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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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Appendix A

The Syriac Churches in Iraq

Numbers

Christians formed two to four percent of the total population of Iraq. While the amount of Christians has sometimes been believed to be higher, official estimates and censuses from the period 1920–1950 are consistent in this figure.¹

Demographic information divided by church and locations is scattered over various sources and comes without accountability. This information is likely to come from the churches themselves, but on the whole the numbers from different sources are not completely consistent with each other. The numbers give some insight into the division of the Christians over the churches and over the country, however.

Numbers from the Dominican mission (tables A.1, A.2, and A.3)

These tables are representations of tables found in Bibliothèque du Saulchoir, Z-91, Statistiques et recensements Iraq 1935. The formulations inside the tables are literal translations from French. The percentages were added by myself. No sources are given in this document.

¹See the statistical information reproduced by Hannah Müller-Sommerfeld, *Staatliche Religionspolitik im Irak gegenüber Juden, Assyrischen Christen und Bahá'í (1920–1958)*, 284.

Race	Number	Percentage
Arabs (Muslims, Christians, Jews, Sabeans)	3,410,000	80.7%
Kurds (Muslims, Christians, Sabeans)	750,000	17.8%
Turkmens (Muslims)	65,000	1.5%
Total	4,225,000	100.0%

Table A.1: Races in Iraq according to the census of 1935; percentages added

Religion	Number	Percentage
Christians	97,000	2.3%
Jews	75,000	1.8%
Yezidis	20,000	0.4%
Sabeans	5,000	0.1%
Muslims	4,028,000	95.3%
Total	4,225,000	100.0%

Table A.2: Religions in Iraq according to the census of 1935; percentages added

Numbers from the *Iraq Directory* of 1936 (table A.4)

The English-language *Iraq Directory* of 1936 offers some pages with general information about the “Iraqi Communities,” which includes the Jews, Chaldeans, Syrian Catholics, “Orthodox Syrians,” Carmelites, Sabeans, and Yezidis. The Assyrians are left out here, although they are featured at other places in the book. The sections on the Chaldeans, Syriac Catholic and Syriac Orthodox Christians offer some statistical information.

The numbers about the Chaldean Catholic Church are presented as a table and offer numbers per diocese and are presented in table A.4. The Syrian Catholics are only divided into those who live in the north of the country (20,000) and the rest (5000, adding up to 25,000). The only demographic information provided about the Syriac Orthodox is that their number in Iraq is 12,000.

Church	Number	Percentage
Chaldean Catholic Church	81,703	54.4%
Amadia	4,531	
Aqra	1,567	
Baghdad	29,883	
Kirkuk	6,175	
Mosul	31,405	
Zakho	8,142	
Assyrian Church of the East	22,395	14.9%
Amadia	6,710	
Aqra	635	
Baghdad	9,165	
Kirkuk	2,750	
Mosul	2,135	
Zakho	1,000	
Syriac Catholic Church	18,430	12.3%
Baghdad	3,695	
Mosul	14,735	
Syriac Orthodox Church	11,164	7.4%
Baghdad	490	
Mosul	10,674	
Armenian Catholic Church	1,840	1.2%
Armenian Apostolic Church	12,535	8.3%
Greeks (Catholics)	200	0.1%
Protestants	888	0.6%
Latins	900	0.6%
Sabbatins	105	0.1%
Total	150,160	100.0%

Table A.3: Christians in Iraq in May 1947 according to data from the Dominicans; leaving out the numbers of priests and with percentages added

Conclusions

The amount of Chaldeans according to the *Iraq Directory* of 1936 (98,800) is more or less the same as the total amount of Christians in Iraq according to the 1935 census, which is impossible. In addition

Location	Number
<i>Chaldean Catholic Church</i>	
Baghdad	20,085
Mosul	41,699
Basrah, Amara, and Kut	7,000
Zakho and Dohuk	11,146
Amadiyah	5,985
Kirkuk	9,685
Aqra	2,400
Total	98,000

Table A.4: Christians in Iraq according to the Iraq Directory of 1936

to that, the numbers of the Chaldeans, Syriac Catholic and Syriac Orthodox in the *Iraq Dictionary* of 1936 are all higher than in the Dominican figures from 1947, while the censuses show that in this period the total amount of Christians had risen together with the general population. Nevertheless, the distribution of the Christians according to the churches is more or less consistent.

The figures convincingly show that the great amount of the Syriac Christians lived in the north, especially in Mosul or in its vicinities. For the Chaldean Catholic Church, however, Baghdad was of growing importance, with over than a third belonging to the Baghdad diocese in 1947. Baghdad was also an important city for the Assyrian Church of the East from the beginning.

The churches

The following tables provide an overview of general information about the four Syriac churches in Iraq. Here, “National/ethnic identification” and “Group/*tāʾifa* identification” are according to my interpretation of what identifications are generally visible.

Chaldean Catholic Church

Syriac: <i>Ṭ(d)tā Kaldetā Qātuli- getā</i> Arabic: <i>al-Kanīsa al-Kaldā- niyya al-Kāthūlikīyya</i> Branch: East Syriac Christianity Theology: Catholic (Chalcedonian) National/ethnic identification: Arab – common among elite Assyrian – not common (Chaldean – recently) Group/ṭāʾifa identification: Chaldean (<i>Kaldānī, Kaldetā</i>)	Patriarchate: Mosul (from 1830) Baghdad (from 1950) Patriarchs: Joseph VI Emmanuel II Thomas (1900–1947) Joseph VII Ghanīma (1947–1958) Priest seminaries: Syro-Chaldean Seminary of Saint John (Dominicans) Priest School of Saint Peter
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(Assyrian) Church of the East

Syriac: <i>Ṭ(d)tā d-Madnḥā d-Ātorāye</i> Arabic: <i>Kanīsa al-Mashriq al-Āshūriyya</i> Branch: East Syriac Christianity Theology: Dyophysitic (Nestorian) National/ethnic identification: Assyrian Group/ṭāʾifa identification: None	Patriarchate: Hakkari mountains Mosul (from 1918) Chicago (from 1940) Ankawa (from 2015) Patriarchs: Mar Shimʿun XIX Benjamin (1903–1918) Mar Shimʿun XX Paul (1918–1920) Mar Shimʿun XXIII Eshai (1920–1975) Priest seminaries: None
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Syriac Catholic Church

Syriac: <i>ʿI(d)tho Suryoytho Qathuliqaytho</i> Arabic: <i>al-Kanīsa al-Suryā-niyya al-Kāthūlikiyya</i> Branch: West Syriac Christianity Theology: Catholic (Chalcedonian) National/ethnic identification: Unclear Group/ṭāʿifa identification: Syriac Catholic	Patriarchate: Mardin (from 1854) Beirut (from 1920s) Patriarchs: Ignatius Ephrem II Raḥmānī (1897–1929) Ignatius Gabriel I Tappūnī (1929–1968) Priest seminaries: Syro-Chaldean Seminary of Saint John (Dominicans)
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Syriac Orthodox Church

Syriac: <i>ʿI(d)tho Suryoytho Trishath Shubḥo</i> Arabic: <i>al-Kanīsa al-Suryā-niyya al-Urthūdhuksiyya</i> Branch: West Syriac Christianity Theology: Myaphysitic (“Jacobite”) National/ethnic identification: Syriac (<i>Suryānī</i>) Arab (not officially; not very common) Assyrian (common in early 1920s) Group/ṭāʿifa identification: Syriac Orthodox	Patriarchate: Deyrūlzafaran monastery Homs (from 1933) Patriarchs: Ignatius Elias III (1917–1932) Ignatius Ephrem I Barsoum (1933–1957) Priest seminaries: Mar Mattai monastery Saint Ephrem Institute (from 1946 in Mosul)
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Appendix B

Timeline

1900	Chaldeans • Consecration of Patriarch Joseph VI Emmanuel II Thomas
1905	Politics • Young Turk revolution; reinstatement of Ottoman constitution
1911–1914	Secular journalism • Publication of Anastās al-Karmilī's <i>Lughat al-ʿArab</i>
1915	Christians • Start of Anatolian genocide
1918	Church of the East/Assyrians • Patriarch Mar Shimʿūn XIX Benjamin killed; consecration of Mar Shimʿūn XXII Paulos
1918	Church of the East/Assyrians • Arrival of Assyrians in Baʿqūba refugee camp
1918	Politics • End of World War I; completion of British occupation of Iraq
1918–1921	Secular journalism • Publication of <i>Dār al-salām</i>
1920	Politics • Start of British mandate of Iraq
1920	Church of the East/Assyrians • Death of Patriarch Mar Shimʿūn XXII Paulos; consecration of 11-year-old Mar Shimʿūn XXIII Eshai
1920	Missions • Restart of Dominican mission
1921	Politics • Cairo Conference: foundation of State of Iraq
1924	Politics • First Anglo-Iraqi treaty; formal abolishment of the mandate

- 1924 **Missions** • Start of United Mission in Mesopotamia (Protestant, American)
- 1925 **Politics** • Granting of Mosul province to Iraq; instatement of the constitution of Iraq
- 1926 **Politics** • Second Anglo-Iraqi treaty
- 1926–1931 **Secular journalism** • Publication of Anastās al-Karmilī's *Lughat al-ʿArab*
- 1928–1938 **Chaldeans** • Publication of *al-Najm*
- 1929–1963 **Secular journalism** • Publication of Rafāʿil Buṭṭī's *al-Bilād*
- 1930 **Politics** • Third Anglo-Iraqi treaty: independence formally planned; establishment of right-wing *al-Ikhāʾ al-waṭani* party
- 1932 **Politics** • Independence of Iraq
- 1933 **Church of the East/Assyrians** • Simele massacre
- 1933 **Politics** • Death of King Faisal I; coronation of King Ghāzī; start of fierce Arab nationalist influence
- 1933–1937 **Church of the East/Assyrians** • Failed attempts to collectively transfer Assyrians to Brazil, British Guyana, and Syria
- 1936 **Politics** • Coup d'état by Bakr Ṣidqī; start of short-lived Iraqist *al-Ahālī* influence
- 1937 **Politics** • Bakr Ṣidqī killed
- 1939 **Politics** • Death of King Ghāzī; coronation of Faisal II with Prince ʿAbd al-Ilāh as regent (pro-British)
- 1941 **Politics** • Coup d'état of Rashīd ʿAlī al-Kaylānī (Arab nationalist; pro-German); British invasion
- 1946–1948 **Syriac Orthodox** • Publication of *al-Mashriq*
- 1947 **Chaldeans** • Consecration of Patriarch Joseph VII Ghanīma; Patriarchate moved to Baghdad
- 1948–1950 **Syriac Orthodox** • Publication of *Lisān al-Mashriq*
- 1948 **Church of the East/Assyrians** • End of Patriarch's assumed role as worldly leader of the Assyrian nation
- 1958 **Politics** • Republican revolution in Iraq; end of Kingdom

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