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

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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

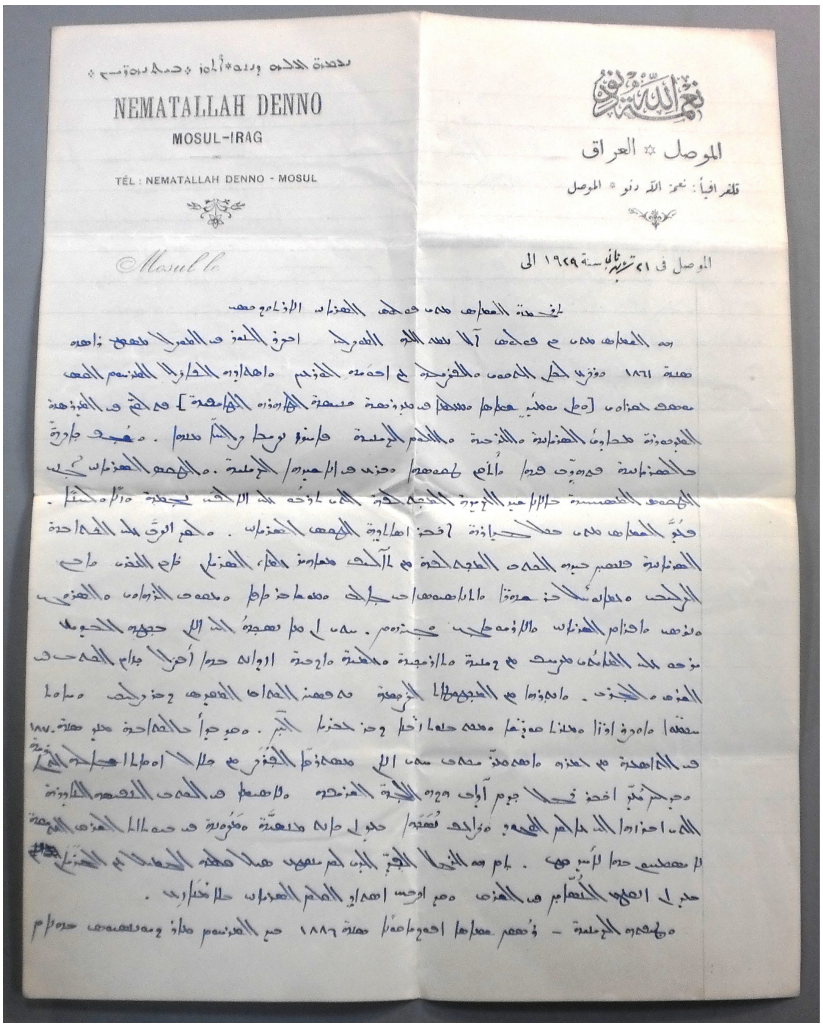

Figure 2.1: Nematallah's letter about Mattai bar Paulus

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.