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

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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 Ṣāʾigh, 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 Ṣāʾigh.[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 Ṣāʾigh 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-Ṣāʾigh: 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 (*Esṭrangelā* 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" (*ṭāʾifa*) 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 *ṭāʾifa*:

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

The word *ṭāʾifa* (religious group, sect) is used to refer to the Chaldean Catholic community only. *Ṭāʾifa* 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 *ṭāʾifa* of the Chaldeans is called *al-ṭāʾifa al-kaldāniyya* (the Chaldean religious group) and is set apart from the other Christian *ṭāʾifa*-s that are found in Iraq. By using the word *ṭāʾifa*, 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 *ṭāʾifa* 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 *ṭāʾifa*-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 (*liwāʾ 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 Ṣāʾigh'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 Ṣāʾigh 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 *ṭāʾifa*: 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-ṭāʾifa*," *Al-Najm* 5:1 (1933): 40.

[34] "*Al-jamʿiyya al-khayriyya al-kaldāniyya bi-l-Mawṣil, bi-munāsabat ijtimāʿihā al-ʿām 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-ikhāʾ 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 (*abnāʾ 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-ikhāʾ 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 *ṭāʾifa* 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 *ṭāʾifa* 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 *ṭāʾifa* 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.