

Becoming Catholic in Ottoman Mardin (c. 1662-1783)



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Abstract

This thesis investigates the spread of the Catholic faith among Armenian and Syriac Christians in Mardin, an Ottoman town in southeastern Anatolia, between 1662-1783 CE. It also examines why the origins of Catholicism in Mardin attracted attention among Arabic-speaking scholars in the early twentieth century, highlighting the need to revise these enduring historical narratives.

The thesis first inspects a series of unstudied Arabic historical publications dating to 1907-1915 by Iṣḥāq Armalet (1879-1954), a Syriac Catholic priest and scholar from Mardin. It argues that Armalet's historical vision of Catholicism in Mardin was influenced by both wider contextual factors and an agenda to craft a historical and geographical basis for his Syriac Catholic community. It then examines a corpus of over 500 manuscripts produced and procured by Christians in Mardin between 1662-1783, preserved primarily in local collections (the Church of the Forty Martyrs, Dayr al-Za'farān and the Church of Rabban Hormizd). Focusing on three different frameworks of analysis – a first-person conversion narrative, churches in the region and local Christian manuscript culture – it finds that the diverse Christian communities of Mardin experienced distinct dynamics and trajectories of Catholicism, rather than one unified Catholic movement. Simultaneously, it highlights the significance of this period for the development of the Syriac Orthodox confessional identity. In these respects, the thesis exposes the limitations of the scholarship of Armalet and his contemporaries.

This research contributes to recent scholarly debates on the global development of Catholicism by exploring the interplay between local environments and processes of conversion. It also offers a fresh outlook by shifting the traditional focus on missionary narratives to indigenous materials, and by analysing the imprint of twentieth-century ecclesiastical history on our present knowledge. Finally, its focus on Mardin illuminates the historiographically marginalised contexts of the eastern Ottoman provinces and Syriac Christianity.

Extended abstract

This is a case study of the spread of the Catholic faith in Mardin, an Ottoman town in southeastern Anatolia, between 1662-1783 CE. Drawing on a unique and little-known corpus of indigenous sources, it seeks to understand how Catholic identities and communities formed among the Armenian, Syriac Orthodox and East Syriac Christians who inhabited this locale. It also examines why the origins of Catholicism in Mardin attracted attention among Arabic-speaking scholars in the early twentieth century, highlighting the need to revise these enduring historical narratives.

This case study draws on two main source bases. The first is a series of unstudied Arabic publications dating from 1907-1915 and authored by Iṣḥāq Armalet (d. 1954), a Syriac Catholic priest and prolific scholar from Mardin. The second is a corpus of over 500 manuscripts in Arabic, Syriac and Arabic Karshuni produced and procured by local Christians between the period 1662-1783. These are primarily preserved in three digitally accessible Christian collections in Mardin: the Church of the Forty Martyrs, Dayr al-Za‘farān and the Church of Rabban Hormizd. Manuscripts relating to Mardin which have been found in locations further afield have also been included in this corpus.

The study opens at the beginning of the twentieth century – a lively moment for the history of Catholicism in Mardin. Chapter One focuses on the historical writings of Iṣḥāq Armalet, which have served as a basis for subsequent scholarship on Syriac Catholicism in the region. Through close reading of his articles and historical monograph produced during this phase, and identifying the methods and preoccupations behind Armalet’s work, the chapter argues that they were infused by an agenda to create a previously absent history for his Syriac Catholic community, and – crucially – to cement his hometown of Mardin within it.

Chapter Two returns to the temporal focus of the investigation: 1662-1783. It offers a critical study of the *Life of Eliya*, a rare and long-neglected first-person account in Arabic of early Catholicism in Ottoman Mardin. Preserved in three manuscripts, the account relates the Catholic conversion of Eliya ibn al-Kuzayr, a Syriac Orthodox deacon living in Mardin in the early eighteenth century. Eliya presents his Catholic conversion as causing widespread disruption, not only within his Syriac Orthodox milieu, but for local authorities and society as a whole. His testimony affords us key insights into the specific social, confessional and political fabric of local Christianity, as well as the disparate levels of success encountered by different Catholic movements there.

Chapter Three deals with the Christian topography of Mardin during the late seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Analysing testimony from contemporary historical accounts and paratextual notes in manuscripts, it argues that the territorial, economic and confessional import of churches and monastic institutions entangled them in struggles between local Orthodox and Catholic factions. Furthermore, these sources convey a stark imbalance in the ecclesiastical resources of the three Christian communities in the region. Not only does this highlight another layer of specificity to the Christian context in Mardin, but also how this contributed to separate trajectories of Catholic community establishment.

Chapter Four is a study of manuscript culture in Christian Mardin between 1662-1783. Based on analysis of a considerable corpus of manuscripts, it argues that two simultaneous confessionalization movements were taking place within the local Christian scribal milieux from the early eighteenth century. Whereas the East Syriac community used manuscript production to cultivate a new Catholic identity, the Syriac Orthodox community endeavoured to reinforce their Orthodox heritage. The manuscripts testify to distinct scribal practices and centres within each local community, as well as contrasting levels of engagement with Catholic literature. Confessional identity thus emerges as a dynamic and defining issue in the contemporary record of Christian communities in Mardin.

Rather than one unified movement, this case study argues that the different Christian communities of Mardin each experienced distinct chronologies, dynamics and degrees of Catholic reception. The specificity of the Christian Mardin context – its denominational composition, its leadership, its ecclesiastical structures, its scribal traditions – was crucial to the heterogenous manner in which Catholicism spread there. On the other hand, the study emphasises this as a significant period for identity construction not only among newly converted Catholics, but also among the Syriac Orthodox of Mardin. In these respects, it challenges Ishaq Armalet's historical narrative of a cohesive Catholic movement in Mardin which took root within the Syriac Orthodox Church from an early stage.

This research makes an important contribution to recent scholarly debates on the global development of Catholicism by highlighting the relationship between local environments and processes of conversion. It also offers a fresh outlook by shifting the traditional focus on missionary narratives to indigenous materials, and by analysing the imprint of twentieth-century ecclesiastical history on our present knowledge. Finally, the focus on Mardin and its rich textual heritage illuminates the historiographically marginalised contexts of the eastern Ottoman provinces and Syriac Christianity.

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Note on transliteration and translation

For transliteration of Arabic words, this thesis has followed the Library of Congress transliteration scheme. While finding a unified transliteration system for Syriac has proved more challenging, for consistency Syriac words have been transliterated literally with full vocalisation. For names of well-known prelates and churches which appear in various forms across diverse linguistic traditions, Anglicised versions have mostly been used to avoid confusion (i.e. 'George' rather than 'Kūrķīs', 'Gewārgīs' or 'Jirjis'; 'Saffron Monastery' rather than 'Mōr Ḥananyō' or 'Dayr al-Za'farān').

Longer quotations in Arabic and Syriac have been provided in original script. While a uniform Arabic script has been used, this study has employed either West Syriac (Serto) or East Syriac script according to the primary source in question.

Unless otherwise indicated, all translations into English are my own.

Introduction

When the light of the Catholic Church was about to die out... God Almighty wished to return it to its former vigour. So, at the beginning and end of the seventeenth century, He raised up well-known, venerable people who were zealous to increase His glory and promptly endeavoured to extend His reach. Mardin became renowned for this, for her righteous soil sprung forth defenders of the true faith who suppressed the followers of error, whose reputes stretched far and wide, and who earned the sweetest of praise and the utmost of gratitude. Their homeland began to take pride in them, extolling their virtues and glorifying their deeds.¹

In 1908, these words poetically prefaced a biography of a seventeenth-century Catholic convert from Mardin, a city in what is today southeast Turkey. The author was Işāq Armalet (d. 1954), a Syriac Catholic priest hailing from Mardin, as rooted in his subject matter as he was passionate about it. The intended image of his hometown leaves us in little doubt: the promised Catholic land, home of celebrated evangelicals, guardian of a Catholic history. But how does Armalet's triumphant imagery sit alongside the sources originating within this early phase of Catholicism? In other words, to what extent does his account encapsulate the process of 'becoming Catholic' in Mardin?

This thesis investigates how the Catholic faith spread among the different Eastern Christian communities inhabiting Mardin during the period 1662-1783 CE under Ottoman rule. It provides a case study of a dynamic yet underexplored context of Ottoman Christianity, examining how religious change manifested within a specific locale. Moreover, its analysis focuses on a rich corpus of manuscripts and printed materials authored by local individuals – one of whom we have already encountered.

Catholicism in the Ottoman Empire: historiographical developments

The presence of European Catholics in the Middle East dates back to the medieval period.² In 1622, however, a global Catholic missionary enterprise was launched with the creation of the Sacred Congregation for Propagation of the Faith (Propaganda Fide). Catholic missions – Jesuits, Capuchins, Dominicans, Discalced Carmelites – began to be dispatched to the Ottoman territories, intensifying over the course of the seventeenth century. Their aim was to bring Eastern rite churches in the empire –

¹ I. Armalet, 'al-Sayyid Athanāsiyūs Safar al-'Aṭṭār al-Mārdīnī', *al-Machriq*, 11 (1908), p. 563: لما أوشك تيراس الكنيسة الكاثوليكية ان يخبو ... اراد الله عز وجل ان يعيد اليها نضارتها السابقة فاقام في اوائل القرن السابع عشر واخره اناماً شهرين اجلاء تغايروا على زيادة مجده وسعوا السعي الحثيث في توسيع نطاقه. وقد اشتهرت بذلك مدينة ماردين خاصة فان تربتها الصالحة انبتت كماً ذبوا عن الدين القويم وكتبوا انصار الضلال فطار ذكرهم في الافاق واستحقوا اطيب الثناء واطول الشكر واصبح وطنهم يفاخر بهم ويمتدح بخصالهم وبياهي مناقبهم.

² On Franciscan custodianship of the Holy Land, see M. C. Armstrong, *The Holy Land and the Early Modern Reinvention of Catholicism* (Cambridge, 2021), pp. 28-39.

among them the Armenian, Greek Orthodox, Syriac Orthodox and East Syriac Churches – into union with Rome.³ In parallel with these missions, French ambassadors and consuls stationed in the Ottoman Empire also worked to establish Eastern Uniate (Catholic) patriarchates.⁴

Scholarship on the spread of Catholicism in the Ottoman Empire has evolved and expanded considerably over the last few decades. These developments, which are rooted in several different scholarly traditions, have had an important bearing on the historiographical and methodological approaches of the present study.

One of the key backdrops to this thesis is the growing body of research on the early modern Catholic Church and its global missions – whether in Persia, China, the Americas or the Ottoman Empire.⁵ Within this, the premise of a unified, centrally coordinated Catholic missionary enterprise outside of Europe has been challenged, and scholars have instead started to unravel the heterogenous nature in which Catholicism spread in different corners of the globe.⁶ Recognition of the importance of local contexts to these processes – and indeed to religious studies in general⁷ – has produced compelling research on Ottoman locations. Historians have revealed how specific local factors contributed to the diffusion and solidification of the Catholic faith, moving beyond purely dogmatic considerations to explore economic, migratory, political and social incentives for conversion.⁸ In tandem, how missionaries interacted with

³ C. Verdeil (ed.), *Missions Chrétienues En Terres d'Islam, (XVIIe-XIXe Siècles): Anthologie de Textes Missionnaires* (Turnhout, 2013), p. 15.

⁴ On European relations with Churches in the Ottoman realm, see C. A. Frazee, *Catholics and Sultans: The Church and the Ottoman Empire, 1453-1923* (Cambridge, 1983). On the diplomatic dimension to Catholic missions, see e.g. A. Ruiu, 'Missionaries and French Subjects: The Jesuits in the Ottoman Empire', in R. Po-Chia Hsia (ed.), *A Companion to the Early Modern Catholic Global Missions* (Leiden; Boston, 2018), pp. 181-204; B. Heyberger, 'The Migration of Middle Eastern Christians and European Protection: A Long History', in idem, *Middle Eastern and European Christianity, 16th-20th Century: Connected Histories*, ed. A. Girard, C. Santus, V. Kontouma and K. Sanchez Summerer, trans. M. Robitaille-Ibbett (Edinburgh, 2023), pp. 142-59.

⁵ See e.g. R. Po-Chia Hsia, *The World of Catholic Renewal, 1540-1770* (Cambridge, 2005); A. Bamji, G. H. Janssen and M. Laven (eds), *The Ashgate Research Companion to the Counter-Reformation* (London, 2013), esp. contributions in pt. ii; R. Po-Chia Hsia (ed.), *Early Modern Catholic Global Missions*.

⁶ See pioneering essay of Simon Ditchfield: idem, 'Decentering the Catholic Reformation Papacy and Peoples in the Early Modern World', *Archiv Für Reformationsgeschichte*, 101/1 (2010), pp. 186-208. For studies which have drawn on this approach, see e.g. A. Forrestal and S. A. Smith (eds), *The Frontiers of Mission: Perspectives on Early Modern Missionary Catholicism* (Leiden; Boston, 2016).

⁷ See E. Menegon, 'Local Religion in the Early Modern Period: Chinese Christianity as a Case Study', in A. Badea (ed.), *Pathways through Early Modern Christianities* (Paderborn, 2023), pp. 211-35; N. Terpstra, 'Lay Spirituality', in Bamji et al. (eds), *Research Companion to the Counter-Reformation*, esp. pp. 266-7.

⁸ On economic incentives, see R. M. Haddad, 'Conversion of the Eastern Orthodox Christians to the Unia in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries', in M. Gervers and R. J. Bikhazi (eds), *Conversion and Continuity:*

and adjusted to local contexts has attracted attention, evoking what has recently been described as a “dance of agency” between missionary and indigenous actors.⁹ Yet, while the move towards locally based investigations is a promising development, the study of extra-European Catholicism is still dominated by missionary perspectives.¹⁰ Such perspectives do hold the potential, as recently pointed out, to offer a more “local, diverse and granular” image of emergent Catholicism.¹¹ But a mission-centric focus also carries its limitations. Not only does it diminish attention to indigenous source materials, considered a crucial element in analysis of local religiosity;¹² it also means that – notwithstanding several recent interventions – contexts in which Catholic conversion took place independently of or with limited involvement of missionary orders have tended to be overlooked.¹³ As Bruce Masters reminded us when contrasting the cities of Aleppo and Izmir, a Western European presence – whether missionary, diplomatic or commercial – did not necessarily equate to successful Catholic evangelism.¹⁴ From this angle, a case study of Mardin is an opportunity to broaden the scope

Indigenous Christian Communities in Islamic Lands, Eighth to Eighteenth Centuries (Toronto, 1990), pp. 454-456; B. Masters, *Christians and Jews in the Ottoman Arab World: The Roots of Sectarianism* (New York, 2001), esp. pp. 72, 75-7, 97; F. Tramontana, *Passages of Faith: Conversion in Palestinian Villages (17th Century)* (Wiesbaden, 2014), 92-3, 101-4; J. Norris, ‘Dragomans, Tattooists, Artisans: Palestinian Christians and Their Encounters with Catholic Europe in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries’, *Journal of Global History*, 14/1 (2019), pp. 68-86. On migration, see Tramontana, *Passages of Faith*, pp. 107-10, 119-29; idem, ‘Geographical Mobility and Community-Building in Seventeenth-Century Palestine: Insights from the Records of Bethlehem’s Catholic Parish’, *Continuity and Change*, 35 (2020), pp. 163-85. The political dimension is explored in B. Kūmin and F. Tramontana, ‘Catholicism Decentralized: Local Religion in the Early Modern Periphery’, *Church History*, 89/2 (2020), pp. 268-87. On social incentives for conversion, see B. Heyberger, *Les chrétiens du Proche-Orient au temps de la réforme catholique (Syrie, Liban, Palestine, XVIIe-XVIIIe siècles)* (Rome, 1994), pp. 454-478; idem, ‘Missionaries and women: Domestic Catholicism in the Middle East’, in N. Amsler, A. Badea, B. Heyberger and C. Windler (eds), *Catholic Missionaries in Early Modern Asia: Patterns of Localization* (London, 2019), pp. 190-203; Tramontana, *Passages of Faith*, pp. 93-6.

⁹ Quote from S. Ditchfield and L. Nolan, ‘Appropriation and Agency in the Making of Roman Catholicism as a World Religion’, in Badea (ed.), *Pathways through Early Modern Christianities*, p. 90. Recent studies include Amsler et al. (eds), *Catholic Missionaries in Early Modern Asia*; C. Windler, *Missionare in Persien: kulturelle Diversität und Normenkonkurrenz im globalen Katholizismus (17.-18. Jahrhundert)* (Köln, 2018).

¹⁰ Pointed out in L. Parker and R. Maxton, ‘Archiving Faith: Record-Keeping and Catholic Community Formation in Eighteenth-Century Mesopotamia’, *Past and Present*, 257/1 (2022), p. 92. Recent examples of studies on extra-European Catholicism with a mission focus include Amsler et al. (eds), *Catholic Missionaries in Early Modern Asia* and R. Po-Chia Hsia (ed.), *Early Modern Catholic Global Missions*.

¹¹ J.-P. Ghobrial, ‘Connected Histories and Eastern Christianities’, in Badea (ed.), *Pathways through Early Modern Christianities*, p. 191.

¹² Menegon, ‘Local Religion in the Early Modern Period’, p. 215.

¹³ Several recent examinations of East Syriac Catholic (Chaldean) identity formation in the Ottoman Empire have focused on local source materials: see Parker and Maxton, ‘Archiving Faith’; L. Parker, ‘Joseph I of Amida (d.1707) and the Invention of the Chaldeans’, in Bernard Heyberger (ed.), *Les Chrétiens de Tradition Syriaque à l’époque Ottomane* (Paris, 2020), pp. 121-52.

¹⁴ Masters, *Christians and Jews in the Ottoman Arab World*, pp. 95-6.

of global Catholic history, offering a local context with a minimal foreign missionary or consular presence and – most importantly – a rich palette of local Christian sources which attest to this period of religious change.

The study of Catholicism in the Ottoman Empire also necessarily intersects with the study of Eastern Christianity. This is given that, aside from rare exceptions, Christians were the main target of Catholicising missions to the region until at least the nineteenth century.¹⁵ Scholarship on Eastern Christian communities in the early modern era has showcased a variety of approaches: some have examined them alongside other religious minorities in the Ottoman Empire;¹⁶ some have studied specific Christian confessions in isolation;¹⁷ and some have centred on geographical areas, including the spectrum of Christian confessions dwelling there.¹⁸ Most recently, scholars have situated Eastern Christians in a global context, constructing connected histories through records of their mobility and migration across the early modern world.¹⁹ These approaches, however, each present certain

¹⁵ See detailed discussion in Verdeil (ed.), *Missions Chrétiennes En Terres d'Islam*, pp. 42-59. Cases of conversion from Islam to Catholicism were occasionally reported: see e.g. record of Muslim woman convert by Carmelites in Aleppo in 1681: A. Rabbath, *Documents inédits pour servir à l'histoire du christianisme en Orient* (2 vols, Paris, 1905), ii, pp. 27-31. For later missions among the Druze and Alawites, see C. Verdeil, 'La Mission Jésuite auprès des Alaouites (Syrie)' in idem (ed.), *Missions Chrétiennes En Terres d'Islam*, pp. 365-401.

¹⁶ See e.g. Masters, *Christians and Jews in the Ottoman Arab World*; B. Braude, *Christians and Jews in the Ottoman Empire* (Boulder, CO, 2013).

¹⁷ On the Church of the East, see D. Wilmshurst, *The Ecclesiastical Organisation of the Church of the East, 1318-1913* (Leuven, 2000) and H. Murre-van den Berg, *Scribes and Scriptures: The Church of the East in the Eastern Ottoman Provinces (1500-1850)* (Leuven, 2015). On the (Melkite) Greek Orthodox Church, see C. Panchenko, *Arab Orthodox Christians: Under the Ottomans 1516–1831* (Jordanville, NY, 2016). On the Syriac Orthodox in the late Ottoman period, see K. Dinno, *The Syrian Orthodox Christians in the Late Ottoman Period and Beyond: Crisis Then Revival* (Piscataway, NJ, 2017).

¹⁸ On the Syrian provinces, see Heyberger, *Les chrétiens du Proche-Orient* and R. M. Haddad, *Syrian Christians in a Muslim Society: An Interpretation* (Princeton, NJ, 2015). On Constantinople, see C. Santus, *Trasgressioni necessarie. Comunicatio in sacris, coesistenza e conflitti tra le comunità cristiane orientali* (Rome, 2019). On the district of Jerusalem, see Tramontana, *Passages of Faith*.

¹⁹ For recent discussions of connected history, see Ghobrial, 'Connected Histories and Eastern Christianities'; B. Heyberger, 'East and West: A Connected History of Eastern Christianity' in I. Feodorov, B. Heyberger and S. Noble (eds), *Arabic Christianity between the Ottoman Levant and Eastern Europe* (Leiden, 2021), pp. 3-29; and essays in B. Heyberger, *Middle Eastern and European Christianity*. Notable treatments in the Ottoman Christian context include J.-P. Ghobrial, 'The Secret Life of Elias of Babylon and the Uses of Global Microhistory', *Past & Present*, 222 (2014), pp. 51-93; C. Santus, 'Wandering Lives: Eastern Christian Pilgrims, Alms-Collectors and "Refugees" in Early Modern Rome' in M. C. Wainwright and E. Michelson (eds), *A Companion to Religious Minorities in Early Modern Rome* (Leiden; Boston, 2021), pp. 237-71; and S. Aslanian, 'From Mount Lebanon to the Little Mount in Madras: Mobility and Catholic-Armenian Alms-Collecting Networks during the Eighteenth Century' in P. Nelles and R. Salzberg (eds), *Connected Mobilities in the Early Modern World: The Practice and Experience of Movement* (Amsterdam, 2023), pp. 237-75.

methodological challenges to the historian.²⁰ A focus on one community can divert our attention from both interconfessional and interfaith exchanges embedded in everyday Ottoman life, and the effects of historical and political change on society at large. As James Grehan has compellingly demonstrated for Ottoman Syria, local cultures of spirituality could even cut across religious boundaries.²¹ Meanwhile, though studies of a particular region may prioritise historical events and a wide-ranging source base, this could in turn reduce their sensitivity to specific components – not only religion, but also language, culture, demography, liturgy and scribal practices – which underpinned diverse Christian communal identities and perceptions, even within one locale. This is not to mention the dynamics and tensions between these communities, which naturally varied from one place and time to another.²² In recognition of these challenges, the present study seeks to conduct a deep exploration into the multi-confessional Christian society of Mardin in the late seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. It will not only consider the unique traditions and identities of each local denomination – Armenian, Syriac Orthodox and East Syriac – but also how they engaged with one another and, where possible, other religious groups against the specific backdrop of Mardin. Furthermore, despite Mardin being the centre point of this thesis, it also reflects on how the mobility of local sources and individuals extended the reach of this town, thereby offering new contributions to a connected history of Eastern Christianity.

For its part, Ottoman historiography is also showing increasing interest towards Christian communities within the empire, particularly in its employment of the confessionalization paradigm. The concept of ‘confessionalization’ was first used by Wolfgang Reinhard and Hans Schilling to describe the establishment of confessionally distinct Catholic and Protestant Churches in post-Reformation Europe. Rather than theological differences, they focused on how confessionalization implemented

²⁰ For detailed treatments of these methodological issues, see H. Murre-van den Berg, ‘The Unexpected Popularity of the Study of Middle Eastern Christianity’, in S. H. Griffith and S. Grebenstein (eds), *Christsein in der islamischen Welt. Festschrift für Martin Tamcke zum 60. Geburtstag* (Wiesbaden, 2015), pp. 8-10; Ghobrial, ‘Connected Histories and Eastern Christianities’, pp. 186-90; B. Heyberger, ‘The Westernisation and Confessionalisation of Christians in the Middle East: An “Entangled History” (“Histoire Croisée”)', in idem, *Middle Eastern and European Christianity*, esp. pp. 164-66.

²¹ See J. Grehan, *Twilight of the Saints: Everyday Religion in Ottoman Syria and Palestine* (New York, 2014).

²² Ghobrial, ‘Connected Histories and Eastern Christianities’, pp. 187-8.

social discipline and thereby the construction of the modern state.²³ In past years, this analytical framework has been applied to the consolidation of Sunni orthodoxy and orthopraxy (‘Sunnitization’) in the Ottoman realm by the imperial hierarchy, particularly during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.²⁴ Moreover, its horizons have been further expanded by the recent edited volume of leading proponents of Ottoman confessionalization, Tijana Krstić and Derin Terzioğlu. Building on the idea of an all-pervasive ‘confessional age’ between the sixteenth and eighteenth centuries, the contributions in this publication demonstrated how discourses of confessional belonging, conformity and boundaries were not confined to an imperial state project, and arguably touched the spectrum of minority religious groups within the Ottoman territories, including its various Christian denominations.²⁵ This fresh conceptualisation is immensely valuable for the present study. It not only provides a framework for the formation of new Catholic identities among different Christian communities within the Ottoman realm during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries,²⁶ but also, crucially, for how ‘traditionalist’ Orthodox communities simultaneously refined their confessional identities.²⁷ Bernard Heyberger has even argued that the encounter with Catholicism and Western Europe in itself stimulated confessionalization processes among Eastern Christian communities, particularly their efforts to enhance knowledge of their unique intellectual and literary heritages.²⁸ With consideration to Mardin, an overarching current of confessionalization provides a compelling basis for the separate yet equally dynamic scribal

²³ Within this impressive body of literature, see e.g. W. Reinhard, ‘Reformation, Counter-Reformation, and the Early Modern State: a Reassessment’, *The Catholic Historical Review*, 79/3 (1989), pp. 383-404 and H. Schilling, ‘Confessionalization in the Empire. Religious and Societal Change in Germany between 1555 and 1620’, in idem., *Religion, Political Culture and the Emergence of Early Modern Society. Essays in German and Dutch History* (Leiden; New York; Cologne, 1992), pp. 205-245. For an exposition of developments and controversies concerning the confessionalization paradigm, see U. Lotz-Heumann, ‘Confessionalization’, in D. M. Whitford (ed.), *Reformation and Early Modern Europe: A Guide to Research* (Kirksville, MO, 2008), pp. 136-57.

²⁴ D. Terzioğlu, ‘How to conceptualize Ottoman Sunnitization: a historiographical discussion’, *Turcica*, 44 (2012-2013), pp. 301-38.

²⁵ T. Krstić and D. Terzioğlu (eds), *Entangled Confessionalizations?: Dialogic Perspectives on the Politics of Piety and Community Building in the Ottoman Empire, 15th-18th Centuries* (Piscataway, NJ, 2022).

²⁶ See J.-P. Ghobrial, ‘Catholic Confessional Literature in the Christian East?’, in Krstić and Terzioğlu (eds), *Entangled Confessionalizations?*, pp. 383-99 and L. Parker, ‘On the Margins of Empire: Confessionalization and the East Syrian Schism of 1552’, in ibid., pp. 429-50.

²⁷ See C. Santus, ‘Sheikh ül-islam Feyzullah Efendi and the Armenian Patriarch Awetik’: a Case of Entangled Confessional Disciplining?’, in Krstić and Terzioğlu (eds), *Entangled Confessionalizations?*, pp. 233-54 and A. Ohanjanyan, ‘Intra-Armenian Polemics and Confession-Building in Ottoman Constantinople: The Case of Gēorg Mxlayim Olli (1681/85-1758)’, in ibid., pp. 489-520.

²⁸ Heyberger, ‘East and West: A Connected History of Eastern Christianity’, pp. 4-5 and idem, ‘The Westernisation and Confessionalisation of Christians in the Middle East’.

movements which emerged during this period among its different Christian communities, Catholic and Orthodox.

Finally, this thesis is a window into contexts which have suffered from relative neglect within the fields of both Eastern Christian and Ottoman studies. Scholars of Eastern Christianity have recently called out the disproportionately fewer studies on Arabic and Syriac-speaking Christians, and especially from the Syriac tradition.²⁹ This also feeds into a general geographic disparity in early modern Ottoman historiography. Comparatively less attention has been afforded the eastern Ottoman provinces; that is, the region extending from eastern Anatolia to the borders of the Persian Safavid Empire, in which the indigenous Christian population mostly derived from Syriac and Armenian denominations.³⁰ Not only did Mardin belong to this region, but also major cities such as Diyarbakır, Urfa, Mosul and Baghdad.³¹ One of the principal reasons cited for this imbalance is a scarcity of primary sources. This is not only owing to there being less material on peripheral areas within the central Ottoman archives, but also – allegedly – a lack of locally produced sources.³² With regard to Catholicism in the Ottoman territories, these issues have been further compounded by the above-mentioned prioritisation of locations with a consistent foreign missionary and diplomatic presence, such as Aleppo and Constantinople.³³ Yet, in spite of its perceived remoteness, Catholicism did reach Mardin, and the confessional transformations which took shape during this period were, in fact, richly documented by local Christian contemporaries.

²⁹ Pointed out in Ghobrial, ‘Connected Histories and Eastern Christianities’, p. 187 and L. Parker, ‘The Interconnected Histories of the Syriac Churches in the Sixteenth Century’, *The Journal of Ecclesiastical History*, 72/3 (2021), pp. 511-2. Two major exceptions for the Church of the East are Murre-van den Berg, *Scribes and Scriptures* and Wilmshurst, *The Ecclesiastical Organisation of the Church of the East*.

³⁰ See Y. T. Cora, D. Derderian and A. Sipahi, *The Ottoman East in the Nineteenth Century: Societies, Identities and Politics* (London, 2016), pp. 1-16.

³¹ Among the few substantial treatments of the Ottoman East in the early modern era, see D. R. Khoury, *State and Provincial Society in the Ottoman Empire: Mosul, 1540-1834* (Cambridge, 1997) and Y. Aykan, *Rendre la justice à Amid: procédures, acteurs et doctrines dans le context ottoman du XVIII^{ème} siècle* (Leiden, 2016). Specifically on power distribution in the Ottoman provinces, see contributions in ‘Part III: The Centre and the Provinces’, in S. Faroqhi (ed.), *The Cambridge History of Turkey. Volume 3, The Later Ottoman Empire, 1603-1839* (Cambridge, 2006), pp. 135-206.

³² Cora, Derderian and Sipahi (eds), *The Ottoman East in the Nineteenth Century*, pp. 3-5. Similar comments concerning Ottoman Anatolian cities can be found in E. Eldem, D. Goffman and B. Masters, *The Ottoman City between East and West: Aleppo, Izmir, and Istanbul* (Cambridge, 1999), pp. 8-11.

³³ Recent examples on Aleppo include Heyberger, ‘Missionaries and women’ and B. Masters, ‘The Millet Wars in Aleppo, 1726–1821: An Ottoman Perspective’, in S. Winter and A. Mafalda (eds), *Aleppo and Its Hinterland in the Ottoman Period*, (Leiden; Boston, 2020), pp. 130-51. On Constantinople, see Santus, *Trasgressioni necessarie and idem*, ‘La Comunità Armena Di Costantinopoli All’inizio Del XVIII Secolo: Scontri e Tentativi Di Accordi Interconfessionali (XVIII Sec.)’, *Rassegna Degli Armenisti Italiani*, 17 (2016), pp. 51-9.

In harnessing recent trends across several scholarly fields, and shedding light on a series of historiographically marginalised contexts, a case study of Mardin deepens our understanding of the dissemination of the Catholic faith in the early modern world.

Mardin and its Catholic historiography

The past century has witnessed barely any research into the Catholic origins of Mardin. Christian communities in Mardin during the late Ottoman era have been the subject of some scholarship. This covers an array of topics, including Protestant missions,³⁴ institutional change within the Syriac Catholic Church,³⁵ the Syriac Orthodox patriarchal archives,³⁶ material devotional culture,³⁷ and, most notably, the tragic history of the town as a site of genocide.³⁸ Studies on Christian Mardin in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries are much sparser. Mardin is peripherally addressed in several contributions on Armenian and East Syriac communities in the early modern Ottoman territories.³⁹ Research has also been carried out on the Christian architectural heritage throughout the wider Mardin region.⁴⁰ Meanwhile, Iskandar Bcheiry has offered key insights into contemporary Syriac Orthodox history writing and record keeping through studying paratextual notices in manuscripts, several of which belong to the Church of the Forty Martyrs collection in Mardin. His investigation has unearthed local testimonies on political and economic upheaval in eastern Anatolia during the late sixteenth and early

³⁴ M. Tamcke, 'Mardin and the Tur 'Abdin in Interaction with the "Deutsche Orientmission" (German Oriental Mission)', in H. Teule, E. Keser-Kayaalp, K. Akalin, N. Doru and M. S. Toprak (eds), *Syriac in its multi-cultural context: First International Syriac Studies Symposium, Mardin Artuklu University, Institute of Living Languages, 20-22 April 2012, Mardin* (Leuven, 2017), pp. 337-42

³⁵ F. Mazzucotelli, 'The Shift of the Syriac Catholic Patriarchate to Mardin: Sources and Voices from Rome', in Teule et al. (eds), *Syriac in its multi-cultural context*, pp. 289-312.

³⁶ K. Dinno, 'The Deir al-Za'faran and Mardin Garshuni Archives', *Hugoye: Journal of Syriac Studies*, 17/1 (2015), pp. 195-214; G. Kiraz, 'A Disgruntled Bishop: A Garshūnī Letter from Bishop Dinḥā of Midyat to Patriarch Peter III', in E.-M. Wagner (ed.), *A Handbook and Reader of Ottoman Arabic* (Cambridge, 2021), pp. 399-414.

³⁷ I. Bcheiry, *Collection of Historical Documents in Relation with the Syriac Orthodox Community in the Late Period of the Ottoman Empire: The Register of Mardin MS 1006* (Piscataway, NJ, 2010).

³⁸ See e.g. Y. Ternon, *Mardin 1915 : anatomie pathologique d'une destruction* (Paris, 2007); Z. Ö. Binner, 'Acts of Defacement, Memory of Loss: Ghostly Effects of the "Armenian Crisis" in Mardin, Southeastern Turkey', *History and Memory*, 22/2 (2010), pp. 68-94; A. Riccardi, *La strage dei cristiani. Mardin, gli armeni e la fine di un mondo* (Rome, 2016).

³⁹ See Santus, 'La Comunità Armena Di Costantinopoli All'inizio Del XVIII Secolo', pp. 57-8; Wilmshurst, *The Ecclesiastical Organisation of the Church of the East*, pp. 72-80.

⁴⁰ P. G. Akyüz, *Deyrulzafaran Manastırı'nın Tarihi* (Mardin, 1998); idem, *Mardin ili'nin merkezinde civar köylerinde ve ilçelerinde bulunan kiliselerin ve manastırların tarihi* (Mardin, 1998). I have unfortunately been unable to obtain copies of these materials.

seventeenth centuries, as well as trends in Syriac Orthodox ordinations and pious endowments.⁴¹ This research not only supplies the present study with key contextual information, but also resonates with its focus on local Christian materials. With respect to Catholicism, Ibrahim Özcoşar's two articles on Uniate movements in the Armenian and Syriac Orthodox Churches of Mardin are a promising start.⁴² Özcoşar relies principally on local Ottoman court records (*Mardin Şer'iyeye Sicilleri*) and almanacs (*Salnameleri*) to provide insights on these intracommunal ruptures. His research has drawn together essential statistics and legal rulings related to Christians in Mardin which are useful to the present investigation.⁴³ However, his analysis and sources are heavily weighted toward the nineteenth century; moreover, they lack perspectives from within the Christian communities he discusses, and on how internal confessional discord impacted the dynamics of Christianity in Mardin as a whole.

A notable exception in this historiographical survey must, however, be acknowledged here. It is wrong to claim that the Catholic history of Mardin has always suffered neglect; in fact, the subject received a remarkable amount of attention in Arabic scholarship during the early twentieth century. Chief among its proponents was a churchman from Mardin himself: the above-named Syriac Catholic priest Işhaq Armalet.⁴⁴ Işhaq Armalet devoted much of his early scholarly career to writing historical essays and volumes on the Syriac Catholic Church, particularly within Mardin. But while Armalet's scholarship continued to inform historiography throughout the twentieth century,⁴⁵ this thesis seeks to problematise the historical narrative he propagated. As is increasingly argued for ecclesiastical histories and other scholarship emanating from the late Ottoman era, Armalet's works are above all a reflection of his own

⁴¹ I. Bcheiry, *Hagiography, History and Manuscript Culture: Studies in Syriac Christianity* (Kaslik, 2018), pp. 57-71, 73-101; idem, *A List of Syriac Orthodox Ecclesiastic Ordinations from the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Century: The Syriac Manuscript of Hunt 444 (Syr 68 in Bodleian Library, Oxford)* (Piscataway, NJ, 2010).

⁴² I. Özcoşar, 'Osmanlı Dönemi Mardin Ermenilerinde Dini Değişim', *Soysal Bilimler Dergisi* (Journal of Social Sciences), 7/2 (2008), pp. 427-40; idem, 'Separation and Conflict: Syriac Jacobites and Syriac Catholics in Mardin in the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries', *Byzantine and Modern Greek Studies*, 38/2 (2014), pp. 201-17.

⁴³ See e.g. Özcoşar, 'Mardin Ermenilerinde Dini Değişim', p. 434; idem, 'Separation and Conflict', pp. 213-4.

⁴⁴ For biography of Armalet, see M. al-Jamil, *Tārīkh wa-siyar. Kahanat al-Suryān al-kāthūlīk min 1750–1985* (Mkalles, 1986), pp. 22–26.

⁴⁵ See praise of Armalet's works in e.g. J. Joseph, *Muslim-Christian Relations and Inter-Christian Rivalries in the Middle East: The Case of the Jacobites in an Age of Transition* (Albany, NY, 1983), p. xiv. Further examples can be found below, Chapter One.

specific preoccupations at that time.⁴⁶ More precisely, as this thesis will argue, Armalet's publications are infused with an agenda to establish a history for the Syriac Catholic community to which he belonged. Yet through promoting its ancient roots and claim to his hometown of Mardin, Armalet both adapted and repurposed much of local Syriac Orthodox history, and devised a dubious lineage of local Syriac Catholic converts in the process. Armalet's works in themselves are a fascinating insight into Christian intercommunal dynamics in Mardin during the early twentieth century. Where the early modern period is concerned, however, the present study is committed to the all-important task of revising this historiographical legacy.

Mardin in the Ottoman era

Mardin, like any other early modern Ottoman site, had its own unique conditions and characteristics which are important for understanding any local historical processes. Situated on the slope of a rocky hill overlooking the Mesopotamian plain, Mardin belongs to the ancient geographical region known as Upper Mesopotamia. It became an early Christian site during the Roman era, and between the fourth and sixth centuries numerous Syriac monasteries were founded in a region to the east of the town named Tur Abdin, or 'mountain of the servants of God'.⁴⁷ Mardin was captured by Muslim forces in the seventh century and, after shifting between the control of various Muslim rulers – including the Seljuks, the Artuqids and the Safavids – the town fell to Ottoman forces in 1516.⁴⁸ It remained part of the Ottoman Empire until its dissolution, and has preserved a culturally and religiously diverse population to the present day.

⁴⁶ See Ghobrial, 'Connected Histories and Eastern Christianities', pp. 191-2. Recent pioneering treatments of *Nahḍa* scholars from the late nineteenth and early twentieth century include contributions in the special issue edited by Feras Krimsti and John-Paul Ghobrial: 'The Past and Its Possibilities in Nahḍa Scholarship', *Philological Encounters*, 6/3-4 (2021) and C. Ceyhun Arslan's study of Jurjī Zaydān in idem, *The Ottoman Canon and the Construction of Arabic and Turkish Literatures* (Edinburgh, 2024), pp. 56-82. For a similar approach against the backdrop of British Orientalism, see T. C. Baarda, 'Firmly Established in Early 20th-Century Orientalism: Alphonse Mingana Among His Fellow Scholars', *Hugoye*, 19/1 (2016), pp. 3-34.

⁴⁷ A. Palmer, *Monk and Mason on the Tigris Frontier: The Early History of Tur 'Abdin* (Cambridge, 1990). On the sacred architecture of Tur Abdin, see E. Keser-Kayaalp, *Church Architecture of Late Antique Northern Mesopotamia* (Oxford, 2021), pp. 153-223.

⁴⁸ For general descriptions of Ottoman Mardin, see O. Yildirim, 'Mardin', in *Encyclopaedia of Jews in the Islamic World*, (5 vols, Leiden, 2010), iii, p. 342; V. Minorsky and C. E. Bosworth, 'Mārdīn', *Encyclopaedia of Islam, Second Edition Online* (2012), https://doi-org.ezproxy-prd.bodleian.ox.ac.uk/10.1163/1573-3912_islam_COM_0682 (13 May 2024).

From the outset, Mardin had a distinguished status within the Ottoman framework. The town was a strategic victory for the Ottomans: with a fortress positioned over 3,000 feet above sea level, it served as a “watchtower” for the eastern borders with the Persian Safavid Empire.⁴⁹ Shortly after being captured, Mardin was incorporated into a *sancak* (district) by the same name within the *eyâlet* (province) of Diyarbakır. The *sancak* of Mardin comprised the towns of Savur to the north and Nusaybin to the south, as well as some 247 villages.⁵⁰ *Sancaks* would typically be appointed a *sancak beyi* (governor) by the sultan, who would oversee local fiscal and military affairs and the preservation of public order.⁵¹ In the seventeenth century, the voyager Evliya Çelebi (d. 1682) noted a host of other officials allocated to the Mardin *sancak*, including a deputy governor, qadi, mufti, police chief, customs superintendent and commander of the janissaries.⁵² By the same token, the impact of the Ottoman takeover of Mardin was diminished by several factors. Having been the capital of the Artuqid dynasty, Mardin was already well equipped with Islamic administrative and religious institutions, and witnessed minimal physical or architectural remodelling by the Ottoman government until the nineteenth century.⁵³ Imperial alliances with hereditary Kurdish emirates (*mîr-i aşiret*) in the region, who were granted privileges and some autonomy from local government, added to its distinct administrative conditions.⁵⁴ In the mid-sixteenth century, the *sancak* of Mardin is recorded as comprising thirteen such emirates.⁵⁵ Referring to the presence not only of Kurdish but also Turkmen and Arab tribes in the region, Evliya Çelebi surmised that only a “courageous and determined” person could handle the governorship of Mardin.⁵⁶ In addition to this, provincial elites known as *ayan* exercised influence within their local religious communities – as gestured to, for example, in one contemporary account of Mardin which will

⁴⁹ F. Husain, *Rivers of the Sultan: The Tigris and Euphrates in the Ottoman Empire* (New York, 2021), pp. 136-7.

⁵⁰ According to 1518 land register: see N. Göyünç, *XVI. yüzyılda Mardin Sancağı* (Istanbul, 1969), p. 56. On formation of the Mardin *sancak*, see *ibid.*, pp. 38-45.

⁵¹ For detail on *sancak* and governor functions, see C. Imber, *The Ottoman Empire, 1300-1650: The Structure of Power*, 2nd edn (London, 2009), pp. 170-81.

⁵² The *Seyahatnâme* of Evliya Çelebi was consulted in Arabic translation: E. Çelebi, *Rihlat Awlīyā Chilibī fī Kūrdistān*, ed. and trans. R. Fandī (Duhok, 2008), p. 80.

⁵³ B. Açıkyıldız-Şengül, ‘Mardin in the Post-Tanzimat Era: Heritage, Changes and Formation of an Urban Landscape’, *Journal of Ethnic and Cultural Studies*, 5/2 (2018), pp. 159-185.

⁵⁴ For more on the status of tribes in the Ottoman Empire, see H. Özoğlu, *Kurdish Notables and the Ottoman State: Evolving Identities, Competing Loyalties, and Shifting Boundaries* (New York, 2004), pp. 43-68 and R. Kasaba, ‘Nomads and Tribes in the Ottoman Empire’, in C. Woodhead (ed.), *The Ottoman World* (Milton Park, Abingdon, Oxon, 2012), pp. 11-24.

⁵⁵ According to 1564 tax register: see Açıkyıldız-Sengül, ‘Mardin in the Post-Tanzimat Era’, p. 161.

⁵⁶ Çelebi, *Rihlat Awlīyā Chilibī fī Kūrdistān*, p. 79.

be analysed in this thesis.⁵⁷ Mardin would be further distanced from central imperial control in the mid-eighteenth century, with its transfer from the administration of the Diyarbakır *eyâlet* to the semi-autonomous *paşalık* of Baghdad.⁵⁸ Baghdad was directly in charge of its resources and appointment of its governors until the following century, when Mardin was returned to the Diyarbakır jurisdiction.⁵⁹

For the early modern period, there appears to be no record of a permanent European presence – consular, commercial or missionary – in Mardin. The place had perhaps stirred some curiosity through the figure of Sitti Maani Gioerida, an East Syriac Christian from Mardin who married the celebrated Italian traveller Pietro della Valle (d. 1652). Her funeral was held at the Santa Maria in Aracoeli Church in Rome, and memorialised in a printed pamphlet bearing her portrait.⁶⁰ Moreover, as a frequent stopover point along caravan routes connecting Aleppo to Baghdad, Mardin attracted a steady flow of foreign visitors. Several European travel accounts dating to the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries offer their impressions on Mardin, most of which focus on its geographical and agricultural conditions. The French traveller François de La Boullaye-Le Gouz (d. c. 1669), who spent four days in Mardin, was most struck by its military capabilities: he designated it the “strongest of the sultan’s possessions in Asia” with a citadel that not even Tamerlane could conquer, and highly praised the commander of the janissaries there.⁶¹ Jean-Baptiste Tavernier (d. 1689) briefly remarked that Mardin was well fortified with a resident pasha, two hundred *siphahis* (cavalrymen) and four hundred janissaries, as well as being

⁵⁷ Syriac Orthodox, Armenian and Muslim *ayan* (Arabic *‘ayān*) in Mardin are referenced in USJ (= Beirut, Université Saint-Joseph, Bibliothèque Orientale) 30 (1700-1800), e.g. f. 18r, ff. 47r-47v, 55r and USJ 31 (1850-1950), e.g. p. 60. On the rise of provincial elites in the early modern Ottoman era, see F. Adanir, ‘Semi-autonomous provincial forces in the Balkans and Anatolia’, in Faroqhi (ed.), *The Cambridge History of Turkey. Volume 3*, pp. 157-85.

⁵⁸ Husain, *Rivers of the Sultan*, pp. 127-44.

⁵⁹ Although it is unclear when the dependency to Baghdad began, it was noted as early as 1738 by Jean Otter: J. Otter, *Voyage en Turquie et en Perse* (2 vols, Paris, 1748), ii, p. 267. On the history of Mardin within the Diyarbakır *eyâlet*, see S. Aydin and J. Verheij, ‘Confusion in the Cauldron: Some Notes on Ethno-Religious Groups, Local Powers and the Ottoman State in Diyarbakir Province, 1800-1870’, in J. Jongerden and J. Verheij (eds), *Social Relations in Ottoman Diyarbakir, 1870-1915* (Leiden; Boston, 2012), pp. 18-9, 23-7.

⁶⁰ See C. Baskins, ‘Lost in Translation: Portraits of Sitti Maani Gioerida Della Valle in Baroque Rome’, *Early Modern Women*, 7/1 (2012), pp. 241-60. For della Valle’s own account of Sitti Maani, see P. Della Valle, *Viaggi di Pietro della Valle, il pellegrino : descritti da lui medesimo in lettere familiari all'erudito suo amico Mario Schipano, divisi in tre parti cioè : La Truchia, La Persia, e l'India, colla vita dell'autore* (2 vols, Brighton, 1843), i, pp. 397-403.

⁶¹ F. de la Boullaye-Le Gouz, *Les voyages et obseruations du Sieur de La Boullaye-Le-Gouz, gentil-homme angeuin* (Paris, 1657), pp. 339-342.

the birthplace of the wife of Pietro della Valle.⁶² The Swedish traveller Jean Otter (d. 1748), visiting Mardin in around 1738, offered a much more detailed account of the town. Although fearful of Kurdish attacks on the approach to Mardin – as well as deadly serpents! – he was, like La Boullaye-Le Gouz, taken by its fortress. Most of all, Mardin encapsulated the beauty and fertility of the Mesopotamian plain: alongside blissful views, Otter praised Mardin for its good air, fruits (especially plums), wine and ice.⁶³ In 1766, the German explorer Carsten Niebuhr (d. 1815) noted a phenomenal barley yield in Mardin,⁶⁴ meanwhile the French entomologist Guillame-Antoine Olivier (d. 1814), who visited Mardin for five days in around 1792, described a cornucopia of agricultural produce – pistachios, almonds, cherries, plums, grapes, pears, sesame, cotton, wheat and barley – as well as the local manufacture of leather and cotton. Yet Olivier was clearly underwhelmed in other respects: the town was “more of a village than a city”; its fortress had seen better days; and its commercial activity was markedly less than that of Mosul, Cizre or Diyarbakır due to its off-road location.⁶⁵

Against the backdrop of these travelogues, the local sources on which this study relies depict the eighteenth century as a period punctuated by crises for Mardin. Notes in manuscripts record three devastating plagues which swept across the region in 1712, 1771 and 1799.⁶⁶ A hyperinflation in 1758 which lasted for around two years resulted in famine within the town and surrounding villages, which one account claimed was so desperate that people resorted to cannibalism.⁶⁷ Mardin also experienced political turmoil and violence from different angles: struggles for local governorship led to an uprising in the early eighteenth century;⁶⁸ a Kurdish incursion beset the town in 1782;⁶⁹ and it was invaded by the forces of the pasha of Baghdad in 1792-1793.⁷⁰

⁶² J.-B. Tavernier, *The Six Voyages of John Baptista Tavernier, Baron of Aubonne through Turkey, into Persia and the East-Indies, for the Space of Forty Years* (London, 1677), p. 69.

⁶³ Otter, *Voyage en Turquie et en Perse*, ii, pp. 268-70.

⁶⁴ C. Niebuhr, *Travels through Arabia and other Countries in the East* (2 vols, Edinburgh, 1792), ii, pp. 290-1.

⁶⁵ G.A. Olivier, *Voyage Dans l'empire Othoman, l'Égypte et La Perse* (6 vols, Paris, 1801-1807), iv., pp. 242-6.

⁶⁶ 1712 plague: CCM (= Mardin, Mar Hirmiz Keldani Kilisesi) 12 (1705-19), ff. 9v-10r; 1771 plague: CCM 12, f. 293r; 1799 plague: CFMM (= Mardin, Church of the Forty Martyrs) 1135 (1725), f. 187r.

⁶⁷ See MSS Charfet, Bibliothèque patriarcale syro-catholique, 393 (1758), ff. 163r-164v and 714 (1758), f. 211r, in B. Sony, *Fihrist al-Makḥṭūṭāt al-baṭrayarkīyah fī Dayr al-Sharfāh* (Beirut, 1993), p. 151, 254.

⁶⁸ USJ (= Beirut, Université Saint-Joseph, Bibliothèque Orientale) 30 (1700-1800), ff. 26v-27v.

⁶⁹ MBM (= Mosul, Mar Behnam Monastery) 450 (1800-1900), ff. 14r-15v.

⁷⁰ ZFRN (= Mardin, Dayr Za'farān Monastery) 198 (1763-4), f. 1r-v.

These glimpses cannot provide a substantial overview of Mardin in the early modern era. However, they do capture the specificity at the crux of the present case study. From its topography to its administration to its historical events, Mardin was its own version of an Ottoman locale – and understanding this is just as pertinent when we look to its Christian residents.

Christianity in Mardin

As already indicated, recent literature on Christianity in early modern Mardin is scarce. Moreover, little can be gleaned from European travel accounts until the nineteenth century, when figures such as the English journalist James Silk Buckingham (d. 1855), and Anglophone Protestant missionaries George Percy Badger (d. 1888), Horatio Southgate (d. 1894) and Oswald Parry (d. 1936), spent extended periods of time documenting local Christian communities.⁷¹

From the early Ottoman period, the town was home to a multireligious population. Ottoman tax registers (*tahrir defterleri*) report for the Mardin *sancak* in 1564 that 62.1% of inhabitants were Christian, 27.9% were Muslim, and the remainder were designated as Jewish and Yazidi.⁷² While it is difficult to find precise statistics on Mardin's religious composition, Christians appear to have lost their majority over the following centuries. Olivier estimated at the end of the eighteenth century that the town of Mardin had “barely three thousand Kurds, five to six thousand Arabs or Turks, fifteen hundred Armenian Jacobites, and almost as many Nestorians”.⁷³ At the turn of the nineteenth century, the French orientalist Jean-Baptiste Rousseau (d. 1831) noted that half of Mardin's residents were Christian and “enjoyed great freedom”;⁷⁴ other visitors throughout the nineteenth century gauged that Christians

⁷¹ For accounts of Mardin, see J. S. Buckingham, *Travels in Mesopotamia: Including a Journey from Aleppo to Bagdad, by the Route of Beer, Orfah, Diarbekr, Mardin & Mousul* (London, 1827), pp. 313-44; G. P. Badger, *The Nestorians and their rituals: with the narrative of a mission of Mesopotamia and Coordistan in 1842-1844, and of a late visit to those countries in 1850* (2 vols, London, 1852), i, pp. 46-52; H. Southgate, Horatio, *Narrative of a Tour through Armenia, Kurdistan, Persia and Mesopotamia* (2 vols, New York, 1840), ii, pp. 272-288; idem, *Narrative of a Visit to the Syrian (Jacobite) Church of Mesopotamia: With Statements and Reflections upon the Present State of Christianity in Turkey and the Character and Prospects of the Eastern Churches* (New York, 1856), pp. 112-5; O. Parry, *Six Months in a Syrian Monastery: Being the Record of a Visit to the Head Quarters of the Syrian Church in Mesopotamia, with Some Account of the Yazidis Or Devil Worshippers of Mosul and El Jilwah, Their Sacred Book* (London, 1895), esp. pp. 57-140.

⁷² Yüzyılda Mardin Sancağı, Türk Tarih Kurumu Basımevi, Ankara 1991, s.103, quoted in Özcoşar, ‘Mardin Ermenilerinde Dini Değişim’, p. 434.

⁷³ Olivier, *Voyage Dans l'empire Othoman*, iv., p. 244.

⁷⁴ J. B. L. J. Rousseau, *Description du pachalik de Bagdad: suivie d'une notice historique sur les Wahabis, et de quelques autres pièces relatives à l'histoire et à la littérature de l'Orient* (Paris, 1809), p. 94.

accounted for between one half and one third of a total population of around 20,000.⁷⁵ If these numbers are to be believed, this decline may have been owing to a combination of factors. Notwithstanding the effects of Christian conversions to Islam, some Ottoman historians have argued for a demographic crisis in Anatolia during the early seventeenth century. This was in the wake of climate crisis, war with Safavid Persia (1603-1605), and a collection of popular uprisings, known as the *Celali* revolts, which terrorised towns and villages in the region, resulting in their desertion.⁷⁶ In possible reference to this, Pietro della Valle claimed that the “war of the Kurdish rebels” had driven his wife Maani’s family from Mardin to Baghdad in the late sixteenth century.⁷⁷ Moreover, historians have noted a significant influx of Armenian and Syriac Christians from eastern Anatolia to Aleppo in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries.⁷⁸ As well as fleeing from upheaval, possible incentives were both religious and economic in nature: the relative safety Aleppo offered Catholic converts, and the demand for specialised textiles manufactured in Mardin and Diyarbakır.⁷⁹

Adding to this religious diversity, multiple languages were also spoken in Mardin and its environs, including Arabic, Kurdish, Turkish, Armenian, Persian and Neo-Aramaic. While Kurdish and neo-Aramaic dialects were largely spoken in rural areas, Arabic appears to have been the vernacular of the urban population of Mardin, both Christian and Muslim.⁸⁰ According to a church deacon living in Mardin in the early eighteenth century, multilingualism was embedded in everyday society: he reports communicating with people in Arabic, Kurdish and Syriac, as well as being able to understand the Turkish spoken by Ottoman officials.⁸¹ In the mid-eighteenth century, Carsten Niebuhr also perceived

⁷⁵ More population estimates from nineteenth century can be found in Wilmshurst, *The Ecclesiastical Organisation of the Church of the East*, p. 76 and Özcoşar, ‘Mardin Ermenilerinde Dini Değişim’, p. 435.

⁷⁶ For an in-depth study of this phenomenon, see S. White, *The Climate of Rebellion in the Early Modern Ottoman Empire* (Cambridge, 2013), esp. pp. 204-11. For associated historiographical debates, see O. Özel, ‘Population Changes in Ottoman Anatolia During the 16th and 17th centuries: The ‘Demographic Crisis’ Reconsidered’, *Middle East Studies*, 36 (2004), pp. 183-205. For effects on the Mardin region in particular, see Bcheiry, *Hagiography, History and Manuscript Culture*, pp. 57-59 and idem, *A List of Syriac Orthodox Ecclesiastical Ordinations from the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Century*, pp. 23-6.

⁷⁷ Della Valle, *Viaggi di Pietro della Valle*, i, p. 398.

⁷⁸ See B. Masters, ‘Aleppo: the Ottoman Empire’s Caravan City’, in Eldem, Goffman and Masters, *The Ottoman City between East and West*, pp. 37-8 and E. Semerdjian, ‘Armenians in the Production of Urban Space in Early Modern Judayda, Aleppo’, in Winter and Mafalda, Ade (eds), *Aleppo and Its Hinterland*, esp. pp. 34-8.

⁷⁹ Masters, ‘Aleppo: the Ottoman Empire’s Caravan City’, pp. 37-8; Semerdjian, ‘Armenians in the Production of Urban Space’, pp. 47-8.

⁸⁰ See Dinno, ‘The Deir al-Za’faran and Mardin Garshuni Archives’, pp. 207-8. On diversity in Upper Mesopotamia more broadly, see Murre-van den Berg, *Scribes and Scriptures*, esp. pp. 31-9.

⁸¹ See USJ 30, e.g. f. 47r, ff. 49r-v; USJ 31, p. 44.

some religious and geographical nuances, noting that Christians in the countryside of Mardin and Mosul spoke “Chaldean” (presumably referring to a neo-Aramaic dialect), while those born in the city spoke Arabic and wrote in “Chaldean letters”, likely gesturing to the use of the Syriac script.⁸²

Within the local Christian population, further divisions manifested. Mardin was home to three Christian denominations with distinct liturgical traditions: the Syriac Orthodox (West Syriac),⁸³ the Armenian Orthodox (Armenian Apostolic),⁸⁴ and Church of the East (East Syriac).⁸⁵ With few estimates, it is difficult to grasp the proportionality of Christian communities in Mardin, though the Syriac Orthodox were almost certainly most numerous: in 1753, for example, the Carmelite friar and bishop Emmanuel of St. Albert gauged the Syriac Orthodox and Armenians at 600 and 400 families respectively, and the East Syriac community at 50 families.⁸⁶ Each community had one church at their disposal in the town – namely, the Syriac Orthodox Church of the Forty Martyrs (*Kanīsat al-Arba ‘īn Shahīd/ Mār Bihnām wa-Arfāqihi*), the Armenian Church of St. George (*Surp Kevork/Kanīsat Mār Jirjis*) and the East Syriac Church of Rabban Hormizd (*Kanīsat Rabbān/Mār Hurmiz*). The Syriac Orthodox notably had an additional two: the Church of St. Shmuni (*Kanīsat Mārt Shimūnī*) and the Monastery of St. Michael (*Dayr Mār Mīkhā’īl*).

The issue of authority manifests as a complex issue within Christian Mardin. Both local and central Ottoman administration appear to have presided over certain matters: in Chapter Two of the present study, we find two Syriac Orthodox rivals appealing before the governor of Mardin and Muslim qadi; in Chapter Three, imperial permits are sought for the renovation of local church buildings. In parallel

⁸² Niebuhr, *Travels through Arabia*, ii, p. 256.

⁸³ A miaphysite Oriental Orthodox church, also known as the West Syriac or ‘Jacobite’ Church, which uses the West Syriac rite. It was derived from the Church of Antioch and formed in opposition to the Council of Chalcedon: see V. L. Menze, *Justinian and the Making of the Syrian Orthodox Church* (Oxford, 2008), esp. pp. 12-57, 145-193.

⁸⁴ A miaphysite Oriental Orthodox church, also known as the Armenian Apostolic or Gregorian Church, and the national church of Armenia. It arose independently and rejected the rulings of Chalcedon: see K. Stopka, *Armenia Christiana: Armenian religious identity and the Churches of Constantinople and Rome (4th-15th century)* (Kraków, 2017), pp. 35-54, 54-75.

⁸⁵ Known as the East Syriac or ‘Nestorian’ Church, which uses the East Syriac rite and follows a dyophysite Christology, distinct from the Oriental Orthodox and Chalcedonian Churches: see W. Baum and D. Winkler (eds), *The Church of the East: A Concise History* (London, 2003), esp. pp. 7-41.

⁸⁶ According to his correspondence with the Sacred Congregation, dated 30th June 1753: see H. Chick (ed.), *A chronicle of the Carmelites in Persia and the Papal mission of the XVIIth and XVIIIth centuries* (2 vols, London, 1939), ii, p. 1264.

with this, it is generally understood that non-Muslim *dhimmī* minorities – usually headed by a patriarch – could exercise some authority over affairs within their community, including arbitration and tax collection.⁸⁷ For the diverse Christian communities of seventeenth- and eighteenth-century Mardin, however, it is difficult to ascertain the extent to which this framework of separate jurisdictions functioned in practice. Although Mardin was traditionally a metropolitan diocese for each local church, their leadership cores – that is, their respective patriarchates – were geographically dispersed. The East Syriac patriarchate and Armenian catholicosate were located at some distance from Mardin: the former at the Monastery of Rabban Hormizd in Alqosh (north of Mosul) and – in the case of its Uniate rival – at Diyarbakır; the latter at Etchmiadzin Cathedral (Vagharshapat, eastern Armenia) within the Persian Safavid territories, although regional authority was delegated to the catholicosate of Cilicia based in Sis (Adana province).⁸⁸ By contrast, the patriarchal see of the Syriac Orthodox, who had a deep-seated history in the region, was situated just a few kilometres east of Mardin at Saffron Monastery (*Dayr al-Za'farān/ Mōr Hananyō*). A rival Syriac Orthodox patriarchate of Tur Abdin in Midyat also existed between the fourteenth and nineteenth centuries, though the Mardin clergy do not appear to have recognised this line.⁸⁹ From the late seventeenth century, moreover, significant changes affected these hierarchical structures. Not only do the East Syriac and Armenian metropolitan seats in Mardin appear to have experienced vacant periods; local sources also indicate that Saffron Monastery – having ostensibly fallen into disuse – was revived as the Syriac Orthodox patriarchal centre.⁹⁰ As we shall

⁸⁷ On the history of the *dhimmī* system, see Masters, *Christians and Jews in the Ottoman Arab World*, pp. 18-26. In the Ottoman context, see *ibid.*, pp. 31-7 and Imber, *The Ottoman Empire, 1300-1650*, pp. 204-30, 244-6. Some historians have challenged the notion of legal autonomy among non-Muslim communities in the early modern period: see N. Al-Qattan, 'Dhimmīs in the Muslim Court: Legal Autonomy and Religious Discrimination', *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, 31/3 (1999), pp. 429-44.

⁸⁸ Santus, *Trasgressioni Necessarie*, pp. 50-2.

⁸⁹ J. M. Fiey, *Pour un Oriens Christianus Novus: répertoire des diocèses syriaques orientaux et occidentaux* (Stuttgart, 1993), pp. 275-8. See also Ignatius E. Barsoum, *The History of Tur Abdin*, trans. Matti Moosa (Piscataway, NJ, 2008). The only Mardin MS I have encountered which recognises a Patriarch of Tur Abdin is SMMJ (= Jerusalem, Saint Mark's Monastery) 304 (1789), f. 178v. There are several examples in which patriarchs of both Antioch and Tur Abdin are named in colophons: see e.g. ACE (= Erbil, Chaldean Catholic Church. Archdiocese of Erbil) 118 (1778), f. 217v; CET (= Tur Abdin, Churches in Enhil) 35 (1780), f. 242r.

⁹⁰ As reported in account of Metropolitan Timothy 'Īsā (d. 1741), superior of Saffron Monastery, authored in 1730. Although I have been unable to locate any manuscript copies, an Arabic edition has been published by Muṭrān G. Y. Ibrāhīm, 'Ṣafḥah min tārikh al-Suryān fī al-qarn al-sābi' 'ashr', *al-Majallah al-Baṭriyarkīyah*, 175-6 (1980), pp. 280-288 and *idem*, 'al-Suryān fī al-qarn al-sābi' 'ashr', *al-Majallah al-Baṭriyarkīyah*, 1 (1981), pp. 30-40. See below, Chapter Three, for further discussion.

inspect in subsequent chapters, these circumstances contributed to local Christian power being heavily weighted towards Syriac Orthodox Church.

While the dynamics of local Christianity add another layer of idiosyncrasy to Ottoman Mardin, they also reflect an issue at the heart of this thesis. More precisely, the present study is not only concerned with how Catholicism spread among the Christian communities of Mardin, but how Catholicism spread *differently* among them.

Catholicism in Mardin: early stirrings

Throughout the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, we do witness some Catholic influence on the Christian communities of Mardin, perhaps most perceptibly at a hierarchical level. As far back as the mid-sixteenth century, the East Syriac community of Mardin appears to have come under the jurisdiction of the breakaway Catholic patriarchate formed by Yōḥannān Sūlaqā (d. 1555) in opposition to the traditional church hierarchy, appointed a metropolitan by either Sūlaqā or his successor ‘Abdīshō‘ IV (d. 1570).⁹¹ This Uniate connection would taper off during the following century. However, the foundation of a new East Syriac Catholic Church – termed ‘Chaldean’ – in Diyarbakır in 1681 by Patriarch Joseph I (d. 1707) again resulted in a Catholic leader for the East Syriac faithful of Mardin.⁹² In around 1683, Joseph consecrated a metropolitan Simon for Mardin.⁹³

In 1709, meanwhile, a local Catholic convert named Melkon Tasbasian (d. 1716) would be installed as metropolitan for the Armenian community of Mardin.⁹⁴ This event preceded the elevation in 1740 of

⁹¹ Wilmschurst, *The Ecclesiastical Organisation of the Church of the East*, pp. 72-3. For detail on the 1552 schism in the Church of the East, see *ibid.*, i, pp. 21-6; L. Parker, ‘The Ambiguities of Belief and Belonging: Catholicism and the Church of the East in the Sixteenth Century’, *The English Historical Review*, 133/565 (2018), pp. 1420-45; L. Parker, ‘Joseph I of Amida (d.1707) and the Invention of the Chaldeans’, in B. Heyberger (ed.), *Les Chrétiens de Tradition Syriaque à l’époque Ottomane* (Paris, 2020), esp. pp. 126-31.

⁹² On the new Chaldean patriarchal line, see notably A. Lampart, *Ein Märtyrer der Union mit Rom. Joseph I., 1681-1696, Patriarch der Chaldäer* (Einsiedeln, 1966) and Parker, ‘Joseph I of Amida (d.1707) and the Invention of the Chaldeans’.

⁹³ Related in a letter from Patriarch Joseph I to the Propaganda Fide, dated 1684: see S. Giamil, *Genuinae Relationes Inter Sedem Apostolicam et Assyriorum Orientalium Seu Chaldaeorum Ecclesiam* (Rome, 1902), document 70, pp. 312-3. See also letter from Propaganda Fide to a ‘Mons. Egamaone, Vescovo de Caldei in Merdin’, dated 1683, in Lampart, *Ein Märtyrer der Union mit Rom*, pp. 301-2. For other references to Simon, see E. R. Hambye, ‘Le Métropolitain Chaldéen, Simon d’Ādā et ses aventures en Inde’, *Parole de l’Orient*, 6/7 (1975-6), pp. 493-513; Wilmschurst, *The Ecclesiastical Organisation of the Church of the East*, p. 73.

⁹⁴ See letters of endorsement in Italian and Arabic signed by Armenian community of Mardin, dated 3rd December 1709, in Propaganda Fide Archive, SC (= Scrittura riferite nei Congressi) Armeni, vi, f. 122, 124. On Melkon, see M. J. Terzian, *Le patriarcat de Cilicie et les arméniens catholiques, 1740-1812* (Beirut, 1955), pp. 175-8; Santus, ‘La Comunità Armena Di Costantinopoli All’inizio Del XVIII Secolo’, pp. 57-8 and *idem*, *Trasgressioni necessarie*, p. 363, 365, 382, 387.

the first Armenian Catholic patriarch of Cilicia, Abraham Ardzivian (d. 1749), who had reportedly been a student of Melkon in Mardin.⁹⁵ In effect, the appointments of Simon and Melkon sealed the status of Mardin as a Catholic diocese for the East Syriac and Armenian communities.

Further afield, an attempt to form a Syriac Catholic patriarchate took place in Aleppo in 1662. Metropolitan Andrew Akhijān (d. 1677), who purportedly had roots in Mardin, was elevated as Uniate patriarch of Antioch largely through the efforts of French consul François Piquet.⁹⁶ At a similar time, we encounter several prominent local prelates converting to Catholicism, such as Metropolitan Timothy Karnūk of Mardin (d. 1724) and Bishop Athanasius Safar of Mardin (d. 1728). However, both would end up travelling to Rome and pursuing careers abroad, never to return to Mardin (even when actively encouraged to do so).⁹⁷ In 1782, after a vacant period spanning eighty years, Mardin would be the site of the revival of the Syriac Catholic patriarchate. Michael Jarwah, a Catholic convert from a wealthy mercantile background who had risen to metropolitan of Aleppo, was consecrated patriarch of Antioch at Saffron Monastery. While Jarwah's stay in Mardin was ultimately short lived, this event would secure a lasting Syriac Catholic patriarchal line based at Charfet Monastery in Mount Lebanon.⁹⁸

⁹⁵ Apparently related in the writings of Ardzivian himself: see S. Davidian, *Biografia di sua beatitudine Abramo Pietro I. patriarca di Cilicia e Catolicos degli Armeni* (Cairo, 1861), pp. 10-11. See also mention of Melkon's student Ibrāhīm from Aintab in USJ 30, f. 3v.

⁹⁶ On patriarchal election of Akhijān, see Heyberger, *Les chrétiens du Proche-Orient*, pp. 261-2 and Rabbath, *Documents inédits pour servir à l'histoire du christianisme en Orient*, i, pp. 95-6, 98-101; ii, pp. 34-41, 78-9, 105-6. For a historical overview of the Syriac Catholic Church, see D. W. Winkler, 'The Syriac Church Denominations: An overview', in Daniel King (ed.), *The Syriac World* (Abingdon, Oxon; New York, 2019), pp. 119-33.

⁹⁷ On Tīmūthāwus, see B. Heyberger, 'The Wasted Career of an Eastern Clergyman in Italy: Timothy Karnuk (Timoteo Agnellini), Syriac Catholic Archbishop of Mardin', in idem, *Middle Eastern and European Christianity*, pp. 90-104 and C. Santus, 'Wandering Lives: Eastern Christian Pilgrims, Alms-Collectors and "Refugees" in Early Modern Rome', in Matthew Coneys Wainwright and Emily Michelson (eds), *A Companion to Religious Minorities in Early Modern Rome* (Leiden; Boston, 2021), p. 256, 269. On Safar, see Heyberger, 'The Migration of Middle Eastern Christians and European Protection', in idem, *Middle Eastern and European Christianity*, p. 144 and Santus, 'Wandering Lives', pp. 256, 259-60.

⁹⁸ An autobiographical account by Jarwah, covering the lead-up to his patriarchal elevation and the aftermath, is preserved in at least nine copies: MBM (= Mosul, Mar Behnam Monastery) 450 (1800-1900); USJ 148 (1900); Charfet Arabic 6/25 (1785 – autograph?); Charfet Arabic 6/26 (1899); Charfet Arabic 6/27 (latest 1907); Charfet Arabic 6/28; Charfet Arabic 16/7 (latest 1930); Charfet Arabic 16/12 (latest 1932); Charfet Arabic 18/12 (Spanish, latest 1906). Charfet MSS consulted in I. Armalet, *Catalogue des manuscrits de Charfet, Publié à l'occasion du 150e anniversaire de l'installation du siège patriarcal à Charfet, 1786-1936* (Jounieh, 1937), pp. 374-5, 375-6, 482-3, 485-6, 503. Cheikho published a partial edition of the text in 'al-Tidhkār al-mi' awī li-wifāt al-sa'īd al-dhikr al-Sayyid Aghnāṭiyūs Mikhā'il Jarwah', *al-Machriq*, 3 (1900), pp. 913-926. See also discussion of events in P. Chalfoun, 'L'Église syrienne catholique en Syrie au XVIII^e ème siècle', *Parole de l'Orient*, 13 (1986), pp. 172-8 and J. Fathi, 'La Maison du Diacre Fathī', *Journal of Eastern Christian Studies*, 74/1-2, (2022), esp. pp. 118-25.

In spite of this apparent progress, it does not appear that any Catholic missionary order established a permanent enterprise in Mardin until the at least the mid-eighteenth century. Mardin was on the radar from the outset, but seems only to have been dealt a series of false starts. While a Capuchin mission was established in Diyarbakır in 1667, the priest Jean Baptise de Saint-Aignan claimed that the tough geographical situation of Mardin had prevented them from stopping there en route.⁹⁹ Around 1680-1682, the Jesuit Michel Nau, previously active in Aleppo, attempted a mission to Mardin with two other priests. According to several accounts, however, Nau's mission ended in his imprisonment at the instigation of the local Syriac Orthodox hierarchy, followed by his swift exit.¹⁰⁰ In 1683, plans for a Capuchin mission to Mardin were again floated, this time by the superior of the mission in Diyarbakır, Giuseppe di San Giovanni, although there is no record that this ever came to fruition.¹⁰¹ A report to the Propaganda Fide claimed that three Capuchin priests were allocated to Mardin in 1691, but never, in fact, made it there.¹⁰² In Aleppo, a record of Catholic conversions by the Carmelites between 1669-1681 even included three Syriac Orthodox individuals from Mardin – one of whom, they note, “fled the town to escape persecution”.¹⁰³

By the mid-eighteenth century, several Discalced Carmelite friars appear to have been dispatched to Mardin, although their activities, at least by their own account, were limited to providing medical assistance to the local population.¹⁰⁴ Over time, we find glimpses of a more active, yet still modest, presence: Metropolitan Peter Eliazarian of Mardin (1775-1787) reported that two Carmelite missionaries assisted at the Armenian church in Mardin,¹⁰⁵ while Michael Jarwah noted that one

⁹⁹ Report of Jean Baptise de Saint-Aignan to Propaganda Fide, dated 18th October 1667, in Lampart, *Ein Märtyrer der Union mit Rom*, p. 238.

¹⁰⁰ Nau's account of his mission to Mardin is published in L. X. Abougit, 'Récit de ce que les PP. Jésuites ont souffert dans les prisons de Mardine en Mésopotamie', *Etudes Religieuses, Historiques et Littéraires/ Par Des Pères de La Compagnie de Jésus*, (1877), pp. 580-600. See also reports of the mission in L. d'Arvieux, *Mémoires du Chevalier d'Arvieux, envoyé' extraordinaire du roy à la Porte, Consul d'Alep, d'Alger, de Tripoli & autres Echelles du Levant* (6 vols, Paris, 1735), vi, pp. 282-3 and Rabbath, *Documents inédits pour servir à l'histoire du christianisme en Orient*, ii, pp. 579-80.

¹⁰¹ See letter of Propaganda Fide to Chaldean Metropolitan 'Egamaone' of Mardin, dated 26th November 1683, in Lampart, *Ein Märtyrer der Union mit Rom*, pp. 301-3.

¹⁰² See memorandum by Carmelite Friar Leander, dated 1747, in Chick (ed.), *A chronicle of the Carmelites in Persia*, i, p. 623, note 3.

¹⁰³ Rabbath, Rabbath, *Documents inédits pour servir à l'histoire du christianisme en Orient*, ii, pp. 86-7.

¹⁰⁴ Chick (ed.), *A chronicle of the Carmelites in Persia*, ii, p. 1264.

¹⁰⁵ Acta, v. 148, ff. 185-6, quoted in Terzian, *Le patriarcat de Cilicie et les arméniens catholiques*, p. 176.

Carmelite friar attended his patriarchal consecration in 1782.¹⁰⁶ In the 1790s, the French traveller Guillame-Antoine Olivier described there being a Carmelite residence in Mardin, yet found only one friar dwelling there.¹⁰⁷

Mardin does, on the other hand, present an opportunity for a different type of Catholic history; one which puts the spotlight on protagonists and accounts from its indigenous communities, both pro- and anti-Catholic. This approach does not necessarily contradict recent research on both missionary encounters and connectivity in global Catholic contexts; rather, it can enrich our understanding of these phenomena. The first Armenian Catholic metropolitan of Mardin, the above-mentioned Melkon Tasbasian, is a compelling example. Not only was Melkon a local of Mardin; he was also a papal missionary dispatched by the Propaganda Fide. Having been sent to study at the College of the Propaganda Fide in Rome, where he was ordained a priest, Melkon returned to his native Mardin in 1703 to evangelise the Armenian community there.¹⁰⁸ While Melkon's missionary activities are recorded at length in a local Arabic history by one of his contemporaries,¹⁰⁹ his reports in Italian to the Propaganda Fide – in which he signs himself “missionario apostolico” – are preserved in Rome.¹¹⁰ Moreover, while Melkon did succeed in garnering support from within the Armenian community for his episcopal appointment,¹¹¹ his mission was reportedly marked by persecution, imprisonment and financial ruin at the hands of the most powerful Christian in Mardin: the Syriac Orthodox patriarch. After fleeing Mardin in 1711, Melkon would spend the next five years in Constantinople, during which time he would forge connections with the superior of the Capuchin mission and the French ambassador, and submit various petitions to the Porte for a separate church and head for the Armenian Catholic

¹⁰⁶ MBM 450, f. 13v.

¹⁰⁷ Olivier, *Voyage Dans l'empire Othoman*, iv, p. 244.

¹⁰⁸ As reported in a Congregation meeting in January 1703: see P. Aranha, ‘Vulgaris Seu Universalis. Early Modern Missionary Representations of an Indian Cosmopolitan Space’, in C. Lefèvre, I. G. Županov and J. Flores (eds), *Cosmopolitismes En Asie Du Sud* (Paris, 2015), pp. 349-50, note 20.

¹⁰⁹ That is, the *Life of Eliya*, preserved in USJ 30 and USJ 31: see below, Chapter Two.

¹¹⁰ Correspondence of Melkon Tasbasian is preserved in SC (= Scrittura riferite nei Congressi) Armeni, volume vi. For period 1709-1714, see ff. 214, 215r, 223r-v, 251r-v, 269, 270, 356r-357v, 468r-469v. I am incredibly grateful to Cesare Santus for his help in locating these documents and to Cristelle Baskins for helping me decipher them.

¹¹¹ See SC Armeni, vi, f. 124.

community there.¹¹² He would die in prison in Constantinople five years later, without having returned to his hometown.

The life of Melkon captures much of the thematic scope of the present study. The consequences of Melkon's Catholicising mission in Mardin, as this thesis will examine, rippled into several accounts by local Christian contemporaries, each projecting their own interpretation and confessional belonging. For one Syriac Catholic convert, Melkon was a hero; for a high-ranking Syriac Orthodox prelate, his activities lead to the suffering and demise of his beloved patriarch, George I (1687-1708).¹¹³ Simultaneously, we encounter local sources – Catholic and Orthodox – which completely bypass these seemingly dramatic events, instead immersed in their own parallel processes of community formation. Moreover, the memorialisation of Melkon in archives in both Rome and Paris is a reminder that, when looking deep into local Catholic history, we cannot at times escape its connectedness to other, distant contexts.¹¹⁴

In light of the above, while the thesis focuses on a limited geographical area, it shall explore the issue of Catholicism from a variety of angles. At a basic level, it will use local sources to piece together the chronology and historical narrative of emergent Catholicism in Mardin. Until now, much of the key information surrounding this religious transition has remained unclear, owing to both limited secondary literature on the matter and a tendency to focus on one community in isolation. The thesis will secondly question how the multi-confessional composition of Christianity in Mardin impacted the spread of Catholicism: did communities differ from one another in their reception of the Catholic faith, and did interconfessional relations play any role in this? It will also dig deeper into the local context by questioning how the specific dynamics of Christianity in Mardin – not just its confessional diversity, but its demographic, political and ecclesiastical framework – impacted the diffusion of Catholicism. The thesis will additionally investigate how manuscript culture – one of the most tangible legacies of

¹¹² See letter describing Melkon's activities written by Hyacinthe, Capuchin superior, to the Chancellor of France, Pontchartrain, 14th November 1714: Kévorkian, Raymond H., *Documents d'Archives français sur le Patriarcat arménien de Constantinople (1701-1704)*, *Revue des Études Arméniennes*, 19 (1985), pp. 357-9.

¹¹³ See Syriac Catholic perspective in *Life of Eliya*, preserved in USJ 30 and 31. See Syriac Orthodox perspective in account of Metropolitan Timothy 'Īsā, superior of Saffron Monastery, published in Ibrāhīm, 'Şafḥah min tāriḫ al-Suryān fī al-qarn al-sābi' 'ashr', and idem, 'al-Suryān fī al-qarn al-sābi' 'ashr'. For further discussion of these texts, see below, Chapter Two and Chapter Three.

¹¹⁴ Reminiscent of the dichotomy observed by John-Paul Ghobrial in 'The Secret Life of Elias of Babylon', p. 59.

Christianity in Mardin – can enhance our understanding of the development of confessional identities during the studied timeframe. At the same time, this case study will broaden its local horizons by considering whether nascent Catholicism in Mardin – and Christian communities more generally – were connected to any other locations. That is, can this tiny starting point alert us to a wider geography of Christian belonging? Tying all these research questions together is an overarching issue: how were the origins of Catholicism in Mardin represented in history writing during the early twentieth century, and how do the findings of the present case study problematise this?

Methodology

This thesis is a case study of Christian communities and Catholicisation within the town of Mardin and, to a lesser extent, its surrounding villages. In its close-up focus, it follows recent research which has investigated how broader religious processes in the early modern era were shaped by local contexts.¹¹⁵ Within the Ottoman realm, Felicita Tramontana provides a striking example in her research on Catholic community formation in Palestinian villages, particularly concerning the role of local migratory trends.¹¹⁶

While the thesis operates on a small geographical scale, its temporal scope is just over one hundred and twenty years (1662-1783). This timeframe was primarily chosen to incorporate key developments in the history of the three churches represented in Mardin, namely the establishment of separate Uniate branches within each one. These occurred at various intervals and locations: within the Syriac Orthodox Church, the process was set in motion in 1662 with the election of the Catholic Patriarch Andrew Akhījān in Aleppo, although the patriarchate fell through with the death of his successor, Patriarch Peter Shāhbaddīn, in 1702. Meanwhile, in 1681 a former prelate within the Church of the East named Joseph was confirmed as patriarch of a new Chaldean Catholic Church in Diyarbakır. The Armenian Catholic patriarchate of Cilicia was in turn established in 1740 with the election of Abraham Ardzivian (d. 1749) in Aleppo. The case study ends with the revival of the Syriac Catholic patriarchate by Michael Jarwah,

¹¹⁵ See above, note 8. Outside the Ottoman context, notable examples include E. Duffy, *The Voices of Morebath: Reformation and Rebellion in an English Village* (New Haven, 2001) and H. Harrison, *The Missionary's Curse and Other Tales from a Chinese Catholic Village* (Berkeley, CA, 2013).

¹¹⁶ See Tramontana, *Passages of Faith*, esp. pp. 11-2; idem, 'The Spread of Catholicism in Seventeenth-Century Palestinian Villages', in Amsler et al. (eds), *Catholic Missionaries in Early Modern Asia*, pp. 81-102; idem, 'Geographical Mobility and Community-Building in Seventeenth-Century Palestine'.

who was consecrated patriarch in Mardin in 1782 and proceeded to establish an enduring Syriac Catholic patriarchal see in Mount Lebanon. This timeframe not only increases the number of sources at our disposal, but also affords perspective on the pace and patterns of Catholic community formation across the different Christian confessions within Mardin.

In a more general sense, Ottoman society witnessed some major religious and cultural phenomena across the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. This thesis recognises the importance of both the intensification of Latin Catholic missions to the Ottoman Empire and internal processes of confessionalization taking place amongst its religious communities. Moreover, this period overlaps with a proliferation in Ottoman Christian literary production.¹¹⁷ While much of this emanated from Aleppo, there was also a considerable increase in scribal activity among Syriac Christians in provincial regions – not least among them Mardin and Diyarbakır.¹¹⁸ In Ottoman society at large, the eighteenth century was a rich era for history writing in Arabic, and what Dana Sajdi coined a ‘nouveau literacy’ stimulated the flourishing of historical works by non-elite individuals.¹¹⁹ This development provides a backdrop for a crucial historical account within this thesis, written by a church deacon and cotton seller in early eighteenth-century Mardin.¹²⁰

Nonetheless, as much as we should emphasise the ubiquity of certain historical processes, close-up research can enormously enrich our understanding of them. Not only does it highlight how change manifests in specific contexts, but also, more compellingly, “why this change happens differently in sites that are connected to one another.”¹²¹ While all the developments detailed above touched Mardin,

¹¹⁷ On the flourishing of Christian Arabic literature, see notably H. Kilpatrick, ‘From Literatur to Adab: The Literary Renaissance in Aleppo around 1700’, *Journal of Eastern Christian Studies*, 58/3-4 (2006), pp. 195-220; idem, ‘The Inter-communal Poetry of Niqūlāwus aṣ-Ṣā’iḡ (1692–1756)’, *Rocznik Orientalistyczny*, 64/1 (2011), pp. 60-79; A. Patel, *The Arab Nahdah: The Making of the Intellectual and Humanist Movement* (Edinburgh, 2013), pp. 49-87.

¹¹⁸ On scribal productivity in seventeenth/eighteenth-century Syriac Christian circles, see S. P. Brock and D. G. K. Taylor, *The Hidden Pearl: The Syrian Orthodox Church and Its Ancient Aramaic Heritage* (4 vols, Rome, 2001), iii, ch. 8 and Murre-van den Berg, *Scribes and Scriptures*, pp. 80-2.

¹¹⁹ See D. Sajdi, *The Barber of Damascus: Nouveau Literacy in the Eighteenth-Century Ottoman Levant* (Stanford, CA, 2014) For an overview of Ottoman Arabic historiography, see M. Winter, ‘Historiography in Arabic during the Ottoman period’, in R. Allen and D. S. Richards (eds), *Arabic Literature in the Post-Classical Period* (Cambridge; New York, 2006), pp. 171-88.

¹²⁰ That is, the *Life of Eliya*, preserved in USJ 30, USJ 31 and CFMM 912 (1907). See discussion below, Chapter Two.

¹²¹ Pointed out by John-Paul Ghobrial with consideration to the merits of global and microhistorical approaches: idem., ‘Introduction: Seeing the World like a Microhistorian’, *Past & Present*, 242 (suppl_14, 2019), pp. 7-8.

they did so to its own rhythm. The trajectory of Catholic conversion in Mardin will suffice as an example. In the Ottoman Levant, historians have identified the second half of the seventeenth to the early eighteenth century as the peak period of Catholic conversion among the Christian population.¹²² In Mardin, while Catholicism began developing among the Armenians and East Syriacs during this phase, Catholicism struggled to gain a foothold within the largest Christian segment – the Syriac Orthodox – throughout the eighteenth and well into the nineteenth century.¹²³ Even on fundamental issues such as chronology, case studies of localities can continue to challenge our understanding of renowned historical phenomena.

Sources

This investigation draws on an array of sources relating to the local Christian communities of Mardin between 1662-1783. Until this point, the majority of these have not been the subject of intensive or critical analysis.¹²⁴ These sources can be divided into two main categories. The first is the repertoire of historical publications written between 1907-1915 by Işāq Armalet, the by now familiar Syriac Catholic priest from Mardin, comprising printed journal articles and books in Arabic. Detailed study of these materials allows us to capture the preoccupations of Armalet at a particular point in his career – during some of which he was physically present in Mardin – and to reconstruct his historical vision of Catholicism within this locale. The second is a corpus of over 500 manuscripts in Arabic, Syriac and Arabic Karshuni (Arabic in Syriac characters) which have a recorded or estimated production date between 1662-1783.¹²⁵ This corpus is primarily derived from the three Christian collections extant in Mardin: the Chaldean Church of Rabban Hormizd (Mar Hirmiz Kilisesi), the Syriac Orthodox Church of the Forty Martyrs, and the Syriac Orthodox Saffron Monastery (Dayr Za‘farān). In addition, a portion of manuscripts related to Mardin via production or authorship have been located in collections outside of the region, including in other parts of Turkey (Church of Meryem Ana Kilisesi, Diyarbakır; Churches

¹²² See Verdeil (ed.), *Missions Chrétiennes En Terres d’Islam*, pp. 15-6; Tramontana, ‘The Spread of Catholicism in Seventeenth-Century Palestinian Villages’, pp. 81-2.

¹²³ On Syriac Orthodox-Catholic conflicts in the nineteenth century, see Özcoşar, ‘Separation and Conflict’.

¹²⁴ References to existing studies on manuscripts within the corpus can be found in Chapter Four, notes 1-4.

¹²⁵ Note that this thesis has generally followed the estimated date ranges provided in the Hill Museum and Manuscript Library (HMML) online catalogue descriptions: see link below, note 127. In the interest of precision, I have added the qualifiers ‘earliest’ and ‘latest’ to dates where possible.

in Enhil, Tur Abdin; Dayro d-Mor Gabriel, Midyat), in India (Konat Collection, Pampakuda), in Iraq (Mar Behnam Monastery, Mosul; Syriac Orthodox Archdiocese of Mosul; Syriac Catholic Archdiocese of Baghdad; Dawrah Chaldean Monastery, Baghdad; Chaldean Archdiocese of Erbil), in Syria (Syrian Catholic Archdiocese of Aleppo; Syriac Orthodox Archdiocese of Aleppo; Syriac Orthodox Patriarchate, Damascus), in Jerusalem (Saint Mark's Monastery), in Lebanon (Our Lady of Bzoummar, Keserwan; Our Lady of Deliverance of Charfet, Keserwan; Ordre Basilien Alepin, Sarba; Bibliothèque Orientale, Beirut), in Germany (Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin), in France (Bibliothèque nationale de France, Paris), and in the UK (Mingana Collection, Birmingham; University Library, Cambridge). The collections of Dawra Monastery, the Syriac Orthodox Patriarchate, Charfet, Mingana and Cambridge have been consulted in catalogues and, in some cases, in person.¹²⁶ The remainder have been accessed via digitised versions on the online repositories of the Bibliothèque nationale de France, the Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin, and the Hill Museum and Manuscript Library (HMML).¹²⁷

Until at least the nineteenth century, manuscripts were the chief method of textual production throughout the Ottoman Empire.¹²⁸ With regard to the Christian Mardin corpus, these were almost exclusively produced by clergymen in churches or monasteries.¹²⁹ They stem from both Orthodox and Catholic milieux across local Christian communities, and together attest to a range of evolving

¹²⁶ The present author was able to consult several MSS from the Charfet collection in May 2022 and from the Mingana collection in March 2024. The Charfet collection has three different catalogues to date: I. Armalet, *al-Ṭurfah fī makḥṭūṭāt Dayr al-Shurfah/ Catalogue des manuscrits de Charfet, Publié à l'occasion du 150e anniversaire de l'installation du siège patriarcal à Charfet, 1786-1936* (Jounieh, 1937); B. Sony, *Fihrist al-Makḥṭūṭāt al-baṭrayarkīyah fī Dayr al-Sharfāh* (Beirut, 1993); A. Binggeli, F. Briquel-Chatonnet, M. Debié, Y. Dergham, A. Desreumaux, J. Dib and F. Vinourd (eds), *Catalogue des manuscrits syriaques et garshuni du Patriarcat syriaque-catholique de Charfet (Liban)* (Dar'un-Harissa, 2021). Catalogue of Mingana collection: A. Mingana, *Catalogue of the Mingana Collection of Manuscripts, Now in the Possession of the Trustees of the Woodbrooke Settlement, Selly Oak, Birmingham* (4 vols, Cambridge, 1933). Catalogue of the Syriac Orthodox Patriarchate in Damascus: Y. Dolabani, R. Lavenant, S. Brock and S. K. Samir, 'Catalogue des manuscrits de la bibliothèque du patriarcat syrien orthodoxe à Homs, auj. à Damas', *Parole de l'Orient*, 19 (1994), pp. 555-66. Catalogue of Dawrah Monastery: P. Haddad and J. Isaac, *al-Makḥṭūṭāt al-suryānīyah wa-al-'arabīyah fī khizānat al-rahbānīyah al-Kaldānīyah fī Baghdād* (Baghdad, 1988). Catalogue of Cambridge University Library: W. Wright, *A Catalogue of the Syriac Manuscripts Preserved in the Library of the University of Cambridge, by the Late William Wright* (2 vols, Cambridge, 1901).

¹²⁷ Links to online repositories are as follows: 'Gallica – The BnF digital library' <https://www.bnf.fr/en/gallica-bnf-digital-library> (8 Jul 2024); 'Digitalisierte Sammlungen' <https://digital.staatsbibliothek-berlin.de/> (30 May 2024); 'Virtual HMML Reading Room' <https://www.vhmdl.org/readingRoom/> (14 Feb 2023).

¹²⁸ Murre-van den Berg, *Scribes and Scriptures*, pp. 7-8; A. El Shamsy, *Rediscovering the Islamic Classics: How Editors and Print Culture Transformed an Intellectual Tradition* (Princeton, NJ, 2020), pp. 64-5.

¹²⁹ For discussion of conditions of Christian MS production in Ottoman Mesopotamia, see Murre-van den Berg, *Scribes and Scriptures*, esp. pp. 79-111.

confessional identities throughout the studied period. Certain imbalances, however, must be acknowledged. Few manuscripts have survived from the Armenian Church in Mardin, meaning that analysis is much more focused on the Syriac traditions. More generally, we must not forget that these manuscripts were produced by the individuals most invested in constructing and promoting confessional identities on behalf of their communities. While they offer us fleeting insight into events affecting Mardin society as a whole, their value lies in revealing the outlooks and concerns of local ecclesiastical culture. In essence, this is an investigation into how local churchmen perceived their own church communities.

The majority of the Mardin manuscripts are religious in content, such as scriptures, liturgies, homilies, hagiographies and theological works, although they also represent other genres such as grammar, history, poetry and astronomy. While several historical works contained in the manuscripts have been analysed in detail, the manuscripts have primarily been scrutinised for their paratextual content. Paratextual notes were typically written in the first person by copyists or users of manuscripts, and include colophons, notes of endowment, ownership or readership, and records of events. Though usually short in length, the testimonies offered in these notes merit their increasing recognition as historical sources.¹³⁰ In recent years, scholars of Ottoman Christianity have illuminated the potential of close study of paratextual notes, investigating a range of topics such as religious and political authority, political events, religious worldviews, communal identity construction, record-keeping and scribal practices, collection formation, migration and mobility, family history, and reconstructing individual lives.¹³¹ In the present study, piecing these clues together has provided critical insights into issues of

¹³⁰ Studies which have advocated for this approach include Wilmshurst, *The Ecclesiastical Organisation of the Church of the East*; A. Görke and K. Hirschler, *Manuscript notes as documentary sources* (Beirut, 2011); A. K. Sanjian, *Colophons of Armenian Manuscripts, 1301-1480: A Source for Middle Eastern History* (Cambridge, MA, 2014); Murre-van den Berg, *Scribes and Scriptures*; G. Ciotti and H. Lin (eds), *Tracing Manuscripts in Time and Space through Paratexts* (Berlin, 2016); Bcheiry, *Hagiography, History and Manuscript Culture*; C. D. Bahl and S. Hanß (eds), *Scribal Practice and the Global Cultures of Colophons, 1400-1800* (Cham, 2022).

¹³¹ On religious and political authority, see F. Krimsti, 'Signatures of Authority: Colophons in Seventeenth-Century Melkite Circles in Aleppo', in Bahl and Hanß (eds), *Scribal Practice and the Global Cultures of Colophons*, pp. 109-132; R. Maxton, 'Public and Private Spheres at Saffron Monastery' in N. Domeisen, D. Haywood, E. Jones, D. Kohler, M. Mackay, R. Maxton, B. M. Moore, K. Noble, F. M. Simon, D. Wakelin and D. Wojahn, *Unprinted: Publication Beyond the Press* (Cambridge, forthcoming). On historical political events, see Bcheiry, *Hagiography, History and Manuscript Culture*, esp. pp. 57-71. On religious worldviews, see H. Murre-van den Berg, 'I the Weak Scribe: Scribes in the Church of the East in the Ottoman Period', *Journal of Eastern*

identity, community, geographical connections, and the ecclesiastical and scribal landscape of Christian Mardin during the period 1662-1783.

The digitisation of these manuscripts, it must be noted, has benefitted this study immeasurably. Online platforms such as the Hill Museum and Manuscript Library enable us to analyse combinations of sources in ways which would otherwise be impossible. This is especially pertinent in the case of Ottoman Christian manuscripts, which not only got swept up in cycles of mobility and trade in the early modern era, but have often endured rearrangement and dispersal at a collection level – particularly as a result of modern historical events.¹³² In these respects, as we shall uncover in later chapters, the Mardin collections are no exception. Moreover, the ability to directly consult these sources avoids overreliance on outdated catalogues and studies produced in the early twentieth century. While traditionally providing a much-needed access point to these materials, they often lack the precision or consistency which we now aspire to in bibliographic records. With respect to authoritative works such as Graf's *Geschichte der christlichen arabischen Literatur*, published in the mid-twentieth century, we must additionally be wary of how personal bias – particularly confessional affiliation – may have impacted his analysis.¹³³ On the other hand, digitised manuscripts are not without their limitations. The physicality of manuscripts – weight, size, paper, binding, flyleaves, decorative features – can be difficult to capture in digital format, and this may in turn cost us certain insights into provenance. In the case of an undated manuscript in the Bibliothèque Orientale collection of Saint-Joseph University in Beirut, which was extensively analysed for this thesis, the appearance of a watermark during a physical

Christian Studies, 58/1-2 (2006), pp. 9-26. On communal identity, see Parker and Maxton, 'Archiving Faith'. On record-keeping and scribal practices, see J.-P. Ghobrial, 'The Archive of Orientalism and its Keepers: Re-Imagining the Histories of Arabic Manuscripts in Early Modern Europe', *Past and Present*, 230 (suppl_11, 2016), pp. 90-111; V. Zaki, 'From a Pilgrim to a Resident: The Marginalia of Yuwakim Ghazzī in the Manuscripts of Mt Sinai', *Journal of Eastern Christian Studies*, 73 (2021), pp. 219-62; Parker and Maxton, 'Archiving Faith'. On collection history, see Ghobrial, 'The Archive of Orientalism and its Keepers'. On migration and mobility, see J.-P. Ghobrial, 'Migration from Within and Without: In the Footsteps of Eastern Christians in the Early Modern World', *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, 27 (2017), pp. 153-73. On family history, see Wilmshurst, *The Ecclesiastical Organisation of the Church of the East*, esp. pp. 242-58; Parker and Maxton, 'Archiving Faith'. On tracing historical lives, see Ghobrial, 'The Secret Life of Elias of Babylon', esp. pp. 74-89; Zaki, 'From a Pilgrim to a Resident'.

¹³² See discussion in Ghobrial, 'Connected Histories and Eastern Christianities', pp. 189-90.

¹³³ *Ibid.*, pp. 189-190. Publication details are as follows: G. Graf, *Geschichte der christlichen arabischen Literatur* (5 vols, Vatican City, 1944-1953). For a probing analysis of reference works on Arabic literature from Ottoman Syria (including Graf), see H. Kilpatrick, 'Brockelmann, Kaâla & co: reference works on the Arabic literature of early Ottoman Syria', *Middle Eastern Literatures*, 7/1 (2004), pp. 33-51.

inspection of its paper had important implications for its dating.¹³⁴ Another critique of using digitised primary sources in historical research is that it can undermine place-based expertise, although this is more relevant in studies of global connectivity.¹³⁵ Access to local Christian sources – whether in situ or in alternative locations – forms both the basis and the uniqueness of the present case study.

On a final note, this study will periodically be supplemented by evidence from other types of contemporary sources. These include printed travelogues authored by Europeans who visited Mardin, which can offer impressions on visible facets of Christian life – particularly architecture.¹³⁶ Several published accounts relating to missions to Mardin during the studied period, such as those of the Jesuit Michel Nau and the Carmelite friars, while less attuned to communal distinctions, help to quantify the overall status of local Catholicism.¹³⁷ The thesis also draws on selected documents from the Propaganda Fide archives in Rome: namely, handwritten correspondence in Italian by Melkon Tasbasian, the above-mentioned Armenian Catholic missionary and metropolitan, between 1709-1714. These are preserved among the missionary affairs discussed in the weekly meetings of the Congregation (*Scritture riferite nei Congressi*), within the Armenian fonds.¹³⁸ This correspondence is significant not only as the testimony of a key Catholic contemporary in Mardin, but also – in the absence of a manuscript collection – as one of few vestiges of the Armenian community from the studied period.

Structure of thesis

Despite its timeframe of 1662-1783, the present study in fact opens at the beginning of the twentieth century – one of the liveliest moments for the history of Catholicism in Mardin. Chapter One focuses on the Arabic publications of Ishaq Armalet, whose work served as a basis for subsequent scholarship on Syriac Catholicism in the region. Through close reading of his historical monograph and articles from 1907-1915, the chapter argues that they were informed by an agenda to invent a previously missing history for his Syriac Catholic community, and – crucially – to cement his hometown of Mardin within

¹³⁴ That is, USJ 30 (1700-1800): see below, Chapter Two, 2.1.

¹³⁵ Reference to Lara Putnam in Ghobrial, 'Introduction: Seeing the World like a Microhistorian', pp. 6-7.

¹³⁶ See below, Chapter Three.

¹³⁷ See Nau's account in Abougit, 'Récit de ce que les PP. Jésuites ont souffert dans les prisons de Maredine'.

Various Carmelite reports can be found in Chick (ed.), *A Chronicle of the Carmelites in Persia*.

¹³⁸ All correspondence is taken from SC Armeni, vi, ff. 122-469v.

it. Moreover, in identifying the methods and preoccupations behind Armalet's work, it problematises his historical narrative of Mardin as an early site of Syriac Catholicism.

Chapter Two takes us back to the beginning of the eighteenth century. It offers a critical study of the *Life of Eliya*, a rare and long-neglected first-person account in Arabic of early Catholicism in Ottoman Mardin. Preserved in three manuscripts, the account relates the Catholic conversion of Eliya ibn al-Kuzayr, a Syriac Orthodox deacon living in Mardin in the early years of the eighteenth century. Eliya presents his conversion as a source of widespread disruption, not only within his Syriac Orthodox milieu, but for local government and society as a whole. His testimony affords us key insights into the specific social, confessional and political fabric of local Christianity, as well as the disparate levels of success encountered by different Catholic movements there.

Chapter Three deals with the Christian topography of Mardin during the late seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Analysing testimony from an array of contemporary historical accounts and paratextual notes in manuscripts, it argues that the territorial, economic and confessional significance of churches and monastic institutions entangled them in struggles between local Orthodox and Catholic factions. Furthermore, these sources convey a stark imbalance in the ecclesiastical resources of the three Christian communities in the region. Not only does this highlight another layer of specificity to the Christian context in Mardin, but also how this contributed to separate trajectories of Catholic community establishment.

Chapter Four is a study of manuscript culture in Christian Mardin between 1662-1783. Based on analysis of a considerable manuscript corpus, it argues that two simultaneous confessionalization movements were taking place within the local Christian scribal milieux from the early eighteenth century. Whereas the Chaldean community used manuscript production to cultivate a new Catholic identity, the Syriac Orthodox community endeavoured to reinforce their Orthodox heritage. The manuscripts testify to distinct scribal practices and centres within each local community, as well as contrasting levels of engagement with Catholic literature. Confessional identity thus emerges as a dynamic and defining issue in the contemporary record of Christian communities in Mardin.

This thesis presents a much-needed case study of the origins of Catholicism in Mardin. It applies new historiographical developments to an underrepresented geographical and religious context, and shifts

the traditional focus on missionary narratives to the rich and dynamic textual culture of local Christian contemporaries. It also offers a fresh perspective on Ottoman Catholicism by analysing why twentieth-century ecclesiastical history was so invested in its promotion. Rather than one unified movement, this case study argues that the three Christian communities of Mardin each experienced distinct chronologies and degrees of Catholic reception. The specific situation of Christianity in Mardin – its confessional composition, its leadership, its ecclesiastical structures, its scribal traditions – was crucial to the heterogenous manner in which Catholicism spread there. On the other hand, the study emphasises this as a significant period for confessional identity construction not only among newly converted Catholics, but also among the Syriac Orthodox of Mardin. In these respects, it problematises Ishaq Armalet's historical narrative of a cohesive Catholic movement in Mardin which took root within the Syriac Orthodox Church from an early stage. Above all, the case study highlights Mardin as a unique and invaluable witness to evolving Christian identities in the early modern Ottoman world.

Chapter One

Ishāq Armalet and the invention of Syriac Catholic history in Mardin

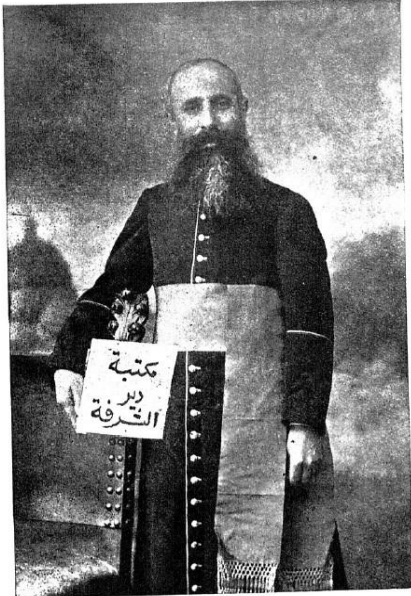


Figure 1: Ishāq Armalet with Charfet Library sign (no date).

The contribution of Ishāq Armalet (1879-1954) to the record of Christianity in Ottoman Mardin cannot be overstated. A native of Mardin, the Syriac Catholic priest devoted himself throughout his life to scholarship on historical, theological, literary, linguistic and codicological aspects of the Syriac Christian heritage. His most renowned work remains his *al-Quṣārā fī nakabāt al-Naṣārā* ('The Utmost of Christian Calamities'),¹ an Arabic account of the atrocities inflicted on Christian communities in Mardin and eastern Anatolia at large between 1895-1919, much of which was witnessed

by Armalet first-hand (though parts are based on the writings of another local Syriac Catholic priest, Ḥabīb Jarwah). To this day, historians consider *al-Quṣārā* a rare and crucial Syriac Christian testimony to these events.²

Armalet also gained prominence as a historian of Syriac Catholicism. Throughout the twentieth century, his publications furnished historiography on the evolution of the Catholic offshoot of the Syriac Orthodox Church.³ However, like many other historians who belong to the late Ottoman generation,

¹ I. Armalet, *al-Quṣārā fī nakabāt al-Naṣārā* (Charfet Monastery, 1919). This first edition was published under anonymous authorship, described simply as an "eyewitness" (*shāhid 'iyānī*).

² Recent studies which have drawn on Armalet's account include S. de Courtois, *The Forgotten Genocide: Eastern Christians, The Last Arameans* (Piscataway, NJ, 2004), esp. pp. 157-79; Y. Ternon, *Mardin 1915: anatomie pathologique d'une destruction*. (Paris, 2007), pp. 64-7, 118-39; S. Talay, 'Sayfo, Firmān, Qafle: The First World War from the Perspective of Syriac Christians', in D. Gaunt, N. Atto and S. Önder Barthoma (eds), *Let Them Not Return: Sayfo -- the Genocide against the Assyrian, Syriac, and Chaldean Christians in the Ottoman Empire* (New York, 2017), pp. 132-147; D. Gaunt, 'Two Documents on the 1895 Massacres of Syriacs in the Province of Diyarbekir: A Discussion', *Études arméniennes contemporaines*, 10 (2018), pp. 187-201; E. Ishac, "'I will stay with Jesus and never betray Him!': Sayfo in Mansuriye", in S. Talay and S. Ö. Barthoma (eds), *Sayfo 1915: An Anthology of Essays on the Genocide of Assyrians/Arameans during the First World War* (Piscataway, NJ, 2018), pp. 147-162.

³ See e.g. G. Graf, *Geschichte der christlichen arabischen Literatur* (5 vols, Vatican City, 1944), iv, p. 32, 35, 48, 52, 56, 57, 62; J. Joseph, *Muslim-Christian Relations and Inter-Christian Rivalries in the Middle East: The Case of the Jacobites in an Age of Transition*. (Albany, NY, 1983), pp. xiv, 31-55; P. Chalfoun, 'L'église syrienne catholique en Syrie au XVIII ème siècle', *Parole de l'Orient*, 13 (1986), pp. 172-8; M. al-Jamil, *Tārīkh wa-siyar. Kahanat al-suryān al-kāthūlīk min 1750–1985* (Mkalles, 1986), pp. 435-6; I. Özcoşar, 'Separation and Conflict: Syriac Jacobites and Syriac Catholics in Mardin in the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries', *Byzantine and Modern Greek Studies*, 38/2 (2014), pp. 214-5.

Armalet and his works are yet to receive any critical scholarly attention. This oversight is being increasingly recognised in scholarship, with calls to re-evaluate the body of historiography which still lingers from a distant and very distinct historical context – chiefly defined by late Ottoman rule, and the cultural and literary phenomenon of the Arabic *Nahḍah*.⁴

With this in mind, this chapter will carry out a detailed analysis of Armalet’s early historical writings on the Syriac Catholic Church and community. Considering both his content and historiographical methods, it will argue that Armalet, more than simply documenting, was attempting to *invent* a Syriac Catholic history; to fill in what he later described as a “blank white page” (*ṣahīfah bayḍā’ fārighah*)⁵ in the historical narrative of his community. The vision which he unfolded for Syriac Catholic history comprised three main aspects: constructing an ancient patriarchal claim; securing his native Mardin as a locus for early Syriac Catholicism; and refuting the heritage of the Syriac Orthodox Church from which Syriac Catholicism descended. The chapter will also situate Armalet’s writings within key contextual factors, including the late Ottoman socio-political climate, *Nahḍah* scholarly innovations, and local interconfessional rivalries in Mardin.

For all its specificity, Armalet’s scholarly agenda – and that of some of his contemporaries – has shaped a significant portion of modern historiography on both Catholicism in Mardin and Syriac Catholicism in general. This is particularly, as we shall see below, through the masses of journal articles and textual editions they devoted to these subjects. In terms of this project as a whole, it highlights the pressing need to revisit the materials produced during the fledging years of Catholicism in Mardin; materials which would, at times, be employed in the service of Iṣḥaq Armalet’s historical vision.

The immense oeuvre of Iṣḥaq Armalet spans several decades and countless topics. In addition to authoring some forty books throughout his lifetime, he contributed articles and textual editions to at least ten journals and copied scores of manuscripts, preserved today in collections in Lebanon, Syria

⁴ See notably A. Edwards, ‘Fact or Fiction? In Search of the “Learned Council” of Jirmānūs Farḥāt’, *Journal of Arabic and Islamic Studies*, 18 (2018), pp. 1-21; F. Krimsti and J.-P. Ghobrial, ‘The Past and Its Possibilities in Nahḍa Scholarship’, *Philological Encounters*, 6/3-4 (2021), pp. 265-87; N. K. Schmid, ‘Louis Cheikho and the Christianization of Pre-Islamic and Early Islamic Ascetic Poetry’, *Philological Encounters*, 6/3-4 (2021), pp. 339-73. For a recent comprehensive study of the *Nahḍah*, see A. Patel, *The Arab Nahḍah: The Making of the Intellectual and Humanist Movement* (Edinburgh, 2013).

⁵ SPFH (= Harissa, Société des Missionnaires de Saint Paul) 401 bis (earliest 1948), p. 3.

and Iraq.⁶ He also catalogued the manuscript collection of the former Syriac Catholic patriarchal seat at Charfet in Harissa-Daraoun, Mount Lebanon.⁷ The sources examined in this chapter focus on an early phase in Armalet's history writing between 1907-1915, when topics relevant to this thesis – that is, Syriac Catholicism and Mardin – appear of paramount importance to his scholarly agenda. These writings mainly comprise articles published in the Arabic Catholic periodical *al-Machriq*, founded in 1898 by another Mardin-born scholar, the Jesuit priest Louis Cheikho (d. 1927), and issued by the Catholic press at the Université Saint-Joseph in Beirut.⁸ The chapter will also consider several of Armalet's printed books from this phase, issued at presses in Beirut and at Charfet Monastery in Harissa-Daraoun, Mount Lebanon. Additionally, the historical works of several of Armalet's Ottoman Catholic contemporaries will feature for comparison, including the above-mentioned Louis Cheikho, the Lebanese polymath Viscount Philippe de Tarrazi (d. 1956), and the Syriac Catholic metropolitan of Aleppo, Dionysius Ephrem Naqqāshah (d. 1920).

Before proceeding to analysis, however, the following sections will provide a brief background to the personal and socio-political circumstances which framed Armalet's early writings, and the status of the Syriac Catholic Church to which he belonged.

⁶ See varied estimates of Armalet's oeuvre in I. A. al-Yasū'ī Khalīfah, 'Al-Ab Ishāq Armalah al-Suryānī', *al-Machriq*, 50 (1954), pp. 714-718; al-Jamil, *Tārīkh wa-siyar*, pp. 22-6; C. Hechaimé, *al-Mu'allifūn al-'Arab al-Masīhīyūn min qabl al-Islām ilā ākhir al-qarn al-'ishrīn: mu'jam al-a'lām wa-al-āthār wa-al-marāji'* (7 vols, Beirut, 2010), i, pp. 265-7. For MSS copied by Armalet, see e.g. Charfet Arabic 5/25 (1902-3) and Arabic 16/20 (1924), in I. Armalet, *Catalogue des manuscrits de Charfet, Publié à l'occasion du 150^e anniversaire de l'installation du siège patriarcal à Charfet, 1786-1936*, (Jounieh, 1937), p. 358, 489; ASCBN (=Baghdad, Syriac Catholic Church, Archdiocese of Baghdad) 49 (1902); Damascus, Syriac Orthodox Patriarchate, 9/25 (1940) in R. Lavenant, S. Brock and S. K. Samir, 'Catalogue des manuscrits de la bibliothèque du patriarcat syrien orthodoxe à Homs, auj. à Damas', *Parole de l'Orient*, 19 (1994), p. 597.

⁷ I. Armalet, *al-Ṭurfah fī makhṭūṭāt Dayr al-Shurfah/ Catalogue des manuscrits de Charfet, Publié à l'occasion du 150^e anniversaire de l'installation du siège patriarcal à Charfet, 1786-1936* (Jounieh, 1937).

⁸ For details on Cheikho and the foundation of *al-Machriq*, see R.B. Campbell. 'The Arabic Journal, al-Mashriq: Its Beginnings and First Twenty-Five Years under the Editorship of Père Louis Cheikho' (PhD thesis, University of Michigan, 1972), esp. pp. 18-20; R. Herzstein, 'The Oriental Library and the Catholic Press at Saint-Joseph University in Beirut', *Journal of Jesuit Studies*, 2 (2015), esp. pp. 261-3; D. Glaß, 'Al-Mashriq, Journal', *Encyclopaedia of Islam Three Online* (2022), https://doi-org.ezproxy-prd.bodleian.ox.ac.uk/10.1163/1573-3912_ei3_COM_36268 (16 May 2024).

1.1 Armalet in context

Little can be gleaned from Armalet's writings as to his family or early years in Mardin. Born by the name Ilyās ibn Sa'īd Armalet, he had at least one sister and one brother, Yūsuf, whom he discusses in *al-Quṣārā*,⁹ and who is also recorded as a copyist and donor of manuscripts.¹⁰ Their paternal uncle, Anṭūn Armalet (d. 1929), was a priest in the Syriac Catholic Church.¹¹ In 1895, after receiving his primary education in Mardin, sixteen-year-old Armalet and five other boys from the town were sent to study at the seminary of the Syriac Catholic Monastery of Charfet in Mount Lebanon. In 1903, the Syriac Catholic patriarch Ephrem II Raḥmānī (d. 1929) ordained him a priest and he was given the name Iṣḥāq; he subsequently became secretary to the patriarch. During this time, he published his first book – an anthology for students of Syriac entitled *Reggath Shabrē* ('Delight of Children') and participated in a patriarchal visit to Rome.¹² In 1912, he returned to Mardin at the behest of the patriarch to teach at the school of the Syriac Catholic monastery of St. Ephrem. After remaining in Mardin throughout the First World War, he went back to Charfet in 1919. It is this early phase in Armalet's scholarly career with which the present chapter is most concerned.

Armalet would become secretary to Patriarch Gabriel Tappouni (d. 1968) after the latter's appointment in 1929. The following year, the patriarch ordained him chorepiscopus at the Church of St. Peter in Antakya. After serving the patriarch for three years, Armalet spent the remainder of his life at Charfet Monastery, during which time he continued to be exceptionally prolific.¹³ Commenting on his industriousness, his obituary in *al-Machriq* related that Armalet could write skilfully with both hands – for just one, Armalet had allegedly stated, "was not enough for him".¹⁴ In the same article, Armalet was remembered as a controversial scholar ("pouncing like a lion"), whose works – as will be discussed in

⁹ *al-Quṣārā*, pp. 203, 242-3, 294-5, 302.

¹⁰ See Charfet Syriac 6/57 (1888), donated by Yūsuf Armalet to the monastery in 1903: Armalet, *Catalogue des manuscrits de Charfet*, pp. 131-3, and USJ (= Beirut, Université Saint-Joseph, Bibliothèque Orientale) 137 (1908), p. 75, copied by "Maqdisī Yūsuf Sa'īd Armalet".

¹¹ Al-Jamil, *Tārīkh wa-siyar*, p. 26; Hechaime, *al-Mu'allifūn al-'Arab al-Masīḥīyūn*, i, p. 267.

¹² Iṣḥāq Armalet, *Reggath Shabrē* (2 vols, Charfet Monastery, 1907-8). See brief discussion in N. Posegay, 'Men of Letters in the Syriac Scribal Tradition: Dawid bar Pawlos, Rabban Rāmišo', and the Family of Beṭ Rabban', *Hugoye: Journal of Syriac Studies*, 24/1 (2021), p. 132.

¹³ Al-Jamil, *Tārīkh wa-siyar*, pp. 22-6.

¹⁴ Khalīfah, 'Al-Ab Iṣḥāq Armalah al-Suryānī', pp. 714-5.

more depth below – elicited significant opposition, including from the incumbent Syriac Orthodox patriarch Ephrem Barsoum (d. 1957).¹⁵

Although this chapter deals with Armalet's printed publications, he was equally connected to manuscript culture. Throughout his career, he exhibited a keen interest in locating and editing manuscripts – an enterprise which has been particularly associated with scholarly trends in the Arabic-speaking community of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century.¹⁶ Frequently employing manuscripts in his articles, his travels around the Mardin region and Lebanon, Rome and Florence were punctuated by visits to libraries to consult and transcribe them.¹⁷ He demonstrates detailed knowledge in his writings of the manuscripts preserved in different churches in Mardin, including the Chaldean Church of Rabban Hormizd and Saffron Monastery,¹⁸ and apparently once acted as an intermediary in the transfer of a manuscript from Mardin to Charfet.¹⁹ As mentioned above, he also catalogued the considerable Arabic and Syriac manuscript collection at Charfet, and copied numerous manuscripts himself. His earliest known copy is a set of liturgical texts in Syriac dating to 1902.²⁰

From a wider perspective, it is important to comprehend the social, political and personal upheaval which framed the early historical writings of Armalet. Armalet was born into the final decades of Ottoman rule and a turbulent era for Christians – particularly within the eastern territories. A series of bureaucratic reforms enacted by the Ottoman government over the nineteenth century, known as the *Tanzimat* era, had pledged equal rights to the historically subordinate non-Muslim communities within the empire.²¹ However, official sentiment changed course during the reign of Sultan 'Abd al-Ḥamīd II

¹⁵ Ibid., p. 716. For biography of Barsoum, see Muṭrān G. Y. Ibrāhīm, *Majd al-Suryān Mār Ighnāṭiyūs Afrām al-awwal Barṣūm ḥayyatuhu wa-mu'allafātuhu* (Aleppo, 1996).

¹⁶ See A. El Shamsy, *Rediscovering the Islamic Classics: How Editors and Print Culture Transformed an Intellectual Tradition* (Princeton, 2020), esp. pp. 123-46, 147-71, and C. Gianni, 'Paul Spath's Manuscript Library: Conceptualizing the Library of a Syrian Catholic Priest between Europe and the Middle East in the Early-20th Century', *Journal of Islamic Manuscripts*, 13/4 (2022), pp. 381-420.

¹⁷ For record of travels, see I. Armalet, 'Al-Siyāḥah fī Ṭūr 'Abdīn', *al-Machriq*, 16 (1913), pp. 561-577, 662-674, 739-753, 835-854; idem, 'Al-Ṭuqūṣ al-Suryānīyah al-Milkīya wa-maktabat Bakirkī al-baṭriyarkīyah', *al-Machriq*, 38 (1940), pp. 41-62; idem, 'Waṣf anājil siṭranjīlīyah Suryānīya muṣawwarah', *al-Machriq*, (1953), pp. 524-541.

¹⁸ Armalet, 'Al-Siyāḥah fī Ṭūr 'Abdīn', p. 848, 850.

¹⁹ I. Armalet, 'Ishāq Muṭrān Nīnawī', *al-Machriq*, 12 (1909), p. 217.

²⁰ That is, ASCBN 49 (1902), copied by "Iliyā Armalah from Mardin" (f. 54r).

²¹ See e.g. M. Ş. Hanioglu, *A Brief History of the Late Ottoman Empire* (Princeton, NJ, 2010), pp. 72-6; H. J. Sharkey, *A History of Muslims, Christians, and Jews in the Middle East* (Cambridge, 2017), esp. 115-78; U. Makdisi, *Age of Coexistence: The Ecumenical Frame and the Making of the Modern Arab World* (Oakland, CA, 2019), pp. 10-11, 44-74.

(r. 1876-1909). His pan-Islamic ideology, paired with the defeat of the Ottoman Empire in the Russo-Turkish War of 1877-1878, which resulted in a major loss of territory in the Balkans and eastern Anatolia, contributed to mounting hostility towards religious minorities and policies for Muslim conversion. Suspicion of foreign loyalties – particularly to the Russian enemy – were directed predominantly at Armenian Christians.²² In tandem, the reforms of the nineteenth century also propelled attempts to tighten central governmental control over peripheral regions of the empire, including the Diyarbakır *vilayet* (province) to which Mardin belonged. Among other things, this meant additional taxation and juridical and military presence.²³

Worse was yet to come. Between 1894-1896, widespread violence and massacres were committed against Armenian and Syriac Christians in eastern Anatolia, in large part by local Kurdish militias and the ‘Hamidiye’ cavalry regiments of the sultan, and possibly resulting in as many as 300,000 deaths.²⁴ Mardin was reportedly spared most of the bloodshed due to the defence provided by local Muslim and Christian notables.²⁵ However, the preceding period under the governorship of Anīs Pasha had been tense for Christian communities in Mardin. In his account of his travels to his hometown in 1895, Louis

²² See S. Deringil, *The Well-Protected Domains: Ideology and the Legitimation of Power in the Ottoman Empire, 1876-1909* (London, 1998), esp. ch. 3; idem, “‘The Armenian Question Is Finally Closed’: Mass Conversions of Armenians in Anatolia during the Hamidian Massacres of 1895–1897”, *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, 51/2 (2009), pp. 344-71; Sharkey, *A History of Muslims, Christians, and Jews*, pp. 184-7, 212-27; B. Morris and D. Ze’evi, *The Thirty-Year Genocide: Turkey’s Destruction of Its Christian Minorities, 1894-1924* (Cambridge, MA, 2019), pp. 15-43.

²³ Deringil, *The Well-Protected Domains*, esp. ch. 2; Hanioglu, *A Brief History of the Late Ottoman Empire*, pp. 86-8. For investigation into how these centralisation processes actively played out in the Diyarbakır province, see S. Aydin and J. Verheij, ‘Confusion in the Cauldron: Some Notes on Ethno-Religious Groups, Local Powers and the Ottoman State in Diyarbekir Province, 1800-1870’ in J. Jongerden and J. Verheij (eds), *Social Relations in Ottoman Diyarbekir, 1870-1915* (Leiden; Boston, 2012), pp. 15-54, and Bayraktar, Uğur Bahadır, ‘Periphery’s Centre: Reform, Taxation, and Local Notables in Diyarbakir, 1845–1855’, in Y. T. Cora, D. Derderian and A. Sipahi (eds), *The Ottoman East in the Nineteenth Century: Societies, Identities and Politics* (London, 2016), pp. 159-78.

²⁴ Figure quoted from Morris and Ze’evi, *The Thirty-Year Genocide*, p. 44. On the evolution of the Hamidiye regiments, see J. Klein, *The Margins of Empire: Kurdish Militias in the Ottoman Tribal Zone* (Stanford, CA, 2011), esp. pp. 52-84. On the Hamidian massacres, see D. Gaunt, ‘Sayfo Genocide: The Culmination of an Anatolian Culture of Violence’, in Gaunt, Atto and Barthoma (eds), *Let Them Not Return: Sayfo*, pp. 54-69; B. Adjemian and M. Nichanian, ‘Rethinking the “Hamidian massacres”: the issue of the precedent’, *Études arméniennes contemporaines*, 10 (2018), pp. 19-29. This introduces contributions across two issues devoted to the subject: ‘The Massacres of the Hamidian Period (I): Global Narratives and Local Approaches’, *Études arméniennes contemporaines*, 10 (2018), and ‘The Massacres of the Hamidian Period (II): Perceptions and Perspectives’, *Études arméniennes contemporaines*, 11 (2018). For contemporary accounts, see L. Cheikho, ‘Min Bayrūt ilā al-Hind’, *al-Machriq*, 15 (1912), pp. 204, 207-8, 210-11, 304, 626, 706-8 and Armalet, *al-Quṣārā*, pp. 42-66.

²⁵ According to Louis Cheikho, this protection was afforded by the local Kurdish warlord, Ibrāhīm Pasha, whom the head of the Capuchin mission begged for help: see Cheikho, ‘Min Bayrūt ilā al-Hind’, p. 208, 304. See also Gaunt, ‘Two Documents on the 1895 Massacres of Syriacs in the Province of Diyarbekir’.

Cheikho reported recent aggressions against the local Christian population, ostensibly with tacit official approval, such as the burning and looting of Armenian Catholic stalls.²⁶

Just twenty years later, when working as a teacher in Mardin, Armalet would witness first-hand an even more brutal episode of state-sponsored massacres inflicted upon Christians in the region. The Armenian and Assyrian genocide of 1915-1916 would nearly decimate the Christian population of eastern Anatolia.²⁷ In addition to watching the horrors unfold in his town from the rooftop of St. Ephrem Monastery,²⁸ Armalet suffered both brief imprisonment and the murder of his brother Yūsuf in one of the first deportation convoys – as well as that of numerous friends and acquaintances.²⁹ In *al-Quṣārā*, Armalet relays in detail the requisitioning, looting, famine, kidnappings, epidemic and poverty which ravaged his hometown up to the end of the First World War.³⁰ While writing the account during those years in Mardin, he reports, he buried his notes underground to prevent them from being discovered.³¹

1.2 The Syriac Catholic Church

Despite the position of Christians in the eastern Anatolian provinces growing increasingly dire, the Syriac Catholic Church witnessed important advancements throughout the second half of the nineteenth century.

The earliest concerted attempt to form a Syriac Catholic Church took place in seventeenth-century Aleppo with the patriarchates of Andrew Akhijān (d. 1677) and his successor Peter Shāhbaddīn (d.

²⁶ Cheikho, 'Min Bayrūt ilá al-Hind', pp. 617-8.

²⁷ Recent and diverse scholarly treatments of these events include J. McCarthy, *The Armenian Rebellion at Van* (Salt Lake City, UT, 2006); Gaunt, Atto and Barthoma (eds), *Let Them Not Return: Sayfo*; Morris and Ze'evi, *The Thirty-Year Genocide*; Ü. Kurt, *The Armenians of Aintab: The Economics of Genocide in an Ottoman Province* (Cambridge, MA, 2021). For a review of recent literature, see R. G. Suny, 'Since the Centennial: New Departures in the Scholarship on the Armenian Genocide, 2015–2021', in T. Kühne, M. J. Rein and M. A. Mamigonian (eds), *Documenting the Armenian Genocide: Essays in Honor of Taner Akçam* (Cham, 2024), pp. 273-99. On Mardin specifically, see contemporary accounts in Armalet, *al-Quṣārā*, and A. Sarafian, 'The Disasters of Mardin during the Persecution of the Christians, especially the Armenians, 1915', *Haigazian Armenological Review*, 18 (1998), pp. 261-292, esp. appendix one, pp. 268-9. Secondary literature on Mardin includes Y. Ternon, *Mardin 1915: anatomie pathologique d'une destruction* (Paris, 2007); idem, 'The Impossible Rescue of the Armenians of Mardin: the Sinjar Safe Haven' in Jacques Semelin (ed.), *Resisting Genocide: the Multiple Forms of Rescue* (Oxford, 2014), pp. 383-394. For an ethnographic approach, see Z. Ö. Biner, 'Acts of Defacement, Memory of Loss: Ghostly Effects of the "Armenian Crisis" in Mardin, Southeastern Turkey', *History and Memory*, 22/2 (2010), pp. 68-94.

²⁸ Armalet, *al-Quṣārā*, pp. 186-193.

²⁹ Ibid., pp. 301-8 (Armalet's imprisonment); pp. 189-90, 294-5 (his brother Yūsuf); pp. 242-3 (names of deceased among Syriac Catholic community). He also reports the death of his brother in the Charfet catalogue: Armalet, *Catalogue des manuscrits de Charfet*, p. 133.

³⁰ Armalet, *al-Quṣārā*, esp. pp. 445-99.

³¹ Ibid., p. 133.

1702).³² After an ensuing leadership vacancy which lasted eighty years, the church was revived in 1782 with the installation (and, the following year, papal confirmation) of Patriarch Michael Jarwah (d. 1800). Having been ousted from Saffron Monastery – the Syriac Orthodox patriarchal seat just outside Mardin – by a rival Orthodox candidate, Jarwah managed to establish a Syriac Catholic see (and seminary) at Our Lady of the Deliverance Charfet Monastery in Mount Lebanon. From Jarwah, an (almost) uninterrupted Syriac Catholic patriarchal line commenced.³³

The status of the Syriac Catholic Church was further enhanced during the *Tanzimat* reform phase. Having previously been placed under the jurisdiction of the newly legitimated Armenian Catholic *millet* (confessional community) in 1831, the Syriac Catholic community went on to be recognised as an independent, self-governing *millet* by Sultan ‘Abd al-Majīd I (r. 1839-1861) in 1848.³⁴ Around the same time, Patriarch Peter Jarwah (d. 1851) decided to move the patriarchal see from Charfet to Aleppo.³⁵ The move, however, was short-lived: the patriarchate was forced to relocate after bloody riots broke out in Aleppo in 1850, during which an unknown number of Christian residents were attacked and killed.

³² On the patriarchal elections of Akhījān and Shāhbaddīn, and the role of French envoys in Aleppo, see A. Rabbath, *Documents inédits pour servir à l’histoire du christianisme en Orient* (Paris, 1905), i, pp. 95-6, 98-101; ii, pp. 34-41, 78-9, 105-6, and B. Heyberger, *Les chrétiens du Proche-Orient*, (Rome, 1994), pp. 261-2. For a contemporary Syriac Orthodox account of events, see I. Bcheiry, ‘A list of the Syrian Orthodox patriarchs between 16th and 18th century’, *Parole de l’Orient*, 29 (2004), pp. 223-4. On the evolution of the Syriac Catholic Church generally, see A. O’Mahony, ‘Between Rome and Antioch: The Syrian Catholic Church in the Modern Middle East’, in A. O’Mahony and E. Loosley (eds), *Eastern Christianity in the Modern Middle East* (London, 2010), pp. 121-37; D. W. Winkler, ‘The Syriac Church Denominations’, in D. King (ed.), *The Syriac World* (Abingdon, Oxon; New York, 2019), pp. 119-33.

³³ Details of Jarwah’s patriarchal election saga can be found in Özcoşar, ‘Separation and Conflict’, pp. 201-17 and J. Fathi, ‘La maison du diacre Fathī’, *Journal of Eastern Christian Studies*, 74 (2022), esp. pp. 118-25. An autobiographical account by Jarwah covering these events is preserved in at least nine copies: MBM (= Mosul, Mar Behnam Monastery) 450 (1800-1900); USJ 148 (1900); Charfet Arabic 6/25 (1785 – autograph?); Charfet Arabic 6/26 (1899); Charfet Arabic 6/27 (before 1907); Charfet Arabic 6/28; Charfet Arabic 16/7 (before 1930); Charfet Arabic 16/12 (before 1932); Charfet Arabic 18/12 (Spanish, before 1906). Charfet MSS consulted in I. Armalet, *Catalogue des manuscrits de Charfet, Publié à l’occasion du 150^e anniversaire de l’installation du siège patriarcal à Charfet, 1786-1936* (Jounieh, 1937), pp. 374-5, 375-6, 482-3, 485-6, 503. Cheikho published a partial edition of the text in ‘al-Tidhkār al-mi’awī li-wifāt al-sa’id al-dhikr al-Sayyid Aghnāṭiyūs Mīkhā’īl Jarwah’, *al-Machriq*, 3 (1900), pp. 913-926.

³⁴ See F. Mazzucotelli, ‘The Shift of the Syriac Catholic Patriarchate to Mardin: Sources and Voices from Rome’ in H. Teule, E. Keser-Kayaalp, K. Akalın, N. Doru and M. Sait Toprak (eds), *Syriac in its multi-cultural context: First International Syriac Studies Symposium, Mardin Artuklu University, Institute of Living Languages, 20-22 April 2012, Mardin* (Leuven, 2017), pp. 297-301. Bruce Masters notes that the Armenian Catholic *millet* was originally intended as ‘pan-Catholic’: idem, ‘The Establishment of the Melkite Catholic Millet in 1848 and the Politics of Identity in Tanzimat Syria’, in Peter Sluglett and Stefan Weber (eds), *Syria and Bilad Al-Sham under Ottoman Rule: Essays in Honour of Abdul-Karim Rafeq* (Leiden; Boston, 2010), pp. 455-6.

³⁵ On patriarchate of Peter Jarwah, see O’Mahony, ‘Between Rome and Antioch’, pp. 123-5.

Not only was the Syriac Catholic patriarchal residence destroyed; Patriarch Peter himself was reportedly seriously injured during these events.³⁶

The patriarchate of Antony Samḥīrī (1853-1864), the Catholic convert and former metropolitan of Mardin who succeeded Patriarch Peter, witnessed key developments in the church. Immediately after his patriarchal election, a synod convened at Charfet Monastery from December 1853 to January 1854 signified the first attempt to clearly set out the “theological, doctrinal, liturgical and disciplinary” stance of the Syriac Catholic Church and eliminate the influence of Orthodox doctrine. The resulting 144-page document was then dispatched to Rome for approval.³⁷ The Charfet synod also resolved to transfer the patriarchal see to Mardin and implement a church-building campaign there, ostensibly owing to its status as the seat of the Syriac Orthodox patriarch and significant Syriac Orthodox population.³⁸ The repercussions of this move to Mardin, as shall be discussed below, were still very relevant in the context of Armalet’s history writing.

Towards the later nineteenth and early twentieth century, several patriarchs invigorated the scholarly profile of the Syriac Catholic Church. In addition to revising the Syriac Catholic liturgy and spearheading another reformatory synod at Charfet in 1888, Patriarch Behnam Binnī (1893-1897) authored several theological and polemical works promoting uniformity with the Roman Catholic Church and denouncing Protestantism.³⁹ One of his works, *The Tradition of the Syriac Church: concerning the Primacy and the Prerogatives of St. Peter and of his Successors the Roman Pontiffs*,

³⁶ Mazzucotelli, ‘The Shift of the Syriac Catholic Patriarchate to Mardin’, p. 302. On the 1850 riots, see F. Krimsti, ‘The 1850 uprising in Aleppo. Reconsidering the explanatory power of sectarian argumentations’, in Ulrike Freitag (ed.), *Urban violence in the Middle East. Changing cityscapes in the transition from empire to nation state* (New York, 2015), pp. 141-63. The Syriac Catholic perspective is recorded in a biography of subsequent patriarch Anṭūn Samḥīrī: J. Mamarbaschi, *Les Syriens catholiques et leur patriarche Mgr Ant. Samhiri* (Paris, 1855), pp. 5-6, 20-1. See also a note written in a manuscript by Patriarch Anṭūn himself remarking on the destruction of the Aleppo residence, dated 1852: SCAA (= Aleppo, Syriac Catholic Church. Archdiocese of Aleppo) 7/115, pp. 28-9.

³⁷ Quote from Mazzucotelli, ‘The Shift of the Syriac Catholic Patriarchate to Mardin’, p. 304; see also O’Mahony, ‘Between Rome and Antioch’, p. 126. A transcript of the synod is preserved in Charfet Arabic 4/17: Armalet, *Catalogue des manuscrits de Charfet*, p. 342; a French translation of the introduction of the introduction is found in P. Bacel, ‘Le premier synode syrien de Charfê, 1er décembre 1853 – 14 janvier 1854’, *Échos d’Orient*, 14/90 (1911), pp. 293-8.

³⁸ Mazzucotelli, ‘The Shift of the Syriac Catholic Patriarchate to Mardin’, pp. 302-7; transfer also detailed in Mamarbaschi, *Les Syriens catholiques*, pp. 20-3.

³⁹ O’Mahony, ‘Between Rome and Antioch’, p. 128; Mazzucotelli, ‘The Shift of the Syriac Catholic Patriarchate to Mardin’, p. 309. See e.g. C. B. Benni, *al-Durrah al-naḥṣah fī bayān ḥaqīqat al-kanīṣah* (Mosul, 1867). A transcript of the 1888 synod is preserved in Charfet 472 (1903): B. Sony, *Fihrist al-Makhṭūṭāt al-baṭrayarkīyah fī Dayr al-Sharfāh* (Beirut, 1993), p. 179.

was translated into English and published in London in 1871.⁴⁰ Binnī's successor Patriarch Ephrem Raḥmānī (1898-1929), for whom Armalet served as secretary between 1903-1912, would further enrich the intellectual activity of the Syriac Catholic Church.⁴¹ In addition to establishing a seminary in Jerusalem in 1902 and renovating the printing press at Charfet, he published numerous works on liturgy, scripture and classical Syriac literature.⁴² He also rediscovered and copied many Syriac manuscripts himself – including the history of Michael the Great/the Syrian (d. 1199)⁴³ and the *Testamentum Domini* version by Jacob of Edessa (d. 708)⁴⁴ – and left behind a considerable collection at Charfet Monastery which bears his name.⁴⁵

The Syriac Catholic patriarchal see would officially remain in Mardin until 1919. In reality, Patriarch Ephrem moved his residence to Beirut years earlier; Armalet also mentions his presence at Charfet during the atrocities committed between 1915-1919.⁴⁶ The patriarchate has remained in Beirut ever since.

1.3 Armalet's *Fragrant Flower*

It was perhaps under the influence of Patriarch Ephrem that Armalet was compelled to start producing scholarship of his own. While some earlier articles he authored will feature in the discussion below, this section will consider Armalet's first book-length publication on Syriac Catholic history, printed in 1909 while he was secretary to Patriarch Ephrem, and entitled *Kitāb al-Zahrah al-dhakīyah fī al-baṭriyarkīyah al-Suryānīyah al-Anṭākīyah* ('The Fragrant Flower in the Syriac Patriarchate of Antioch'). The 140 page-book, written in Arabic, contains biographical entries of varying lengths on successive Syriac Orthodox and Catholic patriarchs. Armalet describes it in the foreword as a "concise

⁴⁰ C. B. Benni, *The Tradition of the Syriac Church of Antioch Concerning the Primacy and the Prerogatives of St. Peter and of His Successors the Roman Pontiffs* (London, 1871).

⁴¹ See his inclusion by Louis Cheikho among the likes of Addai Scher and Orientalist scholars: L. Cheikho, 'Āthār tārikhīyah lil-Suryān', *al-Machriq*, 6 (1908), p. 546.

⁴² See O'Mahony, 'Between Rome and Antioch', pp. 128-9; Posegay, 'Men of Letters in the Syriac Scribal Tradition', pp. 131-4.

⁴³ See extracts in Rahmani's hand in Charfet Rahmani 92, 93 and 94: A. Binggeli, F. Briquel-Chatonnet, M. Debié, Y. Dergham, A. Desreumaux, J. Dib and F. Vinourd (eds), *Catalogue des manuscrits syriaques et garshuni du Patriarcat syriaque-catholique de Charfet (Liban)* (Dar'un-Harissa, 2021), pp. 379-80.

⁴⁴ Rahmani's printed Latin-Syriac edition is preserved in MBM 514 (1899).

⁴⁵ Binggeli et al. (eds), *Catalogue des manuscrits syriaques et garshuni du Patriarcat syriaque-catholique de Charfet*, pp. 29-38; Fathi, 'La Maison du Diacre Fathī', pp. 186-90.

⁴⁶ Joseph, *Muslim-Christian Relations*, p. 111; Özcoşar, 'Separation and Conflict', p. 212; Armalet, *al-Quşārā*, p. 494.

series of notices on the leaders who ascended to the Antiochian throne, from Peter, leader of the Apostles, up to our blessed patriarch”.⁴⁷ It was one of the earliest – if not the earliest – printed Arabic publications to attempt a linear account of the Syriac Catholic hierarchy, right up to the present day. As this section shall discuss, it exemplifies Armalet’s agenda to construct and transmit a historical basis for the Syriac Catholic community of the early twentieth century – in this case, through establishing an ancient Syriac lineage for its patriarchate.

The Fragrant Flower coincided with the initial stirrings of a printed Syriac Catholic history in Arabic. Fragments of Syriac Catholic history had previously appeared in print, though predominantly within European settings. The autobiography of Patriarch Michael Jarwah, which he wrote in Arabic in 1785, was purportedly composed and translated into Spanish for the Spanish King Charles IV and Queen Maria Luisa, who were among the most notable patrons of Charfet Monastery.⁴⁸ Meanwhile, Patriarch Antony Samḥīrī wrote his memoirs “in response to the request of the French” while in France trying to raise finance for the church. They were translated into French from Arabic Karshuni and published as a biographical account by his secretary Yūḥannā Ma’ marbāshī in 1855.⁴⁹ To this can be added a French translation of the *Life* of the eighteenth-century Syriac Catholic convert in Mardin, Eliya ibn al-Kuzayr, published in *Revue de l’Orient chrétien* 1896.⁵⁰ Moreover, several works on the Syriac Catholic Church appeared in the journal *Revue des études byzantines*, including an article on the Syriac Catholic patriarchs in 1898, and a translation in 1911 of the preamble to the above-mentioned 1853-1854 synod

⁴⁷ Ishaq Armalet, *al-Zahrah al-dhakīyah fī al-batrīkarkīyah al-Suryānīah al-Anṭākīya* (Beirut, 1909), p. 4: سلسلة وحيزة تشتمل على اخبار الاحبار الذين تبوأوا العرش الانطاكي منذ بطرس زعيم الرسل حتى غبطة بطريركنا المثلث الطوبى

⁴⁸ According to information supplied by Armalet in description of Jarwah’s autograph, Charfet Arabic 6/25 (1785): Armalet, *Catalogue des manuscrits de Charfet*, pp. 374-5. The Spanish version is preserved in Charfet Arabic 18/12 (undated), and Jarwah’s correspondence with King Charles IV and Queen Maria Luisa is preserved in Charfet Arabic 16/12: *ibid.*, pp. 475-6, 503. For details of other donors of Charfet Monastery, see Fathi, ‘La maison du diacre Faḥrī’, pp. 152-3.

⁴⁹ Quote from I. Armalet, ‘al-Tidhkār al-khamsīnī bi-wifāt al-Sayyid Ighnāḥīyūs Anṭūn Samḥīrī Baṭriyark al-Suryān al-Anṭākī’, *al-Machriq*, 17 (1914), p. 402. See also Mazzucotelli, ‘The Shift of the Syriac Catholic Patriarchate to Mardin’, pp. 305-6. Original publication: J. Mamardashchi, *Les Syriens catholiques et leur patriarche Mgr Ant. Samhiri* (Paris, 1855).

⁵⁰ O. Scheil, ‘Une page de l’histoire de l’église de Mardin au commencement du XVIIIe siècle ou les tribulations de Cas Elia Ibn Al Qsir racontées par lui-même’, *Revue de l’Orient chrétien*, 1 (1896), pp. 43-87.

of Charfet.⁵¹ Yet the tide was turning as Armalet embarked on his scholarly career in the early twentieth century, and editions of these works in their Arabic original began to surface.⁵²

In the introduction to the *Fragrant Flower*, Armalet imbues his publication with a sense of urgency and duty towards the Syriac Catholic community. Referring to the current state of scholarship, Armalet acknowledges the “communal zeal” (*al-ḥamīyah al-tāʿifīyah*) propelling two of his Syriac Catholic contemporaries, the above-mentioned Viscount Philippe de Tarrazi and Metropolitan Ephrem Naqqāshah of Aleppo, to compile “histories of the Syriac people” (*tawārīkh fī akhbār al-ummah al-Suryānīyah*).⁵³ But despite the “pressing need” (*shaddat al-ḥājah ilayhā*) for this scholarship, Armalet explains, neither de Tarrazi nor Naqqāshah had yet succeeded in publishing their work. After waiting for “many years”, Armalet concluded that his “devotion to serving the patriarch” (*mā nahnu fīhi min al-inqīṭāʾ ilā khidmat baṭriyarkinā*) could not prevent him from “advancing ahead of these two historians” (*nataqadam kilā al-muʿarrikhayn*) and accomplishing his own work.⁵⁴

Armalet’s preface positions both himself and Patriarch Ephrem as pioneers in compiling and publishing a history for their Syriac Catholic community. Across the rest of the work, however, he presents his communal history agenda through a curious, knotted image of the succession of the ‘Syriac Patriarchate of Antioch’. He does not begin his biographies with the first patriarch of the separate, non-Chalcedonian Syriac Orthodox Church from which the Catholic branch would later evolve. Rather, Armalet prefers to trace a line from St. Peter to the current Syriac Catholic patriarch, Ephrem Raḥmānī.⁵⁵ Severus of Antioch (d. 538), generally considered the founder of the Syriac Orthodox see of Antioch, is thus designated fifty-second in the line.⁵⁶ From Severus, Armalet proceeds with entries

⁵¹ J. Chahin, ‘Les patriarches de l’église Syrienne Catholique’, *Revue des études byzantines*, (1898) 1/7, pp. 201-5; P. Bacel, ‘Le premier synode syrien de Charfé 1er décembre 1853-14 janvier 1854’, *Revue des études byzantines*, 90 (1911), pp. 293-98.

⁵² Extracts of Jarwah’s autobiography were published in Cheikho, ‘al-Tidhkār al-miʿawī li-wifāt al-saʿīd al-dhikr al-Sayyid Aghnāṭiyūs Mīkhāʾil Jarwah’; the *Life of Eliya* was published in idem, ‘Al-Kathlakah fī Mārdīn: riwāyah li-shāhid ʿiyānī’, *al-Machriq*, 12 (1909), pp. 589-604, 665-673, 732-748, 836-846, 890-897; biography of Samḥūrī published in Armalet, ‘al-Tidhkār al-khamsīnī bi-wifāt al-Sayyid Ighnāṭiyūs Anṭūn Samḥūrī Baṭriyark al-Suryān al-Anṭākī’. As far as I can tell, the proceedings of the 1853-4 Charfet synod were never published in Arabic.

⁵³ Armalet, *al-Zahrah al-dhakīyah*, p. 3.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 3-4.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 6.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 26-7. See V. L. Menze, *Justinian and the Making of the Syrian Orthodox Church* (Oxford, 2008), esp. pp. 149-52.

on successive Syriac Orthodox patriarchs, noting any contacts with the Roman Catholic Church, for example in the case of patriarchs ‘Abd Allāh I (d. 1557) and Ni‘mat Allāh I (d. 1576).⁵⁷

While undeniably pro-Catholic, Armalet occasionally demonstrates some nuance in his historical assessments. Arriving at a patriarchal schism in the seventeenth century, Armalet upholds the patriarchate of Shukr Allāh I (d. 1670) over that of Simon I (d. 1653), the latter of whom he reports sided with the Catholic faction.⁵⁸ In a footnote, he bases his uncharacteristic leaning on a technicality: “contemporary historians have confirmed Simon in the [patriarchal] succession due to his obtainment of the patriarchal *firmān*, but we have not done so owing to the legitimate Patriarch Shukr Allāh still being alive”.⁵⁹ Armalet’s openly controversial stance on the validity of Patriarch Simon would conflict with the views of other contemporary Syriac Catholic historians like Philippe de Tarrazi and Ephrem Naqqashah.⁶⁰ His exclusion is also remarkable given that the introduction to the transcript of the Charfet synod of 1853-54, which laid out a historical background to the Syriac Catholic Church, hailed Simon I as an early Uniate patriarch, remarking that he “embraced the Catholic faith and many Jacobites followed his example and returned to the fold of the holy Church”.⁶¹ Whether or not Armalet had seen this document, he was consciously imposing his own vision of the founding leaders of the Syriac Catholic Church.

Patriarch Shukr Allāh is then immediately followed by Andrew Akhijān, whom Armalet notes was born in Mardin. After being installed as a Catholic bishop for the Syriac Orthodox in Aleppo by the Maronite patriarch Peter al-Ṣafarāwī (d. 1656), Akhijān was recognised as patriarch in 1662. He is largely recognised by scholarship today as the first Syriac Catholic patriarch.⁶² Rather than beginning a new patriarchal line, however, Armalet asserts that Akhijān was bestowed by God to “return the Syriac Jacobite people to its former vigour” (*fa-a ‘āda ilayhā naḍāratahā al-qadīmah*).⁶³ The rival patriarch

⁵⁷ Armalet, *al-Zahrah al-dhakīyah*, pp. 83-4.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 87.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 87, note 1.

⁶⁰ See P. de Tarrazi, *al-Salāsīl al-tārīkhīya fī asāqīfat al-abrīshīyāt al-Suryānīya* (Beirut, 1910), pp. 357-8, 414 (Tarrazi lists Simon I as 127th patriarch of Antioch); Muṭrān D. Naqqāshah, *Ināyat al-Raḥmān fī Hidāyā al-Suryān* (Beirut, 1910), p. 37.

⁶¹ Bacel, ‘Le premier synode syrien de Charfē’, p. 296; also noted in Tarrazi, *al-Salāsīl al-tārīkhīyah*, p. 358.

⁶² Armalet, *al-Zahrah al-dhakīyah*, pp. 88-90. See e.g. O’Mahony, ‘Between Rome and Antioch’, pp. 120-1; Mazzucotelli, ‘The Shift of the Syriac Catholic Patriarchate to Mardin’, pp. 290-2.

⁶³ Armalet, *al-Zahrah al-dhakīyah*, pp. 88-90; quote from p. 88.

‘Abd al-Masīḥ I (d. 1686), who was appointed in Mardin concurrently with Akhījān and recognised as legitimate patriarch by the Syriac Orthodox community, receives a passing mention as an “impostor” (*dakhīl*).⁶⁴

Armalet offers a somewhat diluted perspective on external, extra-communal influences on Akhījān’s career, possibly to avoid detracting from his depictions of ancient Syriac lineage. This is particularly in the case of the Maronite Church and foreign assistance in Aleppo. He mentions Akhījān’s ordination as priest and then metropolitan by the Maronite hierarchy, and the role of the French consul in Aleppo, François Piquet.⁶⁵ It is notable, however, that Akhījān’s attendance of the Maronite college in Rome is not specified,⁶⁶ nor his signing as “the Maronite Aleppan bishop” (*Muṭrān Andrāwus al-Ḥalabī al-Mārūnī*) in the colophon of a manuscript he copied in 1656, to which Armalet specifically refers at the end of his entry.⁶⁷ This is despite the fact that these details were also extant in one of Armalet’s reference works – the correspondence gathered by the Jesuit priest Antoine Rabbath (d. 1913) in his *Documents inédits*.⁶⁸ As will transpire below, Armalet’s downplaying of the Maronite-Aleppo context to the Uniate Syriac patriarchate notably diverged from that of other Syriac Catholic historians of his time.

Following on from Akhījān, Armalet documents his successor, Patriarch Peter Shāhbaddīn VI,⁶⁹ again bypassing the rival Orthodox patriarch of Antioch in Mardin, George I (d. 1708).⁷⁰ After returning to biographies on successive Syriac Orthodox patriarchs for the duration of the vacancy after Patriarch Peter (covering patriarchs Isaac II (1709-1722), Shukr Allāh II (1722-1745), George II (1745-1768) and George III (1768-1781)), Armalet smoothly transitions to the patriarchate of Michael Jarwah, who reinstated the Syriac Catholic patriarchate in 1782.⁷¹ He was opposed in Mardin by an “impostor patriarch” (*baṭriyarkan dakhīlan*) named Matthew, who would become patriarch for the Syriac

⁶⁴ Ibid., p. 87, 89. For a contemporary Syriac Orthodox version of patriarchal succession, see Bcheiry, ‘A list of the Syrian Orthodox patriarchs’, pp. 222-3.

⁶⁵ Armalet, *al-Zahrah al-dhakīyah*, p. 88.

⁶⁶ See record of Akhījān in Duwaihī’s history of Maronite College graduates: L. Cheikho, ‘Athr jalīl lil-baṭriyark Iṣṭafānūs al-Duwayhī: tārikh al-madrasah al-Marūnīyah fī Rūmīyah’, *al-Machriq*, 21 (1923), p. 214.

⁶⁷ Armalet, *al-Zahrah al-dhakīyah*, p. 90; original colophon is in SCAA SL07 01 (1656), p. 293.

⁶⁸ A. Rabbath, *Documents inédits pour servir à l’histoire du christianisme en Orient* (2 vols, Paris, 1905). On Akhījān and the Maronites, see i, pp. 95-6 and ii, pp. 78-9. Source quoted in Armalet, *al-Zahrah al-dhakīyah*, p. 88, footnote 1.

⁶⁹ Armalet, *al-Zahrah al-dhakīyah*, pp. 90-92.

⁷⁰ Ibid., p. 90.

⁷¹ Ibid., pp. 92-95; Jarwah entry: pp. 95-98.

Orthodox.⁷² Spatially, Armalet designates a sense of priority in his entries: while devoting over two-and-a-half pages to the careers of Akhījān and Jarwah, information on patriarchs Isaac II to George III covers less than a page. From Jarwah, the independent line of the Syriac Catholic patriarchate of Antioch continues, finishing on the incumbent patriarch Ephrem Raḥmānī.⁷³

Armalet seals his timeline of events with a report on the current status of a now explicitly defined “Syriac Catholic community” (*al-ṭāʿifah al-Suryānīyah al-kāthulīkīyah*). He provides statistics for adherents (around 70,000), metropolitans (4), bishops (6), priests (144), churches (41) and monasteries (7).⁷⁴ Wherever Patriarch Ephrem may have actually been based in 1909, Armalet designates “Mardin, Diyarbakır and its environs” as the patriarchal see.⁷⁵ His historical project concludes with the rhetoric of rupture and longed-for unity:

We ask that God Almighty ... preserve our patriarch and metropolitans ... and gladden them with pastorship over our separated Syriac brothers so that the flock becomes one, complete and combined, and that determination can rise, and resolution can stand shoulder to shoulder, and the front can be united towards honouring and priding in the people after having languished and wilted.⁷⁶

While Armalet’s book aims to satisfy a “pressing need” within the specifically defined Syriac Catholic community, it is interesting to observe how this community history is formulated through insertion into the Syriac Orthodox record. By adding to, reordering and omitting parts of a template of Syriac Orthodox patriarchal succession, Armalet moulds a Syriac Catholic version – and with it, a lineage for the present Syriac Catholic patriarchate which derives itself not from seventeenth-century Aleppo and Maronite patronage, but from St. Peter and the ancient Church of Antioch. To his Orthodox coreligionists – whom we shall encounter below – this was, in fact, one of the most objectionable aspects of his work.⁷⁷ Even his explicit use of “ancient Syriac texts”, including the history of Patriarch Michael the Great, helps him to bolster this ancestral claim.⁷⁸ At the same time, as his concluding remark above

⁷² Ibid., p. 97.

⁷³ Ibid., pp. 108-11.

⁷⁴ Ibid., pp. 110-1.

⁷⁵ Ibid., p. 111.

⁷⁶ Ibid., p. 111: نَسْأَلُ الْحَقَّ سُبْحَانَهُ وَتَعَالَى أَنْ يَصُونَ غِيْطَةَ بَطْرِيْرِكْنَا الْمَثَلِثِ الطُّوْبِيِّ وَالسَّادَةِ الْمَطَارِنَةِ الْاِجْلَاءَ بَيْنَ عِنَانِيْهِ. يَقْرَ عِيُونَهُمْ بِرَعْوَى عَلَى اِثْرِ خَمُوْلِيْهَا وَذَبُوْلِيْهَا اِخْوَتْنَا السَّرِيَانِ الْمَنْفَصِلِيْنَ حَتَّى تَكُوْنَ الرَّعِيَّةُ وَاحِدَةً وَكَامِلَةً مَجْتَمِعَةً فَتَنْهَضَ الْهَمُّ وَتَتَكَاتِفَ الْعَزَائِمُ وَتَتَوَحَّدَ الْوَجْهَةُ إِلَى مَا فِيْهِ شَرَفُ الْاِمَّةِ وَزُهْوُهَا

⁷⁷ See Afrām al-Suryānī al-Mawṣilī [Ephrem Barsoum], *Kalimah intiḡādīyah ʿalā al-zahrah al-dhakīyah* (Beirut, 1910), pp. 7-9.

⁷⁸ Armalet, *al-Zahrah al-dhakīyah*, p. 6.

exemplifies, Armalet does not negate the “Jacobite”⁷⁹ heritage of the Syriac Catholic Church. Rather, he paints the Orthodox as a wayward branch of a natural process of Catholicisation, which he hopes will someday rejoin the “Syriac people” (*al-ummah al-Suryānīyah*) – by which, it must be noted, he appears to conceive of a Uniate West Syriac ecclesiastical identity, rather than an ethnic identity shared with other Syriac confessions.⁸⁰ Overall, this approach would come to characterise Armalet’s early historical works.

Armalet’s history of the Syriac patriarchate is not only significant in its content, but also in its subsequent impact. In addition to provoking hostile reactions among Syriac Orthodox scholarship, to be discussed below, it also appears to have set in motion the long-awaited (as Armalet would have it) history-writing project within the Syriac Catholic community. Just one year after the publication of Armalet’s history, Metropolitan Ephrem Naqqāshah would publish his *Ināyat al-raḥmān fī hidāyā al-Suryān* (‘Providence of the Merciful One in the Gifts of the Syrians’).⁸¹ In this comparatively denser volume, Naqqāshah traced the development of Catholicism within the Syriac Orthodox Church from the fallout after the Council of Chalcedon until present times in a seamless narrative. Though this work is not the focus of the present study, some striking contrasts can be made with the *Fragrant Flower* concerning the origins of the Syriac Catholic leadership. While Armalet asserts that Simon I was not a legitimate patriarch, Naqqāshah acknowledges the patriarch’s tenure after having “received the *fīrmān* of the sultan in Constantinople to support his patriarchate”.⁸² Naqqāshah also emphasises Aleppo as the “base” of the Syriac Catholic patriarchate established by Akhījān, devoting an entire section to the city’s early Christian heritage.⁸³ Though Armalet reports that Akhījān was born in Mardin and subsequently moved to Aleppo,⁸⁴ (even remarking in a later work that he knew one of Akhījān’s descendants who

⁷⁹ Note that Armalet consistently uses the terms *ya‘qūbī* (‘Jacobite’ – after Jacob Baradaeus) and *munūfīstī* (‘monophysite’) to refer to the Syriac Orthodox community in recent history: see e.g. *al-Zahrah al-dhakīyah*, p. 88, 92, 94, 95, 103. See also sections on ‘monophysite Syriac patriarchs’ of Antioch in Armalet, ‘Fī al-batriyarkīyah al-Anṭākīyah’, *al-Machriq*, 21 (1923), pp. 499-507, 589-99, 660-64. For historical context to this terminology, see Courtois, *The Forgotten Genocide*, pp. xv-xvi.

⁸⁰ See use of the term in Armalet, *al-Zahrah al-dhakīyah*, p. 3, 111; idem, ‘al-Sayyid Athanāsīyūs Safar al-‘Aṭṭār al-Mārdīnī’, *al-Machriq*, 11 (1908), p. 563; idem, ‘al-Tidhkār al-khamsīnī bi-wifāt al-Sayyid Ighnāṭīyūs Anṭūn Samḥīrī Batriyark al-Suryān al-Anṭākī’, *al-Machriq*, 17 (1914), p. 423. His interest in the shared ethnic origins of different Syriac denominations would increase over time: see examples of his later articles below, note 238.

⁸¹ Naqqāshah, *Ināyat al-Raḥmān fī Hidāyā al-Suryān* (Beirut, 1910).

⁸² *Ibid.*, p. 37.

⁸³ *Ibid.*, pp. 25-33.

⁸⁴ Armalet, *al-Zahrah al-dhakīyah*, p. 88.

was still living in Mardin),⁸⁵ Naqqāshah claims that the patriarch was only “of Mardinian origin”, and that Aleppo was in fact his birthplace.⁸⁶ Alongside this, Naqqāshah provides much more detail as to the Maronite background of Akhījān,⁸⁷ even using the same manuscript reference as Armalet to remark that Akhījān self-identified as Maronite “because there was not another term for the Catholicised Syriacs to distinguish themselves from others in those days”.⁸⁸ Although Naqqāshah’s history allowed much more room for detail, these alternative framings are striking. His interest in promoting Aleppo as its incumbent Syriac Catholic metropolitan may not be surprising, but it underlines how significant (and perhaps even personal) *place* could become in writing Syriac Catholic history – as we shall explore below.

In the same year as Naqqāshah, Philippe de Tarrazi printed his *al-Salāsīl al-tārīkhīyah fī asāqifat al-abrīshīyāt al-Suryānīya* (‘Historical Series on Bishops of the Syriac Parishes’),⁸⁹ a 500-page volume organised by the traditional episcopal sees within the Syriac Orthodox Church and providing biographical entries on their various officeholders throughout history. While Tarrazi offered much more detailed notices than Armalet, his temporal scope for investigation was similarly arbitrary. The history of each episcopal see begins from its first Catholic-inclined officeholder (whether from the twelfth, thirteenth or seventeenth century).⁹⁰ Tarrazi was not linear in his approach, focusing only on bishops who converted to Catholicism (or, in rare cases, were instrumentally anti-Catholic),⁹¹ and skipping over any figures to whom this did not apply. No one location appears to take precedence, although Mardin does feature first in the book – perhaps owing to its then status as the Syriac Catholic patriarchal see. Tarrazi also presented a succession of the “patriarchs of Antioch, from the apostle Peter to Mar Ignatius Ephrem II” which closely resembled the model employed by Armalet in *The Fragrant Flower*.⁹² Beginning with St. Peter, Tarrazi traces an identical sequence until his additions of the patriarchs ‘Abd

⁸⁵ Armalet, *al-Quṣārā*, p. 32, note 1.

⁸⁶ Naqqāshah, *Ināyat al-Rahmān*, p. 36.

⁸⁷ See *ibid.*, pp. 37-42.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 41: لقب نفسه فيه مارونياً لأنه لم يكن للمتكلمين من السريان يومئذٍ لقب آخر يميزهم عن سواهم.

⁸⁹ Philippe de Tarrazi, *al-Salāsīl al-tārīkhīyah fī asāqifat al-abrīshīyāt al-Suryānīyah* (Beirut, 1910).

⁹⁰ See e.g. Mardin diocese starting with biography of Metropolitan John of Mardin (d. 1165), p. 17; Mosul starting with biography of Maphrian David al-Khayshūmī (d. 1252), p. 115; and Jerusalem starting with Metropolitan Peter Shāhbaddīn (d. 1702), p. 59.

⁹¹ See e.g. entry on Syriac Orthodox patriarch Shukr Allāh II: Tarrazi, *al-Salāsīl al-tārīkhīyah*, pp. 204-9.

⁹² *Ibid.*, pp. 409-15.

al-Ghanī (d. 1598), Patriarch Simon I, Yashū‘ II (d. 1661), and George I (d. 1709).⁹³ Similar to Armalet’s works, Tarrazi’s *Historical Series* became a key reference work for future histories of Syriac Catholicism.⁹⁴ Khalid Dinno points out that it was so influential as to be considered a “quasi-official” resource for the Syriac Catholic community in its time.⁹⁵

The patriarchal history of Armalet arguably set a precedent for both his own approach to Syriac Catholic history, and for Syriac Catholic history in Arabic print more generally. Armalet would refer to the content provided in his *Fragrant Flower* in his subsequent output, as would historians throughout the twentieth century.⁹⁶ As we shall discover below, his Catholicising approach to Syriac Orthodox antiquity continued throughout his early historical pieces, in addition to his disregard of a Maronite or Aleppan dimension to events. Coincidentally, the latter issue would become relevant to Armalet’s discourse at a much later stage, and for very different reasons.⁹⁷ In the meantime, Armalet began to nuance the scholarly agenda he had revealed in his *Fragrant Flower*, namely by inscribing his hometown of Mardin within the history of Syriac Catholicism.

1.4 Catholic Mardin: churches and people

Mardin transpires as a focal point in Armalet’s early historical essays on the Syriac Catholic Church. This section analyses how he used historical architecture and individuals to promote his birthplace as a site of early Syriac Catholicism.

In 1909, a few years before he moved back to his hometown, Armalet published an article in the journal *al-Machriq* on Mardin’s monasteries to commemorate the twentieth-fifth anniversary of the Syriac Catholic monastery of St. Ephrem (opened in 1884).⁹⁸ Before providing brief information on the establishment of each monastery, the article outlines the ancient Christian heritage of Mardin and wider

⁹³ Ibid., p. 414.

⁹⁴ See e.g. Graf, *Geschichte*, iv, p. 45, 47, 48, 51, 52, 54, 57, 58, 62, etc.

⁹⁵ K. Dinno, *The Syrian Orthodox Christians in the Late Ottoman Period and Beyond: Crisis Then Revival* (Piscataway, NJ, 2017), p. 192, note 111.

⁹⁶ See e.g. Armalet, ‘al-Tidhkār al-khamsīnī bi-wifāt al-Sayyid Ighnāṭiyūs Anṭūn Samḥūrī’, p. 417 note 1; idem., ‘Fī al-baṭriyarkīyah al-Anṭākīyah’, *al-Machriq*, 21 (1923), p. 662, note 2.

⁹⁷ See e.g. I. Aramlet, ‘Al-Rutab al-kahnūṭīyah fī al-ṭā’ ifatayn al-Marūnīyah wa-al-Suryānīyah’, *al-Machriq*, 30 (1932), pp. 161-169, 297-302, 365-371, 530-537, 744-751, 848-855, 933-939; idem., ‘al-Ṭuqus al-Suryānīyah al-Malakīyah wa-maktabat Bakrī al-baṭriyarkīyah’, *al-Machriq*, 38 (1940), pp. 41-62.

⁹⁸ I. Armalet, ‘Lum‘ah tārikhīyah fī adyār Mārdīn’, *al-Machriq*, 12 (1909), pp. 760-770.

Mesopotamia, tracing it back to the founder of monasticism in the region, the fourth-century saint Awgin. Armalet extols the historic virtue of these monastic sites, remarking:

As much as Orientalists have tried to deny the existence of this great champion [Mār Awgin], the ancient vestiges and lasting histories can only endorse and confirm it, and [now] historians can barely stop talking about it.⁹⁹

Armalet acknowledges that the majority of the thirty-one historic monasteries in Mardin which he lists are ‘Jacobite’, or Syriac Orthodox. Yet before moving to the Syriac Catholic establishment of St. Ephrem, Armalet pauses in the mid-seventeenth century over a converted Syriac Catholic bishop from Mardin, Safar al-Mārdīnī (d. 1728). He writes that Safar:

... desiring to rectify what time had corrupted, had wanted to build a monastery in Mardin dedicated to Mar Ephrem, lyre of the [Holy] Spirit. But he was prevented from fulfilling his noble intention, so he built a monastery in Rome in 1708 and one in Lebanon in 1709 in the name of this glorious saint.¹⁰⁰

Amidst a wealth of testaments to ancient Orthodox monasticism, Armalet’s (unevidenced) claim of “noble intention” for a Syriac Catholic monastery in seventeenth-century Mardin appears slightly incongruous. By the same token, through mentioning Bishop Safar’s hopes for a monastery dedicated to St. Ephrem, Armalet links the recent St. Ephrem Monastery to a much earlier context. With the passing of time, he writes, Patriarch Antony Samhīrī was able to “fill the gap” (*sadd hadhihi al-thulmah*) left by Safar’s unfulfilled wishes, and purchase land for the current monastery.¹⁰¹ A substantial piece follows concerning the foundation of the new St. Ephrem, including the delegation sent to Rome to seek funding, and its opening ceremony in 1884, attended by the local Capuchin, Armenian Catholic and Chaldean clergy.¹⁰² Armalet even circumvents the recent history of Christian bloodshed in the region during the massacres of 1894-1896, curtly mentioning that the monastery was used as a base for “some soldiers and officers” in that year who “repelled the Kurds and Arab tribes and prevented them from attacking the town”.¹⁰³

⁹⁹ Ibid., p. 761: ولقد طالما حاول المستشرقون انكار وجود هذا البطل العظيم ولكن الآثار القديمة والتواريخ الراهنة ابنت الا ان تويده وتثبته حتى لا تكاد ترى مؤرخاً سكت عنه

¹⁰⁰ Ibid., p. 765: ... يريد اصلاح ما افسد الدهر ورام ان يشيد ديراً في ماردين على اسم مار افرام قيثاره الروح غير ان الاحوال حالت دون انجاز قصده الحميد فشيّد ديراً في رومية سنة ١٧٠٨ وأخر في لبنان سنة ١٧٠٩ على اسم هذا القديس الجليل.

¹⁰¹ Ibid., p. 765.

¹⁰² Ibid., p. 767.

¹⁰³ Ibid., p. 769.

In a striking parallel to his *Fragrant Flower* (published in the same year), Armalet envelops Syriac Orthodox antiquity in a narrative of recent progress within the Syriac Catholic Church – this time not through patriarchal succession, but religious architecture in Mardin. As we shall see, this was not the only instance in which Armalet would claim earlier, unrealised designs for a St. Ephrem Monastery. His insertion of Syriac Catholicism into the traditional Christian landscape of Mardin can be observed in other contexts too. In the historical preface to *al-Quṣārā*, published in 1919, Armalet reported that the Syriac Catholic community at one point “solely occupied” two important, long-standing Orthodox churches in Mardin: the Church of St. Shmuni and the Church of the Forty Martyrs.¹⁰⁴

It is worth noting that Mardin’s Catholic history was also gaining traction outside of Armalet’s works – and even confessional community. At some point prior to 1910, the Syriac Catholic chorepiscopus of St. Ephrem Monastery, Ephrem Aḥmar Dhaqanuh (d. 1928), had written a ‘History of the Guidance of the Mardin Parish to Catholicism’ (*Akhbār ihtidā’ abrashīyat Mārdīn ilā al-Kathlakah*),¹⁰⁵ while Joseph Tfinkdji, a Chaldean priest from Mardin, claimed in an article for the Paris-based periodical *Les missions catholiques* that Mardin was “the city in Mesopotamia with the most Catholics”.¹⁰⁶ *Al-Machriq* was more than marginally interested in Mardin – the issue containing Armalet’s monasteries article also featured the Catholic conversion account of Eliya ibn al-Kuzayr, set in eighteenth-century Mardin.¹⁰⁷ Two years earlier, an article on the Armenian Catholics of Mardin had also appeared in the periodical, tracing the development of their community, churches and diocese.¹⁰⁸ The editor of *al-Machriq*, Louis Cheikho, even noted at the end of this article that “some information about the origins and history of Mardin had been held back, so that it could be employed in a separate article about the town”.¹⁰⁹ Though this promised article does not appear to have been published, Mardin was firmly on the agenda for the Ottoman Catholic scholarly milieu of the early twentieth century.

¹⁰⁴ Armalet, *al-Quṣārā*, pp. 33-4. See also claim that St. Shmuni Church was in Catholic hands in idem, *al-Zahrah al-dhakīyah*, pp. 96-7.

¹⁰⁵ Tarrazi does not ascribe a date to this work, and it is impossible to tell if it was a printed or manuscript source: see idem, *al-Salāsīl al-tārīkhīyah*, p. 40, note 2.

¹⁰⁶ J. Tfinkdji, ‘Le catholicisme à Mardin’, *Les missions catholiques*, (1914), p. 29.

¹⁰⁷ L. Cheikho, ‘Al-Kathlakah fi Mārdīn: riwāyah li-shāhid ‘ayyānī’, *al-Machriq*, 12 (1909), pp. 589-604, 665-673, 732-748, 836-846, 890-897.

¹⁰⁸ M. Alexandrian, ‘al-Abrashīyah al-Armanīyah fi Mārdīn’, *al-Machriq*, 11 (1907), pp. 502-9.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid., p. 509.

Armalet not only looked to Christian architecture to imprint Mardin with early Syriac Catholicism: he also began writing iconic Syriac Catholic roles into Mardin's history. Between 1907-1914, he published five biographical essays in *al-Machriq* on historical churchmen, three of which are especially relevant here: on Metropolitan John Mūdyānā of Mardin (late twelfth/early thirteenth century);¹¹⁰ Bishop Safar ibn Ḥannā al-Mārdīnī,¹¹¹ and Patriarch Antony Samḥūrī (d. 1864).¹¹² As Barbara Winckler argues, these adaptations of the biographical genre in classical Arabic literature were an important development in history writing during the *Nahḍah* period. While offering a concise model for wide dissemination of historical information (which suited the periodical context), their subjects could also serve as “exempla” for their present audience.¹¹³ Moreover, as has been discussed with the biographies written by the Jesuit priest Georges Manache (d. 1931) for *al-Machriq* between 1902-4, retrieving these individuals could be used to promote the historicity of specific communities in specific places.¹¹⁴ While for Georges Manache, this meant Eastern Catholics in Aleppo, Ishaq Armalet was concerned with Syriac Catholics in Mardin.¹¹⁵

Armalet's biography of Metropolitan John Mūdyānā in 1907 represents an early attempt to establish a Catholic icon for Mardin. His short essay on this Syriac Orthodox metropolitan of Mardin, elevated by Patriarch Michael the Great, centres on offering evidence that he had actually been an adherent of Melkite Chalcedonian theology, and therefore sympathetic to those who “preserved the canons of the Catholic Church” (*al-muḥāfiẓūn ‘alā qawānīn al-kanīisah al-kāthūlīkīyah*).¹¹⁶ Using testimony from the ecclesiastical histories of Michael the Great and Bar Hebraeus, Armalet sketches the tumultuous career

¹¹⁰ I. Armalet, ‘Suryānī-Malakī – wa-huwwa Yūḥannā Mūdyānā Muṭrān Mārdīn al-mūnafisītī al-Rahāwī’, *al-Machriq*, 10 (1907), pp. 996-1001. From Edessa and sometimes known as ‘John the Confessor’, John was appointed during the patriarchate of Michael the Syrian/Great (1166-99). He is not to be confused with Metropolitan John of Mardin (1124/5-65) or Patriarch John X Mawdyono (1130-37). References to Metropolitan John can be found in Armalet, *al-Zahrah al-dhakīyah*, p. 65 and I. E. Barsoum, *History of the Za‘faran Monastery*, trans. Matti Moosa (Piscataway, NJ, 2008), pp. 47-8.

¹¹¹ Armalet, ‘al-Sayyid Athanāsiyūs Safar al-‘Aṭṭār al-Mārdīnī’.

¹¹² Armalet, ‘al-Tidhkār al-khamsīnī bi-wifāt al-Sayyid Ighnāṭiyūs Anṭūn Samḥūrī’.

¹¹³ B. Winckler, ‘Embarking upon a New Era through an Old Genre: Biographical Essays in Journals of the Nahḍah Period - Ġurġī Zaydān and al-Hilāl’s Early Years as Example’, *Oriente Moderno*, 99/1-2 (2019), pp. 68-93.

¹¹⁴ Edwards, ‘Fact or Fiction? In Search of the “Learned Council” of Jirmānūs Farḥāt’, pp. 8-9.

¹¹⁵ For examples of biography in contemporary Orthodox contexts, see e.g. ‘Isā Iskandar Ma’lūf’s biography of Patriarch Macarius ibn al-Za’īm (d. 1672) in the journal *al-Ni’mah* in 1912: C. Walbiner, ‘Biographies of Prominent Clerics as a Possible Approach to the History of the Christian Arabs in the First Centuries of Ottoman Rule – the Case of Macarius Ibn al-Zaim’, *Chronos*, 3 (2000), p. 39.

¹¹⁶ Armalet, ‘Suryānī-Malakī – wa-huwwa Yūḥannā Mūdyānā Muṭrān Mārdīn’, p. 996.

of John Mūdyānā. After being forced to flee from his diocese of Mardin to Edessa and then Malayta due to infighting among the Syriac Orthodox clergy, he proceeded to “renounce the Jacobite faction to follow the Catholic Church, represented in the East by the Melkites”.¹¹⁷ Here, Armalet considers professing the Chalcedonian doctrine of dyophysitism (i.e. Christ having two separate natures, one human and one divine) tantamount to becoming Catholic. He even portrays John’s individual role as pivotal to the formation of Catholic communities in the region, suggesting that the current existence of the Melkite Catholic community in Diyarbakır could be a direct result of “John Mūdyānā and those who followed his example” (*alladhīn iqtadū bi-mithālihi*).¹¹⁸ Armalet’s narrative of this twelfth-century Catholic leader influenced trends in Syriac Catholic history writing: Philippe de Tarrazi positioned John Mūdyānā as the first Syriac Catholic bishop of Mardin in his *al-Salāsīl al-tārīkhīyah*, quoting verbatim from Armalet’s article.¹¹⁹

An even more compelling example is Armalet’s biography in 1908 of the Syriac Catholic convert Bishop Athanasius Safar al-Mārdīnī.¹²⁰ He holds up Safar as a worthy biographical subject who was “distinguished among our Syriac community for defending the true faith” (*al-munāḍalah ‘an al-dīn al-ḥaqq*). Yet the setting of Mardin was equally important in reviving a “vanishing” Catholicism: the “righteous soil” (*turbatahā al-ṣāliḥah*) which had produced such defenders of the faith, and the “homeland” (*waṭan*) which rejoiced in their evangelism.¹²¹ Rather than immediately recounting Safar’s life, Armalet follows the introduction with a short account of other notable Catholic figures from Mardin’s history, from diverse confessional traditions. These include the first Armenian Catholic archbishop, Melkon Tasbasian (d. 1714),¹²² and the Chaldean priest Jibrā’īl Dembo (d. 1832), who

¹¹⁷ Ibid., p. 996: نبذ الشيعة البعقوبية لاتباع الكنيسة الكاثوليكية التي كان يمثلها الملكيون في الشرق

¹¹⁸ Ibid., p. 1000.

¹¹⁹ Tarrazi, *al-Salāsīl al-tārīkhīyah*, pp. 17-21.

¹²⁰ On Safar, see B. Heyberger, ‘The Migration of Middle Eastern Christians and European Protection: A Long History’, in idem, *Middle Eastern and European Christianity, 16th-20th Century: Connected Histories*, ed. A. Girard, C. Santus, V. Kontouma and K. Sanchez Summerer, trans. M. Robitaille-Ibbett (Edinburgh, 2023), pp. 144; C. Santus, ‘Wandering Lives: Eastern Christian Pilgrims, Alms-Collectors and “Refugees” in Early Modern Rome’, in Matthew Coneys Wainwright and Emily Michelson (eds), *A Companion to Religious Minorities in Early Modern Rome* (Leiden; Boston, 2021), p. 256, 259-60.

¹²¹ Armalet, ‘al-Sayyid Athanāsīyūs Safar al-‘Aṭṭār al-Mārdīnī’, p. 563.

¹²² Ibid., p. 563.

established the Antonian Chaldean brotherhood.¹²³ From the Syriac Orthodox community, Armalet refers to Patriarch Andrew Akhijān, and certain individuals who would “secretly frequent the Chaldean church” in Mardin: Arsān and Sulaymān, sons of the priest Safar; ‘Abd al-Nūr the deacon; and Ḥannā al-‘Aṭṭār (presumably father of the present subject).¹²⁴ While the title of the article indicates a solo biography, Armalet in fact slots Safar’s life into a genealogy of great Catholics from Mardin.

It is interesting to observe how Armalet approaches the issue of a life lived largely outside of Mardin, despite it being Safar’s episcopal see. While glossing over his travels to Aleppo (where he was ordained), to Persia with French consul François Piquet, and to Rome, Armalet is much more focussed on forging present, local links with Safar’s heritage. He explains how the *Sheḥīmō* breviary that Safar published in Rome in 1696 was printed at the Charfet press in 1902 – just a few years prior – by Patriarch Ephrem Raḥmānī.¹²⁵ Armalet also devotes space to the two Syriac Catholic monastic foundations that Safar helped to set up: the Monastery of St. Ephrem in Rome in 1696 in consultation with Patriarch Peter Shāhbaddīn, intended as a Syriac Catholic seminary (*madrāsah li-abnā’ al-millah*), and that of St. Ephrem al-Raghm in 1706 in Baabda district, Mount Lebanon.¹²⁶ Lamenting that both monasteries had since been lost by the Syriac Catholic community and repurposed,¹²⁷ he establishes their connection to Mardin through a claim which we witnessed in his article on local monasteries: that building a monastery in “Mardin or Edessa” had been Safar’s original plan.¹²⁸ While shedding light on Armalet’s use of Safar al-Mārdīnī to contextualise Syriac Catholicism within seventeenth-century Mardin, the article also raises an important point concerning access to resources. After noting both the *Sheḥīmō* breviary and the travelogue which Safar authored, Armalet concludes that “if it were not for the difficult travels endured throughout his [Safar’s] life,

¹²³ Ibid., p. 564. On Dembo and his activities at Rabban Hormizd Monastery, see M. Brière, ‘Histoire du couvent de Rabban Hormizd de 1808 à 1832’, *Revue de l’Orient chrétien*, 15 (1910), pp. 410–24; 16 (1911), pp. 113–27, 249–54, 346–55. According to the editor, the text is a translation of a Syriac biography, written by the Chaldean monk Paul in 1895 for Louis Cheikho: *ibid.* (1911), p. 355.

¹²⁴ Armalet, ‘al-Sayyid Athanāsiyūs Safar al-‘Aṭṭār al-Mārdīnī’, p. 564.

¹²⁵ Ibid., p. 569.

¹²⁶ Ibid., pp. 567–8. On the church and hospice of St. Ephrem in Rome, see Santus, ‘Wandering Lives’, p. 239, 256. A “church of the Syrians in Rome” is also mentioned in the *Life of Eliya* (USJ 31, p. 42). On St. Ephrem al-Raghm, see I. A. Hayek, *Tārīkh Dayr Mār Afrām al-Raghm, al-Shabbānīyah, wa-Dayr Mār Afrām bi-Mārdīn* (Mkalles, 1984), pp. 13–103.

¹²⁷ Armalet, ‘al-Sayyid Athanāsiyūs Safar al-‘Aṭṭār al-Mārdīnī’, p. 568.

¹²⁸ Ibid., p. 567.

then he would have left a significant body of other works to be studied by scholars”.¹²⁹ Had Armalet been aware of Safar’s renowned apology for the Catholic faith and various translations he accomplished whilst in Rome, preserved in the Vatican library and the Bibliothèque nationale de France, it is hard to imagine that he would have made such a comment – or indeed failed to mention them.¹³⁰ Armalet’s interest in Safar al-Mārdīnī would endure: he published Safar’s account of his travels with Piquet in *al-Machriq* after managing to transcribe its original copy on his trip to the Vatican in 1930.¹³¹ Though he does not repeat Safar’s intention to build a monastery in Mardin, he mentions that his body (*hāmāh*) was transported to Charfet “at the request of Philippe de Tarrazi”, where it was “preserved to this day in the library of the monastery”.¹³²

Armalet’s biography of Patriarch Antony Samḥīrī, written in 1914 on the fiftieth anniversary of his death, also exemplifies his attempts at a Mardin-centric Syriac Catholic history. The article relates the life of Samḥīrī, a Syriac Orthodox metropolitan of Mardin who converted to Catholicism and rose to the Syriac Catholic patriarchate in 1853. As it was during Samḥīrī’s patriarchal tenure that the patriarchal see was transferred to Mardin,¹³³ Armalet reveres him as a “luminous star” (*kawkab sātī*) for the Syriac Catholic community, “especially [for those] from Mardin” (*wa-lā siyyamā al-Mārdīnīyah*).¹³⁴ Patriarch Antony, Armalet writes, not only endeavoured to convert many Syriac Orthodox in Mesopotamia, but also invested in church-building projects for Syriac Catholic communities in Mardin and Mosul.¹³⁵ In his “zeal” for his Mardin parish, he commissioned a patriarchal residence, a seminary, and the Cathedral Church of the Immaculate Conception (*Kanīsat al-Ḥabal bi-lā Danas*), as well as purchasing several buildings and a garden. He also acquired the

¹²⁹ Ibid., p. 569: ولولا كثرة الاسفار الشاقة التي استغرقت اكثر حياته لخلف ولا جرم لعالم العلم آثاراً أخرى تذكر

¹³⁰ I.e. *‘Azamat waḥdanīyat al-kanīсах al-muqaddasah al-jāmi‘ah al-rasūlīyah al-qāthūlīqīyah al-rūmānīyah*, preserved in BnF (=Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France) Syriaque 219. See Graf, *Geschichte*, iv, pp. 53-4 for other MSS. Armalet gives slightly more, yet still vague, information on Safar’s works in *al-Zahrah al-dhakīyah*, p. 94.

¹³¹ I. Armalet, ‘Akhbār safar al-Mūnsinnīyūr Fransīs Bīkīt ilā bilād Armīnīyah wa-al-‘Ajam’, *al-Machriq*, 32 (1934), pp. 109-130, 282-295, 441-459, 592-608. Safar’s travelogue is preserved in Vatican Sir. 232 (1686); Armalet’s Arabic transcription of it is found in Charfet Arabic 16/23: Armalet, *Catalogue des manuscrits de Charfet*, p. 490.

¹³² Armalet, ‘Akhbār safar al-Mūnsinnīyūr Fransīs Bīkīt’, p. 608.

¹³³ Armalet, ‘al-Tidhkār al-khamsīnī bi-wifāt al-Sayyid Ighnāṭīyūs Anṭūn Samḥīrī’, p. 418.

¹³⁴ Ibid., p. 401, 423.

¹³⁵ Ibid., pp. 419-20.

land on which the above-mentioned St. Ephrem Monastery would be built in 1884.¹³⁶ Though not explicitly mentioned by Armalet, these buildings would be the first state-approved places of worship for Syriac Catholics in Mardin. Prior to this, they had reportedly used a private property belonging to Samḥīrī.¹³⁷

A new, local style of history writing also emerges in Armalet's biography of Patriarch Antony. The main source of information he provides is the autobiographical account written by the patriarch – mentioned above – which he was personally “gifted” by Samḥīrī's secretary, Yūḥannā Ma‘mār Bāshī.¹³⁸ He also enhances the biography with details from local oral testimony. His article references “some people in Mardin who reported it” (*ba‘d ahl Mārdīn alladhīn aṭla‘ū ‘alayhā*), for example concerning a miracle performed by the patriarch, or the fact that young Syriac Catholics helped to build the Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception “for free” (*majjānan*).¹³⁹ These testimonies highlight Patriarch Antony as pivotal to the development of Syriac Catholicism in Mardin. For example, at the opening ceremony of the cathedral in 1860, Armalet reports: “It was said that Deacon Ḥannā Dūqmāq said in tears: ‘We grieved and longed for a priest, even a one-eyed one ... and now, we thank God for all his gifts.’”¹⁴⁰ Armalet would also show his regard for oral history in other contexts. In his preface to *al-Quṣārā*, he states: “we have strived to be as exact as possible, and so we have made a point of only mentioning reports that we have heard from the very mouths of the few who escaped death.”¹⁴¹ Armalet concludes his article by emphasising Patriarch Antony's continued reverence in local Mardin culture, including “splendid celebrations” (*al-ḥaflāt al-shā‘iqah*) for the fiftieth anniversary of his death.¹⁴² Finally, he prays that the “lost sheep groping around in the Jacobite [faith] return to the realm of St. Peter.”¹⁴³

¹³⁶ Ibid., pp. 419-20.

¹³⁷ Özcoşar, ‘Separation and Conflict’, pp. 214-5. See contemporary account of property in H. Southgate, *Narrative of a Tour through Armenia, Kurdistan, Persia and Mesopotamia* (2 vols, New York, 1840), ii, p. 272, 274.

¹³⁸ Ibid., p. 402.

¹³⁹ Ibid., p. 419, 420.

¹⁴⁰ Ibid., p. 420:

الشماس حنّا دو قماق كان يبكي ويقول: "كنا نتحسر ونتمنى ان نحصل على قيس ولو اعور. اما الان فنشكر الله على مواهبه"

¹⁴¹ Armalet, *al-Quṣārā*, p. i.

¹⁴² Armalet, ‘al-Tidhkār al-khamsīnī bi-wifāt al-Sayyid Ighnāṭiyūs Anṭūn Samḥīrī’, p. 423.

¹⁴³ Ibid, p. 423: ان تُرجع الخراف الضالة المتسكعة في اليعقوبية الى الحظيرة البطرسيّة

These biographies capture Armalet's attempts to intertwine trajectories of prominent Catholic converts across time with the flourishing of the Syriac Catholic faith in Mardin. However, it was not only with biographies of high-ranking prelates that Armalet populated Mardin's Syriac Catholic history. Here we shall consider the eighteenth-century Syriac Catholic convert, Eliya ibn al-Kuzayr, who not only attracted Armalet's sustained interest, but is also one of the key historical figures considered in this thesis itself – particularly in the following chapter.

Armalet first mentions an “Eliya ibn al-Kuzayr the priest” in his *Fragrant Flower* patriarchal history of 1909, briefly referencing his suffering and imprisonment in Mardin in the name of the Catholic faith. However, his incorrect attribution of Eliya to the period of Patriarch Shukr Allāh II (1722-1745), and the fact that the *Life of Eliya* had not yet been published in Arabic (though a French version did exist),¹⁴⁴ suggests that Armalet might have known of Eliya through a source other than scribal transmission – an idea advanced by both Cheikho and Graf.¹⁴⁵ Given Armalet's usage of oral testimony in his biography of Patriarch Antony above, it is possible that his information on Eliya was gathered from oral culture in Mardin. Eliya's status as a local legend appears to be corroborated by one of the copyists of his *Life*, the Syriac Catholic priest Ibrāhīm Ma‘mār Bāshī of Mardin. While he had clearly consulted a text of the *Life*, he also records that one of his sources was the descendants of Melkon Tasbasian, another key character in the text.¹⁴⁶

Armalet would continue to reference Eliya in his historical writing. However, following the release of his *Fragrant Flower* in 1909 (and perhaps more importantly the publication of the *Life of Eliya* in *al-Machriq* by Cheikho in the same year),¹⁴⁷ Armalet's approach to using Eliya as a source is much more thorough and textually evidenced. In fact, Eliya transpires as a crucial testament to a Syriac Catholic past in Mardin. In his account of his travels in 1912 within the Syriac Orthodox heartland of

¹⁴⁴ Scheil, ‘Une page de l’histoire de l’église de Mardin’.

¹⁴⁵ Armalet, *al-Zahrah al-dhakīyyah*, pp. 93-94. Neither Cheikho nor Graf provide any explanation for this other than the lack of a manuscript citation: see Cheikho, ‘al-Kathlakah fī Mārdīn’, p. 591 and Graf, *Geschichte*, iv, p. 56.

¹⁴⁶ CFMM (= Mardin, Church of the Forty Martyrs) 912 (1907), ff. 40r-41v. See full quotation below, Chapter Two, 2.1.

¹⁴⁷ Cheikho, ‘al-Kathlakah fī Mārdīn’.

Tur Abdin, a region which borders the Mardin province, Armalet makes a painstaking effort to inscribe Eliya's life within this geography.¹⁴⁸ He reports:

Then we continued on to 'Ayn Kāf... this is where the deacon Eliya al-Kuzayr al-Mārdīnī headed in 1707, and it made us think about his watermelon drink concoction. As he recounted, he would get a watermelon and some honey, cut the melon, fill it with two spoons of honey, and then leave it out in the sun. Then he would squeeze them and extract 100 dirhams' worth of strong, sharp 'araq. If one of his compatriots came to him and he gave them some [of the 'araq], they would marvel at his creation. Ibn al-Kuzayr stayed in Shūr Aşbaḥ for a full month, before moving to 'Ayn Kāf and then Qālūq, where he came across a grand church ...¹⁴⁹

Here, Armalet decides to engage with the scenery of Tur Abdin through the textual exploits of a Catholic fugitive there some two hundred years before – as opposed to its current Muslim and Syriac Orthodox population. It is a fascinating reminder of how rooted his perception of history was in his own identity, in the sense of both his confessional and geographical affiliation. This acute sense of the self in history writing was, as has been recently argued, not unique to Armalet within the scholarly context of the *Nahḍah*.¹⁵⁰ At the same time, his interweaving of Eliya into personal and local narratives is more remarkable given that, within the text of the *Life* itself, the protagonist actually identifies as from Aleppo.¹⁵¹ As we observed in the case of Patriarch Andrew Akhījān, within Armalet's histories the Mardin connection always superseded any other.

The *Life of Eliya* would continue to be harnessed by Armalet in his works as a viable testimony to the presence of Syriac Catholicism in eighteenth-century Mardin and, simultaneously, to tarnish the memory of its Syriac Orthodox community. For example, in Armalet's biographies of the "monophysite" patriarchs of Antioch in a 1923 article for *al-Machriq*,¹⁵² he quotes from the *Life* as a source for the unpleasant circumstances surrounding the death of Syriac Orthodox Patriarch George I. Armalet describes the latter's body secreting a "disgusting odour" (*rawā'ih mustakraḥah*) for days after his death, even after his tomb had been whitewashed.¹⁵³ Similar uses of the text can be found in his

¹⁴⁸ Armalet, 'al-Siyāḥah fi Tūr 'Abdīn'.

¹⁴⁹ Ibid., p. 662: *وتم استأنفنا المسير إلى عين كاف ... التي كان الشماس ايليا ابن الكزير المارديني قد قصدها سنة 1707 فخطر على بالنا لشراب البطيخ قال انه كان يحضر بطيخاً و عسلاً فيشق البطيخة ويملاًها ملعقتين عسلاً ويدعها في الشمس. ثم يعصرها ويستخرج منها مقدار مائة درهم من العرق الحاد القوي. وكان إذا حضر إليه احد وطنييه وسقاهاهم أخذهم العجب من اختراعه. وأقام ابن الكزير في شور اصبیح شهرأ كاملاً ثم Section corresponds to USJ 30, ff. 28v-29r.*

¹⁵⁰ See Krimsti and Ghobrial, 'The Past and Its Possibilities in Nahḍah Scholarship', pp. 279-80.

¹⁵¹ USJ 30, f. 4v: قلت له أنا حلبی

¹⁵² I. Armalet, 'Fī al-batriyarkīyah al-Anṭākīyah', *al-Machriq*, 21 (1923), pp. 494-507, 589-99, 660-71.

¹⁵³ Ibid., p. 662. Corresponds to USJ 30, f. 31v.

article the following year on the history of the catholicos and maphrian ranks in the Syriac Orthodox Church, when Armalet reports the “obscene language and casuistic objections” (*kalāmihi al-badhī wa-i‘tirāḏātihi al-safsaṭīyah*) Maphrian Simon of Tur Abdin used in debate with Eliya.¹⁵⁴ In all instances, it should be noted, Armalet refers to Cheikho’s published edition of the *Life*, and not the manuscript copies.

It was not only Armalet who saw the value of Eliya ibn al-Kuzayr for constructing the history of Catholicism in Mardin. In Naqqāshah’s history of the Syriac Catholic Church referenced above, he compiles three chapters on Catholicism in Mardin using information from Eliya’s *Life*.¹⁵⁵ Tarrazi includes Eliya in his entry on Aḥnūkh, the converted Catholic metropolitan of Midyat who is mentioned in the *Life* as having ordained Eliya a priest.¹⁵⁶ Interestingly, the source Tarrazi cites for Eliya is not the *Life of Eliya*, but the above-mentioned ‘History of the Guidance of the Parish of Mardin to Catholicism’ by the chorepiscopus Ephrem Aḥmar Dhaqanuh.¹⁵⁷ Meanwhile, in Cheikho’s edition of the *Life* in *al-Machriq*, he styles it as ‘Catholicism in Mardin: an eyewitness account’, and prefaces it with a brief overview of the beginnings of Catholicism in Mardin, even gesturing to some of Armalet’s biographies discussed above.¹⁵⁸ Cheikho also references Eliya’s account when describing his visit to Mardin in 1895 (though the travelogue itself was written subsequently and not published until 1912).¹⁵⁹ However, as an early Syriac Catholic convert in Mardin, the legend and the textual account of Eliya ibn al-Kuzayr – if indeed they are separate matters – appear to have had more of an impact on Armalet’s histories than that of any of his Catholic contemporaries.

This section has analysed how Armalet used historical spaces and individuals to prioritise Mardin in the development of Syriac Catholicism. While it might be easy to ascribe Armalet’s emphasis on Mardin

¹⁵⁴ I. Armalet, ‘Jathāliqat al-Mashriq wa-mafārinat al-Suryān’, *al-Machriq*, 22 (1924), pp. 182-91, 272-80, 364-71, 417-26, 519-27, 604-13. See entry on Maphrian Simon of Tur Abdin on pp. 607-8, which corresponds to USJ 30, f. 6r.

¹⁵⁵ Naqqāshah, *Ināyat al-Rahmān fī Hidāyā al-Suryān*, pp. 128-38, 147-52, 153-63.

¹⁵⁶ Tarrazi, *al-Salāsīl al-tārīkhīyah*, pp. 359-60.

¹⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 360, footnote 1. For other works by Ephrem Aḥmar Dhaqanuh, see MBM 445 (undated), which contains the ascetic work *Avvisi spettanti alla vocazione religiosa* by Alfonsus Maria de Liguori (d. 1787), translated into Arabic by Ephrem and published in Beirut in 1913, and Charfet 472, which contains the Charfet Synod of 1888, copied by Ephrem in 1903: Sony, *Fihrist al-Makḥṭūṭāt al-baṭrayarkīyah fī Dayr al-Sharfāh*, p. 179.

¹⁵⁸ Cheikho, ‘al-Kathlakah fī Mārdīn’, pp. 589-91. Biographies mentioned in p. 595, note 1.

¹⁵⁹ Cheikho, ‘Min Bayrūt ilā al-Hind’, p. 303, note 2.

to his belonging there, it is important to understand the complex interplay of homeland with confessional community in his historical narrative. For example, his contemporary Louis Cheikho, a Jesuit priest who was also born in Mardin to a Chaldean family, projected a much more missionary-centric outlook on the Catholic origins of the town. In his memoirs, Cheikho describes his family as “having been established in Mardin for three centuries, and perhaps converted from Nestorianism through the zeal of the Jesuits, in particular that of the celebrated Père Nau”.¹⁶⁰ Moreover, in his account of his trip to Mardin, Cheikho reports that only 1,500 “Jacobite heretics” remained in the town, with the rest of the Christians having been converted to Catholicism “to the credit of the Latin missionaries” (*wa-al-faḍl... ‘ā’id ilā al-mursilīn al-Lātīn*).¹⁶¹ He lays out successive missions of the Jesuit, Carmelite and Capuchin orders in Mardin since the seventeenth century, mentioning that they “worked alongside” (*sa’á ma’*) Patriarch Andrew Akhījān and Metropolitan Melkon Tasbasian.¹⁶² The only local Catholic ‘hero’ on whom Armalet and Cheikho seem to converge is Patriarch Antony Samḥīrī.¹⁶³ Cheikho’s vision of successful Latin Catholic missions in Mardin is just as worthy of problematisation as that of Armalet, and will be reflected on as this thesis progress. In the meantime, the following section will consider the status of Mardin in another key element of Armalet’s historical agenda: undermining the historical basis of the Syriac Orthodox community.

1.5 Mardin and the Orthodox rival

We have already observed how Armalet used the trope of the estranged, errant Syriac Orthodox to bolster his narrative of Syriac Catholic history. It is perceptible in his Catholicised reworking of the Syriac Orthodox patriarchal line in his *Fragrant Flower*; in his vilification of Syriac Orthodox prelates throughout history; and in his familiar concluding plea for the “return” of “our separated Syriac brothers” to the bosom of the Catholic Church – imagery also harnessed by other contemporary Syriac

¹⁶⁰ Quoted in Campbell, ‘The Arabic Journal, al-Mashriq’, pp. 18-9. Cheikho is referring to the Jesuit Michel Nau who came to Mardin in 1681; an account is found in L. X. Abougit, ‘Récit de ce que les PP. Jésuites ont souffert dans les prisons de Maredine en Mésopotamie’, *Etudes Religieuses, Historiques et Littéraires/ Par Des Pères de La Compagnie de Jésus*, (1877), pp. 580-600.

¹⁶¹ Cheikho, ‘Min Bayrūt ilā al-Hind’, p. 302.

¹⁶² Ibid., pp. 302-3.

¹⁶³ Ibid., p. 303.

Catholic historians, such as Ephrem Naqqāshah.¹⁶⁴ The present section will analyse this theme in Armalet's works, arguing that contemporary Mardin and ongoing rivalries between the Syriac Orthodox and Catholic communities was a crucial backdrop to his continued efforts to write Syriac Catholic history. This is especially pertinent given that Armalet was resident in Mardin during the period in which most of the literature below emerged, working as a teacher at St. Ephrem Monastery (1912-1919).

Tensions between the Syriac Orthodox and Catholic communities in Mardin were heightening throughout the course of the nineteenth century. By the late nineteenth century, the Syriac Catholic population in the district of Mardin, according to official statistics, was just over a third of the size of the Syriac Orthodox.¹⁶⁵ Ottoman archives indicate, however, that disputes over usage of churches and



Figure 2: The town of Mardin (c. 1915-1917).

cemeteries frequently erupted between the two factions (particularly prior to the construction of the first Syriac Catholic church in town in 1860).¹⁶⁶ We even observe the circulation of religious disputational

¹⁶⁴ See e.g. Armalet, *al-Zahrah al-dhakīyah*, p. 111; idem, 'al-Tidhkār al-khamsīnī bi-wifāt al-Sayyid Ighnāṭiyūs Anṭūn Samḥūrī', p. 423; Naqqāshah, *Ināyat al-Rahmān*, p. v.

¹⁶⁵ That is, 1,185 and 3,407 respectively: see Diyarbakır *salname* for 1894-5 quoted in I. Özcoşar, 'Osmanlı Dönemi Mardin Ermenilerinde Dini Değişim', *Soysal Bilimler Dergisi*, 7/2 (2008), p. 438.

¹⁶⁶ See E. Akgündüz, 'Some notes on the Syriac Christians of Diyarbakır in the late 19th century: a preliminary investigation of some primary sources', in J. Jongerden and J. Verheij (eds), *Social Relations in Ottoman Diyarbakır, 1870-1915* (Leiden; Boston, 2012), p. 236; Özcoşar, 'Separation and Conflict', pp. 213-4; Dinno, *The Syrian Orthodox Christians*, pp. 126-8.

literature, such as debates between the converted Catholic Metropolitan Antony Samḥīrī and an unknown Syriac Orthodox priest.¹⁶⁷ The transfer of the Syriac Catholic patriarchate to Mardin in 1854 by Patriarch Antony almost certainly exacerbated the situation. While Francesco Mazzucotelli has viewed this move in a much broader, international context of attempts of re-establish the influence of the Roman Catholic Church vis-à-vis the *Tanzimat* reforms, contemporary Catholic sources painted it as a move to Catholicise the local Syriac Orthodox population.¹⁶⁸ The statement of approval from the Propaganda Fide explained that a patriarchate in Mardin could “best cater to the needs” of the “Syriac nation” and “act more effectively for the reversion of the heretical Jacobites”.¹⁶⁹ Cheikho later stated in his preface to the autobiography of Michael Jarwah in 1901 that the relocation of the patriarchate to Mardin had been “in the hope of facilitating the conversion of the Jacobites, almost all of whom are around this city”,¹⁷⁰ a sentiment which Armalet would echo in his biography of Patriarch Anṭun Samḥīrī in 1914.¹⁷¹ Amidst this Catholic evangelism was almost certainly an underlying concern over American Protestant missions (Episcopalian and Congregationalist) which had started operating in Mardin from around the mid-nineteenth century. In addition to Armenian communities, these missions directed efforts (though apparently with limited success) towards the local Syriac Orthodox.¹⁷²

The Syriac Orthodox were also at a disadvantage to their Catholic counterparts in broader matters of political influence and communal recognition. While the Ottoman government had confirmed the Syriac Catholics as a millet in 1848, the Syriac Orthodox leadership had to engage in a bureaucratic struggle throughout the nineteenth century to disentangle themselves from subordination to the Armenian

¹⁶⁷ CFMM 907 (1844), pp. 60-119; MS also includes disputation of a Syriac Catholic named Buṭrus ibn Shim‘ūn and the Syriac Orthodox metropolitan Zaytūn al-Anḥilī, pp. 120-421.

¹⁶⁸ Mazzucotelli, ‘The Shift of the Syriac Catholic Patriarchate to Mardin’, pp. 269-311.

¹⁶⁹ Propaganda Fide Archives, s. 18 (1855), f. 1, quoted in *ibid.*, p. 305.

¹⁷⁰ L. Cheikho, ‘Autobiographie du Patriarche Ignace-Michel Djaroué’, *Revue de l’orient chrétien*, 6 (1901), pp. 380-1.

¹⁷¹ Armalet, ‘al-Tidhkār al-khamsīnī bi-wifāt al-Sayyid Ighnāṭiyūs Anṭun Samḥīrī’, pp. 419-20.

¹⁷² Joseph, *Muslim-Christian Relations*, pp. 56-78; Mazzucotelli, ‘The Shift of the Syriac Catholic Patriarchate to Mardin’, p. 305; Dinno, *The Syrian Orthodox Christians*, pp. 58-60, 128-31. On discourses of Protestant missions in the Ottoman Empire more generally, see N. Maksudyān, ‘Physical Expressions of Winning Hearts and Minds: Body Politics of the American Missionaries in “Asiatic Turkey”’, in I. M. Okkenhaug (ed.), *Christian Missions and Humanitarianism in the Middle East, 1850-1950: Ideologies, Rhetoric, and Practices* (Leiden, 2020), pp. 62-89.

Orthodox millet.¹⁷³ As Henry Clements has demonstrated, this struggle provoked reactions from Syriac Orthodox communities across different provinces in the empire.¹⁷⁴ Naturally, these issues preoccupied their community head, the patriarch, based at Saffron Monastery: when visiting Mardin in the 1880s, the German orientalist Eduard Sachau (d. 1930) observed that the Syriac Orthodox patriarch Peter IV (d. 1894) was staying in Istanbul in order to petition for “official recognition of his people”.¹⁷⁵ In fact, this situation was likely still ongoing when Armalet was writing his histories in the early twentieth century; there is no evidence to suggest that their fight for independent recognition, or millet status, was ever satisfactorily achieved.¹⁷⁶

This backdrop of tension between the Syriac Orthodox and Catholics in Mardin and beyond seem to have found expression in Armalet’s writings. In an account of his travels around the neighbouring Tur Abdin region, published in *al-Machriq* in 1913, Armalet describes repeated instances of Orthodox hostility towards Catholics, such as he and his companions being refused entry to Syriac Orthodox monasteries and libraries, their monks having ostensibly been given orders to “prevent people like us from coming in” (*taḥrīj al-dukhūl ‘alā man kāna mithlanā*).¹⁷⁷ This was accompanied by his harsh critique of the religious and educational standard of the Syriac Orthodox he encountered: he remarks that they had become “people who only know the appearance of religion and are unable to pursue training and spiritual and temporal education”,¹⁷⁸ warning that this poor state of affairs would lead the Syriac Orthodox to “misfortune and ruin” (*al-bawā’iq wa-al-kharāb*).¹⁷⁹ These views were diffused by other Catholic contemporaries: an aghast Louis Cheikho similarly related being prevented from consulting manuscripts at the Syriac Orthodox patriarchal library during his trip to Mardin in 1895.¹⁸⁰ Intriguingly, Cheikho also blamed the refusal of one Syriac Orthodox priest to sell him a manuscript on

¹⁷³ H. Clements, ‘Documenting Community in the Late Ottoman Empire’, *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, 51/3 (2019), pp. 423-43; S. L. R. Burke, ‘Two Nineteenth-Century Syriac Orthodox Colophons Giving Accounts of The Hamidian Massacres’, *Études arméniennes contemporaines*, 14 (2022), pp. 55-84.

¹⁷⁴ Clements, ‘Documenting Community in the Late Ottoman Empire’, pp. 435-36.

¹⁷⁵ E. Sachau, *Reise in Syrien und Mesopotamien* (Leipzig, 1883), p. 407.

¹⁷⁶ See Dinno, *The Syrian Orthodox Christians*, pp. 64-9; Clements, ‘Documenting Community in the Late Ottoman Empire’ p. 437.

¹⁷⁷ Armalet, ‘al-Siyāḥah fi Ṭūr ‘Abdīn’, p. 743, 839, 841.

¹⁷⁸ Ibid., pp. 565-6.

¹⁷⁹ Ibid., p. 570.

¹⁸⁰ Cheikho, ‘Min Bayrūt ilā al-Hind’, p. 306.

the “corrupting” (*afsadū*) presence of Anglophone Protestant missionaries in the region, who would likely tempt the priest with a higher price.¹⁸¹

Armalet also invoked this Orthodox-Catholic rivalry by refuting aspects of the Syriac Orthodox heritage, particularly in his historical biographies. In addition to populating Mardin’s past with Syriac Catholic protagonists, Armalet sought to strip the Syriac Orthodox of some of their own – particularly from the early Islamic period. In his article on Metropolitan Ishāq of Nineveh (d. c. 700) in *al-Machriq* in 1909,¹⁸² Armalet references the work of Patriarch Ephrem Raḥmānī as evidence for Ishāq’s belonging to the pro-Chalcedonian Church of the East, thus dispelling any Syriac Orthodox claims to him:

There are those ... who claim that he [Ishāq] was of the Jacobite creed, given the abundant interest of the Jacobites in him, their reverence for him, and their citations of him in their writings. However, the first part of the publication by our patriarch, the learned Mar Ignatius Ephrem II, [entitled] *Majānīhi al-Suryānīyah*, which was translated into Latin, resolved this issue as he plainly explained that he [Ishāq] was purely Nestorian, owing to his birth and death among Nestorians, and his elevation as metropolitan by the hand of their patriarch.¹⁸³

Armalet’s attacks on figures from the Syriac Orthodox tradition were at times accompanied by a familiar accusation of decline within their current community. In his above-mentioned article on Metropolitan John Mūdyānā, in which he purported the latter’s ‘Chalcedonian’ – and therefore, he surmises, Catholic – leanings, Armalet implores readers to observe:

... what the Jacobite Church had in that period when it was at its zenith and glory, before quarrels and schism prevailed and ushered in its dissolution and descent that we see today, for it does not have a solid foundation to unite around and to preserve it [the church] against discord and unrest.¹⁸⁴

Armalet would continue to challenge the Orthodox belonging of historic individuals. Recently analysing multi-era historiographical debates over the celebrated Syriac writer Jacob of Serugh (d. 521), Philip Forness demonstrated that as late as 1946 Ishāq Armalet was trying to prove that this (widely

¹⁸¹ Ibid., p. 708.

¹⁸² Armalet, ‘Ishāq Muṭrān Nīnawī’.

¹⁸³ Ibid., pp. 215-6: العفيدة الكاتوليكية الراهنة (على رأيهم) مما يمسّ العفيدة الكاتوليكية الراهنة: 215-6. ومن زعم بانه كان يعقوبي النحلة لوفرة اعتبار اليعاقبة له وثنائهم عليه وايراد كلامه في كتاباتهم. بيد ان ما نشره غبطة بطريركنا العلامة مار اغناطيوس افرام الثاني في الجزء الاول من مجانيه السريانية المنقولة إلى اللاتينية قد فك ذلك المشكل اذ صرح جلياً بانه كان نسطورياً قحاً وذلك لقيامه وعوده في ما بين النساطرة وارتسامه مطراناً بيد بطريركهم.

¹⁸⁴ Armalet, ‘Suryānī-Malakī – wa-huwwa Yūḥannā Mūdyānā Muṭrān Mārdīn’, p. 1000: ما كانت عليه الكنيسة اليعقوبية: 1000. في ذلك العصر وهي في زهوها ومجدها إلا أنّ المخاصمات والانشقاقات قد استولت عليها واعدت انحلالها وهبوطها الذي نشاهده في ايماننا وليس لها اساس ثابت يجمع كلمتها ويصونها من الفتن والشغب

recognised as non-Chalcedonian) figure had endorsed Chalcedonian Christology.¹⁸⁵ In another blow, Armalet would reproduce a profession of the Catholic faith in *al-Machriq* in 1924, which was reportedly “handwritten” by Patriarch Matthew (d. 1819), rival Orthodox patriarch to Michael Jarwah, and preserved in an unspecified document in the Syriac Catholic patriarchal library in Mardin.¹⁸⁶ Armalet was not the only one to Catholicise the memory of Patriarch Matthew: Ephrem Naqqāshah included the same profession of faith in his Syriac Catholic history – a matter curiously overlooked by Armalet.¹⁸⁷

Paradoxical as it may seem, one of the strongest indicators that Armalet’s history writing both undermined Syriac Orthodox history and fed off current Orthodox-Catholic rivalries is the response it elicited among the local Orthodox scholarly milieu. Despite Armalet’s comments as to the state of education among the Syriac Orthodox, their intellectual activity in Mardin during the early twentieth century is well attested. While Armalet and other Syriac Catholic contemporaries were mainly publishing in Beirut, the Syriac Orthodox patriarch Peter IV, through the assistance of the Archbishop of Canterbury Archibald Tait (d. 1882), had established a printing press at Saffron Monastery in 1881.¹⁸⁸ The list of books printed at Saffron Monastery between 1888-1917, compiled by Taşğın and Langer, indicates that Syriac grammars and liturgical works were a priority, but educational materials were also supported.¹⁸⁹ Oswald Parry (d. 1936) observed when visiting Mardin in 1892 that pupils at the Syriac Orthodox Church of St. Shmuni were using a catechism recently printed at the monastery.¹⁹⁰ Historical works were also on the agenda, such as the monk (and future patriarch) Ephrem Barsoum’s history of Saffron Monastery, published in 1917.¹⁹¹ Moreover, between 1909-1914, six journals were established

¹⁸⁵ P. M. Forness, ‘Manuscript Discoveries and Debates over Orthodoxy in Early Christian Studies: The Case of the Syriac Poet-Theologian Jacob of Serugh’, *Harvard Theological Review*, 115/3 (2022), p. 434. The work in question is I. Armalet, *Mār Ya‘qūb usquf Sarūj al-malfān baht intiqādī tārīkī dīnī* (Jounieh, 1946).

¹⁸⁶ I. Armalet, ‘Šūrat īmān al-Sayyid Ighnāṭiyūs Mattā – Batriyark al-Suryān al-Ya‘āqibah, 1782-1817’, *al-Machriq*, 22 (1924), pp. 1002-1006.

¹⁸⁷ Naqqāshah, *Ināyat al-Rahmān*, pp. 423-5: the author is also vague about the document, stating the original is preserved in “the patriarchal residence in Mardin” (p. 425, note 1).

¹⁸⁸ See A. Taşğın and R. Langer, ‘The Establishment of the Syrian Orthodox Printing Press’, in G. Roper (ed.), *Historical Aspects of Printing and Publishing in Languages of the Middle East* (Leiden, 2014), pp. 181-192. On relations of the Syriac Orthodox Church with the Church of England during this period, see W. Taylor, *Antioch and Canterbury: The Syrian Orthodox Church and the Church of England (1874-1928)* (Piscataway, NJ, 2006), esp. pp. 49-74.

¹⁸⁹ Taşğın and Langer, ‘The Establishment of the Syrian Orthodox Printing Press’, p. 189.

¹⁹⁰ O. Parry, *Six Months In A Syrian Monastery* (London, 1895), p. 83.

¹⁹¹ E. Barsoum, *Nuzhat al-adhān fī tārīkh Dayr al-Za‘farān* (Mardin, 1917).

by Syriac Orthodox circles in Harput, Diyarbakır and Mardin.¹⁹² The patriarchal journal *al-Hikmat*, founded in 1913 and issued by Saffron Monastery, described itself as a “religious, literary, historical and news source” journal, and claimed to be the first of its kind printed in Mardin.¹⁹³ The Syriac Orthodox Church was instituting scholarship in Mardin.

The most active Syriac Orthodox engagement with Armalet’s historical oeuvre came after his publication of the *Fragrant Flower* in 1909. Ephrem Barsoum, a monk at Saffron Monastery and future patriarch, would rival Ishāq Armalet in his life-long scholarship on the Syriac Orthodox heritage, particularly in Mardin.¹⁹⁴ The year after its issuing, Barsoum published a rebuttal of the *Fragrant Flower* entitled ‘A Critical note on the *Fragrant Flower*’ (*Kalimah intiqādīyah ‘alā al-zahrah al-dhakīyah*) at the American press in Beirut¹⁹⁵ – a moment significant enough to be invoked by Armalet’s eulogist as proof of his controversies with the Syriac Orthodox.¹⁹⁶ Describing it as a “victory for ill-fated falsehood and reprehensible fabrication” (*intiṣār lil-bāṭil al-mash’ūm wa-al-tazwīr al-malūm*), Barsoum assesses the book in chronological order, meticulously quoting page numbers and passages.¹⁹⁷ Several of his objections to the *Fragrant Flower* reverberate with the analysis above; others are more nuanced. Barsoum criticises Armalet’s mixed Orthodox-Uniate patriarchal succession “built on the foundations of another” (*al-binā’ ‘alā asās al-ghayr*);¹⁹⁸ his accusations of falsification by early Syriac Orthodox historians;¹⁹⁹ his lavish descriptions of Uniate patriarchs at the expense of revered Orthodox church fathers;²⁰⁰ his appropriation of the Orthodox liturgical canon, established by the likes of Jacob of Edessa (d. 708);²⁰¹ and his “distorted” claims (*tamwīhāt*) of Catholic professions by numerous patriarchs, including Behnam Ḥadloyo (d. 1455), ‘Abd Allāh I (d. 1557), David II Shāh (d. 1591) and Matthew (d. 1819).²⁰² Barsoum seals his allegations of distortion of the Syriac Orthodox heritage with

¹⁹² Dinno, *The Syrian Orthodox Christians*, pp. 214-5.

¹⁹³ Ibid., p. 214: it only lasted one year, but was reinstated at St. Mark’s Monastery in Jerusalem in 1927.

¹⁹⁴ For biography of Patriarch Ephrem Barsoum, see Muṭrān Ibrāhīm, *Majd al-Suryān Mār Ighnāṭīyūs Afrām al-awwal Barṣūm*. His studies on the MSS of Mardin were published posthumously: see Barsoum, *Makhtūṭāt Āmid wa-Mārdīn* (Damascus, 2008); idem, *Makhtūṭāt Dayr al-Za’farān* (Damascus, 2008).

¹⁹⁵ E. Barsoum, *Kalimah intiqādīyah ‘alā al-zahrah al-dhakīyah* (Beirut, 1910).

¹⁹⁶ Khalīfah, ‘Al-Ab Ishāq Armalah al-Suryānī’, p. 715.

¹⁹⁷ Quote from Barsoum, *Kalimah intiqādīyah ‘alā al-zahrah al-dhakīyah*, p. 5.

¹⁹⁸ Ibid., pp. 7-9.

¹⁹⁹ Ibid., pp. 16-20.

²⁰⁰ Ibid., pp. 21-8.

²⁰¹ Ibid., pp. 38-41.

²⁰² Ibid., pp. 43-8.

the shocking claim that the Catholic patriarch Michael Jarwah “stole around three hundred of the most ornate and ancient volumes” from Saffron Monastery, which “we heard are now located in the Charfet library”.²⁰³

The indefatigable Armalet issued a response to Barsoum in the same year.²⁰⁴ He was swiftly met with another rebuttal by the Syriac Orthodox deacon Ni‘mat Allāh Dinno in 1912, this time published at Saffron Monastery.²⁰⁵ Mardin had become the scene of this controversy: Dinno’s publication was rebutted by the incumbent Syriac Catholic metropolitan of Mardin, Yūḥannā Ma‘mār Bāshī, in 1913,²⁰⁶ before finally being met with another by Deacon Ni‘mat Allāh, published at Saffron Monastery in the same year.²⁰⁷ Ni‘mat Allāh’s preface gestures to the scholarly rivalry prompted by Armalet’s work. After claiming that Yūḥannā Ma‘mār Bāshī’s work was none other than a “repetition” (*takrār*) of Armalet’s rebuttal, and that it was in fact Iṣḥaq Armalet who wrote it, he goes on:

Everyone knows that if there is something of a controversy in the matter, that it started with them and they are to blame, and we only entered this out of compulsion, not choice, in the name of the truth and faith ...²⁰⁸

Armalet’s confrontation with the Syriac Orthodox heritage in his *Fragrant Flower* (and most probably the other examples above) was being recreated in real time. Centre stage was Mardin – a location historically and currently contested by the two opposing sides. While Armalet’s work seems by far to have generated the most response from the Syriac Orthodox, it is noteworthy that Naqqāshah’s history, published in 1910, similarly met with a printed refutation. The Syriac Orthodox Metropolitan Jirjis Shāhīn of Homs and Hama privately published a response to Naqqāshah’s “fabricated book” (*kitāb mulaffaq*) in 1911 under the less subtle title ‘Removing the masks from deceitful authors and historians’ (*Kashf al-anqibah ‘an wujūh al-mu’allifīn wa-al-mu’arrikhīn al-kadhbah*).²⁰⁹ While published

²⁰³ Ibid., p. 58: ... سرقة منها نحو ثلاثمائة مجلد من انفس الكتب واقدمها هي اليوم على ما بلغنا موجودة في مكتبة الشرفة ...

²⁰⁴ I. Armalet, *Kitāb al-raj‘ah fī tanfīdh ‘alimah intiqādiyah*, (Beirut, 1910). Also noted in Khalīfah, ‘al-Ab Iṣḥaq Armalah al-Suryānī’, p. 715.

²⁰⁵ Shammās N. Dinno al-Mawṣilī, *al-Rad‘ah fī tafnīd al-raj‘ah* (Mardin, 1912).

²⁰⁶ Iqlīmīs Y. Ma‘mār Bāshī al-Mārdīnī, *al-Lum‘ah fī takhdhīb al-rad‘ah* (Beirut, 1913).

²⁰⁷ Afdhiyāqūn N. Dinno al-Mawṣilī, *al-Nuj‘ah fī tafnīd al-lum‘ah* (Mardin, 1913).

²⁰⁸ Ibid., p. i: هذا والكل يعلم انه ان كان في المسألة شيء من الخصام فالبدء منهم واللائمة عليهم وما اقدمنا على هذا الا اضطرارياً لا اختيارياً بأمر الحق والإيمان ...

²⁰⁹ Muṭrān J. Shāhīn, *Kashf al-anqibah ‘an wujūh al-mu’allifīn wa-al-mu’arrikhīn al-kadhbah* (Beirut, 1911), pp. 3-4.

scholarly rebuttals were not an anomaly at the time, analysing the context of this particular controversy sparked by Armalet underscores the significance of the Mardin setting.²¹⁰

Finally, it is worth considering how more intricate conflicts, this time among the highest ranks of the Syriac Catholic and Orthodox Churches in Mardin, could also reverberate in the scholarship of Armalet and others. One major contemporary issue was the purported Catholic conversion of the former Syriac Orthodox Patriarch ‘Abd al-Masīḥ (d. 1915). Patriarch ‘Abd al-Masīḥ had been deposed in 1904 by the Porte, a move which was allegedly prompted by the Syriac Orthodox hierarchy due to his alcohol addiction.²¹¹ Despite returning to Saffron Monastery before his death in 1915, a rumour circulated a few years prior that, after extensive travels, he had defected to the Syriac Catholic Church.²¹² In his Tur Abdin travelogue, Armalet factually reports that:

When we visited Midyat, Patriarch ‘Abd al-Masīḥ was residing there. [He] had embraced the Catholic faith in Jerusalem through the efforts of Chorepiscopus Ya‘qūb al-Malakī on 10th April 1913, then he proceeded to Beirut where he professed the Catholic faith in our church in the presence of Patriarch Ephrem II Raḥmānī on 3rd May 1913.²¹³

It is important to note here that the events described by Armalet were happening in real time – not even at the time of his trip (which was actually undertaken the previous year), but whilst going to press. As Khalid Dinno demonstrates, Syriac Orthodox publications in Mardin were also getting a word in on the controversy. The journal *al-Hikmat* reported in 1914 when ‘Abd al-Masīḥ returned to Saffron Monastery:

...his desire to return to the bosom of his mother, the Syrian Church, as he became certain of the good will of the community (*tā’ifah*) towards him, and as he also realised that those who worked to convince him to join Catholicism did so for their own aims out of hatred towards the Syrian Church.²¹⁴

The following month, the journal also detailed a dispute between Gabriel Tappouni, the Syriac Catholic metropolitan of Mardin, and ‘Abd al-Masīḥ. The former had raised an official complaint against ‘Abd al-Masīḥ whom he had gifted some of his possessions, including a crucifix and a ring.

²¹⁰ See e.g. angry responses to Louis Cheikho’s writings in Schmid, ‘Louis Cheikho and the Christianization of Pre-Islamic and Early Islamic Ascetic Poetry’, pp. 345, 351-2.

²¹¹ Dinno, *The Syrian Orthodox Christians*, pp. 183-4.

²¹² *Ibid.*, p. 185.

²¹³ Armalet, ‘al-Siyāḥah fi Ṭūr ‘Abdīn’, pp. 663-4: اعتنق عبد المسيح الذي اعتنق وكان يسكن مذبات عند زيارتنا إياها غبطة البطريرك عبد المسيح الذي اعتنق في ١٠ نيسان ١٩١٣ ثم قدم الى بيروت واقتر بالايمن الكاثوليكي في كنيستنا بحضور غبطة البطريرك اغناطيوس افرام الثاني الرحماني في ٣ ايار سنة ١٩١٣.

²¹⁴ *al-Hikmat*, June 11, June 24, 1914, pp. 314–315, quoted in Dinno, *The Syrian Orthodox Christians*, p. 186.

Now, presumably owing to ‘Abd al-Masīh’s renunciation of Catholicism, Tappouni was demanding their return.²¹⁵ While it is unclear whether the items were ever recovered by Tappouni, it is almost certain that Ishāq Aramlet would have had first-hand knowledge of the unfolding events. Not only was Armalet teaching at St. Ephrem Monastery in Mardin at the time, where Tappouni was based, but as he indicates in *al-Quṣārā*, he held the bishop in exceptionally high esteem, and would end up becoming his secretary when the latter became patriarch.²¹⁶

This was not the only conversion controversy experienced in the Syriac Orthodox Church hierarchy. The incumbent Syriac Orthodox Patriarch ‘Abd Allāh II (1906-1915) had also reportedly converted to Catholicism when he was Bishop of Diyarbakır, having taken refuge in the French consulate there during the massacres between 1894-1896. In 1906, however, he reverted to his original faith to ascend to the patriarchate.²¹⁷ While Armalet appears uncharacteristically reticent on the matter, Patriarch ‘Abd Allāh’s Catholic conversion was included in Tarrazi’s history in 1910.²¹⁸ As late as 1912, Cheikho had chastised the patriarch in his travelogue: “he exposed that his reversion to Catholicism was not out of good intentions, but rather temporal measures, may God illuminate him”.²¹⁹

The interconfessional competition between the Syriac Catholics and Orthodox in Mardin, both in recent history and in Armalet’s present, provides essential context to his historical scholarship in the early decades of the twentieth century – particularly concerning his efforts to cast doubt on celebrated Orthodox scholars, and his engagement in heated debates in print. It appears that Armalet’s attitude towards the Syriac Orthodox community did evolve after the horrors of 1915-1916; on at least one occasion, he acknowledged their shared plight. In an article published in *al-Machriq* in 1923, he reports that the Syriac Orthodox suffered “devastating slaughter and obliteration” (*fatakū bi-him fatkan dharī’an wa-maḥaqū atharahum*) during the First World War. He even concedes:

²¹⁵ *al-Hikmat*, June 20, July 3, 1914, pp. 336-337, quoted in *ibid.*, p. 186.

²¹⁶ Armalet, *al-Quṣārā*, e.g. pp. 457-462.

²¹⁷ See Dinno, *The Syriac Orthodox Christians*, pp. 192-7. For an alternative contemporary perspective, see historical account in CFMM 250 (1800-1900), which claims that ‘Abd Allāh converted to Catholicism out of distress at the election of ‘Abd al-Masīh (p. 463). See also report of Joseph Tfinkdji in ‘Le catholicisme a Mardin’, p. 30.

²¹⁸ Tarrazi, *al-Salāsīl al-tārīkhīyah*, pp. 351-2.

²¹⁹ Cheikho, ‘Min Bayrūt ilá al-Hind’, p. 621: واضهر بذلك ان ارتداده الى الكلكة لم يكن عن سلامة نية بل لغايات زمنية اناره الله

The liturgy of the monophysite Syrians is the exact same liturgy of the Syriac Catholics. They only differ in the issue of the doctrine of Christ in one nature, and submission to the throne of Peter and reverence for the apostolic throne...²²⁰

Somewhat predictably, however, Armalet finishes with his hopes that these “separated Syriac brothers” would reunite with his community to become “one flock with one shepherd” (*al-ra‘īyah wāḥidah li-rā‘in wāḥid*).²²¹

1.6 Changing historical concerns

After leaving Mardin for good in 1919, Armalet continued his scholarly pursuits in Lebanon. Printing of *al-Machriq* resumed in 1920, and Armalet would go on to produce a plethora of articles on Syriac Catholic history. While few were now centred on Mardin,²²² they instead covered a much wider geographical range, surveying the Syriac Catholic tradition in Egypt, Baghdad and Palestine.²²³

Unlike his previous focus on prominent clerics, Armalet turned to populating Syriac Catholic history with lay characters, composing genealogies of numerous early Syriac Catholic converts, mainly from the Ottoman Syrian provinces. In his work on the Ibrāhīmshāh family of Aleppo, written after 1947,²²⁴ he still professed the missing narrative for Syriac Catholicism: “The history of the Syriac Catholic community has a blank white page which needs to be filled with the histories of its blessed descendants.”²²⁵ In addition to the Ibrāhīmshāhs, he compiled genealogies of other Syriac Catholic clans: the Habrā family (Beirut, 1934);²²⁶ the Tarrāzi family (Beirut, 1934 and 1947);²²⁷ the Shayḥā

²²⁰ Armalet, ‘Fī al-baṭṭīyarkīyah al-Anṭākīyah’, p. 671: اما طقس السريان المنوفستيين فهو طقس السريان الكاثوليك ذاته لا يختلفون... عنهم إلا في مسألة الاعتقاد بالطبيعة الواحدة وفي الخضوع للرئاسة البطرسيية واحترام الكرسي الرسولي المقدس...

²²¹ Ibid., p. 671.

²²² See e.g. Armalet, ‘Ṣūrat īmān al-Sayyid Ighnāṭīyūs Mattā’.

²²³ See I. Armalet, ‘al-Suryān fī al-qaṭr al-Maṣrī’, *al-Machriq*, 23 (1925); idem., ‘al-Ṭā’ifah al-Suryānīyah wa-al-qunṣulīyah al-Faransāwīyah fī Baghdād’, *al-Machriq*, 24 (1926), pp. 99-113; idem., ‘al-Rahbanah al-Bindiktīyah fī Falasṭīn’, *al-Machriq*, 30 (1932), pp. 401-416.

²²⁴ Preserved in Melkite Catholic Church of St. Paul in Harisa, Lebanon, MS401 bis. French translation: I. Armalet *La famille Ibrahimchah dans l’histoire: manuscrit anonyme en arabe*, trans. Gilbert Brahamsha (Paris 1999).

²²⁵ SPFH 401 bis, p. 3: في تاريخ الامة السريانية الكاثوليكية صحيفة بيضاء فارغة تقتقر إلى من يملأها فيدرج فيها أخبار مشاهير أجدادها الميامين

²²⁶ I. Armalet, *Ajmal al-zahrah fī ḥadīqat Āl Habrā* (Beirut, 1934).

²²⁷ I. Armalet, *Wathā’iq khaṭṭīyah fī ‘alāqat Āl Tarrāzī bi-al-millah al-Suryānīyah* (Beirut, 1934); idem., *Usrat Āl Ṭarrāzī* (Beirut, 1947). Manuscript copy in Charfet Arabic 16/25: Armalet, *Catalogue des manuscrits de Charfet*, p. 491.

family (unpublished);²²⁸ the Hindī family (unpublished);²²⁹ the Fattāl family (unpublished);²³⁰ and the Kafūrī family (unpublished).²³¹

Mardin, having been centre stage for Armalet's Syriac Catholic history-writing project, appears to have been no longer suited to this purpose. Not only had the Syriac Catholic patriarchate been transferred to Beirut, but the Christian population of the town had almost been wiped out. Armalet depicts the few survivors in eastern Anatolia as "neither alive nor dead" (*bayna ahyā' wa-amwāt*).²³² He reports in *al-Quṣārā* that the main Syriac Catholic church in Mardin became a grain and weapons store, as did that of the Capuchins.²³³ The Monastery of St. Ephrem, which Armalet had held up as the pinnacle of Syriac Catholic success in Mardin, had been stripped of all its valuables and repurposed as an orphanage for Armenian and Syriac children.²³⁴ After over a century, it was reconsecrated by the Syriac Catholic patriarch Ignatius Joseph Yonan in October 2022.²³⁵

Armalet's continued affection for his hometown – of which there is no record that he ever visited again – can be grasped through his contributions to other genres. In 1927, he published a book of 'Mardinite' proverbs, in which he alphabetically compiled colloquial sayings in the local Arabic dialect. Describing proverbs as "the most beautiful heirloom" (*ajmal turāth*) which can be passed down, his preface is a poignant reminder of Mardin's recent history. He explains that the collection was intended "for the enjoyment of dear countrymen dispersed across different corners, whose number has increased in these times", citing the "innumerable calamities and sufferings during the crushing war, which we bore witness to in our book *al-Quṣārā fī nakabāt al-Naṣārā*".²³⁶

²²⁸ I. Armalet, *Ḥaqā'iq tārīkhīyah 'an usrat Shayhā al-Suryānīyah*: referenced in Khalīfah, 'al-Ab Iṣḥāq Armalah al-Suryānī', p. 718, no. 7; idem, *Fransīs Shayhā wa-akhbār usratihī*: ibid., p. 718, no. 22.

²²⁹ I. Armalet, *Lamḥah tārīkhīyah 'an usrat Hindī al-Ḥalabīyah*: ibid., p. 718, no. 8.

²³⁰ I. Armalet, *Uqd al-lāl fī shajrat Āl Fattāl*: ibid., p. 718, no. 9.

²³¹ I. Armalet, *Uqd al-lāl fī shajrat Āl Kafūrī*: ibid., p. 718, no. 9.

²³² Armalet, *al-Quṣārā*, p. 487.

²³³ Ibid., pp. 253-5.

²³⁴ Ibid., pp. 123, 207, 455-6.

²³⁵ Joseph Tulloch, 'Syriac monastery in Turkey reopens after 100 years'

<https://www.vaticannews.va/en/church/news/2022-10/syriac-monastery-mor-efrem-reopening-assyrian-liturgy.html> (20 May 2024).

²³⁶ I. Armalet, *Salwā al-rā' idīn fī amthāl Mārdīn* (Beirut, 1927), p. 4: لبتسلى بها الوطنيون الأعماء المشتتون في اطراف البلاد وقد ازداد عددهم في عهدنا ولا سيما بعدما تكبدوا من النكبات والعذابات اثناء الحرب الطاحنة اشكالاً والواناً على ما اثبتناه في كتابنا "القصارى في نكبات النصارى"...

In his scholarly discourse, Armalet would increasingly shift his once localised scope towards Assyrian nationalism. Despite the earlier roots of this movement in the nineteenth century, it continued to grow among Syriac Christians after the First World War.²³⁷ Armalet published articles in *al-Machriq* which sought to unite all Syriac Christians (including Maronites and Melkites) as descendants of the Assyrians of the ancient Near East, and to affirm the antiquity of the Syriac language and liturgy,²³⁸ as well as Assyrian architecture.²³⁹ His interest in promoting classical Syriac literature and language, the topic of his very first publication, also persevered.²⁴⁰ This phase in Armalet's scholarship, while not the purview of the present chapter, would doubtless be a fruitful topic for investigation.

Conclusion

This chapter has captured a particular moment in a history-writing project which, in reality, spanned a lifetime. Armalet's scholarship between 1907-1915 focussed on crafting for his Syriac Catholic community a historical narrative which, until this point, had been threadbare at best. For this reason, the term 'invention' is considered a justified description of his contribution. Armalet not only presented his histories as quenching a "pressing need" within the community, but also managed to beat the two other renowned Syriac Catholic historians of his era – Philippe de Tarrazi and Ephrem Naqqāshah – to it.

In analysing the specific Syriac Catholic history created by Armalet, three significant themes have emerged: his assembling of a patriarchal line derived from St. Peter; his emphasis on Mardin as an

²³⁷ On modern Assyrian nationalism, see e.g. A. H. Becker, *Revival and Awakening: American Evangelical Missionaries in Iran and the Origins of Assyrian Nationalism* (Chicago, 2015), esp. pp. 299–338; R. B. ter Haar Romeny (ed.), *Religious Origins of Nations?: The Christian Communities of the Middle East* (Leiden; Boston, 2010), pp. 39-42; H. Muerre-van den Berg, 'Syriac Identity in the Modern Era' in Daniel King (ed.), *The Syriac World* (Abingdon, Oxon; New York, 2019), pp. 770-82.

²³⁸ See I. Armalet, 'al-Rutab al-kahnūtīyah fī al-ṭā' ifatayn al-Marūnīyah wa-al-Suryānīyah', *al-Machriq*, 30 (1932), pp. 161-69, 297-302, 365-71, 530-37, 744-51, 848-55, 933-39; idem, 'al-Malakīyūn (baṭriyarkīyathum al-Anṭākīyah wa-lughatuhum al-waṭanīyah wa-al-ṭaqsīyah' *al-Machriq*, 34 (1936), pp. 37-66, 211-34, 361-94, 497-526; idem, 'Asmā' al-qurā al-Lubnānīyah al-Suryānīyah' *al-Machriq*, 37 (1939), pp. 387-412; idem, 'al-Ṭuqus al-Suryānīyah al-Malakīyah wa-maktabat Bakrī al-baṭriyarkīyah' *al-Machriq*, 38 (1940), pp. 41-62; idem, 'al-Qurā al-Suryānīyah fī mudun Sūrīyah', *al-Machriq* 38 (1940), pp. 175-98; idem, 'al-Suryān wa-al-Malakīyūn' *al-Machriq*, 39 (1941), pp. 355-82.

²³⁹ I. Armalet, *al-Hurūb al-Ṣalībīyah fī al-āthār al-Suryānīyah* (Beirut, 1929).

²⁴⁰ See e.g. I. Armalet, *Lettres de Josué, fils de David, surnommé Bar Kilo, de Sévère Jacques de Bartelli, surnommé Bar-Chacaco, et de David de Beit-Rabban* (Beirut, 1928) in Syriac; Arabic translation of Bar Hebraeus' *Chronicon Syriacum*: I. Armalet, 'Tārīkh al-Duwwal al-Suryānī', *al-Machriq*, 43 (1949), pp. 463-502; 45 (1951), pp. 25-70, 181-99, 351-62, 517-32; 46 (1952), pp. 7-28, 385-400, 513-24; 47 (1953), pp. 1-23, 423-70; 48 (1954), pp. 418-57; 49 (1955), pp. 736-49; 50 (1956), 1-14, 129-52, 257-74, 385-414.

origin point for Syriac Catholicism; and his appropriation of the Syriac Orthodox heritage. These themes reveal not only the diverse historical and historiographical methods which Armalet employed, but also the contextual factors to their materialisation – a transitioning society, new scholarly trends emerging with the *Nahḍah* movement, reform of the Syriac Catholic Church, and interconfessional tensions in his hometown of Mardin.

Mardin, it could be ventured, transpires as just as important a backdrop to Armalet's history as an object of study. Understanding how rooted the historiography of Armalet and his contemporaries is in the history of their point (and place) of creation generates enormous impetus to reassess the original texts and persons which feature in their works. As this thesis progresses, some of the perceptions on Catholicism in Mardin diffused by Armalet and other contemporary historians will be unravelled, making space for the complex web of confessional change and resistance among Mardin's Christian communities during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. This begins in the next chapter with a critical analysis of the conversion account of Eliya ibn al-Kuzayr – one of Armalet's local Catholic 'heroes'.

At the same time, undertaking this research on Armalet and other historians from the early twentieth century is a chance to uncover an equally dynamic moment in the development of confessional and myriad other identities in Mardin and throughout the Ottoman Empire. It is time to incorporate the rich, tireless and immensely invested scholarship of individuals like Iṣḥāq Armalet into our own scholarly agendas.

Chapter Two

The Life of Eliya

When investigating the spread of Catholicism in Mardin, perhaps no text which engages with the issue in such a focused and in-depth manner as the *Life of Eliya*. Beginning in the year 1700, the *Life of Eliya the Priest* (*Qiṣṣat al-Qiṣṣīs Īliyā* – hereafter the *Life of Eliya*) is a first-person account in Arabic of the conversion of Eliya ibn al-Kuzayr, a Syriac Orthodox deacon living in Mardin, to the Catholic faith. As we saw in the previous chapter, the text and its protagonist became a major resource in early twentieth-century scholarship for promoting the Catholic heritage of Mardin – most strikingly in the works of Ishaq Armalet. Yet, despite being a rare early account of Syriac Catholicism in the eastern Ottoman provinces, and an unusually lengthy Arabic self-narrative for its time, the *Life of Eliya* has encountered minimal scholarly attention over the last one hundred years. This chapter is devoted to close reading and analysis of this unique and understudied text, drawing on its earliest and most complete scribal copies (MSS Beirut, Bibliothèque Orientale 30 and 31).

While the *Life* shows some similarities with the writings of Eastern Catholic converts from this period, this chapter will argue that it ventures far beyond its presumed literary context. The narrative incorporates a range of local people, practices and perceptions from eighteenth-century Mardin unparalleled in contemporary sources. Furthermore, as this chapter will argue, the *Life* is not simply an account of individual spirituality, or schism within the Syriac Orthodox Church. Rather, it exposes Catholicism as a disruptive force across the entire and diverse Christian population of Mardin, jeopardising the social, confessional and political fabric which governs it. This effect is not attributed to foreign Catholic missionaries, but instead to several local clergymen – including the author and hero of the text, Eliya. The *Life of Eliya* thus presents an opportunity to move beyond the doctrinal discourses which dominated contemporary Catholic literature in the Ottoman Empire, and to nuance our understanding of this moment of change within the Mardin locale. The chapter will first survey the complicated transmission history of the *Life*, before turning to its historical and literary context, and then analysis of three major themes of Catholicism within the text: social disruption, confessional dynamics, and power dynamics.

2.1 Manuscripts

To our knowledge, the *Life of Eliya* is preserved today in three manuscripts,¹ although Metropolitan Ephrem Naqqāshah implied in his historical publication of 1910 that there could be more.² As we shall reflect on below, the precise circumstances and timeline of even the known scribal transmission remain ambiguous, and make it difficult to establish one authoritative text.

The oldest of these three manuscripts is almost certainly MS 30 of the Bibliothèque Orientale collection at Saint-Joseph University in Beirut (hereafter USJ 30). The manuscript comprises fifty-six folia, but the catchwords, pagination and binding show that three portions are missing from both the middle and the end of the text.³ The textile and paper covering of the manuscript are badly damaged; close inspection of the paper, which is watermarked with a *trois croissant* and Latin initials, indicates that it was likely manufactured in an eighteenth-century European context.⁴ However, the manuscript is undated and unfortunately lacks any paratext (such as a colophon or an ownership note) which could allude to its provenance and/or circulation.

At first glance, the proposed identification of USJ 30 as the autograph by its cataloguer, the Jesuit priest and scholar Louis Cheikho, seems unlikely.⁵ Its rendering in Arabic script – as opposed to Arabic Karshuni (i.e. in Syriac letters) – seems incongruous with what we know of seventeenth- and eighteenth-century Syriac Orthodox scribal culture in Mardin.⁶ Other aspects of the manuscript could, however, support Cheikho's theory. Unlike the other copies below, USJ 30 is the only manuscript which exclusively comprises the *Life of Eliya* text. The manuscript was linked to Mardin at one stage: Cheikho

¹ That is, USJ (= Beirut, Université Saint-Joseph, Bibliothèque Orientale) 30 (1700-1800); USJ 31 (1800-1909); CFMM (= Mardin, Church of the Forty Martyrs) 912 (1907), ff. 17v-39v.

² Naqqāshah states that there are copies of the *Life* in Mardin and Siirt (southeast Turkey) but does not supply further information. While the former could be USJ 30, I have been unable to locate a copy of the *Life* connected to Siirt: Muṭrān D. Naqqāshah, *Ināyat al-Rahmān fī Hidāyā al-Suryān* (Beirut, 1910), p. 130, note 1.

³ Lacunae in USJ 30 are as follows (using original pagination in MS): pp. 64-5, pp. 72-105. End missing after p. 146.

⁴ On watermarks in Middle Eastern manuscripts, see F. Déroche, *Islamic Codicology: An Introduction to the Study of Manuscripts in Arabic Script* (London, 2005), pp. 57-9 and A. Velkov, *Les filigranes dans les documents ottomans: divers types d'images* (Sofia, 2005). The initials, which seem to show 'IM' and 'D' on occasion, can be found in various combinations throughout the 17th-18th century within the Gravell Watermark Archive: see e.g. Gravell No. FOL 0748 (1688); Gravell No. FOL 1884 (1694/5); Gravell No. FOL 1656 (1705); Gravell No. TJ 48 (1789) in D. W. Mosser, E. W. II Sullivan, with L. Hatfield and D. H. Radcliffe, 'The Thomas L. Gravell Watermark Archive' <https://memoryofpaper.eu/gravell/> (5 Sep 2022).

⁵ L. Cheikho, 'al-Kathlakah fī Mārdīn: riwāyah li-shāhid 'iyānī', *al-Machriq*, 12 (1909), p. 591; L. Cheikho, I.-A. Khalifé and P. Nwyia, *Catalogue raisonné des manuscrits de la Bibliothèque Orientale de l'Université Saint-Joseph* (15 vols, Beirut, 1913-1998), vi, pp. 229-230.

⁶ See further discussion below, Chapter Four.

records that it was donated to the Bibliothèque Orientale by an Armenian priest from Mardin named Sookias Cherrian sometime before 1913.⁷ Intriguingly, the wastepaper affixed to the back boards of the manuscript, which comprises a portion of unidentified Arabic text, mentions the neighbouring city of Diyarbakır (though the context is unclear).⁸

Perhaps the most convincing argument for the early dating (if not the autograph status) of USJ 30 is its language. Cheikho – himself a native of Mardin – asserts in his catalogue entry on the manuscript that it is written in the local dialect of the town.⁹ Cheikho does not offer any evidence to this effect. However, a recently published edition of USJ 30 suggests that it could be one of the oldest texts of its length in the Mardin *Muḥallamīyah* dialect.¹⁰ Describing it as closely related to the Arabic vernacular of Mosul, Abdulsattar Elhajhamed evinces peculiar grammatical and orthographical features of the text, as well as loanwords from Turkish, Persian, Kurdish and Syriac.¹¹ The other two manuscripts to be discussed below closely reflect the language of USJ 30. However, they do contain some grammatical differences, for example regarding the syntax, morphology and orthography, which in most cases reveal a more classical register of Arabic than that of USJ 30.¹² While there is no concrete evidence to prove that these changes were made at a later stage, the probability is high. Historians such as Dana Sajdi have exposed processes of “refining” the grammar and language of earlier manuscripts which were practised among Arabic-speaking scholars of the nineteenth and early twentieth century.¹³

⁷ Cheikho et al., *Catalogue raisonné des manuscrits de la Bibliothèque Orientale*, vi, pp. 229-230.

⁸ USJ 30: ... الي دياريكر وصل تاياه لكان علي الصابوني وصلت سلامتي...

⁹ Cheikho et al., *Catalogue raisonné des manuscrits de la Bibliothèque Orientale*, vi, p. 230.

¹⁰ The *Muḥallamīyah*/Mhallami is an Arabic-speaking ethnic group of tribal descent, historically based in the Mardin region. See A. Elhajhamed, *Qiṣṣat al-Qissīs Īlīyā: Ṣafḥah min tārikh Mārdīn, kutibat bi-lahjat ahl Mārdīn wa-ta'ūd aḥdāthuhā ilā awā'il al-qarn al-thāmin 'ashar* (Ankara, 2021), pp. 2, 13-14.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 14-17, 18-19, 20-2.

¹² Orthography: e.g. spelling letter س as ص (صلاطين (USJ 30, f. 10r) السلطان (USJ 31, p. 28, CFMM 912, 30v) كانوا أهل ماردین بولس (USJ 30, f. 14r) بولس (CFMM 912, f.26v); syntax: e.g. singular verb not preceding plural noun كانوا أهل ماردین (USJ 30, f. 1v); كان أهل ماردین (USJ 31, p. 6)); morphology: e.g. dropping letter ى in third person plural verbs كانوا (USJ 30, f. 1v); كانوا (USJ 31, p. 12, CFMM 912, f. 19r); صاروا (USJ 30, f. 20v); صاروا (CFMM 912, f. 26r)). For more detail on grammatical ‘errors’ in USJ 30, see Elhajhamed, *Qiṣṣat al-Qissīs Īlīyā*, pp. 14-17, 20-2.

¹³ See the “editorial interventions” of Muḥammad Sā'īd al-Qāsimī to Ibn Budayr’s chronicle highlighted by Sajdi in *idem, The Barber of Damascus: Nouveau Literacy in the Eighteenth-Century Ottoman Levant* (Stanford, CA, 2014), pp. 174-204. On preparation of textual editions of manuscripts in this period, see A. El Shamsy, *Rediscovering the Islamic Classics: How Editors and Print Culture Transformed an Intellectual Tradition* (Princeton, NJ, 2020), pp. 79-87.

The second copy of the *Life of Eliya* is still located in Mardin; that is, MS 912 from the collection of the Syriac Orthodox Church of the Forty Martyrs (hereafter CFMM 912).¹⁴ As its lengthy colophon relates, the manuscript was copied in 1907 by a Syriac Catholic priest from Mardin named Ibrāhīm ibn Maqdisī Malakī Ma‘mār Bāshī.¹⁵ This was not the first local history that Ma‘mār Bāshī had reproduced: another manuscript he copied in 1880 contains assorted texts on previous governors of Mardin and a biography of the Syriac Catholic patriarch Antony Samhīrī.¹⁶ In addition to the *Life of Eliya*, CFMM 912 comprises three polemical tracts in Arabic against the Protestant faith, each spanning around twenty folia.¹⁷ Notwithstanding the alternative framing which the anti-Protestant polemics provide, CFMM 912 presents a total refashioning of the *Life of Eliya* as reflected in USJ 30. Rather than being a complete text, only part of the *Life* is included, covering roughly the first half of the narrative, or up until the exit from Mardin of Melkon Tasbasian (d. 1716), the first Armenian Catholic metropolitan of the town.¹⁸ This extract is not identified as the *Life of Eliya*, but rather is subsumed into an extensive biography of Melkon, entitled *Tarīkh irtidād jam‘āt Tall Arman wa-Mārdīn ilā al-īmān al-katūlīkī* (‘History of the Reversion of the Community of Tell Arman and Mardin to the Catholic faith’).¹⁹ Melkon is, as shall transpire in this discussion, one of the main characters in the *Life of Eliya*. However, the CFMM 912 version of the *Life* decidedly shifts the focus from the author (Eliya) to Melkon, prioritising his role in this narrative of nascent Catholicism in Mardin. This repurposing of the *Life of Eliya* is implied in the colophon of CFMM 912, in which Ma‘mār Bāshī explains that he used several sources to collate the history; not only the *Life of Eliya*, but testimony

... from the mouths of some of the elderly members of the Tasbas family itself, who would speak about it among one another. [This knowledge] passed from one generation to the next, until it reached us.²⁰

¹⁴ Note that this copy is not mentioned by Graf or Cheikho: see Cheikho, ‘al-Kathlakah fī Mārdīn’, p. 591; G. Graf, *Geschichte der christlichen arabischen Literatur* (5 vols, Vatican City, 1944-1953), iv, pp. 55-6.

¹⁵ CFMM 912, ff. 40r-41v.

¹⁶ Charfet 656 (1880) in B. Sony, *Fihrist al-Makḥṭūṭāt al-baṭrayarkīyah fī Dayr al-Sharfāh* (Beirut, 1993), p. 231.

¹⁷ CFMM 912, ff. 73r – 111v; ff. 111v – 130v; ff. 130v – 150v.

¹⁸ CFMM 912, f. 38v; corresponding to USJ 31, p. 40.

¹⁹ CFMM 912, ff. 2r-41v; (extracts of *Life of Eliya* from ff. 17v-39v).

²⁰ CFMM 912, ff. 40r-41v: والبقية قد سمعنا من فم بعض الشيوخ الطاعنين في السن من نفس عابلة طاز باز. كان يتداولونها في بينها. وكان تلقوها من اجدادهم خلفاً من سلفه. من واحد الى الآخر حتى اتصلت الينا...

Ma‘mār Bāshī here makes an intriguing reference to a local oral tradition existing in parallel with the textual rendition of the *Life of Eliya*. This may also, as suggested in the previous chapter, have informed some of Ishaq Armalet’s historical writings.²¹ Identifying this additional, almost folkloric dimension to the figures of Melkon and Eliya suggests how embedded they were in local narratives of the Catholic origins of Mardin. Moreover, this phenomenon of Catholic history was not limited to Mardin: historians of the twentieth century interested in other Catholic contexts, such as Mosul, also drew on a mixed textual-oral repository.²²

The third copy of the *Life of Eliya* is MS 31, which also belongs to the Bibliothèque Orientale collection (hereafter USJ 31). While it lacks a date, its binding, paper and handwriting indicate that it was produced in the early twentieth century.²³ According to the information provided by its cataloguer, Louis Cheikho, the manuscript is based on another copy made by a Syriac Catholic priest from al-Nabk (current-day Syria) named Ya‘qūb al-Ḥalwajī, though it has yet to be recovered. Among al-Ḥalwajī’s possessions, a “historical introduction” bearing the familiar title ‘History of the Reversion of the Community of Tell Arman and Mardin to the Catholic faith’ was also found and affixed to the USJ 31 copy.²⁴ Rather than fully replicating the biography of Melkon Tasbasian by the same title in CFMM 912, however, USJ 31 only includes the beginning of this historical piece,²⁵ before moving to a separate and complete text of the *Life of Eliya*.²⁶ While the text of USJ 31 closely resembles that of USJ 30, it notably fills out the missing sections found in the latter (with catchwords corresponding to the lacunae in USJ 30). The grammatical variations mentioned above are also notable.²⁷ The hybrid of scribal recensions represented in USJ 31 is indicated in a French note left in its margins, which references both the Ḥalwajī copy and the Ma‘mar Bāshī copy (i.e. CFMM 912): “c.f. la reste de la texte Halouagi [sic].

²¹ See above, Chapter One, 1.4.

²² See Buṭrus Naṣrī’s account of the Catholic movement in Mosul in his history of the Syrian Churches, published in 1913, discussed in J.-P. Ghobrial, ‘The Secret Life of Elias of Babylon and the Uses of Global Microhistory’, *Past & Present*, 222 (2014), pp. 86-88.

²³ Cheikho et al., *Catalogue raisonné des manuscrits de la Bibliothèque Orientale*, vi, pp. 229-232.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 230.

²⁵ USJ 31, pp. 1-12.

²⁶ USJ 31, pp. 6-61.

²⁷ See above, note 12.

Les additions du texte Momarbachī [sic] seront ajoutées ici.”²⁸ From this, we can deduce that USJ 31 was likely written in 1907 at the earliest (the copy date of CFMM 912).

The circumstances under which the USJ 31 copy surfaced are also intriguing. Although he fails to mention these details in its catalogue entry,²⁹ Cheikho’s edition of the *Life of Eliya* in the journal *al-Machriq* in 1909 (discussed further below) offers deeper insight into the manuscript’s provenance. In the introduction to the edition, Cheikho reports his use of the USJ 30 copy, but explains:

Some of the folia in this copy [USJ 30] are missing in the middle and at the end. We requested them in the places where we would expect to find them (*mazānnihā*), but we didn’t come across another copy, so perhaps publishing this [copy] could be an incentive to find them.³⁰

It seems that Cheikho’s hopes were answered. He prefaces the third instalment of the edition in the journal with the following:

We reported in the introduction ... that it [i.e. the manuscript] was missing some folia, and we pinned our hopes on finding them in another copy belonging to one of the readers. We were not disappointed, for Father Anṭūn Rabbāṭ donated another copy to us which includes the missing part of the copy we have been printing ...³¹

Cheikho refers here to the Jesuit priest Antoine Rabbath (d. 1913), a prolific scholar of Eastern Christianity who authored numerous articles for *al-Machriq* throughout his lifetime and published a seminal collection of historical documents concerning Catholic missions in the Ottoman Empire and Persia.³² Although no information is provided as to how Rabbath came across the USJ 31 copy (or indeed that of its source belonging to Ya’qūb al-Ḥalwajī), Cheikho reports decisively that it “completes all the lacunae” of USJ 30, publishing its relevant sections in the journal.³³

Examining the provenance and collation details of manuscripts USJ 30, CFMM 912 and USJ 31 not only highlights the complex legacy of transmission and intertextuality surrounding the *Life of Eliya*. It also reminds us that – despite its ostensible eighteenth-century context – certain scholars of the early

²⁸ USJ 31, p. 16.

²⁹ Cheikho et al., *Catalogue raisonné des manuscrits de la Bibliothèque Orientale*, vi, p. 232.

³⁰ Cheikho, ‘al-Kathlakah fi Mārdīn’, p. 591: وهذه النسخة قد وقع من وسطها وأخرها بعض صحائفها فطلبناها في مظانها فلم نجد منها نسخة ثانية ولعلّ نشرها يكون داعياً للبحث عن باقيها...

³¹ Ibid., p. 732: قلنا في مقدمة الأثر... أنه قد وقع من وسطه أوراق وعقدنا الأمل بوجودها في نسخة ثانية لدى أحد القراء. فلم يخب أملنا فإنّ حضرة الاب انطون رباط اوقفنا على نسخة اخرى تزوي ما وقع من النسخة التي باشرنا في طبعها...

³² His first article for *al-Machriq* was ‘Sa’āt shaykh al-balad’, 5 (1902), pp. 845-50, 898-903, and his last was ‘al-Injīl al-sharīf: baḥṭh nazārī tārikhī’, 14 (1911), pp. 242-55, 333-44, 413-27, 595-606, 910-23. On Catholic missions in the Middle East, see A. Rabbath, *Documents inédits pour servir à l’histoire du christianisme en Orient* (2 vols, Paris, 1905).

³³ Cheikho et al., *Catalogue raisonné des manuscrits de la Bibliothèque Orientale*, vi, p. 232.

twentieth century were instrumental in preserving and shaping the versions that we encounter today. Notably, as with Iṣḥāq Armalet in the previous chapter, these scholars all had some connection to the subject matter of the *Life*: in their Catholic faith and even, in some cases, their Mardin roots.

Despite the dubious origins of the USJ 31 manuscript, and our inability to know what kinds of omissions, modifications or embellishments to the missing sections of USJ 30 it may represent, it is currently the most complete extant version of the text. Both its catchwords and its content also appear to align with that of USJ 30. For the purposes of the present study, then, USJ 31 will be used to supplement what can reasonably be considered as the oldest surviving version of the *Life of Eliya*: USJ 30.

2.2 Printed editions

Almost concurrently with the copying of manuscripts CFMM 912 and USJ 31, the *Life of Eliya* was making an appearance in print among Eastern Christian scholarly circles. In 1896, a significantly abridged French translation of the text was published in the journal *Revue de l'Orient chrétien* by Father S. Scheil, a Dominican missionary in Mosul. Scheil interestingly combined the broader historical value of the *Life* with its autobiographical element in the title of the translation: ‘A Page in the History of the Church of Mardin at the Beginning of the Eighteenth Century, or the Tribulations of the Priest Eliya ibn al-Kuzayr, told by himself’.³⁴ In his foreword to the text, Scheil explains that his translation was based on a copy of an original in Mardin, access to which was facilitated by a “Bishop Paul of Dara”.³⁵ While we might reasonably conjecture that the Mardin “original” was USJ 30 – particularly as Scheil mentions that its ending was missing³⁶ – it is interesting to note that his translation only exhibits the *final* lacuna found in USJ 30; the rest of its content aligns with USJ 31.³⁷ This raises the question as to whether some of the missing leaves in USJ 30 were lost *after* Scheil undertook his translation in 1896. In this case, the authenticity of USJ 31 is perhaps even more plausible. Moreover, the unidentified “copy” of the

³⁴ O. Scheil, ‘Une page de l’histoire de l’église de Mardin au commencement du XVIIIe siècle ou les tribulations de Cas Elia Ibn Al Qsir racontées par lui-même’, *Revue de l’Orient chrétien*, 1 (1896), pp. 43-87.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 44. Presumably referring to the location to the southeast of Mardin, although I have been unable to identify this individual.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 44, 87.

³⁷ In fact, Scheil’s translation stops short of USJ 30: it finishes at USJ 30, f. 53v, whereas USJ 30 runs up to f. 55v.

original that Scheil mentions – which we might refer to as the ‘Mosul copy’ – gives a glimmer of hope that a fifth manuscript containing the *Life of Eliya* exists.

In 1909, Louis Cheikho published the above-mentioned Arabic edition of the *Life of Eliya* in the journal of Eastern Catholic studies he founded, *al-Machriq*.³⁸ Spread over five months, the text was this time styled as an authoritative testimony, entitled ‘Catholicism in Mardin: an Eyewitness Account’ (*al-Kathlakah fī Mārdīn: riwāyah li-shāhid ‘iyānī*).³⁹ As explained above, Cheikho’s edition was initially based on the USJ 30 copy. However, after his ‘discovery’ of USJ 31, the text evolved into an combined reproduction of both manuscripts. According to Cheikho, the first, second and fifth instalments of the edition were based on the USJ 30 copy, whilst the third and the fourth instalments were based on USJ 31. Curiously, Cheikho writes in the third instalment that he also added in a passage from Scheil’s French translation (translated into Arabic) which had been missing from USJ 31.⁴⁰ Overall, Cheikho’s edition provides a fairly accurate representation of these two manuscripts; as he affirms in his introduction, the narrative was “written in the dialect of Mardin, so we told it in this accent ...”.⁴¹ However, closer inspection reveals not only his use of glosses and revisions to language and grammar,⁴² but also slightly concerning omissions of content or – as he puts it – “obvious mistakes which somewhat obscure the meaning” (*al-aghlāt al-zāhirah allatī ta ‘bath bi-al-ma ‘nā fī shay*).⁴³ In one such instance, Cheikho leaves out a short passage in USJ 31 in which Eliya challenges the Chaldean patriarch Joseph II on calling Muslims “idolaters” (*‘ābidīn lil-aṣnām*), though it is unclear whether the “obscured

³⁸ On Cheikho and the foundation of the journal *al-Machriq*, see R.B. Campbell, ‘The Arabic Journal, al-Mashriq: Its Beginnings and First Twenty-Five Years under the Editorship of Père Louis Cheikho’ (PhD thesis, University of Michigan, 1972), esp. pp. 18-20; R. Herzstein, ‘The Oriental Library and the Catholic Press at Saint-Joseph University in Beirut’, *Journal of Jesuit Studies*, 2 (2015), esp. pp. 261-3; D. Glaß, ‘Al-Mashriq, Journal’, *Encyclopaedia of Islam Three Online* (2022), https://doi-org.ezproxy-prd.bodleian.ox.ac.uk/10.1163/1573-3912_ei3_COM_36268 (16 May 2024).

³⁹ Cheikho, ‘al-Kathlakah fī Mārdīn’, pp. 589-604, 665-673, 732-748, 836-846, 890-897.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 745, note 2.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, p. 591.

⁴² Revisions to language include substitution of words e.g. معلماً instead of معلماً (Cheikho p. 591, USJ 30 f. 1v); جريمة instead of جرمة (Cheikho p. 665, USJ 30 f. 22r); يا خرفان instead of يا ابي (Cheikho, p. 740; USJ 31, p. 40). Revisions to grammar include addition of case endings e.g. كنت هرطوقياً instead of كنت هرطوقي (Cheikho, p. 593, USJ 30 f. 4r); طلب مننا برطيل instead of طلب منا برطيل (Cheikho, p. 890, USJ 30 f. 48v). Glosses include clarifications of phrases (e.g. that سلاطين refers to “Christian kings”: Cheikho, p. 595, note 3) and translations from other languages (e.g. that قدمكاه is a Persian word meaning “water closet”: Cheikho, p. 890, note 1). Examples from two longer passages are also provided in Elhajhamed, *Qiṣṣat al-Qiṣṣīs Īlīyā*, pp. 5-7.

⁴³ Cheikho, ‘al-Kathlakah fī Mārdīn’, p. 591. See also reference in Elhajhamed, *Qiṣṣat al-Qiṣṣīs Īlīyā*, pp. 7-8.

meaning” is encased in the patriarch’s anti-Islamic rhetoric or the uncharacteristic discord between the two characters (or perhaps both).⁴⁴

Finally, in 2021, an updated Arabic edition and study of the *Life of Eliya* was published by Abdulsattar Elhajhamed.⁴⁵ The edition is based only on the USJ 30 copy, and provides an examination of the dialectal features in the text specific to Mardin Arabic, as well as identifying the places and landmarks mentioned throughout. Moreover, Elhajhamed draws attention to the fundamental issue of Cheikho’s adaptations and deletions of the language of USJ 30 in his edition for *al-Machriq*, emphasising the need to revisit the original manuscript text.⁴⁶ While the study does not investigate the significance of the narrative to the religious history of Mardin, its manuscript-based approach is a welcome contribution – especially given that other references to the *Life* in recent scholarship have relied exclusively on Scheil’s French translation or Cheikho’s Arabic edition.⁴⁷

The trajectory of the *Life of Eliya* – both through manuscript and print – is in itself worthy of an entire comparative study. However, this being beyond the scope of the present work, this section has sought to highlight the difficulty of establishing one source text for the *Life*, the multi-layered nature of its transmission, and its overwhelming use in the early twentieth century as a historical document of the Catholic movement in Mardin. In view of this, this chapter is devoted to a manuscript-based analysis of the *Life of Eliya*, drawing on what are believed to be the oldest and fullest versions of the text. Not only does this approach bypass the interventions made by Scheil and Cheikho; it also aims to cast new light on sources which have largely evaded scholarship over the past one hundred years.

2.3 Mapping the *Life*

Eliya informs us that his account begins in 1700, though it is difficult to tell how many years after it spans. Certain markers allow us to roughly place the account in the first quarter of the eighteenth century

⁴⁴ Ibid., p. 746, corresponding to USJ 31, p. 45.

⁴⁵ Elhajhamed, *Qiṣṣat al-Qiṣṣīs Īlīyā*.

⁴⁶ Ibid., pp. 2, 5-9.

⁴⁷ References to Scheil: D. Wilmshurst, *The Ecclesiastical Organisation of the Church of the East, 1318-1913* (Leuven, 2000), p. 5, 52, 78; H. Murre-van den Berg, *Scribes and Scriptures: The Church of the East in the Eastern Ottoman Provinces (1500-1850)* (Leuven, 2015), p. 67, 256; A. Croq, ‘De nouvelles formes d’écriture en Mésopotamie ottomane : la *Relation du pèlerinage à Jérusalem* du prêtre chaldéen ‘Abd al-Aḥad en 1707, suivi du *Récit de l’épidémie de peste* de 1712 à Diyarbakır’, *Bulletin de correspondance hellénique moderne et contemporain*, 8 (forthcoming), p. 276, note 42. References to Cheikho: Campbell, ‘The Arabic Journal, al-Mashriq’, pp. 20-1; J. M. Fiey, *Pour un Oriens Christianus Novus: répertoire des diocèses syriaques orientaux et occidentaux*. (Stuttgart, 1993), p. 238.

– such as the plague of 1708, the death of Syriac Orthodox patriarch George I in 1708, the flight of Melkon Tasbasian to Istanbul in 1711, and the failure to mention the death of Patriarch Isaac II in 1722. The geographical backdrop of the narrative is Mardin. Almost all events take place within the town – with reference points including churches, the market, the *ḥammām*, the governor’s residence and the *khan* – but occasionally stray to its outlying villages, such as Qālūq and Jiftlik. Mentions of local historical events – plagues, uprisings, natural disasters – are sprinkled throughout. The rendering of the account in the Arabic dialect of Mardin further fortifies the local boundaries of the narrative.⁴⁸

The narrative voice is ambiguous. While it appears to be recounted in first person by Eliya, the inclusion of the phrase “my teacher said” (*qāla mu‘allimī*) several times at the beginning of the text frames it with a third-person perspective.⁴⁹ This anonymous narrative voice could indicate an account by a student or disciple of Eliya of what the latter related about his life, perhaps even for pedagogical purposes. However, in the absence of any further evidence to this effect, we also cannot rule out that the expression is simply a literary device, possibly even added at a later stage to override the authorial voice of Eliya.⁵⁰

Rather than focusing immediately on the protagonist of the *Life*, the text opens with an individual who will become pivotal to Eliya’s spiritual development. Eliya’s story begins in 1700 with the arrival of *vardapet*⁵¹ Melkon Tasbasian (fig. 1), an Armenian Catholic convert from Mardin and later metropolitan.⁵² After having studied and taught at the College of the Propaganda Fide in Rome, he returns to Mardin not only as a priest, but as an apostolic missionary for his home territory (*rasūlan min al-bī‘ah al-muqaddasah*).⁵³ Despite arriving to a society of “few Catholics”, where people were “ardent

⁴⁸ See Cheikho, ‘al-Kathlakah fī Mārdīn’, p. 591; idem et al., *Catalogue raisonné des manuscrits de la Bibliothèque Orientale*, vi, p. 230; Elhajhamed, *Qiṣṣat al-Qiṣṣīs Ilīyā*, pp. 14-17, 18-19, 20-2.

⁴⁹ Occurs three times in USJ 30: f. 1r, 4r, 5v.

⁵⁰ Discussed by Dana Sajdi in a subsequent rendition of Ibn Budayr’s eighteenth-century chronicle: idem., *The Barber of Damascus*, pp. 198-9.

⁵¹ ‘Vardapet’ is a particular title within the Armenian Church denoting clerics with theological training responsible for preaching and spiritual education: see C. Santus, *Trasgressioni necessarie. Comunicatio in sacris, coesistenza e conflitti tra le comunità cristiane orientali* (Rome, 2019), pp. 52-3.

⁵² In addition to Melkon’s own correspondence (see below), references to Melkon’s career can be found in M. J. Terzian, *Le patriarcat de Cilicie et les arméniens catholiques, 1740-1812* (Beirut, 1955), pp. 175-8; C. Santus, ‘La Comunità Armena Di Costantinopoli All’inizio Del XVIII Secolo’, pp. 57-8 and idem, *Trasgressioni necessarie*, p. 363, 365, 382, 387.

⁵³ USJ 30, f. 1v.

and steadfast in [their] heretical beliefs”,⁵⁴ Melkon’s Catholic teachings soon attract many followers from within and beyond the Mardin region.

Eliya duly introduces himself: he was, at the time, a deacon and prominent preacher at the Syriac Orthodox Church of the Forty Martyrs in Mardin, though he reveals that he is originally from Aleppo.⁵⁵ While initially resistant, Eliya finds himself drawn to Melkon’s teachings around two years after the latter’s return from Rome. A turning point comes around ten folia into the narrative, when – after much debate with his coreligionists – Eliya visits Melkon and declares himself ready to risk everything for his belief in the “truth” of the “holy church”, by which he refers to the Catholic Church preached by Melkon.⁵⁶

After these initial events, Eliya’s actions and interactions revolve around his new-found Catholic beliefs. During the unknown span of years that the account covers, Eliya becomes intent on both securing his ordination as a Catholic priest, and installing a Catholic convert in a position of authority within the Syriac Orthodox Church. Along the way, his allegiance to Melkon Tasbasian and renunciation of Syriac Orthodox teachings leads to the pair’s bitter struggle with two different Syriac Orthodox patriarchs, with each side routinely manipulating local Ottoman authorities to garner support and influence. The text also details their theological disputations with one another and before local Ottoman Muslim officials, including the governor (also called *amīr*), the pasha, the deputy, the qadi and the mufti. In addition to these key characters, Eliya’s vignettes from his daily life – particularly in the marketplace – encompass an assortment of local characters, belonging to various ethno-religious groups (predominantly Christians of different denominations, but also Muslims, Kurds and Jews) and segments of society (clerics, lay people, women, state officials, prisoners).

Amidst relentless Syriac Orthodox persecution and fines by the Ottoman administration, Melkon leaves Mardin for Constantinople. The account is silent as to his fate in Constantinople, where we know from other sources that he died in the sultan’s prison in 1716.⁵⁷ Eliya, meanwhile, after a short-lived

⁵⁴ USJ 30, f. 1v.

⁵⁵ USJ 30, f. 4v.

⁵⁶ USJ 30, f. 10r.

⁵⁷ See entry for Melkon in Collegium Urbanum de Propaganda Fide, *Alma Mater: Collegium Urbanum de Propaganda Fide, 1627 - 1927. III, Centenario della Fondazione* (Rome, 1927), p. 39; Terzian, *Le patriarcat de Cilicie et les arméniens catholiques*, pp. 20, 175-6.

exile and a spell in prison, succeeds in being ordained a monk by a Syriac Catholic prelate from outside Mardin. He also temporarily takes over a Syriac Orthodox church – aptly named St. Eliya – in a village on the outskirts of Mardin, and is granted the right to hear confession by Catholic missionaries (“padres”) in Aleppo.⁵⁸

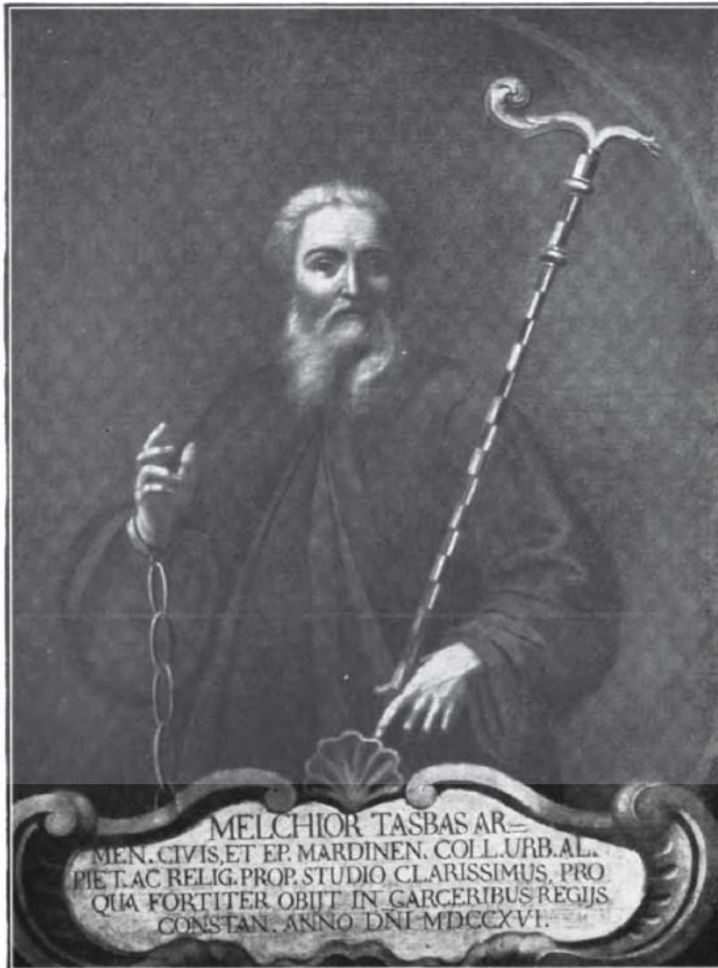


Figure 3: Portrait of Melkon Tasbasian (no date).

and perhaps even that of Melkon in 1716.

2.4 Searching for Eliya

Given the reasonably wide circulation of the *Life* that the manuscripts indicate – not to mention the very existence of the text – it is somewhat perplexing that its author and protagonist, Eliya ibn al-Kuzayr, does not appear to be directly mentioned in any other primary sources. By contrast, the subjects of the few other Catholic conversion narratives from the eastern Ottoman context during this period – such as

The final section details Eliya’s imprisonment, torture and trial by Ottoman authorities following a *firmān* against him obtained by the Syriac Orthodox patriarch. The outcome appears to be in Eliya’s favour: while the patriarch is receives a hefty fine, Eliya continues to serve at two local Catholic churches outside his traditional confession: that is, the Chaldean Church of Rabban Hormizd and the Armenian Church of St. George. Though no date is specified, these proceedings presumably take place before the death of the Syriac Orthodox patriarch Isaac in 1722 –

⁵⁸ USJ 30, f. 39v.

Chaldean patriarch Joseph I (written in 1719), Syriac Catholic patriarch Michael Jarwah (written in 1785), and metropolitan and later Chaldean patriarch Yōḥannān Hormizd (written in c. 1778) – are all well-documented, high-ranking clergymen.⁵⁹

Despite his low clerical status as a (married) deacon, however, Eliya presents himself as a person of renown in Mardin and beyond. He reports how he had previously been designated by his church elite as “preacher of the Syriac Orthodox” in Mardin, granted preaching privileges over monks and even bishops.⁶⁰ After his conversion to Catholicism, he relates, news of “Deacon Eliya ibn al-Kuzayr, the learned preacher” spread to “all villages and towns”.⁶¹ He even – similar to the biographer of Patriarch Joseph I – paints his Catholic conversion in hagiographic hues: he is a “second Paul” for the Catholic faith,⁶² who submits to “Jesus Christ, the Virgin Mary and the Holy Church” during his excruciating ordeals in Ottoman prison.⁶³ Furthermore, as shall be explored in more depth below, Eliya’s actions imply an instrumental role in the local Catholic cause, particularly within his Syriac Orthodox community. It is he who persuades a Catholic-leaning bishop to rebel, who seizes control of a village church, and who instigates the destruction of a newly installed Orthodox icon.

There are a number of possibilities surrounding the authorship of the *Life of Eliya*. Firstly, we cannot rule out that ‘Eliya ibn al-Kuzayr’ is a textual construct, or at least a stylised version of a real person. The ambiguous narrative voice of the text – first person, yet occasionally superseded by another narrator – potentially further distances us from the relationship between author and subject. By the same token,

⁵⁹ The Arabic Karshuni *Life* of Joseph I is preserved in CCM (= Mardin, Mar Hirmiz Keldani Kilisesi) 12, ff. 273v-291r (1719); CCM 6 (1700-1800) and CCM 281 (1800-1900), ff. 202v-234v. For Arabic edition, see L. Cheikho, ‘Tarjamāt Yūsuf al-awwal batriyark al-Kaldān’, *al-Machriq*, 19 (1921), pp. 124-138. The Arabic autobiography of Jarwah is preserved in the following MSS: MBM (= Mosul, Mar Behnam Monastery) 450 (1800-1900); USJ 148 (1900); Charfet Arabic 6/25 (1785 – autograph?); Charfet Arabic 6/26 (1899); Charfet Arabic 6/27 (latest 1907); Charfet Arabic 6/28; Charfet Arabic 16/7 (latest 1930); Charfet Arabic 16/12 (latest 1932); Charfet Arabic 18/12 (Spanish, latest 1906). Charfet MSS consulted in I. Armalet, *Catalogue des manuscrits de Charfet, Publié à l’occasion du 150e anniversaire de l’installation du siège patriarcal à Charfet, 1786-1936* (Jounieh, 1937), pp. 374-5, 375-6, 482-3, 485-6, 503. See partial Arabic edition of the text in L. Cheikho, ‘al-Tidhkār al-mi’awī li-wifāt al-sa’id al-dhikr al-Sayyid Ighnāṭiyūs Mikhā’il Jarwah’, *al-Machriq*, 3 (1900), pp. 913-926. The Syriac autobiography of Yōḥannān Hormizd is preserved in CCM 165 (1700-1800), ff. 72r-88v. For a partial English translation, see G.P. Badger, *The Nestorians and their Rituals* (2 vols, London, 1852), i, pp. 150-160.

⁶⁰ USJ 30, ff. 5v-6r.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, f. 14v.

⁶² *Ibid.*, f. 14r.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, f. 47r. For hagiographic tropes in the *Life of Joseph*, see L. Parker and R. Maxton, ‘Archiving Faith: Record-Keeping and Catholic Community Formation in Eighteenth-Century Mesopotamia’, *Past & Present*, 257/1 (2022), p. 11.

the possibility of a fictional protagonist does not necessarily negate the historicity of the text itself. In fact, the *Life of Eliya* is rich in historically attested individuals, many of whom feature as subjects, copyists and owners of manuscripts throughout this thesis: the above-mentioned Armenian Catholic metropolitan Melkon Tasbasian; two successive Syriac Orthodox patriarchs of Antioch, George I (d. 1708) and Isaac II (d. 1722);⁶⁴ the Chaldean patriarch Joseph II (d. 1713);⁶⁵ and the Syriac Orthodox scholar and maphrian, Simon of Tur Abdin (d. 1743).⁶⁶ Eliya even claims to be a distant cousin of the Syriac Catholic convert from Mardin who lived in Rome and travelled as far as the Americas, Bishop Safar ibn Ḥannā al-Mārdīnī (d. 1728).⁶⁷ Moreover, certain events in the *Life* are corroborated in other eighteenth-century sources – though notably without reference to Eliya. Two of these were produced in a Syriac Orthodox milieu, and comprise an appendix to the Chronicle of the twelfth-century patriarch and historian Michael the Great/the Syrian,⁶⁸ and an account of the patriarchate of George I by Metropolitan Timothy ʿĪsā (d. 1743), superior of Saffron Monastery.⁶⁹ Episodes aligned with the content of the *Life* include the rebellion of Maphrian ʿAzār against Patriarch George I;⁷⁰ the imprisonment of George I by the Ottoman governor;⁷¹ the prayer lead by the latter at the Monastery of St. Michael during the plague;⁷² and the sudden illness of the patriarch after.⁷³ From the Catholic side, information gleaned

⁶⁴ See e.g. USJ 30, f. 31v; USJ 31, p. 34. For contemporary biographies of these patriarchs, see appendix to Chronicle of Michael the Syrian in I. Bcheiry, ‘A list of the Syrian Orthodox patriarchs between 16th and 18th century’, *Parole de l’Orient*, 29 (2004), pp. 222-31.

⁶⁵ See e.g. USJ 31, p. 41. For biographical information, see H. Teule, ‘Joseph II, Patriarch of the Chaldeans (1696–1713/4), and the book of the Magnet. First Soundings’, in R. Ebied and H. Teule (eds), *Studies on the Christian Arabic Heritage in honour of Father Prof. Dr. Samir Khalil Samir S.I.* (Leuven, 2004), pp. 221-41; H. Murre-van den Berg, *Scribes and Scriptures*, esp. pp. 65-6, 258-9, 277-8, 303.

⁶⁶ USJ 30, f. 6r. For contemporary biography, see Bcheiry, ‘A list of the Syrian Orthodox patriarchs’, pp. 230-1.

⁶⁷ USJ 31, p. 37. For biographical information, see B. Heyberger, ‘The Migration of Middle Eastern Christians and European Protection: A Long History’, in idem, *Middle Eastern and European Christianity, 16th-20th Century: Connected Histories*, ed. A. Girard, C. Santus, V. Kontouma and K. Sanchez Summerer, trans. M. Robitaille-Ibbett (Edinburgh, 2023), pp. 144; C. Santus, ‘Wandering Lives: Eastern Christian Pilgrims, Alms-Collectors and “Refugees” in Early Modern Rome’, in Matthew Coneys Wainwright and Emily Michelson (eds), *A Companion to Religious Minorities in Early Modern Rome* (Leiden; Boston, 2021), p. 256, 259-60.

⁶⁸ The earliest extant MS was copied in Sadad, Syria in 1763: see Bcheiry, ‘A list of the Syrian Orthodox patriarchs’, pp. 211-2. For a study of the original chronicle, see D. Weltecke, *The ‘Description of the Times’ by Mōr Michael the Great (1126-1199): A Study on Its Historical and Its Historiographical Context* (Leuven, 2021).

⁶⁹ Supposedly composed in 1730 and preserved in 3 MSS, though I have only been able to locate an edition: see Muṭrān G. Y. Ibrāhīm, ‘Ṣafḥah min tāriḫ al-Suryān fī al-qarn al-sābi’ ʿashr’, *al-Majallah al-Baṭriyarkīyah*, 175-6 (1980), pp. 280-288, and idem, ‘al-Suryān fī al-qarn al-sābi’ ʿashr’, *al-Majallah al-Baṭriyarkīyah*, 1 (1981), pp. 30-40.

⁷⁰ Bcheiry, ‘A list of the syrian orthodox patriarchs’, pp. 224-5: corresponds to USJ 30, ff. 17v-18v.

⁷¹ Ibrāhīm, ‘al-Suryān fī al-qarn al-sābi’ ʿashr’, (1981), p. 33: corresponds to USJ 31, pp. 39-40.

⁷² Ibid., p. 34: corresponds to USJ 30, ff. 30v-31r.

⁷³ Ibid., p. 34: corresponds to USJ 30, ff. 31v-32r.

from the correspondence sent by Melkon Tasbasian to the Propaganda Fide, dating between 1709-1714, is also consistent with the narrative – and supplies concrete dates. For example, Melkon reports the imprisonment of both himself and Patriarch George as occurring in July 1710;⁷⁴ his escape to Constantinople in 1711;⁷⁵ the death of Chaldean patriarch Joseph II in 1712;⁷⁶ and a struggle for governorship of Mardin in 1714.⁷⁷ Whatever the identity of its author, we can surmise that the *Life of Eliya* resembles a reliable account of events in early eighteenth-century Mardin society.

On the other hand, this research has identified several promising – and not incompatible – leads in the search for the historical figure of Eliya ibn al-Kuzayr. In one letter from Melkon Tasbasian, sent from Constantinople in August 1714, he reports among other news from Mardin that “perfidious critics... wanted to kill a Catholic Jacobite priest named Elia, who fled to the residence of the new governor and then escaped”.⁷⁸ Notwithstanding the matching name and confessional affiliation, this could be a slightly garbled summary of events near the end of the *Life*: Eliya’s imprisonment by the new governor of Mardin, Syriac Orthodox notables paying bribes for his murder, and his subsequent release.⁷⁹ Melkon’s interest in affairs concerning Eliya would not be untoward against the background of their close relationship in the *Life*.⁸⁰ Another potential link to Eliya is derived from the manuscript corpus of this project. In the colophon of an Arabic manuscript containing *The Trumpet of Heaven*, a treatise on penitence, the scribe mentions a teacher named “Īlīyā al-Suryānī al-Mārdīnī” at the Armenian Catholic Church of St. George in Mardin in 1739.⁸¹ Not only does the Catholic context of this manuscript align with the interests of Eliya ibn al-Kuzayr, but the reference to Eliya as a teacher and active at the Church of St. George correlates with information provided in the *Life*. If the events at the end of the *Life* did take place – according to Melkon’s account – around 1714, this would imply that Eliya in fact lived for some time after.

⁷⁴ SC (= Rome, Archive of the Holy Congregation for the Propagation of Faith, Scritture riferite nei Congressi) Armeni, vi, ff. 214r-215r, 223r-223v: corresponds to USJ 31, pp. 39-40.

⁷⁵ SC Armeni, vi, ff. 251r-251v: corresponds to USJ 31, p. 40.

⁷⁶ SC Armeni, vi, f. 357r: corresponds to USJ 30, f. 37r.

⁷⁷ SC Armeni, vi, f. 468r: corresponds to USJ 30, f. 46v.

⁷⁸ SC Armeni, vi, f. 468r: “gli perfidi critici... volevano ammazzare un sacerdote cattolico giacobita di nome Elia che fugì alla casa del novo governatore, poi dopo scapò”.

⁷⁹ USJ 30, ff. 45r-48v.

⁸⁰ See e.g. USJ 30, f. 11r; USJ 31, p. 40.

⁸¹ CCM 456, f. 172v.

Regardless of the enigmatic identity of Eliya ibn al-Kuzayr, we must acknowledge that the figure memorialised in the *Life* – and indeed its oral legacy – would subsequently become a crucial piece of the historical narrative of Catholicism in Mardin. This is especially with consideration to the early twentieth century; not only through the scribal copies and textual editions of the *Life of Eliya* which clustered around this period, but also the prolific output of Ishaq Armalet analysed in the previous chapter. Having considered the different possibilities embodied by the literary figure of Eliya ibn al-Kuzayr, we shall now turn to situating the text itself.

2.5 Literary influences

In both content and style, the *Life of Eliya* bears similarities with several contemporary literary genres. A cursory reading could plausibly identify it with Catholic apologetic literature circulating in the early modern Ottoman context. The narrative contains frequent affirmations of aspects of Catholic theology and practice by Melkon and Eliya – namely, the doctrine of the two natures and two desires of Christ (i.e. dyophysitism and dyothelitism);⁸² papal primacy (“the representative of Christ and successor of St. Paul”);⁸³ and the Catholic sacraments.⁸⁴ This pro-Catholic stance is equally defined by rejections of “heretical” Syriac Orthodox beliefs, in particular the Christological doctrine of miaphysitism (i.e. the existence of Christ in a single nature),⁸⁵ and the veneration of the saints Barsaumo and Dioscorus of Alexandria (designated idols and heretics by Eliya).⁸⁶ This discourse strongly resonates with intra-Christian polemics diffused in the eighteenth-century Ottoman world. Examples from the West Syriac context include that of Syriac Catholic convert Maphrian Isaac ibn Jubayr of Mosul (d. 1721), who wrote in defence of the Christological doctrine of dyophysitism in around 1700;⁸⁷ Maphrian Simon of Tur Abdin, who criticised the Catholic sacraments in his apology for the Syriac Orthodox faith, written

⁸² USJ 30, f. 6r, 12r, 44v.

⁸³ Ibid., f. 10r; USJ 31, p. 43.

⁸⁴ USJ 30, f. 36v, 39v; USJ 31, p. 37.

⁸⁵ USJ 30, f. 6r, 44v; USJ 31, p. 60. For an overview of Christological doctrine in the early Syriac churches, see T. Hainthaler, ‘Theological Doctrines and Debates within Syriac Christianity’, in D. King (ed.), *The Syriac World* (Abingdon, Oxon; New York, 2019), pp. 377-90.

⁸⁶ USJ 30, f. 51r, 53v; USJ 31, p. 36, 38.

⁸⁷ Entitled *Mudrik al-najāt wa-maḥajjat al-fawz bi-al-ḥayyāt* (‘Discerning Salvation and the Path to Achieving Life’): see Graf, *Geschichte*, iv, pp. 48-9. The earliest known version is preserved in CCM 338 (1699-1700).

in 1720;⁸⁸ and Metropolitan George al-Ḥalabī of Jerusalem, who defended miaphysite Christology in another Syriac Orthodox apology composed in around 1750.⁸⁹ Moreover, the above-mentioned Catholic conversion account of Chaldean patriarch Joseph I, composed in 1719 by the Chaldean bishop ‘Abd-al Aḥad, similarly upholds Catholic doctrine, practices and anathematisation of particular East Syriac saints, including Nestorius “the excommunicate”.⁹⁰

The use of theological disputations in the *Life of Eliya* – in the form of dialogues with Orthodox prelates and at the Muslim court – also has stylistic parallels in contemporary Catholic conversion accounts. Similar scenes are witnessed, for example, in the *Life of Joseph*, the autobiography of Yōḥannān Hormizd,⁹¹ and the martyrology of the Armenian Catholic convert Komitas (d. 1707) from Constantinople, produced in the late eighteenth century.⁹² Copies of theological debates between the Syriac Orthodox patriarch George I – one of Eliya’s opponents — and prominent Catholic converts Metropolitan Rizq Allāh Amīn Khān (d. 1701) and Maphrian Isaac ibn Jubayr, also date to the eighteenth century.⁹³ While the religious disputation genre has a long history in Arabic and Syriac literature,⁹⁴ it is noteworthy when considering influences on the *Life of Eliya* that this genre was simultaneously emerging in European Catholic contexts. As Bernard Heyberger has explored, the Jesuit missionary Michel Nau (d. 1683), who spent time in Aleppo and Mardin, advocated the use of

⁸⁸ Entitled *Ṣilāḥ al-dīn wa-turs al-yaqīn* (‘The Weapon of Religion and the Shield of Certainty’). Preserved in CFMM 391 (1722); CFMM 392 (1768-9); CFMM 393 (1777-8); Mingana Syriac 608 (1728): see A. Mingana, *Catalogue of the Mingana Collection of Manuscripts, Now in the Possession of the Trustees of the Woodbrooke Settlement, Selly Oak, Birmingham* (4 vols, Cambridge, 1933), i, p. 172.

⁸⁹ Entitled *al-‘Itiqād al-ṣaḥīḥ fī tajassud al-Masīḥ* (‘Treatise on the True Christological Doctrine’). See Graf, *Geschichte*, iv, pp. 31-3. Preserved in CFMM 375 (1753); CFMM 376 (1700-1800); SOAA (= Aleppo, Syriac Orthodox Church. Archdiocese of Aleppo) 39 H (1751-4); MGMT (= Midyat, Dayro d-Mor Gabriel) 190 (1775), pp. 113-195; Mingana Syriac 344 (undated): Mingana, *Catalogue of the Mingana Collection*, i, pp. 638-41.

⁹⁰ For discussion of Catholic theology in the *Life of Joseph*, see Parker and Maxton, ‘Archiving Faith’, pp. 98-9. Quote from CCM 12, f. 276v.

⁹¹ See e.g. CCM 165, f. 74r, ff. 76r-77r.

⁹² See H. R. Shapiro, ‘Afterlives of Komitas K’ēomurchean (1656-1707): Commemorating an Istanbul-Armenian Martyr in Armeno-Turkish Literature and Sacred Pilgrimage’, *Journal of Ottoman Studies*, 58 (2021), pp. 95-104.

⁹³ See e.g. Charfet Arabic 5/22 (at least 1778), 5/21 (undated) and 5/23 (undated) in Armalet, *Catalogue des manuscrits de Charfet*, pp. 357-8.

⁹⁴ See S. H. Griffith, *The Church in the Shadow of the Mosque: Christians and Muslims in the World of Islam* (Princeton, NJ, 2012), pp. 75-105.

disputational dialogues – both with Muslim and Orthodox Christian intellectuals – in Catholic missionary literature.⁹⁵

Yet, while the apologetic dimension to the *Life of Eliya* is undeniable, it broadens the horizons of the Catholic polemics and conversion accounts above in compelling ways. Firstly, the *Life of Eliya* does not confine its exposition of Catholicism to theological discourse among a religious elite. These debates are instead merged into a series of vignettes from Eliya's life, which weave an assortment of local characters and places into his narrative of conversion, and offer a window into Ottoman Mardin society more generally. We encounter characters outside the ecclesiastical hierarchy, the clergy, Eliya's Syriac Orthodox community and even – albeit less often – the Christian population of Mardin. He frequently mixes with individuals of different denominational and cultural backgrounds, operating in at least three languages (Arabic, Kurdish and Syriac). Moreover, Eliya's work at the cotton market alongside his clerical duties – apparently a normality for local clergy – reveals aspects of both social and economic life in eighteenth-century Mardin.⁹⁶ The cotton market gestures to Mardin's status in regional trade networks,⁹⁷ and exposes us to types of social interactions – confrontations, gossip, rumours – among a broader spectrum of society than an exclusively ecclesiastical setting could provide. Moreover, in its use of Arabic script, Eliya's account notably does not follow the more common practice among Syriac Orthodox scribal circles in this period of using Arabic Karshuni (i.e. Arabic in Syriac letters).⁹⁸ As Henry Shapiro argued with the employment of Armeno-Turkish (rather than classical Armenian) for the account of Catholic convert Komitas, this could indicate that the narrative was intended for consumption beyond clerical (or perhaps even Syriac Christian) circles.⁹⁹

⁹⁵ B. Heyberger, 'Polemic Dialogues between Christians and Muslims in the Seventeenth Century', *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient*, 55 (2012), pp. 495-516. See Nau's account of his stay in Mardin in L. X. Abougit, 'Récit de ce que les PP. Jésuites ont souffert dans les prisons de Maredine en Mésopotamie'. *Etudes Religieuses, Historiques et Littéraires/ Par Des Pères de La Compagnie de Jésus*, (1877), pp. 580-600.

⁹⁶ USJ 30, f. 18v, 25v. See broader discussion of clerics having trades in B. Heyberger, *Les chrétiens du Proche-Orient au temps de la réforme catholique (Syrie, Liban, Palestine, XVIIe-XVIIIe siècles)* (Rome, 1994), pp. 99-100.

⁹⁷ See references to Mardin cotton industry in contemporary travelogues: J. Otter, *Voyage en Turquie et en Perse: avec une relation des expéditions de Tahmas Kouli-Khan* (2 vols, Paris, 1748), ii, pp. 268-70; C. Niebuhr, *Travels through Arabia and other Countries in the East* (2 vols, Edinburgh, 1792), ii, pp. 290-1; G.-A. Olivier, *Voyage Dans l'empire Othoman, l'Égypte et La Perse. Fait Par Ordre Du Gouvernement, Pendant Les Six Premières Années de La République* (6 vols, Paris, 1801-1807), iv, p. 245. See also D. R. Khoury, *State and Provincial Society in the Ottoman Empire: Mosul, 1540-1834* (Cambridge, 1997), p. 35.

⁹⁸ See more below, Chapter Four, 4.4.

⁹⁹ Shapiro, 'Afterlives of Komitas K'eōmurchean', pp. 94-7.

The *Life of Eliya* additionally resonates with the ‘nouveau literacy’ phenomenon observed by Dana Sajdi in contemporary chronicles emerging in the eighteenth-century Ottoman Levant.¹⁰⁰ The purported author, Eliya ibn al-Kuzayr, not only represents a literate, yet non-elite (‘non-‘*ulamā*’), social class;¹⁰¹ he also espouses the authority of being an ‘eyewitness’. He is the chief source for the events he recounts, and uses the first-person voice accordingly.¹⁰² As mentioned above, Eliya ascribes himself and his conversion a pivotal role in events taking place around him. Moreover, while mainly focussed on local Christian affairs, Eliya periodically chronicles episodes concerning society as a whole – signalled by phrases such as “now let us return to news of the town” (*fal-narji ‘ ilā akhbār al-balad*) and “among the trials of that time” (*wa-min tajārīb al-zamān*).¹⁰³ In particular, the reader is kept abreast of developments in local Ottoman government: the popular uprising against the governor of Mardin, during which time no one went to work;¹⁰⁴ the governor who consulted soothsayers before his dismissal;¹⁰⁵ and the subsequent struggle between two candidates for governorship of Mardin.¹⁰⁶ While defending the Catholic faith, the *Life of Eliya* situates itself within contemporary trends of Arabic historiography in the Ottoman Empire.

In light of the discussion above, we might concede that the *Life of Eliya* does not fit easily into any one literary genre – chronicle, hagiography or apology. Having said this, fixating on genre may cause us to lose sight of the unique value this source holds for the present study. It allows for engagement with recent scholarship on global Catholicism not only in its local horizons, but also in creating opportunities for – unlike most other primary sources in this thesis – a less institutional and doctrinally focused, more ethnographic approach to this divisive phase in Mardin’s religious history.¹⁰⁷ When

¹⁰⁰ See Sajdi, *The Barber of Damascus*, esp. pp. 77-114.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*, p. 77.

¹⁰² *Ibid.*, esp. pp. 139-41. See also *idem.*, ‘Peripheral visions: The worlds and worldviews of commoner chroniclers in the 18th century Ottoman Levant’ (PhD thesis, Columbia University, 2002), esp. pp. 28-34.

¹⁰³ USJ 30, f. 30v, 27v. Comparable observations are made of Mikhā’il Burayk’s chronicle in Sajdi, *The Barber of Damascus*, pp. 78-81, 142-3. See also B. Masters, ‘The View from the Province: Syrian Chronicles of the Eighteenth Century’, *Journal of the American Oriental Society*, 114/3 (1994), pp. 353–62.

¹⁰⁴ USJ 30, ff. 26v-27v.

¹⁰⁵ USJ 30, ff. 37r-v.

¹⁰⁶ USJ 30, f. 46v.

¹⁰⁷ See discussion of this approach in M. Laven, ‘Legacies of the Counter-Reformation and the Origins of Modern Catholicism’, in A. Bamji, G. H. Janssen and M. Laven (eds), *The Ashgate Research Companion to the Counter-Reformation* (London, 2013), pp. 453-4. For application in Ottoman religious history, see J. Grehan, *Twilight of the Saints: Everyday Religion in Ottoman Syria and Palestine* (New York, 2014); in Ottoman Catholic context

investigating a predominantly illiterate society, this potential is crucial.¹⁰⁸ Moreover, the broad perspective of the *Life* helps us not only in investigating early Catholic movements in Mardin, but in understanding the specific context of interconfessional Christianity in which this occurred. Despite his Syriac Orthodox background, Eliya's story of conversion cannot isolate itself from the wider Christian society to which he belongs.

In fact, this chapter will argue that the most vivid impression of Catholicism that the *Life of Eliya* offers is the impact – or, more aptly, the *disruption* – that it inflicts across the spectrum of Christian society in Mardin. More specifically, both the return of the Armenian Catholic missionary Melkon and Eliya's conversion to Catholicism are depicted as catalysts for the disruption of the social, confessional and political balance of local Christianity. Eliya relates the unfolding situation in detail, regardless of his evident commitment to the Catholic cause. The following sections will closely examine how themes of disruption pervade the narrative, and what this can tell us about the specific nature of nascent Catholicism and Christianity more generally in eighteenth-century Mardin.

2.6 Catholicism as social disruption

At the beginning of the *Life*, just after Melkon returns from Rome, Eliya describes his preaching at the Armenian Orthodox Church of St. George in the following terms:

The community was split in two, and even some of [Melkon's] own family wanted to suppress him and have him killed by stoning. On one occasion, a wicked old woman started to beat him in the middle of the church. She broke his staff and tore his robes and headdress, while he endured it all like a gentle lamb.¹⁰⁹

Notwithstanding the stylised, hagiographic quality to the passage, the message seems clear: the spread of Catholicism in Mardin ruptures different social collectives – families, congregations, communities – and provokes violent reactions. Even towards the end of the narrative, when Eliya is on trial for his Catholic beliefs, one observer in the crowd tells him that he had “never witnessed such commotion in

specifically, see e.g. Heyberger, *Les chrétiens du Proche-Orient*, esp. pp. 139-80; Felicita Tramontana, *Passages of Faith: Conversion in Palestinian Villages (17th Century)* (Wiesbaden, 2014).

¹⁰⁸ Grehan, *Twilight of the Saints*, pp. 14-15, 53-8.

¹⁰⁹ USJ 30, f. 2v: انقسم الشعب الى قسمين حتى ان البعض من اهاليه ومن اقاربه كانوا يضطهدوه ويريدون قتله ورجمه حتى ان يوم من الايام... ان امرات من عجائز السوفى وسط الكنيسة ضربته وكسرة عكاسه وخزقت ثيابه وقباعته وهو احتمل كالخاروف الوديع...

the town, with swathes of people, even women and children, lined all the way from the dyehouse to the palace gate”.¹¹⁰

The figure of the Syriac Orthodox patriarch George I – Eliya’s archenemy in the narrative – appears to be the mouthpiece for the apparent chaos that Catholicism inflicts on society. In one sermon, the patriarch accuses Catholics of being “fornicators” (*zunāh*), whose belief in dyophysitism renders their children illegitimate (*ghayr ḥalāl*), social rejects.¹¹¹ Slightly after, he blames Catholic converts for the outbreak of a devastating plague before a crowd of mixed Christian denominations.¹¹² Furthermore, when the patriarch convenes a synod at Saffron Monastery in response to increased Catholic conversion, he decides to nullify any pre-existing engagements between Syriac Orthodox and Armenian Orthodox couples – breaking an interconfessional tradition “of our ancestors” in Christian Mardin and causing “great sadness”.¹¹³ Catholicism – as Eliya’s most hostile critics would have it – threatens both social order and convention.

These scenes from the *Life*, it should be mentioned, are not being investigated as historical events (even where they are witnessed by alternative sources). Rather, this discussion is concerned with the impression they create of social tension in Mardin caused by nascent Catholicism, and the types of ways in which people living in the specific context – either as individuals or collectives – might respond to it. Throughout the narrative, certain practices stand out as emblems of social reactions to the Catholic conversions of Eliya and Melkon, which merit consideration here.

The first of these practices is name-calling. Once Eliya’s Catholic leanings are known, the term ‘Frank’ (*ifranjī*) starts to be levelled against him, becoming a recurrent motif in the narrative. While also used more generally to denote the geographical region of Europe (Eliya reporting, for example, that one of his relatives travelled to “the land of the Franks”),¹¹⁴ the insult seems to be meaningful across different socio-religious groups and contexts: as a marketplace slur used by both Christians and Muslims;¹¹⁵ as piece of local news (“[it] spread to all villages in towns that Deacon Eliya... became a

¹¹⁰ USJ 30, f. 55v: ما عاينتو مثل هذا اليعناغ الذي فيه نسا وصبيان ما تحصى وقد مسكت الناس من قدام المسبغه الى باب الصراي

¹¹¹ USJ 30, f. 24v.

¹¹² Ibid., f. 31r.

¹¹³ Ibid., ff. 21r-21v.

¹¹⁴ USJ 31, p. 37.

¹¹⁵ USJ 30, f. 14v, 15r, 27v.

Frank”);¹¹⁶ as a formal complaint before the governor of Mardin (the Syriac Orthodox patriarch informing him that Eliya “became a Frank and took possession of a church and turned it into a Frankish church”);¹¹⁷ as a taunt used by the prison guard torturing Eliya;¹¹⁸ and as a battle-like cry from the patriarch’s supporters (“You, Frank, today we will drink your blood!”)¹¹⁹ This usage is apparent in other contemporary texts – an allegation not only of Catholic conversion, but also treason against the Ottoman state.¹²⁰ In the *Life of Joseph*, for example, the protagonist is accused by the East Syriac patriarch before the qadi of Diyarbakır of “changing his religion and becoming a Frank”,¹²¹ while the court record for the trial of the Catholic convert Komitas details a charge of “entering the Frankish religion and performing the Frankish liturgy”.¹²² Though the use of the term ‘Frank’ in Middle Eastern literature has a history which significantly predates the eighteenth century, for the purpose of the present study, it is an important example in the *Life* of how Mardin society – clergy, lay, Christian, Muslim – confronted conversion to Catholicism.¹²³

The prolific rumour mill is another way in which the text conveys the social unrest caused by the spread of Catholicism in Mardin. The theologically grounded rebuttals observed above in contemporary scribal culture are replaced with items of defamatory gossip. On some occasions, these rumours appear to be connected to religious practice. Consider, for example, Eliya’s report of marketplace gossip concerning Melkon Tasbasian:

First, they said that he brought a chest full of gold and silver with him from Rome, and that he distributed it to his followers, each taking his share. Then they said that he made two rollers, one of wood and one of stone, and covered each one with a red cloth. Whenever someone came to him to make a confession, man or woman, he would make them first carry the stone roller, and then, after they had confessed, he would make them carry the wooden roller, saying: ‘Now your

¹¹⁶ Ibid., f. 14v.

¹¹⁷ Ibid., f. 50v.

¹¹⁸ Ibid., f. 47v.

¹¹⁹ USJ 31, p. 60.

¹²⁰ While there do not appear to be any detailed treatments of the usage of this term against Ottoman Catholics, see comparable mentions in: Shapiro, ‘Afterlives of Komitas K’eōmurchean’, p. 93; C. Santus, ‘Sheikh ūl-islam Feyzullah Efendi and the Armenian Patriarch Awetik’: a Case of Entangled Confessional Disciplining?’, in T. Krstić and D. Terzioğlu (eds), *Entangled Confessionalizations?: Dialogic Perspectives on the Politics of Piety and Community Building in the Ottoman Empire, 15th-18th Centuries* (Piscataway, NJ, 2022), pp. 233-54.

¹²¹ CCM 12, f. 282v.

¹²² Shapiro, ‘Afterlives of Komitas K’eōmurchean’, p. 93.

¹²³ On the use of the term ‘Frank’ in the context of Crusades, see C. Hillenbrand, *The Crusades: Islamic Perspectives* (New York, 2017), esp. pp. 257-328. In early Ottoman literature and art, see B. Tezcan, ‘The Frank in the Ottoman eye of 1583’, in James G. Harper (ed.), *The Turk and Islam in the Western Eye, 1450-1750: Visual Imagery before Orientalism* (New York, 2016), pp. 267-296.

sins are forgiven'. Such slander and accusations were told by the Armenian priests in the markets, without shame or fear of God.¹²⁴

The content of these rumours also provides insight into how Catholicism might be perceived in eighteenth-century Mardin. The association with financial corruption is fairly prevalent in the narrative: Eliya reports the accusation by Syriac Orthodox “heretics” that the Catholics “gave him one piastre each day to preach their faith”,¹²⁵ as well as the later recycling of the rumour by the Syriac Orthodox patriarch, telling the governor of Mardin that Eliya gave people “Frankish gold”, so they would “obey him and be like him”.¹²⁶ This particular trope is acknowledged too in wider contemporary Catholic literature: the Jesuit Michel Nau reports a “laughable” claim that Catholic missionaries in Mardin distributed money to converts.¹²⁷ While it is difficult to establish the validity of these allegations, they are not, perhaps, as far-fetched as the text implies: recent research on Franciscan missionaries in Jerusalem has demonstrated that material incentives were used to attract local converts.¹²⁸ With reference to the second rumour, it is compelling to note that Catholic sacraments such as confession, which we know generated controversy in contemporary anti-Catholic polemics,¹²⁹ could also transpire as an object of popular speculation and – as this primitive analogy of lifting weights would suggest – ridicule.

Additional types of gossip in the narrative highlight local responses to the spread of Catholicism. Eliya reports a group of Syriac Orthodox clerics discrediting the Catholic faith because, among various doctrinal points, “the priests do not marry, their feasts are different from all the other confessions, they eat fish and drink wine during Lent... and they inhale tobacco.”¹³⁰ Somewhat salacious rumours are exchanged between the Armenian and Syriac Orthodox communities surrounding the relationship between Eliya and Melkon, his spiritual mentor: “They said that he [Eliya] spends every morning and

اولاً كانوا يقولون ان قد جاب معه من روما خزنة ذهب وفضه ويفرقها على تابعينه كلهم باخذون منه اعلوفه ثانياً يقولو
انه قد عمل مندروننتين واحد خشب وواحد حجر والبسهم حوخ احمر واذا مضى اليه واحداً يعترف ان رجل ام امراه ليحمله اولاً مندرونه الحجر فيعد
الذي يعترف بحمله مندرونه الخشب ويقول قد غفرت لك خطاياك وهدى التشنيعاه والتهمات كانوا يحكوها قسوس الارمن في الاسواق بلا حيا ولاخوف
من الله...

¹²⁴ USJ 30, ff. 8r-8v.

¹²⁵ Ibid., f. 10v.

¹²⁶ Ibid., f. 50v.

¹²⁷ Abougit, ‘Récit de ce que les PP. Jésuites ont souffert dans les prisons de Maredine’, p. 595.

¹²⁸ B. Kümin and F. Tramontana, ‘Catholicism Decentralized: Local Religion in the Early Modern Periphery’,

Church History, 89/2 (2020), pp. 281-2.

¹²⁹ E.g. Simon of Tur Abdin’s *Weapon of Religion*: see above note 88.

¹³⁰ USJ 30, f. 15r.

night with Melkon, eating and drinking together, as well as many other things ...”.¹³¹ Some even try to expose Eliya as a violent threat: he recounts how a group of Syriac Orthodox “heretics” complain to the governor that he is storing arms (*masyafah*) in his home.¹³²

A final example of the social disruption which the *Life* paints around Catholicism features in another of Eliya’s vignettes. According to the narrative, a local Syriac Orthodox prelate has an altar (*madhbah*) dedicated to the saint Barsaumo erected within the Church of the Forty Martyrs complex during the night. In view of the rejection of certain Orthodox saints that the theological discourse of Melkon prescribes, Melkon is “furious at the evil of those people [responsible]” and advises Eliya to go to the Ottoman authorities to demand its destruction.¹³³ After the governor rules in Eliya’s favour, the ensuing scene is dramatic: Eliya enters the church with several Ottoman officials, including the qadi and the mufti, and a horrified crowd watches as the structure is demolished:

One of them [i.e. the officials] approached [the altar] and swung the axe, saying: ‘This is the filthy Barsaumo’. Then they all began to destroy it. And some of the old, ignorant women began to beat their chests and say: ‘Oh, iron-clad Barsaumo; who was it that allowed your destruction? Leave him be!’¹³⁴

The image of the smashed Syriac Orthodox altar conveys a powerful message of how the Catholic convictions of a few determined individuals – in this case, Eliya and Melkon – can inflict chaos on local Christian society. The idea of any church structure being dismantled is particularly profound in the context of contemporary Syriac Orthodox literature: eulogies of patriarchs George I and Isaac II resound with their building achievements in Mardin, including renovations of Saffron Monastery and the very same Church of the Forty Martyrs.¹³⁵ Eliya, intriguingly, appears to embrace his association with these aggressive tactics: he reports that when the Chaldean patriarch Joseph II visits Mardin, he embraces him and jokingly asks: “Are you the deacon Eliya, destroyer of churches (*hādīm al-kanā’is*)?”¹³⁶ While

¹³¹ Ibid., ff. 10v-11r: هذه وكل ليلة بيات ويصبح عند ملكون مرتببت في الاكل والشرب واشيا كثيرة غير هذه

¹³² Ibid., ff. 37v-38r.

¹³³ USJ 31, pp. 34-5.

¹³⁴ Ibid., p. 36: ثم تقدم واحد وضرب المعول وقال هذا هو برصوم النجس ثم بدا الكل يهدموه. وبعض من العجايز الجاهلات يدقون في صدورهم: يا لباس الحديد برصوم من الذي صار سبب هدمك تترك له ويقولون: يا لباس الحديد برصوم من الذي صار سبب هدمك تترك له

¹³⁵ For record of the buildings works achieved by Patriarch George I, see Mingana Syriac 38 (1689), f. 33v; for Patriarch Isaac II, see Mingana Syriac 480 (1713), ff. 427v-428v; Mingana, *Catalogue of the Mingana Collection*, i, pp. 98, 879-80. See more detailed discussion below, Chapter Three, 3.2.

¹³⁶ USJ 31, p. 41.

Catholicism manifests as a destructive force, Eliya arguably inverts this image by presenting it as a commendable, restorative measure against the heresy he perceives in society.

Having analysed the social disruption which Eliya fuses with his own narrative of Catholic conversion, the following sections will examine how the text portrays the unbalancing effect of emergent Catholicism on the confessional and political dynamics of the local Christian population.

2.7 Catholicism and confessional dynamics

From the previous examples, we can already see how the *Life of Eliya* provides a window into a confessionally diverse Christian society. While the spread of Catholicism does not overthrow this system, it does at times present as redefining established confessional boundaries, in both an ideological and a material sense.

The three main Christian confessional groups in Mardin identified by Eliya near the beginning of the narrative – presumably sometime around 1700 – are the Syriac Orthodox, the Armenian Orthodox and the Catholic Chaldeans, each with their own church(es) in town. In some respects, the *Life* presents Christian interconfessional relations as a normality. Not only is gossip shared, but also space: Eliya describes his own house as situated between the Armenian Church of St. George¹³⁷ and a Muslim (*Hanafi*) neighbour named ‘Umar.¹³⁸ He also mentions visiting acquaintances such as “Yaldah the Chaldean”.¹³⁹ Inter-marriage between Armenian and Syriac Orthodox communities is depicted as a local tradition,¹⁴⁰ and certain ceremonies presided over by the Syriac Orthodox and Chaldean patriarchs are attended by Christians from different confessions.¹⁴¹ Furthermore, as shall be examined in the following section, the Syriac Orthodox appear at times to fulfil an almost supervisory role for their Armenian counterparts in Mardin.

By the same token, Eliya is consistent in delineating the confessional affiliations of characters, ascribing the matter a certain significance. This is not only through use of *nisbah* (e.g. ‘Abd al-Masīḥ ‘*al-Armanī*’, Mūsá ibn Ḥuṣrum ‘*al-Kaldānī*’), but also by acknowledging the separate leadership

¹³⁷ USJ 30, f. 27v.

¹³⁸ USJ 30, f. 27v.

¹³⁹ Ibid., f. 42v.

¹⁴⁰ Ibid., f. 21r.

¹⁴¹ See e.g. *ibid.*, ff. 15v-17r, 30v-31r; USJ 31, p. 43.

structure of each religious community (*tā'ifah*), according to Ottoman custom. While the church hierarchies would be headed by a patriarch or a bishop, Eliya also refers to local elders (*khawājikīyah*) in Mardin, such as the Armenian Khawājah Ishāq, who arbitrate for their communities in both internal and interconfessional affairs, and notables (*a'yān*), a wealthy laity within each community who, as we shall see below, could also intervene in certain situations.¹⁴² The text also alerts us to the kinds of scenarios in which confessional boundaries were worth emphasising. These usually comprise challenges to theological positions: for example, when the Syriac Orthodox maphrian Simon of Tur Abdin engages in a theological debate with Melkon in the Church of St. George, the Armenian Khawājah 'Abd al-Masīḥ shoos him out, saying: “You are Jacobites and we are Armenians, what do you have to do with us? Mind your own business, and we'll mind ours!”¹⁴³

In tandem with this, the *Life of Eliya* reflects how the established confessional contours of Christian Mardin evolve with the spread of Catholicism. Given his Syriac Orthodox origins, Eliya's loyalty to the Armenian Catholic Melkon Tasbasian is a case in point. Shortly before Eliya's conversion, Melkon alludes to Catholicism's lack of conformity to prescribed confessionalism, informing Eliya that the “Roman Church” is “witnessed by all communities (*sā'ir al-ṭawā'if*) and all forefathers (*jamī' al-ābā'*)”.¹⁴⁴ This ecumenical discourse is emphasised in a subsequent conversation involving Eliya, Melkon and Melkon's father, Murād:

He [Murād] said to my humble self before his son: ‘Why are you shortening your legs with all this coming and going to my son's place? Can't you see what your patriarch did to us?’

When [Melkon] heard these words from his father's mouth, he was moved by the Holy Spirit and fell to his knees, saying to his father: ‘Be quiet, you old fool!’ Then he shoos his father out of the room and said: ‘I would shed my blood for this deacon.’¹⁴⁵

¹⁴² See F. Adanir, ‘Semi-autonomous provincial forces in the Balkans and Anatolia’, in S. Faroqhi (ed.), *The Cambridge History of Turkey. Volume 3, The Later Ottoman Empire, 1603-1839* (Cambridge, 2006), pp. 157-85; C. Imber, *The Ottoman Empire, 1300-1650: The Structure of Power*, 2nd edn (London, 2009), pp. 204-30, 244-6.

¹⁴³ USJ 30, f. 5v: انتم ايعاقبي ونحن ارمن ايش لكم منا انتم في حالكم ونحن في حالنا

¹⁴⁴ Ibid., f. 9v.

¹⁴⁵ USJ 31, p. 40: فقال إلى حقارتي قدام ابنه الورتببيت: يا شماس منكم ان تقصروا رجلكم فرد زمان من الرواح والمجي لعند ابني ما تنتظرون ما عمل بطركم معنا. فلما سمع ابونا الورتببيت هذا الكلام من فم ابيه تحرك بالروح القدس وجلس على ركبتيه وبيديه الاثنتين قال لابييه: اسكت يا خرفان وطرده اباه من القلايه. وقال ان اريد ان اسفك دمي قدام هذا الشماس وانت تقول له قصر رجلك...

Eliya's account of the scene – Melkon's rage at Eliya's potential exclusion from his Catholic teachings due to his Syriac Orthodox background, followed by the dramatic display of loyalty – appears to juxtapose Catholicism with the traditional framework of denominational divisions within the locale. Clearly, however, this changing scenario is not without resistance – both from the Syriac Orthodox patriarch, and even within the growing Catholic community itself.

Throughout the narrative, Eliya accentuates this image by depicting a cross-confessional network of Catholic converts operating in Mardin. Instances of sacramental sharing between individuals of different rites, and other kinds of practical assistance, are notable. For example, when his wife is on her deathbed, Eliya records that Melkon visits their house to administer the sacraments of confession and extreme unction;¹⁴⁶ when Melkon is forced to flee Mardin, he places a Chaldean priest in charge of the Armenian Catholic congregation at St. George;¹⁴⁷ and when Eliya is imprisoned, two Chaldeans bribe the Ottoman governor with their own possessions (money, clothing and jewellery) to save his life.¹⁴⁸ Moreover, the leader of the Chaldean Church, Patriarch Joseph II, appears to be involved in the elevation of Catholics from other confessional traditions. He receives the Catholic profession of faith from a Syriac Orthodox priest from Mardin, Ni'mah ibn 'Ajam, who subsequently joins him in Diyarbakır,¹⁴⁹ and he even offers to ordain Eliya a priest and bishop.¹⁵⁰

Eliya not only uses theological and practical considerations to forge unity between local Catholic converts from diverse confessions. Another, secondary connection binds them in the text: education. His efforts to associate Catholicism with high standards of education, particularly in contrast to the Syriac Orthodox Church, are apparent from an early stage in the narrative. The Syriac Orthodox Patriarch George warns Eliya that anyone of scholarly repute in the Syriac Orthodox Church – such as Andrew Akhijān, Isaac ibn Jubayr, Safar al-Mārdīnī and Timothy Karnūk – had been “corrupted” by Catholicism (*afsadūhu*).¹⁵¹ This image is accentuated by Eliya's frustration over the failings of his own community in this regard. When the Syriac Orthodox Maphrian Simon of Tur Abdin engages in a

¹⁴⁶ Ibid., p. 37.

¹⁴⁷ Ibid., p. 40.

¹⁴⁸ USJ 30, f. 46v.

¹⁴⁹ Ibid., f. 36v.

¹⁵⁰ USJ 31, p. 42.

¹⁵¹ USJ 30, f. 6r.

theological debate with Melkon Tasbasian, Eliya flees from “embarrassment” at the maphrian’s “foolish talk and primitive references, which are neither from scripture or the prophets, nor the apostles or scholars!”¹⁵² Linguistic knowledge is relevant too: Eliya scathingly remarks that the “Kurdish” deputy of the Syriac Orthodox patriarch was “unable to utter a single word in Arabic” (*lam yakun ya ‘rifyanṭuq wa-lā kalimah bi-al-‘arabī*).¹⁵³

On the other hand, Eliya’s interactions with the Chaldean patriarch Joseph II when the latter visits Mardin emphasise their shared scholarly understanding. As well as exchanging proverbs and discussing texts in the Syriac language (which, on one occasion, Eliya has to “explain” to others present),¹⁵⁴ Eliya’s anecdote of a trip that they undertake to the Syriac Orthodox monastery of Our Lady of the Water Drop (*Sayyidat al-Nāṭif*) is revealing:

We entered [the cell] of one of the monks called ‘Azzū, who was sitting on his bed ... the appearance of this monk was unbelievable. If he lay down, he would resemble an elephant, and his breasts were like the udders of a cow ... Mar Joseph asked him: ‘Do you know any prayers at all?’

He responded: ‘No, I don’t know how to pray or to read.’

Mar Joseph turned to me and said: ‘How astonishing that this monk has been here all this time and lived through all the countless patriarchs, metropolitans and monks, and they weren’t able to teach him to pray. Truly, blessings pass this community by ...’¹⁵⁵

The carefully described scene – while presumably providing entertaining imagery for the audience – assumes an almost satirical quality in its efforts to expose the educational and intellectual shortcomings of the Syriac Orthodox church. Despite Eliya’s Syriac Orthodox origins, the elderly, illiterate and immobile monk is positioned in stark contrast to the two learned, repulsed Catholic individuals before him. Such binary representations of Catholics and traditional adherents are not unique to the *Life of Eliya*. The *Life of Joseph* reports, for example, that the East Syriac patriarch Eliya IX (d. 1700) “was not educated in a school and did not know Arabic or Turkish, but he did know how to consume tobacco

¹⁵² USJ 30, f. 6r: امثال اصفاقياية ليسة من كتاب ولا من انبيا ولا من رسل ولا من المعلمين

¹⁵³ USJ 30, f. 17v.

¹⁵⁴ USJ 31, p. 44.

¹⁵⁵ USJ 31, p. 45: لما دخلنا عند راهب عزو وكان جالساً في فراشه ... وكان صفت هذا الراهب غليظاً جداً وكان رابض مثل الفيل وديوسه مثل حالوية البقرا ... وجلس مار يوسف جنب الراهب واستخبره ... هل تعرف شيئاً من الصلاة فقال ابدا ولا قريار ولا صلاة ... فالتفت الي مار يوسف هذه عجباً عظيم انه من مدة هلقدر زمان وسنين الذي فوت هل قدر بطاركة وطارين ورهبان وما قدروا علموه صلاة. فتحقيق تحقيق ان النعمة مختلفة عن هذه الطائفة ...

and *araq*”.¹⁵⁶ While later chapters provide ample evidence to challenge Eliya’s assessment of Syriac Orthodox scholarship in Mardin, education is nonetheless a prism for confessional reconfiguration in the *Life*.¹⁵⁷

It is important to note, however, that these points of interconfessional contact do not always manifest in the ecumenical tones of Melkon Tasbasian. When Melkon leaves the Chaldean priest in charge of St. George, for example, it is apparently “because there weren’t any Catholic priests from his community (*tā’ifah*) to handle the affairs of his flock”;¹⁵⁸ and when the Syriac Catholic priest Ni’mah joins the Chaldeans in Diyarbakır, Eliya explains: “his wife left him and went to Diyarbakır, so he followed her. As he was not content to mix with heretics, he would perform mass with the padres [i.e. missionaries] and Mar Joseph [i.e. patriarch of the Chaldeans].”¹⁵⁹ It seems that necessity or, more precisely, a shortage of options, strongly influenced interconfessional relations amongst Catholic converts in Mardin.

The *Life of Eliya* thus lends us specific insight into how Catholicism prompted new interconfessional scenarios in Christian Mardin. While Melkon may act as a conduit for ecumenical theology, the practical dimension to these scenarios is perhaps even more evident. This theme has been stressed in other contexts of nascent Catholicism within the Ottoman territories, for example in Felicita Tramontana’s study of Catholic converts in seventeenth-century Palestine, whose mobility patterns have been shown to correlate with access to Catholic sacraments.¹⁶⁰ The *Life* also contributes to recent, growing scholarship on interconfessional relations in comparable contexts of nascent Eastern Catholicism, such as Diyarbakır, Aleppo and Rome.¹⁶¹ Probing deeper into the framework of local Christianity in Mardin,

¹⁵⁶ CCM 12, f. 276v: لندس من جنه كد المهدومس هلن جنه كدنى تنلكنند هلن تنلكنند تن جنه كد مكنوكس كد تنذت نلمومو مكنلكنند.

¹⁵⁷ See below, Chapter Four, 4.4.

¹⁵⁸ USJ 31, p. 40.

¹⁵⁹ USJ 30, f. 36v: تركته وراحت الى ديار بكر فراح بعدها وما رضى يخالط الهراطقه بل كان يروح يقدس عند الباطريه وعند مار يوسف

¹⁶⁰ F. Tramontana, ‘Geographical Mobility and Community-Building in Seventeenth-Century Palestine: Insights from the Records of Bethlehem’s Catholic Parish’, *Continuity and Change*, 35/2 (2020), pp. 163-85.

¹⁶¹ On Aleppo, see e.g. B. Masters, ‘The Millet Wars in Aleppo, 1726–1821: An Ottoman Perspective’, in S. Winter and A. Mafalda (eds), *Aleppo and Its Hinterland in the Ottoman Period*, (Leiden; Boston, 2020), esp. pp. 143-4, 150; on Rome, see L. Parker, ‘The Interconnected Histories of the Syriac Churches in the Sixteenth Century’, *The Journal of Ecclesiastical History*, 72/3 (2021), pp. 509-32; on Diyarbakır, see J-P. Ghobrial, ‘Catholic Confessional Literature in the Christian East? A View from Rome, Diyarbakir, and Mount Lebanon, ca. 1674’ in T. Krstić and D. Terzioğlu (eds), *Entangled Confessionalizations?: Dialogic Perspectives on the Politics of Piety and Community Building in the Ottoman Empire, 15th-18th Centuries* (Piscataway, NJ, 2022), pp. 383-399.

the following will explore how the *Life of Eliya* portrays power dynamics among the three main communities – and how the spread of Catholicism impacted these.

2.8 Catholicism and power dynamics

Catholicism is not only presented as challenging the confessional boundaries of the Christian population of Mardin, but also the distribution of power among these confessions. The *Life* depicts a predominantly Syriac Orthodox elite – formed by the upper church hierarchy and local lay notables – pitted against Catholicism, looking for any opportunity to obstruct Eliya and Melkon as renowned local converts. This transpires in both their opposing stances in theological debates (for example, Patriarch George versus Eliya, or Maphrian Simon versus Melkon), and in their practical dealings with local Ottoman government. In addition to instigating his imprisonment on two occasions, Eliya claims that the Syriac Orthodox notables gave his prison guard fifty piastres to torture and kill him,¹⁶² and were bribed to assemble at his trial before the governor and qadi.¹⁶³ Even the Syriac Orthodox patriarch himself orders his flock from all the surrounding villages – “old and young, men and women” – to rally at Eliya’s trial, threatening them with excommunication if they did not attend (*hattá ħirman*).¹⁶⁴

The leading role the text ascribes the Syriac Orthodox in resisting the spread of Catholicism may simply be a reflection of Eliya’s own ties to this community. However, it is also more generally framed by a sense of the pre-eminence of the Syriac Orthodox among other local Christian communities. While other sources mention their numerical superiority,¹⁶⁵ the *Life* embodies Syriac Orthodox power and influence over Christian Mardin through the ever-present figure of the patriarch, based just a few miles outside the town at Saffron Monastery. Eliya reports, for example, how Armenians gather at the rituals performed by the patriarch at Saffron Monastery during Lent, such as *Shūbqonō* (reconciliation) and the consecration of the *myron*.¹⁶⁶ On separate occasions, he mockingly describes a group of Armenians collecting donations for their “saint” patriarch (*qiddīs*),¹⁶⁷ and the patriarch convening his Syriac

¹⁶² USJ 30, ff. 47r-47v.

¹⁶³ Ibid., f. 55r.

¹⁶⁴ Ibid., f. 55r.

¹⁶⁵ See figures reported by a Carmelite missionary in 1753: H. Chick (ed.), *A chronicle of the Carmelites in Persia and the Papal mission of the XVIIth and XVIIIth centuries* (2 vols, London, 1939), ii, p. 1264.

¹⁶⁶ USJ 30, ff. 12r-v, 15r-16r.

¹⁶⁷ Ibid., f. 17v.

Orthodox and Armenian “devotees” (*muḥibīhi*) at his residence.¹⁶⁸ During times of widespread suffering, the Syriac Orthodox patriarch emerges as a spiritual leader for all Christians in the locality: Eliya recounts, for example, how Armenians and Chaldeans joined in the prayer led by Patriarch George at the Monastery of St. Michael during the plague of 1708.¹⁶⁹ Moreover, the earlier mentioned quashing of intermarriage between Syriac Orthodox and Armenians exemplifies how Syriac Orthodox ecclesiastical authority could have a strong and enduring effect on other Christian confessions in Mardin.

Though not explicitly mentioned in the *Life*, the ascendancy of the Syriac Orthodox cannot be divorced from the relative power vacuum experienced by other churches in Mardin during this period. With regard to the Chaldean community, it is reported that after the elevation of Patriarch Joseph I in 1681, he assigned a converted Catholic metropolitan to Mardin named Simon of Amid.¹⁷⁰ However, as letters written to the Propaganda Fide by both Joseph I and Simon indicate, the latter left Mardin for Rome in 1690-1 in order to “better conform to the holy faith”, and was still there in 1696.¹⁷¹ In a strange twist, it then appears that in around 1701 Metropolitan Simon travelled to India, where he became a Catholic missionary, eventually dying in Pondicherry in 1720.¹⁷² While many details about Simon’s life are nebulous, it is highly unlikely that he ever returned to his original see in Mardin. The absence of any resident Chaldean bishop in the *Life of Eliya* – particularly given the numerous Chaldean characters who do feature in the narrative – likely signals one of several vacant periods that the diocese witnessed in the eighteenth century.¹⁷³ After the Simon debacle, it appears that Mardin did not have its own metropolitan again until Basileus Ḥesro was nominated in around 1728.¹⁷⁴ Indeed, just one visit to

¹⁶⁸ Ibid., f. 19r.

¹⁶⁹ Ibid., ff. 31r-v.

¹⁷⁰ Detailed in letter from Joseph I to the Propaganda Fide dated 1684: see S. Giamil, *Genuinae Relationes Inter Sedem Apostolicam et Assyriorum Orientalium Seu Chaldaeorum Ecclesiam*. Ed. Cura et Studio S. Giamil (Rome, 1902), document 70, pp. 312-3. See also letter from Propaganda Fide, dated 1683, addressed to ‘Mons. Egamaone, Vescovo de Caldei in Merdin’ in A. Lampart, *Ein Märtyrer der Union mit Rom. Joseph I., 1681-1696, Patriarch der Chaldäer* (Einsiedeln, 1966), pp. 301-2.

¹⁷¹ “...per maggiormente conformarsi nella Santa Fede”: see letter dated 1696 from Simon to Propaganda Fide in Lampart, *Ein Märtyrer der Union mit Rom*, p. 334 and letter from Joseph I, dated 1696, in *ibid.*, pp. 334-6.

¹⁷² E. R. Hambye, ‘Le Métropolitain Chaldéen, Simon d’Ādā et ses aventures en Inde’, *Parole de l’Orient*, 6/7 (1975-6), pp. 493-513.

¹⁷³ See Wilmhurst, *The Church of the East*, i, pp. 73-4.

¹⁷⁴ See letter from Chaldean community of Mardin to the Propaganda Fide dated 1738 reporting the death of Metropolitan Basileus: Giamil, *Genuinae Relationes*, document 98, pp. 360-1. There is a possibility that

Mardin by the Chaldean patriarch Joseph II is recorded over the course of the narrative.¹⁷⁵ But while the previous section demonstrated how the Chaldeans often cooperated with Melkon Tasbasian and Eliya on a practical level, they intriguingly appear to experience little opposition from the Syriac Orthodox elite. At one point, the Syriac Orthodox patriarch even needs to be reminded of their Catholic sympathies: when Patriarch Isaac confides in Patriarch Joseph and the Chaldean elders his desire to “rid himself” of Eliya “the Frank”, one of the elders responds to him: “And what are we?” Patriarch Isaac duly “falls silent”.¹⁷⁶

The status of religious leadership within the local Armenian community is even more ambiguous. Mardin had been a diocese within the Armenian Orthodox Church for centuries, subject to the Catholicosate of Etchmiadzin and, from the fifteenth century, the regional authority of the Catholicos of Sis.¹⁷⁷ However, there do not appear to be any references to a metropolitan of Mardin in the seventeenth century after Metropolitan Sarkīs (d. 1632),¹⁷⁸ and an unnamed individual encountered by Jean-Baptiste Tavernier in 1643.¹⁷⁹ Moreover, Metropolitan Timothy ‘Īsá reported in his historical account that by the early 1700s, the Syriac Orthodox were acting as administrative representatives for the Armenians in Mardin, petitioning the sultan for the renovation of their Church of St. George.¹⁸⁰ These gaps and ambiguities in the recent leadership history of the Chaldean and Armenian communities of Mardin thus offer a compelling basis for the dominant position of the Syriac Orthodox hierarchy in the *Life of Eliya*.

Reflecting on how the Catholic movement develops across the narrative, such nuances in local Christian power dynamics play an integral role. According to Eliya, Melkon’s return to Mardin as a Catholic priest and missionary meets with almost instantaneous success among local Armenians. After initially occupying a derelict church named St. Barbara, the support he obtains from both the Armenian

Metropolitan Timothy of Diyarbakır (later Patriarch Joseph III) was also responsible for Mardin; he signs himself in one MS as “Metropolitan of Diyarbakır and Mardin”: see CCM 378, f. 150v.

¹⁷⁵ USJ 31, pp. 41-45.

¹⁷⁶ Ibid., p. 44.

¹⁷⁷ Santus, *Trasgressioni Necessarie*, pp. 50-2. Note that Melkon was consecrated metropolitan of Mardin by the Catholicos of Cilicia [Sīs], Peter Bidzag, in 1709: SC Armeni vi, f. 124.

¹⁷⁸ M. Alexandrian, ‘al-Abrashīyah al-Armanīyah fī Mārdīn’, *al-Machriq*, 11 (1907), pp. 503-4.

¹⁷⁹ J.-B. Tavernier, *The Six Voyages of John Baptista Tavernier; Baron of Aubonne through Turkey, into Persia and the East-Indies, for the Space of Forty Years* (London, 1677) p. 69.

¹⁸⁰ Ibrāhīm, ‘al-Suryān fī al-qarn al-sābi’ ‘ashr’, p. 32.

elders and the Ottoman governor enables him to swiftly take over the cathedral Church of St. George, thereby imposing a Catholic leadership on the Armenian community:

He [Melkon] took up residence there and began to pray [there]. He became the leader of the congregation, lifting all the heresies from the church and preventing the priests who did not accept him from administering communion.¹⁸¹

Faced with Melkon's rise to power, Eliya describes how the Syriac Orthodox hierarchy mobilises in retaliation:

The foolish [Armenian Orthodox] priests ... sought refuge in the Jacobites, in Patriarch George of Mosul ... he advised them to isolate themselves from him [Melkon], and gave them a place in the Church of the Forty Martyrs. They began to pray at this church on the opposite side to the Jacobites, and around two hundred men and women followed them.¹⁸²

Shortly after, an Armenian-Syriac Orthodox faction proceed to support a “heretic” candidate named *vardapet* Irmīyā who, showing up in Mardin with a *firmān* from the sultan, unsuccessfully attempts to wrest control of the Armenian flock and church from Melkon.¹⁸³ Curiously, Eliya fails to report Melkon's subsequent triumph: in August 1709 – almost certainly within the timeframe of the narrative – Melkon was consecrated as the first Armenian Catholic metropolitan of Mardin by the Uniate Catholicos Petros Bidzag of Cilicia, which took place at the Church of St. George.¹⁸⁴ According to a confirmation document preserved in the Propaganda Fide archives, his elevation was endorsed by twenty-one notables of the Armenian community of Mardin (most of whom bear the title *khawājah*). Several characters from the *Life* are even among the signatories – the elder Khawājah Ishāq, Melkon's father Murād, and another layman named Karābīd ibn Chankar.¹⁸⁵ These notables also, according to Eliya, assist Melkon with paying off fines to the Ottoman government resulting from Syriac Orthodox machinations.¹⁸⁶ In essence, Melkon's presence institutes another mechanism of Christian power in Mardin.

¹⁸¹ USJ 30, f. 3r: واقام بها وصار يصلى وصار ريصاً على الجميع ورفع جميع الهراطقة من الكنيسة ومنع الكهنه الذين لم يقبلوه من تقديم القربان

¹⁸² USJ 30, ff. 3v-4r: الكهنه المقرقعين ... التجو الى الايعاقبه الى بطرك كركيس الموصلى... فانشار عليهم ان ينزلو منه واعطاهم مكاناً في كنيسة اربعين شهيد الذي بداخل ماردين وصاروهم يصلو في جانب والايعاقبه في جانب وانعزلت معهم تابعينهم مقدار مايتين رجل من نسا وصبيان

¹⁸³ Ibid., ff. 7v-8r.

¹⁸⁴ See record of his elevation in SC Armeni, vi, f. 122 (Italian), 124 (Arabic). Terzian gives the date as 1708: idem, *Le patriarcat de Cilicie et les arméniens catholiques*, p. 61, 175.

¹⁸⁵ SC Armeni, vi, f. 124. See references to these individuals in USJ 30, ff. 21r-21v; USJ 31, p. 40; USJ 30, f. 48v.

¹⁸⁶ USJ 31, p. 40.

Against the backdrop of this rivalry with the Syriac Orthodox clerical and social elite, converting to Catholicism becomes synonymous with supporting the leadership of Melkon Tasbasian. Patriarch George asks Eliya after meeting Melkon whether his “conscience was corrupted by ibn Ṭāzbāz”,¹⁸⁷ when Eliya reports news of his conversion spreading, he is described as “becoming a Frank and following the faith of ibn Ṭāzbāz”,¹⁸⁸ and Eliya recounts how his fellow prisoners jeeringly refer to him as one of “the people of ibn Ṭāzbāz”.¹⁸⁹ The spread of Catholicism in Mardin is inherently intertwined with the threat that one prominent convert poses to the balance of power amongst the entire Christian population.

At the same time, though Melkon evidently won the support of certain influential members within his community, we must treat glorified depictions of his Catholic leadership in the *Life of Eliya* with caution. As Melkon’s correspondence with the Propaganda Fide indicates, the Orthodox faction within the Church of St. George did not submit to his agenda – nor abandon the church – as swiftly as the *Life* implies. As late as 1706, Melkon protested to the Propaganda Fide that Mardin had “only one [Armenian] church for heretics and Catholics”, rendering him unable to preach “according to the Catholic rite” or to “be present without communicating with heretics”.¹⁹⁰ Furthermore, as explored in the previous section, the apparent disregard for confessional backgrounds which the text associates with Catholicism – and within this, Melkon’s influence over Syriac Catholic converts like Eliya – was possibly more informed by practical circumstances than explicitly indicated. Although a Uniate rival to the Syriac Orthodox patriarch was inaugurated in 1667 in Aleppo with Andrew Akhījān, the death of his successor Peter Shāhbaddīn in 1702 would leave a gaping hole in the leadership of the Syriac Catholic Church for around eighty years. This was only exacerbated by the expatriate status of other prominent, potential leaders of the community in Rome, some of whom – such as Bishop Safar al-Mārdīnī and Metropolitan Timothy Karnūk – had connections to Mardin. Eliya references their absence on two occasions in the text.¹⁹¹ Did Melkon, in this sense, represent the only hope for Syriac Catholicism

¹⁸⁷ Ibid., f. 6r (‘Ṭāzbāz’ being the Arabic rendering of the Armenian ‘Tasbasian’).

¹⁸⁸ Ibid., f. 14v.

¹⁸⁹ Ibid., f. 37v.

¹⁹⁰ APF, Acta, 1706, cong. gen. del 15 marzo 1706, f. 52v: quoted in Santus, *Trasgressioni necessarie*, p. 382.

¹⁹¹ USJ 30, f. 6r; USJ 31, p. 43.

in Mardin? Other Eastern Catholic perspectives certainly promoted this view: the Maronite Andrew Iskandar made the somewhat dramatic claim in a report for the Propaganda Fide in 1727 that the incumbent Armenian Catholic metropolitan of Mardin was the “only Catholic prelate in Mesopotamia, as his predecessor Melkon had been”.¹⁹²

Eliya does, nevertheless, implant some of these significant yet – geographically or temporally – remote Syriac Catholic figures into his own narrative, a technique which would arguably be reused in the history writing of his coreligionists two centuries later.¹⁹³ In a conversation between himself and the Syriac Orthodox patriarch George I, the patriarch informs Eliya that, after learning on a visit to Aleppo that the remains of Andrew Akhijān were kept in a church there, he hatched a plan to exact revenge on the first Syriac Catholic patriarch. Sneaking into church at night with an accomplice, they opened the tomb of the former patriarch and threw his bones down the lavatory!¹⁹⁴ So shocking was this story, Eliya reports, that its utterance instantly caused an earthquake in Mardin. However, Eliya does not leave the anecdote to rest here, continuing:

I recounted this story to Maphrian Isaac ibn Jubayr and Bishop Safar [al-Mārdīnī] when I was in Rome. They said: ‘May God dishonour him [Patriarch George]. The missionaries transported the body of Patriarch Andrew to Rome, where he is buried in the Church of San Giovanni. His body still performs benevolent miracles, as was witnessed many a time during his life... He is not the one who persecuted widows and orphans and distributed their money to despots, making faith worthless.’¹⁹⁵

The story, of course, provides an excellent opportunity for Eliya to both revere the memory of the first Syriac Catholic patriarch and to discredit the incumbent Syriac Orthodox patriarch in the most dramatic of characterisations: grave-robbers, miracle-workers, thieves. But we might also interpret such anecdotes as an effort to incorporate key figures and geographical markers (that is, Rome and Aleppo) in the early Syriac Catholic Church into his own personal account of Catholic conversion, and that of Mardin. As an insight into local consciousness (or selectiveness), we might also note that whilst Eliya may venerate Patriarch Andrew (who almost certainly died before his time), he makes no reference to

¹⁹² SC Mesopotamia e Persia iii, f. 281v, dated 4th August 1727, quoted in Lampart, *Ein Märtyrer der Union mit Rom*, p. 345.

¹⁹³ See above, Chapter One, 1.4.

¹⁹⁴ USJ 31, p. 33.

¹⁹⁵ USJ 31, pp. 33-4: وهذه الحكمة احكيها في روميا الى المفريان اسحق ابن اجبير والى اسقف سفر فقالوا الله يسود وجهه ان جسد البطرک اندراوس نقله الباطرية الى روما وهو محطوط في كنيسة مار يوحنا وهو الذي الان يصنع العجائب هذا الذي في حياته عمل عجائب كثيرة ... ليس هو الذي ظلم الارامل والايتم وفرق مالهم على الظلام حتى يبطل حق الايمان

late and disturbing events concerning the Syriac Catholic patriarchate – that is, the capture and death of Patriarch Peter Shāhbaddīn in Aleppo, ostensibly at the hands of Eliya’s archenemy, the very same Syriac Orthodox patriarch George.¹⁹⁶

Yet, despite this stagnation in Syriac Catholic leadership, Eliya does, for his own part, try to increase the political influence of Catholicism in Mardin. As well as briefly occupying a local church, he conspires with Melkon on two occasions to install a Catholic convert within the upper ranks of the Syriac Orthodox Church. First is their failed attempt to replace Patriarch George with Maphrian ‘Āzār of Manṣūr, for which they even manage to garner the support of the qadi and ten local Muslim notables.¹⁹⁷ The two then try to coax a layman, the retired merchant and purported Catholic convert Shukrū ibn Khawājah Ḥanī, into becoming a bishop, though likewise to no avail.¹⁹⁸ Ultimately, the success achieved by Melkon in becoming a Catholic leader for the Armenians seem to far outweigh Eliya’s efforts within his own Syriac Orthodox community.

Owing to a web of contextual factors, the growth of Catholicism in Mardin emerges as inextricably linked to Melkon Tasbasian’s challenge to the pre-eminence of the Syriac Orthodox Church hierarchy, backed by lay notables. As such, the *Life of Eliya* exposes Catholicism as a threat to the specific power dynamics underpinning Christian life in eighteenth-century Mardin.

Conclusion

As we gather from the final lines of the *Life*, Eliya apparently does manage to find a space to practise Catholicism, albeit outside his confessional tradition:

I was released [from prison] and not a single Jacobite was able to speak to me anymore. I went on celebrating mass in the Chaldean Church of Rabban Hormizd and in [the Church of] St. George, and not one person nor his community were able to say anything about it.¹⁹⁹

Not all sources maintain that Eliya’s story ended here: a note scrawled at the end of manuscript USJ 31 records a “continuation of events in Istanbul”,²⁰⁰ which is repeated by Cheikho in his edition.²⁰¹

¹⁹⁶ For details on the demise of Peter Shāhbaddīn, see Rabbath, *Documents inédits pour servir à l’histoire du christianisme en Orient*, i, pp. 108-125.

¹⁹⁷ USJ 30, f. 18r.

¹⁹⁸ USJ 31, p. 37.

¹⁹⁹ Ibid., p. 61: *وانا سبيني وما بقا احد يقدر يتكلم معي من اليعاقبة وبقيت اقدس في بيعة الكلدان بيعة با هرمز وفي سورب ك... واحد ما يقدر يتكلم لي بفرد شي ولا جماعته*

²⁰⁰ USJ 31, p. 61.

²⁰¹ Cheikho, ‘al-Kathlakah fī Mārdīn’, p. 897.

Meanwhile, Ephrem Naqqāshah's history of the Syriac Catholic Church reports with remarkable specificity that Eliya "headed one year later to Aleppo and then to Rome, where he gloried in seeing the pope and Maphrian Ishaq and Bishop Safar, among others..."²⁰² However, in the absence of evidence for either of these eventualities, we must treat the above passage – at least for now – as the end point of Eliya's journey. Moreover, if we venture that this is the same Eliya described as a teacher in a manuscript copied at the Church of St. George in 1739, these last words may indeed have summarised the fate of Eliya ibn al-Kuzayr, the Aleppan in Mardin.²⁰³

On the other hand, we might speculate as to whether this really was a satisfying finale to Eliya's story. This is especially when compared to other accounts of Eastern Catholic converts from the eighteenth century, such as that of Joseph I or Michael Jarwah, which both culminate in successful establishments of Catholic patriarchates, inscribing a founding story for their respective communities. But if we consider Eliya's initial status as a Syriac Orthodox deacon, and his ultimate emergence as a practising Catholic priest, we can perhaps perceive an arc of progress across the narrative. Furthermore, in some respects, the outcome of the *Life of Eliya* could be seen as symptomatic of the evolving confessional and power dynamics which Catholicism initiated in Mardin: a setback for the overwhelmingly dominant Syriac Orthodox Church, and continued flourishing and exchange within the locally forged Armenian Catholic and Chaldean communities. Alongside this, Eliya's failure to create an enduring place of worship for a Syriac Catholic community, or to install any viable Catholic rivals to local Syriac Orthodox leadership, reminds us that time and momentum also has its place in the history of Catholicism in Mardin. Catholicism may have shaken existing confessional and political structures within the local Christian population, but these very structures arguably also exerted their own effect, holding the development of Syriac Catholicism back in relation to that of their Armenian and Chaldean counterparts. While Mardin was established as a diocese of the Chaldean and Armenian Catholic Churches between the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, it was not until 1827, over one

²⁰² Muṭrān E. Naqqāshah, *Ināyat al-Raḥmān fī Hidāyā al-Suryān* (Beirut, 1910), p. 163.

²⁰³ CCM 456, f. 172v.

hundred years later, that Mardin would witness a resident Syriac Catholic metropolitan in the form of the convert Antony Samḥīrī.²⁰⁴

These are not the only ways, however, in which the *Life of Eliya* contributes to the present study of the spread of Catholicism in Mardin. In blending aspects of diverse literary genres – Catholic apologies, conversion narratives and chronicles – we gain a unique insight into the workings of Catholicism and Christian society in early eighteenth-century Mardin. The vivid image the text provides of the social disruption provoked predominantly by Melkon and Eliya’s Catholicism is admittedly curious: Eliya defends Catholic dogma in debates and reveres his learned mentor Melkon, but in almost contradictory fashion he depicts Catholicism as a socially divisive, even destructive, movement, which embroils locals in malicious confrontations, rumour spreading and death plots. On the other hand, it is tempting to wonder whether this disruptive energy necessarily carries a negative connotation in the text. Eliya appears to take pride in his role in the tearing down of a sacred Syriac Orthodox structure, and at one point even deems it a “miracle” that an Orthodox opponent was hanged on the day of his priestly ordination.²⁰⁵ Could the narrative in fact be testifying that such chaos was necessary, even to be embraced, if it meant liberating believers from tradition and ‘heresy’? By this interpretation, Eliya’s account seals both himself and Melkon as true heroes for the Catholic faith. More broadly, the detailed vignettes we encounter (while undoubtedly adding entertainment value) provide insight into the spectrum of individuals, practices and perceptions which Catholicism may have stirred up in eighteenth-century Mardin society. The text not only contributes to growing scholarship on local experiences of religious change – particularly in the Ottoman context – but also complements the intellectual, theological output of Catholic converts examined in later chapters of this thesis. At some moments, we even witness thematic alignment in these different channels of engagement, such as the issue of the Catholic sacraments or the veneration of particular saints within different Eastern traditions.

Finally, within a wider framework, the complex transmission history of the *Life of Eliya* plotted earlier in the chapter suggests the role of Eliya’s story in both constructing and relaying the narrative of

²⁰⁴ On the Syriac Catholic metropolitans of Mardin, see Fiey, *Pour un Oriens Christianus Novus*, p. 238 and above, Chapter One, 1.4. On the Armenian Catholic metropolitans, see Terzian, *Le patriarcat de Cilicie et les arméniens catholiques*, p. 176, note 33.

²⁰⁵ USJ 30, ff. 38r-v.

Catholicism in Mardin. The concurrence of most versions at the beginning of the twentieth century is, as discussed in the previous chapter, emblematic of contemporary efforts to compile a hitherto absent Syriac Catholic history. And yet, whatever the status of Eliya ibn al-Kuzayr was in eighteenth-century Mardin society, his significance to the history of Catholicism in Mardin is as relevant today – albeit for different reasons – as it was to Işhaq Armalet in 1909.

While this chapter has focussed on social, confessional and political dynamics, the following chapter will draw on an array of contemporary accounts to analyse how ecclesiastical space and materiality featured into the changing Christian landscape of Mardin during this period.

Chapter Three

The Churches of Mardin

While the *Life of Eliya* transported us to the streets, markets and courts of Mardin, this chapter is firmly rooted in ecclesiastical space. It provides a detailed analysis of the church and monastic landscape of Mardin and its environs between 1662-1783: a period marked by religious change. Working on the basis that sacred spaces are not “pre-existing and primordial entities”, but rather “contingent human and cultural constructs”,¹ it will identify and analyse three thematic representations of churches in contemporary Christian sources: their physical construction, their material wealth, and their confessional demarcation. In doing so, it will reveal the significance of specific churches and monasteries to the record of Christian communities in Mardin during this period, and how entangled they became in the tension and discord caused by Catholic conversion. After all, these were more than just places for worship; within the framework of Ottoman-governed society, churches were arguably the “only political arena open to Christians”.² As this chapter will inspect, this routinely positioned them at the centre of Christian interconfessional struggles during this period.

The renovation and building of churches, this chapter will argue, feature as markers of success for Christian communities in contemporary accounts, particularly for the Syriac Orthodox in Mardin. While Islamic law technically forbade the building of Christian places of worship, and applied tight restrictions to their rebuilding, scholars have advocated for the “pragmatism” with which this was interpreted and executed by Ottoman authorities.³ Accounts of church rebuilding in Mardin present its legal

¹ A. Walsham, ‘The Sacred Landscape’, in A. Bamji, G. H. Janssen, and M. Laven (eds), *The Ashgate Research Companion to the Counter-Reformation* (London, 2013), p. 204.

² B. Masters, *Christians and Jews in the Ottoman Arab World: The Roots of Sectarianism* (New York, 2001), p. 96. On the significance of maintaining places of worship in the Ottoman context, see also R. Gradeva, ‘From the Bottom Up and Back Again until Who Knows When: Church Restoration Procedures in the Ottoman Empire, Seventeenth-Eighteenth Centuries (Preliminary Notes)’, in A. Anastasopoulos (ed.), *Political Initiatives ‘From the Bottom Up’ In the Ottoman Empire* (Rethymno, 2012), pp. 136-8.

³ Quote from Gradeva, ‘From the Bottom Up and Back Again until Who Knows When’, p. 137, 162. See further treatments in P. Girardelli, ‘Architecture, Identity, and Liminality: On the Use and Meaning of Catholic Spaces in Late Ottoman Istanbul’, *Muqarnas*, 22 (2005), pp. 233-64; M. Hartmuth, ‘The Challenge of Rebuilding a Catholic Monastery in Ottoman Bosnia in 1767’, in M. Hartmuth, A. Dilsiz and A. Wharton (eds), *Christian Art under Muslim Rule: Proceedings of a Workshop Held in Istanbul on May 11/12, 2012* (Leiden, 2016), pp. 137-44; A. Çapar, ‘The Ottoman Policy Towards Church Construction: The Issue of Church Construction and Restoration in Antakya (Antioch) in the 18th and 19th Centuries’, *Asia Minor Studies*, 12 (2018), pp. 53-71; R. Gradeva,

permissibility in clearly prescribed yet unproblematic terms. Against the backdrop of Catholic conversion, however, these construction works emerge as a contentious issue among local Christian communities. Secondly, the chapter will consider the material assets of specific churches in Mardin and connected locations. While material donations were viewed as expressions of piety, patriarchal handling of these assets emerges as a contraversial issue in discourses of leadership struggles between Orthodox and Catholic candidates during the investigated period. Finally, the chapter will reflect on how the installation of Catholic leaders within particular churches in Mardin resulted in idealised, Catholicised depictions of these spaces. At the same time, these depictions are tempered by documented concerns about the necessity of continued interconfessional church sharing within the locale – a phenomenon which has been widely acknowledged in the contexts of both early modern Ottoman society,⁴ and post-Reformation Europe.⁵ In all these respects, this chapter uncovers new dimensions to our understanding of early Catholicism in Mardin.

More broadly, the chapter also deepens our understanding of the Catholic history of Mardin by distinguishing the trajectories of church establishment by different local Catholic communities. Syriac Catholic converts appear to have been considerably less successful than their Armenian and Chaldean counterparts in occupying Orthodox spaces during the eighteenth century; the traditional concentration of the Syriac Orthodox hierarchy, churches and monasteries across the local Christian landscape, as we shall explore below, was undoubtedly a factor. A Syriac Catholic church was not officially established in Mardin until the mid-nineteenth century, after which they were permitted to build new churches for themselves.⁶ In fact, as we saw in Chapter One, this relatively late physical and institutional presence was one of many issues which confronted Syriac Catholic historians during the early twentieth century.

‘Ottoman Policy towards Christian Church Buildings’, in idem, *Rumeli under the Ottomans, 15th-18th Centuries: Institutions and Communities* (Piscataway, NJ, 2019), pp. 339-68.

⁴ See e.g. J. Grehan, *Twilight of the Saints: Everyday Religion in Ottoman Syria and Palestine* (New York, NY, 2014), esp. pp. 164-189; C. Santus, *Trasgressioni necessarie: comunicatio in sacris, coesistenza e conflitti tra le comunità cristiane orientali (Levante e Impero ottomano, XVII-XVIII secolo)* (Rome, 2019), esp. pp. 219-24, 381-428.

⁵ See e.g. M. Christ, *Biographies of a Reformation: Religious Change and Confessional Coexistence in Upper Lusatia, 1520-1635* (Oxford, 2021), esp. pp. 29-50, 153-174.

⁶ On developments to the church-building policy during the nineteenth century, see H. J. Sharkey, *A History of Muslims, Christians, and Jews in the Middle East* (Cambridge, 2017), esp. pp. 136-7; Çapar, ‘The Ottoman Policy

This chapter draws on a variety of contemporary sources in which mentions of churches or monasteries in Mardin transpire. First among these are scattered paratextual notes from the manuscript corpus, in which scribes have recorded churches as sites of copying or beneficiaries of donations. Some narrative texts also provide testimonies on local churches. From the Syriac Orthodox milieu, these include an anonymously-authored appendix to the Chronicle of Michael the Great/the Syrian, the twelfth-century Syriac Orthodox patriarch, considered one of the most prestigious writers of the Syriac Orthodox ‘golden age’.⁷ The appendix contains notices of the Syriac Orthodox patriarchs from the sixteenth to eighteenth century, in which churches in Mardin and Mosul are referenced.⁸ While its earliest copy dates to 1763, the parts covering the patriarchates of George III (d. 1781) and Matthew (d. 1817) were likely added in the early nineteenth century.⁹ Another Syriac Orthodox history, purportedly written in 1730 by Metropolitan Timothy ‘Īsá (d. 1743), superior of Saffron Monastery, documents the reign of Patriarch George I (d. 1708).¹⁰ Though this account is only extant in a printed edition based on twentieth-century copies,¹¹ both the historicity of its author and its alignment with events recounted in other contemporary accounts merit its consideration here.¹² This chapter will also examine sources authored by Catholic converts. These include the subject of the previous chapter, the *Life of the Syriac*

Towards Church Construction’, esp. pp. 61, 64-8. On Mardin specifically, see B. Açıkyıldız-Şengül, ‘Mardin in the Post-Tanzimat Era: Heritage, Changes and Formation of an Urban Landscape’, *Journal of Ethnic and Cultural Studies*, 5/2 (2018), pp. 162, 165-8; A. Wharton-Durgaryan, ‘Open for Business?: the Stylistic Choices and Symbolic Vocabulary of Post-Reform Armenian Mansions in Mardin and Bitlis’, *Études arméniennes contemporaines*, 14 (2022), pp. 119-60.

⁷ See D. Weltecke, ‘Michael the Syrian and Syriac Orthodox Identity’, in R. B. ter Haar Romeny (ed.), *Religious Origins of Nations?: The Christian Communities of the Middle East* (Leiden; Boston, 2010), pp. 115-125. For a recent study of the chronicle, see also D. Weltecke, *The ‘Description of the Times’ by Mōr Michael the Great (1126-1199): A Study on Its Historical and Its Historiographical Context* (Leuven, 2021).

⁸ Consulted here as a translated edition: I. Bcheiry. ‘A list of the Syrian Orthodox patriarchs between 16th and 18th century’, *Parole de l'Orient*, 29 (2004), pp. 212-61.

⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 212.

¹⁰ Timothy is identified as the “secretary” of Patriarch Isaac II in the extended chronicle of Michael the Syrian: see Bcheiry, ‘A list of the Syrian Orthodox patriarchs’, p. 229. For biographical information, see Ignatius A. Barsoum, *History of the Syriac Dioceses*, trans. Matti Moosa (2 vols, Piscataway, NJ, 2009), i, pp. 23-4. He is mentioned as Metropolitan of Saffron Monastery in notes and colophons of several MSS: CFMM (= Mardin, Church of the Forty Martyrs) 818 (1714), f. 402v; CFMM 360 (1726-7), f. 279v; ZFRN (= Mardin, Dayr Za‘farān Monastery) 130 (1726), f. 249v.

¹¹ Arabic edition published in Muṭrān G. Y. Ibrāhīm, ‘Şafḥah min tāriḫ al-Suryān fī al-qarn al-sābi‘ ‘ashr’, *al-Majallah al-Baṭriyarkīyah*, 175-6 (1980), pp. 280-288; idem, ‘al-Suryān fī al-qarn al-sābi‘ ‘ashr’, *al-Majallah al-Baṭriyarkīyah*, 1 (1981), pp. 30-40. ‘Īsá’s authorial colophon is replicated in 1980 installment, pp. 281-2. According to Muṭrān Ibrāhīm, the MS used for the edition was copied in 1976 at Saffron Monastery from an unidentified “ancient text”, which he compared with two other modern copies (‘Şafḥah min tāriḫ al-Suryān’, p. 281). I have been unable to locate any MSS containing the account.

¹² E.g. with *Life of Eliya* and extended Chronicle of Michael the Syrian: see above, Chapter Two, 2.4.

Catholic convert Eliya ibn al-Kuzayr, set in early eighteenth-century Mardin;¹³ the *Life* of Chaldean patriarch Joseph I, written in 1719 by Metropolitan Basileus ‘Abd al-Aḥad (d. 1728) which, though predominantly based in Diyarbakır, references Mardin in places;¹⁴ and the autobiographical account of the Syriac Catholic patriarch Michael Jarwah, composed in 1785, particularly concerning his stay in Mardin between 1781-1782.¹⁵ Lastly, the discussion will be supplemented with architectural and ethnographic observations from the accounts of European visitors to Mardin during the investigated period,¹⁶ and reports on church affairs in Mardin within the correspondence of local prelates and Catholic missionaries. These are preserved in archives in Rome, though they have mainly been consulted in edited collections.¹⁷

It is important to bear in mind that these sources are written predominantly by members of the clergy. As such, the insight which they offer on the status of these churches amidst the confessional struggles of seventeenth- and eighteenth-century Mardin cannot usually be perceived as representing the

¹³ Preserved in USJ (= Beirut, Université Saint-Joseph, Bibliothèque Orientale) 30 (1700-1800); USJ 31 (1800-1909); CFMM (= Mardin, Church of the Forty Martyrs) 912 (1907), ff. 17v-39v.

¹⁴ The Arabic Karshuni *Life* of Joseph I is preserved in CCM (= Mardin, Mar Hirmiz Keldani Kilisesi) 12, ff. 273v-291r (1719); CCM 6 (1700-1800) and CCM 281 (1800-1900), ff. 202v-234v. For Arabic edition, see L. Cheikho, ‘Tarjamat Yūsuf al-awwal baṭriyark al-Kaldān’, *al-Machriq*, 19 (1921), pp. 124-138.

¹⁵ An autobiographical account by Jarwah, covering the lead-up to his patriarchal elevation and the aftermath, is preserved in at least nine copies: MBM (= Mosul, Mar Behnam Monastery) 450 (1800-1900); USJ 148 (1900); Charfet Arabic 6/25 (1785 – autograph?); Charfet Arabic 6/26 (1899); Charfet Arabic 6/27 (latest 1907); Charfet Arabic 6/28; Charfet Arabic 16/7 (latest 1930); Charfet Arabic 16/12 (latest 1932); Charfet Arabic 18/12 (Spanish, latest 1906). Charfet MSS consulted in I. Armalet, *al-Ṭurfah fī makhṭūṭāt Dayr al-Shurfah/ Catalogue des manuscrits de Charfet, Publié à l'occasion du 150e anniversaire de l'installation du siège patriarcal à Charfet, 1786-1936* (Jounieh, 1937), pp. 374-5, 375-6, 482-3, 485-6, 503. Cheikho published a partial edition of the text in ‘al-Tidhkār al-mi’awī li-wifāt al-sa’id al-dhikr al-Sayyid Aghnāṭiyūs Mikhā’il Jarwah’, *al-Machriq*, 3 (1900), pp. 913-926. This study will refer to the MBM 450 copy.

¹⁶ Printed accounts as follows: J.-B. Tavernier, *The Six Voyages of John Baptista Tavernier, Baron of Aubonne through Turkey, into Persia and the East-Indies, for the Space of Forty Years* (London, 1677); L. d’Arvieux, *Mémoires du Chevalier d’Arvieux, envoyé extraordinaire du roy à la Porte, Consul d’Alep, d’Alger, de Tripoli & autres Echelles du Levant* (6 vols, Paris, 1735); A. Bembo, *The Travels and Journal of Ambrosio Bembo*, ed. Anthony Welch (Berkeley, CA, 2007); J. B. L. J. Rousseau, *Description du pachalik de Bagdad: suivie d’une notice historique sur les Wahabis, et de quelques autres pièces relatives à l’histoire et à la littérature de l’Orient* (Paris, 1809); G.-A. Olivier, *Voyage Dans l’empire Othoman, l’Égypte et La Perse. Fait Par Ordre Du Gouvernement, Pendant Les Six Premières Années de La République* (6 vols, Paris, 1801-1807); H. Southgate, *Narrative of a Tour through Armenia, Kurdistan, Persia and Mesopotamia* (2 vols, New York, 1840); J. S. Buckingham, *Travels in Mesopotamia* (London, 1827); O. Parry, *Six Months in a Syrian Monastery*, (London, 1895).

¹⁷ See Melkon Tasbasian’s correspondence in SC (=Scrittura riferite nei Congressi) Armeni vi. Other documents are preserved in L. X. Abougit, ‘Récit de ce que les PP. Jésuites ont souffert dans les prisons de Maredine en Mésopotamie’, *Etudes Religieuses, Historiques et Littéraires / Par Des Pères de La Compagnie de Jésus*, (1877), pp. 580-600; S. Giamil, *Genuinae Relationes Inter Sedem Apostolicam et Assyriorum Orientalium Seu Chaldaeorum Ecclesiam. Ed. Cura et Studio S. Giamil* (Rome, 1902); H. Chick (ed.), *A chronicle of the Carmelites in Persia and the Papal mission of the XVIIth and XVIIIth centuries* (2 vols, London, 1939); A. Lampart, *Ein Märtyrer der Union mit Rom* (Einsiedeln, 1966).

‘popular’ voice of a church congregation, nor indeed individual or lay piety. Rather, these sources express the views of the clerical elite; of the very people invested in implementing and promoting an image – predominantly confessionally driven – of these places of worship. It is how such key figures described these churches in which this chapter is interested. But before proceeding to analysis, the following section will establish the layout, conditions and characteristics of churches and monasteries in Mardin during our investigated timeframe.

3.1 Christian topography of Mardin

3.1.2 Urban churches

The majority of the churches and monasteries identified as in use in seventeenth- and eighteenth-century Mardin are still standing today.¹⁸ Unlike in places such as Aleppo, where churches were all confined to a specific quarter,¹⁹ churches in Mardin were distributed among the mosques and madrasas which had been erected during the Artuqid dynasty (1107-1409), for which Mardin had served as the capital.²⁰ The three denominations in Mardin each had their own church. The East Syriacs – the smallest Christian community – had the Church of Rabban Hormizd (*Kanīsat Rabbān/Mār Hurmiz*) on the main street (fig. 7);²¹ the Syriac Orthodox – the largest Christian community – had the Church of the Forty Martyrs (*Kanīsat al-Arba ʿīn Shahīd/ Mār Bihnām wa-Arfāqihī*) in the north-west quarter (fig. 4);²² and the Armenians the Church of St. George (*Surp Kevork/Kanīsat Mār Jirjis*) in the south-east quarter (fig. 8). Of these, only the Church of St. George is no longer in use, having fallen into disrepair after the

¹⁸ Visited by the present author in October 2023. See architectural surveys of Syriac churches and monasteries in/around Mardin in T. A. Sinclair, *Eastern Turkey: An Architectural and Archaeological Survey* (4 vols, London, 1987-1990), iii, pp. 207, 208, 211, 214-219; H. Hollerweger, *Turabdin: lebendiges Kulturerbe : wo die Sprache Jesu gesprochen wird* (Linz, 1999), pp. 314-327, 338-359; E. Keser-Kayaalp, *Church Architecture of Late Antique Northern Mesopotamia*. Oxford, 2021), pp. 188-205, 212-219. On the Armenian church of Surp Kevork in Mardin, see Z. Ö. Biner, *States of Dispossession: Violence and Precarious Coexistence in Southeast Turkey* (Philadelphia, PA, 2020), pp. 76-81.

¹⁹ See B. Heyberger, *Les chrétiens du Proche-Orient au temps de la réforme catholique (Syrie, Liban, Palestine, XVIIe-XVIIIe siècles)* (Rome, 1994), pp. 54-62 and idem., ‘Missionaries and women: Domestic Catholicism in the Middle East’, in N. Amsler, A. Badea, B. Heyberger and C. Windler (eds), *Catholic Missionaries in Early Modern Asia: Patterns of Localization* (London, 2019), pp. 191-2.

²⁰ On Artuqid structures in Mardin, see Sinclair, *Eastern Turkey*, iii, pp. 203-6, 208-14.

²¹ Ibid., iii, p. 211; Hollerweger, *Turabdin: lebendiges Kulturerbe*, p. 325.

²² Sinclair, *Eastern Turkey*, iii, p. 207; Hollerweger, *Turabdin: lebendiges Kulturerbe*, pp. 317-21.

massacres inflicted on local Christians between 1915-1916, and exposed to looting and squatting over subsequent years.²³

Analysis of colophons within the manuscript corpus indicates that there was scribal activity at Rabban Hormizd and St. George from the mid to late eighteenth century,²⁴ though next to none is recorded at the Church of the Forty Martyrs until around 1799.²⁵ The churches of Rabban Hormizd and the Forty Martyrs appear to have accommodated their respective patriarchs on visits to Mardin, while St. George was the residence of the Armenian metropolitan.²⁶ The Syriac Orthodox additionally possessed two smaller churches within walking distance of the Forty Martyrs: the Church of St. Shmuni (*Kanīsat Mārt Shimūnī*) in the south-west quarter (fig. 5),²⁷ and the Monastery of St. Michael (*Dayr Mār Mīkhā'īl*) to the south (though there is no evidence that it had a resident monastic community during the studied period).²⁸ The possession of “three churches” by the Syriac Orthodox community of Mardin – in comparison to the single churches serving the other communities – is routinely attested in seventeenth- and eighteenth-century sources, including the account of the Jesuit Michel Nau’s (d. 1683) stay in Mardin around 1680-1682.²⁹ In the *Life of Eliya*, the Syriac Orthodox Patriarch Isaac II is described at one point as visiting the Church of the Forty Martyrs on Monday, St. Shmuni on Tuesday, and St. Michael on Wednesday.³⁰ European visitors to Mardin during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries

²³ See Biner, *States of Dispossession*, pp. 76-81.

²⁴ For Rabban Hormizd, see e.g. CCM (= Mardin, Mar Hormizd Keldani Kilisesi) 104 (1759), f. 271v; CCM 117 (1759), f. 256v; CCM 261 (1770), f. 183r; CCM 272 (1770), f. 103r; BnF (= Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France) Syr. 278 (1746), f. 64v; BnF Syr. 61 (1746), ff. 57v-58v. For St. George, see CCM 456 (1739), f. 172v; BnF Ar. 130 (1743), f. 53v. BnF MSS consulted on ‘Gallica – The BnF digital library’ <https://www.bnf.fr/en/gallica-bnf-digital-library> (8 Jul 2024).

²⁵ The only MS I came across copied at the Church of the Forty Martyrs between 1662-1783 is Mingana Syriac 480 (1713): A. Mingana, *Catalogue of the Mingana Collection of Manuscripts, Now in the Possession of the Trustees of the Woodbrooke Settlement, Selly Oak, Birmingham* (4 vols, Cambridge, 1933), i, pp. 878-882. MS copied at Church of the Forty Martyrs in 1799 records the “opening” (*infataḥa*) of its copying facilities (*maktab*) in colophon: CFMM 1128 (1799), f. 208r.

²⁶ USJ 31, p. 41, p. 44 (Joseph II stays at Rabban Hormizd); BnF Syr. 61 (1746), f. 58r (copy produced in “patriarchal cell” of Rabban Hormizd in Mardin); USJ 30, f. 5v (Patriarch George at Church of the Forty Martyrs); USJ 31, p. 40 (Melkon has “cell” at St. George).

²⁷ Sinclair, *Eastern Turkey*, iii, p. 208; Hollerweger, *Turabdin: lebendiges Kulturerbe*, p. 322.

²⁸ Sinclair, *Eastern Turkey*, iii, p. 214; Hollerweger, *Turabdin: lebendiges Kulturerbe*, p. 323. See also A. Palmer, ‘La montagne aux LXX monastères: la géographie monastique du Tur Abdin’, in F. Jullien (ed.), *Le monachisme syriaque* (Paris, 2010), pp. 191-2.

²⁹ See Abougit, ‘Récit de ce que les PP. Jésuites ont souffert dans les prisons de Maredine’, p. 584. These “three churches” are also referred to by e.g. Timothy ‘Īsā: Ibrāhīm, ‘Şafḥah min tārīkh al-Suryān’, p. 32 and Armenian Catholic Metropolitan of Mardin John Tasbasian in 1771: Chick (ed.), *A chronicle of the Carmelites in Persia*, ii, p. 1264.

³⁰ USJ 30, f. 42r.

seldom mention its churches, seemingly more impressed by the fortress towering above the town.³¹ This may, on the other hand, have been owing to the churches' somewhat unassuming appearance: Oswald



Figure 4: Church of the Forty Martyrs, Mardin, inner courtyard (October 2023).

Parry noted of the Church of the Forty Martyrs in the late nineteenth century that “nothing external shows the building to be a church”, apart from a small bell tower which had only recently been installed.³²

The dating of these churches in their current states is somewhat ambiguous, given the range of estimates which have abounded in historiography. Writing in the early twentieth century, the Mardin-born scholars Louis Cheikho and Išāq Armalet advocated their early Christian origins, though without providing any concrete evidence. In an account of his visit to Mardin in 1895, Louis Cheikho reported that the East Syriac and Armenian churches of Rabban Hormizd and St. George were among the “oldest

³¹ For mentions of Mardin Castle, see e.g. F. de La Boullaye-Le Gouz, *Les voyages et observations du Sieur de La Boullaye-Le-Gouz, gentil-homme angevin*, (Paris, 1657), p. 322; J. Otter, *Voyage en Turquie et en Perse: avec une relation des expéditions de Tahmas Kouli-Khan* (2 vols, Paris, 1748), ii, pp. 266-7; Olivier, *Voyage Dans l'empire Othoman, l'Égypte et La Perse*, iv., p. 243.

³² Parry, *Six Months in a Syrian Monastery*, p. 78. See also discussion of Ottoman Christian architectural restrictions in Heyberger, *Les chrétiens du Proche-Orient*, pp. 56-7.

buildings” (*min aqdam abnīyatihā*) in the entire town, and likely dated to the fifth or sixth century.³³ Cheikho also noted that St. George housed a nail from the Crucifixion, gifted by an early Christian king.³⁴ Ishaq Armalet traced the three main churches to the fifth century, and claimed that the other Syriac Orthodox churches of St. Shmuni and St Michael were built in the eighth century.³⁵ He added in the Charfet manuscript catalogue that a relic of Noah’s ark was preserved in an unnamed church in Mardin.³⁶ The antiquity of these churches was not only espoused by local Christians: Oswald Parry described the Church of Rabban Hormizd as a “splendid old Roman basilica”, while observing the Church of St. George was “of the same type but later date”.³⁷ Later estimates have emerged in recent studies: Sinclair judged the existing church buildings in the town to date to the Artuqid dynasty or later (i.e. from twelfth century), though his reasoning is not specified.³⁸ The West Syriac *Synodicon* attests that the Syriac Orthodox Metropolitan John of Mardin (d. 1165) restored as many as fifty churches and monasteries in the diocese of Mardin between 1125-1165, but notably does not reference any of the three churches in town.³⁹ Nonetheless, there are indicators that these churches could have been established prior to Artuqid rule: a Syriac inscription on the square tower in St. Michael is dated 961-2, signifying the latest founding date for the monastery.⁴⁰

Local tradition also maintained that a Syriac Orthodox church had once stood on the site of the original Artuqid Grand Mosque (*Ulu Cami*) in the town centre. The Muslim jurist and historian ‘Abd al-Salām al-Mārdīnī (d. 1842) wrote that the “courtyard of the church of Mardin” (*ḥūsh kanīsat Mārdīn*) was annexed for the mosque in 1170,⁴¹ while Armalet reported that the Muslim seizure of the church, as well as another church dedicated to the St. Thomas the Apostle, was recorded by Bar Hebraeus and an

³³ L. Cheikho, ‘Min Bayrūt ilā al-Hind’, *al-Machriq* 15 (1912), p. 299.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 622.

³⁵ I. Armalet, *al-Qusārā fī nakabāt al-Naṣārā*, (Charfet, 1919), p. 30, 33-4; *idem.*, ‘Lum’ah tārikhīyah fī adyār Mārdīn’, *al-Machriq*, 12 (1909), pp. 760-770.

³⁶ Armalet, *Catalogue des manuscrits de Charfet*, p. 265.

³⁷ Parry, *Six Months in a Syrian Monastery*, p. 79.

³⁸ Sinclair, *Eastern Turkey*, iii, p. 203.

³⁹ A. Vööbus (ed.), *The Synodicon in the West Syrian tradition* (4 vols, Louvain, 1975), i, t. 163, p. 210, t. 164, p. 222. According to Patriarch Ephrem Barsoum, the biography of John of Mardin is preserved in 3 MSS: Vatican Syr. 96, BnF Syr. 297, and an unidentified Homs MS dated 1602: *idem*, *The Scattered Pearls: History of Syriac Literature and Sciences*, trans. Matti Moosa (Piscataway, NJ, 2004), p. 151.

⁴⁰ A. Palmer, *Monk and Mason on the Tigris Frontier: The Early History of Tur ‘Abdin* (Cambridge, 1990), pp. 195, 217-8.

⁴¹ ‘Abd al-Salām al-Mārdīnī, *Naḥāḥ al-nardīn fī tārikh al-Mārdīn*: USJ 137 (1908), p. 11.

anonymous Edessan historian.⁴² The British traveller James Silk Buckingham (d. 1855) heard claims of the Christian roots of the Grand Mosque in Mardin, although its exterior architecture made him doubtful.⁴³ Yet while securely dating the churches of Mardin is difficult, it is almost certain that they all existed at the point of the Ottoman conquest in 1516, and endured as places of Christian worship



Figure 5: Church of St. Shmuni, Mardin, exterior (October 2023).

afterward. In fact, recent research indicates that the Ottoman authorities themselves made minimal changes or contributions to the urban architecture of Mardin during their first few centuries of rule.⁴⁴

Christian worship in Mardin was likely no less hidden than in any other urban Ottoman context. Processions and the ringing of church bells were in theory forbidden by authorities, although there were probably exceptions.⁴⁵ In 1681, the later Syriac Catholic bishop Safar al-Mārdīnī was surprised to witness a procession with bells, incense and chanting

⁴² Armalet, *al-Quṣārā*, p. 33.

⁴³ Buckingham, *Travels in Mesopotamia*, p. 191.

⁴⁴ Açıkyıldız-Şengül, 'Mardin in the Post-Tanzimat Era', pp. 161-2.

⁴⁵ See Heyberger, *Les chrétiens du Proche-Orient*, pp. 54-62; Gradeva, 'Ottoman Policy towards Christian Church Buildings', pp. 364-5; J.-P. Ghobrial, 'Christian Materiality between East and West: Notes of a Capuchin among the Christians of the Ottoman Empire', in S. Ivanič, M. Laven and A. Morrall (eds), *Religious Materiality in the Early Modern World* (Amsterdam, 2019), p. 104. On the banning of sound and visual features of Christianity in the Mongol Ilkhanate, see S. Rassi, 'What Does the Clapper Say?': An Interfaith Discourse on the Christian Call to Prayer by 'Abdīshō' bar Brīkhā', in A. Peacock, B. De Nicola and S. N. Yıldız (eds), *Islam and Christianity in Medieval Anatolia* (Farnham, 2015), pp. 263-284.

outside the Armenian church in Diyarbakır, while local Muslims watched on “without saying anything” – possibly indicating a less strict environment than his native Mardin.⁴⁶ Churches were typically hidden behind high stone walls without facades, as witnessed in Mardin (fig. 5).⁴⁷ By the same token, the *Life of Eliya* depicts local clergy as engaged in the commercial life of the town, employed as tradesmen or at the market when not in church (a situation not unique to Mardin).⁴⁸ They appear to have been able to enter churches belonging to other confessions with relative ease – although not always without attracting attention.⁴⁹ Special occasions could draw large, confessionally mixed audiences to a church. When the Chaldean Patriarch Joseph II (d. 1713) ordained his nephew Qūryāqūs at the Church of Rabban Hormizd, Eliya described the church as crammed with people from different Christian confessions, all listening to his sermon in silence.⁵⁰ During an outbreak of the plague of 1712, the governor of Mardin ostensibly ordered the Syriac Orthodox patriarch George I to lead a prayer for the town. Eliya recounts that Armenians, Syriac Orthodox and Chaldeans gathered at the “outside door” (*khārij al-bāb al-barrānī*) of the Monastery of St. Michael to pray with the patriarch;⁵¹ Timothy ʿĪsā adds that Muslims and Jews were also present.⁵² European travellers offer mixed reviews: in the early nineteenth century, Jean-Baptiste Rosseau (d. 1831) remarked that the Christians of Mardin “enjoy great freedom, and have several superbly built churches”, though without elaboration.⁵³ By around 1817, however, James Silk Buckingham observed that Christian rituals in Mardin were being increasingly concealed from public view. After reporting that “it was the custom of this place, half a century ago, to celebrate the marriage of the Christians in their churches, and to perform the festivities as openly as they wished”, he explained that the ceremony now had to be conducted in the houses of priests, owing to “repeated insults and interruptions offered to them by the Turks”.⁵⁴ Moreover, the security of the

⁴⁶ I. Armalet, ‘Akhbār safar al-Mūnsinniyūr Fransīs Bīkīt ilā bilād Armīnīyah wa-al-‘Ajam’, *al-Machriq*, 32 (1934), p. 116.

⁴⁷ Heyberger, *Les chrétiens du Proche-Orient*, pp. 54-7. See also comment above by Oswald Parry, *Six Months in a Syrian Monastery*, p. 78.

⁴⁸ USJ 30, f. 18v. For Aleppo, see Heyberger, *Les chrétiens du Proche-Orient*, p. 100.

⁴⁹ See e.g. Eliya confronted about visiting the Armenian Church of St. George: USJ 30, ff. 5r-v; USJ 31, p. 40.

⁵⁰ USJ 31, p. 43.

⁵¹ USJ 30, ff. 30v-31r.

⁵² Ibrāhīm, ‘al-Suryān fī al-qarn al-sābi‘ ‘ashr’, p. 34.

⁵³ “...les Chrétiens y jouissent d’une grande liberté, et ont plusieurs églises superbement bâties”: Rousseau, *Description du pachalik de Bagdad*, p. 96.

⁵⁴ Buckingham, *Travels in Mesopotamia*, pp. 186-7.

churches could not necessarily be guaranteed. A note in an Arabic grammar in the Saffron Monastery collection records how the Monastery of St. Michael was “captured” (*fatahū*) and its silver looted by forces of the Pasha of Baghdad in 1792-3.⁵⁵ This is perhaps one of the reasons behind Parry’s observation that valuables were “unsafe” being left inside this particular church, and thus had to be stored at the house of a deacon.⁵⁶

3.1.3 Rural churches

Given the minimal interest shown by contemporary sources, the church landscape of the countryside surrounding Mardin is harder to gauge. According to Elif Keser Kayaalp, some of the rural churches in the region may have originated as early as the sixth century, and were typically situated at the highest point of the settlement.⁵⁷ Paratextual notes in manuscripts occasionally attest to village churches in the Mardin *sancak*. These include churches belonging to the Syriac Orthodox (e.g. St. Eliya in Jiftlik, St. George in Qal‘at al-Mārā);⁵⁸ to the Armenians (e.g. St. Barbara to the west of Mardin, St. George in Tall Arman);⁵⁹ and to the East Syriacs (e.g. St. George in Ṭabyāthā, St. Petion in Kārab Ūlmā).⁶⁰ As Iskandar Bcheiry has shown, however, these are but a small cross-section of the rural churches surrounding Ottoman Mardin. MS Oxford Hunt 444, which preserves a register of ordinations in the Syriac Orthodox Church during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, provides insight into a vast network of local Syriac Orthodox parish churches.⁶¹ These include the Church of the Mother of God in Aḥmadī, the Monastery of St. Barsaumo and Behnam in Banābīl, the Church of St. Jacob in Banābīl, St. George in Ibrahīmīyyah, the Church of the Mother of God in Ḥarīn, the Church of St. Osyo in Maṣūriyyah, the Church of St. George in Mashqūq, the Church of St. George in Qal‘at Aṭṭo, the Church of Ḥbīshto in Qal‘at Aṭṭo, the Church of St. Qūryāqūs in Qālūq, the Church of St. Shmuni in Qawīm, the Church of St. John in Qawīm, the Church of St. John in Qillith, and the Church of St. Theodore in Quṣūr.⁶²

⁵⁵ ZFRN 198, f. 1v.

⁵⁶ Parry, *Six Months in a Syrian Monastery*, p. 78.

⁵⁷ Keser-Kayaalp, *Church Architecture of Late Antique Northern Mesopotamia*, pp. 163, 185-6.

⁵⁸ CFMM 42 (1700), f. 402r; CFMM 48 (1738-9), back cover.

⁵⁹ USJ 30, ff. 2v-3r, USJ 31, pp. 1-5.

⁶⁰ CCM 103 (1568-75), f. 215v; CCM 74 (1647), f.134r; Dawra Syr. 492 (1581) in P. Haddad and J. Isaac, *al-Makḥūṣāt al-suryāniya wa-al-‘arabiya fī khizānat al-rahbāniya al-kaldāniya fī Baghdād* (Baghdad, 1988), pp. 211-2.

⁶¹ I. Bcheiry, *A List of Syriac Orthodox Ecclesiastic Ordinations from the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Century: The Syriac Manuscript of Hunt 444 (Syr 68 in Bodleian Library, Oxford)* (Piscataway, NJ, 2010).

⁶² *Ibid.*, pp. 101, 104-5, 105-6, 106, 108, 111-2, 116, 117-8, 119, 121-2, 123.

Churches in some of these villages (Aḥmadī, Banābīl, Ibrahīmīyyah, Mashqūq, Qawīm) were ostensibly built in the time of Metropolitan John of Mardin, although their names are not given.⁶³

While Oxford Hunt 444 indicates that rural Syriac Orthodox churches were being supplied with clergy in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, the figures show a marked decrease after the sixteenth century – possibly relating to the population crisis experienced by Anatolia in the early seventeenth century.⁶⁴ Moreover, in sources produced in the studied period, the few references to these establishments allude to their neglected condition. Eliya describes the Syriac Orthodox church of St. Eliya in Jiftlīk, a village to the south of Mardin, as “dilapidated” (*kharibah*),⁶⁵ and relates how the Armenian Church of St. Barbara (*Surp Varvara*), to the west of the town, was in a state of disrepair by the early eighteenth century:⁶⁶ “it was a dilapidated church, neglected for a long time, and he [Melkon] cleaned out the rubbish which had been left in it”.⁶⁷ Though we cannot rule this out as a means of downplaying the seizure of these churches by himself and his fellow Catholic convert Melkon, Eliya does seem more impressed with another Syriac Orthodox church which he briefly attends in the village of Qālūq – perhaps the above-mentioned Church of St. Qūryāqūs – remarking that it was “a big church surrounded by a garden” (*kanīсах kabīrah fī wašt bustān*).⁶⁸ Another source for the Church of St. Eliya in Jiftlīk, comprising an evangelion dated 1700, indicates that it did suffer damages at some point: an anonymous note records that the custodianship of the church was usurped, resulting in the “burning of all books, customs and clothing until nothing remained” (*iḥtaraqū al-kitābāt wa-al-badlāt wa-al-qumṣān ḥattā mā baqā shī*).⁶⁹ A report by the Carmelite Bishop Emmanuel, who was in Mardin in 1753, vaguely referenced “two villages, four leagues from Mardin” with “their church in ruins”.⁷⁰ A vivid image of another rural church in the Mardin *sancak* is provided in an account by Jean-Baptiste Tavernier

⁶³ Vööbus (ed.), *The Synodicon in the West Syrian tradition*, i, t. 163, pp. 202-3; t. 164, pp. 213-4.

⁶⁴ Bcheiry, *A List of Syriac Orthodox Ecclesiastic Ordinations*, pp. 23-8.

⁶⁵ USJ 30, f. 43v.

⁶⁶ USJ 30, ff. 2v-3r.

⁶⁷ USJ 30, f. 2v: وكانت كنيسة خرابة منروكت من زمان ونصفها من الزبالات التي كان بها

⁶⁸ USJ 30, f. 29v.

⁶⁹ CFMM 42 (1700), ff. 402v-403r. See mention of church/monastery in Palmer, ‘La montagne aux LXX monastères’, p. 192.

⁷⁰ Chick (ed.), *A chronicle of the Carmelites in Persia*, ii, p. 1264.

of the village of Cara in 1643 (today Büyükkayrık, around 40 km from the town).⁷¹ He encountered the Armenian metropolitan of Mardin in the church there:

It was a pitiful poor church, where they had nothing but two planks supported with four sticks instead of an altar. They dare not leave any furniture in it; but as soon as the priest has said service, he must have a care to take away everything, as well the planks as the covering of the altar, which was only a painted cloth: for the Turks that travel that way, if it be foul weather, will break open the door, put their horses there, burn the altar, and take away whatever they find.⁷²

Though Tavernier's description cannot encapsulate all churches in the countryside of Mardin during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, it does provide rare insight into what could practically constitute a church within this context – and the fragile nature of their existence (at least, as he perceived it). Sometimes, less dramatic, more bureaucratic, issues could explain their run-down conditions. In 1843, the Anglican missionary George Percy Badger commented on the partially ruined Syriac Orthodox church in the village of Qillith (Dereçi, around 60 km from the town) which “notwithstanding all their applications to the *Mutsellim* at Saor [sic.], and to the pasha of Diarbekir, they have not yet received permission to rebuild”.⁷³ Accordingly, most of the church renovations undertaken in Mardin during the investigated period, to be discussed below, pertain to churches situated within the town itself. This disparity appears not to have been limited to the eastern Ottoman regions: James Grehan has highlighted the disproportionate allocation of clergy, churches and religious furnishings between town and countryside in the Syrian provinces during the same period,⁷⁴ while Rossista Gradeva has noted similar scenes from Christian life in Rumelian villages.⁷⁵

3.1.4 Monasteries

One Syriac Orthodox monastery on the outskirts of Mardin does emerge as a site of spiritual, intellectual, social and material significance for the local Syriac Orthodox community during the considered period. Saffron Monastery (*Dayr al-Za'farān/ Mōr Ḥananyō*) is situated above the village of Qal'at al-Mar'ah (Eskikale), around 3 km east of the town; in contemporary terms, “two hours” from

⁷¹ See mention in B. Flemming, *Essays on Turkish Literature and History* (Leiden, 2018), p. 460.

⁷² Tavernier, *The Six Voyages of John Baptista Tavernier*, p. 68.

⁷³ Badger, *The Nestorians and their rituals*, i., p. 54.

⁷⁴ Grehan, *Twilight of the Saints*, esp. pp. 20-61.

⁷⁵ Gradeva, ‘Ottoman Policy towards Christian Church Buildings’, pp. 348-50.

Mardin (fig. 6).⁷⁶ It became the seat of the patriarch of Antioch during the reign of Michael the Great (1166-99), although this move does not appear to have been fully observed until the fourteenth century.⁷⁷ Details of the foundation of Saffron Monastery are unknown, but some of its structures possibly date to as early as the sixth century. Arranged around an open courtyard, the monastery contains two late antique churches – the Church of St. Ḥananyō and the secondary Church of the Mother of God, and is distinguished by its ornate architectural sculpture.⁷⁸ The monastery was reinstated by Metropolitan John of Mardin in the twelfth century, who reportedly established a community of sixty monks there, and significantly increased its estate.⁷⁹

Crucially for this study, Syriac Orthodox sources designate the late seventeenth and eighteenth centuries as a period of revitalisation for Saffron Monastery. Not only did it benefit from extensive structural renovations and endowments under several patriarchs, as we shall examine below; it also became a centre for Syriac Orthodox intellectual, translation and scribal production.⁸⁰ Moreover, the monastery was a spiritual and social hub for the Syriac Orthodox faithful in and around Mardin. It was the locus of patriarchal consecrations and synods, such as that held by Patriarch Shukr Allāh II in 1724.⁸¹ In the *Life of Eliya*, people from the villages of Quṣūr, Ibrāhīmīyyah and Banābīl are described as coming to watch the patriarch anoint the *myron* (chrism) there during Holy Week.⁸² The account of Timothy Īsā reports that this ritual was reinstated in 1688 whilst the monastery was being renovated, attracting “a huge throng of people from far places to visit the monastery and the patriarch”.⁸³ Both sources describe it as an opportunity to collect “donations” (*tabarru ‘āt*)⁸⁴ – a key financial resource for

⁷⁶ Quote from autobiography of Mikhā’īl Jarwah: MBM 450, f. 13v. A history of Saffron Monastery by Patriarch Ephrem Barsoum, *Nuzhat al-adhān fī ta’rīkh Dayr al-Za’farān* (Mardin, 1917), has recently become available in English: idem, *History of the Za’faran Monastery*, trans. Matti Moosa (Piscataway, NJ, 2008).

⁷⁷ Barsoum, *History of the Za’faran Monastery*, pp. 47-8; K. Dinno, *The Syrian Orthodox Christians in the Late Ottoman Period and Beyond: Crisis Then Revival* (Piscataway, NJ, 2017), pp. 22-4.

⁷⁸ See Sinclair, *Eastern Turkey*, iii, pp. 214-8; Hollerweger, *Turabdin: lebendiges Kulturerbe*, pp. 338-59; Keser-Kayaalp, *Church Architecture of Late Antique Northern Mesopotamia*, pp. 188-9, 196-7, 212-5, 216-7.

⁷⁹ Vööbus (ed.), *The Synodicon in the West Syrian tradition*, i, t. 163, pp. 205-8, 210; t. 164, pp. 217-20, 222.

⁸⁰ See below, Chapter Four, 4.4.

⁸¹ See e.g. elevation of Mikhā’īl Jarwah at Saffron Monastery in 1782 in his autobiography: MBM 450, ff. 13r-v. The ‘Tablet of Faith’ (*Wathīqat al-īmān*) resulting from synod of Patriarch Shukr Allāh is preserved in Mingana Syr. 460 (1797): Mingana, *Catalogue of the Mingana Collection*, i, p. 818.

⁸² USJ 30, f. 12r.

⁸³ Ibrāhīm, ‘al-Suryān fī al-qarn al-sābi’ ‘ashr’, p. 31: وحضر هذه الحفلة الروحية عدد غفير من المؤمنين المتوافدين من أماكن بعيدة جاءت لتزور الدير والبطريرك

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 31-2; USJ 30, f. 17v.

patriarchs.⁸⁵ It appears that this ritual endured: a note written in a manuscript by the priest Jibrāʿīl ibn Bihnām al-Qahawātī reports how he journeyed all the way from Aleppo to Saffron Monastery in 1796 to see Patriarch Matthew bless the *myron*, which was attended by “people from everywhere” (*khalqan min jamīʿ al-amākin*).⁸⁶



Figure 6: Saffron Monastery, Mardin, exterior entrance (October 2023).

The status of Saffron Monastery for the Syriac Orthodox evokes another kind of disparity in the Christian landscape of Mardin: confessional. To the east of Mardin lies the ancient, mountainous heartland of Syriac Christianity, known as Tur Abdin, in which West Syriac monasticism gained a strong foothold during the early Christian period.⁸⁷ By the eighteenth century, it is thought that as many as seventy monasteries stood there.⁸⁸ The Ottoman *sancak* of Mardin contained part of the Tur Abdin

⁸⁵ See Heyberger, *Les chrétiens du Proche-Orient*, pp. 96-7.

⁸⁶ SOAA (= Aleppo, Syriac Orthodox Church. Archdiocese of Aleppo) 45 H (latest 1796), f. 375v.

⁸⁷ Palmer, *Monk and Mason on the Tigris Frontier*, pp. 149-159; Palmer, 'La montagne aux LXX monastères. La géographie monastique du Tur 'Abdin', pp. 169-259; E. Keser-Kayaalp, 'Églises et monastères du Tur 'Abdin: les débuts d'une architecture « syriaque »', in F. Briquel-Chatonnet (ed.), *Les églises en monde syriaques* (Paris, 2013), esp. pp. 284-6. For a list of the Syriac Orthodox churches and monasteries of Tur Abdin, see Ignatius E. Barsoum, *The History of Tur Abdin*, trans. Matti Moosa (Piscataway, NJ, 2008), pp. 17-20.

⁸⁸ Palmer, 'La montagne aux LXX monastères', pp. 172-3.

region, including the celebrated late antique monasteries of St. Jacob in Ṣalaḥ and St. Gabriel in Qartmīn, near Midyat.⁸⁹ In immediate proximity to the town of Mardin, the Syriac Orthodox had four additional troglodyte monasteries and hermitages, built into the caves of Mount Hazro above Saffron Monastery.⁹⁰ Three of these are evidenced as sites of manuscript production during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries: namely, the Monastery of Our Lady of the Water Drop (*Sayyidat al-Nāṭif*),⁹¹ the Monastery of St. Jacob (*Dayr Mār Ya 'qūb*),⁹² and the Monastery of St. Behnam (*Dayr Mār Bihnām*).⁹³ Our Lady of the Water Drop, identified as one of places restored by Metropolitan John of Mardin,⁹⁴ appears to have been the most active of these small monasteries during the studied period. The above-mentioned Oxford Hunt manuscript registers clerical ordinations there between 1575-1589,⁹⁵ and a colophon dated 1726 mentions a Metropolitan Basileus Ibrāhīm for this monastery.⁹⁶ Eliya additionally testifies to both Our Lady and St. Jacob being in use in the early eighteenth century.⁹⁷

The East Syriac and Armenian Churches did have a historical monastic presence in Mardin – albeit to a significantly lesser degree than their Syriac Orthodox counterparts. It seems unlikely, however, that this endured into the investigated period. East Syriac monasteries had been established in the Tur Abdin region during late Antiquity, such as St. Awgin near Nusaybin and St. Jacob near Siirt.⁹⁸ Beyond Tur Abdin lay the renowned monastery and patriarchal see of Rabban Hormizd near Alqosh, to the north of Mosul.⁹⁹ In immediate proximity to Mardin, references are made in the sixteenth and early seventeenth

⁸⁹ For stylistic features of these two monasteries, see Hollerweger, *Turabdin: lebendiges Kulturerbe*, pp. 59-91, 125-32; Keser-Kayaalp, *Church Architecture of Late Antique Northern Mesopotamia*, pp. 193-4, 197-201, 202-4, 205-7, 208-12.

⁹⁰ See Sinclair, *Eastern Turkey*, iii, pp. 218-9; Palmer, 'La montagne aux LXX monastères', pp. 186-191; Keser-Kayaalp, *Church Architecture of Late Antique Northern Mesopotamia*, p. 160, 190, 192.

⁹¹ APSTCH KONA (= Pampakuda, Konat Collection) 1 211 (1673), f. 97r; ASCBN (= Baghdad, Syriac Catholic Church, Archdiocese of Baghdad) 46 (1730), f. 188r; CPB (= Baghdad, Chaldean Catholic Church, Patriarchate of Baghdad) 164 (1770), f. 266r; CFMM 63 (1793); CFMM 44 (1798), f. 318v; Mingana Syriac 483 (1769); Mingana Syriac 607 (1570) contains a list of the possessions of the monastery, f. 16v; Mingana, *Catalogue of the Mingana Collection*, i, pp. 893-4; ii, pp. 167-71.

⁹² APSTCH KONA 1 260 (1724), f. 546v.

⁹³ Berlin, Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin, Petermann I 10 (1645), f. 267r. Consulted on 'Digitalisierte Sammlungen' <https://digital.staatsbibliothek-berlin.de/> (30 May 2024).

⁹⁴ Vööbus (ed.), *The Synodicon in the West Syrian tradition*, i, t. 163, pp. 208-9; t. 164, pp. 220-1.

⁹⁵ Bcheiry, *A List of Syriac Orthodox Ecclesiastical Ordinations*, pp. 128-9.

⁹⁶ ZFRN 130 (1726), f. 249v.

⁹⁷ USJ 31, p. 45.

⁹⁸ Keser-Kayaalp, *Church Architecture of Late Antique Northern Mesopotamia*, pp. 44-49.

⁹⁹ For a full list of East Syriac monasteries in 1607 and 1610, see D. Wilmshurst, *The Ecclesiastical Organisation of the Church of the East, 1318-1913* (Leuven, 2000), pp. 353-4.

centuries to an East Syriac monastery of St. Petion near the village of Kārab Ūlmā, southwest of the town.¹⁰⁰ ‘Abd al-Aḥad reports in the *Life of Joseph* that a synod was convened by the East Syriac patriarch Eliya “in mountains of the town of Mardin, in the Church of Mar Petion the Martyr” in 1616, though there do not seem to be any mentions of the monastery after this.¹⁰¹ The situation could be indicative of a general decline in monasticism within the Church of the East from the seventeenth century onwards, as noted by Heleen Murre-van den Berg.¹⁰² Palmer has even theorised that some of the East Syriac monasteries in Tur Abdin, including St. Awgin, were taken over by the Syriac Orthodox during the eighteenth century.¹⁰³ We do find pockets of scribal activity at East Syriac monasteries during the studied period, but at some distance from Mardin: the manuscript corpus reveals two manuscripts copied at the Monastery of St. Aḥā the Copt in Cizre,¹⁰⁴ meanwhile the Monastery of Rabban Hormizd in Alqosh seems to have remained under the control of the Church of the East until the nineteenth century, albeit not continuously inhabited.¹⁰⁵

Armenian monasticism was traditionally concentrated in areas further east of Mardin. Famed monasteries during the considered period include that of St. Karapet in Muş, visited by Simeon of Poland (d. 1639) in 1613,¹⁰⁶ and the monasteries of Our Lady and St. Karapet in Erzurum, visited by Bishop Safar al-Mārdīnī and François Piquet in 1681.¹⁰⁷ According to Thierry’s study, two monasteries are historically attested in the Mardin region: that of St. Daniel in Derik (roughly 50 km west of Mardin), active between the seventeenth and nineteenth centuries, and another (name unknown) in the fourteenth

¹⁰⁰ Ibid., i, pp. 80-1.

¹⁰¹ CCM 12, ff. 274r-v.

¹⁰² H. Murre-van den Berg, ‘Chaldeans and Assyrians: the Church of the East in the Ottoman Period’, in E. C. D. Hunter (ed.), *The Christian Heritage of Iraq. Collected Papers from the Christianity of Iraq I-V Seminar Days* (Piscataway, NJ, 2009), pp. 150-1; idem, *Scribes and Scriptures: The Church of the East in the Eastern Ottoman Provinces (1500-1850)* (Leuven, 2015), pp. 90-2.

¹⁰³ Palmer, ‘La montagne aux LXX monastères’, pp. 181-3, 185-6. Though not conclusive evidence, a MS containing West Syriac texts was copied at St. Awgin monastery by an individual named Barsaumo at some point in the 18th or 19th century: CFMM 190, f. 33v.

¹⁰⁴ CCM 341 (1690), f. 189v; CCM 472 (1700-1800), f. 1r.

¹⁰⁵ Wilmschurst, *The Ecclesiastical Organisation of the Church of the East*, pp. 245-53, 258-63; Murre-van den Berg, *Scribes and Scriptures*, pp. 91-9. See Badger’s account of Rabban Hormizd Monastery in 1843: Badger, *The Nestorians and their Rituals*, i, pp. 102-4.

¹⁰⁶ S. Lehatsi, *The Travel Accounts of Simēon of Poland*, ed. and trans. G. A. Bournoutian (Costa Mesa, CA, 2007), pp. 6, 176-9. See also J. M. Thierry, *Répertoire des monastères arméniens* (Turnhout, 1993), p. 70.

¹⁰⁷ Armalet, ‘Akhbār safar al-Mūsinniyūr Fransīs Bīkīt’, pp. 124-8; Thierry, *Répertoire des monastères arméniens*, pp. 40-1.

century.¹⁰⁸ Seeing as these monasteries are not mentioned in any contemporary sources for this investigation, it is unclear whether the Armenian community of Mardin had any contact with them, or if they were even in use at this point. In one of his letters to the Propaganda Fide, Melkon Tasbasian notably expressed his intention to “build a monastery of St. Barbara” in Mardin, perhaps implying that he wished to rebuild the dilapidated Church of St. Barbara mentioned in the *Life of Eliya*.¹⁰⁹ Melkon did not return to Mardin, and there is no evidence to suggest that St. Barbara was renovated by subsequent prelates in the eighteenth century. In 1842, Badger noted that the Armenians of Mardin possessed “a convent not far from the town”.¹¹⁰ Alexandrian’s article on the Armenian community of Mardin in 1907 identified St. Barbara and an additional monastery to the north, St. John. By this point, they were not in regular use: they had been “overcome by ruin” (*istawalá ‘alayhumā al-kharāb*), and mass was celebrated in them just once a year on the feasts of their namesakes.¹¹¹

3.1.5 Catholic missionary space

The local Christian population of Mardin was represented to varying degrees by places of worship throughout the town and surrounding countryside. Importantly, however, the manuscript corpus does not acknowledge any occupation of space by Catholic missionaries during the period 1662-1783, while information offered by foreign travellers and missionaries themselves is piecemeal and at times contradictory. Several Ottoman cities with sizeable foreign populations did have designated places of worship for Latin Catholics, usually administered by missionaries.¹¹² Tavernier, for example, reported that Aleppo had “three Roman Catholic churches” served by Capuchins, Carmelites and Jesuits,¹¹³ though these were more likely chapels located within European *khans* or inns, rather than full-scale churches.¹¹⁴ Constantinople, meanwhile, had three Latin churches by the eighteenth century in Galata

¹⁰⁸ Thierry, *Répertoire des monastères arméniens*, p. 67.

¹⁰⁹ “...edificare un monastero di Santa Barbara”: SC Armeni, vi, f. 269, dated 1711. See also USJ 30, f. 2v.

¹¹⁰ Badger, *The Nestorians and their Rituals*, i, p. 49.

¹¹¹ M. Alexandrian, ‘al-Abrashīyah al-Armanīyah fī Mārdīn’, *al-Machriq*, 11 (1907), p. 509.

¹¹² See Heyberger, *Les chrétiens du Proche-Orient*, pp. 340-50.

¹¹³ Tavernier, *The Six Voyages of John Baptista Tavernier*, p. 58.

¹¹⁴ See Heyberger, *Les chrétiens du Proche-Orient*, pp. 340-3; idem, ‘Missionaries and women’, pp. 191-2.

and Pera run by the Franciscan and Dominican missions.¹¹⁵ Catholic missionaries apparently even managed to erect churches in Syrian cities such as Acre and Damascus during the eighteenth century.¹¹⁶

In Mardin, contemporary missionary sources indicate that ad-hoc solutions were in place. The Jesuit Michel Nau, who stayed in Mardin around 1680-1682 with two other priests, reported that they rented a house from a “Turk”.¹¹⁷ He claimed that the house did not include a chapel, and that he and his fellow Jesuits “had only the Nestorian church [i.e. Rabban Hormizd], where everyone would see them go on Sundays and feast days to say their prayers”.¹¹⁸ In the neighbouring city of Diyarbakır, a similar arrangement seems to have been pursued by the Capuchins. The traveller Ambrosio Bembo noted in 1673 that the mission had a house there, but celebrated mass in the Armenian church.¹¹⁹ Friar Eugenius of St. Macarius, who was present in Mardin from 1748 to 1772, related that the Discalced Carmelites had “a church” for private use only, so as to “keep [the church] out of quarrels”.¹²⁰ Without evidence that a church had been acquired or newly constructed by the Carmelites during this period, it seems likely that Friar Eugenius was referring to a private chapel within their accommodation. Towards the latter part of the eighteenth century, things appear to have been evolving, albeit at a modest pace. The earliest reported Catholic construction in Mardin was a Carmelite residence, which Ishaq Armalet claimed was “built” by a friar named Ignatius in 1775 (*ibtaná dāran*).¹²¹ Michael Jarwah records that a missionary attended his patriarchal consecration at Saffron Monastery in 1782 (*al-bādrī mursil Mārdīn*),¹²² possibly identifiable as the Carmelite Vincenzo Ruvo de Predi.¹²³ His residence was likely the same Carmelite “convent” observed in Mardin in the 1790s by the French traveller Guillaume-Antoine Olivier, who found just one friar dwelling there.¹²⁴ Churches or chapels, contemporary accounts

¹¹⁵ Girardelli, ‘Architecture, Identity, and Liminality’, pp. 233-7.

¹¹⁶ E.g. by the Franciscans in Acre: Heyberger, ‘Missionaries and women’, p. 192; and by the Franciscans in Damascus in 1718: C. Santus, ‘Conflicting Views: Catholic Missionaries in Ottoman Cities between Accommodation and Latinization’, in Amsler et al. (eds), *Catholic Missionaries in Early Modern Asia*, p. 99. See also in 18th-century Istanbul: Girardelli, ‘Architecture, Identity, and Liminality’, pp. 236-7.

¹¹⁷ Abougit, ‘Récit de ce que les PP. Jésuites ont souffert dans les prisons de Mardine’, p. 581, 585.

¹¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 583.

¹¹⁹ A. Bembo, *The Travels and Journal of Ambrosio Bembo*, ed. A. Welch (Berkeley, CA, 2007), p. 103.

¹²⁰ Chick (ed.), *A chronicle of the Carmelites in Persia*, ii, p. 1264.

¹²¹ Armalet, *al-Qusārā*, p. 37.

¹²² *Ibid.*, p. 37; quote from MBM 450, f. 13v.

¹²³ Gleaned by Jean Fathi from a letter preserved in Charfet Monastery: see J. Fathi, ‘La Maison du Diacre Fathī’, *Journal of Eastern Christian Studies*, 74/1-2, (2022), p. 146.

¹²⁴ Olivier, *Voyage Dans l’empire Othoman, l’Égypte et La Perse*, iv, p. 244.

do not give the impression of an obvious or open Latin Catholic place of worship in Mardin until the latter eighteenth century at the earliest.

3.1.6 Summary

During the period 1662-1783, the local Christian communities of Mardin each had designated places of worship within the town, which predated and survived the Ottoman takeover in 1516. Though surrounding villages appear to have been furnished with churches, contemporary sources tend to characterise these as more primitive structures, frequently suffering from neglect. The vulnerability of churches and their property against the background of Ottoman rule also emerges in these depictions. But perhaps the most compelling feature of the local Christian terrain is the dominance of the Syriac Orthodox confession. The Syriac Orthodox community was served by a remarkably larger volume of churches and monasteries in the Mardin region than the East Syriac and Armenian communities. The more numerous Syriac Orthodox had a strong historical precedent within the Tur Abdin region to the east of Mardin, and the continuation of their monastic culture throughout the eighteenth century distinguished them from their East Syriac and Armenian counterparts, whose closest monasteries appear to have fallen into disuse. While the patriarchal see of Saffron Monastery emerges as a key spiritual centre for the local Syriac Orthodox faithful in the eighteenth century, it seems likely that the devotional and intellectual life of the Armenian and East Syriac communities of Mardin was concentrated in their sole churches of St. George and Rabban Hormizd inside the town. Finally, unlike in some other Ottoman locations, Mardin does not appear to have had any churches specifically for the use of a foreign Catholic community, with the few missionaries there resorting to private accommodation or local churches for worship.

Understanding the distinct Christian topography of Mardin is critical when examining the development of Catholicism among local Christian communities from 1662-1783. The local church and monastic environment, both as a whole and as many separate establishments, would feature prominently in discourses of confessional tension and transition. The following sections will inspect contemporary representations of these establishments from three angles: construction, material wealth, and confessional demarcation.

3.2 (Re)building churches in Ottoman Mardin

Mardin in the late seventeenth and eighteenth centuries witnessed a wave of church reconstructions, especially among the Syriac Orthodox community. Contemporary historical accounts not only relate extensive renovation of the patriarchal see of Saffron Monastery and the three Syriac Orthodox churches within the town, but also render these works a defining achievement for both the incumbent patriarch and the Syriac Orthodox community at large. In analysing the content of these accounts, moreover, we gain insight into to how local Christian contemporaries interpreted the process of church rebuilding within the Ottoman context, and how the issue of its permissibility surfaced in discourses of interconfessional strife.

The most detailed record of church restoration for this period in Mardin is found in the biography of Syriac Orthodox patriarch George I (1687-1708), authored by Metropolitan Timothy ʿĪsá. According to ʿĪsá, the main focus of Patriarch George after his appointment in 1687 was the renewal of Saffron Monastery, which was first designated as the Syriac Orthodox patriarchal see in the twelfth century. The patriarch encountered the monastery “in ruins” (*kharbān*), abandoned for thirty years, during which time a group of “Kurds” (*Akrād*) had taken up occupancy there and began spinning cotton (*nadf al-quṭun*).¹²⁵ Alternative sources indicate that Saffron Monastery had at least suffered from a lack of patriarchal presence in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries: the papal envoy Léonard Abel noted in 1587 that the Syriac Orthodox patriarch resided in Diyarbakır, rather than Saffron Monastery, for “greater convenience and tranquillity”,¹²⁶ while the famous explorer Pietro della Valle encountered the Syriac Orthodox Patriarch Hidāyat Allāh (d. 1639/40) in Aleppo in 1625. The patriarch had informed him that he resided in Aleppo, despite it “not being his patriarchal seat, which was near the city of Mosul”.¹²⁷ Though perhaps not in use as the patriarchal residence, ʿĪsá’s image of total abandonment must be regarded with caution: the colophon of one manuscript records that twenty-four monks were

¹²⁵ Ibrāhīm, ‘Ṣafḥah min tāriḫ al-Suryān fī al-qarn al-sābi‘ ‘ashr’, pp. 287-8.

¹²⁶ Quoted in Fathi, ‘La Maison du Diacre Faṭḥī’, p. 190.

¹²⁷ P. Della Valle, *Viaggi di Pietro della Valle, il pellegrino : descritti da lui medesimo in lettere familiari all'erudito suo amico Mario Schipano, divisi in tre parti cioè : La Truchia, La Persia, e l'India, colla vita dell'autore* (2 vols, Brighton, 1843), ii, pp. 870-1.

residing at Saffron Monastery in 1575;¹²⁸ another manuscript notes the ordainment of three priests and one deacon as late as 1672,¹²⁹ when it was supposedly overrun by squatters and cotton spinners.

‘Īsá provides a description of the extensive renovation works to Saffron Monastery, completed over three years: the rebuilding of the outer walls, the monastic cells, one of the churches within the monastery (Our Lady), and the construction of a new patriarchal reception hall.¹³⁰ Alongside the practical details, Patriarch George’s project is framed as a divinely inspired mission:

He [the patriarch] lifted his arms to the sky and said: ‘O Lord God! You who were with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob in their mission, and appointed Moses to erect the Dome of Time, and assisted Solomon in building his temple: be with me in your kindness as I set about building this holy monastery.’¹³¹

Such hagiographic hues bear a striking resemblance to the partially autobiographical account of Metropolitan John of Mardin’s restoration of Saffron Monastery in the twelfth century. Not only does John compare Saffron Monastery to the temple of Solomon;¹³² like Patriarch George, John reportedly found that “the Kurds were wintering in [the monastery] for lack of the dwellers, (namely) the monks”.¹³³ Though it is difficult to establish whether ‘Īsá would have had knowledge of the account of John of Mardin, the possible attempt to connect Patriarch George with another patron of the monastery some five hundred years earlier ascribes even more significance to this event within Syriac Orthodox historical consciousness.

‘Īsá also emphasises the significance of the Saffron Monastery renovation at a community level. He records that “the children of the community all rejoiced” (*faraḥa kull abnā’ al-ṭā’ifāh*) at the news,¹³⁴ and that people from “the town and villages” (*min al-balad wa-bāqī al-qurā*) – including girls and women – assisted with the construction work and donated money and supplies.¹³⁵ In fact, local Syriac Orthodox patronage of Saffron Monastery lived on: in 1872, Patriarch Peter IV (d. 1894) managed to

¹²⁸ Charfet Syriac 1/4: Armalet, *Catalogue des manuscrits de Charfet*, p. 3.

¹²⁹ Bcheiry, *A List of Syriac Orthodox Ecclesiastic Ordinations*, p. 128.

¹³⁰ Ibrāhīm, ‘al-Suryān fī al-qarn al-sābi’ ‘ashr’, p. 31.

¹³¹ Ibrāhīm, ‘Ṣafḥah min tārikh al-Suryān fī al-qarn al-sābi’ ‘ashr’, pp. 287-8: *وقد رفع طرفه إلى السماء وقال: ربي وإلهي! يا من كنت مع إبراهيم واسحق ويعقوب في جهادهم وأعنت موسى صفيك حتى نصب قبة الزمان ونصرت سليمان تشييده للهيكل كن معي بلطفك وأعني هلي عمارة هذا الدبر المقدس*

¹³² Vööbus (ed.), *The Synodicon in the West Syrian tradition*, i, t. 163, p.204; t. 164, p. 215.

¹³³ Ibid., i, t. 163, pp. 205-8, quote from p. 210; t. 164, pp. 217-22.

¹³⁴ Ibrāhīm, ‘al-Suryān fī al-qarn al-sābi’ ‘ashr’, p. 31.

¹³⁵ Ibid., p. 31.

cover around twenty per cent of the total cost of renovations to the monastery through the donations of the Syriac Orthodox community in Mardin.¹³⁶

While the account provided by Timothy ʿĪsá is highly stylised and arguably tinged by his personal investment in commemorating Saffron Monastery as its superior, independent testimonies from outside Mardin also present the renovation as an event of historical significance. The colophon of a manuscript copied in Diyarbakır in 1699 recognises George I as the incumbent patriarch, and credits him with the restoration of Saffron Monastery ten years prior.¹³⁷ The appendix to the Chronicle of Michael the Great depicted the restoration of Saffron Monastery as a source of community pride and vitality:

In the year 1697, he [Patriarch George] rebuilt Saffron Monastery, which had been destroyed many years earlier. It had become a base for Kurds to stay, and nobody could enter it because it was too dangerous. The heads of the Syriac Orthodox were held high. After he rebuilt it, he admitted to the monastery so many monks, it was not possible to count them.¹³⁸

Above all, contemporary Syriac Orthodox histories signified the renewal of the physical structure of the monastery and its religious life as an emblem of communal success. But the manuscript corpus also reveals the scholastic benefits for the local community. After a period of scribal inactivity between 1649 and 1705,¹³⁹ Saffron Monastery emerges as by far the most common site of Syriac Orthodox (and indeed Christian) manuscript production in Mardin for the remainder of the eighteenth century.¹⁴⁰ While the revived monastic presence was not innumerable, its educational focus is evident: the manuscript of one colophon dated 1726 relates that the monastery was inhabited by thirty monks, three deacons and five teachers.¹⁴¹ As a subject and a place of creation, the renewed Saffron Monastery became pivotal to the record of the Syriac Orthodox community in Mardin and beyond during the investigated period.

The reign of Patriarch George also witnessed restoration works on the three Syriac Orthodox churches located in the town: that is, the Churches of the Forty Martyrs and St. Shmuni, and the Monastery of St. Michael. An ornate copy of the Gospels in Syriac, dated 1713, details in its colophon how Patriarch

¹³⁶ See I. Beheiry, *Collection of Historical Documents in Relation with the Syriac Orthodox Community in the Late Period of the Ottoman Empire: The Register of Mardin MS 1006* (Piscataway, NJ, 2010), p. 37. A list of donors' names is found in pp. 15-30.

¹³⁷ Mingana Syriac 38 (1699), f. 33v; Mingana, *Catalogue of the Mingana Collection*, i, p. 98.

¹³⁸ Beheiry, 'A list of the Syrian Orthodox patriarchs', p. 223.

¹³⁹ See DIYR 309 (1649); Charfet Syriac 1/16 (1705) in Armalet, *Catalogue des manuscrits de Charfet*, p. 14.

¹⁴⁰ See details below, Chapter Four, 4.2.

¹⁴¹ ZFRN 130 (1726), f. 248v, 249v.

George had been assisted by the current patriarch Isaac II (1709-1722) in his initiative to “build” (*bnō*) both Saffron Monastery and the above-mentioned three churches.¹⁴² The colophon also reports that these were among a swathe of Syriac Orthodox churches that Patriarch George renovated in Diyarbakır, Edessa, Zakho and Mosul.¹⁴³ In his compendium of Syriac literature, Patriarch Ephrem Barsoum (d. 1957) even identifies one of the two copyists of this manuscript – ‘Īsá, the priest-monk from Mosul¹⁴⁴ – with the very same Metropolitan Timothy ‘Īsá.¹⁴⁵ The extended Chronicle of Michael the Great also records the “building” of the “three churches of Mardin” during the patriarchate of George, placing the works in the year 1704.¹⁴⁶ The account of Timothy ‘Īsá, while more focused on Saffron Monastery, attests to the renovation (*tarmīm*) of these Mardin churches in the following period, noting that the local community “donated money, supplies and food, and many worked for free” (*tabarra ‘ū mālan wa-ma ‘ūnah wa-ta ‘āman wa-kathūrūn tabarra ‘ū bi-al- ‘amal majānan*) in their enthusiasm for the works.¹⁴⁷ He refers to the renovations of churches in Mosul and Diyarbakır under Patriarch George as well.¹⁴⁸ Remarkably, ‘Īsá adds that the patriarchate also requested permission to rebuild the Armenian Church of St. George in Mardin, “gratifying their Orthodox inclinations” (*jabran li-khawāṭirihim al-urhūdhuksīyah*);¹⁴⁹ as suggested in the previous chapter, this was perhaps a subtle gesture to the extension of Syriac Orthodox influence over other Christian communities in Mardin.

Historical accounts continue to acknowledge the renovation of churches in Mardin and other Syriac Orthodox dioceses throughout the eighteenth century. A series of notices in a sumptuous evangelion at Saffron Monastery inform us that Patriarch Shukr Allāh II (1722-1745) rebuilt the walls, cells, altars and sanctuaries of the monastery during his reign.¹⁵⁰ Patriarch George III (1768-1781) is also credited with multiple construction projects. The extended Chronicle of Michael the Great observed that the patriarch “did not cease to rebuild monasteries in the regions of Mosul and Mardin”,¹⁵¹ with scribal

¹⁴² Mingana Syriac 480 (1713), ff. 427v-428v in Mingana, *Catalogue of the Mingana Collection*, i, pp. 878-882; also consulted in person by the present author.

¹⁴³ Mingana Syriac 480, f. 427v.

¹⁴⁴ Mingana Syriac 480, f. 428r.

¹⁴⁵ Barsoum, *The Scattered Pearls*, p. 157.

¹⁴⁶ Bcheiry, ‘A list of the Syrian Orthodox patriarchs’, p. 223.

¹⁴⁷ Ibrāhīm, ‘al-Suryān fī al-qarn al-sābi‘ ‘ashr’, p. 32.

¹⁴⁸ Ibrāhīm, ‘Şafḥah min tāriḫ al-Suryān fī al-qarn al-sābi‘ ‘ashr’, pp. 282-3 (Mosul); 286-7 (Diyarbakır).

¹⁴⁹ Ibrāhīm, ‘al-Suryān fī al-qarn al-sābi‘ ‘ashr’, p. 32.

¹⁵⁰ ZFRN 397 (1728), p. 683, c.2; p. 685, c.2.

¹⁵¹ Bcheiry, ‘A list of the Syrian Orthodox patriarchs’, p. 236; for Karshuni original, see p. 258.

paratext documenting his renovation works to the cells and altars at Saffron Monastery,¹⁵² and at the Church of Our Lady in Diyarbakır in 1774.¹⁵³ A note in his own hand records his restoration of St. Matthew Monastery in Mosul while he was maphrian in 1760.¹⁵⁴ Similar to the renovation of Saffron Monastery by George I, he relates that his endeavours elicited “total joy” (*farahū farahan kāmīlan*) among the Syriac Orthodox of Mosul.¹⁵⁵ The appendix to the Chronicle of Michael the Great also reports that Patriarch Matthew (1782-1819) added “ten new cells” to Saffron Monastery, as well as “rebuilding churches in the town and villages” (*‘ammara kanā’is bi-al-balad wa-al-qurā bi-al-tarmīm*), although no further detail is given.¹⁵⁶

These sources, while essentially narratives of success, are also a window into how local clergymen interpreted church renovation vis-à-vis Ottoman government. Though the sources rarely offer detail, they do present application to central administration by high-ranking prelates as standard practice for undertaking such works. Both Timothy ‘Īsā and the 1713 colophon report in relation to Saffron Monastery and the three Syriac Orthodox churches in Mardin that Patriarch George sent Maphrian Isaac (later Patriarch Isaac II) to Constantinople to gain an imperial edict, or *firmān*, for the restoration works.¹⁵⁷ ‘Īsā curiously elaborates that a second trip to acquire a *firmān* for rebuilding the three churches after Saffron Monastery was necessary only because a new sultan, Aḥmad Muṣṭafā,¹⁵⁸ had succeeded the throne that year (*bi-mā anna al-sulṭān Aḥmad Muṣṭafā rufi ‘a fī tilka al-sanah*).¹⁵⁹ As far as ‘Īsā was concerned, imperial permission for church rebuilding need only be granted once, even for multiple churches – although a separate *firmān* was notably required for the Armenian church.¹⁶⁰ These accounts also imply that appeals to central administration, despite the distance, were a more recognised channel

¹⁵² ZFRN 397, p. 683, c.2; p. 685, c.2.

¹⁵³ ZFRN 397, p.686, c.2.

¹⁵⁴ Charfet Rahmani 51, ff. 275v-276r: A. Binggeli, F. Briquel-Chatonnet, M. Debié, Y. Dergham, A. Desreumaux, J. Dib and F. Vinourd (eds), *Catalogue des manuscrits syriaques et garshuni du Patriarcat syriaque-catholique de Charfet (Liban)* (Dar‘un-Harissa, 2021), pp. 203-6.

¹⁵⁵ Ibid., p. 205 (foliation unclear).

¹⁵⁶ Bcheiry, ‘A list of the Syrian Orthodox patriarchs’, p. 240; for Karshuni original, see p. 260.

¹⁵⁷ Mingana Syriac 480, f. 427v; Ibrāhīm, ‘al-Suryān fī al-qarn al-sābi‘ ‘ashr’, p. 30, 32.

¹⁵⁸ Timothy ‘Īsā mentions construction of Saffron Monastery finished in 1689, and that Patriarch George began with the town churches five years later, so this presumably refers to Sultan Muṣṭafā II (1695-1703): Ibrāhīm, ‘al-Suryān fī al-qarn al-sābi‘ ‘ashr’, p. 32.

¹⁵⁹ Ibid., p. 32.

¹⁶⁰ Ibid., p. 32.

than application to local powers, such as the qadi or the governor.¹⁶¹ The sense that this was a less troublesome option for achieving permits for church rebuilding transpires in the correspondence of Melkon Tasbasian, Armenian Catholic metropolitan of Mardin. Writing to the Propaganda Fide from Constantinople in 1714, he explained that he was there to request two *firmāns*. The first – which had already been granted – was to make sure that “no pasha, governor, judge, mufti or anyone else can trouble me or interfere in my affairs and business”; the second, which he “hoped to obtain”, was to “build a monastery of St. Barbara” in Mardin.¹⁶² While Melkon’s desire to bypass local administration was almost certainly framed by the difficulties he encountered as a Catholic missionary, his belief in imperial authority as a surer recourse for his church-building designs is evident.

The local accounts additionally give the impression that the construction works approved by the *firmāns* were broad in scope. Admittedly, the descriptions are typically ambiguous in their terminology: concerning the renovation of various parts of Saffron Monastery in the late seventeenth century, for example, the terms “built” (Syriac: *bnō, ethbanath*; Arabic: *‘imārah*)¹⁶³ and “rebuilt” (Arabic: *‘iādat binā*)¹⁶⁴ are used interchangeably. Flashes of detail do, however, suggest that the total rebuilding of original church structures was not perceived as problematic. Timothy ‘Īsā refers to people “digging up the foundations” of the Church of St. Shmuni in Mardin (*kanū yahfarūn usus kanīsat al-qadīсах Shimūnī*),¹⁶⁵ while Patriarch George III records that within the Monastery of St. Matthew in Mosul they “demolished the Church of Our Lady and built a new one” (*hadamnā bī‘at al-‘Adhrā wa-inbanat jadīdan*); so extensive were the works that the monastery emerged “new from inside and out” (*ṣāra al-dayr jadīd min dākhil ilā khārij*).¹⁶⁶ The sources also imply potential consent for constructing *new* churches – a phenomenon which has been acknowledged in other early modern Ottoman contexts.¹⁶⁷

¹⁶¹ See discussion in Çapar, ‘The Ottoman Policy Towards Church Construction’, pp. 59-60 and Gradeva, ‘Ottoman Policy towards Christian Church Buildings’, pp. 351-2.

¹⁶² SC Armeni, vi, f. 269r. “...sono venuto qui per pigliare farman... ho pigliato uno che contiene cio che da qui inanzi ni un pascia o governatore giudice mufti et altri non molessino ne habbiano da intricare in mie cose e negotii...ancora prosuro di havere uno altro per edificare un monasterio di santa barbara spero di otenerlo.”

¹⁶³ See Mingana Syriac 38 (1699), f. 33v; Mingana Syriac 480 (1713), f. 427v; Ibrāhīm, ‘al-Suryān fī al-qarn al-sābi‘ ‘ashr’, p. 30.

¹⁶⁴ Ibrāhīm, ‘Ṣafḥah min tāriḫ al-Suryān fī al-qarn al-sābi‘ ‘ashr’, p. 288.

¹⁶⁵ Ibrāhīm, ‘al-Suryān fī al-qarn al-sābi‘ ‘ashr’, p. 32.

¹⁶⁶ Charfet Rahmani 51, ff. 275v-276r.

¹⁶⁷ Çapar, ‘The Ottoman Policy Towards Church Construction’, pp. 57, 65-6; Gradeva, ‘Ottoman Policy towards Christian Church Buildings’, p. 348, 354-8.

ʿĪsá relates that Patriarch George I, finding the Syriac Orthodox of Ḥasan Maṣṣūr (Adıyaman) – a town between Aleppo and Mardin – without a church, had “purchased a house for three hundred piastres, spent two hundred piastres on construction, consecrated it in the name of Our Lady, and celebrated mass [there]”; this time, it was only laterally that the patriarch “obtained a *firmān*”, after which time people began attending the church.¹⁶⁸ Though ʿĪsá’s hagiographic hyperbole must be heeded, even Eliya, one of the sharpest critics of Patriarch George, reports his church-building aims without objection: “I obtained a *firmān* and I wish to build a church in the town of Bitlis” (*qad akhrajtu firmānan wa-urīd an abnī kanīṣah fī madīnat Badlīs*), says the patriarch at one point.¹⁶⁹ While contemporary Christian accounts from Mardin are often vague, they generally create an image of church rebuilding (and building) as a straightforward procedure, dependent on imperial permission yet not hampered by restrictions on the nature or extent of structural work.

In contrast to these triumphant narratives of Syriac Orthodox construction in Mardin, a very different, contentious image of church building emerges in the context of nascent Catholicism. In 1681, one of the earliest known Catholic missions to Mardin was ostensibly quashed by the accusation of Syriac Orthodox prelates that they had illegally constructed a church within their rented accommodation. Michel Nau, one of the three Jesuit priests on the mission, left a first-hand account of the events. He related that the “heretic” Syriac Orthodox of Mardin, being unable to “impede” their apparently thriving Catholic mission, had “attacked from another angle, accusing them to the *vayvode* [i.e. governor] of the town of having built a church (d’avoir bâti une église)”,¹⁷⁰ and – crucially – “without the permission of the Grand Seigneur [i.e. the sultan]”.¹⁷¹ Despite the protests of Nau that they used the Church of Rabban Hormizd “for our services”, and that the books and icons in their residence were “on a carpet in the middle of the room”,¹⁷² the accusation materialised in a hefty fine and imprisonment for the Jesuits before departing Mardin for good. Yet while Ottoman rule serves as the backdrop for the disputed church, Nau firmly attributes the episode to anti-Catholicism within the local Christian population:

¹⁶⁸ Ibrāhīm, ‘al-Suryān fī al-qarn al-sābi’ ‘ashr’, pp. 32-3.

¹⁶⁹ USJ 30, f. 20r.

¹⁷⁰ Abougit, ‘Récit de ce que les PP. Jésuites ont souffert dans les prisons de Maredine’, p. 581.

¹⁷¹ Ibid., p. 583.

¹⁷² Ibid., p. 584.

No one was persuaded that we had made a church at all; the persons and the judge who came to the house to take an inventory of our furniture admitted such to me. Having seen the house, I asked them if there was a church there, or if there was any sign [of one]; they responded that there was not a sign [of one], but that it was the Christians who had given this testimony against us.¹⁷³

According to Nau's testimony, the accusation of illicit church building had irrefutable currency in interconfessional struggles among local Christians. Intriguingly, one of Nau's contemporaries, Laurent d'Arvieux (d. 1702), the French consul in Aleppo, also weighed in on the matter of the alleged Jesuit church in Mardin after Nau's return there in 1682. While acknowledging that "heretic Syrian Christians" were behind the accusation, d'Arvieux claims that Nau did in fact "make a public church in his house", carrying out his priestly duties within it "as publicly as though he were in Paris".¹⁷⁴ Though Rabbath's suggestion of a personal feud between Nau and d'Arvieux from their time in Aleppo might explain the critical tone,¹⁷⁵ d'Arvieux's insistence on the public dimension to churches, and its role in the demise of Nau, is nonetheless striking. He notes that Nau's mission would have been more successful had he proceeded "with great precautions and in secret".¹⁷⁶ The weaponizing of churches, as both sources would have it, was the biggest obstacle to Catholic evangelism in Mardin.

The role church construction could assume within interconfessional struggles is even bolder in the *Life of Eliya*. This time, the accusation emanates from the Catholic side: at one point in the narrative, Eliya recounts how a Syriac Orthodox metropolitan illicitly erected an altar (*madhbaḥ*) dedicated to the saint Barsaumo within the Church of the Forty Martyrs in the middle of the night.¹⁷⁷ Outraged by the homage to a saint anathematised by the Catholic Church, and emboldened by his fellow convert Melkon Tasbasian, Eliya proceeds to inform the local governor:

I told him that Metropolitan Karkarī ... conspiring with some of his followers at night, knocked down some of the walls inside the church, [thereby] expanding it, and built a new church inside it dedicated to Barsaumo ... Indeed, this is most shameful, because throughout the Islamic realm it is forbidden to add one stone to a church without a *firmān* from the sultan, and this wretched person built a church in the name of Barsaumo and the building will testify to it ...¹⁷⁸

¹⁷³ Ibid., p. 598.

¹⁷⁴ Arvieux, *Mémoires Du Chevalier d'Arvieux*, vi, p. 283.

¹⁷⁵ A. Rabbath, *Documents inédits pour servir à l'histoire du christianisme en Orient* (2 vols, Paris, 1905), ii, p. 581, note 1.

¹⁷⁶ Arvieux, *Mémoires Du Chevalier d'Arvieux*, vi, p. 283.

¹⁷⁷ USJ 31, pp. 34-5.

¹⁷⁸ USJ 31, p. 35: فقلت له مطران كركري ... فتشاور مع محبيه في الليل ورفع بعض من الحيطان ووسعها وبني فيها بيعة جديدة على اسم برصوم ... وهذه هي قباحة كبيرة لان بغير فرمان السلطان في كل بلاد الاسلام ما يقدر ان يرفعوا في الكنيسة حجراً واحداً. وهذا الشقي بني بيعة باسم برصوم والينا يشهد عليه...

Eliya not only upgrades the altar to a “church” (*bī’ah*) before the governor, but also attempts to support his complaint with Ottoman legislation, citing a stipulation not dissimilar to a variant of the *Kanunname* of Sulaymān the Magnificent (r. 1520-1566).¹⁷⁹ While initially unsure as to whether he needed to confer with the sultan on the matter, a payment of four hundred piastres from Eliya ultimately persuades the governor to have the new structure within the Forty Martyrs complex demolished.¹⁸⁰ For Eliya, convincing Ottoman officials as to the illegality of the church construction – whatever the means – is a triumph for his new-found Catholicism: Melkon, himself a Catholic missionary, promises him: “if you destroy [this church], you will receive a great reward” (*idhā hadamtahā taksib faḍīlah kabīrah*).¹⁸¹ While the short-lived altar of Barsaumo evades mention in any other sources, the *Life of Eliya* is another compelling testament to how church building could be meaningful in narratives of interconfessional rivalries in Mardin.

In juxtaposition to the Syriac Orthodox patriarch George I, eulogised for his reconstruction of run-down churches, Eliya continues to affirm his Catholic piety through his *deconstruction* of places of worship. Following the Barsaumo episode, Eliya depicts his iconoclastic reputation as going hand-in-hand with his Catholic status. He reports that his priestly ordainment was rejected by the Syriac Orthodox community in Mardin out of fear that he would “destroy our church” (*yakhrīb bī’atanā*) – perhaps meant in both a literal and ideological sense.¹⁸² When the Chaldean patriarch Joseph II came to visit Mardin, he similarly associated him with the episode, asking: “Are you Deacon Eliya, destroyer of churches?” (*hādīm al-kanā’is*).¹⁸³ Towards the end of the narrative, the congregation of the Church of the Forty Martyrs approach Eliya and ask: “What do you want here? Do you want to destroy our church?”¹⁸⁴ Eliya’s potential to destroy Orthodox places of worship arguably overwrites the threat of his Catholic evangelism.

¹⁷⁹ Gradeva, ‘Ottoman Policy towards Christian Church Buildings’, p. 353: “a variant of Suleyman the Magnificent’s *Kanunname* provides particularly harsh fines for Christians who, having obtained permission by *ferman* to repair a ruined church, added even a single stone to the original structure.”

¹⁸⁰ USJ 31, p. 36.

¹⁸¹ USJ 31, p. 35.

¹⁸² USJ 31, p. 36.

¹⁸³ USJ 31, p. 41.

¹⁸⁴ USJ 30, f. 53r.

Reports of church renovations contributed considerably to the historical record of the Syriac Orthodox patriarchate and community in Mardin during the late seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Though these accounts express little difficulty in undertaking these building works beyond the required imperial approval, the issue assumes a more tenuous, exploitable identity in Catholic accounts of struggles with local Orthodox confessions. In both cases, the physical presence of churches is of paramount importance to contemporaries. But churches also held value, as the following section will address, as points of access to material wealth.

3.3 Churches and material wealth

Alongside their essential purpose as places of worship, churches in Ottoman society were reserves of material wealth. This is understood here as the physical assets belonging to a church – liturgical furnishings, gold and silverware, images, manuscripts, landed property – the extent of which could vary considerably from one church to another. As this section will examine, how this wealth was handled by patriarchs was an object of concern within local sources from this period, particularly amidst reports of their exploitation as an economic resource. The issue is most pronounced, however, in narratives of Orthodox-Catholic leadership struggles, which shed light on the assets of specific churches in Mardin and connected locations, and thereby alert us to alternative framings of interconfessional tension.

Material culture has become increasingly pertinent in studies of early modern religious life across varied geographical and confessional contexts, especially when considering the often-imperceptible lay piety.¹⁸⁵ Within seventeenth- and eighteenth-century Mardin, we encounter a recorded culture of donations to local churches and monasteries by prelates and laypeople alike. A sumptuous evangelion commissioned by Patriarch Shukr Allāh II for the Syriac Orthodox Saffron Monastery in 1728, for example, details successive endowments made to the patriarchal see over the course of the eighteenth

¹⁸⁵ See discussion in Ivanič et al. (eds.), *Religious Materiality in the Early Modern World*, pp. 19-20, and contributions within the volume. In the Ottoman context, see H. Murre-van den Berg, 'Generous Devotion: Women in the Church of the East between 1550 and 1850', *Hugoye: Journal of Syriac Studies*, 7 (2007), pp. 24-5; Ghobrial, 'Christian Materiality between East and West: Notes of a Capuchin among the Christians of the Ottoman Empire' in *Religious Materiality in the Early Modern World*, pp. 103-18. In the Counter-Reformation context, see e.g. S. Evangelisti, 'Material Culture' in A. Bamji, G. H. Janssen, and M. Laven (eds), *The Ashgate Research Companion to the Counter-Reformation* (London, 2013), pp. 395-416. In Reformation England, see e.g. E. Duffy, *The Voices of Morebath: Reformation and Rebellion in an English Village* (New Haven, 2001), esp. pp. 68-83.

century, including silver candelabras, fans, chandeliers and a crucifix from Patriarch George III,¹⁸⁶ grapevines from a certain Sarkīs and Mādah in 1774-1775, and a garden from Wardah and Īliyā in 1778-1779.¹⁸⁷ Lay endowments to the Church of the Forty Martyrs include a silver crucifix in 1657-1658, a weaver’s shop (*dukān al-ḥayyākah*) in 1718-1719, and two silver goblets and trays in 1790-1791.¹⁸⁸



Figure 7: Church of Rabban Hormizd, Mardin, sanctuary (October 2023).

More light is shed on donations by the Syriac Orthodox community in Mardin and its surrounding villages by another register in the Church of the Forty Martyrs collection, recently published by Iskandar Bcheiry.¹⁸⁹ Within the East Syriac context, an illuminated seventeenth-century lectionary donated to the Church of Rabban Hormizd in Mardin details that it was sold in 1684 with other church property, including a silver chalice and a silver crucifix, to two women – Anāhīd Umm Ḥannā and the wife of Ṭarsī Ḥarābīd – and subsequently endowed to the Church of St. Petion in Diyarbakır.¹⁹⁰ Donations of manuscripts to Rabban Hormizd – including liturgical and biblical texts – are also attested

¹⁸⁶ ZFRN 397, pp. 684-6.

¹⁸⁷ ZFRN 397, p. 687, c.1; p. 687, c.2. For study of this MS, see R. Maxton, ‘Public and Private Spheres at Saffron Monastery’ in N. Domeisen, D. Haywood, E. Jones, D. Kohler, M. Mackay, R. Maxton, B. M. Moore, K. Noble, F. M. Simon, D. Wakelin and D. Wojahn, *Unprinted: Publication Beyond the Press* (Cambridge, forthcoming).

¹⁸⁸ See lists of endowments to the Church of the Forty Martyrs in CFMM 1135 (1725), f. 186v.

¹⁸⁹ That is, CFMM 248 (1800-1900): see I. Bcheiry, *Hagiography, History and Manuscript Culture: Studies in Syriac Christianity* (Kaslik, 2018), pp. 73-101.

¹⁹⁰ CCM 63 (before 1684), f. 27v.

only is he praised for not burdening the community with his investiture costs; he is also favourably contrasted with his predecessor, George II, for redeeming the precious church furnishings that the latter had pawned. The bountiful legacy of George III is then sealed with his donation of the manuscript itself to the patriarchal see of Saffron Monastery. Though undated, the indication that the note was a record of the manuscript endowment by Patriarch George almost certainly dates it to his patriarchate (1768-1781). This sentiment, moreover, is echoed in other contemporary accounts: the appendix to the Chronicle of Michael the Great, for example, praised him as “a courageous man when he met the governors, and very persuasive. His income was very high without need for collections”.¹⁹⁶

The extract above does not give any indication as to why Patriarch George II had to borrow money in the first place; the indebtedness of patriarchs and bishops within the Ottoman realm could be caused by numerous factors, including the cost of investiture, fines and regular taxes.¹⁹⁷ These financial burdens seem to have been acute in the context of contested leadership between Catholic and Orthodox factions within different communities, as sources such as the *Life of Joseph*, the *Life of Eliya*, the autobiography of Michael Jarwah, and the correspondence of Melkon Tasbasian testify to in detail.¹⁹⁸ Yet while the root cause is not always apparent, the material resources of churches in and beyond Mardin, as the following will explore, became significant in discourses of interconfessional power struggles during this period – most perceptibly within the Syriac Orthodox Church.

An early example of this can be observed in Aleppo, with the historically Syriac Orthodox Church of Our Lady. The account of Timothy ʿĪsá, while primarily focused on Mardin, highlights this church as the setting for the Catholic-Orthodox patriarchal rivalry which unfolded in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries. Yet, in reporting the eventual triumph of Patriarch George I over his rival Uniate candidate in Aleppo, Patriarch Peter Shāhbaddīn (1678-1701),¹⁹⁹ ʿĪsá fixates on the material benefits for the Church of Our Lady:

When Patriarch George came to Aleppo... he defeated them [Peter and his followers] and extracted the church from their clutches. The followers of Shāhbaddīn had squandered the

¹⁹⁶ Bcheiry. ‘A list of the Syrian Orthodox patriarchs’, p. 236; for Karshuni original, see p. 258.

¹⁹⁷ Heyberger, *Les chrétiens du Proche-Orient*, pp. 102-3.

¹⁹⁸ See e.g. Joseph: CCM 12, f. 283v, 286v; Eliya: USJ 30, ff. 6v, 23v-24r; USJ 31, pp. 39-40, 61; Jarwah: MBM 450, ff. 12r-v, 14v-15r, 23v, 26r; Melkon: SC Armeni, vi, f. 223r.

¹⁹⁹ See letters of the French consul in Aleppo, Jean Pierre Blanc Antoine, concerning the matter in Rabbath, *Documents inédits*, ii, pp. 108-25.

possessions of the church and pawned some of them for the sum of one thousand piastres. So he [Patriarch George] returned them after retrieving them from the bond. When the people saw his fervour, their hearts were soothed and they rejoiced and were assured that he was a true and orthodox father.²⁰⁰

‘Īsá harnesses the image of restoring precious church belongings to contrast the righteous, orthodox rule of Patriarch George with the reckless Catholic Peter. The extensive borrowing by Patriarch Peter during his turbulent patriarchate is well documented in the correspondence of the French consuls in Aleppo and the ambassador in Constantinople.²⁰¹ Laurent d’Arvieux even claimed that Peter entrusted him with a chest containing the treasures of the church before travelling to Constantinople in 1681 (“un coffre cacheté, dans lequel étoient les ornemens les plus précieux, & les richesses de son Eglise...”).²⁰² Whatever ‘Īsá’s knowledge of such details, his presentation of the deed as engendering popular conviction in the patriarch’s “true and orthodox” nature imbues it with the spiritual and communal success of the church renovation projects. Inside this snapshot of interconfessional strife, ‘Īsá deems the security of the assets of this Aleppan church a pivotal factor.

Around one century later, the focus would be shifted to the recently revived, all-important patriarchal siege of Saffron Monastery, just outside of Mardin. In accounts of the dispute over the patriarchate between the Catholic Michael Jarwah and his Orthodox rival Matthew following the death of Patriarch George III in 1781, the material wealth of this monastery would occupy a key position. The self-account of Jarwah, written in 1785, relates the assorted financial pressures he encountered after arriving in Mardin in November 1781 to claim the patriarchal throne. Great sums were required to obtain the support of the local governor, the governor of Baghdad and the sultan, for which Jarwah was aided by a loan sourced by the “Catholic community” (*jamā‘atunā al-kāthūlīkīyah*) of Mardin.²⁰³ Yet while acknowledging this financial assistance, Jarwah alleges the looting of the valuables of Saffron Monastery during the subsequent Orthodox coup by Matthew and his brother:

We learned that they had gone in the night to Saffron Monastery, which is around two hours from Mardin, and they took from it all the property of the deceased patriarch, as they were in charge

²⁰⁰ Ibrāhīm, ‘*Safḥah min tārikh al-Suryān fi al-qarn al-sābi‘ ‘ashr*’, p. 286: ولما دخل البطريرك جرجس إلى حلب... فاز وانتصر عليهم واستخلص الكنيسة من أيديهم وكان أتباع بدين قد بددوا أغراض الكنيسة ورهنوا بعضها لقاء ألف قرش فأعادها بعد أن استخلص من الرهن ولما رأى الشعب غيرته اطمأن قلبه وفرح به وأيقن بأنه أب حقيقي ومستقيم...

²⁰¹ See Rabbath. *Documents inédits*, i, pp. 104 (François Piquet), 117 (Jean Pierre Blanc), 120-1 (Charles de Ferriol); Santus, *Trasgressioni necessarie*, pp. 150-1.

²⁰² Arvieux, *Mémoires Du Chevalier d’Arvieux*, p. 56.

²⁰³ MBM 450, ff. 12r-v.

of his estate and the monastery. From there they went with a group of monks to the mountain of the rebels (*jabal al-‘uṣāh*), that is, Tur Abdin, whose people are heretics ...²⁰⁴

As witnessed with the Church of Our Lady in Aleppo, the illicit seizure of church assets provides a damning assessment of his rival to the patriarchate. Admittedly, Jarwah’s emphasis on financial issues when composing the account is hardly surprising, given its likely purpose of attracting funding for the Syriac Catholic patriarchal see he founded in 1784 in Mount Lebanon, Our Lady of Deliverance of Charfet.²⁰⁵ The account ends with a plea for “Christian compassion” (*marāḥim al-Masīḥīyīn*) to help him “complete his mission” (*li-takmīl wazīfatī*),²⁰⁶ and was even translated into Spanish for the Spanish monarchs Charles IV and Maria Luisa, who became major benefactors of the monastery.²⁰⁷ By the same token, other contemporary sources indicate that the property of Saffron Monastery was a contentious issue in this interconfessional struggle. The appendix to the Chronicle of Michael the Great, for example, weighs in with a wholly different perspective. After claiming the patriarchal see of Saffron Monastery from Jarwah, it relates, Matthew

took his see and organised the affairs of the Syriac Orthodox as they had been before. He became very weary from organising the monastery because Michael had sold all the gold, silver and pottery that was in the monastery. They had eaten about thirty sheep and goats that belonged to the monastery. For that reason, [Patriarch Matthew] was worn out from managing it, and he rebuilt the monastery and invested much money.²⁰⁸

The double image of restoring the financial and structural well-being of Saffron Monastery cements Matthew’s righteous status over his Catholic opponent. Yet this aspect to Matthew’s patriarchal eulogy is even more compelling in view of additional reports of his abuse of local church resources. In 1783, six Catholic prelates from Diyarbakır and Mardin – including the Chaldean metropolitan Simon of Mardin and the Carmelite missionary Vincenzo Ruvo de Predi – condemned Patriarch Matthew in a

²⁰⁴ MBM 450, ff. 13v-14r: *بلغنا انهما قد ذهبوا ليلاً الى دير الزعفران الذي بعيد عن ماردين مقدار ساعتين واخذوا من هناك جميع مال البطريرك الذي مات بما انهما كانا متوكلين على ماله وعلى الدير. ومن هناك ذهبوا مع جملة رهبان الى جبل العصاة الذي يدعى طور عبيد الذين كان اناسه اراطقة ...*

²⁰⁵ While resident there from 1784, Jarwah did not purchase the plot until 1786. For the circumstances surrounding the foundation of Charfet, see P. Chalfoun, ‘L’Église syrienne catholique et le patriarche Michel Giarvé sous le gouvernement ottoman au XVIII siècle’, *Parole de l’Orient*, 9 (1979), pp. 205-38; Fathi, ‘La maison du Diacre Fathī’, pp. 148-9.

²⁰⁶ MBM 450, f. 38r.

²⁰⁷ According to information supplied by Ishaq Armalet in entry on Jarwah’s autograph copy, Charfet Arabic 6/25: Armalet, *Catalogue des manuscrits de Charfet*, pp. 374-5. The Spanish version is preserved in Charfet Arabic 18/12 (latest 1906); Jarwah’s correspondence with King Charles IV and Queen Maria Luisa is preserved in Charfet Arabic 16/12: *ibid.*, p. 503, 486.

²⁰⁸ Bcheiry, ‘A list of the Syrian Orthodox patriarchs’, p. 240.

letter to the Propaganda Fide for selling the “silverware” of the churches (presumably within the locality) to obtain support from Constantinople and Baghdad for his patriarchal election.²⁰⁹ Moreover, a letter addressed to Patriarch Matthew sometime between 1783-1786, signed by priests and lay notables on behalf of the Syriac Orthodox community of Diyarbakır, offers a rare glimpse into collective opinion on the matter.²¹⁰ Having apparently instructed that an outstanding debt of nine hundred piastres he owed could be settled by remortgaging the Church of Our Lady in Diyarbakır and selling its gold, the community representatives informed the patriarch that they would not permit the sale of “a single piece of silver, gold or copper” belonging to the church.²¹¹ While their determination to protect these objects gestures to the devotional spirit of the community, it is hard to overlook the confessional undertones: the custodian of said church, alongside several of the undersigned laymen, had contracted a much more substantial loan of 4,500 piastres for the Catholic Michael Jarwah in June 1782.²¹²

Contemporary sources similarly implicated opposing patriarchs Michael and Matthew in squandering the resources of Saffron Monastery and other churches in Mardin and Diyarbakır, implying its significance in discourses of this Catholic-Orthodox struggle. Remarkably, the pertinence of the property of Saffron Monastery within this historical schism appears to have lived on in local consciousness. Ephrem Barsoum (d. 1957), a monk at Saffron Monastery and later Syriac Orthodox patriarch, claimed in an apology against the Syriac Catholic priest Ishaq Armalet as late as 1910 that Jarwah “stole around three hundred of the most ornate and ancient manuscripts” from Saffron Monastery, taking them to his new patriarchal seat at Charfet.²¹³

Not all cases of church borrowing by patriarchs during the investigated period, it must be noted, were shrouded in controversy. The Chaldean patriarch Joseph III (1713-1757) racked up considerable debts for his community, both before and during his ten-year-long absence from his patriarchal see in Diyarbakır between 1731-1741. Ostensibly fleeing from repeated offensives by the East Syriac patriarch

²⁰⁹ Letter preserved in Charfet Monastery archives: see Fathi, ‘La maison du Diacre Fathī’, p. 146.

²¹⁰ Letter is preserved in DIYR 228, f. 138: quoted in Fathi, ‘La maison du Diacre Fathī’, pp. 157-8.

²¹¹ Fathi, ‘La maison du Diacre Fathī’, p. 157.

²¹² Ibid., pp. 140-1.

²¹³ E. Barsoum, *Kalimah intiḡādīyah ‘alā al-zahrah al-dhakīyah* (Beirut, 1910), p. 58: سرقة منها نحو ثلثمائة مجلد من انفس الكتب واقدمها هي اليوم على ما بلغنا موجودة في مكتبة الشرفة ... See discussion of full work above, Chapter One, 1.5.

Eliya XI (1722-1778) at Alqosh, Joseph headed for Constantinople and then on to Rome.²¹⁴ A register of his debts, preserved in the Propaganda Fide and possibly authored by Joseph himself, notes that he borrowed 2,460 piastres from the Chaldeans of Mardin and various sums from the metropolitan, custodian and priests of the Church of Rabban Hormizd, in addition to 5,000 piastres from the Church of St. Petion in Diyarbakır.²¹⁵ While these payments are reflected as cash sums, there are hints in Joseph's correspondence that church property was used as collateral for his loans: the congregation of St. Petion in Diyarbakır informed Joseph in 1738 that they had managed to retrieve "some lamps and a silver crucifix" after paying off one of his loans.²¹⁶ Fascinatingly, however, practically no trace of Joseph's financial conduct transpires within local Chaldean manuscripts during this period,²¹⁷ which continued to acknowledge his patriarchal authority during his extended absence.²¹⁸ The fledging Chaldean Catholic community in Diyarbakır and Mardin were arguably more focused on promoting an image of success and cohesion in their contemporary record.²¹⁹ The loss of church wealth, it seems, only had a place in narratives of communal tension and disputed leadership.

The material wealth of churches in Mardin and other locations bore significance for contemporary observers, not only as a symbol of pious donations by congregants, but also in its vulnerability to exploitation by patriarchs. Yet while this issue could perhaps be overlooked to promote community cohesion, it gained currency in discourses of Catholic challenges to Syriac Orthodox leadership over the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Though this implies a distinct, materialised framing of interconfessional struggles, the next section will explore more idealised depictions of churches in this context.

²¹⁴ On his absence, see Wilmshurst, *The Ecclesiastical Organisation of the Church of the East*, pp. 26-7; L. Parker and R. Maxton, 'Archiving Faith: Record-Keeping and Catholic Community Formation in Eighteenth-Century Mesopotamia', *Past and Present*, 257/1 (2022), pp. 126-9. A note of his travels from Diyarbakır on to Constantinople, Rome and Lisbon can be found in BnF Ar. 128, f. 52r.

²¹⁵ Document 102 in Giamil, *Genuinae Relationes*, pp. 367-8.

²¹⁶ Document 94 in *ibid.*, pp. 356-7.

²¹⁷ That is, save from a note of a property sale by the Chaldean Church of St. Quryāqūs in 'Ayn Tannūr: see Parker and Maxton, 'Archiving Faith', pp. 120-4.

²¹⁸ See colophons in e.g. CCM 33 (1734), f. 155r; CCM 240 (1734), f. 142r; MBM 398 (1734), ff. 167r-167v; CCM 234 (1736), f. 112v

²¹⁹ See Parker and Maxton, 'Archiving Faith', pp. 126-9.

3.4 Churches and confessional demarcation

Amidst these interconfessional disputes, the churches of Mardin could emerge in more idealised, confessionally grounded tones. This section will examine Catholicised accounts of the occupation of local churches in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, evincing their confessional conditioning of this space through the elimination of ‘heresies’ and the implementation of Catholic customs. In spite of this, however, reports by contemporary clerics also reveal that these churches continued as sites of *interconfessional* worship. As such, ecclesiastical space – or the lack thereof – presents as a both a crucial and problematic dimension to confessional demarcation during this transitional era.

Catholic assumptions of local churches tend to be characterised by two processes: firstly, the cleansing of heresies prescribed by the Catholic Church, particularly anathemised Orthodox saints, and secondly, the performance of the Catholic sacraments by qualified clergy. This reverberates in Joseph’s attempts to establish Catholic control over local East Syriac churches in the *Life of Joseph*. In addition to preaching the Catholic sacrament of confession in the Church of St. Petion in Diyarbakır, ‘Abd al-Aḥad describes him as “completely removing the name of Nestorius from the church”,²²⁰ vowing shortly after that he would “never set foot in the church to hear the name of Nestorius uttered inside it”.²²¹ At the Church of Rabban Hormizd in Mardin, the measures taken by Joseph transpire in their subsequent reversal by his rival, the East Syriac Patriarch Eliya IX (1660-1700). ‘Abd al-Aḥad writes that the patriarch came to Mardin and “sowed his heresy [there]. He uttered the name of Nestorius the excommunicate, and took down the icons from the church, and discharged a priest whom Mar Joseph had ordained”.²²² Such depictions notably align with official communication from the Vatican: in a congratulatory letter sent by the Propaganda Fide to the Chaldean metropolitan for Mardin appointed by Joseph in 1683, it praises him for being “brought to the Catholic faith with so much zeal, by whose means the name of Nestorius remains erased from the heretical books ... and [who] put his church in peace”.²²³

²²⁰ CCM 12, f. 275r: *ذقد نهج نهجه ذقدن حله*

²²¹ CCM 12, f. 277r: *نجد: من نجل نك الحنيس هلن نهجد نهج نهجه كسه*

²²² CCM 12, f. 276r.

²²³ Document 52 in Lampart, *Ein Märtyrer der Union mit Rom*, pp. 301-2: “...siasi portata con tanto zelo per la Cattolica Religione che col mezzo suo resti cancellato il nome di Nestorio dalli libri d’Eretici, e sedate le discordie insorte per tal causa, e posta in pace cotesta sua Chiesa.”

The *Life of Eliya* similarly sheds light on these Catholicising processes. Eliya describes Melkon Tasbasian as “extracting the heresies” from the Armenian Church of St. George and “preventing priests who did not accept him from administering communion” (*taqdīm al-qurbān*).²²⁴ We have already observed Eliya’s triumphant rhetoric of “removing the filth” from the Church of the Forty Martyrs in destroying the new altar dedicated to the “heretic” saint Barsaumo.²²⁵ Moreover, in recounting his own occupation of the Syriac Orthodox Church of St. Eliya in Jiftlīk, just outside of Mardin, Eliya presents his successful implementation of Catholic rituals from day one:

Around two hundred men, not to mention women and children, gathered there that day, so I celebrated mass and gave a sermon. The next Sunday all the Catholic children were there, sitting on their knees, each one with a book in his hand and praying ... On Palm Sunday I confessed all the Catholic children of the church of Mār Eliya and offered them the Eucharist.²²⁶

Though offering less detail, Michael Jarwah recounts that, after arriving in Mardin in 1781, Catholic converts beseeched him to “consecrate and celebrate mass” (*ukarrisuhā wa-uqaddisuhā*) in the local Syriac Orthodox churches out of their “zeal for the Catholic faith” (*ghīratihim nahw al-īmān al-Kathūlīkī*). Following this, he reports that he “dispatched Catholic priests to the rest of the churches [there] to celebrate mass for them”.²²⁷

These measures for confessional alignment are not necessarily far-fetched. ‘Abd al-Aḥad qualifies, for example, that the eradication of the anathematised saint Nestorius from East Syriac churches simply involved Joseph “covering the name of Nestorius with a piece of paper” in liturgical books.²²⁸ Their emphasis on infusing churches with Catholic orthodoxy does, on the other hand, obscure a concern which accompanied this transitional phase: the necessity of sharing sacred space with the unconverted. We must not forget that church space in Mardin was limited, especially given that two local Christian communities – the Armenians and the East Syrians – had only one church for their use within the town. The Armenian Church of St. George in Mardin is a compelling case. Despite Eliya’s assertions that Melkon Tasbasian had successfully Catholicised the church soon after his arrival in Mardin in 1700,

²²⁴ USJ 30, f. 3r.

²²⁵ USJ 31, pp. 34-6.

²²⁶ USJ 30, ff. 39r-v: واجتمع في ذلك النهار مقدار مائتين غير النساء والصبيان فقدمت وكرزت وثاني احد انت جميع اولاد القاتوليفيين وكانو كلهم يجلسو على ركبهم وكل واحد كتابه بيده يصلو ... ويوم احد الشعانين عرفت جميع اولاد البيعة القاتوليفيين بمار ايليا وقربتهم ...

²²⁷ MBM 450, ff. 1v-12r.

²²⁸ CCM 12, f. 281r: لئلا يذنبوا بهم في ذلك اليوم، فكتبوا على اسمهم اسم القاتوليفيين...

Melkon's own correspondence with the Propaganda Fide in 1706 – a few years before his episcopal appointment – offers a quite different perspective.²²⁹ More precisely, he presents the existence of only one Armenian church in Mardin as a major barrier to his Catholic mission:

There being in this said place [Mardin] only one church shared by heretics and Catholics, it is not possible to celebrate publicly according to the Catholic rite, nor stay there without communicating with heretics, nor even to [celebrate mass] in a house. I remain in suspense and wish for some resolution from Your Excellencies on this...²³⁰

Another letter written by Melkon a few months later indicates his continued concern. He informed the Sacred Congregation that he had decided to stop celebrating mass altogether in the Church of St. George, so as not to be compelled to “pray with heretics” and “hear their heretical mass”.²³¹ In Melkon's eyes, the current situation of interconfessional church use was untenable.



Figure 8: Church of St. George, Mardin, exterior (October 2023).

The preoccupations over church sharing expressed by Melkon were almost certainly fuelled by wider dogmatic issues in the Catholic Church. The permissibility of converted Catholics partaking in mass in their traditional ‘schismatic’ church (known as ‘*communicatio in sacris*’), which appears to have been

²²⁹ See USJ 30, ff. 3v-4r.

²³⁰ APF, Acta, 1706, cong. gen. 15th March 1706, c. 52v, quoted partially in Santus, *Trasgressioni necessarie*, p. 382, note 2. I am grateful to Cesare Santus for sharing his transcript of the document with me.

²³¹ Santus, *Trasgressioni necessarie*, p. 387.

a common practical measure in Ottoman locations, sparked controversy among Catholic missionary orders operating there during the eighteenth century.²³² As Cesare Santus has argued, it was this very issue of mixing with “heretics” that spurred Melkon’s designs to renovate the Church of St. Barbara and create an exclusively Catholic space for the Armenian community of Mardin.²³³

Interconfessional church use in Mardin manifested in other forms against the backdrop of Catholic conversions. In the *Life of Eliya*, far from acknowledging Melkon’s difficulties at St. George, Eliya reports that around two hundred opponents of his Catholic leadership were permitted to worship in the Syriac Orthodox Church of the Forty Martyrs, the Syriac Orthodox on one side and the Armenians on the other.²³⁴ Moreover, Eliya gestures to Catholic converts from different communities attending one another’s churches, possibly to avoid ‘communicatio in sacris’. In addition to his attendance at the local Chaldean and Armenian churches,²³⁵ he reports hearing confession from a Chaldean priest during his service at St. Eliya,²³⁶ and how a fellow Syriac Catholic priest in Diyarbakır resorted to the Chaldean church over that of the Syriac Orthodox as he was “not content to mix with heretics” (*mā raḡiya yukhālīt al-harātiqah*).²³⁷ Such situations were not unique to Mardin: Bruce Masters has similarly noted “interdenominational cooperation” among Catholic clerics in Aleppo in the eighteenth century.²³⁸ However, Eliya does not present as staunchly opposed to sharing with his Orthodox counterparts as we might expect of Melkon, an apostolic missionary and former pupil of the Propaganda Fide. At one stage, Eliya even refuses an offer from Syriac Orthodox elders to designate him a place to celebrate mass at Saffron Monastery “free from heretics” (*khalwan min al-harātiqah*).²³⁹

In contemporary accounts concerning Catholic takeovers of local churches, we encounter common traits: the erasure of ‘heresies’ and the swift implementation of Catholic rituals. But these symbolic acts

²³² See discussion in Heyberger, *Les chrétiens du Proche-Orient*, pp. 385-90; Santus, *Trasgressioni necessarie*, esp. pp. 169-196, 381-427; idem, ‘Conflicting Views: Catholic Missionaries in Ottoman Cities between Accommodation and Latinization’, pp. 102-5; H. Shapiro, ‘Afterlives of Komitas K’eōmurchean (1656-1707): Commemorating an Istanbul-Armenian Martyr in Armeno-Turkish Literature and Sacred Pilgrimage’, *Journal of Ottoman Studies*, 58 (2021), pp. 90-1.

²³³ Santus, *Trasgressioni necessarie*, p. 387. Melkon relates his plan in SC Armeni, vi, f. 269.

²³⁴ USJ 30, ff. 3v-4r.

²³⁵ USJ 31, p. 61.

²³⁶ USJ 30, f. 39v.

²³⁷ USJ 30, f. 36v.

²³⁸ B. Masters, ‘The Millet Wars in Aleppo, 1726–1821: An Ottoman Perspective’, in S. Winter and A. Mafalda (eds), *Aleppo and Its Hinterland in the Ottoman Period*, (Leiden; Boston, 2020), pp. 143-4, 150.

²³⁹ USJ 30, f. 38r.

of confessional demarcation sit at odds with ongoing scenarios of interconfessional church usage indicated by local contemporaries – most compellingly by the later Armenian Catholic metropolitan of Mardin, Melkon Tasbasian. The process of delineating confessional space in Mardin, while idealised by Catholic clergy, was far from smooth; faced with the confines of local church space, it prompted serious concern and ad-hoc solutions with other communities. How Catholic conditioning affected the different churches of Mardin in the longer term will be our final consideration in this chapter.

3.5 Uneven Catholic success

By the mid-eighteenth century, it appears that some churches in Mardin had managed to acquire a Catholic identity. While the endurance of confessionally mixed congregations cannot be ruled out, the Catholicisation of the clergy and rituals of the Armenian and East Syriac churches is witnessed by several sources. In 1753, the Carmelite missionary Bishop Emmanuel reported that the “Chaldeans” in Mardin had a church, and that the Armenian clergy had a “spacious church” in which they “professed the Catholic faith in all liberty”. Friar Eugenius, meanwhile, spoke of “two Catholic churches, one Armenian with nine priests, the other Chaldean with two priests”.²⁴⁰ The liturgical materials within the manuscript corpus also indicate the Catholic supervision of these churches. Though few manuscripts have survived from the Church of St. George after its reported looting in 1915,²⁴¹ one Armenian liturgical text copied at the church by the son of its custodian in 1743 demonstrates some Catholic influence; the church itself is more generally designated “the Armenian church” (*kanīsat al-Arman*).²⁴² With regard to the traditionally East Syriac Church of Rabban Hormizd, numerous liturgical texts trace its emergent Chaldean Catholic identity throughout the eighteenth century. As early as 1709, the revised, Catholicised liturgy arranged by the Chaldean patriarch Joseph II was procured for the church, with similar copies being produced at the church from the mid- to late eighteenth century.²⁴³ In records of manuscript purchases made by the congregation between 1739-1740, we even see their self-styling as

²⁴⁰ Chick (ed.), *A chronicle of the Carmelites in Persia*, ii, p. 1264.

²⁴¹ Armalet, *al-Quṣārā*, pp. 133-4; Biner, *States of Dispossession*, pp. 76-81.

²⁴² See instructions for blessing of the holy water “according to the Roman Church” (‘*alā ‘ādat kanīsat Rūmiyyah al-muqaddasah*) in BnF Ar. 130 (1743), ff. 50v-53v.

²⁴³ I.e. CCM 569 (1709-1862). For examples of other MSS, see below, Chapter Four, 4.3. On the liturgical revisions of Joseph II, see Murre-van den Berg, *Scribes and Scriptures*, pp. 149-50; Parker and Maxton, ‘Archiving Faith’, pp. 106-8.

“the congregation of the Chaldean Church of Hormizd the martyr” (*jamā‘at bī‘at al-shahīd Hirmīzd al-kaldānīyah*).²⁴⁴ There are glimpses of confessional ambiguity too, reminding us that it was still an early point in this transitional phase. In 1742, for example, a deacon from Mardin named Quryāqūs ibn Kūrķīs identified himself as belonging to “the Chaldean community; that is, the Nestorians” (*min tā‘ifat al-Kaldānīyīn ayy al-Nasāṭarā*),²⁴⁵ evoking the saint whom Joseph had tried so hard to erase from memory.

While there are indications that Syriac Catholic converts existed in Mardin – not least, of course, the testimony provided in the *Life of Eliya* – it is difficult to perceive their imprint on local Syriac Orthodox churches until the latter half of the eighteenth century. The above-mentioned Carmelite Emmanuel reported “twenty Catholic Syrian families” in Mardin in 1753,²⁴⁶ while Eliya Faṭḥ Allāh, a Syriac Catholic convert from Diyarbakır, detailed in a report to the Propaganda Fide in 1780 that there were two hundred Syriac Catholics in Mardin.²⁴⁷ Several false starts at church establishment found their way into the historical record: Ishaq Armalet’s (unsubstantiated) claim of Bishop Safar al-Mārdīnī’s failed mission to build a Syriac Catholic monastery in Mardin,²⁴⁸ the short-lived Catholic takeover of the Church of St. Eliya reported in the *Life of Eliya*.²⁴⁹ Where, then, did early Syriac Catholics in Mardin worship? Aside from assuming continued attendance at their traditional churches, the Catholic intercommunal church sharing observed by Eliya may have been one solution. A Catholic theological work produced at the Armenian Church of St. George in 1739, for example, documents a teacher at the church named Eliya al-Suryānī al-Mārdīnī – possibly to be identified with our own Eliya ibn al-Kuzayr. There may also have been a more clandestine Syriac Catholic devotional culture which existed outside the church framework – a situation which has been noted for other contexts of Ottoman Catholicism, such as in Aleppo.²⁵⁰ Both Eliya and Michael Jarwah make references to performing Catholic

²⁴⁴ CCM 464 (1738), f. 189v; CCM 25 (1731), f. 78v.

²⁴⁵ CCM 454 (1742), f. 263v.

²⁴⁶ Chick (ed.), *A chronicle of the Carmelites in Persia*, ii, p. 1264.

²⁴⁷ J. Fathi, ‘D’Orient à L’Orient: Don Élias Fathalla, interprète de Napoléon, et la première Église syrienne-catholique’, *Journal of Eastern Christian Studies*, 72/1-2 (2020), pp. 104-6.

²⁴⁸ I. Armalet, ‘Lum‘ah tārikhīyah fī adyār Mārdīn’, *al-Machriq*, 12 (1909), pp. 764-5. See also discussion above, Chapter One, 1.4.

²⁴⁹ USJ 30, ff. 39r-v.

²⁵⁰ See e.g. Masters, *Christians and Jews in the Ottoman Arab World*, p. 103, 106; Heyberger, ‘Missionaries and women’, esp. pp. 191-8.

sacraments, especially confession, in people's homes.²⁵¹ As late as 1776, Jarwah instructed new Syriac Catholic converts in neighbouring Diyarbakır to take confession at the missionary residence there, suggestive that they, too, did not have a church for such uses.²⁵² The report of Eliya Faṭḥ Allāh clearly aims to highlight the issue on a community scale: while the Syriac Orthodox "Jacobites" possessed "more than one hundred and ten monasteries" throughout the Ottoman realm, he writes, the Catholics had only one monastery to their name – that of St. Ephrem al-Raghm, founded in 1706 in Mount Lebanon.²⁵³

The entry of Michael Jarwah to Mardin in 1781, prior to his patriarchal consecration the following year, is depicted as a turning point – if short lived – for Syriac Catholic church presence in Mardin. This was not Jarwah's first encounter with Mardin: he had previously spent about four years at Saffron Monastery after being summoned from Aleppo in 1769 by the new patriarch George III, ostensibly in an attempt to dissuade the former from his Catholic beliefs.²⁵⁴ Jarwah betrays little as to any Catholic evangelism during his residence at Saffron Monastery, instead reporting that he celebrated mass alone with another deacon "in an isolated place" (*fī makān munfarid*).²⁵⁵ On his arrival back in Mardin over ten years later, however, Jarwah appears to immediately take action. Having initially advised the Catholic priests who had travelled with him to confess people in their homes,²⁵⁶ Jarwah, encouraged by conversions among the local population, began to assign Catholic clergy to the Syriac Orthodox churches in Mardin.²⁵⁷ While we must be cautious with Iṣḥāq Armalet's assertion that the churches of St. Shmuni and the Forty Martyrs were once "solely occupied" by Catholic converts,²⁵⁸ Jarwah's occupation of local Syriac Orthodox establishments is attested in contemporary Orthodox accounts too. The appendix to the Chronicle of Michael the Great not only reports the abuse of resources at Saffron

²⁵¹ USJ 30, ff. 39v-40r; MBM 450, ff. 10v-11r.

²⁵² SC Siri, iii, ff. 272r-v & SC Siri, iii, ff. 262r-v quoted in Fathi, 'La Maison du Diacre Fathī', pp. 93-4.

²⁵³ Fathi, 'D'Orient à L'Orient', p. 104. On St. Ephrem al-Raghm, see idem., 'D'Orient à L'Orient', pp. 98-101; I. A. Hayek, *Tārīkh Dayr Mār Afrām al-Raghm, al-Shabbānīyah, wa-Dayr Mār Afrām bi-Mārdīn* (Mkalles, 1984), pp. 13-103. Note that Charfet Arabic 2/8 (latest 1756) and Charfet Arabic 7/28 (latest 1777) were donated to St. Ephrem 'Ayn al-Raghm Monastery in 1756 and 1777 respectively: Armalet, *Catalogue des manuscrits de Charfet*, p. 317, 387.

²⁵⁴ MBM 450, ff. 4v-5r. On these events, see also P. Chalfoun, 'L'Église syrienne catholique en Syrie au XVIII^e ème siècle', *Parole de l'Orient*, 13 (1986), pp. 174-7.

²⁵⁵ MBM 450, f. 4v.

²⁵⁶ MBM 450, ff. 10v-11r.

²⁵⁷ MBM 450, f. 11v.

²⁵⁸ Armalet, *al-Qusārā*, pp. 33-4.

Monastery by Jarwah and his followers, as we saw above, but also vividly describes him being beaten out of the Church of the Forty Martyrs (*akhraja minhu bi-al-darb*) after the triumph of Patriarch Matthew.²⁵⁹ Syriac Orthodox territory in Mardin had been – momentarily – threatened. Furthermore, there are traces of Catholic teachings from Jarwah’s short stay in Mardin. Two Arabic manuscripts copied in Mardin in 1782 and 1783 by the priest Yūsuf walad Maqdisī Ilyās Ḥiwārah of Aleppo and Yūsuf ibn Khalīl Rūmī respectively contain texts identifiable with Catholic catechisms.²⁶⁰ Both witness the incumbency of “Patriarch Ignatius Michael” and “the town of Mardin” as their copy site, though neither, notably, mention being written within or for a church.

The fleeting Catholic influence on the Syriac Orthodox churches of Mardin does not seem to have survived Matthew’s imperial sanction and Jarwah’s subsequent exit;²⁶¹ local archives indicate that the Syriac Catholic struggle for space persevered well into the nineteenth century.²⁶² In 1838, a petition by local Syriac Orthodox sought to ban the burial of Catholics in their cemeteries, which appears to have been upheld by a *firmān* of 1843;²⁶³ and in 1844 the sultan denied the Catholics’ request to use one of the three Syriac Orthodox churches in Mardin.²⁶⁴ Yet the Syriac Catholics of Mardin were not entirely without alternatives: the Episcopal missionary Horatio Southgate offered interesting insight when visiting the town in 1837. He described a property adjoined to the house of Metropolitan “Antoun” – presumably to be identified with the later Syriac Catholic patriarch Antony Samḥīrī (d. 1864) – which Ottoman authorities had permitted for use in the capacity of a “praying place” within a private house.²⁶⁵ To a disapproving Southgate, however, the distinction was minimal: designating the property as the

²⁵⁹ Bcheiry, ‘A list of the Syrian Orthodox patriarchs’, p. 240; for Karshuni original, see p. 259.

²⁶⁰ Charfet Arabic 8/86 (1782) contains *al-Ta’līm al-masīḥī*: Armalet, *Catalogue des manuscrits de Charfet*, p. 417. See same text in e.g. CCM 372 (1766). Charfet Arabic 8/81 (1783) contains *al-Mu’allim al-lāhūtī*: Armalet, *Catalogue des manuscrits de Charfet*, p. 416. See same text in e.g. USJ 1261 (1800-1900).

²⁶¹ On these events, see Fathi, ‘La maison du diacre Faṭḥī’, pp. 118-9.

²⁶² See E. Akgündüz, ‘Some notes on the Syriac Christians of Diyarbakir in the late 19th century: a preliminary investigation of some primary sources’, in J. Jongerden and J. Verheij (eds), *Social Relations in Ottoman Diyarbakir, 1870-1915* (Leiden; Boston, 2012), p. 236; I. Özcoşar, ‘Separation and Conflict: Syriac Jacobites and Syriac Catholics in Mardin in the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries’, *Byzantine and Modern Greek Studies*, 38/2 (2014), pp. 213-4; K. Dinno, *The Syrian Orthodox Christians in the Late Ottoman Period and Beyond: Crisis Then Revival* (Piscataway, NJ, 2017), pp. 126-8.

²⁶³ Document 23 quoted in Akgündüz, ‘Some notes on the Syriac Christians of Diyarbakir’, p. 236; M.Ş.S. no. 242 (January 1843) quoted in Özcoşar, ‘Separation and Conflict’, p. 214.

²⁶⁴ B.O.A., HR.MKT, 7/32 quoted in Özcoşar, ‘Separation and Conflict’, pp. 214-5.

²⁶⁵ Southgate, *Narrative of a Tour through Armenia, Kurdistan, Persia and Mesopotamia*, ii, p. 272, 274.

“church” of the Syriac Catholics, he pronounced it “the same thing under a different name”.²⁶⁶ In 1844, the private building and garden were approved by the Ottoman state as a church and cemetery for the Syriac Catholic community of Mardin.²⁶⁷

The assumption of Catholic identities by the churches of Mardin was a gradual, sometimes even non-linear process. The material we have reveals distinct and disparate trajectories of Catholicisation among the churches of this locale. Accounts of the traditionally East Syriac and Armenian churches attest to an emerging Catholic identity throughout the eighteenth century, which is particularly well represented in the Chaldean case. Yet, despite the efforts of Michael Jarwah towards the end of the century, the Syriac Catholics of Mardin seem to have been unable to establish a lasting hierarchy or congregation within any of the local Orthodox churches, instead resorting to other spatial domains for worship. It would take until the patriarchate of Antony Samḥīrī, at least a century after their Armenian and Chaldean counterparts, for the Syriac Catholics to make their mark on the ecclesiastical architecture of Mardin.²⁶⁸ Oswald Parry aptly summarised the situation in 1895, commenting that while “the Papal Syrians possess none of the old churches or monasteries in or near Mardin”, they now had several “fine” church buildings to their name.²⁶⁹

Conclusion

This chapter has explored the church and monastic topography of Mardin against the backdrop of confessional change between 1662-1783. Recognising the layers of meaning that churches could embody, it has analysed them in contemporary sources as objects of rebuilding, material wealth and confessional demarcation. The cases we have examined from Mardin and connected locations enrich historiography on issues such as church building under Ottoman rule, material culture and piety, and interconfessional usage of sacred space. But more than this, these themes have opened up new dimensions to the spread of Catholicism in Mardin. Tensions between Catholic and Orthodox factions erupted in historical accounts in diverse and dramatic ways: accusations of unlawful church construction, the squandering of precious church property, and the eradication of heretical elements.

²⁶⁶ Ibid., ii, p. 274.

²⁶⁷ M.Ş.S. no. 242 (June 1844) quoted in Özcoşar, ‘Separation and Conflict’, p. 215.

²⁶⁸ See above, Chapter One, 1.4.

²⁶⁹ Oswald Parry, *Six Months In A Syrian Monastery*, p. 79.

Confessional ruptures within local Christian communities thus take shape as a series of smaller-scale struggles over specific churches and monasteries; struggles for control of territory, financial resources and confessional conformity. We are again reminded of the unique access to power that churches offered Christians in Ottoman society.²⁷⁰

Yet while individual churches played key roles, we must not overlook the significance of the local Christian landscape as a whole. Mardin, as a town and a region, had a distinct dynamic which almost certainly impacted the foundation of Catholic churches throughout the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. While the three Christian communities dwelling in Mardin each had designated places of worship, the Syriac Orthodox domination of the sacred landscape is inescapable. Not only did the Syriac Orthodox have a historic and dense monastic network in Tur Abdin, east of Mardin; the late seventeenth and eighteenth centuries were defined as an era of rejuvenation for Syriac Orthodox architecture and ecclesiastical activity – a return to communal vitality and the days of John of Mardin. The reinstatement of Saffron Monastery as both the patriarchal residence and the spiritual and intellectual centre for the Syriac Orthodox faithful throughout the region was also of profound importance to contemporary historians. Unlike in Aleppo, where physical presence was more limited, the situation in Mardin likely contributed to the resistance of local Syriac Orthodox churches (and clergy) to Catholicisation. On the other hand, we do observe the sole churches of the Armenian and East Syriac faithful in Mardin, both of which were geographically isolated from their traditional hierarchies and monastic culture, developing and refining their Catholic identities throughout the eighteenth century. The delayed and difficult path to church establishment for the Syriac Catholics of Mardin – not achieved until several decades into the nineteenth century – would pose a major challenge for ecclesiastical historians like Işhaq Armalet in the twentieth century.

On a final note, we must also continue to remind ourselves of the uses and limitations of the sources on which this investigation is based. This chapter has inspected the accounts of the ecclesiastical actors at the epicentre of Christian interconfessional disputes within early modern Ottoman society, and has read their confessionally motivated outlooks accordingly. There is rarely space in these accounts for

²⁷⁰ Masters, *Christians and Jews in the Ottoman Arab World*, p. 96.

any confessional ambiguity or confusion which may accompany periods of transition; the voice of the congregants, the core of these churches, is recovered only through the occasional endowment or purchase note. Within the historical record of Christian communities in Mardin, discourse on churches was nothing if not confessionally aligned. It is perhaps no surprise, then, that the texts produced and preserved by these very churches also capture the confessional changes taking place in this period. The following and final chapter will delve inside the manuscript collections of local churches and monasteries to examine evolving confessional identities between 1662-1783.

Chapter Four

Manuscript Culture in Christian Mardin

Manuscripts have so far played a crucial role in this project. This chapter, however, will fully immerse itself in the manuscript culture of Christian Mardin, analysing its specific features in the period between 1662-1783, and how Catholic literature filtered into it. For this purpose, the chapter will draw primarily on a corpus of 482 manuscripts belonging to the three extant Christian collections in Mardin: that is, the Chaldean Church of Rabban Hormizd,¹ the Syriac Orthodox Church of the Forty Martyrs, and Saffron Monastery, the former Syriac Orthodox patriarchal seat.² While portions of the Chaldean collection have lately attracted some attention,³ no comprehensive studies of the Syriac Orthodox corpus have emerged since those of Patriarch Ephrem Barsoum (d. 1957).⁴

Bringing these collections into conversation with each other for the first time, this chapter will firstly examine the scribal landscape of Christian Mardin during the investigated period. Despite their shared

¹ Collection catalogued in A. Scher, 'Notice sur les manuscrits syriaques et arabes conservés à l'archevêché chaldéen de Diarbékir', *Journal Asiatique*, 10 (1907), pp. 331-62, 385-43; idem, 'Notice sur les manuscrits syriaques et arabes conservés dans la bibliothèque de l'évêché chaldéen de Mardin', *Revue des bibliothèques*, 18 (1908), pp. 64-95.

² A hand-written catalogue of the Saffron Monastery collection can be found in P. Y. Dolabani, *Catalogue of Syriac Manuscripts in Za'faran Monastery* (Piscataway, NJ, 2009).

³ See preliminary discussion of Chaldean scribes in Mardin in D. Wilmshurst, *The Ecclesiastical Organisation of the Church of the East, 1318-1913* (Leuven, 2000), i, pp. 77-8. On MSS produced by the Chaldeans of Diyarbakır, see L. Parker, 'Joseph I of Amida (d.1707) and the Invention of the Chaldeans', in Bernard Heyberger (ed.), *Les Chrétiens de Tradition Syriacque à l'époque Ottomane* (Paris, 2020), esp. pp. 132-3, 141; L. Parker and R. Maxton, 'Archiving Faith: Record-Keeping and Catholic Community Formation in Eighteenth-Century Mesopotamia', *Past & Present*, 257/1 (2022), pp. 89-133. For studies of individual MSS, see M. Maggi and P. Orsatti, 'The Syro-Persian Texts in Manuscript 398 of the Chaldean Cathedral in Mardin', *Hugoye: Journal of Syriac Studies*, 22/2 (2019), pp. 395-431; A. Croq, 'De nouvelles formes d'écriture en Mésopotamie ottomane : la Relation du pèlerinage à Jérusalem du prêtre chaldéen 'Abd al-Aḥad en 1707, suivi du Récit de l'épidémie de peste de 1712 à Diyarbakır', *Bulletin de correspondance hellénique moderne et contemporain*, 8 (forthcoming), pp. 297-316.

⁴ Patriarch Ephrem's general survey of Syriac Orthodox literature throughout the Middle East, *Kitāb al-Lu'lu' al-manthūr fī tārikh al-'ulūm wa-al-ādāb al-Suryānīyah* (Homs, 1943), was translated into English in 2004: I. A. Barsoum, *The Scattered Pearls: History of Syriac Literature and Sciences*, trans. Matti Moosa (Piscataway, NJ, 2004). Two of his works on the MSS of Mardin have been published posthumously: I. E. Barsoum, *Makhtūṭat Āmid wa-Mārdīn* (Damascus, 2008); idem, *Makhtūṭat Dayr al-Za'farān*, (Damascus, 2008). More recently, studies of individual MSS have emerged: see discussion of CFMM (= Church of the Forty Martyrs) 1006 in I. Bcheiry, *Collection of Historical Documents in Relation with the Syriac Orthodox Community in the Late Period of the Ottoman Empire: The Register of Mardin MS 1006* (Piscataway, NJ, 2010); CFMM 248 in idem, *Hagiography, History and Manuscript Culture: Studies in Syriac Christianity* (Kaslik, 2018), pp. 73-101; and ZFRN (= Dayr Za'farān) 397 in R. Maxton, 'Public and Private Spheres at Saffron Monastery' in N. Domeisen, D. Haywood, E. Jones, D. Kohler, M. Mackay, R. Maxton, B. M. Moore, K. Noble, F. M. Simon, D. Wakelin and D. Wojahn, *Unprinted: Publication Beyond the Press* (Cambridge, forthcoming).

locale and religion, marked differences will be revealed between the scribal practices of contemporary Chaldean and Syriac Orthodox communities. Building on this, this chapter will secondly posit that *two* scribal movements – simultaneous, yet largely unrelated – were active in Mardin from the early eighteenth century. These movements are defined here as the creation of a Chaldean Catholic literary corpus, and the reform of Syriac Orthodox literature. In addition to the confessional agenda which underpinned these scribal movements, the chapter will also consider the specific ways in which the Chaldean and Syriac Orthodox communities in Mardin engaged with Catholic literature.

This investigation analyses the Christian manuscripts of Mardin through the prism of ‘confessionalization’, or processes of confessional demarcation and identity construction. The concept first arose in scholarship on Central Europe in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, posited as a state-sponsored method for social discipline in the aftermath of the Reformation.⁵ More recently, historians have argued that these processes also occurred independently of state building in the early modern era, manifesting in regional and local variations and within multi-confessional societies.⁶ As the edited volume by Tijana Krstić and Derin Terzioğlu explored, the diverse religious minorities of the Ottoman Empire were arguably all influenced by discourses of confessional identity formation from the fifteenth to eighteenth centuries – including, as this chapter centres on, its Christian communities.⁷ Furthermore, the materials considered in this chapter are particularly well aligned to the precepts for ‘confessionalized’ literature, as problematised in Reformation historiography: they were almost

⁵ The term ‘confessionalization’ was coined by Wolfgang Reinhard and Hans Schilling: see e.g. W. Reinhard, ‘Reformation, Counter-Reformation, and the Early Modern State: a Reassessment’, *The Catholic Historical Review*, 79/3 (1989), pp. 383-404; H. Schilling, ‘Confessionalization in the Empire. Religious and Societal Change in Germany between 1555 and 1620’, in idem., *Religion, Political Culture and the Emergence of Early Modern Society. Essays in German and Dutch History* (Leiden; New York; Cologne, 1992), pp. 205-245. For a recent examination of ‘confessionalized’ literature in the Reformation context, see U. Lotz-Heumann and M. Pohlig, ‘Confessionalization and Literature in the Empire, 1555–1700’, *Central European History*, 40/1 (2007), pp. 35-61.

⁶ On these specific critiques, see U. Lotz-Heumann, ‘The concept of ‘confessionalization’: a historiographical paradigm in dispute’, *Memoria y civilización*, 4 (2001), pp. 109–14; idem, ‘Confessionalization’, in David M. Whitford (ed.), *Reformation and Early Modern Europe: A Guide to Research* (Kirksville, MO, 2008), pp. 145-9.

⁷ See numerous contributions (cited in later footnotes) in T. Krstić and D. Terzioğlu (eds), *Entangled Confessionalizations?: Dialogic Perspectives on the Politics of Piety and Community Building in the Ottoman Empire, 15th-18th Centuries* (Piscataway, NJ, 2022). Additional recent expositions of confessional identity in Ottoman Christianity include A. Ohanjanyan, ‘Creedal Controversies among Armenians in the Seventeenth-Century Ottoman Empire: Eremia Č‘ēlēpi K‘ēōmiwrčean’s Polemical Writing against Suk‘ias Prusac‘i’, *Journal of the Society for Armenian Studies*, 27/1 (2020), pp. 7-69; Parker, ‘Joseph I of Amida (d.1707) and the Invention of the Chaldeans’, esp. pp. 124-5, 133-40, 146.

exclusively produced by clergymen in ecclesiastical settings, usually religious in content, and frequently sponsored by the leadership of their respective churches.⁸

The identification of two parallel scribal movements in Mardin – one Catholic and one Orthodox – has important implications for the historiography of Christianity in Ottoman Mardin. The lack of symmetry and dialogue we observe between the Chaldean and Syriac Orthodox collections – especially with regard to Catholic literature – firstly problematises images of the linear, cross-confessional Catholic movement in Mardin painted by historians during the early twentieth century.⁹ It also casts doubt on Mardin as a nexus for early Syriac Catholicism, as promoted in the historical writings of Iṣḥāq Armalet.¹⁰ Secondly, the literary reform witnessed within the Syriac Orthodox Church in Mardin calls for reconsideration of the “stagnation” ascribed to the Ottoman era in scholarly paradigms of communal progress and decline.¹¹ As observed with their East Syriac counterparts, the eighteenth century was a dynamic phase in Syriac Orthodox scribal production.¹² Finally, all this underlines the need for comparison and specificity when dealing with the diffusion of Catholicism across different confessional communities, even within a small locale like Mardin.¹³ This is not to negate or overlook the types of interconfessional interactions we found so vividly depicted in the *Life of Eliya*, from daily exchanges to practical assistance, church sharing, religious ceremonies and even spiritual mentorship, nor the

⁸ See Lotz-Heumann and Pohlig, ‘Confessionalization and Literature in the Empire’, pp. 44-5, 61.

⁹ See notably introduction to the *Life of Eliya*: L. Cheikho, ‘Al-Kathlakah fī Mārdīn’, *al-Machriq*, 12 (1909) pp. 589-91; Cheikho’s account of Catholic missionaries in Mardin: idem, ‘Min Bayrūt ilā al-Hind’, *al-Machriq*, (1912), pp. 302-3; Armalet’s preface to biography of Safar al-Mārdīnī: I. Armalet, ‘al-Sayyid Athanāsīyūs Safar al-‘Aṭṭār al-Mārdīnī’, *al-Machriq*, 11 (1908), pp. 563-4.

¹⁰ See e.g. Armalet, ‘al-Sayyid Athanāsīyūs Safar al-‘Aṭṭār al-Mārdīnī’; idem, ‘Lum‘ah tārikhiyah fī adyār Mārdīn’, *al-Machriq*, 12 (1909), pp. 760-70.

¹¹ Quote from K. Dinno, *The Syrian Orthodox Christians in the Late Ottoman Period and Beyond: Crisis Then Revival* (Piscataway, NJ, 2017), p. 22. For discussion and delineation of historical phases in construction of Syriac Orthodox identity, covering the pre-Ottoman period and twentieth century, see R. B. ter Haar Romeny with N. Atto, J. J. van Ginkel, M. Immerzeel and B. Snelders, ‘The Formation of a Communal Identity among West Syrian Christians: Results and Conclusions of the Leiden Project’ in R. B. ter Haar Romeny (ed.), *Religious Origins of Nations?: The Christian Communities of the Middle East* (Leiden ; Boston, 2010), esp. pp. 42-51; see also Dinno, *The Syrian Orthodox Christians in the Late Ottoman Period and Beyond*, esp. pp. 7-8, 11-12, 33-8.

¹² S. Brock and D. Taylor, *The Hidden Pearl: The Syrian Orthodox Church and Its Ancient Aramaic Heritage* (Rome, 2001), ch. 8. East Syriac manuscript production has been noted as especially prolific between the late seventeenth and early eighteenth century: see H. Murre-van den Berg, *Scribes and Scriptures: The Church of the East in the Eastern Ottoman Provinces (1500-1850)* (Leuven, 2015), esp. pp. 80-7.

¹³ Noted by John-Paul Ghobrial in idem, ‘Catholic Confessional Literature in the Christian East? A view from Rome, Diyarbakır and Mount Lebanon, ca. 1674’, in Krstić and Terzioğlu (eds), *Entangled Confessionalizations?*, pp. 384-5.

importance of interconfessional cooperation to nascent Catholicism in other contexts like Aleppo¹⁴ or Rome.¹⁵ However, as this chapter will demonstrate, scribal culture – from liturgy to language to script to geography to interconfessional influence – offers profound insight into the distinct confessional agendas of the Christian communities in Mardin, and their differing relationships with emergent Catholicism.

4.1 Sources and methodology

The analysis of this chapter is based on three surviving Christian manuscript collections in Mardin, which have been digitally imaged and made accessible online.¹⁶ The manuscripts which have been selected for analysis either date to or have an estimated production date between 1662-1783, and are distributed across the collections as follows (see full list in Appendix Two):¹⁷

Repository	Denomination	MSS dating from 1662-1783
Church of the Forty Martyrs, Mardin (Project code: CFMM) ¹⁸	Syriac Orthodox	228
Dayr Za‘farān [Saffron Monastery], Mardin (Project code: ZFRN) ¹⁹	Syriac Orthodox	41
Mar Hirmiz Keldani Kilisesi [Rabban Hormizd Church], Mardin (Project code: CCM) ²⁰	Chaldean	213

Table 1: Christian manuscript collections of Mardin.

The collections of the Church of the Forty Martyrs, Saffron Monastery and Rabban Hormizd together provide a rich data set for this investigation. But before proceeding to analysis, it is important to reflect

¹⁴ See B. Heyberger, *Les chrétiens du Proche-Orient au temps de la réforme catholique (Syrie, Liban, Palestine, XVIIe-XVIIIe siècles)* (Rome, 1994), esp. pp. 340-5, 350-60; B. Masters, ‘The Millet Wars in Aleppo, 1726–1821: An Ottoman Perspective’, in Stefan Winter and Ade Mafalda (eds), *Aleppo and Its Hinterland in the Ottoman Period*, (Leiden; Boston, 2020), pp. 130-51.

¹⁵ See L. Parker, ‘The Interconnected Histories of the Syriac Churches in the Sixteenth Century’, *The Journal of Ecclesiastical History*, 72/3 (2021), pp. 509-32.

¹⁶ These collections are all accessible the via the Hill Museum and Manuscript Library (HMML) online reading room: ‘Virtual HMML Reading Room’ <https://www.vhmml.org/readingRoom/> (24 Jan 2024).

¹⁷ Note that this thesis has generally followed the estimated date ranges provided in the HMML online catalogue descriptions; the qualifiers ‘earliest’ and ‘latest’ are my own additions.

¹⁸ HMML currently hosts images for 1091 manuscripts from the CFMM collection.

¹⁹ HMML currently hosts images for 274 manuscripts from the ZFRN collection.

²⁰ HMML currently hosts images for 582 manuscripts from the CCM collection.

on the extent to which they represent the totality of Christian manuscript culture in Mardin during the period 1662-1783, particularly in view of modern historical developments.

One of the most conspicuous issues is that, despite Armenians comprising the second largest Christian community in Mardin, no Armenian collections are known to have survived within the region.²¹ Like their Syriac Orthodox and Chaldean counterparts, the Armenian faithful of Mardin had a long history of scribal production. As early as 1426, a copy of the Gospels in Armenian designates Mardin as its origin point; in 1452, a local chronicle was written in Armenian by a certain David of Mardin.²² Moving to the eighteenth century, the Armenian Church of St. George under Melkon Tasbasian is portrayed as a centre of learning for students from surrounding regions – among them reportedly the later Armenian Catholic patriarch, Abraham Ardzivian.²³ Moreover, we find reference to a library belonging to the Armenian Catholic metropolitan of Mardin, Yūwākīm Tasbasian (1788-1836), in a nineteenth-century manuscript.²⁴ Even as late as 1895, Louis Cheikho referenced the manuscript collection of St. George while visiting Mardin.²⁵ But it is unclear what became of these manuscripts after the massacres carried out on local Christians by Ottoman authorities between 1915-1916. Išḥaq Armalet reported a night-time raid on St. George during the early phase of the atrocities, at which point all the correspondence and manuscripts of the Armenian Catholic archbishop Ignatius Maloyan (d. 1915) were confiscated.²⁶ The church lay abandoned in the following period, falling prey to looters and squatters.²⁷ Despite the loss of the St. George collection, however, this research has encountered a few remnants of local Armenian scribal production elsewhere, for example in the Chaldean collection of Rabban Hormizd in Mardin,²⁸ the Armenian Catholic monastery of Our Lady of Bzoummar in Keserwan, Lebanon,²⁹ and the

²¹ Estimated in 1753 by the Carmelite friar Bishop Emmanuel of St. Albert at 400 and 600 families respectively: Chick, H. (ed.), *A chronicle of the Carmelites in Persia and the Papal mission of the XVIIth and XVIIIth centuries* (2 vols, London, 1939), ii, pp. 1263-4.

²² A. K. Sanjian, *Colophons of Armenian Manuscripts, 1301-1480: A Source for Middle Eastern History* (Cambridge, 2014), pp. 172, 221-4.

²³ USJ (= Beirut, Université Saint-Joseph, Bibliothèque Orientale) 30 (1700-1800), ff. 3r-v. On Ardzivian, see S. Davidian, *Biografia di sua beatitudine Abramo Pietro I. patriarca di Cilicia e Catolicos degli Armeni* (Cairo, 1861), pp. 10-11.

²⁴ Charfet 656 (1880) in B. Sony, *Fihrist al-Makḥṭūʾāt al-baṭrayarkīyah fī Dayr al-Sharfāh* (Beirut, 1993), p. 231.

²⁵ L. Cheikho, 'Min Bayrūt ilá al-Hind', p. 305.

²⁶ I. Armalet, *al-Quṣārā fī nakabāt al-Naṣārā* (Charfet, 1919), pp. 133-4.

²⁷ See Z. Ö. Biner, *States of Dispossession: Violence and Precarious Coexistence in Southeast Turkey* (Philadelphia, 2020), pp. 76-81.

²⁸ CCM 456 (1739), f. 172v.

²⁹ BzAr (= Bzummār, Our Lady of Bzummār Convent) 9 (1817); BzAr 207 (1874).

Bibliothèque nationale de France.³⁰ Though this material is insufficient to examine confessionalization processes, some preliminary observations will feature in the discussion below. Importantly, these finds are a glimmer of hope that there are still more Armenian manuscripts from Mardin to be recovered in other places.

We must also be mindful of manuscript migration more generally. The collections of these three establishments in Mardin, like any other Middle Eastern manuscript collection, have never been static entities; manuscripts have flowed in to, out of and across them throughout history, making it impossible to ascribe a purely local provenance to any of the collections.³¹ Even as recently as the twentieth century, these collections experienced significant changes to their composition. The Chaldean manuscripts were traditionally divided between the Church of Rabban Hormizd in Mardin and the Church of St. Petion in Diyarbakır.³² However, after the outbreak of the First World War, the much larger Diyarbakır collection was transferred to Mardin,³³ while several manuscripts additionally were relocated to the Chaldean patriarchate in Mosul (now in Baghdad), to the Vatican, and to Leiden.³⁴ Notably, a small portion of the original collection does appear to have remained at or subsequently been moved back to the Church of St. Petion itself, of which thirty-one manuscripts are currently digitised on the Hill Museum and Manuscript Library (HMML) online repository.³⁵

³⁰ BnF (= Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France) Ar. 130 (1743).

³¹ Raised recently by John-Paul Ghobrial in his essay ‘Connected Histories and Eastern Christianities’, in Andreea Badea (ed.), *Pathways through Early Modern Christianities* (Paderborn, 2023), pp. 189-90. For studies on the movement and dispersal of Middle Eastern manuscripts, particularly to Europe, see e.g. J.-P. Ghobrial, ‘The Archive of Orientalism and its Keepers: Re-Imagining the Histories of Arabic Manuscripts in Early Modern Europe’, *Past and Present*, 230 (suppl_11, 2016), pp. 90-111; T. Seidensticker, ‘How Arabic Manuscripts Moved to German Libraries’, *Manuscript Cultures*, 10 (2017), pp. 73-82; A. El Shamsy, *Rediscovering the Islamic Classics: How Editors and Print Culture Transformed an Intellectual Tradition* (Princeton, NJ, 2020), pp. 10-19; K. Hirschler, *A Monument to Medieval Syrian Book Culture: The Library of Ibn Abd al-Hadi* (Edinburgh, 2020), esp. pp. 155-65.

³² The pre-WWI locations of the MSS now in Mardin can be gleaned from the Scher catalogues: ‘Notice sur les manuscrits syriaques et arabes conservés à l’archevêché chaldéen de Diarbékir’, pp. 331-62, 385-431; and idem, ‘Notice sur les manuscrits syriaques et arabes conservés dans la bibliothèque de l’évêché chaldéen de Mardin’, pp. 64-95.

³³ Details of this move can be found in G. Kessel, ‘Manuscript Collection of the Syrian Orthodox Church Meryemana in Diyarbakır: a preliminary survey’, in F. Briquel-Chatonnet and M. Debié (eds), *Manuscripta syriaca. Des sources de première main* (Paris, 2015), pp. 84-5.

³⁴ J.-M. Vosté, ‘Notes sur les manuscrits syriaques de Diarbekir et autres localités d’Orient’, *Le Muséon*, 50 (1937), pp. 348-51; Kessel, ‘Manuscript Collection of the Syrian Orthodox Church Meryemana in Diyarbakır’, pp. 84-5.

³⁵ See collection Diyarbakır, Mar Petyun Keldani Kilisesi, project nos. CHAL 00001-CHAL 00030 on <https://www.vhmmml.org/readingRoom/>.

With respect to the Syriac Orthodox manuscripts of Mardin, in a similar period a substantial part of the Saffron Monastery collection was transferred to the Church of the Forty Martyrs. This is evident from the seal of the Saffron Monastery library adorning numerous manuscripts in the Forty Martyrs collection,³⁶ as well as from comparison with the catalogue of the Saffron manuscripts by Metropolitan Philoxenos Yuhanon Dolabani of Mardin (d. 1969), reportedly compiled in 1928.³⁷ Manuscripts copied at Saffron Monastery within our investigated period have also made their way to an array of locations, including Diyarbakır,³⁸ Midyat,³⁹ Mosul,⁴⁰ Damascus,⁴¹ Mount Lebanon,⁴² Jerusalem,⁴³ Birmingham, UK⁴⁴ and Kerala.⁴⁵ For these reasons, this investigation is not shackled by strict notions of geographical provenance: it will consider manuscripts within the Mardin collections which originated elsewhere, and it will, where relevant to the analysis, consider manuscripts created in Mardin but not currently in situ.⁴⁶

The Mardin corpus, while not all encompassing, can still offer us a compelling window into local Chaldean and Syriac Orthodox manuscript culture, revealing distinct aspects of their scribal traditions and developing confessional identities during this period. In investigating these issues, the chapter will not only consider bibliographical data such as the genre, author, title, language and script of the manuscripts, but will closely scrutinise their paratextual content. Paratext – which includes colophons, ownership statements, endowment notices and any other notes additional to the main text of the

³⁶ Of the 228 Church of the Forty Martyrs MSS examined here, 97 have the seal of Saffron Monastery.

³⁷ Dolabani, *Catalogue of Syriac Manuscripts in Za'faran Monastery*. Information on compilation date found in idem, *Fihris makḥṭūtāt Dayr al-Za'farān*, (Aleppo, 1994), p. 7. The migration of the collection is also noted in A. C. McCollum, 'Remarks on Recent Cataloging Efforts among Syriac Manuscripts Preserved at the Hill Museum & Manuscript Library', *Hugoye: Journal of Syriac Studies*, 15/2 (2012), pp. 355-6.

³⁸ See e.g. DIYR (= Diyarbakır, Meryem Ana Kilisesi) 251 (1702), f. 136r.

³⁹ CET (= Tur Abdin, Churches in Enhil – Tur Abdin) 34 (1727), f. 256v.

⁴⁰ MBM (= Mosul, Mar Behnam Monastery) 396 (1713), f. 205v.

⁴¹ MS 1/7 (1715) in Y. Dolabani, R. Lavenant, S. Brock and S. K. Samir, 'Catalogue des manuscrits de la bibliothèque du patriarcat syrien orthodoxe à Homs, auj. à Damas', *Parole de l'Orient*, 19 (1994), p. 560.

⁴² Charfet Syriac 9/39 in I. Armalet, *al-Ṭurfah fī makḥṭūtāt Dayr al-Shurfah/ Catalogue des manuscrits de Charfet, Publié à l'occasion du 150e anniversaire de l'installation du siège patriarcal à Charfet, 1786-1936* (Jounieh, 1937), pp. 204-5.

⁴³ SMMJ (= Jerusalem, Saint Mark's Monastery) 199 B (1734), f. 356v.

⁴⁴ Mingana Syriac 562 (1723) in A. Mingana, *Catalogue of the Mingana Collection of Manuscripts, Now in the Possession of the Trustees of the Woodbrooke Settlement, Selly Oak, Birmingham* (4 vols, Cambridge, 1933), i, pp. 1044-1051.

⁴⁵ APSTCH KONA (= Pampakuda (India), Konat Collection) 1 260 (1724), f. 546v: copied at the Monastery of St. Jacob above Saffron Monastery.

⁴⁶ A full list of these collections can be found in the introduction to the present work.

manuscript – is increasingly being recognised as historical testimony in its own right.⁴⁷ Scribal colophons – which follow a similar format in the Syriac Orthodox and Chaldean traditions – are particularly beneficial to the present study, often revealing key information surrounding the creation of a manuscript: the date and location of copying, personal details about the copyist, the incumbent patriarch of his community, and the commissioner of the text.⁴⁸ In this sense, the investigation builds on recent approaches to paratextual notes as a lens for evolving confessional identities among Ottoman Christians.⁴⁹

In the following sections, the chapter will firstly consider the insights that the Mardin collections offer into local Christian manuscript culture between 1662-1783, comparing the scribal traditions of the Syriac Orthodox and Chaldean communities. The chapter will then use evidence from the manuscripts to conduct an in-depth examination of two distinct confessional movements within the local Christian scribal milieu. The analysis will also identify any texts of Catholic authorship within the collections. These include translated works by Western Catholics, compositions by Catholics of Eastern denominations, and texts copied by individuals who explicitly self-identify as Catholic. Much of this literature pertains to Catholic doctrine or rituals, but it could also comprise, for example, a grammatical work authored by a Catholic individual.⁵⁰ In examining the circumstances of its presence in the collections – largely through paratextual records – we can discern the differing interactions of the Chaldean and Syriac Orthodox communities with Catholic literature. Drawing these strands of analysis

⁴⁷ On the historical value of paratext, see e.g. Wilmschurst, *The Ecclesiastical Organisation of the Church of the East*; A. Görke and K. Hirschler, *Manuscript notes as documentary sources* (Beirut, 2011); Sanjian, *Colophons of Armenian Manuscripts, 1301-1480*; Murre-van den Berg, *Scribes and Scriptures*; G. Ciotti and H. Lin (eds), *Tracing Manuscripts in Time and Space through Paratexts* (Berlin, 2016); C. D. Bahl and S. Hanß (eds), *Scribal Practice and the Global Cultures of Colophons, 1400-1800* (Cham, 2022).

⁴⁸ For features and significance of the Syriac colophon, see H. 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), pp. 9-26; idem, *Scribes and Scriptures*, pp. 113-42, 279-80, 280-86. In the West Syriac context, see S. P. Brock and D. G. K. Taylor. *The Hidden Pearl: The Syrian Orthodox Church and Its Ancient Aramaic Heritage* (Rome, 2001), pp. 246-7.

⁴⁹ See L. Parker, 'On the Margins of Empire: Confessionalization and the East Syrian Schism of 1552', in Tijana Krstić and Derin Terzioğlu (eds), *Entangled Confessionalizations?: Dialogic Perspectives on the Politics of Piety and Community Building in the Ottoman Empire, 15th-18th Centuries* (Piscataway, NJ, 2022), pp. 429-50; Parker and Maxton, 'Archiving Faith', esp. pp. 104-17.

⁵⁰ See e.g. CFMM 517 (1647-1800) containing Syriac grammar of the Maronite Yūsuf al-‘Aqūrī.

together, this chapter seeks to offer new perspectives on the long-neglected scribal heritage of Christian Mardin.

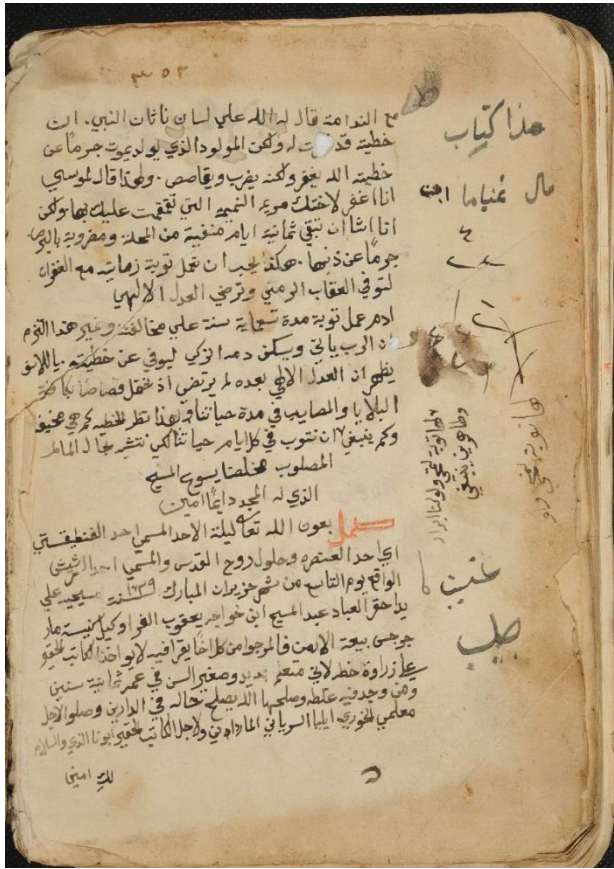


Figure 9: Mardin, Mar Hirmiz Keldani Kilisesi, MS 456 (HMML Project No.: CCM 00456), f. 172v. Colophon of *The Trumpet of Heaven*, copied at the Armenian Church of St. George in Mardin.

4.2 The Scribal landscape of Christian Mardin, 1662-1783

The collections tell us that all three Christian communities in Mardin were engaged in some level of scribal activity during the period 1662-1783. The numbers outlined above (see table 1) suggest that the Syriac Orthodox and Chaldeans had a similar level of productivity, although we must bear in mind that these include Chaldean scribal activity in Diyarbakır. The relative productivity of the Armenian community is impossible to establish. The most active period for the Syriac Orthodox community within our considered timeframe, according to information in the colophons, was during the patriarchates of Shukr Allāh II (1722-1745) and George II

(1745/6-1768); for the Chaldean community, during the patriarchate of Joseph III (1713-1757). Paired with the surviving Armenian manuscripts, dated 1739 and 1743,⁵¹ we can tentatively suggest the early to mid-eighteenth century as a peak period for Christian manuscript production in Mardin.

Ottoman Christian manuscripts predominantly flourished in ecclesiastical settings, and Mardin was no different in this respect.⁵² Key production sites in Mardin were the Chaldean Church of Rabban Hormizd,⁵³ the Armenian Church of St. George,⁵⁴ and the Syriac Orthodox Saffron Monastery.⁵⁵ Scribal

⁵¹ I.e. CCM 456 (1739), f. 172v; BnF Ar. 130 (1743), f. 53v.

⁵² See Murre-van den Berg, *Scribes and Scriptures*, esp. pp. 88-99.

⁵³ See e.g. CCM 104 (1759), CCM 117 (1759), CCM 395 (1770); CCM 261 (1770); CCM 272 (1770); CCM 99 (1775). See also BnF Syr. 278 (1746), f. 64v; BnF Syr. 61 (1746), ff. 57v-58v.

⁵⁴ See CCM 456 (1739), f. 172v; BnF Ar. 130 (1743), f. 53v.

⁵⁵ See e.g. CFMM 134 (1722), f. 346r; ZFRN 130 (1726), f. 248v; CFMM 360 (1726-7), f. 279v; CFMM 409 (1727-8), f. 74v; ZFRN 397 (1728), f. 339r; CFMM 26/1 (1782), f. 117r; CFMM 288 (1782-1819), f. 164v.

activity at the Church of the Forty Martyrs – which today houses the major part of the Syriac Orthodox collection – appears to have been minimal.⁵⁶ Copyists were usually members of the clergy, although lay people occasionally feature as scribes and commissioners of manuscripts.⁵⁷ While women scribes were exceptionally rare among Ottoman Christian communities,⁵⁸ the collections highlight at least one female scribe in each of the Chaldean and Syriac Orthodox contexts – that is, Theresa bint Khajjū (fl. 1766), resident of the village of ‘Ayn Tannūr outside Diyarbakır,⁵⁹ and the nun Sayyidah (fl. 1766-1797), from the village of Azakh in Tur Abdin, at Saffron Monastery.⁶⁰ In terms of genre, the Chaldean and Syriac Orthodox collections are largely aligned. Religious genres are most popular – liturgy, theology, hagiography, homilies, polemics, scriptures and exegetical texts – which echoes trends in other Ottoman Christian contexts.⁶¹ The Armenian manuscripts mentioned above contain a set of Armenian Catholic ritual offices,⁶² and the *Trumpet of Heaven* (*Fī būq al-samā’*), a treatise on Catholic spirituality by the Capuchin Joseph de Reuilly (fl. 1717) (fig. 9).⁶³ While they cannot possibly define the former collection, Cheikho alluded to its religious content by reporting that it mainly contained works “by European missionaries and local monks”.⁶⁴ Grammars of the Syriac and Arabic languages and historical texts are represented in both the Chaldean and Syriac Orthodox traditions and, less frequently, medicine, astronomy, philosophy, folktales and poetry. Some divergences are also noticeable: Islamic literature, for example, appears only in the Syriac Orthodox collections. This includes copies of the Quran,

⁵⁶ See Mingana Syriac 480 (1713): Mingana, *Catalogue of the Mingana Collection of Manuscripts*, i, pp. 878-882; CFMM 1128 (1799), f. 208r.

⁵⁷ See e.g. MS copied by Theresa bint Khajjū (CCM 372 (1766), ff. 363v-364r); MS commissioned by Maqdisī Hormizd ibn Garābīd (CCM 361 (1707), f. 223v); MS commissioned by Maqdisī Sa‘īd walad Ilyās (CFMM 483 (1600-1700), f. 173r).

⁵⁸ On the role of women within the East Syriac scribal tradition, see H. Murre-van den Berg, “An Inheritance with Sarah”: Women in the Church of the East (1500-1850), *Internationale Kirchliche Zeitschrift*, 1 (2010), pp. 190-208.

⁵⁹ CCM 372 (1766), ff. 363v-364r. Another MS by Theresa, copied in 1766, seems to be lost: MS 155 in Scher, ‘Manuscrits syriaques de Diarbékir’, pp. 425-6. This scribe is also referenced in Murre-van den Berg, “An Inheritance with Sarah”, p. 199.

⁶⁰ Charfet Syriac 9/27 (1766) in Armalet, *Catalogue des manuscrits de Charfet*, p. 198; Dawra Syr. 304 (1768-81) in P. Haddad and J. Isaac, *al-Makhtūṭāt al-suryānīya wa-al-‘arabīya fī khizānat al-rahbānīya al-kaldānīya fī Baghdād* (Baghdad, 1988), p. 134; Mingana Syriac 175 (c. 1780) in Mingana, *Catalogue of the Mingana Collection of Manuscripts*, i, pp. 384-5. She is mentioned in a teaching capacity in colophons of CFMM 820 (1789), f. 344r, and Mingana Syriac 277 (1797) in Mingana, *Catalogue of the Mingana Collection of Manuscripts*, i, pp. 541-4.

⁶¹ See Murre-van den Berg, *Scribes and Scriptures*, esp. pp. 225-69.

⁶² BnF Ar. 130 (1743).

⁶³ CCM 456 (1739).

⁶⁴ Cheikho, ‘Min Bayrūt ilá al-Hind’, p. 305.

collections of prayers and texts concerning Islamic jurisprudence, *ḥadīth* and *sīrah*.⁶⁵ The implications of this Islamic content – if indeed any are to be drawn – would require further research. Broadly speaking, however, we can deduce an established framework of genres for this period.

There is, however, less symmetry between the collections with regard to specific titles. We do observe a common interest in certain ‘ecumenical’ scholars such as John Chrysostom⁶⁶ and Bar Hebraeus⁶⁷ – in the latter case, this may even have signified Chaldean efforts to engage with Syriac literature outside of ‘Nestorian’ teachings.⁶⁸ Texts by several contemporary Syriac Orthodox authors, such as Patriarch Shukr Allāh II and Maphrian Simon of Tur Abdin (d. 1740), also transpire in the Chaldean collection, although Grigory Kessel proposes that this was a side effect of a general dispersal of Syriac manuscripts within the Diyarbakır region in the early twentieth century.⁶⁹ While both groups engaged with Catholic literature, they exhibited diverse tastes in authors, titles, confessional origins and even script – matters to be considered in more depth below.

⁶⁵ See e.g. CFMM 972 (1677); CFMM 1007 (1600-1700); CFMM 962 (1600-1700); CFMM 973 (1600-1700); CFMM 931 (1750-1850); CFMM 938 (latest 1754); CFMM 934 (latest 1792).

⁶⁶ See e.g. CFMM 502 (1678); CCM 364 (1703); CCM 344 (1600-1700); CFMM 199 (1700-56).

⁶⁷ See e.g. CFMM 315 (1700); CCM 377 (1706); CCM 431 (1707-8); ZFRN 197 (1718); CFMM 516 (1747).

⁶⁸ As discussed in Murre-van den Berg, *Scribes and Scriptures* p. 278; see also p. 243, 250, 258. John Chrysostom seems to have been one of the Church Fathers who influenced Joseph II’s *Book of the Magnet*: see H. Teule, ‘Joseph II, Patriarch of the Chaldeans (1696–1713/4), and the book of the Magnet. First Soundings’, in R. Ebied and H. Teule (eds), *Studies on the Christian Arabic Heritage in honour of Father Prof. Dr. Samir Khalil Samir S.I.* (Leuven, 2004), pp. 232-3, 236.

⁶⁹ CCM 468 (1700-1900); CCM 443 (1728). See Kessel, ‘Manuscript Collection of the Syrian Orthodox Church Meryemana in Diyarbakır’, pp. 83-4.

Place of copying	No. of MSS
Church of St. Petion, Diyarbakır ⁷⁰	11
Village of Alqosh ⁷¹	11
Diyarbakır ⁷²	9
Village of 'Ayn Tannūr (Diyarbakır region) ⁷³	9
Mardin ⁷⁴	6
Church of St. Quryāqūs, 'Ayn Tannūr (Diyarbakır region) ⁷⁵	5
Church of Rabban Hormizd, Mardin ⁷⁶	4
Rome ⁷⁷	2
Monastery of St. Aḥā the Copt (Cizre region) ⁷⁸	2
Village of Beth Gawsā (Cizre region) ⁷⁹	1
College of the Ponte Sisto, Rome ⁸⁰	1
Monastery of San Giovanni a Carbonara, Naples ⁸¹	1
Church of St. Awgin, Shākh (Cizre region) ⁸²	1
Mosul ⁸³	1
Church of the Syrians [Our Lady], Aleppo ⁸⁴	1

Table 2: Copy sites recorded in MSS of Rabban Hormizd Chaldean Church, Mardin.

⁷⁰ CCM 48 (1672); CCM 51 (1677); CCM 354 (1682); CCM 67 (1693); CCM 448 (1694); CCM 337 (1703); CCM 452 (1705); CCM 118 (1707); CCM 572 (1707-1862); CCM 119 (1711); CCM 108 (1774).

⁷¹ CCM 173 (1592-1753); CCM 168 (1683); CCM 220 (1696); CCM 473 (1721); CCM 420 (1722); CCM 277 (1722); CCM 58 (1742); CCM 127 (1757); CCM 175 (1768); CCM 229 (1777); CCM 203 (1700-1800).

⁷² CCM 70 (1682); CCM 273 (1701); CCM 112 (1702-7); CCM 377 (1706); CCM 360 (1720); CCM 212 (1774); CCM 504 (1774); CCM 213 (1774); CCM 305 (1775).

⁷³ CCM 64 (1695); CCM 45 (1698); CCM 73 (1702); CCM 567 (1706); CCM 361 (1707); CCM 33 (1734); CCM 240 (1734); CCM 28 (1754); CCM 372 (1766).

⁷⁴ CCM 364 (1703); CCM 183 (1715); CCM 365 (1715); CCM 456 (1739); CCM 454 (1742); CCM 99 (1775).

⁷⁵ CCM 274 (1713); CCM 289 (1718); CCM 222 (1738); CCM 236 (1755); CCM 279 (1766).

⁷⁶ CCM 117 (1759); CCM 261 (1770); CCM 272 (1770); CCM 569 (1709-1862).

⁷⁷ CCM 491 (1704); CCM 154 (1758).

⁷⁸ CCM 341 (1690); CCM 472 (1700-1800).

⁷⁹ CCM 02 (1678).

⁸⁰ CCM 528 (1729).

⁸¹ CCM 166 (1733).

⁸² CCM 421 (1737).

⁸³ CCM 434 (1719).

⁸⁴ CCM 443 (1728).

Provenance also distinguishes the manuscripts of local Christian confessions. Chaldean and Armenian manuscripts were copied in churches situated within the town of Mardin. However, the Syriac Orthodox – despite having three churches at their disposal in town – almost exclusively produced manuscripts in monastic environments – that is, at Saffron Monastery, a few kilometres away,⁸⁵ as well as the tiny monasteries above Saffron Monastery, namely the Monastery of Our Lady of the Water Drop (*Sayyidat al-Nāṭif*)⁸⁶ and the Monastery of St. Jacob.⁸⁷ This stands out against a decline in monastic scribal activity for the East Syriac and Armenian communities in the region from the late seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.⁸⁸ Beyond their shared context of Mardin, the geographical scope of the Chaldean and Syriac Orthodox collections also ranges significantly. The production of Chaldean manuscripts (table 2) is concentrated in the Mardin and Diyarbakır region (both the town of Diyarbakır itself and the village of ‘Ayn Tannūr), with some influence from the villages of Alqosh and Cizre to the southeast. Locations further afield include Mosul, Aleppo, Naples, and Rome. Meanwhile, the provenance of the Syriac Orthodox manuscripts (table 3) covers a more expansive area across eastern Anatolia (Mardin, Midyat, Nusaybin, Diyarbakır, Siirt, Urfa, Bitlis, Marash), the Syrian provinces (Aleppo, Al-Nabk, Damascus) and the Mosul province (Qaraqosh). Just one manuscript was copied in Rome. This situation does testify to the diverse demography of the Syriac Orthodox and Chaldean faithful throughout the Ottoman territories. Yet these points of geographical influence were also, as we shall explore below, a factor in the distinct scribal movements which developed within these two confessions.

⁸⁵ Only one MS is recorded as copied in the Church of the Forty Martyrs during the studied period: Mingana Syriac 480 (1713): Mingana, *Catalogue of the Mingana Collection of Manuscripts*, i, pp. 878-882.

⁸⁶ APSTCH KONA 1 211 (1673), f. 97r; ASCBN (= Baghdad, Syriac Catholic Church, Archdiocese of Baghdad) 46 (1730), f. 188r; CPB (= Baghdad, Chaldean Catholic Church, Patriarchate of Baghdad) 164 (1770), f. 266r; Mingana Syriac 483 (1769): Mingana, *Catalogue of the Mingana Collection*, i, pp. 893-4.

⁸⁷ APSTCH KONA 1 260 (1724), f. 546v.

⁸⁸ For the East Syriac context, see Murre-van den Berg, *Scribes and Scriptures*, pp. 90-2, 97-9. See also further discussion above, Chapter Three, 3.1.4.

Place of copying	No. of MSS
Monastery of Dayr al-Za'farān [Saffron], Mardin ⁸⁹	9
Church of Our Lady, Diyarbakır ⁹⁰	4
Monastery of Our Lady of the Water Drop, Mardin ⁹¹	3
Aleppo ⁹²	3
Mardin ⁹³	2
College of the Ponte Sisto, Rome ⁹⁴	1
Monastery of St. Mark, Jerusalem ⁹⁵	1
Church of Our Lady, Aleppo ⁹⁶	1
Madrasat Naqībiyah, Marash ⁹⁷	1
Egypt ⁹⁸	1
Siirt ⁹⁹	1
Monastery of St. Awgin, Nusaybin ¹⁰⁰	1
Monastery of St. Jacob, Şalah (Midyat region) ¹⁰¹	1
Bitlis ¹⁰²	1
Monastery of St. Abhāy (near Karkar) ¹⁰³	1
Church of Saints Peter and Paul, Urfa ¹⁰⁴	1
Village of Aman (Diyarbakır region) ¹⁰⁵	1
Church of St. Behnām, Damascus ¹⁰⁶	1
Monastery of SS. Behnam and Sarah, Beth Khudayda [Qaraqosh] ¹⁰⁷	1
Monastery of St. Moses the Ethiopian, Al-Nabk ¹⁰⁸	1

Table 3: Copy sites recorded in MSS of the Church of the Forty Martyrs and Saffron Monastery, Mardin.

⁸⁹ CFMM 134 (1722); ZFRN 130 (1726); CFMM 360 (1726-7); CFMM 361(1727-8); CFMM 409 (1727-8); ZFRN 397 (1728); CFMM 1057 (1750); CFMM 26/1 (1782); CFMM 288 (1782-1819).

⁹⁰ CFMM 365 (1669); CFMM 104 (1755); CFMM 105 (1755); CFMM 123 (1763).

⁹¹ CFMM 136 (1725); CFMM 63 (1793); CFMM 44 (1798).

⁹² CFMM 326 (1668-9); CFMM 36 (1691); CFMM 818 (1714).

⁹³ CFMM 256 (1671); CFMM 953 (1794).

⁹⁴ CFMM 124 (1734).

⁹⁵ CFMM 73 (1719)

⁹⁶ CFMM 70 (1741-2)

⁹⁷ CFMM 955 (1716-7).

⁹⁸ CFMM 312 (latest 1781).

⁹⁹ CFMM 501 (1669-70).

¹⁰⁰ CFMM 190 (1700-1800).

¹⁰¹ CFMM 1055 (1721).

¹⁰² CFMM 502 (1678).

¹⁰³ CFMM 316 (1661).

¹⁰⁴ CFMM 413 (1785).

¹⁰⁵ CFMM 527 (1746-7).

¹⁰⁶ CFMM 440 (1771).

¹⁰⁷ CFMM 74 (1713-4).

¹⁰⁸ CFMM 352 (1674).

Analysing language and script within this data set also unearths trends in the scribal culture of Christian Mardin during the studied period. The collections represent a range of languages – Arabic, Armenian, Azerbaijani, Neo-Aramaic, Persian, classical Syriac and Turkish – but Arabic and Syriac are most common among them. While Syriac was the traditional liturgical and literary language of the East and West Syriac Churches, Arabic is considered to have been the vernacular for the Christian population of Mardin during this period.¹⁰⁹ The situation, however, manifested differently in the Chaldean and Syriac Orthodox scribal contexts. Whereas Syriac and Arabic are equally used in the Chaldean manuscripts (each amounting to 41%),¹¹⁰ Arabic is far more popular than Syriac among the Syriac Orthodox (57% and 23% respectively).¹¹¹ The manuscripts from the Armenian scribal milieu were copied only in Arabic, and an additional nineteenth-century manuscript records that its text was translated into Arabic by the Armenian Catholic metropolitan of Mardin, Joseph Balithian (1771-1773).¹¹² Based on this sparse evidence, we might infer that Arabic was at least one of the languages used within local Armenian scribal culture. The status of the Armenian language is unclear. Eliya relates that Melkon was mocked by Armenian deacons for reading from the Gospels in Arabic,¹¹³ although the liturgical significance of Armenian may have endured, as suggested by a bilingual Armenian-Arabic book of Catholic prayers copied in Mardin in 1874.¹¹⁴ While the continued use of Syriac is notable among the Chaldeans, Mardin does resonate with other contemporary Ottoman Christian contexts in its gravitation towards Arabic as a literary – and, in some cases, liturgical – language.¹¹⁵

¹⁰⁹ Observed by Carsten Niebuhr when visiting Mardin in the 18th century: C. Niebuhr, *Travels through Arabia and other Countries in the East* (2 vols, Edinburgh, 1792), ii, p. 256; see also K. Dinno, ‘The Deir al-Za‘faran and Mardin Garshuni Archives’, *Hugoye: Journal of Syriac Studies*, 17/1 (2015), pp. 207-8. On the status of these languages in the Church of the East and Chaldean Church, see H. Murre-van den Berg, ‘Classical Syriac, Neo-Aramaic and Arabic in the Church of the East and the Chaldean Church between 1500 and 1800’, in H. Gzella and M. L. Folmer (eds), *Aramaic in its Historical and Linguistic Setting* (Wiesbaden, 2008), pp. 335-352.

¹¹⁰ I.e. 87 out of 213 MSS in Rabban Hormizd collection were copied in Syriac; 88 out of 213 MSS were copied in Arabic. Bilingual Arabic/Syriac MSS were not counted here.

¹¹¹ I.e. 62 out of 269 MSS in the combined Church of the Forty Martyrs and Saffron Monastery collections were copied in Syriac; 154 out of 269 MSS were copied in Arabic. Bilingual Arabic/Syriac MSS were not counted here.

¹¹² BzAr 9 (1817): contains the *Theologia Moralis Universa* of Jesuit theologian Paul Gabriel Antoine (d. 1743).

¹¹³ USJ 30, f. 8v.

¹¹⁴ BzAr 207 (1874).

¹¹⁵ See treatments in e.g. B. Masters, *Christians and Jews in the Ottoman Arab World: The Roots of Sectarianism* (New York, 2001), pp. 87-8, 95-7; H. Kilpatrick, ‘From Literatur to Adab: The Literary Renaissance in Aleppo around 1700’, *Journal of Eastern Christian Studies*, 58/3-4 (2006), pp. 195-220; A. Patel, *The Arab Nahdah: The Making of the Intellectual and Humanist Movement* (Edinburgh, 2013), pp. 49-87; R. M. Haddad, *Syrian Christians in a Muslim Society: An Interpretation* (Princeton, NJ, 2015), pp. 51-4.

The issue of script is worth brief consideration, particularly given its increasing recognition as a marker of communal identity in early modern Ottoman society.¹¹⁶ While the Armenian manuscripts are exclusively written in the Arabic script, the majority of Arabic manuscripts within the Chaldean and Syriac Orthodox collections are transcribed in Karshuni, or Arabic in Syriac letters. Alongside this, however, these contexts differ not only in their employment of two different Syriac scripts – East Syriac and Serto respectively – but also by a greater Syriac Orthodox preference for Karshuni over Arabic script than their Chaldean counterparts (68% and 53% respectively).¹¹⁷ This interplay of language and script would become pertinent in the separate scribal movements developed by these confessional communities.

This survey of the Mardin collections has drawn out key trends in local Christian scribal culture from the late seventeenth to late eighteenth century. Although we detect some alignment in the literary genres and periods of productivity among the Syriac Orthodox and Chaldean communities, how their scribal cultures diverge is more striking. This divergence manifests in the type of institutions in which they produced manuscripts, the geographical provenance of those manuscripts, and their usage of Syriac and Arabic languages and scripts. These differences not only underline the separate scribal contexts of the Chaldeans and Syriac Orthodox in Mardin; they also, as we shall discover below, contributed significantly to carving out their distinct confessional agendas.

4.3 Creating a Chaldean Catholic corpus

This section will focus on the collection of the Church of Rabban Hormizd to explore the Chaldean scribal movement during the investigated period. This movement consolidated the nascent Chaldean confessional identity through creating a corpus of Catholic texts, derived from both original Chaldean

¹¹⁶ In general, see E. Balta and M. Ölmez (eds), *Between Religion and Language: Turkish-Speaking Christians, Jews and Greek-Speaking Muslims and Catholics in the Ottoman Empire* (Istanbul, 2011). On Karshuni specifically, see F. Briquel-Chatonnet, 'Rôle de la langue et de l'écriture syriaques dans l'affirmation de l'identité chrétienne au Proche-Orient', in C. Baurin, C. Bonnet and V. Krings (eds), *Phoinikeia grammata : lire et écrire en Méditerranée : actes du Colloque de Liège, 15-18 novembre 1989* (Namur, 1991), esp. pp. 267-74; F. del Río Sánchez, 'Arabic-Karshuni: an Attempt to Preserve Maronite Identity: The Case of Aleppo', *The Levantine Review*, 2/1 (2013), pp. 3-11; A. Girard, 'La Construction de l'identité confessionnelle maronite à l'époque ottomane (XVI^e-XVIII^e siècle)' in B. Heyberger (ed.), *Les Chrétiens de Tradition Syriaque à l'époque Ottomane* (Paris, 2020), esp. pp. 179-90.

¹¹⁷ I.e. 104 out of 154 Arabic MSS in the combined Church of the Forty Martyrs and Saffron Monastery collections were transcribed in Karshuni; 47 out of 88 Arabic MSS in the Rabban Hormizd collection were transcribed in Karshuni. Bilingual Syriac/Karshuni MSS were not counted in these figures.

contributions and translations of European Catholic literature, and characterised by specific scribal conventions. Though this scribal movement emanated from the Church of St. Petion in Diyarbakır, the see of the new Joseph patriarchal line,¹¹⁸ this section will argue that Mardin was a satellite from the beginning of the eighteenth century. Moreover, paratextual features in the manuscripts indicate how the Chaldean community of Mardin transitioned during the considered period from recipients of this confessional literature to producers.

The efforts of the Chaldean Church hierarchy in Diyarbakır to form a new Chaldean Catholic literature from the late seventeenth century have already earned scholarly interest.¹¹⁹ Lucy Parker has compellingly suggested how manuscript culture helped to advance confession building under Patriarch Joseph I (1681-1694). The ‘correcting’ of texts written by earlier Uniate East Syrians forged a historical precedent for the new Chaldean Church, which Joseph also stocked with literature from other – mostly Uniate – confessional traditions.¹²⁰ The contributions of his successor Patriarch Joseph II (1696-1713) – many of which are now preserved in the collection of Rabban Hormizd Church – were also a pillar of this movement. Perhaps most crucially were the Catholicising revisions he made to the traditional East Syriac liturgy.¹²¹ The preface of one *Gazzā* (offices for the feasts), copied in 1709 by Chaldean Metropolitan Basileus ‘Abd al-Aḥad of Diyarbakır, communicates this confessional agenda in detail. After finding that the prayers for feast days of “Nestorius and his followers” were “rife with heresies” (*haraṭiqāt shitā*), chiefly concerning Christological doctrine, ‘Abd al-Aḥad recounts that the patriarch, “seized with divine zeal” (*inghāra ghayrah ilāhīyah*), proceeded to remove these heresies and correct any documented errors in the year 1707. He then not only enhanced the musicality of the *Gazza*, but added new feast days “not celebrated” (*lam yakūn la-hā dhikr aw tuqūs*) within the “Nestorian” tradition, including that of St. Barbara, St. Nicholas, the Circumcision of Christ, St. James Intercisus, St. Petion and several pertaining to Mary.¹²² The Chaldean collection shows that numerous revised

¹¹⁸ See Parker, ‘Joseph I of Amida (d.1707) and the Invention of the Chaldeans’, pp. 133, 144-5.

¹¹⁹ See Teule, ‘Joseph II, Patriarch of the Chaldeans’; Murre-van den Berg, *Scribes and Scriptures*, pp. 235, 245-7, 276-8; Parker, ‘Joseph I of Amida (d.1707) and the Invention of the Chaldeans’; Parker and Maxton, ‘Archiving Faith’, esp. pp. 89-117.

¹²⁰ Parker, ‘Joseph I of Amida (d.1707) and the Invention of the Chaldeans’, esp. pp. 134-9, 140-1.

¹²¹ See Murre-van den Berg, *Scribes and Scriptures*, pp. 276-7; Parker and Maxton, ‘Archiving Faith’, pp. 106-8.

¹²² CCM 569 (1709), f. 3v; see f. 4r for complete list of feast days. This MS is also discussed in Parker and Maxton, ‘Archiving Faith’, pp. 106-8.

liturgies of Joseph II were transmitted throughout the eighteenth century. These include other copies of the *Gazzā*,¹²³ the *Hūdrā* (offices for Sundays),¹²⁴ *Qdām wa-d-bāthar* (daily offices),¹²⁵ and *Ṭaksā* (ritual offices).¹²⁶ Most report being copied either in Diyarbakır or the nearby village of ‘Ayn Tannūr.¹²⁷ Importantly, while we notice some bilingual Syriac-Arabic Karshuni copies,¹²⁸ Syriac endures as the language of this updated liturgy.

Joseph II also furnished the Chaldean literary corpus with new compositions promoting Catholic teachings.¹²⁹ Within the collection, we encounter copies of *The Polished Mirror*, his renowned defence of papal primacy and other Catholic teachings such as the incarnation against ‘Nestorian’ and ‘Jacobite’ opponents;¹³⁰ *The Book of the Magnet*, another popular work on Catholic devotion;¹³¹ and *The Enlightening Lamp*, a compendium of conciliar texts thought to be based on a Latin original by the Discalced Carmelite Johannes Petrus a Madre Dei (d. 1669).¹³² Joseph II also authored an explanation of the sacraments;¹³³ catechisms;¹³⁴ homilies;¹³⁵ and sermons.¹³⁶ With the exception of his sermons in Turkish Karshuni and sacrament exegesis in Arabic Karshuni,¹³⁷ these compositions were, like the revised liturgies, predominantly written and circulated in the Syriac language.

¹²³ CCM 118 (1707); CCM 119 (1711); CCM 25 (1731); CCM 279 (1766); CCM 135 (1700-1800).

¹²⁴ CCM 25 (1731); CCM 107 (1772-4); CCM 108 (1774); CCM 135 (1700-1800).

¹²⁵ CCM 273 (1701): autograph of Joseph II, f. 50r; CCM 274 (1713).

¹²⁶ CCM 112 (1702-7): autograph of Joseph II, f. 108r, 131r; CCM 206 (1706); CCM 323 (1750-1800); CCM 201 (earliest 1780); CCM 202 (earliest 1780); CCM 203 (1700-1800).

¹²⁷ Diyarbakır: CCM 273 (1701), f. 50r; CCM 118 (1707), f. 367v; CCM 119 (1711), f. 353r. ‘Ayn Tannūr: CCM 274 (1713), f. 42v; CCM 279 (1766), f. 106r.

¹²⁸ See e.g. CCM 273 (1701); CCM 112 (1702-7); CCM 206 (1706); CCM 201 (after 1780); CCM 202 (after 1780); CCM 135 (1700-1800).

¹²⁹ Teule, ‘Joseph II, Patriarch of the Chaldeans’; Muerre-van den Berg, *Scribes and Scriptures*, pp. 245-6, 247-9.

¹³⁰ CCM 337 (1703 – possibly autograph); CCM 365 (1715); CCM 346 (1720); CCM 362 (1700-1800): on text, see Teule, ‘Joseph II, Patriarch of the Chaldeans’, pp. 228-9; Muerre-van den Berg, *Scribes and Scriptures*, p. 246.

¹³¹ CCM 452 (1705 – possibly autograph): Teule, ‘Joseph II, Patriarch of the Chaldeans’, pp. 230-40; Muerre-van den Berg, *Scribes and Scriptures*, pp. 247-8.

¹³² CCM 332 (1700-1800); CCM 335 (1700-1900): Teule, ‘Joseph II, Patriarch of the Chaldeans’, p. 226; Muerre-van den Berg, *Scribes and Scriptures*, p. 238. The connection to Johannes a Madre Dei has been argued recently by Herman Teule in idem, ‘The Shining Lamp: An Arabic Florilegium of Conciliar Texts’, in Emiliano Fiori and Bishara Ebeid (eds), *Florilegia Syriaca: Mapping a Knowledge-Organizing Practice in the Syriac World* (Leiden, 2023), pp. 365-80.

¹³³ CCM 378 (latest 1735); CCM 395 (1770): Teule, ‘Joseph II, Patriarch of the Chaldeans’, p. 227.

¹³⁴ CCM 185 (1700); CCM 332 (1700-1800).

¹³⁵ CCM 431 (1707-8).

¹³⁶ CCM 13 (1719); CCM 498 (1700-1800): contains sermons of Joseph I, f. 98.

¹³⁷ Note that Teule believes the *Treasury of the Sacraments* to have been originally written in Syriac: idem, ‘Joseph II, Patriarch of the Chaldeans’, p. 227.

Yet religious texts were not the only additions to this growing confessional corpus. One historical account in Arabic Karshuni of the founder of the Chaldean Church in Mesopotamia, Patriarch Joseph I, is a compelling case in point. Written in 1719 by the above-mentioned Metropolitan Basileus ‘Abd al-Aḥad, the *Life of Joseph* pivots on a hagiographical depiction of Joseph’s struggle to defend his Catholic beliefs against the traditional East Syriac hierarchy.¹³⁸ This text marked a significant contribution to the nascent Chaldean confessional identity, establishing a clear and historical distinction between Nestorian ‘heresy’ and the Catholic orthodoxy of the Chaldean Church.¹³⁹ It is preserved in three copies within the Rabban Hormizd collection, two of which are combined with Chaldean liturgical texts;¹⁴⁰ the other – believed to be the autograph of ‘Abd al-Aḥad – preserves an early historical record of the Chaldean community in Diyarbakır.¹⁴¹

The manuscripts also trace how Mardin was brought into the fold of the Chaldean literary movement. Paratextual notes, particularly colophons, indicate that the Church of Rabban Hormizd primarily accessed Chaldean liturgies and religious texts in the early eighteenth century through patronage and endowments of manuscripts by scribes from Diyarbakır and Mosul. In 1702, ‘Abd al-Aḥad b. Garabed, (later metropolitan of Diyarbakır), copied a lectionary and personally donated it to Rabban Hormizd.¹⁴² Seven years later, he copied a *Gazzā* for the church at the request of a local deacon named Yūḥannon, son of ‘Abdīshō’.¹⁴³ The same deacon Yūḥannon also commissioned a scribe from Mosul for a copy of the Gospels in Karshuni.¹⁴⁴ Moreover, in 1717 Deacon Mīkhā’īl, the son of Metropolitan ‘Abd al-Aḥad, copied a Syriac text on the tenets of Catholic theology entitled *The Book of Exact Science*, authored by an unidentified ‘Isaac of Mosul’. He records that the manuscript was copied “at the expense of this [Rabban Hormizd] church and at the urging of the priest Mūsá, son of ‘Abd al-Aḥad”.¹⁴⁵ One manuscript containing didactic works by Joseph II, copied by Metropolitan Timothy of Diyarbakır (later to become

¹³⁸ See discussion in Parker and Maxton, ‘Archiving Faith’, pp. 97-102.

¹³⁹ Parker, ‘Joseph I of Amida (d.1707) and the Invention of the Chaldeans’, pp. 132-3.

¹⁴⁰ CCM 6 (1700-1800); CCM 281 (1700-1900).

¹⁴¹ CCM 12 (1705-19). For details of texts in CCM 12, including *Life of Joseph*, see Lucy Parker and Rosie Maxton, ‘Archiving Faith’, pp. 97-102 and Croq, ‘De nouvelles formes d’écriture en Mésopotamie ottomane’.

¹⁴² CCM 73 (1702), f. 189v.

¹⁴³ CCM 569 (1709-1862), f. 386r.

¹⁴⁴ CCM 69 (1720), f. 166r.

¹⁴⁵ Vat.sir.606: catalogue entry in A. Van Lantschoot, *Inventaire des manuscrits syriaques des fonds Vatican (490-631)*, Barberini Oriental et Neofiti (Vatican City, 1965), pp. 138-9. On this text, see Murre-van den Berg, *Scribes and Scriptures*, p. 257.

Joseph III), came into the possession of Rabban Hormizd after being initially endowed to St. Petion in Diyarbakır in 1735.¹⁴⁶

Resonating with trends in the flourishing Chaldean corpus, the Syriac language seems to have been important to the community in Mardin. Between 1739-1740, the congregation of Rabban Hormizd was recorded as purchasing two manuscripts from a certain Deacon Yūḥannā son of Yashū' from Mosul. One was a Syriac-Arabic lexicon,¹⁴⁷ and the other the Syriac grammar of Eliya of Nisibis (d. 1046), followed by liturgical selections in Syriac.¹⁴⁸ These purchases are infused with their confessional affiliation: the patrons are recorded as the “the congregation of the Chaldean Church of Hormizd the martyr” (*jamā'at bī'at al-shahīd Hirmīzd al-Kaldānīyah*).¹⁴⁹

While the collection points to limited Chaldean scribal activity in Mardin during this period, this notably is not attested as having taken place within the Church of Rabban Hormizd itself. One scribe active in Mardin in 1715, Deacon Yuḥannā son of the priest Ilyās al-Mawṣilī, who also identified himself using the epithet “Chaldean” (*al-Kaldānī*), copied a set of Eucharistic liturgies in Syriac and Karshuni,¹⁵⁰ and the *Polished Mirror* of Joseph II in Arabic.¹⁵¹ Although Diyarbakır was evidently more established as a scribal centre, it also appears that the diocese of Mardin lacked a resident metropolitan during the early years of the eighteenth century. Patriarch Joseph I had reportedly elevated Metropolitan Simon of Amid (i.e. Diyarbakır) as the first Chaldean bishop for Mardin in around 1683.¹⁵² However, after the latter's mysterious exit in 1690-1691, there seems to be no record of a resident metropolitan again until Basileus Ḥesro in around 1728.¹⁵³ Nonetheless, the Chaldean community of Mardin were willing to inscribe their place in the literary movement of Joseph II. In one letter sent to Patriarch Joseph

¹⁴⁶ CCM 378 (latest 1735), f. 150v, 154v.

¹⁴⁷ CCM 464 (1738).

¹⁴⁸ CCM 25 (1731).

¹⁴⁹ See CCM 464, f. 189v; CCM 25, f. 78v.

¹⁵⁰ CCM 183 (1715), f. 54v, 61r.

¹⁵¹ CCM 365 (1715), f. 160r, 183r. This scribe is also mentioned in Wilmshurst, *The Ecclesiastical Organisation of the Church of the East*, p. 78.

¹⁵² Related in a letter from Patriarch Joseph I to the Propaganda Fide, dated 1684: see S. Giamil, *Genuinae Relationes Inter Sedem Apostolicam et Assyriorum Orientalium Seu Chaldaeorum Ecclesiam* (Rome, 1902), document 70, pp. 312-3. See also letter from Propaganda Fide to a ‘Mons. Egamaone, Vescovo de Caldei in Merdin’, dated 1683, in A. Lampart, *Ein Märtyrer der Union mit Rom. Joseph I., 1681-1696, Patriarch der Chaldäer* (Einsiedeln, 1966), pp. 301-2.

¹⁵³ On the subsequent activities of Metropolitan Simon, see E. R. Hambye, ‘Le Métropolitain Chaldéen, Simon d'Ādā et ses aventures en Inde’, *Parole de l'Orient*, 6/7 (1975-6), pp. 493-513. On appointment of Metropolitan Basil Ḥesro, see Wilmshurst, *The Ecclesiastical Organisation of the Church of the East*, pp. 73-4.

III by a handful of clerics and laymen from Mardin in 1739, they wrote that “our town was illuminated by the light of Catholicism through Patriarch Joseph I... and the errors in our books were corrected by Patriarch Joseph II...”¹⁵⁴

It is only by the mid-eighteenth century that Chaldean scribal activity at the Church of Rabban Hormizd in Mardin comes into focus. Notably, this period aligns with the appointments of successive metropolitans for Mardin by Joseph III – that is, Basileus John (c. 1741-1758) and Simon al-Āmidī (1758-1788).¹⁵⁵ One particular scribe, the deacon Yūsuf ibn ‘Abdīshō‘ Dadah of Tel Keppe, whose manuscripts are now preserved in the Bibliothèque nationale de France, can be identified during this timeframe. At the request of Patriarch Joseph III, Deacon Yūsuf restored an Arabic translation of the *Compendiosae institutiones theologicae (al-‘Ilm al-lahūtī)* of Jean-Claude de La Poype de Vertrieu (d. 1732) in 1745.¹⁵⁶ The following year, he also copied the *Book of Moral Philosophy (al-Falsafah al-rīyāḍah)* by a certain ‘Peter the Capuchin’, in addition to the Pauline Epistles in Arabic Karshuni.¹⁵⁷ In fact, the latter appears to be the first mention of a manuscript being copied at the “patriarchal cell” in the Church of Rabban Hormizd in Mardin (*al-qilāyah al-baṭriyarkīyah*).¹⁵⁸

The copies of Deacon Yūsuf ibn ‘Abdīshō‘ alert us to a key, novel scribal practice associated with the Chaldean literary movement. During the incumbency of Patriarch Joseph II, a new, Catholicised take on the East Syriac colophon surfaced, which is strikingly depicted in the copy of the Pauline Epistles mentioned above.¹⁵⁹ Harnessing an established medium for relaying contextual information, Chaldean scribes began to express their new confessional identity by using the *nisbah* (attribution) “*al-Kaldānī*”, and often designating themselves a “disciple” (*tilmīdh*) of the current Chaldean patriarch.¹⁶⁰ The

¹⁵⁴ Letter from Chaldeans of Mardin to Joseph III, dated 1739: “Nostro Signore Gesù Cristo... è degnato d’illuminare la nostra Città col lume delle Fedde Cattolica per mezzo del nostro Patriarca Giuseppe Primo... e furono corretti i libri nostri dall’errori del nostro Patriarca Giuseppe Secondo...” in Giamil, *Genuinae Relationes*, document 100, pp. 363-5.

¹⁵⁵ Wilmshurst, *The Ecclesiastical Organisation of the Church of the East*, p. 74. The death of Basileus Ḥesro is reported in letter from Metropolitan Simon of Siirt to Joseph III, dated 1739: Giamil, *Genuinae Relationes*, document 96, pp. 357-8.

¹⁵⁶ BnF Ar. 232 (1745), f. 123v.

¹⁵⁷ BnF Syr. 278 (1746), f. 64v; BnF Syr. 61 (1746), ff. 57v-58v. These MSS are also mentioned in Wilmshurst, *The Ecclesiastical Organisation of the Church of the East*, p. 78.

¹⁵⁸ BnF Syr. 61, f. 58r.

¹⁵⁹ These developments are discussed in more detail in Parker and Maxton, ‘Archiving Faith’, pp. 25-7. For traditional features of the Syriac colophon, see Murre-van den Berg, ‘I the Weak Scribe: Scribes in the Church of the East in the Ottoman Period’, pp. 9-26; idem, *Scribes and Scriptures*, pp. 113-42.

¹⁶⁰ BnF Syr. 61 (1746), f. 58r.

traditional statement of allegiance to the East Syriac patriarch was extended to include the incumbent pope, “the greatest lord” (*al-ḥibr al-a‘zam*)¹⁶¹ in acknowledgement of papal primacy, who was then followed by the current patriarch of “the Chaldeans and all orthodox in the East” (*baṭriyark al-Kaldānīyīn wa-sā‘ir al-urthudūksiyīn alladhīn fī al-mashriq*).¹⁶² A subsequent invocation to Mary “Mother of God” (*wālidat Allāh Maryam*)¹⁶³ refuted one of the ‘heretical’ East Syriac doctrines marked out by Joseph II during his liturgical redesign.¹⁶⁴ The use of these revised colophons in manuscripts produced by senior members of the Chaldean clergy – including Metropolitan ‘Abd al-Aḥad and his son, Deacon Mīkhā‘īl¹⁶⁵ – indicates their official nature.

It is worth noting, however, that this new Chaldean colophon – which first appeared at the end of the seventeenth century – did not transpire in Mardin manuscripts until many years later.¹⁶⁶ If anything, some slightly muddled examples of Chaldean identity appear during this early phase in Mardin. In an Arabic copy of the homilies of John Chrysostom, completed in Mardin in 1703 by the deacon Ḥannā son of the priest ‘Abdīsho (mentioned above as a commissioner),¹⁶⁷ he describes himself as “the wretched scribe...of the Chaldean community; that is, the Nestorians” (*min ṭā‘ifat al-Kaldānīyīn ayy al-Nasāṭarā*).¹⁶⁸ This is an unusual pairing from both a scribal and a theological sense,¹⁶⁹ and certainly not aligned with ‘Abd al-Aḥad’s harsh condemnations of Nestorius “the excommunicate” (*al-mahrūm*) in his *Life of Joseph*.¹⁷⁰ Though this confusion could be explained by the early date of the manuscript, the same terminology was also employed in 1742 by the deacon Quryāqūs son of Kūrkiīs, who completed a copy of the *Trumpet of Heaven* in Mardin.¹⁷¹ Neither copies emulate any of the ‘Catholic’

¹⁶¹ BnF Syr. 61, f. 57v. Note that recognition of the incumbent pope in colophons dates as early as Joseph I: Parker, ‘Joseph I of Amida (d.1707) and the Invention of the Chaldeans’, pp. 141-2.

¹⁶² BnF Syr. 61, f. 58r.

¹⁶³ BnF Syr. 61, f. 58r.

¹⁶⁴ See preface to Gazza in CCM 569, f. 3v. Other examples of these colophons include CCM 45 (1698), f. 181v; CCM 361 (1707), f. 223r; CCM 569 (1709-1862), f. 367v; CCM 289 (1718), f. 139v; CCM 33 (1734), f. 155r; CCM 240 (1734), f. 142r; DIYR 361 (1742), f. 194r; CCM 28 (1754), f. 165r.

¹⁶⁵ See e.g. CCM 45, ff. 181r-182r; CCM 33, ff. 155r-v.

¹⁶⁶ CCM 365 (1715), f. 160r, 183r.

¹⁶⁷ CCM 364 (1703).

¹⁶⁸ CCM 364, f. 243v.

¹⁶⁹ The attitude of the Chaldean Church towards Nestorius evolved over time; under the Joseph movement, he came to embody the “apostasy” of the Church of the East: see Parker, ‘Joseph I of Amida (d.1707) and the Invention of the Chaldeans’ (quote from p. 133).

¹⁷⁰ CCM 12, f. 276r.

¹⁷¹ CCM 454 (1742), f.263v.

colophon features described above, such as naming the pope, the Chaldean patriarch or the Mother of God. In fact, despite seemingly being copied around forty years apart, the colophons are almost identically worded – down to the reference to Matthew 13:18, “a return of thirty, sixty or one hundred times” (*‘iwad al-wāhid thalathūn wa-sittūn wa-māyah*).¹⁷² Mardin, evidently slower to adopt new Chaldean scribal conventions, also perhaps had its own local models of colophons to emulate. These two examples, moreover, are an important reminder of the blurrier manifestations of confessional belonging during transitional periods.¹⁷³ They could lurk behind the confessionalising agendas of the hierarchy and, as the 1742 manuscript indicates, even avoid them – without necessarily opposing them. Subtle features such as colophons thus open up multiple dimensions to the fledgling Chaldean confessional identity.

Another aspect of the Chaldean scribal movement merits consideration here. While the foundation of the Chaldean Catholic literary corpus was laid from within the church hierarchy, the collection shows that it was also sourced by texts from other Catholic traditions, particularly within the first half of the eighteenth century. Of these, European literature translated into Arabic (or composed in Arabic) forms the biggest portion. Examples in the collection include the *Treatise on Moral Theology* by the Jesuit Tomás Sánchez (d. 1610), translated in 1680 and copied in 1704;¹⁷⁴ the *Treatise on the Sacraments* by the Jesuit Ignace René de Clisson (d. 1692) within the same copy;¹⁷⁵ the apology *Kitāb al-najāh wa-miṣbāḥ al-fallāḥ* of the Discalced Carmelite Jean-Pierre de la Mère de Dieu (d. c. 1669), possibly an original Arabic work, dated 1721;¹⁷⁶ the *Spiritual Exercises* of Ignatius of Loyola, founder of the Jesuits (d. 1556), dated 1729;¹⁷⁷ two copies of the *Trumpet of Heaven* by the Capuchin Joseph de Reuilly (fl. 1717), dated 1739 and 1742;¹⁷⁸ sermons for feast days by the Capuchin Michel Febvre (d. c. 1687),

¹⁷² CCM 364 (1703), f. 243v; CCM 454, f.263v.

¹⁷³ See also discussion above, Chapter Three, 3.4.

¹⁷⁴ CCM 363 (1704), ff. 2r-127v. See R. Domingo, ‘Tomás Sánchez’, in J. Martínez-Torrón and R. Domingo (eds), *Great Christian Jurists in Spanish History* (Cambridge, 2018), pp. 225-39.

¹⁷⁵ CCM 363 (1704), ff. 128r-154r.

¹⁷⁶ CCM 436 (1721).

¹⁷⁷ CCM 528 (1729). For treatments of the *Spiritual Exercises*, see R. A. Maryks (ed.), *A Companion to Ignatius of Loyola: Life, Writings, Spirituality, Influence* (Boston, 2014), esp. chs. 13, 14, 16.

¹⁷⁸ CCM 454 (1742); CCM 456 (1739).

dated 1766;¹⁷⁹ another treatise by Ignace René de Clisson on *Death, the Last Judgement and Punishment*, dated 1770;¹⁸⁰ *El Libro de la Vanidad del Mundo* by the Franciscan theologian Diego de Estella (d. 1578);¹⁸¹ a treatise on confession by the Jesuit Cristobal de Vega (d. 1599);¹⁸² *On the Creator and the Spiritual War* by John the Capuchin;¹⁸³ and a commentary on the Song of Solomon translated by an anonymous Capuchin priest.¹⁸⁴ In addition, a copy of the *Introduction to the Devout Life* of Catholic bishop Francis de Sales (d. 1622), dated 1746, is preserved in the current St. Petion Church collection.¹⁸⁵ The manuscripts appear to have originated both locally and overseas: the *Trumpet of Heaven* was copied in Mardin by the above-mentioned deacon Quryāqūs in 1742,¹⁸⁶ and three other manuscripts designate their copy sites as Diyarbakır,¹⁸⁷ Rome,¹⁸⁸ and Naples.¹⁸⁹

This considerable portfolio also highlights that, alongside the enduring use of Syriac, the Chaldean Church simultaneously gravitated towards Catholic content in the Arabic language during this period.¹⁹⁰ Importantly, however, these manuscripts reflect some departure from Chaldean scribal practices observed above. Not only are the stylised Chaldean colophons missing; we also find few usages of Karshuni script, or Arabic in Syriac letters. Aside from the sermons of Michel Febvre and the Capuchin *Book of Moral Philosophy*, all of the copies listed above are rendered in Arabic script. This preference for Latin Catholic texts in Arabic is also striking given that some did exist in Syriac translation, such as

¹⁷⁹ CCM 496 (1766). On Michel Febvre, see B. Heyberger, ‘Febvre (ou Le Febvre, ou Lefebure), Michel Justinien de Neuvy dit (Alep, vers 1664-1687)’, in F. Pouillon (ed.), *Dictionnaire des orientalistes de langue française* (Paris, 2008), pp. 401-2.

¹⁸⁰ CCM 363 (1704), ff. 128r-154r; CCM 375 (1770).

¹⁸¹ CCM 433 (latest 1721). On the life and works of Diego de Estella, see J. L. Carillo, ‘Fray Diego de Estella (1524-1578), escritor místico de la provincia seráfica de Santiago’ in M. Peláez del Rosal (ed.), *Aportaciones al diccionario biográfico franciscano de España, Portugal, Iberoamérica y Filipinas* (Córdoba, 2014), pp. 159-70.

¹⁸² CCM 460 (earliest 1723).

¹⁸³ CCM 459 (1700-1800).

¹⁸⁴ CCM 547 (earliest 1767).

¹⁸⁵ CHAL 20 (1746).

¹⁸⁶ CCM 454 (1742), f. 263v.

¹⁸⁷ CHAL 20 (1746), f. 276v.

¹⁸⁸ CCM 528 (1729), f. 133r.

¹⁸⁹ CCM 166 (1733), 156r.

¹⁹⁰ See Murre-van den Berg, ‘Classical Syriac, Neo-Aramaic and Arabic in the Church of the East and the Chaldean Church between 1500 and 1800’, pp. 316-18, 321-23; idem, *Scribes and Scriptures*, pp. 67-8, 277-8.

De la Vanidad del Mundo, translated into Syriac by the Chaldean priest Khidr ibn Hormizd al-Mawṣilī.¹⁹¹

Accompanying the translated texts are Arabic works by Catholics from other Eastern rites. A few texts of Maronite provenance feature, including the *Science of Theology* (*Kitāb al-‘ilm al-ilāhī*) by Buṭrus al-Tūlāwī (d. 1745), dated 1723;¹⁹² texts by the Maronite metropolitan of Aleppo, Jirmānūs Farḥāt (d. 1732), such as his *Synaxarion* for saints, Sundays and feast days, dated 1728;¹⁹³ his *Treatise on Christian Perfection* (*Mukhtaṣar al-kamāl al-Masīḥī*);¹⁹⁴ and an Arabic grammar.¹⁹⁵ A bilingual Syriac-Arabic Maronite liturgical text, containing the Eucharistic liturgy (*Qurōbō*) and mass of the apostles, was also copied in 1733.¹⁹⁶ From the Syriac Catholic milieu, we find the treatise of Maphrian Isaac ibn Jubayr (d. 1721) on the incarnation, *Mudrik al-najāt wa-maḥajjat al-fawz bi-al-hayyāt*, copied in 1699-1700;¹⁹⁷ and the animal fables *Kalīlah wa-Dimnah*, copied by Bishop Safar al-Mārdīnī (d. 1728) in 1704 and bearing an ownership note by “Mar Joseph, Patriarch of the Chaldeans” – presumably Joseph I.¹⁹⁸ The Syriac Catholic manuscripts are both written in Arabic Karshuni, whereas the Maronite compositions are mostly in Arabic script.¹⁹⁹ The presence of these texts in the Chaldean collection evokes the recently argued ecumenical nature of Eastern Catholic confessional literature within the Ottoman context.²⁰⁰ At the same time, it is important to note that the Chaldean scribal movement exhibited a considerably greater interest in European literature than that of other Eastern Catholics during the investigated period.

¹⁹¹ See Muerre van den Berg, *Scribes and Scriptures*, p. 249. On Khidr, see J.-M. Vosté, ‘Qas Kheder de Mossoul: Notes bio-bibliographiques’, *Orientalia Christiana Periodica*, 10 (1944), pp. 45-90; J.-P. Ghobrial, ‘Migration from Within and Without: In the Footsteps of Eastern Christians in the Early Modern World’, *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, 27 (2017), pp. 170-1.

¹⁹² CCM 342 (1723). See N. Hage, ‘Boutros al-Tulawi et l’école maronite d’Alep à la fin du 17e et au début du 18e siècle’, *Parole de l’Orient*, 16 (1990-1), pp. 271-277.

¹⁹³ CCM 435 (1728).

¹⁹⁴ CCM 437 (1700-1800).

¹⁹⁵ CCM 26 (1700-1800). On Farḥāt’s grammatical works, see Kilpatrick, ‘From Literatur to Adab’, pp. 206-9.

¹⁹⁶ CCM 166 (1733).

¹⁹⁷ CCM 338 (1699-1700), ff. 3v-126r.

¹⁹⁸ CCM 491 (1704), ff. 1v-164v. Colophon on f. 193v; ownership note f. 194r.

¹⁹⁹ That is, except CCM 437 (containing *Treatise on Christian Perfection*).

²⁰⁰ Ghobrial, ‘Catholic Confessional Literature in the Christian East?’, esp. p. 387.

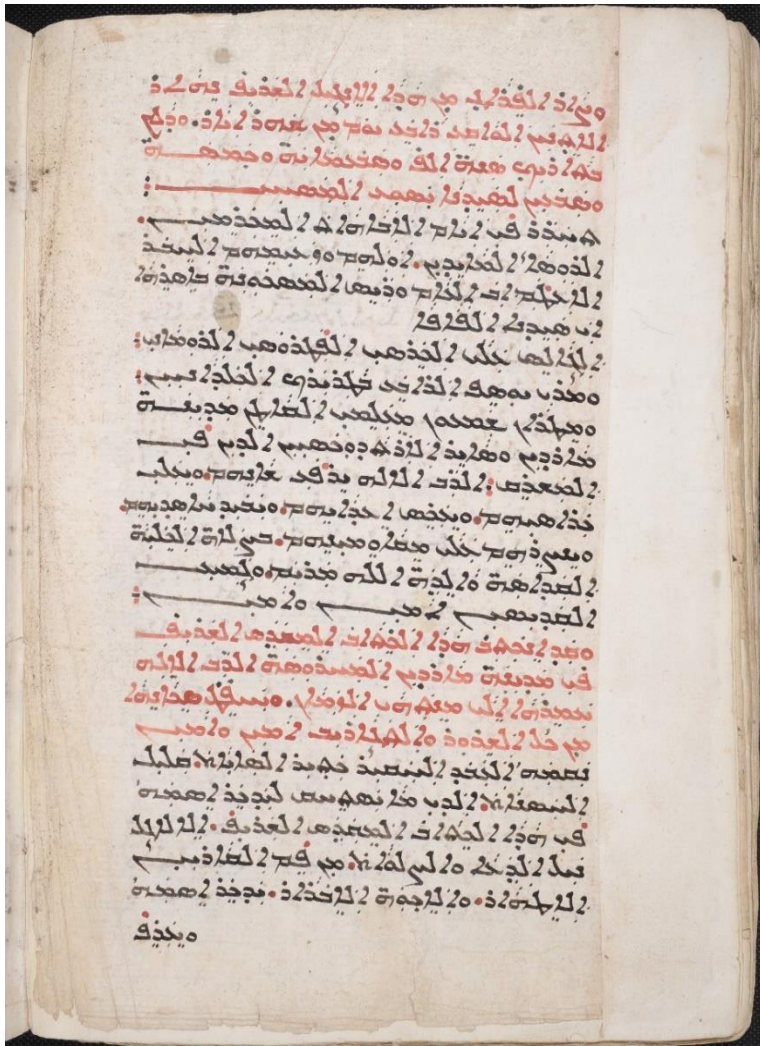


Figure 10: Mardin, Mar Hirmiz Keldani Kilisesi, MS 99 (HMML Project No.: CCM 00099), f. 84v. Chaldean innovations used in colophon by Anṭūn ibn Yūḥannā, Mardin, 1775.

It was not until the late eighteenth century that the murmurings of confessional scribal production at the Church of Rabban Hormizd in Mardin gathered momentum, in the form of the deacon and prolific copyist Anṭūn ibn Yūḥannā ibn Fath Allāh al-Mārdīnī. Deacon Anṭūn copied at least eleven manuscripts between 1759 and 1820.²⁰¹ Not only were six of these recorded as having been copied in the Church of Rabban Hormizd in Mardin,²⁰² he also identified as a “disciple” of the metropolitan of Mardin, Simon al-Āmidī, finally inscribing the presence of a local Chaldean figurehead.²⁰³ While his manuscripts

predominantly comprise Chaldean liturgies,²⁰⁴ he also copied one of the Catholic compositions of Joseph II, the *Treasury of the Sacraments*.²⁰⁵ Aside from two examples in Arabic Karshuni,²⁰⁶ the majority of his copies are in Syriac. Deacon Anṭūn also employed the familiar Chaldean formula for

²⁰¹ CCM 104 (1759); CCM 117 (1759); CCM 395 (1770); CCM 261 (1770); CCM 272 (1770); CCM 108 (1774); CCM 504 (1774); CCM 212 (1774); CCM 305 (1775); CCM 99 (1775); Mardin Scher 48 (1820) (Scher, ‘Notice sur les manuscrits syriaques et arabes conservés dans la bibliothèque de l’évêché chaldéen de Mardin’, p. 79). Note that Anṭūn describes himself as a “student” (*eskūlyō*) in his 2 earliest MSS: CCM 104, f. 271v; CCM 117 (1759), f. 256v. Wilmshurst identifies this scribe, but only references 2 out of these 11 MSS (i.e. CCM 395 and Mardin Scher 48): Wilmshurst, *The Ecclesiastical Organisation of the Church of the East*, p. 78.

²⁰² CCM 104 (1759), f. 271v; CCM 117 (1759), f. 256v; CCM 395 (1770), f. 562r; CCM 261 (1770), f. 183r; CCM 272 (1770), f. 103r; CCM 99 (1775), f. 84v.

²⁰³ CCM 395, f. 561r. See also CCM 104, f. 271v; CCM 117 (1759), f. 256v.

²⁰⁴ CCM 261 (1770); CCM 99 (1775).

²⁰⁵ CCM 395 (1770).

²⁰⁶ CCM 395 (1770); CCM 99 (1775).

colophons in several of his copies, which recognise the incumbent pope, the Chaldean patriarch – by this point, Joseph IV (1757-1780) – and Mary as Mother of God.²⁰⁷ It could even be ventured that the symbolic value of this style of colophon outweighed the correct transmission of information: in two of these copies, Anṭūn leaves a space after the word “Pope”, presumably from being unable to identify the current pope.²⁰⁸ Within the new Chaldean Church, papal primacy could be prioritised over precise record keeping.

As a final note on the developing Chaldean scribal movement in Mardin, we will briefly consider a preface which was later added to Deacon Anṭūn’s copy of the evangelion, preserved in CCM 99. The text, dated 1893, was written in Arabic by the Chaldean Metropolitan of Mardin, Yūḥannon Eliya Mellus (d. 1908). Marked “for the attention of the beloved reader”, the metropolitan explains that the lectionary is the “only one to be found in this church [Rabban Hormizd] which is arranged according to the Chaldean rite, for reading on Sundays, feast days, memorials and fasts throughout the year...”. He goes on to describe the text as a “treasure”, not only as it was transcribed in the “letters of the Chaldean liturgy” (that is, Karshuni), which no one knew how to write anymore, but also because it was done so by the hand of the “venerable, esteemed and renowned” priest Anṭūn, who had served as secretary to the Chaldean patriarch.²⁰⁹ This rare tribute to a scribe implies that, over a century later, the contributions of Anṭūn – quite possibly the only resident scribe at Rabban Hormizd in the late eighteenth century – were perceived as vital to the Chaldean scribal legacy in Mardin.

The Chaldean scribal movement, as analysis of the Rabban Hormizd collection has revealed, strove to consolidate the Chaldean confessional identity from the early eighteenth century by building a new corpus of texts, sourced from both Chaldean and other Catholic authors. The relationship of Mardin to these processes evolved over time. Initially, the local Chaldean community resembled a satellite of the movement, looking to Chaldean scribes from Diyarbakır and Mosul to supply them with texts. However, it was not until the mid-eighteenth century – which notably coincided with a period of stability in local

²⁰⁷ CCM 395, f. 561r; CCM 99, ff. 84r-85r; CCM 212, ff. 90r-90v.

²⁰⁸ CCM 99, f. 84v; CCM 395, f. 561r.

²⁰⁹ CCM 99, f. 3r: ان هذا الكتاب بما انه الانجيل الوحيد في هذه الكنيسة مرتب حسب الطقس الكلداني لقراء الاحاد والاعياد والذكرانات والاصوام في دور السنة وانه مخطوط باحرف الطقس المذكور وفي عصرنا هذا من سوء الحظ والاهمال الالاهم لم يعود احد من ابنا هذا الطقس يعرف يخط لهذه الاحرف...كذخيرة قديمة ومعتبره لا سيما لانه خط احد الكهنة الوقوريه والفضلاء وهو ذو الذكر الجيد القس انطون فتحو الذي خدم في هذه الكنيسة عدة سنين بمقام نايب باطريركي...

leadership – that the Church of Rabban Hormizd in Mardin began actively producing Chaldean literature and replicating novel Chaldean scribal practices. Yet, despite their shared aim of confessionalization, the Chaldean scribal movement in Mardin – both in substance and in its supplementary role – differed remarkably from that of the Syriac Orthodox.

4.4 Syriac Orthodox literary reform

Just a few kilometres east of the Church of Rabban Hormizd, the Syriac Orthodox were engrossed in an entirely different scribal movement at Saffron Monastery, the patriarchal see. Unlike that observed with the Chaldeans, Mardin – specifically, Saffron Monastery – was centre stage for the Syriac Orthodox scribal movement which emerged in the first decades of the eighteenth century. Drawing on the current collections at the Church of the Forty Martyrs and Saffron Monastery, this section will examine this scribal movement as an attempt to reinforce the confessional identity of the Syriac Orthodox community. The movement – defined here as the reform of Syriac Orthodox literature – had two main strands: firstly, the translation of liturgies and classical Syriac Orthodox texts into Arabic Karshuni, and secondly, the composition of new religious works by Syriac Orthodox clerics. The section will also consider the reception of Catholic literature within the local Syriac Orthodox scribal milieu. This limited engagement, it will argue, not only differed from that witnessed in the Chaldean context, but was also in itself influenced by Syriac Orthodox scribal conventions.

The Syriac Orthodox literary reform in Mardin flourished primarily under the leadership of Patriarch Shukr Allāh II (1722-1745), a Mardin local who presided over a monastery which was, according to contemporary accounts, recently renovated and inhabited by over thirty monks.²¹⁰ Ironically, the same patriarch was reported by Ishaq Armalet (and, in turn, Graf), as having converted to Catholicism while metropolitan of Aleppo in 1716, only to subsequently renounce his profession of faith.²¹¹ Though this

²¹⁰ On restoration of the monastery, see above, Chapter Three, 3.2. For figures of the monastic community, see ZFRN 130 (1726), f. 148v, 149v.

²¹¹ I. Armalet, ‘Fī al-baṭriyarkīyah al-Anṭākīyah’, *al-Machriq*, 21 (1923), p. 663; idem, *Catalogue des manuscrits de Charfet*, p. 65; G. Graf, *Geschichte der christlichen arabischen Literatur* (5 vols, Vatican City, 1944-1953), iv, pp. 28-9. In an intriguing contemporary reference to the matter, the Syriac Catholic priest Eliya Faṭḥ Allāh of Diyarbakır, teacher at the Propaganda Fide, claimed in a letter to Mīkha’īl Jarwah in 1775 that the Maronite metropolitan Jirmānūs Farḥāt had hidden the confirmation letter sent by Rome to Metropolitan Shukr Allāh: J. Fathi, ‘D’Orient à L’Orient : Don Élias Fathalla, interprète de Napoléon, et la première Église syrienne-catholique’, *Journal of Eastern Christian Studies*, 72/1-2 (2020), p. 95.

profession is yet to be uncovered, this background information – if it has any basis – makes his spearheading of this traditionalist scribal movement all the more remarkable.

The first aspect of the movement for consideration is the replacement of Syriac with Arabic as the main literary language. Arabic was not unknown in the Syriac Orthodox literary context, and its usage stretched back to the early Islamic period – a prominent example being Yaḥyá ibn ‘Adī (d. 974).²¹² Yet, though we encounter some Arabic liturgies²¹³ and hagiographies²¹⁴ within the collections dating to the seventeenth century, it was not until the reign of Patriarch Shukr Allāh that a concerted translation project was implemented in Mardin. On a basic level, these translations had a practical aim, given that the Syriac language – a traditional pillar of Syriac Orthodox identity²¹⁵ – was no longer widely understood by the community. This is explicitly conveyed in an ornate bilingual Syriac-Arabic Karshuni evangelion completed at Saffron Monastery in 1728 (fig. 11).²¹⁶ The colophon records that the translation of the evangelion was commissioned by the incumbent patriarch Shukr Allāh II:

He [Patriarch Shukr Allah] took care of the cost of this holy book, and at his order we translated all that was Syriac in the [original] text into the Arabic language, leaving no section untranslated. This was at his bidding for public benefit, readers and listeners [alike]...²¹⁷

²¹² Romeny et al., ‘The Formation of a Communal Identity among West Syrian Christians: Results and Conclusions of the Leiden Project’, p. 49. On Arabic literature within East and West Syriac circles in the late medieval period, see T. Carlson, ‘Syriac in a Diverse Middle East: From the Mongol Ilkhanate to Ottoman dominance, 1286-1517’, in D. King (ed.), *The Syriac World* (Abingdon, Oxon; New York, 2019), esp. pp. 723-8.

²¹³ See e.g. CFMM 326 (1668-9); CFMM 54 (1676-7); CFMM 298 (1682); CFMM 36 (1691); CFMM 326 (1668-9).

²¹⁴ CFMM 126 (1600-1700); CFMM 291 (1600-1700); CFMM 295 (1600-1700); CFMM 306 (1600-1700).

²¹⁵ Romeny et al., ‘The Formation of a Communal Identity among West Syrian Christians: Results and Conclusions of the Leiden Project’, pp. 48-51.

²¹⁶ ZFRN 397 (1728). For discussion of this MS and its communal dimension, see Maxton, ‘Public and Private Spheres at Saffron Monastery’.

²¹⁷ ZFRN 397, p. 683, c. 2:
... الله اعلم بحصوه... والاحكام المتضمنه... اني... محمدا... في... النسخه... من... الكتاب...
... النسخه... من... الكتاب...
... الله اعلم بحصوه... والاحكام المتضمنه... اني... محمدا... في... النسخه... من... الكتاب...

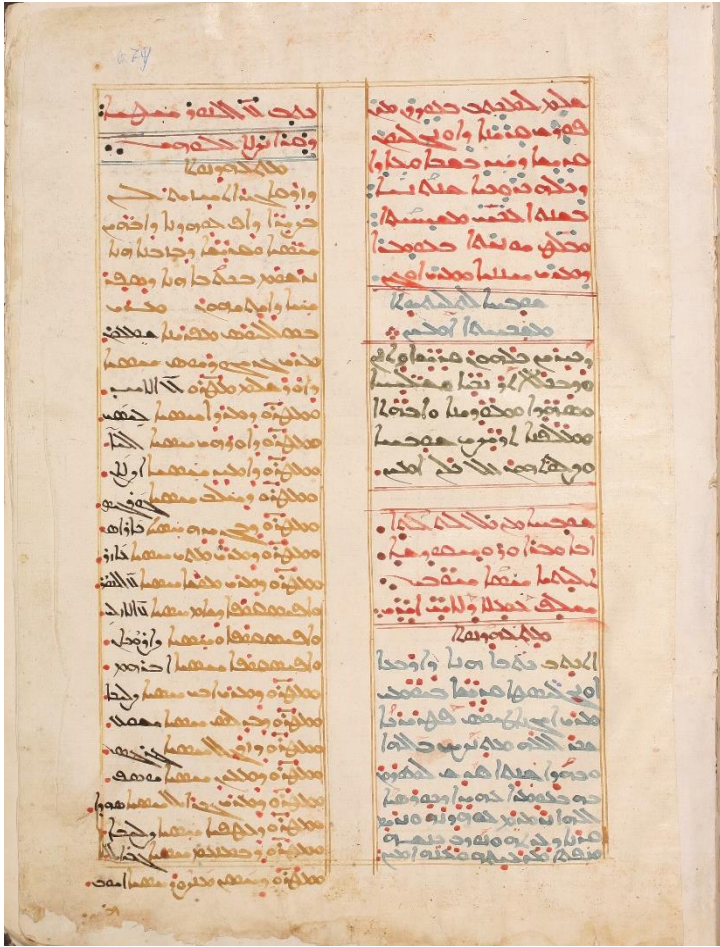


Figure 11: Mardin, Dayr Za'farān, MS 397 (HMML Project No.: ZFRN 00397), f. 339r. Record of current Syriac Orthodox Church hierarchy in colophon by 'Abd al-Nūr, 1728.

The community-serving basis for this translation imparts a convincing image of patriarchal benevolence. But other examples indicate that it was not only among the Syriac Orthodox of Mardin that knowledge of the Syriac language was waning. In 1731, Bishop Tūmā of Damascus noted in a Syriac lexicon that its damaged state was owing to a lack of “readers of Syriac or people who know the language accurately”;²¹⁸ and as late as 1775, Metropolitan Mikhā'īl Jarwah of Aleppo had offices for the feasts translated on the basis that the local community “could no longer understand Syriac”.²¹⁹ Within the

Mardin collections, the increasing prevalence of Arabic Karshuni or bilingual Karshuni-Syriac liturgical works throughout the eighteenth century is indicated by at least ten manuscripts, consisting of Old Testament and Gospel lectionaries, baptism and ordination rituals, prayer books and psalters.²²⁰

The translations commissioned by Shukr Allāh, while evidently responding to a changing linguistic culture, were arguably also underpinned by a confessionalising agenda. The patriarch sought to strengthen the historical and confessional identity of the Syriac Orthodox community through facilitating access to liturgy and, perhaps even more importantly, to the literature of their church fathers.

²¹⁸ Charfet Rahmani 112, f. 245r: A. Binggeli, F. Briquel-Chatonnet, M. Debié, Y. Dergham, A. Desreumaux, J. Dib and F. Vinourd (eds), *Catalogue des manuscrits syriaques et garshuni du Patriarcat syriaque-catholique de Charfet (Liban)* (Dar'un-Harissa, 2021), pp. 421-3.

²¹⁹ Charfet Syriac 7/16 (1775): Armalet, *Catalogue des manuscrits de Charfet*, p. 144.

²²⁰ See e.g. CFMM 42 (1700); CFMM 65 (1713-4); CFMM 1135 (1725); ZFRN 130 (1726); ZFRN 397 (1728); ZFRN 18 (1729); ZFRN 2 (latest 1738); ZFRN 400 (latest 1738); CFMM 1057 (1750); CFMM 801 (1758); CFMM 1070 (1763).

trove for Christian children and the Syriac Orthodox community” (*khazīnah ilā al-awlād al-Masīhiyyah wa-al-ṭāʾifah al-Suryāniyah*).²²⁶

‘Abd al-Nūr did indeed help stock this treasure trove. Throughout his career, he accomplished other prestigious Arabic translations, including the above-mentioned *Cause of All Causes* by Jacob of Edessa (d. 708);²²⁷ the Psalms commentary by Daniel of Salah (fl. sixth century);²²⁸ the *Book of True Knowledge*, a philosophical work potentially identifiable with a Greek translation of Alexander of Aphrodisias by Sergius of Reshaina (d. 536);²²⁹ and the Gospel commentary of Dionysius bar Salibi (d. 1171), commissioned by Patriarch George II in 1745.²³⁰ Aside from those of ‘Abd al-Nūr, numerous other Arabic translations of the West Syriac church fathers transpired during the eighteenth century. These include the works of earlier scholars, such as the *Hexaemeron* of Jacob of Edessa,²³¹ and the homilies of Ephrem of Nisibis (d. 373) and Jacob of Serugh (d. 521).²³² Spearheads of the Syriac Orthodox literary renaissance in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries were also translated.²³³ These include the *Book of Splendours* of Bar Hebraeus;²³⁴ the Chronicle of Michael the Great/the Syrian (d.

²²⁶ DIYR 37, f. 315r.

²²⁷ CFMM 361 (1727-8); CFMM 409 (1727-8); Charfet Rahmani 68 (1722-45); Charfet Syriac 9/39 (1729). Catalogue entries: Binggeli et al. (eds), *Catalogue des manuscrits syriaques et garshuni du Patriarcat syriaque-catholique de Charfet (Liban)*, pp. 258-61; Armalet, *Catalogue des manuscrits de Charfet*, p. 204.

²²⁸ A note in Mingana Chr. Ar. 14 (1884) records that this text was translated by ‘Abd al-Nūr al-Āmidī in 1730: Mingana, *Catalogue of the Mingana Collection of Manuscripts*, ii, pp. 18-19. Copies are preserved in CFMM 75 (1700-1900) and ASOM (= Mosul, Syriac Orthodox Church. Archdiocese of Mosul) 207 (1700-1900), though it is unclear if these translations were completed by him. On the significance of this work to the early Syriac Orthodox community, see D. G. K. Taylor, ‘The Psalm Commentary of Daniel of Salah and the formation of sixth-century Syrian Orthodox identity’, in Romeny (ed.), *Religious origins of nations?*, pp. 65-92.

²²⁹ CFMM 360 (1726-7), ff. 3v-208r. Possibly also included in Syriac in CCM 339 (1690-1): see mention in Muerre-van den Berg, *Scribes and Scriptures*, p. 257.

²³⁰ CFMM 104 (1755); CFMM 105 (1755); Charfet Arabic 2/19 (1745-1800): Armalet, *Catalogue des manuscrits de Charfet*, pp. 319-20.

²³¹ ZFRN 394 (1700-1800). McCollum has identified other Karshuni versions of the text copied in the 17th century which predate ‘Abd al-Nūr’s translation: idem., ‘Remarks on Recent Cataloging Efforts among Syriac Manuscripts Preserved at the Hill Museum & Manuscript Library’, pp. 367-8. I have also come across a copy in Wellcome Karshuni 3 (undated).

²³² CFMM 298 (1682); CFMM 125 (1600-1800).

²³³ Of the rich scholarship on this literary movement, see contributions in H. Teule and C. F. Tauwinkel (eds), *The Syriac Renaissance* (Leuven, 2010); H. Teule, ‘Reflections On Identity. The Suryoye Of The Twelfth And Thirteenth Centuries: Bar Salibi, Bar Shakko, And Barhebraeus’ in Romeny (ed.), *Religious Origins of Nations?*, pp. 179-189. An excellent recent overview is found in D. Weltecke and H. Younansardaroud, ‘The Renaissance of Syriac Literature in the Twelfth–Thirteenth Centuries’, in King (ed.), *The Syriac World*, pp. 698-717.

²³⁴ Cambridge Add. 3275 (1751): W. Wright, *A Catalogue of the Syriac Manuscripts Preserved in the Library of the University of Cambridge, by the Late William Wright* (2 vols, Cambridge, 1901), ii, pp. 810-13; CFMM 497 (1778).

1199);²³⁵ and commentaries on the sacraments by Bar Salibi and Bishop John of Mardin (d. 1165), commissioned by Patriarch Shukr Allāh in 1710 and 1726.²³⁶

The increasing employment of Arabic as a textual language was not, it must be stressed, unique to the Syriac Orthodox community during this time.²³⁷ We find parallel movements among the seventeenth-century Melkite Church hierarchy, for example, to translate liturgies and revive hagiographical texts from the Greek tradition.²³⁸ However, Arabic translations within the Syriac Orthodox scribal movement are distinguished by a key aspect: their steadfast preservation of the Syriac script. The examples above are exclusively transcribed in Arabic Karshuni. Similar to reviving traditional works in Arabic, continued use of the Syriac script could also be harnessed to reinforce confessional identity. The Syriac Orthodox were historically one of the earliest and most prolific Eastern Christian communities in their employment of Karshuni.²³⁹ Moreover, as has been argued, the use of this script was an intrinsic aspect of both their own identity and that of other Christian communities, such as the Maronites, within the Ottoman context.²⁴⁰ Although the Mardin manuscripts do not explicitly address this, they do indicate

²³⁵ CFMM 214 (1759). On the chronicle, see Romeny et al., ‘The Formation of a Communal Identity among West Syrian Christians: Results and Conclusions of the Leiden Project’, pp. 21-8; D. Weltecke, ‘Michael the Syrian and Syriac Orthodox Identity’, in *ibid.*, pp. 115-125; *idem*, *The ‘Description of the Times’ by Mōr Michael the Great (1126-1199): A Study on Its Historical and Its Historiographical Context* (Leuven, 2021).

²³⁶ Charfet Syriac 3/29 (1710); Charfet Syriac 4/3 (1726); Armalet, *Catalogue des manuscrits de Charfet*, p. 65, 80.

²³⁷ On ‘Arabization’ in general, see R. Haddad, *Syrian Christians in a Muslim Society*, pp. 51-4; Masters, *Christians and Jews in the Ottoman Arab World*, pp. 87-8, 95-7; H. Kilpatrick, ‘From Literatur to Adab’; *idem*, ‘The Inter-communal Poetry of Niqūlāwus aṣ-Ṣā’iḡ (1692–1756)’, *Rocznik Orientalistyczny*, 64/1 (2011), pp. 60-79; Patel, *The Arab Nahdah*, pp. 49-87.

²³⁸ On the liturgical reform activities of Melkite metropolitan Meletios Karma (d. 1635) and Patriarch Makarios ibn Za’īm (d. 1672), see S. Melikyan, ‘Hagiographical Renaissance as a Part of the Melkite Renaissance’, in I. Feodorov, B. Heyberger and S. Noble (eds), *Arabic Christianity between the Ottoman Levant and Eastern Europe* (Leiden, 2021), pp. 115-31; F. Krimsti, ‘Signatures of Authority: Colophons in Seventeenth-Century Melkite Circles in Aleppo’, in Christopher Bahl (ed.), *Scribal Practice and the Global Cultures of Colophons, 1400-1800* (Cham, 2022), esp. pp. 113-7.

²³⁹ A. Mengozzi, ‘The History of Garshuni as a Writing System: Evidence from the Rabbula Codex’, in F. M. Fales and G. F. Grassi (eds), *CAMSEMUD 2007. Proceedings of the 13th Italian Meeting of Afro-Asiatic Linguistics, held in Udine, May 21st-24th, 2007* (Padova, 2010) pp. 297-304; J. Moukarzel, ‘Le garshuni. Remarques sur son histoire et son évolution’, in J. den Heijer, A. B. Schmidt and T. Pataridze (eds), *Scripts beyond Borders: A Survey of Allographic Traditions in the Euro-Mediterranean World* (Leuven, 2014), esp. pp. 129-30.

²⁴⁰ K. Dinno, ‘The Deir al-Za’faran and Mardin Garshuni Archives’, esp. pp. 208-9. For the Maronite context, see del Río Sánchez, *Arabic-Karshuni: an Attempt to Preserve Maronite Identity*, pp. 3-11; *idem*, ‘The study of Syriac in an Arabized community: the Maronites of Aleppo’, in S. Torallas Tovar and J. Pedro Monferrer Sala (eds), *Cultures in Contact: Transfer of Knowledge in the Mediterranean Context: Selected Papers* (Córdoba; Beirut, 2013), pp. 237-242; Girard, ‘La Construction de l’identité confessionnelle maronite à l’époque ottomane’, esp. pp. 179-90.

that efforts were made to ensure the rendering of Arabic texts into Karshuni. A translation of the Gospel commentary by Dionysius bar Salibi, dated 1755, is a compelling example.²⁴¹ The colophon reveals that the work was initially translated from Syriac to Arabic script by ‘Abd al-Nūr al-Āmidī in Saffron Monastery at the expense of Patriarch George II and the metropolitan of Jerusalem, George al-Ḥalabī “for the benefit of the readers, the children of our Syriac Orthodox confession” (*li-ajal ifādat al-qāriyīn min abnā ṭā’ifatinā naḥnu al-Suryān*).²⁴² Then, strikingly, it details that the text was “transcribed” into “Karshuni letters” (*nasakhahu min al-aḥraf al-‘arabiyyah ilā al-aḥraf al-garshūniyyah*) at the Syriac Orthodox Church of Our Lady in Diyarbakır. The whole process, the scribe comments, was “extremely expensive” (*kalifah zā’idah wa-mablagh wāsi’*).²⁴³ The preservation of the Syriac script – even if it meant extra expense and effort – was evidently an important dimension to the literary reform initiated by the Syriac Orthodox hierarchy.

The proliferation of Arabic texts in the Syriac Orthodox milieu of Mardin, it must be noted, did not preclude the use of Syriac language altogether. Our famed translator, ‘Abd al-Nūr al-Āmidī, produced a Syriac lectionary in 1706, as well as three sets of homilies by Jacob of Serugh and Ephrem of Nisibis in their Syriac original between 1722-1725 in Mardin.²⁴⁴ The Syriac grammars of Metropolitan Timothy Isaac of Diyarbakır (d. 1665) are also extant in several copies produced in the early to mid-eighteenth century.²⁴⁵ As illuminated in the examples above, however, both the implementation and stated objectives of the Arabic translation project associated with Patriarch Shukr Allāh are infused with the rhetoric of consolidating the Syriac Orthodox identity.

Simultaneously with translation, the Syriac Orthodox literary reform also involved the production of new confessional literature in (Karshuni) Arabic, although this has yet to be systematically researched.²⁴⁶ While there does not appear to have been explicit liturgical reform, religiously instructive

²⁴¹ CFMM 105 (1755). See also CFMM 104 (1755), copied by father of scribe.

²⁴² CFMM 105, f. 344r.

²⁴³ CFMM 105, f. 344r.

²⁴⁴ CFMM 620 (1706), f. 172r; CFMM 134 (1722), f. 346r; CFMM 135 (1722), f. 132r; CFMM 136 (1725), f. 347v.

²⁴⁵ CFMM 530 (1707); CFMM 527 (1746-7); CFMM 526 (1760); CFMM 525 (1700-1800).

²⁴⁶ Pointed out by Grigory Kessel in relation to the Meryemana collection in Diyarbakır: idem, ‘Manuscript Collection of the Syrian Orthodox Church Meryemana in Diyarbakır’, p. 108. Barsoum mentions several of these authors in his *Scattered Pearls*, categorised under the “third period” of Syriac literature (1290-1931): idem, *Scattered Pearls*, pp. 516-9.

texts were popular. Alongside his patronage of translations, Patriarch Shukr Allāh II authored his own set of homilies.²⁴⁷ An early copy of these, dating to his time as metropolitan of Aleppo and including an exposition of the Christological doctrine of the church, was even approved as “correct and in accordance with our faith and creed” (*ṣaḥīḥah muwāfiqah ilā īmāninā wa-‘itiqādinā*) by the seal and signature of the incumbent Patriarch Isaac II (1709-1722).²⁴⁸ Moreover, in 1724, a synod convened by Shukr Allāh at Saffron Monastery resulted in the composition of *The Tablet of Faith (Wathīqat al-īmān)*, a profession of the miaphysite Christology of the Syriac Orthodox Church.²⁴⁹ Within the traditional paradigm of confessionalisation, professions of faith have strong implications: such codifications of “pure doctrine” were one of the key methods identified by Reinhard for ensuring confessional orthodoxy and differentiation.²⁵⁰

New scholarship also emanated from the prelate Maphrian Basileus Simon of Tur Abdin (d. 1740),²⁵¹ styled the “star of the east” (*kawkab al-mashriq*) among the Syriac Orthodox.²⁵² In addition to his Syriac-Arabic Karshuni lexicon,²⁵³ the Mardin collections also preserve his exegetical homilies²⁵⁴ and homilies for feast days,²⁵⁵ at least one of which was copied at Saffron Monastery.²⁵⁶ Simon also copied a set of West Syriac anaphora for the Church of the Forty Martyrs in Mardin in 1721.²⁵⁷ In fact, his compositions witnessed considerable circulation among the Syriac Orthodox at large. At least eleven

²⁴⁷ MBM 397 (1722), ff. 1r-172r; ZFRN 214 (1700-1800); Mingana Syriac 277 (1797): Mingana, *Catalogue of the Mingana Collection of Manuscripts*, i, pp. 541-4.

²⁴⁸ SOAA (= Aleppo, Syriac Orthodox Church. Archdiocese of Aleppo) 89 K (1716), ff. 180v-181r. For full Christological profession of Metropolitan Shukr Allāh, see ff. 173v-180v.

²⁴⁹ Mingana Syriac 460 (1797); Mingana Syriac 495 (undated): Mingana, *Catalogue of the Mingana Collection of Manuscripts*, i, p. 818, 912.

²⁵⁰ Reinhard, ‘Reformation, Counter-Reformation, and the Early Modern State’, pp. 390-1; see also discussion in Lotz-Heumann, ‘The concept of “confessionalization”’, pp. 98-9.

²⁵¹ For biographical information, see Barsoum, *Scattered Pearls*, pp. 516-8 and Fathi ‘La Maison du Diacre Fathī’, pp. 85-8. The prolific output of Simon is also referenced in McCollum, ‘Remarks on Recent Cataloging Efforts among Syriac Manuscripts Preserved at the Hill Museum & Manuscript Library’, pp. 366-8.

²⁵² OBA (= Sarba, Ordre Basilien Alepin) 326 (1747), f. 95v.

²⁵³ CFMM 476 (1700-1800); CFMM 477 (1700-1900).

²⁵⁴ CFMM 360 (1726-7), ff. 208v-279v; CCM 443 (1728), ff. 1v-221r, 244v-304v; CFMM 193 (1747-53).

²⁵⁵ CFMM 189 (1727-1907).

²⁵⁶ CFMM 360 (1726-7), f. 279v.

²⁵⁷ CFMM 1055 (1721), f. 169v.

copies of his works dating to the investigated period are spread across collections today in Erbil, Midyat, Jerusalem, Aleppo, Keserwan, Birmingham and Cambridge.²⁵⁸

It was the polemical treatise of Maphrian Simon, however, which would mark one of his compelling contributions to the Syriac Orthodox repertoire of confessional works. Written in around 1720, *The Weapon of Religion and the Shield of Certainty* (*Ṣilāḥ al-dīn wa-ṭurs al-yaqīn*) provided the ideal format for delineating the Syriac Orthodox confessional identity and – more importantly – in opposition to the lurking rival: Catholicism. In sixteen parts, Maphrian Simon affirmed Syriac Orthodox Christology and refuted tenets of Catholic doctrine and practice, such as purgatory, repentance, and the use of leavened bread for communion.²⁵⁹ While three copies are preserved in the Mardin collections,²⁶⁰ a copy in the Mingana collection in Birmingham reveals that the text was being actively sourced from Saffron Monastery. In 1728, a monk produced a copy for a patron in Aleppo named Rabbān Jirjis al-Ḥalabī ibn Maqdisī Iliyān al-Fattāl.²⁶¹ Strikingly, the very same patron had also ordered a copy of one of ‘Abd al-Nūr’s Arabic translations, the *Cause of All Causes*, around the same time.²⁶²

The Syriac Orthodox apology of Maphrian Simon was joined by a similar example written in around 1750 by Metropolitan George al-Ḥalabī of Jerusalem, entitled the *Treatise on the True Christological Doctrine* (*al-‘Itiqād al-ṣaḥīḥ fī tajassud al-Masīḥ*).²⁶³ Written in Arabic Karshuni and preserved in Mardin in two copies,²⁶⁴ the treatise defended the miaphysite Christology of the Syriac Orthodox (and Copts) and refuted the Chalcedonian rulings observed by Catholics. The work effuses an aggressive disputational rhetoric: the author records in his preface that the work was inspired by meeting people in Upper Egypt who “professed that Christ had two natures”, and should serve as “a shield” for “Syriac

²⁵⁸ ACE 118 (1778); CET 34 (1727); CET 37 (1739); CET 35 (1779-80); SMMJ 171 (1726); SOAA 63 A (1720); OBA 326 (1747), pp. 140-79; Charfet Syriac 13/4 (latest 1738); Charfet Arabic 7/4 (1763); Mingana Syriac 416 (1723); Cambridge Add. 2026 (1729). Catalogue entries: Armalet, *Catalogue des manuscrits de Charfet*, pp. 235, 381-2; Mingana, *Catalogue of the Mingana Collection of Manuscripts*, i, pp. 741-2; Wright, *A Catalogue of the Syriac Manuscripts Preserved in the Library of the University of Cambridge*, ii, pp. 1251-3.

²⁵⁹ On this work, see Barsoum, *Scattered Pearls*, p. 517; Graf, *Geschichte*, iv, pp. 23-7.

²⁶⁰ CFMM 391 (1722); CFMM 392 (1768-9); CFMM 393 (1777-8).

²⁶¹ Mingana Syriac 608 (1728): Mingana, *Catalogue of the Mingana Collection of Manuscripts*, i, p. 172.

²⁶² CFMM 361 (1727-8), f. 204v.

²⁶³ See Graf, *Geschichte*, iv, pp. 31-3, though I contend his assumption that Metropolitan Jirjis is one and the same person as Patriarch George III, who died in 1781.

²⁶⁴ CFMM 375 (1753); CFMM 376 (1700-1800). Other copies are found in SOAA 00039 H (1751-4); MGMT (= Midyat, Dayro d-Mor Gabriel) 190 (1775), pp. 113-195; Mingana Syriac 344: Mingana, *Catalogue of the Mingana Collection of Manuscripts*, i, pp. 638-41.

Jacobite children” with which to “crush the heads of opponents of the truth” (*tursan li-kay yaruṣṣū bi-hi rūs al-mukhālifn*).²⁶⁵ The polemics of Maphrian Simon and Metropolitan George were prestigious enough to be commemorated in contemporary Syriac Orthodox history. In the supplement to the Chronicle of Michael the Great, Maphrian Simon is described as “struggling for his religion in his preaching and teaching”, after which his entire oeuvre – including the *Weapon of Religion* – is listed.²⁶⁶ Metropolitan George is also lauded for his *Treatise on the True Christological Doctrine* and for “arguing with the Franks, defeating them and showing their faults by the power of God.”²⁶⁷ Maphrian Simon’s anti-Catholic discourse even found expression in local Catholic histories of Mardin. In the *Life of Eliya*, the maphrian is depicted in a debate with the Armenian Catholic convert Melkon Tasbasian at the Church of St. George, though Eliya decries his “foolish talk and primitive references”.²⁶⁸ For the Syriac Orthodox – as for other traditionalist Orthodox communities – the two-fold action of sharpening their theological stances and refuting Catholicism was crucial to cultivating their confessional identity during this period.²⁶⁹

The literary reform launched by Patriarch Shukr Allāh II sought not only to address a changing linguistic culture, but to revive works from the Syriac Orthodox heritage which could provide a basis for their confessional identity. This confessional agenda was bolstered by fresh literary contributions, in particular didactic texts and apologies against the Catholic faith. But amidst this scribal movement, the collections also reveal a limited circulation of texts written by Catholics.

4.5 Catholic influences among the Syriac Orthodox

The presence of these Catholic-authored works within the Syriac Orthodox collections is intriguing from several angles: in how they differ from the Chaldean Catholic corpus; in how they exhibit certain

²⁶⁵ CFMM 375, ff. 3r-v.

²⁶⁶ I. Becheiry, ‘A list of the Syrian Orthodox patriarchs between 16th and 18th century’, *Parole de l’Orient*, 29 (2004), p. 230. See discussion of this work above, Chapter Three, esp. 3.2.

²⁶⁷ Becheiry, ‘A list of the Syrian Orthodox patriarchs’, p. 233.

²⁶⁸ USJ 30, f. 6r: *وَقَلْتُ اِنِّي هَرَبْتُ مِنْ ضَعْفِ كَلَامِهِ لِانَّهُ تَكَلَّمَ بِجَهْلِ امْثَالِ اصْطِقَايَا لَيْسَةَ مِنْ كِتَابٍ وَلَا مِنْ اَنْبِيَا وَلَا مِنْ رَسَلٍ وَلَا مِنْ مَعْلَمِيْنَ*

²⁶⁹ For Armenian traditionalist context, see e.g. A. Ohanjanyan, ‘Creedal Controversies among Armenians in the Seventeenth-Century Ottoman Empire: Eremia Č‘ēlēpi K‘ēōmiwrčean’s Polemical Writing against Suk‘ias Prusac‘i’, *Journal of the Society for Armenian Studies*, 27/1 (2020), pp. 7-69; for East Syriac context, see e.g. Parker, ‘On the Margins of Empire: Confessionalization and the East Syrian Schism of 1552’, esp. pp. 439-43.

characteristics of the Syriac Orthodox scribal movement; and in what they suggest more broadly about textual engagement with Catholicism by the Syriac Orthodox during the eighteenth century.

Across the collections of Saffron Monastery and the Church of the Forty Martyrs, fifteen Catholic texts have been identified. While these works represent diverse confessional legacies, the majority are liturgical, exegetical and theological works by Eastern Catholics, namely: the *Lamp of the Sanctuary* (*Manārat al-aqdās*), an explanation of Maronite liturgy by patriarch and historian Estephan Duwayhī (d. 1704);²⁷⁰ the *Treatise on Christian Perfection* (*Mukhtaṣar al-kamāl al-Masīhī*) of Jirmānūs Farḥāt (d. 1732), Maronite metropolitan of Aleppo;²⁷¹ a commentary on the New Testament (the Gospels, the Pauline Epistles, the Catholic Epistles and Revelation) by George Binyāmīn, Maronite metropolitan of Ehden, dated 1734;²⁷² the *Treatise on the Sacraments* (*Khizānat al-asrār wa-al-manārah al-musabba ‘at al-anwār*) by Maronite patriarch Sim‘ān ‘Awwād (d. 1756), preserved in two copies;²⁷³ and a biblical concordance for preachers by the Armenian Catholic Mikirdīj al-Kasīh (fl. 1690-1732). This is preserved in four copies, two of which date to 1714 and 1789.²⁷⁴ An alternative genre is represented in an undated copy of the Syriac grammar by Maronite patriarch Yūsuf Ḥalīb al-‘Āqūrī (d. 1648).²⁷⁵ This was edited by the well-known Maronite scribe Yūsuf al-Baslūqītī in 1647 and printed in Rome.²⁷⁶ We also encounter a set of eighty-five homilies of John Chrysostom on the New Testament copied by a Maronite deacon from Aleppo, Yūsuf ibn Jirjis al-Bashrānī, in 1667;²⁷⁷ and a Maronite lectionary containing the Pauline Epistles copied by a priest from Mount Lebanon in 1691.²⁷⁸ The four remaining texts are works by European Catholics in Arabic translation. These include a commentary of the Jesuit exegete Cornelius a Lapide on the Pauline Epistles, translated from the Latin by the Maronite Yūsuf ibn

²⁷⁰ CFMM 354 (1700-1800). On contribution of Patriarch Duwayhi, see Patel, *The Arab Nahdah*, pp. 41-3.

²⁷¹ CFMM 906 (latest 1847).

²⁷² CFMM 124 (1734).

²⁷³ CFMM 830 (latest 1869); CFMM 834 (1700-1800).

²⁷⁴ CFMM 818 (1714); CFMM 820 (1789); CFMM 819 (1700-1800); CFMM 821 (1700-1800). On al-Kasīh, see Kilpatrick, ‘From Literatur to Adab’, pp. 209-12.

²⁷⁵ CFMM 517 (1647-1800).

²⁷⁶ CFMM 517, f. 1v. On al-Baslūqītī, see N. Jumayyil, *al-Nussākh al-mawārinah wa-mansūkhātuhum* (5 vols, Jounieh, 1997), i., pp. 378-80. For account of al-‘Āqūrī requesting the printing of his grammar and a liturgical text from the pope in 1645, see I. al-Duwayhī, *Tārīkh al-azminah*, ed. Buṭrus Fahd (Beirut, 1986), pp. 529-30.

²⁷⁷ CFMM 194 (1667).

²⁷⁸ CFMM 36 (1691).

Jirjis Bānī in 1715 and preserved in two copies, one of which dates to 1717;²⁷⁹ a translation of the Franciscan Diego de Estella's *De la Vanidad del Mundo*, dated 1772;²⁸⁰ and an undated copy of *The Trumpet of Heaven* by the Capuchin Joseph de Reuilly.²⁸¹

This selection first and foremostly highlights a general lack of conformity in selections of Catholic literature across Christian Mardin as a whole. Several texts do manifest in both the Chaldean and Syriac Orthodox collections, namely *De la Vanidad del Mundo* by Diego de Estella, copied at least fifty years apart,²⁸² and the *Treatise on Christian Perfection* by Jirmānūs Farḥāt, though both lack firm dates.²⁸³ The appearance of *The Trumpet of Heaven* in the Chaldean, Syriac Orthodox and Armenian contexts – two of which date to the mid-eighteenth century – is a compelling exception.²⁸⁴ However, there is an evident imbalance in the interconfessional texture of this local Catholic literature. While the Chaldeans of Mardin display greater interest in translated European Catholic texts, much more emphasis is placed on Eastern Catholic contributions within the Syriac Orthodox milieu. Moreover, while an Armenian Catholic work features, we do not find any trace of the rich corpus of original Chaldean literature which flourished during this period – and in the same geographical region, no less.

Distinctive aspects to Syriac Orthodox engagement with Catholic literature in Mardin must also be acknowledged. The commanding role of the Maronites in authoring, translating and transmitting these Catholic texts is striking – especially given that Mardin lacked its own Maronite population. Even two manuscripts which are not of Maronite authorship – that is, the homilies of John Chrysostom and one of the Lapide commentaries – report a Maronite copyist.²⁸⁵ The prolific translation and literary enterprise of the Uniate Maronites in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries – particularly after the

²⁷⁹ CFMM 115 (1717); CFMM 114 (latest 1781). For recent discussion of the text, see D. J. Fisher, 'The Impact of Erasmus on the 1614 Pauline Commentary of Cornelius a Lapide, S.J.', in W. François, V. Soen, A. Dupont and A. A. Robiglio (eds), *Authority Revisited: Towards Thomas More and Erasmus in 1516* (Turnhout, 2020), pp. 371-411.

²⁸⁰ CFMM 832 (1772).

²⁸¹ ZFRN 241 (latest 1838).

²⁸² CCM 433 (latest 1721); CFMM 832 (1772).

²⁸³ CCM 437 (1700-1800); CFMM 906 (latest 1847).

²⁸⁴ CCM 456 (1739); CCM 454 (1742); ZFRN 241 (latest 1838).

²⁸⁵ See colophons in CFMM 194 (1667), f. 251v; CFMM 115 (1717), f. 488v.

establishment of the Maronite College in Rome in 1584 – needs little introduction.²⁸⁶ Yet their dominant position across diverse Eastern Catholic literary contexts, such as with the Chaldeans, is an emerging research area.²⁸⁷ Within the Syriac Orthodox milieu, it is tempting to wonder whether the Maronite influences on early Syriac Catholicism may have influenced this. Not only did Andrew Akhijān, the first Uniate Syriac patriarch elected in 1662, attend the Maronite College in Rome;²⁸⁸ he was also ordained a priest and bishop of the Maronite Church before his patriarchal appointment.²⁸⁹ One of the manuscripts captures this association: while the colophon in the homilies of John Chrysostom reports that they were commissioned by a Maronite deacon named Yūsuf al-Marūnī ibn Jirjis al-Bashrānī in 1667, it recognises the authority of Patriarch Andrew and his brother, Metropolitan Dionysius Behnam of Aleppo.²⁹⁰ The interest of the Mardin Syriac Orthodox community in Maronite literature even trumped that of works produced by Catholic converts of the same confessional and geographical heritage. The impressive oeuvre of the Syriac Catholic Bishop Safar al-Mardīnī, for example, is entirely overlooked.²⁹¹ Furthermore, all this seems to heighten the sense that there was not a distinctly *Syriac Catholic* scribal movement in Mardin at this point – at least, insofar as the Syriac Orthodox and Chaldean collections tell us.

Paratextual elements in the manuscripts provide important insight into to how these Catholic texts reached the Syriac Orthodox scribal milieu in Mardin. Out of the fourteen texts, only four cite the

²⁸⁶ On the Maronite College in Rome, see A. Girard and G. Pizzorusso, ‘The Maronite College in Early Modern Rome: Between the Ottoman Empire and the Republic of Letters’, in L. Chambers and T. O’Connor (eds), *College Communities Abroad: Education, Migration and Catholicism in Early Modern Europe* (Manchester, 2017), pp. 174-197. For contemporary account of alumni, see unfinished account of Patriarch Duwayhī in L. Cheikho, ‘Athar jalīl lil-baṭriyark Iṣṭafānūs al-Duwayhī: tārikh al-madrasah al-Marūnīyah fi Rūmīyah’, *al-Machriq*, 21 (1923), pp. 209-16. An extensive account of Maronite scribal activity can be found in N. Jumayyil, *Les échanges culturels entre les Maronites et l’Europe: du Collège maronite de Rome (1584) au Collège de ‘Ayn-Warqa (1789)* (2 vols, Beirut, 1984) and idem, *al-Nussākh al-mawārinah wa-mansūkhātuhum*.

²⁸⁷ Discussed in Ghobrial, ‘Catholic Confessional Literature in the Christian East?’, esp. pp. 394-5.

²⁸⁸ See biography of Akhijān in Duwayhī’s history of Maronite College alumni: L. Cheikho, ‘Athar jalīl lil-baṭriyark Iṣṭafānūs al-Duwayhī’, p. 214.

²⁸⁹ See Akhijān’s identification as “Maronite bishop of Aleppo” in his own hand in colophon of SCAA SL07 01 (1656), p. 293.

²⁹⁰ CFMM 194, f. 251v.

²⁹¹ See Graf, *Geschichte*, iv, pp. 51-4; there do not appear to be any more recent studies of Safar’s oeuvre. Some MSS containing Safar’s works are found in Charfet collection, acquired in Aleppo by Michael Jarwah: see e.g. Charfet Syriac 2/7 (1695) and Charfet Syriac 20/16 (1700-1800), in Armalet, *Catalogue des manuscrits de Charfet*, pp. 26-7, 291.

locations in which they were copied: that is, two in Aleppo,²⁹² one partially in Aleppo and partially at Saffron Monastery,²⁹³ and one in Rome.²⁹⁴ The scribe of an additional manuscript also designates his geographic origins as Aleppan.²⁹⁵ This not only emphasises Aleppo as a Catholic centre during the investigated period,²⁹⁶ but presents us with a tentative scenario of Catholic literature mainly flowing into, rather than out of, Mardin.

Despite these external influences, however, the Catholic literature in the Mardin collections does show alignment with aspects of the Syriac Orthodox scribal movement mapped out above. This is especially with regard to increasing use of the Arabic language while simultaneously preserving the Syriac alphabet. Out of the fifteen manuscripts, fourteen are in Arabic and, of those, twelve are transcribed in Karshuni.²⁹⁷ This is even more remarkable for the fact that – aside from the *Lamp of the Sanctuary* by Duwayhī and the Maronite lectionary²⁹⁸ – all other texts appear to have been originally written in Arabic script. Without solid information, their transition to Syriac lettering is open to conjecture. However, a statement at the end of the *de la Vanidad del Mundo* copy reports a familiar scenario. It relates that “the commissioner of the transcription of this noble text from Arabic letters to Karshuni was the basest of servants of God, Metropolitan George in name...”²⁹⁹ Given the copy date of 1772 and the endowment of the manuscript to Saffron Monastery, the metropolitan is almost certainly identifiable with the Syriac Orthodox metropolitan of Jerusalem and author of the *Treatise on the True Christological Doctrine*, George al-Ḥalabī. Furthermore, the note implies the same process of transcription to Karshuni observed in the Gospel commentary by Dionysius bar Salibi discussed above.³⁰⁰ The rendering into Arabic Karshuni thus suggests that, while borne from a Catholic context, these texts were in turn conditioned

²⁹² CFMM 194 (1667), f. 251v; CFMM 36 (1691), f. 388v.

²⁹³ CFMM 818 (1714), f. 402v.

²⁹⁴ CFMM 124 (1734), ff. 175v-176r.

²⁹⁵ I.e. ‘Abd al-Masīḥ al-Marūnī al-Ḥalabī: CFMM 115, f. 488v.

²⁹⁶ On the significance of Aleppo to the Catholic movement, see Heyberger, *Les chrétiens du Proche-Orient au temps de la réforme catholique (Syrie, Liban, Palestine, XVIIe-XVIIIe siècles)* (Rome, 1994), esp. pp. 340-5, 350-60; Kilpatrick, ‘From Literatur to Adab’, Masters, ‘The Millet Wars in Aleppo, 1726–1821’.

²⁹⁷ MSS in Arabic script: commentary on the New Testament by Jirjis Binyāmīn (CFMM 124); *Treatise on Christian Perfection* by Jirmānūs Farḥāt (CFMM 906); *Trumpet of Heaven* by Joseph de Reuilly (ZFRN 241).

²⁹⁸ That is, the only other copies I have encountered, LMMO (= Jounieh, Lebanese Maronite Missionary Order) 110 (1600-1700) and LMMO 111 (undated), are in Karshuni.

²⁹⁹ CFMM 832 (1772), f. 225v: *القصه ام قد يعصب هذا الكتاب العزيز مع اسرة الحريه الى الصيغ العربيه اذ هو حوار الله حاهم ...*

³⁰⁰ See CFMM 105 (1755), f. 344r.

by local Syriac Orthodox scribal culture. Confessional identity, we might conjecture, rested as much on the choice of alphabet as it did on the content of a text.

Local Syriac Orthodox scribal practices are also apparent in the patriarchal patronage of these manuscripts, reminiscent of the role played by Shukr Allāh II. Far from coincidentally joining the collections, notes in these manuscripts reveal that almost half of them were endowed to Saffron Monastery, the patriarchal see, by the leadership of the Syriac Orthodox Church. We encounter one manuscript endowed by Patriarch Shukr Allāh II,³⁰¹ three by Patriarch George III (1768-1781),³⁰² one by Metropolitan George of Jerusalem,³⁰³ and one by Patriarch Matthew (1782-1819).³⁰⁴ In one of the concordances of the Uniate Armenian Mikirdīj al-Kaṣīḥ, this patronage is meticulously documented in a *waqf* notice by the superior of Saffron Monastery, Timothy ʿĪsá (d. 1743), and confirmed by the subscription of Patriarch Shukr Allāh (fig. 11). While a date is not provided, the endowment was presumably made at some point after the elevation of Shukr Allāh in 1722:

I, the wretched monk ʿĪsá, Metropolitan of the see of Dayr al-Zaʿfarān [Saffron Monastery], copied with my wretched hand half of the aforementioned book. The second half was commissioned by our lord father Patriarch Shukr Allāh ... and it was copied by the deacon Anṭūn ibn Zījārah of Aleppo... and the two of us agreed – I mean, Metropolitan ʿĪsá and our lord Patriarch Shukr Allāh – to endow it to the monastery of the [patriarchal] see, that is, Dayr al-Zaʿfarān...³⁰⁵

³⁰¹ CFMM 818 (1714), f. 402v.

³⁰² CFMM 114, f. 1r; CFMM 115, f. 4r; CFMM 354, f. 2r. These *waqf* notices are all undated.

³⁰³ CFMM 832 (1772), f. 225v.

³⁰⁴ CFMM 820 (1789), f. 2r.

³⁰⁵ CFMM 818 (1714), f. 402v: *انا الّسمين ذاهب حنصه كلالهم صلفنا، طرود حنصه وين الّرحفنا، م صلاصا صبت الّسمينا، برفه هه* *صلاصا ... هالّثرف الّلام م اولام فسه اوهنا ههههه الّصهههه حنصنا ههه الّحه... ههصاه اّحب الّثرف الّلام حك م الّصاهه اناه اّح اّصاهه الّصاحب ... ههه الّافمنا الّامنا اب انا الّسمين صلفنا، حنصه ههههه الّصهههه حنصنا ههه الّحه ههه اّصاههه الّك وين الّصههه اّحب وين الّرحفنا...*

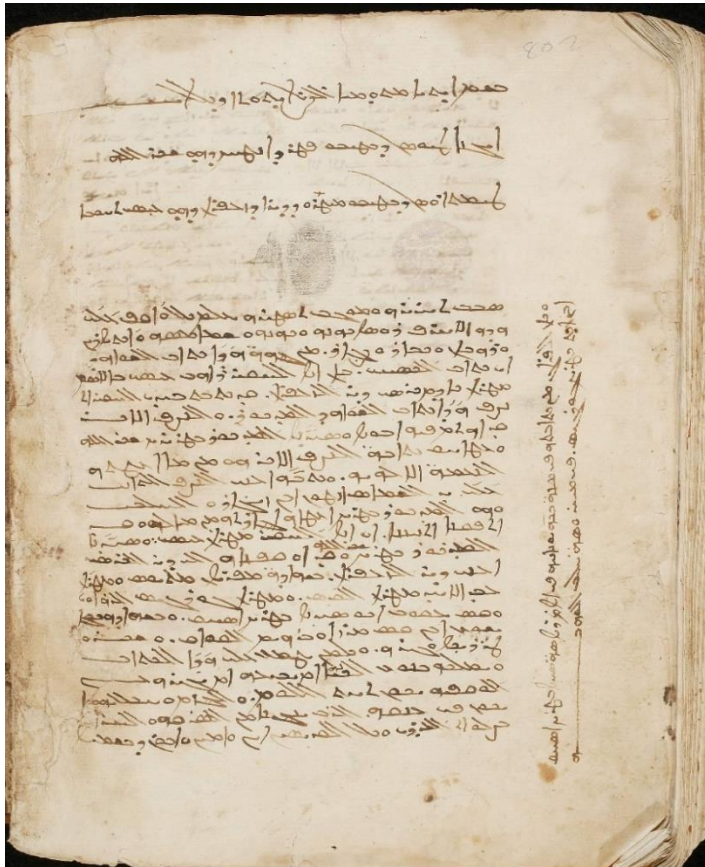


Figure 12: Mardin, Church of the Forty Martyrs, MS 818 (HMML Project No.: CFMM 00818), f. 402v. Endowment notice by Metropolitan Timotheos 'Īsā of Saffron Monastery, c. 1722-45.

This paratextual evidence has important implications for our investigation into Catholic materials. Not only was the manuscript produced at the behest of two figures at the forefront of contemporary Syriac Orthodox scholarship;³⁰⁶ it also represents a rare example of a Catholic-authored work being copied at the centre of the Syriac Orthodox scribal movement, Saffron Monastery.

The presence of literature of Catholic provenance also raises the all-important question of what – or indeed how much – to make of it. The content of some of these texts may reflect Catholic tastes

more than beliefs; Syriac grammars and the homilies of John Chrysostom, for example, could even be considered supraconfessional.³⁰⁷ But it is still difficult to square encounters with these materials with the active Orthodox literary reform which we observed in Mardin. Some of the patrons of this Catholic output were both champions of Orthodox doctrine, such as Patriarch Shukr Allāh and Metropolitan

³⁰⁶ 'Īsā is also credited with authoring a celebratory history of Patriarch George I in 1730. For edition, see Muṭrān G. Y. Ibrāhīm, 'Ṣafḥah min tārikh al-Suryān fī al-qarn al-sābi 'ashr', *al-Majallah al-Baṭriyarkīyah*, 175-6 (1980), pp. 280-288; idem, 'al-Suryān fī al-qarn al-sābi 'ashr', *al-Majallah al-Baṭriyarkīyah*, 1 (1981), pp. 30-40. See further discussion above, Chapter Three, 3.2.

³⁰⁷ For an overview of the transmission of Chrysostom's works throughout the premodern period, see W. Mayer, 'John Chrysostom', in K. Parry (ed.), *The Wiley Blackwell Companion to Patristics*, pp. 141-154. On the homilies of Chrysostom within the Syriac tradition, see e.g. J. Childers, 'Patristic Citations and Versional Evidence: The Syriac Version(s) of Chrysostom's Homilies on Matthew and the Old Syriac Text', *Le Muséon*, 115/1-2 (2002), pp. 129-57; idem, 'Chrysostom in Syriac Dress', *Studia Patristica*, 67 (2013), pp. 323-32.

George of Jerusalem, and historically attested rivals of Syriac Catholic converts, such as Patriarch George III and Patriarch Matthew versus the Uniate Patriarch Michael Jarwah (d. 1800).³⁰⁸

On the other hand, looking deeper into the background of these manuscripts presents us with several possibilities which do not necessarily cast doubt on, or even speak to, confessional belonging. Firstly, we might consider a perceived scholarly value in these Catholic-authored works. Metropolitan George, who commissioned the copy of *de la Vanidad del Mundo* – and presumed to be the same author of the Syriac Orthodox apology *Treatise on the True Christological Doctrine* – offered explanation to this effect in the notice of its endowment to Saffron Monastery:

[The manuscript must] stay in the cells of the brothers, [so that they can] read it and comprehend its meanings and recall its deceased owner... for when he donated it during his lifetime, he requested that the brothers should benefit from it and remember him with mercy...³⁰⁹

Whether or not Metropolitan George recognised or was concerned about any Catholic influence in the treatise – which is primarily a set of ascetic meditations on renouncing worldly matters – is unclear from the above note.³¹⁰ In fact, the knowledge sought from Catholic sources could well have been considered beneficial for defining their own Orthodox doctrine – as has been argued in the seventeenth-century Greek Melkite context, for example.³¹¹ As Michael Philip Penn has demonstrated, the necessity of ‘knowing thy enemy’ in a literary sense dates back to early Syriac Christian theological debates.³¹² Yet equally, this copy of *de la Vanidad del Mundo* has no evidence of any of the paratextual methods through which scribes traditionally expressed their opposition to the content – including warning prologues, reading marks pointing out heresies and disapproving marginal comments.³¹³

³⁰⁸ On this episode, see Becheiry, ‘A list of the Syrian Orthodox patriarchs’, pp. 237-40 and autobiography of Jarwah in MBM 450, ff. 6r-11v, 16r-29v.

³⁰⁹ CFMM 832 (1772), f. 1r: *... لا يحف طاجن؛ حطالک اللہ کل بعنی فہ مہمہ علی مہداسہ مہجہ؛ یاسدہ اللعزمہ ... لاہ ...*

³¹⁰ See table of contents in CFMM 832, ff. 1v-3v.

³¹¹ See M. Voulgaropoulou, ‘Orthodox Confession-Building and the Greek Church between Protestantism and Catholicism: the mission of Marquis Nointel to the Levant (1670-1673)’ in Krstić and Terzioğlu (eds), *Entangled Confessionalizations?*, pp. 521-562. On the significance of European knowledge to Orthodox churches, see B. Heyberger, ‘East and West: A Connected History of Eastern Christianity’ in Ioana Feodorov, Bernard Heyberger and Samuel Noble (eds), *Arabic Christianity between the Ottoman Levant and Eastern Europe* (Leiden, 2021), pp. 12-3, 16-22.

³¹² M. P. Penn, ‘Know Thy Enemy: the Materialization of Orthodoxy in Syriac Manuscripts’ in L. Ingeborg Lied and H. Lundhaug (eds), *Snapshots of Evolving Traditions: Jewish and Christian Manuscript Culture, Textual Fluidity, and New Philology* (Berlin, 2017), pp. 221-41.

³¹³ *Ibid.*, pp. 224-235.

culture. If we consider the wide range of manuscripts which the affluent Patriarch George III donated to Saffron Monastery – including the Chronicle of Michael the Great,³¹⁸ the Old Testament in Syriac,³¹⁹ a commentary on the Pentateuch by Cyril of Alexandria,³²⁰ and the canons of Clement of Rome³²¹ – the three Catholic-authored texts suddenly seem less a reflection of special interests.³²² Such procurement practices, we must bear in mind, were not unidirectional: the Catholic convert Michael Jarwah, for instance, acquired the works of both Latin Catholics and Syriac Orthodox contemporaries in the same period.³²³ Moreover, during Jarwah’s sojourn at Saffron Monastery, the nun Sayyidah copied a collection of theological treatises by Maphrian Simon of Tur Abdin, entitled *The Chariot of Mysteries* (*Markabat al-asrār al-‘aqlīyah*), under his direction.³²⁴ Moreover, if we return our focus to the Mardin locality, we are reminded that the *Trumpet of Heaven* is the only text which binds its three Christian communities. Though it might not explain the presence of all the Catholic-authored materials identified above, the role of geography in determining patterns of textual diffusion and popularity should also be taken into account.

Catholic-authored literature represents a modest yet dynamic aspect to the Syriac Orthodox collections of Mardin. The role of the Maronite confession over any others is a notable contrast to the Catholic texts in the Chaldean milieu, as is the lack of any literature of Syriac Catholic provenance. While some of the manuscripts were procured from outside Mardin, almost half of this literature appears to have been either commissioned by the Syriac Orthodox hierarchy or gifted by them to the patriarchal see. Certain characteristics of these manuscripts – the employment of Arabic Karshuni, patriarchal patronage – even evoke aspects of the wider Syriac Orthodox scribal movement based at Saffron Monastery during this period. Yet, while we might speculate at the benefit of these materials for composing anti-Catholic polemics, or their betrayal of personal Catholic sympathies, we must also

³¹⁸ CFMM 214 (1759), ff. 338v-339r.

³¹⁹ CFMM 1 (1702-18), f. 3r.

³²⁰ CFMM 70 (1741-2), f. 6r.

³²¹ CFMM 312 (latest 1781), f. 249v; CFMM 331 (latest 1781), f. 110v.

³²² I.e., CFMM 114, f. 1r; CFMM 115, f. 4r; CFMM 354, f. 2r.

³²³ See e.g. the *Book of Salvation* of John the Carmelite, commissioned by Jarwah in 1760 (Charfet Syriac 20/6), and the sermons of Simon of Tur ‘Abdīn, which he acquired in 1761 (Charfet Syriac 13/6). Catalogue entries: Armalet, *Catalogue des manuscrits de Charfet*, p. 287, 235.

³²⁴ Charfet Syriac 9/27 (1766): Armalet, *Catalogue des manuscrits de Charfet*, p. 198.

acknowledge that they may not have been assigned meanings of confessional identity by contemporary audiences. For both the Syriac Orthodox and eighteenth-century Christian Mardin as a whole, perhaps Catholic writings were simply an inescapable – and, to differing degrees, desirable – element of manuscript culture.

Conclusion

In the most basic sense, this study has demonstrated that the Armenian, Chaldean and Syriac Orthodox communities in Mardin were all involved in manuscript production during the first half of the eighteenth century. Each of these communities, moreover, engaged with Catholic literature on some level, as producers or procurers. These conclusions can be drawn despite the dispersal and devastating loss of materials over time.

While the sources used in this study may not offer us a complete picture, they do provide a snapshot of a diverse and dynamic manuscript culture in Christian Mardin during the period 1662-1783. The evidence indicates that each local Christian community nurtured their own scribal traditions, from the texts they copied to the language and scripts they used to the places in which they produced them. Some of these traditions were evolving during the scrutinised period – though not necessarily in tandem with other local Christian communities. In fact, for the Chaldean and Syriac Orthodox communities, two separate scribal movements can be witnessed over the course of the eighteenth century. These movements were directed by the hierarchies of each church, based in Diyarbakır and Mardin respectively, and driven – often in explicit terms – by an agenda to develop and reinforce their confessional identities. While the Chaldeans cultivated a new corpus of original and translated European literature to underpin their fledgling Catholic status, the Syriac Orthodox looked to both traditional and new contributions, sometimes in conversation with Catholicism, to reform the textual basis for their confessional identity. Disparate practical situations must also be acknowledged. The Chaldeans at the Church of Rabban Hormizd, who seem to have lacked a bishop for the first quarter of the eighteenth century, initially procured their manuscripts from outside Mardin, whereas the Syriac Orthodox enjoyed a flourishing local scribal industry at Saffron Monastery, the patriarchal see.

The role of Catholic literature in these scribal movements is another distinguishing factor. While Catholic texts were central to the Chaldean movement, they represent only a fraction of the Syriac

Orthodox collections. Notwithstanding one or two examples, moreover, we see a lack of symmetry in the exposure of these communities to Catholic doctrine and thought. The Chaldean Church both created their own Catholic literature and obtained Latin Catholic materials, whereas the Syriac Orthodox predominantly consumed Eastern Catholic works. Remarkably, Maronite scholarship was more prevalent in the Syriac Orthodox collections than that of any other Catholic community – even those who shared their confessional and/or geographical origins; namely, the Syriac Catholics and the Chaldeans. The Chaldeans and Syriac Orthodox also acquired Catholic manuscripts from different locations, and accessed them in different scripts. All this not only casts doubt on a local, cross-confessional Catholic literary movement in Mardin, but also on any tangible Syriac Catholic scribal presence during this period. The survival of a local Syriac Catholic history in Arabic script from this period, the *Life of Eliya*, given much weight by historians like Armalet, thus becomes even more of an anomaly.

The procurement of Catholic-authored materials by the Syriac Orthodox hierarchy in Mardin pushes the boundaries of this discussion in several directions. Catholic literature may have been utilised for apologetic aims, particularly given the record of figures such as Patriarch Shukr Allāh and Metropolitan George al-Ḥalabī. But we may also question whether the presence of exceptional texts necessarily implies or negates confessional agendas. Is it possible that this literature, regardless of its Catholic provenance, was perceived as both intellectually and spiritually edifying in its own right? Or could it point more to patterns of diffusion and popularity within the region, perhaps even the inevitability of encounters with Catholic materials? By this last interpretation, Catholic literature could, ironically, act as one of the few bridges between the distinct Christian scribal cultures of eighteenth-century Mardin.

Finally, this study emphasises the need when researching the spread of Catholicism not only to identify trends within specific geographical areas, but also across specific local communities. Only then do some of the idiosyncrasies of Christian Mardin and its shifting confessional contours come into focus: Syriac as a Catholic language and Arabic as an Orthodox one; innovative ‘traditionalists’; Arabic script recast into Syriac letters; Orthodox procuring Catholic literature; and ‘Nestorian-Chaldean’ as a label. Even in their current incomplete state, the manuscripts of Mardin offer boundless potential for exploring confessional identity in early modern Ottoman society.

Conclusion

‘Becoming Catholic in Ottoman Mardin’ is not the story of one faith or one community. Rather, it has traced a local Christian society undergoing an extraordinary transition, magnified so that we can observe its distinct components and workings. Far from just a backdrop, the traditions and dynamics of the Christians of Mardin were integral to how the new Catholic faith spread among them. Each Christian community – Syriac Orthodox, Armenian, East Syriac – experienced the reformulation of their confessional identities differently during this period. But the idiosyncratic ways in which religious change met Mardin have only emerged through deep study of the sources rooted in this local context; a miniature testament to our continuously developing understanding of how Catholicism came to be a global religion.

The investigation opened with one of the richest and most enduring bodies of scholarship on Catholicism in Mardin: the historical writings of the Syriac Catholic priest and Mardin local, Iṣḥāq Armalet, produced between 1907 and 1915. Yet the historical vision which Armalet – and, equally, his contemporaries – crafted is in desperate need of reevaluation. His agenda was innovative, consisting quite literally – in his own words – of filling a “blank white page” in the history of his Syriac Catholic community, and particularly within his hometown of Mardin.¹ However, his agenda was framed by a specific web of circumstances: the position of Christians in late Ottoman society, the *Nahḍah* intellectual movement, the recent consolidation of the Syriac Catholic Church, and tension between the Syriac Orthodox and Catholics of Mardin – a tension in which Armalet himself was even, at moments, directly implicated. Close analysis of Armalet’s oeuvre has exposed his distinct methods: manipulating the Syriac Orthodox ecclesiastical and scholarly heritage to incorporate a Catholicism inherent from the beginning; and situating his hometown of Mardin and pioneering local converts, such as Andrew Akhījān, Safar al-Mārdīnī and Eliya ibn al-Kuzayr, within a successful Catholic rejuvenation from the seventeenth century, sealed by the efforts Patriarch Antony Samḥīrī in the nineteenth century. Armalet’s histories, which sometimes veer into the autobiographical and anecdotal, were inextricably bound to his

¹ Quotation from SPFH (= Harissa, Société des Missionnaires de Saint Paul) 401 bis (after 1948), p. 3.

communal and geographical belonging. They fostered a linear, one-dimensional narrative of a Syriac Catholicism which flourished in Mardin from an early stage and was a formidable opponent to its Orthodox counterparts. It is an essential historical legacy which this thesis, through shedding new light on the chronology and complexity of confessional change within this locale, has sought to scrutinise and problematise.

The rest of this thesis has analysed different dimensions to the changing Christian landscape of Mardin between 1662-1783: a personal account of Catholic conversion, local churches and monasteries, and local manuscript culture. Offering an alternative to history focused on Catholic missions, the investigation has drawn on a considerable corpus of manuscripts emanating from the Mardin context, reflecting indigenous languages and styles of record-keeping. In symmetry with the later contributions of Işhaq Armalet, our sources invariably originated within the ecclesiastical domain. These sources not only represent the individuals most concerned with interpreting and implementing confessional change within their local environments; they also have an inherent tendency towards introspection and exclusion of other communities.² As such, they perhaps bear the closest resemblance to official church histories from within Mardin. Moreover, though written by clerics of different ranks and rites, we have observed their limitations: there are few voices from the Armenian community; they tell us little about interfaith relations with the Muslims of Mardin, nor indeed what confessional change meant to the laity, the majority of the local Christian population. Their position in Ottoman society, while often imperceptible, does shine through at times: in records of local events, in church-building petitions to authorities and, most notably, in Eliya's interactions in the markets and courts of Mardin. Curiously, our sources rarely capture the question of *why* people chose to become Catholic. Even the detailed self-narrative of Eliya glosses over his conversion as a moment of spiritual awakening, quickly overshadowed by the social disturbance it created – as though the event itself was far less meaningful than the outcome. What the sources do offer us is a strong sense of identity; a sense of their belonging to a particular religious community, what that community stood for, and how it differed from other communities. Although we cannot escape their inherent bias, these sources have together provided a

² Pointed out in H. Murre-van den Berg, *Scribes and Scriptures: The Church of the East in the Eastern Ottoman Provinces (1500-1850)* (Leuven, 2015), p. 39.

compelling window into how local clergy in Mardin negotiated their confessional identities during this dynamic period.

This study has first and foremost expanded our knowledge of the chronology and key characters of the emergence of the Catholic faith in Mardin. We gain a strong impression that local individuals, as opposed to foreign missionaries, were most instrumental to the spread of Catholicism, and that each local community had separate timelines of Catholic reception. The sources indicate that the East Syriac community began developing a Catholic identity from at least the late seventeenth century. The founding story of the new Chaldean Catholic Church, authored by Metropolitan ‘Abd al-Aḥad, included Mardin in the proselytising activities of Metropolitan Joseph of Diyarbakır during the final decades of the seventeenth century, before his patriarchal ascension in 1681. Though this account was not written until 1719, several other sources suggest local contacts with Catholicism during this period: the ostensible use of the Church of Rabban Hormizd by the Jesuit Michel Nau around 1680-1682; the short-lived appointment of a metropolitan for Mardin in 1683; Eliya’s witness to a Chaldean priest and a community loyal to Patriarch Joseph II in the early eighteenth century; and the engagement of local clergy with Catholicising literature and liturgies around the same time. Only from the mid-eighteenth century onwards, however, do we observe a flourishing local Chaldean scribal culture under Metropolitan Simon al-Āmidī (1758-1788), inscribing Mardin within the hierarchical and devotional framework of the Chaldean Church.

The Catholic trajectory of the Armenians of Mardin is most vividly conveyed in the *Life of Eliya*, most likely composed in the first half of the eighteenth century. The account situates the Catholic origins of the Armenian community in the return of the apostolic missionary and graduate of the Collegio Urbano, Melkon Tasbasian, to his native Mardin in 1700. The sense of a new Catholic era with Melkon is emphasised by the disruption which his evangelism seemingly unleashes on local Christian society. Although we must be cautious of Eliya’s hagiographic depictions, the surviving correspondence of Melkon with the Propaganda Fide also chronicles his struggles to establish his Catholic leadership in Mardin, both from within his community and from the Syriac Orthodox clergy. By 1709, Melkon had won enough support to be consecrated as the first Armenian Catholic metropolitan of Mardin by the

Uniate patriarch of Cilicia, Peter Bidzag, verified in a document sent to the Propaganda Fide.³ Although Metropolitan Melkon fled to Constantinople in 1711, where he ultimately met his death five years later, his appointment secured Mardin as an Armenian Catholic archdiocese. He was succeeded by Metropolitan Mardiros Markar Tuhmanian (1716-1737). Due to the loss of the scribal heritage of the Armenian community, our insights into how their Catholic identity progressed from within is limited. According to missionary reports, the Armenian Church of St. George was still under Catholic control by the mid-eighteenth century.

With respect to Syriac Catholicism in Mardin, the *Life of Eliya* similarly equates the return of Melkon in 1700 with the initial stirrings of Catholicism among Syriac Orthodox locals – not least, of course, himself. Syriac Catholicism already had some history in Mardin, with conversions by several prominent prelates such as Bishop Safar al-Mārdīnī and Metropolitan Timothy Karnūk in the late seventeenth century. Yet there is no evidence to suggest that these individuals, both of whom emigrated to Rome and apparently actively avoided return to Mardin, had any involvement in local Catholic evangelism; Eliya instead mourns the unfulfilled potential of earlier converts. In many ways, his account reads as an apology for Syriac Catholicism which, despite his best efforts to establish a suitable leader and church, was unable to take root against opposition from the Orthodox patriarchate in Mardin. One historian of late Ottoman Mardin even claimed that the resorting of Syriac Catholic converts to the Armenian Church during this phase had altered the ethnic homogeneity of the Armenian community.⁴ For their part, local Syriac Orthodox sources from the eighteenth century confine accounts of Catholicism to their ostensible triumph over the Uniate patriarchate established in Aleppo between 1662-1701. Hints of a local Syriac Catholicism do not emerge again until the first-person account of Michael Jarwah, composed in 1785, which details his short-lived attempts to establish a Uniate patriarchate and Catholicise the Orthodox community in Mardin between 1781-1782. Eliya remains one of the only testimonies to a Syriac Catholic presence in Mardin during the eighteenth century, underlining why the likes of Işhaq Armalet and Louis Cheikho were so drawn to it. As far as can be seen, the Syriac Catholics

³ SC (= Scrittura riferite nei Congressi) Armeni, vi, f. 124r.

⁴ S. de Courtois, *The Forgotten Genocide: Eastern Christians, The Last Arameans* (Piscataway, NJ, 2004), pp. 170-1.

of Mardin remained deprived of a formal church or ecclesiastical framework until the conversion of Metropolitan Antony Samḥīrī in 1827.⁵

While these trajectories provide us with a fuller image than previously of Catholic diffusion in Mardin, there remain gaps in the source material. They do not account, for example, for the covert practice of Catholicism outside of church environments, or vacant periods in church leadership. They even raise doubts about the suitability of the designated timeframe of this project: while 1662 appears somewhat early for the reception of Catholicism in Mardin, 1783 is arguably also too early to draw a line across evolving confessional identities within the local Christian population. What we can surmise, however, is a record of diverse Catholic movements for the three Eastern traditions in Mardin, led by local individuals, and which encountered varying levels of opposition, success and historical attention.

Alongside these differing trajectories, the investigation has also shown how interconfessional relations – an inescapable aspect, we must assume, of everyday life in Mardin – contributed to emergent Catholicism. Eliya ibn al-Kuzayr encapsulated this with his own conversion at the hands of an Armenian Catholic, and gestured to cross-confessional Catholic networks in Mardin through instances of church sharing, clerical cooperation and material assistance. Less tangible aspects too, such as a sense of educational superiority over their traditional communities, united Catholic converts. Eliya also recounts coordinated manoeuvres by the Syriac and Armenian Orthodox communities when confronted with the spread of Catholicism. On the other hand, the examples in the *Life of Eliya* relate a practical dimension to interconfessional engagement which is harder to glean from our other source materials. When looking to local churches and manuscript culture, we find much clearer discourses of confessional boundaries, and minimal evidence of spatial or textual interaction between different Christian communities. Yet, rather than negating the presence of interconfessional contacts in Mardin, this points to how these two domains were much more significant and purposed to the consolidation of confessional identities than the narrative of Eliya.

Specific ecclesiastical and economic dynamics among the local Christian population were also integral to how struggles between Catholic and Orthodox factions played out during the studied period.

⁵ See J. M. Fiey, *Pour un Oriens Christianus Novus: répertoire des diocèses syriaques orientaux et occidentaux* (Stuttgart, 1993), p. 238.

Churches and monasteries became immersed in these controversies, significant as symbols of communal prosperity and identity, financial resources and platforms for confessional conditioning. As well as highlighting contested sites at various junctures, such as the Churches of St. George and Rabban Hormizd in town, and Saffron Monastery just outside of Mardin, contemporary accounts more generally paint a sharp disparity in the ecclesiastical infrastructure of local Christian communities – a factor which had practical implications for the diffusion of Catholicism. By the late seventeenth century, the church and monastic sites of the Armenian and East Syriacs within the locality appear to have significantly reduced, meaning that their Catholic movements were focused on each of their respective churches in the town. Meanwhile, multiple accounts attest that the Syriac Orthodox were strengthening their physical and hierarchical presence in Mardin and surrounding countryside. This not only involved an extensive programme of church restorations, but also – most importantly – the revival of the patriarchal residence at Saffron Monastery at the end of the seventeenth century, replacing previous preferences for Aleppo and Diyarbakır. The changing church topography of Mardin thus created a relative disadvantage for Catholicism, particularly within the Syriac Orthodox tradition.

The issue of Syriac Orthodox dominance in Mardin also fed into local Christian power dynamics more generally. We see the situation compellingly sketched in the *Life of Eliya*, in which the Syriac Orthodox patriarch transpires as a leader for all Christian communities in Mardin, bolstered by the centralisation of patriarchal power in the locality and the apparent absence of any leadership for the Armenians and Chaldeans. Faced with Melkon and Eliya's attempts to establish Catholic figureheads and churches for the Armenian and Syriac Orthodox communities, the patriarch morphs into a direct and aggressive source of resistance to Catholicism – recounted in both the *Life* and Melkon's reports to the Propaganda Fide. While the Armenian Catholics did manage to install Melkon as metropolitan, this phase is silent on any lasting institutional achievements for Syriac Catholicism. The recent consolidation of the resources and authority of the Syriac Orthodox Church hierarchy is thus key context to the knotted course of Catholicism in Mardin.

Perhaps the most compelling snapshot of local Christian identities amidst the confessional unrest has emerged through analysis of its manuscript culture. The first half of the eighteenth century witnessed the flourishing of two distinct scribal cultures within the Chaldean and Syriac Orthodox communities

of Mardin. The confessionalization paradigm enabled us to describe parallel processes occurring within these two communities; how each simultaneously harnessed text and paratext to develop their confessional identities – one moulding a fledgling Catholic identity, and the other reinforcing Orthodox tradition. While both produced new materials to support these confessional agendas, they evinced great diversity in their scribal contexts and practices. The Chaldean Church of Rabban Hormizd and the Syriac Orthodox Saffron Monastery, despite their geographic proximity, were isolated scribal worlds. They differed in their focus as producers and consumers, their tastes in confessional literature, and the language and script of their manuscripts – aspects which were arguably just as important to their identity as the content of their texts. The Chaldean manuscripts indicated a gradual development of Catholic identity in Mardin throughout the eighteenth century, built on liturgical reform, transmission of Catholic doctrinal and devotional works, and scribal innovations. The Syriac Orthodox, though their limited engagement with Catholic literature opened up interesting avenues of analysis, maintained distinct aspects of their reforming confessional agenda, and offer little impression of nascent Syriac Catholic belonging or influence from other local Catholic identities. In this sense, the history of confessional change and the specificity of Mardin and its diverse Christian communities crystallises in local manuscript culture, and calls into question Armalet's vision of early Syriac Catholic flourishing in his hometown.

In spite of how pivotal local context was to these developments, Christianity in late seventeenth- and eighteenth-century Mardin was not locked away from external influences. Key points of connection on the Catholic grid have transpired throughout this study: Diyarbakır, Aleppo, Rome and, to a lesser extent, Mosul and Constantinople. The issue of churches directed us to Orthodox-Catholic controversies traversing local boundaries: Syriac Orthodox clerics in Mardin expressed concern over Catholic movements at the Churches of Our Lady in Aleppo and Diyarbakır, while Joseph I oversaw Catholicising measures at both the Church of St. Petion in Diyarbakır and Rabban Hormizd in Mardin. The geography of Catholicism in Mardin came into sharper focus through analysis of the manuscript corpus. For the first half of the eighteenth century, Mardin emerges as a satellite of Chaldean textual production in Diyarbakır, the new patriarchal see. Meanwhile, the Catholic manuscripts of the Syriac Orthodox collections demonstrated significant outside influence through their Maronite and Aleppan

provenance. Though we perceive distinct networks for local Uniate communities – Aleppo as the centre for Syriac Catholicism and Diyarbakır for the Chaldeans – these sites simultaneously had a supraconfessional significance.

In addition, several local characters within this investigation evoke the concept of a connected history of Eastern Christianity. Catholic converts connected to Mardin traversed multiple lands, such as the above-mentioned Safar al-Mārdīnī, who made it all the way to the Americas before settling in Rome, or the East Syriac Catholic convert Simon of Amid/Ada who, after a lengthy sojourn in Rome, spent the rest of his days in Pondicherry. Moreover, migration was not a purely Catholic phenomenon: for example, ‘Abd al-Nūr al-Āmidī, a key figure in the Syriac Orthodox literary reform at Saffron Monastery, spent time in various European countries. But perhaps the most compelling case in point for connected history is the Armenian Catholic missionary and metropolitan of Mardin, Melkon Tasbasian. Although we are familiar with Melkon’s trajectory by now – Mardin, Rome, Mardin, Constantinople – it is worth emphasising his preservation and representation as a cross-cultural product in contemporary sources. We find remarkable dichotomies in his identity as both a local and an immigrant: while people in Mardin accuse him of arriving from Rome with chests of gold in the *Life of Eliya*, his correspondence in the Propaganda Fide archives records him begging the Curia for funds to improve his pitiful existence. After leaving Mardin a second time, moreover, Melkon relates how at home he feels in Constantinople – surrounded by fellow Catholic “fugitives” from Mardin and finally able to put to use the five or six languages he had learned in Rome among the cosmopolitan population.⁶ As a local Catholic pioneer, Melkon’s life cements Mardin in connected histories of early modern Catholicism.

In all of the above ways, this thesis has captured the uniqueness of Mardin, trying to construct as full an image as possible of local Christian identity and the origins of Catholicism, told from within. There remain further avenues for exploration: systematic study of the extensive correspondence of Metropolitan Melkon Tasbasian with the Propaganda Fide would undoubtedly offer deeper insight into the process of Catholicisation among the Armenians; research into the legal registers for Mardin (*Mardin Şer’iye Sicilleri*) in Ankara could better situate local Christian communities as Ottoman

⁶ SC Armeni, vi, f. 469r.

subjects, an aspect at times beyond our grasp in the manuscripts.⁷ On another note, the writings of other early twentieth-century historians which this study has briefly mentioned – Ephrem Naqqashah, Philippe de Tarrazi – would offer compelling material for tracing the development of Syriac Catholic ecclesiastical history.

The year 1783, the end point of this study, could justifiably seem far too early to conclude our investigation into evolving local Christian identities. In Mardin, there was no neat end point for these processes; they dragged on into the early twentieth century, at which point the history and historiography of these communities became entangled in the scholarship of local contemporaries like Ishaq Armalet. Back in Lebanon in 1919, Armalet would publish a testimony of the genocide which lost him his brother and almost wiped out the Christian population of his hometown. For the few Christians in Mardin today, interconfessional strife has faded into a distant past. The congregation rotates its service each Sunday among churches belonging to different confessions – Armenian Catholic, Syriac Orthodox, Syriac Catholic, Chaldean and Protestant. While the churches remain locked most of the time, their doors are graciously opened for any interested visitors.

⁷ For a list of the Mardin registers, see A. Akgündüz, *Şer'ıye sicilleri: mahiyeti, toplu kataloğu, ve seçme hükümler* (Istanbul, 1988), pp. 203-4.

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Publications of Iṣḥāq Armalet

Articles

- ‘Suryānī-Malakī – wa-huwwa Yūḥannā Müdyānā Muṭrān Mārdīn al-mūnafisitī al-Rahāwī’, *al-Machriq*, 10 (1907), pp. 996-1001
- ‘al-Mafriyān Bāsīliyūs Iṣḥāq Jubayr al-Mawṣilī’, *al-Machriq*, 11 (1908), pp. 286-91
- ‘al-Sayyid Athanāsiyūs Safar al-‘Aṭṭār al-Mārdīnī’, *al-Machriq*, 11 (1908), pp. 563-70
- ‘Iṣḥāq Muṭrān Nīnawī’, *al-Machriq*, 12 (1909), pp. 215-220
- ‘Lum‘ah tāriḫīyah fī adyār Mārdīn’, *al-Machriq*, 12 (1909), pp. 760-770
- ‘al-Siyāḥah fī Ṭūr ‘Abdīn’, *al-Machriq*, 16 (1913), pp. 561-577, 662-674, 739-753, 835-854
- ‘al-Tidhkār al-khamsīnī bi-wifāt al-Sayyid Ighnāṭiyūs Anṭūn Samḥīrī Baṭriyark al-Suryān al-Anṭākī’, *al-Machriq*, 17 (1914), pp. 401-23
- ‘Fī al-baṭriyarkīyah al-Anṭākīyah’, *al-Machriq*, 21 (1923), pp. 494-507, 589-599, 660-671
- ‘Jathāliqat al-Mashriq wa-mafārinat al-Suryān’, *al-Machriq*, 22 (1924), pp. 182-191, 272-280, 364-371, 417-426, 519-527, 604-613
- ‘Sūrat īmān al-Sayyid Ighnāṭiyūs Mattā – Baṭriyark al-Suryān al-Ya‘āqibah, 1782-1817’, *al-Machriq*, 22 (1924), pp. 1002-1006
- ‘al-Suryān fī al-qaṭr al-Maṣrī’, *al-Machriq*, 23 (1925), 282-292, 384-389, 448-458, 536-544, 574-590, 741-755, 810-815
- ‘al-Ṭā’ifah al-Suryānīyah wa-al-qunṣulīyah al-Faransāwīyah fī Baghdād’, *al-Machriq*, 24 (1926), pp. 99-113
- ‘al-Rahbanah al-Bindikīyah fī Falastīn’, *al-Machriq*, 30 (1932), pp. 401-16
- ‘al-Rutab al-kahnūtīyah fī al-tā’ifatayn al-Marūnīyah wa-al-Suryānīyah’, *al-Machriq*, 30 (1932), 161-169, 297-302, 365-371, 530-537, 744-751, 848-855, 933-939
- ‘Akhbār safar al-Mūnsinniyūr Fransīs Bīkīt ilā bilād Armīnīyah wa-al-‘Ajam’, *al-Machriq*, 32 (1934), pp. 109-130, 282-295, 441-459, 592-608
- ‘al-Malakīyūn (baṭriyarkīyathum al-Anṭākīyah wa-lughatuhum al-waṭanīyah wa-al-ṭaqṣīyah’ *al-Machriq*, 34 (1936), pp. 37-66, 211-34, 361-94, 497-526
- ‘Asmā’ al-qurā al-Lubnānīyah al-Suryānīyah’ *al-Machriq*, 37 (1939), pp. 387-412
- ‘al-Qurā al-Suryānīyah fī mudun Sūriyah’ *al-Machriq*, 38 (1940), pp. 175-198
- ‘al-Ṭuqūṣ al-Suryānīyah al-Malakīyah wa-maktabat Bakirkī al-baṭriyarkīyah’, *al-Machriq*, 38 (1940), pp. 41-62

— ‘al-Suryān wa-al-Malakīyūn’ *al-Machriq*, 39 (1941), pp. 355-382

— ‘Tārīkh al-duwwal al-Suryānī’, *al-Machriq*, 43 (1949), pp. 463-502; 45 (1951), pp. 25-70, 181-199, 351-362, 517-532; 46 (1952), pp. 7-28, 385-400, 513-524; 47 (1953), pp. 1-23, 423-470; 48 (1954), pp. 418-457; 49 (1955), pp. 736-749; 50 (1956), 1-14, 129-152, 257-274, 385-414

— ‘Waṣf anājīl siṭranjīliyah Suryānīyah muṣawwarah’, *al-Machriq*, (1953), pp. 524-541

Books

— *Reggath Shabrē* (2 vols, Charfet Monastery, 1907-8)

— *Kitāb al-zahrah al-dhakīyah fī al-baṭrīkarkīyah al-Suryānīah al-Anṭākīya* (Beirut, 1909)

— *Kitāb al-raj‘ah fī tanfīdh kalimah intiqādīyah* (Beirut, 1910)

— *al-Quṣārā fī nakabāt al-Naṣārā* (Charfet Monastery, 1919)

— *Salwā al-rā‘idīn fī amthāl Mārdīn* (Beirut, 1927)

— *Lettres de Josué, fils de David, surnommé Bar Kilo, de Sévère Jacques de Bartelli, surnommé Bar-Chacaco, et de David de Beit-Rabban* (Beirut, 1928)

— *al-Hurūb al-ṣalībīyah fī al-āthār al-Suryānīyah* (Beirut, 1929)

— *Ajmal al-zahrah fī ḥadīqat Āl Habrā* (Beirut, 1934)

— *Wathā‘iq khaṭṭīyah fī ‘alāqat Āl Tarrāzī bi-al-millah al-Suryānīyah* (Beirut, 1934)

— *al-Ṭurfah fī makḥṭuṭāt Dayr al-Shurfah/ Catalogue des manuscrits de Charfet, Publié à l’occasion du 150e anniversaire de l’installation du siège patriarcal à Charfet, 1786-1936* (Jounieh, 1937)

— *Tārīkh Dayr Sayyidat al-Najāt ayy Dayr al-Shurfah (1786-1946)* (Jounieh, 1946)

— *Mār Ya ‘qūb usquf Sarūj al-malfān baḥṭh intiqādī tārīkhī dīnī* (Jounieh, 1946)

— *Āthār Faransā wa-ma‘āthirhā fī Lubnān wa-fī Sūriyā* (Beirut, 1946)

— *Usrat Āl Tarrāzī* (Beirut, 1947)

— *Rasūl al-shabāb al-qiddīs Yūḥannā Buskū, 1815-1888* (Beirut, 1948)

Appendix Two
The Mardin collections corpus

Church of the Forty Martyrs (228 MSS)

HMML Project No.	Language	Date of Copying
CFMM 1	Syriac	1702-18
CFMM 26/1	Karshuni	1782
CFMM 30	Syriac	1700-1900
CFMM 36	Syriac/Karshuni	1691
CFMM 42	Syriac/Karshuni	1700
CFMM 45	Syriac	1600-1800
CFMM 48	Syriac	1738-9
CFMM 49	Syriac/Karshuni	1700-1800
CFMM 54	Arabic	1676-7
CFMM 57	Karshuni	1700-1800
CFMM 58	Karshuni	1700-1900
CFMM 61	Syriac	1700-1800
CFMM 65	Syriac/Karshuni	1713-4

CFMM 70	Karshuni	1741-2
CFMM 73	Karshuni	1719
CFMM 74	Karshuni	1713-4
CFMM 75	Karshuni	1700-1900
CFMM 79	Karshuni	1600-1800
CFMM 81	Karshuni	1600-1800
CFMM 83	Karshuni	1709-20
CFMM 84	Karshuni	1728
CFMM 86	Karshuni	1700-1900
CFMM 104	Karshuni	1755
CFMM 105	Karshuni	1755
CFMM 110	Syriac/Karshuni	1600-1800
CFMM 111	Karshuni	1600-1700
CFMM 114	Karshuni	latest 1781
CFMM 115	Karshuni	1717
CFMM 116	Karshuni	1700-1900

CFMM 122	Karshuni	1600-1800
CFMM 123	Karshuni	1763
CFMM 124	Arabic	1734
CFMM 125	Karshuni	1600-1800
CFMM 126	Syriac/Karshuni	1600-1700
CFMM 133	Syriac	1700-1800
CFMM 134	Syriac	1722
CFMM 135	Syriac	1722
CFMM 136	Syriac	1725
CFMM 137	Syriac	1700-1800
CFMM 155	Syriac	1711
CFMM 156	Syriac	1700-1800
CFMM 157	Syriac	1700-1800
CFMM 160	Syriac	1600-1800
CFMM 161	Syriac	1600-1700
CFMM 170	Syriac	1700-1900

CFMM 171	Syriac/Karshuni	1700-1900
CFMM 172	Syriac	1700-1900
CFMM 181	Karshuni	1700-1800
CFMM 190	Syriac	1700-1800
CFMM 193	Karshuni	1747-53
CFMM 194	Karshuni	1667
CFMM 199	Karshuni	1700-1756
CFMM 214	Karshuni	1759
CFMM 246	Karshuni	latest 1767
CFMM 249	Syriac/Karshuni	1714-5
CFMM 254	Arabic	1700-1900
CFMM 255	Syriac	1700-1800
CFMM 256	Syriac	1671
CFMM 258	Syriac	1799
CFMM 261	Syriac	1757-8
CFMM 263	Syriac	1600-1800

CFMM 265	Syriac	1500-1700
CFMM 282	Syriac	1763-4
CFMM 285	Karshuni	1600-1800
CFMM 286	Karshuni	1500-1700
CFMM 287	Syriac	1717
CFMM 288	Karshuni	1782-1819
CFMM 289	Karshuni	1600-1800
CFMM 290	Karshuni	1700-1800
CFMM 291	Karshuni	1600-1700
CFMM 292	Syriac/Karshuni	1700-1900
CFMM 294	Karshuni/Arabic	1772
CFMM 295	Karshuni	1600-1700
CFMM 296	Karshuni	1700-1800
CFMM 298	Syriac/Karshuni	1682
CFMM 299	Karshuni	1600-1800
CFMM 306	Karshuni	1600-1700

CFMM 312	Arabic	latest 1781
CFMM 313	Karshuni	1700-1800
CFMM 315	Karshuni	1700
CFMM 316	Syriac	1661
CFMM 318	Karshuni	1500-1700
CFMM 326	Karshuni	1668-9
CFMM 331	Karshuni	1700-1800
CFMM 351	Syriac	1600-1700
CFMM 352	Syriac/Karshuni	1674
CFMM 354	Karshuni	1600-1800
CFMM 355	Syriac/Karshuni	1718
CFMM 360	Karshuni	1726-7
CFMM 361	Karshuni	1727-8
CFMM 363	Syriac	1700-1800
CFMM 365	Karshuni	1669
CFMM 375	Karshuni	1753

CFMM 376	Karshuni	1700-1800
CFMM 381	Syriac	1700-1800
CFMM 382	Syriac	1700-1800
CFMM 383	Karshuni	1700-1800
CFMM 384	Karshuni	1700-1800
CFMM 386	Karshuni/Arabic	1579-1850
CFMM 390	Karshuni	1500-1700
CFMM 391	Karshuni	1722
CFMM 392	Karshuni	1768-9
CFMM 393	Karshuni	1777-8
CFMM 399	Karshuni	1739-40
CFMM 401	Karshuni	1750-1850
CFMM 407	Syriac/Karshuni	1600-1700
CFMM 409	Karshuni	1727-28
CFMM 410	Karshuni	1741
CFMM 413	Syriac	1785

CFMM 427	Karshuni	1750-1850
CFMM 430	Karshuni	1700-1800
CFMM 431	Karshuni	1750-1850
CFMM 432	Karshuni	latest 1782
CFMM 440	Karshuni	1771
CFMM 444	Karshuni	latest 1773
CFMM 447	Karshuni	1700-1800
CFMM 456	Karshuni	1753
CFMM 471	Syriac/Karshuni	1700-1800
CFMM 476	Syriac/Karshuni	1700-1800
CFMM 477	Syriac/Karshuni	1700-1900
CFMM 483	Syriac	1600-1700
CFMM 485	Syriac/Karshuni	1700-1800
CFMM 495	Syriac	latest 1744
CFMM 496	Syriac	1717
CFMM 497	Syriac/Karshuni	1778

CFMM 501	Syriac	1669-70
CFMM 502	Syriac/Karshuni	1678
CFMM 504	Syriac/Karshuni	1742
CFMM 509	Syriac	1700-1800
CFMM 510	Syriac	1781
CFMM 511	Syriac	1700-1800
CFMM 512	Syriac	1709
CFMM 513	Syriac	1700-1900
CFMM 516	Syriac	1747
CFMM 517	Syriac	1647-1800
CFMM 519	Syriac	1700-1800
CFMM 522	Syriac	1700-1900
CFMM 525	Syriac	1700-1800
CFMM 526	Syriac	1760
CFMM 527	Syriac	1746-7
CFMM 528	Syriac	1700-1900

CFMM 529	Syriac	1700-1800
CFMM 530	Syriac	1707
CFMM 534	Syriac/Arabic	1700-1900
CFMM 537	Karshuni	1700-1800
CFMM 538	Karshuni	1745-68
CFMM 539	Karshuni	1700-1800
CFMM 542	Karshuni	1749
CFMM 544	Syriac	1700-1900
CFMM 545	Syriac	1700-1900
CFMM 553	Syriac	1700-1900
CFMM 555/2	Karshuni	1600-1700
CFMM 556	Karshuni	1500-1700
CFMM 557	Syriac	1753
CFMM 559	Syriac/Karshuni	1700-1800
CFMM 561	Syriac/Karshuni	1676-7
CFMM 562	Karshuni	1600-1800

CFMM 563	Karshuni	1700-1900
CFMM 564	Karshuni	1700-1900
CFMM 564/2	Karshuni	1700-1900
CFMM 606	Syriac/Karshuni	1650-1750
CFMM 620	Syriac	1706
CFMM 659	Syriac/Karshuni	1737
CFMM 709	Karshuni	1700-1800
CFMM 733	Arabic	1650-1750
CFMM 780	Karshuni	1650-1750
CFMM 801	Karshuni/Arabic	1758
CFMM 818	Karshuni	1714
CFMM 819	Karshuni	1700-1800
CFMM 820	Karshuni	1789
CFMM 821	Karshuni	1700-1800
CFMM 831	Arabic	1700-1884
CFMM 832	Karshuni	1772

CFMM 834	Karshuni	1600-1700
CFMM 843	Karshuni/Arabic	1700-1800
CFMM 879	Arabic	1600-1700
CFMM 902	Arabic	1600-1700
CFMM 905	Arabic	1750-1850
CFMM 906	Arabic	1700-1847
CFMM 911	Arabic	1650-1750
CFMM 914	Arabic	1700-1800
CFMM 916	Arabic	1600-1700
CFMM 921	Arabic	1750-1850
CFMM 927	Arabic	1600-1700
CFMM 928	Arabic	1600-1700
CFMM 929	Arabic	1700-1800
CFMM 931	Arabic	1750-1850
CFMM 932	Arabic	1730
CFMM 934	Arabic	latest 1792

CFMM 937	Arabic	1700-1800
CFMM 938	Arabic	latest 1754
CFMM 940	Arabic	1600-1700
CFMM 941	Arabic	1600-1700
CFMM 943	Arabic	1700-1800
CFMM 946	Arabic	1725-1800
CFMM 953	Arabic	1794
CFMM 954	Arabic	1750-1850
CFMM 955	Arabic	1716-1717
CFMM 956	Arabic	latest 1687
CFMM 961	Arabic	1700-1800
CFMM 962	Arabic	1600-1700
CFMM 963	Persian	1712
CFMM 965	Turkish	1700-1800
CFMM 969	Turkish/Arabic	1600-1700
CFMM 970	Turkish	1747

CFMM 972	Turkish/Azerbaijani	1677
CFMM 973	Turkish	1600-1700
CFMM 974	Turkish	1738
CFMM 976	Turkish	1641-1700
CFMM 977	Turkish	1700-1752
CFMM 978	Turkish/Persian/Azerbaijani	1637-1678
CFMM 979	Turkish	1600-1700
CFMM 981	Turkish	1700-1800
CFMM 1000	Arabic	1650-1750
CFMM 1007	Arabic	1600-1700
CFMM 1018	Arabic	1700-1800
CFMM 1027	Arabic	1650-1750
CFMM 1029	Arabic	1750-1850
CFMM 1031	Arabic	1750-1850
CFMM 1039	Arabic	1750-1850
CFMM 1041	Arabic	1750-1850

CFMM 1052	Arabic	1750-1850
CFMM 1055	Syriac	1721
CFMM 1057	Syriac/Karshuni	1750
CFMM 1070	Syriac/Karshuni	1763
CFMM 1077	Arabic	1600-1700
CFMM 1091	Karshuni	1700-1799
CFMM 1135	Syriac/Karshuni	1725

Dayr Za'farān (41 MSS)

HMML Project No.	Language	Date of Copying
ZFRN 2	Karshuni	latest 1738
ZFRN 4	Arabic	1700-1800
ZFRN 5	Syriac/Karshuni	1600-1800
ZFRN 6	Syriac/Karshuni	1600-1800
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ZFRN 73	Syriac/Karshuni	1700-1800
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ZFRN 167	Syriac/Karshuni	1700-1800
ZFRN 176	Syriac	1700-1800
ZFRN 183	Syriac	1700-1900
ZFRN 188	Syriac/Karshuni	1771

ZFRN 191	Karshuni	1700-1900
ZFRN 197	Syriac/Karshuni /Armenian Karshuni/Turkish Karshuni/Persian Karshuni	1718
ZFRN 198	Karshuni	1763-4
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ZFRN 210	Arabic	1700-1800
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ZFRN 212	Karshuni	1769
ZFRN 213	Arabic	1700-1800
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ZFRN 215	Syriac/Karshuni	1600-1700
ZFRN 218	Karshuni	1747
ZFRN 219	Karshuni	1700-1900
ZFRN 227	Arabic	1700-1900
ZFRN 241	Arabic	1717-1838
ZFRN 246	Karshuni	1765
ZFRN 247	Karshuni	1767

ZFRN 394	Karshuni	1700-1800
ZFRN 397	Syriac/Karshuni	1728
ZFRN 400	Karshuni	latest 1738

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CCM 8	Karshuni	1681
CCM 10	Syriac/Karshuni	1700-1800
CCM 12	Karshuni	1705-19
CCM 13	Syriac/Karshuni/Turkish	1719
CCM 15	Arabic	1700-1800
CCM 16	Karshuni	1600-1700

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CCM 25	Syriac	1731
CCM 26	Arabic	1700-1800
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CCM 33	Karshuni	1734
CCM 39	Karshuni	1745
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CCM 58	Syriac	1742
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CCM 64	Syriac/Karshuni	1695

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CCM 104	Syriac	1759
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CCM 108	Syriac	1774
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CCM 439	Arabic	1700-1800
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CCM 452	Syriac	1705

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CCM 496	Karshuni	1766

CCM 498	Syriac/Turkish Karshuni	1700-1800
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CCM 512	Syriac	1700-1800
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CCM 544	Arabic	1700-1900
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CCM 547	Arabic	earliest 1767
CCM 550	Syriac	1650-1750

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CCM 563	Karshuni	1700-1800
CCM 565	Karshuni	1700-1800
CCM 567	Syriac/Karshuni	1706
CCM 569	Syriac	1709-1862
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