

# THE HISTORY OF CHRISTIANITY IN SOUTHERN MESOPOTAMIA



**By Archbishop Habib Jajou**

**Basra & the South Chaldean Catholic Archdiocese  
Publishing**



# Contents

Introduction	4
Chapter One	
<b>Metropolitan of Prath d'Maishan under the Persian rule</b>	<b>10</b>
Chapter Two	
<b>The Metropolitan under the Islamic rule</b>	<b>46</b>
Chapter Three	
<b>Centuries of Anarchy and Darkness (14-19)</b>	<b>79</b>
Chapter Four	
<b>Displacement from Southern Turkey</b>	<b>108</b>
<b>First World War 1914</b>	
<b>The growth of Christian Presence during the Kingdom of Iraq</b>	
<i>Looting the Jewish &amp; Christian Properties</i>	
<i>(Al –Farhood) 1941-1948</i>	
<b>Displacement to the North</b>	
<b>Series of wars and economic sanctions 1980-2003</b>	
Chapter Five	
<b>The Metropolitan in the third Millennium</b>	<b>147</b>
<b>References and Sources</b>	<b>166</b>



## Introduction

The Metropolitan of Basra and the South (formerly known as the Diocese of Prath d'Maishan) is regarded as one of the oldest Archbishopric of the Church of the East.

Southern Mesopotamia and the Gulf have an important geographical location, the area is renowned for its trade and transportation links. It contains numerous canals and rivers that contribute to its thriving agriculture. However, the input of its native population (such as cultural, social, spiritual and constructional) in building a modern society has not been recognised.

Scores of churches, monasteries and cultural centres were spread between *Jundishapur*, *Ahwaz*, Prath d'Maishan and the Gulf for hundreds of years until the arrival of *Hulagu*, the Mongol king. This was achieved as a result of the spirit of the missionaries who preached of Christianity.

The indigenous people of the region are descendants of the Sumerians, Chaldeans and Arab who embraced the Aramaic language and culture. They swiftly accepted Christianity and unleashed their capabilities that resulted in reviving the people of the region. The Church of the East in Mesopotamia prided itself that the majority of church leaders of the Gulf were graduates of its monasteries. In the early 4<sup>th</sup> century Prath d'Maishan was elevated into a diocese then archdiocese.

The Christian inhabitants settled around the rivers where they established their diocese which included several

priests and lasted for a thousand years (the first bishop in 258 until the invention of *Hulagu* in 1258).

Records mention the existence of several monasteries that gave birth to famous scientists. In the early part of the 8<sup>th</sup> century Prath d'Maishan Archdiocese was re-named as the Basra Archdioceses, after the early Muslims built the city of Basra near the town of *Zubair*. Initially, it was built for military purposes but later became a city for Arab emigrants.

All signs of Christian civilisation was destroyed in the early 14<sup>th</sup> century, the last Archbishop of Basra was mentioned by *Abdisho Al-Soubawi* in 1316.<sup>1</sup> Christianity disappeared for centuries because of the Mongols attacks, political instabilities, and epidemics that wiped out large population of Mesopotamia until the 16<sup>th</sup> century. The inhabitants moved away to the North to be sheltered by its mountain's. Christianity returned to Basra as the refugees trickled back to the south in the early parts of the 16<sup>th</sup> century, thanks to the activities of the missionaries and a reverse migration. It still continues today despite the danger of it being extinct. Since the 1980s until now, 90% of its inhabitants have left.

The Archdiocese was and still is responsible for the Christians as far as the area between province of Kut in the north and Kuwait today. In the first millennium it bordered the Diocese of the city of Hira (7 kilometres

---

<sup>1</sup> Habbi, Y. (1986) *Fahris al Moualeefen*. Baghdad: Iraqi Scientific Academy Print,.

south of Kufa and Najaf) .To the south, it stretched as far as the diocese of Bahrain and Qatar.

Basra is the smiling mouth of Iraq; some see it as the city of cities. But regrettably, over the previous decades, it has been living through grief. The blood of her children flowed across the land. The city was destroyed and witnessed numerous tragedies. Perhaps the existence of what is called “the Tree of Adam and Eve” in north of Basra, mentioned in Genesis, is a sign that humanity rejected its relationship with God, the creator, and their son Cain killed his brother Abel. It is the fruit of evil in mankind that still exists in our land, hardly any day passes without the killing of its sons.



The people of Basra are very simple and peaceful; their dwellings are surrounded by different types of date trees. There is a wide variety of delicious fish that exists in the many small rivers that diverge from *Shatt al- Arab*.

During numerous wars, shells fell down on the city like raindrops, hundreds of bombs per minute. I saw this with my own eyes when I served for four years in the trenches. I was also told about the bombings by eyewitnesses within the city.

An avid reader of Basra's history will find that many wars have been fought over it<sup>2</sup>. Countries near and far, have participated in destroying its people and its infrastructure in order to occupy it. The city also faced many plagues caused by flooding, but at the end of each era it didn't succumb to any political autocrat and it never will.

The geographical boundaries of the dioceses are vast and cannot be covered in such a small book; therefore I will concentrate on the vicinity of Basra with occasional references to other areas.

## OUR MISSION

Since my appointment as Archbishop of the Diocese of Basra and Southern Iraq in early 2014, I tried with the priests, nuns and volunteer helpers to serve in a collective spirit in four directions: spiritual, cultural, social and financial.

Our focus is on the people that are left without their relatives, the disabled, elderly, widowed and the sick. We are attentive to the co-existing with the



---

<sup>2</sup> The naming of the Archdiocese of the South as Basra bears no relationship to the old Basra, as it was not in its present location but towards the south east about 20 kilometres from Zubair province.



Muslims and the Mandeans. There are no Jews left as all of them have immigrated. The diocese has a strong presence amongst the religious authority and tribal *sheikhs*, it is observant of antiquities such as Ur, which dates back to third millennium BC, and has a cultural presence through its publications.

Over the past two centuries, the diocese churned out many scientists and scholars which it can be proud of. They adhered to the Lord's value and contributed immensely to the society. We will mention few of them in the last chapter, some have passed away and others live in different parts of the world.

The highlight of our message is to love others, as our Lord commanded us, so that co-existence grows by ways of transparency and decency. It is a responsibility to serve by utilising on the talents given by the Holy Spirit as Paul said in Corinthian 1-12 and to rely on the rock of Jesus.

In producing this book I tried to present to the reader a brief history of the Archdioceses with an emphasis on the past two centuries until present day. I tried to highlight the work of the Lord throughout the centuries hoping that God will bless this work. I explored other churches and the Jews as far as I could by exceeding our current geographical boundaries.

+ Habib Jajou

Basra, 2015



# Chapter One

## Metropolitan of Prath d'Maishan

According to historical sources, by the 4<sup>th</sup> century the Metropolitan of Prath d'Maishan was ranked third in the diocesan organisation of the Church of the East. It was one of the sixth largest provinces of the church.<sup>3</sup>The region of the diocese included many small towns such as *Karkha d'Maishan*, *Rima* and *Nahrkor* , situated between Basra and Maisan-present day Amara<sup>4</sup>.

Its topography contained many marshes as it can be seen today. Scholars agree that it was an area between Tigris and Karoun Rivers. The cities of Basra and Amara did not exist. The Metropolitan had many bishops and priests who served the local population.

## Etymology of Maishan

According to the lexicon of Bishop Yacoub Manna, Prath d'Maishan consists of two Aramaic words. Prath means dent or split and Maishan means tame. During the 2<sup>nd</sup> century BC, Maishan (or Maisan) was the capital of Maishan kingdom-also known as Characene. A recent map

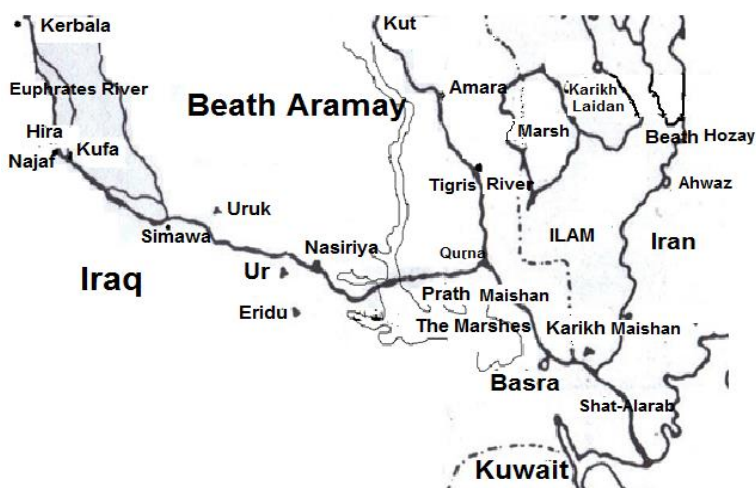
---

<sup>3</sup> The writer did not look for a scientific and historical examination as there are some question marks on the accuracy of dates.

<sup>4</sup> In Persian it is called *Hamn-ardasheer*.

of Basra, locates its position at Al- Qurna province near where the Euphrates and Tigris Rivers connect.

The people of Maishan converted to Christianity in the 2<sup>nd</sup> century by some of Jesus's disciples<sup>5</sup>. *Al-Sa'aradi's* "the book of the Little History" mentions that Shapur I (241-272) built in Maishan area a city by the name of *Sadshahpur* also known as *Der Mehraq* (or Rima). Shapur made the captive Christian Romans dwell in it.



Part of a map of the Church of the East in the 4<sup>th</sup> Century

In the year 256 Shapur took more prisoners from the Roman territories. Some of the prisoners were experts in construction, engineering and sewing. Amongst them was an Antakian priest by the name of Domitianus. They all lived at the city of Suss.

---

<sup>5</sup> Despite the lack of historical evidence to substantiate this claim.

Shapur built another city the name of *Karqh Laidan* in 486, and forced the Roman detainees to live in it. One of their bishops was *Paulos bin Qae*. The scholar Habbi indicates that *Bar Sawma*, bishop of Nisibis, held the synod of *Jundishapur*, the capital of *Khuzestan*, in the same city .<sup>6</sup>



The ruins of part of Prath-Dmaishan Wall  
(*Masaarat*, 14, vol: 5, 2010)

People of the area lived in marshes and low valleys. They relied on growing seeds and grains such as rice, wheat and barley and on planting fruit and date palm trees. They bred animals such as camels and sheep and hunted in deserts and fished in rivers. Some excelled in medicine and astrology and others produced salt from the marshes.



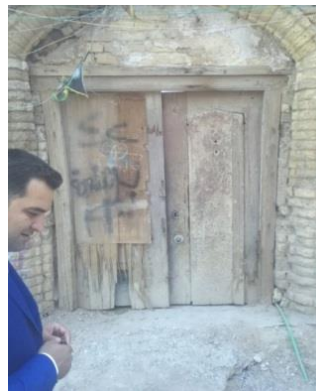
<sup>6</sup> *Bayn al Nahrain*, issues 45-46, 1984, p. 33.

Christians celebrated their religious customs alongside Mandaean, Zoroastrian and other followers of old Babylonian religions. They also lived amongst captive Jews in the area of Al'azeer, where today the tombstone of one of the prophets of the old testament (believed to be one of the disciples of Ezra) lies south of city of Amara. In the centre of Amara the remnants of the old Jews quarter "the Torah" with its school and temple can still be seen. There was a large presence of Mandeans in Amara and Basra, which still exists today.



The ruins of al-Torah Neighbourhood where the Church of Mother of Sorrows is located in the centre of Amara (photos by the author)

The gate of the Jewish School in Amara, next to the Church of Mother of Sorrows





The traditionally described as the tomb of Ezra at Al Uzayr near Basra before and after its maintenance, it is located on the western shore of River Tigris





Hebrew writings next to the tomb

## Saint Thomas and Saint Mari

Christian Malabar tradition confirms that there were links between the city of Orhay (or Edessa, south Turkey) and Malabar (in south India). The area was reached through Mesopotamia and the Gulf by passing the shores of Euphrates or Tigris Rivers and then through Basra and Shatt al-Arab.

It is believed that Saint Thomas took this route to India and was martyred in Malabar. His remains were taken back via the same route to Orhay in 394. *Mari bin Suleiman* mentions that Saint Mari went to the south of Mesopotamia to evangelise. According to “The book of Majdal”, Maishan was the last province he preached Christianity<sup>7</sup>.

There was a definite Christian presence in the area that dated back to the 2<sup>nd</sup> or 3<sup>rd</sup> century for a simple reason: It was deemed necessary that a bishop should be appointed

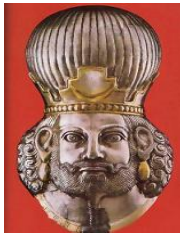
---

<sup>7</sup> Suleiman, M. (1899) *News of Patriarchs of the Eastern Seat*, Rome, p. 3.



to serve the population. *The history of al- Sa'aradi* book mentions the appointment of bishop Dawood (David) in 256. And he left his position in 285 and went to India to participate in preaching on Christianity. However, this information is very vague.

When Bishop *Fafa* tried to head the Church of the East in Seleucia- Ctesiphon in 315 (or 325) Youhanna, the priest of *Prath d'Maishan*, and others objected to him. Sources also mention a bishop by the name of *Boleadagh* who was martyred with *Mar Shimoon Barsabae* in 341. Bishop *Abda* was martyred during the forty years persecution that took place between the years 339-379 (during the reign of Shapur II)



Shapur II the Persian king  
309-379



*Mar Shimoon Barsabae(+341)*



The ruins of a religious building in Hira from the 6<sup>th</sup> century

## The Fifth Century

Church records mention that the Archbishopric participated in all the synods that were held by the Church of the East. I will briefly describe its participation in each synod.

### Synod of Isaac

Church sources mention the attendance of five bishops from the Diocese of Prath d'Maishan to the Synod of Isaac on February 1, 410<sup>8</sup>. They were *Zebedee*, who was elevated to Archbishop according to canon law XX1, *Melis*, *Mari* Bishop of *Karkh d'Maishan*, *Ibrahim* Bishop of Rima<sup>9</sup>, *Youhanna* Bishop of *Nahrkourm*<sup>10</sup> and *Hosea* Bishop of Hira<sup>11</sup>.

Firstly, the Archbishop had to go to Seleucia-Ctesiphon (today Salman Pak) as it was the capital of the Sassanid Empire, to meet King Yazdegerd I to get an official invitation to attend the synod. During this synod the diocese of Prath d'Maishan was elevated to an

---

<sup>8</sup> Habbi, Y. (1999) *Synods of the Church of the East*, Kaslik, Lebanon, p. 79.

<sup>9</sup> Perhaps its remains are the historic site of Tal Reem, 18 kilometres North West of Al-Qurna towards Azir province on the western shore of Tigris River.

<sup>10</sup> River Kor is located between Maishan, Basra and Ahwaz.

<sup>11</sup> Believed to be under the jurisdictions of the Archbishop.

Archbishopric as it already had three bishops who were serving three dioceses: *Karkh*, *Rima* and *Nahrkourm*.



Ruins of a Seleucia town built in 305 BC by Seleucus



It was also decided that all the dioceses would celebrate together Christmas, Epiphany and Easter and to fast together and to celebrate mass on one altar. The synod endorsed that the clergy must attend the morning and evening prayers in accordance with the official church order.

In accordance with law XXI, the synod privileged the diocese of Prath d'Maishan as being ranked third within the Eastern Church dioceses. The first being

Archbishopric of *Beth Hozai* or *Beth Lafaat* in Jundishapur and the second was Nisibis.

Throughout the Persian Empire, during the forty years persecution, Christians were regarded as second class citizens for rejecting the Zoroastrian religion. After the synod of Isaac, things improved to the better, which helped Christianity to spread.



King Yazdegerd I ([www.wikipedia.org](http://www.wikipedia.org))

### **Synod of Dadisho**

This synod convened in 424, during the reign of King Bahram V. It was attended by thirty six bishops including the Archbishop of Prath d'Mishan (believed to be Zebedee). Also present were bishops of *Beth Lafaat*, Nisibis, Irbil, *Karkh Sloqh* and *Rawardasheer*. Advanced thoughts emerged from this synod, such as the church must preserve its independence from political and ecclesiastical interferences.

The participants accepted the decisions of the previous synod and emphasised on the importance of collectiveness in decision making. They stressed that power is meaningless if it is not based on true fatherhood built on a divine foundation, for God is the father of all and the Patriarch is the father of the church, his authority stem

from God through the Body of Christ. The participants believed that authority is a service between the clergy and the people and it must be served and obeyed.

The purpose of this synod was to tackle several problems and controversies, the disobeying of laws and the state of single party rule that was prevailing in the dioceses. All the decisions that were taken served to organise the affairs of the Christians such as celebrating religious customs, evangelising, and deterring all the infidels and transgressors.



Newly found Christian ruins near Hira



Many unofficial ecclesiastical types of council were held to discuss the theological issues regarding the character of Christ, such as Ephesus in 431 and 449, Chalcedon in

451. Some of these councils were attended by the bishops of Prath d'Maishan, however, when the council of Ephesus issued its theological decrees in 431, the Church of the East did not accept them.

One of the renowned personalities during this time was Bishop Mari, nicknamed *the Persian*, from *Ardasher*. He wrote several books about the visions of Daniel, another against *a Magian in the city Nisibis* and *interpretation of the epistles of Patriarch Aqaq*<sup>12</sup>.

### **Synod of Barsoma**

In the year 484 the Bishop of Nisibis conveyed a synod in Ahwaz (*Beth Lafaat*) with the blessing of King Peroz. Nani, bishop of Maishan, was one of the attendants. The Church of the East nullified the decisions of this synod because the thoughts of Nestorius and the interpretations of Theodor of Mopsuista, thinkers of the Antakya church, were debated. The synod also decided that a son cannot marry the wife of his deceased father and banned the marriage of two wives. In 285 Barsoma sent the first episcopate letter to some bishops including Bishop Isaac of *Karkh d'Maishan*<sup>13</sup>.

### **Synod of Aqaq (Acacius)**

Patriarch Aqaq chaired his synod at Seleucia-Ctesiphon in 486. In this synod, the Archbishopric of Prath

---

<sup>12</sup> *Bayan al-Nahrain* magazine, issues 45 and 46, 1984, p. 33.

<sup>13</sup> Habbi, Y. *Synods of the Church of the East*, pp. 142-149.

D'Maishan was regarded as one of the top six bishoprics in the Church of the East. It was attended by Bishop *Nany* (or *Haaye*) together with Bishop *Isaac* who was responsible for the diocese of *Karkh d' Maishan*.



King Peroz ([www.wikipedia.org](http://www.wikipedia.org))

### Synod of Babai

This synod was held at Seleucia-Ctesiphon in 497, during the reign of King *Zamasp* who was very tolerant to Christians. Present from the Archbishopric of Prath d'Maishan were Bishops *Akaai*, *Abaai*, *Mari*, *Anfi* and *Marwan*. The attendance of five bishops from one Archbishopric suggests that there was security and peace in the area. It also indicates how large the area of the Archbishopric was.



King Zamasp ([www.wikipedia.org](http://www.wikipedia.org))

According to scholar Yousif Habbi, during the middle of this century saw the emergence of *Ma'na II* who translated and published the books of Theodor of Mapsuista and

Diodorous of Tarsus, and distributed them as far as India. He worked assiduously to spread Christianity in Persia<sup>14</sup>.



A picture believed to be of a Christian bishop in Yemen dating back to year 530([www.coptichistory.org](http://www.coptichistory.org))

---

<sup>14</sup> *Bayen al-Nahrain* magazine, issues 445-46, 1984, p. 32.



## The Sixth Century

During this century the monastic centres spread rapidly in southern Iraq and the Gulf because the Byzantine Emperor Zeno closed the school of Orhay between 471 and 489. When Bishop Teemai, son of Dadisho, was Archbishop of Prath d'Maishan (520-530) a patriarchal split occurred between *Narsai* and *Elisha*.



Byzantine Emperor Zeno ([www.wikipedia.org](http://www.wikipedia.org))

The city of Prath continued to be the provincial capital of Maishan. It was visited by Patriarch *Abba*, after he held his synod in 544, in order to confront and remove Bishop *Teemai* from office, as he was deviating from the teaching of the church and creating many controversies. He was replaced by Bishop *Youhannan*.

### Synod of Abba I

Abba held a synod during the reign of Cyrus I in Seleucia-Ctesiphon in order to make changes in the church as it was



suffering from moral, social and cultural decline. The Patriarch attempted to work collectively and swiftly to remedy the defects in the performance of the church and its institutions. Patriarch *Abba* was a thinker and an experienced lawman. The liturgical letters he sent to all the dioceses became a useful tool in organising the Christian life<sup>15</sup>.



Cyrus I (531-579)

Some renowned individuals in the time of Abba were Bishop Gabriel, brother of Theodor, Bishop of Marro. He wrote against Manichaeism and Chaldean astrologers, and he was appointed bishop of Hurmozadsher in Ahwaz. Philologist *Yousif al-Ahwazi* excelled in his field. According to *Rahawi's* "Book of the Little History", *Paulos al-Basri* or *al-Farsi* (d.573) was a great philosopher<sup>16</sup>.

### **The Synod Joseph**

Joseph held a synod in 554 at Seleucia-Ctesiphon. It was attended by 36 bishops who declared 33 canon laws. The minutes of the synod indicate that the Archbishop of Prath

---

<sup>15</sup> Read his letter in *the Book of the Eastern Church Synods*.

<sup>16</sup> *Bayan al- Nahrain*, issues 45-46, 1984, p. 33.

d'Maishan did not attend. But the ranking of his Archbishopric, as third in the hierarchy of the church, was upheld. *Sargies*, Bishop of Rima signed the minutes of the meeting on behalf of his Archbishop (as the diocese of Rima belonged to the Archbishopric of Prath d'Mishan).

### **Synod of Ezekiel**

Ezekiel was elected Patriarch in 569<sup>17</sup>, after the patriarchal seat was vacant for four years. In 576 he held a synod in the reign of King *Anushirwan*. Bishop *Shamoon* of Prath d'Maishan was invited to attend the synod, alongside thirty bishops. Thirty nine canon laws were passed against the different heresies that caused disorder in the church. It also issued laws that organised marriages, Christian values and church institution.

The area suffered from plague for three and half years. Ezekiel ordered a fasting for three days (rogation rituals are in the Chaldean Office Prayer Book of *Hudra*). After a few years of religious freedom, the Christians faced harassments and diseases. Several bad years followed and the church produced many martyrs such as *Shirin* <sup>18</sup>.

During this century Archbishop *Fod* (or *Bod*) was an Apostolic Nuncio in the time of Patriarch Isaac. Scholar Habbi mentions that Cyrus despatched him to India to obtain some medical drugs. Upon his return he was

---

<sup>17</sup> Scholer, S. *the Church before Islam part 11*, Trans: Fouad J. p. 50, place and date of Publishing is not mentioned.

<sup>18</sup> Habbi, *Synods of the Church of the East*, p. 294.

accompanied by an Indian doctor who taught him how to practice medicine according to the Indian way which focused on the psychological aspects of illnesses. Whilst in India he preached about Christianity. He has many religious writings and a book about Manichaeism. He published in Greek a collection of questions and answers entitled *the Alpha and the Omega*. It is said he translated the book of *Kalila and Dimna* from Indian into Syriac and he explained *the Book of Nature* by Aristotle. There were also some other famous people such as Ibrahim bin *Lefi* in Qatar who published a book explaining church rituals. *Ibrahim al- Mahozi* was famous for his liturgical interpretations; he was deported to Seleucia- Ctesiphon by king Anushirawan<sup>19</sup>.



The King Anushirawan

## Synod of Ishoyab I

The synod of Ishoyab was held in 585, during the reign of the Persian king Hormizd. It was the last synod of the 6<sup>th</sup> century. Sources mention that Bishop Shamoon,

---

<sup>19</sup> *Bayn al- Nahren* magazine, issue 45-46, 1984 p. 34.

representing Archbishopric of Prath d'Maishan, alongside 22 bishops and priests, participated in its proceedings. 31 canon laws were endorsed which emphasised on true faith and good Christian life

### **King Nu'man and his two daughters Hind and Hurqa**

During this period, King of *Lakhmids*, *Nu'man bin al-Mundher* and his daughters rose to prominence in Hira. His most well-known daughter was Hind (582-609). During the time of Bishop Ephraim<sup>20</sup> she built a convent of *Little Hind* between Hira and Kufa. Hind was a mystic female poet who married the renowned poet *Udai bin Zaid al-Ebadi*. He died in prison, leaving her a son by the name of *Umrooz*<sup>21</sup>. King Khosrau II asked her to marry him but she refused, causing the death of her father which she later buried in her convent.

Patriarch *Ishoyab* sought refuge with King *Nu'man* to escape the oppression of the Persian king. The instabilities between his kingdom and Persia led to the battle of *Dhi Qar* in 611.



King Hurmizd 577-590 ([www.wikipedia.org](http://www.wikipedia.org))

---

<sup>20</sup> This is to differentiate from another convent of *Hind al-Harith*.

<sup>21</sup> Scholar, p. 51.



The Battle of *Dhiqar*



Ruins of a the palace of *al-Nu'man* in Hira

When the Muslim armies reached the area, General *Khalid bin al- Waleed*<sup>22</sup> asked Hind to convert to Islam but she refused. After the battle of *al-Qadisiya*, General *Saad bin al- Waqas* went to meet with Hind. During their meeting she recited a great poem to him expressing her anguish at

---

<sup>22</sup> He died in 642.

the fall of her father's kingdom<sup>23</sup>. Hind died in 642 and was buried in her convent. She had a younger sister by the name of *Hurqa*, a female poet.

The Christians of Hira were called *al-Ebads* (the worshipers) because they paid great deal of importance to their worship. They spoke Syriac and Arabic but their writing was mainly Syriac. At the request of the poet *Al-Marqash*<sup>24</sup> they managed to alter the Syriac alphabet in order to create the Arabic alphabet

### **The Synod of Sabrisho I**

Sabrisho was elected patriarch in 596. He held a synod in Seleucia-Ctesiphon in 598 during the time of Cyrus II. The synod was concerned with theological matters and heresies. The decisions of the synod were signed by four bishops only.

---

<sup>23</sup> *Qala Souryaya* magazine, (1984) issue 32-33 pp. 148-155.

<sup>24</sup> Qanawatee, G. (Fr.) (1984) *Christianity and Muslim civilisation*, Baghdad: Arab institute for study and Distribution, p. 55. It is worth mentioning that there are remains believed to be the palace of *Shamoon ibin Jaber* the lakhmids. It is 15 meters high and is located between *Ain Tamir* and *Ukhaither* Palace. It is believed it dates back to the end of sixth century. Shamoon was a Strong personality that supported *Nu'man ibin Al-Mundher*



The discovery of monasteries of the South  
<http://www.kahramannews.com/uncategorized/43634>[15/02/2015]



## The Seventh Century

### The Synod of Gregory

Gregory was born in early 7<sup>th</sup> century at a town called *Uttor*. In April 605, he was elected Patriarch<sup>25</sup>. Gregory was handsome and tall, he was educated by *Isho* in Seleucia-Ctesiphon, and he became a commentator. May be his election as Patriarch was influenced by Queen Shirin, who was born in Prath d'Maishan <sup>26</sup>.



The Queen Shirin & Cyrus II Hurmizd 590-628

([www.wikipedia.org](http://www.wikipedia.org); <http://www.wonderslist.com>)

Gregory was regarded as a great theologian and an interpreter of the Holy books<sup>27</sup>. However, he was desirous

---

<sup>25</sup> Sources mention that there was a bishop in the Archbishopric by the name of Yousif who attended the Synod of Gregory in the same year and *the book of Synods* mentions another bishop by the name of *Nani*.

<sup>26</sup> Ibin Mati, U. (1899) *News of the Patriarchs of the Church of the East*, Rome, part 2, p. 60

<sup>27</sup> Hadad, P. (Fr.) (1976) *the Little History*, Baghdad: al-Adeeb printing press.

towards wealth; King Cyrus II was angered by him and denied his request of appointing a bishop for Nisibis. After serving for four years he passed away and was buried in Seleucia-Ctesiphon. Twenty nine bishops attended his synod in which all agreed to determine the correct faith of the church

### **The New Persecution**

In the early parts of the 7<sup>th</sup> century, Christians lived in chaos and fear they were forced to pay taxes and suffered the consequences of conflicts between different religious sects and heresies. When the Persian army was defeated by the Romans, Cyrus II started to persecute all the Christians of Mesopotamia. He ordered the destruction of all churches and allowed killing Christians. It is estimated that 90,000 people perished, amongst them were priests, monks and nuns<sup>28</sup>. But Cyrus was killed by his sons (some say with a blow of an axe to his head). He was succeeded by his son Sheroweesh who stopped all the persecution<sup>29</sup>.



Yazdegerd III (632-651)

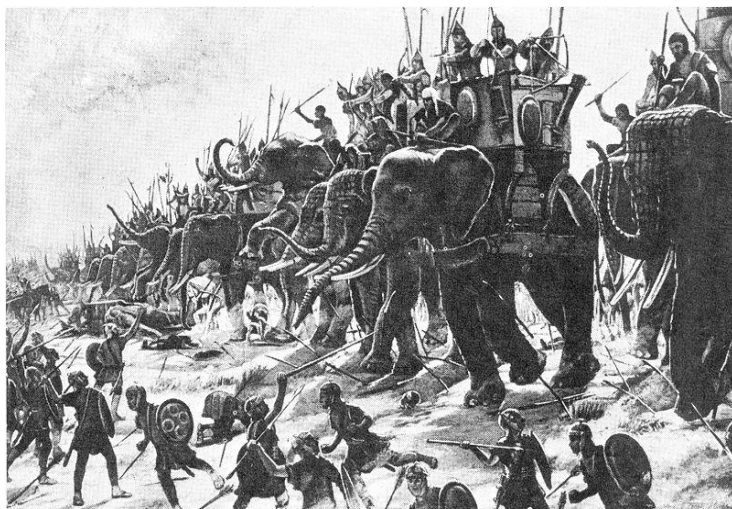
---

<sup>28</sup> Scholar, p. 90.

<sup>29</sup> Abouna, A. (Fr.) (2002) *the History of the Eastern Syriac Church*, part 1, Beirut: the Eastren Bookshop, 2nd edition, p. 155.

In the year 630 *Bar Sawma*, Bishop of *Karkh Leedan*, was dispatched to Heraclius to discuss peace talks, in the meantime, the military situation was escalating in southern Iraq that eventually led to the battle of *Al-Qadiysia* in 636. This battle took place near the city of Hira and lasted for three days. When the Muslim armies reached the city of *Jundisapour* Bishop *Amma* open the city gates for them. He later became the Patriarch of the Church of the East between 644 or 647<sup>30</sup>.

Christians remained neutral, content with the Muslim rule. Many Christian Arabs in Hira and its surroundings spoke Arabic, which was similar to Syriac, due to their common Semitic origin, but they were forced to pay the *Jizia* tax.



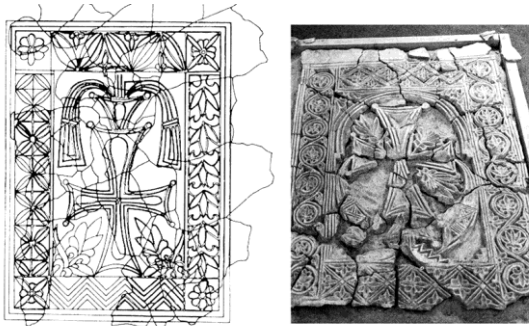
Al-Qadisiya Battle

---

<sup>30</sup> *Bayan al-Nahrain* magazine, issue 45-46, (1984) p. 33.

## Christianity in Kuwait

Recently, Christian antiquities were discovered in the Kuwaiti islands of Shuwaikh and Failaka. At Shuwaikh archaeologists discovered a plaster built church, containing three halls for prayers, a cross and a tomb. Two churches were also discovered in Failaka <sup>31</sup>.



Eastern Christian's antiquities in Kuwait (www.alqabas.com)

## Diocese of Bahrain

There was a thriving church in Bahrain (previously known as *Dari* Island), a letter was sent by Patriarch *Ishoyab* to bishop *Yacoub* about church liturgies. *Dari* lies near

---

<sup>31</sup> Source: <http://saber.cc/inner.aspx?id=36102> [accessed 31/03/15]

another Gulf island by the name of *Ruhayathba*<sup>32</sup>. It is thought that an Archbishopric existed in *Dari* Island before the year 410 as it was mentioned in the synod of Isaac; some scholars associated this island with present day Qatar which was visited by Patriarch *Giwargies*.

Bahrain was known as *Yamama* Island .When bishop *Mar Abda* reached it coming from *Der Mahraq* (Rima) during the 4<sup>th</sup> century (see below the list of monasteries) its inhabitants were baptised and a monastery was built. His disciples were Patriarchs *Mar Aha*, *Mar Yahballaha* and *Mar Abidisho* Bishop of Maishan. In the year 633 the areas of Bahrain (Qatar) and Maishan fell to the Muslim.

Recently some monastery ruins were discovered in Abu Dhabi that dated back to the 6<sup>th</sup> century. It is thought that it housed between 30 to 40 monks. In 1992, two churches were discovered which contained a remains of a person, two crosses, pottery and glassworks



Crosses were discovered in a monastery (Jibail-Saudi Arabia) 7<sup>th</sup> century. (<http://bloggercomprofile157520blogspot.blogspot.com> [ibrahim-al-copti.blogspot.com](http://ibrahim-al-copti.blogspot.com))

---

<sup>32</sup> Habbi, *Synods of the church of the East*, p. 395.

## Archdioceses of the Church of the East

According to the history of *Amr bin Mati*, the Church of the East encompassed 27 Archdiocese and the Patriarchate seat at Seleucia- Ctesiphon. Each Archdiocese was served by 6 to 12 bishops. They were:

1. *Jundishapur* 2. *Niibis* 3. *Prath d'Maishan (Basra)*
4. *Mosul* 5. *Irbil and Haza* 6. *Bajirmi* 7. *Halwan*
8. *Jerusalem* 9. *Orhay* 10. *Persia* 11. *Maro* 12. *Hurat* 13. *Tatrouba*
14. *China* 15. *India* 16. *Barda'a*
17. *Damascus* 18. *Al Rai* 19. *Tibrustan* 20. *Al Deleam* 21. *Samarkand*
22. *Turkistan* 23. *Matran Blikh*
24. *Sajistan* 25. *Baliq* 26. *Tankot* 27. *Kashqhar and Nawakuth*<sup>33</sup>



Christian antiquities in Saudi Arabia and Bahrain dating back to the 6<sup>th</sup> century ([www.middle-east-online.com](http://www.middle-east-online.com))

## Monasteries of the region

Monastic life thrived throughout the Dioceses of the South. According to archaeological studies of the discovered monasteries in Hira, we can conclude that their

---

<sup>33</sup> *Ibin Matta, U. (1899) News of the Patriarchs of the Church of the East, Rome, part 2.*

architecture was of Babylonian style. The monasteries were regarded as a centre for prayer and social life. They were supplied by water- wells and by cultivated lands. Its rooms were dome-shaped and the walls were built from plaster decorated by mosaic works with ornamental plants. The ceiling was decorated by drawings and traces of gold. The rooms contained a cross (sometimes a cross inside a circle) and glass lamps<sup>34</sup>.

The males and females lived a secluded life in their monasteries and convents. The daughters of the covenant (*Bnath Qyama*) participated in church choirs and were catechist teachers, especially, after the 4<sup>th</sup> century.

According to the researcher Susan Ashbrook the Daughters of the Covenant served as deaconess and evangelised the Salvation of Christ to all who wished to convert to Christianity. They were noted for their volunteer works, preferring their seclusion to achieve their spiritual goals. They were also targeted during the years of persecution<sup>35</sup>.

According to the research of *al- Tarihi*, the monasteries within the province of the Archbishopric<sup>36</sup> were:

---

<sup>34</sup> Al-Hamdani, A. (2010) *Massarat Magazine*, issue 14, vol. 5, pp. 42-47.

<sup>35</sup> HUGOYE: Journal of Syriac studies, Revisiting the Daughters of the Covenant: Women's Choirs and Sacred Song in Ancient Syriac Christianity by Susan Ashbrook Harvey, Brown University, Department of Religious Studies, 07/2005.

<sup>36</sup> Al-Tarihi, M. (1981) *Monasteries and places of al- Nasara in Kufa and its suburbs*, 1<sup>st</sup> edition, Beirut.

1. Monastery of the Workers (Rulers), located between Prath d'Maishan and *Wasit* (present day *Kut*).
2. Monastery of Skulls, believed to be built at the end of the 7<sup>th</sup> century.
3. Monastery of *Muhraq* (Monastery of *Mirra*), its ruins are at *Tal Reha* near *Lakesh*, 60 kilometres from *al- Nasiriya*. It is thought that it was the headquarters of Bishop Mar *Abda* during the 5<sup>TH</sup> century, albeit for a short time.
4. Monastery of *al- Dahdar* was built before Islam and remained open until 1225. It is located at river *Mrra*, 100 kilometres north of Basra.
5. Monastery of *Abidisho* near Hira. It was named after his founder {*Abidisho*} who was ordained a bishop at the time of Patriarch *Tomersa* 384-393
6. Monastery of *Jabeel* near Basra and Monastery of *Hizqial*, both located between Basra and *Askar Mukaram*<sup>37</sup>.

Apart from prayers and fasting the monks were actively involved in translation and literature. The monasteries were famous for the manufacturing of wooden household materials, their Horticulture and prosperous gardens<sup>38</sup>. The 7<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> centuries witnessed a thriving boom in Syriac literature that dealt with the spiritual life. And by translating some texts to Arabic and Greek languages, their influence was greatly felt outside the borders of the

---

<sup>37</sup> Qasha, S. (2008) *Basra in Syriac sources*, Al Sa'aeh bookshop, p.59.

<sup>38</sup> I did not mention other monasteries in the south as there was a lack of information, some of is mentioned in different sources such as 'The *Book of Nasara monasteries in Islam*' by Habib Zayaat and others.



Church of the East, such as the works of Isaac of Nineveh.

### **Saint Isaac of Nineveh**

Isaac was born in *Beth Qatraye* (modern-day Qatar) in the early 7<sup>th</sup> century. He was ordained bishop of Nineveh (on the outskirts of modern-day Mosul). After holding this post for several months he withdrew from the Archbishopric and headed for the mountain of Ahwaz to live a secluded life. He was attached to the monastery of *Rabban Shapur* (monk Shapur). His reputation grew during the second half of the 7<sup>th</sup> century. We have 68 articles about his works in spiritual life. Most of his writing and teaching was directed to the monks.

### **Gabriel bin Lefi al Qatari**

Sources mention that he was a student at *Nisibis* School in 615, and then a teacher at the same school. Afterwards, he taught at the *Mahozî* School in Seleucia-Ctesiphon. Gabriel was renowned for his explanation of ecclesiastical services<sup>39</sup>.

### **Ibrahim bin Lefi al Qatari**

Born towards the end of sixth century, he was appointed as a commentator at Saleq School. Ibrahim published a book explaining the church rituals.

---

<sup>39</sup> Isaac, J. (Bishop) (Dr) (2008) *Chaldean Mass*, Baghdad, Nagem Al –Masriq publications, p. 33.

## Abidisho the monk

He was from *Arfaloona* village in the province of Maishan. *Abidisho* was a disciple of Mar *Abba* and studied theology at his school. Renowned for his fasting, God bestowed upon him the talent of miracles. After completing his monastery he moved to *Bhaksaya* and built another large monastery. King Bahram (it is believed to be Bahram IV who ruled between 388 and 399) when passing his monastery would visit and pay tribute to him. The king saw in him a man of great imminence.



Bahram IV (388-399)

*Abidisho* left his monastery and headed for Maishan. In Reemion, his reputation grew and many monks were selected by him. Patriarch *Tomarsa* (d.393) ordained him Bishop of *al- Miharaq* monastery. He went to an island in *Yamama* and Bahrain living a life of seclusion. *Abidisho* started preaching to the locals about the Bible and many abandoned their cruel ways and turned into righteousness. He performed several miracles in the area and after building his monastery, *Abidisho* headed to *Hira* and later to Maishan. That was his last stop. He was buried at the

monastery and his tomb became a fountain of divine goodness<sup>40</sup>.

### **The antiquities of today**

One of the reasons for the rarity of antiquities of the churches and monasteries above ground level is that very few of them were built with stones. Most buildings were constructed with dried brick mud mixed with haystack and horse manure with reed ceiling. The structures were unable to withstand the ground water and Meteorological condition. Additionally, the area witnessed so many invasions and attacks that uprooted all the signs of civilisation. Some of the ruins can be seen today but most of the antiquities have been effaced.

### **The challenges of the Church**

Despite the spiritual and cultural revival throughout the dioceses, when we study historical church records we find many cultural, spiritual, pastoral and financial shortfalls.

Culturally, several heresies influenced the faithful such as Manichaeism, the Worshipers and other cults. Some sought witchcraft and fortune tellers and were feeble-minded in understanding the Holy Book. Social morals were misconstrued. Many improper actions occurred such as fornication, exaggerated bereavement for the dead, and celebrating pagan festivals.

---

<sup>40</sup> Sher, (Fr.) A. (1906) *life of most famous Martyrs of the East*, part 2, p. 227.

Spiritually, there was negligence towards fasting and prayers and no obligations towards the holiness of Sundays. Leaving church half way through mass, ignoring the morning and evening prayers, the mismanaging of monasteries and monk's quarters.

Pastorally, many befriended pagans and flawed the concept of marriage by taking two wives or forcibly marrying someone.

Financially, some audaciously stole from places of worship and mismanaged the financial affairs of the church, failure to fund Church building projects and carelessly building monasteries without proper financial planning.

Many deleterious issues surfaced because of the harmful role of some banned priests and the politics of certain bishops. Often church centres would compete between themselves for supremacy such as Hira, Ahwaz and Seleucia-Ctesiphon. The theological differences surfaced about the divinity of Christ and the Trinity and how to transact with other religions such as Islam and Zoroastrian.

## **Conclusion**

There were other internal reasons, besides the ones we mentioned above, that restrained the church. Such as: the concentration on the vertical relationship with God at the expense of developing the civil components of the Christian society; The majority of church leaders were monks who emphasised on the spiritual aspects of life and they could not offer solutions to the practical problems that faced the persecuted people, except by excommunication and directives.

On the other hand, church fathers took advantage of the popular arts and the language and used them as means of explaining the Bible, they translated the Holy Book into Aramaic and organised great religious customs.

The synods diagnosed the obstacles that were facing the church and tried to heal its body. But the escalation of the Persian persecutions, the inaccessibility to the Western church and the arrival of Islam made the church deal only with the bare minimum. The level of ecclesiastical work was like a wave that would go up and down. Additionally, the majority of the bishops (in some cases more than 175) would hardly gather and meet due to security reasons and the influence exerted upon them by the Arab and Persian politicians.

Despite all these adversaries, Christianity spread in south of Mesopotamia in the first millennium (258-1258) and declined in the second one (after 1258). But the remaining

few Christians- during the 3rd millennium continued to light up the candles of Christian values amongst the majority of Muslims. The church flourished and gave thousands of martyrs and devoted bishops, priests, monks, nuns, and scholars, even to this day.

Prath d'Maishan was a link between the dioceses of the Gulf, the Arabian Peninsula, the dioceses of Persia and the Patriarchal centre in Seleucia- Ctesiphon. The church today is asked to study its history in a critical and objective way to learn lesson from its pasts. It resembles a ship that's being hit by waves of secularism and terrorism.

# **Chapter Two**

## **The Metropolitan under the Islamic rule**

### **The Islamic State between 7<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup> century & The Mongol invasion**

#### **Introduction**

When the Islamic call started, Patriarch *Isho 'yab I* (628-645) sent gifts to the Arabic Prophet (Muhammad) in the form of 1000 silver drapes. According to “*History of al-Sa'ardi*”, they were taken by Archbishop Gabriel of Prath d'Maishan, but by the time he arrived at his destination the prophet was already dead (632). They were given to Caliph Abu *Baker al-Siddiq*. It is said that there were agreements and pledges being made between the Muslims and Christians, but historians doubt them as there is lack of good evidence<sup>41</sup>.

During the first half of the 7<sup>th</sup> century, Muslim rule in southern Mesopotamia was firmly established. When the Muslims arrived in the area, around 632, they were

---

<sup>41</sup> Sher, A. (2010) *History of al-Sa'ardi*, part 2, Sulaymaniayah: Institute of Kurdish Culture, p. 182.

welcomed by the Christians of Iraq<sup>42</sup>. Many people from the Arabian Peninsula were of Christian decent and they took part in battles and administered the Caliphate. As a reward for their services, it is reputed that Christian Arabs were exempt from the *Jizia* tax.

Sources speak of a Christian from Bahrain by the name of Estepanous, who built a whole neighbourhood in Basra. He was the personal actuary of *Ziyad bin Abi Sufyan*<sup>43</sup>. Records mention that the first doctor in the dawn of Islam was a Christian by the name of *Al- Harith bin Kalda*. He studied medicine at Jundisapur and practiced at a school built by the church during the 5<sup>th</sup> century<sup>44</sup>.

## Islamic rule

The battle of *Al-Qadiysia* (636) was the decisive turning point between the Arab and the Persian rule in Iraq. In the aftermath of this battle many skirmishes occurred and, eventually, Seleucia- Ctesiphon (present day Mada'an) was conquered by *Saad bin Abi Waqas*. He temporarily set his base camp at Hira. Then He built three cities: (*Aqulla*) or Al-Kufa, Basra and Wasit <sup>45</sup>.

---

<sup>42</sup> According to Muslim sources it is the same year that the prophet died.

<sup>43</sup> *Bayan al- Nahreen* issue 63, 64, 1988, p. 207.

<sup>44</sup> There is a contradiction in dates, how did he work in school during the 5<sup>th</sup> century and at the same time he was the first doctor when Muslims arrived in 632.

<sup>45</sup> In Aramaic it means *the curving* because it was built at the curving of Euphrates River. *Aqulla* is situated about 6 kilometres from Hira (Sometimes it is referred to as the chariot of the Arabs).



According to “the Book of little History”, it was *Utbah bin Ghazwan* who first drew the initial plans of Basra.

The book also mentions the martyrdom of Gewagris, Bishop of *Aowlai*, and the imprisonment of Ibrahim, Archbishop of Prath d’Maishan, by the Persians. They were acting as messengers of peace between the two warring parties<sup>46</sup>. The Persian army, under the command of *Rostam*, fiercely resisted the Islamic army, but eventually it disintegrated and collapsed<sup>47</sup>.

The severity of battles and destructions around Seleucia-Ctesiphon resulted in the displacement of the Christian from the area. They dispersed to far-flung destinations, some came to Prath d’Maishan. As the general decline of Seleucia-Ctesiphon continued, many immigrated to the south for economic reasons<sup>48</sup>.

### **Etymology of Basra**

Basra has several meanings, but for the purpose of this book, the Aramaic meaning will suffice. It is possible that it was derived from the word *Basrayeta* (canal) or *Baith Bsuria* (a place of crack or break). The verb *Basr* means weakness and *Basryeta* means hut houses (from two pronunciation *baith* or *osree*) it appears that Basra was a

---

<sup>46</sup> According to *the book of little history Abu Musa al -Asha’ari* he is the one that built Basra

<sup>47</sup> Haddad, P. *the Little History*, pp. 101-102.

<sup>48</sup> Altareehi, p. 16, it is worth noting that life returned to Mada’an again after the building of Baghdad by Caliph Abu *Jafaar al-Mansour*, (*Bayan al -Nahrain*, issue 53-54 1986 p. 34 ).

city built by austere huts. The Persian name for Basra is *Wahman Ardashir*

The city was built to serve the early Muslim immigrants from the Arabian Peninsula<sup>49</sup>. After the year 636, the building of Basra commenced around present day Zubair<sup>50</sup>. Basra has a dusty or humid climate and it is very hot. Some scholars believe that Basra was built near the city of Tardeem which was built during the Persian occupation on the ruins of a Chaldean city. At Zubair, archaeologist discovered evidence of Chaldean, Persian and Arabic paintings on unburned mud-bricks that dates back to the early centuries. Additionally, several Chaldean statues from that time are kept at the British Museum<sup>51</sup>.

### **The Church and the early Muslims**

During this gruesome century, the church faced several challenges caused by the resurgence of Islam and the migration of Muslims to Mesopotamia (due to the large influx of people from the Peninsula some monasteries were repossessed and used as living quarters). As a result of continuous battles in the area, a state of anarchy

---

<sup>49</sup> during the days of *al-Hajaj* 660-714 the city of Wasit was built for the same reason that Kufa and Basra were built. The area belonged to a Christian gentleman that *al-Hajaj* purchased it from him.

<sup>50</sup> The city is on 33 degrees of latitude and 44 degrees north.

<sup>51</sup> Al- Abbassi, A. (1970) *Encyclopaedia of the history of Basra*, part 1, Baghdad: Thames company, pp. 26-27. When we say Chaldean we don't mean the Chaldean church because the statues before the church was established as they belong to the Chaldean Civilisation that lasted till the 5<sup>th</sup> century BC and it fell under the Persian rule.

prevailed on Archbishoprics of Mesopotamia and the Gulf. Additionally, the Christians continued to have their problems with other religions.

Some Christians converted to Islam, as they saw some similarities between the two faiths, such as: Judgment day, the resurrection, Virgin Mary, prayers, fasting and alimony. There was a resemblance in the language of the Muslims (Arabic) and the Christians (Aramaic) as both were of Semitic origin<sup>52</sup>. Moreover, old companionship existed with a number of Christian Arab tribes who lived in the Arabian Peninsula long before the advent of Islam. A well-known convert to Islam was *Bashir bin Amir* or *Harith bin Zaid* known as *Abaa Munther* who lived in Basra until he was killed in 642. Jews also lived in Basra during the 7<sup>th</sup> century. A small tributary from the Tigris River was named after a Jewish doctor<sup>53</sup>.

### **The Exclusion of the Jews and Christians from the Arabian Peninsular**

In the year 640, *Calipha Umar* decided to expel all the Jews and Christians from the Arabian Peninsula, in accordance with the Prophet's directive concerning the removal of non-Muslims from Arabia. The Christians of Najran and the Jews of Khaybar were most affected. Some

---

<sup>52</sup> It is worth mentioning that the writing that Basra's residence used in writing was Aramaic, this according to *the encyclopaedia of Basra*. It is clear in the calendars of dated in 8-9 AD and then the Mandaean (*Basra Encyclopaedia*, (2013), Basra: University of Basra, al-Ghadeer for printing and publishing, p. 39)

<sup>53</sup> *Basra Encyclopaedia*, p. 80.

of them (in their hundreds of thousands) were re-allocated to Hira in Iraq. It is reputed that they were financially compensated<sup>54</sup>.

The Caliph also imposed the Jizia tax on Christians, Jews and Magians (the original Christians of Iraq were exempt). However, the tax of Umar was in the form of hosting a Muslim for three days. *Khiraj* tax (land tax) was imposed on businesses and was paid in cash or by materials.

### **Patriarchs in critical years**

The Church of the East remained without a patriarch for five years (643-647). The Christians suffered from high unemployment and poverty as a result of never ending wars. Political conspiracies were rife in Kufa and Basra, especially in the reign of third Caliph *Uthman bin Affan* (644). During these critical times Patriarch *Maremmeh* was elected in 647. When he died in 650 Bishop of Prath d'Maishan temporarily attained the patriarchal seat, but later handed it over to Bishop Gewargis of Hadyaab.

In Basra, unemployment levels rose inexorably, the city was abuzz with contempt against the Caliph *Uthman*, who was accused of opulence living. Patriarch *Ishoyab III* was elected (650-661) amidst these raucous circumstances. As a result of people's discontent, an attempted assassination of the Caliph occurred in 656 that triggered a large scale battle (the Battle of the Camel) that took place at Basra on 7 November, 656 in the reign of Caliph *Ali bin Abi Talib*

---

<sup>54</sup> Scholar, p. 31.

(d. 661), it was during the last year of his rule that Patriarch *Gewargis I* was elected.

It is worth mentioning that the doctor who tried to save the life of the fourth Caliph, *Ali bin Abi Talib*, was a Christian by the name of *Atheer bin Umar*. He was one of the 40 Christian youths who were taken as slaves from *Ain-Altamor* city north of al Hira by Imam Ali. Atheer was selected from the 150 doctors that were summoned in Kufa<sup>55</sup>. After the Imam's death, power transferred to the Umayyad's for 88 years (662-750).

Patriarch *Gewargis I* conveyed his synod in 676 in order to organise the affairs of the church. It took place in *Dareen* Island. The political turmoil in the area had an adverse effect on the churches and monasteries. Therefore, it was vital to hold this synod in order to reconfirm the church's faith and to install capable people and to divide responsibilities between the church clergies. The synod emphasised on organising monastic life, especially nuns of 'the Daughters of the Covenant'. It tried to offer solutions to the problems of interfaith marriages, the multiple of wives. It dealt with liturgical and financial matters of the church.

---

<sup>55</sup> <http://islamicbooks.info/H-28-Arabic-Variable/Khalili-Ali-wounded-analysis.htm> (25/2/2015). This is not the only tale of the presence of Christians in Kufa, there is also a tale of *Wahab* and his wife they are the Christians who fought with Imam Hussein and they are buried in Karbala and also the tale of monk *Karakolis* he cared about the head of the martyr, <http://bahzani.net/services/forum/showthread.php>

Christians adopted themselves positively to the new situation. Muslim leaders relied on them to administer the affairs of their rule (as most Muslims were engaged in fighting). A famous Christian during the 7<sup>th</sup> century was called *Estepanous*<sup>56</sup>. He was an actuary of *Abid Ziyad bin Abyea*, and neighbourhood in Basra was named after him. He also acted as an actuary for *Abdul Rahmaan bin Ziyad*, the governor of *Khurasan* in 677<sup>57</sup>.

According to sources, the evacuation of Christians from the Arabian Peninsula took tens of years to complete. The mass exodus continued for more than half a century. The remaining inhabitants refused to leave and converted to Islam, in some cases they worshiped secretly. Records mentioned that the remaining Christians in Najran did not exceed 5000.

The time it took to re-allocate the displaced Christians from the Arabian Peninsula reveals the magnitude of the tragedy and the size of the Christian population. To add to their ordeal, they were forced to march for 1600 kilometres on bare desert roads to far-flung destinations, some reached the churches and monasteries of Prath d'Maishan and Hira<sup>58</sup>. Additionally, the Archbishopric received more displaced people from Seleucia-Ctesiphon.

---

<sup>56</sup> *Ziyad* was an *Umayyad* military and political commander who died in 673.

<sup>57</sup> *Bayan al- Nahrain* , issue 63, 64, 1988 p. 207.

<sup>58</sup> It is worth noting that in those years there was also an immigration of Muslim families from the Peninsula the population of Basra In the time of Ali were 60,000 excluding kids, slaves and governors (*Book of Basra*, (2012) Government of Basra Publication, p. 18.)

Once again the Christians were treated as second class citizens when the Jizia tax was imposed on them.

*Ishoyhab* was in charge of the Archbishopric of Prath d'Maishan (the exact date is unknown, but possibly in 686). He possessed an immense intellect and ambitions. After the death of Archbishop *Youhanna Barmarta*, *Ishoyab* arrived at Seleucia- Ctesiphon and forcibly installed himself as Patriarch. The bishops and the people were stunned at his stealth action and were unable confront him. However, When *Abdullah bin Almute'e*, the Governor of Kufa, fell from grace; *Ishoyab* found himself a target of *Mukhtar bin abi Ubaida* who was in Seleucia- Ctesiphon. He ordered his imprisonment and gave permission to church leaders to legitimately elect a new head of church. They elected *Hnanisho*.

In his book, *History of the Church* (126:3), *Bin al-Ibri* alludes to the bad relationship between Patriarch *Hnanisho* and the Umayyad Caliph *Abid al-Malik bin Marwan*. When the Umayyad caliph came to Iraq in 691 and defeated the governor of Basra *Mu'sab bin al-Zubair*, the patriarch went to meet him. They engaged in a prolonged conversation until the Caliph asked the patriarch's opinion about the Arab religion. The patriarch replied: "The Arabs have conquered the world by the might of weapons whereas Christianity expanded and established itself by the might of divine miracles." This reply enraged the Caliph and he ordered the patriarch's tongue to be cut. But some Christians interceded with the Caliph and alleviated his anger and bad intentions towards *Hnanisho*.

The historian *Mari bin Suleiman* offers a different version regarding the rage of *Abdul Malik*. *Hnanisho* was very kind to *Ishoyab*, but he had a grudge against the patriarch. Undoubtedly, when he returned to his Archbishopric he started smearing his name to the Governor of Basra. His other adversary was *Youhanna the leper*, Bishop of Nisibis-History of the Church page 136-138-<sup>59</sup> who were disgruntled about the election of *Hnanisho*.

For four year, *Youhanna* regularly met with *Abdul Malik* until he obtained from the Caliph a discharge order, effectively dismissing *Hnanisho*. In 692, the Umayyad Caliph wrote to his son *Bashr*, Governor of Kufa, saying: “the Nazarenes of our nation have chosen *Youhanna* and we have empowered him to receive the resignation of *Hnanisho*”.The bishop took the letter to Kufa and delivered it to *Bashr* .He spent large amounts of money in order to achieve his ambitions<sup>60</sup> .

The Jews of Basra also helped the Umayyad’s to manage the affairs of their empire<sup>61</sup>. Sources mention a Jewish doctor by the name of *Maserjoeh*, during the reign of *Marwan bin al- Hukim*(d. 686) the founder of the second Umayyad density. He translated from Syriac to Arabic a very important medical book by Haroon, an Alexandrian priest.

---

<sup>59</sup> Nisibis is situated at the Syrian Turkish borders near North West of Iraq.

<sup>60</sup> *Mukhtar al Thaqafi* was murdered in 686 and he asked for the blood of Hussein (<http://ar.wikipedia.org/wiki>)

<sup>61</sup> *Umayyad’s* ruled between 662 and 750.



## **The Cultural and Scientific changes before and after Islam**

Between the 4<sup>th</sup> and the 6<sup>th</sup> century the area of Hira-Prath d'Maishan-Jundishapur was a treasure drove of science and culture. Monasteries and church centres started to pay attention to the Arabic language and its literature. The science of Philology was created. In the beginning, the translation was to Syriac<sup>62</sup> then to Arabic depending on Syriac grammar. Basra flourished under the Abbasid Dynasty. According to scholar Habbi, during the time of *al-Ma'mon* there were 700 schools in Basra and its libraries contained some 200,000 books<sup>63</sup>

Despite the importance of Kufa, by the end of the century, Basra became the command and control centre of the Muslims during the rule of *Muawia*. In Basra the first author of Arabic grammar appeared by the name of *Abu Alaswad al-Duli* (d. 688). He consulted priests and religious authorities of the Church of the East at Basra according to the opinion of *Al Zayat* in his book (Arabic Literature)<sup>64</sup>

---

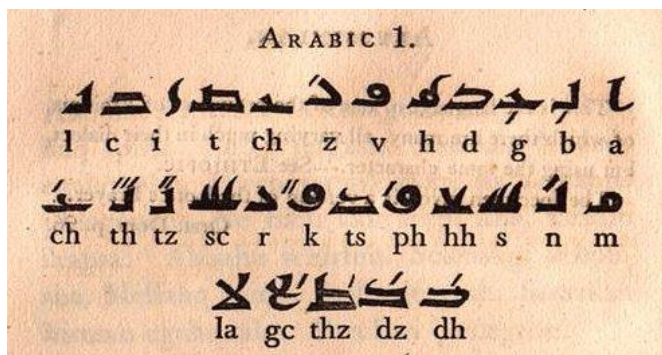
<sup>62</sup> We mention The Syriac Language, not Aramaic or Chaldean or Assyrian so that it corresponds with the title that the western missionaries who called our national meaning Syriac language. One of the reason for emphasising on the Syriac saying so that it distinguishes her from the Aramaic as it refers to the era of pagan culture before Christ (for example the Chaldean civilisation) and before the language was *baptised* and became a Christian cultural instrument in the 3<sup>rd</sup> century.

<sup>63</sup> *Bayan al- Nahrain* 45-46.1984 pp. 39-40.

<sup>64</sup> Abouna, (Fr.) A. *History of the Syriac Church*, part 2 p. 92.



The similarity between the Aramaic (up)  
and first Arabic fonts (down)



## Eight Century

During this century, the Christians situation deteriorated as they witnessed the increased aggression by non-Christians against their properties and belongings, and the internal conflicts between the Muslims that led to the outbreak of several battles in 704. However, the church produced some outstanding individuals that excelled in mysticism and spirituality. The Archbishopric of Basra was a springboard of mysticisms that influenced even the Muslims.

History records the name of the monk *Bar Sahde*<sup>65</sup> who came from Istakhar in Persia. After completing his studies in Basra he decided to be a monk. *Bar Sahde* built a monastery and named it after him. The locals referred to the site as the monastery of *al-Zabareach*<sup>66</sup>. He lived until he reached the age of ninety (d.745).

Archbishop *Soureen* of Prath d'Maishan, who was elected in 754, attempted to restore the damages that befell on the Christians as a result of battles and skirmishes. In 774, the most important of these battles was with the *Khwarij* under the command of *Yazid bin Muhlib* against the Abbasid Caliph with the support of the people of Basra. They were later defeated in the battle of *Afer* near Kufa<sup>67</sup>.

---

<sup>65</sup> Aramaic term meaning is *the son of martyrs*.

<sup>66</sup> Abouna, (Fr.) A. (2006) *Monasteries of Iraq*, Baghdad, p. 318.

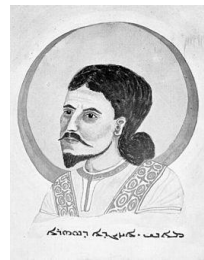
<sup>67</sup> [www.wikipedia.org](http://www.wikipedia.org) (10/11/2014).

In 774, *Hnanisho II* was elected patriarch for the Church of the East (the people of Hira played a major role in his election), he held a synod in 775 during the time of Caliph *Al-Mahdi*. The Synod emphasised on organising the internal affairs of the church and to stick to its true faith<sup>68</sup>. *Abu al- Abbas al- Taoussi* murdered the patriarch (by poisoning) for not conceding to him a village that belonged to the church.

### **Change of name**

During the synod of Timothy I (790) the dioceses of Prath d'Maishan was renamed Archbishopric of Basra<sup>69</sup>. The Archbishopric had a major influence when voting took place for the election of a new patriarch because of the bishop's seniority. This was also confirmed by Patriarch Timothy I in his synod (which was attended by *Gewargis*, the Archbishop Basra).

Many religious movements appeared in Basra between the 8<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> centuries, especially in the time of *Abu Abbas al- Safah*. In addition to the Shi'a and Sunni Islam, the *al- Mu'tazila* (theological movement which introduced speculative dogmatism into Islam during the 8th–10th centuries) together with Manichaeism had a major influence on the




---

<sup>68</sup> Habbi, Y. (Fr. Dr) (1989) *the Synods of the Church of the East, Bayen al- Nahrain* issues 65-66, p. 43.

<sup>69</sup> He was born in 728, ordained patriarch in 780, and died in 823.

intellectual front<sup>70</sup>. Christianity benefited from the limited religious freedom it had, and Christians-who constituted large numbers of the population, were highly intellectual and they were prominent in passing on the Hellenic concepts to *Jundishapur* in Persia.

One of the prominent individuals during the early Abbasid Caliphate was *Khasib*, a Christian doctor, from Basra. This skilful physician was so much in demand that even one poet who was treated by him recited a poem about him by saying:

*I have said to my parents,  
bring me Khasib  
By God only Khasib is the doctor  
who knows my sickness*<sup>71</sup>

According to the book “Eyes of the Inhabitants” (*Eyoon al- Abna’a*), *Khasib* died in prison because he failed to cure *Muhammad bin Abi al- Abbas Al- Safadi*, the governor of Basra. It was alleged that *Khasib* purposely administered a medicine to Muhammad that caused him severe side effects. Muhammad was taken to Baghdad where he died in 767. *Khasib* was accused of murdering

---

<sup>70</sup> Refers to the heresy of Mani (above his picture), the Christian Persian who was born in 216 in Iraq. Mani formed a religion that lasted approximately one thousand years that contains Buddhist, Christian and Zoroastrian thoughts. His followers were spread in the Middle East and North Africa (picture of Mani is copied from Wikipedia).

<sup>71</sup> *Qanawati*, p. 154.

him. He was put in prison until his death<sup>72</sup>. *Al- Safadi* praised the skills and treatments of *al-Khasib* to the famous doctor Galenous (a prominent European physician).

The Church continued to face some damaging spells, some chaotic trends emerged within the church itself such as the juggling of power between bishops so that they reach a position of prominence, amongst them was Soreen, the Archbishop of Nisibis. In the year 754, he was elected patriarchy by sheer favouritism. He used the influence of the prince of Seleucia-Ctesiphon who later transferred him to Basra. Soreen was not welcomed by anyone in Basra and subsequently, he was imprisoned and later died of poisoning.

It seemed Basra was a depository of personalities that caused embracement to the Patriarchate seat. Towards the end of the 8<sup>th</sup> century, bishop Yousif of *Mirro* headed a group of bishops and rebelled against Patriarch Timothy. When the patriarch removed him from office, he went to meet Caliph *al-Mahdi* to persuade him to use his authority against Timothy. But the Caliph dismissed him and as a result of that, the bishop converted to Islam and based himself in Basra. But after a while he returned to Christianity<sup>73</sup>.

It is worth mentioning the role and influence of *Zubaidah*, wife of *Harun al-Rashid*, the fifth Abbasid Caliph who

---

<sup>72</sup> *Bayan al- Nahrain*, issues 65-66, 1989, p. 43.

<sup>73</sup> Abouna, *History of the Syriac Church*, part 2, pp. 115-116.

assumed power in 787, in helping the Christians. In 790 she assisted *Sargis*, Archbishop of Basra in building the Archbishopric's churches. She would often help in making banners of palms for Palm Sunday and crosses of gold and silver<sup>74</sup>.

Caliph *Amin* (787-808) was tolerant towards the Christians in Basra. He fulfilled what his father commanded to *Hamdoun bin Ali* in rebuilding of churches.

During the reign of Caliph *Al- Rashid* (787- 808), *Hamdoun* intimated to him that the Christians worshiped bones of the dead. Based on this insinuation the Caliph ordered the destruction of Basra churches. Some influential Christians interfered in this matter with the Caliph and denied this false allegation. He ordered the rebuilding of any destroyed churches. This was also due to the influence and efforts of Patriarch Timothy and Harun's wife. Towards the end of October 799<sup>75</sup> Caliph Harun visited Basra accompanied by Timothy.

---

<sup>74</sup> Abouna, A. *History of the Syriac Church*, part2, p. 124, according to Wikipedia site some of the doctors that were included in her care was doctor Gibriel she paid him a monthly salary of 50,000 *Dirham*.

<sup>75</sup> Abouna, A. *History of The Syriac Church*, part 2, pp. 141,125; Fee, J. (Fr) (2000) *Christian antiquities in Mosul*, Translated by *Najib Qaqo*, Baghdad, p. 28.



***Harun al-Rashid & Zubaidah***

(Pictures from the internet)



## Ninth Century

During the 9<sup>th</sup> century, the Archbishopric of Basra comprised of two Dioceses. According to *Eliya al-Damashqee* there was the diocese of *Karkh d'Maishan* and *Nahr Almara (Rima)*. Sources mention that in 840 the Archbishopric had two bishops by the name of *Shoha E'lmaran* and Daniel in 852.

In the time of Caliph *Al-Mutawakkil* (847-861) many churches were destroyed and strict directives were issued to the Christians such as:

1. Ringing of church bells was prohibited.
2. Forbiddance of reciting Psalms in public.
3. Forbiddance of displaying crosses in public.
4. Forbiddance of building over any previous Muslim properties.
5. Banning of public funerals (usually the deceased's family would say loud prayers and sad songs on their way to the cemetery).
6. Banning of horse riding.
7. Banning the use of saddles when mounting a horse or a donkey.

As a result of these oppressive laws, some Christians converted to Islam and others migrated north of the country. There were daily harassments which enticed people to attack Christians and even their writings such as

the Book of *Al-Jahith* (d. in 868)<sup>76</sup>. On the other hand, some Christians paid little attention to this maltreatment and continued to translate and teach in medicine, astrology, pharmaceutical and especially philosophy that had a great amount of influence on Islamic thoughts of the *Mu'tazila*.

During the rule of *Al-Mu'tamid* (870-892) the Christians of Basra were anxious because of a man stood against the government and the Christians. However, the troublesome was killed in 884 at about the same time Patriarch *Enosh* died.

During this century, some rich people of Basra brought the Zings (Negros) into the country from East Africa, as workers to dry out the marshes. But due to their bad social and economic conditions, they started a few rebellions between 869 and 883 which spread to Ahwaz and the Gulf. They established a small local rule at *Mukhtara* city (southern Basra). The revolt of the Zing was against the Caliph *Al-Muhtadi* (869-870).



Zanj in Basra

---

<sup>76</sup> He died of old age when he was in his library as some books fell on him.

According to *Sheikh al- Abassi*, there was a Jewish village in the time of the Zing on the western shores of *Shatt al - Arab*. Its name was unknown. It was given as a gift by Caliph *Harun* to a Jewish doctor who cured one of his maids. However, scholars disagree about its ownership and claim that the village was given to a Christian doctor by the name of Gabriel *bin Bakhtisho*<sup>77</sup>.

### **Hunayn ibn Ishaq**

*Abu Zaid Hunayn ibn Ishaq* was born in 810 and lived in Hira, his father was a pharmacist who belonged to *al-Abbad*, a Christian Arab tribe. Hunayn studied Arabic and medicine in Baghdad. He headed for the Roman lands to get some books to translate, whilst there he learned Greek and upon his return to Baghdad, he translated several books to Syriac. Hunayn translated the medical books of Galenous and some books of Aristotle and Plato and wrote a book entitled “Issues of Medicine”. His book “Ten Articles about the Eye” is regarded as one of the oldest known medical book about eye diseases. Hunayn died in Samara in 877 or 873.

Hunayn went through many hardships because of his family, relatives and people who begrudged him. *Al-Mutawakkil* imprisoned him once for failing to give him a poison to kill one of his opponents. Doctor *bin al-Tefouri* smeared his name because of an icon of crucified Jesus. One of his medical adversaries, *Bakhtisho bin*

---

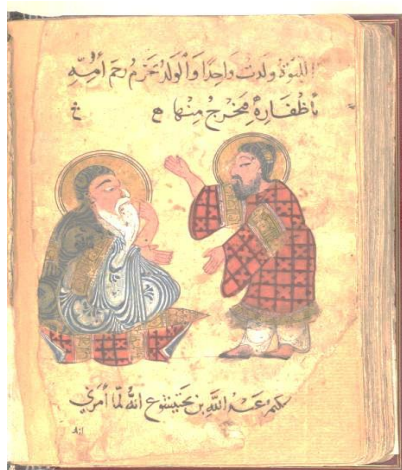
<sup>77</sup> Al-Abbasi, A. (?) *History Encyclopidia of Basra*, pp. 211-212.

*Gibraiel* also caused him an issue because of another icon<sup>78</sup>.



Hunayn bin Ishaq

([www.startimes.com](http://www.startimes.com))



One of Al-Bakhtisho Doctor Family (<http://www.qdl.qa>)

Another famous person of Basra was *Essa bin Massa al-Basri* who was mentioned by *bin Abi Ussaiba*'a book

<sup>78</sup> *Bayan al- Nahrain*, issue 4, 1973, p. 417.

(part1). He was a famous physician during the 9<sup>th</sup> century. Essa published six books.

*Amar al- Basri* also rose to prominence as a theologian who published many articles about the Bible, the trinity and transfiguration

### **Archbishop Isho'ednah**

Sources mention the historian and writer Archbishop *Ishoadnah*, who lived in Basra during the second half of the 9<sup>th</sup> century. He has a poetic speech that refers to the story of *Mar Younan*, the founder of *al- Anbar* monastery. *Ishoadnah* wrote an article about logic and a book about *the history of the church* <sup>79</sup> Half of this book has been lost and we have only obtained what *Eliya al- Nasibi* has written and a period of history that *Mikhail the Syriac* wrote which was mentioned by *Bar Hebraeus* in his book about the History of the Church.

### **Book of Virtue**

This book was written around 860 and contains 140 biographies of people that founded monasteries to the east of the Euphrates River. These biographies are mixed stories that give an insight into the unknown aspects of the church's geography in Mesopotamia. It was translated

---

<sup>79</sup> *Dictionary of Syriac Literature*, (1990) Baghdad: Iraqi Scientific Academy, p. 236.

from French to Arabic by Patriarch *Paul II Cheikho* in 1939<sup>80</sup>

*Gabriel al- Basri* in 884 was one of the dioceses bishops. According to *Abidisho al- Soubawi*, he was a companion of Patriarch *Youhanna III*. The bishop organised ecclesiastical laws of the church that *bin al- Taib* and *al- Soubawi* were greatly influenced by them.



Bishop from the Church of the East (9<sup>th</sup> Century)

---

<sup>80</sup> Abouna (Fr) A. (1970) *the Art of Aramaic Language*, Mosul, p. 354.

## Tenth century

Although Iraq was ruled by the Abbasid Caliphs, they were controlled by the Turkish guards. Five bishops were ordained for The Archbishopric during this century. They were:

1. Archbishop *Sheala*, ordained in 906 during the time of Patriarch *Youhanna bin Essa* and in the reign of *Al-Muktafi*.
2. Archbishop *Sabrisho*, ordained in 940 during the time of Patriarch Emmanuel and in the reign of *Al-Muttaqi*.
3. Archbishop *Abdul Massieh*. He was ordained by *Sabrisho* and was one of the three bishops who attended the ordination of Patriarch Israel in 961. He died in 986, leaving the Basra seat vacant.
4. Archbishop Yousif, ordained in 978- perhaps he could have been *Yousif al-Hiri* who attended the appointment of Patriarch Mari (987-1000) - in the reign of *Al-Qadir*. After his death, he was succeeded by bishop *Ibrahim al-Shaherzoor*.
5. Archbishop *Ibrahim al-Basri* was appointed as the bishop of Basra on April 10,987 by Patriarch Mari II (according to “the Book of Index” *Abidisho al-Soubawi*

(d.1318). He was known for his Interpretation of Theodore of Mopsuestia's writings (350-428)<sup>81</sup>.

"News of the Patriarchs of the Church of the East" book, mentions bishop Israel of *Kashkar* in *Wasit* (present day *Kut* city 160 km south east of Baghdad). He chose to be a monk and lived at *Mar Sabrisho* monastery in *Wasit*, and was elevated to bishop of *Kashkar*. Israel was renowned for his asceticism and his spiritual knowledge. He taught at the school of *Mar Mari the Apostle*. Sources mention that when the Caliph *Al-Mu'ti* (946-974) went to do battle with *Abi al- Hassan al- Bareedi*, he stopped at the monastery and toured the monk's quarters. During their conversation, Israel predicted his victory, which he did. Ever since that day, the Caliph would regularly visit Israel as he held him in high esteem.

When Patriarch Emmanuel died<sup>82</sup>, Bishop Israel attended the election of the new patriarch, he was about 90 years old. The bishops elected him as the new patriarch in May 962. His ordination ceremony was conducted by *Abid al- Massieh*, Bishop of *Basra*<sup>83</sup>.

A state of anarchy engulfed Mesopotamia but *Basra* remained a safe haven for all the Iraqis. In the year 948, a Christian by the name of *Sinjilla* was appointed as a custodian to the properties of the Buyids and prince

---

<sup>81</sup> *Dictionary of Syriac literature*, p. 223.

<sup>82</sup> Maybe he means Patriarch Emmanuel I who died in 960.

<sup>83</sup> *Bin Matti*, U. (1899) part 1, p. 91, part 2, p. 98. Rome.



*Khorshid*<sup>84</sup>. In 956 the prince rebelled against the rule of *Mueez al-Dawla*<sup>85</sup> one of his associates, *bin Ali al-Shirazi*, asked *Sinjla* to rescue the prince's children and money by taking them to Basra.

The “*Book of Majdal*” mentions the travels of Bishop *Mari bin Touba* to Ahwaz in early 987; afterwards he headed to Basra in order to regain the stolen church properties in *Jundishapur*. Sources mention that when Patriarch *Abidisho* I died, *Sharaf al- Dawla* decided to promote Bishop Mari by recalling him to Baghdad and installing him as the new patriarch.

Some famous personalities during this century were: doctor (a poet and a scholar) *Abu al- Hassan al- Basri*, who helped to construct the monastery of *Mar Pathion* in 953. *Abid Massih al- Hiri* also excelled in his field and published a book about monastic regulations. At the end of the century witnessed the emergence of *Aba al- Hassan bin Ghassan*, a Christian doctor and poet who drowned in Baghdad.

According to *Umar bin Matti* the Basra Archdiocese was without Archbishop when the Patriarch *Eshoyahb* was installed in Baghdad on Sunday 11 Dec. 999<sup>86</sup>.

---

<sup>84</sup>Buyids are descendants from south of Caspian Sea, they ruled Iraq between 932 and 945 and between 1056 and 1062.

<sup>85</sup> *Ahmed Mueez al- Dawla* ruled between 932 and 967.

<sup>86</sup> *Ibin Matti*, A. part 2, p. 117.

## The Eleventh Century

This century marked the end of the second Abbasids Dynasty (era of the Turkish guards) and the start of the Seljuk's rule<sup>87</sup>. Sources mention that Archbishop Ibrahim was in charge of the Diocese, the date he took charge is unknown.

*Matti bin Umar* references the attendance of bishops of Basra and Hira (without mentioning any names) for the election of Patriarch Eliya I in 1028.

It is worth to mention the participate of bishop of Basra in the election of Patriarch Youhanna, known as *Abi Nassir bin al- Targhal*, in 1049.

In those days, it was a common practice that before the election of Patriarch all the faithful would fast for three days so that they elect wisely. The synod gave an opportunity to the people to voice their own opinion when electing a bishop or patriarch. It was a positive sign that showed the power of the Church and its unity<sup>88</sup>.

In April 1063, the monk *Gewargis* was elected Archbishop of Basra by Patriarch *Sabresho III*.

---

<sup>87</sup> Their origin goes back to Asia Minor, they were descendants of a Turkish origin since 1038, and they occupied Persia and Iraq And declared themselves in 1055 as defenders of the Abbasid Caliphate as his rule witnessed many disturbances by the time the Caliphate *al-Fatimi* came to power, they continued in power till 1307.

<sup>88</sup> Bin Matti, A. part 2 p. 118.

The Archbishop of Basra and Bishop Marcus attended the election of Patriarch Mar *Abdesho II bin al- Arith al-Mouseli*, who held office from 1074 till 1090.

Patriarch *Abdesho II* appointed *Abdul Massieh Akha* as Bishop of Basra, and elevated *Abu Ali bin Tahir* to a Bishop<sup>89</sup>. When the Patriarch died in 1092 he was buried in a Baghdad church (present day Zayouna)<sup>90</sup>.

Most famous Christian person during this time was *Abu Hussain al- Basri*, a doctor and a philosopher, who published a book about the dialogue with the Muslims. He went to Nisibis and met with Bishop Eliya and a government minister by the name of *Abu Al-Qasim* to discuss theological issues such as trinity, transfiguration and the Koran's attitude towards Christianity. He died in 1038<sup>91</sup>.

Christians and Jews excelled in money management (as they accepted profits whereas Islam did not). Initially, almost all of the money exchanges in Basra were run by Christians before they were taken over by the

---

<sup>89</sup> *Bayen al- Nahrain*, issue 22,23,1987 p. 283.

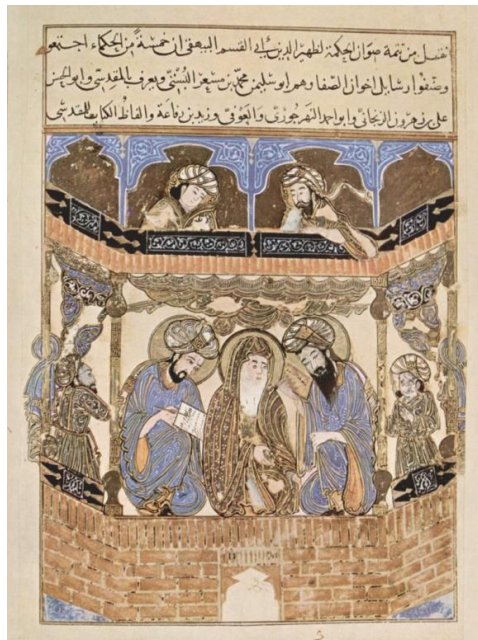
<sup>90</sup> It used to be called *Darb al Dinar Church*. It was large and thought that was named after the Virgin Mary. *Gewargis*, Archbishop of Basra was buried there before 1090. Patriarch *Eshoyahb* also buried there in 1175. Patriarch Eliya III was buried there in 1190. It is mentioned that *Makikha II* gathered all the Christians of Baghdad in this church when Holague entered Baghdad. It remained till 1356. According to *bin Al Wardi* it was demolished and a mosque was built in its place and was named *Al Dinar* mosque. *Bayen al- Nahrain*, Issues 22-23, 1978, 31, 1980, p. 316, p. 283.

<sup>91</sup> *Al Qanawati*, p. 239.

Jews. Towards the end of the century *Al-Qaramita* revolution took place in Basra against the Seljukian rule. Additionally the Crusades wars commenced which had bad consequences on the Christians of Mesopotamia (and still does) despite the lack of any connections between the political camp of the west and Christianity in the East.



*al-Mustadhi* (1180–1170)



The Brethren of Purity (11<sup>th</sup> Century)

## Twelve Century

During this century, Iraq was ruled by seven Abbasid Caliphs, some scholars called them Seljukians.

Because of wars and plague (which hit the area in 1156), the Archbishopric started to deteriorate. There was lack of church and individual news, except what was written about doctor *bin Mari (Abu Abbas Yahya bin Saeed)* who was an expert in Medicine and very well versed in Arabic language and its literature.

*Abu Abbas* was famous for his sixty rhymed prose that were known as the prose of *bin al- Massihi*. He died in 1193<sup>92</sup>. There used to be a copy of these prose at the *Hayderkhana* Mosque in Baghdad<sup>93</sup>. Many writers and scholars have re-published his writings<sup>94</sup>

---

<sup>92</sup> Babu, I, *the History of Iraq's Nasara*, p. 103.

<sup>93</sup> A Baghdad mosque at Rashid Street was built by *Haider P. Chalabi* maybe during 18th century; it was rebuilt by *Dawood Pasha* In 1819 and completes in 1827. It was famous for its school of philosophy.

<sup>94</sup> *Lexicon of Syriac Literature* p. 61.

## Thirteen Century

During the middle of the century, Basra became the second largest city in Iraq. The Crusade wars continued and Iraq was invaded by Hulago (the Mongol King). Christianity's prominence started to fade away in middle and southern Iraq.

During the early part of this century, Bishop Suleiman was appointed to the Diocese of Basra. He was born near Lake Van in Urmia, Iran and died in 1240. Bishop Suleiman put together "The Book of the Bee (*Dabouretha*)", which contains theological and historical writings, and composed many prayers that are still said today, such as the morning prayers for Good Friday<sup>95</sup>.

The ranking of the Archbishopric fell in comparison with the previous centuries. Seleucia-Ctesiphon was regarded as being the first, headed by the Patriarch who was assisted by Bishop of *Kashkar* (south of Baghdad), who took over responsibilities when the Patriarch was away. It was followed by Archbishopric of *Beth Lafat* (Ahwaz), Nisibis and then Basra<sup>96</sup>. The Patriarchs during this century were: *Yahballaha II (1190-1222)*, *Sabrisho IV bar Qaeuma (1222-1265)*, *Sabrisho V bin Al- Massihi*

---

<sup>95</sup> Qassab, L. Tr. (Fr.) (1992), *the History of Syriac Literature*, Baghdad: Publications of Syriac Catholic Archbishopric, p. 431.

<sup>96</sup> Sako L. (Archbishop) (1989) *Our Syriac Fathers*, Baghdad, p. 114.

(1226-1256), *Makkikha II* (1257-1265), *Dinha I* (1265-1281), *Yahballaha III* (1281-1317).

According to a meeting with the Baghdad Armenian Archbishop Avac Asadorian, in 1222, the first Armenian families has arrived Baghdad.



The invasion of the Mongols during the 14th century



Hulague and his wife Daqis Khatoun

## Chapter Three

### Centuries of Anarchy and Darkness (14-19)

#### Fourteen Century

Numerous wars left little of the original Basra standing, forcing the population to re-settle in a new location, some 12 kilometres away from the initial place. Before this redeployment, its population was estimated to have been 230,000 people<sup>97</sup>.

The central government of Baghdad, under the rule of *Al-Musta'sim*, was so weak that it eventually collapsed when attacked by the Mongols and local tribes under the command of Hulague. Anarchy, plunder and slaughter descended upon the cities and villages of Mesopotamia. Many surviving Christians escaped towards the northern cities of Iraq.

The migration and deportation of the Christians lasted for ten years. Hundreds of churches and monasteries were deserted and became a nesting place for crows and owls. The scant Christian presence in the region was verified by different sources<sup>98</sup>. Subsequently, even the Christians of northern Iraq were not spared the carnage. Occasionally, they were saved because of the intervention of some influential individuals such as Queen *Qootai Khatoon*. In 1310, the Christians of Irbil were massacred and a curtain

---

<sup>97</sup> <http://arab-ency.com/index.php> [30/01/2015]

<sup>98</sup> Babu, I. *the History of Iraq's Nasara*, p. 120.



of darkness engulfed the north, just as it did in middle and south of Mesopotamia.

During this century, Timothy II was elected (1318-1332) and was succeeded by Patriarch *Dinha II* (1366 or 1381 -37 or 82). The last Archbishop of Basra was mentioned by *Abidisho al-Soubawi* in 1316. But some sources allude to the Christians of Persia and a bishop of *Ilam* (Iran). Between 1318- 1374, only the Archbishoprics of Samarkand and Turkistan remained functional.

Many Christians migrated to Cyprus and the Holy Land. Since the 10<sup>th</sup> century (due to the efforts of Patriarch Timothy) the Church of the East had a large presence in Cyprus. It was headed by an Archbishop, two bishops and several priests. It kept in touch with the mother church in Iraq through the endeavours of the Latin Bishops and other western priests<sup>99</sup>.

Archbishopric of Basra was in disarray when the synod of Timothy II convened in Irbil<sup>100</sup>, the attendance of the Archbishopric was not mentioned. The Patriarchal seat remained vacant between 1332- 1336, this dismal situation continued during the middle of the 14<sup>th</sup> century when the country was attacked by the *Qara Qoyunlu* (black sheep Turks).

---

<sup>99</sup> Seferta, J. (2008) *the Chaldean Church of Iraq*, London: Blackfriars publication, p.7: Rassam, S. (2005) *Christianity in Iraq*. London: Gracewing, p. 109.

<sup>100</sup> He was elected after the death of *Yahaballah III* in 1317.

## Fifteen Century

In 1434, the *Qara Qoyunlu* occupied Baghdad and Basra and two years later many suburbs of Basrah were flooded.

During the *Jalayirid* Sultanate (a Mongol dynasty, which ruled over Iraq and western Persia) all the remaining churches, schools and Jewish temples were either converted to mosques or destroyed. Christians and Jews were forced to pay the Jezia tax. However, sources do not mention any physical damage being inflicted on them<sup>101</sup>.

During this period, the patriarchal seat (which was moved about between Irbil, Karamelish and Mosul in northern Iraq) was held by the following: Shamoun V 1407, Shamoun V in 1420, Shamoun VI in 1448 and Eliya V in 1491.

According to Abouna, Prince Jihan Shah ruled parts of Iraq (between 1437 and 1467) and managed to extend his control to Basra and Kerman in 1449<sup>102</sup>

---

<sup>101</sup>

[Http://repository.Uobabylon.edu.iq/bchc/publications/pdf/babylon\\_era.pdf](http://repository.Uobabylon.edu.iq/bchc/publications/pdf/babylon_era.pdf) [19/01/2015]

<sup>102</sup> Abouna, A. (Fr.) A. *History of the Eastern Syriac Church*, part 3, p. 85.

## Sixteen Century

During this century, Basra was ruled by the Safavids. The city attracted the attention of the Portuguese and they launched their first campaign against the Safavids in 1524.

The patriarch of the Church of the East enacted a law (contrary to the canons of the church) which restricted his office to members of his own family. This new arrangement became a fruitful source of dissension within the church and between 1552-1544 segments of the Church of the East (mainly Archbishoprics of the north) entered into communion with the Roman Catholic Church. The breakaway church was headed by the martyred Patriarch *Youhanna Sulaqa* (see picture).



In 1533, Sultan Suleiman I felt the need to counter the threat of his adversaries. He initiated a military campaign that took him all the way to Basra. The city was governed by a prince who switched his alliance to the Sultan in return for some commercial favours. The Ottomans failure to defeat the Portuguese fleet resulted in a revival of tribal uprisings. Nevertheless, Basra (together with Baghdad, Mosul and *Shahrizor*) remained as one of four *Vilayats* (administrative province) of Iraq.

In 1546, Ottoman power was established in Basra, only to be usurped later by the Safavid (year is unknown).

In 1563, Federico the explorer, stayed 40 days in Basra and afterwards he headed to Baghdad, unconcerned about the dangers of his Journey<sup>103</sup> .

The Christians continued to suffer from the Ottomans restrictions as they tried to attenuate the community. Despite these constraints, the Armenians in Iraq were better off than their counterparts in Iran and Armenia. During the early part of this century the displaced Armenians arrived in Basra, seeking asylum from their countries and creating a new Christian presence in the city.

During 1534, an atmosphere of stability prevailed over Basra due to the strength of Sultan Suleiman I<sup>104</sup> .But according to the historian Shaker, Basra suffered from local uprisings from the middle of the 16<sup>th</sup> century to the middle of 17<sup>th</sup> century. These uprisings were against the Ottoman and the Persian rule. Some succeeded and establish a de facto rule and others failed<sup>105</sup> . Economically, Basra began to export cash crops to the capitalist markets of the West.

---

<sup>103</sup> Muhaimid, W. (2013) *Travels to Iraq*, Baghdad: Dar al- Farahidi, p. 29.

<sup>104</sup> Abouna, A. (Fr.) A. *History of the Eastern Syriac Church*, part 3, p. 121.

<sup>105</sup> Shaker, A. (1984) *The history of Iraq during the Ottoman Rule*, Nineveh, 1st edition, pp. 123-153.

## Seventeen Century

During this century, the region attracted the interests of the Europeans (English, Dutch and Portuguese). In 1604, the explorer Buckingham visited Basra and estimated its population to be some 100,000 people. He projected the Armenians to be about 50 families, Mandeans 153 families, Jews 100 families and Catholic Christian 20 families.

These statistics did not include Christians who belonged to the Church of the East, according to the census of 1610, they numbered about 3000 families and were served by a bishop and a priest. Persians, Indians and Kurds also lived in Basra<sup>106</sup>.

In 1680, there were 1800 Christian families in Kufa who were served by an Archbishop, two bishops and 50 priests. They had three churches<sup>107</sup>. The Christians of Basra and Kufa were not mindful of the Catholic faith and had no relationship with the Chaldean Patriarch.

Due to the political and security uncertainties in the country, a military person by the name *Afrasiyab* seized Basra in 1612 or 1615. The Ottomans recognised his son

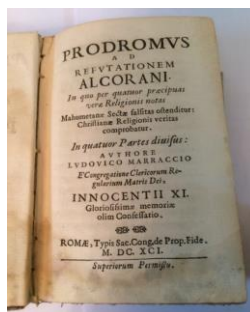
---

<sup>106</sup> Albazi, H. (1969) *Basra during the Dark Ages and afterwards*, Baghdad: Manshurat al-Basri, p. 173.

<sup>107</sup> Babu, I. *the History of Iraq's Nasara*, Iraq, p. 131.

Ali Pasha and maintained a good working relationship with him until they re-gained control of Basra in 1668<sup>108</sup>.

This century witness the migration of many Syro-Catholic families from *Qaraqosh* (northern Iraq) and its surrounding villages to Baghdad and Basra because of famine and plagues that brook out in the area. Scholar *Qasha*, mentions that the Carmelite mission played a major role in converting these families to Catholicism, and they established a Syro-Catholic Church in Basra-He refers to a manuscript by Aziz Petrous confirming that the families during the 17<sup>th</sup> century numbered 3000-<sup>109</sup>. But I think it is an exaggerated figure, perhaps he meant number of people.



The only two remaining books dating back to the 17th century in the Archbishoprics Library, printed in 1685 & 1691.

<sup>108</sup> Abouna, A. (Fr.) A. *The History of the Eastern Syriac Church*, part 3, p. 214.

<sup>109</sup> Qasha, S. pp. 85-87,175.

## Monastic orders

### The Carmelites

A report by the Latin Bishop Baye in the 18<sup>th</sup> century revealed that the Apostolic See sent the barefoot Carmelite monks (monks of St. Theresa) to Mesopotamia. They arrived on May 23, 1623 and set up their mission in Basra. The following year, Ignatius (Apostolic Representative) built a small wooden church with the help of the Portuguese priests, father Basil and father Mansour<sup>110</sup>. The following year father Vincenzo and father Sebastian built a larger church and named it after the Virgin. The authors of “Cultural Encyclopaedia of Basra” mention a Carmelite father by the name of Braz de Santa Barbara who served in Basra during 1663. According to *al-Samarai*, the church was refurbished in 1882 and in 1936<sup>111</sup>.

Sources mention that the missionary Rodrigues visited from Basra all the churches of northern Iraq in 1624-1625 and he returned to the Vatican after a year carrying a letter in Arabic from the people of Basra to the Holy See (Pope Urban VIII 1623-1644) (see picture) expressing their solidarity with the Catholic Church. The letter



---

<sup>110</sup> Babu, I. *the History of Iraq's Nasara*, Iraq, p. 127.

<sup>111</sup> Al- Samarai, I. (2009) *Images from Basra*, Basra printing house, p. 292.

clearly indicates the return of Christianity to Basra.

The Carmelites tried to serve all of Basra's population without any prejudice. Reports mention that they converted and baptised some Mandeans. In 1679, the head of Carmelite Mission was appointed as the French High Commissioner in Basra<sup>112</sup>.

The Carmelite mission spread throughout Iraq, Arabian Peninsula and India, However, the monks were put under severe pressure and were forced to leave Baghdad and Basra. The order returned later as the current situation in Iraq improved and they were given assurances by Ottoman authorities and French protection<sup>113</sup>.

### **The Augustinians**

The Augustinian Portuguese missionaries arrived in Strait Hormuz (Oman) and set up their centre in 1573, three years later they opened a mission in Muscat. They set up the Basra mission after they were granted protection from the King of France. Some problems occurred between the

---

<sup>112</sup> Al- Bazi, p. 154.

<sup>113</sup> In a report by the Carmelite priest named Phillip in 1631 mentions that the Carmelite received him in Basra for 15 months. He studied Arabic and Farsi before he travelled to India. He sailed with the Portuguese merchants. There was a Christian prisoner with the Persians who was forced to serve the governor of Shiraz, after he escaped to Basra he was caught by its governor and imprisoned. A Portuguese merchant who came to purchase dates helped to release him (*Mehemid*, p. 47).



friars and the local faithful which forced them to close their mission<sup>114</sup>. (the below map from the internet)



According to ‘The Cultural Encyclopaedia of Basra’, the Augustinian missionaries arrived in the city during 1625. Father Gonzalo Branco hired a house and used it as a church. When the traveller Jean de Thevenot visited Basra in 1652 he could not locate the mission, however, when traveller Goudenho passed through Basra in 1663 he met two of the missionaries<sup>115</sup>.

## **The Capuchins**

Capuchin friars arrived in Basra in 1632. It seems that the Chaldean Church had no active involvement with the

---

<sup>114</sup> *Qasha*, p. 88, The Augustinian friars established their centre at the Straits of Hormuz in 1576 , Muscat in 1594 and in Isfahan in 1604 (*History of the Eastern Syriac Church*, part 3, p. 227).

<sup>115</sup> Basra Cultural Encyclopaedia, p. 337.

Christians in Basra and the south during this and the previous century. The Carmelite missionaries requested, several times, from the authority in Baghdad to appoint a Latin Bishop for Babel and Isfahan. Eventually, they succeeded in 1638-1669<sup>116</sup>.

We do not believe that the Chaldean church had any contact with the Capuchins because Patriarchs Yousif I (1677-1695) and Yousif II (1696-1713) (see picture) were based in Diyarbakir (south-eastern Turkey) and they had enough problems on their hands.



The remaining of the Carmelite mission in Basra until 1988 open and active reflected the vigour of the missionaries in spreading Christian spirituality. The politicians and the state of affairs of the French and Ottomans often played their part in supporting or banning the missionaries. They supported the Carmelites, whilst the Portuguese supported the Augustinians. The demise of the Portuguese influence in the area caused the closure of the Augustinian missionary.

---

<sup>116</sup> *Qasha*, p. 89; *Babu, the History of Iraq's Nasara*, p. 127.

## **Eighteen Century**

The Carmelite monks returned to Basra in 1716, and their mission played a major part in reviving and developing education. But because of the slaughter of father Petrous in Mosul in 1722 many were frightened and decided to leave Basra. Father Yousef Maria was a renowned Carmelite, who visited Basra twice in order to restart the monastic works of the Capuchins, but due to the rising violence in the area, he escaped hastily to Aleppo. The monks returned again to Basra and set up St. Joseph School in 1732. During this time, Pope Benedict XIV (see picture) wrote his famous exoneration to the Carmelite asking them to preserve the Eastern Religious Rituals.



In 1735, Basra withstood a siege by Latif Khan, Commander of the Persian Navy<sup>117</sup>. In addition to the hardship of the Ottoman occupation, Basra was under siege in 1775 by the armies of the two Persian brothers Karim and Sadiq Khan. The siege lasted thirteen months, Basra resisted under the command of Suleiman Agha the Great (d.1802), but the Khan Brothers managed to break

---

<sup>117</sup> Shakir, p. 193.

through the defences and entered the city only to evacuate it in 1779<sup>118</sup>.

### **The Christian situation**

The Europeans took care of Basra and they set up a consulate to look after their traders and missionaries. Many Christians of the north migrated to the south as the area was much safer<sup>119</sup>.

We have relied on the reports by religious people and travellers to ascertain the state of the Christians in Basra and the south, some are as follows:

### **Bishop Baye's Report**

Bishop Baye visited Basra several times between 1730-1747, he wrote about the history of its monastic life. During his first visit, he discovered eight Catholic and four non-Catholic families together with three Carmelite friaries, but he did not mention any members of the Church of the East or other churches.

His second visit to Iraq was in 1747, he attended the election ceremony of father Emmanuel to a bishop and then he headed to Basra and compiled his report in 1753<sup>120</sup>. Baye came across 200 families in Basra (in another source he mentions 260 Catholic families) this

---

<sup>118</sup> Abouna, A. (Fr.) A. *The History of the Eastern Syriac Church*, part 3, p. 213.

<sup>119</sup> Babu, I. *the History of Iraq's Nasara*, p. 137.

<sup>120</sup> Qasha, p. 91.

was due to the migration of Armenians, 160 families were from Isfahan (Iran), who escaped the tyranny of Nadir Shah -1736-1747(see picture)<sup>121</sup>. The Armenians were served by a bishop and several priests; one of them was a Catholic.



Initially, the Armenians had no church of their own, but they obtained permission from Ottoman governor to build their church in 1739. The rest of the families were Chaldean<sup>122</sup>. Scholar Qasha, mentions an Armenian by the name of *Amirjan*, who managed the affairs of the Christians during the attacks of Nadir Shah on Baghdad and Basra. He relied on foreign reports which indicated that during the *Mamluks* Dynasty (17, 18, 19 centuries) the relationship between the Muslims and Christians were good in Basra<sup>123</sup>.

### **Report of traveller Karsten Niebur**

As part of his travels in Iraq, Niebur visited Basra in 1765<sup>124</sup>. He conducted a survey of the area and praised

---

<sup>121</sup> *Mhamid*, p. 113. (Nadir Shah was a military commander who attacked Iraq. He destroyed and burned many Christian villages on his way to Mosul through Kirkuk and Irbil.)

<sup>122</sup> Armenians have two churches in Basra, church of the resurrection and church of the Holy Spirit. They were believed to be built Around the 16<sup>th</sup> century.

<sup>123</sup> Qaha, p. 169(*Mamluks* ruled Iraq in the middle of the 18<sup>th</sup> century until 1831 they came from Georgia and Caucasus.)

<sup>124</sup> He is a German traveller by the name of *Karsten Niebur* 1733-1815 was sent by the king of Denmark with four scientific scholars To study the Arab areas.

Governors Afrasyaab and Hussein Pasha for promulgating religious tolerance. He mentioned Catholic monks who were constructing a church on the ruins of another church, which was built during the time of Hussein Pasha<sup>125</sup>. According to Niebur, the Armenians played a major role in the construction of manufacturing factories<sup>126</sup>. He also commented on some impoverished Mandeian families. Niebur estimated Basra's population to be between 40, 00 and 50,000.

### **Report of Father Ferdinand**

The Carmelite records mention the death of father Alfonso on 23 April and fathers Fidel and Eliya on 29 April, 1773 as a result of plague<sup>127</sup>. On 28 May, 1773 father Ferdinand arrived in Basra to re-open the Carmelite mission.

### **Traveller Tyler's report**

Basra was hit by a plague in 1774- during the time of Governor *Sulaiman Bek*-who forced people to eat garlic and dates. When Tyler visited Basra in 1789-1790, he

---

<sup>125</sup> *Faithi, S. (2014) Greater Basra, Fayhaa House, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed, pp. 43-50.* It is meant by church is the replacement of the Carmelite church which was built in 1656 this was the third construction of the church and was supervised by father Cazimero. (Source: *Basra Cultural Encyclopaedia* p. 336)

<sup>126</sup> *Al-Amin, M. (1965) The Travels of Niebour to Iraq, Baghdad: Ministry of Culture.* Additionally an Armenian person who was unfairly treated after he built a small bridge on one of the small rivers that diverged from *Shatt al-Arab* to open a road to the Armenian cemetery.

<sup>127</sup> *Abouna, A. (Fr.) A. (1978) Alkarmil, Baghdad: AL –Adib printing Press.*

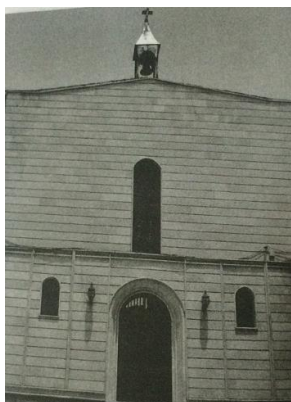
estimated its population at 8000 people (natural disasters such as flooding and diseases caused the deaths of many people in southern Iraq). Tyler looked at the great gates of Basra and wondered where its people were? He recalls that the plague of 1691 killed 80,000 people<sup>128</sup>. Probably, this is an estimated number; however, it indicates the effects of the deadly flooding on the people.

The journeys of these travellers were not just by sea but by land, despite the dangers of brigand. There was a desert road that linked Basra with Aleppo during the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> century alongside the western side of River Euphrates<sup>129</sup>.

The Christians of Basra paid al-Jizia tax to the value of 250 sack of silver or gold. The sack of silver was estimated at 500 Qurush (Piasters in English or French) and gold at 10,000 Qurush<sup>130</sup>.

During 1786, Iraq suffered from a major drought that caused several revolts and clashes inside and outside its borders<sup>131</sup>.

The Armenian Orthodox also built their church in 1736 (see picture) which was refurbished



---

<sup>128</sup> According to Tyler people used to think that plague appeared every 19 years.

<sup>129</sup> *The Cultural Encyclopaedia of Basra*, p. 341.

<sup>130</sup> *Mhamid*, p. 156.

<sup>131</sup> Many Ottoman soldiers (especially in Basra) were of Christian origin they were forced to convert to Islam at a young age.

several times. They were served by fathers: Jihan Kihan Pasha, Karakian, Siroop and many others<sup>132</sup>. The Jews also had a presence in Basra, scholar *Ramadan* mentions Moshe-who was head of money exchangers in Basra in 1734<sup>133</sup>.

In 1787, the Carmelites built a new church and named it after Saint Theresa, only to be demolished later<sup>134</sup>. There were other Christians in Basra belonging to the Syro-Catholic Church, they were looked after by the Bishop of Mosul. Scholar *Qasha*, mentions that Bishop *Bshara Akhtal* sent numerous priest to Basra in 1790 or 1791<sup>135</sup>.



(www.marefa.org)

Saint Thomas Tomb in India (a paint from the 18<sup>th</sup> Century)

---

<sup>132</sup> Ghlab, page 52-53.

<sup>133</sup> Ramadan, A. *Heritage of Basra*, parts 1 and 2, Damascus, 2014

<sup>134</sup> Ghalib, B. *Basra heritage encyclopaedia*, Ghader company, Basra 2014, p. 50.

<sup>135</sup> Qasha, p. 100, Abouna, (Fr.) A, *History of the Eastern Syriac Church*, part 3, p. 270.



## Nineteen Century

This century saw the ordination of Six Patriarchs for the Chaldean Catholic Church. They were: Yousif V (1828-1803), based at Diyarbakir in Turkey, Youhanna VIII Hurmoz (1838-1830), Nicholas Zee'a (1847-1840), Yousif VI Audo (1878-1847), Eliya XIII Abu Younan (1894-1878) and Abidisho V Khayat (1899-1895), they were based in Mosul.

The Chaldeans paid a lot of attention to Basra. In 1882, the martyred monk Gabriel Danbu set up a centre for Chaldean monks, albeit for a short time<sup>136</sup>. The Christian presence (because of Basra's commercial role) was not only limited to the Iraqi nationals but encompassed many Lebanese, Syrians and other nationalities. *Mikhael Aboud* (a trader from Aleppo) lived in Basra and wrote his memos in 1810<sup>137</sup>.

During this century, Basra was hit by plague in 1820, 1831 and 1896. Flooding was the major factor that brought about plagues ensuing thousands of death. As the result of these plagues, some Armenians migrated to India<sup>138</sup>. The Jews also migrated to Aleppo and India-in 1880 they

---

<sup>136</sup> Abouna, A. (Fr.) *History of the Eastern Syriac Church*, part 3, p. 258.

<sup>137</sup> Albazi, pp. 67, 36, 139.

<sup>138</sup> Adamof, A. (2009) *The past and present of Governate of Basra*, tr. by H., Saleh, Beirut: Al-Furat for publications, p. 238.

numbered about 3,000 but their population dwindled over the years due to migration<sup>139</sup>.

Flooding also destroyed all natural recourses of the region. Sources mention, that in 1896 the flooding of *Shatt al-Arab* washed out one million date palms, antiquities and cemeteries. There were 1105 rivers that diverged from Shatt al –Arab, so one can imagine the catastrophe when they flooded<sup>140</sup>.

These natural disasters affected the monastic missions in Basra. The Carmelite mission continued to operate until 1844 and then it was re-allocated to Amara city (perhaps to escape the natural disasters of Basra). The mission reopened in Basra in 1899. It went through a period of revival due to the arrival of French nuns and a school was opened in both cities<sup>141</sup>.

In 1867, the Chaldean Church members in Basra reached 1500. The church of Saint Thomas was built in 1880. Source mention that Patriarch Youhanna VIII Hormuz opened a Chaldean mission in 1883 in Basra and Al–Ashar under the supervision of Fr. Israel Audo (see his picture).



In another census conducted by G. B.

---

<sup>139</sup> Al Bazi, p. 176.

<sup>140</sup> Al Basra, *History of a Cultural Light*, page 179-180.

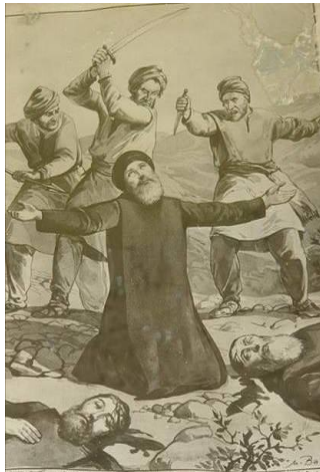
<sup>141</sup> Qasha, p. 91.

Chabot (1896) he estimated the number of the Chaldeans was 3000. They were served by three priests.



Chaldean Patriarchs between 1554 and 1930

Many church personalities lived in Basra, including the martyr Gabriel Denbo, reviver of the Chaldean monastic mission. In 1880 he travelled to Aleppo and Beirut and spent some time in a monastery in Mount Lebanon. Since his miraculous recovery from an illness, he always wanted to establish a Chaldean monastic order but did not see himself experienced enough to do it, so he enlisted the help of a French monk from a Maronite monastery to help him set up his mission in 1822. A year later He was martyred in Alqosh (northern Iraq).



The martyred monk Gibrail Danbo

### **Bishop Toma Khanjarkhan**

He was born in *Manqaish* (northern Iraq) during early 19<sup>th</sup> century, and entered the Chaldean monastic mission in 1823. He witnessed the



devastation, by the governor of Amadya, on the Chaldean monasteries, especially the monastery of *Mar Hormuzd*, which was repeatedly pillaged and its monks displaced. Rokos and Bishop Yousif Audo were imprisoned together in 1835.

In 1848, Bishop Audo ordained him a priest and twelve years later he was elevated to Bishop of the Malabar (south India). First, he travelled to Basra for a year, then to India as a Patriarchal visitor to the Malabar, after staying for a year he returned to Mosul in 1862. Bishop Toma died in 1885<sup>142</sup>.

Midhat Pasha (1869-1872), the Turkish governor, concentrated on developing Baghdad and Basra. He set up dry docks to repair ships and to deepen the depth of *Shatt al -Arab*. He improved the agricultural system and the irrigation networks and palm growing.



A company was formed to provide maritime services between Basra and Baghdad. He also appointed a Christian ruler over Basra to assist him<sup>143</sup>.

According to the memos of Bishop Ignatius Khoury, during 1888, 60 families from Baghdad and Mosul arrived in Basra. The following year the number of arrivals increased to 133 and 80 Chaldean, 25 Syriac, and 28

---

<sup>142</sup> *Bayan al-Nahrain* magazine, issue 11, 1975, p. 171.

<sup>143</sup> *Basra Vilayat*, p. 188.

Armenian families<sup>144</sup>. In 1892, the Chaldean Church set up a Patriarchal representation office in Basra. It was run by Bishop *Mikhael Namo*. In 1894, Patriarch *Elyia XIII Abu Younan* fell sick and died, he was succeeded by Patriarch Abidisho Khayaat (pictures enclosed)<sup>145</sup>.



Patriarch A. Khayaat    Patriarch E. XIII Abu Younan

According to Jean Batist's source's (which he obtained them from Patriarch *Gewrgis Khayat*), in 1896 there was a Patriarchal representation in Basra which covered south of Iraq and its 3000 members who spoke *Sorath* (widespread Aramaic) and Arabic. There were five Bishoprics, Basra, Amara, Ashar, Nasiriya and Kut.

In Basra the congregation were served by three priests, and they had two churches and two schools. Scholar Qasha, refers to a manuscript by Aziz Petrous which verified the number of Christians at 2250 people; half of them were Catholics at a time when Basra's population numbered 18,000. In other words, the Christians

---

<sup>144</sup> Hadad, P. (Fr.) (2006), *Al -Khawater*, Baghdad: Gabriel Denbo Centre, pp. 21-22.

<sup>145</sup> Qasha, p. 91.

represented 12% of the population in which 6% were Catholics. However, all our censuses do not mention the number of Christians that belonged to the Church of the East, due to lack of credible sources.

Some Protestant Chaldean, Syriac and Assyrian families arrived in Basra from Turkish lands. Their arrival started towards the end of 19<sup>th</sup> century and after the First World War as they were members of the Anglican missionaries. In 1891, they established a school and started their religious evangelisation<sup>146</sup>. During and after the First World War, they were forcibly displaced from Turkey, some of them came to Basra. They were the lucky ones. All the Christians that remained in Turkey were slaughtered as part of war of annihilation against the Christians. The ones in Basra became the nucleus of the Protestant presence.

Father (later Bishop) *Eliya Abouna* served in Basra. He was born in Alqosh in 1863 and was ordained priest in 1888. After serving in several cities of Iraq and Turkey he returned to his native Basra. In 1909, he was ordained Bishop in *Qudshanis* (south-eastern corner of Turkey) and took the name of *Mar Eliya*, after several years of dedicated service he died in Kirkuk in 1956. Some of his important writings were a book about the church history

---

<sup>146</sup> Al Tamim, H. (1979) *Basra During the British Occupation*, Publications of Institute of Arabian Gulf studies, Basra, p. 77.

which was translated from Arabic to Sorath and The Story of *Yazdandok* by Bishop *Suleiman Al-Sayegh*<sup>147</sup>.



Bishop Abouna



Bishop Audo

Bishop Israel Audo (born 1858 or 1859) also served in Basra. After his graduation from the seminary in Mosul he was ordained a priest in 1886. Bishop Israel served in Alqosh, Baghdad and Basra. In 1891, he opened a school and built a beautiful church in Basra by the name of Saint Thomas (pictures in following pages). In 1898 he accompanied Patriarch *Abidisho Khayaat* to Mumbai and then to Malabar. He built a Patriarchal headquarters and a small church by the name of Virgin Mary at the al- Ashar area, and purchased the house next to the church to teach religion studies to children. Bishop Israel served in Basra for 17 years<sup>148</sup>. He was ordained Bishop for Mardin(south-eastern Turkey) in 1910 and died in 1941. He published

---

<sup>147</sup> Babana (Bishop)Y. (1979) *Alqosh Throught History*, Baghdad, p. 179.

<sup>148</sup> Babana (Bishop)Y. *Dictionary of Syriac literature*, p.133.



his memos about the events of the First World War as he witnessed them in his Bishopric and a poetry book and some very important Syriac letters.

### **Church of Saint Thomas**

Built in 1885, it is one of the oldest Chaldean churches in Basra. Its design incorporates eastern style elements, and primary school was built next to it. Despite being severely damaged by a huge fire in 1983, it continued to serve its members until 2004. Today, it provides shelter for the poor families. In the last 120 years the church witnessed 1167 burials, 684 marriages and 3501 baptisms.



The two side views of the Church of Saint Thomas



The church of Saint Thomas today, it serves as a shelter for low income families



Frontal view of the Church of Saint Thomas



A class in the church's school during the 1950s

The Syro Catholic Church frequently sent priests to Basra. Scholar Qasha, mentions monk Toma al-Mardini who was responsible for the Syro of Baghdad and Basra in 1811. He also states that Bishop Paulos Daniel and father Mikhael Elo arrived in Basra in 1864. The faithful were happy to receive them as they had no priest for three years. In 1880, Father Mikhael Bakus looked after the Syro families in Basra and Amara. Six years later he was

replaced by father Yousif Sakmn. Following his death, Ignatius Nouri was appointed in 1888 and was succeeded by father Toma Bahi in 1893.

Commercially, sources mention the merchant Arteen Baghdasian, who traded in seeds and dates. The Jews had a continuous presence in Basra. The family of Murad Noh were engaged in major commercial activities between India and England during 1887. Yousif Noh was a prominent Jewish figure during the 19<sup>th</sup> century<sup>149</sup>.

A branch of the Ottoman bank was opened in Basra in 1894, after its brief closure it re-open in 1904. The currency used in Basra was the Golden Lira, usually, it was named after the Sultan who minted the currency, for example, Lira Majdalia and Lira of Shadi<sup>150</sup>.



The golden Lira & Ottoman Qirsh

According to Zuhair Akbar, al- Mitleek was another currency in circulation (used mainly in Syria and Basra). It was in two types: Mitleek of silver and Mitleek of nickel. In 1876, Sultan Abdul Hamid II minted silver floos (singular fils) in Turkish it was called Manghar which was

---

<sup>149</sup> Al-Qahwati, M. H. (1980) *the Commercial Role of Basra in the Arabian Gulf*, Basra University: The institute of Arabian studies publication, pp. 295-296.

<sup>150</sup> *Basra Vilayt*, pp. 271-276.

widely used in Basra<sup>151</sup>. There were also other currencies in circulation such as the Persian Qaran, European and Indian currencies.



A painting showing a British Royal Navy ship carrying mail to Basra during the 19<sup>th</sup> century



An artist imaginary painting of the port of Basra during the 19<sup>th</sup> century, by *Farouq Krikor*

---

<sup>151</sup> Zuhair ali Akbar: <http://baghdadchamber.com> [23/11/2014]

# **Chapter Four**

## **The Twentieth Century**

Displacement from Southern Turkey

First World War 1914

The growth of Christian Presence during the  
Kingdom of Iraq

*Looting the Jewish & Christian Properties*

*(Al –Farhood) 1941-1948*

Displacement to the North

Series of wars and economic sanctions 1980-2003

### **The development of Basra**

The considerable growth of Basra during the 19<sup>th</sup> century led to the expansion of the Archbishopric and other churches in the area. After 1908, the city expanded gradually from its nucleus and came close to al-Ashar and eventually became one city. As the size of the faithful increased (due to economic growth and forced out or voluntary migration) the Patriarch felt the need to set up another church. Sources mention that Patriarch Emmanuel

II separated the mission of Basra from al-Ashar and he appointed father Hanna Nissan as its priest in 1907

## Numbers and statistics

The below census (we are not sure of its accuracy) was conducted by the researcher *Ihsan al-Samarrai* when he was in Basra between 1925 and 1955. According to his research, there were 1900 Jewish families, 8800 Christian families and 1851 Mandeian families living in the city<sup>152</sup>, but according to the census of father *Yousif Tufankchi*, which he conducted in 1913 (see below diagram), his figures differ from the above numbers -perhaps he only counted the Chaldeans and not other Christians of different denominations-<sup>153</sup>.

City	No of people	No of priests	church	No of schools
Amara	7000	one	chapel	none
Basra	500	two	church	two
Al-Ashar	450	one	chapel	one
Al Kut	100	one	none	none

However, the official government census below reveals different figures<sup>154</sup>:

City	number of Christians	number of Jews
Kut	127	381
Diwaniya	5000	6000

<sup>152</sup> Al –Samarri, I. p. 291, mentioned 24 Hindu families.

<sup>153</sup> Sanna, A. (bishop), *Nagim al- Masriq* magazine, volume 2, issue 8, 1996, p. 512.

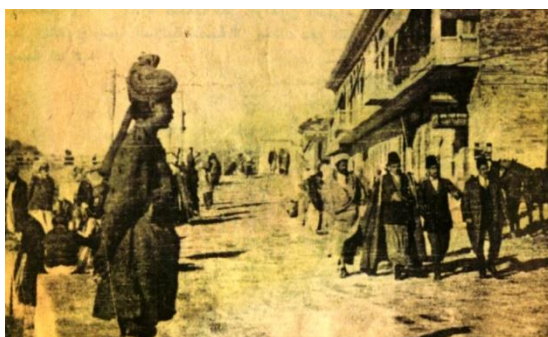
<sup>154</sup> [http://ar.wikipedia.org/wiki/Iraq's\\_population](http://ar.wikipedia.org/wiki/Iraq's_population) (27/01/215)

Basra	2221	6928
Amara	300	3000
Thiqar	30	160

According to sources, in 1913 father Mansour *Kiriakos Kajachi*<sup>155</sup> was appointed as the Patriarchal representative of the Chaldeans and a further two churches were built dedicated to Saint Anthony and Saint Thomas. On October 19, 1914 the British Army entered Basra.



The British Army in Basra




---

<sup>155</sup> It could be the same Mansour Qoryaqos that is included in the above table.





British Nurses in Basra



The British Cemetery in Basra

During this time, there were very scarce news items about the church in Basra, the Carmelite mission was closed and it re-opened in 1917, their Amara mission closed in 1926.

By the end of World War Two, there were three Carmelite friars in Basra and two in Abadan (Iran). In 1948, they set up a new mission in Kuwait<sup>156</sup>. Researchers Ahmad and

---

<sup>156</sup> Abouna A. (Fr.) *Al-Karmel*, p. 114.



Buthayna, mention that the Protestant Church was served by Reverend Yashou and an American school was also set up<sup>157</sup>.

### **The Jewish presence in Basra**

According to the historian, *SabghatAllah al-Haidari*, towards the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the Jews population of Basra grew to more than 12,000. In 1905, they opened a school that contained 281 Jewish students and 124 Christian students from a total of 842 students<sup>158</sup>.



Jewish students in Basra in 1910

In 1920, The Jews population fell to 7,000, which represented 4.3% of Basra's population that numbered 165,560<sup>159</sup>. During the 1950s, the figure increased to approximately 15,000 from total of 135,000 Jews who

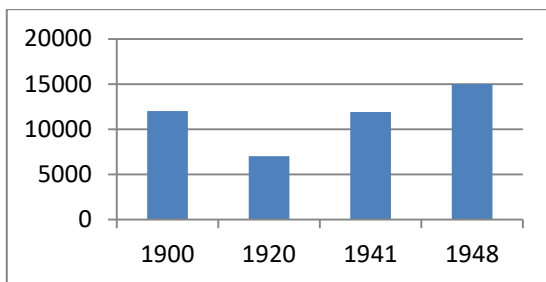
---

<sup>157</sup> Al-Hilfi, p. 181.

<sup>158</sup> Al-Bazi, p. 160.

<sup>159</sup> Notice the difference between the figure of this census and the government one.

lived in Iraq during 1948<sup>160</sup>. According to the census of Basra (conducted in 1941) the city's population numbered some 407,451. There were 11,900 Jews and 8800 Christians<sup>161</sup>.



A diagram indicating the Jewish presence in Basra between 1900 and 1950

Despite the large Jewish presence in Iraq and, especially in Basra they embarked on a mass migration between 1949 and 1950 in an operation codenamed Ezra and Nehemiah<sup>162</sup>.

Sources speak of many influential Jews personalities in Basra such as Ibrahim Heskiek, Sion Youna, and Khathori Elyahoo<sup>163</sup>. However, during and after the Arab-Israeli war of 1948, many Jewish and Christian shops were

<sup>160</sup> [Http://www.alzakera.eu/music/vetenskap/Historia/historia-0131.htm](http://www.alzakera.eu/music/vetenskap/Historia/historia-0131.htm) [22/01/2015]

<sup>161</sup> Abdul Razaq, A. (2011), *Basra During the 30's and 40's*, Baghdad, p. 134.

<sup>162</sup> The two prophets of the Old Testament who organised and accompanied the Jews when they left Babylon to return to Jerusalem during the 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> century BC.

<sup>163</sup> <http://alqabas.com.kw/node/560770> [22/01/2015]

looted. These incidents were referred to as *Farhood* which in Arabic literally means *the Jews have escaped*. It is worth noting that not all of Basra's Jewish families had a long history in Iraq. Around the 19<sup>th</sup> century many Jewish families came to Iraq as expatriates who had a British nationality.

The Ottomans established a land registry for Basra and allowed the Christians and the Jews to register their churches and synagogues. Despite the existence of this registry, many Christian properties vanished<sup>164</sup>. The Archbishopric, until this day, is unable to locate its lost properties, due to the disasters that befell Iraq and the mass forgery of documents committed by some individuals in Basra, Amara and Kut.

### **The Chaldean Patriarchs**

When the Chaldean Church was headed by Patriarch Yousif Toma (1900-1947) (see picture), Iraq was suffering the consequences of the World War One and the transitional changes from the Ottoman rule to the British mandate and the Rule of Kingdom of Iraq. During these times thousands of Christians perished. In Basra and al-Ashar, there were 7 churches serving its Christian community<sup>165</sup>.



---

<sup>164</sup> Adamof, A. p. 215.

<sup>165</sup> Ramadan, *The Heritage of Basra*, p. 138.

## **The visits of Patriarch Yousif Toma**

The patriarch visited Basra in 1905, 1919 and 1922. In 1905, he arrived in Basra by boat, a journey that took three days to complete. He stayed for twelve days visiting the Governor of Basra and various High Commissioners and ordained several priests and deacons. Between 6 and 8 of April, the patriarch visited Amara on his way to Baghdad.

On February 6, 1909 the Patriarch visited the churches of Kut, Amara, Basra and al-Ashar. On 10 February, he arrived in Basra where few deacons ordained then returned to Baghdad.



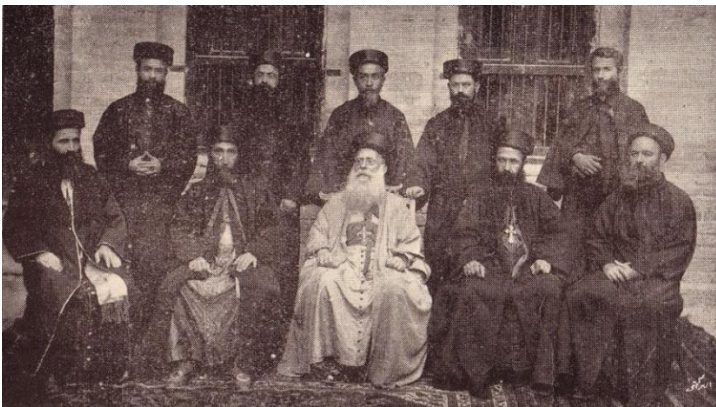
A boat in the Tigris River/ Baghdad-1918

On May 6, 1919 the patriarch embarked on his second visit to southern Iraq. He visited Kut, Amara, al-Ashar and Basra and then headed for Ahwaz. Father Ibrahim Bana received him and he was given a piece of land by the Arab leader *Shiekh Khaza'al* to build a centre named after Mar

*Shamoon Barsabai*<sup>166</sup>. He also met with the representatives of the British Government.



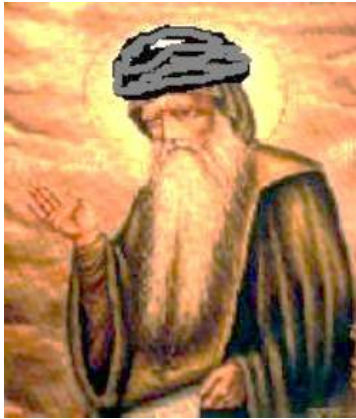
Sheikh Khaza'al and his palace on the shores of Shatt al-Arab which was visited by the patriarch



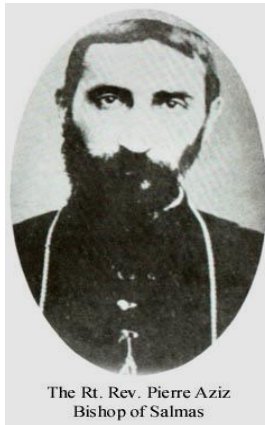
Patriarch Yousif Emmanuel II with his escorts and priests of Basra in 1919

---

<sup>166</sup> He was a Patriarch of the Church of the East during the 4<sup>th</sup> century; he was martyred in 341 together with 100, bishops, priests, nuns and ordinary people. This was the beginning of the 40 years persecution that killed 160,000 Christians. He was buried at Suss in Iran, he is considered one of the Saints of the Church of the East.



An artist impression depicting the martyred patriarch



The Rt. Rev. Pierre (Putrus) Aziz

When the patriarch returned to al-Ashar on 27 of May, he appointed Bishop Putrus Aziz a Bishop for the Chaldeans in Ahwaz. On June 1, 1919 he ordained some deacons and elevated father Mansour to a monsignor. On July 2, the patriarch left, with Bishop Youhanna Nissan, to Amara

and ordained more deacons and elevated father Toma Yealdo to a monsignor<sup>167</sup>.



Elias bishop of Ahwaz (number 2), father Moushee Babika, father Francis Amer, father Oraha Selfan and father Toma al- Rahib (1938)

His third visit was in 1922, he arrived by train and was well received at the church (according to Wikipedia the Baghdad-Basra train was operative in 1920).

Father (later bishop) Yacoub Eugene Manna (see picture) served at the Archbishopric of Basra. He was born in Baqofa (26 kilometres north of Mosul) in 1866, and was ordained a priest in 1889. Since 1915 he served in several areas in the region including the



<sup>167</sup> Hadad, P. (Fr.) *al- Khwateer*, p. 193.

Caucasus, and lived in Rome until 1919. He was appointed Patriarchal Representative for Basra between 1923 and 1927. On April 15 1928, his body was found washed in the Tigris River<sup>168</sup>.

### **The building of Mary the Virgin Church**

In 1907, work commenced on building a cathedral in Basra (*al- Qishla*) to replace the small church that already existed, the building was drawn up by Italians who were influenced by Gothic designs<sup>169</sup>. It was constructed as a Roman Cross (see the below design) and was twined with a church in Rome. The cathedral opened in 1934. It also acted as bishop's headquarters from 1954 to 1971. When it closed down in 1981; the cathedral was converted into a refuge centre for penurious families with the help of Chaldean Association of Mercy<sup>170</sup>. The Chaldean nuns



managed the *Al- Fayhaa* School which was built adjacent to the cathedral. Some 3877 children were baptised in this cathedral.

Bishop Hanna Nisan (1936)

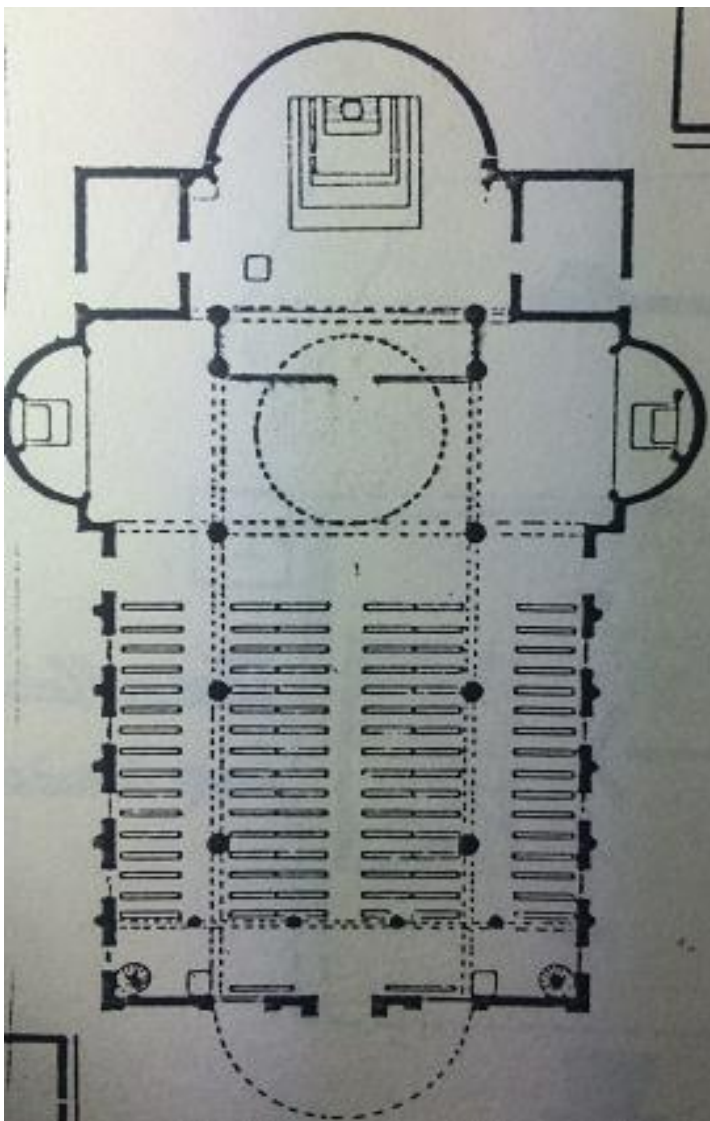
---

<sup>168</sup> Hadad, (Fr.) P. *Qala Syouriara* magazine, issue 13-14, 1977, Baghdad, p. 7.

<sup>169</sup> An European architecture which was very popular in Europe between 1150 and 1400.

<sup>170</sup> The Chaldean Association of Mercy was established in 1934 and still continues to serve the faithful in the Archbishopric.

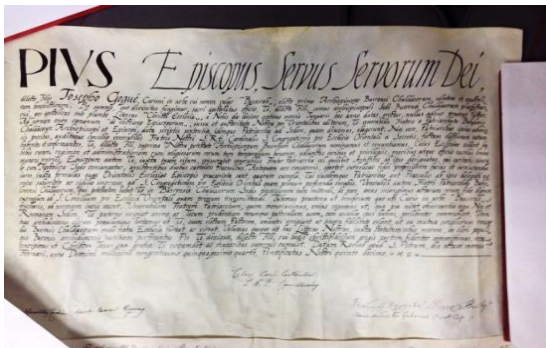




The Design of Mary the Virgin Cathedral



Mary the Virgin Chaldean Cathedral



Papal exoneration in 1954 decreeing the church of Mary the Virgin to be changed into Cathedral

## **The Church of St. Pius**

This church was built in 1953 in *al- Jumhuriya* district by Bishop Yousif Gougi (see picture) and was name after Pope Pius XII. After 20 years of service, it was abandoned and it remains empty until this day.



Church of St. Pius (1953)

## **The Church of Lady of the Annunciation**

This humble church was built in early 1970s due to the efforts of father *Jibrael Gini* and later it became a kindergarten.



Church of the lady of Annunciation which was converted into  
classes to teach the children of the diocese



Little deacons in Basra (1954)



The Babylon Chaldean primary Church in Basra 1937-1939



## **The Church of Saint Joseph**

This tiny church was opened in 1951. Today, there is nothing left of this church except its abandoned structure as it was closed down in 1992. The church was cast in the Western Architectural style and it was built so that it could serve the Christians who lived near the port of Basra. Today some low income families live around it. 82 baptisms were conducted in this church.



An abandoned structure and alter

## **The Church of Saint Aphram**

The church was built in 1969. Bishop Gibrael Ganni (see picture) supervised its building. Until 2015, the church witnessed the baptisms of 1656 children, 1332 marriages and 982 funerals, also a catechist centre was build next to the church.





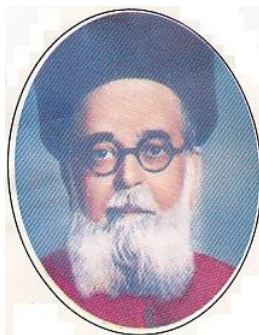
The Church of Saint Aphram 1969 (Ashar)



The kindergarten of the diocese which was run by the Chaldean nuns during the 50s



The Holy Communion in 1966



The Patriarch Yousif Ghanima +1958

### **Bishop Estefan Kajo**

He was born in Alqosh in 1929 and was ordained a priest in 1956 (see picture). After serving in many of Baghdad's churches, he was ordained a bishop for the diocese of Basra in 1980. He served at the Archbishopric for four years and returned





to the diocese of Zakho (northern Iraq) in 1984<sup>171</sup>.

### **Bishop Yousif Mikhael**

Born in Alqosh and was ordained a priest in 1960 and a bishop in 1984. He served in Basra until 1995. Bishop Yousif also served in Lebanon until his death in 1999 (see picture).



The Christian migration from the north to the south of Iraq caused a revival of Christianity in the area, which lasted until 1980, whilst tens of villages in the north were evacuated and destroyed. According to the author's census, which relied on the death register of several Chaldean and Syriac churches, since the beginning of the Iran-Iraq war in 1980, the Christians suffered more than 10,000 lives of Christian officers and soldiers and many thousands of disabled people and similar figures of widows and orphans.

Many Christians left the country, willingly or unwillingly, seeking refuge elsewhere and their ordeals deteriorated further after the end of the Gulf War in 1991. To this day, there are hundreds of families still awaiting the news of their loved ones who have gone missing in different wars.

---

<sup>171</sup> *Al Fikir al-Masehi* magazine, vol. 17, issue 161, p. 47.

## Statistics

As stated by *Al-Fikir Al-Masihi Magazine*, during 1977 there were 5000 Chaldean families living in Basra and a further 1000 families in Amara, Kut, Nasiriya, Faw and Samawa. By the end of the Iran-Iraq war in 1988, the families were reduced to 1150. According to the researcher *Gougi*, after the 1990 war, the numbers dropped to 720.

Basra suffered immensely during the Iran-Iraq war; according to the memories of the author (he was based in Basra between 1982 and 1986) sometimes around 400 bombs per day would fall on the city. Some of these bombs fell on church buildings.

The Gulf War and the harsh sanctions that followed, affected badly on the presence of Christians. The social, educational and cultural services deteriorated and poverty became rife, some people lacked the money to buy food or household necessities. Many students left their studies and went out to work so that they help with the costs of living.

During the 1990s, the average wage of a civil servant was not enough to buy 30 eggs. Many factories ceased production, due to lack spare parts, which in turn caused a high rate of unemployment. The situation was made worse by the deadly heat and humidity, and most of the food and water was contaminated with depleted uranium. Pollution levels were high due to the burning of oilfields, all these factors lead to a deteriorating health situation and the

spread of cancerous diseases. Additionally, there was a severe housing shortages, many houses were forcibly occupied, including some church properties. Land registries were forged and to this date some properties are still illegally occupied and the government appears helpless in returning them. These are the reasons why some people migrated to Baghdad and northern Iraq and some overseas.

Despite these grotesque conditions, a research conducted by Gougi (1992) showed that the Christian families in Basra continued to grow. She conducted her research among 500 Christian families, which revealed the following:

30.4% of the families conceived 6 children per family

22.8% of the families conceived 5 children per family

15.4% of the families conceived 7 children per family

05.0% of the families conceived 8 children per family

04.4% of the families conceived 9 children per family

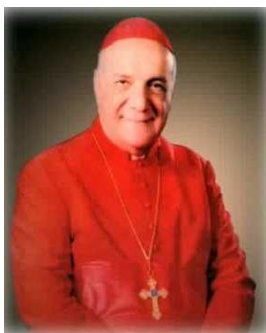
18.3% of the families conceived 4 children per family

03.6% of the families conceived 3 children per family.

These findings indicate the great Christian attitude towards the love of life, but their cross was and still is today, heavier than they can bear. We hope that the day will never come where people would say “there used to be Christians in Basra”.

## **Patriarch Rafael Bidawid**

He succeeded Patriarch Paulos Sheikho in 1989 and was the head of the Catholic Chaldean church until 2003. Patriarch Bidawid was born in Mosul in 1922, ordained priest in 1947, and to a bishop in 1956. Before being based in Lebanon, he served in many dioceses of Iraq. Until his death, he witnessed, with his people, the horrors of the Gulf war and the unjust sanctions imposed on the Iraqi people. Patriarch Bidawid was buried in Lebanon.



Patriarch Rafael Bidawid



Patriarch Paulos Sheikho

## **Bishop Gibrail Kassab**

He was ordained a priest in 1961. Bishop Kassab, served in Baghdad from 1966- 1996 and was ordained bishop of the Dioceses of Basra in 1996. The Chaldean Synod appointed him Bishop to the diocese of St Thomas in Australia and New Zealand in 2006. He retired in 2015.



## The Syro Orthodox Church

According to the records of the United Society of Syro Orthodox in Basra for 1936-1937, some 38 families lived in the city. A church dedicated to Mary the Virgin was built in 1938. Its first priest in 1941 was father *Mousa Toma*.<sup>172</sup>

In 1965, a kindergarten was set up, but after 5 years it ceased operating. The families continued to increase and by the late 70's there were some 350 families in Basra. During this time, Bishop Paulos Rassam visited Basra and ordained 18 deacons.



During the Iran- Iraq war the church suffered some damages, as a result of Iranian shelling. After the Gulf war 1990 the number of families dropped to some 85. In 1994,

---

<sup>172</sup> Father *Sima'an Kaskoos* (pastor of the Syro Orthodox Church) provided us with information about the Syro Orthodox presence in Basra by means of a research undertaken by father *Putrous Khider*.

monk *Putrous Ibrahim Khidr* arrived in Basra, and three years later he was ordained a priest. However, the decline of the faithful continued and plummeted to 70 families. After the US Lead invasion of Iraq in 2003, the number of families plunged to 25 in 2014 and finally to 14 at the time of writing of this book (see the below diagram).

### **The Assyrian Church**

Presently, the Assyrian church has no presence in Basra and the families' number about 11. During the 70s, there were about 500 families in Basra and its surrounding areas<sup>173</sup>. The church of Mary the Virgin, at al-Jumhuriya neighbourhood, was built during the 70s. Both Reverends Younan and Yahodzadiq served the congregation; the church was closed down in the 90s.

The Church of Mar *Gewargis* (Assyrian Ancient Church of the East) was built in 1978 under the supervision of father *Gewargis*. It is still in good condition and prayers are held in it once a year.

The church of Mar *Ogin* ( Assyrian Ancient Church of the East) was set up in a refurbished house during the 1950's due to Reverend Younan's efforts and it closed during the 70's and it has fallen into oblivion. The church of Mar Benyamin served the faithful during the 50s until it closed down. There is in the archive of the dioceses a registrar written in Eastern Syriac containing 3150 students that we

---

<sup>173</sup> Ghalib, p. 55.

believe belonged to the Assyrian church. It starts from 1931 to 1964.



The Assyrian church of Mar Gewargis

### **The Syro Catholic Church**

The Syro Catholic Church was served by father *Yousif Jarji* between 1897- 1842. Father *Dareen* opened a church in 1900, dedicated to the Holy Family but it closed down in 1963.

Two churches were built in al- Ashar and Amara. The first one was, dedicated to Saint Joseph, was built in 1908, due to the diligent efforts of father Anton Matloob, and the other church was opened in 1913 and dedicated to The Sacred Heart, father Yousif Ossi was the parish priest.

The state of the Syro Church did not differ much from its sister churches in the area and the number of families continued to decline to some 125 families (which includes the newly displaced families from the north when Isis overran the area in July 2014).

During the Iran-Iraq and the Gulf War, father *Louise Kassab*<sup>174</sup>, Father *Toma Azizoo* and Bishop *Yousif Habsh* all served the church. After 2003, father *Soulaqa Karoumi* served the congregation and he was succeeded by father *Emaad Iklemis*, who is serving the church to this day.

### **The Armenian Church**

Despite the presence of Armenians in Basra for more than 790 years, their numbers dwindled rather than increased. Between 1925 and 1955 the families numbered some 390 but it dropped to 163 in 2002, today they do not exceed 60 families. The Armenians were looked after by father Arakeel (year unknown) and then father Vartan Nishan who served until 2014 and presently father Petroun Azadian. The church runs a primary school and a social club. The Armenians have an old church that dates back to the 18<sup>th</sup> century.

### **The Protestant Church**

The Protestant arrived in Basra during the 19<sup>th</sup> century which concurred with their displacement from Turkey. Their Facebook page, mentions that doctor Samul Zouimer and James Canteen arrived in 1891 to serve the Protestant families. In 1903, the community was served by

---

<sup>174</sup> Qasha, page 115-123.



an Iraqi priest who came from Mosul named *Jarjis Amsou*.<sup>175</sup>

The majority of the Protestant priests, until the 1960s, were Americans. The historian Ghanima mentions that the Protestant used to worship at *Rajaa al- A'ali* Church until they built their own church in 1931, due to Reverends *Mikha Jibouri* and *Toma Khadoury's* efforts. Reverend *Karabit AbdulAhad* served the Protestant Church until 1940.

During 1891, an American protestant missionary arrived in Amara and after setting up a mission in Bahrain in 1893, he returned to Amara to set up his mission in 1894. Sources mention that the evangelist distributed 620 copies of the Holy Bible during 1899.

The Protestant Church conference was held in Basra in 1954 and it was attended by people from Basra and Amara such as Vicar Adon Laidens, representative of the church in Amara, and Vicar George Haller of Basra. During the 60s *Yousif Matti* was appointed as a Vicar for Basra, he was followed by Anwar Nathan from Egypt. Historian *Ghanima* mentions that some 120 families were looked after by the Egyptian Vicar *Nassif Barhoom* in 1984. He served in Basra until 1991.

---

<sup>175</sup> <https://www.facebook.com/pages/National-Evangelical-Presbyterian-Church-Basrah/205256319547151?fref=ts> [accessed 03/08/2015]

Vicar *Gilbert Shaheen* was appointed to serve the Protestant congregation in 1996 (he served until 2003) and a church was built in 1998. He was succeeded by Vicar *Arteen*. During 2014, the number of families dropped to 10 and they are being looked after by the Egyptian Vicar *Majdi Midhat*<sup>176</sup>. There are about 20 Armenian Catholic and Latin families in Basra.



The Evangelical Churches



The Sabbatarian church



The Basra Centre

---

<sup>176</sup> Ghanima, H. Y. (1998) *the Protestants and the Anglicans in Iraq*, Baghdad: al Nashir printing press, p. 155.

## **The role of the monastic orders during the twentieth century**

### **The Carmelite**

The Carmelite friars continued to operate in the diocese and in 1904 they set up their centre in Amara as an extension to their orphanage in Baghdad. They also set up a new centre in 1912 at *al- Muhamara*<sup>177</sup>. Many friars served in this mission, such as the Lebanese brothers Francois and Jean, however, the mission more or less closed in 1987, but up to year 2000 someone would visit it from Baghdad once a month, especially the late father Robert, who specialist in the spirituality of *Youhanna of Daliyathi*<sup>178</sup>.

The mission has a church by the name of St. Therese of the Child Jesus which was built by father Masoud Tnb in 1987<sup>179</sup>.

### **Dominican Sisters of love for the Presentation of the Virgin Saint**<sup>180</sup>

The Dominican sisters of Presentation participated in evangelising throughout Amara and Basra. Their mission

---

<sup>177</sup> Abouna, A. (Fr.) *al-Karmel*, p. 110.

<sup>178</sup> *Dalyatha* originated from a village between Zakho and Duhok in northern Iraq. He became a monk in the year 700 he has over 30 spiritual articles and over 50 other writings.

<sup>179</sup> Qasha, p. 87.

<sup>180</sup> It was established in Europe during the 17<sup>th</sup> century due to the efforts of Mary Bousban and it was established in Iraq in the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

(which opened in Amara in 1907) comprised of a surgery and a primary school. In 1914, the mission closed down and sold all their properties- due to World War One. Two nuns, who died of Cholera, are buried at the old site<sup>181</sup>.



St. Joseph Nursery School where 500 of Basra's children are taught

It states that the mission opened in Basra at the request of the Carmelite friars. The convent was set up by Mother Superior Adel in 1906 and during the same year a primary school was opened (which became a high school for girls

---

<sup>181</sup> Abouna, A. (Fr.) *Love without frontiers*, Baghdad, 2008, p. 184.

in 1953). A sewing workshop was opened in 1906, and in the following year a kindergarten and an orphanage were set up. In 1907, they opened a small surgery between 1910 and 1912 and a further two primary schools were opened, one for boys and the other one for girls.<sup>182</sup>



The report states that in 1974, all schools were nationalised by the government but the mission continued its service until 1987, the convent was hit by Iranian shelling during the Iran-Iraq war. The mission was re-opened in 1997 and a Kindergarten of St. Joseph was set up. In 2002, a girl's dormitory was opened.



The Church of St. Theresa of the Child Jesus which was built in 1958

---

<sup>182</sup> Sister Susan provided us with a report about the nuns and their roles in serving the community.

## The Chaldean daughters of Mary<sup>183</sup>

This mission was established in August 1952. Father (later bishop) *Yousif Koki* requested from Patriarch *Yousif Ghanima* to send nuns in order to open the *Fayhaa* School only to be closed down when the schools were nationalised in 1974. The mission's activities were limited to running its kindergarten.



---

<sup>183</sup> It was established in Baghdad in 1922, its motto is *with Mary towards heaven*.

The Christians worked in different professions such as medicine, journalism, engineering, education and law, some worked as jewellers, contractors or civil servants. Armenians and Jews also set up many commercial enterprises. Below is a brief about the Christian's activities in different fields.

## **Trade and Commerce**

Researcher al- Qahwati wrote about a prominent 20th century merchant named Yousif Abdulahad <sup>184</sup>. *Ramadan* and *al-Rufaai*, documented the activities of a sea transport company based in Amara which was owned by *Hanna al-Shiekh*<sup>185</sup> and an entrepreneur by the name of *Kamel Toutanchi* who set up a cigarette factory. In 1908, brothers Michael established a company that exported seeds and dates and imported electrical equipment. Meir Levi (a Jew) established in 1918 a commercial company and another for selling cars. Additionally, the majority of money exchanges were run by non-Muslims<sup>186</sup>. In London, I met with *Bahjat T. Hanna*, the managing director of Basra Date Company, which was established by Nouri Abdulahad during the 50s<sup>187</sup>. Ur hotel, was the first luxury hotel built in Basra and was owned by the

---

<sup>184</sup> Al-Qahwati, p. 298.

<sup>185</sup> Ramadan, A. *Heritage of Basra*, Afaaq Printing, 2008, p. 173.

<sup>186</sup> Al- Bazi, pp. 115-138.

<sup>187</sup> Basra has about 100 different types of dates, it used to have 17 million palm trees, but after 1980s, 8 million trees were destroyed due to wars and sanctions. Nowadays the number is down to one million according to *the book of Basra, a shining culture of history by the Governet of Basra in 2012* p. 75.

*Shukir Brothers* who also owned the *Samiramis Hotel* during the 40s.

### **Journalism, education and printing**

The Christians of Basra contributed in establishing several printing shops. In 1912, *Haj A. al-Shamkhani* founded the *Kathimya printing Press*, which was run by Estephan Kajachi and published *al- Akha'a Newspaper*. Toma Francis set up the national printing press in 1914 and published many periodicals. In 1920, Yousif Hormuz set up *al-Umaa* printing and published *Sout al-Shaab Newspaper* that continued until 1935.

During the same year, father Yousif Gougi established *al-Amal printing*. Yousif Hormuz also set up the National Printing press in 1925. Yousif was a journalist who produced *al-Hayat Newspaper* that continued for ten years<sup>188</sup>.

The prolific poet *Yousif Hadad*, set up a printing house in 1952<sup>189</sup> and in 1928 *Yousif Kajachi* published *Daleel al-A'elaa Newspaper*, and after two years *Estephane Kajachi* published *al-Raqeeb Newspaper*- which ceased production in 1936-. But Abdul Basit mentioned that it was published in 1931 and stopped in 1934<sup>190</sup>. In 1934, *Kajachi* also published *al-Ayaam Newspaper*. Finally, in 1948, Nasser

---

<sup>188</sup> In the book by *Ihsaan al-Samarrai*, *Toma Hurmoz* is the one who was editor in chief of *Al-Hayat Newspaper* in 1926, p. 35.

<sup>189</sup> Abdul Razzak, p. 132.

<sup>190</sup> Khalil, Abdul Basit, p. 264.



Jarjis published *al-Nadeem Newspaper*, which lasted only one year<sup>191</sup>.

The Christians contributed towards the cultural and literary progress of Basra. They had a school in 1905, which contained 124 students. And in 1909, father Youhanna Nissan founded the Society of Chaldean Literature.

### **Medicine and Pharmacology**

Starting with Doctor *Suleiman Ghazala* (1854-1929), a residence of Basra, who was excelled in medicine. He studied in France and was in charge of Iraq's health policy. Despite being a doctor by profession, he was talented in arts and literature and published 15 books. *Aphram Sayegh* was another renowned doctor. Mrs *Warda* was the first person who introduced the Braille method for reading for the blind. In the field of surgery, Doctor *Najim Hanna* conducted thousands of operations during the wars that affected Basra (1980-2000). The second oldest pharmacy in Basra was opened by Joules in 1922 and was followed by *al-Fayhaa* pharmacy of *Bashir Naoum* in 1925<sup>192</sup>. Finally, *Eliyahoo Ibrahim* (possibly a Jew) opened his pharmacy in 1924.

### **Sports and Arts**

The artist Thomas possessed great musical aptitude and in sports, *Jamil Putrous* excelled at weight lifting.

---

<sup>191</sup> Khalil, pp. 242, 251, 274.

<sup>192</sup> Al Bazi, p. 161.

Researcher *Kathim al-Hammami*, praised *Hanna Sheikh* for his interest in sport matters and for setting up a football league<sup>193</sup>.

In photography, the first photo studio was set up by the Armenian *Donenek* in 1923<sup>194</sup>. Artist *Joseph Konri* was a specialist in water colour paintings and *Maurice Hadad* excelled at visual arts. The Christian actors Louise Thomas and Mary George were mentioned by *Al-Samarrai*. *Sami al-Buni* founded the *Fayhaa Club* (currently closed). During 1976, some Assyrian and other clubs were established but they all closed down<sup>195</sup>.



Eight priests were born in Basra: Wisam (1971), Khalid (1969), Steven (1985), Aram (1987), and Emad (1959)...

---

<sup>193</sup> Lawer K. (2012) *On the Shores of Shatt al- Arab*, Damascus, Ministry of Culture, p. 215.

<sup>194</sup> Ramadan, A. (2013), *Culture of Basra*, vol. 4, Damascus, p. 45.

<sup>195</sup> Al- Samarai, *Paintings from Basra*, pp. 203, 215, 251, 262, 278, 276, 501, 384, 559, 505, 593.



Basra in 1913, by *Muhamid Kareem*



# Chapter Five

## The Metropolitan in the third Millennium

### Introduction

We have a deep faith that behind every dark cloud there is a bright sun and there is no tunnel without an end. This is our hope, what trigger us to pray and work with hopefulness, during the third Millennium, for a better society.

Towards the end of the second millennium, the Chaldean church census that was carried out by the late father Habbi, revealed the numbers of Chaldeans in Basra were some 1210 people. They had one church and two schools. The faithful were served by four priests and a Bishop.

In 2001, Iraq continued to suffer from the impact of wars and catastrophic sanctions, the Christian community continued to emigrate. In 2003, the US led invasion of Iraq began and every Iraqi suffered its consequences, especially the people in southern Iraq. The church lost many of its worshipers.

The tragedy continues, even at the time of writing this book, because of the war against IS (Isis), thousands of families have fled to Turkey, Lebanon and Jordan. After

July 2014, they numbered about 46,000. This figure does not include the earlier refugees that escaped to other parts of the country. And we believe that since the Iran-Iraq war some one million Christians have either emigrated or were displaced from their lands. It is a crime against an indigenous people, with a culture spanning thousands of years. It is a crime against humanity. There are many reasons which force people to leave their homes and move to other places such as personal harassment, economy, social and religious grounds. The Chaldean families living in Basra have declined to some 200 and there are a further 200 families that belong to different church denominations.

Despite their small numbers, many Christians play an important part in serving their community. There are many professional individuals such as doctors, engineers and business people who thrive to serve and develop the society; however, there are still some isolated vitriolic incidents against them that could cause the remaining few to leave. At the moment, an average of one family every two weeks leaves the province.

### **Cardinal Emmanuel III Delly**

He was born in *Telkepe* (northern Iraq) and was ordained a priest on 21 December, 1952. He was ordained a bishop ten years later in December 1962 at the age of 35. He was elected Patriarch of the Chaldean Church on 3 December, 2003- succeeding the late Patriarch Raphael I Bidawid and was elevated to Cardinal Bishop on 24 November, 2007.

The cardinal visited Basra on July 24, 2011 and later he visited Amara and prayed together with the resident families at the church of mother of Sorrows. He retired in 2013 and died a year later.



### **Patriarch Louise I Sako**

After the retirement of Patriarch Delly, Louis Sako was elected as his successor. He was born in Zakho (northern Iraq) in 1948 and was ordained a priest in 1974 and bishop for Kirkuk dioceses. He was elected patriarch of the Chaldean Church in 2013. Patriarch Sako visited Basra and Amara in February 3, 2014. The purpose of his visit was to install the new Archbishop (the author) and to visit the Chaldean



families and governmental officials. During his visit he was accompanied by papal envoy Giorgio Lenko.

The Archbishopric is regularly visited by religious officials, high commissioners and tribal leaders to cement the friendship of the communities and to discuss the progress of the people of Basra and Amara.







Meetings with the foreign consuls in Basra





A meeting with the Basra Governor



A meeting with the Mandaen Leader



The Christian religious leaders in Basra

## Al-Amara Churches



Church of Mary the Virgin mother of Sorrows in Amara



The Syro Catholic Church

Amara is the centre of Misan Province, it lies on the shores of Tigris River, 320 kilometres south- east of Baghdad and 50 kilometres from the Iranian border. Sources mention Amara as a village during the 17th century and then as a district after two centuries (in 1861) and a city during the 20th century. The majority of its

inhabitants are Muslims; there are some Mandaens and 20 Christian families. The city is replete with palm trees, weeds and plants. There was a Jewish presence in the city spanning some two thousand years, however, all the Jewish population left the city after 1948.



In Amara, today, there is only one cross standing on the rooftop of the church of Mary the Virgin mother of Sorrows; it is regarded as the oldest surviving Christian monument in the city. It was built in 1880, at *Mahmoudia* neighbourhood, on a land about 1600 square metres and it was renovated in 1995 and 2013. Presently, Jalal Daniel looks after the church affairs and the Christian families. The Jewish school and the Syro Catholic Church are two old buildings adjacent to it. The Syro Church was built in 1950 and despite its worn out structure, it still provides shelter to poor Christian families. The church was visited by patriarch Raphael I Bidawid on March 21, 1988<sup>196</sup> and by patriarch Louise Sako during February 2014.

---

<sup>196</sup> *Nagim al-Mashriq*, vol. 4, issue 13, 1998, p. 121.

We could not manage to find the marriage registry of the church, but according to the death registry we were able to obtain the following information: Its faithful were a mixture of Chaldean, Armenians, Syro and some foreign missionaries that came to the church. The registry records the death of a Dominican nun by the name of Jan in 1916 and a British citizen by the name of Rose, who died in 1925. It also mentions a person by the name of *Shawkat Mikha* who died in 1938 at the age of 106. The registry also mentions that on March 2, 1918 an earthquake took place.



The baptism registry records show that between 1880 and 1993, 677 children were baptised. The first child to be baptised was in 1880 by the name of *Nasouri Hurmo*. Father *Putrus* conducted his baptism ceremony. During the Iran-Iraq war, the baptism of children dropped by half which indicates that half of the families has emigrated.

## **The Library of the Archbishopric**

The library contains over 5000 books and periodicals. The oldest book dates back to the 17th century, about 150 books are between 100 to 300 years old. It has a comprehensive collection of books on religion, spirituality and history. The books were obtained by donation and purchasing and sometimes they were left by previous priests and deacons. They are in different languages such as Aramaic, Arabic, English, Italian, French and Latin.



## **Office of the estates in Mortmain**

Since its inception in 2008, the office provides varied services to the churches and is managed by Khalid Albert.





Pilgrims and Masses at UR

## The Cemetery

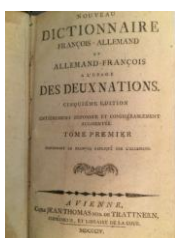
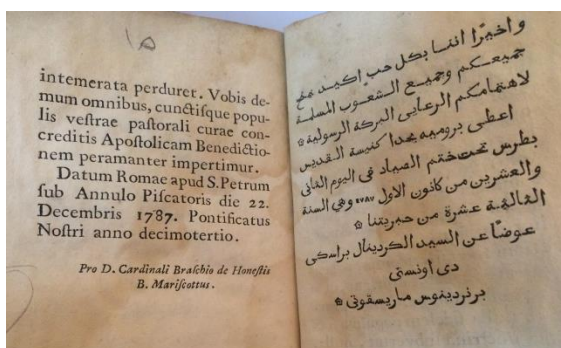
The Archbishopric owns a land that was set as a cemetery a century ago. The land was given by the Ottoman government in 1915 and it is located at *Mishraq* district. Regrettably, the land was grabbed from the church. In 1953, a further piece of land was purchased by the church

in Muteeha district to be used as a cemetery and it is still in use today.



## Rare artefacts of the Archbishopric

During 2014, many rare artefacts were gathered, such as books, paintings and some instruments that were used in mass, dating back to the 19th century. These artefacts have a spiritual value and they show the care that our ancestors paid when they exercised their faith.







A Liturgical Manuscript from the 19<sup>th</sup> Century



## **An analytical look at the emigration issues**

A quick glance at the current situation in Iraq reveals that the population of Christians is gradually and rapidly declining. During 2014, 20% of the families that lived in Basra have left the city. This is in a time where the province is considered to be a safe place with good employment opportunities and improving income levels.

To offer a better hope for the Christians, one must analyse the factors that contribute to the continuation of this bleeding wound. The church and the government have a hugely important role to play in promoting human rights, so that all individuals can excel at their work. A survey (conducted by the author) of 100 emigrant families show what reasons they gave when claiming asylum or emigration. They are as follows:

1. Political asylum because of persecutions.
2. Economic reasons caused by kidnapping, plundering and theft.
3. Social reasons, the need to be emancipated from the restraints of the Iraqi society.
4. Other reasons, such as education, better health care and to search for “a better quality of life”.

Based on the above reasons, the church and the government must concentrate on the following issues:

1. Christians must be equal in dignity and rights. Often Christians are being made to feel like second-class citizens (they are referred to as infidels or free non- Muslim subjects living in Muslim countries who in return for

paying tax enjoy the protection and safety). All the inequality and defects in the law must be tackled. The law should have the last word.

2. The freedom to celebrate religious festivals and national and cultural figureheads (such as language, traditions, saints, patron of churches), with good governmental media coverage.

3. Provide better housing. Many migrants stated that if they were given a piece of land, they would rather build on it than pay the exorbitant rentals.

4/ Promote job opportunities on the basis of non-discrimination by the government.

5/ Equality in the management of local affairs.

6/ Supporting the families and students who want to continue their education.

7/ Promote equal opportunities between men and women.

8/ Correct the defects in Christian-Muslim relations, especially in cases of marriage and inheritance.

9. Renewal of educational curriculums in order to promote equality, religious freedom and forgiveness.

10. Concentrating on the essential aspects of traditions and customs and eradicating all the decaying concepts that hinder the renewal of the heart and mind. An individual must be brought up free from fear and anxiety.

11. Implanting self-confidence in people by stressing the importance of the goals that each individual must strive for, this requires highlighting the history of living together.

12. Embrace all the talented and educated people.

13. The government must issue special laws regarding the displaced people who wish to return back to their country by guaranteeing their safety and to give back their stolen rights.

Iraq needs to rebuild its infrastructure in order to achieve economic growth. It requires real educational plans to elevate the society to a new level. It is vital to focus on national unity, a just distribution of wealth and implementation of good human rights policies. Additionally, it is imperative to tend for all the ethnic languages and for the social rights of the people who speak them. We strive for a country where, together, its people build a common life based on comradeship between them.

## Notes

We tried, through this study, to underline the history of Christianity in southern Mesopotamia since the third century with a special attention to the religious activities of the dioceses of *Prath d'Maishan*.

Regarding, *Wasit (Kut)* province, the information about its Christianity during the first Millennium is widely available and, perhaps, in the future we will conduct a similar research about it. We highlighted, directly or indirectly, and according to the available information any activities related to the other churches.

A philosopher once said that “He who does not know his history is like a little child”. It is important to present this historical document to the new generation. Today, the Christians of Iraq need the support of people who are in power so that they continue to contribute to the culture of the area, as their ancestors did. It is important to create a spirit of cultural dialogue and tolerance, in order to learn from the mistakes of the past so that we grow in hope and happiness together for a better Iraq.

## References and Sources

### Dictionaries, encyclopaedias, references

- Al- Abbassi, A. *Encyclopaedia of Basra's History*, part 1, Thames Company, Baghdad, 1988.
- Bedawid, R., (ed.) *HUDRA, Chaldean Prayer Book according to the Eastern Church liturgy*. Pro Ecclesia Orientali, Rome, 2002.
- Encyclopaedia of Basra*, University of Basra, al-Ghadeer for printing and distribution, 2013.
- Jajou, H. (Fr.) *Chaldo-Assyrian Dictionary*, Baghdad, 2002.
- Lexicon of Syriac Culture*, Iraqi scientific academy, Baghdad, 1990.
- Manaa, Y. E. (Fr.) *Chaldean-Arabic lexicon*, 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition, Beirut, 1975.

### Books

- Abdul al-Razzak, A. (2011) *Basra during the 30s and 40s*, Baghdad.
- Abouna, (Fr.) A. (1970) *The Culture of Aramaic language*, Mosul.
- Abouna, (Fr.) A. (1978) *Al-Karmel*, Adeeb printing press, Baghdad.
- Abouna (Fr.) A. (2002) *The History of the Eastern Syriac Church* (3 parts), Eastern Bookshop, Beirut.
- Abouna, (Fr.) A. (2006) *Monasteries of Iraq*, Baghdad.
- Abouna, (Fr.) A. (2008) *Love without frontiers*, Baghdad.
- Adamove, A. (1989) *Basra Vilyat: it's past and present*, T: Dr Hashim Saleh, part 2, University Of Basra.
- Al- Amin, M. Hussein, (1965) *the Travels of Niebor to Iraq*: Ministry of Culture, Baghdad.
- Al- Bazi, H. (1969) *Basra During and After the Dark Age*, al-Basri publications, Baghdad.

- Al- Hamami, K. Finjan, (2012) *On the Shores of Shatt al- Arab*, Ministry of Culture, Damascus.
- Al- Hilfi A. (2013) *Basra During 30s and 40s*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, Baghdad.
- Al –Rufa'ai, A. (2013) *Basra and the Disciples of Culture*, part 4, Damascus.
- Al- Rufa'ai, A. (2014) *the Heritage of Basra*, part 1 and 2, Damascus.
- Al- Samarra'i, I. Wafiq (2009) *Aromas of Herbs and Distant Ports*, Baghdad.
- Al- Samarra'i, I. Wafiq: *Paintings from Basra*, Baghdad, 2009.
- Al-Tamimi, H. (1979) *Basra During the British Occupation*, the centre of Arabian Gulf Publication, Basra.
- Al-Tareehi, M. S. (1981) *Monasteries and Nasarra Places of Kufa and its surroundings*, 1<sup>st</sup> edition, Beirut.
- Al- Qahwati, H. (Dr) (1980) *The Commercial role of Basra in the Arabian Gulf*, Centre of Arabian Gulf studies publication at the University of Basra.
- Babana, Y. (Bishop) (1970) *Alqosh Through History*, Baghdad.
- Babu Isaac, R. (1948) *The History of Iraq's Nassara*, al-Mansour printing press, Baghdad.
- Babu Isaac, R. (1955) *the Schools of Iraq before Islam*, Shafeeq printing press, Baghdad.
- Barsom, E. I. (Patriarch) (1976) *The Scattered Pearl in Syriac Science and Culture*, 3<sup>rd</sup> edition, Baghdad: Al-Sha'ab printing press.
- Douval, R. (1992) *The History of Syriac Culture*, Fr. Louise Qassab, Publications of the Syriac Catholic diocese, Baghdad.
- Fayee, J. (Fr.) (2000) *Christian Antiquities of Mosul*, T:Najib Qaqoo, Baghdad.
- Faithi, S. (2014) *The Greater Basra*, al Fayhaa house, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition.
- Ghalib, Bassem: *The Heritage of Basra Encyclopaedia*, Al-Ghadeer company, Basra.
- Ghanima, H. Y. (1998) *The Protestant and Anglicans in Iraq*, Baghdad: al- Nashir printing press.
- Habbi, Y. (Fr.) (1960) *The Upper Monastery and the Church of al – Taheyra*, Mosul.



- Habbi, Y. (Fr.) (2001) *The Eastern Chaldean-Assyrian Church*, Beirut: Al-Kaslik.
- Habbi, Y. (Fr.) (2013) *The Eastern Church*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition Beirut: Academic Research Centre.
- Habbi, (Fr.) Y. (1999) *Synods of the Eastern church*, Beirut: Kaslik.
- Habbi, (Fr.) Y. (1986) Index of Authors, Baghdad: Iraqi Scientific Academy Assembly print.
- Haddad, (Fr. Dr) (1976) *The Small History (investigative)*, al – Adeeb printing press, Baghdad.
- Haddad, (Fr. Dr) (1999) *The Chaldean Daughters of Mary*, al-Diwan printing press, Baghdad.
- Haddad, (Fr. Dr) (2006) *Al- Khawater, Fr. Dawood Ramo*, Gibrail Dnbo centre, Baghdad.
- Ibn Matti, A. (1899) *News of the Eastern Church Patriarchs*, part 2, Rome.
- Isaac, J. (Bishop Dr) (2008) *The Chaldean Mass*, Baghdad: Nagim al- Masriq publications, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition.
- Jamil, F. (1998) *Iraq during the 4<sup>th</sup> century*, Baghdad.
- Jazrawi, N. Yousif, (Fr.) (2003) *On the Footsteps of Jesus*, Baghdad.
- Khalil, A. (?) *History of Basra*, part 3, al-Fayhaa printing press.
- Mhemid, W. H. (Dr) (2013) *Voyages to Iraq*, Baghdad: Dar al-Farahidi.
- Nasri, P. (Fr) (1905) *Thakherat al- Athhan*, 2 parts, Mosul.
- Ramadan, A. (2012) *Heritage of Basra*, Damascus.
- Ramadan, A. (2013) *Basra and the Disciples of Civilisation*, part 4, Damascus.
- Rassam, S. (2005) *Christianity in Iraq*, London: Gracewing.
- Qanawati, G. (Fr) (1984) *Christianity and Arab Civilisation*, Baghdad: the Arab Institute for study and publication.
- Qasha, S. (2008) *Basra in the Syriac References*, al-Sa'ah bookshop.
- Sabri, A. (Fr) (2006) *History and lives of Chaldean monks*, Baghdad: the Church of Divine Wisdom publication.
- Sako, L. (Fr, Dr) (1989) *Our Fathers in Faith*, Baghdad.
- Scholer, S. *The Church before Islam*, part 11, T: Fouad Jarji (place and time of print unknown).

Seferta, J. (2008) *the Chaldean Church of Iraq*, London: Blackfriars Publications, p.7.

Shakir, A. (1984) *The History of Iraq during the Ottoman Era*, Ninveh, 1<sup>st</sup> edition.

Sheikho, P. (Patriarch) *The Monasteries in the Arab and Persian Kingdoms by Ishodnah the Basra Archbishop*, Oak park eastern institute for design and print, United States.

Sher, A. (Bishop) *The Famous Martyrs of the East*, part 2, 1906.

Sher, A. (Bishop) (2007) *Chaldo- Athour*, Aleppo: Golden word printing press.

Sher, A. (Bishop) (2010) *The History of al-Sa'aradi*, part 2, Sulaymaniyah: the Kurdish Heritage institute.

Suleiman, M. (1899) *News of Patriarchs of the Eastern Church*, Rome.

Tisserant E. (Cardinal) (1939) *A Historic Summary of the Chaldean Church*, T. Fr. Suliman al-Sayegh, Mosul.

## **Magazines**

*Alfikr almasihi*, issues: 12,3,31,122, Baghdad.

*Bayen al- Nahrain* issues 11, 31, 4, 54+53, 43, Baghdad.

*Masaarat*, issue 14, vol 5, 2010.

*Nagim al- Masriq*, issue 8, Baghdad.

*Qala Souryaya*, issues 14+13, 1977, Baghdad.

## **Newsletters**

Sunday newsletter, issue 2, 1992, page 338-339.

## **Dissertations**

Kouki, I. A. *the quarters of Virgin Mary Church in al-Ashaar*, Basra, graduation dissertation, Produced for University of Technology, 1991.



# THE HISTORY OF CHRISTIANITY IN SOUTHERN MESOPOTAMIA

## About the book

The book deals with the history of Christianity in Southern Mesopotamia and especially the Metropolitan of Prath d'Maishan (Basra and the south). It analysis, evaluates and criticises some historical stages in a very simple way.

The aim of the author is to record the Christian presence in the area, which has become a distant memory, so that the book becomes a historical document to bear witness to people that loved the spiritual and temporal lives with openness towards each other and without any prejudice. They founded towns and cities and their societies embraced all Godly values in deserts, marshes, between rivers and on islands.



## About the Author

Archbishop Habib H. Jajou was born in the northern Iraqi town of Baqofa in 1960. He was ordained a priest in 1998 and an Archbishop in 2014. He has a master's degree in Geophysics from the University of Mosul in 1989 and a master's degree in Applied Theology from the Maryvale Institute in Birmingham (United Kingdom). The Archbishop also obtained several diplomas in English and Journalism in London between 2006 and 2011. He is an author of many books and numerous articles. When he was in London, he published the *Al-Qeethara* magazine that continued for ten years. He was member of the editorial board of *Bayen al-Nahrain* magazine and is currently a member of the editorial team of *Nagim al-Masriq* magazine in Baghdad.

## Basra and the South Chaldean Catholic Archdiocese

Basra/Iraq 2015