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From *Intibah* to #baytokh_ʿīdto: Literary Production in the American Syriac Orthodox Diaspora

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The Syriac Orthodox North American diaspora goes back to the late nineteenth century. The first to land on the Eastern shores of the United States was a skilled scribe, *Shammas* (deacon) Micha al-Naqqar. Micha was from Mosul and worked for American missionaries from the Boston area as well as for British missionaries. He learned English in Mosul and worked there as an interpreter for the missionaries. The missionary Dr. Grant called him an "intelligent and valuable assistant."[1] Micha immigrated to the United States, probably travelling with missionaries when they went back home. He arrived in the United States sometime in the 1840s. We do not know if Micha produced any manuscripts while living in the United States. We do not even know of Syriac Orthodox 'communities' back then.

By the 1880s, Syriac Orthodox from Kharput began to arrive in and around Worcester, MA. Immigrants from Diyarbakir settled in New Jersey and New York. Others from Tur Abdin resided in Rhode Island (not too far from Worcester). By the turn of the century, families began to coalesce into communities.

While most of the immigrants were labourers, we do encounter a few intellectuals and professionals early on. George Barsoom, born in Kharput in 1872, studied at Euphrates College before arriving in the US. He later attended a theological seminary in Chicago and subsequently followed a career in medicine. Abraham Yoosuf arrived in 1889 and attended Baltimore Medical School. He then opened a medical practice in Worcester in 1897 and became a prominent community member. Yoosuf later became a nationalist and produced many articles in English.[2] But we do not know of any literary production *during* the nineteenth century. Most of the other early immigrants must have produced letters that they sent to their families. These would have been written mainly in Ottoman Turkish. Nothing, as far as I know, survives from the 1890s.

1 Thomas Laurie, *Dr. Grant and the Mountain Nestorians* (Boston: Gould and Lincoln, 1853), 214.
2 A collection of his writings was reproduced in Abraham K. Yoosuf, *Assyria and the Paris Peace Conference* edited by Tomas Beth-Avdalla (Nineveh Press, 2017).

After all the early silence, 1909 marks the beginning of journalism by Suryanis with the release of the first issue of the newspaper *Intibah*. Its editor was a newcomer to the eastern shores. Gabriel [Jabbūr] Boyajy of College Point, NY, was already in the United States in 1900. The first issue of his *Intibah* appeared in 1909. It was mostly in Ottoman Turkish, written in his hand and produced on a mimeograph machine. In the summer of 1911, Nasif Hanna Qirmizi of Mardin arrived in New York City. Gabriel showed him around. Qirmizi gives us a description of how Gabriel worked:

> He showed me how he edits and prepares the newspaper. In addition to his daily work, you find him spending all evening composing and editing the newspaper with no one to help him except a red electric lantern.[3]

Intibah would be followed by two periodicals, one beating the other in size and duration of publication. These periodicals were primarily in Ottoman Turkish but also in Arabic, Syriac, and Armenian (probably in this order), a representation of the linguistic ecosystem the immigrants left behind. Within a few decades, a new generation of English speakers would continue the tradition of their parents and grandparents and produce periodicals in English.

The 1948 war between Jews and Arabs in Palestine would indirectly change everything in America. The Archbishop of Jerusalem was dispatched to the US to gather aid for the 1948 refugees. Instead, he settled in the US permanently against the wishes of his patriarch, and began to form an Archdiocesan structure, forcing such a trans-local structure down the throats of the American parishes. And with that, first, we begin to lose the voice of the individual and instead mostly hear from a top-down organisational structure, albeit with only a few individuals running the show; and second, the no-longer-immigrant parishes – by now second and third-generation Americans – would soon be transformed again to an immigrant community with a new flux of immigrants following the various wars of the Middle East starting with 1948. It would take a few decades for the archdiocese to settle in, before it began to produce bilingual liturgical editions for its parishes. It would be the first archdiocese to produce its own liturgical texts.

In what follows, I will attempt to navigate through the literature that has been produced and seek to contrast top-down vs bottom-up production, the latter ultimately returning in the twenty-first century with a vengeance with the rise of the Read-Write-Publish era and its social media arm. The Germanist Sylvie Moli-

3 *Initbāh* (Sept 1911), 1–2.

tor-Lübbert presents top-down and bottom-up as directional models vis-à-vis the writing process itself.[4] I will apply these models to the agency of literary production to understand the relationships between creators and audiences or, in the case of social media, "users."

Historical background

The first signs of community formation in the US appeared in the late 1890s when associations and organisations were formed. The social aspect of these formations has already been addressed in my *The Syriac Orthodox in North America (1895–1995)*. Here, I will concentrate on how such organisations interacted with the agents of literary production.

The first organisation we know of was formed in 1897 in Worcester, MA. We do not know if it had a name then (compare with the naming history of New Jersey's *TMS* below). Later picture captions named it the Assyrian Benefit Association. The women established their own organisations. The earliest known women organisation is *The Assyrian Ladies' Church Loving Association*, established in 1908 in Worcester. Closer to our topic, a Syriac language organisation was formed in 1910 in Fitchburg, MA, with a membership of individuals from Mardin and Kharput. In fact, New England produced such a bewildering number of associations that umbrella organisations became necessary. It is from the minutes – rather newspaper reports – of such meetings that we know of intended literary productions. A 1916 meeting of The Harpoot Union of Worcester formed a committee to look into finding a print-type solution to publish the newspaper *Beth Nahrin* – which, like its immediate predecessor *Intibah*, has been produced with mimeograph technology – and "other books." It seems that the Union had already asked a number of "writers" in a previous meeting to put together a collection of articles on history and literature, but now that project was put on hold until a print-type solution was found. During a 1917 meeting, the Union collected $250 (about $5,785 in 2022) from each member organisation towards the print-type project.

The first non-periodical publication was a byproduct of establishing one such organisation. Immigrants from Diyarbakir met in 1899 in Sterling, NJ, and formed an organisation. But they did not know what to call it, and they did not know what sort of purpose it should have. They simply felt that they needed an organisation. A newcomer attended a meeting that was held on March 25, 1900. The newcomer

4 Sylvie Molitor-Lübbert, "Scientific text production under electronic conditions. A Heuristic Model of Cognitive Requirements" from 1997 [second hand reference from https://medium.com/age-of-awareness/do-you-write-top-down-or-bottom-up-286469e0ec5c].

was none other than Gabriel Boyajy who would publish the *Intibah* newspaper nine years later. Gabriel suggested a purpose and a name: *Terakkiyât-ı Mekteb-i Süryânî* "Progress of Syriac Schools" with the specific purpose of opening a school in Diyarbakir. Boyajy wrote a constitution in Turkish Garshuni in 1910. The first article gave the Turkish name as above and stated that the association should be known in English as … (with a blank line to be filled out later). Boyajy published the constitution in 1912 with the blank line intact. But the publication's title page read, "The Assyrian Orphanage and School Association of America, Inc." This is our oldest publication with an English title. The organisation would become known in the Syriac world as *Taw Mim Simkath*, the letters of the acronym that makes up its Turkish name written in Garshuni form. During the 1920s and 1930s, branches of the *Terakki* organisation would be established in many American towns on the East Coast. One such organisation, known as the Assyrian Progressive Association, was established in New England in 1924 and began to publish a periodical named *Nineveh* in 1927, mostly written in Armenian with a few articles in subsequent issues in English and Turkish Garshuni.

Before discussing such bottom-up publications of the pre-diocesan period, it is worth pausing briefly to investigate what sort of publications the community consumed other than its own productions.

Early literary consumption

We are fortunate to have a collection of a few hundred manuscripts and rare printed books at the Assyrian Orthodox Church of the Virgin Mary, Paramus, NJ. The collection is made up of the collections of immigrants from the early 1900s. Their families have deposited their books in the Parish's library. These manuscripts and books give us an insight into what the community intellectuals consumed.

The library must have already existed in 1927 when Afram Barsoum, by then an Archbishop, was sent as an Apostolic Delegate to visit the community. He took the opportunity to visit libraries, including the New York Public Library, Harvard, and the University of Chicago, where he stayed for almost a year at the Oriental Institute. Under the entry for Bar ʿEbroyo's grammatical work *Ṣemḥe*, Barsoum tells us that the oldest manuscripts of this work are found in Florence, Deir al-Zaʿfaran, London, New Jersey, Jerusalem, Oxford, Boston, and "our library in an elegant hand."[5] The only known Syriac collections in New Jersey are those of Princeton's Firestone Library and the library of Princeton Theological Seminary. But *Ṣemḥe* is in neither.

5 Afram Barsoum, *al-Luʾlʾal-Manthūr* (Aleppo, second edition, 1956), 528.

Barsoum was referring to the library of the Paramus parish, then in West New York, NJ. I came across this manuscript in 2005 when I attempted to organise the library.

The immigrants must have brought most of the manuscripts with them. One such manuscript (*Book of Qandilo*, a liturgical text of repentance and the anointing of the sick) once belonged to Naoum Elias Palak (1868–1930), aka Naum Faiq [Naʿūm Fāʾiq], whom we will meet shortly.[6] An Arabic Garshuni note in the front reads:

اشترى هذا الكتاب مع كتب اخر من اسحاق بن قس ابلاحد من آمد سنة ٢٩ م
محمّم نعوم
بن الياس
فالاق

I have purchased this book with other books from Isaac son of Qas Ablaḥad [ʿAbdulʾaḥad] of Amid in the year [18]92 AD.
Deacon Naʿum
son of Elias
Palak

Faiq clearly purchased "this book with other books" before leaving Diyarbakir. In addition to liturgical manuscripts, there are also commentaries, sermons, hymnals, and at least one manuscript on calendars. The manuscripts are mostly in Syriac, but there are a good number of Arabic Garshuni manuscripts, with a smaller number in Turkish Garshuni ones. The community also used and collected printed matter, books written in Ottoman Turkish and Arabic. Not all were religious in nature. There is a good number of books on general secular history.

Prior to the establishment of this West New York parish, a meeting was held in Paterson, NJ, in 1906. Those assembled determined that for the community to survive in the United States, they needed to have regular liturgies. They needed a priest. They chose one of their deacons, Hanna Koorie, whose father was already a priest in Diyarbakir. They raised funds to send him to be ordained and to "bring back liturgical books." Such books must have been manuscripts, as no printed liturgical books existed at the time. Indeed, many of Koorie's manuscripts are now part of the Paramus collection.

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6 George A. Kiraz, "Fāʾiq, Naʿūm," in *Gorgias Encyclopedic Dictionary of the Syriac Heritage*, edited by Sebastian P. Brock, Aaron M. Butts, George A. Kiraz and Lucas Van Rompay, https://gedsh.bethmardutho.org/Faiq-Naum.

We also know that the community consumed non-community publications such as Turkish and Arabic newspapers produced both in the Middle East and America. We know this from various reports in the community's periodicals, sometimes editorials responding to an article in such non-community publications, or sometimes reproducing articles from newspapers that arrived from the Middle East to disseminate news.

We now turn to the periodicals that the community produced.

Bottom-up publications: "Awakening," "Progress" and "Union"

Intibah was only the beginning. The title means "awakening" and was borrowed from the name of an organisation that Naum Faiq created back in Diyarbakir. The organisation was Faiq's brainchild at a time when he was a mere teen,

> The history and desire for this Intibah and its necessity for our Aramaean nation [*qawminā al-'Arāmī*] was kept in my heart for more than thirty years, ever since I entered school and began learning our beloved Syriac language [*al-lugha al-Suryāniya*].

The organisation began to have branches in various Ottoman cities. Within two years, a branch was opened in Paterson, NJ in 1910. A year before the NJ branch was established, Gabriel Boyajy began to publish his *Intibah*. The Turkish subtitle reads "our pages are open writings for the benefit of the Süryânî millet." An English subtitle begins to appear in the second year, "Assyrian's Monthly Newspaper" (with the apostrophe before the *s*).

Intibah became a bridge between the diaspora and the homeland, frequently reprinting reports from Turkish newspapers. We also know that the newspaper was read by/reached readers in the Middle East who would write letters to the publisher that would appear in subsequent issues.

Gabriel's *Intibah* became an imprint. The TMS constitution mentioned earlier was published under the Intibah imprint. Gabriel also published an anthology of Turkish and Arabic poems in 1913. These were written mainly by Naum Faiq, Fr. Hanna Koorie, Nasif Hanna Qirmizi, the monk Afram Barsoum (later the Patriarch), and Ḥanna Sirri Çakı – the last two lived in the Middle East. Gabriel also published in 1914 the *Taqlab*, the calendar system that shows the dates of Easter for any year in a 532-year cycle (the number 532 is *tqlb* in Syriac letter, hence the name *Taqlab*). This publication came with an English title, *Taklab: Everlasting Calendar of the Orthodox Church*.

The lack of "Assyrian" and the presence of "Orthodox" in the title are interesting, considering a nomenclature war that would erupt in the 1950s. By the late 1920s, the Syriac Orthodox parishes on the East Coast would be called "Assyrian Apostolic" (probably borrowing "Apostolic" from their Armenian neighbours).[7] When a nomenclature dispute erupted in the 1950s, with the hierarchy favouring "Syrian" over "Assyrian", the diaspora parishes also complained about "Orthodox" that replaced "Apostolic."

Another publication of interest from this early period is a directory published in English in 1913 under the English title "A Directory of the Assyrian Population of the United States and Canada." The "Assyrian" population here is restricted to the Syriac Orthodox. It was published in Boston by the ܚܒܪܬܐ ܣܘܪܝܝܬܐ ܕܒܘܣܛܘܢ / *Boston'daki Süryani Gençler Şirketi*, known in English as The Assyrian Young Men's Association of Boston. The directory gives the names of males (1,126 of them), their marital status, profession, and how many male (total 224) and female (total 193) children they had. Around the same time, Naum Faiq published a Syriac language primer titled *Kthobo d-Qeryono d-Suryoutho* in Paterson, 1917.

While Boyajy was still publishing *Intibah*, Sanharib Baley, another immigrant from Diyarbakir, began to publish a competing newspaper in Paterson, NJ, and named it in Syriac *Sawto d-Oromoye* "Voice of the Arameans." No issues survive and it is therefore difficult to ascertain its motivation, circulation, or readership. Reports in other newspapers tell us that it was also published in Ottoman Turkish, but we do not know if in Garshuni form or not.

Faiq immigrated to the United States and settled in New Jersey in 1912. He became a regular contributor to Gabriel's *Intibah*. But for some reason, probably due to the lack of funding, *Intibah* closed in 1915. In fact, funding has always been a major problem. The 1911 editorial by Qirmizi asks the readers to support the newspaper as the subscriptions do not cover the expenses. Qirmizi tells that Boyajy himself pays for the rest. This will become a chronic problem in the community – and still remains, as I personally attest! *Intibah* was succeeded by *Beth Nahrin* in 1906; a 1927 editorial reads:

> We ask our readers to kindly send the subscription dues or inform us if they are not interested so that we do not print many copies and pay for the postage Our budget does not allow for this.

7 The 1916 US census called them "Jacobite Church (Assyrian)" at a time when no formal parishes existed (Department of Commerce, *Religious Bodies: 1916*, Part II (1919)). The 1926 and 1936 census called them "Assyrian Jacobite Apostolic Church" (Department of Commerce, *Religious Bodies: 1926*, Part II (1929, 1941)).

Faiq published *Beth Nahrin* until the early 1920s, and at some point, he had two editions: Turkish and Arabic, both in Garshuni form. When *Beth Nahrin* ceased, Faiq started *Ḥuyodo* in 1921 until his death in 1930. In an English editorial, *Ḥuyodo* was introduced to the readers as the "legitimate offspring of *Beth Nahreen*, and the direct descendent of *The Aramean* [i.e. Sanharib Baly's *Sawto d-Oromoye*]." *Ḥuyodo* was the official publication of the Assyro-Chaldean National Unity of America, representing not only Syriac Orthodox, but also Church-of-the-East Assyrians and Chaldeans (some articles are in Sureth). It was also published with print type using the new Linotype technology.

If it was not for *Intibah*, *Beth Nahrin*, and *Ḥuyodo*, the history of the Syriac Orthodox prior to the establishment of the archdiocese in the 1950s would have been lost.

While by the 1920s, the community must have had second and some third-generation members who could only read English, neither *Intibah* nor *Beth Nahrin* published anything in English. Neither Boyajy nor Faiq were able to edit in English. The few English glosses that appear here and there are written phonetically, such as "unsinkuble" in an article reporting on Titanic and "cristmas" when reporting on a Christmas party in Worcester.

In 1916, *The New Assyria* was published in English by an Urmia editor Joel Warda. However, it was a pan-Assyrian periodical, with coverage of both communities who saw themselves as one nation. When a distinction was necessary, the Syriac Orthodox were called "Turkish Assyrians" while the Church of the East (and Protestant) community members were called "Persian Assyrians."

After the close of *Ḥuyodo*, the English-speaking next generation produced *The New Beth Nahreen* in English. Throughout, recurring themes of "nation" (the *millet* of the old), "unity" (the *Ḥuyodo* of earlier writers), and "progress" (the *tarakki* of earlier generations – itself borrowed from Ottoman modernity and the Taw of Taw Mim Simkath) are dominant. In addition to reporting on the community, the glories of the ancient Assyrians – and, to a lesser degree, of the ancient Arameans – became a recurring theme as the English speakers had access to English books published on the Ancient Near East. The sense of Assyrian identity grew stronger.

In California, Kharput immigrants who migrated from New England published in English the periodical *Assyrian Progress* – that *tarakki* again. Much of the interests and activities of community life during the 1930s and 1940s is preserved thanks to *The New Beth Nahreen* and *Assyrian Progress*, the latter our only source on the West coast region. It is from *The New Beth Nahreen* that we learn about the formation of modern women choirs, the earliest formed in 1934 at St. Mary's in West New York with fourteen young women and three young men. This becomes

the beginning of a 20th-century phenomenon in Syriac Orthodox parishes, where women's choirs complement the male-centric deacon's *gudo* (or traditional choir).

But soon, the voice of the community will be no more. Even the English-speaking periodicals would cease. One factor may have been the inevitable melting pot. Naum Faiq predicted this in the 1920s. We read in a letter that he wrote to Archbishop (later Patriarch) Afram Barsoum:[8]

> Not a long time will pass until all those Syriacs [*Suryoye*] in America will become Episcopalians [*meth'angolu*], Catholics, or secular, living without faith, without nationality, and without a name or appellation of a nation. They will become "modern," without "tradition." Woe to our time! Pooh to the age in which we live!

And indeed, many of the second and third generation *'eth'angal*, that is, became Episcopalians.

Within a few decades, those who resisted *'eth'angal*-ization were faced with a new flux of immigrants who would arrive as a result of wars in the Middle East and the "Americans" would be overrun by new immigrants. One elderly woman complained to me in the 1990s, "their kids would run around the church out of control and the women would cook the *kibbeh* and other dishes in a different way." Above all, none of the "Americans" with a strong sense of "Assyrian" (in its English usage) identity had anticipated that the new immigrants of the 1950s and 1960s would be calling themselves in English "Syrian Orthodox," not "Assyrian Apostolic."

A clash of sorts was in the awaiting.

Top-down publications: "The priest then places the crown upon the bride's head saying…"

The 1948 Arab-Israeli war was a disaster for the Syriac community in Palestine. Patriarch Afram Barsoum sent the Archbishop of Jerusalem as an Apostolic Delegate to the United States to raise funds to help the refugees. Barsoum himself was sent by his predecessor as an Apostolic Delegate to the United States in 1927. It was Barsoum who consecrated the first three parishes in the US.

But unknown to Barsoum, his Apostolic Delegate did not plan to go back. Mor Athanasius Yeshu Samuel brought with him a few hundred manuscripts from the St. Mark's collection as well as his personal papers – documents and letters he

8 Syriac Orthodox library, Maarat Saydnaya; no call number. A copy was transcribed by the author.

would not need had he intended to stay for some months. Samuel had another intention as well: to find a buyer for the Dead Sea Scrolls he brought with him.[9]

With Samuel's arrival and his manoeuvring around the Patriarch to establish an archdiocese, the US parishes had a new "leader" they did not plan for. Each parish was thus far free. The Americans had never had the experience of operating *under* an archbishop. But Samuel not only had a conflict with his Patriarch – due to his refusal to go back to his Archdiocese of Jerusalem – but he began to fight the locals over their "Assyrian" name. In fact, Barsoum tried to "correct" the name when he consecrated churches in 1927, but the locals fought him and he failed. Samuel, now in conflict with his Patriarch over his permanent stay in the US, may have wanted to at least appease Barsoum on the name issue. When Samuel established his Archdiocese, it was a "Syrian Orthodox" one. Soon, he would establish new "Syrian Orthodox" parishes: Hackensack, NJ 1958, Los Angeles 1963, Chicago 1966, and Detroit 1968. These now outnumbered the three existing "Assyrian Apostolic" parishes. The parish in Rhode Island soon changed its name to "Syrian Orthodox." But West New York and Worcester MA persisted on their "Assyrian Apostolic" title. The West New York parish would become "Assyrian Orthodox" when it moved to Paramus, NJ in 1968, maybe as a compromise. Samuel remained as the *de facto* Archbishop of North America, though Patriarch Barsoum never recognized him as such until the Patriarch's death in 1957.

The nomenclature struggle gave rise to a publication. Barsoum penned in Arabic a treatise on the Syriac name titled في اسم الأمة السريانية "On the name of the Suryani nation" in 1952. Samuel had it translated into English under the title *The Syrian Church of Antioch, Its Name and History*. This publication would become a go-to resource in Europe when the name became an issue there in the 1970s and 1980s.

Barsoum was succeeded by Jacob III. It took three rounds of voting to elect Jacob III. It is said that Samuel gave his vote on the condition of Jacob recognizing North America as an Archdiocese with Samuel on the helm. In 1960, Jacob III visited the United States and solidified Samuel's position.

A byproduct of the visit was the recording of the Beth Gazo melodies. Jacob III was a master of sacred music. Just before returning to the Middle East, Samuel asked him to record the melodies on reel tapes. While the recording was never published at the time, later reproductions ensured the preservation of the received liturgical heritage and paved the way for others to start recording other musical

9 Athanasius Yeshu Samuel, *Treasure of Qumran: My Story of the Dead Sea Scrolls* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1966), 169.

traditions. All of these have recently been incorporated into a mobile app called Beth Gazo Portal, available on the Android and iOS operating systems.

Only one religious book had appeared prior to Samuel's arrival. The West New York parish published a 1929-version of the *Catechism of Christian Doctrine*. It was translated from a Syriac text "prepared and approved by the Holy Synod Patriarchal [sic]" by Fr. "Kuruakos of India." It seems that the "Holy Synod" referred to is the one planned for in 1927, to be held at St. Mark's Monastery in Jerusalem. The Syriac text must have already been prepared by then. That synod did not take place until 1930 at Deir Mar Matta near Mosul. The portrait of Patriarch Elias III appears in the frontispiece as well as the portrait of Archbishop Barsoum, either because he consecrated the church in 1927 or because he played a role in composing the Arabic behind the catechism.

During Samuel's early years, two publications appeared with Samuel's consent. In 1951, the West New York church published an English translation of Barsoum's book on prayer titled *The Golden Key to Divine Worship with Commentary on the Ritual of the Syriac Church*; the translation was made by James A. Kinnear. The Eucharistic liturgy was published in English by Fr. A. Carim Karma of Sherbrooke in 1954, titled *The Order of the Holy Eucharist of the Syrian Church of Antioch (Syriac Rite)*. The Syriac word ܣܘܪܝܝܐ /*suryoyo*/ appeared twice in the title, "Syrian" to name the church and "Syriac" to name the language. This publication further solidified the new nomenclature realities. A prayer book containing the liturgy, hymns, and morning prayers was published by Fr. Peter Barsoum of Worcester under the title *Assyrian Apostolic Church Prayer, Hymn, and Liturgical Service Book* (1957). Here, too, we see the nomenclature wars play on book titles. When Fr. Peter Barsoum's book was reprinted later, the initial "AS" of "ASSYRIAN" (which was already in all caps on the title page) was removed; one can still see the title off-centred.

Samuel now turned his attention to preparing liturgical books for his increasing parishes, drawing on his previous experience as director of St. Mark's Press during the 1930s and 1940s. His first major publication was the Sunday Eucharistic liturgy, or Anaphora of St. James, in English translation. Mor Athanasius recognised that the English translation needed to be checked by native speakers who were academic and familiar with liturgical literature. He first approached Cyril Richardson, Dean of Students at Union Theological Seminary. Richardson did not have time for the task and suggested the Professor of Liturgy Boon Poster, who accepted the task. The book was published in 1954 with the long title *Anaphora: The Divine Liturgy of Saint James the First Bishop of Jerusalem according to the rite*

of the Syrian Orthodox Church of Antioch translated from the original Syriac. Notice "Syrian" and "Syriac"!

During the subsequent years, Mor Athanasius would recruit *Malphono* ("teacher") Murad Saliba Barsoum to translate many service books: baptisms, weddings, and funerals (all published in 1974). Now, for the very first time, the texts appear in a bilingual manner with Syriac on the right page and English on the left. The books were typeset and printed in Lebanon using Syriac type.

Other liturgical books edited by Samuel and translated by Murad Barsoum followed. The Major Feasts book known as *Mʿadʿdono* was published in 1984. But now, print type was hard to obtain and people began to publish books written by scribes and reproduced with offset printing. The Syriac text of the *Mʿadʿdono* was written by the hand of Mar Julius Yeshu Çiçek, Archbishop of Central Europe, a skilled scribe who published dozens of books this way in Europe.[10]

A larger bilingual *Anaphoras* containing thirteen liturgies was published in 1992. This time, the Syriac text was typeset in 1988 or 1989 by the author of the current contribution, who was then a young engineering student who had just devised Syriac fonts for the computer. Samuel had a good eye for typesetting from his St. Mark's press days. My early fonts had no kerning; the final-*nūn* letter was too far from the previous letter as in ܚܨ݂ܢ. Samuel insisted that the letter kerns (i.e. goes under the previous letter) as in ܚܨ݂ܢ. But the software had no way of kerning at the time. I implemented an additional final-*nūn* letter that operated like a diacritic and placed it on the left of the previous letter to achieve the desired visual result.

Samuel also produced a shorter daily prayer for the faithful (1993), and a book for the burial of clergy (published posthumously, 2003). Samuel's editions of liturgical books would become the foundation for future editions by the archbishops who succeeded him.

It is worth noting that none of Samuel's editions included Arabic, which, by the 1970s, was the primary language of most immigrants. After the passing away of Mor Athanasius, North America was divided into three archdioceses: Eastern US, Western US, and Canada. Each Archdiocese began to publish its own liturgical books. With the disappearance of the "old timers," the third and fourth-generation Americans, and their replacement with new immigrants, Arabic became an important language across all North American dioceses, and liturgical books became trilingual.

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10 On his contribution, see the contributions by Josef Önder and Heleen Murre-van den Berg in this volume.

The two US archdioceses – Eastern and Western United States – collaborated on putting together a series of Sunday school curriculum books, put together primarily by Sara Hadodo under a committee set up for this purpose. Hadodo was the daughter of a priest and an active Sunday school teacher. The archdiocese of the Eastern United States also established Beth Antioch Press under whose imprint a few translations of Arabic books by Matti Mousa appeared. Most of these were co-published with Gorgias Press, https://www.gorgiaspress.com/.
These publications include:

1 History of the Syriac Dioceses
2 The Collected Historical Essays of Aphram I Barsoum
3 History of the Za'faraan Monastery
4 Commentary on the Liturgy of the Syrian Orthodox Church of Antioch
5 History of the Syrian Church Of India
6 Concise Teachings Of Christianity For Orthodox Families And Schools

In addition, an English translation of S. de Courtois' *The Forgotten Genocide: Eastern Christians, the Last Arameans* was commissioned by the Eastern Archdiocese and published by Gorgias Press in 2004.

Bottom-up again: #ܥܕܬܐ_ܣܘܪܝܝܬ and social media

The post-archdiocesan period saw no Gabriel Boyajy and no Naum Faiq. Sadly, the multitude of organisations that were active in the first half of the century all but disappeared, partly due to the American melting pot taking its course, and partly because there was now an ecclesiastical leadership in place that took the initiative to publishing. While I was able to write a micro-history of the diaspora for the first half of the century using their publications, my account of the second half is a macro-history. I no longer had the voice of the people.

Having said that, publications by church entities and at least one association are known. In 1961, the first archdiocese convention was held in West New York. Ever since, conventions have been held every year, each time at a different parish. At some point in the 1970s, conventions began to publish souvenir books. They usually included messages from the archbishop, the local priest, and representatives of local parish organizations. Sometimes there was a message from the President of the United States, or of a local Governor or Senator. A few had brief accounts of the history of the church in North America or of the local parish. Of note is J. Meno's "A Brief History of the Annual Archdiocesan Conventions" in the souvenir book of the 47th convention held in Teaneck, NJ, 2010. But the vast majority of the pages were messages and advertisements. These provide demo-

graphic data. Who lived where and when. And what sort of businesses people ran. My collection has several such souvenir books, listed in the Appendix. Similarly, an important non-convention souvenir book is the *55th Anniversary of the Ladies Aid Societies' Dinner* (1965). It outlines essential facts about the history of the West New York Parish (later moved to Paramus).

Two periodicals were published in the 1970s and 1980s, both short-lived. The Aramaic American Association, established in 1974, published *Aramaic Times* between 1975 and 1983. Fr. Abdulahad Shara of Detroit published *Voice of the Parish* between 1978 and 1988.[11] Some parishes published leaflets in the form of a periodical, but these were all short-lived as well. Leaflets that come to mind are *Shlomo* by the Worcester parish and *Meltho* by St. Mark, NJ. A list of issues found in my personal collection (deposited at the Beth Mardutho Research Library) can be found in the appendix, compiled by Jana Safely.

A few individuals produced books. J. Tarzi put together cooking recipes of the Edessa tradition in his *The Syrian Urhoyan Cuisine: The Art of Edessan Cookery* (1997). A few historical accounts were published: N. Donabed and S. Donabed wrote on early Kharput immigrants in their *The Assyrians of Eastern Massachusetts* (2006); S. Donabed wrote on the same subject in *Remnants of Heroes* (2003); and Edip Aydin (now Mor Polycarpus) wrote an M.A. thesis on the American experience at St. Vladimir's Theological Seminary.[12]

Eli Shabo, first as a deacon then as a priest, edited many liturgical booklets. He was an advocate for having the people recite the people's parts in the Eucharistic liturgy which in the past few hundred years – at least – had been taken over by the deacons. He instituted this in many of the parishes that he served. This was picked up at the archdiocesan level in some parishes and when the archbishop Mor Cyril Aphrem Karim became Patriarch as Mor Ignatius Aphrem II, he began to reinstitute this at the Patriarchal level. Eli Shabo also reworked Qarabashi's Syriac textbooks with English annotations during the 1990s and early 2000s.

No directory of Syriac Christians in the US has been published since the 1913 directory produced by the Boston Youngmen's Association. Mor Cyril's Eastern Archdiocese published a population directory in the late 1990s. The Western

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11 Shara, personal communication, 9/25/22:
اصدرت مجلة (صوت الرعية) لمدة تسع سنواتٍ متتالية وبلغاتٍ ثلاثة السريانية والعربية والانكليزية. وكانت سنتها عشرة اشهر.من ٨٧٩١ الى اواسط ٨٨٩١

12 Edip Aydin, *The History of the Syrian Orthodox Church of Antioch in North America: Challenges and Opportunities* (MA Thesis, St. Vladimir's Orthodox Theological Seminary, 2000).

Archdiocese published another for the clergy of the Syriac church worldwide in 1999–2000.[13]

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With the rise of social media, information exchange moved from print culture to the digital world. Thomas Joseph of CA was the first to produce a Syriac Orthodox website in North America. It was dedicated to St. Mary's Jacobite Syrian Orthodox Church (Malankara tradition). He later established Syrian Orthodox Resources [now syriacorthodoxresources.org] in collaboration with the present writer. The late Fr. Kamil Ishac of Canada published the web site syrianorthodoxchurch.com prior to 1996 and in 1997, Mor Cyril published syrianorthodoxchurch.org as a diocesan site with the help of John Samuel. These were the days of the read-only web.

The need for print production grew smaller and smaller with the rise of the read-write-publish era. The number of websites and portals increased. The Eastern Archdiocese even attempted a dating website for its youth.

At the Oregon convention in 1998 (or 1999), I spoke about the possibility of using computer technology in church services. One suggestion was the use of screen monitors to cater for the multilingual nature of Syriac parishes (speakers of Arabic, Turkish, and English) and those who can or cannot read Syriac. Within a few years, parishes began to use such screens showing the Syriac text with transliteration into the Latin or Arabic script – which was called Garshuni! Translations into Arabic and English were also provided.

And the move to the electronic format went beyond screens for the parishioners. In former times, many priests would produce their own Anaphora manuscripts and other liturgical texts. With the electronic availability of these texts, we now have PDF "editions" of such liturgical texts. Today, one hardly uses printed matter on the altar in a good number of US parishes. The Anaphora is on an iPad. So are many of the other texts.

With the Coronavirus in 2020 and the closure of churches, it was not that difficult to stream the texts online. They already existed in electronic form. Entire liturgies were streamed online, not only in the US but worldwide. In the US, liturgies began Saturday afternoon, streamed from Australia, and continued until Sunday afternoon when California parishes were done. When a man saw his mother

13 [Clemis Awgin Kaplan, ed.] ܕܝܪܟܬܘܪܝܘܢ ܕܐܪܟܝܕܝܐܣܩܘܦܝܐ ܣܘܪܝܝܐ ܐܘܪܬܘܕܘܟܣܝܐ ܕܐܢܛܝܟܝܐ ܠܡܕܝܢܚ ܐܡܪܝܟܐ ܒܬܪ ܐܝܪܘܦܐ ܘܐܣܝܐ / Directory of the Archdiocese of the Syrian Orthodox Church of Antioch for the Eastern United States (1999–2000).

almost binge watching one Eucharistic service after the other, he told her that he would be coming for the *tapseh*[14] – the collection – every hour!

In addition, the Patriarchal youth department created the hash tag "Your home is a church", #ܒܝܬܟ_ܥܕܬܐ (#baytokh_ʿīdto), to encourage the faithful to pray at home.

In conclusion

The trajectory of North American publications went through three main periods, each characterized by its own genre and actors. The early publications were dominated by ideas of nationalism and modernity. There were a few actors, most prominently among them Naum Faiq. The publications were unidirectional, though when letters to the editor were published, one can argue that there was limited bidirectionality. It is difficult to estimate the size of the readership, and how many people actually knew the Syriac alphabet to read these garshuno-graphic writings.

The middle period was dominated by liturgical publications officially published by an archdiocese with an archbishop at its helm. These, too, were unidirectional publications, but their readerships are now limited to the clergy and to a lesser extent the faithful in the case of Sunday liturgy books. The dominant actors here were Mor Athanasius as main editor and Archdeacon Mourad Saliba Barsoum as translator.

The final phase was open to all, with social media dominating the scene. And "publications" became snippets, sometimes in text form, others in video form. These were peer-to-peer, not top-down or author-reader oriented. Each phase represented its world. Oceans separated the worlds of *Intibah* and *#baytokh_ʿīdto*.

14 Turkish for "plate," like a kitchen serving plate.

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Appendix

Convention Books

30th Annual Convention of the Syrian Orthodox Archdiocese, St. Mark's Cathedral, Hackensack, 1991.

37th Annual Archdiocesan Convention, St. Peter's Syrian Orthodox Church, Long Island, NY, [2000]. [2 copies]

39th Annual Convention of the Syrian Orthodox Church of the United States and Canada, St. Matthew, Boston, MA, 2001.

47th Annual Archdiocesan Convention, St. Mark's Cathedral, Teaneck, NJ, 2010. [4 copies]

48th Annual Convention of the Syriac Orthodox Church, Archdiocese of the Eastern United States, [2011]. [3 copies]

49th Annual Convention of the Syriac Orthodox Church, St. Aphraim Syriac Orthodox Church, Washington, D.C., 2012.

51st Annual Syriac Orthodox Archdiocesan Convention, [St. Mary's Syriac Orthodox Church, Shrewsbury [formerly Worcester], MA], 2015.

55th Annual Archdiocesan Convention, Archdiocese of the Eastern United States, [2019].

Souvenir Books

The Assyrian National School Association of America, Twenty-Fifth Anniversary of the Assyrian School and Orphanage at Beyrouth, Lebanon [T.M.S.], Union City, NJ, 1948.

Assyrian National School Association Golden Jubilee [T.M.S.], 1949. [2 copies]

Silver Anniversary of the St. Ephraim's Young Ladies Society Dinner Dance, [Central Falls, R.I.], 1958.

Dedication of Saint Ephraim's Rectory, [Central Falls, R.I.], 1966.

St. Ephraim's Church, "Burning of the Mortgage Celebration" [Central Falls, R.I.], 1967.

Assyrian Apostolic[15] Church of the Virgin Mary [on the occasion of moving from West New York to Paramus], Paramus, NJ, 1968. [2 copies]

Jubilee Banquet Celebrating the Twenty-Fifth Year of Episcopal Consecration of H.E. Archbishop Mar Athanasius Yeshue Samuel [1973].

Twenty-Fifth Anniversary, St. Ephrem Syrian Orthodox Church of Antioch, Serbrooke, Canada, 1977.

His Holiness Moran Mor Ignatius Zakka 1 … on the occasion of H.H.'s Visit to Los Angeles, 1981.

Golden Jubilee of Priestly Ordination of H.E. Archbishop Mar Athanasius Yeshue Samuel, Hackensack, NJ, [1983]. [2 copies]

St. Mark's Syrian Orthodox Cathedral 25th Anniversary ([1984]).

[Graduation of Students of Mor Aphraim School of the Aramaic American Association, 1991].

Mor Ephraim Syriac School, Aramaic American Association, Graduation Program, 1992.

Twenty-Fifth Anniversary Banquet in Honor of Very Rev. John Koury, Paramus, 1992.

[25th Anniversary of the] Assyrian Orthodox Church of Virgin Mary, Paramus, 1993.

85th Anniversary of the Assyrian Ladies Aid Society, Paramus, 1994.

St. Mark's Syrian Orthodox Cathedral Consecration Day, Teaneck, NJ (1996).

Silver Anniversary of Priestly Ordination [of] Very Rev. Chorepiscopus John Peter Meno, Teaneck, NJ, 1997.

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15 Note that the name has not changed from "Apostolic" to "Orthodox" yet.

The Assyrian Orphanage and School Association [T.M.S., formerly Assyrian National School Association] Diamond Jubilee, 1999.
Consecration Day [of] St. Aphraim Syriac Orthodox Church of Washington, D.C., 2007.
St. Mark's Cathedral 50th Anniversary Golden Jubilee ([2008]). [4 copies]
Assyrian Orthodox Church of Virgin Mary Centennial Journal, 2009.
Grand Opening of the Mor Aphrem Center, Paramus, 2015.
St. Mark's Syrian Orthodox Cathedral Consecration Day, Paramus, NJ (2019).

Short-Lived Periodicals

A list of issues of US Syriac Orthodox periodicals from the George A. Kiraz collection, preserved at the Beth Mardutho Research Library. The list was compiled by Jana Safley.

ID	Title	Place	Years	Avg. trim	Avg. pp.	No. of issues
18	Aramaic Times (Aramaic American Association)	New Jersey	1982-1983	21 x 27	30	5
21	Sabro Tobo	California	2005-2010	21½ x 28	75	7
32	Voice of the Parish (ed. Abdulahad Shara)	Michigan	?? (7th & 8th year)	21 x 28 & 19 x 25	40	9
33	Mhadyono (ed. J. Tarzi)	California	1992-1997	21 x 27½	35	12
43	The Western US Archdiocesan	California	1998-1999	21 x 27½	16	6
46	Meltho/The Word: St. Mark's Syrian Orthodox Cathedral Parish News	New Jersey	1998-2007	14 x 22	30	30
48	Sabro	California	1999-2001	17½ x 24	90	19
49	Mnorto	California	1992-1993	21½ x 28	8	6
50	Youth News	New Jersey	1998-1999	21½ x 28	12	4
51	Soayo Speaks (Archdiocesan youth organization)	New Jersey	1997-1998	21½ x 28	12	3
53	Syriac Orthodox Archdiocese	New Jersey	2005	21½ x 27½	150	1
54	Hubo	Las Vegas	1996-1997	21½ x 28	35	2
55	Tebeh	New Jersey	2001-2002	21½ x 28	4	3
57	Mor Barsawmo Syrian Orthodox Church	New Jersey	?	21½ x 28	4	1
59	Voice of the Archdiocese	New Jersey	1997-2001	8½" x 11" & 17½ x 21½	15	20
61	Voice of Saint Gabriel	New Jersey	1996	21½ x 28	20	1
63	Mor Barsawmo Newsletter	New Jersey	2003	21½ x 28	4	1