nationalism is not treated in this dissertation, but it is described in depth in Adam Becker, *Revival and Awakening: American Evangelical Missionaries in Iran and the Origins of Assyrian Nationalism* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2015).

who often referred to the Assyrians as a race.[32] Not all Syriac Christians were influenced by this idea, and their primary identification remained with their church. In the second half of the twentieth century, opposition against the movement also provoked the emergence of yet another form of nationalism from the side of Syriac Christians: that of Aramean nationalism. By using the word "Aramean," this alternative nationalism traced back the history of the Syriac Christians to the Arameans from Biblical times. Both nationalisms can be found among the members of different Syriac churches, and while only the Assyrian Church of the East has one of the two national identities in its name, Assyrianism also enjoys popularity within the other churches.[33] Aramean nationalism is not very relevant for this dissertation, because it emerged after 1950. Here, the question is rather to what extent a sense of an Assyrian national identification was adopted by which groups of Syriac Christians in Iraq. I employ the term Assyrianism for the identification as Assyrian, and Assyrian nationalism for the potential political consequences of this identification.

Together with the emergence of Assyrianism came the idea that all Syriac Christians belong together as one nation, sometimes known as *umthonoyutho* (see above). This idea should certainly not be taken for granted, especially not for the early twentieth century.[34] While elements for a connection between the various different Syriac churches were always present because of the Classical Syriac language and shared early church fathers such as Ephrem the Syrian, this is not the case for the existence of a common national or ethnic identification. The idea can be traced back to the end of the nineteenth century, when groups of West Syriac Christians started to use an Assyrian identification, too. For the first time, members of all Syriac churches started to identify as members of the same ethnic or national group. By the time of World War I, it looked as if Assyrianism was to be indis-

[32] For example, when Percy Cox affirmed that the Assyrians were to be settled according to "the reasonable claims and aspirations of their race," as reproduced in Isaac E. Asia, *British Policy in Assyrian Settlement* (N.P.: 2009), 100 (available online: https://www.atour.com/people/20100815a.html). See also Robson, *States of Separation*, 44.

[33] For an overview of the development of the two national identities and the name debate, see Aaron Michael Butts, "Assyrian Christians," in *A companion to Assyria*, ed. Eckart Frahm (Hoboken: John Wiley, 2017), 599–612.

[34] Atto, *Hostages in the homeland*, 261–321.

puted in the future. The climax was perhaps reached when both West Syriac and East Syriac leaders put forward Assyrian national claims to the Paris Peace Conference of 1919, to conclude World War I. The Syriac Orthodox Archbishop Ephrem Barsoum—before he became patriarch—filed a petition to the Paris Peace Conference of 1919 to consider "the sufferings and the wishes of [the] ancient Assyrian nation." Pointing at the lack of recognition of the massacres against the Syriac Christians in the Ottoman Empire despite the recognition of those against the Armenians, and lamenting the neglect of their "ancient and glorious race," he requested that the Turkish authority be removed from a number of Ottoman provinces and that no Kurdish authority be installed. He used the term "Assyro-Chaldean civilization," which implies the inclusion of East Syriac Christians, but he left out Van in his list of provinces, thereby excluding Hakkari, where most East Syriac Christians lived.[35] At the same time, an East Syriac American delegation, with support of the Assyrian Patriarch Mar Shimʿūn XX Paul, presented a series of claims to the Conference calling for an Assyrian state under some mandatory power. They presented the Assyrians as an ethnicity that comprised multiple "divisions," including the Nestorians (Church of the East), Chaldeans, and Jacobites (Syriac Orthodox), but also the Maronites and some "Islamic Assyrians" who were supposed to be of Assyrian descent. The claims have been recorded by Joel E. Werda as president of the "Assyrian National Associations of America." The definition explicitly included those who "lost their mother tongue and speak Turkish, Arabic and Armenian," defying Europeans who counted these people as members of the respective ethnic groups.[36] Placing the demands from West and East next to each other, there is a great difference between the demands of the two, even though an Assyrian identification is present for both sides. This shows that the shared Assyrian identification did not (yet) translate into tangible joint efforts between East and West Syriac

[35] The petition is reproduced in Atto, *Hostages in the Homeland*, 541–42.

[36] Joel Euel Werda, *The Flickering Light of Asia, or, The Assyrian Nation and Church* (N.P., 1924). I used a digital reproduction of this book that was published on the website *Seyfo Center*: http://www.seyfocenter.com/english/e-werda-the-flickering-light-of-asia-the-assyrian-nation-and-church-1924/ (accessed September 13, 2018), comprising pages 67–73. See also Sargon Donabed, "Rethinking Nationalism and an Appellative Conundrum: Historiography and Politics in Iraq," *National Identities* 14:4 (2012): 410.

Christians.[37] After the war, unity discourse seems to have died down in Iraq. Assyrianism was certainly an important force from the 1920s onwards, but it appears that an expression of unity between the West and East Syriac Christians was not well developed until the 1950s. The different groups of Syriac Christians did not see each other as belonging to the same nation. Instead, while some of the Syriac Christians identified as Assyrian, many of the Syriac Christians saw themselves as part of an Arab nation. Which groups of Syriac Christians chose which position is an important part of the argument of this dissertation.

Identification, nation, *ṭāʾifa* and *millet*

In their famous essay about the term "identity," Rogers Brubaker and Frederick Cooper reject usage of the word as an analytical term and propose several alternatives covering the wide range of meanings in which identity is used by scholars. One of their main objections is that the term is used for too many things, including its use by scholars of ethnicity and nationalism focusing on sameness of multiple people within one group, and its use by psychologists and other social scientists who stress the individual aspects of identities.[38] Another main objection is the problem that the use of "identity" as a "term of analysis"—which the authors contrast with its usage as a "term of practice" in daily life and for political purposes—implies that the ideas that people commonly have about identity exist in reality. This includes the idea that "[i]dentity is something all people have" and that a collective identity "impl[ies] strong notions of group boundness and homogeneity."[39] For current-day academic works that deal with identity as something fluid and constructed rather than something static and essential, this is problematic. In our case, for example, saying that a group of people "have an Arab identity" implies that there is an identity that exists in reality and that is present inside all these people, whether they know it or not, so that these people intrinsically belong

[37] For this argument, see also Becker, *Revival and Awakening*, 328.

[38] Rogers Brubaker and Frederick Cooper, "Beyond 'identity'," *Theory and Society* 29:1 (2000): 1–47.

[39] Ibid., 10.

together. This is something that we cannot prove and that is also not likely to be true.

Two of Brubaker's and Cooper's alternative terms are helpful for our analysis. The first of these is the term "identification." Identification is a "processual, active term" and "lacks the reifying connotations of 'identity'," they write.[40] As such, it refers to the act of identification rather than the result. It also allows a distinction between "self-identification" and "identification and categorization of oneself by others." In our case, saying that a person or a group of people "identify as Arabs" does not imply that they are intrinsically related to others who identify the same. For that reason, I will use the term "identification" throughout this dissertation. The term "identification" is therefore safer to use, but also limited: it cannot be used to analyse whether a group of people actually feels to belong together. For that, Brubaker and Cooper propose the terms "commonality," "connectedness," and "groupness," the latter of which is the strongest, defined as "the sense of belonging to a distinctive, bounded, solidary group," which may be a proper term to describe a "nation."[41]

Usage of the terms "identification" and "groupness" instead of "identity" solves a number of problems. However, we are still dealing with different types of identification and groupness: does somebody who identifies as a, say, Assyrian, identify as such in an ethnic, national or religious way? It is tempting to ignore this issue and simply note the fact that people or groups of people show identification as Arabs, Assyrians, Chaldeans, and so forth. While safe, this solution would not do justice to the different kinds of categories people use to identify. Identification as part of a nation is not the same as identification as belonging to a religious denomination. Moreover, this solution would not allow for the study of multiple layers of identification. A possibility would be to work with definitions of theorists on ethnicity and nationalism, as was done in a recent project where the development of an ethnic community for the Syriac Orthodox before modern

[40] Ibid., 14.
[41] Ibid., 20.

times was traced.[42] This does not immediately solve the difficulty of distinguishing an ethnicity from a nation.

In his book on nationhood, the British historian Adrian Hastings gives definitions of ethnicity and nation that are closely related to each other, where an ethnicity has a "shared cultural identity and spoken language" and a nation is a "far more self-conscious community than an ethnicity."[43] A nation may be "[f]ormed from one or more ethnicities." If this is the case, a fusion of ethnicities may have taken place if the ethnicities are culturally close to each other and if the state does not favor one of them. A nation formed of multiple ethnicities is also possible without fusion of ethnicities, such as in the case of Switzerland.[44] There is an "intrinsic connection between ethnicity, nation and nationalism," and "[e]very ethnicity ... has a nation-state potentially within it."[45] I will take a nation therefore as a further development of an ethnicity. This allows me, for the sake of this dissertation, to leave unanswered whether we are talking about an ethnicity or a nation. This is further supported by the fact that, while sources often explicitly speak of "nation" and "race"—the latter being the early-20th-century equivalent of "ethnicity"—these two words are often used interchangeably. I will use the term "national or ethnic identification" in these cases. In Arabic, this type of identification is most of the times represented by the word *umma*, which then can be translated one-to-one as "nation."[46] However, the Arabic *umma* may also refer to a no-

[42] Bas ter Haar Romeny et al., "Identity among West Syrian Christians: Results and Conclusions of the Leiden Project," in *Religious Origins of Nations: The Christian Communities of the Middle East* (Leiden: Brill, 2010), 1–52. In this project, a list of features of an ethnic community by Hutchingson and Smith is used, building on the idea that ethnic communities already existed before modern times. To assert whether one may speak about an ethnic community, a group ought to have all six elements of a name, an ancesty myth, shared historical memories, a territorial link, elements of common culture, and a sense of solidarity. John Hutchingson and Anthony D. Smith (eds.), *Ethnicity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), 6–7. The same list of features is used by Peter Webb in his recent work where he traces the development of an Arab ethnic identity. Peter Webb, *Imagining the Arabs: Arab Identity and the Rise of Islam* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2016), 10 and 15.

[43] Adrian Hastings, *The Construction of Nationhood: Ethnicity, Religion and Nationalism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 3.

[44] Ibid., 3 and 29–30.

[45] Ibid., 31.

[46] One-to-one translation is often possible because many political terms in Arabic originate as calques from Western languages, often via Ottoman Turkish. C.H.M.

tion as in the Islamic *umma*, where it has the meaning of a global religious community, and it may even be interpreted as *millet*. For the Syriac cognate *umtho*, the same range of possibilities is possible (see Chapter 2). A clear example of an ethnic or national identification is Arabism or Arab nationalism, and Assyrianism may also be included.

Besides "national or ethnic identification," the second type of identification I distinguish is a *millet*-type identification. This is a type of identification that corresponds to the *millet*-s of the Ottoman Empire and is based on denominational affiliation. The traditional interpretation of this "*millet* system" entails that the non-Muslim groups of the Ottoman Empire managed their own affairs and communicated with the Ottoman authorities by means of the leader of the *millet*. The *millet* system was codified from the eighteenth century onwards,[47] but there is discussion about the degree to which we can speak of a consistent legal *millet* system at all in the late Ottoman Empire.[48] However, more than a legal system, "millet system" refers to the wider idea that non-Muslim groups in the Ottoman Empire were bound together within their religious denominations, with some form of autonomy and an identification as member of a *millet* that was stronger than a religious identification. As far as it was a legal practice, it was not a unified and static system with the same features throughout the Ottoman Empire in place and time. For this reason, some authors prefer to speak of "millet practice" rather than "millet system."[49]

There is evidence that this *millet* practice was inherited in the early state of Iraq, even though legally there was litte recognition for it. While the word *millet*, or its Arabic equivalent *milla*, was not widely used, the Arabic word *ṭā'ifa* "sect" appears to have had roughly the same meaning. Rafā'il Buṭṭī, one of the intellectuals I discuss in this

Versteegh, *The Arabic Language*, second edition (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2014), 223.

[47] Bruce Masters, *Christians and Jews in the Ottoman Arab World: The Roots of Sectarianism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 61.

[48] For a discussion about the development of scholarly opinions on the *millet* system, see Maurits H. van den Boogert, "Millets: Past and Present," in *Religious Minorities in the Middle East: Domination, Self-Empowerment, Accommodation*, ed. Anne Sofie Roald and Anh Nga Longva (Leiden: Brill, 2011), 25–45.

[49] Latif Taş, "The Myth of the Ottoman Millet System: Its Treatment of Kurds and a Discussion of Territorial and Non-Territorial Autonomy," *International Journal of Minority and Group Rights* 21:4 (2014): 498.

dissertation, wrote that the word *milla* was incorrectly used in the sense of *ṭāʾifa*—see page 184 for this quotation.[50] This inheritence is, for instance, visible in the first Iraqi constitution, where everybody is equal for the law, but where there is at the same time room for special courts for each *ṭāʾifa*, or non-Muslim group (see Chapter 1). This reflects the Ottoman system in granting the possibility for religious communities to manage their own affairs. In addition to that, the word *ṭāʾifa* only applies to non-Muslim communities, just like the Ottoman *millet*. Even in the late 1940s the term *millet* was in use in Western discourse to describe the situation of the Christians in Iraq, and also in Arabic the word *milla* is attested with the meaning of *millet* here and there. A (formerly secret) CIA report from 1950 starts with a discussion of the "community, or 'millet' system," and later describes all Christian communities in detail. Here, the word "millet" is probably an "English" rendering of the Arabic *ṭāʾifa*.[51] Sami Zubaida writes that the "*millet* model ... remain[ed] prominent in mentalities and forms of solidarity and organisation of most sectors of the population" in Iraq, despite the fact that Iraq was officially a nation-state that was not organized on the basis of religious groups.[52] It will become clear in this dissertation that some of the Christians in Iraq themselves showed that a *millet*-type of identification, using the word *ṭāʾifa*, was

[50] Or to be more precise, the word *millet* gradually narrowed down to the meaning of the word *ṭaʾifa*. The word *ṭāʾifa* had always denoted individual non-Muslim groups, while the word *millet* was first used to refer to Christians and Jews in general. Later, more and more individual non-Muslim groups obtained their own (legal) *millet*, so that the latter term took over the meaning of *ṭāʾifa*. Becker, *Revival and Awakening*, 109; Masters, *Christians and Jews in the Ottoman Arab World*, 61–65.

[51] *National Intelligence Survey: Iraq. Section 43: Religion, Education, and Public Information* (Washington: Central Intelligence Agency, 1950), 6–7. The report is detailed and well informed about the different Christian communities. It should be taken into account that it is possible that scholarly discourse about the *millet* system has been planted on the contemporary situation, but the information on the situation of the individual communities is according to local intelligence. Benjamin White, in his work on the emergence of the concept of minority in the Middle Eastern context, warns us that "[t]he communities that emerged as 'minorities' during the mandate cannot simply be mapped back onto the *millet*-s or Christian and Jewish communities of the Ottoman period." However, it is one of my arguments that the Christian groups who had a *millet*-like identification were not seen as minorities. White, *The Emergence of Minorities in the Middle East*, 45.

[52] Sami Zubaida, "Contested nations: Iraq and the Assyrians," *Nations and Nationalism* 6:3 (2000): 365.

indeed the primary way they looked at themselves, although in some cases this was in addition to an envisioned membership of a larger nation: the Arab nation. In some other cases, a *millet*-type identification goes hand in hand with an *overlapping* form of national identification. The Ottoman *millet* system or practice did not prevent national or ethnic identities from developing next to the traditional classification in *millet*-s. In Adam Becker's work about the emergence of Assyrian nationalism in the nineteenth century, he deploys the term "millet nationalism" for the formation of national ideas *within* a *millet*, without aspirations for a separate state.[53] This practice of "millet nationalism" was brought to Iraq by the Assyrians as they arrived in Iraq as refugees.

Arabic and its alternatives

Many scholars have recognized the role of language in creating and defining ethnic, national, and religious identities. In the well-known studies by theoreticists such as Ernest Gellner and Benedict Anderson, language plays an important role. The role of language has also been established in scholarship on identification in the Middle East. We have already seen George Antonius, who explicitly mentioned the Arabic language as one of the defining factors in the question whether somebody can be regarded as an Arab or not. Yasir Suleiman has shown for numerous early Arab nationalist authors the importance of the Arabic language in their definition of Arab nationalism.[54] But Arabic was not the only language in the Arab Middle East, and it seems that every other language that was spoken or used at places with an Arabic-speaking majority comes with the possibility of adopting a non-Arab identity. This is the case for the Kurds, but also for most

[53] Becker, *Revival and Awakening*, 297. The term was earlier used by Joseph Grabill in his work on the influence of Protestant missions in the Middle East, but he uses it to refer to the development of Armenian (territorial) nationalism with the *millet* as a starting point. Joseph L. Grabill, *Protestant Diplomacy and the Near East: Missionary Influence on American Policy, 1810–1927* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1971), 50.

[54] Yasir Suleiman, *The Arabic Language and National Identity: A Study in Ideology* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2003), and Yasir Suleiman, "Nationalism and the Arabic Language: A Historical Overview," in *Arabic Sociolinguistics: Issues & Perspectives*, ed. Yasir Suleiman (Surrey: Curzon Press, 1994), 3–24.

of the non-Muslim communities in the Middle East. Virtually all Jewish and Christian communities were in a linguistic situation that was more complex than that of the Muslim environment because of the existence of a liturgical language in addition to Arabic—always a classical language in a form that was not in use for everyday communication—including classical Greek, Armenian, Syriac, Coptic, and Hebrew. This language was to a greater or lesser extent used in church and other formal situations. In addition to that, some of the non-Muslim communities also had a separate colloquial language that was not used by Muslims, sometimes with the exception of some villages. This colloquial language was in some cases also in use as a formal language. On top of that, Arabic or other majority languages such as Turkish always played a role for official purposes or inter-communal communication. The Syriac Christians, in Iraq but also elsewhere, are characterized by a complex linguistic situation where Arabic was the language for official use, where colloquial Arabic or Neo-Aramaic was the language for private communication, and where Classical Syriac was the language used in ecclesial situations. Both Neo-Aramaic and Classical Syriac were sometimes used as written languages in non-ecclesial situations as well. All these languages, of the Syriac Christians and the other non-Muslim communities in the Middle East, had a function in the various ethnic and national identities that were developing in the early twentieth century. Crucially, it seems that the inclusion of Arabic in the list of languages together with all its alternatives made it possible that the non-Muslims in the Arab Middle East had many possible competing ways of identifying. In other words, speaking or using a language other than Arabic did not close the road towards adopting an Arab identity, but it was not the only possibility either. How this works for the Syriac Christians in Iraq is the main subject of this dissertation. In this section, I introduce the linguistic situation of the Syriac Christians of Iraq and I explain how I discuss the different types of language use in this dissertation.

Arabic is the most widely spoken language in Iraq and has been politically dominant since the fall of the Ottoman authority in the country during World War I. It is also spoken by a large share of the Syriac Christians in the country, especially in the cities. Because of its political status and its literary heritage, it was also in use with many speakers of other languages than Arabic. To understand the use of the Arabic

language by the Syriac Christians in Iraq, it is important to be aware of the phenomenon of diglossia that is characteristic for the situation of Arabic all over the Arab world: the fact that the spoken, informal form of Arabic (*al-lugha al-ʿāmmiyya* "the popular language") with strong variation all over the Arab world is very different from its standard form (*al-lugha al-fuṣḥá* "the pure language"). In Western publications the informal form is usually called colloquial Arabic, while the standard form is known as Classical Arabic, or Modern Standard Arabic in its appearance since the nineteenth century.[55] Iraq hosts two main varieties of colloquial Arabic, and should be divided between the north and the rest of the country. In the north the variety of Arabic is often called North Mesopotamian Arabic, which is closely related to the Arabic of Syria. In the rest of the country, the Muslims speak the distinct Mesopotamian Arabic, but the Christians and Jews in this area speak North Mesopotamian Arabic instead due to earlier migration processes.[56] Colloquial Arabic is relatively unimportant in this dissertation, but we see a few cases in Chapter 2 where the influence of North Mesopotamian Arabic is visible in written texts. Another point to keep in mind is the fact that Arabic has already been in use by the Christians of the Middle East, including the Syriac Christians, since the first centuries after the Arab expansion.[57] In some places, including cities like Mosul, Arabic had replaced Aramaic as the spoken language. Equally important, it was also quickly adopted as a language for more formal contexts, as the many Arabic-language texts and manuscripts produced from the ninth century onwards by Syriac

[55] Many linguists argue that one can better speak about a continuum between colloquial and Modern Standard Arabic, but for an argument for the duality based on the interpretation by users of Arabic, see Yasir Suleiman, "Egypt: From Egyptian to Pan-Arab Nationalism," in *Language and National Identity in Africa*, ed. Andrew Simpson (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 2.

[56] B. Mahmoodi-Bakhtiari, "Iraq: Language Situation," in *Encyclopedia of language and linguistics*, second edition, ed. K. Brown (New York: Elsevier, 2006), 23–24.

[57] There were already intensive contacts between Aramaic-speaking and Arabic-speaking Christians before the rise of Islam, and these contacts have possibly influenced the quick rise of the status of Arabic within Syriac Christianity in the first centuries after the Arab expansion. S.H. Griffith, "What Does Mecca Have To Do With Urhōy? Syriac Christianity, Islamic Origins, and the Qurʾān," in *Syriac Encounters*, ed. Maria Doerfler et al. (Peeters: Louvain, 2015), 375.

Christians prove.[58] Both colloquial and standard Arabic are deeply rooted in Syriac Christianity, and this is crucial if we wish to understand the developments concerning Arabic and other languages in the last two centuries.

The nineteenth and twentieth centuries indeed brought about extreme changes to the way the Arabic language was used throughout the Arab world. Three interrelated developments have to be mentioned here: the *nahḍa* or Arab renaissance; the emergence of Modern Standard Arabic; and Arab nationalism with Arabic as one of its main ingredients. The *nahḍa*, already briefly introduced above as a development related to the increasing Arab cultural identification of the nineteenth century inside the Ottoman Empire, was a literary revival in the Arabic language that took place from the second half of the nineteenth century until the beginning of the twentieth century. This revival, which had an enormous literary but also cultural impact,[59] caused a massive increase in production of Arabic texts, a renewed interest in the classical language and an adoption of Western genres and mediums, such as journals. Related to the *nahḍa* is the emergence of Modern Standard Arabic. Linguists usually hold to a differentiation between Classical Arabic and Modern Standard Arabic, even though the usual terminology in Arabic itself does not make this differentiation, employing the term *al-lugha al-fuṣḥá* for both, and the fact that to a large extent and by principle, the grammar, orthography and vocabulary of both varieties are the same. Because the difference does in fact not exist in the perception of most users of Arabic, which has implications for the discourse surrounding the Arabic language and national identity, Yasir Suleiman favors the use of the Arabic terms *ʿāmmiyya* and *fuṣḥá*,[60] without denying that there evidently are substantial differences between the standard Arabic of today and the classical Arabic of the Middle Ages. Many of these differences started to emerge from the nineteenth century onwards, partly because of the

[58] Georg Graf, *Geschichte der christlichen arabischen Literatur*, part 1: *Die Übersetzungen* (Vatican City: Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, 1944), 51.

[59] For a recent discussion of the *nahḍa* as a cultural phenomenon, see Jens Hanssen and Max Weiss, "Language, Mind, Freedom and Time: The Modern Arab Intellectual Tradition in Four Words," in *Arabic Thought beyond the Liberal Age: Towards an Intellectual History of the Nahda*, ed. Jens Hanssen and Max Weiss (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016), 1–38.

[60] Yasir Suleiman, "Egypt: From Egyptian to Pan-Arab Nationalism," 27–28.

need to adapt the language to the modern world, and to such an extent that a differentiation between Classical and Modern Standard Arabic is justifiable from a linguistic point of view.[61] For the present dissertation, both terms are problematic because we are in the middle of the transformation in which the Arabic language found itself. For that reason, I employ the term Standard Arabic, without the word "modern," when referring to the standard language.

Some scholars have interpreted the *nahḍa* as a process that, among other things, created a common literary ground for Muslims, Christians, and Jews. Before the *nahḍa*, Christians and Jews already used Arabic, but usually in a way that was distinguishable from how their Muslim neighbors did. The Arabic of the Syriac Christians was often characterized by mixing it with other languages, especially Syriac, and in many cases written in Syriac script, a practice known as Garshuni. The language was often in a form between the colloquial and Classical Arabic, often described as Middle Arabic. From the time of the *nahḍa* onwards, this has changed: Christians and Jews started more and more to adopt a standardized way of using the Arabic language, even allowing a considerable number of publications co-authored or co-edited by adherents to different religions. The Arabic script became common practice for non-Muslims and practices such as Garshuni diminished.[62] Abdulrazzak Patel observes in this respect that the period *before* the start of the *nahḍa* features the "reintegration of pre-modern Christians into the mainstream of Arabic literature."[63] From approximately 1600 to 1800, Christians once again became active participants in the Arabic literary realm, which they had been well-known participants of during the translation movement and through the thirteenth century. According to Patel, "[b]y the nahḍah the reintegration of Christian writers into the mainstream of Arabic literature was complete and an inter-religious, almost supra-religious, space had evolved where Christian writers were no longer

[61] On the emergence of Modern Standard Arabic, see Versteegh, *The Arabic Language*, 221–40.

[62] Alessandro Mengozzi, "The History of Garshuni as a Writing System: Evidence from the Rabbula Codex," in *Casemud 2007: Proceedings of the 13th Italian Meeting of Afro-Asiatic Linguistics, Held in Udine, May 21st–24th, 2007*, ed. F.M. Fales and G.F. Grassi (Padova: S.A.R.G.O.N. Editrice e Libreria, 2010), 300.

[63] Abdulrazzak Patel, *The Arab Nahḍa: The Making of the Intellectual and Humanist Movement* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2013), 4–5.

hampered by specific religious or theological considerations."[64] This process can therefore be seen as a "preparatory" internal development that opened the way for the *nahḍa* to begin full scale. Other authors have noted similar developments. In the course of the *nahḍa*, the language of literary production became more standardized, creating a link between the *nahḍa* and the emergence of Modern Standard Arabic, and new textual genres began to be deployed, such as novels and articles in journals. Christians took part in the *nahḍa* in the same way as Muslims, and already in the eighteenth century we can see that they adapted genres that had been deployed solely by Muslims.[65] During the *nahḍa*, Christians, Jews and Muslims began to use the Arabic language in the same sorts of ways, which is visible in common genres and mediums, like printed books and journals, use of a common type of standardized Arabic with a shared grammar and vocabulary (which was to evolve later into the Modern Standard Arabic of today), and the consistent use of Arabic script for all religions. This "*nahḍa* hypothesis," as I call it, seems not to be completely applicable to the situation of Iraq in the early twentieth century: while many Syriac Christian authors used Arabic in a standardized way, many did not. Or, put differently, the "*nahḍa* hypothesis" may be correct, but the process had not been completed in Iraq until the second half of the twentieth century.

Apart from Arabic, the other main languages that were used by the Syriac Christians of Iraq and elsewhere in the Middle East are varieties of Aramaic. While by the twentieth century, Aramaic had been reduced to a much smaller language than Arabic, in many aspects the situation of Aramaic is comparable to that of Arabic. Like Arabic, albeit with some differences, we perceive a situation of diglossia for Aramaic. The official form of Aramaic for Christians is Classical Syriac, which probably emerged as a literary language out of the local Aramaic dialect of Edessa, and which has been in use as a largely unchanging liturgical and literary language for the Syriac churches at least since

[64] Ibid., 69.

[65] Farouk Mardam-Bey and Hilary Kilpatrick, "L'état des lieux dans le monde arabe à la fin du XVIIIe siècle," in *Histoire de la littérature arabe moderne*, part 2: *1800–1945*, ed. Boutros Hallaq and Heidi Toelle (Paris: Sindbad 2007), 70.

the fifth century.[66] In Syriac its name is (*leshānā*) *suryāyā* "the Syriac (language)," and in Arabic it is known as *al-lugha al-suryāniyya*. Whether the literary language as we know it now was ever in use as a spoken language is unclear, and it features a similar usage and position as Classical or Standard Arabic, though on a smaller scale and without the official status that Arabic gained since the twentieth century. While there is one Classical Syriac language, the language was split into a western and eastern tradition, alongside the lines of the ecclesial split between the western and eastern branches of Syriac Christianity. On both sides of the split we find a distinct pronunciation tradition, different scripts and a few diferences in orthography. In total there are three scripts: *Esṭrangelā*, an old script that is in use in both branches of Syriac Christianity; *Serṭā*, the West Syriac script; and *Madhnḥāyā*, the East Syriac script. The different pronunciation traditions and scripts immediately reveal whether the writer or speaker has a West or East Syriac background. This split is also visible in Iraq in the twentieth century, as we will see here and there.

Next to Classical Syriac, we find various colloquial forms of Aramaic, called Neo-Aramaic by linguists and locally known under various names, often signifying the specific dialect. All Aramaic dialects present in Iraq in the twentieth century belong to the North Eastern Neo-Aramaic dialect (NENA), which includes the dialects spoken by the Syriac Christian original inhabitants of the many villages in Northern Iraq (known as Sureth) and those of the Assyrians who came from the Hakkari and Urmia regions (in its standardized form known as Urmia Aramaic or Swadaya).[67] Sureth is on a small scale also in use as a written language, and also in Iraq there is some evidence of this in the twentieth century manuscripts that we come across.[68] Swadaya, on the other hand, has developed a full-fledged literary tradition in the

[66] Lucas Van Rompay, "Some Preliminary Remarks on the Origins of Classical Syriac as a Standard Language: The Syriac Version of Eusebius of Caesarea's Ecclesiastical History," in *Semitic and Cushitic Studies*, ed. Gideon Goldenberg and Shlomo Raz (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag, 1994), 72–73.

[67] A. Mengozzi, "Sureth," in *Gorgias Encyclopedic Dictionary of the Syriac Heritage*, ed. Sebastian P. Brock et al. (Piscataway: Gorgias Press, 2011), 385–86.

[68] Alessandro Mengozzi, *Israel of Alqosh and Joseph of Telkepe. A Story in a Truthful Language. Religious Poems in Vernacular Syriac (North Iraq, 17th Century)* (Louvain: Peeters, 2002), 1–7.

course of the nineteenth century.[69] It was brought as such into Iraq by the Assyrians from the Hakkari and Urmia regions, and thanks to this a good number of printed Swadaya works have been published in Iraq, which is discussed in Chapter 3. The Neo-Aramaic dialects are no direct descendants of Classical Syriac, but there is a close connection between the two. When written, the same scripts are used for Neo-Aramaic—featuring the same split between the western and eastern scripts—and in the case of Swadaya, the orthography is based on that of Classical Syriac. In addition to that, the words to refer to the languages do not always make it clear whether Classical Syriac or Neo-Aramaic is meant: in English, Neo-Aramaic is also known as Modern Syriac, where the word "modern" can also be omitted. Another name is "(modern) Assyrian," which emphasizes the link to the ancient Assyrians but which equally asserts a connection between Classical Syriac and Neo-Aramaic. The term *Kthobonoyo* for Classical Syriac, literally "the written language," also points into this direction.[70] Because of this connection, we could almost describe the situation as one of diglossia, like that of Arabic, but it has to be kept in mind that active knowledge of Classical Syriac is much more limited than that of Standard Arabic, while the literary tradition of Swadaya is stronger than that of modern Arabic dialects, certainly in the early twentieth century.

Like Arabic, Aramaic has a function in ethnic, national or religious identification. Classical Syriac is exclusively used by the Syriac Christians, and with some exceptions only Syriac Christians are speakers of the Neo-Aramaic dialects.[71] For that reason, Aramaic is the preeminent language of the Syriac Christians and part of Syriac Christian identity. In the twentieth century in Iraq, we can identify three phe-

[69] For the development of literary Urmia Aramaic, see H.L. Murre-van den Berg, *From a Spoken to a Written Language: The Introduction and Development of Literary Urmia Aramaic in the Nineteenth Century* (Leiden: Nederlands Instituut voor het Nabije Oosten, 1999).

[70] George A. Kiraz, "Kthobonoyo Syriac: Some Observations and Remarks," *Hugoye: Journal of Syriac Studies* 10:2 (2011): 130–31. I use the western Syriac pronunciation for this form, because this term is almost only used in West Syriac Christianity.

[71] There are some Jewish and Muslim villages where Aramaic is spoken, or where it used to be spoken until recently. Apart from that the importance of Aramaic in Jewish religious texts should be mentioned.

nomena where the expression of a Syriac Christian identity using Aramaic is visible, be it ethnic, national, or religious. In the first place this is the use of written Neo-Aramaic or Swadaya by the Assyrian Christians. The development of literary Urmia Aramaic was connected to the parallel emergence of Assyrian nationalism in the Hakkari and Urmia regions, and as indicated above this practice was brought into Iraq in the 1920s. This issue is extensively discussed in Chapter 3. In the second place we sometimes see the influence of the twentieth-century revival of Classical Syriac.[72] Many of the authors related to this movement were explicit in their ideas of a distinct Syriac national identity. In Iraq, the fruits of this movement were limited, but in several manuscripts its influence is clearly visible. This is a significant marker of a Syriac Christian identity, be it not necessarily in a ethnic or national way. Finally, the use of Garshuni is a remarkable way of identification as Syriac Christian, where not the Syriac language but only the Syriac script is used. However, while the marking of a Syriac Christian identity as the most commonly suggested explanation,[73] the evidence for this argumentation is scarce and as much can be said for the argument that Garshuni was just "the way it was done": Syriac script was the script of the Syriac Christians and therefore the most practical way of writing whatever language. Following this argumentation, only when Arabic script became common among the Syriac Christians thanks to mass education or otherwise, Garshuni became a conscious choice and a possible marker of identification.[74] We see both the influence of the Classical Syriac revival movement and the use of Garshuni in detail in Chapter 2. Apart from these three phenomena where Aramaic/Syriac or its script is actually used, there are many examples of texts in other languages, especially Arabic, where the Ara-

[72] See Sebastian P. Brock, "Some Observations on the Use of Classical Syriac in the Late Twentieth Century," *Journal of Semitic Studies* 34:2 (1989): 363–75; H. Murre-van den Berg, "Classical Syriac and the Syriac Churches: A Twentieth-Century History," in *Syriac Encounters*, ed. Maria Doerfler et al. (Leuven: Peeters, 2015), 119–47; Knudsen, "An Important Step in the Revival of Literary Syraic;" and Elie Wardini, "Modern Literary Syriac: A Case of Linguistic Divorce," in *Symposium Syriacum* VII, ed. René Lavenant (Rome: 1998), 517–25.

[73] F. del Río Sánchez, "El árabe karshūnī come preservación de la identidad siríaca," in *Lenguas en contacto: el testimonio escrito*, ed. P. Bádenas de la Peña et al. (Madrid: Consejo superiores de investigaciones científicas, 2004), 185–94.

[74] Murre, "Arabic and its alternatives."

maic or Syriac languages are not in use but explicitly mentioned as important languages for the Syriac Christians, in fact revealing the impracticalities of using a language that was in limited use. We see examples of this throughout this dissertation, but especially in Chapter 4 and 5.

One final aspect that I want to mention here is a difference between traditional forms of language use and modern forms. The *nahḍa* is supposed to have created a common literary field where Muslims, Christians and Jews were able to use the Arabic language equally, contrary to the situation before, where Christians and Jews had distinctive ways of using the Arabic language. Since the *nahḍa* Muslims, Christians and Jews have been using common genres and all equally use correct Standard Arabic to write in.[75] The *nahḍa* process is supposed to have finished around 1920.[76] Yet, some of the distinctive features that set apart "Syriac Christian Arabic" from "Muslim Arabic" were still present after 1920 in Iraq. Garshuni was still a common way to write Arabic until after 1950 and various languages were still being mixed in manuscripts. On the other hand, at other places the influence of the *nahḍa* is strongly visible, such as the various Arabic-language journals that were published, especially those with an multi-faith editorial board. The use of Classical Syriac may also be interpreted as a modern phenomenon. The above-mentioned revival of Classical Syriac is in many aspects similar to the Arabic *nahḍa*, as it featured a enormous increase in modern production in Syriac, especially in poetry. Not only are both Standard Arabic and Classical Syriac principally written languages where its use for original work was limited before the start of the respective revivals, as opposed to their colloquial counterparts, but some of the actors of this revival even explicitly mentioned the fact that they were inspired by authors of classical

[75] Yasir Suleiman argues against the idea that Christians and Jews used a type of Arabic that was distinguisable from "normal," i.e. Muslim Arabic. I think it is correct that it is not possible to identify a specific kind of Christian Arabic, but there still are several features that set non-Muslims apart: the more frequent appearance of dialectal forms (Middle Arabic) and the use of different scripts (Garshuni and Judaeo-Arabic). In addition to that, co-publication by Muslims and Christians or Jews seems to be a post-*nahḍa* phenomenon. Yasir Suleiman, *Arabic, Self and Identity: A Study in Conflict and Displacement* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 33.

[76] P. Starkey, "Nahḍa," in *Encyclopedia of Arabic Literature*, volume 2, ed. J.S. Meisami and Paul Starkey (London: Routledge, 1998), 574.

Arabic genres, such as the poetry genre of the *maqāmāt*.[77] According to Heleen Murre-van den Berg, the revival of Classical Syriac can even be seen as change in status of Syriac from a mere ritual language to a "modern" and "secular" language.[78] Obviously, the smaller amount of users of Syriac as compared to Arabic limits the comparison, and Classical Syriac has never been able to gain the support of mass education or mass media. To understand the existence of these traditional and modern types of language use at the same time, it is helpful to make a distinction between the roughly corresponding traditional types of publishing—especially manuscripts, but also letters could belong to this category—and modern types of publishing—printed books and journals. In traditional publications, the pre-*nahḍa* setting is usually visible, and Arabic, Syriac, Garshuni and sometimes other languages are used side by side. In modern publications this is not the case: the languages are clearly distinguished from each other, and Arabic publications look identical to those published by Muslims. Generally, expressions of national or other identities are stronger in modern publications. However, the traditional publications receive due attention in this dissertation, for they offer examples of authors who seemed—at least at first sight—to be less conscious about the way they identified.

The vast amount of languages that were spoken and otherwise used by the Syriac Christians evokes the question whether this was seen as a favorable situation or something to avoid. Research on multilingualism in mandatory Palestine shows that while monolingualism was promoted by the British authorities (Arabic for the Arabs, Hebrew for the Jews), multilingualism was promoted by French Catholic missionaries on top of a focus on Arabic.[79] In this regard,

[77] This is the case for the Syriac Orthodox poet Ghattas Maqdisi Elyas, who wrote in an introduction to one of his volumes of poems that he was inspired by al-Hamadhānī (11th century), al-Ḥarīrī (12th century), and al-Yāzijī (19th century). Ghattas Maqdisi Elyas, *Tawgone: nebhe w-reʿyone* (Glane: Bar-Hebraeus Verlag, 1988), 2–5. For an analysis of the twentieth-century Syriac poetry by Naʿʿūm Fāʾiq, see Robert Isaf, "Awakening, or Arising: Syriac Language Poetry at the Fall of the Ottoman Empire," in *Arabic and its Alternatives: Religious Minorities in the Formative Years of the Modern Middle East (1920-1950)*, ed. Heleen Murre-van den Berg et al. (in print).

[78] Murre, "Classical Syriac and the Syriac Churches," 141.

[79] Suzanne Schneider, "Monolingualism and Education in Mandate Palestine," *Jerusalem Quarterly* 52 (2013): 68–74; Karène Sanchez Summerer, "Linguistic Di-

Karène Sanchez Summerer shows that for Latin Catholics, favoring knowledge of other languages than Arabic—in their case, western languages—did not mean a lack of allegiance to the Palestinian nation, even though it has often be interpreted as such.[80] In Iraq, questions of multilingualism play a role, but in a different way than for the Catholic communities of Palestine. In Iraq too, French missionaries attempted to promote knowledge of French, but the impact of this appears to have been rather limited. The highly multilingual situation of the Syriac Christians of Iraq is more related to knowledge of liturgical languages (Syriac) on top of languages that are connected to national identification (primarily Arabic, but also Neo-Aramaic), and less to knowledge of languages that had a practical use for economic advancement, such as English or French. However, my argument is that also in this case, the knowledge and use of other languages than Arabic did not at all necessarily coincide with a diminished esteem of Arabic and that this was not a disadvantage for their incorporation in Iraq as an Arab nation either.

Previous research

The last decade saw the appearance of a substantial number of monographs dealing with Christianity in Iraq in the beginning of the twentieth century. Almost all these books are mainly about the Assyrians who had arrived from the Hakkari and Urmia regions as refugees. This includes Hannah Müller-Sommerfeld's unpublished *Habilitationsschrift* about the League of Nations policies concerning Jews, Assyrian Christians and Bahá'is in Iraq (2012); Sargon Donabed's *Reforging a Forgotten History* (2015), about the Assyrians in modern Iraqi historiography; and Laura Robson's *States of Separation* (2017), dealing with parallel minority policies towards the Zionists in Palestine, the Armenians in Syria and Lebanon and the Assyrians in Iraq in the Middle East in the interwar period. Apart from that, a monograph has appeared about the modern history of the Chaldean Catholic Church by

versity and Ideologies among the Catholic Minority in Mandate Palestine: Fear of Confusion or a Powerful Tool," *British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies* 43:2 (2016): 191–205.

[80] Ibid., 203–204.

Kristian Girling (2018), but only a small portion of this book is about the first half of the twentieth century.

The focus on the Assyrians is understandable because of the relative political importance of this group that this group had both internally and internationally. However, the result of this is that the other Christian groups in Iraq have been gravely underrepresented in the country's Western-language historiography. A more serious problem is that the history of the other Christian groups has sometimes been conflated with that of the Iraqi Assyrians. The reason for this is that a wide interpretation of "Assyrian" allows for inclusion of the other Syriac Christian groups, even though this interpretation was not common in Iraq. This wide interpretation may be justified from an ideological or political point of view, but it is problematic if the experience of the other Christians does not get equal treatment at the same time. Both Donabed and Robson take the word Assyrian in this wide interpretation, but without making clear that their work deals only or mainly with a certain portion of these Assyrians. Donabed makes a distinction between Assyrians from the Hakkari and Urmia regions and the other Syriac Christians, but sees them both as Assyrians and stresses that the difference between the two groups is the result of colonialism. At some place in her book, Robson speaks of "longer-standing Assyrian communities" in contrast to the Assyrians from the Hakkari and Urmia regions, pointing at the Chaldeans. In both cases, identification as Assyrians was rare among those who did not come from Hakkari and Urmia.[81] I stress this point, because the fact that the Assyrians from Hakkari and Urmia identified as Assyrians while the other Syriac Christians did not is essential for the argument of this dissertation.

Oddly enough, in works that focus more on the general intellectual history of Iraq, of which a considerable number has appeared as well in the last decade, the non-Assyrian Christians are rather *overrepresented*. This is caused by the fact that these Christians were generally better integrated in the Iraqi public sphere. However, these works do not focus on the Christian aspects of these actors and almost seem to take their integrated position in Iraqi society for granted. The result is

[81] Donabed, *Reforging a Forgotten History*, 54–55; Robson, *States of Separation*, 55–56.

that historiography of Christianity in Iraq currently has two faces: one is the story of the Assyrians, which is a story of separateness from the rest of Iraqi society, and the other is the story of Syriac Christian intellectuals, where the connections between Muslims, Christians and Jews are stressed. No authors seem to address this issue. In this dissertation, I show how this paradox works and I point out that there were groups of Christians in the middle of these two positions who were not politically active and for that reason absent from almost all historical accounts.

Regarding research about identity of the Syriac Christians, the most important work that deals with modern times is Naures Atto's monograph *Hostages in the Homeland*, which is the result of anthropological research among the Syriac Christian diaspora concerning identity questions, with ample attention for the Assyrian-Aramean name debate. In addition to its discussions on the contemporary situation, this book contains a considerable amount of original historical research about the development of Assyrian and Aramean identities. A major historical work on the nineteenth-century development of Assyrian nationalism is Adam Becker's *Revival and Awakening*, but apart from that and a number of smaller studies there are few works that thoroughly cover identity questions of Syriac Christians in a particular historical period. As far as Iraq in the first half of the twentieth century is concerned, many more general works mention, for instance, that the Iraqi Chaldeans were close to the state and in favor of the Arabic language, but do not give any more details than that. This dissertation aims to fill in that lacuna.

Few major studies have been done on language use and language policy in early twentieth-century Iraq. This is in sharp contrast to the large amount of studies on Palestine, Turkey or Lebanon in the same period. One reason for this may be an apparent lack of interest from the British authorities in Iraqi language policies.[82] Contrary to Syria or Palestine, Iraq gained its independence relatively quickly (in 1932), and in addition to that, the British mandatory powers left the Iraqis relatively free in the development of a national identity and educational policies. Language use and policy have best been studied for the

[82]Many studies are mainly dependent on what Peter Sluglett writes in his authorative monograph on British power in Iraq. Sluglett, *Britain in Iraq*, esp. 129–35.

case of the Jews, with ample attention in a few recent monographs.[83] In addition to that, there are a number of recent linguistic studies describing individual dialects of Arabic and Neo-Aramaic of towns and villages in Iraq, including a considerable number of Christian places.[84] Some of these studies provide details about sociolinguistic aspects of the languages.

Sources and methodology

This dissertation is largely based on an analysis of the publications and other writings of the Syriac Christians in Iraq between the years 1920 and 1950. The sources do not only include contributions to journals, but also material that is less often included to study this topic, most notably a selection from the large number of twentieth-century manuscripts and the fruits of Joseph de Kelaita's Assyrian printing press. The large range of material types give a varied view on Syriac Christian identification and language use in these years. I have attempted to reach this goal by inventorying everything that was produced for each type of source, with several selected sources that I discuss in detail. Other sources that I have accessed are various archives, most notably the archives of the French Dominican missionaries and the interconfessional American Protestant mission. My approach in analyzing these sources has been to find out which language was used where, and what was said about the meaning in using any of these languages. It is therefore a combination of the study of discourse about language and what it tells about Syriac Christian identitification, and an investigation of how the language was used. In Chapter 5, I use the memoirs of Rafāʾil Buṭṭī. The contents of these are illuminating on a number of issues, despite the fragmentary character of these particular memoirs and the lack of information about when they were written. By focusing on the productions of the involved actors themselves,

[83] Bashkin, *The New Babylonians*, throughout the book; Goldstein-Sabbah, *Baghdadi Jewish Networks in Hashemite Iraq*.

[84] This includes the towns of Telkepe, Baghdeda, Alqosh, and Bartallah, which are featured in this dissertation. See Eleonor Coghill, "The Neo-Aramaic Dialect of Telkepe," in *Studies in Semitic Linguistics and Manuscripts: A Liber Discipulorum in Honour of Professor Geoffrey Khan*, ed. Nadia Vidro et al. (Uppsala: Uppsala University Library, 2018), 235–36.

I am not dealing with language policy from above, but with how it was used from below. However, it should be noted that I am mainly dealing with language use by the elites and only little with colloquial language. This is the result of my choice to exclusively work with written sources, which could have been partly overcome by employing oral history, but which I refrained from doing because it would only have provided information about the final years of the period under consideration. Furthermore, this dissertation deals with the usage of language, but I am not a linguist and as such this dissertation is not a linguistic endeavor—I approach these questions from a historical point of view.

For the purpose of this dissertation, I paid a visit to Northern Iraq in the fall of 2013, where I was generously received by the late Dr. Saadi al-Malih, former director of the General Directorate of Syriac Culture and Arts of the Iraqi Kurdistan Government in Ankawa, and Dr. Robin Beth Shamuel, Benjamin Ḥaddād and Fr. Shlimon I. Khoshaba of Beth Mardutha d-Madhnḥā (*Dār al-mashriq al-thaqāfiyya*) in Duhok.[85] This visit was not the most fruitful in the sense that they brought be the sources I needed, which I eventually found elsewhere. However, the visit enabled me to get a grasp of the rich variety of Syriac Christian cultural expression. During my visit, a conference about the great Syriac Orthodox journalist Rafā'il Buṭṭī was going on, but I also got to see the private manuscript collection of Benjamin Ḥaddād, to speak about Assyrian cultural expressions and to discover the religious journals of the Chaldean and Syriac Orthodox churches. Without this visit, I would have never been able to incorporate the variety of types of sources that I have used now, which are all necessary to draw a complete picture. I have obtained my sources at other places: the Bibliothèque du Saulchoir in Paris and the Presbyterian Historical Society in Philadelphia for the Dominican and American Protestant mission archives; the Cadbury Research Library in Birmingham (UK) for Mingana's archive and the Mingana collection of manuscripts; the Bibliothèque Orientale in Beirut and the Widener Library in Cambridge (Massachusetts) for Arabic-language journals and the Ashurbanipal Library in Chicago for a number of Assyrian sources. Many

[85] Robin Beth Shamuel is the current director of the General Directorate of Syriac Culture.

other resources have been digitized and were available online, including manuscripts and some complete runs of journals.

While analytical research about Syriac Christian language use and identification is scarce, this is not the case for specific studies about the literary and scholarly endeavors. This dissertation draws upon several previous descriptions of Syriac Christian literature and other works in Iraq. Already in 1943, the Syriac Orthodox patriarch Ignatius Ephrem I Barsoum (1887–1957) wrote his classic history of Syriac literature in Arabic. This history, which comprehensively covers Syriac Christian authors and their works, also includes many contemporary authors from Iraq.[86] Specifically dealing with literature in Neo-Aramaic and Classical Syriac from the last two centuries, Rudolf Macuch's literature history gives biographies and works of almost all Syriac Christian authors until its time of publication in 1976.[87] Both works deal with authors from all Syriac churches, but focus on literature in the Aramaic and Syriac languages. Arabic-language journalism is furthermore covered in Fāʾiq Buṭṭī's encyclopedia of "Syriac journalism."[88] Descriptions of many of the Syriac-heritage manuscripts in Iraq are available in a number of catalogues published in Iraq itself and elsewhere, which are listed in Chapter 2. These works combined provide a thorough overview of Syriac Christian authors who published in Iraq between 1920 and 1950. These works all cover only part of the total amount of written works by Syriac Christians in Iraq, and they are written in various languages. This can partially be explained by the variety in thoughts about Syriac Christian identity. In this dissertation, one of my goals is to provide a discussion of Syriac Christian literary and intellectual activity, and by doing so give picture of how language was used to express a Syriac Christian or other identity.

I have divided my sources into four categories. The categories do not correspond to the different Syriac churches in Iraq, but are different means of literary or intellectual expressions, which correspond to

[86] Ignatius Aphram I Barsaum, *Al-luʾluʾ al-manthūr fī tārīkh al-ʿulūm wa-al-ādāb al-suryāniyya* (reprint) (Baghdad: Majmaʿ al-lugha al-suryāniyya), 1976.

[87] Rudolf Macuch, *Geschichte der spät- und neusyrischen Literatur* (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1976).

[88] Fāʾiq Buṭṭī, *Mawsūʿat al-ṣaḥāfa al-suryāniyya fī al-ʿIrāq: tārīkh wa-shakhṣiyyāt* (Ankawa: Wizārat al-thaqāfa wa-l-shabāb, al-mudīriyya al-ʿāmma lil-thaqāfa wa-l-funūn al-suryāniyya, 2014).

a certain forms of Syriac Christian identification. The first category consists of manuscripts and other writings that can be considered traditional forms of publications. The material in this category is exclusively produced through the networks of the church, and the authors of these texts tend to identify themselves in the first place as part of their church. A variety of languages are used, often within the same manuscript, of which Arabic—often in Garshuni—and Syriac are the most important. The second category consists of printed books coming from the Assyrian printing press in Mosul. These books are all written in Neo-Aramaic, Syriac or both, and are specially meant for the Assyrian community, which is also explicitly identified as such. While the printing press is connected to the Assyrian Church of the East, and most books are religious, the identity that is expressed is of the ethnic or national type. The third category is formed by two Arabic-language journals that were published by respectively the Chaldean and Syriac Orthodox patriarchates. While the journals were probably meant for the members of the respective churches in the first place, they explicitly show that they regarded their communities to be part of the country they lived in, and the Chaldean journal went as far as supporting Arab nationalism. The fourth category consists of Arabic-language journals that were edited by Syriac Christian authors who did so not by means of their churches but through secular channels. A few of these journals had Muslim co-editors. While the Syriac heritage is not ignored by these authors, they saw themselves as Iraqi and Arab citizens in the first place and had a secular outlook.

Chapter overview

This dissertation consists of five chapters, of which the main part consists of a discussion of the above-mentioned four categories of sources. Chapter 1 provides the historical context for the rest of the dissertation. It starts with the development of Iraqi Arab identification within the context of the political changes from the end of the nineteenth century to the revolution in 1958. It then provides a historical and geographical overview of the situation of the four Syriac churches in Iraq. Finally, it covers the development of the Iraqi school system and the French Dominican and American Protestant missions to Iraq.

Chapter 2 focuses on the scribes and authors who were involved in the production of manuscripts. Despite the introduction of the printing press and the popularity of modern genres like journal articles, manuscripts did not cease from being published. Apart from the Assyrian Church of the East, which was in the possession of a printing press, manuscripts remained the most important medium to multiply religious texts. This chapter first gives an overview of the manuscripts that were produced in Iraq between 1920 and 1950, and then discusses a few collections of manuscripts in detail based on the choice of languages and their colophons. These often provide interesting information about the way these authors looked at themselves as religious groups and as part of Iraqi society. Most of the times the authors only refer to the specific church they belonged to, without signs of a sense of unity between the four Syriac churches. The chapter ends with a discussion on the collaboration between the Syriac Orthodox scribe Mattai bar Paulus and the British Orientalist Alphonse Mingana, the latter of which used his Middle Eastern background to purchase existing manuscripts, as well as to commission for new copies of older texts.

Chapter 3 discusses the endeavors of Joseph de Kelaita and the people around him. Joseph de Kelaita was a priest of the Assyrian Church of the East, who had a pioneering role in the development of Assyrian intellectual life. Originally coming from Urmia but having spent the years of World War I in the United States, he brought a printing press to Iraq with movable Syriac types, helping the Assyrian refugees set up their intellectual infrastructure from scratch. The chapter first discusses the context of Assyrian publishing in the Ottoman Empire and the United States. It then continues with the fruits of Joseph de Kelaita's printing press. These productions have in common that they are all books printed in Classical Syriac or Neo-Aramaic (Swadaya) and specifically meant to serve the Assyrian community in Iraq and possibly abroad. Being at the same time explicitly connected to the Assyrian Church of the East, these publications show an Assyrian ethnic or national identification, where it is ambiguous whether the other Syriac churches are considered part of this. Finally, the chapter surveys the Assyrian schools that were set up in the early years after World War I.

Chapter 4 consecutively discusses three Arabic-language religious journals with a strong connection to the churches of their editors. The first one is *al-Najm* (The Star), which was published between 1928 and 1938 by the Chaldean Patriarchate in Mosul itself. While this journal had a Chaldean readership in mind, it proudly posits this church and their members as part of the Iraqi nation with an Arab identity. This Arab identity is not only expressed by using the Arabic language throughout the journal, but also by explicitly referring to the Iraqi-Arab nation as their own. As such, there are no signs of unity discourse. The other two are the closely related journals *al-Mashriq* and *Lisān al-Mashriq*, which were published consecutively in the years 1946–1950 by a Syriac Orthodox priest. While these journals are entirely written in Arabic, too, they speak about a transnational *Suryānī* (Syriac) nation, seeing themselves as loyal Iraqi citizens but not as Arabs. There are clear signs of a sense of national unity among the Syriac Christians in these two journals.

Chapter 5 also concerns Arabic-language journals, but those that were published in networks outside one of the Syriac churches. After an inventarization of this diverse group of authors, three active authors are discussed in detail. The first one is Anastās al-Karmilī, whose mother was Chaldean Catholic but whose father was a Maronite from Lebanon. This famous author was a priest, but his publications were of a secular nature with a strong interest in the Arabic language. The second is Rafāʿīl Buṭṭī, a Syriac Orthodox journalist who explicitly identified as an Arab. He wrote in various places about issues relating to Iraqi society and identities, fighting against sectarian differences in the country. The third one is Paulina Ḥassūn, who published a women's journal for many years and then left the country after this became impossible.

Chapter 1

Iraq and Syriac Christianity

Iraq has often been portrayed as an artificial country: a state without its own identity, based on the Sykes-Picot agreement rather than a preexisting cultural, social or political unit, which was doomed to eventually fall apart. While this narrative is not completely justified, the state of Iraq that was established in 1920 did not easily become a credible focal point of the loyalty of all of its citizens indeed, with all its religious and ethnic diversity. The issue became more pressing after 1925, when the former Ottoman province of Mosul was formally decided to become part of Iraq, which was not only the home of a large number of Kurds, but which was also an important area of much of Syriac Christianity. While forming less than four percent of the total population,[1] the Christians were not a large minority to deal with for the Iraqi government, but it was certainly one to keep in mind. Indeed, in the early formulations of Iraqi identity, Christians were explicitly included as a fundamental part of Iraqi society. In this chapter, I provide the historical, geographical and religious context in which the Syriac Christians of Iraq lived. This helps to put into context the great variety of texts that they wrote and published, which is discussed in the remainder of this dissertation.

I start this chapter with a historical overview of the state of Iraq from the last decades of Ottoman rule to the revolution in 1958. I put special emphasis here on the question what it meant to be an Iraqi and what the ethnic character of the state of Iraq was. The general his-

[1] See Appendix A for more information about demographics.

tory of modern Iraq is well studied. Several recent monographs provide a comprehensive overview of Iraqi history in Western languages, the most notable of which is Charles Tripp's *A History of Iraq*, which combines secondary sources in Arabic and Western languages to give a comprehensive account of Iraq's political history following the fall of the Ottoman Empire.[2] Other major works are Orit Bashkin's *The Other Iraq*, a history of intellectual activities based to great extent on accounts in newspapers and periodicals,[3] and Peter Sluglett's *Britain in Iraq*, a study of the British presence in Iraq drawing upon British archival sources.[4] Pierre-Jean Luizard's monograph *La formation de l'Irak contemporain* focuses on Shia politics, but is also of great interest for its accounts of the contexts of the Ottoman Empire and the Mandate in which the Shia political activity took place.[5]

After that, I continue with an overview of Syriac Christianity in Iraq. Here, I treat the Syriac Christians according to their ecclesial affiliation, even though this was not necessarily their primary form of identification. The reason for this categorization is that ecclesiastical history is the only aspect of Syriac Christian history for which—sometimes rudimentary—information is available. In practice, however, a categorization based on religious boundaries appears to be a functioning representation of the conceptions people had in this period. There seems to be one exception to this, namely the Assyrians who came from the Hakkari and Urmia regions as refugees. They were the only group with a clear ethnic or national identification in which multiple religious groups were unified. While the Assyrian Church of the East was by far the most dominant church among these people, some of these people belonged to the Chaldean Catholic Church, and some were Protestant Assyrians. The dominance of the Assyrian Church of the East (and the assumption of its Patriarch as the Assyrians' worldly leader), however, makes the distinction between the Assyrians as an ethnic or national group and as the adherents to the As-

[2] Charles Tripp, *A History of Iraq*, third edition (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007).

[3] Bashkin, *The Other Iraq*.

[4] Sluglett, *Britain in Iraq*.

[5] Pierre-Jean Luizard, *La formation de l'Irak contemporain : le rôle politique des ulémas chiites à la fin de la domination ottomane et au moment de la création de l'Etat irakien* (Paris: CNRS Editions, 1991).

syrian Church of the East often difficult. In this section, I therefore consecutively discuss the Chaldean Catholic Church, the Church of the East (and at the same time the Assyrians as an ethnic or national group), the Syriac Orthodox Church and the Syriac Catholic Church.

The chapter continues with another form of religious activity: that of foreign missions. In the first place I discuss the Catholic mission in Mosul, which was run by French Dominicans. The second mission was an American Protestant mission, run by three different churches together of which the Presbyterians were the most important. The chapter ends with an overview of the educational policy as it was developed from the establishment of the state of Iraq onwards. The Syriac Christians, as well as the French and Protestant missionaries, undertook various private initiatives to provide education to specific groups of people, but at the same time the state education system was developing rapidly.

Creating the state of Iraq

The start of the mandatory authority in Iraq in 1920 marked the beginning of the modern state of Iraq as we know it today. The establishment of this state and the British authority were a direct consequence of Britain's military activities during World War I. The new ruling power did not only have to legitimize its own authority in the area, but also the existence of the country itself as a nation state. Iraq as a nation state could not be taken for granted, given the fact that it was the first time that the area became a political unity. The new country consisted of multiple ethnicities, religions and religious factions, and languages. But neither was it something completely new. Already before World War I, the word Iraq (Arabic: *al-ʿIrāq*) was used to designate the area that was known as Mesopotamia in the west, and some even described it as a homeland. In addition to that, the new British rulers came in the place of the unpopular Ottoman Empire, and the new state structure made limited Arab self-rule possible with a prospect of full independence. Indeed, while British rule was hated by many, the existence of Iraq as a state itself was remarkably well accepted, and many intellectuals from all religions even willingly contributed to the state-building

Figure 1.1: Map of Iraq, based on "Location map of Iraq" (https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Iraq_location_map.svg, by user NordNordWest – CC BY-SA 3.0

process, as we see further on in this dissertation.[6] That is not to say that the authorities ruling Iraq, British and local, did not have difficulties with developing their state identity. The Kurdish revolts and the Simele massacre of 1933 are good examples where the state failed to keep everybody on board. In this section, I show the different phases of state formation Iraq went through from the end of Ottoman rule to the revolution of 1958, as it formulated its identity as an Arab, and later

[6] Apart from this, there are more arguments to give against the "Sykes-Picot narrative," according to which modern Iraq was purely the result of this infamous pact. See Sara Pursley about the meaning of "Iraq" before the state was created: Sara Pursley, "'Lines Drawn on an Empty Map': Iraq's Borders and the Legend of the Artificial State," *Jadaliyya*, June 2nd, 2015, http://www.jadaliyya.com/pages/index/21759/.

pan-Arab, state with varying degrees of inclusivity for non-Arabs and non-Muslims.

Iraq is roughly built up from the former Ottoman provinces of Baghdad, Basra and Mosul. Of these provinces, Mosul had a different status compared to both Baghdad and Basra. This is visible in terms of demographics, where the Mosul province had a large Kurdish population and a significant Turkmen minority. Furthermore, the dominant Arabic dialect in the north was different from those of the rest of the country. From the start, forming the new state of Iraq out of the Baghdad and Basra provinces made more sense than forming it out of Mosul. There are indications that the word Iraq was already before World War I, long before the start of the Arab revolt or the British occupation, used as a determiner for Baghdad and Basra, but not for Mosul. In Baghdad in 1911, the famous Christian writer and linguist Anastās al-Karmilī, who is introduced in Chapter 5, together with the Muslim Kāẓim al-Dujaylī, founded the Arabic-language journal *Lughat al-ʿArab* "Language of the Arabs." In its introductory editorial, the editors show the idea of the existence of an Iraqi homeland, or *waṭan*:

> We transfer to our Iraqi patriots (*waṭaniyyinnā al-ʿIrāqiyyīn*) the things that were written about them by the Europeans (*al-ifranj*) and by others among the famous authors.[7]

In the same journal, an article in the next year (1912) written by Ibrāhīm Ḥalamī explicitly defines the borders of Iraq. While he recognizes that Iraq's borders have always changed over time, quoting Yāqūt's thirteenth-century *Kitāb muʿẓam buldān*[8] for its borders in medieval times, his definition of the current situation is clear:

> Today, Iraq is subdivided into two parts, and both these parts consist of a self-existent *vilayet* (*wilāya*), which are: the vilayet of Baghdad and the vilayet of Basra.[9]

[7] Anonymous, "*Lughat al-ʿArab: Majallat shahriyya adabiyya ʿilmiyya tārīkhiyya*" (introductory article), *Lughat al-ʿArab* 1:1 (1329/1911): 1. The journal gives the issuing dates both in the Islamic and the Gregorian calendar.

[8] Ibrāhīm Ḥalamī, "Al-ʿIrāq," *Lughat al-ʿArab* 2:1 (1330/1912): 2–9.

[9] Ibid.

These citations therefore show that in this journal Iraq was seen as a *waṭan* with clearly defined borders. The use of this word before the creation of the country parallels the use of this word by the propagators of an "integrated Syria" within the Ottoman Empire from the mid-1850s and fits Cem Emrence's definition of "concentric homelands" (see the Introduction). At the same time, the exclusion of the Mosul *vilayet* is significant, suggesting that "Iraq" and "Mesopotamia" did not have exactly the same meaning at this point. The view that Mosul was less Iraqi than Baghdad and Basra is supported by the fact that during the period of Turkish resistance from Ankara against the Treaty of Sèvres, Mosul was included in the *Misak-ı Millî* (National Pact) as an area that had to remain part of Turkey, while a referendum was proposed for the Arab-majority areas.[10]

Notwithstanding the earlier territorial identifications, the creation of the state itself can be explained as a direct consequence of British military intervention. In the Hijaz, Sharif Ḥusayn led the Arab revolt against the Ottoman authorities with the help of his sons, amongst whom Faisal, who became the de facto leader of the revolt and later King of Iraq. From a movement in favor of rights for the Arab provinces within the Ottoman Empire, its goal gradually shifted towards independence through contacts with Arab nationalists and British encouragement.[11] The revolt was a military success, and Faisal was able to install himself as king of a shortlived Arab Syrian state. Iraq was supposed to become part of the new Arab state, but it was no priority for the revolt. Instead, the British had strategic interests in the area. Already at the start of World War I, the British forces undertook an operation to get hold of the coastal city of Basra, the Ottoman Empire's only access to the Persian Gulf, to protect British interests concerning the trade with India and its oilfields in Persia.[12] Starting as a small operation organized though Britain's military infrastructure for India, the result was the occupation of all the Ottoman provinces

[10] "The Turkish National Pact, 28 January 1920," reproduced in *Arabian boundary disputes*, volume 9, *Part 1: Turkey–Iraq, 1920–1946, part 2: Iraq–Jordan, 1926–1992*, ed. Richard N. Schofield (Cambridge: Archive Editions, 1992), 5. See also Erik J. Zürcher, *Turkey: A Modern History*, third edition (London: I.B. Tauris, 2004), 133–65.

[11] See Ali A. Allawi, *Faisal I of Iraq* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2014), chapters 4–8.

[12] Sluglett, *Britain in Iraq*, 4.

of Basra, Baghdad and Mosul by the end of 1918—in other words, the state of Iraq as we know it today.

From the beginning, the British presence in Iraq was characterized by an ambivalent stance towards the desired style of rule that was going to be established. During World War I, Mesopotamia was conquered relatively easily. Only the Basra province, which was of lasting strategic importance for the British, was planned to become a permanent part of the British Empire. The rest of the country was planned to be held after the war for an indefinite period.[13] However, the influence of the American president Wilson's idea of self-determination, made the creation of new colonies a geopolitical impossibility. These new ideas slowly influenced the actual policies that were pursued on the ground, despite instructions from the British government in London.[14] With the establishment of the League of Nations in 1920, the mandate system was created where Britain gained a mandate over Iraq. After a Shi'ite revolt in the south, the newly installed Sir Percy Cox became High Commissioner of Iraq and received the task to create an Arab state under British supervision.[15] Only at this point, the decision was made to turn the conquered lands into a state on its own, separate from the other Arab territories but as an Arab state.[16]

To make the necessary decisions about the form and the institutions of the state, the British held the Cairo Conference in March 1921, where it was decided that Iraq was to become a constitutional monarchy, based on the elements of any modern democracy (a constitution, head of state, a government, and a parliament), under British tutelage.[17] The ministers received British advisers, and the King remained in contact with the British High Commissioner.[18] As king, the British

[13] Toby Dodge, "International Obligation, Domestic Pressure and Colonial Nationalism: The Birth of the Iraqi State under the Mandate System," in *The British and French mandates in comparative perspectives*, ed. Nadine Méouchy, Peter Sluglett and Gérard D. Khoury (Leiden: Brill, 2004), 144.

[14] Ibid., 17, and Adeed Dawisha, *Iraq: A Political History* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2009), 10.

[15] Dawisha, *Iraq*, 12.

[16] Dawisha cites Percy Cox, saying that he had the purpose of "setting up an Arab Government under the supervision of Great Britian."

[17] Dawisha, *Iraq*, 12–19.

[18] Dodge, "International Obligation, Domestic Pressure and Colonial Nationalism," 150.

had chosen Fayṣal bin Ḥusayn (hereafter Faisal), with whom they had cooperated before as the de facto leader of the Arab revolt in the Hijaz, and who was king of the Arab Kingdom of Syria for a short while before he was driven out by the French. The British had considered Faisal as a candidate since 1918, and the fact that he was from outside Iraq was seen as favorable because of the various sectarian and ethnic differences in Iraq.[19] While Faisal was not granted any real power as the British retained the final word on all decisions, he is usually considered to have been quite successful in leading Iraq towards independence.[20] In 1924 the Anglo-Iraqi treaty was ratified, which formalized the relationship between Britain and Iraq. By doing so, the unpopular mandate could formally be abolished, but the treaty did not bring Iraq closer to independence.[21] Both the signing and ratification of this treaty was met with great resistance, as anti-British sentiments were growing.

A Constituent Assembly was responsible for creating a constitution, laying out the institutions of the state and their responsibilities. The constitution that came into force in 1925 granted significant powers to the King, who obtained the right to issue royal decrees (*irādāt malakiyya*) for many decisive matters, in such a way that the King was always able to interfere if ministers or parliament did not act according to his will. Of course, the democratic character of the state was further limited by the British influence through the Anglo-Iraqi treaty. The constitution furthermore described Islam as the religion of the state but guaranteed full freedom to practice other religions. Arabic was mentioned as the only official language, but the constitution explicitly allowed the establishment of schools that used the languages of the non-Muslim religious groups (*ṭawāʾif*), provided that they followed the official curriculum. Furthermore, besides the civil courts the constitution defined religious courts, which were subdivided into sharia courts (*al-maḥākim al-sharʿiyya*) and "communal spiritual councils" (*al-majālis al-rūḥāniyya al-ṭāʾifiyya*).[22] The consti-

[19] Dawisha, *Iraq*, 14.

[20] Tripp, *A history of Iraq*, 48.

[21] Peter Sluglett described the treaty as "old wine in new bottles." Sluglett, *Britain in Iraq*, 43. Iraqi historiography often continues using the term "mandate" for the period up to independence in 1932.

[22] *Al-qānūn al-asāsī al-ʿIrāqī li-ʿām 1925*, articles 13, 16, 17, 69, and 75. An official translation of the constitution in English is available in *British and Foreign State Pa-*

tution therefore codified a certain number of fundamental statements about the identity of the state, which was Arab with an Islamic element, as well as about the position of the non-Muslim groups and their languages. Non-Muslims gained the right to provide education in their own languages and to have their own religious courts. No mention was however made of non-Arab ethnic groups, such as the Kurds.

The early Iraqi state was thus pre-eminently an Arab state. What this meant becomes clear when looking at the ideas of the important Arab nationalist thinker Sāṭiʿ al-Ḥuṣrī (1880–1968), who stood at the beginning of the development of Iraqi Arab nationalism.[23] His writings clarify two key points in early Iraqi Arab nationalism: how Iraqi patriotism was seen as compatible with the existence of a larger Arab nation, and the question how an Arab could be defined. In Arab nationalist discourse, a difference is recognized between *qawmiyya* (nationalism), pointing at a "group of human beings bound by mutually recognized ties of language and history," and *waṭaniyya* (patriotism), "related to a country with its defined borders." Peter Wien notes about this that while the standard narrative in Western discourse about Arab nationalism says that the wish for a unified Arab nation, or pan-Arab nationalism, only took off from the 1930s, new research has proven that "parallel and asynchronical developments in different Arab lands ... had brought about a clear image of the Arab nation in the late 1920s already." In Iraq, an "Iraqi homeland" and an "Arab nation" were distinguished because of the early establishment of a kingdom.[24] Sāṭiʿ al-Ḥuṣrī also made this distinction. For him, there were two types of homeland (*waṭan*): the general homeland, or *al-waṭan al-ʿāmm*, which comprised the complete Arab nation, and the particular homeland, or *al-waṭan al-khāṣṣ*, which only comprised the state somebody lived in. Second, like George Antonius, the Arabic language is—next to history—the most important foundational element of Sāṭiʿ

pers, with which is incorporated Hertslet's Commercial Treaties, 1926 part I, vol. CXXIII (London: H.M. Stationery Office, 1931), 383–402. The English translation "communal spiritual councils" is attested in archival records from the British Foreign Office. *Greek Orthodox Communities, Roman Catholic, Jacobite, Chaldean and Syrian Catholic Communities in the Levant and Iraq 1844–1955* (Cambridge: Archive Editions, 2007), 513–14.

[23] Cleveland, *The Making of an Arab Nationalist*, 59–77.

[24] Peter Wien, *Iraqi Arab Nationalism: Authoritarian, totalitarian, and pro-fascist inclinations 1932–1941* (Oxon: Routledge, 2006), 6.

al-Ḥuṣrī's Arab nationalism. For him, all countries in which Arabic is spoken are Arab countries, and in these countries, all speakers of Arabic are Arabs.[25] Religion is not relevant here, and while Sāṭiʿ acknowledges a role for Islam in keeping the Arabs together, it is not fundamental to the Arab nation.[26] Nevertheless, there is no room for non-Arab groups in this formulation of Arab nationalism, which was a cause for difficulties with various groups, and especially Kurdish groups.

Troubles with the Kurds in the north indeed remained a continuous problem. Already in 1919 and 1920, there were Kurdish protests against the British. The constitution of 1925 did not mention the Kurds at all, and later versions of the constitutions did not change this.[27] The formal inclusion of Mosul within Iraq in 1925 put this question on the agenda yet another time. In July 1925, the Permanent Mandates Commission of the League of Nations decided that Mosul could remain part of Iraq if Britain presented a new Anglo-Iraqi treaty. In order to address the Kurdish wish for autonomy, which was followed closely by the League of Nations because of the minority protection provisions that were part of the mandate system, Britain was required to make sure that the Kurds were given a certain form of self-rule. The new Anglo-Iraqi treaty was to be signed for the next 25 years, with the possibility that Iraq became an independent state in the meantime. A new treaty, which contained a review process with a possibility for independence every four years, was quickly drafted, and signed and ratified in January 1926.[28] The new treaty did not contain any guarantees for Kurdish autonomy. It was in 1931 that Kurdish received some form of official recognition, when the Local Languages Law was signed in direct response to Kurdish petitions to the League of Nations.[29] According to this law, Kurdish became the official language in the cities of Erbil, Sulaymaniyya and some other areas, but not in important

[25] Cleveland, *The Making of an Arab Nationalist*, 117–18.

[26] Ibid., 123–24.

[27] Shafiq Haji Khadar, "The Legal Status of the Kurdish Language in Iraq," *Niqash: Briefings from Inside and Across Iraq*, 7 November 2007, http://www.niqash.org/en/articles/politics/2057/The-Legal-Status-of-the-Kurdish-Language-in-Iraq.htm.

[28] Sluglett, *Britain in Iraq*, 85–6.

[29] Fuat Dundar, *"Statisquo": British Use of Statistics in the Iraqi Kurdish Question (1919–1932)* (Waltham: Crown Center for Middle East Studies, 2012), 35–36.

other areas for the Kurds like the city of Kirkuk.[30] In practice, the implementation of the law appears not to have been taken seriously either.[31]

Independence of Iraq came into sight in 1927, when 1932 was mentioned as the year of the recommendation of Iraq as a member of the League of Nations. This was conditionally agreed upon in a new treaty, which was signed in December 1927. It was not ratified due to opposition in the Iraqi parliament, because Britain was not going to leave the country under the terms of the treaty. Nevertheless, the British intention to end the mandate in 1932 was repeated in 1929, and in 1930 a new treaty was negotiated. The new treaty contained independence for Iraq in 1932, but the terms of independence were thus that Britain retained a considerable influence on Iraq, especially in foreign and military affairs.[32] While the treaty was criticized by many, parliament ratified it without much trouble in November of the same year, fixing the date of independence and the nature of the relations between Britain and Iraq after becoming a member of the League of Nations.[33] In the meantime, the years 1921–1932 had seen the consolidation of state institutions and the formation of a basic democratic style of politics. While the powers of the King and the British influence together made sure that the influence of the—mostly anti-British—political parties was limited, their existence was allowed and the government had to deal with them in a certain way.[34] While British influence continued through the treaty of 1930, Iraqi politicians were now at least able to decide upon their own internal affairs. Nevertheless, as Charles Tripp argues, "Iraq's achievement of independence [did not mean] a radical shift in the pattern of its politics," and the "period of the Mandate had been a defining period in many ways."[35] The foundations of the state, according to the borders we know today, and with an Arab-Islamic character and Sunni dominance in politics, had been laid and would not change anymore until at least the 1990s.

[30] Ibid., 42.
[31] Dawisha, *Iraq*, 28.
[32] Sluglett, *Britain in Iraq*, 123.
[33] Tripp, *A History of Iraq*, 61–5.
[34] Dawisha, *Iraq*, 41.
[35] Tripp, *A History of Iraq*, 73.

In the summer of 1933, one year after independence, King Faisal died and was succeeded by his son Ghāzī. The Simele massacre took place in the same year (see below) and set the tone for a turbulent decade. A military coup d'état took place in 1936, led by army officer Bakr Ṣidqī, which brought the ideas of the *al-Ahālī* activist group to practice by forcing a change of government. The *al-Ahālī* influence caused a government that was more inclusive towards the non-Arab and non-Sunni groups in Iraq.[36] The fruits of the coup were however reversed in 1937 under pressure of the army, when Bakr Ṣidqī was killed. In 1939, King Ghāzī died in a car accident after ruling for six years. He was succeeded by the three-year-old Faisal II, and he was represented by regent Prince ʿAbd al-Ilāh, who was pro-British and not an Arab nationalist.[37] In September 1939, World War II broke out and the British expected Iraq to stand at their side against Germany. This was initially accepted by the government, but in 1940 Rashīd ʿAlī al-Kaylānī became prime minister and took on a pro-German attitude instead. He quit his position on the request of the British, but then in 1941 he organized another coup d'état with help of part of the Arab nationalist army officers. Prince ʿAbd al-Ilāh and others fled to Transjordan and a new government was formed with Rashīd ʿAlī as prime minister. The British then started an invasion and were able to remove the new government and restore the rule of Prince ʿAbd al-Ilāh. The subsequent period until 1958 was less tumultuous, but not without frequent changes in government. The monarchy came to an end in 1958, when a violent military revolution took place in which the King and many members of his family were killed. Iraq was then transformed into a republic.

Throughout the history of the Iraqi monarchy after independence, there was a struggle between two main schools of political ideology. The first, more popular and generally more successful school was the right-wing Arab nationalist and fiercely anti-British school, which obtained more influence from 1933 thanks to a greater role of the army and the nationalist ideas of the new King. One major representative of this ideology was a party called *Ḥizb al-ikhāʾ al-waṭanī*, which was founded in 1930 as a reaction to the Anglo-Iraqi treaty, continuing

[36] Dawisha, *Iraq*, 92–94; Tripp, *A History of Iraq*, 82–87.
[37] Tripp, *A History of Iraq*, 96.

until 1941. The second school was a more inclusivist, leftist "Iraqist" school, which was more democratic and supported a more balanced distribution of power among the various demographic groups of the country, especially for Iraq's shi'ites.[38] This school is especially represented by the *al-Ahālī* group, which forced its ideas to the government for a short time after the military coup of 1936 by Bakr Ṣidqī. Apart from these two currents there was a continuous influence of British interests, which were mainly represented by Nūrī al-Saʿīd, who supported British interests to keep the situation in control: sometimes as prime minister, and at other times behind the scenes. Within any of these main political currents, the general Arab character of the state was not contested.

While the details of the political events in Iraq do not concern us here, certain trends about the development of the style of politics and state identity in the period from 1920 to 1958 are important. The official political system of Iraq was always a constitutional monarchy until the revolution, but the degree in which a truly democratic process could take place varied from time to time. Whenever this was deemed necessary, the King could dismiss the government and parliament and install a new government, often in order to implement unpopular measures, mostly at British request. In these cases, the former Ottoman army officer and participant in the Arab revolt Nūrī al-Saʿīd usually took the position of prime minister, stepping back as soon as a more democratic attitude was deemed possible.[39] The general trend was a steady growth and eventual radicalization of anti-British Arab nationalism. This growth can partly be explained by the demographics within the army, which were by far dominated by Sunni Arabs.[40] At times, Arab nationalist army officers would impose their ideas on the civil government. There were however periods when more inclusivist ideas were prevalent, such as the year of Bakr Ṣidqī's goverment under the influence of the *al-Ahālī* group in 1936–1937, which however abruptly ended after Sunni Arab nationalists started complaining. From 1932 there was furthermore a growing influence of Nazi propaganda and anti-Semitism, culminating in the *Farhūd*, when hundreds

[38] Wien, *Iraqi Arab Nationalism*, 10.
[39] Dawisha, *Iraq*, 25.
[40] Ibid., 90–91.

of Jews were killed.[41] These Arab and later pan-Arab nationalist tendencies were often hindered by the British, fearing German interference.

The Chaldean Catholic Church

Since the creation of the state, the Chaldean Catholic Church was the largest church of Iraq. It comprised about 50% of the total Christian population around 1950, with probably around 80,000–100,000 adherents.[42] It is the Catholic counterpart of the Assyrian Church of the East, and together they are commonly known as the East Syriac churches. As an autocephalous or uniate Catholic Church, the Chaldeans have their own hierarchy and liturgy, based on that of the Church of the East, while accepting the Catholic faith and the authority of the Pope. The see of the Chaldean patriarchate, called the Patriarchate of Babylon, had been located in Mosul since 1830, and was transferred to Baghdad in 1947.[43] The Chaldeans are known in Arabic as *al-Kaldān*. Most of the Chaldeans in Iraq were already in the country before the state was founded, but some of them arrived from the Hakkari mountains and Urmia plains as refugees, together with Christians who belonged to the Assyrian Church of the East. Like those who belonged to the Assyrian Church of the East, these Chaldeans from the Hakkari and Urmia regions may have identified as Assyrians. Unfortunately, the sources about these "Chaldean Assyrians" are sparse, and therefore they are not discussed much in the remainder of this dissertation. The Chaldeans who were originally in Iraq did usually not identify as Assyrian, although this changed in the later period.

A union between the Church of the East and the Catholic Church was first put into place in 1553, made possible by electing a rival patriarch by the Catholic party. In the next few centuries, a separate Chaldean hierarchy was gradually set up as was the case with the other Uniate churches in the Middle East. Eventually it took until 1830 before the situation became stable with the confirmation of John

[41] Bashkin, *New Babylonians*, 112–25.

[42] See Appendix A for statistical information about the Syriac Christians.

[43] Herman Teule, *Les Assyro-Chaldéens : Chrétiens d'Irak, d'Iran et de Turquie* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2008), 153.

Hormizd as the Patriarch of Babylon, which is also the year when the patriarchate was located in Mosul.[44] Conversion to Catholicism worked well in Mosul and the area around, while most people in the Hakkari mountains and Urmia plains remained with the Church of the East.[45] By the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, the Church of the East had therefore all but disappeared from what would later become Iraq. The conversions were actively supported by missionaries, led by the Dominicans since 1748. The word "Chaldean" seems to have been popularized by the European Catholics, who used this designation at least from the fifteenth century onwards. Initially, it could be used for all Syriac Christians, but later it only referred to those from the Church of the East who had become Catholic.[46]

While the history of the Chaldean Church before the twentieth century is well studied, this is—as for the other churches except the Assyrian Church of the East—not the case for its twentieth-century history. A recent study is Kristian Girling's monograph on modern societal history of the Church of the East in Iraq, but even here the period 1900–1950 is sparsely described.[47] I give a general outline here based on the secondary studies. In 1900 Joseph VI Emmanuel II Thomas had become Patriarch of Babylon with Mosul as his see. He would remain patriarch until his death in 1947. In the period 1915–1918, the Chaldeans of the Hakkari and Urmia regions suffered under the same circumstances as those who belonged to the Assyrian Church of the East, and several managed to flee to the refugee camps in Iraq with British help in 1918. In the meantime, the original Chaldean inhabitants of Iraq witnessed the British conquest of this area and the establishment of the state. The Patriarchate was initially supportive of British influence and the Patriarch received a position in the Iraqi

[44] For the early development of the Chaldean Church, see Murre-van den Berg, *Scribes and scriptures*, 44–54; David Wilmshurst, *The Ecclesiastical Organization of the Church of the East, 1318–1913* (Louvain: Peeters, 2000); and Anthony O'Mahony, "Patriarchs and Politics: The Chaldean Catholic Church in Modern Iraq," in *Christianity in the Middle East: Studies in Modern History, Theology, and Politics*, ed. Anthony O'Mahony and Sebastian P. Brock (London: Melisende, 2008), 105.

[45] Murre-van den Berg, *Scribes and Scriptures*, 68–73.

[46] O'Mahony, "Patriarchs and Politics," 105–7.

[47] Kristian Girling, *The Chaldean Catholic Church: Modern History, Ecclesiology and Church-State Relationships* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2018).

senate.[48] Like the Copts of Egypt in the same period, the Chaldean Church did not favor proportional representation in Parliament for the country's religious minorities, and instead participate in the country's democracy on equal par with the Muslims without separate political parties for Christian groups.[49] This is aligned with the wish of the Patriarchate that the Chaldeans be seen as part of the Arab majority, rather than as a Christian minority. In general, the Patriarch's approach has been described as flexible and cooperative as possible vis-à-vis the society and politics in which Muslim Arabs were dominant.[50] This is illustrated further in Chapter 4. After the Patriarch's death in 1947, he was succeeded by Joseph VII Ghanīma, who stayed in power until his death in 1958. The new Patriarch moved his residence to Baghdad, which had become a more and more important city for the Chaldeans since 1920 due to migration to the capital.[51]

From the moment that the state of Iraq was founded, the Chaldean Church had de facto become the national church of Iraq. It was not only the largest church of the country, its scope was also largely restricted to Iraqi territory—the other churches were more transnational. The removal of the Chaldeans from the Hakkari mountains meant that there were very few Chaldeans left in Turkey. The only significant place outside Iraq where Chaldeans were present was Urmia in Iran. Within Iraq, the center of the Chaldean Church was initially in the city of Mosul. Most of the Chaldean population lived there, and it was the location of the patriarchal see. Outside Mosul, most Chaldeans lived in an area called the Nineve plains, which is located to the north-east of Mosul. In this area we find numerous predominantly Christian villages and some towns, in most of which one of the Syriac churches is dominant. Of these, Telkepe and Alqosh are the most important Chaldean towns.[52] The center of Chaldean life gradually moved to Baghdad as more and more Chaldeans moved there, partly as a result of general urbanization.[53] The migration to Baghdad was to

[48] Ibid., 69.

[49] Ibid. For the Coptic position, see the introduction on page 13.

[50] Ibid., 67, 71, 73.

[51] Ibid., 77.

[52] See J.-M. Fiey, *Assyrie chrétienne : Contribution à l'étude de l'histoire et de la géographie ecclésiastiques et monastiques du nord de l'Iraq*, volume 2 (Beirut: Imprimerie Catholique, 1965), 355 and 387.

[53] Girling, *The Chaldean Catholic Church*, 74.

such an extent that by the end of the 1940s, the balance between the Chaldean population of Mosul and Baghdad was more or less equal.[54] In the interwar period, migration to foreign countries started, most notably to the United States and for economic reasons,[55] Administratively, the church was divided into the six Iraqi dioceses Amadia, Aqra, Baghdad, Kirkuk, Mosul, and Zakho. Important monasteries were the Rabbān Hormizd monastery on the mountain of Alqosh, and the Mār Orāhā monastery close to Batnaya, both in the Nineve plains. The Chaldeans had two institutions at their disposal for the education of priests. One was the Syro-Chaldean seminary dedicated to Saint John in Mosul, which was run by the Dominican missionaries (see below). The other was the patriarchal "priest school," also located in Mosul and dedicated to Saint Peter, about which unfortunately little is known.[56]

The Assyrians

Most authors who have written about Christianity in Iraq in the early twentieth century have been focusing on the Assyrians. This is not only the case for the general historians of Iraq, such as Charles Tripp, but also for authors specializing on Christianity in the country. Hannah Müller-Sommerfeld, who wrote extensively about the Assyrians in her Habilitationsschrift on governmental religion policies in Iraq, gives the reason for this which remains omitted by most other authors, justifying why she wrote about the Assyrians while the larger community of Chaldeans has no place in her book: the Assyrians are simply the only group that appears often enough in the archives to write sub-

[54] See statistics in Appendix A.

[55] Girling, *The Chaldean Catholic Church*, 75.

[56] It was known in Arabic as *al-Madrasa al-kahnūtiyya al-paṭriyarkiyya* (Priestly School of the Patriarchate) and in Syriac as *Bet drāshā kāhnāyā kaldāyā d-pāṭriyārkutā*, and it is mentioned a few times in the Chaldean journal *al-Najm*, including a report about an exam in the Hebrew and Greek languages from 1930. "*Akhbār ṭā'ifiyya*," in *al-Najm* 2 (1929–1930), issue 3: 131. See also J.F. Coakley and David G.K. Taylor, "Syriac Books Printed at the Dominican Press, Mosul," in *Malphono w-Rabo d-Malphone: Studies in Honor of Sebastian P. Brock*, ed. George Kiraz (Piscataway: Gorgias Press, 2008): 73–74.

stantially about them.[57] I want to stress again that contrary to some other authors, I use Assyrians in the strict sense of those who identified as such. This generally excludes the Syriac Orthodox, Syriac Catholic, and most of the Chaldean population of Iraq. For the period about which we are talking and in Iraq, identification as Assyrian seems to have been restricted to the Christians, all of East Syriac background, who came as refugees from the Hakkari mountains and Urmia plains. The majority of these belonged to the Church of the East, and a minority to the Chaldean Catholic Church. There may have been a minor Assyrian Protestant group among these people as the result of recent missionary activity in the area. In addition to that, there was also a relatively small amount of adherents to the Church of the East in Iraq already before World War I. Because most of the Assyrians belonged to the Church of the East, and because its Patriarch assumed a key role among these people, their history in Iraq often falls together with that of the church. This section therefore at the same time describes the history of a people within Iraq and the history of a church. It should be kept in mind, though, that outside the purview of this dissertation, i.e. outside Iraq and/or after 1950, the range of Syriac Christians who identified as Assyrians was and is often broader.

The Assyrians in Iraq, or at least those who played a role in the political arena, positioned themselves as a minority. In that sense they assumed a stance towards the Iraqi government that was the reverse of that of the Chaldean Catholic Church, which wanted to be seen as an integral part of the Iraqi-Arab nation. Minorities were a new concern in geopolitics of the early twentieth century, related to the new ideas surrounding self-determination.[58] According to Laura Robson, the British deliberately reinterpreted the Assyrians as a minority in order to make a claim for British control of the Mosul province.[59] In the new world order after World War I, nation-states with a homogeneous demography were more important than before. Sweeping measures such as the Greek-Turkish population exchange were seen as justifiable and appropriate to this end. However, it was admitted

[57] H. Müller-Sommerfeld, *Staatliche Religionspolitik im Irak gegenüber Juden, Assyrischen Christen und Bahá'i (1920–1958)*, unpublished Habilitationsschrift (Leipzig, 2012).

[58] White, *The Emergence of Minorities in the Middle East*, 2.

[59] Robson, *States of Separation*, 52.

that there would always be groups that would could not be situated in an appropriate nation-state, for example because their size was too small. As a second-best solution, these groups would have to reside in a nation-state that was not theirs, as minorities living among a majority. To guarantee the wellbeing of these minorities, they had to be granted special rights, and the Wilson-backed League of Nations was one of the institutions that was supposed to guarantee this. Research by Müller-Sommerfeld has provided details on how this mechanism worked in the case of the Assyrians. Minority rights as they were established after World War I were unique in the sense that the minorities were placed under international law. According to Müller-Sommerfeld, "[i]t was based on the principle of equality before the law," but it also "conferred them additional special cultural and religious rights." New nation-states that came into existence after World War I with minorities had to "sign treaties or make declarations with special provisions for the protection of minorities," but more importantly, the League of Nations as the guarantor of these rights could interfere with the state if necessary, which could happen after minority members filed a petition.[60] In a way, under this system the nation-states that had to sign these agreements were only sovereign over the nation they represented, always leaving the possibility open that the League of Nations would interfere when it was unsatisfied with the minorities' treatment. For some countries this was problematic to accept, and Iraq as it became independent was one of them. Responsible for transforming Iraq into a nation-state as holder of the League of Nations mandate, Britain had to guarantee the rights of minorities in the future independent state of Iraq. This process was not only followed closely by the League of Nations, but also public opinion expected from the British authorities that it force Iraq to respect minorities' rights, especially concerning the Assyrians, as a Christian group for which the Archbishop of Canterbury had a special interest.[61] These

[60] H. Müller-Sommerfeld, "The League of Nations, A-Mandates and Minority Rights during the Mandate Period (1920–1932)," in *Modernity, Minority, and the Common Ground: Jews and Christians in the Middle East*, ed. Sasha R. Goldstein and Heleen Murre-van den Berg (Leiden: Brill, 2016), 263–65. On this topic, see also Robson, *States of Separation*.

[61] For the old relationship between the Assyrians and the Church of England, see J.F. Coakley, *The Church of the East and the Church of England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992).

factors made the question of the Assyrians in an independent Arab-led Iraq so pressing and political.

Most of the Assyrians who came to Iraq belonged to the Church of the East,[62] which is the non-Catholic counterpart of the Chaldean Catholic Church, holding to its traditional dyophysite faith that was rejected during the Council of Ephesus in 431. Therefore the church is often (sometimes pejoratively) referred to as the Nestorian church, which was for instance the custom of the Dominican missionaries. Since the rule of the Mongols in the thirteenth century, its center had been in Northern Mesopotamia and around, but the success of Catholicism there made that, from the twentieth century onwards, it was largely restricted to the Hakkari mountains in the Ottoman Empire (now the extreme south east of Turkey) and the Urmia plains in Persia (now Iran). Until World War I, the adherents of the church who lived in the Hakkari mountains had a tribal lifestyle, while those in the Urmia plains lived in towns and villages as subjects of other groups.[63] Their language was Neo-Aramaic or Swadaya and Arabic was of little relevance for them. The Patriarch of the Church of the East, Mar Shimʿun XIX Benjamin, was their spiritual and temporal leader, exercising his authority as "chieftain over the mountain tribes as well as the local subject (raʿyat) population."[64] Until World War I, the Ottoman and Persian states had little influence over these people.

From 1915, the genocide against Armenian, Greek and Syriac Christians took place. The area that was to become Iraq was spared, but both the West Syriac Christians in the area of Ṭūr ʾAbdīn around Mardin and Midyat, and the East Syriac Christians of the Hakkari mountains and the Urmia plains suffered tremendously.[65] While the West Syriac Christians were targeted as part of the general anti-Christian measures in Eastern Anatolia, where the Armenians were the main target, the story of the East Syriac Christians of the Hakkari

[62] Nowadays known as the Assyrian Church of the East.

[63] Becker, *Revival and Awakening*, 45–46.

[64] Ibid., 55.

[65] The genocide against West Syriac Christians is usually known as the Sayfo or "sword." The work that covers the Sayfo most extensively is David Gaunt, *Massacres, Resistance, Protectors: Muslim-Christian Relations in Eastern Anatolia during World War I* (Piscataway: Gorgias Press, 2006).

and Urmia area is different.[66] Urmia (Persia) had been under Russian control since 1909, but in the beginning of 1915 it was occupied by the Ottoman Empire. During the time of the occupation, many Assyrians were massacred in the villages of the Urmia mountains and in the cities of Dilman (Salmas). The situation also became unsafe within the Ottoman Empire as soon as the Russians fought back and occupied part of Eastern Anatolia. At this point, the Assyrians of Hakkari, where they were the most numerous and where the Patriarch was, fled to Urmia, which was again under Russian control. In 1917 however, the Russians ended their war efforts, leaving the Assyrians alone. Together with the British, who had promised autonomy in return, they defended the area for some time under the military leadership of the Patriarch. In 1918, the Patriarch was killed by a Kurdish leader who had his trust, and in the same year further defence became impossible because the Ottomans had become stronger, forcing the Assyrians to leave the area. Collectively, both the Assyrians from the Hakkari mountains and those who were originally from the Urmia plains fled to the Persian city of Hamadan, which was under control of British forces, more than 300 kilometers to the southeast of Urmia. The British army officer Ronald Sempill Stafford writes that "[m]ore than seventy thousand Assyrians started out on this dreadful retreat; fewer than fifty thousand reached Hamadan."[67]

Hamadan was a temporary destination, and in the same year almost all Assyrian refugees went to the Baʿqūba refugee camp close to Baghdad, while some came in service of the British army. The Baʿqūba refugee camp was set up by the British in cooperation with Assyrian military leadership. After the death of the Patriarch, his younger brother took up office under the name of Mar Shimʿun xx Paul, but the military responsibilities came in the hands of Agha Petros de Baz, who had assumed an important role during the war. Except for Assyrians (around 25,000 people), there were also a large number of Armenians

[66] Many West Syriac Christians in Eastern Anatolia who fled ended up in Syria with French help. As such, their story does not play a large role in this dissertation. The suffering of the East Syriac Christians is best covered in Florence Hellot-Bellier, *Chroniques de massacres annoncés: Les Assyro-Chaldéens d'Iran et du Hakkari face aux ambitions des empires (1896–1920)* (Paris: Editions Geuthner, 2014), 411–78.

[67] R.S. Stafford, *The Tragedy of the Assyrians* (London: Allen & Unwin, 1935), 25.

in the camp (around 15,000).[68] The refugee camp functioned to reinforce the ethnic and tribal configurations of the situation before World War I, by not only spatially separating the Armenians and Assyrians in the camp, but even by grouping people on the basis of their tribal affiliations. Mar Shimʿun XX Paul died in 1920 in the camp, and he was succeeded by his nephew, who was consecrated Mar Shimʿun XXI Eshai at the age of eleven or twelve.[69] Because of his young age, he came to be represented by his aunt Sūrmā d-Bet Mār Shimʿun ("Lady Surma") as leader of the community. J.F. Coakley mentions grave leadership problems in this period, with the Patriarch and Lady Surma lacking wide support from the community and with the metropolitan Mār Yosip Khnanishoʿ of Shamsdin and the bishop Mār Abimalek Timotheus of Malabar, who were responsible for religious affairs.[70] Despite the terrible events and the great number of victims during the war, however, the Assyrians from the Hakkari mountains and the Urmia region stayed together as a group, having lost their homeland but not dispersed. The increased solidarity is furthermore said to have reinforced Assyrian nationalism.[71]

After the establishment of the state of Iraq, the long and painful process of settlement of the Assyrians took place. One of the reasons that this was a slow process was that it only gradually became clear that most Assyrians could not return to their homes or emigrate as a group. The Assyrians from the Urmia region, as Persian citizens, could return to their homeland as soon as the government regained authority over the area. For the Assyrians from the Hakkari mountains this was not possible, because after reassertion of authority in the area by the Turkish authorities, Turkey refused their return and evicted those who

[68]Laura Robson, "Refugee Camps and the Spatialization of Assyrian Nationalism in Iraq," in *Modernity, Minority, and the Public Sphere: Jews and Christians in the Middle East*, ed. Sasha R. Goldstein and Heleen Murre-van den Berg (Leiden: Brill, 2016), 244.

[69]From 1940, he was known under the regnal number XXIII. J.F. Coakley, "The Church of the East since 1914," *Bulletin of the John Rylands Library* 78 (1996): 181.

[70]Ibid.: 181–3.

[71]Dietmar W. Winkler, "The Twentieth Century," in *The Church of the East: A Concise History*, by Wilhelm Baum and Dietmar W. Winkler (London: Routledge-Curzon, 2003), 138.

had already returned at their own initiative.[72] In 1921, the Baʿqūba camp was closed because of anti-British sentiments in the capital,[73] and a new refugee camp was opened in Mindan, not far from Mosul. The British soon decided that the Assyrians were to be located in villages in Northern Iraq. The reason Northern Iraq was chosen was, as Laura Robson describes, to provide a buffer between the rest of Iraq and Turkey and to "creat[e] a new ethnographic claim to Mosul," to convince the League of Nations to grant the Mosul province to Iraq instead of Turkey.[74] The Assyrians were deliberately not located together but spread out across villages despite protests from the Patriarch.[75] In 1925, when the border between Turkey and Iraq was fixed, Turkey's authority over Hakkari became definitive and long-term settlement in Iraq as citizens was the only option left, despite several failed attempts for an autonomous region within Iraq or settlement elsewhere. Different factions came into existence, of which the faction of Patriarch Mār Shimʿun (still represented by Lady Surma) was probably the most influential. This faction fiercely opposed integration in Iraq, as it would let the higher goal go out of sight, i.e. return to the Hakkari mountains, or at least their autonomy from any higher government within the territory of Iraq.[76] Other Assyrians had more positive feelings towards the state of Iraq, especially the smaller group of Assyrians who were not displaced during World War I and were already living in Iraqi territory when the country was created. Settlement took place slowly and was still not finished by 1930.[77] The settled Assyrians were still refugees at this point, as a proposal to grant citizenship to the Assyrians came after Iraqi independence. One of the reasons that settlement was complicated consisted of the military activities Assyrians engaged in on behalf of the British forces. From 1921, the British had recruited large numbers of Assyrians in the Iraq Levies, a British ground force in Iraq that was created in 1915 to support the Royal Air Force. In contrast to the Iraqi army that was being

[72] R.S. Stafford, "Iraq and the Problem of the Assyrians," *International Affairs* 13:2 (1934): 161–62.

[73] Robson, *States of Separation*, 49.

[74] Ibid., 52.

[75] Ibid., 54–55.

[76] Zubaida, "Contested nations": 367.

[77] Stafford, *The Tragedy of the Assyrians*, 43–44; Robson, *States of Separation*, 83.

created since the formation of the Iraqi state, the Levies were under direct control of the British. While the Levies consisted originally of Arabs, the British started to recruit soon members of Iraq's minorities, and eventually it became entirely Assyrian. In combination with the anti-British sentiments, which were present since the beginning of the British occupation, the Assyrian military activities for the British are widely cited as a reason for some people in Iraq and occasionally the Iraqi government to be hostile to them.

The issue became worse after independence, culminating in the Simele massacre of 1933 in which more than 600 Assyrians lost their lives. Many Assyrians were afraid that independence would mean the end of their protection by the British, making their life in Iraq impossible. The proposed permanent settlement in the north of Iraq, including Iraqi citizenship and the same rights as the other non-Muslim groups, was rejected by many, including the Patriarch. One solution that came up during this period was the Assyrians' mass emigration to Syria, which was still under French control without imminent prospects of independence. Mār Shimʿun's party presented this wish to the League of Nation's Permanent Mandates Commission in 1931.[78] This and other requests were rejected, but the idea of migrating to Syria remained as Iraq's independence remained alive. After independence, one of the changes was that the Assyrian Levies, the British ground troops in Iraq who had been recruited among the local population, were disbanded in 1933. These former soldiers were allowed to retain and carry weapons in order to be able to defend themselves against the Kurds among whom they lived.[79]

In early 1933, an Assyrian tribal leader called Mālik Yāqū, son of Mālik Ismael, started a campaign to propagate the opinion that the Assyrians should not integrate into Iraq as citizens with the same rights as other minorities. He did this in cooperation with the Patriarch and by touring with armed men around the villages in the north.[80] This

[78] Donabed, *Reforging a Forgotten Nation*, 95–97. In this document, emigration to Syria was presented as an alternative, should "arrang[ing] our emigration to one of the countries under the rule of one of the Western Nations" fail.

[79] Khaldun S. Husry, "The Assyrian Affair of 1933 (I)," *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 5:2 (1974): 172.

[80] Stafford, *The Tragedy of the Assyrians*, 110–11; Husry, "The Assyrian Affair of 1933 (I)": 170; Donabed, *Reforging a Forgotten History*, 100.

led to a hostile response of the Iraqi government and a deterioration of public opinion about the Assyrians.[81] At this point Iraqi soldiers were sent to the area, partly at the advice of the British, who foresaw a possibility that military intervention was necessary.[82] The Patriarch was furthermore forced to leave the north and stay in Baghdad, to prevent him from stirring up the situation.[83] When negotiations between Yāqū and the army did not succeed, Yāqū with a group of armed men decided to leave the country and cross the border into Syria, which was still under French control. They were reportedly joined by 800 other Assyrians from various tribes. They were sent back and taken into Iraq under the condition of being disarmed by the authorities in Syria; however, the disarmament did not happen.[84] When the Assyrians crossed the border back to Iraq in the beginning of August, fierce fighting broke out between the Assyrians and the Iraqi army, which took almost a full day. It is undecided who started fighting—the Iraqi army might have started when they saw that the Assyrians were unexpectedly armed, but official British reports suggest that the Assyrians started fighting.[85] Initially, the battle passed off to the advantage of the Assyrians, during which the Iraqi army suffered many casualties, but eventually the battle was won by the army.[86] Afterwards, most Assyrians fled back to Syria, while others fled, trying to go back to their villages. The army then started a campaign to capture the fleeing Assyrians, because they were still armed. During the chaotic days that followed, many of them were killed and some villages were looted as they were left unprotected. Because of the events, many villagers fled to the Assyrian town of Simele on 8 August. On the same day, the

[81] Stafford, *The Tragedy of the Assyrians*, 129.

[82] Husry, "The Assyrian Affair of 1933 (I)": 172; Donabed, *Reforging a Forgotten History*, 101.

[83] Husry, "The Assyrian Affair of 1933 (I)": 173; Donabed, *Reforging a Forgotten History*, 99. Donabed places the detention of the Patriarch before the touring of Yāqū.

[84] It is unclear why the French had not disarmed the Assyrians or even had given back the weapons. Husry, "The Assyrian Affair of 1933 (I)": 174. Donabed adds that the French did so because the weapons were given by the Iraqi state in the first place. Donabed, *Reforging a Forgotten History*, 106.

[85] For the argument that the fighting was started by Yāqū and his party, see Husry, "The Assyrian Affair of 1933 (I)": 175. Donabed holds that the army started fighting as soon as they saw the Assyrians return. Donabed, *Reforging a Forgotten History, 106.*

[86] Stafford, *The Tragedy of the Assyrians*, 131–32; Donabed, *Reforging a Forgotten History*, 106.

army arrived in Simele, and the Assyrians in town were led to the police post and disarmed under the pretext that they would be protected by the state. But after three days, they suddenly had to leave the police post. All men in Simele were then massacred, while women and children were led to the police post and thus spared.[87]

After the events in July and August 1933, the Iraqi army received a very warm welcome in Baghdad at the end of August upon their return from the north.[88] It should be noted that at this point the massacre in Simele was not acknowledged, and that the people were cheering for the defeat of the Assyrians who fought the army.[89] The episode was popularly seen as a deed of resistance against the remainders of British rule,[90] as the actions of Yāqū were thought to be supported by them. Further atrocities were prevented, however, with pressure from the British, and the survivors of the Simele massacre were moved to camps in Mosul. While the British tried to make the Iraqi authorities punish the army elements responsible for the massacre, the nationalist mood following the events made this impossible, fearing an anti-British coup.[91] In August, in various places in Iraq, especially Mosul, anti-Assyrian attacks took place, as well as attacks against the British and French residents.[92] According to Stafford, it took until the end of October for the situation to calm down.[93]

In the period between 1933 and 1937, a collective movement of the Assyrian out of Iraq was back on the table, which was reportedly supported by around 90% of the Assyrians at the time.[94] With support by the League of Nations, preparations for a collective movement were made. The first attempt was a transfer to Brazil in 1934, but this failed after public opposition to the plan. The second attempt, in the same

[87] Stafford, *The Tragedy of the Assyrians*, 144–46; Donabed, *Reforging a Forgotten History*, 109–16.

[88] Stafford writes, though, that the crowds welcoming the army in Baghdad were organized by the government "by the spending of a few pounds," but that similar demonstrations took place in Mosul that were genuinely popular. Stafford, *The Tragedy of the Assyrians*, 162 and 164.

[89] Zubaida, "Contested Nations": 371.

[90] Husry, "The ssyrian Affair of 1933 (II)": 352; Robson, *States of Separation*, 89.

[91] Husry, "The Assyrian Affair of 1933 (II)": 359; Donabed, *Reforging a Forgotten Nation*, 122–23.

[92] Stafford, *The Tragedy of the Assyrians*, 165.

[93] Ibid., 167 and 171.

[94] Stafford, *The Tragedy of the Assyrians*, 176.

year, was migration to British Guiana, which was held up by practical drawbacks. The third attempt, between 1935 and 1937, was collective settlement in Syria, but this plan faced staunch nationalist opposition and was partially executed. When further execution of the plan was cancelled, the 9,000 Assyrians who had moved wanted to go back, but this was not allowed by the Iraqi government.[95] In 1937 this idea was eventually abandoned, when the Iraqi government declared to the League of Nations that the Assyrians had the same status as any other minority in Iraq.[96] The position of the Assyrians in Iraq had changed for good. It was the end of their years in a tribal formation and the Assyrians were not allowed to carry arms anymore. The Patriarch was forced to leave the country out of fear of armed resistance and went to Cyprus with his family. He was not allowed to return to Iraq or even to visit the country, and neither did he get permission to go to Syria. After the departure of Mār Shimʿun to Cyprus, the most important figure in Iraq representing the Church of the East was Mār Yōsip Khnanīshōʿ, who had been the Metropolitan of the Shemsdin province since 1918, holding the second most important office in the hierarchy. As such, he had the responsibility to represent the church for the sake of communication with the Iraqi government.[97] In 1940, the Patriarch accepted an invitation to go to Chicago in the United States by the diaspora community there. He was to stay in the United States for the rest of his life, laying the foundation of Chicago as the international center of the Assyrian Church of the East. The official policy of the Assyrian Church of the East to aim for a state on their own or autonomy finally changed in 1948, when the Patriarch wrote a piece in the first issue of a journal called *Light from the East*, writing that the Assyrians in the Middle East should be loyal citizens in the various countries they lived in. This is a completely new policy in comparison to the Patriarch's earlier countless endeavors to create a separate state. At the same time, it corresponds well to what the Assyrians had already been doing for a long time in Iraq, and it makes sense given that the Assyrians had spread out over the world during

[95] Robson, *States of Separation*, 92–99. The Assyrians who stayed in Syria were granted Syrian citizenship. Müller-Sommerfeld, *Staatliche Religionspolitik im Irak*, 437.

[96] Ibid., 437–438.

[97] Müller-Sommerfeld, *Staatliche Religionspolitik im Irak*, 178.

the preceding decades. Heleen Murre-van den Berg has interpreted this shift in policy as a "deterritorialization" of the Assyrian Church of the East, from a church that was inherently linked to a particular territory to a global church.[98] In addition to the removal of the strive for an Assyrian state, this de-territorialization included that the ethnic component of Assyrian Christianity became less important (but not absent), and it came with less negative feelings for Islam.[99] At the same time, the Patriarch gave up his claims to political leadership of the Assyrians as a nation.[100] The Patriarch was allowed by the Iraqi government to go back to Iraq in the same year, which must have had something to do with the new policy.[101] Since the publication, the relationship between the government and the Assyrians in Iraq had eased as well.[102]

The story of the Assyrians in Iraq, and especially of the Simele massacre, remains quite controversial. The main narrative of the Simele massacre has been provided by Lieutenant-Colonel Stafford, the British administrative inspector for Mosul, who witnessed the events from closeby. Later additions and alterations have been added by Khaldun Husry, son of Sāṭiʿ al-Ḥuṣrī and in defense of the Iraqi government, as well as by Sami Zubaida, mainly based on British Foreign Office documents, and more recently by Sargon Donabed, who added more Assyrian sources, including oral reports. Some questions have never been resolved, and questions about who bears guilt for parts of the events remain on the table. Although the massacre was initially officially denied by the Iraqi government,[103] there is no doubt among historians about what took place inside Simele and that this was an unforgivable atrocity. The controversies surrounding the Simele mas-

[98]Heleen Murre-van den Berg, "Light from the East (1948–1954) and the Deterritorialization of the Assyrian Church of the East," in *Religion beyond its Private Role in Modern Society*, ed. Wim Hofstee en Arie van der Kooij (Leiden: Brill, 2013), 121–8.

[99]Ibid., 125–26. The link between the church and the Assyrian nation did not disappear, as pointed out by Murre-van den Berg, which is even demonstrated in the official name of the church, "Assyrian Church of the East" (see page 132).

[100]Ibid., 129.

[101]Ibid., 121.

[102]Müller-Sommerfeld, *Staatliche Religionspolitik im Irak*, 186.

[103]Khaldun S. Husry, "The Assyrian Affair of 1933 (II)," *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 5:3 (1974): 345.

sacre concern two issues.[104] First, a major question is whether the Iraqi government intended to commit a massacre on the Assyrians, either to address awakening nationalist feelings or as a form of genocide.[105] The question which party started fighting after the Assyrians crossed the river back into Iraq is important here, but also whether the massacre in Simele was planned or an act of individuals within the army.[106] The anti-Assyrian feelings of army general Bakr Ṣidqī, who was stationed in Mosul, are often mentioned in this respect.[107] The second issue is whether the Assyrian leadership could justify its refusal to accept the government's settlement and integration proposal. Husry is extremely severe at this point, and holds that the Assyrians had a comfortable life in Iraq and should not complain.[108] Stafford shows more sympathy for the Assyrians, but concentrates on the unrealistic expectations of the Patriarch and the sincere efforts of the Iraqi government. Donabed rightly stresses the anti-Assyrian sentiments in Iraq, as well as unrealistic housing plans, justifying the anti-integration campaign and the emigration attempt.[109] A key part of Stafford's argument is that, while it should have never ended in a massacre, the way in which the government treated the Assyrians in general was fair and even more than that.[110] This is in line with the fact that in general, the British supported the Iraqi government in their treatment of the Assyrians and their refusal to grant the Assyrians

[104] For the development of the academic discourse surrounding the Simele massacre, see Heleen Murre-van den Berg, "Writing Assyrian History: The Military, the Patriarch and the British in Yaqu bar Malek Ismael's Assyrians in Two World Wars (Tehran 1964)," in *Sayfo 1915: An Anthology of Essays on the Genocide of Assyrians/Arameans during the First World War*, ed. Shabo Talay and Soner Barthoma (Piscataway: Gorgias Press, 2018), 221–24.

[105] The term genocide is frequently mentioned in relation to the Simele massacre. For the controversy regarding the intentions of the government, see Zubaida, "Contested Nations": 374–75.

[106] Stafford claims that it was planned by Bakr Ṣidqī, while Husry (in response to Stafford) writes that it is more probable that it was an irregular action by the respective army division.

[107] Sargon George Donabed, *Reforging a Forgotten History: Iraq and the Assyrians in the Twentieth Century* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2015), 117–18; Husry, "The Assyrian Affair of 1933 (I)," 173.

[108] Husry, "The Assyrian Affair of 1933 (I)": 164.

[109] Donabed, *Reforging a Forgotten History*, 99–100.

[110] Stafford, *The Tragedy of the Assyrians*, 128.

special rights or autonomy,[111] despite the suspicions in Iraq that the British were aiding the Assyrians against Iraq in order to delay independence.[112] Recent research is especially critical of the British treatment of the Assyrians in a more general sense. In relation to this, it is Laura Robson's argument that the Assyrians were used in order to secure the continued British control over Mosul, among other things, and then let down.[113]

A major question during the immediate aftermath of the massacre was whether the events were to be interpreted as an attack against the Christians of the country or as a political matter. The fact that the response of the army was wrong was not questioned, and was explained by the now independent government as actions of several individuals within the army. However, the government wanted to stress that the situation was caused by a political situation and not by general anti-Christian sentiments, which was a main concern for the minority protection scheme of the League of Nations, on the basis of which independence was granted. In October 1933, following the Simele massacre, the League of Nations organized a session about the protection of minorities in Iraq at which British and Iraqi delegations were present. The Iraqi delegation was anxious to note that the conflict was not religious but political—this view is strongly expressed by Stafford at various times in his book. The massacre itself was condemned and was explained by stating that "certain elements of the army had behaved with unjustifiable severity," and the government proposed that the League of Nations take initiative to find a place for the Assyrians to move collectively.[114] Keeping in mind that the Assyrians were a group set off in many aspects from the other (Syriac) Christians in the country, the Assyrian issue can well be interpreted as purely a political issue, and indeed many people from the west who saw the issue from the ground did so. However, understandably, many observers from Europe saw the events as an anti-Christian attack.[115] There is some evidence that the anti-Assyrian sentiments during the aftermath of the

[111] Zubaida, "Contested Nations," 377.

[112] Stafford, *The Tragedy of the Assyrians*, 93; Husry, "The Assyrian Affair of 1933 (II)," 346 and 350.

[113] Robson, *States of Separation*, 52.

[114] Müller-Sommerfeld, *Staatliche Religionspolitik im Irak*, 420.

[115] Husry, "The Assyrian Affair of 1933 (II)": 353.

Simele massacre also reached the Christian population in general.[116] In the next chapters, it becomes clear how the other Syriac Christians in Iraq interpreted the events.

The Syriac Catholic and the Syriac Orthodox Churches

Both the Syriac Catholic Church and the Syriac Orthodox Church were present from the beginning of the state of Iraq, but in smaller numbers than the Chaldeans and those belonging to the Church of the East. The Syriac Catholic Church was the bigger of these two, but the Syriac Orthodox were more active in public life and in publishing, so that we know more about the latter, which is reflected in this dissertation. Like the Chaldean Catholic Church and the Church of the East, the Syriac Catholic Church and the Syriac Orthodox Church are sister churches. Together they represent the West Syriac ecclesial and ritual tradition. The Syriac Orthodox Church holds the miaphysite christological position and is sometimes known under the name of Jacobite Church, after the sixth-century Jacob Baradaeus, who was responsible for the creation of a separate Syriac Orthodox hierarchy and the formal break with the Byzantine church. The Syriac Catholic Church is an autocephalous church in the same way as the Chaldean Catholic Church. The usual designation of both churches and their people in Arabic is *Suryānī* (adjective) and *al-Suryān* (collective noun for the people), which can be translated as Syrian or Syriac.[117] While today these words refer to East Syriac Christianity as well, in the period until 1950 its usage in Arabic was restricted to the West Syriac Church. This confusing issue is explored in detail in the following chapters. In Syriac the word for both the language and the people is *Suryoyo*.

[116] Sargon Donabed mentions that some people were threatened to be killed if they did not convert to Islam immediately. Donabed, *Reforging a Forgotten History*, 110–11. Stafford also mentions the general anti-Christian sentiments, without however providing details. Stafford, *The Tragedy of the Assyrians*, 167.

[117] "Syriac" was originally only the word for the Syriac language, but recently it has become more common to use this word to refer to the Syriac churches and people as well to avoid confusion with the modern Syrian state. However, both Syrian and Syriac are in use.

The West Syriac church was established as a separate church in the sixth century, when the bishop Jacob Baradaeus created an independent miaphysite hierarchy in Syria. From the early seventh century, this church expanded to the east, inside Persian territory.[118] Thanks to this expansion, the West Syriac churches also have a presence in what is now Iraq, together with the East Syriac churches. Catholicism started to influence the West Syriac church from the eleventh century, during the First Crusade. A separate Catholic hierarchy emerged in the sixteenth century, after which we can speak of a Syriac Orthodox and a Syriac Catholic Church. The Ottoman government recognized the Syriac Orthodox Church in 1831.[119] In the nineteenth century, the West Syriac churches were smaller in what is now Iraq than elsewhere. For both the Syriac Catholic and the Syriac Orthodox church, the Ṭūr ʾAbdīn region, now in Southeastern Turkey, had become the heartland. The see of the Syriac Catholic Patriarchate was in Mardin since 1854, and that of the Syriac Orthodox Church in the Dayr al-Zaʿfarān monastery close to Mardin already since 1293. This was to change completely during World War I because of the genocide in Eastern Anatolia (see above). The genocide caused a great stream of refugees, especially to Syria, and to a lesser extent to Iraq. The see of the Syriac Catholic patriarchate was moved to Beirut, and that of the Syriac Orthodox patriarchate to Syria in 1924 (since 1959 in Damascus).

In contrast to the East Syriac churches, both West Syriac churches in Iraq had their patriarchates outside the country. The Syriac Catholic church had its most important center in Mosul. Other centers were located in the Nineve plains, an area that was also important for the Chaldeans and the Syriac Orthodox. Here the towns of Bartallah and Baghdeda (Qaraqosh) are located, with had a majority mixed West Syriac population. Iraq is furthermore home to the Monastery of Mar Behnam (*Dayr Mār Bihnām*), to the southeast of Mosul.[120] Mosul

[118] Claude Sélis, *Les Syriens orthodoxes et catholiques* (Turnhout: Editions Brepols, 1988), 27–30.

[119] For this history see John Flannery, "The Syrian Catholic Church: Martyrdom, Mission, Identity and Ecumenism in Modern History," in *Christianity in the Middle East: Studies in Modern History, Theology, and Politics*, ed. Anthony O'Mahony and Sebastian P. Brock (London: Melisende, 2008), 146–51.

[120] See B. Snelders, "Behnam, Dayro d-Mor Behnam," in *Gorgias Encyclopedic Dictionary of the Syriac Heritage: Electronic Edition*, ed. Sebastian P. Brock et al., last modified 2016-09-22, http://gedsh.bethmardutho.org/Behnam-Dayro-d-Mor.

was also the place where Ignatus Ephrem II Raḥmānī (1848–1929) was born, who was Patriarch from 1897 until his death. He studied at the above-mentioned Syro-Chaldean seminary of the Dominican mission. Despite his birth and early life in Mosul, he did not go back to Iraq after the establishment of the state.[121] The same can be said about Gabriel Tappuni (1879–1968), who was patriarch between 1929 until his death. He too was born in Mosul and attended the Syro-Chaldean seminary, but left the place when he became patriarchal vicar in Mardin.[122] The ecclesiastical structure of the Syriac Catholic Church in Iraq is relatively simple, with an archdiocese in Mosul and one in Baghdad. The Syriac Catholic Church did not have any significant publications in Iraq in the period 1920–1950. The church did however produce a significant number of manuscripts. A significant person with links to the church was Anastās al-Karmilī, who had a Syriac Catholic mother. He is discussed in Chapter 5.

The geographical features of the Syriac Orthodox Church in Iraq since the establishment of the state were similar. Its center was equally in Mosul, and the towns of Bartallah and Baghdeda were also inhabited by the Syriac Orthodox. The Syriac Orthodox monastery of Mar Mattai (*Dayr Mār Matay*) is located close to Bartallah. When Iraq was established as a state, the Syriac Orthodox Church had just received a new patriarch in the person of Ignatius Elias III (1867–1932) from Mardin, who was elected in 1917 and, despite the circumstances, officially accepted by the Ottoman sultan. In 1924, soon after his consecration, he had to move the patriarchal see from Turkey to Syria. Contrary to the Syriac Catholic patriarchs, Ignatius Elias III actively dealt with issues concerning Iraq. In 1930 he held a synod in the Mar Mattai monastery, during which the ecclesiastical structure of the Syriac Orthodox Church in general was renewed. After his death in 1932, he was succeeded by Ignatus Ephrem I Barsoum (1887–1957) in 1933, who was born in Mosul. Like many other clergy of the Syriac churches, Barsoum had a deep interest in scholarship, and he produced many works on Syriac literature, language and church history. His bio-

[121] S.P. Brock and G.A. Kiraz, "Raḥmani, Ignatius Ephrem II," in *Gorgias Encyclopedic Dictionary of the Syriac Heritage*, ed. Sebastian P. Brock et al. (Piscataway: Gorgias Press, 2011), 350.

[122] A. Harrak, "Tappuni, Gabriel," in *Gorgias Encyclopedic Dictionary of the Syriac Heritage*, ed. Sebastian P. Brock et al. (Piscataway: Gorgias Press, 2011), 396.

bibliographical overview of Syriac literature, which includes contemporary authors, is especially important in this respect.[123] Much of the training of priests and other clergy initially took place at the Mar Mattai monastery. From 1946 onwards, most clergy were educated in the Saint Ephrem Institute in Mosul (Syriac: *Beth sefro Efremoyo*, Arabic: *al-Maʿhad al-Aframī*), which was founded in Lebanon by Barsoum in 1939 and transferred to Mosul in 1946.[124] Apart from their manuscripts, the Syriac Orthodox Church did not publish anything inside Iraq until 1946, when it started the Arabic-language journal *al-Mashriq*. This journal is discussed in Chapter 4.

Western missions

Two Western missions were present in Iraq in the early twentieth century: a Catholic mission, run by French Dominicans, and a Protestant mission, led by three American Protestant churches together. The Dominican mission was the oldest of the two, and was the continuation of an older Italian mission. The Protestant mission was a new mission established in 1924. Not much historical research has been conducted on missionary work in Iraq as far as the twentieth century is concerned, but the archives of these two missions are a good starting point. The archive of the Dominican mission to Mosul is present in the Bibliothèque du Saulchoir in Paris. The material is well accessible and contains letters, reports, and other documents produced by the missionaries. The archive consists for a remarkably large part of secondary material in the form of historical narratives of the mission. The archive contains relatively few primary documents, such as personal letters by the missionaries, and relatively many formal documents such as reports. Like the Dominican mission, the American mission has an extensive, well-kept archive, providing a good overview of the mission's history. The archive, containing the secretaries' files covering the full period in which the mission was active, is freely accessible for researchers at the Presbyterian Historical Society in Philadelphia (Pennsylvania), with a restriction on material that is less than 50 years

[123] Barsaum, *Al-luʾluʾ al-manthūr fī tārīkh al-ʿulūm wa-al-ādāb al-suryāniyya*.

[124] Anonymous, *Dayr Mār Afrām al-Suryānī – al-kulliyya al-lāhūtiyya*, Syriac Orthodox Patriarchate, http://syrian-orthodox.com/page.php?id=5.

old. Contrary to the archive of the Dominican mission, in the American archive original letters written by the missionaries make up a large share, providing an insight in their personal perspectives.

The official start of the Dominican mission was in 1748 when Pope Benedict XIV made the Order of Preachers responsible for the project to convert the non-Chalcedonian Christians in Mesopotamia and Kurdistan. The first missionaries were sent out in 1750.[125] Catholic sources often speak about a "return to Catholic unity," based on the idea that before the dogmatic conflicts of the fourth and fifth century there was a unified Church of which the Catholics are heirs.[126] The first Dominicans who were sent out to Mosul, where the mission was to be based, were Italians, and the mission's governance remained in Italian hands for more than a hundred years. The Italian period came to an end in 1856 because of political unrest in Italy. In that year the first French Dominican was sent to Mosul, taking over the leadership of the mission immediately. The last Italian left Mosul in 1857.[127] From the moment that the French took over, the mission was headed by French Dominicans, each of them staying for a considerable number of years. It was in this period that the main institutions of the mission were established and consolidated. The only rupture was World War I, when the French were forced to leave the country by the Ottomans.[128] Three local members of the mission remained, among whom Sulaymān Ṣā'igh, who was active as a well-known Chaldean writer. The mission came to a complete standstill, and was reestablished in the beginning of 1920 with a largely renewed staff. The work of the Dominican missionaries was organized in various "œuvres" (works), of which the educational works were the most important, judging from how often they appear in the archives of the mission. In fact, the information on the non-educational works inside the mission in the period after World War I is very scarce and is mostly limited to irregular remarks. Before 1914, the mission had its own printing press, but at the start of World War I

[125] Bernard Goormachtigh, *Histoire de la Mission Dominicaine de Mésopotamie et en Kurdistan depuis ses premières origines jusques à nos jours* (Mosul: 1873), 12.

[126] Mannès Brelet, *Deux siècles de mission dominicaine à Mossoul* (Mossoul: 1950), 1. Bibliothèque du Saulchoir, Paris, Mosul mission archive, Z-11.

[127] Ibid., 14–15.

[128] Ibid., 41.

it was confiscated. Attempts to reestablish the printing press failed.[129] A document of 1923 indicates the wish to reestablish a hospital, and the creation of an eye clinic, but this seems to have been without success.[130]

The best-known *œuvre* of the Dominican missionaries was their seminary, the Syro-Chaldean seminary devoted to Saint John. It was opened as part of the Dominican mission in 1878 and its goal was to educate local priests for the Chaldean and Syriac Catholic Church. The Dominican seminary was not the only one, since the Chaldeans also had their own seminary devoted to Saint Peter (see above), but the Dominicans felt the need to establish a separate seminary because they were not satisfied with its quality.[131] Similar to other Catholic seminaries, the students enrolled in the seminary at the age of 12 or 13,[132] and first fulfilled a preparatory track of six years called "petit séminaire," devoting most of their time to languages. After that, the actual education to become a priest took place during another six years of "grand séminaire." From the beginning the Dominicans placed great importance on making the program suit the needs of the two Syriac churches, spending a great amount of time in teaching Arabic, Syriac and Turkish, besides French and Latin.[133] Turkish was removed from the curriculum after World War I. Initially a sharp distinction existed between morning sessions in which French and Latin were taught and used, and afternoon sessions that were reserved for

[129] See the following short booklet in the possession of the Bibliothèque du Saulchoir: Biskupski, *L'imprimerie des pères dominicains de Mossoul et son activité linguistique et littéraire* (Paris: Imprimerie nationale, 1955).

[130] Bibliothèque du Saulchoir, Paris, Arch op Paris Mossoul IV-Z-95, "Mission de Mossoul : 1914– 52," 11. Eye diseases were a common problem in Iraq. An education report shows that in 1943–1944 almost 30% of the school pupils had trachoma or another eye disease. Roderic D. Matthews and Matta Akrawi, *Education in Arab Countries of the Near East: Egypt, Iraq, Palestine, Transjordan, Syria, Lebanon* (Washington: American Council on Education, 1949), 124.

[131] Bibliothèque du Saulchoir, Paris, Arch op Paris Mossoul IV-Z-95, "Mission de Mossoul : 1914–52," 89: "Les Chaldéens avaient fondé, quelque dix ans avant nous, un séminaire sous le patronage de S. Pierre : ce fut plutôt originairement une simple école épiscopale qui procurait à la cathédrale les enfants dont elle avait besoin pour les chants et les cérémonies."

[132] Bibliothèque du Saulchoir, Paris, Arch op Mossoul IV-N13-2-11, anonymous document called "Rapport sur le Séminaire Syro-Chaldéen de S. Jean l'Evangéliste à Mossoul" (dated 1929 by the archivist with uncertainty).

[133] Brelet, *Histoire de la mission de Mossoul*, file F, 41.

eastern languages.[134] After the war, nothing of this policy was left and a report that was probably written in 1929 mentions that from the third year all classes were in French.[135]

For the school year 1946–1947, the archive at the Saulchoir library contains a document which describes the program for each of the 12 grades at the seminary.[136] The document does not give extensive information about the contents of the lessons, but provides the number of hours that were spent on different subjects, as well as the textbooks that were used. This reveals some interesting details about the seminary's language policy. During the first six grades of "petit séminaire," the languages were by far the most important. In the "grand séminaire," the amount of time devoted to languages gradually decreased. The languages that were mentioned in this program are the same as in earlier years of the seminary: Arabic, French, and Latin. Turkish was not mentioned anymore and was obviously much less important since the assignment of Mosul and its surroundings to Iraq. English was not part of the program at all. Of the languages that were being taught, Aramaic ("araméen")Aramaic, was the only language that was present in the program of the grades of "théologie" for two hours per week, except for the final grade, when no language was being taught at all. The program mentions a division of Aramaic into "syrien" and "chaldéen," for respectively the Syriac Catholic and Chaldean students. Most probably this was to distinguish the two pronunciation traditions of Classical Syriac and not to different dialects of Neo-Aramaic. Aramaic was not grouped together with the other languages, but considered part of the theological subjects. Arabic was being taught during the first eight years, and it was the language which the largest total number of hours were spent on: from eight and a half hours in the first grade to one hour in the eighth grade. French was part of the program for all six grades of the "petit séminaire," with normally three to four hours per week, except for the second grade when eight hours were spent on this language. With all classes being taught in French from

[134] Ibid., 42.

[135] Bibliothèque du Saulchoir, Paris, Arch op Mossoul IV-N13-2-11, anonymous document called "Rapport sur le Séminaire Syro-Chaldéen de S. Jean l'Evangéliste à Mossoul" (dated 1929 by the archivist with uncertainty).

[136] Bibliothèque du Saulchoir, Paris, Arch op Mossoul IV-N13-2-11, "Séminaire Syro-Chaldéen, Programmes des Etudes, 1946–1947."

the beginning of the "grand séminaire," knowledge of French could be taken for granted after six years of instruction. Finally, the students learned Latin with four hours a week for four years, from the fifth to the eighth grade. After that, knowledge of this language was probably deepened with theological readings for the other subjects.

The Protestant mission was led by three American Protestant churches: the Presbyterian Church of the USA, the Reformed Church in America, and the Reformed Church in the United States. While Presbyterians had been present in Iraq since 1834, the United Mission in Mesopotamia started in 1924 as a cooperation between the three abovementioned churches, and was renamed in 1935 to "United Mission in Iraq," following the independence of the state of Iraq in 1932. After 1950, the denominational makeup of the mission's organization changed a couple of times, and in 1970 the mission came to an end after seizure of its schools by the government of Iraq.[137] Contrary to the Dominican mission, which mainly aimed at converting non-Catholic Christians to Catholicism and helping the autocephalous Catholic churches organizing themselves, the goal of the United Mission was to convert Muslims and other non-Christians. A report of 1925 describes it as follows:

> The aim of the Mission is to evangelize the Mohammedans in the unoccupied area of Mesopotamia, officially designated as Irak. Mosul is a gateway to work among the Moslem Kurds who constitute a new field. Work is to be done among the returning refugees and among the remnant of Jacobite and Chaldean Christians.[138]

Nevertheless, other documents in the archive suggest that in practice most of the work was being performed amongst Christians, and

[137] "Guide to the United Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A. Commission on Ecumenical Mission and Relations. Secretaries' files: United Mission in Iraq," Presbyterian Historical Society, accessed 20 October 2014, http://history.pcusa.org/collections/research-tools/guides-archival-collections/rg-89.

[138] Presbyterian Historical Society, RG89–1–4 (1925), "Pen Picture of Mosul Station," Presbyterian Board of Foreign Missions, Department for Specific Work. This document is undated but is placed in the 1925 section of the archive.

sometimes it is emphasized that work should also be done to convert Muslims and other non-Christians.[139] The mission was divided into five cities ("stations") from which the work was conducted. The Mosul station appears to have been the most important one, and together with the stations in Hilla (south of Baghdad) and Duhok they fell under the responsibility of the Presbyterian Church in the USA. The other stations, Baghdad and Kirkuk, fell under the Reformed Church in America and the Reformed Church in the United States respectively.[140] The 1925 report quoted above mentions as its "equipment": "An organized church; a city school for girls; a night school for young men; a kindergarten and kindergarten training school; 8 village schools; and a widespread work among the Assyrian Christians to the North."[141]

Where the Dominicans used to group the country's Christians according to their denomination, the Americans preferred ethnic categories. In the early phase, each missionary was responsible for one ethnic group. In a letter written in 1924 to the Board in New York, the Rev. Roger C. Cumberland, who worked in the village of Simele mentioned the general features of a number of ethnical groups in Northern Iraq, in the essentialist way that characterizes the contemporary British accounts of the situation in Iraq too. He starts with the Assyrians, referring to the Christians from "the mountains of Kurdistan, and the Urumia plain in Persia." The fact that the British used them to form a protective army (the Assyrian Levies) "speaks well and truthfully for their manly qualities." He continues with the "Christians of the Mosul plain" whom he refers to as the "Niseramies," an otherwise unknown word which probably refers to the Arabic word *naṣrānī* "Christian." He is negative about their faith, to the extent that "so far as living a life fit for eternity is concerned, they are little if any nearer to it than the Moslems among whom they live," because, according to Cumberland, they did everything they could to keep the dominant Muslims on their side. Cumberland then praises the Arab tribes, but mentions that about the Arabs in cities "it is impossible to find a good work." Cum-

[139] Presbyterian Historical Society, RG89–1–3 (1924), letter by the Rev. Roger C. Cumberland to Dr. Robert E. Speer, dated 21 June 1924.

[140] "Guide to the United Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A. Commission on Ecumenical Mission and Relations."

[141] "Pen Picture of Mosul Station."

berland is finally quite neutral about the Kurds, but adds that "[t]heir reputation as freebotters of a bold and picturesque type needs no reiteration."[142] The American missionaries had particular interest in the Assyrians, Protestant members of which formed the majority of their staff. In 1926, they founded a formal Assyrian evangelical congregation.[143]

When comparing the two missions, we see several striking differences. The most important one concerns the way in which they organized the people they were working for. The Dominicans were in the position that an ecclesiastical structure for Catholicism was already present in the form of two autocephalous churches thanks to the efforts of their predecessors and the local Catholic Christians, and their main aim was—apart from converting more Christians to Catholicism, which seems not to have been their main concern in the period after the World War I—to reinforce the organization of the Chaldean and Syriac Catholic churches, especially by providing education. The United Mission had to start from scratch, and while they also had to set up organizational structures for the people they were working with, the archival documents suggest that their main concern was with the conversion of non-Protestant Christians and non-Christians, especially Muslims and Yezidis. While the Dominicans were equipped with their own church following the Latin rite, this church was not intended to be used by the people they worked for, who had their own churches, but for the sake of the missionaries themselves. The United Mission, with its "fully equipped church" (see before), used this to provide services for the sake of the people they worked for—in their case converts to Protestantism. They preached as far as possible in the local Arabic and Neo-Aramaic languages.

Educational policies

Education in Iraq developed rapidly in the period 1920–1950 with considerable consequences for the Syriac Christians of the country. From

[142] Presbyterian Historical Society, RG89–1–3, "Selections from a letter written by Rev. Roger C. Cumberland of Semel, Iraq, dated January 9, 1924," 5 March 1924.

[143] Presbyterian Historical Society, RG–1–5 (1926), Report on the Assyrian work, 1925-26.

a situation in which almost no education was provided by the state in the early 1920s, it changed to a system in which virtually all schools were state-regulated. While the improvement of education was an obvious advantage for everybody in the country, this development went hand in hand with decreasing room for education that was specifically meant for ethnic or religious groups, such as the Syriac Christians.

State education in Iraq right after World War I was extremely limited, and during the decades that followed, a modern educational system was slowly developed. The initial slow development of the educational system has probably something to do with the lack of importance the British connected to it during their short but decisive rule. In this period, communal schools affiliated to one of the Christian denominations played a relatively important role.[144] Peter Sluglett writes extensively about the British educational policy in his book *Britain in Iraq*. While the need for education to allow the Iraqis to administer their country themselves was recognized, education remained a low priority, as it was apparently the case in general that little was done to prepare Iraq for independence.[145] Another reason for the slow development of education was a fear that educating a great number of young people would not be in accordance to the availability of jobs, which the danger of creating a potentially harmful politically active youth.[146] In contrast to the lack of interest in education from the side of the British, the topic was very serious for Sāṭiʿ al-Ḥuṣrī, the architect of Arab nationalism in Iraq, who was Iraq's Director General of Education in the period 1923–27. He made the educational system concentrate on the Arabic language and the history of the Arabs.[147] In line with this policy, Christian schools run by the various Syriac Christian denominations in Mosul were taken over by the government in 1920, giving them a function in the dissemination of Arab nationalism.[148]

[144] An overview of the situation in 1923 is given in Walther Björkman, "Das irakische Bildungswesen und seine Probleme bis zum zweiten Weltkrieg," *Die Welt des Islams* 1 (1951): 190–91.

[145] Sluglett, *Britain in Iraq*, 193.

[146] Ibid., 194.

[147] Cleveland, *The Making of an Arab Nationalist*, 61–65.

[148] Donabed, *Reforging a Forgotten History*, 74–75.

After independence, public education in Iraq grew rapidly.[149] In 1945, a commission was established by the American Council on Education in order to investigate the status of education in the Arab Middle East. The result after nine months of visits to educational institutions and schools by the commission was an over 500-page book with detailed information about school systems in the Arab countries under discussion.[150] Contrary to the situation under the British mandate, the report of 1945 shows an elaborate centralized public school system under the Ministry of Education, comparable to that of contemporary Western countries. The budget for the Ministry had risen to 12.9% of the total state budget in 1938–1939, although there was a relative (but not absolute) decline in the following few years.[151] By 1945, the school system that had developed provided six years of primary education, which was compulsory and free of charge wherever available, with a nationwide exam at the end.[152] The curriculum was centrally determined and even the daily schedule was fixed for the whole country. Much attention was given to the Arabic language, and English was part of it as well.[153] Boys were usually separated from girls, but the report notes an early movement towards mixed-gender education.[154] About religion, the report marks that the schools followed Islamic holidays and that the curriculum included Islamic religious instruction, but that students with minority religions were permitted to be absent during important feasts and to stay away from religious instruction. Secondary education was not obligatory, but also centrally organized. The curriculum for secondary schools was first established in 1926 and revised multiple times. The revision of 1943 shows that English and Arabic were relatively important, with translation as a separate subject in the last two years of preparatory school. Religious instruction was limited to one class per week, only at the intermediate

[149] Björkman, "Das irakische Bildungswesen": 179.

[150] Matthews and Akrawi, *Education in Arab Countries of the Near East*. Part 2 (pages 119–213) is about Iraq. The American Council on Education is a representative organization for public and private higher education in the United States.

[151] Ibid., 127.

[152] Ibid., 131.

[153] Ibid., 147.

[154] Ibid., 146. In 1926, the Syriac Orthodox journalist Rafā'īl Buṭṭī already complains about the separation of genders at schools—see Chapter 5 for this.

school. Higher education was limited to a number of colleges providing preparation for certain professions.

Private education in this period was subject to various laws, such as an obligation to have government approval of the school's curriculum and textbooks. Private schools followed the school system of public schools with its structure of primary, intermediate, and preparatory schools. Their students were required by law to possess the same diplomas as students of public schools. Foreign schools formed a separate category with its own laws. Part of the Iraqi private schools were sectarian schools, including a particularly well-developed system of Jewish schools, but this category also included Christian schools of different denominations. The development of a complex school system by the government therefore had serious consequences for the schools operating outside this system, such as the Syro-Chaldean seminary of the Dominicans. Where the missionary and communal schools seem to have had almost complete freedom in their organizational structures and programs in the years right after World War I, in the later decades they were more pressured to comply with the rules of the government. In some cases schools were forced to close. This included the enforcement of a standard school curriculum on private primary and secondary schools in 1929.[155] The Public Education Law of 1940 included a policy that Iraqi citizens were not allowed to attend foreign primary schools, which posed particular difficulties.[156] This meant the end of the primary school in Mosul that was reestablished by the Dominicans in 1935.[157] This decline of freedom corresponds to a more general increase of the state bureaucracy, which was at a minimum during the first years of the mandate.

[155] Khalil Osman, *Sectarianism in Iraq: The Making of State and Nation Since 1920* (Oxon: Routledge, 2015), 174.

[156] Ibid., 128 and 131.

[157] Bibliothèque du Saulchoir, Paris, Arch op Paris Mossoul IV-Z-95, "Mission de Mossoul : 1914–52," 66.

Chapter 2

Continuation of a tradition: manuscript production

Few works on twentieth-century intellectual history include an analysis of manuscripts in their methodologies, and at first sight it is not obvious why a dissertation on twentieth-century language use by the Syriac Christians in Iraq should contain a chapter about manuscripts. While it is well known that the adoption of the printing press in the Middle East has been slow, since the nineteenth century it had become common practice to print books in Arabic. Moreover, Syriac Christians made frequent use of printing presses to publish texts, especially in Arabic, but also in Syriac and Neo-Aramaic. At the same time, in Iraq and elsewhere the ancient tradition of copying manuscripts, which was done in ecclesial contexts by priests and deacons, was still very vivid in the early 1920s and would remain alive for the decades to come. In fact, the production of manuscripts in the Syriac tradition is continuing until today, also in Iraq, albeit on a smaller scale. In the twentieth century, manuscripts were only used for religious purposes only, and therefore constitute just a fraction of the total of writings by Syriac Christians in Iraq. However, as we see in this chapter, manuscripts form a medium in which the expression of Syriac Christian identification is rather different from what we see happening in printed texts. This includes differences in language use and in the way the creators of manuscripts present Syriac Christianity as part of Iraqi society. Manuscript production was more closely related to ecclesiastical life than other forms of intellectual expression, and the scribes

and authors identified more explicitly with their churches than others did. These unique characteristics justify looking at this category of sources in more detail.

The fact that the Syriac Christians of Iraq continued manuscript production seems surprising, but can be explained by several factors. Before the beginning of the nineteenth century, when printing in the Arab world finally took off, the region's Christians were an exception to the rule by performing a pioneer role in establishing the printing press in the Middle East.[1] One of the reasons why printing did not make manuscript production obsolete is certainly the limited availability of printing presses, especially when it comes to equipment for printing Syriac script. A major concern for the Dominican missionaries was indeed the loss of their printing press with movable types in World War I, when it was confiscated by the Ottoman authorities.[2] Despite various endeavors after World War I, the Dominicans were unsuccessful in reestablishing the printing press, which forced them to use the less efficient technique of collotype.[3] However, manuscript production might better be seen as a world of publishing in its own right, rather than as a solution for not being able to use printing presses. The number of manuscripts that was produced in the period 1918–1950 was very large, and even though a certain influence from printing tradition is perceivable in manuscripts of this era—such as page numbering—manuscripts were still a separate category of publications with their own characteristics. In this sense, the production of manuscripts in early twentieth-century Iraq seems to be comparable to that of the late Ottoman Arab provinces, when the tradition of manuscript production was continuing, but at the same time adapting to the modernizing world. For the earlier period, this has been argued by Heleen Murre-van den Berg in her recent work about the Church

[1]Dagmar Glass, Geoffrey Roper, "Arabic book and newspaper printing in the Arab world. Part I: The printing of Arabic books in the Arab world," in *Middle Eastern Languages and the Print Revolution. A Cross-cultural Encounter*, edited by Eva Hanebutt-Benz et al. (Westhoven: WVA-Verlag Skulima, 2002): 177–181.

[2]Biskupski, *L'imprimerie des pères dominicains de Mossoul.*

[3]Bibliothèque du Saulchoir, Paris, Arch op Paris Mossoul IV-Z-95, "Mission de Mossoul : 1914–52," 44. In contrast to the printing techniques with movable types, collotype prints text as if it were an image, which gives greater freedom and does not require the preparation of types for each script and font size, but is more laborious as all glyphs on a page have to be prepared individually.

of the East in the eastern Ottoman Empire.[4] The arrival of a Syriac printing press to the Church of the East did not mean a decline in the production of manuscripts. To the contrary, an inventory of Eastern Syriac manuscripts between 1400 and 1920 shows an explosion in the production of manuscripts between 1880 and 1900.[5]

Traditionally, philologists have mostly been interested in manuscripts for their value in reconstructing ancient texts, but during the last couple of decades the interest in manuscripts for the information they provide about the world in which they were produced has increased. Everyone who has studied manuscripts recognizes the richness of material outside the main texts that many manuscripts contain. This includes phrases in the margins, which are sometimes readers' notes, ownership information, and especially colophons. Colophons of Syriac manuscripts do not only provide meta-information about the manuscripts, but generally also give detailed information about the copyist, the donor, and contextual historical information, such as the name of the contemporary patriarch or political developments. In that respect they are similar to Arabic manuscripts, both Christian and Islamic, in which the copyist traditionally had considerable freedom to include additional information as they wished.[6] The contextual details in the colophons of Syriac manuscripts tend to be of such historical value that David Wilmshurst was able to write a history of the Church of the East between 1318 and 1913 focusing on its ecclesiastical organization based on the colophons of the manuscripts.[7]

For this study, the manuscripts of the Syriac Christians in Iraq are indeed most interesting for their meta-information, and less so for their contents. The manuscripts mainly contain copies of older

[4] H.L. Murre-van den Berg, *Scribes and Scriptures, The Church of the East in the Eastern Ottoman Provinces (1500–1850)* (Leuven: Peeters, 2015).

[5] Murre-van den Berg, *Scribes and Scriptures*, 81. Murre-van den Berg based herself on the list by David Wilmshurst. Wilmshurst, *The Ecclesiastical Organization of the Church of the East*, 378–732.

[6] See Ramazan Şeşen, "Esquisse d'une histoire du développement des colophons dans les manuscrits musulmans," in *Scribes et manuscrits du Moyen-Orient*, ed. François Déroche and Francis Richard (Paris: Bibliothèque Nationale de France, 1997), 189–221, and Gérard Troupeau, "Les colophons des manuscrits arabes chrétiens," in *Scribes and manuscrits*, 223–31.

[7] Wilmshurst, *The Ecclesiastical Organization of the Church of the East, 1318–1913*.

liturgical religious texts, and while in some cases these copies are very valuable for the study of these texts they will not be discussed in this dissertation. The information about the manuscripts, such as the languages that were used, and their colophons however provide valuable information about the way the copyists saw themselves as part of their churches, (Syriac) Christianity and Iraqi society. In this chapter, I examine the manuscript production of Iraqi Syriac Christianity by discussing several important individuals responsible for manuscript production, as well as two considerable collections of manuscripts. In the first section, I present a general overview about the manuscripts that were produced in Iraq between 1920 and 1950. In the second section, I look at post-1920 manuscripts from the Syriac Orthodox and Syriac Catholic towns of Bartallah and Baghdeda, which are of special interest because of the fact that their catalogues include the manuscripts' colophons in full. The last section is about the great orientalist and manuscript collector Alphonse Mingana, who was active in Britain but who never broke off his relations with Iraq, where he was born and where he studied. His famous collection of Syriac manuscripts includes a few dozen that were produced between 1920 and 1950 in northern Iraq. The section will also discuss Mattai bar Paulus, a scribe who produced many manuscripts for Mingana. Finally, I make concluding remarks about the role manuscripts had in Syriac Christian intellectual life in Iraq, and what the manuscripts tell us about the identifications of Syriac Christians as part of Iraqi society.

An inventory of manuscripts

In order to come to an overview of the manuscripts that were produced in Iraq, I inventoried the manuscripts that were produced in Iraq between 1920 and 1950. There are certain problems when making a complete inventory of manuscripts. Apart from the issue that not all manuscripts have been documented, the catalogues that are available are all different in the information they provide and their choices to leave certain manuscripts in or out. A considerable number of items that are often included in manuscript catalogues are not bound volumes, but for example notebooks or letters that have been put together. The choice of a manuscript cataloguer to include these items may suggest an increase in the total number of manuscripts. Fur-

thermore, the place where a manuscript is located is not always the place where it comes from, although the catalogues that give information about the origins of the manuscripts show that most manuscripts from the last century in Iraq originated from the place where they were copied, so for our purposes this is not a great problem.

For the East Syriac churches, I have used a list of manuscripts by David Wilmshurst. This list, which Wilmshurst compiled for his ambitious study of the ecclesiastical history of the Church of the East and the Chaldean Church through manuscript colophons, gives an overview of all East Syriac manuscripts that were found in a wide range of catalogues, of collections both inside and outside the Middle East.[8] While Wilmshurst's study stops in 1919, the list contains manuscripts until the time of writing (2000). Unfortunately, Wilmshurst's list does not provide many details about the manuscripts it includes, as it lacks for instance the language the manuscripts were written in. For the West Syriac churches, such a list was not available. For this I am mainly reliant on a two-volume collection of manuscript catalogues that was published in Baghdad in 1977 and 1981.[9] These volumes combine the work of various manuscript cataloguers, giving a rather complete list of manuscripts belonging to Syriac ecclesial institutions that are located in Iraq. Unfortunately, this does not give information about manuscripts that were produced in Iraq and moved to other places, either because they were acquired by churches or people outside Iraq or because they were commissioned by Western scholars. However, the low number of East Syriac manuscripts in Wilmshurst's list of the period after 1920 that are located outside Iraq suggests that it is not a very substantial amount. An exception is formed by the manuscripts of Alphonse Mingana, whose collection in Birmingham contains numerous manuscripts that were produced after 1920, but his collection is treated separately below, because of his tight connections to Iraq.

Even though the total number of manuscripts in these inventories is relatively large, it is necessary to be cautious about the possibility of the absence of large numbers of manuscripts. It would

[8] David Wilmshurst, *The Ecclesiastical Organization of the Church of the East*, 378–732.

[9] *Fahāris al-makhṭūṭāt al-suryāniyya fī al-ʿIrāq*, two volumes (Baghdad: Maṭbaʿat al-majmaʿ al-ʿilmī al-ʿIrāqī, 1977–81).

for instance be tempting to compare the numbers of manuscripts in the four different Syriac denominations. But the absence of a proper manuscript catalogue of even one or two locations, each listing hundreds of manuscripts, could give enormous differences in the share of the number of manuscripts for each denomination. It is safer to make assertions about changes over time, such as peaks in manuscript production and changes in language use, or about certain developments specific for denominations or locations.

For the East Syriac manuscripts, Wilmshurst's list makes clear that virtually all manuscripts in the period 1920–1950 were copied in the following three places in the neighborhood of the Chaldean town of Alqosh: (1) the Monastery of Notre Dame des Semences, close to Alqosh; (2) the Monastery of Rabban Hormizd, close to Alqosh; (3) Alqosh itself. Other places are the Chaldean towns of Karimlīs, close to Bartallah and Baghdeda, and Tall Usquf, about ten kilometers to the south of Alqosh. All places are located in Iraq and are centers of the Chaldean Catholic Church, and indeed Wilmshurst's list does not contain any manuscripts coming from the Church of the East.[10] This must have been a consequence of the devastation of World War I, and it is in sharp contrast to the situation in the late-nineteenth century, when the manuscript production of the Church of the East is at a striking peak. With a few exceptions that are dealt with below, I have found no Assyrian manuscripts in other catalogues either. Apparently, no new centers were created after the settlement of the Assyrians in Iraq. As we see in Chapter 3, the Assyrians seem to have partly provided in the needs that manuscripts served by using the printing press—something the other churches did not do in this way. As far as Wilmshurst's list is complete, the period 1920–1950 saw the production of a total of 134 manuscripts across the East Syriac churches. In each year between one and eleven manuscripts were produced. Production was the greatest during the years 1925–1933, with a mean production of around eight manuscripts a year. After that the production went down somewhat, with a mean of around three manuscripts between 1934 and 1950.

[10] Wilmshurst notes this explicitly in the introduction of his list. Wilmshurst, *The Ecclesiastical Organization of the Church of the East*, 379.

The West Syriac manuscripts come from other locations. The most important centers are the towns of Bartallah and Baghdeda (Qaraqosh), two largely Christian towns, which both had a mixed population of Syriac Orthodox and Syriac Catholics. These manuscripts are dealt with below in more detail, which is possible thanks to the fact that they were recently carefully catalogued. Apart from that, there are West Syriac manuscripts that belong to Dayr Mar Mattai and the Syriac Orthodox patriarchate. For the period 1920–1950, a total of 68 dated manuscripts were catalogued in Bartallah and Baghdeda, in addition to a considerable number of manuscripts for which it is only known that they date from the 20th century. As explained later, a few of these manuscripts should be seen as East Syriac in terms of language.

Many manuscripts from this period, despite being written by hand, look similar to modern books. While traditional elements, such as catchwords and rubrication,[11] are still present in most manuscripts, many contain phenomena such as title pages and headings as we know them from books. Similarly, Indic numerals are used to number the pages. Some manuscripts have double page numbering: one using Syriac *abjad* numerals counting the folios on all recto pages,[12] and another giving each page a number using Indic numerals, as in modern Arabic books.[13] The binding usually has a modern appearance through the use of cardboard in almost all cases.

Manuscript colophons: Bartallah and Baghdeda

Around twenty kilometers to the east from the city of Mosul, we find two towns, Bartallah and Baghdeda, which were almost entirely pop-

[11] A catchword is a word at the bottom of a page giving the first word of the next page, to help the binder putting the pages in the right order. In combination with modern page numbers, which make catchwords redundant, its presence suggests that it is merely of symbolic value. Rubrication is the practice to use a different color, usually red, to emphasize parts of the text, a practice dating form medieval times present in both European and Middle Eastern manuscripts.

[12] The system of Syriac *abjad* numerals uses the letters of the alphabet to represent numbers, and is similar to the Hebrew numerals and Arabic *abjad* numerals.

[13] This is the case for Mingana 107 (Cadbury Research Library, Birmingham), one of the manuscripts in Mingana's collection of Syriac manuscripts that was copied by Mattai bar Paulus.

ulated by Syriac Christians. Bartallah is located on the main road between Mosul and Erbil, and traditionally had a mainly Syriac Orthodox population. Baghdeda, also known under its Turkish name Qaraqosh (*Karakuş* in modern Turkish orthography), is located about seven kilometers south of Bartallah and is mainly Syriac Catholic. While the Syriac Christians of the city of Mosul generally have Arabic as their native language, the most common language in these towns is Sureth, a form of Neo-Aramaic. In the many churches in both towns an abundance of manuscripts were created, many of which coming from the decades after World War I.

The populations of both Bartallah and Baghdeda belong to West Syriac Christianity. This branch of Syriac Christianity is characterized by the use of *Serṭā* (West Syriac script) and the employment of a West Syriac phonology for Classical Syriac, recognizable for the endings of nouns in *-ō* rather than *-ā*. However, like the larger Chaldean and Assyrian communities, the language they speak belongs to the mutually intelligable North East Neo-Aramaic (NENA) dialects. These dialects have noun-endings in *-ā* rather than *-ō*, hence in contrast to the western pronunciation of Classical Syriac. Geoffrey Khan points this out in his grammar of the Neo-Aramaic of Baghdeda, noting that when Classical Syriac is read aloud in church services, the western pronunciation is used.[14] This is in contrast to the Eastern form of their dialect of Neo-Aramaic. However, Khan mentions as well that earlier, at the end of the nineteenth century, the Eastern pronunciation tradition was used. The change to the western pronunciation of Classical Syriac seems to point at an increasing influence from other centers of the Syriac Orthodox Church.

As for written language, Khan mentions the fact that most of the laity of the town are not able to use the Syriac script, so that often the Arabic script has been used to render poems and other texts in Sureth. Apart from that, Khan writes that there is no evidence of written Sureth in Syriac script, not even in manuscripts.[15] This might seem surprising, given the ability of the clergy to write in Syriac script, but writing in Sureth requires the presence of a lively writing tradition,

[14] Geoffrey Khan, *The Neo-Aramaic Dialect of Qaraqosh* (Leiden: Brill, 2002), 8.

[15] Ibid. Like Alqosh, Bartalla and Baghdeda lie in the Iraqi governorate of Nineveh and are not part of the Kurdish Autonomous Region, explaining the fact that Arabic has not become less important since the 1990s.

which existed for Classical Syriac and Arabic, but apparently not for Sureth. The tradition of writing the closely related Swadaya (Urmia Aramaic) was brought to the country by the Assyrians and did not influence the clergy of Bartallah and Baghdeda. This is comparable to the current situation of Syriac Christians in the Kurdish Autonomous Region, who are often native speakers of Neo-Aramaic but who feel more at ease in Arabic or Kurdish when it comes to written language.[16]

The catalogue of Bartallah manuscripts lists all known manuscripts of this town by the church where they can be found. A separate chapter gives a list of manuscripts that are in private possession, of which most belong to an institution called Markaz Mār Mattá.[17] The vast majority of post-World War I manuscripts from Bartallah come from the Syriac Orthodox Mart Shimūnī church or belong to the above-mentioned (Syriac Orthodox) institute. Of the other two churches, only three manuscripts are present, including two manuscripts from the Syriac Catholic church Mār Kūrkīs. Other manuscripts are in possession of private persons. Almost all manuscripts from this period are written in Classical Syriac, without any occurrence of Garshuni as far as this is evident from the catalogue. Occasionally, a manuscript contains pieces of text in Arabic.

Not all manuscripts in the Bartallah catalogue bear a date of production, but virtually all manuscripts without a date are assumed to be very old by the cataloguers. The dates are known thanks to the colophons, in which the year of completion is mentioned. For the period after World War I, all years were written with the traditional Syriac *abjad* numerals, but using the relatively "modern" Christian era, using phrases such as *l-mōran mrīmō* "of our exalted Lord,"[18]

[16] Interview with Dr. Saadi al-Malih, October 27, 2013.

[17] This institution's full name is *Markaz Mār Mattá li-l-khidmāt al-kanīsa li-l-suryān al-urthūdhuks fī Barṭallá* (Center of Mar Mattai in service of the Syriac Orthodox church in Bartallah.) While this center is related to the monastery of Mar Mattai, it is located in the town.

[18] Manuscript number 4 ("*Al-qirā'āt*") of the Mart Shimūnī church in Bartallah, according to Bahnām Dāniyāl, *Fahāris al-Makhṭūṭāt al-Suryāniyya fī Barṭallá* (Duhok, 2013), 26–32.

mshīḥōytō "Christian," or in Arabic *li-l-tajassud al-ilāhī* "of the divine incarnation,"[19] or simply without any additional clarification.

For the manuscripts of Bartallah, the period around 1880 shows a dramatic increase in manuscript production compared to the period before. This is in line with figures of manuscript production by the East Syriac Christians, as Heleen Murre-van den Berg points out in her book on manuscripts from the Church of the East, for which she mentions various factors, including a considerably improved position of Christians in Iran and Iraq.[20] After the 1880s, the number of manuscripts produced in Bartallah decreases quickly, to come to a standstill at the beginning of World War I. After World War I, the first manuscripts are produced from 1925 onwards, and most manuscripts that were produced after the war are from the 1930s and the late 1940s. After 1950 only a few manuscripts were produced in Bartallah.

Only one manuscript survived that was produced during World War I: in 1915 the scribe Ilyās, son of ʿAbū Bīnū Kūrkā finished a manuscript for the Syriac Catholic church of Saint George (Mār Gūrgīs) containing songs and prayers.[21] This is the latest of the Bartallah manuscripts that contains a colophon written in Garshuni. The production of this manuscript had possibly already started before the beginning of the war.

The virtual absence of manuscripts that were produced during the war years and the period immediately afterwards is not hard to explain and is in line with the virtual absence of publications through other channels. The absence of manuscripts originating from the years before World War II until 1948 may be explained by the hardships of war, but increased censorship probably had an impact on the production of manuscripts as well, despite their limited circulation.[22]

[19] Manuscript number 8 ("*Kitāb al-taʿlīm al-masīḥī*") of the manuscript of Bahnām Jīwā of Bartallah, according to Bahnām Dāniyāl, *Fahāris al-Makhṭūṭāt al-Suryāniyya fī Barṭallá*, 512.

[20] Murre-van den Berg, *Scribes and Scriptures*, 87.

[21] Manuscript number 82 of the Saint George church (Mār Gūrgīs) in Bartallah, according to Bahnām Dāniyāl, *Fahāris al-Makhṭūṭāt al-Suryāniyya fī Barṭallá* (Duhok, 2013), 403.

[22] In the period from the first years before World War II until the beginning of 1947, censorship in Iraq was at a peak. This is evident from a letter from the United Mission in Mesopotamia to the mission's headquarters in New York City from December 1947, where the mission's secretary explains the absence of reports in the earlier years—the

The structure of the colophons of the Bartallah manuscripts is typical for the Syriac manuscript tradition. Most of the elements of a typical East Syriac manuscript colophon that Murre-van den Berg gives are also present in Bartallah's West Syriac manuscripts.[23] The colophons usually start with an exaltation of God, mentioning that the book was completed with his help, and giving some information about the contents of the manuscript. The part that follows gives details about the scribe. In all cases they describe themselves in negative terms: the most commonly used words are *mḥilo* "weak" and *ḥatoyo* "sinning." Then the scribe gives details about the time in which the manuscript was completed, by giving the names of contemporary leaders in the church. Besides the head of the church (the Patriarch or the Pope), the name of the archbishop is often included. In many cases the scribe asks the reader to rectify any errors they come across, where the scribe again stresses his weakness: in one manuscript the scribe is "not skilled in reading,"[24] and in another manuscript the reader should remember that the scribe is not a teacher but a student.[25] The colophon then ends with another exaltation of God.

Besides these basic elements of the colophons, which are present in virtually all manuscripts, there are a number of other elements that occur occasionally. One of these elements is the church for which the manuscript was produced. Unlike many of the older East Syriac colophons, the Bartallah colophons rarely give names of donors or persons who commissioned the manuscript.[26] Whenever the commissioner is mentioned, it is usually somebody from the ecclesiastical ranks. Some colophons are in the form of poetry—in one case, after the usual prosaic colophon a poetic colophon follows, following a sim-

archive's folders of which are almost empty—by the censorship of all mail. Presbyterian Historical Society, RG89–1–26 (1947), letter from B.D. Hakken to C.H. Allen, December 17, 1947.

[23] For these elements, see Murre, *Scribes and Scriptures*, 113–42; and Heleen Murre-van den Berg, "'I the Weak Scribe': Scribes in the Church of the East in the Ottoman Period," *Journal of Eastern Christian Studies* 58:1–2 (2006): 9–26.

[24] Manuscript number 9 of the Mart Shimuni church in Bartallah, according to Bahnām Dāniyāl, *Fahāris al-Makhṭūṭāt al-Suryāniyya fī Barṭallá*, 39.

[25] Manuscript number 4 of the Mart Shimuni church (Bartallah), according to Bahnām Dāniyāl, *Fahāris al-Makhṭūṭāt al-Suryāniyya fī Barṭallá*, 28. Some of the scribes were indeed students, as we see below.

[26] Murre, *Scribes and Scriptures*, 127–31.

ilar structure but providing different details. Occasionally, the scribe gives the author, location and date of the Vorlage they copied the text from.

In many cases, notices were added after the manuscript was finished on the occasion of certain events. In 1945, a certain Ilyās writes a notice in a manuscript saying that he received it as a gift on the occasion of his consecration as a priest. More interesting is a manuscript that was produced in 1905 in Diyarbekir and sold in 1914 to Isḥāq Jīwā, who resided in the Mar Mattai monastery. When it was sold, a long notice was added about the political circumstances in the region of Tur Abdin, and the declaration of *jihād* in 1914. Both the main text of the manuscript and this notice are written in Garshuni. The difficulties in Diyarbekir probably made it necessary to bring the manuscript to a safer place.

Traditionally, most of the scribes in the Syriac Christian tradition were deacon or had another rank in the church, and indeed a number of the scribes of the Bartallah manuscripts identify themselves as deacons in the manuscript colophons. However, a relatively high number of manuscripts from the Syriac Orthodox Church were written by persons who were identified as students of the "Ephrem school" (*beth sefrō efremōyō*, or in Arabic, *al-maʿhad al-afrāmī*, literally "Ephrem institute"). This must be the Saint Ephrem Institute in Mosul that belonged to the Syriac Orthodox Church. There are few details known about this school, but given the number of scribes that studied at this school it is reasonable to assume that the school was an important center for learning Classical Syriac.

The colophons of the Bartallah manuscripts sometimes give information about the community in which it was created and its intended readership. In several cases, the community is identified by name. A manuscript from the Mart Shimūnī church (Bartallah), finished in 1950, identifies the religious community as "the Syriac Orthodox nation" (*umtho triṣath shubḥo suryoyto*). The use of the word *umtho* "nation" here is paralleled in contemporary nationalist or patriotist literature from other areas,[27] but the specification of "Syriac Orthodox"

[27] In the poems by Ghattas Maqdisi Elyas (1911–2008), who had to flee his birthplace Midyat as soon as the Ottoman genocide hit the city and found refuge in Syria, the Syriac *umtho* is frequently used in a way that is evidently representing an ethnic identification (see below). Tijmen C. Baarda, "The Poems of Ghattas Maqdisi Elyas

suggests that we are not dealing with a nationalist statement. It seems more probable that the word *umtho* "nation" is rather a reflection of the concept of *millet* from Ottoman times, especially since the word *millet* literally means "nation." As stated in the previous chapter, the Ottoman *millet* system was not completely abandoned after the transition to the modern Iraqi state, but religious communities retained some of their previous legal and societal characteristics. In Iraq, remnants of the *millet* system are clearly visible in the constitution that was adopted in 1925, even if it was using the word *ṭāʾifa* "sect," rather than something meaning "nation."

The argument for the word *umtho* referring to the Ottoman phenomenon of *millet* is supported by the fact that there are parallels from Ottoman times where the word *millet* is explicitly mentioned in manuscript colophons. A manuscript from Baghdeda written in 1860 mentions in its colophon in Garshuni that "*wa-huwa min al-milla al-suryān al-urthūduksiyya al-mulaqqab ṭāʾifa al-yaʿqūbiyya*" (he was from the Syriac Orthodox millet, also named the Jacobite sect).[28] However, most manuscripts colophons are not so explicit about the position of the West Syriac denominations in Iraqi society. As the tradition prescribed, most colophons contain a reference to the head of the church—the Patriarch in Syriac Orthodox manuscripts, and the "pope of Rome" (*papa d-Rūmī*) in Syriac Catholic manuscripts[29]—as well as other clerical figures that were considered important. We can assume that this normally meant that the manuscript was supposed to be read by members of the mentioned church, but it tells

and the Remembrance of Turabdin," in *Sayfo 1915: An Anthology of Essays on the Genocide of Assyrians/Aramaeans during the First World War*, ed. Shabo Talay & Soner O. Barthoma (Piscataway: Gorgias Press, 2018), 323–40. Another example of use of the word *umtho* with an ethnic meaning is the discourse that surrounded the founding of the Assyrian Democratic Organization in the 1930s. Atto, *Hostages in the Homeland*, 290–99.

[28] In itself, this reference to the Syriac Orthodox *millet* is remarkable, as a separate formal Syriac Orthodox millet was only established in 1882. The word *milla* or its Turkish equivalent *millet* may rather refer to a non-Muslim religious community in a social way, rather than in a political or legal way.

[29] Manuscript number 44 of the Saint George church (Mār Gūrgīs) in Bartallah, according to Bahnām Dāniyāl, *Fahāris al-Makhṭūṭāt al-Suryāniyya fī Barṭallá*, 352. Pope Pius XI is rendered as *Biyūs* in Syriac, using a *bēth* instead of a *pē*, which can be explained by the modern West Syriac pronunciation tradition, where *pē* is always pronounced /f/.

us little about the role of these communities in the Iraqi society. The manuscripts are so much bound to their use in ecclesial contexts that their references to church leaders cannot be interpreted as an indication that the ecclesiastical boundaries—which were self-evidently important in religious contexts—had the same meaning in Iraqi secular society. For that, we need to compare it with texts that were not produced for use in the church, which we will do in the next three chapters. References to political events in the Bartallah manuscripts are rare.

Interestingly, as far as the manuscripts of Bartallah is concerned, the use of Garshuni—and the Arabic language in general—in manuscripts is uncommon. Apart from a few instances, all texts are in Classical Syriac (never in Sureth) in *Serṭā* script. This is in sharp contrast to the period before World War I, when a variety of languages was used. The creativity in which Classical Syriac is used by the scribes in Bartallah suggests participation in the movement of revival of Classical Syriac by the scribes in town. Generally, manuscript colophons require relatively little creativity from the author in their use of language, as much of it follows a fixed pattern of words and phrases and can be composed by filling in a limited number of words. However, colophons are not exclusively formulaic and especially the tradition to give details about the historical context in which the manuscripts were written seems to have encouraged the scribes to use Syriac words that are specific for modern times. For example, the colophon of manuscript 4 of Bartallah contains a short eulogy of chorepiscopus Ilyās Eshaʿya, citing as one of his assets the construction of two roads for cars. For "car," the scribe uses the word *radōythō*, a neologism based on a Syriac root meaning "flowing," which has more often been used in modern compositions in Classical Syriac to mean "car."[30]

The clear shift towards Classical Syriac, together with the inclusion of complicated new compositions and the use of modern words suggests that these manuscripts are part of the revival movement of Classical Syriac of the twentieth century, which was especially present among members of the Syriac Orthodox Church.[31] One of the scribes

[30] See Knudsen, "An Important Step in the Revival of Literary Syriac: Abrohom Nuro's Tawldotho," in *Oriens Christianus* 84 (2000): 62. He describes the word *radōythō* as a calque from the Arabic word *sayyāra*, which has the same meaning.

[31] Murre, "Classical Syriac and the Syriac Churches," 142.

whose name comes up often is that of Isaac Sākā. He was born in the early thirties of the twentieth century in Bartallah and became later a well-known bishop. He appears in the catalogues of the Bartallah manuscripts as the scribe of several manuscripts of the late forties and the early fifties. At that time he was a student of the Ephrem School in Mosul. Isaac Sākā is not only known for his later activities as bishop, but also for the fact that he was later in his life actively concerned with the use of Classical Syriac for modern purposes. Assad Sauma considers him as one of the forerunners of the Syriac revival movement.[32] His father was the equally well-known priest Jacob Sākā, mentioned in Patriarch Barsoum's literature history, of whom it is known that he wrote a large collection of Classical Syriac poetry. The most viable explanation for the fact that Classical Syriac became so omnipresent in Bartallah's manuscripts is that its scribes, possibly assisted by their education at the Ephrem School in Mosul, collectively made this switch possible.

The manuscripts in Baghdeda, the other town from which I studied the manuscript colophons, do not show a similar development. Here the plurality of languages before World War I remains intact in the years after: we see that most colophons are in Classical Syriac, but that there are also many colophons or manuscript parts in Arabic or in Garshuni. Even if the towns were located close to each other, there seems to be little connection between Baghdeda and Bartallah as far as the manuscripts are concerned: there are different scribal families, and there is no evidence that the scribes of the Syriac Orthodox churches of Baghdeda frequented the same educational institutions as those in Bartallah. In addition, the contents of the colophons are different: they have a different structure and contain different standard elements.

The colophons of the Baghdeda manuscripts often contain references to political and societal events and issues. For instance, a Syriac Catholic manuscript from 1929 gives information in its Syriac-language colophon about a major disease that spread around the town, and how the town was put into quarantine:

[32] Assad Sauma, "Denho Makdisi-Elyas (1911–2008): The Last Giant of the Aramean Poets," *Parole de l'Orient* 36 (2011): 329–66.

> In this year, 1929, 500 children from the village of Baghdeda died—may God protect them—and in October and November of the same year there was disease and no few children died. The leaders of the city of Mosul gave an order to the soldiers in Baghdeda not to permit any of its inhabitants to leave and to go to another place, or to enter [the town].[33]

The scribe then asks himself if the events should be considered a punishment from God, without providing an answer.

An old Syriac Orthodox manuscript, from 1742, that was renovated in 1938, contains an Arabic addition written in 1948 giving information about the Arab-Israeli war, and an unidentified conflict between the Syriac Orthodox and Catholic:

> In 1948, a *ṭighār* (2000 kg) of wheat was twenty dinars, and a *ṭighār* of barley was eight dinars. A war between the Arabs and the Jews took place in the Holy Land, and a conflict occurred between the Syriac Orthodox and the Syriac Catholic groups (*jamāʿatayn*) in the same year, on Sunday 11 July 1948, and members of our Orthodox group were killed due to the conflict. This is what happened in the beginning of this year. This line was written on Sunday 22 August 1948.[34]

Alphonse Mingana's collection of manuscripts and his scribe Mattai bar Paulus

Alphonse Mingana was a famous scholar who was born in Iraq but who became well known in Britain for his academic work about languages and texts from the Middle East. Coming originally from Iraq but living in Europe, he gives a perspective as an outsider with inside

[33] Baghdeda manuscript 62, according to Sony, *Fihris makhtūtāt kanāʾis Baghdēdā*, 81–82.

[34] Baghdeda manuscript 38, according to Sony, *Fihris makhtūtāt kanāʾis Baghdēdā*, 61–62. It is not clear whether the conflict took place in the Jerusalem or in Iraq.

knowledge. Alphonse Mingana was born around 1880 in Sharanāsh al-ʿUlyā, a village close to the city of Zakho, which was at that time still part of the Ottoman Empire. His father was a priest for the Chaldean Church in that village, and Mingana—still known as Hormizd at that time—was supposed to become a priest as well, as he graduated from the Syro-Chaldean seminary of the Dominicans.

To the regret of the Catholic Church, Mingana took a different path. After his graduation at the seminary he was ordained a priest in 1902, and during the following eight years he worked as a lecturer of Syriac at the same seminary. He also published his first academic work in this period. One of these publications resulted into a break between him and the Church. The exact reasons and the nature of this rupture are unknown, but in 1913 he arrived in Birmingham in the United Kingdom, where he found refuge with the Quakers.[35]

Mingana lived in Britain for the rest of his life, where his talents concerning manuscripts was quickly discovered: in 1915 he was hired by the John Rylands Library in Manchester to catalogue the library's Arabic manuscripts, of which he eventually became the curator. In 1925, 1926 and 1929 he undertook three journeys to the Middle East to collect manuscripts, which is now called the "Mingana collection" of Christian Syriac and Arabic manuscripts. In 1932 Mingana left his job in Manchester to become the curator of his personal collection at the Central Library of the Selly Oak Colleges. He remained active in this position until his early death in 1937.

While Mingana never occupied a research position at a university—possibly because he had never obtained a Ph.D.—he published academic articles and books throughout his career, which gave him a reputation as a respected scholar, even though there were (and are) doubts about his integrity, mainly triggered because he probably forged a manuscript during his early career.[36]

[35] See for Mingana's biography Samir Khalil Samir, *Alphonse Mingana (1878–1937) and his contribution to early Christian-Muslim studies, a lecture delivered on 25 May 1990 to the First Woodbrooke Mingana Symposium on "Christian Arabic Apologetic texts during the Abbasid period 750–1258 CE"* (Birmingham: Selly Oak Colleges, 1990).

[36] I argued elsewhere that Mingana's professional correspondence with other European and American orientalists shows that even though the accusations at Mingana's address were well known, he had an extensive network of scholars who respected and supported him. Tijmen C. Baarda, "Firmly established in early 20th-

The reason why Mingana is interesting for our purposes concerns the connections he maintained with the Middle East, especially Iraq. His engagement with the situation that unfolded during and after World War I is visible in a considerable amount of newspaper articles he wrote for the *Manchester Guardian*. Here we discover that Mingana was a staunch supporter of the British policy in Iraq, fearing that if Iraq were abandoned by Britain sectarian tensions between Sunnis and Shi'ites and Muslims and Christians would drive the country into chaos.[37] He also strongly opposed the idea that Mosul was a Turkish city as it was discussed where the border between Turkey and Iraq was going to be drawn. About the religious tolerance that he perceived in this city, he writes: "The most striking characteristic note of its inhabitants is the friendliness and the religious toleration which exists between Christians and Mohammedans. Mosul is the only place trodden under the foot of the Turkish Sultan where the effervescence of religious fanaticism does not carry all before it; hence the title of the 'City of Toleration' applied to it by many travelers and tourists."[38] In 1923, when the debate was taking place if Mosul should belong to Turkey or to Iraq, Mingana wrote in opposition to the Turkish claims on the city that "[a]ll the present inhabitants of the city speak Arabic, and, including its 25,000 Syrian Christians, are as true Arabs as any to be found in the other large Arab towns of the Near East."[39]

Mingana's active involvement in Middle Eastern affairs is visible in his correspondence with the Syriac Orthodox patriarch Ignatius Ephrem I Barsoum, whom he described as the "highest ecclesiastical

century Orientalism: Mingana among his fellow scholars," *Hugoye: Journal of Syriac Studies* 19 (2016): 3–34.

[37] On July 19, 1920 he writes in the *Manchester Guardian*: "I am certain that if tomorrow we withdrew from Mesopotamia, our withdrawal would give rise to such a terrible state of anarchy that not more than a week would elapse before we found ourselves compelled to return and begin afresh our interrupted administrative work," giving as reasons the division between Sunnites and Shi'ites and the existence of other "nationalities," and the chaos this would create. A. Mingana, "The Mandate For Mesopotamia," *Manchester Guardian*, July 19, 1920 (this and the following articles from the *Manchester Guardian* are available in a scrapbook in Mingana's archive, Cadbury Research Library, Birmingham, DA66–2).

[38] A. Mingana, "Mosul. By One Who Knows It," *Manchester Guardian*, April 10, 1917.

[39] A. Mingana, "Mosul. Its Population and Resources. Why the Turks Desire It," *Manchester Guardian*, January 2, 1923.

dignity found in this world" in a letter to him after he was elected as a patriarch in 1933, and whom he advised during a conflict between him and the Catholicos of the Syrian Church of India, when large numbers of its members were about to join the Catholic church.[40]

Aside from his political and religious involvement, most of Mingana's correspondence with people in the Middle East concerns his dedication in collecting manuscripts in Arabic and Syriac. His correspondence with the Syriac Orthodox Patriarch especially concerns the manuscripts he wanted to acquire from him. A large number of letters is furthermore preserved with various professional manuscript dealers, working from the Middle East or from Europe, even though Mingana held the opinion that these sellers were charging too much money, preferring to buy manuscripts from the Middle East directly from the owner.

Mingana's main task in Birmingham was to catalogue the immense amount of manuscripts he had collected. The three volumes, comprising over a thousand pages and covering almost 3000 manuscripts, appeared during the years 1933–1939.[41] The first one, which is by far the most voluminous, covers the Syriac manuscripts in the collection, contains around 600 manuscripts of which many were produced in the period 1918–1950 in Iraq.

One of the most important persons through which Mingana acquired manuscripts was the Syriac Orthodox deacon Mattai bar Paulus from Mosul (1861–1947).[42] He was a prolific copyist of

[40] Mingana wrote the letter in which he congratulated the Patriarch in English instead of Arabic, because he was not able to use his right hand at that time and his secretary used to type out the letters that he wrote in English. The letters can be found in the Cadbury Research Library (Birmingham), DA66/1/3/5 "Correspondence concerning the Church of Malabar," respectively dated January 3, 1933, and December 8, 1932.

[41] A. Mingana, *Catalogue of the Mingana collection of manuscripts, now in the possession of the trustees of the Woodbrooke settlement, Selly Oak, Birmingham*, part 1 (Cambridge: Heffer, 1933).

[42] This section is partly based on a book chapter that I wrote on the occasion of a conference called "Common ground? Jews, Christians and Muslims in the Middle East," which took place at Leiden University on 26 and 27 September 2013. Tijmen C. Baarda, "Standardized Arabic as a post-Nahḍa common ground: Mattai bar Paulus and his use of Syriac, Arabic and Garshuni," in *Modernity, Minority, and the Public Sphere: Jews and Christians in the Middle East*, ed. Sasha R. Goldstein and Heleen Murre-van den Berg (Leiden: Brill, 2016), 71–95.

manuscripts, and he produced numerous manuscripts on the request of Mingana and other scholars.[43] Mingana's collection contains around fifty of his manuscripts. Mattai's scholarship and excellency in the Syriac language was acknowledged by the well-known Syriac Orthodox writer Nematallah Denno, who I introduce below. He is mentioned by Jean-Maurice Fiey in his book *Mossoul chrétienne*, calling him a "copiste jacobite fameux," suggesting that he was a relatively well-known person in Syriac Orthodox circles in Mosul.[44] Mingana's archive in Birmingham contains almost a hundred letters from Mattai, which for the biggest part deal with arrangements to buy and solicit manuscripts. He received them while he was already living in Britain, respectively in Manchester and Birmingham, in the period 1926–1935. The letters are all in Arabic, and provide an interesting view on the use of Arabic by the Syriac Orthodox in Mosul.

All letters are written in Arabic using *ruqʿa*, a type of Arabic script that was originally used in Ottoman bureaucracy and gradually became the standard script for Arabic handwriting throughout the Middle East. Mattai's skilled use of this script suggests a proper training in writing Arabic. However, a look at the language behind the script shows that Mattai's adherence to formal norms stops there. The language is far from Standard Arabic and contains many elements that suggest heavy influence of the prevalent dialect of Northern Mesopotamian Arabic. At the same time, it lacks certain dialectal markers to consider it purely dialectal Arabic. If these letters had been written centuries ago, they would have been put under the category of Middle Arabic by Western scholars.

Northern Mesopotamian Arabic was almost certainly not the native language of Mingana, who came from an Sureth-speaking environment. Having received the greatest part of his education in Mosul at the Dominican seminary, though, he was most probably well able to understand the Arabic dialect of Mosul. It is therefore almost certain

[43] In the nineteenth and early twentieth century, soliciting copies of older manuscripts was a common practice with Western Orientalists if acquiring the original manuscript was not possible, and Mingana was one of the scholars who resorted to this. See Murre-van den Berg, *Scribes and scriptures*, 87–88.

[44] J.-M. Fiey, *Mossoul Chrétienne : Essai sur l'histoire, l'archéologie et l'état actuel des monuments chrétiens de la ville de Mossoul* (Beirut: Imprimerie catholique, 1959), 30.

that Mingana could understand Mattai's letters without any trouble. The question remains, however, why Mattai wrote to Mingana in this type of Arabic, instead of using any of the other possibilities: Sureth, Classical Syriac, or Standard Arabic. Another question is why Mattai did not make use of Garshuni to write in Arabic.

Of those options, Sureth—probably Mingana's native language—was probably not feasible since Mattai's origins from the city of Mosul make it unlikely that he was proficient writing in it. And even if he were, it still remains possible that he would not have opted to use this language: as I discuss later, many educated native speakers of Sureth did not use this language for written texts, using Arabic or Classical Syriac instead. Classical Syriac, then, was a language that both Mattai and Mingana were evidently proficient in, at least for written purposes. In Mattai's case we know that he used Classical Syriac as a deacon in ecclesial contexts and for copying manuscripts. This means that his writings in Syriac may have been limited to the texts he copied from other manuscripts and manuscript colophons. Of these writings, only the manuscript colophons are creative work, and even these texts are often relatively formulaic, and they are written in the context of a very long tradition of Syriac manuscript colophons, needing relatively little active knowledge of Classical Syriac. Writing letters would be different, especially because a modern letter is a different genre than a manuscript colophon.[45] Had Mattai been influenced by the revival movement of writing and speaking in Classical Syriac, he would possibly not only have been encouraged to write his letters in Classical Syriac, but also to be empowered to do so. However, while there are some traces of this revival movement in Iraq at the time (see above), it is unlikely that the employment of Classical Syriac would have been thought appropriate for the genre of personal letters: the Syriac revival movement was mainly restricted to literary expressions.

Considering that both Sureth and Classical Syriac were probably no feasible options for Mattai, the fact that Mattai chose to write his letters in Arabic is not surprising. The question remains why Mattai does not follow the standards of Arabic, and at the same time why he

[45] To give an example, someone who trains themselves in writing in Biblical Hebrew or Classical Greek would be able to write new stories and poems using the style of the classical texts, but probably not to write modern news reports without inventing special vocabulary and structures for it.

did not write in Garshuni. To answer the first question, we have to know whether Mattai was conscious of the fact that he did not use the formal forms and if he was able to write according to the standards. Every now and then Mattai shows his knowledge of features that are very specific to Standard Arabic, as they do not occur in any of the common spoken dialects. An example is the occurrence of the word *qā'ilan* "saying," a form which glottal stop in the middle of the word is highly distinctive for Standard Arabic. It is even more telling that he writes the word with the *hamza* and *tanwīn* signs. These features suggest that Mattai was well aware of the ideal of using the official, Standard Arabic forms, and that he either did his best to use them, without being able to do it all the time, or that he wrote in this way on purpose.

The other question is why Mattai did not use Garshuni in his letters to Mingana. It is possible that the assumed function of Garshuni to express a "Syriac identity" while writing in Arabic was not considered useful in writing personal letters, as they were not addressed to somebody who had to be convinced of any identity. In the case of manuscripts, which were often used in spaces where rituals and symbols were important, the use of Syriac script has a more obvious function, reasserting the belonging of the readers to a community with a certain kind of religious Syriac identification. If it is true that Mattai resorted to the use of Arabic script because there was no ideological reason to use Garshuni in his letters to Mingana, there is a good chance that Mattai felt more comfortable in writing in Arabic script than in Syriac script.

Mattai bar Paulus makes no appearance in the written histories of intellectuals, nor is he known by contemporary historians and other scholars from Iraq and the diaspora. However, he was held in high esteem by Nematallah Denno, who was one of the most prominent writers for *Lisān al-Mashriq*, one of the two ecclesial journals (see Chapter 4). Mingana's archive contains a curious document by Nematallah called "Biography of deacon Mattai Paulus the Syriac Orthodox" (*Tarjamat al-Shammās Mattá Pawlūs al-Suryānī al-Urthūdūksī*) (see figure 2.1 at the end of this chapter). Indeed, the text contains a biography of Mattai, or rather a eulogy, because it is a laudatory account of his achievements as a scribe. It is unclear how the text became part of Mingana's archive. It does not seem to have acted as some sort of

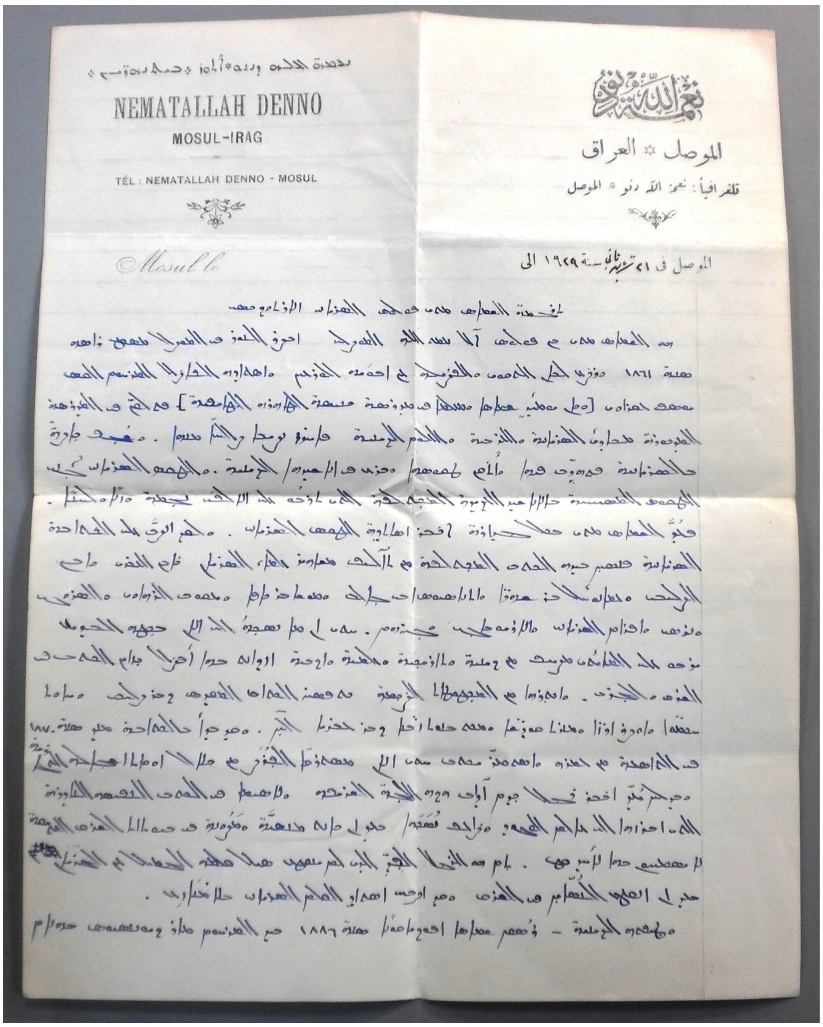

Figure 2.1: Nematallah's letter about Mattai bar Paulus

a "letter of recommendation" for Mingana, because it was written in 1929, three years after the first correspondence between Mattai and Mingana.

Other than Nematallah's (later) work for *Lisān al-Mashriq*, which is completely in Arabic as we expect it to be written, this biography is written in Garshuni in West Syriac *Serṭā* script. The paper on which

it is written contains a printed letterhead in three languages: Arabic, Syriac, and French. The Arabic and French parts seem the most important here and include space to write the date. The Syriac comprises only one line, in *Serṭā* script, and was apparently mainly for decorative purposes as it lacks the telegraph address and date. In Syriac, the city of Mosul and Iraq are referred to as *Othur* and *Beth Nahrin*. Nematallah's Arabic name is rendered here using Garshuni. The date is filled out in the Arabic part of the printed letterhead and is the only instance of written Arabic script in the document.

At first sight, Mattai's biography by Nematallah features linguistic phenomena that are even further away from the common use of Arabic by the Muslim environment because of its employment of Garshuni. The whole document has a Syriac appearance because of the use of Syriac script. However, contrary to Mattai's letters to Mingana, the Arabic *language* that Nematallah uses is in perfect accordance to the rules of Standard Arabic: if one changed the Syriac characters for the corresponding glyphs in Arabic, the document would look like a normal Arabic text. Nematallah even added Arabic vowel signs at some places to explicitly mark the correct case endings.[46]

At one place in the biography, there is a feature that could be identified as code switching. About halfway the biography, Nematallah names several examples of texts that Mattai copied. Like Mattai himself in his letters, he does so in the Syriac language, even though in Nematallah's case the contrast with the Arabic parts is not as obvious because both parts are in the same script. Interestingly, from the moment that Nematallah switches to Syriac, he does not only use Syriac for the names of the texts and authors, but also for the words in between. In addition to that, he uses the Syriac version of the name of Bar Salibi (*bar ṣalībī*), whereas elsewhere in the text he uses the Arabic *ibn ṣalībī*. Apparently, writing those names in Classical Syriac triggered a reaction with Nematallah to write the whole phrase in the

[46] This is possible thanks to the fact that the Syriac and Arabic scripts are conceptually very similar: in Garshuni, each Syriac glyph represents one Arabic glyph, so that texts in Garshuni adhere to the same orthography as Arabic in principle. The surplus of letters in the Arabic alphabet compared to the Syriac (28 against 22) is overcome by optional diacritical dots. For representing vowels, gemination and *tanwīn*, the Arabic signs may be used. Nematallah follows the usual rules of Garshuni, which were described in George Anton Kiraz, *A Grammar of the Syriac Language: Orthography* (Piscataway: Gorgias Press, 2012), 1:294–298.

language. This is visible in the following excerpt, in which the Syriac parts are printed in bold face:[47]

ܘܐܟܬܪܗܐ ܡܢ ܣܓܝܐ ܟܬܒ̈ܐ ܐܝܟ ܦܫܓܪ ܟܬܒܐ ܩܕܝܫܐ ܕܒܪ ܨܠܝܒܝ ܘܗ̱ܝܘܬ ܚܟܡܬܗ̱ ܘ
ܐܘܨܪ ܪ̈ܙ̈ܐ ܘܡ̈ܢܪ̈ܬ ܩܘ̈ܕܫ̈ܐ ܘܡ̈ܟܬܒ̈ܢܘܬ ܙܒ̈ܢ̈ܐ ܕܒܪ ܥ̈ܒ̈ܪܝܐ ܐܠ̈ܐ ܐ̈ܟܝܪ̈ܗ̱ ܘ
ܐ̈ܟܝܪ̈ܗ̱ ܗ̱ܢ ܗ̱ܢ ܟ̈ܠ

wa-ʾakthar-hā min al-makhṭūṭāt al-ḍakhma ka-tafsīr al-kitāb al-muqaddas d-bar ṣalībī w-ḥēwath ḥekhmōthō w-awṣar rōzē wa-mnōrath qūdshē w-makhtbōnūth zabnē d-bar ʿēbrōyō ilá ākhirihī

> Most of them are from voluminous manuscripts, such as the commentary of the Bible **by Bar Salibi, "Cream of Wisdom," "Storehouse of mysteries," "Candlestick of the Sanctuary," and the Chronicon by Bar Hebraeus,** etcetera.

The reason why in this document Nematallah, contrary to Mattai in his letters to Mingana, used a formal type of Arabic is not difficult to answer. First, Nematallah was a well-known writer and active for the Syriac Orthodox journal *Lisān al-Mashriq*, which uses a formal type of Arabic throughout: there is no question about his ability to write in Standard Arabic. Second, Nematallah's text has a more formal character than Mattai's letters. We do not know the intended audience of the document for sure, but the fact that it carries a title and a rather formal enumeration of Mattai's abilities and works suggests that it was meant to be published somewhere instead of being solely a notice for the sake of Mingana.

The question for this document is why Nematallah used Garshuni here, while Mattai, the person about whom he is writing, used Arabic script in his letters. It is, as we see in Chapter 4, contrary to his practice while he was writing for *Lisān al-Mashriq*, which was completely printed in Arabic script. However, the biography of Mattai was handwritten, and unlike printed texts in Syriac, handwritten texts in Syriac did not cause technical difficulties. While Mattai's letters to Mingana were handwritten as well—but nevertheless written in Arabic

[47] The last word is the Garshuni version of الخ, a common Arabic abbreviation for the Arabic expression *ilá ākhirihī* "etcetera," marked by a line above the combination, which is a common feature in Arabic manuscripts.

script—Nematallah's document was of a more formal nature, which might have triggered Nematallah to make a more conscious choice of the script to use for the document. If the document was for internal use within the boundaries of the Syriac Orthodox community, its intended readers would have been familiar with texts in Garshuni. The same is true if the text was written for the sake of Mingana: Garshuni had no secrets for him.[48] Except for Arabic, Nematallah could also have written the whole document in Classical Syriac—leaving out the possibility of Sureth for the same reasons as Mattai. Given Nematallah's reputation as an intellectual, it is highly probable that he was able to compose this biography in Syriac, but apparently Arabic was a more logical choice. This probably has to do with the fact that Arabic was much more in use for the creation of new, original texts, and that Nematallah was not known to be part of the movement of the revival of Classical Syriac. It is also in line with his further activity in Arabic-language mediums, such as the later Syriac Orthodox journal *Lisān al-Mashriq*.

The documents I have discussed in this section are similar to manuscripts in the sense that they are handwritten, but different because they are less formal. Another important difference is that these texts were written to be sent outside the Syriac Orthodox community of Mosul, crossing a denominational boundary.[49] This is certain for the letters from Mattai to Mingana, and a possibility for Nematallah's biography of Mattai.

Conclusion

For the Syriac Christians in Iraq, manuscripts were an important tool to record and to preserve texts. Most of these texts were liturgical and meant for usage in church. Up to the end of the 1940s and beyond, the manuscript production remained considerable, and the en-

[48] A final possibility is that by using Syriac script, Nematallah intended to overcome censorship, even though it is hard to find a reason why the document would be politically sensitive.

[49] We should keep in mind, though, that part of Mattai's manuscripts were commissioned by Mingana and therefore meant to be distributed outside the community as well. Mattai might have taken this—consciously or unconsciously—into account while producing the manuscripts.

deavors of Alphonse Mingana through his Mosul contact Mattai bar Paulus show that the production was valued by customers in Western Europe as well. Representing a tradition that in many aspects was virtually unchanged through the centuries, they do not only differ from other types of literary production in terms of language use and way of production, but also in the way they locate the Syriac Christians as members of Iraqi society. While the manuscripts rarely explicitly give information about the way the Syriac Christians self-identified, their meta-information such as language and place of production, as well as their colophons, gives many clues.

The manuscript colophons from Bartallah and Baghdeda, covering part of the Syriac Orthodox and Syriac Catholic churches, make clear that the affiliation with the specific denomination was considered important information that needed to be included. All manuscript colophons contain a reference to the head of their church and other church leaders. The occasional references to the "Syriac Orthodox *umtho*," which can be seen as a Syriac equivalent of the Ottoman *millet*, show that the manuscripts present a world in which the traditional Ottoman world order had not changed much and that the "*millet* practice" was still alive in the world of manuscripts. The same general conclusion can be made regarding the significance of the Iraqi state: the manuscript colophons do not refer to the King or even the state of Iraq as a point of reference. There is not a single sign of steps toward unity among the different groups of Syriac Christians, either.

Turning to language use, we see some striking developments compared to the period before World War I. In a country where Arabic was the language of the future, the scribes of Bartallah chose to write everything exclusively in Syriac, contrary to the period before World War I, when Arabic was used a lot. Rather than interpreting this as a conservative turn, we should see this as a pre-eminent example of a modern development. From a situation where Syriac, Arabic, and Arabic Garshuni were used alongside each other and often within one and the same manuscript before the war, after the war everything is in Syriac. This standardization is similar to the standardization process of Arabic, related to the *nahḍa*. Where other Syriac Christians took pride in writing correctly in Standard Arabic, the scribes of Bartallah did the same for Syriac. One of the scribes was evidently influenced by the Classical Syriac revival movement, which is in many

ways influenced by the Arabic *nahḍa*. At the same time, the clear turn to Syriac is not visible at other centers of manuscript production discussed in this chapter. The traditional practices of language mixing and Garshuni from before World War I are continued in the manuscript colophons of Baghdeda and in the correspondence of Mattai bar Paulus with Alphonse Mingana. In these centers, the *nahḍa* had not (yet) had its effect as elsewhere that Christians and Muslims used Arabic in the same way.

Most manuscripts were produced in smaller towns and monasteries, far from the cosmopolitan centers of Mosul and Baghdad. This chapter was the only chapter where these places play a central role. From manuscripts we now move on to the group of Christians that was absent in this chapter: the Assyrians, most of whom belonged to the Church of the East. Their printed books may be seen as a substitution of the manuscripts of the other groups, but there are striking differences in language use and especially the self-identification that is expressed in these books.

Chapter 3

Identifying as Assyrians: printing Syriac and Neo-Aramaic

In Chapter 1, I discussed the struggle between different factions among the Assyrians. One group, the "party of Mar Shimʿun," named after the Patriarch of the Assyrian Church of the East, opposed integration of the Assyrians as citizens of Iraq, while another party had more positive feelings towards the state of Iraq. However, what brings these two parties together is that both groups identified as Assyrians, and therefore explicitly as being part of a different national group than their Arab and Kurdish neighbors. The dominance of the Assyrians in Iraqi political historiography makes that they are often seen as the quintessential opponents of Arab-Iraqi society.

In this chapter, I show that Assyrian literature and education gives a more nuanced view of the Assyrians' supposedly negative attitude towards Iraqi society. Most Assyrian literature does not express hostile feelings against the state of Iraq, while educational activities usually actively stimulated integration into the Arab-dominated society by stressing the study of Arabic in the school curriculums. However, an important difference between the Assyrians and the other Syriac Christian groups that I discuss in this dissertation is their identification as an ethnic group. This important aspect is clearly visible both in their preferred way of literary expression—by publishing printed

books—and in their educational activities. I start with the group around Joseph de Kelaita and their printing press. After that, I turn to Assyrian education.

19th-century beginnings: written Neo-Aramaic and the rise of Assyrianism

The beginnings of self-identification as Assyrian and the establishment of Northeastern Neo-Aramaic as a written language happened roughly at the same time with the same group of people. Both developments are largely intertwined, and are fundamental for the understanding of the activities of Assyrians in early Iraq. There is evidence for a considerable role of Western missions here, specifically the American Protestant mission, which started in 1834, and continued until World War I.

The first dated attestations of Neo-Aramaic texts are from the 16th or 17th century,[1] but it would take another two centuries for the language to be used at a large scale. Today, the writing of Neo-Aramaic, most often a northeastern dialect and usually called Sureth, Swadaya or (Modern) Assyrian, is well developed and common among communities who speak this language, especially in Iraqi Kurdistan.[2] The developments that led to this consolidation mainly happened in the 19th-century Urmia and Hakkari regions, where a Northeastern variant called Swadaya was spoken. Users of written Neo-Aramaic in 20th-century Iraq drew upon this legacy.

[1] Alessandro Mengozzi, *A Story in a Truthful Language: Neo-Syriac Poems by Israel of Alqosh and Joseph of Telkepe, North Iraq, 17th century*, volume 1: *Introduction and translations* (Louvain: Peeters, 2002), 20.

[2] Northeastern Neo-Aramaic is often abbreviated as NENA. The other Neo-Aramaic groups employed by Christians are Central Neo-Aramaic, best known in its appearance as Ṭūrōyō or Sūrayt, spoken by the West Syriac Christians of Tur Abdin and the diaspora in Syria, Lebanon and outside the Middle East, and Western Neo-Aramaic. The latter group has few speakers and stands out, as it belongs to the Western group of Aramaic dialects, and not to the Eastern group, to which Classical Syriac also belongs. For the interplay of dialects of Northeastern Neo-Aramaic in Iraq since World War I, see Edward Y. Odisho, "Bilingualism and Multilingualism among Assyrians: A Case of Language Erosion and Demise," in *Semitica: Serta philologica, Constantino Tsereteli dicata*, ed. Riccardo Contini et al. (Turin: Silvio Zamorani, 1993), 189–200.

There is evidence that the local dialect of Neo-Aramaic in the region of Urmia was written on a limited scale from the early nineteenth century.[3] Right from the start of the American mission, in 1834, it was decided that the local vernacular language was to be used in writing for their missionary purposes, which was common practice among Protestant missionaries at the time. The absence of a strong writing tradition forced the missionaries to set this up themselves, which they did with help from assistants among the local clergy. The dialect of Urmia was chosen as the fundament of the literary language, because it was considered a well-understood dialect.[4] In 1840, a Syriac printing press was established and the next year the first texts in Neo-Aramaic were published, including texts translated from English and original works by the missionaries.[5] In the following decade, the press published numerous tracts and books, a translation of the Old and New Testament, and the journal *Zahrire d-Bahrā* (Rays of Light) from 1849. At the end of this decade the language had largely standardized.[6] In this period, most, though not all, original texts were written by the missionaries, but from 1870 there is evidence that the literary language started to be employed by the Assyrians themselves on a larger scale, with the same linguistic features as the texts composed by the missionaries.[7] The end of the nineteenth century saw a sharp increase in the writing of Neo-Aramaic by Assyrians, who also started to publish their work at other places than the American missionary press.[8] In this way, the new literary language, or Literary Urmia Aramaic, had gradually become a new tool that could be used independently by Assyrians to write in their native language. The American missionaries evidently had a highly stimulating, if not foundational role to this effect.

The missionaries used East Syriac script for Literary Urmia Aramaic and the orthography that was developed was roughly based on that of Classical Syriac, a practice that is in line with the (so-

[3] H.L. Murre-van den Berg, *From a Spoken to a Written Language: The Introduction and Development of Literary Urmia Aramaic in the Nineteenth Century* (Leiden: Nederlands Instituut voor het Nabije Oosten, 1999), 88.

[4] Ibid., 93–6.

[5] Ibid., 97-8.

[6] Ibid., 101–2.

[7] Ibid., 106–8.

[8] Ibid., 110.

cio)linguistic connection between the two languages.[9] In some cases, it is hard to distinguish the difference between written Neo-Aramaic and Classical Syriac at first sight, even in cases where there is a dramatic difference in pronunciation. This happens mainly for short texts such as title pages of books.[10] While the writing of Neo-Aramaic on a large scale is a 19th-century phenomenon, the principle of basing the written language on the practices of Classical Syriac appears to be in fact a relatively old tradition. While other writing practices are attested, such as using Arabic script,[11] the earliest known Christian texts in Neo-Aramaic show a strong influence of Classical Syriac in the orthography.[12] Interestingly, but not surprisingly, early Jewish Neo-Aramaic texts show similar influence of Hebrew and Jewish Aramaic,[13] and another parallel can be drawn with writing practices of Neo-Arabic dialects.[14] It is not known if the American missionaries were influenced by earlier writing tradition of Neo-Aramaic,[15] but in texts of the late nineteenth century the principle to base orthography on Classical Syriac had even increased, which is visible in a tendency to base the orthography of more words on etymology.[16]

[9]While from a linguistic point of view the Neo-Aramaic dialects cannot be regarded as a direct continuation of Classical Syriac, apart from being both in the eastern group of Aramaic dialects, the connections are tight on other fronts, such as continued mutual influence in terms of vocabulary and grammar, but also because of the common group of users. The idea that Neo-Aramaic dialects are often seen as variants of Classical Syriac is supported by the fact that Neo-Aramaic is sometimes referred to as Modern Syriac.

[10]This is similar to the situation of Ottoman Turkish versus Arabic, where the large amount of Arabic words are written in the same way as in Arabic.

[11]Geoffrey Khan, *The Neo-Aramaic Dialect of Qaraqosh* (Leiden: Brill, 2002), 8.

[12]For a discussion of the influence of Classical Syriac in Neo-Aramaic poetry from Alqosh, see Mengozzi, *A Story in a Truthful Language*, 21–4.

[13]Alessandro Mengozzi, *A Story in a Truthful Language*, volume 1, 20.

[14]This situation can be compared to orthographies of the spoken varieties of Arabic where Arabic script is used, which does not usually reflect differences in phonology, facilitated by the absence of short vowels in writing. For instance, the Arabic word الجديد *al-jadīd* "new," normally pronounced as /ælʤædi:d/ in Modern Standard Arabic, is pronounced as /ʒ:did/ in Moroccan Arabic, but usually written in the same way. Especially in short written phrases the difference between Standard Arabic and a spoken variety is not distinguishable.

[15]Murre, *From a Spoken to a Written Language*, 95–6.

[16]Ibid., 109.

It was in the same time that a sense of nationhood became common in the Hakkari and Urmia regions, which was eventually to develop into Assyrian nationalism as we know it today. In the late nineteenth century, an increasing differentiation is visible between a religious and national identification. Adam Becker cites as one of the reasons for this differentiation a fragmentation of these Syriac Christians into different religious groups. A new national identification was advocated to unite all these groups. According to Becker, foreign missionaries amplified this development in two ways: first because the missions caused a greater religious pluralism,[17] and second because the idea of a distinction between religion and nationhood was advocated by the American missionaries.[18] The result was not nationalism in the sense that there was a pronouncement of territorial claims, but rather the idea that the Assyrians belong together as a nation. This shift to a national identification is visible in a gradual shift in terminology: where the word *ṭāyepā*, a word derived from Arabic *ṭā'ifa* and used to differentiate between Christian sects, was preferred in the early period of the American mission, the word *mellat* took over in the late nineteenth century.[19] While the latter is a cognate of the well-known Ottoman Turkish word *millet*, which was used for religious groups, in this context it rather corresponds to its Persian version, *mellat*, which started to refer to national communities from the mid-nineteenth century onwards, a meaning that it gradually received in Neo-Aramaic as well.[20]

[17] In 1871, there Protestant Church formally separated from the Church of the East, while the original plan of the missionaries was to reform the church from within. Murre, *From a Spoken to a Written Language*, 67. The divisions that were caused by ambitions and rivalries of missionaries have incited scholars to critically comment on this role. See Murre, *From a Spoken to a Written Language*, 86, and Becker, *Revival and Awakening: American Evangelical Missionaries in Iran and the Origins of Assyrian Nationalism* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2015), 280.

[18] Becker, *Revival and Awakening*, 296–7.

[19] Ibid., 108–12.

[20] Becker, *Revival and Awakening*, 110. Becker stresses that *melat* meaning "national community" was a new development, and that the original meaning "religious community" prevailed alongside its new meaning. For the Church of the East, the applicability of the *millet* system in a legal way is uncertain, but that does not alter the fact that *millet* could also be used in a social way. See Kai Merten, "Gab es im Osmanischen Reich eine nestorianische Millet? Annäherungen an eine ungelöste Frage," in *Zur Situation der Christen in der Türkei und in Syrien: Exemplarische Einsichten*, ed.

Throughout the nineteenth century, however, the Christians of Hakkari and Urmia continued calling themselves "Syrians" (*Suryāye*, or the vernacular form *Surāye*). Consistent usage of "Assyrian" only started from the end of the 1890s, and was facilitated by numerous factors that were already present for much of the 19th century.[21] In 1895, the connection between "Syrian" (*Suryāyā*) and the Assyrians (*Ātorāye*) was explicitly noted for the first time in *Zahrire d-bahrā* (Rays of Light), in a citation from Ruben Duval's Syriac grammar that was translated from French. In the citation, the word *Suryāyā* is explained as coming from the geographical Syria, which in turn comes from Assyria.[22] From then on, the connection was made more often, and interest in the ancient Assyrian language, culture, and archaeology grew. Becker mentions as a forerunner in this respect the Chaldean archbishop of Urmia Thomas Audo, who in 1906 wrote that as East Syrians they "descend from the aforementioned Assyrians," they "are Assyrians by nature," asking: "[W]hy are we called and call ourselves Syrians?"[23] After the turn of the century these ideas culminated in a mature form of Assyrian nationalism, with an increase in voices expressing the push for unification through a common language, literature and historiography, even if short of demands for an independent homeland. Some West Syriac Christians took this over, resulting in the start of *umthonoyutho*, or the idea that all Syriac Christians belong to one nation, even though this did not yet lead to collaboration among the West and East Syriac Christians (see the Introduction).

For both the development of the written vernacular language and Assyrian nationalism a considerable role is attributed to the Protes-

Martin Tamcke (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag, 2013), 59–72. However, Adam Becker makes it clear that the idea of classification according to religious affiliation also applied to them, including the use of the word *tāyepā*. Becker, *Revival and Awakening*, 108–12.

[21] These reasons were laid out by Wolfhart Heinrichs in 1993, who mentions factors such as the contact with Armenians in Tbilisi who used the word ɯunɲh *asori* for Syriac Christians, and the use of the word "Assyrian Christians" by Anglican missionaries, which they had chosen on the basis of their location in the lands of the ancient Assyrians. Wolfhart Heinrichs, "The Modern Assyrians – Name and Nation," in *Semitica: Serta philologica, Constantino Tsereteli dicata*, ed. Riccardo Contini et al. (Turin: Silvio Zamorani, 1993), 99–114, especially 102 and 107.

[22] Becker, *Revival and Awakening*, 318.

[23] Ibid., 322.

tant American missionaries. What interests us here, however, is not so much how these two developments came about, but rather the fact that they are specific for the East Syriac Christians of the Hakkari and Urmia regions, and that these two factors were imported to Iraq after their forced emigration to the south. Writing in Neo-Aramaic was limited among the Syriac Christians who were in Iraq already before World War I (see Chapter 2), and the same is true for identification as Assyrian (see for this Chapter 5). Both phenomena are therefore strongly connected to the Assyrians from the Hakkari and Urmia regions. In this chapter, I want to show how these phenomena developed in postwar Iraq, and to what extent other Syriac Christian groups got involved into it.

Joseph de Kelaita and Syriac and Swadaya printing

The manuscript production of the Assyrian Church of the East had come to an almost complete standstill before World War I. Literary production of the Assyrians of Hakkari and Urmia before World War I was largely limited to the printed publications in Neo-Aramaic discussed above, such as the journal *Zahrire d-Bahrā*. After the arrival of the Assyrians in Iraq, they had to start anew, without remaining centers of manuscript production, and without a printing press. Before World War I, the Dominican missionaries possessed a printing press in Mosul, the place where their headquarters were based. The printing press was capable of printing multiple scripts, including Latin, Syriac and Arabic, and was used for various types of religious publications, such as liturgical books and catechisms.[24] However, in 1914 it was seized by the Ottoman government, and after the war the missionaries were not able to reestablish a printing press that was able to handle

[24] Mannès Brelet, *Deux siècles de mission dominicaine à Mossoul* (Mosul: 1950), 21. Bibliothèque du Saulchoir, Paris, Mosul mission archive, Z-11.; Coakley and Taylor, "Syriac Books Printed at the Dominican Press, Mosul": 72–75.

Syriac script.[25] There was a gap to be filled in, and the Assyrians were quick to fill in this gap.

The first to bring a printing press suitable for Syriac script to Iraq after World War I was the well-known deacon and later priest Joseph de Kelaita (Yawsep d-bet Qlaytā, 1880–1952).[26] He was born in 1880 in the village of Mārbishoʿ, between Hakkari and Urmia, and was educated in Urmia in the episcopal school and became deacon in the Church of the East. Between 1910 and 1918 he was in England and the United States, where he learned the craft of printing, without experiencing World War I. In 1920, he went to Thrissur in India,[27] accompanying his cousin Mar Timotheus, the bishop of Malabar who had earlier opposed the election of the eleven-year-old Eshai as patriarch Mar Shimun XXI (see Chapter 1). There he was supposed to help his cousin to set up a printing press in Thrissur, but when most of the types were complete he decided to go back to Iraq to use them for himself.[28] In 1921, he went to Mosul, where he was ready to establish the Assyrian printing press. He was entangled in a conflict with the Patriarch, who opposed his ordination as a priest by Mar Timotheus,[29]

[25] See Coakley and Taylor, "Syriac Books Printed at the Dominican Press, Mosul." There is some confusion about the ability of the Dominicans to print Syriac after World War I. An article that speaks about French influence in Iraq from 1920 mentions that the only printing press in Mosul was the Dominican press, which "imprime en français, en arabe, en chaldéen, [et] en syriaque," referring to the eastern and western Syriac scripts with the last two languages, but while it is not surprising that the Dominicans indeed had a Latin and Arabic printing press, it seems improbable that they were capable of efficiently printing in Syriac script. Probably it refers to occasional use of collotype for printing phrases in Syriac script, as I have found no evidence for books or considerable amounts of Syriac texts printed by the Dominicans after 1918, contrary to the period before the war. This view is supported by Coakley and Taylor, who write that after World War I, the Dominican Syriac press was not reestablished, even though some books are claimed to have been published "chez les Pères Dominicains." Henri Froidevaux, "La nouvelle organisation de l'Empire Ottoman," *L'Asie française* 1920: 84–86.

[26] A basic biography of him can be found in Macuch, *Geschichte der spät- und neusyrischen Literatur*, 279.

[27] Contemporary sources give Trichur, as the city was officially named until 1990.

[28] Mar Aprem, "Mar Narsai Press," *Bulletin of the John Rylands Library* 78 (1996): 171–2.

[29] Coakley, "The Church of the East Since 1914," 184. The American missionary R.W. McDowell, who staunchly supported the Assyrian Patriarch, wrote the following about the opposition against him in 1932: "Antagonism [against the Patriarch] centers about one individual, a Kasha Yosep Kalaita, whose opposition is based

which was possibly related to the latter's opposition to the Patriarch's consecration.

There is no reliable comprehensive bibliography of works printed at the press, but some lists are available at the end of the books and at other places.[30] Unfortunately, it seems that these lists are not complete, as they do not include works that were printed by the press for other organizations than the Assyrian Church of the East.[31] The printing press operated from 1921 to 1931, in which period at least 15 books were published. The great majority of these books are liturgical, being editions of medieval and ancient texts in Classical Syriac (*Suryāyā*), sometimes with a translation in Swadaya. Some of these editions are still used by scholars using reprints.[32] The other main categories of books are liturgy books and books about languages: textbooks, grammars, and lexicons, concerning Syriac, English and possibly also Swadaya.

The text editions printed at the Assyrian press were edited by Joseph de Kelaita himself. These books were prepared entirely in Classical Syriac. De Kelaita's critical edition of ʿAbdishoʿ of Nisibis' *Paradise of Eden* (*Pardaysā d-ʿDen*) was published in 1928 at the press

largely on his selfish purposes." It is not clear what these "selfish purposes" might be. It must be noted that the other American missionaries were less enthusiastic about the Patriarch at this point. Presbyterian Historical Society, RG89-1-11 (1932), 30-11. Letter from Mr. McDowell to Speer, January 13th, 1932.

[30] Daniel Benjamin, "Assyrian Printing Presses in Iraq During the 20th Century", ARAM *Periodical* 21 (2009): 154. An almost identical version of this article is also available online: http://www.meltha.dk/AssyrianPrinting-Eng.pdf (accessed May 4th, 2016). Benjamin lists 15 books from this period, but at least one book that I came across is not part of the list.

[31] An example of such a work is a grammar of Classical Syriac by the Paul Bēt-darāyā (or Pawlos d-Bēt Dar), a Chaldean priest affiliated to the Priest School of St. Peter, which he published in 1924 at Joseph de Kelaita's press. The title of the grammar and its contents do not contain the word "Assyrian," but the title page indicates that it was printed at the "press of the Assyrians of the Ancient Church of the East. Pawlos d-Bēt Dar, *Turāṣ mamllā qafisā d-leshānā suryāyā Kaldāyā* (Mosul: Ṭabʿā d-Ātorāye d-ʿIdtā ʿatiqtā d-madnḥā, 1924). Accessed at the Bibliothèque Orientale in Beirut.

[32] For instance, de Kelaita's 1928 edition ʿAbdishō of Nisibis' *Paradise of Eden* was recently republished by Gorgias Press. Abdisho of Nisibis, *The Paradise of Eden*, ed. Joseph E. Y. De Kelaita (Piscataway: Gorgias Press, 2009).

after he published it earlier in Urmia in 1916.[33] Its title page, reproduced by Daniel Benjamin, contains the name of the work, its author, its printer (De Kelaita is not credited as the editor), and details of the printing press. It also mentions that it is the second print, probably regarding the 1916 edition as its first print. The title page resembles Syriac manuscripts in many ways: it is decorated with complex borders that are often found in Syriac manuscripts, and printed in the colors black and red, a common feature of both Western and Eastern manuscript production. Except for the parts of the text printed in a large font size, all the text in Syriac is completely vocalized. While the title page features the year of publication in Arabic (Western) numerals, the line that mentions that De Kelaita was "founder of and teacher in the Assyrian school of Mosul, 1921–1928" gives these years in traditional Syriac numerals, with the addition of *l-māran* "of our Lord," i.e. according to the Christian era. The book also features a title page in English.

Another publication from 1928 is De Kelaita's edition of Narsai's *Exposition of the Mysteries* (*Pūshāq rāzē*).[34] It is not surprising that De Kelaita's press, which was connected to the Assyrian Church of the East, printed a work by this famous fifth-century East Syriac author and founder of the School of Nisibis. The *Exposition* gives valuable insight into the liturgy of the early Church of the East. What interests us, however, is the way this edition of Narsai's text came about. The edition appears to be based on its first (and to date only) critical edition, which was brought out as part of a collection of part of Narsai's hymns by Alphonse Mingana in 1905.[35] At the time, Mingana was still in Mosul and in good understanding with the Chaldean Church and

[33] See the description of Gorgias Press' reprint on the publisher's website: https://www.gorgiaspress.com/the-paradise-of-eden, accessed September 2, 2018.

[34] This edition was recently republished by ATOUR Publications. This edition contains a curious anonymous translation, which appears to be a reproduction of R.H. Connolly's translation, published in 1909. Narsai, The liturgical homilies of Narsai, translated by R. Hugh Connolly, part of *Text and studies: contributions to biblical and patristic literature*, volume 8, no. 1 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1909). The book was republished using a self-publishing service—details can be found here: http://www.lulu.com/shop/mar-narsai/an-exposition-of-the-mysteries/paperback/product-177484.html (last accessed: 17 May 2016).

[35] Mingana's edition was accompanied by an introduction in Latin. Narsai, *Narsai doctoris Syri homiliæ et carmina*, two volumes, ed. Alphonse Mingana (Mosul: Typis Fratrum Prædicatorum, 1905).

the Dominican missionaries. His relationship with the Chaldeans and the missionaries was to deteriorate later,[36] but in 1905 he was still able to publish his edition with the Dominican missionary press in Mosul.

Critics unanimously consider the *Exposition of the mysteries* as the most important of Narsai's homilies that Mingana edited,[37] but also the only one of which Narsai's authorship is contested. Mingana himself noted that according to some authors the homily was written by the thirteenth-century ʿAbdishoʿ of ʿIlām.[38] Already in 1909, the text was translated into English by Hugh Connolly, who for internal reasons concluded that the text was probably authentic, but F.C. Burkitt was more skeptical.[39] De Kelaita shows that he is aware that there might be another author than mentioned on the book's title page, by adding a footnote on the first page of the text of the homily: "There are people who say that [this text] was composed by Mār ʿAbhdishoʿ of ʿIlām."[40] Mingana's edition is notorious for the fact that certain passages from the text were removed or altered in order to hide its references to Nestorius, to make it acceptable for usage by Chaldean Catholics. Mingana was frank about this, and mentions the two omissions and the one alteration in footnotes, while giving the correct text in the introduction.[41] De Kelaita, who worked in service of the Assyrian Church of the East, had no reason to censor the explicitly dyophysite passages. Comparing his edition to Mingana's, De Kelaita reintroduced the first omitted passage, and repaired the text where Mingana had removed the name of Nestorius. At the same time, he did not reintroduce the second omitted passage, for unknown reasons. An innovation of De Kelaita is that he added an excerpt at the begin-

[36] Mingana published the edition while he was working at the Dominican Syro-Chaldean seminary (see Chapter 1). In 1910, Mingana had a conflict with the Chaldean Church, and in 1913 he emigrated from the Middle East to Britain (see also Chapter 2).

[37] See Connolly's introduction: Narsai, *The liturgical homilies of Narsai*, xii, and F.C. Burkitt, "The mss of 'Narsai on the mysteries,'" *Journal of Theological Studies* 29:2 (1928): 269.

[38] Narsai, *Narsai doctoris Syri homiliæ et carmina*, volume 1, 28n.

[39] Burkitt, "The mss of 'Narsai on the mysteries,'": 269–75. Mingana's edition of Narsai's work caused a controversy about his integrity because of accusations of forgery, but the accusations concern another part of his edition. See Samir, *Alphonse Mingana*, 8–10.

[40] Translation is mine.

[41] Narsai, *Narsai doctoris Syri homiliæ et carmina*, volume 1, pages ذفحد and ذفسد.

ning of the book from the *Expositio officiorum ecclesiae*, presumably written by the tenth-century author George of Arbil (or Mosul).[42] This work was earlier identified by Connolly to be similar in contents and of interest for the study of this homily. It seems that De Kelaita used Connolly's edition of the work, which had appeared in the well-known series of critical editions *Corpus Scriptorum Christianorum Orientalium* in 1913. Another interesting aspect of the edition of Narsai's work is that it is accompanied by a translation into Swadaya. Throughout the book, the Classical Syriac text appears on the right (verso) side, with the translation parallel to it on the left (recto) side. Each page of the translation is headed by the word *Swādā'it*.

There are three issues to be discussed about this and other text editions. First, what does it mean that De Kelaita used an edition of Alphonse Mingana for producing a book for his printing press? Second, why was De Kelaita so interested in the production of text editions of classical authors, without an apparent immediate need for use in the church or elsewhere? And third, what was the reason to include Swadaya translations of some of his works, including Narsai's *Exposition*?

The use of Mingana's edition of Narsai's work is interesting, because there is no known connection between De Kelaita and the Dominican missionaries, where Mingana's work was published. De Kelaita could however have had access to Mingana's edition through one of his Chaldean contacts. After Mingana's conflict with the Catholic Church, he had certainly become a controversial figure among the Catholics in Iraq, or at least among the Dominican missionaries,[43] but the fact that his Syriac grammar was still in use at the Syro-Chaldean seminary in 1946 shows that this did not imply an absolute boycott. Another possibility is that he received access to Mingana's edition during his trip to the United Kingdom or the United States. As the early adoption of Mingana's edition by scholars such as Chabot and Con-

[42] Anonmi auctoris (ascribed to Georgio Arbelensi), *Expositio officiorum ecclesiae*, part 2, ed. R.H. Connolly, *Corpus Scriptorum Christianorum Orientalium, scriptores syri*, series secunda xcii (Paris: J. Gabalda, 1913), 81–3.

[43] A document in the Dominican missionary archive about the history of the Syro-Chaldean seminary, where Mingana was a student and later a teacher, notes that he has "une triste célébrité en passant à l'anglicanisme." Mannès Brelet, *Histoire de la mission de Mossoul (jusqu'en 1914)*, Bibliothèque du Saulchoir, Mosul mission archive, Z-9, 29.

nolly shows, it quickly found its way into European and North American libraries.

De Kelaita's interest in text editions certainly needs explication. Part of the books printed by Joseph de Kelaita's press was printed for use in the church, which possibly functioned as a replacement for manuscripts. The grammars and other books about language also had a direct function for the community and could be used as an aid in education or for self-education. But there is little reason to assume that the text edition of classical Syriac religious works served an religious or educational purpose. As an alternative, it can be seen in the light of Assyrian nationalism as it was developing in the early twentieth century. In his monograph on Assyrian nationalism, Becker notes that creating a national literature was an important means by early proponents of an Assyrian identification to bring about their goal. Often with help of missionaries, especially the Dominicans, who were interested in making accessible Syriac patristic literature, and often drawing upon the work of earlier Orientalists, they produced numerous editions and collections of medieval Syriac works. Part of this was published by Thomas Audo in his journal, *The Star*.[44]

Last, De Kelaita's books are partly in Classical Syriac and partly in Swadaya. Most of the works in Swadaya are original works, but a few of his classical text editions are accompanied by a Swadaya translation. Given the history of the strong development of the Swadaya written language before World War I, it is likely to have been the language of choice of the Assyrians in Iraq for the sake of being understood by a large amount of people. Still, it might come as a surprise that De Kelaita felt the need to add a translation to classical text editions. This may be explained by a wish for the texts to be understood by a larger audience than the usual readers of these classical texts. However, another possibility is that he did this for ideological reasons. Having these texts translated into Swadaya could increase the number of important texts in this language, and thereby the status of a national Assyrian literature. At the same time, the texts cannot be interpreted as Assyrian nationalist texts. The books contain no nationalist elements, and, more in general, there is nothing that suggests that De Kelaita supported the Assyrian nationalist acts of the Patriarch—

[44] Becker, *Revival and Awakening*, 330–7.

whom he was in conflict with—or others who did not accept integration into the Iraqi state. However, the fact that the books were written in Neo-Aramaic and therefore only accessible by the Assyrians makes that they can still be taken as an example of an Assyrian identification, which is relevant in the light of what the other Syriac Christian groups in Iraq do.

Assyrian education

The lack of state education during the first years after World War I was addressed by a multitude of private teaching activities, at scales ranging from small informal study groups to large city schools of long-standing high reputation. Part of this education was specifically directed at Syriac Christians, and organized by members of the communities themselves or by one of the two Western missions. Most of the lasting educational initiatives undertaken by Syriac Christians came from the side of the Assyrians. A comprehensive overview was provided by Robin Shamuel, who succeeded in obtaining first-hand information about these schools by conducting interviews with former students—a valuable undertaking, given the lack of known archival materials about these schools.[45]

The Assyrian community had two important schools. One was the Assyrian School in Baghdad, founded by the American United Mission in Mesopotamia in 1921, which is dealt with at the end of this section. The second school was the Assyrian School in Mosul, ran by Joseph de Kelaita, who founded the school in 1921. A diploma from 1926, with the text in English, Arabic and Syriac gives as the official name of the school "The Assyrian school of Mosul" in English and Arabic (*al-madrasa al-athūriyya bi-l-Mawṣil*), whereby the English text had an additional line saying "for the revival of the Ancient Church of the East," absent in the Arabic text. This link to the Assyrian Church of the East is even more explicit in the Syriac, where the name of the school is cited as "the Assyrian school of the Ancient Church of the East in Mosul" (*madhrashtā āturāytā d-ʿītā ʿatiqtā d-madhnḥā b-Mawṣil*).

[45]Robin Shamuel, "The Private Assyrian Schools in Iraq During the 20th Century," unpublished master's thesis, Leiden University, 2008.

In the early years, the school seems to have followed its own curriculum, free from government interference that was to strongly influence private and religious education in later years. The 1926 diploma mentions "Holy Scriptures, Church doctrine, Arithmetic, Geography, Map drawing, English, Elementary Arabic, and Syriac" as the subjects of examination. Syriac, for which the Arabic and Syriac used, as expected, respectively the words *Suryāniyya* and *Suryāyā*, did probably refer to Classical Syriac, as this was also used on the diploma.[46]

The diploma itself is interesting as well, as it features the three languages English, Arabic and Classical Syriac. The diploma is signed in threefold, for each language, by both Joseph de Kelaita as the school's director and two teachers with their names. Interesting here is that Joseph de Kelaita signs successively with his name in Latin, Arabic and Syriac characters, while the two teachers write their names in one script only all three times: one in Syriac script, the other in Arabic script. This suggests that the teacher who signed in Arabic script did not know Syriac script and was probably a teacher of Arabic at the school from outside the Assyrian community, while the teacher who signed in Syriac script might not have known Arabic. If this is true, it shows a situation that is well thinkable in 1926, where a teacher from outside the community is appointed to teach Arabic to children in order to facilitate a good future in the country they lived in, while at the same time keeping the Assyrian community together by establishing an educational institution specifically for them.

After the Simele massacre in the summer of 1933, the school could not continue in its existing form, as its Assyrian identification became problematic. Two narratives exist about the continuation of the school. One says that after the summer of 1933 the school was renamed to *Madrasat al-Falāḥ*, which is probably related to a neighborhood called al-Falāḥ in Mosul. The formerly private school was subsequently taken over by the government, but Joseph de Kelaita remained active as a teacher of Syriac and religious education. The other narrative was reported by Daniel d-Beth Benjamin to Robin Shamuel, who says that the school was closed down completely, but that Assyr-

[46] http://web.archive.org/web/20150911032852/http://aina.org/mosulschool/school.htm; this page contains information about the school curriculum in 1921–1924 according to Deacon Yosip Zia, who attended the school at that time.

ian education continued in a semi-informal way on a smaller scale.[47] Whatever the truth is, the most important period of the school was undoubtedly the time before 1933, as there are almost no sources available for the later period, nor is there any evidence that the school educated people in this period who became well known later in their lives. One source reports that the school continued operating until 1945, but without any indication about the form.[48]

The Assyrian community had three more schools in this period. One was the Assyrian and Armenian Union School, which operated from 1924 to 1944. This school was located in Hinaidi (Arab. *Ḥinaydī*), the most important air base of the Royal Air Force, not more than ten kilometers from Baghdad.[49] Except for the British servicemen and their families, a large number of Levies were based in the camp, especially Assyrians and a smaller number of Armenians from the Baʿqūba refugee camp. The school was a project of Yaʿqūb d-Bet Yaʿqūb (1896–1988), who had an Armenian father and an Assyrian mother and was born in Urmia. Next to Swadaya, Armenian was taught at the school as well. Yaʿqūb founded the school at a relatively young age in 1924 and remained responsible for it until its closure in 1944. In 1938, after a closure of one year, the school moved together with the British military activities to the British air base of Habbaniya, named after the city of al-Ḥabbāniyya in central Iraq. It continued in this form until 1944, when the school was put under government control.

The second school was the Assyrian School of Kirkuk. Robin Shamuel reports that it was founded by a group of Assyrian nationalists, most of which were refugees from the area of Hakkari and Urmia. Its leader, however, was the priest Isḥāq Rīḥāna Kārdin, who was an Assyrian born in Istanbul in 1909. The group founded the school in 1928. The school's founder was arrested in 1933, after the Simele massacre, and deported to Cyprus together with the Assyrian Patriarch.[50] However, the school itself was not closed and even allowed to

[47] Shamuel, "The Private Assyrian Schools in Iraq," 28–9.

[48] See "The Assyrian School of Mosul Project" (link above).

[49] Solomon Solomon, "The Assyrian Levies Move to Hinaidi, 1928; The Assyrian Levies and the 1933 Crisis; The Assyrian Refugees of 1933," *Nineveh Magazine* 21:3 (1998): 18. Accessed online on September 7th, 2018: http://www.marshimun.com/new/pdfs/RK-SK02.pdf.

[50] Shamuel, "The Private Assyrian Schools in Iraq", 46–7.

continue under the same name.[51] Only in 1974, the school was taken over by the Ministry of Education and was renamed *Madrasat Anastās al-Karmalī*, after the well-known Syrian-Iraqi Christian author (see Chapter 5). Under government control, it could not continue as an Assyrian school. The nationalization was a general measure for all denominational and private schools in that year.[52]

Finally, there was an Assyrian school in the village of Sarsink, around fifty kilometers northeast of Duhok. Despite being a village school, the description that Robin Shamuel offers—mainly derived from interviews—paints the picture of a remarkably big and well-organized school. The school can be seen as a personal project of the Assyrian priest ʿAwdishoʿ Eskharyā. It was linked to the Assyrian School of Mosul in the sense that its curriculum and organizational ideas were based on those of Joseph de Kelaita.[53] A visit of King Faisal to the school in 1932 suggests a good relationship between the school and the Iraqi authorities. That this was indeed the case, is confirmed by Zaki Odisho, the son of the school's founder. In an interview with Robin Shamuel, he describes that his father "[t]hrough his loyalty to his country, people and Church ... managed to have the approval of all the governmental officials," and that he had "warm friendships with Iraqi authorities such as King Faisal I, the Prince Abdul'ilah and Nuri Saʿid."[54] The Assyrian school of Sarsink still exists. It was transformed to a government school in 1952, but it retained the teaching of Syriac. Now it is one of the state-sponsored schools in the Kurdish Autonomous Region that uses Neo-Aramaic as its language of instruction.[55]

In the beginning of this section, I mentioned the Assyrian school in Baghdad. The foundation of this school is closely connected to the

[51] It is indeed still listed in the *Iraq Directory* of 1936 as the Assyrian primary school for boys in Kirkuk. *The Iraq Directory: A General and Commercial Directory of Iraq with a Supplement for the Neighbouring Countries, 1936* (Baghdad: Dangoor's Printing and Publishing House, 1936), 421.

[52] Osman, *Sectarianism in Iraq*, 187.

[53] Shamuel, "The Private Assyrian Schools in Iraq," 72.

[54] Ibid., 53.

[55] Ibid., 72; there are some recent references to this school on the Internet, such as Shlīmūn Dāwud Awrāham, "*Madrasat Ūrhuy al-Suryāniyya al-asāsiyya al-mukhtaliṭa fī Sarsink tuḥriz al-markaz al-awwal fī thalāthat alʿāb*," *Ishtar TV*, December 13th, 2011, http://ishtartv.com/viewarticle,39738.html.

American mission, and it gives a valuable insight in both the ideological differences of the Assyrians among each other and the developing policies of the American missionaries. This case shows a rigid determination from the side of the missionaries to strictly implement its principles and strategies. This school was set up by the American mission in 1921, but was later run independently by the Assyrian Evangelical congregation of Baghdad, which was operating under the name "Assyrian Evangelical Church." The American missionaries were unrelenting in their decision to limit and later cancel their subsidy to an Assyrian school in Baghdad. The school was open to non-Protestants but was specifically meant for the Assyrian population: the school was open to "boys and girls of all the denominations among the Assyrians,"[56] meaning Protestants, those belonging to the Church of the East and possibly also Chaldeans among the Assyrian refugees. In 1931 it had 170 students and provided primary and secondary education, largely following the obligatory government curriculum.[57] Despite the fact that they had set up the school, in 1931 the American missionaries were not happy with the idea of subsidizing "a foreign language group," and decided to reduce the subsidy:

> The Assyrians have never adapted themselves to the life in Iraq but have continued their school and their church in their original language. The Government is desirous of having them absorbed into the Iraqi nation. The Mission feels that its primary purpose is to evangelize the Arabs. Consequently, it felt that it could not continue paying out money to a non-Arab community.[58]

In 1936, the subsidy for the related Assyrian Evangelical Church was stopped as well, and this decision was met with considerable

[56] A letter from Khendo H. Yonan, who was a pastor in the Assyrian Evangelical Church but also active for the American mission, indicates that upon closure "97 percents of the Assyrian refugee youths will be out in Baghdad streets," praising the school for that "boys and girls of all the denominations among the Assyrians, are prepared for Christian life." Presbyterian Historical Society, RG89–1–10, letter from Rev. Khendo H. Yonan to Robert E. Speer, dated April 17th, 1931.

[57] Ibid.

[58] Presbyterian Historical Society, RG89–1–16, "Memorandum on conversation with Mr. Willoughby regarding the Assyrians in Baghdad and his comments on a letter from Mr. Khendo H. Yonan with regard to the situation there" (1937).

protest from the side of the Assyrian Evangelical community. The reverend Khendo H. Yonan responded saying that they were "by far more Iraqis in spirit and in every way than the other sects among the Assyrians here in Baghdad."[59] The missionaries' uncompromising attitude can be seen as part of a wider tendency of the American mission to focus more on the Muslim majority and less on accommodating Christian minorities, culminating in an explicit decision in 1938 to focus almost exclusively on mission work in Arabic, because "[e]mphasis on Arabic and upon work for the majority seems of particular importance at this time when the Mission needs to identify itself strongly with the national development and to secure a permanent open door for work in Iraq."[60]

The shift in focus of the American mission did however not mean the complete end of missionary support for the Assyrians. In late 1938, the Assyrian church and school in Baghdad asked for money for new accommodation. When they once again sent a letter asking the missionaries for money to buy land and establish new buildings for the school, the church and the pastor's residence, the mission refused this at first. The reasons for the refusal are not only a lack of money, but also a strong rejection of the idea of an Assyrian school:

> The Mission has never felt that it was responsible for the school and especially at this time it seems to be a needless expense since there are good Government schools and your children would not lose out educationally if you dropped the idea of conducting a school. You possibly feel that you must teach the Syriac tongue to your children, but is this the wisest course? The language of your country is Arabic and we feel that you should put emphasis on your children learning this language. This would be one way of identifying yourselves with the people of this country if you intend to remain citizens of Iraq.[61]

[59] Presbyterian Historical Society, RG89–1–15, letter from Khendo H. Yonan to Dr. Coan, August 6th, 1936.

[60] Presbyterian Historical Society, RG89–1–17, "Executive Committee Report from Minutes of the Sixteenth Annual Meeting of the United Mission in Mesopotamia," October 25, 1938.

[61] Presbyterian Historical Society, RG89–1–17, letter from B.D. Hakken (secretary of the mission) to Khendo H. Yonan, November 1st, 1938.

Moreover, the need for religious education was not considered a valid reason for continuing the school, as "this matter could be taken care of in the same way as is done in America by the pastor conducting Bible classes at stated times during the week."[62] Nevertheless, the Assyrians did not give up and tried again with a letter to the Presbyterian Board of Foreign Missions in New York City, which eventually decided to help financially.[63]

The five above-mentioned schools are similar in the sense that they all had the word "Assyrian" in their name, linking themselves explicitly to support of an Assyrian identification.[64] All founders were indeed Assyrians, and most of them came from the region of Hakkari and Urmia as refugees, or had relatives there. Furthermore, all five schools were founded in the twenties, not long after the establishment of the state of Iraq and the arrival of the Assyrian refugees. As Assyrian schools, they did not only provide education for these refugees, but they also contributed to the development of Assyrianism. Putting "Assyrian" in a school's name, however, did not automatically mean a negative attitude towards the Iraqi state or the Arabic language, as the example of the Assyrian school in Baghdad shows.

Conclusion

The Assyrians were in many ways different from the other Christians of the country. The large majority of them were uprooted from their homeland during World War I and had refugee status until the early 1930s. They were the only group of Christians in Iraq that was confronted with large-scale violence in the first half of the twentieth century. Their tribal way of life including carrying arms, the temporal leadership of their Patriarch, and the participation of many of them in the Levies caused unpopularity and fear among the rest of the population of Iraq. The writings and other intellectual endeavors of the Assyrians add to this image of difference with the other Christians, as

[62] Ibid.

[63] Presbyterian Histoire Society, RG89–1–18, letter from Potter to B.D. Hakken, June 29, 1939. No reason for reinstating the support is given here.

[64] For Robin Shamuel, the use of the word "Assyrian" in the name of the schools was the criterion to include them in his work, as he was interested in schools that had explicitly chosen for an Assyrian identification.

they show features that are unique in Iraq: an efficient way of printing Syriac script, a fully developed writing tradition in Neo-Aramaic, and the existence of schools of general education that were only open to members of the group.

The word that was used for the self-identification of this group was without exception "Assyrian," or *Athūrī* in Arabic or *Āturāyā* in Syriac. This word was added to the names of all institutions and understood as self-understandable without further clarifications. From the way it was used, it is clear that the word did not refer to a church: it was most often used by adherents to the Assyrian Church of the East, but not exclusively. Rather, the term "Assyrians" was used to refer to a community consisting of multiple religious groups. The director of the Assyrian School in Baghdad clarifies this further when he writes about the of Evangelical Assyrians as one of the "sects of the Assyrians." The discourse about and from the Assyrians before their arrival in Iraq, in which the words "nation" and "race" are frequently used, shows that we may assume a national or ethnic identification here. Despite the strong Assyrian identification, there are no signs of an aspiration of unity with the other Syriac Christians in Iraq. The Assyrians who were in the process of settling in Iraq thus retained their identification from the time that they were located in the regions of Hakkari and Urmia.

The Assyrians are not known for their willingness to integrate into the Iraqi state, as a large part of the Assyrians kept hoping for a return to a situation with autonomy or a transfer out of Iraq. A political form of Assyrianism, or Assyrian nationalism, is however not visibly present for most of the Assyrian intellectuals discussed in this chapter. Joseph de Kelaita printed religious texts, many of which could be used in the church, but these texts did not contain any nationalist elements. His creation of the Assyrian school in Mosul cannot be seen as a nationalist act, either, and his opposition to the Patriarch may be related to this. The leader of the Assyrian school in Baghdad even stressed his loyalty to Iraq in his correspondence with the American missionaries. Having said that, a strong Assyrian identification remains visible among all actors in this chapter: being loyal to the state of Iraq does not mean a rejection of this identification. Given the prevalent anti-Assyrian feelings in Iraq, the fact that many Assyrians felt comfortable enough to hold on to their identification and to express it, even after 1933, is significant. They stood up against the stricter variants of

Arab nationalism in Iraq, which requested assimilation from all non-Arabs. For similar reasons, the fact that many Assyrians were hesitant about integration into Iraq is by all means understandable: even Assyrian Iraqis who were loyal to the state, but without identifying as Arab, could not be counted as "real Iraqis" according to Arab nationalist ideology.

Looking at the language use of the Assyrians discussed in this chapter, we can draw the same conclusions. The printing press of Joseph de Kelaita consistently used Classical Syriac and Swadaya (Neo-Aramaic), which was different from what the other Syriac Christians did. The fact that these printed books were mainly for usage in church suggests that they can simply be seen as a substitution for the manuscripts that the other churches used. On the other hand, the large amount of language textbooks and reference works shows that the printing press also had a function in the preservation of Syriac and possibly Swadaya. The Assyrian schools, too, all had a function in the preservation of the communal languages. However, the use of Syriac and Swadaya by the actors in this chapter can hardly be seen as an Assyrian nationalist act. Most of the endeavors discussed in this chapter took place in the early years after World War I, when the possibilities of return or autonomy of the Assyrians were still high on the agenda and the preservation of the communal language was not more than logical. The teaching of Arabic, from the mid-1920s at the latest, shows that the schools already facilitated integration into Iraq when citizenship of the Assyrians was not even spoken of. Like the turn to Classical Syriac in the Bartallah manuscripts, the use of Syriac and Swadaya in the printing press of Joseph de Kelaita is a conscious choice, and—especially considering the fact that these texts were printed and not handwritten—a modern development. While there are no signs of direct influence from the Arabic *nahḍa* here, the phenomenon is similar to what we see in Bartallah.

In the next chapter, we move away from Classical Syriac and Neo-Aramaic while staying close to the Syriac Churches: the two religious journals that we will look at now were completely written in Arabic.

Chapter 4

For the *ṭāʾifa* and for the country: Chaldean and Syriac Orthodox journalism

A wealth of journals and newspapers was published in Iraq after World War I, characterizing the vivid intellectual life of postwar Iraq, with centers in the cities of Baghdad, Basra, and Mosul. Many intellectuals saw the fall of the Ottoman Empire as a great opportunity, not only as it promised the freedom to write, but also because there was a possibility that their ideas about pluralism and democracy were going to be put into practice.[1] Syriac Christians actively took part in this world of journalism, sometimes with their own communal journals, and sometimes as part of the more general world of journalism. From late Ottoman times, journalism was one of the main fields of common ground between Muslims, Christians, and Jews among Arabs in the Middle East. When journalism emerged in the nineteenth century, Christians and Jews often collaborated with their Muslim colleagues by writing in periodicals together. The upcoming field of journalism is part of the *nahḍa* movement, which was characterized by an integration of non-Muslim users of Arabic in the field of Arabic literary

[1] Bashkin, *The Other Iraq*, 19–51.

production. As such, the *nahḍa* has been regarded as the foundation of Arab nationalism that was to develop later.[2]

In the previous chapters, I discussed a few examples of authors who were influenced by the Arabic *nahḍa*, or at least showed parallel developments by the consistent and elaborated usage of a single language. In this chapter I will discuss how other authors went a step further by the use of Arabic in a way that corresponds to the wider (Muslim) literary environment. The literary integration into Arabic writing was completed among these Syriac Christians. The difference between the current chapter and the next one is that the authors in the current chapter stayed within the boundaries of their churches, while the authors in the next chapter cross these lines. This chapter does not just concern the fact that Syriac Christians in Iraq used Arabic like Muslims (and Jews) did. The periodicals studied in this chapter also explicitly reflect on the relation of their Christian communities to both the wider Iraqi society, to the churches they belong to abroad, and to the Western world. In the case of the Syriac Orthodox, also the vivid relationship with the church in India frequently comes to the fore. In this chapter, I discuss two major journals published by the Syriac churches: the Chaldean journal *al-Najm* (1928–1938) and the Syriac Orthodox journals *al-Mashriq* and *Lisān al-Mashriq* (1946–1950). Both journals give us important insights in the way (representatives of) these Christian communities looked at themselves, at the Iraqi state, their language, and the political situation of the country.

In the following sections, I first introduce the two journals, and then discuss both journals in detail. I argue that the Chaldean Patriarchate, by means of its publication *al-Najm*, fiercely supported the Arabist ideology of the Iraqi state, while at the same time it drew a clear distinction between its own group and the rest of Iraq by stressing their belonging to the Chaldean *ṭāʾifa*. The Syriac Orthodox on the other hand, through *al-Mashriq* and *Lisān al-Mashriq* published by one of their more prominent priests, were less vocal in their support of the Iraqi state, but seemed to share the same views regarding the place of the Syriac Orthodox community in Iraqi society.

[2] Lital Levy, "Historicizing the Concept of Arab Jews in the Mashriq," *The Jewish Quarterly Review* 98:4 (2008): 468.

Journals from the patriarchates: *al-Najm* and *Lisān al-Mashriq*

The Chaldeans had their own journal from 1928 until 1938, called *al-Najm* "The star."[3] It was published by the Chaldean Patriarchate in Mosul and edited by the priest Sulaymān Ṣā'igh, who was involved in the Dominican mission as one of the local staff, or in the words of the missionaries, "religieux orientaux." The journal identified itself as a "scholarly (*ʿilmī*) and literary journal by the Chaldean Patriarchate, published once a month."[4] Most of the articles in the journal were written by priests, including the editor himself as the most prolific author. The journal included mainly scholarly articles, but also poetry, news bulletins and articles about societal issues. The scholarly articles were philological and historical, and showed a particular interest in Syriac theology and the history of Islam, as well as the history of the ancient Mesopotamian civilizations. *Al-Najm* stopped publishing in 1938. No reason or even an announcement is given in the final issue of the last year. In 1950, a second series of the journal was initiated that would last until 1955.[5]

The editor of the journal was the well-known priest and later bishop Sulaymān Ṣā'igh.[6] He was born in 1886 in Mosul. He had command of Arabic, English, and French. In 1954 he became bishop of

[3] This journal is present in the Oriental Library, Beirut. I would like to thank Ms. Magda Nammour for providing access to this and other journals and resources in the library.

[4] Front page, in *al-Najm* 1 (1928–1929).

[5] Buṭṭī, *Mawsūʿat al-ṣaḥāfa al-suryāniyya fī al-ʿIrāq*, 47–50. The second series of *al-Najm* falls beyond the scope of this dissertation.

[6] Apart from appearing frequently in texts about Chaldean history, Sulaymān Ṣā'igh is mentioned in the *Encyclopedia of eminent people in Mosul in the twentieth century* by Iraqi intellectual historian ʿUmar al-Ṭālib. ʿUmar Muḥammad al-Ṭālib, *Mawsūʿat Aʿlām al-Mawṣil fī al-qarn al-ʿashrīn* (Mosul: Markaz dirasāt al-Mawṣil, 2008). I have used the online version, which is freely available: http://www.omaraltaleb.com/KOTOB/maosoaa/12seen.htm (accessed September 21, 2015). Information about his position in the Chaldean Church is omitted in most biographies, but present in the anonymous article "*Al-muṭrān Sulaymān al-Ṣā'igh: lisān ḥāl al-Mawṣil fī ʿaṣr al-nahḍa*", *Azzamman*, February 4, 2013, https://www.azzaman.com/%D8%A7%D9%84%D9%85%D8%B7%D8%B1%D8%A7%D9%86-%D8%B3%D9%84%D9%8A%D9%85%D8%A7%D9%86-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%B5%D8%A7%D8%A6%D8%BA-%D9%84%D8%B3%D8%A7%D9%86-%D8%AD%D8%A7%D9%84-%D8%A7%D9%84%D9%85%D9%88%D8%B5%D9%84.

Mosul. Except for his journal *al-Najm*, he is mainly renowned for his three-volume history of Mosul.[7] Apart from that, he wrote five major theater pieces, of which four were published in books. He died in 1965.

Even though the journal was published by the Patriarchate, it was initially not officially named a "religious" (*dīnī*) journal, contrary to many other Christian journals published in Arabic around that time outside Iraq. Indeed, the journal was not overtly religious and had a secular outlook. Still, the journal regularly included a section of news from the patriarchate and many of the articles were about theological subjects. Another religious element was the front page, which showed a banner with the text "We saw a star in the East" in Classical Syriac and Arabic, pointing at the three mages of the New Testament who saw a star after the birth of Jesus (Matthew 2:2). This refers to the importance of the Magi in East Syriac tradition, who are believed to originate from Urmia and to have founded the Church of Saint Mary in this city upon their return from Palestine.[8] The journal was almost completely in Arabic: the above-mentioned piece of text on the banner in Syriac (*Eṣtrangelā* script) is an exception, which should probably be seen as merely a symbolic reference to the Syriac heritage. Apart from that, Syriac is only present inside theological or historical scholarly articles as citations of old Syriac texts.

The other important Syriac Christian journals that were produced in Iraq were *al-Mashriq* and *Lisān al-Mashriq*, both by the Syriac Orthodox priest Būlus Bahnām in Mosul in the years 1946–1950.[9] The editor was the director of the Saint Ephrem Institute in Mosul, the Syriac Orthodox seminary that was transferred from Lebanon in 1946, and the many pieces with news from this school in the journals reflect his role there. The first two years it was called *al-Mashriq* "the East," but in 1948 it was renamed *Lisān al-Mashriq* "Language of the East." It should not be confused with the Lebanese Catholic journal

[7]The three volumes were recently edited and reprinted by Dār al-Kutub al-ʿIlmiyya: Sulaymān Ṣāʾigh al-Mawṣilī, *Tārīkh al-Mawṣil*, ed. ʿAbd al-Khāliq ibn ʿAbd al-Laṭīf ibn Ḥasan al-Mawṣilī (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-ʿIlmiyya, 2013).

[8]Becker, *Revival and Awakening*, 61.

[9]Photocopies of this journal are available in the Widener Library, Cambridge (United States). I am grateful to Michael Hopper for his assistance.

al-Mashriq, which was founded in 1898 by Louis Cheikho and is still being published by the Saint Joseph University in Beirut.

Under the name of *al-Mashriq*, the journal appeared twice a month. Each issue counted about 50 pages. The first volume consisted of 24 issues, but from the sixteenth issue onwards, two and sometimes three issues were combined into one. The second volume consisted of just four issues, which appeared in June and July 1947. After that, the journal was renamed *Lisān al-Mashriq* after a short break. The frequency became monthly, and in many cases two or three issues were combined into one. Like *al-Najm*, *al-Mashriq* and *Lisān al-Mashriq* were written in Arabic. But where *al-Najm* still occasionally featured pieces of text in Syriac, this was not the case for (*Lisān*) *al-Mashriq*, where the only Syriac was visible on the title pages of the issues: the name of the journal was rendered in Syriac as (*Leshōnō d-*)*Madhnḥō*. *Lisān al-Mashriq* had throughout its years of appearance a division of its pages into sections named "literature," "history," and "moral and society." Later issues also had a news section, featuring news stories from different parts of Iraq and from abroad, especially from Syria and India, but from Turkey and Lebanon as well.

Al-Najm and (*Lisān*) *al-Mashriq* should be compared with caution, as there are eight years between the final issue of the one and the first issue of the other, but there are some striking similarities. Like *al-Najm*, (*Lisān*) *al-Mashriq* was published in Mosul and founded and edited by a priest. As such, it was connected to the Syriac Orthodox Church, but contrary to *al-Najm*, the patriarchate is not mentioned as its publisher. But while *al-Najm* had a relatively secular outlook, as stated above, (*Lisān*) *al-Mashriq* took a more religious perspective. Like *al-Najm* and most contemporary journals in Arabic, all issues of (*Lisān*) *al-Mashriq* opened with a title page providing a description of the journal by using multiple adjectives: the journal was "scientific, religious, historical, moral, and educational," whereas the word "religious" (*dīnī*) was missing on the title pages of *al-Najm*.

In the following sections, I first discuss *al-Najm*, and then compare this to the often different attitudes of the editor and authors of *al-Mashriq* and *Lisān al-Mashriq*, which shows a striking contrast in the identification of the two communities. While both journals were completely printed in Arabic, *al-Najm* propagates a complete identification of the Chaldeans as Arabs, while (*Lisān*) *al-Mashriq* shows its

allegiance to the state of Iraq and its institutions, but without identifying the Syriac Orthodox as Arabs.

The Chaldean *ṭāʾifa*

In *al-Najm*, we see a distinction between two groups to which the editors and the author felt to belong to: on the one hand, the Chaldeans themselves, for which they consistently use the Arabic word *ṭāʾifa*, and on the other hand the country of Iraq. Both notions deserve substantial clarification. In this section, I show what the Chaldeans exactly meant with this notion, and to what extent Chaldeans in other countries were included as well. In addition to that, I show the apparent absence of solidarity with other Christian groups, apart from some sense of affinity with the Syriac Catholic Church.

The opening issue of the journal's first volume[10] starts with an anonymous address to the reader. It says that the journal is published "with the help of the Sublime" (*bi-ʿawnihi al-taʿālá*) and that it is published for "those who speak with the *ḍād* in general, and the people of the Euphrates and the Tigris in particular" (*ilá al-nāṭiqīn bi-l-ḍād ʿumūman wa-ʾilá abnāʾ al-rāfidayn khuṣūṣan*), meaning for all speakers of Arabic, but especially those who live in Mesopotamia.[11] The opening issue was then devoted to "the one with noble devotion and white hands, the beatitude (*ghibṭa*), the splendid authority (*al-ḥabr al-jalīl*) Joseph Emmanuel II, Patriarch of Babel," who was praised for the fact that he had served "the beloved country of Iraq" (*al-qaṭar al-ʿIrāqī al-ʿazīz*) for almost 29 years. The address speaks explicitly about different types of groups, using both the words *umma* "nation" and *ṭāʾifa* "sect." The word *umma* is used in the sense of country: the text speaks of *al-umam al-nāhiḍa* "the rising countries," saying that these

[10] Each volume's first issue was published in December of the year that the volume carries, and the rest of the issues were published in the next year. For example, the first volume of 1928 had is opening issue in December 1928, and the other eleven issues in January through November 1929.

[11] "Those who speak with the *ḍād*" refers to the phrase *lughat al-ḍād* "language of the *ḍād*" as an alternative name for the Arabic language. The *ḍād* is a letter of the Arabic alphabet which sound is supposedly only present in Arabic, and which is therefore a symbol of pride for the language as a whole. See Suleiman, *The Arabic Language and National Identity*, 59–60.

countries need journalism in order to go forward, and puts it in contrast to *al-umam al-gharb* "the Western countries," where there exists "a longing to publish."

This piece suggests that the journal saw their Chaldean community as an integral part of Iraqi society: it was a "sect" (*ṭā'ifa*) as part of a "nation" (*umma*). The claim that the journal was intended for all speakers of Arabic can probably best be seen as a symbolic support of the Arab character of the Iraqi state rather than an actual journal policy, given the fact that the vast majority of the articles were of specific interest to (Chaldean) Christians in Iraq. Indeed, in the opening word of the third volume (December 1930) the intended audience is explicitly limited to the members of the *ṭā'ifa*:

> The honorable direction considered that there is no option but to issue a journal for the *ṭā'ifa* that deals with moral and scientific research for the use of its readers in general, and in service of the members (*abnā'*) of the Chaldean *ṭā'ifa* in particular.[12]

The word *ṭā'ifa* (religious group, sect) is used to refer to the Chaldean Catholic community only. *Ṭā'ifa* is a very common Arabic word and is especially used for all different Christian denominations that are found in the Middle East. This is in sharp contrast to the terminology used by the Assyrians. The *ṭā'ifa* of the Chaldeans is called *al-ṭā'ifa al-kaldāniyya* (the Chaldean religious group) and is set apart from the other Christian *ṭā'ifa*-s that are found in Iraq. By using the word *ṭā'ifa*, the Chaldeans identified themselves thus as nothing more than a religious group or denomination in Iraqi society. Crucially, as we see later, they regarded this *ṭā'ifa* as part of the wider Iraqi-Arab *umma*, and as such they presented themselves as an integral part of it and not as a minority.

There is not a single sign of an understanding of unity between the different Syriac Christian groups, although in a few cases a special connection with the other Christian groups is acknowledged. In one case the journal expresses in particular its Christmas and New Year's wishes to the "Christian *ṭā'ifa*-s."[13] Furthermore, an article that appeared in 1929 about intermarriage of people from different Christian

[12] Opening word, *al-Najm* 3:1 (1930): 2.
[13] Editorial, *al-Najm* 4:1 (1931): 1.

groups using civil courts sheds light upon the names that were used for the other Christian groups in Iraq. All groups are cited as individual *ṭāʾifa*-s. The Chaldeans are named *ṭāʾifat al-kaldān*, the Syriac Catholic are *ṭāʾifat al-suryān al-kāthūlīk*, and the Syriac Orthodox are *ṭāʾifat al-suryān al-urthudūks*.

Service to the nation: support for the Arab Iraqi cause

We just saw that *al-Najm*'s opening word initially intended the journal to be for the Arabs "in general, and the people between the Euphrates and the Tigris in particular." While this broad audience was later changed by a policy of writing for the Chaldeans only, Iraq and the Arab world as a whole remained very important notions in the journal, and the broad audience reflects the journal's position in the time of the upcoming ideas of Arab nationalism: a strong belonging to both the Iraqi nation and the Arab nation was expressed at various points in the journal's ten years of publication.

We saw a positive but rather short affirmation of the position of the Chaldeans as part of Iraq in the opening word, but in the subsequent years the journal becomes stronger and stronger in expressing this sense of belonging. In the first two years it is limited to occasional references to the country of Iraq and its king, usually not mentioned by name. On the occasion of the golden jubilee of Patriarch Mar Joseph VI Emmanuel II Thomas in 1929, apparently to mark the fiftieth year since his consecration as a priest in 1879, various religious and non-religious figures are cited with their words of congratulations to the Patriarch, including the well-known Jaʿfar al-ʿAskarī, who had served two terms as prime minister of Iraq by the time.[14]

From the third volume (1931), the journal becomes more explicit in its support of the state of Iraq, and equally so its Arab character. First, in the June issue of this year an obituary is included of Hussein bin Ali, the father of King Faisal and the leader of the Arab revolt. The piece is entitled "Great loss of the Arab nation" (*ruzʾ al-umma al-ʿarabiyya al-alīm*), and it is mentioned that he is the "father of the

[14] *Al-Najm* 2:9 (1930), 434.

[Arab countries'] revolution, who raised the flag of their renaissance (*liwā' nahḍatihā*)."[15]

Later that year, the journal prints a speech of bishop Istifān Jibrī, who spoke in Kirkuk in the presence of King Faisal. The speech was given on the occasion of a visit of Faisal to the north of Iraq, after having visited the Mār Orāhā monastery, close to Batnaya in the Nineveh plains. The bishop starts by explaining that he will talk about "patriotism," or literally "love for the homeland" (*ḥubb al-waṭan*):

> God did not create man to be all alone, but to live with others in a societal body, and the country (*al-bilād*) in which he is born or lives, together with the people of his people (*qawmihi*) in a lasting way, is called the homeland (*al-waṭan*). This definition of the homeland implies the kingdom, because it is the same thing in this meaning; when we say that a man loves his homeland, it means that he loves the kingdom, under which patronage he lives.[16]

He continues by rendering patriotism as something natural, which children understand as they get born:

> The child opens his eyes to the light of this world, and he finds himself embraced by his parents, who are fond of him and love him deeply. As the days pass, he sees that the number of acquaintances, [who are] his relatives and others from the people of his homeland, increases, and all of them love him and are nice with him; he becomes attracted to them naturally and loves their companionship.[17]

Then, the child's love for the homeland increases, because he sees that his compatriots help him when necessary, up to the point that he realizes that there is a government:

> And he knows that at the top [of his people] there is a government that protects his rights and defends him

[15] *Al-Najm* 3:7 (1931), 326.
[16] *Al-Najm* 3:7 (1931), 327ff.
[17] Ibid.

> from the injustice of his enemies. Patriotism occupies an important space in his heart, and this virtue is mingled in one way or another with his blood and his character (*akhlāq*).[18]

In the continuation of the bishop's speech, various passages from the Bible are cited to support the idea that loving one's homeland is natural. The request of Jacob, the patriarch, from his son Joseph to be buried with his ancestors and not in Egypt (Gen. 47:31), is used to give a religious significance to the importance of one's homeland, and equally so the announcement of Joseph as his life is coming to an end that God will bring them to the promised land (Gen. 50:24). He then notes the fact that some countries, like Iraq, have religious differences, but asserts that this need not be problematic:

> We should observe that unity of homeland (*waḥdat al-waṭan*) does not require unity of religion (*waḥdat al-dīn*), just as unity of religion does not require unity of homeland. There might be one single religion for a number of homelands or kingdoms (*awṭān wa-mamālik*), but there can also be one homeland or kingdom that contains peoples (*aqwām*) with different religions (*adyān mukhtalifa*).[19]

The bishop goes further, though, by asserting that religion not only obliges one to love their homeland, but also to obey the government. The speech can be explained as a declaration of total support for the country and its government: the Chaldean population will obey to what the government says. The strong words suggest that this support was apparently doubted by some. However, at the same time this support is contingent to a certain understanding of Iraqi citizenship: being a Christian is no obstacle whatsoever to participate in Iraqi society. Turning things around, the speech can also be read as a warning to the government: if they derive from this idea of Iraqi citizenship, this support may fade away.

The most striking commitment to the Iraqi state came in the September issue of 1933, after the usual two-month summer break of

[18] Ibid.
[19] Ibid.

July and August. The summer of 1933 had been particularly dramatic: in the first place because of the Simele massacre of the beginning of August, which had irrevocably changed the relationship between the Assyrians and the government, but also because of the death of King Faisal in early September. Of the September issue of *al-Najm*, the first pages are devoted to Faisal's son Ghāzī, who was crowned as the new king of Iraq on the day of his father's death, and we find an obituary of the late king covering ten pages at the end of the issue. The events that took place in Simele, on the other hand, are not mentioned at all.[20]

Ghāzī seems to receive most of the attention in this September issue—more than his father. The praise for him comes first, while his father's obituary is placed at the end. On the page before the usual start of the issue, there is a picture of Ghāzī, carrying the text "His exalted Majesty Ghāzī the first, King of the beloved Iraq (*al-ʿIrāq al-mafdī*)." On the next page he is praised with the following words: "With the voices of the children of the noble Iraqi nation (*al-umma al-ʿIrāqī al-najība*), we raise our voices with prayer from the depths of our heart for his exalted Majesty Ghāzī the first, the beloved, descendent of the Hashemite house, which is of exalted nobility (*al-rafīʿ al-ʿimād*). He is happily the leader on the eternal Iraqi throne (*al-ʿarsh al-ʿIrāqī al-abadī al-dawām*). Worthy descendant of the Majesty of his father, the forgiven Faisal the First, whose memory lasts forever (*al-khālid al-dhikr*), praying to his Majesty for length of life, endurance of the fame and the victory; making eternal the happy day of his coronation on 8 September 1933." He is even honored with a lengthy poem on the next page by the journal's editor Sulaymān Ṣāʾigh, who valued Ghāzī as the one who rose against the Western yoke, highly praising the values of the east. Here, the journal not only accepts the Arab character of the state, but also presented itself as in favor of a strong Arab nationalism.

After the praise for the new king, the issue continues with some of its usual type of articles. The last ten pages of the issue then form an obituary of the late King Faisal. The obituary is more plain in nature, but equally praiseworthy from the side of the Chaldean editors. After general statements regarding the death of the king, it continues with the participation of Chaldean church leaders in mourning. The

[20] *Al-Najm* 5:7 (1933).

Chaldean participation is paralleled to Muslim involvement, probably on purpose:

> On that day the Luminous Islamic Guidance Association (*jamʿiyyat al-hidāya al-islāmiyya al-zāhira*) spread an announcement to the people, announcing accepting condolences, and reading of *al-Fātiḥa* in the Sheikh Abdallah mosque for three full days. In the same way, the residence of the Chaldean Patriarchate accepted condolences in the evening of that day, and likewise the rest of the dioceses in their residences, and moving obituary speeches were held.[21]

The text continues with the laying of wreaths on Faisal's grave and a speech of the Patriarch in the Chaldean church in Baghdad. The "Islamic Guidance Association" is a commonly-found organization in Muslim countries, finding its origins in the 1920s and 1930s and related to the pan-Islamic movement.[22] *Al-Najm* did generally not include many references to Islam or Muslims in texts related to Iraqi society, but here, the desired effect seems to have been juxtaposing the participation of the Chaldean Church to involvement of this Muslim organization as equal partners in the participation in mourning about Faisal's death.

The obituary continues with various pieces related to Faisal's life. At the end, the editors included a series of citations from Faisal, through which they implicitly supported Arab nationalism:

> From the deceased of the beloved country there are statements that show wisdom with deep meanings, short and clear, showing you how his heart was full of honesty of principles, height of aspiration, stability of determination and desire to make his nation and country happy:
>
> "There is nothing in the custom of patriotism (*ʿurf al-waṭaniyya*) named Muslim, Christian or Israelite, but there is something called Iraq.[23] The religions help the

[21] *Al-najm* 5:7 (1933): 322.

[22] Jacob M. Landau, *Pan-Islam: History and Politics* (London: Routledge, 2015), 225.

[23] See the beginning of the Introduction for this citation.

> theory of unity, moral and nationalism (*naẓariyyat al-waḥda wa-l-ʾakhlāq wa-l-qawmiyya*). The Fashioner, the almighty (*al-Bāriʾ ʿazza wa-jalla*) did not incite to anything to the same extent as he incited support of association and friendship between people."
>
> "Through our veins flows one [type of] blood and we are nothing but one Semitic race, of which all these connected branches come back to its tree. And with this idea, we can strive for one way out to build this country and to bring it back to its former power."
>
> "The Arabs should be Arabs before being Muslims, Christians (*naṣārá*) or Jews."[24]

Faisal's quotations were clearly chosen to highlight not only his tolerance for Christians and Jews, but also his explicit support of an ideal of Arab nationalism in which Muslims, Christians and Jews are equal. The editors did not eschew Faisal's use of specifically Muslim terminology in his first quotation, when he uses the phrase *al-Bāriʾ ʿazza wa-jalla* to refer to God, or, maybe more importantly, the Quranic term for Christians *naṣārá* as opposed to the usual *masīḥiyyūn*.

After these and more quotations Faisal's obituary ends together with the September issue of *al-Najm*. Looking back at the beginning of the issue, the praise for the new king Ghāzī is especially striking because it was him who, in his last month before his coronation, was hailed by the crowds cheering for the soldiers upon their return to Mosul after the Simele massacre.[25] Stafford mentions an anti-Christian mood in Mosul right after the Simele massacre.[26] Probably, the Chaldean Patriarchate deemed it necessary to stress allegiance to the state of Iraq, its Arab character and its King especially because of the anti-Christian sentiments that prevailed in that period.[27] In addition to that, not mentioning the Simele massacre also meant that no

[24] *Al-najm* 5:7 (1933): 329–30.

[25] Stafford, *The Tragedy of the Assyrians*, 167 and 169–70.

[26] Ibid., 167.

[27] Compare the Jewish participation in mourning for the death of King Faisal (1933) and King Ghāzī (1941). Aline Schlaepfer argues convincingly that the bigger Jewish participation in mourning after King Ghāzī's death compared to the mourning after King Faisal's death is related to the less comfortable position of Jews in Iraqi society related to the rise of Zionism and the growing popularity of Nazism in Iraq, as well

position had to be taken in the issue—possibly a strategic choice as not all readers were necessarily favorable to the actions of the Iraqi army.

The volumes of the years 1934 to 1937 did not contain any explicit approvals of the state of Iraq—they did, however, include details showing some of the political views of the editors, as I discuss in one of the next sections—but the last volume before the journal came to an end in 1938 contained a curious but clear endorsement of the state of Iraq, in the form of a "national song" (*nashīd qawmī*), written by the priest Joseph Kajah-Jī. The short song, written in Arabic, does not only show pride of Iraq but also of being Arabs. This song is not the national anthem of Iraq, which the country did not have until the revolution of 1963. No explanation whatsoever is given in the journal as to the purpose of printing this song here in *al-Najm*, nor is it clear why this priest, who was related to the Chaldean patriarchal Priest School of St. Peter, wrote a "national song." Its inclusion in *al-Najm*, however, with an unusually high density of nationalist terms, as well as usual nationalist themes such as the youth, elevation, and unity, is remarkable. Of special importance is the use of the phrase "we are the youth of the Arabs" in the first stanza (*naḥnu ashbāl al-ʿarab*): nowhere else in *al-Najm* is a self-identification of the Chaldeans as Arabs so clear as it is here. It is the strongest and last example of identification with the Iraqi state and its Arab character, as the journal came to an end in that year.

The Chaldeans and Arabic as their national language

As said before, the sole language used in the journal is Arabic, except for a few places where Classical Syriac is used in a symbolic way, and the inclusion of other languages than Arabic, including Syriac, English, and French, as citations in articles. Another exception is the

as the fact that the British were considered responsible by many for the car crash that caused King Ghāzī's death. In Jewish mourning ceremonies after King Ghāzī's death, allegiance to Iraq with its Arabness was explicitly stressed. A. Schlaepfer, "The King is Dead, Long Live the King! Jewish Funerary Performances in the Iraqi Public Space," in *Modernity, Minority, and the Public Sphere: Jews and Christians in the Middle East*, ed. S.R. Goldstein-Sabbah and H.L. Murre-van den Berg (Leiden: Brill, 2016), 198–202.

inclusion of a French translation of the table of contents at the end of each issue from the fifth year onwards (1933). Earlier years did not contain such a translation, except from the first issue of the first year (December 1928), where a "Summary of Contents" is given, which is a English translation of the Arabic table of contents.[28] The fact that this translation is in English is remarkable considering the negative feelings the Dominican missionaries had for the English language, and it is an indication that the Chaldean Patriarchate felt the freedom to have its own opinion about the policies of the French missionaries. Subsequent volumes do not feature any table of contents, but from the fifth year onwards the journal consistently includes a table of contents in Arabic at the beginning, and one in French at the end of each issue. The French translations are of a much higher quality than the English one from the first volume, which may be explained by the close connection to the French mission and Sulaymān Ṣā'igh's involvement in it (see the beginning of this chapter).

In the manuscripts of the Syriac churches, as we have seen in Chapter 2, Arabic was often used alongside Classical Syriac and other languages, and often in a non-standard way, especially by using Garshuni. The Arabic that we see in *al-Najm*, to the contrary, shows no signs of language mixing or use of Garshuni. Other languages are sometimes used, but the language does not change within the same text. The type of Arabic that is used is according to the standard (*al-lugha al-fuṣḥá*), and in addition to that the authors often write in an eloquent style, using a wealth of uncommon vocabulary and intertextual allusions, including allusions to the Quran. In addition to that, the journal often included original pieces of poetry in Arabic written by Sulaymān Ṣā'igh and others.

Why did the editor of *al-Najm* and the authors who wrote in the journal only use Arabic, and almost no Classical Syriac or Neo-Aramaic? Arabic may have been the mother tongue of most of the Chaldeans in Mosul, but at other places in Iraq, to which the journal was also reaching out, Neo-Aramaic was the main spoken language and Classical Syriac was still a liturgical language. Syriac was also of historical importance for the church, a fact that was recognized by the

[28] *Al-Najm* 1:1 (1928).

authors of *al-Najm*, too: their inclusion of multiple philological articles about classical texts in Syriac shows this.

We have seen the journal's allegiance to Arab nationalism, and the clue to an answer to the question posed above should certainly be looked for in this direction. *Al-Najm* contains some articles and other contributions that speak more explicitly about the role of the Arabic language. The clearest example of this is the inclusion of an article by the nineteenth-century Dominican missionary Hyacinthe called "Let us master our language as well as possible!" In this article, the reader is urged to do their best to perfect their knowledge of the Arabic language: "Oh youth of Iraq, your language is Arabic, which is old, widely known and one of the most important, far-reaching in terms of speakers and abundant in terms of vocabulary..."[29] The Dominican priest who wrote this poem was not alive anymore at the time of publication, and in fact the Dominican missionaries moved their attention from Arabic more towards French after World War I.[30] However, its publication by the Chaldeans themselves in *al-Najm* much later is significant and it is a very explicit assertion that Arabic was seen as the Chaldeans' own language, which may even not have been the case at the time that the article was written.

Classical Syriac and/or Neo-Aramaic were however not completely absent from *al-Najm*. It seems that both languages are referred to by the word "Chaldean" (*kaldānī*), implying that both languages were seen as varieties of the same.[31] Important is that—in contrast to usage by West-Syriac Christians and in modern-day usage, the word *suryānī* (Syriac) is never used for the language: this

[29] Al-ab Hiyāsint al-Dūmīnīkī, "*Nutqin lughatunā bi-juhd al-istiṭāʿa*," *al-Najm* 7:4 (1935), 141.

[30] The Dominican mission archive shows that, contrary to for the period before World War I, the Dominicans were considered to have a function in the dissemination of the French language in Iraq. After the war, the Dominicans were still teaching Arabic in the Syro-Chaldean seminary, but apart from that, everything was taught in French. Bibliothèque du Saulchoir, Paris, Arch op Paris Mossoul IV-Z-95: Mission de Mossoul: 1914–52.

[31] A distinction between the two "varieties of Chaldean" is visible in the title of the recent Arabic translation of Jacques Rhétoré's grammar of Sureth, where *al-Kaldāniyya al-ʿāmmiyya* is used ("colloquial Chaldean"). Jacques Rhétoré, *Qawāʿid lughat al-Sūrīth aw al-Kaldāniyya al-ʿāmmiyya ḥasba lahajat sahl al-Mawṣil wa-al-buldān al-mujāwara*, translated by Yaldā Tūmā Kikū (Duhok: Dār al-mashriq al-thaqāfiyya, 2012).

word was only used to refer to the Syriac Orthodox and Syriac Catholic churches. This difference is visible in the archives of the Dominican Syro-Chaldean seminary, who used the French equivalents "syrien" and "chaldéen" respectively as names for both types of Syriac, even if the differences between them are limited to different script variants and pronunciation traditions.[32] On the front page, both the journal's name and motto ("We saw a star in the East") were printed in Syriac together with Arabic. Some articles in the journal furthermore contained some quotations from liturgical or historical Syriac texts, printed in Syriac script. While this amounts only to a tiny fraction of all text in *al-Najm*, it imbues the Syriac language with a symbolic relevance. Syriac and/or Neo-Aramaic were furthermore referred to a couple of times in announcements and news reports relating to the Chaldean *ṭā'ifa*: in an announcement of a New Year's wish issued by the Chaldean Patriarchate, it is mentioned that a New Year's message of reportedly 59 pages was issued in both "the Arabic and Chaldean languages,"[33] and in a report on a meeting of the Chaldean Charity Association in Mosul the singing of songs both in Chaldean and Arabic is mentioned.[34] The prevalence of Arabic in *al-Najm* can therefore best be interpreted as the result of both ideological and practical considerations. Arabic was presented as the language of choice of the Chaldeans, both by promoting its usage and its status, as by actually using it throughout the journal. "Chaldean," referring to Syriac and possibly Neo-Aramaic, was recognized as a language of the community, but apparently not one of which the use had to be promoted outside the religious sphere.

Political issues: in line with Arab nationalist thought

Al-Najm took sides in political issues numerous times. A few articles may best be explained as propaganda against communism. In May

[32] Bibliothèque du Saulchoir, IV Mossoul, Z-9, F, "Le séminaire Syro-Chaldéen," 39. The French sources to refer only refer to the classical language.

[33] "*Akhbār al-ṭā'ifa*," *Al-Najm* 5:1 (1933): 40.

[34] "*Al-jam'iyya al-khayriyya al-kaldāniyya bi-l-Mawṣil, bi-munāsabat ijtimā'ihā al-'ām 26 ayyār sanat 1929*," *Al-Najm* 1:8 (1929).

1931, the journal published a short article about political prisoners in the Soviet Union, noticing that around 600,000 political prisoners were convicted to forced labor in the woods of Siberia, continuing with a testimony of a former prisoner and an account of a British eyewitness. The article does not explicitly condemn Soviet politics, but the fact that it is prominently placed as a main article—news articles were normally put in a world news rubric—strongly suggests that it served more than only an informative purpose.[35] In February 1932, the journal informed the reader in a similar fashion about the Soviet Union's "war against religion" in a long article written by one of the Chaldean students who were sent to Rome to study at the Congregatio de Propaganda Fide (see below).[36] In February 1933, in the journal's world news rubric, even Adolf Hitler is cited about a campaign against communists he started,[37] although the inclusion of a speech by the Pope in 1937 reveals that the journal's editorship did not support Nazi Germany.[38]

Despite not being in favor of German Nazism, *al-Najm* was outspoken about its support for Italian fascism. The journal seems to give its full support to Mussolini and his ideas. Fascism's youth movement was especially considered favorable. The first time fascism is mentioned is in September 1934. In an article named *Quwwat al-shabāb* "Force of the youth," the priest Alfūns Jamīl Shūrīz first praises the youth as the ones in society that are both the beginning and the end of any power, "whether by means of a movement, reform, a charitable project, or a praiseworthy goal." Fascism, he states, is "the best and most advanced method that the youth can belong to without serious harm," as "Mussolini alone stopped the complete standstill of the situation of Italy's youth, giving them this energetic spirit to work, far from the fall into error like the rest of Europe's youth nowadays."[39]

Most statements about domestic politics were limited to simple endorsements of the king or the state, which does not reveal details about the Patriarchate's political position. There are some notable

[35] Anonymous, "*Al-sujūn al-ḥamrāʾ*," *al-Najm* 3:6 (1931), 277–78.

[36] Sh. Rabbān, "*Al-sūfyīt wa-muḥārabatuhum li-l-dīn*," *al-Najm* 4:3 (1932), 114–21.

[37] Anonymous, "*Ḥamlat Hitlar ʿalá al-shuyūʿiyyīn*," *al-Najm* 5:2 (1933), 85.

[38] Anonymous, "*Al-barāʾa al-bābawiyya: ʿan ḥālat al-kanīsa al-kāthūlīkiyya fī ʾAlmāniya*," *al-Najm* 9:4 (1937).

[39] Al-qass Alfūns Jamīl Shūrīz, "*Quwwat al-shabāb*," *al-Najm* 6:7 (1934), 252.

exceptions. In the issue of May 1933, there was as usual a section called "News of the sect" (*akhbār ṭā'ifiyya*). After a piece about the uncovering of a statue of King Faisal in Baghdad for his "fulfilment of the hopes of the Iraqi nation (*al-umma al-ʿirāqiyya*) in particular, and the Arab nation (*al-umma al-ʿarabiyya*) in general," another piece followed that explicitly endorsed the activities of the right-wing *Ḥizb al-ikhā' al-waṭanī* (see Chapter 1). The editorial piece first gave a neutral description of its opening of a branch in Mosul, but then closed by saying: "And we ask God to make this party successful, which unites the prestige of the people of Iraq (*abnā' al-ʿIrāq*) to the service of the beloved homeland (*al-waṭan al-maḥbūb*)."[40] More details are not given, but the journal's—and therefore, indirectly, the Chaldean patriarchate's—support of the movement is significant. The *Ḥizb al-ikhā' al-waṭanī* was a right-wing nationalist, pan-Arab party and staunchly anti-British, and had a significant influence in Iraqi politics from its foundation in 1930. The party was furthermore known for some pro-fascist inclinations.[41] The expression of support of this party in 1933 was therefore in line with prevalent politics at the time, but also telling of the journal's affinity with Iraqi nationalist and pan-Arab ideas. The support is well aligned with the evident support for the idea of Iraq as an Arab state, but this is the only case in *al-Najm* where we see this ideology translated in the support of a particular political direction. It was this party, and specifically its Mosul branch, that called for an "elimination of foreign elements" from Iraq right before the Simele massacre, pointing at the Assyrians.

The years in which *al-Najm* was published were characterized by the rise of Zionism. While the journal in general rarely referred to Judaism or Jews, Zionism receives due attention. A four-page article written by Sulaymān Ṣā'igh called "Historical survey of the rise of Zionism" gives information about Chaldean ideas about the matter. The author gives a fairly neutral historical account of Zionism, but his dislike of it is apparent from the concise introduction and conclusion. In the introduction, Zionism is described as coming with "unjust practice" (*sayrihā ghayr al-ʿādil*), causing uproar in the "vastness of the Arab land (*afḍiyat al-bilād al-ʿarabiyya*) and the peoples of earth

[40] "*Akhbār ṭa'ifiyya*," *al-Najm* 5:5 (1933): 334.
[41] Wien, *Iraqi Arab Nationalism*, 65.

in general."[42] In the conclusion of the article, Zionism is also related to communism and freemasonry (*al-firmasūn*). A small piece in the general news section of October 1933 named "The emigration to Palestine" (*Al-hijra ilá Filasṭīn*) is equally negative: "The stream of Zionist emigrants keeps continuing into the ports of Palestine, and the Palestinian people (*al-umma al-filasṭīniyya*) keep on asking for help! On the fifteenth of this month the vessel *Martha Washington* discharged 550 Zionists in Palestine."[43]

In sum, we can assert that the journal supported the anti-British and pan-Arab *Ḥizb al-ikhāʾ al-waṭanī* and was in favor of fascism. It did not support Nazism, but more emphatically expressed enmity towards communism and Zionism, which were seen as being connected to each other. By doing so, they aligned their views with the mainstream Arab nationalist views that prevailed in the country at the time.

The Syriac Orthodox: part of a Syriac nation

Eight years passed between the last edition of the Chaldean *al-Najm* and the first issue of the Syriac Orthodox *al-Mashriq*, later renamed *Lisān al-Mashriq*. In the meantime, in Iraqi politics, King Ghāzī had died in 1939 and Prince ʿAbd al-Ilāh had come into power representing the underage King Faisal II. In addition to that, in those eight years World War II took place, which came with enormous political upheaval and the unleashing of considerable nationalist sentiments and an alternation of pro-British and pan-Arab governments, as well as of relatively democratic times and periods of repression. The period in which *al-Mashriq* and *Lisān al-Mashriq* were published, 1946–1950, showed a continuation of this political pattern, featuring large demonstrations, followed by concessions by the government but also harsh repression. Pan-Arab and related anti-British sentiments, especially concerning the creation of the state of Israel in 1948, were at

[42] Sulaymān Sāʾigh, "*Lamḥa tārīkhiyya fī nushūʾ al-ṣahyūniyya*," *al-Najm* 5:9 (1933): 389–402.

[43] "*Akhbār al-shahr*," *al-Najm* 5:9 (1933): 430. *Martha Washington* was indeed the name of a ship known to have been used for Zionist emigration to Palestine; see Jacob Boas, "A Nazi Travels to Palestine: Baron von Mildenstein," http://www.britishempire.co.uk/maproom/palestine/travelpalestine.htm (accessed: December 30, 2016).

their peak. Nevertheless, allegiance to Arab nationalism is less visible in *al-Mashriq* and *Lisān al-Mashriq* than in *al-Najm*.

It must be said that *al-Mashriq* and *Lisān al-Mashriq* were less political by nature than *al-Najm*, and one has to search more in detail for clues about the perceived relationship of the Syriac Orthodox to Iraqi society and state, especially in its first years. In the first year of *al-Mashriq*'s publication (June 1946 through May 1947), almost no references to the country of Iraq and the Arabs were included. However, the journal's second volume, starting in June 1947, comes with an apparent change in policy, when the word *waṭan* "homeland" is suddenly frequently used to refer to Iraq, and the Arabic language is proudly described as *lughat al-ḍād*, as the Chaldeans of *al-Najm* did before them. This change is immediately visible in the foreword of the second volume: while the foreword of the first volume was highly spiritual and philosophical and did not contain any references to issues in society, the foreword of the second year puts forward the intention "to do nothing else than be of a general benefit and a service that we fulfill for the people of our homeland (*waṭaninā*)." When the journal is restarted under the name *Lisān al-Mashriq* in 1948, this trend continues. In other words, in only a few years' time the attitude of the journal toward the Iraqi state and society and the Arab cause seemed to change from total indifference to active support. What had changed in the minds of the authors of *al-Mashriq* and *Lisān al-Mashriq*? And how did they perceive the Syriac Orthodox Christians as part of Iraq and the wider world? In this section, I discuss several pieces in (*Lisān*) *al-Mashriq* that give information about these issues to answer these questions.

Where the Chaldeans of *al-Najm* consistently used the word *ṭā'ifa* to refer to their community, in Syriac Orthodox sources we frequently find the word *umma*, meaning "nation." While the word *umma* was also frequently used by the Chaldeans, the striking difference is that they used it for the Iraqi and Arab nations, while in *al-Mashriq* and *Lisān al-Mashriq* it is used for the Syriac community itself. This means that the nation they saw themselves part of was not Iraq, or the Arabs as a whole, but their own Syriac community. A couple of times we find the word *ṭā'ifa* as well, in at least one case alongside the word

umma.[44] A few times we also find the word *milla*, which is the underlying form of the Ottoman Turkish word *millet*. In both cases the word seems synonymous to *umma* and could have been replaced by it. However, in all cases where *ṭāʾifa* and *milla* are used instead of *umma*, these words refer to the Syriac Orthodox community on a local level inside Iraq or in other countries, while the word *umma* is used for the Syriac Orthodox worldwide. This suggests that the words *ṭāʾifa* and *milla* mostly have a political or legal value.[45]

The *umma* that the Syriac Orthodox authors had in mind was a transnational nation of Syriac Christians worldwide, both in the Middle East and in the diaspora in the Americas, and possibly in India. When written in full, the name was *al-umma al-suryāniyya*, which may be translated as "the Syriac nation," although it should be kept in mind that the word *suryāniyya* could have been translated in various ways into English should this have happened in the time that it was written, including "Syrian" and "Assyrian." Nowhere it is defined explicitly what was understood by this Syriac nation: did it only refer to the Syriac Orthodox, or to all Syriac Christians, including the East Syriac Chaldeans and Assyrians? The latter option would be surprising, since the East Syriac Christians were never referred to as *Suryānī* in contemporary sources in Iraq. A lengthy article called *Al-thaqāfa al-Suryāniyya* "Syriac civilization," which appeared in the journal's first year of publication, sheds light upon this question. In fifteen parts, appearing every issue, the author (probably the editor of the journal) goes through the two millenniums of history of the Syriac Christians with a focus on its literature and languages. In the beginning of the article the author writes about "the noble Syriac nation (*umma*)," which "has been around since the oldest times in the beloved East."[46] This na-

[44] "*Khiṭāb al-rāhib Jurjis al-qass Būlus: al-mawhiba al-ṣāliḥa*," *al-Mashriq* 1:22,23,24 (1947): 1034 and 1036. In this speech, the words *ṭāʾifa* and *umma* are both used to refer to the Syriac Orthodox in Iraq.

[45] For the word *milla*: *Lisān al-Mashriq* 2:1 (1949): 39, about the consecration of a church; *Lisān al-Mashriq* 2:3,4 (1949/1950): 141, about the election of the Syriac Orthodox *majlis al-millī* in Mosul. For the word *ṭāʾifa*: *al-Mashriq* 1:22,23,24 (1947): 1034, speech by George al-Qass Joseph about the director of the Saint Ephrem Institute praising his service to the *ṭāʾifa* – in the same speech, also the word *milla* is used; *Lisān al-Mashriq* 1:8,9 (1949): 385, in a report about a play about the story of Saladin at the same school to raise money for the poor.

[46] "*Al-thaqāfa al-suryāniyya*," *al-Mashriq* 1:4 (1946): 178.

tion is not only traced back to the early centuries of Christianity, but also further back to the earlier Arameans, praising them as the foundation of all civilization: "And thus [the Syriac people] knew that the Aramaic nation (*al-umma al-Arāmiyya*) was to them a lofty civilization before Christ for many generations, who have laid the foundation of all knowledge, starting in those remote times in the past..."[47] The Aramaic heritage of the Syriac Christians is as such proudly given as the foundation of the culture of today's Syriac Christians, an idea that was to become the basis of the Aramaic nationalist ideas that were developing from the 1950s, although the idea itself was older than that. However, for the period since the establishment of the Edessene Syriac language, the author consistently uses the designation *Suryānī* "Syriac."

For the author, *al-umma al-suryāniyya* also includes the East Syriac Church of the East as it developed as a diophysite church after the condemnation of Nestorius in 451, although he describes its theology from a Syriac Orthodox point of view. In another part of this article discussing the famous School of Edessa, the fourth- and fifth-century institution that was decisive in the development of Syriac literature and theology, a considerable amount of space is devoted to diophysite authors who attended the school, including the famous East Syriac author Narsai, whom we encountered in Chapter 3 in the editions by Joseph de Kelaita and Alphonse Mingana. In addition to that, Nestorius himself is mentioned as "Patriarch of Constantinople, who was Syriac by ethnicity or race (*al-suryānī al-jins*)."[48] Nestorius' diophysitic ideas are described in a relatively neutral way, although his teachings are contrasted to mainstream ideas, represented in the school by "a section that remained with the old doctrine of the church."[49] As such, East Syriac authors from both before and after the Christological schisms are treated as belonging to the Syriac *umma*, even though their theological ideas were considered unorthodox.

The use of the word *umma* shows that these Christians saw themselves as a nation and therefore probably as an ethnically distinct group, even if there are no overt displays of nationalism. In Arabic, the word can both refer to a nation in its modern sense and to the

[47] Ibid., 179.
[48] Ibid., 229.
[49] Ibid.

Islamic concept of *umma*, meaning the worldwide Muslim community. While the use of *umma* in *al-Mashriq* and *Lisān al-mashriq* as the worldwide community of Syriac Christians parallels the Islamic *umma*, that is probably not how it should be understood. The word *umma*, as well as its Syriac cognate *umtho*, appears more often in Syriac Orthodox sources, both in manuscripts inside Iraq and in printed works in other countries.[50] In some of these sources it is clear that this word referred to a nation in the modern sense.[51]

Equally interesting is the fact that a special relationship is expressed with the Syriac Christians of other denominations. As I have indicated before, in the first decades after the establishment of the state of Iraq there is little evidence of prevalence of the idea that all Syriac Christians are part of one nation—often known as *umthonoyutho* among West Syriac Christians. By including the East Syriac Christians in the definition of the Syriac *umma*, *al-Mashriq* gives the first evidence of the development of this idea inside Iraq. The idea of unity does not translate into anything concrete here: apart from the fact that the other Syriac denominations are mentioned every now and then, there is no evidence in *al-Mashriq* and *Lisān al-Mashriq* of any concrete attempts to unite the communities, such as communal meetings or other forms of collaboration. In fact, the only case where the Syriac Orthodox are evidently working together with another denomination it is with Christians who did clearly *not* belong to their nation. This is the case in the description of a religious party in 1947, when the clerical school of the Syriac Orthodox thanks the Armenian association for permission to use the hall of the Armenian Orthodox school as a location to celebrate its anniversary, as well as for the services of the Armenian musical band.[52] The idea of unity did not go further than words in *al-Mashriq* and *Lisān al-Mashriq*.

[50] An article from the 1930s that appeared in the Arabic-language journal of the Syriac Orthodox patriarchate that was published in Jerusalem shows the earlier usage of this term in the Arabic language: "*Lamḥ fī tārīkh al-umma al-suryāniyya fī al-ʿIrāq*," *al-Majalla al-baṭrīrkiyya* 7,8 (1936).

[51] This is the case in the contemporary poems by the Syriac Orthodox poet Ghattas Maqdisi Elyas, and in the discourse surrounding the founding of the Assyrian Democratic Organization in Syria in the 1950s. For the Assyrian Democratic Organization, see Atto, *Hostages in the Homeland*, 290–99.

[52] "*Akhbār al-shahr*," *al-Mashriq* 1:16,17 (1947): 797.

The Syriac Orthodox as a transnational *umma*

The Syriac Orthodox Church was a transnational church, and the news stories in *al-Mashriq* and *Lisān al-Mashriq* reflect this. In contrast to the Chaldean Catholic Church, of which the patriarchate was seated in Mosul, and of which the vast majority of the believers lived in Iraq, the Patriarch of the Syriac Orthodox church was seated outside Iraq. Until 1933, the patriarchate was located in the Deyrülzafaran monastery close to Mardin, Turkey, and after that it was relocated to Homs in Syria.

A news rubric was a regular element of the journal. Virtually all stories deal with the Syriac Orthodox themselves. Much of the news comes from places outside Iraq. Apart from Syria, the United States and Canada are occasionally featured. This rubric especially highlighted the efforts of Syriac Orthodox associations and groups of people cooperating to carry out religious, educational or charitable initiatives. In March 1947, for instance, *al-Mashriq* carefully describes the efforts of an association in the Canadian town of Sherbrooke to establish a church, complete with names of the board members of the association. *Al-Mashriq* and *Lisān al-Mashriq* also had connections to some other periodicals outside Iraq, most noticeably *al-Nashra al-Suryāniyya*, which was published in Aleppo by a group of authors, including the well-known Syriac Orthodox poet Ghattas Maqdisi Elyas, who would later become a main proponent of an Aramean identification for all Syriac Christians.[53]

The fact that there was an international readership of *Lisān al-Mashriq* is apparent from an overview of prices of the journal inside and outside Iraq from January 1949. Prices are mentioned for Mosul (one dinar), the rest of Iraq (1.25 dinars), Syria and Lebanon (10 pounds), Turkey (10 *awrāq*), Egypt and Palestine (1.25 pounds), and America (7 dollars).[54] The inclusion of America[55] is understandable as both *Lisān al-Mashriq* and its predecessor *al-Mashriq* write for a community which already had a sizeable diaspora community in the

[53] *Lisān al-Mashriq* 1:6,7 (February/March 1949): 75.

[54] *Lisān al-Mashriq* 1:5 (January 1949): 50.

[55] The price of 7 dollars, which equals at least fifty American dollars today, may seem high, but is in fact comparable to the prices that are set for subscription to similar journals in the Middle East to be sent abroad.

United States and Canada, which was occasionally discussed in the journal.

The Syriac Orthodox as part of Iraq and the Arabic language

Even though the Syriac Orthodox are mostly presented as a transnational community, the fact that the community belonged to Iraq is not ignored, and at times Iraq is referred to in patriotic terms. There is a striking difference between the first volume and year of publication of *al-Mashriq*, when Iraq is mentioned rarely, and the subsequent volumes of *al-Mashriq* and *Lisān al-Mashriq*, when patriotic references to Iraq appear every now and then. The usual word to refer to Iraq is *waṭan* "homeland," which is the same as what we saw in the Chaldean *al-Najm*.[56]

> Since a couple of years, the honorable and virtuous Doctor ʿAbd al-Aḥad ʿAbd al-Nūr and Mr Mattā Sarsam have been representatives of Mosul in service of their nation (*ummatihi*) and of their homeland (*waṭanihi*) ... May God protect them (*ḥafiẓahum Allāh*) for the service of the beloved Iraq under the shadow of His Majesty, our beloved king Faisal the second, and under the auspices of the attendant of the throne of Faisal, the exalted crown prince His Highness Abdel-Ilah.[57]

Here, the words *umma* and *waṭan* are used next to each other with two different meanings: the representatives are ought to both serve their nation, which is the Syriac Orthodox, and their homeland, which is Iraq. It is similar to the juxtaposition by the Chaldeans of *ṭāʾifa* and

[56] It is significant that *waṭan* refers to Iraq and not to a homeland for the Syriac Christians. In contemporary Syriac poetry and other sources, the word *motho*, which also means homeland, is found to refer to the area where the Syriac Christians live, sometimes with nationalist tendencies. This is the case in poems by Ghattas Maqdisi Elyas, and reportedly by members of the Committee for the Love of Church and Language, which was founded in 1955 in Syria by opponents of Arabization of the Syriac Christians in the country. For the latter see Atto, *Hostages in the Homeland*, 293.

[57] "*Al-nāʾibān al-fāḍilān*," *al-Mashriq* 2:1,2 (1947): 77.

umma for respectively the Chaldean community and the Iraqi-Arab nation, but the terms that are used are not compatible, except for the word *waṭan*, which has the same meaning for the Syriac Orthodox and the Chaldeans. Moreover, the complimentary words in which the country, its king and the regent are described are similar to what we see in *al-Najm*—even if we see it far more frequently there.

Arabic was the only language in *al-Mashriq* and *Lisān al-Mashriq*, and we could almost be led to forget that Syriac was still a very important language for the Syriac Orthodox. The great amount of Syriac we find in their manuscripts indicates the use of the language in church. The only Syriac that we find in the journals is the Syriac translation of the journal's title on its front pages and some Syriac terminology, such as *malfono* "teacher" and *mfashqono* "interpreter," and the latter are even rendered in Arabic script. Different from what we see in *al-Najm* is however that *al-Mashriq* and *Lisān al-Mashriq* devote more attention to the Syriac language, which was clearly regarded as the language that belonged to the Syriac *umma*. This is especially visible in the previously cited article series called "Syriac civilization," where a lengthy part is devoted to the Syriac language.[58] However, Arabic was held in high esteem, too: not only is the Arabic in the journals of a high level, at some places the language is also praised for its beauty or importance. This happens for example when the priest ʿAbd al-Aḥad Tūmā of Bartallah, an Aramaic-speaking town, speaks in Baghdad in Arabic after "not having delivered a speech in the language of the *ḍād* (*lughat al-ḍād*) for thirteen years" and asks to be excused if he makes some mistakes in his speech in "this noble language."[59]

Conclusion

The Chaldean Catholic Church and the Syriac Orthodox Church used journals as an important tool for communication with their members. The Chaldean *al-Najm* was the official mouthpiece of the Chaldean Catholic Church, while the Syriac Orthodox *al-Mashriq* and later *Lisān al-Mashriq* were published by a prominent member of the clergy as part of his official duties for the Saint Ephrem Institute.

[58] This part was published in *al-Mashriq* 1:10 (1946) until 1:24 (1947).
[59] "*Al-khiṭāb al-tārīkhī*," *al-Mashriq* 1:10 (1946): 468.

Keeping in mind that the journals were published in two separate time frames, in 1928–1938 and 1946–1950 respectively, and therefore under different political circumstances, they offer a great amount of information about the position of these two churches in Iraqi society, and especially the ideas the high clergy of these churches had about this.

Both the Chaldeans and the Syriac Orthodox are entirely clear about what binds together the members of their groups: it is the Chaldean and Syriac Orthodox *ṭāʾifa*-s. The use of *ṭāʾifa*, which is common throughout the Middle East until today, sets the groups apart from others in Iraq, including the other Christians—not only in a religious way, but also as separate social groups. This is not much different from the *millet* practice in the Ottoman Empire, and the occasional usage of the word *milla* in Arabic seems to confirm this. With the patriarchs as head of the *ṭāʾifa*-s, the traditional social pattern is maintained, and these journals reinforce it. Both the Chaldeans and the Syriac Orthodox show little contact or collaboration with the other *ṭāʾifa*-s in Iraq. The Christians outside the group are occasionally mentioned, especially in relation to Christian topics such as Christmas, but there are no signs of Christian solidarity.

New, compared to the Ottoman period, is an explicit expression of attachment and loyalty to the Iraqi state. There is a difference here between the Chaldeans and the Syriac Orthodox. The Chaldeans go very far: they do not only recognize and support the country of Iraq and its authorities—especially the King—but they also embrace Arab nationalism. They do so by incorporating the official Arab nationalist doctrines in their own discourse as they were formulated by Sāṭiʿ al-Ḥuṣrī, including the relationship between Iraq and the Arab countries as a whole, expressed by phrases like "the Iraqi nation in particular and the Arab nation in general." The enthusiasm of the Chaldean leaders in their support of Arab nationalism suggests that it cannot simply be explained as providing lip service in order to negotiate a better position in Iraqi society. Such a reading is even less probable when keeping in mind their support of the right-wing *al-Ikhāʾ al-waṭanī* party, supporting the strictest form of Arab nationalism that left no room for non-Arab identifications in the country. The Chaldean elite expressed the belief that they were Arabs, and did not only wish for equal treatment but also expected this from the government. At one point the enthusiasm of the Chaldeans for Arab nationalism is so big that it can

hardly be conceived as genuine, though. This is when after the summer of 1933 the Simele massacre is completely ignored and the new King Ghāzī—who was assumed to have played a role in the events—is hailed by devoting half of the pages of the issue to him. While official discourse held that the problem that led to the Simele massacre was purely political and that religious factors played no role, theoretically safeguarding non-Assyrian Christians, the strong signs of anti-Christian sentiments in 1933 suggest that the Chaldeans felt the need to compensate by stressing their loyalty to the state stronger than they did before.

The Syriac Orthodox also show support of Iraq and its institutions by means of their journals, but with one important difference: there is no support of Arab nationalism, and despite the usage of the Arabic language, there is nothing that suggests that its authors saw themselves as Arabs. Instead, the Syriac Orthodox *ṭā'ifa* remains on the foreground, and in a few cases it is even described with the word *umma*—the same word that the Chaldeans used to describe the Arab nation. It is not clear whether we should see this in the sense of *millet*, or indeed as a national or ethnic identification. Parallels inside and outside Iraq of *umma* or the Syriac *umtho* in combination with the Syriac Orthodox allow for both interpretations. However, when at one point the "Syriac *umma*" is taken to include the other Syriac denominations as well, the interpretation as a national or ethnic identification seems probable, including unity between the different Syriac churches.

Despite the striking differences between the assumed positions of both groups in Iraqi society, the usage of the Arabic language is almost completely the same. The Arabic language is used throughout the journals and treated with respect. Both the Chaldeans and the Syriac Orthodox speak about Arabic as the "language of the *ḍād*." The role of Syriac is in both cases limited to discussions of ancient texts and the journals' front pages. The usage of Arabic shows the result of full immersion in the Arabic *nahḍa*. The resemblences should be seen in relation to the fact that both groups included native speakers of Arabic and of Neo-Aramaic. However, in combination with the differences in support of Arab nationalism, the similarities in language use allow for the interesting conclusion that a linguistic situation that completely

favors the usage of Arabic, both in theory and in practice, does not necessarily lead to the support of Arab nationalism.

Now it is time to move on to the last group of actors: three Syriac Christian authors who published in Arabic-language journals as well, but whose literary career took place in secular circles.

Chapter 5

Across communal lines: secular journalism

Thanks to the *nahḍa*, Christians, Jews, and Muslims had found common ground in the use of the Arabic language by the end of the nineteenth century, and a shared intellectual space was created. In the previous chapter, we saw the results of this through the employment of Standard Arabic and the shared medium of journals. But like the scribes of the manuscripts and the Assyrian intellectuals, these authors primarily wrote with other Syriac Christians in mind, using the networks within their churches to do so. In this chapter, I discuss authors who actively stepped beyond their communal lines, either by working together with non-Christians or by publishing in secular journals without ever referring to their religions. After looking at the situation before World War I and before the creation of the state of Iraq, I discuss three of the most important Syriac Christian authors who belong to this category: the well-known linguist and author Anastās al-Karmalī, the prominent journalist and politician Rafā'īl Buṭṭī, and the only woman active in journalism in this period, Paulina Ḥassūn. The three authors were Christians from Syriac heritage, but all three went beyond the boundaries of their churches. Anastās al-Karmalī was a Carmelite father, and as such he was obviously a religious person. However, with his linguistic interests in the Arabic language, he had an audience in mind that was broader than (Syriac) Christians. Rafā'īl Buṭṭī is known to be of Syriac Orthodox descent, but actively opposed the influence of religion within Iraqi society. Paulina Ḥassūn,

who left the country after a short period of journalist activity, wrote for a general audience of women and men.

In 1908, the Young Turks took power in Istanbul and reinstated the Ottoman constitution. The constitution allowed a greater freedom of speech, and while the effects in the longer term were limited, causing a boom of literary and journalist activity and a genuine optimism among intellectuals throughout the empire.[1] This immediate effect was also visible among Syriac Christian authors in areas that were later to constitute the state of Iraq. The late Fā'iq Buṭṭī, Iraqi historian and son of the famous Rafā'īl Buṭṭī, writes in his recent Arabic-language *Encyclopedia of Syriac Journalism in Iraq*, published by the Iraqi Kurdish Ministry of Culture and Youth, that the role of the Syriacs (*al-Suryān*) was similar to the "role of the great men of culture and journalism among the Arabs and the Kurds."[2] Buṭṭī mentions the year 1869 as the start of Iraqi journalism with the publication of the journal *al-Zawrā'*. The first Syriac Christian engagement in Syriac journalism in Iraq took place in 1902, when the Dominicans started the journal *Iklīl al-Wurūd* ("Crown of Roses") in Mosul. From that year onwards many Syriac Christians were involved in journalism as editors or authors of journals and newspapers. For Buṭṭī, the first who took part in the "field of general Syriac journalism" was the Chaldean author Dāwud Ṣalīwā (1852–1921), who published the journal *Ṣadá Bābil* ("Echo of Babylon"). With "general Syriac journalism" he probably meant journalism for a general audience instead of a religious journal. *Ṣadá Bābil* ran from 1909, shortly after the Young Turk revolution, until the beginning of World War I.[3] This journal was highly political, arguing against Turkification and in favor of the use of the Arabic language. While the reinstatement of the Ottoman constitution came with a sharp increase of freedom of expression, Dāwud's views on the Ottoman language policies were apparently too extreme to be uttered freely, as Buṭṭī mentions that he was arrested several times and eventu-

[1] Keith D. Watenpaugh, *Being Modern in the Middle East: Revolution, Nationalism, Colonialism, and the Arab Middle East* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2006), 68ff.

[2] Buṭṭī, *Mawsū'at*, 8.

[3] Fā'iq Buṭṭī, *Mawṣū'at al-ṣaḥāfa al-suryāniyya* (Encyclopedia of Syriac journalism), 11.

ally banished to Kayseri (Anatolia) in 1914.[4] Nevertheless, the years of his journal's publication clearly show the existence of commitment to the Arabic language and Arabism as opposing the Turkifying policies of the late Ottoman Empire among Chaldeans in Iraq before World War I.

Journalism in Iraq dramatically expanded after the war. In Buṭṭī's earlier general book on journalism in Iraq, which aimed at giving a comprehensive overview of what was published, he mentions for the period 1914–1921 the establishment of 68 new periodicals, for the period 1922–1930 72, and for the period 1930–1939 96 new periodicals, excluding satirical publications.[5] Some of these were published for a short while, others for multiple decades. After this period the number of periodicals becomes extremely high. The Syriac Christians significantly contributed to this.

Ideally, this chapter should also have discussed some of the Iraqi communists with a Syriac Christian origin. Hanna Batatu and, more recently, Orit Bashkin list various Christians in their discussions of Iraqi communism, but without giving details about how the fact that they were Syriac Christians influenced their positions in communist circles and how they identified. Batatu only mentions that most Christians were "Arabized Chaldeans."[6] Unfortunately, the type of sources that I used do not allow for a study of this topic, but a detailed look into the lives of some of the prominent Syriac Christian communists may fill in this gap in the future.

The circle around Anastās al-Karmilī: Arabic linguistics

Anastās al-Karmilī (1866–1947) is known as a famous linguist of the Arabic language, but he was also a priest. His ecclesiastical adherence

[4] Ibid, 12. Kayseri was a common place of banishment. Noémi Lévy-Aksu, *The Young Turk Revolution and the Ottoman Empire: The Aftermath of 1918* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2017), 74.

[5] Fā'iq Buṭṭī, *Al-mawsūʿa al-suḥufiyya al-ʿirāqiyya* (Damascus: Al-Madá, 2010).

[6] Hanna Batatu, *The Old Social Classes and the Revolutionary Movements of Iraq: A Study of Iraq's Old Landed and Commercial Classes and of its Communists, Baʿthists, and Free Officers* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1978), 424.

is rarely mentioned in his biographies. Al-Karmilī's parents had different backgrounds: his mother was from current Iraq and belonged to the Chaldean Catholic Church, while his father was a Maronite from current Lebanon.[7] His parents met in Baghdad, which is also the place where al-Karmilī was born and where he eventually died.[8] His commitment to the Arabic language is unanimously acknowledged by Muslims and Christians alike. However, he was certainly interested in his Syriac heritage.

Anastās al-Karmilī was born in Baghdad in 1866. He received his education at the Carmelite school devoted to Saint Joseph and at the Catholic *Madrasat al-ittifāq al-kāthūlīkī*, both in Baghdad. After his education, he started teaching at the Carmelite school at the age of 16. When he was 20, he left Iraq for a long time, first going to Beirut to teach Arabic and learn Latin and Greek. He later became a monk in Chèvremont close to Liège, which was an old center of pilgrimage where a Carmelite monastery was built in 1874,[9] and went to the Sanctuaire Notre-Dame de Laghet in the extreme southeast of France, which was a Carmelite monastery until 1903,[10] and Montpellier. In 1893 he became a priest and a year later he returned to Baghdad to teach Arabic and French at the Carmelite school in Baghdad. In this period, he started to write linguistic articles about several ancient and modern languages of the Middle East.[11] In 1911 he started with the publication of *Lughat al-ʿArab* (Language of the Arabs). When the war broke out, he was banished to Kayseri in Anatolia. After having returned to Baghdad, he started a new publication, the weekly journal *Dār al-salām* (House of peace). This journal appeared for three

[7] Fāṭima al-Muḥsin, *Tamaththulāt al-nahḍa fī thaqāfat al-ʿIrāq al-ḥadīth* (Beirut: Manshūrāt al-Jamal, 2010), 359.

[8] Asmāʾ Muḥammad Muṣṭafá, "*Shakhṣiyyāt Baghdādiyya: Anastās Mārī al-Karmilī... riḥlat ḥayāh ḥāfila wa-dhikrá khālida*", http://www.iraqnla-iq.com/baghdad%20memory/shakseat27.htm (accessed 4 November 2015).

[9] "La Basilique de Chèvremont," http://users.skynet.be/jchoet/chevrehist.htm, accessed 30 March 2018.

[10] Henri Costamagna, "Historique du sanctuaire de Notre-Dame de Laghet," *Nice historique* (2000): 70. Available online: http://www.nicehistorique.org/vwr/?nav=Index&document=3403

[11] Rafāʾīl Buṭṭī, "*Al-maḥfá al-ʿIrāqī al-jadīd* / La nouvelle académie arabe de Mésopotamie," *Lughat al-ʿArab* 4:7 (1926): 387–88.

years until 1921, when he travelled to Europe and the United States to acquire materials for a printing press.[12]

For our purposes, the most important publication by Anastās al-Karmilī is *Lughat al-ʿArab*, which already started before World War I but was then interrupted (1911-1914), and which continued many years later, after the war, in the years 1926–1931. In total, nine volumes came out. We have already seen this journal in Chapter 1, as it gave a description of what the word "Iraq" meant before World War I and the creation of the state. *Lughat al-ʿArab* was however primarily a linguistic journal dealing with all kinds of issues concerning the Arabic language and its origins.[13] I have not been able to see issues of *Dār al-salām*. According to Fāʾiq Buṭṭī it was set up by the British authorities for reasons of propaganda after their occupation of the country.[14]

Lughat al-ʿArab, both before and after World War I, was in the first place a purely linguistic journal. It published articles about classical and colloquial Arabic, and about the ongoing reform of classical Arabic because of its modern needs—as we would say, the emergence of Modern Standard Arabic. The journal also featured reviews of linguistic and literary works inside and outside Iraq. Both Christian and Muslim authors wrote in it, including important Muslim authors such as the Egyptian Aḥmad Zakī Abū Shādī.[15] Much attention was given to the correct way of using Arabic, for which it contained a question and answer section. The focus on purity is not different from the common line of thought in discourse surrounding the Arabic language in this period, including the goals of the Arabic language academies. The anxiety to do it right is visible in an article that printed the Arabic text of the agreement between Turkey, Iraq and Britain about Mosul, which was signed in 1926. A footnote warns the reader that while there are strange words in these texts, they have not been corrected because

[12] Anastās al-Karmilī, "*Sanatunā al-rābiʿa* / Notre IVe année," *Lughat al-ʿArab* 4:1 (1926): 1.

[13] The pre-war issues of *Lughat al-ʿArab* are available at the Bibliothèque Orientale in Beirut. The full journal was furthermore digitized and is available on the website *al-Maktaba al-waqfiyya lil-kutub al-muṣawwara*: http://waqfeya.com/category.php?cid=132.

[14] Fāʾiq Buṭṭī, *Al-mawsūʿa al-suḥufiyya al-ʿirāqiyya*, 43.

[15] Fāʾiq Buṭṭī, *Al-mawsūʿa al-suḥufiyya al-ʿirāqiyya*, 34–35.

this would not do right to history.[16] Apart from its linguistic articles, its post-war edition contained a monthly update on general news in Iraq. This news was mainly political without criticizing the government and frequently contained news about the King. The journal's only language was Arabic, but throughout its existence many article titles were provided with a translation into French.

Two of the journal's main contributors were the Syriac Orthodox Rafāʾīl Buṭṭī and Yūsuf Rizq Allāh Ghanīma. Rafāʾīl Buṭṭī is discussed below. As a contributor of *Lughat al-ʿArab*, he shows more than in his later more political publications his interests in the Arabic language and literature. Yūsuf Ghanīma (1885–1950), was a Chaldean author from Baghdad who was from the generation above Rafāʾīl Buṭṭī but who was like him politically active. For some time he taught Iraqi history at the *Dār al-Muʿallimīn* in Baghdad.[17] He should not be confused with Mār Yūsuf VII Ghanīma, Patriarch of the Chaldean Catholic Church in the period 1947–1958.

An article in the fourth year mentions the project of setting up a language academy in Baghdad, of which Anastās al-Karmilī was elected to become one of the founding members, together with the well-known Muslim poet Maʿrūf al-Ruṣāfī, who was inspector for Arabic instruction in government schools at the time and who is generally seen as a liberal poet who was also a forerunner of women's rights.[18] By 1926, the Ministry of Education had allocated money for this project. This language academy (*majmaʿ lughawī*) was probably modelled on the famous Language Academy of Damascus, which was founded in 1919, but it was established earlier than the Language Academy of Cairo, which foundation happened in 1932.[19] However, after its official establishment not much has been heard of this initiative, and the establishment of a real academy had to wait until 1948,

[16] "*Al-muʿāhada al-ʿIrāqiyya al-Inklīziyya al-Turkiyya al-mutaʿaqqida fī Anqara fī 5 Ḥazīrān sanat 1126* / Traité Iraqo-anglo-turc," *Lughat al-ʿArab* 4:1 (1926): 26.

[17] Haytham al-Jabūrī, "*Al-Nashaṭāt al-thaqāfiyya li-al-mukawwin al-masīḥī fī al-ʿIrāq: min awākhir al-qarn al-tāsiʿ ʿashar ḥattá ʿām 1939*," *Majallat markaz al-dirāsāt al-insāniyya* 5:2 (2015): 79.

[18] Rafāʾīl Buṭṭī, "*Al-maḥfá al-ʿIrāqī al-jadīd* / La nouvelle académie arabe de Mésopotamie," 385–98. About Maʿrūf al-Ruṣāfī, see Noga Efrati, *Women in Iraq: Past Meets Present* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2012), 115.

[19] Versteegh, *The Arabic Language*, 226–27.

when the Iraqi Academy of Sciences (*al-Majmaʿ al-ʿilmī al-ʿIrāqī*) was created.[20]

The journal gives little information about the political position of the authors. The high number of references to the state of Iraq and its institutions, as well as its continuous focus on the Arabic language, indicates its support for the state of Iraq and its developing Arab character. Apart from that, it appears to take a neutral stance. A moderately pro-British attitude could be distracted from an obituary of the British traveler and archaeologist Gertrude Bell, who died in 1926 in Baghdad and who had great influence on the British policies in Iraq. This may be seen in connection to the fact that Anastās al-Karmilī's earlier journal *Dār al-salām* was funded by the British for propaganda purposes. In addition to that, Rafāʾīl Buṭṭī mentions in his memoirs that he used to have arguments with Anastās al-Karmilī about his political views, which Rafāʿīl considered too pro-British. If not pro-British, *Lughat al-ʿArab* cannot be seen as an Arab nationalist journal in any case.

Despite the lack of clear political expressions, *Lughat al-ʿArab* was a true example of a linguistic and literary common ground for Muslims and Christians and more than *al-Najm* or (*Lisān*) *al-Mashriq* a product of the Arab literary *Nahḍa*. The journal shows that the Christian Anastās al-Karmilī was recognized as an expert on the Arabic language, given his inclusion in the Iraqi language academy and the consultation of his journal in a question and answer rubric on questions about the correct and pure use of the Arabic language. Together with Rafāʾīl Buṭṭī, Yūsuf Ghanīma, and other Syriac Christian authors who wrote for the journal, they took pride in the Arabic language and showed that it was not "owned" by Muslims. The journal did not directly discuss religious issues, but it did not eschew either Muslim or Christian religious themes whenever those were relevant for linguistic purposes, such as the Dominican printing press or Islamic terminology in the Arabic language.

[20] Muḥammad al-Bakāʾ, "*Al-majmaʿ al-ʿilmī al-ʿIrāqī: bidāyat al-nashʾa wa-al-ahdāf*," *Al-lugha al-ʿarabiyya: ṣāḥib al-jalāla*, http://www.arabiclanguageic.org/view_page.php?id=1932 (accessed 30 March 2018).

Rafāʿīl Buṭṭī: identification as an Arab

Rafāʾīl Buṭṭī (1899–1956), the father of the above-mentioned historian Fāʾiq Buṭṭī, was considered by many the "father of Iraqi journalism," and indeed his pioneering role is evident from the large number of his publications.[21] He is one of the few Syriac Christians in Iraq of the early twentieth century who regularly come up in histories that do not focus on Christianity. He was a very active intellectual, and also played a role in Iraqi politics, as he accepted a post as a Minister of State in 1953.[22] Rafāʾīl Buṭṭī is a relatively well-known figure in Iraqi historiography, both among Arab and Western historians. As an influential politician, outside and inside parliament and even as a minister of state, he is one of the main figures in Peter Wien's important work on the variety on political tendencies in Iraq in the 1930s.[23] In this work, Rafāʿīl's Arab nationalism and tendency towards the right-wing ideology of the *al-Ikhāʾ al-waṭanī* party are stressed, and while being an Arab was an inseparable part of his identification, his Syriac Orthodox roots should not be ignored. He is important in this dissertation because he is one of the few Syriac Christians in this period who deliberately retreated from the Christian environment that they grew up in, leading to frequent clashes with the clergy. He had clear ideas about the position of (Syriac) Christians in Iraqi society. There are a considerable number of places in his publications where he expresses these views. Equally important is the publication of his memoirs and notes in 2000 by his son Fāʾiq Buṭṭī.[24] The notes and memoirs come from the notebooks and agendas he had left after his death, and most of the notes are not dated. The large amount of texts have been edited and provided with context about his life by Fāʾiq Buṭṭī.[25] As such, they should be used with caution. Nevertheless, many of the notes speak for themselves and are extremely insightful and tell us much about Rafāʿīl's ideas about (Syriac) Christianity. In the following sections, I give a short biographical introduction and then focus on the question

[21] http://www.ahewar.org/debat/show.art.asp?aid=235578

[22] Matthew Elliot, *Independent Iraq: British Influence from 1941–1958* (London: I.B. Tauris, 1996), 177.

[23] Peter Wien, *Iraqi Arab Nationalism*.

[24] Rafāʾīl Buṭṭī, *Dhākira ʿIrāqiyya*, two volumes (Damascus: Dār al-Madá, 2000).

[25] Buṭṭī, *Dhākira ʿIrāqiyya*, volume 1, 5ff.

how Rafāʿīl combined his Arab nationalism with his Syriac Christian origins, based on these memoirs and his work as a journalist.

Rafāʾīl was born in Mosul in 1899 as the son of a weaver.[26] He was lucky to receive his primary education at the Dominican primary school in Mosul, which he finished in 1913, just a year before it was closed because of World War I.[27] In the same year he started working at his very young age of 13 as a teacher in a school belonging to the Syriac Orthodox church called Mār Tūmā, where he was appointed thanks to his knowledge of French and Arabic. With the money he earned he contributed to the sustainment of his family.[28] He continued doing this until 1919.[29] The director of this school was Nematallah Denno, whom we already encountered in Chapters 2 and 4. In addition to Arabic and French, the subjects that were taught in this school included Syriac, Turkish, liturgy and religious education according to the Syriac Orthodox faith, in addition to subjects like arithmetic and geography. After his father died in 1917, he went to Baghdad in 1919 to enter the well-known boarding school called *Dār al-muʿallimīn* (House of teachers), where he was to receive training as a teacher.[30] At this time he already showed an interest in journalism, even though—as he wrote—it was just because journalism in Baghdad would allow him to make some money on the side. Searching for work, he met Anastās al-Karmilī,[31] who agreed that he could work for him by writing for his weekly journal *Dār al-salām*. He also started writing for the daily newspaper *al-ʿIrāq*, starting his journalist career. In addition to that, he supplemented his income by teaching Arabic to

[26] He grew up as a Syriac Orthodox in a large religious family under poor circumstances. Buṭṭī, *Dhākira ʿIrāqiyya*, volume 1, ed. Fāʾiq Buṭṭī (Damascus: Dār al-Madá, 2000), 39.

[27] Ibid., 42. The Dominican school was reopened in 1935—see Chapter 1.

[28] Ibid. This is the type of communal schools that were taken over by the Iraqi government in 1920—see Chapter 1.

[29] Ibid., 55.

[30] Ibid., 48. About half of the teachers of this school were Egyptian. A list of students in his cohort shows that there was a mix of Muslims and Christians from various places in the country. This institution, in English rendered as Teacher Training School, was reportedly established in Baghdad already in 1918. Walther Björkman, "Das irakische Bildungswesen und seine Probleme bis zum zweiten Weltkrieg," *Die Welt des Islams* 1 (1951): 181.

[31] Ibid., 48.

a French-speaking person.[32] After finishing his education in 1921, he wanted to stay in Baghdad because he saw no future for himself in Mosul. His mother and siblings came over, despite his doubts whether he was able to support them in Baghdad.[33] He had to find a job now, and he started as a teacher of Arabic in place of Anastās al-Karmilī in the Carmelite school of Saint Joseph, although it did not take long until he was fired because he had used a text about Islam for teaching Arabic (see below). From 1924 onwards, he was affiliated to the literary journal *al-Ḥurriyya* "Freedom." While he is not mentioned as owner or editor of either publication, various sources mention him as coeditor. In the same year, he started studying law in the Law Faculty in Baghdad, despite his wish to study abroad in Europe or the United States. Rafāʿīl mentions that he initially did not get permission to study law, because he had no secondary school diploma, and that Sāṭiʿ al-Ḥuṣrī, who was general director of education, personally intervened to prevent the permission from being granted. Eventually the ministry granted his permission after it was established in court that the Dominican school in Mosul was "among the superior preparatory schools" according to the former Ottoman administration.[34] After he finished school in 1929, he received the title of lawyer, which he said helped him being taken more seriously; however, he never became active as a lawyer.

In 1929 he started publishing his own daily newspaper called *al-Bilād* "the Country" together with the Armenian journalist Jibrān Malkūn, who came from Syria,[35] for which they ordered a printing press from London. The personal importance of this project for Rafāʿīl's career is stressed in his memoirs.[36] *Al-Bilād* was a general political newspaper and highly critical of both the British mandate and the ruling government. Between 1930 and 1932, publication was suspended a number of times by the government and it sometimes operated under different names. In March 1932, a few months before the in-

[32] Ibid., 49.

[33] Ibid., 54.

[34] Ibid., 61.

[35] Anonymous, "*Maḥaṭṭāt fī ḥayāt al-ṣuḥufī al-mukhaḍram Sajjād al-Ghāzī*," February 24, 2016, *Al-Madá Supplements*, accessed September 8, 2018, http://www.almadasupplements.com/news.php?action=view&id=14965.

[36] Ibid., 64.

dependence of Iraq, Rafāʾīl Buṭṭī was arrested together with the well-known author Fahmī al-Mudarris (1873–1944), after the publication of an article that heavily criticized the government: he was banished to Koy Sanjaq and to Kirkuk consecutively, and was able to return after almost two months.[37] The journal continued until 1963, after Rafāʿīl's death, when it lost its permit.

According to Peter Wien, he was an important person among the "Young Effendia," young intellectuals and army members who obtained political influence in Iraq from the 1930s onwards. They had come of age in postwar Iraq under the British mandate, and caused a paradigm change as they started to replace the "Sherifian officers," who had served in the Ottoman army and who had come to power thanks to the British. Born in 1899, Rafāʿīl came to adulthood in the time that the Iraqi state was being established. In the young republic, he became convinced that Arab nationalism was the future of the country, and together with the other Young Effendia, he spent the rest of his life to the advancement of this idea. It was through his journal *al-Bilād* that Rafāʿīl exterted an important part of his political influence. The journal endorsed the right-wing Arab nationalist *al-Ikhāʾ al-waṭanī* party when it was created in 1930, and included articles by a number of other nationalist authors among the Young Effendia.[38] Apart from that, the journal did not have a consistent political line beyond the support of Arab nationalism.[39] Rafāʾīl himself sould not be seen as a consistent supporter of the *al-Ikhāʾ al-waṭanī* party either,[40] but he certainly shared its strict Arab nationalist world view, as we see below. Apart from his activities as a journalist, Rafāʿīl's political career consisted of his membership of Parliament for multiple terms from 1935 onwards.[41] Between 1946 and 1948 he stayed in Egypt. Eventually, he became minister of propaganda for a year in 1953.

[37] Buṭṭī, *Mawsūʿat*, 66–67.

[38] Wien, *Iraqi Arab Nationalism*, 53.

[39] Ibid., 55.

[40] Ibid., 35.

[41] Anonymous, "*Rafāʾīl Buṭṭī: amīr al-ṣaḥāfa al-ʿIrāqiyya*," *ʿIrāqiyyūn min zaman al-tawahhuj* 1489 (2009): 2.

In conflict with the clergy

Rafāʾīl Buṭṭī occasionally expressed his views about Christianity in Iraq. He regularly expressed his dislike of religious fanaticism (*taʿaṣṣub dīnī* in his words), among some Christians in the country. Occasionally, his opinions caused him to clash with ecclesial authorities. This clash was related to his secular ideas and his positive attitude towards Islam.

The conflicts started when he was in his twenties. Sometime between 1921 and 1923, when he replaced Anastās al-Karmilī in the Saint Joseph school, he had published an article about the birthday of the Prophet Muhammad in *al-ʿIrāq*, which he used for teaching in class. In his memoirs, Rafāʿīl writes how it caused his dismissal:

> After the students had spread throughout the school the matter of my article and the fact that I had taught it to them in class, and after some of them had passed the matter on to their families, including people who were strict in their Christianity (*naṣrāniyyatihim*), tumult rose in the monastery of the Carmelite fathers and the councils of Christian clergy in Baghdad. I was removed from teaching and deprived from 150 rupees monthly above my salary with the *al-ʿIrāq* newspaper.[42]

His choice to include a text about Islam in his Arabic lessons was clearly not appreciated by the religious leadership of the school. Rafāʿīl interprets this here as a symptom of the strict religious views of some of the students.

His frustration with the role of religion in education is visible in the attacks against him in the religious journal *Nashrat al-aḥad*, the Catholic journal edited by the Syriac Catholic priest ʿAbd al-Aḥad Jurjī. While I have not been able to consult this journal, one of these attacks is narrated in Rafāʿīl's memoirs. After a speech he delivered in 1923 to the yearly assembly of an institution called the Education Forum (*al-Muntadá al-tahdhīb*), which was a nationwide institution, he had apparently gone too far according to the clergy represented by this journal, as they wrote:

[42] Ibid., 56.

> Nobody deviated in their speech except the author Rafāʿīl Afandī Buṭṭī, because he spoke about freedom of thinking and religious fanaticism (*al-taʿaṣṣub al-dīnī*) and took all religions for one and descended together from heaven, while we all know that the religions are different.[43]

Despite their sharp criticism, Rafāʿīl is recognized as an *adīb* (intellectual) despite his rather young age of 23. In Rafāʿīl's (written) response he writes that he has been quoted inaccurately about saying that all religions were one, but stresses his view about how differences in religion should not cause difficulties in society:

> I said the following in this regard: "Our land in the East is the land of the prophets. For that reason, our fate is—thank God (*wa-al-ḥamdu lillāh*)—[that we have] many different religions. Nevertheless, this difference has become the reason of our misfortune and our decline, because we have adopted it as a means to fight and quarrel, even though [the difference] does not justify to take these differences in religion as an excuse for segregation (*al-tafarruq*) and for planting the seeds of schism; to the contrary, it should improve with us the agreement about the work that will benefit the country and elevate its cause." Which means:
>
> The majority of the religions prevailing in Iraq are religions of the *muwaḥḥidīn* (that is, those who believe in the existence of one god), which are religions that have descended from heaven, and all of these are one in their objective of human happiness and elevation of their cause, and all of them teach us tolerance and sincerity with our brothers, children of one homeland (*abnāʾ al-waṭan al-wāḥid*), to live in peace and to reach our goal of the sophisticated dear life, in which there is no religion telling us to separate."
>
> ...

[43] Ibid., 57.

> That is all I told on the topic of religions and our unity, witnessed by hundreds of listeners. As for your admonishment to me that I said "It is not necessary to separate between us by difference of religion, *milla* (I think that you mean with this word the *ṭā'ifa*, because it does not have this meaning in Arabic)[44] and *madhhab*, because we are all of one race (*'unṣur*),[45] from one Father, from one piece of clay, from one homeland (*waṭan*), and we aim at one goal," I said this indeed and even went further than that, and those who heard the speech support this statement.[46]

What exactly was the line Rafā'īl crossed here? Coexistence between the different religions in Iraq as such was not frowned upon as such by the clergy, or at least not by those Catholic clergy who took part in Iraqi public life, which included the editors of *Nashrat al-aḥad*. It was certainly not a problem for Anastās al-Karmilī, who was active in the same kind of circles, given his collaboration with Muslim authors. The key to this issue may rather be sought in his appreciation of other religions than Christianity. The fact that he openly "thanked God" for the existence of multiple religions in Iraq may have been a bridge too far. The issue was possibly more problematic because Rafā'īl was not only a Christian, but also started his intellectual life with help of the church, because of his primary education in the Dominican school in Mosul, his work as a teacher for the Mār Tūmā school, and his journalistic activities for Anastās al-Karmilī. More

[44] The word *milla* here reflects the Ottoman Turkish term *millet* and can even be considered a loan from Turkish. In the course of the emergence of Modern Standard Arabic in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, many Arabic words for political institutions and phenomena were created by taking over the Young Ottoman terminology in Ottoman Turkish, which often consisted of older loans from Arabic. While the word *millet* eventually comes from the Arabic *milla*, it was not used in that way in Arabic and only obtained this meaning in Ottoman Turkish. While, as Kees Versteegh notes, this term "never gained currency in this sense in Arabic political terminology," unlike words such as *ḥukūma* from Turkish *hükümet*, it should be no surprise that the generation who was raised with knowledge of Ottoman Turkish occasionally used this word in its Ottoman Turkish meaning. Rafā'īl corrects them, and at the same time he shows that the Arabic *ṭā'ifa* can be considered a synonym of the Ottoman Turkish *millet*. Versteegh, *The Arabic Language*, 223.

[45] This word may also mean "species."

[46] Ibid., 57–58.

than other secular authors, Rafāʿīl explicitly departed from ecclesial life.

In addition to that, the clergy may have been at unease with Rafāʿīl's apparent view that religion should be of no importance for one's position in society. This becomes more visible in a lecture he delivered at the same assembly of the Education Forum in 1926. At that time, he spoke about the necessary changes the people in Iraq had to make in order to move society forward. In the lecture, which was published in the non-confessional journal *al-Ḥurriyya* of which he was the co-editor, he explicitly speaks to the audience as "sons and daughters of Iraq." He calls the "recent past" (*al-ams al-qarīb*) of Iraq the "age of darkness" and "the black age," referring most probably to the Ottoman era. He denies that the Iraq of his days is the same as that of the recent past, and that while there is much unemployment, there is now at least hope.[47] After expressing the need for people to have "the courage to say the truth and [to have] honesty in speech," blaming journalism in Iraq to be cowardly and uncritical, he speaks about the necessity of educational reform:

> The third subject in the curriculum of the new life is the reform of education. It is not possible to reform education without making the schools social (*ijtimāʿī*) and pure. I mean, schools have to be taken away from sectarianism (*ṭāʾifiyya*), the sectarian (*madhhabī*) and religious (*dīnī*) teachings have to be removed from it, and these teachings have to be restricted to religious institutions.[48]

This last statement was apparently too much for part of the audience, as the following footnote is added:

> Among the people who were present at the party was his beatitude Mar Yūsuf ʿImmānūʾīl, Patriarch of Babylon of the Chaldeans, and a group of clergy from the different

[47] Buṭṭī plays here with the similarity of the Arabic words *ʿamal* "work" and *amal* "hope."

[48] Rafāʿīl Buṭṭī, "*Minhājunā fī al-ḥayāh al-jadida: al-khuṭba allatī alqāhā Rafāʿīl Afandī Buṭṭī fī al-ḥalqa al-sanawiyya al-kubrá al-muntadá li-al-tahdhīb fī Baghdād 2 ayyār 1926*," in *al-Ḥurriyya* 2:10 (1925–1926): 563.

> Christian sects (*ṭawāʾif*). I did not say my last words before the Patriarch left the foyer of the meeting place, and the clergy present followed him...[49]

The rejection from the side of the Chaldean patriarch to accept even to listen to an appeal to separate religion from education shows the sensitivity of the issue. These responses from clergy are similar in strength to his removal from the Saint Joseph school, which we saw above.

Not affected by the departure of the clergy, Buṭṭī goes on to speak about the role of women in society. After arguing for mixed-gender education, which was not common in Iraq until far in the 1940s (see Chapter 1), he devotes an entire paragraph to the need for women to take part in society like men. The last part of Buṭṭī's speech concerns the necessity for the people of Iraq to study Western languages. Calling Western civilization the "highest human culture" that he knows, he states that "everyone who is interested in true knowledge certainly has to be educated in the western languages, at least one of them," in order to be able to adapt Western knowledge. Here, a sharp dichotomy between east and west comes to the fore. Buṭṭī stresses explicitly that he regards Iraqis as "easterners" (*sharqiyyūn*), and sets it off against "westerners" (*gharbiyyūn*).[50]

In Rafāʿīl's whole speech, he never speaks of any religion explicitly. By doing this, he might have wanted to express more convincingly that these categories are irrelevant. At the same time, Rafāʿīl refers to Iraq and the Iraqi people several times, suggesting that for him people of all religions and languages are equal, being Iraqi citizens. While Iraq's "recent past," or the Ottoman era (see above), is "the dark age," which is only useful to talk about in order to learn from mistakes, the "remote past," meaning the ancient Mesopotamian civilizations, has its value in providing a common history for the sake of nationalism. Even though

[49] Ibid.

[50] This is in contrast to the idea of many contemporary Egyptian nationalists, who regarded their country as part of Europe. For example, as Yasir Suleiman points out, to the Coptic Egyptian nationalist Salāma Mūsá (1887–1958), it was clear that Egypt belonged to Europe rather than to the East, and that "the ascription of an Eastern identity to Egypt is an absurdity which must be resisted and ridiculed." Suleiman, *The Arabic Language and National Identity*, 180–1.

Rafāʿīl recognized that using ancient civilizations for modern-day nationalism is "on the pretext that we are grandsons of these peoples," and that "these claims need much evidence," Rafāʿīl the value of referring to ancient civilizations was its usage for nationalist purposes in itself.[51] In other words, while referring to ancient origins may compromise the truth, it has a function in nationalism and therefore it may be justified.

From Assyrianism to radical Arab nationalism

While Rafāʿīl was Syriac Orthodox, there was no doubt for him that identified as an Arab and that this was of great importance to him. In his memoirs, he writes: "I feel that I am Arab from a noble Arab origin connected to al-Ḥīra and its inhabitants and maybe his chiefs. But I do not understand why I have these thoughts, even though I cannot prove it, nor do I put value into descent."[52] The idea that his origin was from al-Ḥīra, which he acknowledges to be unfounded, is significant: this was the most important city of the pre-Islamic Arab Christian Lakhmid dynasty. An implication of this is that he considered himself of Arab origin rather than Arabized.

Rafāʿīl had a very high esteem for the Arabic language, which is clear from the way he talks about the language in his memoirs. He enjoyed teaching the language and its literature. In the period that he replaced Anastās al-Karmilī as a teacher of Arabic, he wrote: "I make the boys drink the love of the Arabic literature. They devote themselves to the study with urgent desire and laudable activity; they get acquainted in their life with the eloquence of the Arabic language."[53] He also acknowledged its connection to Islam. According to his son, he "started his day by reading some *āya*-s from the "wise account" (*al-dhikr al-ḥakīm*), because the Noble Quran is a great teacher of philology, teaching us how to write in Arabic."[54] Rafāʿīl's identification as an Arab came to the fore in his political and journalist activities as well, as we have seen above. In this section I show how Rafāʿīl went from

[51] Rafāʿīl Buṭṭī, "*Minhājunā fī al-ḥayāh al-jadida*," 560.
[52] *Dhākira ʿIrāqiyya*, part 1, 40.
[53] Ibid., 55–56.
[54] Ibid., 10.

identifying as an Assyrian to a form of nationalism that was so strict that it seems to contradict his progressive ideas about religion and education of women.

Rafāʾīl Buṭṭī did not grow up with Arab nationalism. Instead, in his youth in Mosul, he was influenced by Assyrianism for some time, as he admits in his diary, partly writing about himself in the third person:

> I am by virtue of my origin a Christian (*naṣrānī*) in Mosul from a middle class that had become poor, who was born from illiterate parents, and who entered the well-known missionary school of the Dominican fathers, and then before graduating started to teach at the praised school of the *ṭāʾifa* (the Mār Tūmā school of the Syriac Orthodox)[55] under the protection of the Syriac Orthodox Church, and who learned the Syriac language (*al-lugha al-suryāniyya*) and taught it to the children, and attended the church to pray two times a day with the students, and who lived some years in a religious atmosphere and with the Christian Syriac Orthodox sectarian (*ṭāʾifiyya*) limitations. His [Rafāʿīl's] teacher and deacon Nematallah Denno[56] had the greatest influence on him in directing the intellectual and cultural inclinations—even though he was by nature different from it in doubt and freedom of thought and inclination toward rebellion, so that he took over from this intellectual life that the Syriac Orthodox are the descendants of the ancient Assyrians (*al-Āthūriyyīn*) in Mesopotamia (*fī arḍ bilād al-nahrayn*).[57]

This passage shows that there was an inclination towards Assyrianism at the Syriac Orthodox school of Mosul at the time when Rafāʿīl taught there. This was in the period 1913–1919 before the establishment of the state of Iraq, mainly comprising the years of World War I, in which Assyrianism among Syriac Orthodox Christians was indeed at a high point. It also shows that Rafāʿīl, who gives a rare insight into the Syriac Christian element of his identification in this passage,

[55] Part of the Arabic text.
[56] For Nematallah Denno, see Chapter 2.
[57] Rafāʾīl Buṭṭī, *Dhākira ʿIrāqiyya*, part 2, 158.

considered it necessary to explain why he was influenced by Assyrianism. The ironic tone in which is it written, talking about himself in the third person throughout the fragment, can be explained by the lengths he went to denounce his former Assyrian identification and in his account on what problems it caused later in his political and journalistic activities. He describes that his secret became known because he had written the phrase "the Assyrian Library" on all books that he had acquired when he lived in Mosul, which he then sold to others. In addition to that, in the period immediately after moving to Baghdad where he attended the school for teacher training (see above), he still identified as Assyrian:

> And what is more that some who do not have ethics took into consideration that I wrote on the student form at the *Dār al-muʿallimīn* to the question about religion and school (*madhhab*) that I was an "Assyrian Syriac Orthodox Christian" (*masīḥī suryānī urthūdhuksī āthūrī*) with all naivety and good intentions...[58]

This story was later revealed as he became active in politics and was used to mock him. Apart from his later conviction that an Assyrian identification was not correct, he gave the following main reason why he did not want to be identified as Assyrian:

> Especially because those who call me thus do not mean to call me Assyrian in the sense that I am from the ancient Iraqis who lived in Mesopotamia in bygone times, but they insinuate that I am Assyrian, meaning *Tiyārī*,[59] who are the emigrated Christian nation (*al-qawm al-naṣārī*) of Nestorians who came together with the British campaign occupying Iraq in World War I, under leadership of their Patriarch Mār Shimʿūn, whose origins were from some regions of Iran and the Ottoman Empire. (The government of Iraq had granted a vast land and the well-known events of 1933 had happened—the manoeuvre of the Assyrians.) I have indeed written against the abuses of the

[58] Rafāʾīl Buṭṭī, *Dhākira ʿIrāqiyya*, part 2, 159.

[59] Tiyārā is a region of Hakkari, where many of the Assyrians in Iraq had fled from during World War I.

> foreigners in these days an article in the Egyptian newspaper *al-Jihād* of the *Wafd*[60] while I lived in Cairo, defending the Christians of Iraq and their freedom and identity under the protection of the flag of the Iraqi state ... Like I am Mosuli from the Syriac Orthodox, the Assyrians are Nestorian Chaldeans. The difference between the two races (*al-ʿunṣurayn*) is enormous.[61]

Rafāʿīl was therefore most concerned by the risk of being identified as one of the Assyrians who had come from the Hakkari and Urmia regions. This tells us two things. First, also in his own time there was confusion about the meaning of the word Assyrian. When Rafāʿīl wrote on the registration form of the teacher seminary in Baghdad that he was an "Assyrian Syriac Orthodox Christian," he had an Assyrian identification in mind, by which he used the same identification as the Assyrians from the Hakkari and Urmia regions, without being one of them. In other words: the way he used "Assyrian" here was much broader than what we see elsewhere in Iraq in this period and included the other Syriac Christians with their origins within Iraq. As he speaks of the Assyrians as a race (*ʿunṣur*) in the last part of the fragment, this suggests that after embracing an Arab identification, he did not deny the existence of an Assyrian race, but denied being part of it, seeing his former identification as a mistake. By the time that Rafāʿīl was accused of being an Assyrian, the word had become so much associated with the Assyrians from the Urmia and Hakkari regions that its wider interpretation was almost forgotten by Iraqi society at large. Second, this fragment shows how harshly Rafāʿīl thought of the Assyrian leadership in the period leading towards the Simele massacre of 1933. In line with nationalist thought, he portrays them as foreigners who worked together with the British and who, despite everything they received from the government, started a campaign against Iraq. This leads us to another set of fragments, in which Rafāʿīl explains his ideas about what it meant to be an Arab and what Iraq should do with people who do not identify as such.

> Who are the Arabs? The Arabs are those whose language is Arabic or who live in the Arab country (*al-bilād al-*

[60] This newspaper was published in the years 1931–1938.
[61] Rafāʾīl Buṭṭī, *Dhākira ʿIrāqiyya*, part 2, 159–160.

> *ʿarabiyya*), and, in both situations, without any loyalty (*ʿaṣabiyya*) that prevents them from integration in Arab nationalism (*al-qawmiyya al-ʿarabiyya*).[62]

In this passage it becomes clear that Rafāʿīl's definition of the word Arab was close to the definition of Sāṭiʿ al-Ḥuṣrī (see Chapter 1), and that of George Antonius, with a great emphasis on the Arabic language, and at the same time wider: those who do not speak Arabic but live in an Arab country are also included. In addition to that, Rafāʿīl includes an important condition: the loyalty of an Arab should be with the Arab nation, and only the Arab nation. Without mentioning any groups explicitly, he creates room to include speakers of other languages than Arabic who were nevertheless loyal to the Arab nationalist project, such as some Kurds and Aramaic-speaking Syriac Christians. Rafāʿīl then goes on to define the borders of the "Arab country," which included all countries where Arabic was spoken including the countries of North Africa, and to mention the merits of Arab culture. It becomes more interesting if he makes explicit what he expects from those with people with foreign, i.e., non-Arab, loyalties:

> The nationalist culture is a tool for Arabization (*taʿrīb*): Arab nationalism imposes that in the Arab homeland (*al-waṭan al-ʿarabī* no groups organize with a foreign nationality (*ʿunṣuriyya ajnabiyya*), who feel a loyalty different from the Arab loyalty even though they carry the nationality of the state (*jinsiyyat al-dawla*). These groups must Arabize if they wish to stay in this homeland, and the Arabs must make it easy for them to fulfill this for unity and harmony between all citizens. The culture of Arab nationalism is a means that guarantees the requested Arabization.[63]

In other words, the non-Arabs of Arab countries must Arabize if they want to remain in the country. The word use for "Arabization" (*taʿrīb*) is formed in the same way as the word for Turkification (*tatrīk*) against which Arab authors in Mesopotamia and elsewhere on the eve

[62] Ibid., 196.
[63] Ibid., 197–98.

of World War I agitated so fiercely. It also partly resembles the Turkish assimilationist policies of the Kurdish population in the southeast of Turkey. One important difference is, though, where the Turkish nationalism of the early twentieth century had ambivalent views to its non-Muslim communities as regard to the question if they should assimilate or not, for Rafāʿīl there was no question that Arabic-speaking and Arabized Christians would be able to participate equally within Iraqi Arab nationalism.[64] The message is probably mostly directed towards Assyrians and Kurds who refused to identify as Arabs. Although no Assyrian or Kurdish state exists, he considered their loyalty being directed to something foreign. About Syriac Christians like himself, who despite their non-Arab heritage willingly participated in Arab nationalism, there was no loyalty question at all. The above statement can be considered one of the strongest rejections of Assyrianism in this period of Iraqi history coming from Christians.

Paulina Ḥassūn: early Iraqi feminism

Paulina Ḥassūn (Arabic: Pūlīnā or Būlīnā) was born in 1865 in Palestine. Her father was from Mosul and her mother from Palestine, and she lived in Palestine and Egypt before she came to Iraq.[65] Like for Anastās al-Karmilī, her biographies never mention her ecclesial affiliation, but it is almost sure that she was Syriac Catholic or Chaldean. Paulina Ḥassūn was active in Iraq as a journalist for a very short time: from 1923 to 1925. The reason for her to come to Iraq was to work in Baghdad for a cousin from her father's (Iraqi) side, Salīm Ḥassūn, who had been writing for the Dominican journal *Iklīl al-Wurūd* (see above),[66] but who was now preparing a moderately nationalist jour-

[64]For the ambivalence in Turkish nationalism of the early Republic of Turkey regarding the non-Muslims, see Emmanual Szurek, "Minorities or Minoritization? Uncertainties Regarding the Politics of Names and Identity in Interwar Turkey," in *Arabic and its Alternatives: Religious Minorities in the Formative Years of the Modern Middle East (1920-1950)*, ed. Heleen Murre-van den Berg et al., forthcoming.

[65]Ṣabīḥa Shaykh Dāwud, *Awwal al-ṭarīq ilá al-nahḍa al-nisawiyya fī al-ʿIrāq* (Maṭābiʿ al-Rābiṭa: Baghdad, 1958), 204.

[66]Paulina Ḥassūn's cousin from her father's side was a relatively well-known author, of whom it is known that he studied in the Dominican school in Mosul and worked for the Dominican journal *Iklīl al-Wurūd*, of which one of the languages of publication was Neo-Aramaic. Ibrāhīm Khalīl al-ʿAlāf, "*Salīm Ḥassūn 1871–1947 wa-*

nal called *al-ʿĀlam al-ʿArabī*, which was published from 1924 to 1952.[67] She started in 1923 the first journal for women in Iraq, named *Laylá*. After two years of publication, the journal ceased to exist in 1925 because of insufficient funds. After that, Paulina left Iraq back to Palestine and would not return anymore.

The first issue of *Laylá* appeared in October 1923.[68] The subtitle, printed on the front page, reads "Laylá, for the sake of the renaissance (*nahḍa*) of the Iraqi woman." The date of publication was indicated both according to the Christian and Islamic calendar. It was published in what is indicated as a new printing press in Baghdad, belonging to "Ḥassūn, Murād and their partners," which is probably the printing press of her cousin Salīm for which she came to Iraq. The second page of the first issue introduces the journal as "The first women's journal that appeared in Iraq." For the phrase "women's journal," the Arabic has *majalla nisāʾiyya*, which could also be translated as "feminist journal." It then explains the aims of the journal:

> Discusses all what is useful and new related to knowledge, art, literature, society, and especially education (*tahdhīb*) of young women, raising of children, health, family, and all other things related to housekeeping.
>
> Established for families, especially Iraqi families, for the sake of benefit and amusement of men, women and children.
>
> [*Laylá*] is one of the representatives of the Arab women renaissance (*al-nahḍa al-nisāʾiyya al-ʿarabiyya*).[69]

This type of comprehensive list of topics was also common for other journals, including the ones we saw before, but the topics related to "housekeeping" (*tadbīr al-manzil*) are special for this journal. The explicit inclusion of men in its audience suggests that it was meant

al-ṣaḥāfa al-ʿIrāqiyya al-muʿāṣira," *al-Ḥiwār al-mutamaddin*, March 14, 2009. http://www.ahewar.org/debat/show.art.asp?aid=165636 (accessed March 27, 2018).

[67] Buṭṭī, *Mawsūʿat*, 33–35 and Ṣabīḥa Shaykh Dāwud, *Awwal al-ṭarīq*, 204.

[68] The entire journal is available online as part of the *World Digital Library* of the Library of Congress and was digitized in cooperation with the Iraqi National Library and Archives. https://www.wdl.org/en/item/3054/.

[69] *Laylá* 1:1 (1923): 1–2.

to be more than a lifestyle magazine for women, and indeed, the journal surely had a certain degree of change in society in mind, especially concerning the call for education of women.

At the beginning of this issue, Paulina Ḥassūn starts with an opening word in which she explains why this journal is necessary. She immediately connects this cause with the future of Iraq:

> *Feeling for the heart of Iraq*
>
> Some of those people think that the appearance of a women journal in Iraq is "among the luxuries that we do not need at the moment, and [that] the call for a renaissance (*nahḍa*) of the Iraqi woman wastes our time..." And those people are used to do [things] without spirit, and maybe they are among those who are "buried alive." (*al-wāʾidīn*)
>
> But why [do they have] these reactionary thoughts? And why [illegible] the thunder of living voices calling for fresh renewal?
>
> To God, oh heralds of life, and seekers of what is good for the country (*al-bilād*), you are the spirit of Iraq (*rūḥ al-ʿIrāq*)! You are the heart of Iraq!
>
> The heart (*qalb*)[70] of Iraq is striving for a total and real renaissance, the renaissance of "all" (*al-kull*), which contains "for all" promotion, strength and happiness. The heart of Iraq knows that its rage will not be cured, unless the renaissance (*nahḍa*) comprises its girls. They will receive in full their right from societal renewal, to reform their situation, and with them the situation of the nation (*al-umma*).
>
> The heart of Iraq has announced its feeling and ardent love, with a strong "beating." Poets sing the bravest songs about it, and orators and authors keep on explaining its most precise senses with clear signs (*bi-āyāt bayyināt*).[71]

Paulina Ḥassūn, despite her recent arrival in Iraq, immediately connected the fate of the women in Iraq to the fate of the young Iraqi

[70] May be interpreted as "spirit."

[71] Paulina Ḥassūn, "Feeling for the heart of Iraq," *Laylá* 1:1 (1923): 4–5.

nation as a whole. She frequently uses the word *nahḍa*, which can be understood as a renaissance of women on its own, but which in her case is connected to a more general *nahḍa*, because she writes "unless the renaissance (*nahḍa*) comprises its girls." Her words contain numerous references to God, and despite her Christian origin, she does not even refrain from using typically Islamic phrases, such as the Quranic *bi-āyāt bayyināt* (with clear signs, or *āya*-s).[72]

About the name of the journal, the woman's name Laylá, she writes that it was inspired by a poem by the well-known Iraqi poet Jamīl Ṣidqī al-Zahāwī (1863–1936), a neo-classicist poet born in Baghdad with a Kurdish origin:[73]

> Immediately after my arrival in *Dār al-Salām*,[74] I was invited to give a speech at the assembly organized by the Education Council (10 June 1923) to honor the great poet al-Zahāwī. I saw and heard there, for the first time the great man. He recited his poetry with longing and yearning, and he screamed:
>
> "I am in love with Laylá, and she is my home country (*mawṭinī*)"
>
> And both words "Laylá" and "my home country" descended in my heart with a descend of revelation. I was driven to adorn the journal with the name "Laylá," while it was in my mind to call it "Girl of Iraq."[75]

The Laylá in al-Zahāwī's poem is undoubtedly the same as the Laylá his closet drama *Laylá wa-Sumayr*, which was published later in 1927 in Anastās al-Karmilī's *Lughat al-ʿArab*. In this piece, there is a love relationship between Laylá and the man Sumayr, which is disturbed by a man who wants to marry Laylá and who receives support from the state. The story is told as part of a political criticism of the Ottoman world order and an appraisal of the new country Iraq, where

[72] *Sūrat Āl ʿImrān* 97.

[73] Wiebke Walther, "Camīl Ṣidqī az-Zahāwī: Ein irakischer Zindīq im ersten Drittel dieses Jahrhunderts," *Oriens* 34 (1994): 430–450.

[74] *Dār al-Salām* refers to Baghdad.

[75] Paulina Ḥassūn, "Feeling for the heart of Iraq," *Laylá* 1:1 (1923): 4–5.

this does not happen.[76] The combination of women's rights, of which al-Zahāwī was a staunch supporter, and Iraqi patriotism corresponds to the journal's motives, which was apparently the reason why Paulina Ḥassūn chose "Laylá" as the name of the journal.

The journal's activist position is clear from the beginning, calling for women's suffrage in the first issue. In 1923, many European countries did not yet allow women to vote and it was a few years after a U.S. constitution that allowed women's suffrage in all American states. Iraq itself only allowed women to vote in 1958.[77]

> And how many ignorant and miserable women [are there] who express [the wish] but not live up to the request [of women's suffrage]! In some superior countries a "new" sort of women appeared who themselves strive for equality with the men for all democratic rights. They are not satisfied with their natural or social position, and see, they risk their lives for participation in the elections and to take positions in the courts and councils.[78]

With *Laylá*, Paulina Ḥassūn was part of a wider movement of women emancipation in early Iraq. This significant but short-lived movement was called *Nādī al-nahḍa al-nisā'iyya* (Women Renaissance Club) and founded in 1923 by a number of women, led by Asmā' al-Zahāwī.[79] Noga Efrati observes two views surrounding this movement: according to Ṣabīḥa Shaykh Dāwud it was an important movement bringing about change, while al-Dulaymī writes that the movement was ineffective.[80] For us, Paulina Ḥassūn serves as an example of one out of several authors whose Syriac Christian origin did not play any role in how she presented herself. Like Anastās al-Karmilī and Rafā'īl Buṭṭī, she worked together with people from outside her Christian community in journalism. Equally, like both authors, she had positive feelings for the newly established state of Iraq, which she proudly expressed.

[76] Walther, "Camīl Ṣidqī az-Zahāwī," 442–43.

[77] "Iraq Grants Suffrage To Women," *The Washington Post and Times Herald*, March 27, 1958, https://search.proquest.com/docview/148985120?accountid=12045 (accessed March 20, 2018).

[78] Paulina Ḥassūn, "The real woman," *Laylá* 1:1 (1923): 8

[79] Efrati, *Women in Iraq*, 120–23.

[80] Ibid., 122–23.

Conclusion

The boundaries in Iraqi society caused by religious differences were strong, but did not prevent Muslims, Jews and Christians from working together. Already before World War I, the influence of the *nahḍa* together with the freedom provided by the reinstatement of the Ottoman constitution in 1905 made it possible that intellectuals with different religious origins wrote in the same journals. Anastās al-Karmilī, Rafāʾīl Buṭṭī and Paulina Ḥassūn are examples of a considerable but limited group of authors with a Syriac Christian origin who continued this tradition after the war. The fact that Anastās al-Karmilī served as a priest did not appear to be of much influence on what he wrote, while Rafāʾīl Buṭṭī had actively broken out of the networks that the Syriac Orthodox Church provided—though not necessarily out of the church altogether—with clashes as result. The importance of religion in Paulina Ḥassūn's life is unknown. Some differences in religious identification are visible in the works of these authors, but were of no apparent importance for the fact that they engaged in secular journalism.

A common feature of the three authors is that the church they belonged to is not referred to in their work: they do not identify with it. Their focus is somewhere else: they are Arabs and are primarily concerned with the advancement of their country as an Arab state. Having a Maronite father, Anastās al-Karmilī did not belong to a *ṭāʾifa* that was established in Iraq, and his partly Lebanese background makes that his Arab identification should be no surprise. For Rafāʾīl Buṭṭī, a major transformation is visible. Despite the fact that he grew up in the relatively cosmopolitan city of Mosul, his early youth took place in an environment full of Syriac Christianity, especially as soon as he started teaching in the Syriac Orthodox school and was exposed to Assyrianism. After moving to Baghdad, he rapidly and radically changed his mind and adopted an Arab identification, possibly under the influence of his fellow students at the *Dār al-muʿallimīn* and of Anastās al-Karmilī, for whom he worked. Rafāʾīl Buṭṭī shows that, despite the hesitation of the Syriac Orthodox clergy that we saw in the previous chapter, a person from his church could well be an Arab. Paulina Ḥassūn, too, leaves little doubt that she identified as an Arab, because the journal was meant for "Arab women," and in this she was no dif-

ferent from her uncle, the editor of the moderately nationalist journal *al-ʿĀlam al-ʿArabī*.

The authors were not the same in their political views, though. Despite Anastās al-Karmilī's unambiguous identification as an Arab, he cannot be counted as an Arab nationalist. He was committed to the state of Iraq, but he was too close to the British authorities to be considered an Arab nationalist. That cannot be said for Rafāʾīl Buṭṭī, who after his Assyrianist youth developed a radical form of Arab nationalism, rejecting any other possible identification to exist in the country. With an "assimilate or leave" attitude, he lets down the Assyrians because of their "campaign" against Iraq. The examples of both Anastās al-Karmilī and Paulina Ḥassūn show that a firm identification as Arab was possible for Syriac Christians without, like Rafāʾīl Buṭṭī, going for an extreme and intolerant form of Arab nationalism. What is probably most striking, is the naturalness in which these three authors present their Arabness. Except for Rafāʾīl Buṭṭī, who underwent a process of change in identification and who was reminded of his former identification for a long time after, the authors do not give the impression that their Syriac Christian origins caused any hindrance in the Arabic-speaking public sphere in which they took part.

Syriac and Neo-Aramaic play almost no role in the publications of these authors, despite the fact that Anastās al-Karmilī and Rafāʾīl Buṭṭī grew up in an environment where Syriac was important, Paulina Ḥassūn, coming from Palestine, may not have had education in Syriac, but her uncle was educated in the Dominican primary school in Mosul. Anastās al-Karmilī's engagement with Aramaic languages is limited to occasional linguistic discussions, and absent in the works of Rafāʾīl Buṭṭī and Paulina Ḥassūn. Arabic is the only language used by the authors and plays a prominent role in the discourse of both Anastās al-Karmilī and Rafāʾīl Buṭṭī. Anastās al-Karmilī was renowned as a scholar of Arabic and as a Christian he expressed some sort of "ownership" of the language. Rafāʾīl Buṭṭī, on the other hand, recognizes the importance of Islam in shaping the language: for him, the Quran is authorative for the correct use of the language, and his language is steeped in typically Islamic terms.

Conclusion

At the beginning of this dissertation, I quoted Faisal I, the first King of Iraq, saying that there is no difference between Muslims, Jews, and Christians when it comes to patriotism. This idea was certainly part of official Arab nationalist ideology in Iraq in the first decades of the modern state. The question whether this statement holds up to the experience of the Syriac Christians of Iraq has been a common thread throughout the dissertation. The various groups of Syriac Christians showed highly diverging ways of engaging with Iraqi Arab nationalism and, for that reason, Faisal's ideal was not applicable to all of them to the same extent. The question is not simply whether Christians could participate in Iraqi patriotism, but rather under what conditions. As some of these conditions boil down to assimilation, the question is equally whether and why the Christians wanted to fall under this wing. Identification and language use are the keys that I have used to answer this question. This general conclusion thus consists of three parts. First, I discuss the groups of Syriac Christians in Iraq that can be distinguished, according to the names they used for themselves, at which levels these groups existed, and with whom they cooperated. Second, I discuss language use and the discourse around it. Both parts come together in my third point of discussion, which concerns the levels of commitment of the Syriac Christians to Iraqi Arab nationalism, or alternatives to it.

Groups and identification

In the previous four chapters, I have discussed four types of sources created by authors and other actors that come with similar types of identification and language use. Looking at explicit self-identification,

we can reduce this number to three groups. First, the Assyrians; second, the Chaldeans, Syriac Catholic, and Syriac Orthodox; and third, the "secularist" Syriac Christians—that is, those who did not identify using their religious background. The first group was discussed in Chapter 3, the second group in Chapters 2 and 4, and the third group in Chapter 5. The reason why I conflated the categories of Chapters 2 and 4 into one group is that while the language use of the manuscripts and the religious journals respectively is completely different, the style of identification is the same: the *ṭā'ifa*, limited and bound together by the ecclesiastical boundaries of the group, is the basic means of identification as a group.

The Assyrians form the first group. This group consists of East Syriac Christians who originated in the Hakkari mountains and Urmia plains and arrived in Iraq as refugees at the end of World War I. These Christians belonged in majority to the Assyrian Church of the East, and in minority to the Chaldean Catholic Church and to Protestant groups. My analysis excludes any of the members of the Assyrian Church of the East who were already in Iraq before World War I, who reportedly also identified as Assyrians. Since I have not found sources about their identification or language use, it is not possible to tell whether their identification shows the same features. Neither have I found sources concerning Chaldeans who identified as Assyrians—the Chaldeans in this dissertation all belong to the second group. The identification as Assyrian of this group was brought from the place they came from, where Assyrianism originated and was best developed. Assyrianism had developed within the Ottoman Empire into a national or ethnic form of identification, accompanied by terminology such as "race" and "nation" in English, and not limited to a single religious group because of the inclusion of Catholics and Protestants apart from the Church of the East. The Iraqi sources that I have used do not explicitly express ethnic or national identifications, but other texts from and about the Assyrians allow us to assume the presence of an ethnic or national identification. The fact that this group identified as Assyrians, without any exception, is however very clear from my sources. In Chapter 5, we saw that the Syriac Orthodox Rafā'īl Buṭṭī, just like Nematallah Denno as the director of his communal school in Mosul, identified as Assyrian in the early years after World War I. Identification as Assyrian was common among West Syriac Christians

in the beginning of the twentieth century, and Rafā'īl Buṭṭī and Nematallah Denno were influenced by that. However, I have not found evidence that Assyrian identification among West Syriac Christians persisted after the 1920s, let alone evidence of mutual solidarity or collaboration between the West and East Syriac Christians in Iraq. There are no signs either that the Assyrians from the Urmia and Hakkari regions considered the other Christians to be part of their group.

The second group is formed by Chaldean, Syriac Catholic, and Syriac Orthodox Christians who, separately from each other, primarily identified with the churches they belonged to. The terminology connected to this identification in Arabic is usually *ṭā'ifa*, and sometimes *milla* (the Arabic equivalent of *millet*). In Syriac the word *umtho* is used to refer to the Syriac Orthodox. I have characterized their identification as "*millet*-style identification," indicating a certain continuation of the Ottoman *millet* practice with a role of religious boundaries and leadership in society. By law, religious groups had few special rights, limited to non-Muslim religious courts for family law, but the fact that this type of identification is so prominent points to a continuation of the *millet* practice in terms of social relations. Identification with a religious group is to be expected in manuscripts, since they were produced in ecclesial contexts, but the same phenomenon is visible in the journals *al-Najm* and (*Lisān*) *al-Mashriq*, even in the contexts of social affairs. There are no signs that any of these *ṭā'ifa*-s tried to reach out to the other Syriac Christians or considered them to belong together—rather, this type of identification appears to keep the different Syriac Christian groups apart from each other. There is one exception to this: in the late 1940s, the Syriac Orthodox in (*Lisān*) *al-Mashriq* occasionally used the word *umma* (nation) to refer to *al-Suryān* ("the Syriacs"), and at one point this nation is explicitly described as including the other Syriac Christians—including the East Syriac Christians—as well.

The third group contains Syriac Christian secularists from all denominations except the Assyrian Church of the East. In their journalist activities, their religious identities did not seem to play any role at all. The world of *ṭā'ifa*-s in which they lived was not foreign to them: all three actors had religious backgrounds and they—or their family in the case of Paulina Ḥassūn—were educated in church-sponsored institutions. However, they crossed the boundaries of their respec-

tive *ṭāʾifa*-s and did not use them for identification in their public writings. Rafāʾīl Buṭṭī, who wanted to get rid of the influence of religion in society and education, was considered a danger for the power of the *ṭāʾifa*-s and for this reason he occasionally came into conflict with clergy. Overall, however, it seems that Rafāʾīl Buṭṭī was satisfied with the way Iraqi society was formally organized, without many special rules for members of religious groups, but still despised the informal role of religion in society.

One of the conclusions must be that there was no commonly accepted way to refer to all Syriac Christians altogether. With the exception of the "Syriac *umma*" of the Syriac Orthodox at the end of the 1940s, all actors considered their group to be only a subset of what I have defined as "Syriac Christians." The situation could have been different if Assyrianism had caught on in Iraq. Some Syriac Orthodox Christians used to identify as Assyrian in the early 1920s, and if they had continued doing so this may have resulted into a well-established form of *umthonoyutho* or unity discourse. It is probable that the political unrest concerning the Assyrians from the Hakkari and Urmia regions made this impossible. The negative reputation of the Assyrians deterred the other Syriac Christians from following them, making the unifying value of Assyrianism lose momentum.

Arabic and its alternatives

Arabic and Aramaic were used by members of all above-mentioned groups, but it is the differences in usage that interest us here. People preferred to use different languages for different purposes. The spoken language does not always correspond to the preferred language for formal purposes, and the language that is used in manuscripts may again be different. The combination of these native languages and preferences for formal usage is different for each of the above-mentioned groups, and reflects their way of looking at themselves and at Iraqi society at large. Arabic and Aramaic, the latter in the form of Classical Syriac and Neo-Aramaic, show differences in usage between their appearances in traditional, "pre-*nahḍa*" environments, and modern, "post-*nahḍa*" settings.

All in all, Arabic had the best position. It was the spoken language of part of the Christians of all denominations except for the As-

syrian Church of the East, and almost completely so in larger cities such as Mosul and Baghdad. But Arabic especially enjoyed the status as the preferred language for formal purposes for most, but not all, Syriac Christians. This preference was best pronounced by the secular intellectuals, and among them Anastās al-Karmilī and Rafāʾīl Buṭṭī are widely renowned outside Christian circles for their role in the advancement of this language: Anastās al-Karmilī for his contribution to Arabic linguistics, and Rafāʾīl Buṭṭī for his efforts to establish Arabic-language journalism in Iraq. But the Chaldean and Syriac Orthodox authors of the second group showed equal esteem for the language, and crucially, the fact that they were writing for an audience within their own groups does not change that. The Chaldeans even present the Arabic language as "theirs," and while the Syriac Orthodox do not explicitly say that Arabic belonged to them, they treat the language with high esteem. All these authors show proof of their aptitude to use Arabic by the refinedness of their language, chararcterized by proper grammar, a rich vocabulary and the use of phrases from canonical classical literature, including Islamic texts. The Assyrians discussed in this dissertation clearly preferred Neo-Aramaic and Classical Syriac, also for formal purposes, but Arabic was recognized as the language of the country and was taught in Assyrian schools even before this was obliged by the government. Nevertheless, especially in the early decades after World War I, the Assyrians do not show any appreciation of the Arabic language, let alone ownership.

Aramaic, in the form of Classical Syriac and Neo-Aramaic, was also used as a formal language, but on a far smaller scale. Classical Syriac and Neo-Aramaic stood next to each other and were normally considered variants of the same language: in general, the same words were used to refer to the classical and the colloquial languages. On the whole, a similar phenomenon is visible as with Arabic: various actors posited a form of Aramaic as the preferred language for usage in formal contexts; hence, as a conscious *alternative* to Arabic. This is the case for the Assyrians, who exclusively used Aramaic in their publications. For most of the actors, this was partly because they had not grown up in an Arabic-speaking environment and were simply new to this language and because the future of the Assyrians in Iraq was far from certain, but it should also be seen in the light of their deliberate endeavors to preserve knowledge of Classical Syriac and Swadaya

Neo-Aramaic for the next generation through the publication of language learning aids and language lessons in the Assyrian schools. For the Syriac Orthodox manuscript scribes in Bartallah, Classical Syriac functioned as an alternative to Standard Arabic: the sudden absence of Arabic and Garshuni after World War I indicates a conscious choice, and the way in which they used Classical Syriac made it suitable for (limited) new, creative texts. This determination to use Classical Syriac is in line with the twentieth-century endeavors to revive Classical Syriac as a secular language next to its continued usage for religious purposes. Apart from that, however, Classical Syriac was limited to the religious domain. In addition to that, while the formal, modern usage of Arabic is the same for all Syriac Christians who engaged in it, this is not the case for Aramaic: Neo-Aramaic writing is only attested for the Assyrians, while only the Syriac Orthodox wrote creative texts in Classical Syriac. This fragmentation—the existence of a writing tradition for both vernacular and classical variants of Aramaic, together with their different ways of usage of these variants—in addition to the much smaller number of speakers, made that Aramaic had a weaker position than Arabic. In the case of the Syriac Orthodox, the position of Aramaic was even further weakened, because it stood next to the formal use of Arabic, which was widespread in their circles—Syriac was only used in the purely religious domains.

The usage of Arabic and Aramaic laid out above are forms of modern, conscious and consistent usage of these languages. For Arabic, this is the result of the *nahḍa* or Arabic renaissance, which made it possible that, by the end of the nineteenth century, Christians and Jews used Standard Arabic in the same way as Muslims did. For Classical Syriac and Neo-Aramaic, it is likely that the parallel of Arabic influenced the way in which these languages were used, too. In Chapter 2, however, we have seen numerous examples of more traditional language use. This includes the custom of mixing Arabic and Classical Syriac within the same manuscript, the writing of colloquial Arabic, and especially the use of Arabic Garshuni (Arabic in Syriac script). Absent in modern mediums of publications, including journals and books, the language of manuscripts and private letters show that these traditional practices were far from extinct. This "pre-*nahḍa*" language use only occurred with the authors in the second group, and existed next to full-fledged standard use of the respective language elsewhere

within the same denominations. Since it is unclear how conscious the users of "pre-*nahḍa*" language were in their habits, it is impossible to assert that they did so as a means of identification. The use of Garshuni by various Syriac Christians in Iraq, often explained as a way of preserving Syriac identity, can therefore not be interpreted as such. If at all a way of identifying, use of Garshuni is weaker than original use of "proper" Classical Syriac.

Despite the potentially uniting powers of Aramaic, with which all Syriac Christians had a connection, the differences in *usage* of this language were too large. Even if the hegemony of Arabic could have been overcome, the alternative of Aramaic would not have been readily available. In those cases where Syriac Christians considered themselves to be part of one group—we saw this for the common Assyrian identification in the early 1920s and for the discouse about an all-encompassing "Syriac nation" at the end of the 1940s—the factor of language could not be overcome. For those who were willing to embrace an Arab identification, however, Arabic was ready and waiting for them.

Arab nationalism and its alternatives

The Syriac Christians had different and sometimes opposing views about their position in Iraq, boiling down to two interrelated aspects: the extent to which they embraced the state of Iraq, and the possible existence of any alternative form of national identification and nationalism. Concerning Iraq, their opinion ranged from a complete lack of interest in the state to an all-encompassing genuine appropriation of Iraqi Arab nationalism. Alternative forms of national identification or nationalism were Assyrianism, which appears to have been omnipresent among the Syriac Christians from the Hakkari and Urmia regions, and "Syriacism," or a national or ethnic identification as "Syriac." In both cases it is questionable to which extent these identifications can be interpreted as forms of nationalism.

An extremely strong embrace of Arab nationalism is visible in the Chaldean journal *al-Najm*, and in the writings, memoirs and actions of the Syriac Orthodox Rafā'īl Buṭṭī. In both cases, we see full commitment to the Arabic language, but also an identification as Arab. In the Chaldean case, the identification as Arab is only explicitly indicated at

a few places, while Rafāʾīl Buṭṭī leaves absolutely no doubt that he is an Arab, and even traces his family background to the pre-Islamic Arab Lakhmids. While the Chaldeans may have seen themselves as Arabized, Rafāʾīl Buṭṭī was convinced that he was a "real" Arab. Equally interesting is the fact that both opted for the hardline, right-wing current of Arab nationalism, connected to the *Ḥizb al-ikhāʾ al-waṭanī*, instead of a more moderate variant, such as the one represented by the *al-Ahālī* movement. This form of Arab nationalism was not very tolerant towards non-Arab citizens. Rafāʾīl Buṭṭī went the furthest in this, as he—in line with the ideology of this party—expected from all inhabitants of Iraq to Arabize, that is, to assimilate, or else that they leave the country. While this theoretically left the door open for all Iraqis through Arabization, it came with a harsh attitude against the Assyrians. The Chaldean elite was less explicit in what they exactly meant with their endorsement of the *Ḥizb al-ikhāʾ al-waṭanī*, and they did not write anything about the Assyrians, either. The fact that their endorsement came shortly before the Simele massacre, when anti-Assyrian sentiments were at a peak, and that they then kept silent after the Simele massacre in 1933 and honored the new King instead is telling. While this may be interpreted as an exaggeration on purpose in support of Arab nationalism to prevent anti-Assyrian sentiments from evolving into generic anti-Christian sentiments, overall, the Chaldean support of Arab nationalism must be interpreted as representing a genuine belief in this system to the advancement of the Chaldean case.

A middle course was steered by the Syriac Orthodox of (*Lisān*) *al-Mashriq*, and possibly also by the Syriac Catholic elite. They endorsed the state and its institutions without an explicit support of Arab nationalism, let alone of a strict variant of it. It is not clear whether they did so because they did not consider themselves to fit into the definition of Arab, hence having to recourse to the more tolerant "Iraqist" solution as represented by the *al-Ahālī*, movement, or because they simply did not see any reason to support a particular political current. The envisioning of a Syriac nation in Syriac Orthodox circles at the end of the 1940s did not translate in any apparent political activity in Iraq, and as a potential alternative to Arab nationalism it did not materialize. Given their generally good relationship with the government, this position was apparently seen as acceptable. The smaller

sizes of the Syriac Orthodox and Syriac Catholic churches also made that their political views were much less of influence. In this way, these two churches managed—like the Chaldean Catholic Church—to keep their traditional structures relevant. Together, they kept the Ottoman *millet* practice intact to a great extent.

Outright rejection of the Iraqi state is often associated with the Assyrians, but this is only partly true. With his school in Mosul, Joseph de Kelaita shows that he was already preparing the Assyrian youth for a long-term stay in Iraq in the beginning of the 1920s. The Protestant clergy connected to the Assyrian school in Baghdad even expressed their loyalty to Iraq in a letter to the Protestant missionaries. Political Assyrian nationalism was absent from the documents that I came across in my research. The willingness of the Assyrians to adjust to the new situation should therefore not be underestimated. Yet, their way of identification remained of an essentially different nature than that of the other Syriac Christians.

An essential difference between the Arab nationalism of Rafāʾīl Buṭṭī on the one hand and that of the Chaldean clergy on the other is that for the Chaldeans, Arab nationalism came on top of their social identification as a *ṭāʾifa*. For Rafāʾīl Buṭṭī this was irrelevant. The example of the Chaldeans makes clear that there was no obstruction in Arab nationalism per se to hold on to these traditional, pre-nation-state, forms of identification as long as it came with identification as Arab and absolute loyalty to the Iraqi state. In a sense, the Chaldeans opted for the best of two worlds: their church could retain its relevance for worldly affairs thanks to their managerial role in the Chaldean *ṭāʾifa*, while at the same time they could maintain a good relationship with the state. The same is true for language. While Arabic formed an integral part of Arab nationalism and there is no way that the Chaldeans could have participated in Arab nationalism without committing themselves to the Arabic language, there was no obstruction for the Chaldeans to keep using Aramaic next to it: Classical Syriac in church, in manuscripts, and occasionally in their journal in the context of old texts, and Neo-Aramaic as a spoken language for many. The opposite is also possible. The Syriac Orthodox in (*Lisān*) *al-Mashriq* showed no commitment to Arab nationalism, and even seemed to have their primary identification with a Syriac nation. The fact that they held the Arabic language in high esteem at the same time

and used it as their own was not percieved as a contradiction. Arabic was therefore a foundational ingredient of Arab nationalism, but speaking Arabic did not automatically translate into taking part in it.

* * *

Having come to the end of this dissertation, it is time to go back to the beginning. Was King Faisal right by saying that religion does not matter in Iraqi patriottism? In a way, he was. Even the strictest forms of Arab nationalism allowed for the inclusion of Christians, who, not as "minorities" in the Western sense of the word but as *ṭā'ifa*-s, even enjoyed a certain degree of autonomy. Holding on to certain cultural aspects of Syriac Christianity, such as the Classical Syriac language, was no obstacle either. Arab nationalism however equally defined the limits for Christians. The Assyrian position, which did not necessarily reject integration into Iraq but certainly rejected assimilation as Arabs, was unacceptable for Arab nationalists. This, combined with a rather uncompromising attitude of some nationalist Assyrians, eventually caused an inevitable clash.

The question remains, however, if the Syriac Christians who *did* feel at home under the wing of the Iraqi Arab state were indeed treated in the same way as their fellow Muslim citizens. There is enough evidence for the existence of generic anti-Christian sentiments during the time of the Simele massacre to say that this equal treatment of Arab Syriac Christians had its limits. The continuation of the traditional *millet* practice in Iraq—as a mentality, to speak with Sami Zubaida—next to the modern citizenship ideal, allowed the churches to retain their relevance in the new Iraqi society. However, it also meant that the citizenship ideal as expressed by Faisal and many Syriac Christian authors was curbed by traditional patterns, in which religious differences were more important than they were supposed to be.

Appendix A

The Syriac Churches in Iraq

Numbers

Christians formed two to four percent of the total population of Iraq. While the amount of Christians has sometimes been believed to be higher, official estimates and censuses from the period 1920–1950 are consistent in this figure.[1]

Demographic information divided by church and locations is scattered over various sources and comes without accountability. This information is likely to come from the churches themselves, but on the whole the numbers from different sources are not completely consistent with each other. The numbers give some insight into the division of the Christians over the churches and over the country, however.

Numbers from the Dominican mission (tables A.1, A.2, and A.3)

These tables are representations of tables found in Bibliothèque du Saulchoir, Z-91, Statistiques et recensements Iraq 1935. The formulations inside the tables are literal translations from French. The percentages were added by myself. No sources are given in this document.

[1]See the statistical information reproduced by Hannah Müller-Sommerfeld, *Staatliche Religionspolitik im Irak gegenüber Juden, Assyrischen Christen und Bahá'í (1920–1958)*, 284.

Race	Number	Percentage
Arabs (Muslims, Christians, Jews, Sabeans)	3,410,000	80.7%
Kurds (Muslims, Christians, Sabeans)	750,000	17.8%
Turkmens (Muslims)	65,000	1.5%
Total	4,225,000	100.0%

Table A.1: Races in Iraq according to the census of 1935; percentages added

Religion	Number	Percentage
Christians	97,000	2.3%
Jews	75,000	1.8%
Yezidis	20,000	0.4%
Sabeans	5,000	0.1%
Muslims	4,028,000	95.3%
Total	4,225,000	100.0%

Table A.2: Religions in Iraq according to the census of 1935; percentages added

Numbers from the *Iraq Directory* of 1936 (table A.4)

The English-language *Iraq Directory* of 1936 offers some pages with general information about the "Iraqi Communities," which includes the Jews, Chaldeans, Syrian Catholics, "Orthodox Syrians," Carmelites, Sabeans, and Yezidis. The Assyrians are left out here, although they are featured at other places in the book. The sections on the Chaldeans, Syriac Catholic and Syriac Orthodox Christians offer some statistical information.

The numbers about the Chaldean Catholic Church are presented as a table and offer numbers per diocese and are presented in table A.4. The Syrian Catholics are only divided into those who live in the north of the country (20,000) and the rest (5000, adding up to 25,000). The only demographic information provided about the Syriac Orthodox is that their number in Iraq is 12,000.

Church	Number	Percentage
Chaldean Catholic Church	81,703	54.4%
Amadia	4,531	
Aqra	1,567	
Baghdad	29,883	
Kirkuk	6,175	
Mosul	31,405	
Zakho	8,142	
Assyrian Church of the East	22,395	14.9%
Amadia	6,710	
Aqra	635	
Baghdad	9,165	
Kirkuk	2,750	
Mosul	2,135	
Zakho	1,000	
Syriac Catholic Church	18,430	12.3%
Baghdad	3,695	
Mosul	14,735	
Syriac Orthodox Church	11,164	7.4%
Baghdad	490	
Mosul	10,674	
Armenian Catholic Church	1,840	1.2%
Armenian Apostolic Church	12,535	8.3%
Greeks (Catholics)	200	0.1%
Protestants	888	0.6%
Latins	900	0.6%
Sabbatins	105	0.1%
Total	150,160	100.0%

Table A.3: Christians in Iraq in May 1947 according to data from the Dominicans; leaving out the numbers of priests and with percentages added

Conclusions

The amount of Chaldeans according to the *Iraq Directory* of 1936 (98.800) is more or less the same as the total amount of Christians in Iraq according to the 1935 census, which is impossible. In addition

Location	Number
Chaldean Catholic Church	
Baghdad	20,085
Mosul	41,699
Basrah, Amara, and Kut	7,000
Zakho and Dohuk	11,146
Amadiyah	5,985
Kirkuk	9,685
Aqra	2,400
Total	98,000

Table A.4: Christians in Iraq according to the Iraq Directory of 1936

to that, the numbers of the Chaldeans, Syriac Catholic and Syriac Orthodox in the *Iraq Dictionary* of 1936 are all higher than in the Dominican figures from 1947, while the censuses show that in this period the total amount of Christians had risen together with the general population. Nevertheless, the distribution of the Christians according to the churches is more or less consistent.

The figures convincingly show that the great amount of the Syriac Christians lived in the north, especially in Mosul or in its vicinities. For the Chaldean Catholic Church, however, Baghdad was of growing importance, with over than a third belonging to the Baghdad diocese in 1947. Baghdad was also an important city for the Assyrian Church of the East from the beginning.

The churches

The following tables provide an overview of general information about the four Syriac churches in Iraq. Here, "National/ethnic identification" and "Group/*ṭā'ifa* identification" are according to my interpretation of what identifications are generally visible.

Chaldean Catholic Church

Syriac: *ʿI(d)tā Kaldetā Qātuliqetā* **Arabic:** *al-Kanīsa al-Kaldāniyya al-Kāthūlīkiyya* **Branch:** East Syriac Christianity **Theology:** Catholic (Chalcedonian) **National/ethnic identification:** Arab – common among elite Assyrian – not common (Chaldean – recently) **Group/*ṭāʾifa* identification:** Chaldean (*Kaldānī*, *Kaldetā*)	**Patriarchate:** Mosul (from 1830) Baghdad (from 1950) **Patriarchs:** Joseph VI Emmanuel II Thomas (1900–1947) Joseph VII Ghanīma (1947–1958) **Priest seminaries:** Syro-Chaldean Seminary of Saint John (Dominicans) Priest School of Saint Peter

(Assyrian) Church of the East

Syriac: *ʿI(d)tā d-Madnḥā d-Ātorāye* **Arabic:** *Kanīsa al-Mashriq al-Āshūriyya* **Branch:** East Syriac Christianity **Theology:** Dyophysitic (Nestorian) **National/ethnic identification:** Assyrian **Group/*ṭāʾifa* identification:** None	**Patriarchate:** Hakkari mountains Mosul (from 1918) Chicago (from 1940) Ankawa (from 2015) **Patriarchs:** Mar Shimʿun XIX Benjamin (1903–1918) Mar Shimʿun XX Paul (1918–1920) Mar Shimʿun XXIII Eshai (1920–1975) **Priest seminaries:** None

Syriac Catholic Church

Syriac: *ʿI(d)tho Suryoytho Qathuliqaytho* **Arabic:** *al-Kanīsa al-Suryāniyya al-Kāthūlīkiyya* **Branch:** West Syriac Christianity **Theology:** Catholic (Chalcedonian) **National/ethnic identification:** Unclear **Group/*ṭāʾifa* identification:** Syriac Catholic	**Patriarchate:** Mardin (from 1854) Beirut (from 1920s) **Patriarchs:** Ignatius Ephrem II Raḥmānī (1897–1929) Ignatius Gabriel I Tappūnī (1929–1968) **Priest seminaries:** Syro-Chaldean Seminary of Saint John (Dominicans)

Syriac Orthodox Church

Syriac: *ʿI(d)tho Suryoytho Trishath Shubḥo* **Arabic:** *al-Kanīsa al-Suryāniyya al-Urthūdhuksiyya* **Branch:** West Syriac Christianity **Theology:** Myaphysitic ("Jacobite") **National/ethnic identification:** Syriac (*Suryānī*) Arab (not officially; not very common) Assyrian (common in early 1920s) **Group/*ṭāʾifa* identification:** Syriac Orthodox	**Patriarchate:** Deyrülzafaran monastery Homs (from 1933) **Patriarchs:** Ignatius Elias III (1917–1932) Ignatius Ephrem I Barsoum (1933–1957) **Priest seminaries:** Mar Mattai monastery Saint Ephrem Institute (from 1946 in Mosul)

Appendix B

Timeline

1900	**Chaldeans** • Consecration of Patriarch Joseph VI Emmanuel II Thomas
1905	**Politics** • Young Turk revolution; reinstatement of Ottoman constitution
1911–1914	**Secular journalism** • Publication of Anastās al-Karmilī's *Lughat al-ʿArab*
1915	**Christians** • Start of Anatolian genocide
1918	**Church of the East/Assyrians** • Patriarch Mar Shimʿūn XIX Benjamin killed; consecration of Mar Shimʿūn XXII Paulos
1918	**Church of the East/Assyrians** • Arrival of Assyrians in Baʿqūba refugee camp
1918	**Politics** • End of World War I; completion of British occupation of Iraq
1918–1921	**Secular journalism** • Publication of *Dār al-salām*
1920	**Politics** • Start of British mandate of Iraq
1920	**Church of the East/Assyrians** • Death of Patriarch Mar Shimʿūn XXII Paulos; consecration of 11-year-old Mar Shimʿūn XXIII Eshai
1920	**Missions** • Restart of Dominican mission
1921	**Politics** • Cairo Conference: foundation of State of Iraq
1924	**Politics** • First Anglo-Iraqi treaty; formal abolishment of the mandate

1924	**Missions** • Start of United Mission in Mesopotamia (Protestant, American)
1925	**Politics** • Granting of Mosul province to Iraq; instatement of the constitution of Iraq
1926	**Politics** • Second Anglo-Iraqi treaty
1926–1931	**Secular journalism** • Publication of Anastās al-Karmilī's *Lughat al-ʿArab*
1928–1938	**Chaldeans** • Publication of *al-Najm*
1929–1963	**Secular journalism** • Publication of Rafāʾil Buṭṭī's *al-Bilād*
1930	**Politics** • Third Anglo-Iraqi treaty: independence formally planned; establishment of right-wing *al-Ikhāʾ al-waṭanī* party
1932	**Politics** • Independence of Iraq
1933	**Church of the East/Assyrians** • Simele massacre
1933	**Politics** • Death of King Faisal I; coronation of King Ghāzī; start of fierce Arab nationalist influence
1933–1937	**Church of the East/Assyrians** • Failed attempts to collectively transfer Assyrians to Brazil, British Guyana, and Syria
1936	**Politics** • Coup d'état by Bakr Ṣidqī; start of short-lived Iraqist *al-Ahālī* influence
1937	**Politics** • Bakr Ṣidqī killed
1939	**Politics** • Death of King Ghāzī; coronation of Faisal II with Prince ʿAbd al-Ilāh as regent (pro-British)
1941	**Politics** • Coup d'état of Rashīd ʿAlī al-Kaylānī (Arab nationalist; pro-German); British invasion
1946–1948	**Syriac Orthodox** • Publication of *al-Mashriq*
1947	**Chaldeans** • Consecration of Patriarch Joseph VII Ghanīma; Patriarchate moved to Baghdad
1948–1950	**Syriac Orthodox** • Publication of *Lisān al-Mashriq*
1948	**Church of the East/Assyrians** • End of Patriarch's assumed role as worldly leader of the Assyrian nation
1958	**Politics** • Republican revolution in Iraq; end of Kingdom

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Samenvatting

Irak werd in 1920 gesticht als koninkrijk onder een Brits mandaat waarbij alle burgers gelijk waren ongeacht religie binnen een Arabische staat. De koning (Faisal I, 1920–1933) stond symbool voor dit gelijkheidsideaal, en veel christenen – met name de elite van de Chaldeeuwse kerk – konden zich hierin vinden. Dat wil niet zeggen dat er in de periode 1920–1950 in Irak geen problemen bestonden tussen religieuze minderheden en de rest van het land. Het grootste gedeelte van de Joden in Irak is in de periode 1940–1950 verdreven en in 1933 vond onder de Assyrische christenen een massamoord plaats waar meer dan 600 burgers om het leven kwamen. Hoe het gelijkheidsideaal van Faisal te rijmen was met de regelmatig moeizame verhoudingen tussen de Syrische christenen van het land en de staat is onderwerp van dit proefschrift, waarbij gebruik van taal als uitgangspunt wordt genomen. Aan de ene kant propageerde de Chaldeeuwse elite het gebruik van de Arabische taal en het Arabisch nationalisme, terwijl aan de andere kant de meeste Assyriërs het Arabisch alleen zagen als een taal voor communicatie met de rest van het land en zich bleven uitdrukken in het Neo-Aramees of Swadaya. Naast deze twee uitersten waren er bovendien allerlei middenposities mogelijk.

Het Arabisch nationalisme is opgekomen vanaf het einde van de negentiende eeuw en is voor een groot deel het resultaat van groeiende oppositie vanuit de Arabische provincies van het Osmaanse Rijk ten opzichte van de centrale staat. Sprekers van het Arabisch begonnen zich in deze periode meer en meer als Arabisch te identificeren. Dit ging gepaard met een groeiende identificatie met regionale moederlanden (*waṭan*-s), waaronder Syrië en Irak. Ten tijde van de Eerste Wereldoorlog lukte het om deze aanvankelijk vooral culturele identificatie om te zetten in nieuwe politieke structuren, waarbij een combi-

natie van een Arabische opstand en Franse en Britse imperialistische inmenging de vorming van Irak, Syrië, Libanon, Palestina en Transjordanië als staten hebben bewerkstelligd. Groot-Brittannië had Irak bezet en kreeg van de Volkerenbond een mandaat toegewezen om het land te besturen, maar gaf de lokale machthebbers de vrije hand om het Arabisch nationalisme in te voeren als staatsideologie. De vroege Iraakse staat was van begin af aan een Arabische staat, volgens de principes van het Arabisch nationalisme van Sāṭiʿ al-Ḥusrī. Hierbij was niet godsdienst maar het gebruik van de Arabische taal bepalend voor deelname aan de Arabisch-Iraakse maatschappij. Anders dan bij andere christelijke groeperingen, zoals de Armeniërs (niet Arabisch) of de Kopten (wel Arabisch), kon van de Syrische christenen van Irak niet eenduidig gezegd worden of zij wel of niet aan deze definitie voldeden.

De Syrische christenen van Irak, die verdeeld waren over vier kerken met theologische verschillen, vertoonden grote verschillen als het gaat om religie, taal en zelf-identificatie. Religieus waren zij verdeeld onder vier kerken met theologische verschillen (myafysitisch, dyofysitisch en katholiek). Wat betreft taal waren zij verdeeld onder sprekers van het Noord-Mesopotamisch Arabisch en Noordoostelijk Neo-Aramees, maar er waren ook verschillen in keuze voor formele taal: velen gaven de voorkeur aan het Standaardarabisch, anderen aan Neo-Aramees (Swadaya) of zelfs aan Klassiek Syrisch. Wat betreft zelf-identificatie waren er Syrische christenen die zichzelf in eerste instantie beschreven als religieuze groep binnen een groter geheel (bijvoorbeeld als Chaldeeërs binnen de Arabische natie), en anderen die hun eigen groep als een volwaardige etnische of nationale gemeenschap zagen (bijvoorbeeld als Assyriërs).

De Syrische christenen in Irak gebruiken met name varianten van Arabisch en Aramees. Het gebruik van het Arabisch was in de negentiende eeuw aan een aantal veranderingen onderhevig die ook invloed hadden op christenen. Hoewel een groot gedeelte van de christenen in het Midden-Oosten al heel vroeg het Arabisch is gaan gebruiken na de Arabische expansie in de zevende en achtste eeuw, is het pas sinds de negentiende-eeuwse *nahḍa* of 'renaissance' van het Arabische cultuurgebied dat er een gemeenschappelijk literair veld bestaat voor moslims, christenen en Joden waarbij de standaardversie van de Arabische taal (*fuṣḥá*) op dezelfde manier wordt gebruikt. Ook voor

de Syrische christenen gold oorspronkelijk dat zij het Arabisch wel gebruikten, maar vaak op een andere manier dan de moslims, onder andere gekenmerkt door het schrijven van het Arabisch in Syrisch schrift (Garshuni). Ook in Irak was de *nahḍa* werkzaam en begonnen Syrische christenen het Arabisch te gebruiken in literaire werken en journalistiek. Tegelijkertijd zien we echter dat specifiek Syrisch-christelijk gebruik van het Arabisch nog steeds bestond in het Irak van de vroege twintigste eeuw. Wat het gesproken Arabisch betreft gold dat de christenen in het midden en zuiden van Irak een ander dialect hadden dan de moslims. Het Aramees werd in verschillende varianten gebruikt. De meest officiële vorm was en is het Klassiek Syrisch en wordt door alle Syrische christenen gedeeld, hoewel er verschillen zijn in uitspraak en schrifttype tussen de oost- en west-Syrische christenen. Deze taal werd in principe alleen in religieuze context gebruikt, maar er was ook een kleine wereldwijde heroplevingsbeweging die het gebruik in niet-religieuze situaties bevorderde. Het gesproken Aramees (noordoostelijk Neo-Aramees) werd met name gebruikt buiten de grote steden en door de Assyriërs, die bovendien over een traditie beschikten om deze taal te schrijven.

Het proefschrift is grotendeels gebaseerd op een analyse van geschreven werken van de Syrische christenen in Irak tussen 1920 en 1950, waaronder tijdschriften, boeken en handschriften. Ook de archieven van de Franse en Amerikaanse missies zijn gebruikt. Hierbij zijn de bronnen verdeeld in vier groepen, die de basis vormen voor hoofdstuk 2 tot en met 5. Deze groepen zijn achtereenvolgens (1) handschriften, met name die uit Bartallah en Baghdeda; (2) het werk van de Assyriërs in het Neo-Aramees; (3) religieuze tijdschriften van de Chaldeeërs en de Syrisch-orthodoxen; (4) seculiere journalistiek.

Hoofdstuk 1 biedt een algemene historische en geografische context met achtereenvolgens een bespreking van de geschiedenis van het land, de Syrische kerken, westerse missionarissen en het onderwijs. Na de Eerste Wereldoorlog werd in 1920 het mandaatgebied Irak opgericht, wat het begin van de moderne staat Irak inhield als constitutionele monarchie. In 1932 werd Irak een onafhankelijke staat en lid van de Volkerenbond. In 1941 vond een pro-Duitse *coup d'état* plaats, waarop de Britten ingrepen en de monarchie hersteld werd. Uiteindelijk zorgde een revolutie in 1958 voor de oprichting van een republiek. In het algemeen kan de periode van de monarchie gekenmerkt wor-

den door een opeenvolging van autoritaire en meer democratische perioden, en van perioden van strikt Arabisch nationalisme en tijden dat er meer ruimte was voor niet-Arabische geluiden zoals die van de Koerden.

De grootste kerk van het land was de (Oost-Syrische) Chaldeeuwse katholieke kerk, met ongeveer 50% van de christelijke bevolking en in 1950 zo'n 80.000–100.000 leden. Het patriarchaat was sinds 1830 in Mosul en werd in 1947 verplaatst naar Bagdad, en omdat de kerk buiten het land niet veel leden had kon het gezien worden als de nationale kerk van Irak. In principe waren de relaties met de staat goed en zag de Chaldeeuwse elite zich het liefst als onderdeel van de Arabische meerderheid van het land. De Assyriërs, ten tweede, vormden een kleinere groep en hoorden in meerderheid bij de (eveneens Oost-Syrische) Kerk van het Oosten en waren voor het overgrote gedeelte als vluchtelingen gekomen uit het gebergte van Hakkari (Osmaanse Rijk) en de vlakten van Urmia (Perzië) tijdens de Eerste Wereldoorlog. In Irak werden zij opgevangen in het vluchtelingenkamp van Baʿqūba in de buurt van Bagdad en na de oorlog begon een proces van huisvesting in het noorden van Irak. Deze huisvesting was aanvankelijk bedoeld als tijdelijk, maar werd steeds definitiever naarmate de mogelijkheden voor vestiging buiten Irak minder realistisch werden. Hierbij ontstonden verschillen van mening onder de Assyriërs over de wenselijkheid van integratie in het land als Iraaks burgers. Ten tijde van de onafhankelijkheid in 1932 werd voorgesteld om de Assyriërs staatsburgerschap te geven met dezelfde rechten als andere Irakezen. Dit werd door velen afgewezen omdat de weg naar autonomie definitief afgesneden zou worden. In 1933 vond een confrontatie plaats tussen een gewapende Assyrische groep die tegen integratie was en de Iraakse staat, waarna de Iraakse publieke opinie ten aanzien van de Assyriërs enorm verslechterde. De reactie van het Iraakse leger was echter excessief en meer dan 600 Assyriërs verloren hun leven bij een massamoord in de plaats Simele. Het feit dat de Assyriërs 'verslagen' waren werd positief ontvangen in Irak en gezien als daad van verzet tegen de Britten. De Assyrische patriarch werd gedwongen het land te verlaten en de Assyriërs die in Irak bleven integreerden in de decennia daarna langzamerhand in de Iraakse samenleving als staatsburgers. Kleinere Syrische kerken waren de Syrisch-katholieke en de Syrisch-orthodoxe kerk, beide West-Syrisch. Beide kerken had-

den een lange traditie in het gebied maar ook een grote aanwezigheid buiten Irak, waardoor het geen nationale kerken waren. Het patriarchaat van de Syrisch-katholieke kerk was na de Eerste Wereldoorlog en de genocide in Oost-Anatolië in Beiroet gevestigd en dat van de Syrisch-orthodoxe kerk in Damascus. In Irak waren beide kerken gecentreerd in Mosul en de nabijgelegen kleinere steden in de vlakten van Nineve, waaronder Bartallah en Baghdeda, en beide kerken hadden een belangrijk klooster in de regio.

Er waren twee belangrijke westerse christelijke missies in Irak: de Franse dominicaanse (katholieke) missie, die een lange geschiedenis had en eerder betrokken was bij de vestiging van de Chaldeeuwse en Syrisch-katholieke kerk in de regio, en de nieuwe Amerikaanse missie, een samenwerkingsverband van verschillende protestantse kerken. Beide missies hadden hun hoofdkwartier in Mosul. De dominicanen richtten zich op de versterking van de katholieke kerken in Irak en waren het best bekend om hun seminarie gewijd aan sint Petrus, dat priesters opleidde voor de Chaldeeuwse en Syrisch-katholieke kerk, en veel aandacht gaf aan de Arabische en klassiek-Syrische taal. De Amerikanen probeerden zich met name te richten op het bekeren van moslims, maar in de praktijk was het meeste van hun werk op christenen gericht. Een groot gedeelte van hun staf bestond uit Assyrische christenen, terwijl de dominicanen slechts weinig contact hadden met de (overwegend niet-katholieke) Assyriërs.

Het onderwijs in Irak ontwikkelde zich in de periode 1920–1950 heel snel. In de beginsituatie was er nauwelijks openbaar onderwijs en waren christenen vooral afhankelijk van door de kerk georganiseerde scholen. In de decennia daarna, met name vanaf de onafhankelijkheid van Irak, werd er in hoog tempo een volwaardig openbaar schoolsysteem opgezet met een nationaal curriculum, met een grote nadruk op de Arabische taal. De ontwikkeling van dit systeem had ook invloed op christelijke scholen, omdat veel scholen werden genationaliseerd en andere scholen te maken kregen met beperkingen en het nationale curriculum opgelegd kregen.

Hoofdstuk 2 gaat over de productie van handschriften door Syrische christenen, een fenomeen dat in het begin van de twintigste eeuw nog heel levendig was ondanks de aanwezigheid van drukpersen. Met uitzondering van de Kerk van het Oosten werden handschriften door alle Syrische kerken gemaakt. De inhoud van de handschrif-

ten was, in tegenstelling tot vroegere perioden, vrijwel altijd religieus. De Chaldeeuwse handschriften komen allemaal uit de buurt van Alqosh; voor de Syrisch-orthodoxe en Syrisch-katholieke kerk waren Bartallah en Bakhdeda de belangrijkste centra. In totaal zijn er enkele honderden handschriften overgebleven in de periode 1920–1950. De handschriften uit Bartallah en Bakhdeda worden in detail besproken met speciale aandacht voor de colofons, waarin veel contextuele informatie is te vinden over de tijd en plaats waarin ze geschreven zijn. De eigen kerk wordt regelmatig bij naam genoemd, en in één Syrisch-orthodox handschrift uit Bartallah wordt de eigen groep aangeduid als de 'Syrisch-orthodoxe natie (*umtho*)'. Bij de handschriften uit Bartallah is een schril contrast te zien tussen de periode vóór de Eerste Wereldoorlog, waarbij verschillende talen of taalgebruiken – met name Klassiek Syrisch, Arabisch, en Garshuni (Arabisch in Syrisch schrift) – door elkaar werden gebruikt, en de periode na de Eerste Wereldoorlog, waarin bijna alleen nog maar Klassiek Syrisch werd gebruikt. Dit contrast is volstrekt niet aanwezig bij de handschriften uit Bakhdeda, waar ook na de Eerste Wereldoorlog nog volop verschillende talen door elkaar werden gebruikt. Dit lijkt erop te wijzen dat de beweging om het gebruik van het Klassiek Syrisch als moderne taal nieuw leven in te blazen aanwezig was in Bartallah. Het hoofdstuk sluit af met een bespreking van een aantal documenten die te maken hebben oorspronkelijk Chaldeeuwse onderzoeker Alphonse Mingana, die al voor de Eerste Wereldoorlog naar Groot-Brittannië verhuisd was, en de Syrisch-orthodoxe kopiist Mattai bar Paulus, die een uitgebreide correspondentie onderhielden in het Arabisch. Ook uit deze documenten blijkt dat auteurs gemakkelijk schakelden tussen Syrisch en Arabisch en dat de overgang van de ene taal naar de andere niet altijd duidelijk was afgebakend.

Hoofdstuk 3 gaat over de christenen die zich identificeerden als Assyrisch, wat in de situatie van Irak in de vroege twintigste eeuw bijna altijd samenviel met de christenen die uit het noorden gevlucht waren en tot de Kerk van het Oosten behoorden. Deze groep week, ondanks het gedeelde Syrisch-christelijke erfgoed, af van de overige christenen in Irak omdat zij uit een gebied kwamen waar het Arabisch geen status had en tot ver in de twintigste eeuw geen permanente status hadden als Iraaks burger. De identificatie als Assyriërs en het gebruik van het Neo-Aramees (Swadaya) als geschreven en gestandaar-

diseerde taal hadden zij naar Irak meegenomen. Een belangrijke gebruiker van het Neo-Aramees was de priester Joseph de Kelaita, die in 1921 een drukpers in Mosul opzette. Dit was in die tijd de enige drukpers van het land die Syrisch schrift kon drukken. Hij drukte een aanzienlijk aantal boeken met edities van klassieke Syrische teksten en hulpmiddelen bij het onderwijs van de Syrische taal. Teksten in het Klassiek Syrisch werden daarbij vaak van een vertaling in het Neo-Aramees voorzien. Joseph de Kelaita was ook de oprichter van een belangrijke Assyrische school in Mosul, die gelieerd was aan de Kerk van het Oosten, waar naast Syrisch ook Arabisch onderwezen werd. Een andere Assyrische school bevond zich in Bagdad, en was opgericht door de Amerikaanse protestantse missie en bestuurd door protestantse Assyriërs. Deze school was open voor leerlingen van alle kerkelijke gezindten, maar toch specifiek bedoeld voor Assyriërs. De Amerikaanse missie trok begin jaren dertig de steun voor deze school in omdat deze zich wilde concentreren op Arabische Irakezen en het bestaan van een school specifiek voor Assyriërs niet bevorderlijk vond voor hun integratie in Irak. Uit de intellectuele en pedagogische inspanningen van de Assyriërs blijkt dat een groot deel van de elite weliswaar niet als Assyrisch-nationalistisch gezien kon worden, maar zich wel specifiek als Assyrisch en niet als Arabisch identificeerde en zich daarmee duidelijk onderscheidde van de overige Syrische christenen in Irak.

In hoofdstuk 4 worden twee kerkelijke Arabischtalige tijdschriften behandeld. Het tijdschrift *al-Najm* ('de Ster') was een publicatie van de katholieke Chaldeeuwse kerk en liep in de perioden 1928–1938 en 1950–1955. Het tijdschrift was Arabischtalig, hoewel de voorpagina steeds voorzien was van een Syrischtalig opschrift en er regelmatig uit Syrische teksten werd geciteerd. Het tijdschrift biedt veel informatie over hoe de Chaldeeuwse elite zich opstelde als onderdeel van de Iraakse maatschappij. De Chaldeeërs duidt men steeds aan met het Arabische woord *ṭā'ifa*, dat vertaald kan worden als 'religieuze groep' en dat ook tegenwoordig het gebruikelijke woord is voor de verschillende christelijke groepen in het Midden-Oosten. Deze Chaldeeërs worden met trots gesitueerd als onderdeel van de Arabische natie (*umma*) en het Iraakse moederland (*waṭan*). De makers presenteren de Chaldeeërs daarmee als Arabieren en noemen ook het Arabisch als hun geëigende taal, en spreken in 1933 zelfs de steun uit voor

de rechtse Arabisch-nationalistische politieke beweging *al-Ikhāʾ al-waṭanī*, die zich tegen niet-Arabieren had gekeerd. Het tijdschrift *al-Mashriq* ('het Oosten'), later bekend onder de naam *Lisān al-Mashriq* ('Taal' of 'tong van het oosten'), werd in de periode 1946–1950 gepubliceerd door de Syrisch-orthodoxe priester Būlus Bahnām, en kan daarmee ook als religieus tijdschrift worden beschouwd. Ook dit tijdschrift was volledig Arabischtalig en door verschillende auteurs werd vol trots geschreven over de Arabische taal en Irak als land. Een belangrijk verschil is echter dat hier het woord *umma* 'natie' niet werd gebruikt voor de Arabische of Iraakse natie, maar voor de Syrisch-orthodoxen in Irak en elders en in ruime zin zelfs voor de Syrische christenen van alle gezindten wereldwijd. In een enkel geval was er sprake van de 'Aramese natie', waardoor er een prille vorm van Aramees nationalisme te zien lijkt. Waar de Chaldeeuwse auteurs zich met name verbonden voelden met de andere Arabische inwoners van Irak, spreken de Syrisch-orthodoxe auteurs verbondenheid uit met de overige Syrische christenen wereldwijd.

Hoofdstuk 5 behandelt drie Syrisch-christelijke auteurs die buiten de structuren van hun kerk tijdschriften uitgaven en zich daarmee in het domein van de seculiere journalistiek bevonden. Anastās al-Karmilī (1866–1947) was een priester en taalkundige met een maronitische vader uit Libanon en een Chaldeeuwse moeder uit Irak en was actief in Bagdad. Zijn belangrijkste werk was het tijdschrift *Lughat al-ʿArab* ('Taal van de Arabieren') en was een taalkundig tijdschrift met een nadruk op een correct gebruik van de Arabische taal. Verschillende Syrische christenen, maar ook moslims, schreven voor dit blad. Hoewel dit tijdschrift en de andere werken van Anastās al-Karmilī geenszins blijk geven van Arabisch nationalisme, laten zij wel het gemak zien waarmee christenen en moslims een gezamenlijk literair toneel konden bespelen, en laat bovendien een besef van christelijk 'eigenaarschap' over de Arabische taal zien. Rafāʾīl Buṭṭī (1899–1956) was in Mosul geboren in een arm Syrisch-orthodox gezin, maar wist snel een goede maatschappelijke positie in Irak te verwerven. Hij kreeg zijn primair onderwijs bij de Dominicanen in Mosul en gaf later les op christelijke scholen, en hij begon zijn journalistieke carrière rond zijn twintigste door te gaan schrijven voor Anastās al-Karmilī. Niet veel later kwam hij in conflict met verschillende religieuze autoriteiten vanwege zijn seculiere ideeën en omdat hij islamitische teksten

had gebruikt in zijn lessen Arabisch aan christelijke kinderen. Rafāʾīl Buṭṭī beschouwde zichzelf als Arabier, en bovendien van een volle Arabische afkomst. Niettemin geeft hij in zijn memoires toe dat hij zichzelf rond zijn twintigste nog als Assyriër beschouwde en dat die identificatie hem later problemen heeft veroorzaakt. Hij was een fervent voorstander van het Arabisch nationalisme en was betrokken bij de rechtse partij *al-Ikhāʾ al-waṭanī*. Hij vond dat niet-Arabieren in Arabische landen moesten assimileren om er te mogen blijven wonen, waarbij hij onder meer op de Assyriërs leek te doelen. Paulina Ḥassūn (1865–?) groeide op in Palestina maar had een Iraakse vader en had een Syrisch-christelijke achtergrond. Van 1923 tot 1925 publiceerde zij *Laylá*, het eerste Iraakse tijdschrift voor vrouwen. In dit tijdschrift riep zij op tot een algemene renaissance (*nahḍa*) van de Arabische vrouw, met als concrete voorbeelden zaken als onderwijs voor vrouwen en vrouwenkiesrecht.

De conclusie behandelt drie thema's: (1) groepen en identificatie; (2) Arabisch en de alternatieve talen; en (3) Arabisch nationalisme en alternatieven daarvoor. Er kunnen drie manieren van expliciete zelf-identificatie worden geïdentificeerd: ten eerste de Assyriërs (hoofdstuk 3); ten tweede de Chaldeeërs, de Syrisch-katholieken en de Syrisch-orthodoxen (hoofdstuk 2 en 4); en ten derde 'secularistische' Syrische christenen die zichzelf niet op religieuze grond identificeerden. De Assyriërs zijn diegenen die zich als zodanig identificeerden, en dit waren in Irak uitsluitend degenen die uit het Hakkarigebergte en de vlakten van Urmia waren gevlucht – identificatie als Assyriërs onder andere Syrische christenen in Irak lijkt alleen begin jaren '20 voorgekomen te zijn. De Chaldeeërs, Syrisch-katholieken en Syrisch-orthodoxen identificeerden zich in de eerste plaats volgens de kerk waarbij ze hoorden, waarbij ze in het Arabisch het woord *ṭāʾifa* ('sekte') gebruikten, en soms het Arabische *milla* of het Syrische *umtho* (beide 'natie'), wat duidt op een zekere voortzetting van het Osmaanse gebruik om de niet-moslimse bevolking in *millet*-s te categoriseren. Bepaalde Syrisch-orthodoxen lijken in de jaren '40 voorzichtig op te schuiven naar een nationale identificatie als *al-Suryān* ('de Syriërs'). De secularisten tot slot laten hun religieuze identiteiten geen enkele rol spelen in hun werk, hoewel zij de opdeling van de samenleving in *ṭāʾifa*-s wel erkennen. De belangrijkste conclusie van dit deel is dat er geen eenduidige manier was om naar alle Syrische christenen

in Irak te verwijzen, en dat hier ook weinig pogingen werden gedaan om deze situatie te veranderen.

Het Arabisch had de beste positie onder de christenen in Irak als de voorkeurstaal voor formeel gebruik voor het grootste gedeelte van de Syrische christenen. Deze voorkeur kwam tot uitdrukking bij seculiere intellectuelen maar ook bij Chaldeeuwse en Syrisch-katholieke auteurs die voor hun kerk schreven, waarbij Chaldeeërs het Arabisch zelfs expliciet 'hun' taal noemden. De Assyriërs gaven echter de voorkeur aan het Neo-Aramees, en gebruikten het Arabisch wel maar zonder expliciete waardering. Het Aramees, in de vorm van Klassiek Syrisch en Neo-Aramees, werd op kleinere schaal ook gebruikt voor formele doeleinden, en vaak als een bewuste keuze en daarmee als alternatief voor het Arabisch. Dit is het duidelijkst het geval voor de Assyriërs, die weliswaar niet uit een Arabischtalige omgeving kwamen en daarmee aanvankelijk geen andere keuze hadden het gebruik van Neo-Aramees, maar ook bewust hun best deden om de taal voor de volgende generatie te behouden. Dit gold ook voor de Syrisch-orthodoxe kopiisten uit Bartallah, die een bewuste keuze voor het Klassiek Syrisch maakten na de Eerste Wereldoorlog. Naast de auteurs die consequent en bewust gebruik maakten van óf het Arabisch óf het Aramees, waren er ook die op een meer traditionele manier gebruik maakten van talen, waarbij Klassiek Syrisch en Arabisch door elkaar werden gebruikt en Arabisch vaak in Syrisch schrift werd geschreven. Dit gebeurde met name in manuscripten en dit laat zien dat het gebruik van de een of de andere taal niet altijd als een manier van identificatie gezien kan worden. De belangrijkste conclusie over taalgebruik is dat het Aramees in potentie wel de kracht had om de Syrische christenen met elkaar te verbinden, maar dat het verschil in gebruik van deze taal zo groot was dat het niet mocht baten. Het Arabisch stond wat dat betreft veel sterker.

De Syrische christenen hadden verschillende en soms tegenovergestelde ideeën over hun positie binnen de Iraakse samenleving: in hoeverre voelden zij zich verbonden met Irak, en waren er alternatieve vormen van nationale identificatie en nationalisme? Het Chaldeeuwse tijdschrift *al-Najm* en de Syrisch-orthodoxe journalist en politicus Rafā'īl Buṭṭī laten een extreme omarming zien van het Arabisch nationalisme, waarbij men zichzelf ook als Arabisch beschouwde. In beide gevallen was er steun voor de rechtse stroming van het Arabisch

nationalisme met weinig tolerantie ten aanzien van niet-Arabieren, waarbij Rafāʾīl Buṭṭī zich bovendien negatief uitliet over de Assyriërs en de Chaldeeërs geen steun uitten na de massamoord van Simele. Een middenweg lijkt te zijn gekozen door onder anderen de Syrisch-orthodoxen van het tijdschrift (*Lisān*) *al-Mashriq*. Zij steunden de Iraakse staat maar niet expliciet het Arabisch nationalisme. Alleen aan het eind van de jaren '40 lijkt het idee van een Syrische natie vorm te krijgen, maar dit vertaalt zich niet in politieke activiteit en de relaties met de overheid bleven goed. De Assyriërs, ten slotte, worden vaak geassocieerd met een verwerping van de Iraakse staat, maar uit de bronnen gebruikt in dit proefschrift blijkt dat veel Assyriërs juist hun best deden om de loyaliteit aan de Iraakse staat aan te tonen. Het belangrijkste verschil is echter dat ook de pro-Iraakse Assyriërs zich niet als Arabieren identificeerden en daarmee een lastige positie bleven behouden. Een belangrijke conclusie van dit deel is dat niet alle gebruikers van de Arabische taal zich ook committeerden aan het Arabisch nationalisme – de Syrisch-orthodoxen deden dat niet – en dat andersom het Arabisch nationalisme het gebruik van alternatieve talen niet uitsloot – zoals bij de Chaldeeërs.

Het proefschrift sluit af met de vraag of de Iraakse staat inderdaad zo tolerant was voor christenen als wat het ideaal van koning Faisal I doet vermoeden. Inderdaad waren Arabisch-sprekende christenen zelfs volgens de meest strikte vormen van het Arabisch nationalisme vrij om hun geloof te belijden, hadden ze een zekere vorm van autonomie binnen hun *ṭāʾifa* en waren ze volwaardige burgers. Dit gold echter alleen voor degenen die zich thuis voelden onder het Arabisch nationalisme. Bovendien waren er ook regelmatig perioden van een algemeen anti-christelijk sentiment onder de Iraakse bevolking, die doen vermoeden dat het officiële ideaal van gelijkheid als Arabieren ongeacht religie niet altijd overeenkwam met ideeën in de samenleving.

Curriculum vitae

Tijmen Baarda is in 1990 in Haarlem geboren en studeerde Godgeleerdheid (BA 2011) en Theology and Religious Studies (MA 2012) aan de Universiteit Leiden met een specialisatie in het Syrische christendom. Van 2012 tot 2017 nam hij als promovendus deel aan het NWO-project *Arabic and its Alternatives: Religious Minorities in the Formative Years of the Modern Middle East (1920–1950)* geleid door prof. dr. Heleen Murre-van den Berg. Sinds 2017 is hij vakreferent voor de studie van het Midden-Oosten bij Universitaire Bibliotheken Leiden.