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THE ESTABLISHMENT OF THE SYRIAN ORTHODOX PATRIARCHATE PRESS

Ahmet Taşğın and Robert Langer[1]

Introduction

This paper concerns the printing activities of the Syrian Orthodox Christians. On this topic, information is available, but scattered in various sources, and there is no work concentrating solely on this subject. This paper aims to make good this deficiency.[2]

There are several works on the printing activities of the non-Muslim communities in the Near East and Western Asia. For the most part, these deal with people involved in missionary activities. Concerning the rest, there exist few extensive research works, and there is little public awareness of them. The printing efforts of the Syrian Orthodox Church have thus failed to attract attention.

The Syrian Orthodox Church, being based on traditional religious values, failed to keep abreast of the latest developments in politics, culture, law and economics. It struggled to survive the demands of the modern world. The press was one of the efforts that the Church did make, but it did not arouse much interest and because it was considered unimportant, no research was undertaken on it.[3] This article utilises diverse documents and sources, including documents from the Ottoman archives, church histories and related documents, biographies of prominent clergymen, travel books, and memoirs.

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[1] We are grateful to Prof. Dr. Shabo Talay for reading a draft of this paper and correcting several mistakes. The original Turkish text was translated into English by İrem Wedekind (Heidelberg). All remaining faults and errors are our responsibility.

[2] For a general overview, see Shabo Talay, "Die syrisch-orthodoxe Kirche in der Türkei," *Die Türkei und ihre christlichen Minderheiten: Ausgewählte Vorträge einer Tagung der Evangelischen Akademie Hofgeismar, 2.–4. November 2007*, ed. Karl Pinggéra (Hofgeismar: Evangelische Akademie, 2008): 16–35.

[3] For evaluations of this subject, see Aziz S. Atiya, *A History of Eastern Christianity* (London: Methuen, 1968).

Apart from a short-lived press in Istanbul in the 1840s,[4] the printing activities of the Syrian Orthodox Church started with the Patriarch Petrus IV, who made it a priority to complete the tasks that previous patriarchs had initiated or planned. He renovated a large part of the Deyruzafaran Monastery at Mardin, added wings to the building, and moreover, constructed an additional building for the printing press that he had brought with him. Apart from the activities already initiated, he faced numerous problems inherited from the late Patriarch Jacob II's period.[5]

Journey to the Land of the Printing Press

Patriarch Petrus IV was the first patriarch to make a long journey abroad, to Britain and India, in order to find solutions to the problems within the community. He entered into international negotiations and established this as a tradition.

Despite the fact that the Patriarch was accompanied by Mor Ignatios ʿAbd Allāh Saṭṭūf al-Ṣadadī (later Patriarch Mor Ignatios ʿAbde d-Aloho II), the Archbishop of Jerusalem, he felt obliged to request an exit permit from the sultan. His wish was granted only after a year's delay (1874). On 14 August 1874, they left Istanbul for Britain. They arrived in Paris on 17 August and London on 24 August.[6]

The Patriarch and the Archbishop stayed in London for several months, working intensively. They had meetings with numerous people, including clergymen and ministers. Their acquaintance with Mrs Elizabeth Finn, wife of the consul general in Jerusalem, helped them greatly in establishing contact with people in London. Later, they had meetings with people of higher rank, including the Archbishop of Canterbury (see Fig. 1), which they had arranged before they left Istanbul. These in turn arranged their

[4] J. F. Coakley, *The Typography of Syriac* (New Castle: Oak Knoll Press and London: British Library, 2006): 122–123.

[5] Apart from that, the lack of agreement among the Syrian Orthodox Community in India became an important issue. Upon the death of the Patriarch Jacob II, many letters reporting the turmoil in India were delivered to Patriarch Petrus IV; this informed his decision to go to India. He planned a trip from Jerusalem to Istanbul and to India, hoping to solve the problems within the community. Accompanied by ʿAbd Allāh Saṭṭūf, the Archbishop of Jerusalem, he headed for Istanbul. This was followed by journeys to Britain and India in 1873.

[6] For relations with the English Church, see William Henry Taylor, *Antioch and Canterbury: The Syrian Orthodox Church and the Church of England 1874–1928* (Piscataway, NJ: Gorgias Press, 2005), 15–47.



Fig. 1. (right to left:) Patriarch Petrus IV, Archibald Tait (Archbishop of Canterbury), and Metropolitan ʿAbd Allāh Saṭṭūf in Canterbury

meeting with Queen Victoria. After writing letters to subordinate churches to obtain support, they were offered financial assistance, and teachers to be sent to the Deyruzafaran Monastery. The Patriarch accepted the financial aid but declined their offer of teachers, for fear that they would engage in missionary activities.

They had two meetings with the Queen. The first was on 21 February 1875. The Queen welcomed the Patriarch saying that she saw in his eyes the father Abraham and asked him if he had any wishes. The Patriarch informed the Queen about his journey to find a solution to the turmoil within the community and asked for the assistance of the British governor in India. The Queen granted this petition. After the conversation, the Patriarch blessed the Queen and left. The second meeting was toward the end of their stay in Britain (28 February 1875). The Queen took the Patriarch, together with her daughter, to Albert Memorial Chapel, where her husband was buried. The Patriarch prayed there for Prince Albert.

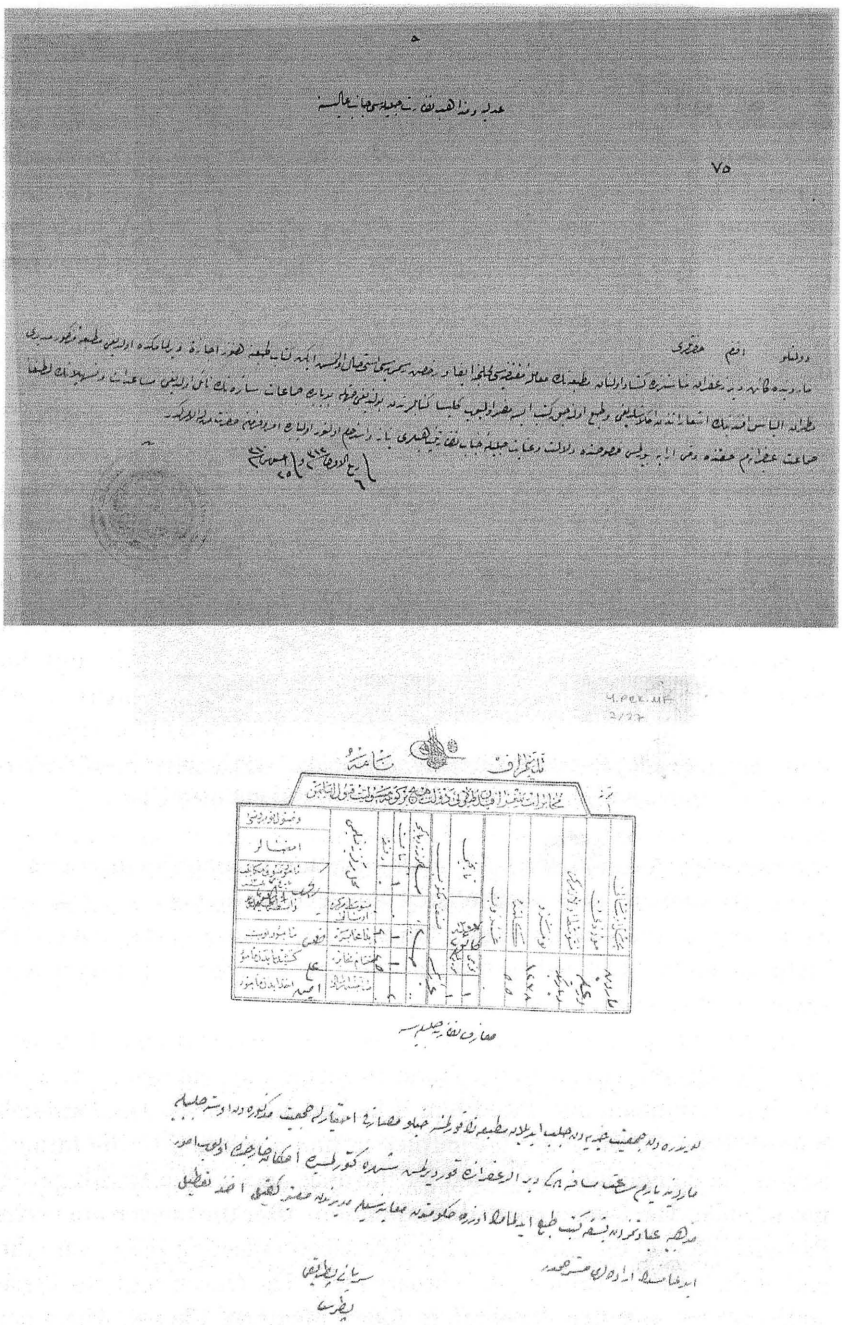


Fig. 2. Ottoman archive documents on the Syrian printing press

The Queen gave the Patriarch a medal and a document to facilitate his work in India. Then the Patriarch and the Archbishop left London and set off for India. The Patriarch sent the printing press, which he had acquired in London before his departure, to Anṭonius ʿĀzār in Aleppo on 25 August 1874. This was a gift from the Archbishop of Canterbury. On his visit to Oxford University, the Patriarch saw and admired this press, and the university bought and gave him a similar one. Canon Liddon had successfully raised money for the press and the monastery through the Syrian Patriarchate Education Fund in London, which was later expanded; it continued to support the Syrian Orthodox Church long afterwards.[7]

Their ship arrived on 2 April 1875 at Alexandria. While staying in the Coptic Orthodox Church, the Patriarch had meetings with many people, including the governor of Egypt. On 23 April 1875, he left Egypt for India, arriving on 17 May 1875 in Bombay, later visiting the Syrian Community in India. By 5 July 1875, he had solved all the problems within the community and returned to Diyarbakır. The Patriarch's arrival was feted in Diyarbakır. After staying there twenty-five days, he set off for Mardin, where his arrival was celebrated by a multitude of people.

The Purchase, Transport, Set-up, and Operation of the Press

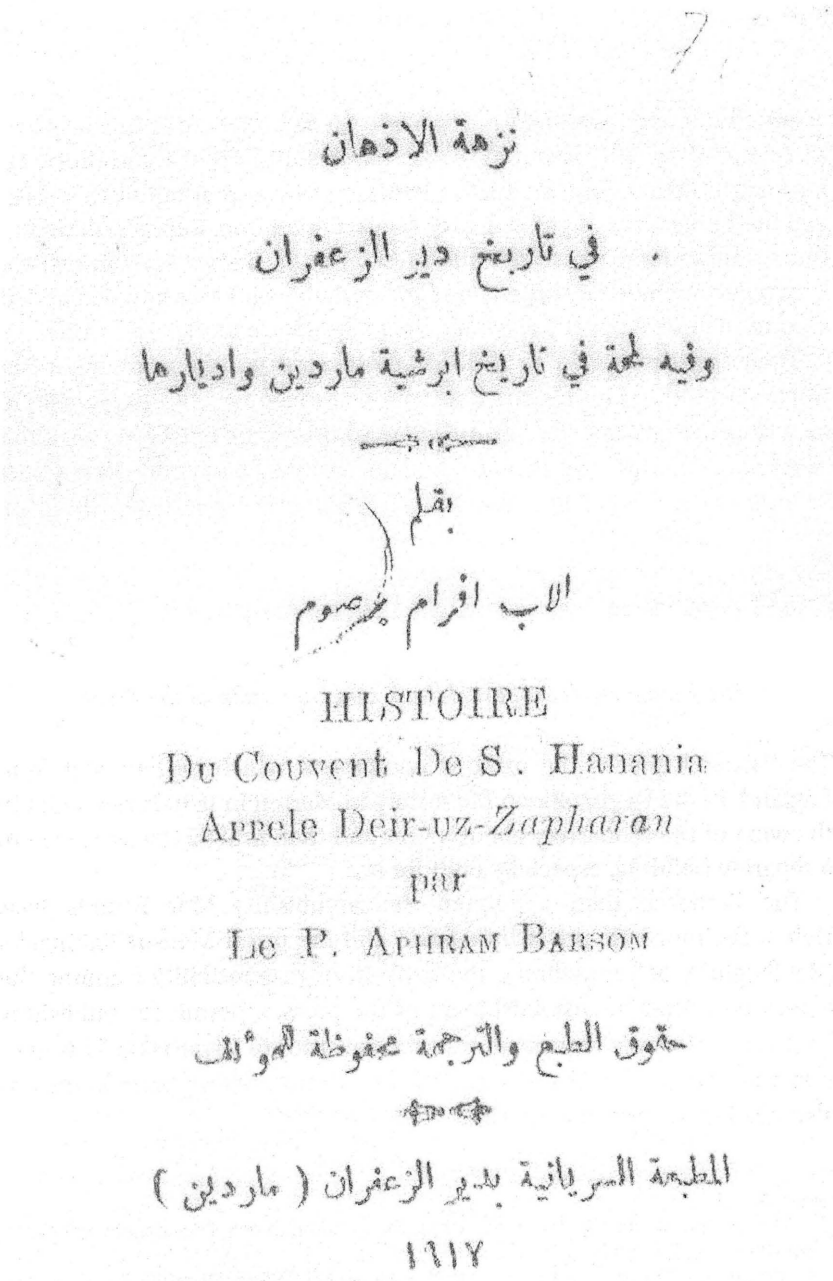
The Patriarch placed the printing equipment, which he had sent from England, in the Deyruzafaran Monastery in Mardin in 1881. It remained in the wing of the monastery about a year and then in 1882 it was moved to a separate building, especially built for it.

The Patriarch then appointed the Archbishop Mor Ivennis Ilyas Heluli, the monastic priest Ilyās Šākir, and the priest Mansur Rahipğallo (Rahiboğlu?), before defining the division of responsibilities among the employees. After the establishment of the press, a permit for publishing books in Syriac was requested from the governor of Diyarbakır. This petition was also sent to the ministry of the interior, whose permission was also needed for printing activities.[8]

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[7] *The Ancient Syrian Church in Mesopotamia* (London: Syrian Patriarchate Education Committee, 1908), 11–12.

[8] "Diyarbekir Vilâyet-i Celîlesine Dahiliye Nezaret-i Celîlesi Devletlû Efendim Hazretleri, Diyarbekir'de bulunan Süryanî Cemaatine mahsus kütübün tab'ı için müstakil matbaa olmayıp şu yüzden ziyadesiyle dûçâr-ı müşkilât olmakta bulundukları beyanıyla mahall-i mezkûrde bir bâb matbaa küşadına ruhsat i'tâsı hakkında millet-i merkûme patrik


نزهة الاذهان

في تاريخ دير الزعفران

وفيه لمحة في تاريخ ابرشية ماردين واديارها

بقلم

الاب افرام برصوم

HISTOIRE

Du Couvent De S. Hanania

Arrele Deir-uz-*Zapharan*

par

Le P. Aphram Barsom

حقوق الطبع والترجمة محفوظة للمؤلف

المطبعة السريانية بدير الزعفران (ماردين)

١٩١٧

Fig. 3. Title page of book by Afrēm Barṣōm, published at Dayr al-Zaʿfarān, 1917

The printing business was, however, more difficult than expected. It was a long time before the press could be put into operation. ʿAbd Allāh Saṭṭūf al-Ṣadadī, the Archbishop of Jerusalem, was sent to England in order to learn how to operate it. He also went there to discuss Syrian schools,[9] and was accompanied by a highly paid interpreter. There he met Rev. F. W. Tremlett, the chairman of the Syrian Patriarchate Education Society, and asked for his help with the printing business. He stayed there for some time, and even learned English.[10]

ʿAbd Allāh Saṭṭūf worked energetically in England, as on his first journey with the Patriarch. While keeping in contact with the Canterbury circle, he gave lectures in various places and drew attention to the Syrians, especially among academics in the universities. He was also invited to address the Lambeth Conference.[11] All these efforts led to an increase in charitable donations. During his stay, ʿAbd Allāh Saṭṭūf attended courses on printing, besides learning English. As he was about to leave England,

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vekili tarafından vuku bulan istid'a üzerine mugâyir-i usûl hâl ve hareketten mücânebet eylemek şartıyla kefîl-i irae edenlere matbaa küşadı için ruhsat i'tâsı nizamı iktizasından bulunduğu cihetle orada tesisi istenilen matbaa için dahi sâhib-i imtiyâzının mahallince ahvali bi-'t-tahkîk kefâlet-i hayriyeye rabt olmak ve Süryanî lisanı üzere basılacak kütüb ve resâil evvel-i emirde cânib-i hükûmetten muayene edilmek ve matbaa dahi Patrikhane dahilinde olmayıp sair mahallerde olduğu gibi memleket derununda bulunmak üzere ruhsat i'tâsında bir gûnâ mahzur olmadığı matbuat idâre-i behîyesinden bâ-müzekkire ifade kılınmış ve keyfiyet Dâire-i Celîle-i Hâriciyeye dahi bildirilmiş olmakla şurût-ı mezkûre dairesinde icrâ-yı îcâbı hususuna himem-i aliye-i dâverîleri derkâr buyurulmak babında emir ve irade men-lehü'l-emrindir. Fî 22 Cumadelahire sene 294 ve fî 22 Haziran 93 (5 Temmuz 1877). Ahmed Cevdet." P. Gabriyel Akyüz, *Osmanlı Devletinde Süryani Kilisesi* (Mardin: Mardin Kırklar Kilisesi, 2002), 136, document no. 127.

[9] On this subject see: "(2 Kanunisani 1307 tarihli telgrafname (29 Ağustos 1889)) Maarif Nazîret-i Celîlesine, Londra'dan Cemiyet-i Hayriye'den celb edilen matbaanın kurulmasına hayli mesarifi itibarla cemiyet-i mezkûreden usta celbiyle Mardin'e yarım saat mesafedeki Deyru'z-zafaran'da kurdurulmuş şehre getirilmesi de imkan haricinde olup umûr-ı mezhebiye ibadetimizden başka kütüb tab' edilmemek üzere hükümetten muayenesiyle müdîrinden muteber kefil ahz tatil edilmemesinin iradeleri müsterhamdır. Süryani Patriği Petrus" Başbakanlık Osmanlı Arşivi, Y.PRK. MF. 2/27.

[10] His interpreter did not like the idea that the Archbishop was learning English and in order to disparage him, wrote a letter to the Patriarch accusing the Archbishop of a crime he did not commit: embezzling one hundred dinars from the money that was donated by the Syrian Patriarchate Education Society. Thereupon the Patriarch wrote a letter to Dr. Tremlett informing him that he had anathematised and dismissed the Archbishop. However, Dr. Tremlett wrote back that ʿAbd Allāh II. Saṭṭūf was a man of honour and everything he did was for the sake of his country. He thus impeded the Archbishop's anathema.

[11] Patriarch Mor Ignatios ʿAbd Allāh II Saṭṭūf (1833–1915): "He paid a second visit to London, during which he attended sessions of the 1888 Lambeth Conference, and secured a second printing press." *The Gorgias Encyclopaedic Dictionary of the Syriac Heritage* (Piscataway, NJ: Gorgias Press, 2011).

Rev. Tremlett advised him to take with him an expert on printing equipment, in case the printing press should malfunction during use. He also advised the Archbishop to buy another printing press, in case of missing or malfunctioning parts, and enabled him to acquire it.

The mechanical problems with the press that caused the Archbishop's visit to England were later solved. The mechanic stayed in Diyarbakır for a while, helping to get the machine working properly. However, an additional problem arose: with only Arabic printing types, Syriac books could not be printed; therefore new printing types for the Syriac alphabet were acquired from London and Oxford.[12]

The Press and the Patriarchs

The first books to be printed in the Deyruzafaran Monastery were *Tūrōs Mammlō* [Grammar] and *Yullfōnō Mšiḥōyō* [Christian teachings] in 1888.[13] A copy of the first book printed was sent to Queen Victoria.[14] After the success of the printing press, other relevant apparatuses such as a paper-cutting machine were also bought. Printing activities continued with *Šḥīmō* and *Teksō d-Qurōḇō Allōhōyō*, a liturgy for weekly worship.

These successful printing activities were interrupted by the new regulations on printing in 1889. During that time, Petrus IV passed away and the succeeding patriarchs also gave a high priority to printing. The Patriarch ʿAbd al-Masīḥ II, who was later deposed from the Patriarchate, and the succeeding Patriarch, ʿAbd Allāh II Saṭṭūf, accelerated printing activities. The latter witnessed and assisted every step of the printing process. According to a newspaper column written by Naum Faiq in *Kawkaḇ Maḏnḥō*, the printing activities had stopped before the patriarchate of ʿAbd Allāh II and the printing presses became dusty.[15] Thankfully, ʿAbd Allāh II Saṭṭūf al-Ṣadadī remedied this situation and resumed printing after a long hiatus.[16]

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[12] Coakley, *Typography of Syriac*, 138–140.

[13] Dolabani, H. *Maḵṯḇōnūṯō d-Faṭeryarke d-ʾAnṭyūḵāya* [Lives of the Patriarchs of Antioch] (Glane: Bar-Hebraeus Verlag, 1990), 272.

[14] *Ancient Syrian Church*, 13.

[15] Naum Faiq examined the situation of the press in his column "The Printing Machines" in the newspaper *Kawkab Maḏnḥō*: "If our printing machines could speak, they would cry out and beg for help: Please dust me off and send me to where I come from. Because if I had stayed in England, I could have printed thousands of books. This is how the idleness is." Çıkkı, *Naum Faik ve Süryani Rönesansı* (Istanbul: Belge Yayınları, 2004), 123.

[16] Akyüz, *Osmanlı Devletinde Süryani Kilisesi*, 137.

In 1911, Afrēm Barṣōm (later Patriarch) was appointed as the administrator of the printing house by the Patriarch ʿAbd Allāh II Saṭṭūf al-Ṣadadī.[17]

Books printed in the Deyruzafaran Monastery

Tūrōs mammlō, 1888.
Yullfōnō mšīḥōyō, 1888.
Šḥīmō, 1888.
Teksō d-qurōḇō allōhōyō, 1888 (Dolabani, 1990: 272).
ʿAbd al-Nūr, *Kısa Süryanice Gramer*, 1889.
ʿAbd al-Nūr, *Al-taʿlīm al-Masīḥī*, 1889.
Afrēm Barṣōm, *Al-ʾIšḥīm*, 1890.
Afrēm Barṣōm, *Kanz al-alḥān*, 1908.
Afrēm Barṣōm *Al-tuḥfa al-rūḥīya fī ṣalāt al-farḍīya*, 1909.
Afrēm Barṣōm, *Al-zahra al-qudsīya fī ʾl-taʿlīm al-Masīḥīya*, 1912.
Ḫidmat al-quddās ʿalā madār al-sana, 1913.
Al-ʾIšḥīm, second printing, 1913.
Ez-Zehretu'l-kudsiyye (translation into Turkish: Mîhaîl Çıkkı Efendi), 1913.
Hikmet (periodical), 1913–1914 (see Fig. 4).
Al-Bīʿya; Ibn al-ʿIbrī = Bar Hebraeus, *Muqtaṣar kanz al-alḥān* (edited by Yuhanna Dolabani).
Ibn al-ʿIbrī: *al-Ḥamāma* (edited by Yuhanna Dolabani).
Yuhanna Dolabani, *Al-Naḥla fī ʾl-qirāʾa wa-ʾl-asās fī ʾl-ṣarf al-Suryānī* (Barṣōm, 1917: 148–149).
Afrēm Barṣōm, *Nuzhat al-aḏhān fī tārīḫ Dayr al-Zaʿfarān*, 1917 (Barṣōm, 1917: 147–148) (see Fig. 3).

The Turkish Republic and the Syrian Press

At the time of the collapse of the Ottoman Empire and the foundation of the new Republic of Turkey, printing activities at the monastery were stopped and carried on only in Jerusalem, where the other printing machine was located.[18]

[17] Al-Ab Afrām Barṣawm [Afrēm Barṣōm], *Nuzhat al-aḏhān fī tārīḫ Dayr al-Zaʿfarān* (Mardin: al-Maṭbaʿa al-Suryānīya bi-Dayr al-Zaʿfarān, 1917), 148.

[18] Y. Bilge, *Geçmişten günümüze Deyrulzafaran Manastırı* (Istanbul: Gerçeğe Doğru Kitapları Yayınları, 2006), 109–110.

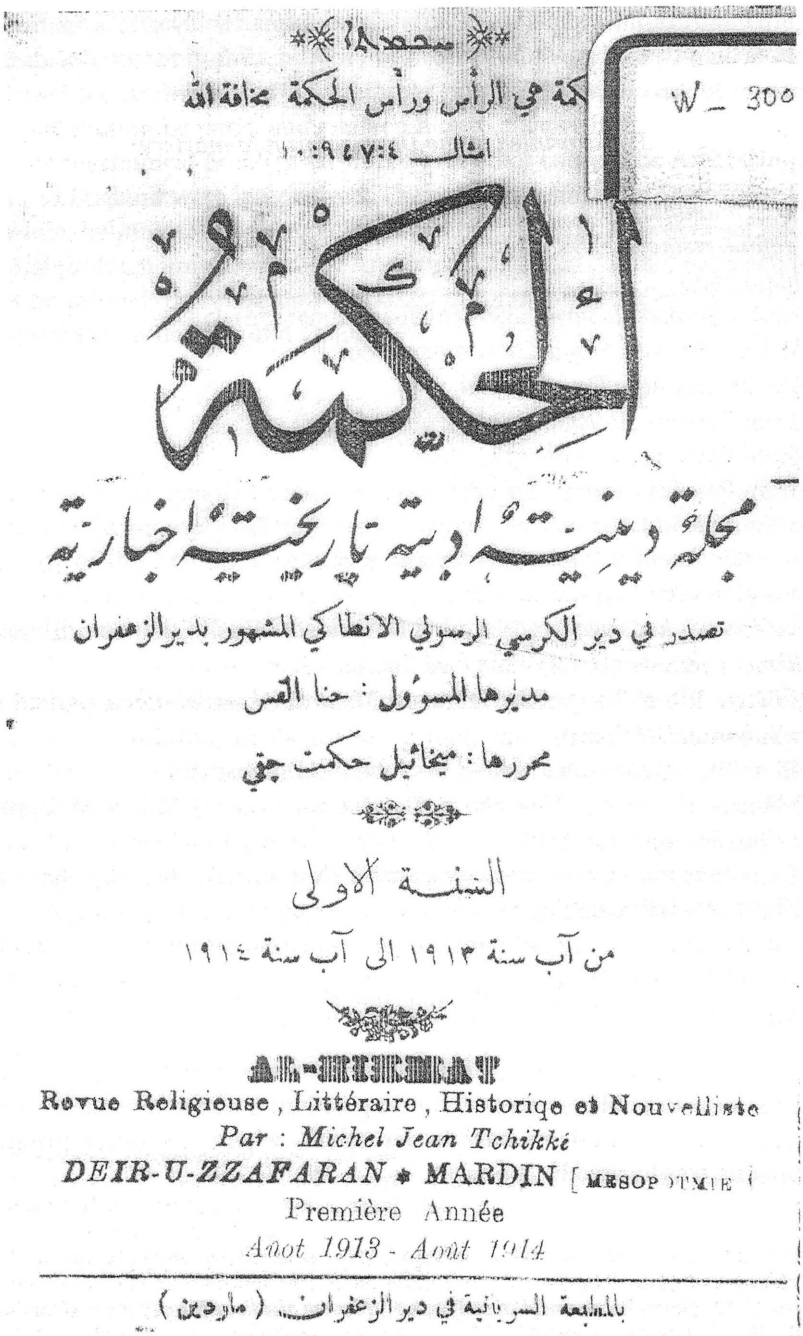


Fig. 4. The journal *al-Ḥikma* (1913–14)

The printing house resumed its activities in the early years of the new republic. It was even used to print state documents, since it was the only printing house in the region.[19] However, the printing activities again stopped after a couple of years; it seems that no one had the will and courage to run the press after the Patriarchate moved to Jerusalem. The printing press fell into disrepair.[20]

Only after Hanna Dolabani was appointed Archbishop of Mardin on 4 May 1947 did the printing house resume work. Dolabani moved the press to the Mor Behnam Church and continued printing there. The periodical *Hikmet* started publication for the third time under the name *Öz Hikmet*.[21]

Conclusions

This paper has examined the printing activities of the Syrian Orthodox Church, drawing on articles, archive documents, diaries, memoirs, church histories, and the biographies of the patriarchs. Missionary sources, being relatively easy to access, were the main sources of information; however given that Syrian Orthodox Christians were not prime targets of the missions, nor were they much influenced by them, there are not many such sources. Missionary activities were only a part of the reason they established the press and printed their own books.

The Syrian Orthodox Church established the press in Deyruzafaran Monastery in Mardin, the centre of the Patriarchate, in Petrus IV's time. In order to establish the press, the Patriarch went to England and bought a printing machine, apparatus for casting types, and a paper-cutting machine. An engineer also came from Britain.

The printing house published books in Arabic, Turkish and, most importantly, Syriac. Later, they produced the newspaper *Hikmet* (*Ḥekmṯō*), issued by the Syrian Orthodox Patriarchate. The publication of this newspaper was suspended three times. However, at the time of writing, it is still appearing.

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[19] Ahmet Taşğın (ed.), *Süryaniler ve Süryanilik* 4 (Ankara 2005): 27–28.

[20] U. Eti, *Diyarbakır'da gazete ve Diyarbakır neşriyat tarihi* (Diyarbakır: Diyarbakır Halkevi Neşriyatı, 1940), 4.

[21] Taşğın (ed.), *Süryaniler*, 51–69.

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