

## Nimrod Effendi and Nestorian Patriarchate: A Study of Conflict and Authority Through Ottoman Archive

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### Abstract

This study presents a rigorous examination of the final phase of the Nestorian Patriarchate, based in Qodshanis (Hakkari), focusing on its interactions with the Ottoman Empire and the influence exerted by Western powers. The primary objective is to investigate the religious and political forces that shaped the Nestorian community in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, with a particular focus on the intricate dynamics between internal factionalism and external interventions. Challenging the predominantly Western-centric narratives prevalent in existing scholarship, this research extensively utilizes Ottoman archival sources to present an imperial perspective on the Nestorian community. The study focuses on three central figures: Mar Shimun Ruel, Mar Shimun Benyamin, and Nimrod Effendi. These individuals played pivotal roles in the Nestorian community's engagement with Ottoman authority and in shaping its internal trajectory. Nimrod Effendi's close cooperation with the Ottoman administration led to the emergence of a new faction that directly challenged the traditional leadership of the Patriarchate. The growing influence of Western missionaries in the region further exacerbated this internal schism. As the community's internal unity weakened, the patriarchate evolved into not only a religious but also a political actor. Ultimately, this article centers the Nestorian Patriarchate in an analysis of local power struggles, foreign interventions, and intra-communal conflicts. In doing so, it provides a nuanced, archive-based contribution to the historiography of the Nestorian community under Ottoman rule.

### Keywords

History of Religions; Hakkari; The Nestorian Church; Nimrod Effendi; Mar Shimun

### Highlights

- By anchoring its analysis in Ottoman archives instead of missionary memoirs, the study reframes Nestorian history as an example of empire-driven management of religious diversity.
- The Istanbul administration rewarded the Kochanis Patriarchate with salaries and insignia (*nishan*) while simultaneously strengthening its control over the community through close surveillance.
- Internal community dynamics and the influence of external actors weakened Mar Shimun Ruel and Mar Shimun Benyamin's traditional authority.
- The rivalry between the Patriarchate and Nimrod Effendi created a significant rupture that deeply undermined the religious unity of the Nestorian community.
- The transformation of the patriarchate is also linked to the politicization of religious institutions during the Ottoman modernization process.

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## Nemrud Efendi ve Nesturi Patrikliği: Osmanlı Arşivi Üzerinden Bir Otorite ve Çatışma İncelemesi

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### Öz

Bu çalışma, Nesturî Patrikliğinin Koçanis (Hakkari) merkezli son dönemini, Osmanlı İmparatorluğu ile ilişkileri ve Batılı güçlerin etkileri çerçevesinde eleştirel bir yaklaşımla incelemektedir. Araştırmanın temel amacı, 19. yüzyılın sonları ile 20. yüzyılın başlarında Nesturî topluluğunu şekillendiren dinî ve siyasî dinamikleri analiz ederek, özellikle içsel rekabet ile dış müdahale arasındaki karmaşık etkileşimleri ortaya koymaktır. Literatürde baskın olan Batı merkezli yaklaşımlara alternatif olarak bu çalışma, büyük ölçüde Osmanlı arşiv kaynaklarına dayanmaktadır ve Nesturîler üzerine Osmanlı perspektifini görünür kılmayı hedeflemektedir. Çalışmada üç temel figür öne çıkmaktadır: Mar Şem'un Ruel, Mar Şem'un Bünyamin ve Nemrud Efendi. Bu şahsiyetler, Nesturî topluluğunun Osmanlı yönetimiyle ilişkilerinde ve içsel yönelimlerinde belirleyici roller üstlenmiştir. Nemrud Efendi'nin Osmanlı idaresiyle geliştirdiği yakın ilişki, patrikliğin geleneksel liderliğiyle ters düşen ve zamanla ayrıışan yeni bir hizbin ortaya çıkmasına neden olmuştur. Bu iç ayrışma, Batılı misyonerlerin bölgedeki etkinliğiyle birlikte daha da derinleşmiş; cemaatin iç bütünlüğü zayıflarken, patriklik kurumu da yalnızca dinî değil aynı zamanda siyasî bir aktöre evrilmiştir. Sonuç olarak bu makale, Nesturî Patrikliğini merkeze alarak yerel otorite arayışları, dış müdahaleler ve topluluk içi iktidar mücadeleleri arasındaki ilişkileri bütüncül bir bakışla değerlendirmek; böylece Nesturî tarihine dair Osmanlı kaynaklarına dayalı yeni bir katkı sunmaktadır.

### Anahtar Kelimeler

Dinler Tarihi, Hakkari, Nesturi Kilisesi, Nemrud Efendi, Mar Şem'un

## Öne Çıkanlar

- Bu çalışma, Nesturî tarihini misyoner anlatıları yerine Osmanlı arşiv belgelerine yaslayarak imparatorluğun dinî çeşitliliği nasıl yönettiğini yeni bir bakışla ortaya koyuyor.
- İstanbul yönetimi, Koçanis Patrikhanesi'ni maaş ve nişanla ödüllendirirken aynı anda gözetim altında tutarak topluluk üzerindeki denetimini pekiştirdi.
- Mar Şem'un Ruel ve Mar Şem'un Bünyamin'in geleneksel otoritesi, iç dinamikler ve dış aktörler tarafından zayıflatılmıştır.
- Patrikhane ile Nemrud Efendi arasındaki rekabet, Nesturî topluluğunun dini birlikteliğini derinden sarsan bir kırılma yaratmıştır.

## Atıf Bilgisi

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## Introduction

The late 19th and early 20th centuries marked a significant transformation in the religious and ethnic composition of the Hakkâri region within the Ottoman Empire. Central to these changes was the Nestorian Patriarchate,<sup>1</sup> which, for centuries, had served as both a religious institution and a socio-political authority. However, by the late 19th century, this authority began to weaken due to internal divisions, the Ottoman Empire's efforts to consolidate its central authority, and the increasing influence of Western powers. These developments profoundly reshaped the region's political and religious dynamics.

The Tanzimat reforms sought to modernize the Ottoman Empire by standardizing governance and promoting equality among its diverse populations. While policies such as the *Hatt-ı Hümayun* of 1856 promised legal equality for religious minorities, implementation often reinforced state control over their leadership. For Christian communities, including the Assyrians, these reforms were accompanied by rewards (e.g., insignias/*nishans*) and coercion, including the suppression of uprisings, such as the Bedir Khan operations of the 1840s. This duality defined the empire's relationship with the Nestorian Patriarchate, as it sought to balance loyalty and control amidst growing foreign intervention.<sup>2</sup>

The Ottoman Empire closely monitored the activities of the Nestorian Patriarchate as part of its reforms aimed at strengthening control over Christian minorities.<sup>3</sup> Simultaneously, Western missionary activities introduced external influences, complicating Ottoman efforts to regulate the Patriarchate. Drawing on Ottoman archival sources, this article examines the Nestorian Patriarchate's political and religious transformations during this period, analyzing its leadership structure, internal conflicts, and interactions with Ottoman state policies and missionary initiatives.

Three key figures—Mar Shimun Ruel (1861–1903), Mar Shimun Benyamin (1903–1918), and Nimrod Effendi (d. 1915)—demonstrate the challenges faced by the Nestorian community in navigating these complexities. Mar Shimun Ruel's interactions with Western missionaries and foreign states, revealed in intercepted letters from 1891 and 1892, intensified Ottoman suspicions, leading to his brief arrest in 1893. However, the state's pragmatic approach resulted in his pardon and the granting of a salary and insignia (*nishan*), illustrating Ottoman strategies to balance control and cooperation. Meanwhile, internal rivalries, particularly between Mar Shimun Ruel and his cousin Nimrod Effendi, split the community into competing factions, further undermining its cohesion.

The analysis also situates the Nestorian Patriarchate within the broader context of regional tensions, including the intensification of the Armenian Question. Fearing a similar

<sup>1</sup> Christians who continued the traditional Eastern Church line were officially defined as Nestorians by the Ottoman Empire. Therefore, the Qudshani Patriarchate was also called the Nestorian Patriarchate in the official correspondence of the Ottoman Empire. The patriarchs of Qudshani also used the names "Nestorian Patriarch" or "Nesturi Reis-i Ruhanisi" (Nestorian Spiritual Leader) in official correspondence. Throughout this article, the term "Nestorian" is used to reflect its historical usage in Ottoman and missionary records. However, it is important to note that the community refers to itself as Assyrian, and the term "Nestorian" is considered outdated and pejorative in modern scholarship. Authors respect contemporary sensibilities.

<sup>2</sup> Selim Deringil, *The Well-Protected Domains: Ideology and the Legitimation of Power in the Ottoman Empire 1876-1909*. New edition (London: I.B. Tauris, 2011), 9.

<sup>3</sup> For details see: İbrahim Özcoşar – Mehmet Sabri Deniz, "Hakkâri Nesturilerin Osmanlı Merkez Otoritesi ile İlişkileri", *Kadim Akademi SBD*, 5/2 (2021), 84-108.

“Nestorian Question,” the Ottoman administration sought to limit the Patriarchate’s foreign contacts and relied on figures like Nimrod Effendi to balance internal power dynamics. Additionally, the Chaldean Catholic Church’s efforts to expand among the Nestorians, often with the support of Nimrod Effendi, introduced further religious and social complexities.

This article examines the challenges faced by the Nestorian community, its transformations, and the interaction of internal and external dynamics during this period. These developments, within the context of late Ottoman religious and ethnic policies, illuminate the complexities of regional governance and international competition in the empire’s eastern provinces.

Academic research on the Nestorian community in Turkey has focused on two primary areas: religious history and socio-political context. Numerous studies have examined the socio-political situation<sup>4</sup> and history<sup>5</sup> of the Nestorians in the 19th century, providing brief insights into their religious tradition and focusing on interactions with missionaries, the Ottoman Empire, and the Kurds.

This study will concentrate on the conflicts among Nestorians in the Hakkari region between the mid-19th and early 20th centuries, as well as their representation in Ottoman sources. A complex history of religious and political interactions marks the relationship between the Nestorian Patriarchate and the Ottoman Empire. Studies on this subject have generally focused on examining the Ottoman State’s policies toward Christian minorities and their impact on ethnic and religious identities. The works of Western travelers and missionaries such as J. Perkins, A. Grant, W. Ainsworth, W.A. Wigram, J.H. Shedd, F.N. Heazell, and H. Browne provide important sources for understanding the relations between the Nestorians and Ottoman rule. In particular, these works illuminate the religious and political dynamics of the Nestorian Patriarchate in the 19th century. However, most of these works reflect a Western perspective, thereby underrepresenting the Ottoman State’s perspective.

Ottoman archival documents serve as a crucial resource to address this gap. These documents offer essential insights into how the state viewed the Nestorian Patriarchate, attempted to exert control over it, and enacted policies designed to regulate the

<sup>4</sup> Some studies that address socio-political aspects: Arvas, Tarık Ziya. *Hakkâri Nasturileri* (1836-1936). Yüksek Lisans Tezi. Van Yüzüncü Yıl Üniversitesi, Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü, 2010; Dalyan, Murat Gökhan. 19. Yüzyıl’da Nasturiler (İdari Sosyal Yapı ve Siyasi İlişkileri). Doktora Tezi, Süleyman Demirel Üniversitesi, Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü, 2009; Altan, Mehmet. *Türkiye’de Nesturiler: Tarihsel ve Sosyolojik Bir İnceleme*. Yüksek Lisans Tezi, İstanbul Üniversitesi, Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü, 2007; Çelik, Mehmet. *Osmanlı Döneminde Nesturiler ve Osmanlı-Nesturi İlişkileri* (19. Yüzyıl). Doktora Tezi, Ankara Üniversitesi, Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü, 1998; Satılmış, Selahattin. *I. Dünya Savaşı Öncesinde Nesturiler and Misyonerlik Faaliyetleri*. Balıkesir Üniversitesi, Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü, Undergraduate Master’s Thesis, 2006; Süleyman Hayrullah Çetin, *Türkiye’de Nasturi Hareketleri*(1830-1926). Ankara Üniversitesi Türk İnkılâp Tarihi Enstitüsü, Yüksek Lisans Tezi, Ankara; Emel Demir Görür. “Hakkâri Sancağı’nda Nasturi Olayları (1896-1897)”. *Tarih İncelemeleri Dergisi* XXXIV/2 (2019), 475-506. DOI: 10.18513/egetid.661583; Karabalık, Kamuran. “Hakkâri Sancağı’nda Nasturi Sorununun Başlaması Ve Birinci Dünya Savaşı’nda Nasturi Olayları”. *Gazi Akademik Bakış* 16/32 (Haziran 2023), 43-64. <https://doi.org/10.19060/gav.1315034>.

<sup>5</sup> Major works addressing the history of religions: Albayrak, Kadir. *Keldanîler ve Nasturîler*. Ankara: Vadi Yayınları, 1997; Fortacı, Talha. *Doğuşundan Günümüze Nesturi Kilisesi*. Ankara, EskiYeni Yayınları, 2020; Kaplan, Yaşar. *Doğu Hristiyanları, Nesturiler: Tarih, İnanç, Ritüel*. İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2023.

community. Nonetheless, further research is necessary to understand the complexity of the Ottoman state's policies toward Christian minorities and their effects on the Nestorian community. This article enhances the existing literature by reexamining the Nestorian Patriarchate's relationships with the Ottoman Empire, particularly through its connections with Western missionaries and internal dynamics.

Studies on the socio-political aspects of the Nestorians have often overlooked the dynamics of patriarchal succession and internal family conflicts. This article not only highlights this neglected area but also clarifies a common misunderstanding about the *nāṭar kursyā* (Syriac: ܢܬܪܟܪܝܐ, “guardian of the throne”) system, which governed the Church of the East. Originally an interim role managing church affairs between a patriarch's death and the election of his successor, by the late fifteenth century it had become a hereditary system, naming successors within the same family. Disputes within these families were not only internal but also exploited by Western powers for their own political gain. In this context, W.A. Wigram's *The Cradle of Mankind*<sup>6</sup> provides a useful example: he criticizes the hereditary election of child-patriarchs and blames interference from the Ottoman state. However, archival records show that the Ottoman authorities typically didn't intervene, instead allowing church authorities to handle these matters. In reality, the Anglican establishment—especially the Archbishopric of Canterbury, which Wigram was part of—played a major role in patriarchal elections. This new perspective questions existing assumptions and also situates family disputes within broader geopolitical conflicts driven by European interests.

### 1. Mar Shimun Ruel XVI (1861-1903) and his Patriarchate

Ruel was the son of Benjamin, the brother of Patriarch Abraham (1820-1861). While Abraham was alive, he consecrated himself as a patriarchal candidate by the succession procedure. He became patriarch at a young age. On 22 July 1861, the Ottoman authorities were informed of the death of his uncle Abraham and his election as patriarch.<sup>7</sup> Ruel stands out as the Nestorian patriarch who has the most contact with foreign missionaries. In response to the activities of foreign missionaries in the region, the patriarch's interactions with them, the conflicts between Kurds and Nestorians, and the escalating Armenian issues following the Treaty of Berlin, the Ottoman Empire implemented various measures to avert the emergence of a Nestorian Question. In this context, some changes were made to the administrative structure to ensure central authority in Hakkâri,<sup>8</sup> the patriarch was paid a salary and awarded various insignia (*nishan*).<sup>9</sup> However, despite all this, the Ottoman authorities' interception of some of Ruel's correspondence made him even more suspicious in the eyes of the Ottoman Empire.

According to the letter from the Van Vilayet in March 1891, some documents sent to Mar Shimun by the Armenians of Urmia were seized at the Iranian-Ottoman border

<sup>6</sup> W.A. Wigram, *The Cradle of Mankind: Life in Eastern Kurdistan* (London: A. & C. Black, 1914), 267-268.

<sup>7</sup> Başbakanlık Osmanlı Arşivi (BOA), *İrade, Dahiliye [İ.DH]*, No. 481, Gömlek No. 32405.

<sup>8</sup> On 24 August 1886, Mar Shem'un Ruel complained that Sheikh Hamid, a member of the Albaq administration, had wronged them by placing his men in government offices. See BOA, *Dahiliye Nezâreti Mektubî Kalemi [DH.MKT]*, No. 1361, Gömlek No. 178.

<sup>9</sup> BOA, *İ.DH*, No. 1241, Gömlek No. 97203; BOA, *İrade Taltifat [İ.TAL]*, No. 102, Gömlek No. 16.

(Bajêrge/Esendere).<sup>10</sup> Also, in September 1892, letters he wrote and sent to some Nestorian lords were intercepted. The patriarch's uncle Nimrod translated these letters into Turkish and sent them to Sublime Porte (Bâbiâli) by the Governor of Van, Bahri Bey.<sup>11</sup> Even though Mar Shimun denied that the letter was his, it was confirmed due to the investigation.<sup>12</sup> The local administration acted cautiously since Albaq (Başkale) was the center of the sanjak of Hakkâri, and the forcible capture of Ruel was expected to result in adverse consequences. Mar Shimun was angered when Ismail, the Malik of Tyari, came to the governor and obeyed the government's orders. The patriarch went to Tyari, expelled Malik Ismail from the village, and excommunicated him. Malik Ismail, angered by this situation, handed the government authorities an English letter sent to him by an English missionary in Qudshanis on 15 September 1892.<sup>13</sup> In January 1893, even before Mar Shimun was arrested and put on trial, a letter he had written a few years earlier, this time intended for Russia, was intercepted. In the letter, it was understood that he requested to enter the protection of the Russian State.<sup>14</sup> Mar Shimun Ruel, who was in a tough situation after all this, informed the government authorities that he was coming to Albaq to be tried and surrendered in July.<sup>15</sup> Upon his arrival in Albaq, the patriarch wanted to distribute money to the Ottoman soldiers to dispel the suspicions against him.<sup>16</sup>

It is understood that the patriarch was attempting to gain influence in the context of Armenian events with Russia, which increased its presence in the region, especially after the War of 93 (1877-1878 Ottoman-Russian War). The Ottoman Empire did not deem it appropriate to punish the patriarch due to the circumstances and instead issued various warnings. On 15 July 1893, the patriarch sent a telegram<sup>17</sup> requesting his pardon; on 18 July 1893, he was pardoned for this time<sup>18</sup> and was rewarded with a salary and an insignia to ensure his loyalty to the state.<sup>19</sup>

The Governor of Van, Bahri Bey, took an interest in the Nestorians and especially monitored the activities of Mar Shimun Ruel. But despite all this, the patriarch continued his relations with the Russians and the British. In June 1894, the government intercepted letters sent to Mar Shimun Ruel by four Nestorians in London.<sup>20</sup> Under pressure from the Van governorate, the patriarch sent a letter to the Bishop of Canterbury in England, requesting the British government's intervention with the Ottoman Empire to change the situation. In the letter he sent in September 1894, he requested the dispatch of a Nestorian deputy to Istanbul and that Mar Shimun be permitted to communicate directly with the

<sup>10</sup> BOA, *Yıldız Mütenevvi Maruzat Evrakı* [Y.MTV], No. 49, Gömlek No. 38, 1.

<sup>11</sup> BOA, *İrade Hususi* [İ.HUS], No. 4, Gömlek No. 16, 6. Bahri Bey served as governor of Van Province between 1892-1895 and closely followed the Armenian Question.

<sup>12</sup> BOA, *Bâb-ı Âli Evrak Odası* [BEO], No. 86, Gömlek No. 6446; BOA, *BEO*, No. 77, Gömlek No. 5731.

<sup>13</sup> BOA, Y.MTV, No. 69, Gömlek No. 77, 1.

<sup>14</sup> BOA, Y.MTV, No. 73, Gömlek No. 195, 2; BOA, *BEO*, No. 132, Gömlek No. 19868, 2; BOA, *Yıldız Sadaret Hususi Maruzat Evrakı* [Y.A.HUS], No. 278, Gömlek No. 16, 2.

<sup>15</sup> BOA, Y.A.HUS, No. 275, Gömlek No. 119, 1; BOA, Y.A.HUS, No. 278, Gömlek No. 16, 2.

<sup>16</sup> BOA, Y.MTV, No. 72, Gömlek No. 10.

<sup>17</sup> BOA, Y.A.HUS, No. 278, Gömlek No. 32, 2.

<sup>18</sup> BOA, *BEO*, No. 251, Gömlek No. 18751; BOA, Y.A.HUS, No. 278, Gömlek No. 32, 1.

<sup>19</sup> BOA, *Sadaret Mektubi Mühimme Kalemi Evrakı* [A.MKT.MHM], No. 669, Gömlek No. 5; BOA, A.MKT.MHM, No. 669, Gömlek No. 3.

<sup>20</sup> BOA, *BEO*, No. 420, Gömlek No. 31433.

Porte. The issues addressed in the letter are summarized as follows: The governor's (Bahri Bey) style of administration undermines Mar Shimun's position and weakens his church and community. While Mar Shimun has typically dealt with the problems of the Nestorian community, this duty has been entrusted to Nimrod, who openly opposes him. Nimrod is being supported, and this has led to unpleasant incidents. Recently, the local council members<sup>21</sup> have been appointed, not by the patriarch as in the past but by the subordinates of the local authorities. Mar Shimun has been put on the back burner and has not been paid his salary for eight months. In addition, Nimrod seized a load of wheat worth 80 gold coins and took it into his possession, resulting in financial losses for the patriarch.<sup>22</sup>

Britain informed the Ottoman government about the patriarch's demands, and the government requested that Bahri Bey evaluate them. Bahri Bey replied: "Since the Nestorians do not have an assembly of clergy and their religious affairs are managed by Mar Shimun, the head of the nation, through the relevant clergy, we have not interfered in the elections of the Assembly of Clergy."<sup>23</sup> The governor stated that no one interfered in Mar Shimun's religious affairs, but he was not allowed to be involved in politics. Bahri Bey stated that Nimrod Effendi was a loyal man to the state and that he and Malik Ismail, the head of the Tyari tribe, had been won over to the Ottoman cause by Ali Riza Bey, the governor of Hakkari. Accordingly, the Nestorians Ruel was the son of Benjamin, the brother of Patriarch Abraham (1820-1861). While Abraham was alive, he consecrated himself as a patriarchal candidate by the succession procedure. He became patriarch at a young age. On 22 July 1861, the Ottoman authorities were informed of the death of his uncle Abraham and his election as patriarch.<sup>24</sup>

As it is understood from all these documents, the Ottoman Empire feared the emergence of a Nestorian Issue like the Armenian Issue<sup>25</sup> due to the increase in Armenian incidents in the region (1895-1896). To prevent this, the Ottoman Empire aimed to sever Patriarch Ruel's ties with foreign states and sought to establish a balance within the Nestorian community through Nimrod Effendi.<sup>26</sup> Therefore, it allowed the Chaldean Church to expand into the Qudshanis, and with the help of Nimrod Effendi, Chaldean priests began to work among the Nestorians of Hakkari.

## 2. 19th Century Missionaries and the Eastern Church (Nestorian-Chaldean)

The Chaldean Catholic Church emerged as a distinct institution from the Church of the East in the 16th century, driven by theological disputes and the influence of Roman Catholic

<sup>21</sup> After the Tanzimat period, local assemblies were established in the provinces, and non-Muslims were also granted the right to participate.

<sup>22</sup> BOA, *A.MKT.MHM*, No. 533, Gömlek No. 19, 5.

<sup>23</sup> BOA, *A.MKT.MHM*, No. 533, Gömlek No. 19, 6.

<sup>24</sup> BOA, *İDH*, No. 481, Gömlek No. 32405.

<sup>25</sup> For the Ottoman Empire, the Armenian Question is the fact that the Ottoman Empire accepted to make reforms against the Armenians within the scope of the Treaty of Ayestefanos (Article 16) and the Treaty of Berlin (Article 611), and the situation ceased to be a domestic issue and became an international problem open to the interventions of Russia and Britain. The Armenian Question in the eyes of the Ottomans covers three periods (1880-1883), (1894-1897) and (1912-1914). See Münir Süreyya Bey, *Ermeni Meselesinin Siyasi Tarihçesi (1877-1914)* (Ankara: Devlet Arşivleri Genel Müdürlüğü, 2001).

<sup>26</sup> Nemrud Efendi was rewarded in 1893 for his past services for the Ottoman Empire. See BOA, *DH.MKT*, No. 16, Gömlek No. 49.

missionary efforts. Patriarch Yohannan Sulaqa (1553–1555) initiated this schism by aligning with the Catholic Church. Although the movement initially faced setbacks, French missionary support in the 17th and 18th centuries helped revive the Chaldean Church, particularly in Mosul and its surrounding areas. By the late 19th century, the Chaldean Church's close relationship with French missionaries and its growing influence among the Assyrians created significant tension with the Qudshanis Patriarchate. This rivalry, rooted in both doctrinal and political differences, exacerbated divisions within the Assyrian community, especially as the Chaldean Church sought to expand into Hakkâri with French backing.<sup>27</sup>

From the early 19th century onwards, Protestant and Orthodox missionaries began to work in the eastern Ottoman provinces, transforming the region into a zone of conflict over influence between Western powers. Among them, British missionaries played an important role. The locations of Urmia, Mosul, and Van, where Christians of the Eastern Church lived, were strategically important for Britain. The missionaries fought fiercely through newly established mission centers and consulates. In 1886, British missionaries established a center named “Archbishop of Canterbury’s Assyrian Mission” in Urmia. This center aimed at the education of Christians, the printing and distribution of books, and the establishment of good relations with the Nestorians. The British took a step forward by placing William Henry Browne<sup>28</sup> in Qudshanis. Browne worked in Qudshanis from 1886 until 1913.<sup>29</sup>

The British missionaries followed a different policy compared to other missionaries. Unlike the American missionaries who sought to convert the Nestorians to Protestantism, they attempted to establish influence over them by refraining from efforts to alter their sect.<sup>30</sup> The Russians worked on the Nestorians in the Urmia region and tried to spread the Orthodox sect among them. The Chaldean Church in Mosul was already affiliated with the Roman Catholic Church. Through its Lazarist and Dominican missionaries, France tried to Catholicize the Nestorians in the region and incorporate the Qudshanis Church into the Chaldean Church. In this context, a fierce rivalry emerged between the British and French missionaries and governments over the Christians of the Traditional Eastern Church in the Ottoman provinces of Mosul and Van. This also affected the Chaldean and Qudshanis patriarchates. Both sides struggled to expand their sphere of influence.

### 3. Nimrod Effendi and Mar Shimun Ruel

Nimrod was the son of Ruel’s uncle Isaac. He had brothers named Abraham (1862-1915), Shlimun, Shemul, and Awishalum. Since Isaac died, Mar Shimun took over the care of Nimrod and his brothers. Abraham was consecrated as a patriarchal candidate (Nazarite) in

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<sup>27</sup> Mar Aprem Mookan, *The History of the Assyrian Church of the East in the Twentieth Century* (Kottayam: St. Ephrem Ecumenical Research Institute, 2003).

<sup>28</sup> He is son of William Henry Browne (1800-1877), of Irish descent, Church of England clergyman. William Henry was educated at St John’s College, Cambridge (LL.B., 1870; LL.M., 1883), admitted to the Middle Temple in 1868, and ordained deacon in 1871 and priest in 1872. He joined the Archbishop’s Mission to Assyrian Christians in 1886 and, as an orientalist at the court of the Assyrian Patriarch, died in Turkey-in-Asia in 1913. See, W. R. Barrett, “Browne, William Henry (1800–1877)”, *Australian Dictionary of Biography* (Access 20 September 2024).

<sup>29</sup> See BOA, A.MKT.MHM, No. 489, Gömlek No. 25, 2 for the request of the Diocese of Canterbury to open a school in Kochanis with British teachers.

<sup>30</sup> Mookan, *The History of the Assyrian Church of the East in the Twentieth Century*, 69; Jelle Verheij, “Doğu Anadolu’da Batılı Seyyahlar 1800-1914. Açıklamalı Bibliyografya Denemesi”, *Kebikeç*, 44 (2017), 382.

1884. Nimrod and his brothers hoped that the patriarchate would pass to them after Ruel. However, the expected patriarchal candidate was his brother, Abraham. This did not happen later due to conflicts between the Patriarch and Nimrod and their inclination toward the Chaldean Catholic Church.<sup>31</sup>

Although Ruel's relations with the Ottoman Empire were not good, Nimrod was seen as an intelligent and trustworthy person, and his command of Turkish, Kurdish, and Syriac languages helped local rulers to bring him to the forefront. Especially Bahri Bey, the governor of Van, protected Nimrod and entrusted him with tasks related to the administration of the Nestorians. In January 1895, Nimrod Effendi, who was a member of the administrative council with Mattran Ishaq of Shemdinli (Nochiya), was allocated a salary.<sup>32</sup> In addition to being a member of the Hakkâri council, Nimrod Effendi also served as the head of the Bidayet Court.<sup>33</sup> Nimrod Effendi had also established good relations with Kurdish notables, and his house was constantly overflowing with guests. He became more prominent than Ruel, and his help was sought to solve social problems.<sup>34</sup> This led to conflicts among Nestorians, resulting in two factions: the "Supporters of Mar Shimun" and the "Supporters of Nimrod". As a result, the Chaldean Catholic priests supported by Nimrod began to increase their activities among the Nestorians.<sup>35</sup> Indeed, in 1902, Heazell informed the Archbishop of Canterbury that the villages in the Bahdinan region, which previously belonged to the Qudshanis Church, primarily aligned with the Chaldean Church. He noted that the Dominican missionaries provided a good education, and the Christians who had converted to the Chaldean Church were satisfied with the situation.<sup>36</sup> In this situation, the Chaldean Church accelerated its efforts to expand its borders to the north, primarily through Nimrod Effendi.

Towards the end of the 19th century, the Ruel-Nimrod rivalry evolved into an Anglo-French missionary rivalry. In 1898, a Catholic missionary Per de Frans, was sent to Hakkâri and its surrounding areas.<sup>37</sup> Since the French Catholics were very hopeful of gaining supporters among the Nestorians by using Nimrod's influence, they opened a mission in Van and directed their activities from there.<sup>38</sup> Mar Shimun and the British were very disturbed by this situation. In April 1899, a priest from Tyari and a follower of Mar Shimun reported that Nimrod and the French consul in Van were giving out money to the local population to convert them to Catholicism.<sup>39</sup> According to the complaint, Nimrod Effendi was inclined towards Catholicism, was in contact with the French consulate, and had his

<sup>31</sup> Mar Eliya Abuna, *Tarihu Betariket'il- Bayti Abawi*, trans. Benjamin Haddad (Duhok: Dar'ul- Mashrik'is- Sakafi, 2008), 135-136.

<sup>32</sup> BOA, *DH.MKT*, No. 337, Gömlek No. 73, 1.

<sup>33</sup> BOA, *DH.MKT*, No. 16, Gömlek No. 49.

<sup>34</sup> BOA, *Dahiliye Nezareti Şifre Evrakı [DH.ŞFR]*, No. 194, Gömlek No. 42.

<sup>35</sup> Mar Eliya *Tarihu Betariketi*, 135-138.

<sup>36</sup> Francis Nicholson Heazell - David S. Margoliouth (eds.), *Kurds and Christians*. (London: Wells Gardner, Darton and Co., Ltd., 1913), 151-152.

<sup>37</sup> BOA, *Yıldız Perakende Evrakı Askerî Maruzât [Y.PRK.ASK]*, No. 144, Gömlek No. 84; BOA, *A.MKT.MHM*, No. 642, Gömlek No. 2. In the salnames of this date and later, it is understood that many priests affiliated with the Catholic Chaldean Church served in Van, Hakkari, Urmiye, Salmas, Geve, etc. See, Canan Seyfeli, "Keldani Patrikliğinin İdaresi ve Osmanlı Devlet Salnameleri", *Sosyal Bilimler Araştırma Dergisi* 32/2 (Güz 2018), 111-117.

<sup>38</sup> Mar Eliya, *Tarihu Betariketi*, 143.

<sup>39</sup> BOA, *Dahiliye Nezareti Tesri-i Muamelât [DH.TMİK.M]*, No. 67, Gömlek No.72, 3.

name stamped on the correspondence.<sup>40</sup> The British and French governments began to make various attempts to support Nestorian groups that aligned with them before the Ottoman Empire. The British also decided to move their mission in Urmia to Van.

Nimrod relocated to Mosul with his followers to join the Chaldean Catholic Church. The situation was reported to the government authorities upon their application to the Chaldean Church in Mosul. On 6 March 1903, the Mosul province sent a letter stating that Nimrod arrived in Mosul with around forty to fifty men. They were guests at the Chaldean Catholic Patriarchate and expressed a desire to convert to the Chaldean Church.<sup>41</sup> The province drew attention to the fact that the Nestorians had been under British influence for a long time and that if they now switched to the Chaldean Church, they would be under French influence. Sublime Porte reported the situation to the Van province, which replied on 22 March 1903: “Nimrod is the son of Patriarch Mar Shimun’s uncle. He resides in the village of Qudshanis in the Hakkari Sanjak district, where Mar Shimun also resides. He is an intelligent man and loyal to the government. He has long been known as a Catholic in opposition to Mar Shimun. There are already many Nestorians who have converted to Catholicism. It was heard that he was going to the Chaldean patriarch in Mosul to fulfill (complete) his sectarian desire.”<sup>42</sup> This did not seem to cause any alarm in the Van province. Nonetheless, a recent development altered the circumstances, hindered Nimrod’s plans, and allowed the British missionaries to finalize the patriarch election.

#### 4. Death of Patriarch Mar Shimun Ruel and New Patriarchal Election

Shortly after Nimrod and his companions left Qudshanis for the Chaldean Church of Mosul, the patriarch Mar Ruel consecrated his nephew, sixteen-year-old Benjamin, as bishop on 15 March 1903 and later chose him as a patriarchal candidate (nāṭar kursyā).<sup>43</sup> Nimrod’s brother Abraham, who had been selected as a patriarchal candidate, was still in Qudshanis at the time. This meant that he was now out of favor. On 29 March, while Nimrod and his friends were in Mosul, Mar Shimun Ruel died.<sup>44</sup> The governor of Van, Tahir Pasha,<sup>45</sup> informed Sublime Porte of Mar Shimun Ruel’s death in a telegram on 1 April 1903.<sup>46</sup> Mar Eliya Abuna mentioned that the governor of Van was requested to direct the district governor of Shemdinli to send Mattran to Qudshanis, as his presence was crucial for the election and consecration of Benjamin as the new patriarch. Nimrod, who was aware of the situation, was caught quite unprepared. Abuna recorded the feelings of the Nimrod family at that moment as follows: “I wish we were in Qudshanis today; the Patriarchate would be ours without a doubt.”<sup>47</sup> According to Abuna, the governor of Van learned from Nimrod’s letter that Nimrod was a Catholic and became angry, saying, “Why are they interfering in

<sup>40</sup> BOA, DH.ŞFR, No. 257, Gömlek No. 100.

<sup>41</sup> BOA, DH.TMİK.M, No. 140, Gömlek No. 52, 2.

<sup>42</sup> BOA, DH.TMİK.M, No. 140, Gömlek No. 52, 5.

<sup>43</sup> Different dates are given for Benjamin’s consecration as bishop by his uncle, such as 1 March and 15 March, but in any case, shortly before Ruel’s death. See Mar Shimun Theodore, *The History of the Patriarchal Succession of the d’Mar Shimun Family* (USA: Xlibris Us, 2008), 43; Mookken, *The History*, 73.

<sup>44</sup> Heazell, *Kurds and Christians*, 158-162; Ruel died on March 29. See Mookken, *The History*, 74. Although sources are reporting that he died on March 16, this does not seem accurate. See Mar Shimun Theodore, *The History of the Patriarchal Succession*, 43; Solhkhah, *The Assyrian Martyr*, 1.

<sup>45</sup> Tahir Pasha of Iskodra was governor of Van Province between 1898 and 1906.

<sup>46</sup> BOA, DH.ŞFR, No. 304, Gömlek No. 14; BOA, DH.MKT, No. 681, Gömlek No. 32, 1.

<sup>47</sup> Mar Eliya, *Tarihu Betariketi*, 143.

the election of the Nestorian patriarch if they are of a different sect". The governor ordered that the procedures for the election of a new patriarch be completed expeditiously so that Nimrod's request would not be realized.<sup>48</sup>

The previous patriarch, Ruel, had passed away on 29 March, and the election results were officially communicated a few days later. However, it's unclear if the Mattran of Shemdinli, a crucial figure in the consecration ceremony, was present in Qudshanis at the time of the election.

British missionaries reported that the Mattran of Shemdinli only arrived on 10 April, and Benyamin was formally consecrated as the new patriarch on 12 April.<sup>49</sup> On 16 April, the Mattran sent a telegram to the Ottoman Ministry of Interior, co-signed by 31 clergy members, confirming that Benyamin had been unanimously chosen on 13 April and was now known as Mar Shimun Benyamin.<sup>50</sup>

Although the consecration took place on 12 or 13 April, a telegram from Julamerik, dated 3 April 1903, informed the Ottoman authorities that Benyamin had been elected as the new Nestorian patriarch.<sup>51</sup>

The correspondence from the governor of Van indicates that, even before Ruel's death, he was aware of Nimrod's long-standing affiliation with Catholicism. The newly elected patriarch was merely a 16-year-old boy. Under typical circumstances, Nimrod's brother, Mattran Abraham, who was present in Qudshanis, would have been the one elected. However, to prevent the new patriarch from aligning with the Catholics, the British took advantage of Nimrod's absence, using their influence over Governor Tahir Pasha of Van to swiftly elect their candidate. As we will see in subsequent correspondence, the province of Van played a crucial role in rejecting all objections raised by Nimrod and the Chaldean Patriarchate against the Sublime Porte.

On 4 April 1903, the Mosul province informed the Sublime Porte that Mattran Abraham, brother of Nimrod and a candidate for patriarchate, had arrived from Hakkari and joined a group converting to the Chaldean Church. It was stated that the Patriarch's death would trigger a sect change among the Nestorians and that the Nestorians becoming Chaldeans would save them from being pro-British, but this time it would make them pro-French.<sup>52</sup> The province needed to report the new situation to Sublime Porte and act accordingly. On 16 April, the Sublime Porte sent a letter to the provinces of Van and Mosul, stating that individuals in the Ottoman Empire were free to change sects. However, the government would never permit an entire tribe to change sects collectively.<sup>53</sup>

Both provinces stated in their correspondence with Sublime Porte that the patriarchate was the right of Mattran Abraham, Nimrod's brother. However, given the potential for

<sup>48</sup> Mar Eliya, *Tarihu Betariketi*, 141- 142.

<sup>49</sup> Heazell, *Kurds and Christians*, 165.

<sup>50</sup> BOA, *DH.TMİK.M*, No. 140, Gömlek No. 52, 14.

<sup>51</sup> "... Vefat eden Mar Şem'un'un yerine biraderzadesi Benyamin Efendi'nin intihab edildiğine dair Colemerk'ten huzur-u sami-i cenabı vekaletpenahilerine bi't-takdim mazrufen irsal buyurulan 21 Mart 1319 [3 Nisan 1903] tarihli telgrafname üzerine (...Upon the telegram dated March 21, 1319 [April 3, 1903], which was sent from Colemerk, stating that his brother Benyamin Efendi was elected to replace the deceased Mar Shem'un .....) See BOA, *BEO*, No. 2077, Gömlek No. 155711, 2.

<sup>52</sup> BOA, *DH.TMİK.M*, No. 140, Gömlek No. 52, 6.

<sup>53</sup> BOA, *DH.TMİK.M*, No. 140, Gömlek No. 52, 4.

increased conversion to Catholicism among the Nestorians following the patriarch's death, and considering that those previously under British influence might shift toward French influence, a mass conversion was ultimately averted to prevent any negative repercussions.<sup>54</sup> Nimrod, who was not allowed to convert to the Chaldean Church, left Mosul at the end of April.<sup>55</sup>

Following the election of Benyamin as patriarch, the Nestorian community submitted numerous petitions—supporters of Nimrod—as well as by representatives of the Chaldean Catholic Diocese of Mosul. These applications called for the annulment of the election on the grounds that established procedures had not conducted the electoral process. The petition of objection submitted by the Chaldean Patriarch to the Ministry of Interior on 14 June is quite important. Accordingly, referring to the fact that fourteen years ago, it was stated that Nestorians could leave their sect and convert to the Orthodox sect patronized by the Russians, the Protestant sect patronized by the British, and the Catholic sect patronized by the French, it was stated that while these sects were under the patronage of foreign states, only the Chaldean Catholic Diocese was directly under the Ottoman Empire. Because of this and the fact that the prominent sect of the Nestorians was Chaldean Catholic, it was claimed that it would be more favorable for the state's policy if they converted to this sect. It was objected that local administrators prevented Nestorians from converting to the Chaldean sect when they should have paved the way.<sup>56</sup>

Among the notable Nestorians in Hakkâri, Berkhove, the leader of the Dez tribe, along with twenty of his companions and the deputy of the Tkhuma tribe, expressed concerns that the patriarchal election had not been conducted properly. They argued that a 16-year-old boy was unsuitable to serve as Mar Shimun. They requested that either the Nestorian patriarchate be transferred to the Chaldean Catholic Patriarch or that Nimrod Effendi's brother be appointed as patriarch.<sup>57</sup> However, all these objections and requests were rejected based on the statement from the Van province that Mar Shimun Benyamin was accepted among the Nestorians beyond any doubt.<sup>58</sup>

Having to accept the loss of the patriarchate, Nimrod and the Chaldean Diocese intensified their activities among the Nestorians.<sup>59</sup> On 18 July, Nimrod arrived in Van and met with the governor. During their meeting, he explained that he had converted to the Catholic faith at the request of Bahri Pasha, the former governor of Van. Nimrod also expressed his frustration that Benyamin, still a child, had been elected patriarch, thereby disrupting his own future, as he believed his brother should have assumed the patriarchal position.<sup>60</sup> From this, it is understood that Nimrod was given various promises to be a counterbalance against the British during the Bahri Bey period. However, the new governor of Van, Tahir Pasha, upset this balance in favor of the British missionaries. The priests in the Chaldean Diocese of Mosul assigned to care for the Chaldeans' religious affairs in Van

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<sup>54</sup> BOA, *BEO*, No. 2051, Gömlek No. 153803.

<sup>55</sup> BOA, *BEO*, No. 2061, Gömlek No. 154503, 1.

<sup>56</sup> BOA, *DH.TMİK.M*, No. 140, Gömlek No. 52, 20.

<sup>57</sup> BOA, *DH.TMİK.M*, No. 159, Gömlek No. 22, 1; BOA, *DH.TMİK.M*, No. 140, Gömlek No. 52, 11; BOA, *BEO*, No. 2164, Gömlek No. 162293.

<sup>58</sup> BOA, *BEO*, No. 2183, Gömlek No. 163589; BOA, *DH.TMİK.M*, No. 159, Gömlek No. 22, 2.

<sup>59</sup> Mar Eliya, *Tarihu Betariketi*, 143.

<sup>60</sup> BOA, *DH.TMİK.M*, No. 140, Gömlek No. 52, 26.

and Julamerk (Hakkari) were not allowed to work. According to Tahir Pasha's report to the Sublime Porte, there were no Catholics in the province. Although Nimrod Effendi had converted to Catholicism, he had lost the people's support, as the Nestorians now viewed him as an apostate. Describing him as a man with malicious intent, the report recommended that he be removed from the region by assigning him to a suitable post elsewhere.<sup>61</sup>

It was reported that Nimrod, along with Catholic priests and the French missionary Per de Frans, was engaging in extensive activities among the Nestorians. This was causing conflict within the Nestorian community. As a result, there was a request for the removal of these priests and the urgent reassignment of Nimrod from the region.<sup>62</sup> Nimrod Effendi was appointed deputy governor of the Genç Sanjak in the province of Diyarbakır, but he did not take up this post.<sup>63</sup> According to the provincial report, a French priest who visited Nimrod attempted to sow distrust among the Nestorians. However, Mar Shimun Benyamin remained loyal to the government's directives. Since his election, he has demonstrated his allegiance by sending his brother to engage with the Nestorian tribes. To prevent Nimrod from leveraging the delayed payment of the patriarch's salary for his advantage, it is crucial to expedite the payment.<sup>64</sup>

Upon the attempt to remove these priests, because there were no Catholics in Hakkâri, the French consulate intervened and objected as to why Browne was not removed from the region even though he had been there for 13 years. In response, it was stated that Browne did not interfere in the affairs of the Nestorians and did not conduct any activities to convert them.<sup>65</sup> The Governor Tahir Pasha insisted that since no Chaldean Catholics were in the region, these officials should be removed. However, in the provincial correspondence before the death of Patriarch Ruel and the beginning of the patriarchal debates, it was stated that there were many Chaldean Catholics among the Nestorians in the province. This correspondence indicates that the Chaldean Catholic Diocese ordained numerous priests. According to information received from Khuri Hormizd, who was in charge of Chaldean Catholic religious affairs in Van, it was reported that there were 3300 Chaldean Catholics in the province.<sup>66</sup> It is understood from the *salnames*<sup>67</sup> that Chaldean priests have worked here since 1899.<sup>68</sup>

Over time, the tone of the statements against Nimrod began to shift. Initially praised as a clever and loyal servant of the state, he came to be portrayed as a corrupting influence with a sinister mind. However, with the intervention of Sheikh Hamid Pasha of Albaq (Başkale), a reconciliation was achieved between Nimrod and Mar Shimun Benyamin, leading to a calmer and more peaceful atmosphere in the region.<sup>69</sup> Thus, there was no longer any controversy among the Nestorians regarding Benyamin's patriarchate.<sup>70</sup>

<sup>61</sup> BOA, *DH.TMİK.M*, No. 140, Gömlek No. 52, 26; BOA, *BEO*, No. 2129, Gömlek No. 159672.

<sup>62</sup> BOA, *BEO*, No. 2125, Gömlek No. 159339; BOA, *DH.ŞFR*, No. 309, Gömlek No. 117.

<sup>63</sup> BOA, *BEO*, No. 2258, Gömlek No. 169341; BOA, *BEO*, No. 2266, Gömlek No. 169919; BOA, *BEO*, No. 2364, Gömlek No. 177275, 2.

<sup>64</sup> BOA, *BEO*, No. 2684, Gömlek No. 201252, 8.

<sup>65</sup> BOA, *DH.TMİK.M*, No. 159, Gömlek No. 22, 7.

<sup>66</sup> BOA, *DH.TMİK.M*, No. 140, Gömlek No. 52, 11.

<sup>67</sup> *Salname*: Official annals of the Ottoman Empire in the 19th century

<sup>68</sup> Seyfeli, "Keldani Patrikliğinin İdaresi", 111-117.

<sup>69</sup> BEO, *DH.ŞFR*, No. 313, Gömlek No. 127.

<sup>70</sup> BEO, *DH.TMİK.M*, No. 159, Gömlek No. 22, 3-4.

### 5. Mar Shimun Benyamin (1903-1918)

Benyamin, the son of Ruel's brother Eshai, was born in Qudshanis in 1887. Apart from his Nestorian religious education, he and his sister Surma were privately educated by the British missionary William Henry Browne (1846-1094). She took various lessons from Browne, especially in English. Upon his father's death in 1895, Benjamin, his sister Surma, and other patriarchal candidates Abraham and Yuna moved in with their uncle. On 2 March 1903, he was consecrated Mattran (archbishop) by his uncle Mar Ruel<sup>71</sup>, and he was later elected patriarch. After becoming patriarch, he encountered significant opposition from Nimrod and the Catholics. However, he overcame this challenge with assistance from the Archbishop of Canterbury in England and the Governor of Van Tahir Pasha. After the British missionaries made their candidate patriarch, Catholic missionaries and priests assigned by the Chaldean diocese carried out intensive activities for several years.<sup>72</sup> During this period, Benyamin and the British missionaries who supported him tried to act in harmony with the Ottoman authorities as much as possible to make the activities of the Catholics more visible and the authorities to take measures against them. The missionaries tried to reach the authorities, primarily through Mar Shimun and accused the Chaldean Catholic priests of attempting to corrupt the Nestorian sect and forcing them to convert.

The British embassy, recognizing Mar Shim'un's loyalty to the state, requested that he be honored with an insignia, granted a salary like other spiritual heads, and provided several officers for his entourage, as was the case with the previous patriarch.<sup>73</sup> These requests were promptly met, as the Sultan ordered the necessary procedures to be carried out.<sup>74</sup> Tahir Pasha, the governor of Van, sent a letter to the Porte stating that gendarmes were assigned to Mar Shimun's entourage. According to him, although Nimrod Effendi did not seem to be involved in any activities against Mar Shimun for the time being, he was urgently summoned to the center of Van with the order sent to his place. He stated that if Mar Shimun were given the promised salary and insignia, his loyalty to the state would be strengthened.<sup>75</sup>

Even though there was a delay in sending the salary and insignia, they were promptly delivered to Mar Shimun upon arrival in the province on 4 July 1905. During this period, Mar Shimun collected sixteen thousand kurush (pennies) from three Nestorian districts that had not paid taxes for fifteen years and forwarded the amount to Van. According to Governor Tahir Pasha, Mar Shimun's efforts demonstrated a commendable level of initiative and compliance with state interests, proving his willingness to serve under government directives.

Despite Mar Shimun's persistent demands for Nimrod's removal from the region, the governor decided against executing the removal order. He argued that transferring Nimrod to another province with an official post would not only fail to secure his cooperation but also risk elevating his status unnecessarily. The governor described Nimrod as a dreamer

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<sup>71</sup> Theodore, *The History*, 43. See Solhkhah, *The Assyrian*, 1; Mookan, *The History*, 73.

<sup>72</sup> Selahattin Satılmış, *I. Dünya Savaşı Öncesinde Nesturiler and Misyonerlik Faaliyetleri* (Balıkesir: Balıkesir Üniversitesi, Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü, Undergraduate Master's Thesis, 2006), 94-96.

<sup>73</sup> BOA, BEO, No. 2151, Gömlek No. 161296.

<sup>74</sup> BOA, İ.TAL, No. 321, Gömlek No. 64.

<sup>75</sup> BOA, BEO, No. 2393, Gömlek No. 179423, 3.

and a man with persuasive abilities. In his view, relocating Nimrod to Mosul and placing him under the Chaldean patriarchate would ease tensions, with the patriarchate readily assuming responsibility for his expenses.<sup>76</sup> However, in its letter to the Van Province, the Porte insisted that Nimrod be removed from the region through a civil service.<sup>77</sup>

Through its representative in the Porte, the Chaldean patriarchate of Mosul filed a complaint against Brown and his associates in Qudshanis. The complaint accused Browne of sowing discord between the Chaldeans and Mar Shimun. In response, the Porte requested a reply from the Van Province, which stated that the British missionary Browne was trying to preserve the sect of the Nestorians. In contrast, the priests sent by the Chaldean Catholic Church were trying to convert the Nestorians to Catholicism, which caused friction among the Nestorians, and these actions should be abandoned. In the article, Nimrod is accused of being in cahoots with Chaldean priests. At the same time, Browne is introduced and exonerated as a person who did not interfere with the sects of the Nestorians and devoted himself to their education and development.<sup>78</sup> Feeling the constant loss of ground in the dispute between Chaldeans and Nestorians, especially in the eyes of state authorities, the Chaldean Catholic Patriarchate felt the urgent need to send a long letter to the Ministry of Justice and Religious Affairs on 25 May 1906.

This letter, sent by Patriarch Emanuel Toma (1900-1947), pleads the following:

*“... The Chaldean community is one in gender and nationality. However, sect and lifestyle are divided into Chaldean and Nestorian. The Chaldeans live in the built-up areas, while the Nestorians live in tribes in the mountainous regions. The Nestorians in Zakho, Aqre, Zibar, and Imadiyya abandoned the Nestorian way of life and began to fulfill their responsibilities as obedient state citizens through the schools opened among them after they became Catholics. During our former Patriarch Eliya (1878-1894), some Nestorian dignitaries approached him and asked him to become Chaldeans. 17 years ago, the state allowed Nestorians to convert to the Chaldean sect. Since then, many Nestorians have converted to Chaldeanism. They abandoned their old way of life and became civilized. My predecessor, Patriarch ‘Abdyeshu’ (1894-1899), also continued these activities. Schools were opened in some of their villages, and clergymen were sent to provide religious services. When Browne, the head of the Protestant missionaries, saw that his efforts in Qudshanis for 20 years had been wasted due to the rapid spread of Chaldeanism among the Nestorians, he complained to us through Mar Shimun Benyamin, whom he had educated and raised since he was four or five years old and now made patriarch. According to the letter from Van, Browne is trying to preserve the ancient sect of the Nestorians. Is Browne, now an Englishman, leaving his homeland and residing in a village like Qudshanis, deprived of civilization, to preserve the ancient sect of the Nestorians? Please prevent the Governorate of Van from preventing the activities of the Chaldean Church in this matter.”<sup>79</sup>*

The policy of the Ottoman state authorities in favor of Mar Shimun Benyamin and Browne continued during the first term of Ali Rıza Pasha, who was appointed governor of Van after Tahir Pasha. He was forced to send a letter to the Porte in response to Mar Shimun’s insistent demands to remove Nimrod from the region. In the letter, it was stated

<sup>76</sup> BOA, BEO, No. 2614, Gömlek No. 196044, 2.

<sup>77</sup> BOA, BEO, No. 2424, Gömlek No. 181741.

<sup>78</sup> BOA, DH.TMİK.M, No. 195, Gömlek No. 33, 5, 7.

<sup>79</sup> BOA, DH.TMİK.M, No. 195, Gömlek No. 33, 8. The document's language has been simplified; the original is in the annexes.

that although Nimrod had been ordered to be sent to the Sanjak of Mazgird because of his disruptive behavior among the Nestorian population, the postponement of this assignment spoiled Nimrod and increased his disruptive behavior. The governor stated that he was informed by Mar Shimun that Nimrod had gone to Mosul this time and that he would accelerate his activities from there. According to the governor's statements, Nimrod Effendi had been brought to the center of Van by the former governor Tahir Pasha on 13 Kanuni Sani 1319 (26 January 1904) to go on the mission entrusted to him. However, when Nimrod assured the governor that he would not engage in the activities attributed to him, Governor Tahir Pasha allowed him to go to his district on 7 Teshrin-i Evvel 1320 (20 October 1904). According to Ali Pasha, Nimrod Effendi and Mar Shimun had been complaining about each other since then. Therefore, Nimrod Effendi should be removed from Hakkâri.<sup>80</sup>

During the administration of Ali Rıza Bey, the Governor of Van who succeeded Governor Tahir Pasha, the local authorities began focusing only on Catholic activities and noticing Browne's activities. In fact, in April 1907, it was reported that Browne had been in Hakkâri for 25 years, had gone to his hometown last year, was now back in the region, and was engaged in activities harmful to the state.<sup>81</sup> Years earlier, Governor Bahri Bey had also detailed Browne's activities in his letters to Sublime Porte.<sup>82</sup>

## 6. Nestorian Church's Counter-Move

During and for several years after Mar Shimun Benyamin's election as patriarch, the Chaldean Catholic Church carried out intensive activities among the Nestorians. With the recovery of the Nestorian patriarchate, the Chaldean Catholic Church began to counterattack by working within the borders of the Chaldean Catholic region of Mosul Province in 1907. Many Chaldean priests and religious officials converted to Nestorianism and came to Qudshanis.<sup>83</sup> Although the Chaldeans made various attempts before the government, no action was taken as this was seen as an individual conversion. However, these priests who converted to Nestorianism were not allowed to return to the Mosul region and carry out their activities because the Chaldeans strongly opposed them. This situation caused various negative consequences for the region. Indeed, Eliya Abuna and Gewargis Abuna, two of the priests who left the Chaldean center of Alqosh in 1908 and came to Qudshanis, wanted to return to their old region in 1910, but the Chaldeans objected to this. Eliya Abuna was forced to take refuge in the house of Nimrod Rassam, who served as an interpreter for the British Vice Consulate of Mosul.<sup>84</sup>

Realizing that they had gained many adherents among the Chaldeans, the British missionaries and the Nestorian patriarchate decided that conditions had become favorable

<sup>80</sup> BOA, BEO, No. 3106, Gömlek No. 232911.

<sup>81</sup> BOA, DH.TMİK.M, No. 242, Gömlek No. 22.

<sup>82</sup> BOA, A.MKT.MHM, No. 533, Gömlek No. 19, 6; BOA, Y.MTV, No. 108, Gömlek No. 22, 2; BOA, Yıldız Perakende Evrakı Umum Vilayetler Tahrirâtı [Y.PRK.UM], No. 30, Gömlek No. 10.

<sup>83</sup> Mar Eliya, *Tarihu Betariketi*, 144-146. On 4 October 1911, the Chaldeans in Mosul complained that Mar Shem'un was trying to relieve some Chaldean clerics from military service by granting them religious ranks. See BOA, BEO, No. 3945, Gömlek No. 295863.

<sup>84</sup> BOA, BEO, No. 3720, Gömlek No. 278957. A year earlier, Nimrud had been appointed as a member of the administrative council of Julamerik (Hakkari) to make peace between the Tyari tribe and the Berwari tribe. See BOA, DH.MKT, No. 2865, Gömlek No. 62; BOA, BEO, No. 3595, Gömlek No. 269595.

for missionary activities among the Chaldeans in the Mosul province. Despite their deliberations regarding the establishment of a station to facilitate more systematic activities, they were ultimately unable to implement such a plan.<sup>85</sup> It was then decided to move the school opened in Van to educate Nestorian children to Imadiye, located in the middle of the Van and Mosul regions. It was more convenient for all Nestorians to reach. However, the British missionaries had incredible difficulty obtaining a license to establish a school and a church in Van.<sup>86</sup> Many individuals in the Imadiye region, including Muslims, Jacobites, and Assyrians, opposed this and appealed to the government to prevent it. Eventually, they succeeded in opening a school in the Imadiye region.

However, after a brief period, the British missionaries withdrew from Ottoman territories, and the anticipated benefits were not achieved. The activities of the British missionaries, along with those of the Nestorian patriarchate, attracted the attention of the Ottoman authorities. In response, as Orthodoxy began gaining influence among the Nestorians in Urmia, the British intensified their efforts among the Nestorians who were under Ottoman rule.<sup>87</sup> The letter from the Ministry of War, dated 16 October 1911, highlights a more critical issue. Accordingly, while the Chaldeans farmed in the villages and obeyed the state, the Nestorians, known as Tyari and Tkhuma, with a population of about thirty thousand, were uneducated and disobedient. They can only be made obedient by force. They want to annex the Chaldeans in the plain (in Mosul province) to themselves because they are planning to revolt in the future. Especially Browne, who has been living among them for thirty years, has been recruiting and inciting them on behalf of the British.<sup>88</sup> The mutual activities of the Nestorians and Chaldeans continued until the eve of the First World War.<sup>89</sup>

## 7. Nestorian Church's Counter-Move

On 10 August 1912, Mar Shimun submitted a petition for a Nestorian representative to be admitted as a member of the Majlis-i Mebusan or Majlis-i Ayan without an election. This request was rejected as illegal.<sup>90</sup> Meanwhile, Browne, who had been actively engaged in Qudshanis since 1886, passed away in that location in 1913. This missionary, who had trained Benyamin since he was a young boy and prepared him for the patriarchate, significantly impacted the patriarchate's policy in the early 20th century. The students who graduated from the schools he built in Urmia, Van, and various parts of Hakkari grew up

<sup>85</sup> Satılmış, 1. *Dünya Savaşı*, 143; Mar Eliya, *Tarihu Betariketi*, 146.

<sup>86</sup> Mar Eliya, Mar Eliya, *Tarihu Betariketi*, 147-148; Satılmış, 1. *Dünya Savaşı*, 144.

<sup>87</sup> BOA, *Dahiliye Nezareti İdare Evrakı* [DH.İD], No. 123, Gömlek No. 4. 5, 8, 14.

<sup>88</sup> BOA, *Dahiliye Nezareti Sicill-i Nüfus Tahrirat Kalemi* [DH.SN.THR], No. 25, Gömlek No. 77.

<sup>89</sup> On 12 July 1913, Mar Shimun complained that Catholics were trying to convert Nestorians by building churches and schools among them in the village of Ashot (Çığlı). BOA, *Hariciye Nezareti Siyasi* [HR.SYS], No. 1783, Gömlek No. 66. The Ottoman authorities informed the French embassy that the construction of schools and churches in Ashot would not be allowed. BOA, HR.SYS, No. 1383, Gömlek No. 70. On 5 August 1914, Mar Shimun reported that Matran Mar Eliya of Alqosh had become Nestorian four years earlier, that he had been expelled from his village as a result of complaints from the villagers, and that he had come to me (Qudshanis) and asked that Eliya be allowed to stay in the village of Alqosh. If Chaldean clergymen can serve in our villages, he should also be allowed to serve there. BOA, BEO, No. 116, Gömlek No. 93, 2.

<sup>90</sup> BOA, *Dahiliye Nezareti Mütenevvia Evrakı* [DH.MTV], No. 40, Gömlek No. 14. 1, 3.

and began to play important roles among the Nestorians.<sup>91</sup> With Browne's death, British missionary work came to a halt, and with the outbreak of World War I, the Ottoman Empire was forced to withdraw all its missionaries from the region. Before the First World War, the Ottoman Empire awarded Mar Shimun Benyamin a new insignia to increase his loyalty. The Sultan approved the proposal of the Van Province, and on 4 August 1913, he was awarded the Ottoman Order of the fourth rank.<sup>92</sup>

Even though the British had supported the Nestorian patriarchs, their support was limited, as Britain lacked direct borders with the region. In contrast, Russia's territorial expansions over the past century had drawn much closer. Most Nestorians in Iran had already converted to Orthodoxy, bringing them under Russia's influence and further strengthening their ties with the Russians. While British missionaries had previously managed to curb this influence, their withdrawal removed any remaining obstacles. The Ottoman authorities quickly noticed this shift. Reports from the region indicated that the Nestorians under Ottoman rule had now fallen entirely under Russian influence.<sup>93</sup> With the First World War outbreak, it was well understood that the Nestorians would cooperate with the Russians. On 3 August 1914, Governor Tahsin Pasha of Van held a meeting with Mar Shimun. It was stated that although there would be no cooperation with the Russians, many improvements would be made for the Nestorians. However, Mar Shimun noted that he would remain neutral but again said that he could not make a final decision without consulting with the Nestorian tribal chiefs.<sup>94</sup> Since the Nestorians could not be fully trusted, the government took a radical decision. Minister of Interior Talat Pasha sent an order to the Van Province to deport the Nestorians to the interior of Anatolia. Given the mountainous geography of Hakkâri and the warlike nature of the Nestorian tribes, it became clear that the plan was unfeasible, leading to its abandonment and careful monitoring of the Nestorians.<sup>95</sup>

With the outbreak of the First World War, the difference of opinion between Mar Shimun and Nimrod Effendi deepened. The two sides disagreed about the attitude that Nestorians should take towards the war. In February 1915, an armed group from Tyari came to Qudshanis and moved Mar Shimun's family to Tyari.<sup>96</sup> In the meantime, a detachment of soldiers was stationed in Qudshanis by the local authorities in Julamerik (Hakkari) to prevent the dispute between the two from escalating. The patriarch insisted that Nimrod be removed from the village. When this was not possible, Mar Shimun himself left Qudshanis in early March and settled in the Dêz Valley (Kırıkdağ).<sup>97</sup> On 12 April 1915, Mar Shimun invited prominent Nestorians and held long talks. As a result, it was decided to fight

<sup>91</sup> Mar Eliya, *Tarihu Betariketi*, 149-150.

<sup>92</sup> BOA, *İ.TAL*, No. 484, Gömlek No. 71.

<sup>93</sup> BOA, *DH.ŞFR*, No. 42, Gömlek No. 44; BOA, *DH.İD*, No. 169, Gömlek No. 11; BOA, *DH.İD*, No. 116, Gömlek No. 57; BOA, *Dahiliye Nezareti Siyasi Kısım Evrakı [DH.SYS]*, No. 108, Gömlek No. 39.

<sup>94</sup> Surma d'Bait Mar Shimun, *Assyrian Church Customs and the murder of Mar Shimun* (New York: Vehicle editions, 1983), 66.

<sup>95</sup> BOA, *DH.ŞFR*, No. 46, Gömlek No. 78; BOA, *DH.ŞFR*, No. 46, Gömlek No. 102.

<sup>96</sup> Surma D'Bait Mar Shimun, *Assyrian Church Customs*, 70; Eliya, *Tarihu Betariketi*, 152; BOA, *DH.ŞFR*, No. 475, Gömlek No. 62.

<sup>97</sup> BOA, *Dahiliye Nezareti Emniyet-i Umumiye İkinci Şube [DH.EUM.2.Şb]*, No. 8, Gömlek No. 63.

alongside the Russians against the Ottoman Empire.<sup>98</sup> Nimrod was not in favor of Mar Shimun's idea of bringing the Nestorians into the war, predicting that it would result in a great disaster for the Nestorians. However, it was impossible to dissuade the patriarch, who wanted to get involved in the war, hoping the Russians would be victorious. On 15 May, a group of armed Nestorians arrived in Qudshanis, took his sons and nephews under the pretext of attending a meeting in Dez Valley, and then returned and killed Nimrod and many members of his family as he lay sick in his home.<sup>99</sup>

While the identity of Nimrod's killer remains unknown, it's easy to speculate on who may have ordered the murder of him and his family.<sup>100</sup>

### Conclusion

This study examines the last period of the Nestorian Patriarchate and its relations with the Ottoman Empire, revealing the dynamics of the period and the effects of these relations on the Nestorian community. One of the most important findings is the transformation of the Nestorian Patriarchate from a mainly religious institution to a political one, particularly evident in the Ottoman archival documents.

This study highlights the intricate interplay between internal dynamics and imperial strategies that shaped the final phase of the Nestorian Patriarchate in Qudshanis. While internal rivalries, exemplified by the feud between Mar Shimun Ruel and Nimrod Effendi, undermined communal cohesion, these conflicts cannot be detached from the broader context of imperial geopolitics. The Ottoman Empire's policies, driven by fears of Western interference, aimed to control the Assyrian community through both coercion and cooptation. At the same time, the competing agendas of British and French missionaries transformed the Patriarchate from a religious institution into a focal point of colonial rivalry. This period exemplifies how imperial powers exploited marginalized communities to further their broader strategies, with devastating consequences for the communities themselves.

The Ottoman Empire's efforts to take control of the Nestorian Patriarchate reveal a complex structure within the framework of the period's political and religious dynamics. Leaders such as Mar Shimun Ruel and Nimrod Effendi were active in both the religious and political arena through their relations with the Ottoman administration. In this context, it has been observed that the Ottoman State's policies of control over the patriarchate led to significant changes in the internal structure of the Nestorian community. Nimrod Effendi's strategic alliances with the Ottoman Empire increased his authority within the community, but this also led to divisions within the community.

The Ottoman Empire regarded Mar Shimun Ruel's ties with Western missionaries as a threat, which heightened the state's pressure on the patriarchate. The Ottoman administration collaborated with leaders like Nimrod Effendi to counterbalance the influence of Western powers in the region. Nimrod Effendi's close affiliation with the

<sup>98</sup> Surma D'Bait Mar Shimun, *Assyrian Church Customs*, 70; Mar Eliya, *Tarihu Betariketi*, 152.

<sup>99</sup> Malik Qambar, *Malik Qambar'ın Kalemî ile Kendi Yaşam Öyküsü ve Jîlo Aşireti*, çev. Kuroš Hërmëz Nazlu (PDF: Assyrian Chaldean Syriac Association), Access 20 September 2024-10; Mookken, *The History*, 104.

<sup>100</sup> There are not many records of this in oral history, but an interview with Yonan Talya is available here: Talay, Shabo. *Neuaramäische Texte in den Dialekten der Khabur-Assyrer in Nordostsyrien*. Band 41. Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag, 2009.

Ottoman Empire strengthened his authority within the Nestorian community, leading to a significant rivalry between him and Mar Shimun Ruel.

The relationship between Nimrod Effendi and Mar Benyamin is an integral part of the power struggle within the Nestorian community. In 1903, Mar Benyamin, who became patriarch at a young age, faced challenges due to his inexperience. Meanwhile, Nimrod Effendi emerged as an influential figure in the community because of his close ties with the Ottoman Empire. Nimrod's political strength undermined Mar Benyamin's patriarchal authority, resulting in divisions within the community.

This study also examined how the Ottoman State's attempts to control the Nestorian Patriarchate impacted the leadership structure within the community. Thanks to the pragmatic approaches of the Ottoman Empire, Patriarch Ruel received a salary and insignia. Simultaneously, leaders like Nimrod Effendi emerged as political figures in the eyes of the state. This resulted in a new balance of power within the Nestorian community and the division of the community into two main factions.

Additionally, hundreds of documents on the Nestorians in Hakkari are awaiting discovery in the Ottoman State archives. Unpublished batches of Ottoman reports and missionary correspondence promise to enrich this picture. A systematic reading of these files could trace how the Patriarchate's networks were reconstituted after 1915 and clarify the long-term effects of these pre-war power shifts on modern Assyrian identity.

The study advances the Nestorian narrative beyond missionary memoirs by illustrating that theology, communal leadership, and imperial statecraft were interconnected in eastern Anatolia. It presents it as a case study in how empires exploit religious differences—an insight that remains significant for current discussions on minority rights and church-state relations throughout the Middle East.

Appendix

1. C. BASANKIRLI GÖRMEKİ ARŞIVI DİĞRE BASANKIRLI (BDA)

DH-TMIK-M 159/22 Zurek (2 shf 50f) 1-1

تغیلات نامنه

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مأمورین	مأمورین	مأمورین	مأمورین	مأمورین	مأمورین	مأمورین	مأمورین	مأمورین	مأمورین
مأمورین	مأمورین	مأمورین	مأمورین	مأمورین	مأمورین	مأمورین	مأمورین	مأمورین	مأمورین

مقدمه - توضیح  
قولده کونسانده بوننه دولت عید تبعه سنده اولوب کله نامنطوری  
منله روسی کی مقررده قیسی طوری مشعوه اقدیل اتمه دیر  
مقررده مخصوص روحانی قوانیه ونظمه مات مخالفه صورته معمله ره  
بولنده معمله سی اهلیز کوره رک اکلایع و مقرر اجازت یوزاوتی  
بر اقدیلی جبه کندی ترک ایتمه مجبور اولده هر ملت یئیس روحانی  
نفسی اقصانه المظله مقررده خارج ملت یئیسله انتخاب و طومره  
سیره مقصد اجاده ویکجه فرقی اولمایا و اتمه ریزو سلطه سینه صادره  
بوننه معمله اقامت ابد کله فی قولک یطریقیتلایع نوش  
اقدیل نیز ادره سیر مکمل مجبور و ضابط کوره رک مومالیه عمانوش اقص  
رضی مراجع اوزینه حاکم ایسه و کتابه کماله بد تفسیر قیاسوه  
اؤره قول ایلدی نیز مشعوه اقدیل روحانیتده صدره قیده  
وجیه اجلا ایلدی کی مقرر قانونی بوجیه اصود مشعوه انتخاب

**Transcription - DH.TMİK.M. 159.22.1 (R. 20 Ağustos 1319 / 2 Eylül 1903)**

(This document consists of three pages; for space-saving purposes, we have only included an image of the first page.)

**Makam-ı Sedaret-i Uzmaya**

Kulları Kürdistan'da bulunan devlet-i aliye tebeesinden olup Keldani Nesturi milletin rüesası gibi milletimizden bir kısmı Nesturi Mar Şem'un Efendi'nin öteden beri milletimize mahsus ruhani kavanin (kanunlar) ve nizamata muhalif surette muamelede bulunarak, muamelesini ahalimiz görerek anlayıp ve milletimizi icraatsız yüzüstü bıraktığı cihetle kendisini terk etmeye mecbur olduk. Her millet reis-i ruhani olacağı lüzumu iktizasından olmakla milletimizden hariç millet reisiyle intihab [seçim] ve hükümet-i seniyyede maksad-ı icraat ve gittikçe farkı olmayan ve öteden beri saltanat-ı seniyyeye sadık bulunan Musul'da ikamet eden Keldani Katolik patriği rütbetlü Emanuel Efendi'nin zir-i idaresine girmeye mecbur ve münasib görerek muma ileyh Emanuel Efendi dahi müracaatımız üzerine milettimizin eimme [dini önderleri-mezheb imamları] ve kitapları kemakan [eskiden olduğu gibi] bila tağyir ..... üzere kabul eyledi. Zira Mar Şem'un Efendi'nin ruhaniyetinden sonra kayd-ı vecihle icra eylediği gibi milletimizin kanunu mucibince usulan Mar Şem'un intihab eylemesi, hükümet-i seniyyeye müracaat eylemeye, umur-u ruhaniyeye emin ve mezhebimize tamamen aşına ve kırk yaşını mütecaviz olmak, devlet millete sadık yarar adamın milletimizin cismani ve ruhani reisi tarafından ictima eyleyecek meclis, milletimiz reisleriyle kanunumuzun müsaade ettiği mertebede intihab edilmesi lazımeden iken buna karşı muğayir bir surette icra-yı eimme etmekten aciz umur-u ruhaniyeden katiyyen haberdar olmayan milletimizin ahlakına güzelce aşına olmayan on altı yaşlarında cahil Bünyamin namıyla bir çocuğun her nasılsa bila intihab [seçim olmaksızın] patrik tayin eylemesi öteden beri icra edilen usulümüze muhalif olacağından muma ileyh Mar Şem'un'un cahilane hareketinden umur-u ruhaniyemiz peyderpey istifade edemeyeceğimize güneş gibi meydanda olduğunu görerek su-i muamelesine müteessif me'yus olmakla marrü'l-arz patrik muma ileyh Emanuel Efendi'nin zir-i idaresine girmiş olacağımızdan fi mabad muma ileyhin millet efradından adile [dengi] Bünyamin yani Mar Şem'un'un milletinden katiyyen tefrik edilmesi lazımeden olmakla lütfen gerek Mar Şem'un dediklerinin ve gerek ise diğerlerinin zulüm ve hakaretlerinden tarumar olmaktan tahlisi [kurtarılması] ve Keldani Katolik patriğine bakılmak Patrik Emanuel canibinden umur-u ruhaniyemize müdahale edilmemek üzere icab edenlere emr-i şedidin i'tası ve yüzler sürerek tadarru'an millet namına akdi dehalet eyleriz, ferman. 20 Ağustos 1319 (2 Eylül 1903)

Dêz Aşireti Reisi Berkho ve yirmi bir nefer refiki

**English Translation - DH.TMİK.M. 159.22.1 (R. 20 August 1319 / 2 September 1903)**

To the Sublime Porte (Grand Vizierate)

We, the undersigned, subjects of the exalted Ottoman state residing in Kurdistan and belonging to the Chaldean Nestorian community, declare the following:

Just as the leaders of the Chaldean Nestorians have long strayed from the canonical spiritual laws and regulations specific to our community, Mar Shimun has also acted against these customs. His actions, recognized by our people, have led to his neglect of our

community, leaving us spiritually abandoned. As a result, we have been forced to cut ties with him.

Since every religious community needs to have its own spiritual leader, and as our community has always been loyal to the Ottoman state and supports the need for strong leadership, we have decided it is right and necessary to follow the spiritual guidance of His Grace Emanuel, the Chaldean Catholic Patriarch in Mosul.

Upon our petition, Patriarch Emanuel accepted our clergy and religious books as they were, without any changes, maintaining the traditional practices of our community.

According to our religious law, the appointment of Mar Shimun as patriarch must follow a legitimate election, be officially submitted to the Sublime State, and the individual must be well-versed in religious matters, familiar with our sect, trustworthy, over forty years old, and loyal to both the state and the community. He must also be elected by a council made up of our religious and community leaders.

Contrary to these requirements, a child named Benyamin—about sixteen years old, inexperienced, and completely unfamiliar with religious matters and our community's morals—was somehow appointed as patriarch without any election. This directly violates our long-standing traditions and practices.

Given Mar Shimun's ignorant conduct and the clear fact that we can no longer gain spiritual benefit from his leadership, we are left with no choice but to express our sorrow and disappointment. Therefore, we have decided to align ourselves with the Chaldean Catholic Patriarch Emanuel and to consider ourselves under his spiritual authority from now on.

We respectfully request that Benyamin, known as Mar Shimun, be officially and fully distinguished from our community. We also urge your esteemed office to issue the necessary strict orders to protect us from the injustices and humiliations caused by Mar Shimun and others, and to ensure that Patriarch Emanuel can oversee our spiritual affairs without interference.

We sincerely and humbly submit this petition on behalf of our community.

Signed                      on                      behalf                      of                      the                      people:  
Berko, Chief of the Dêz Tribe, and twenty-one of his associates  
20 August 1319 / 2 September 1903

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اورجوع احوالده اجتناب ابر رضای عالم دُرره سے حرکت ایسے فوضہ اور ارادہ بولانہ روسای روحانیہ بیلیغہ لایزہ اعطا  
 قلنسہ اللوب شو قدر کہ لطفاً شومسیداً نظر احمیتہ تعریفیولسیدہ حالاً و مستقبلاً موجب اور جیفی بحسنہ حدیدہ یل و بوبابہ کہ  
 ساعی دایانہ مک تقدیر ابرم متر برودک القاسم و تسوینانتم میدانہ و ریلاص فوضہ و لایزہ بیلیغہ لایزہ اجلا یورلسنہ ساعی  
 جلیہ حدیدہ ای نیان و شترجم ایدم اللباب و فوضہ ارادانہ فوضہ مدله الکرکده  
 راجد ر  
 کلانی بطریق  
 خانقہ  
 ایماس



**Transcription - DH.TMİK.M. 195.33.8 (12 Mayıs 1322/25 Mayıs 1906).**

(This document consists of 3 pages; for space-saving purposes, we have only included an image of the last page, especially to show the Chaldean patriarchal seal)

*Adliye ve Mezahib Nezareti Celilesi Huzur-u Fahimanelerine*

Maruz-u daiyi kemineleridir ki

“Koçanis’ta bulunan İngiliz misyonerlerinden mistır Browne ve rüfekaı hakkında şikayeti havi dersaadette bulunan vekil-i daiyanem Yusuf Garib Efendi tarafından makam-ı sami-i sedaretpenahiye ve Dahiliye Nezareti celilesine takdim ettiđi arzuhaller ve vuku bulan müracaatı üzerine Van Vileyetiyle cerayan eden muhabere üzerine alınan cevapta muma ileyh mistır Browne Nesturilerin mezheb-i kadimlerini muhafaza etmek gayretinde bulunduđu ve bilakis Nesturileri Katolikliğe celb için Keldani ruhbanı tarafından der uhde edildiđi ve bu ise Nesturiler arasında tefrika hudüsüne mucib olacađından bu misüllü harekattan men’i lüzumu bildirilmiş olmakla mucibince muamele icrasını amir 36 numaralı ve 8 Nisan 322 ve 44 numaralı ve 12 Nisan 322 tarihli dest-i tazim ve tevkir ile alınan iki kıta emirname-i sami-i nezaretpenahileri meallerinden anlaşılmıştır. Malum-u ali-i fahimaneleri buyurulduđu vecihle daiyi kemineleri devlet-i aliye-i ebed müddetin hıdımat-ı mucibi’l-muğniyetine kendimi vakfetmiş bir abd-ı sadık olduđum gibi ömrümün son dakikasına kadar ifayı hiss-i vazife ile mucib-i saadet olan rızayı ali dairesinde sem’ ve ikdam ile zerre kadar inhıraf etmemeyi vazife-i mukaddesten bilip ol vecihle gece gündüz hizmet etmekte olduđum herkesin malumudur. Şu meseleye gelince evvelce arz olunduđu vecihle nezd-i mealıyu fahimanelerince malum ve maslahattır ki memalik-i mahrusa-i şahanede sakin Keldani cemaati cinsiyet ve milliyet noktasından bir olmak üzere mezhep ve maişetçe ikiye munkasım olup birisi Keldani Katolik diğeri Keldani Nesturidir. Lisan ve ayinimiz bir olup yekdiğërimize meyl ve karabiyetimiz aşkar olup ancak Katolik olanlar bilad-ı ma’mure ve daire-i temdinde yaşayarak bilcümle nizam-ı devlet-i aliyye hudu-’u tam ile münkad bir tebee-i sadıka, Nesturiler ise dađlarda ve adat-ı aşayır üzere imrar-ı hayat edip hal-i vahşet ve cehalette abaddırlar. Eslaf-ı daiyanem Musul Vilayeti’ne tabi Zaho, Akre, Zibar ve İmadiye kazalarında sakin Keldanilerin umumunu Katolikliğe idhal ve mekatib küşadiyle ahlak ve adetlerini tebdil ve tehzib ve aşayırvari maişetlerini terk ettirerek devlet ve millete salih bir tebee-i sadıka ve muti-a halinde isal ile ibraz-ı hıdımat-ı mevrure eyledikleri asar-o mevcude delaletiyle müsbittir. Eslaf-ı daiyanemden müteveffa patrik İliyya Efendi [1878-1894] zamanında mezkur Nesturilerin bir kısm-ı a’zamı kendisine müracaatla ittihadı vuku bulan meyilleri her nasılsa mabeyn-i hümayuna aks ederek ve ol sırada yani takriban on yedi sene mukaddem patrik-i müşarun ileyhe dersaadette bulunmasına tesadüf edip huzur-u lami’u’-nur cenab-ı padişahi misül şeref ‘ala’l-’alına nail olduđu esnada şeref telakki ettiđi cümle-i iradat-ı seniye-i cenabı hilafetpenahiden birisi de Nesturilerin Katolikliğe idhal ve tehzib-i ahlak ve adetleri ve hal-i vahşetten istihlaslarıyla daire-i temdine idhallerine himmet edilmesi ve buna medar olmak üzere hükümetçe de iktiza eden muavenet ve mazahiretin icrası lüzumu şerefsudur buyurulan irade-i ihmam-i dade-i cenabı padişahi imtisalan mabeyn-i hümayun baş kitabet celilesinden babıaliye vuku bulan tebliğat üzerine Musul Vilayeti’ne bu babda evamir-i aliye ‘i’ta buyurulmuş ve tarih-i mezkurdan itibaren marrü’l-arz Nesturilerin birçok efradı Keldani cemaatine iltihak ve maişet-i bedeviyeleri tehzib ve tahsin ile evamir-i devlet ve kavanin-i maniğaya itaat ve inkiyadları bir kat daha tezyid edilmiş olduđu gibi selef-i daiyanem müteveffa patrik ‘Abdişo’ Efendi [1894-1899]

tarafından dahi bu esere bi'l-iktiza bunların bazı nevahi ve kuralarında mekatib-i iptidaiye küşad ve rehaven ve keşişler i'zamıyla idare-i umur-u ruhaniyeleri ve terbiye ve tehzibleri emrine pek çok emekler sarf olunmuş idi. Daileri dahi iş bu nokta-i mühimmeyi nazar-ı ehemmiyete alarak ve bu babdaki irade-i seniye-i cenabı mülukaneye imtisalan asar-ı mezkureye bi'l-iktiza icrayı müsaadet vakit fevt etmeyerek saye-i merahimvaye-i cenabı padişahide ittihaz kılınan şu tedabir-i maslahasına delalet ve tesiriyetle bu günkü güne Van Vilayeti'nde bulunan Nesturilerin kısm-ı a'zamı hemcinsleri olan Keldani Katolik olup müteaddid kurada bile mekatib küşadiyle envâr-ı marifetten bi'l-istifade ev'ıye-i mefruze-i huzur-u mülukane ile meşgul olmalarına muvaffakiyetname husulüne ba'is olup bunu müşahade eden Protestan misyonerlerinin reisi mistır Browne yirmi seneden ziyade Koçanis'ta ihtiyar-ı ikametle sarf ettiği imkanlar hebaya gidip Keldanilerin şu muvaffakiyetlerinden bi'l-infisal dört beş yaşında iken patrik oluncaya kadar taht-ı terbiyesine aldığı hadisu's-sin Mar Şem'un'u alet ittihaz ederek hilaf-ı hakikat şikayette bulundurup tahriş-i ezhanе sa'iden geri durmadığı meydandadır. Ezcümle Van Vilayeti'nde marrü'l-arz cevabında muma ileyh mistır Browne Nesturilerin mezheb-i kadimelerini muhafaza etmek gayretinde bulunduğu beyan edildiği iş'ar buyuruluyor. Dikkat buyurulsun mistır Browne İngiliz tebeesi olduğu halde memleketini bırakıp Koçanis gibi asar-ı medeniyetten mahrum bir karyede ihtiyar-ı ikametle Nesturilerin mezheb-i kadimelerini muhafazaya gayret etmek neden ileri gelsin. Elbette bir su-i fikr ve niyete mübtenei olacağı müstağniyi arz ve izahtır. Binaen aleyh niza' ve cidale mucib olacak ahvalden ictinab ile rızayı ali dairesinde hareket edilmesi hususuna oralarda bulunan rüesayı ruhaniyeye tebligat-ı lazıma 'i'ta kılınmış olup şu kadar ki lütfen şu meseleye nazar-ı ehemmiyetle telakki buyurulmasıyla halan ve müsta'cılan mucib olacağı muhsinat-ı adideyi bu babdaki mesa'iyi daiyanemin takrir ile mistır Browne'un ilkaat ve teşvikatına meydan verilmemesi hususuna Van Vilayeti'ne tebligat-ı lazıma icra buyurulmasına müsaade-i celile-i hudayuvanelerinden niyaz ve istirham eylerim. Ol babda ve her babda emr ü ferman men lehul emrindir. (12 Mayıs 322)

**English Translation - DH.TMİK.M. 195.33.8 (R. 12 May 1322/25 May 1906).**

*To the Honorable Ministry of Justice and Religious Affairs,*

The humble petitioner presents the following:

On behalf of my representative, Yusuf Garib Efendi, currently in Istanbul, petitions have been submitted to the Sublime Porte and the Ministry of the Interior regarding complaints about Mr. Browne and his companions, English missionaries in Qudshanis. In response to the correspondence between the province of Van and the Ministry, it was stated that Mr. Browne is working to preserve the old Nestorian sect, and it has been reported that efforts by the Chaldean clergy to convert the Nestorians to Catholicism would cause division among the Nestorians. Consequently, it was necessary to prevent such actions, and the relevant orders were issued in the imperial decrees numbered 36, dated 21 April 1906 and 44, dated 25 April 1906. The content of these decrees has been respectfully received. As previously conveyed, I, the humble petitioner, have devoted myself to the honorable services of the eternal Ottoman Empire. As a loyal servant, I am committed to fulfilling my duty with utmost sincerity until the last moments of my life. It is well known that I have been working day and night with absolute loyalty to the state. As previously explained, your esteemed authority knows that the Chaldean community residing in Ottoman lands is

divided into two groups: Chaldean Catholics and Chaldean Nestorians. While we share the same language and religious rites, the Catholics live in developed cities, adhering strictly to the laws of the state. In contrast, the Nestorians live in mountainous regions, leading a tribal lifestyle in a state of ignorance and backwardness. The predecessors of my humble office worked to convert all the Chaldeans in the Zakho, Akra, Az Zibar, and Amadiye districts of Mosul to the Catholic faith, opening schools to improve their morals and habits and transform them into loyal and obedient subjects of the state. These efforts, confirmed by existing records, have yielded the desired results. During the time of the late Patriarch Elias [1878-1894], many of the Nestorians expressed a desire to unite with the Catholic Church, and these efforts even reached the Imperial Palace. Around seventeen years ago, when Patriarch Ilyas was in Istanbul, one of the imperial decrees he received from the Sultan was to bring the Nestorians into the Catholic faith, improve their morals, and integrate them into civilized society. Orders were subsequently sent to Mosul; since then, many Nestorians have joined the Chaldean community. The late Patriarch Abdisho [1894-1899] also continued these efforts, opening schools in several villages and appointing priests and monks to oversee the Nestorians' religious and educational needs. Following this crucial path, I have also continued these efforts in line with the imperial decrees. As a result, many of the Nestorians in the Van province have embraced the Chaldean Catholic faith. However, observing this success, Mr. Browne, the head of the Protestant missionaries, who has spent more than twenty years in Qudshanis, is now attempting to disrupt the minds of the people by using Mar Shimun, whom he has raised since he was a child, to make false complaints. Mr. Browne is trying to preserve the old Nestorian faith, as indicated in the report from the Van province. It is noteworthy that Mr. Browne, as a British subject, has chosen to live in Koçanis, a remote and undeveloped village, for the sole purpose of preserving the Nestorian faith. It is clear that he has ulterior motives. Therefore, to avoid disputes and conflicts, instructions have been given to the local religious leaders to ensure that this matter is handled in accordance with the state's wishes. I respectfully request that the necessary orders be issued to prevent Mr. Browne's provocations and that the situation be resolved with the required urgency. In every matter, the command belongs to His Majesty. R. 12 May 1322 (25 May 1906).

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