

Professor Marta Woźniak-Bobińska works at the Department of the Middle East and North Africa of the Faculty of International and Political Studies at the University of Łódź, Poland. Her research interests include national and ethnic minorities in the Middle East, Muslim-Christian relations, Middle Eastern politics, Arabic culture and mass media, and social issues related to globalisation, migration, diasporas, and identity. She is the author of two monographs in Polish – *Modern Assyrians and Arameans. Middle Eastern Christians in Search of Their National Identity* (2014) and *Modern Assyrian/Syriac Diaspora in Sweden* (2018). She has written over 70 articles and edited 11 joint publications, including *An Introduction to Foreign Policy of Muslim Countries in the Middle East and Northern Africa* (2018).

The author knows the community in question inside out (...) Within an extensive European research project, the author has collected an abundance of research material and developed a comprehensive, original analysis of the community of Middle Eastern Christians in Sweden. The author's scientific curiosity and dedication has allowed her to discover many new and important issues. This publication contains a great deal of knowledge, and its style of writing makes it a pleasure to read.

*Professor Katarzyna Górak-Sosnowska
SGH Warsaw School of Economics*

This publication is a strikingly original contribution to its scientific field. The descriptions and conclusions featured in this monographic study exemplify a wide range of problems related to the assimilation and integration of a national and religious minority in a European country which faces the issue of accepting refugees. (...) Marta Woźniak-Bobińska's work can be used as reference, research, and study material by local and national institutions dealing with migration issues.

*Professor Rafał Ożarowski
University of Business and Administration in Gdynia*



FACULTY OF
INTERNATIONAL AND
POLITICAL STUDIES
University of Łódź



Marta Woźniak-Bobińska

Modern Assyrian/Syriac Diaspora in Sweden

Marta Woźniak-Bobińska

Modern Assyrian/Syriac Diaspora in Sweden

For
MY HUSBAND

Marta Woźniak-Bobińska

*Modern Assyrian/Syriac
Diaspora in Sweden*

Translated by Marta Malina Moraczewska

Proofread by Steven Parmee

Department of Middle East and North Africa
University of Lodz

© Copyright by Marta Woźniak-Bobińska, Lodz 2020
© Copyright for this edition by the University of Lodz, Lodz 2020

Reviewers

Prof. Katarzyna Górak-Sosnowska
SGH Warsaw School of Economics

Prof. Rafał Ożarowski
University of Business and Administration in Gdynia

Typesetting
Bożena Walicka

Cover design
Katarzyna Turkowska

Cover photo: © Depositphotos.com/Morphart

This project received funding from the European Union's Seventh Framework Programme for research, technological development and demonstration under grant agreement no. 291827. The project Defining and Identifying Middle Eastern Christian Communities in Europe was financially supported by the HERA Joint Research Programme (www.heranet.info).

The translation of this book into English was co-financed by the Dean of the Faculty of the International and Political Studies, University of Lodz, and the Head of the Department of the Middle East and North Africa, University of Lodz.

The original version of this book entitled *Współczesna diaspora asyryjsko-aramejska w Szwecji* (ISBN 978-83-8142-360-1, e-ISBN 978-83-8142-361-8) was published by the Lodz University Press (WUŁ) in 2018.

Published by the Department of Middle East and North Africa
University of Lodz

ISBN: 978-83-63547-11-0
DOI: 10.18778/63547-11-0

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction	9
Theoretical and methodological considerations	23
1. Research methods	26
2. Main categories	35
3. The John W. Berry model	40
4. Biculturalism	43
5. Integration	44
Chapter 1. Sweden's migration and integration policy	47
1.1. The formation of Swedish statehood	48
1.2. The political system of Sweden	51
1.3. The party system	53
1.4. The welfare state and the role of the Social Democratic Party	54
1.5. Multiculturalism, the Swedish way	57
1.6. The Swedish immigration and integration policy system	66
1.7. Church-state relations in Sweden	71
1.8. The Swedish model	75
1.9. Summary	77
Chapter 2. Assyrians/Syriacs: History of the community in the Middle East	79
2.1. Ancient roots of Syriac Churches	81
2.2. The Assyrian Church of the East	83
2.3. The Chaldean Catholic Church	86
2.4. The Syriac Orthodox Church	89
2.5. The Syriac Catholic Church	92
2.6. Assyrian/Syriac Protestant Churches	92
2.7. Under Muslim rule	93
2.8. The Ottoman Empire – the millet system	94
2.9. The difficult 20th century: Seyfo, Simele	95
2.10. The functioning of the communities in Middle Eastern countries	99
2.11. Assyrian nationalism	108
2.12. Assyrian political parties	114
2.13. Summary	117

Chapter 3. The Assyrian/Syriac diaspora in Sweden: the stages and forms of institutionalisation	119
3.1. Reasons for emigrating to Sweden	120
3.2. The history of Assyrian/Syriac emigration to Sweden	123
3.3. Beginnings of the socialisation of migrants in Swedish society and state	131
3.4. Assyrian/Syriac Churches in Sweden	138
3.5. Assyrian/Syriac associations in Sweden	141
3.6. Outline of the activities of Assyrian/Syriac institutions in Sweden	144
3.7. Summary	147
 Chapter 4. The Assyrian/Syriac diaspora in Sweden – internal dynamics of the community	 149
4.1. Religion and the role of the Church	150
4.2. Access to religious buildings versus religious practices	154
4.3. Assyrian/Syriac homes	161
4.4. Languages used by the Church	163
4.5. Languages used in everyday life	166
4.6. Traditions and rituals	171
4.7. The role of young people	181
4.8. Intergenerational relations	184
4.9. The position of women	188
4.10. Countries of origin	193
4.11. The last wave of migration and its influence on the community ...	194
4.12. Secular <i>versus</i> clerical	198
4.13. The Assyrian-Syriac conflict	200
4.14. Self-identification	203
4.15. Football and national identity	210
4.16. Leaders and their perception by the community	215
4.17. Challenges facing the community	218
4.18. Summary	220
 Chapter 5. The Assyrian/Syriac diaspora in relation to the socio-political environment of Sweden	 223
5.1. Assyrians/Syriacs <i>versus</i> ethnic Swedes	224
5.2. Model citizens?	228
5.3. Södertälje – the Assyrian/Syriac “capital city”	233
5.4. Moral issues and debates	239
5.5. Relationship with the Church of Sweden	244
5.6. Ecumenical relations on a national level	248
5.7. Ecumenical relations on a local level	252

5.8. Relations with Muslims	256
5.9. Assyrians/Syriacs and other migrants	261
5.10. Religion as taboo and the problem of misidentification	263
5.11. The image of Assyrians/Syriacs in the media	265
5.12. Political engagement	268
5.13. Summary	279
Chapter 6. The Assyrian/Syriac diaspora in Sweden and its transnational connections	285
6.1. Transnational contacts and relationships: family ties	287
6.2. Transnational connections of Syriac Churches in Sweden	292
6.3. Assyrians Without Borders as an example of a transnational aid organisation	295
6.4. A Demand for Action as an example of a transnational political organisation	298
6.5. Assyrians/Syriacs in Sweden and politics in their countries of origin ...	301
6.6. A return to the homeland?	309
6.7. Summary	317
Conclusions	319
Bibliography	329
List of Charts, Figures, Illustrations and Tables	367

INTRODUCTION

This book would not have been written were it not for an evening I spent with four colleagues at Oxford University in July 2011. We had all come for an international conference on diasporas, which was held in the venerable, ivy-clad walls of Mansfield College: Dr Fiona McCallum from the University of St. Andrews, Scotland; Dr Lise Paulsen Galal from Roskilde University, Denmark; Professor Annika Rabo from Stockholm University, Sweden; and me, representing the University of Łódź, Poland. We were connected by our shared interest in a relatively obscure field of research: Middle Eastern Christians. Our interest was not in Christians from the pages of the Bible, but in the people living today, fighting for survival in their homelands and striving to maintain or redefine their identities in the diaspora. Dr Fiona McCallum suggested that we join forces. We all agreed: as specialists in political science, international relations and anthropology, our skills and knowledge complemented each other, and the situation of Middle Eastern Christians in the diaspora was a subject not as well researched as, for example, the integration of Muslims in the West.

A year later, we came across an opportunity. The European consortium HERA – Humanities in the European Research Area – announced a competition within the 7th Framework Programme for Research. The lead theme was cultural encounters. In August 2012, Fiona and Lise flew to Łódź (Annika had to resign due to her engagement in other projects). The three of us established the basic framework of what would later be called a model HERA project – but first, we had to compete with almost 600 other research teams. After a lengthy submission process and a long wait, on March 28, 2013, Fiona gave us electrifying news – our project was selected and we were among the 18 winning teams! Between 2013 and 2015, the project Defining and Identifying Middle Eastern Christian Communities in Europe¹ – in short, DIMECCE – absorbed us to an unforeseen extent.

¹ See: <https://arts.st-andrews.ac.uk/dimecce/>. This project received funding from the European Union's Seventh Framework Programme for research, technological development and demonstration under grant agreement no. 291827. The project

We selected three countries – the United Kingdom, Sweden and Denmark, and in each country there were three groups: Copts, Assyrians/Syriacs² and Iraqi Christians. Fiona managed the project in her native United Kingdom, Lise in Denmark; Sweden was assigned to me. Why this country? Sweden is home to thousands of Assyrians/Syriacs, who Rakel Chukri describes as “best in class” among immigrants.³ Sweden was where, in 2001, I had my first opportunity to visit a Syriac Orthodox church and listen to spoken Aramaic. Since then, I have visited this Scandinavian country several times, expanding my scientific contact network thanks to many colleagues and advisors, including Professor Witold Witakowski and his wife, Professor Ewa Balicka-Witakowska.

When Annika withdrew her candidacy, I decided to lead the research in Sweden. Making this a reality was not easy – it required a sabbatical leave from my home University of Łódź, and three long stays in Sweden in two of the largest Assyrian/Syriac communities – in Stockholm and in Södertälje near Stockholm. Being able to speak Arabic turned out to be extremely useful: many things in Södertälje – sometimes called Mesopotälje⁴ due to the large number of Christian refugees from Iraq and Syria – could be arranged in this language. My local Assyrian assistant, Danielle Barsoum Malki, who speaks English, Swedish, French, and Western Neo-Aramaic, was of invaluable assistance. In addition to translating from Swedish and Aramaic, she arranged meetings with interviewees and looked for focus group participants. Danielle kindly introduced me to her family – thanks to her and her husband Robel Malki, I was able to witness the daily life of three generations of Assyrian people living in Sweden. Back in Poland, I had the assistance of two more people – Dorota Ścisłewska and Alexan-

Defining and Identifying Middle Eastern Christian Communities in Europe was financially supported by the HERA Joint Research Programme (www.heranet.info).

² It is one community, whose members began to identify as either Assyrians or Syriacs/Arameans in the second half of the 20th century. The former perceived themselves mainly in ethnic terms, while for the latter, religion was more important. Some members of the community disagree with this division and define themselves as Assyrians/Syriacs. More information about this division and why it took place can be found later in this book.

³ R. Chukri, *Vi syrianer är bäst i klassen*, “Expressen”, 20.09.2005, <https://www.expressen.se/debatt/vi-syrianer-ar-bast-i-klassen/>, accessed on January 26, 2018.

⁴ The Mesopotamian *Tälje* (the Swedish word *söder* means ‘south’ while *tälje* is a proper name). Cf. J. Mack, *Making Mesopotälje*, [in:] eadem, *The Construction of Equality: Syriac Immigration and the Swedish City*, Minneapolis–London 2017, p. 91.

der Parmee, who devotedly transcribed my English-language interviews (those conducted in Aramaic were transcribed by Danielle, those in Arabic were sent to the University of St. Andrews).

Both Fiona and Lise also had help – Dr Alistair Hunter assisted in the British part of the project, and Dr Sara Lei Sparre on the Danish side. We stayed in regular contact by e-mail, took part in study visits,⁵ and presented partial research results at international conferences.⁶ We did our best to divide our work fairly.

This volume represents the results of my own research in Sweden, and quotes only the interviews I had personally conducted. The methodology is partially based on the jointly developed approach (constructivism, qualitative and quantitative methods). However, the choice of theoretical framework (politology of religion), the genetic method, systems analysis, as well as referring to specific researchers and their concepts (including John W. Berry, Stella Ting-Toomey, Jean S. Phinney and Hartmut Esser) were my selection.

The subject of this book is the Assyrian/Syriac community, and its purpose is to describe the formation and functioning of the diaspora of these Middle Eastern Christians in Sweden. Assyrians/Syriacs,⁷ called *Assyrier/Syrianer* in Swedish,⁸ found themselves in Scandinavia

⁵ Multi-sited fieldwork helped us to identify more relevant analytical concepts to understand the complexity of each site. Cf. L. Paulsen Galal, A. Hunter, F. McCallum, S.L. Sparre, M. Wozniak-Bobinska, *Middle Eastern Christian Spaces in Europe: Multi-sited and Super-diverse*, “Journal of Religion in Europe”, Vol. 9, No. 1, 2016.

⁶ Their full list can be found on the project website: https://arts.st-andrews.ac.uk/dimecce/?page_id=922.

⁷ In subject literature, single-word terms were often used to describe the identity of Christians belonging to the Assyrian Church of the East, the Chaldean Catholic Church, the Syriac Orthodox Church, as well as the Protestant and Catholic groups derived from them. Cf. D. Gaunt, *Identity and the Assyrian Genocide*, [in:] *Shatterzone of Empires. Coexistence and Violence in the German, Habsburg, Russian and Ottoman Borderlands*, ed. O. Bartov, E.D. Weitz, Bloomington 2013, p. 331. However, in the context of the division of the Swedish community into two subgroups, I decided to use the compound name well-attested in English – Assyrians/Syriacs (in Polish version, I wrote about Assyrians/Arameans because the term “Aramean” is in turn well-established in the Polish scholarship unlike neologism “Syriac”).

⁸ Some translate the second part of the word as *Syrians*, others use the neologism *Syriacs*. Cf. A. Mrozek, *Pierwsze wieki chrześcijaństwa*, “Porównawcze Studia Cywilizacji. The Polish Journal of the Art and Culture” 3, 2012, p. 138. The English term *Syrians* was initially used in research and then gradually replaced by *Syriacs*. Cf. S. Donabed, *Rethinking nationalism and an appellative conundrum: historiography and politics in Iraq*, “National Identities”, Vol. 14, No. 2, June 2012, p. 117. I tend to follow the self-identification of my respondents, some of whom call themselves Syrians or Syriacs.

due to the imperative of escaping war as well as the meagre prospects in Turkey, Syria, Iraq and Lebanon.⁹

They settled in various localities, one of which became a place of special significance. Södertälje, a city on the outskirts of Stockholm, underwent a grassroots transformation¹⁰ to such an extent that ethnic Swedes began to nickname it “Mesopotälje”, “Syriantälje”¹¹ or “Little Assyria”.¹² Rakel Chukri, a journalist for the Swedish newspaper “Expressen”, described Södertälje as “the capital of an ethnic group that does not have its own state.”¹³ This was where an internal conflict erupted, dividing the community into two factions – Assyrian and Syriac. This fracture has gradually spread to most countries with Assyrian/Syriac communities, and so far, little seems to suggest that it will be overcome in the near future, despite the best intentions of those who emphasize the common roots of all *Suryoye*.¹⁴

This book also touches on Swedish ideals, which include global progress, multiculturalism, and the development of an optimum immigration policy. If one were to summarise the history of Assyrians/Syriacs in Sweden in a few sentences, the result would be a success story for Swedish immigration policies, thanks to which – and thanks to the hard work of the immigrants themselves – their community undoubtedly found its place and advanced its position in society. This process did not happen seamlessly, though; if it had, the police would not need to face the so-called “mafia of Södertälje” and native Swedes would not have moved out of neighbourhoods settled by Christian immigrants

⁹ Tens of thousands of Assyrians live in present-day Iran, but during my research in Sweden I did not come across any groups originating from this country. After the Islamic Revolution in 1979, Assyrians who chose to emigrate headed mainly for the United States. More about Assyrians in Iran, cf. M. Woźniak, *Współcześni Asyryjczycy i Aramejczycy: bliskowschodni chrześcijanie w poszukiwaniu tożsamości narodowej*, Łódź 2012, pp. 122–125; M. Rzepka, *Payām-e Āsuriyān – the Assyro-Chaldean publications in the Persian language in post-revolutionary Iran*, “Orientalia Christiana Cracoviensia” 2, 2010; idem, *Zanikająca społeczność. Katolicki Kościół Chaldejski w Iranie po rewolucji irańskiej 1979 roku*, “Teologia i Człowiek”, Vol. 40, No. 4, 2017.

¹⁰ J. Mack, op. cit., pp. 1–18.

¹¹ Thiry, *Asyryjska Soccer*, <http://www.shlama.be/shlama/content/view/249/213/>, accessed on January 8, 2018.

¹² A. Rabo, “*Without our church we will disappear*”: *Syrian Orthodox Christians in diaspora and the family law of the church*, [in:] *Family, religion and law: cultural encounters in Europe*, ed. P. Shah, M.-C. Foblets, M. Rohe, Farnham 2014, p. 183.

¹³ R. Chukri, op. cit.

¹⁴ A proper name in the Aramaic language. In English script: *Suryoye*. Cf. A. Rabo, op. cit., p. 184. The singular form is *Suryoyo*.

from the Middle East. Where some see mostly successes, others may notice struggles; the reality tends to be complex and does not lend itself to black-and-white dichotomies.

The main hypothesis of this book is that the Assyrian/Syriac community would not have been what it is today if its members had not come to Sweden. The ethno-national identity of this community was largely constructed in the Swedish diaspora and is considerably more complex than it had been previously described in research. When these Middle Eastern Christians arrived in Scandinavia, they thought of themselves primarily in religious categories – as Syriac, or Syrian Christians; only a few saw themselves as ethnic Assyrians. Assyrian – and then Syriac/Aramean – activists devoted ample energy and effort to (re)create Assyrian, and then Syriac/Aramean identities in the diaspora. They were aided by generous donations from Swedish people as well as institutions and were supported by Swedish laws which emphasize the precedence of ethnicity over religious affiliation. These laws enabled the newcomers to create a significant number of Assyrian and Syriac/Aramean organisations capable of exerting influence both locally and globally. At the same time, another gradual process of adopting Swedish values took place – despite marked cultural differences between the immigrant community and the host society, Assyrians/Syriacs became a model of a well-integrated group.

In order to verify the above hypothesis, appropriate research questions must be asked concerning Assyrian/Syriac identity in Sweden, as well as social interactions at various levels, both between individuals and groups, in both the institutional sphere and in everyday life. These questions refer to three aspects of the community: 1. internal dynamics, 2. the socio-political environment, 3. transnational connections.¹⁵

Ad 1. What divisions can be found within the Assyrian/Syriac community in Sweden? My previous research¹⁶ had demonstrated that this group is not a monolith, and various actors compete with each other. These include Churches, which have long held the monopoly on power and representation (performing both spiritual and worldly functions),

¹⁵ We discussed these three themes at the DIMECCE conference: Middle Eastern Christians in Diaspora: Past and Present, Continuity and Change, held in St. Andrews, 26th–27th May 2015, https://arts.st-andrews.ac.uk/dimecce/?page_id=1007.

¹⁶ M. Woźniak, *National and Social Identity Construction among the Modern Assyrians/Syrians*, “Parole de l’Orient” 36, 2011, pp. 569–583; eadem, *The Modern Arameans: In Search for National Identity*, “Parole de l’Orient” 40, 2015, pp. 483–496.

but also secular organisations as well as influential individuals who represent an alternative to religious leadership.

Ad 2. How are Assyrians/Syriacs perceived in Sweden? Are they distinguished from other migrants (especially Muslims from the Middle East) in the national, and social context? Does the correct or incorrect identification of their community affect specific actions of the authorities or the adoption of specific integration policies?

Ad 3. How are the interactions that used to take place in the countries of origin implemented in the new reality? For example: do Assyrians/Syriacs transfer their experiences from their homelands to Sweden and therefore maintain their prejudices against Muslims developed in the Middle East? Or do they, due to cultural proximity, seek a common ground instead? How do Swedish authorities respond to the relationship between Middle Eastern Christians and Muslims? What are the relations between people belonging to different Middle Eastern Churches?¹⁷

I attempt to provide answers to the above questions in several logically interrelated chapters. Following the initial sections devoted to theory and methodology, chapter one discusses the Swedish political system, with a particular emphasis on its immigration policy and church-state relations. Chapter two is an outline of the history of the Assyrian/Syriac minority in the Middle East, while chapter three describes the history of this community in Sweden. The internal dynamics of the Assyrian/Syriac community in Sweden is discussed in chapter four; its relations with the host society are the subject of chapter five, and its transnational connections are discussed in chapter six.

The history of Sweden, its political system and immigration policy have been the subject of many publications. The first chapter of this book does not aim to discover new facts or ideas, but is provided in order to introduce basic facts from the area of political science and international relations to those readers who may not have been interested in recent Scandinavian history. Without a socio-political background it would be

¹⁷ As part of the DIMECCE project, I conducted five interviews with Copts that are not cited in this book. Additionally, I conducted several interviews, which for the purposes of the project were called “interviews with Iraqi Christians”, and were categorised as interviews with Assyrians or Chaldeans (members of the Chaldean Catholic Church, which split from the Assyrian Church of the East in the 16th century). When I write about Assyrians/Syriacs, I *de facto* include Assyrians, Syriacs/Arameans and Chaldeans – the last term is usually omitted for more concise language.

difficult to fully understand the situation of Assyrian/Syriac immigrants, and that of their children. I have mainly referred to Anna Kobierecka's *Między wielokulturowością a integracją. Ewolucja polityki Szwecji w świetle zmieniających się wyzwań migracyjnych*¹⁸ and a slightly earlier publication written by Monika Banaś *Szwedzka polityka integracyjna wobec imigrantów*.¹⁹

Readers interested in the situation of contemporary Assyrians/Syriacs across the world may find of interest my previous monograph, which was primarily based on quantitative research.²⁰ In Poland, a large number of historical and ethnographic articles discussing the Assyrian community, both in the Middle East and in the diaspora, were written by Michael Abdalla.²¹ Interesting studies were also conducted by the late expert on Kurds – Leszek Dzięgiel, who characterised the creation of the “resurrected Assyria” myth²² with great insight.

An excellent English-language book discussing the fate of the Assyrian/Syriac community in Europe, especially in Germany and Sweden, is Naures Atto's *Hostages in the homeland, orphans in the diaspora: identity discourses among the Assyrian/Syriac elites in the European diaspora* – a work which I often quote.²³ Another classic study is *North to Another Country: The Formation of a Suryoyo Community in Sweden* by Ulf Björklund.²⁴ *The Assyrian Heritage: Threads of Continuity and Influence*, a collective work edited by Önver A. Cetrez, Sargon G. Donabed

¹⁸ A. Kobierecka, *Między wielokulturowością a integracją. Ewolucja polityki Szwecji w świetle zmieniających się wyzwań migracyjnych*, Łódź 2016.

¹⁹ M. Banaś, *Szwedzka polityka integracyjna wobec imigrantów*, Kraków 2011.

²⁰ M. Woźniak, *Współcześni Asyryjczycy i Aramejczycy...*

²¹ M. Abdalla, *Kultura żywienia dawnych i współczesnych Asyryjczyków*, Warsaw 2001; idem, *Asyryjska diaspora*, “Sprawy Narodowościowe. Seria nowa”, Vol. 3, No. 1(4), 1994; idem, *Problemy kultury ludności asyryjskiej na pograniczu syryjsko-turecko-irackim*, [in:] *Pogranicze jako problem kultury*, ed. T. Smolińska, Opole 1994; idem, *The fasting traditions among Assyrian Christians*, [in:] *Islam i chrześcijaństwo. Materiały sympozjum, Kraków 12–14 IV 1994*, ed. A. Zaborski, Kraków 1995; idem, *Asyryjczycy w Tur Abdinie między kurdyjskim młotem a tureckim mieczem*, [in:] *Konflikty etniczne. Źródła – typy – sposoby rozstrzygnięcia*, ed. I. Kabzińska-Stawarz, S. Szykiewicz, Warsaw 1996.

²² L. Dzięgiel, *Współcześni Asyryjczycy: nowy obszar badań etnografii?*, “Lud” 70, 1986; idem, *Archaeology and martyrology: sources of the integration of Assyrian Christian communities in the contemporary world*, “Hemispheres. Studies on Cultures and Societies” 5, 1988; idem, *Asyria zamartwychwstała: etnograf wobec mitów i faktów*, “Zeszyty Naukowe Uniwersytetu Jagiellońskiego. Prace Etnograficzne” 28, 1991.

²³ N. Atto, *Hostages in the homeland, orphans in the diaspora: identity discourses among the Assyrian/Syriac elites in the European diaspora*, Leiden 2011.

²⁴ U. Björklund, *North to Another Country: The Formation of a Suryoyo Community in Sweden*, Stockholm 1981.

and Aryo Makko,²⁵ is also a valuable study, as are other publications by these three scholars.²⁶ Other noteworthy contributions to subject literature were made by Annika Rabo,²⁷ Abdulmesih BarAbraham,²⁸ Soner Onder²⁹ and Fuat Deniz.³⁰

Additionally, worthwhile insights can be gained from the reports of the Inanna Foundation, prepared within the “Exchanging Best Practices in the Integration of Assyrians in Europe” (EPIA) project; a particularly interesting report is entitled *Best Practices in the Integration of Assyrians in Europe*.³¹

In 2017, when the work on this book was well advanced, two important new studies were published, to both of which I often refer. The first is *The Construction of Equality. Syriac Immigration and the Swedish City* by Jennifer Mack,³² an American architect who has been living in Sweden for several years. The city in the title is, of course, Södertälje, whose urban and social character has been reshaped by Christian immigrants from the Middle East. The second publication is written by Johny Messo, the foremost advocate of Aramean nationalism and long-time head of the World Council of Arameans (Syriacs) – *Arameans and the Making of “Assyrians”. The Last Aramaic-speaking Christians of the Middle East*.³³ As the title suggests, the author aims to prove that the Assyrian identity was constructed, unlike the Aramean heritage.

²⁵ *The Assyrian Heritage: Threads of Continuity and Influence*, ed. Ö.A. Cetrez, S.G. Donabed, A. Makko, Uppsala 2012.

²⁶ Ö.A. Cetrez, *Meaning-making variations in acculturation and ritualization. A multi-generational study of Suroyo migrants in Sweden*, Uppsala 2005; S. Donabed, *Reforging a Forgotten History: Iraq and the Assyrians in the Twentieth Century*, Edinburgh 2015; A. Makko, *In Search of a New Home: The Assyrian Diaspora in Sweden*, [in:] *Migration from Turkey to Sweden: Integration, Belonging and Transnational Community*, ed. B. Başer, P.T. Levin, London 2017.

²⁷ A. Rabo, op. cit.

²⁸ A. BarAbraham, *Safeguarding the Cross: Emergence of Christian Militias in Iraq and Syria*, [in:] *Middle Eastern Christians and Europe: Historical Legacies and Present Challenges*, ed. A. Schmoller, Wien 2018.

²⁹ S. Onder, *Minority Rights in Turkey: Quo Vadis, Assyrians?*, [in:] *The Slow Disappearance of the Syriacs from Turkey and of the Grounds of the Mor Gabriel Monastery*, ed. P. Omtzigt, M.K. Tozman, A. Tyndall, Zurich–Berlin 2012.

³⁰ F. Deniz, *En minoritets odysse: upprätthållande och transformation av etnisk identitet i förhållande till moderniseringsprocesser: det assyriska exemplet*, Uppsala 1999.

³¹ <http://www.inannafoundation.org/>.

³² J. Mack, op. cit.

³³ J. Messo, *Arameans and the Making of “Assyrians”. The Last Aramaic-speaking Christians of the Middle East*, Germany 2017.

Swedish-language publications focus primarily on the history of Assyrian/Syriac immigration to Sweden and the newcomers' first decades in Scandinavia.³⁴ There is a lack of in-depth analytical studies of the current situation of Assyrians/Syriacs in Sweden – this constitutes a gap in currently available research. Issues which have not yet been studied, or were only signalled, include the complex self-identification of Assyrians/Syriacs in Sweden (which is not limited to a simple dichotomy), political engagement within the community, the position of women, the role of leaders and the relations between Assyrians/Syriacs and Muslims. Transnational connections of the Assyrian/Syriac diaspora in Sweden were also practically unexplored. This explains the avid interest of the Swedish Agency for Support to Faith Communities (SST), a very well-informed Swedish institution, in the DIMECCE project research.³⁵

This is because even the most interesting reports by journalists from all around the globe, who visit Södertälje for a day or two³⁶ cannot replace the results of original, in-depth research of the identity and interactions between the hosts and the newcomers. In the DIMECCE project, we observed the process of identity formation in selected groups; we discovered the significance of religion, ethnicity and culture in the

³⁴ See: B. Knutsson, *Assur eller Aram: språklig, religiös och nationell identifikation hos Sveriges assyrier och syrianer*, SIV Rapport, No. 4/82, Norrköping 1982; O. Pripp, *Att vara sin egen: om småföretagande bland invandrare – mönster, motiv och möten*, Tumba 1994; idem, *Företagande i minoritet: om etnicitet, strategier och resurser bland assyrier och syrianer i Södertälje*, Tumba 2001; V. Kucukkaplan, M. Freyne-Lindhagen, *Syrianska kvinnobilder*, Örebro 2003; *Jag behöver rötter och vingar om assyrisk/syriansk identitet i Sverige*, ed. G. Gunner, S. Halvardson, Skellefteå 2005; K. Nordgren, *Vems är historien?: historia som medvetande, kultur och handling i det mångkulturella Sverige*, Umeå 2006; A. Ackfeldt, D.-E. Andersson, *Assyrier och Syrianer i Sverige: en forskningsöversikt med bibliografi*, Lund 2012; S. Lundgren, *Hundra år av tveksamhet: Osmanska folkordet på kristna och Sveriges reaction*, Södertälje 2015.

³⁵ One of the five publications on Middle Eastern Christians in Sweden to be linked on the SST webpage was an electronic version of a brochure written within the DIMECCE project: S.L. Sparre, A. Hunter, A.R. Jørgensen, L. Paulsen Galal, F. McCallum, M. Wozniak, *Middle Eastern Christians in Europe. Histories, Cultures and Communities*, St. Andrews 2015. It appears on the SST page as *Mellanösterns kristna i Europa: historier, kulturer och samfund*, M. Wozniak (med flera), 2015: <http://www.myndighetensst.se/kunskap/religionsliv---en-kunskapsbank-om-trossamfund-och-religion/ortodoxa-och-osterlandska-kyrkor.html>, accessed on May 24, 2018.

³⁶ There are, of course, positive exceptions; one of them is Dariusz Rosiak's book *Ziarno i krew. Podróż śladami bliskowschodnich chrześcijan*, Wołowiec 2015. The author, thanks to his inquisitiveness and experience, was able to get as close to the core of the problem as possible even during a short stay among the discussed community.

process of acquiring experience in a new society. We also looked at the role of transnational networks in creating what Benedict Anderson calls “imagined communities”.³⁷ We also referred to the different ways in which institutions and organisations of the host society approach the newcomers.

All of this is part of a broader discussion regarding common European values, which has been taking place within the European Union for a number of years. While analysing the current meaning of multiculturalism it might be worthwhile to recall the thoughts of Remy Brague, who pointed to the “genius” of Europe, which stemmed from the Roman tradition and manifested itself as the ability to “watch, receive and transmit”, and to simultaneously evolve when in contact with the new. At one time, this Roman approach to other cultures was strengthened by contact with Christianity.³⁸ Today, Europe’s Christian roots, manifested through its institutions, can on the one hand provide a foundation for good relations with migrants of the same faith. On the other hand, cultural differences embedded in customs and heritage may turn out to be more important than the foundation of a common religion. Cultural integration and cultural differences are influenced by identity strategies implemented by immigrant communities. These, in turn, result from the policies of specific countries, which translate into the level of pluralism experienced by communities in everyday life. The transnational nature of these communities also influences the choice of identity strategies.

The DIMECCE project was an attempt to adopt a transnational perspective and to view intercultural interactions as encounters at different levels – not solely as interactions between the immigrants and the host society. The “Others” significant for Middle Eastern Christians could belong to the national or religious majority in old and new homelands, but could also be members of other Christian Churches or followers of other religions, such as Muslims.³⁹ Since the beginning of the 21st century, Muslims living in the West have received a lot of attention from academia, governments and the media, while Middle Eastern Christian communities remain almost

³⁷ B. Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections of the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, London 1983.

³⁸ R. Brague, *Il futuro dell’Occidente*, Milan 1998, p. 118.

³⁹ Cf. L. Paulsen Galal, A. Hunter, F. McCallum, S.L. Sparre, M. Wozniak-Bobinska, op. cit., pp. 17–21.

unknown to these entities,⁴⁰ appearing in press articles and television coverage mainly in the context of the persecutions they face in Egypt, Syria or Iraq.⁴¹ Meanwhile, the similarities and differences between groups originating from one geographical area may be of great interest to those who wish to build a multi-ethnic and peaceful multi-religious Europe.

A separate issue is secularism, understood in various terms and implemented differently in each member state of the European Union. Recently, European discourse on secularism has revolved around the presence of Muslims in Europe, and has often adopted a somewhat dichotomous understanding of what is secular and what is not. Looking at secularism through the eyes of Middle Eastern Christians may help to break this dichotomy and deepen the reflection on the significance of religious differences for the shape of intercultural encounters.⁴² This in turn may allow for the development of better integration models.

In Europe, the issues of migration and integration are currently among the most important social problems. It is certainly worthwhile gaining knowledge and awareness of these processes, as they happen in our neighbouring countries, in order to draw on their positive and negative experiences in the future. It is not an overstatement to suggest that the descriptions and conclusions contained in this publication exemplify a full range of dilemmas related to the integration of a Middle Eastern ethnic and religious group in a European country which faces the challenge of accepting refugees. Hopefully, institutions which are

⁴⁰ Traditionally, scholars have dealt with Middle Eastern Christians in the context of their historical roots, beliefs, and rituals of various Oriental Churches. Only recently have there been requests to distinguish studies on Middle Eastern Christians within the sciences of politics and international relations, and thus to place emphasis on the study of their social functioning and political involvement. Cf. F. McCallum, *Christians in the Middle East: A New Subfield?*, "International Journal of Middle East Studies", Vol. 42, No. 3, August 2010.

⁴¹ As Andreas Schmöller rightly points out, it is high time to end the narrative depicting Middle Eastern Christians solely as victims. Their Churches and they themselves have been and are important actors who contribute to changes in their countries of residence. Idem, *Introduction*, [in:] *Middle Eastern Christians and Europe...*, p. 10.

⁴² Cf. F. McCallum, *Religion but Still a Marginalized Other: Middle Eastern Christians' Encounters with Political Secularism in the United Kingdom*, "Journal of Church and State", Vol. 61, No. 2, Spring 2019; S. Lei Sparre, *(In)visibility and the Muslim other: Narratives of flight and religious identity among Iraqi Christians in Denmark*, "Ethnicities" 2020.

dealing directly with refugees will find this monograph useful; this would very much illustrate the practical usefulness of my research and its results presented in this book.

The DIMECCE project opened many European doors for me. Over the last few years, I have learnt a lot from my colleagues in Scotland and Denmark – Fiona, Alistair, Lise and Sara. I also benefited from the experience of our non-academic partners from the Brussels Ecumenical Center of the Churches' Commission for Migrants in Europe⁴³ – Dr Torsten Moritz, Doris Peschke and Håkan Sandvik, and gained important insights from members of the Advisory Board – Dr Anthony O'Mahony from Heythrop College in London, Professor Annika Rabo from the Stockholm University, Dr Frederick Volpi of the University of St. Andrews and Professor Margit Warburg from the University of Copenhagen.

I would like to thank my colleagues working on the project, advisers and mentors for sharing their knowledge so gladly. My assistants, for their help and hours of painstaking transcription of interviews. Tens of respondents from among Middle Eastern Christians as well as Swedish interviewees, for their trust and their time. I would like to thank the Faculty of International Relations and Political Studies at the University of Łódź, the Director of my Department, Professor Marek Dziekan, and my colleagues from the Department of the Middle East and North Africa, for their support. Professor Iza-bela Kończak, for reading the manuscript and her great kindness. The reviewers – Professor Katarzyna Górak-Sosnowska and Professor Rafał Ożarowski – for their insightful comments that significantly influenced the final shape of this book. Dr Sebastian Bednarowicz and Dr Marcin Rzepka, for valuable materials about Assyrians. I owe huge thanks to the translator Marta Malina Moraczewska and proofreader Steven Parmee for their hard work to grasp the meaning of my book.

I am grateful to my husband for patiently waiting for my every return from Sweden, for encouraging me and sharing responsibilities at home. I would like to thank both our mothers for looking after my

⁴³ Churches' Commission for Migrants in Europe, CCME: <http://www.ccme.be/>.

daughter, who was a few months old when I started writing this book. My brother, for his suggestion to visually represent the various Assyrian/Syriac ethnic identities in Sweden and for his advice on the technical aspects of the online survey. This book would not have been written without the support of my family.

THEORETICAL AND METHODOLOGICAL CONSIDERATIONS

My research, concerning both the world of politics and that of religion, belongs to **political science of religion** – an area of study within political science which aims to analyse the influence of religion on politics and vice versa. The term *Religionspolitologie* was first used by Claus-Ekkehard Bärsch in the early 1990s.¹ Religion entered the mainstream of political studies at the beginning of the 21st century.² In the United States, political science of religion is now taught in almost all institutes of political science, while in Europe it is taught at a number of institutions including the University of Cambridge and the University of Belgrade.³ It seems that the further development of this field is only a matter of time – and mine is not an isolated view.⁴

¹ C.-E. Bärsch, *Volk und Nation. Das Problem kollektiver Identität unter der Perspektive der Religionspolitologie*, [in:] *Demokratie, Verfassung und Nation: Die politische Integration moderner Gesellschaften*, ed. J. Gebhardt, Baden–Baden 1994, pp. 52–71. Cited in: *Implementacja zasad religijnych w sferze politycznej*, ed. R. Michalak, Zielona Góra 2016, p. 5.

² P. Burgoński, M. Gierycz, *Politologia i religia. Wprowadzenie*, [in:] *Religia i polityka. Zarys problematyki*, ed. P. Burgoński, M. Gierycz, Warsaw 2014, p. 21.

³ At this university, Prof. Miroljub Jevtić established a journal entitled Политикологија религије (“Politikologija religije”), which is also published in English. Miroljub Jevtić is considered to be the leading promoter of the political science of religion in Europe, see the key publications: *Political Science and Religion*, “Politikologija Religije”, No. 1, 2007, pp. 59–69; idem, *Religion and Power-Essays on Politology of Religion*, Belgrade 2008; idem, *Political Relations and Religion*, Belgrade 2011; idem, *The Problems of Politology of Religion*, Belgrade 2012. Cited in: *Implementacja zasad...*, p. 5.

⁴ From November 30th to December 1st, 2017, the international conference “Relations between religion and politics as a subject of political science research” was held at the Cardinal Stefan Wyszyński University in Warsaw: <http://religionand-politicz.pl/>. One of the co-organisers was the Institute of Political Science of the University of Zielona Góra, which has been publishing the “Politology of Religion” series since 2014, <http://www.ip.uz.zgora.pl/index.php/badania-naukowe/politologia-religii>. Among Polish-language studies see: A. Paszko, *Politologia religii*, “Przegląd Religioznawczy”, No. 3–4, 1998; K. Banek, *Główne problemy politologii religii*, “Nomos. Kwartalnik Religioznawczy”, No. 34–36, 2001, pp. 18–23; idem, *Politologia religii. Zakres tematyczny, cele i perspektywy rozwoju*, “Pantheon”, No. 2, 2007, pp. 164–176; B. Grott, *Słowo wstępne*, [in:] *Religia i polityka*, ed. B. Grott, Kraków 2000, pp. 7–8. Cyt. za *Religijne determinanty polityki*, ed. R. Michalak, Zielona Góra 2014, p. 5.

In Poland, this trend is illustrated by the increasing number of new monographs and collective works – written in Polish or translated from other languages – which contain the words “politics” and “religion” in the title.⁵

Of the six research fields related to the religious and political sphere proposed by Ryszard Michalak, I am particularly interested in the second field, which concerns the direct and indirect influence of religious factors in the political sphere. As Grzegorz Babiński points out, religion is “a great mobilising force and therefore it can be very useful in the process of activating communities, particularly ethnic communities”.⁶ For Émile Durkheim, the creator of one of the most popular definitions of religion, it is one of the three – along with social ideologies and nationalist movements – elements that integrate society.⁷ I am interested in the socially mobilising aspect of religion, for example, religion as a tool for legitimising political power and the tasks carried out by political leaders. When studying the community of Middle Eastern Christians, I look at the socially integrating role of religion, the relationship between religion and democracy, and the influence of religion on the formation of national identity.⁸

A good theoretical study of the relationship between religion and national identity has recently been published in Poland.⁹ Radosław Zenderowski points out that religion frequently plays a key role in shaping national identities – contrary to the heretofore prevailing view underlining the universality and inevitability of secularisation processes and the gradual disappearance of national identities. The scholar distin-

⁵ Cf. G. Corm, *La Question religieuse au XXIe siècle. Géopolitique et crise de la post-modernité*, Paris 2007; M. Marczevska-Rytko, *Religia i polityka w globalizującym się świecie*, Lublin 2010; A. Siewierska-Chmaj, *Religia a polityka. Chrześcijaństwo*, Warsaw 2013; F. Halliday, *Islam and the Myth of Confrontation: Religion and Politics in the Middle East*, London–New York 2003.

⁶ G. Babiński, *Etniczność i religia – formy, płaszczyzny i poziomy powiązań*, [in:] *Etniczność a religia*, ed. A. Posern-Zieliński, Poznań 2003, p. 15.

⁷ W. Pawluczuk, *Religia*, [in:] *Encyklopedia Socjologii*, Vol. 3, O-R, ed. H. Domański et al., Warsaw 2000, p. 288.

⁸ See: M. Woźniak, *Asyryjski Kościół Wschodu i Syryjski Kościół Ortodoksyjny a kształtowanie się współczesnej tożsamości asyryjsko-aramejskiej*, [in:] *Religia w stosunkach międzynarodowych. 10-lecie współpracy Instytutu Stosunków Międzynarodowych Uniwersytetu Warszawskiego ze Zgromadzeniem Słowa Bożego (SVD)*, ed. A.M. Solarz, H. Schreiber, Warsaw 2012, p. 287 et seq.

⁹ R. Zenderowski, *Religia jako fundament i rdzeń tożsamości narodowej*, [in:] *Polityka jako wyraz lub następstwo religijności*, ed. R. Michalak, Zielona Góra 2015, p. 103 et seq.

guishes three models of the relationship between religion and identity: national identity is formed (historically or presently) (a) on the basis of religion or in close relation with a specific religion, much less frequently – with several religions, (b) on the basis of an overtly anti-religious ideology that strives to relegate religion from the public sphere, and – in extreme cases – also from the private sphere, (c) on the basis of programmatic or “spontaneous” religious indifference.¹⁰ I am most interested in the first case: the formation of national identity influenced significantly by religious factors.¹¹

Zenderowski describes the “mechanisms of converting” religion into national or ethnic identity. In subject literature, the concept of “religious nationalism” is described as a combination of nationalism and religion in which the two become inseparable.¹² However, this term is somewhat ambivalent. The ambivalence lies in the fact that religion can prepare the ground for nationalism, promoting its emergence and development, but it can also function as an opposing factor, as a competitive ‘provider of meaning’.¹³

An increasing number of researchers recognise the close relationship between religion, national identity and nationalism, but few, so far, have undertaken in-depth studies in this field. Zenderowski questions the role of political scientists in clarifying the relations between religion and national identity. According to the scholar, building or strengthening national identity takes place through political discourse (including nationalist discourse as its subtype) and is not an accidental activity – its aim is to preserve the group integrity. Political scientists studying the relationship between religion and national identity should therefore pay attention to the questions of nationalism, the nation-state, political power and political decisions.¹⁴

I agree with Radosław Zenderowski that research of this phenomenon should be conducted in an interdisciplinary manner, using methods appropriate for political science, but also sociology, history,

¹⁰ Ibidem, pp. 109–110.

¹¹ The flagship example of a nation’s foundation on a religious basis is the relationship of Judaism with the Jewish nation. Ibidem, p. 115.

¹² Cf. B.A. Rieffer, *Religion and Nationalism: Understanding the Consequences of a Complex Relationship*, “Ethnicities” 3, 2003, p. 225.

¹³ R. Zenderowski, *Religia a tożsamość narodowa i nacjonalizm w Europie Środkowo-Wschodniej. Między etnicznością religii a sakralizacją etnosu (narodu)*, Wrocław 2011, p. 47.

¹⁴ Cf. R. Michalak, *Wstęp. Politologia religii – postulowana subdyscyplina politologii*, [in:] *Religijne determinanty...*, pp. 5–11.

religious studies, and anthropology. Rather than aiming for “methodological purity”, perhaps we should strive to “coordinate” scientific reflections in the above-mentioned disciplines.¹⁵

1. Research methods

I have decided to adopt an interdisciplinary approach and utilise several research methods, namely: the genetic method, systems analysis, constructivism, and the qualitative and quantitative methods. **The genetic method**,¹⁶ dominant in Chapters one to three, is particularly important and valuable in political science research. It belongs to historical methods, with history and political science being closely related. Indeed, research in political science is difficult to conduct without applying this method. The task of the genetic method is to find causal relationships of a more complex nature than simple relationships resulting from the sequence of time. In Chapter one, I aim to prove that the shape of the immigration and integration policies in Sweden was strongly influenced by historical experiences of the Swedish nation. Without outlining the historical context, it would be impossible to analyse the phenomena of immigration and integration, or to draw general conclusions. Similarly, it would be impossible to study the dynamics of the Assyrian/Syriac diaspora in Sweden without presenting an outline of the history of the community – before and after migration – in Chapters two and three.

Another method used in this work is **systems analysis**, considered one of the most influential research methods in political science. Its main assumption is to present political phenomena as closely related elements of a larger whole – the system. The principles of systems analysis as a method of studying the political system in the broadest sense were presented in the 1960s by David Easton.¹⁷ The social system is a super-system in relation to the political system;¹⁸ a system is defined as “an internally ordered hierarchy of elements within a specific structure”.¹⁹ Systems analysis branches into macro-level analysis (which covers

¹⁵ R. Zenderowski, *Religia jako fundament...*, p. 104.

¹⁶ See: K. von Beyme, *Współczesne teorie polityczne*, Warsaw 2007, pp. 80–86; *Leksykon politologii*, ed. A. Antoszewski, R. Herbut, Wrocław 1997, p. 118; *Encyklopedia politologii*, Vol. 1, ed. W. Sokół, M. Żmigrodzki, Zakamycze 1999, p. 116.

¹⁷ See: D. Easton, *A Systems Analysis of Political Life*, New York–London–Sydney 1965.

¹⁸ A. Huczek, *Zastosowania analizy systemowej jako metody badawczej w naukach politycznych – perspektywa porównawcza*, “Wrocławskie Studia Erazmiańskie” 2010, p. 121.

¹⁹ A.J. Chodubski, *Wstęp do badań politologicznych*, Gdańsk 2004, p. 119.

the political system as a whole), meso-level analysis (concerning a specific subsystem within a broader political system) and micro-level analysis (focusing on an isolated element of the system, e.g. the results of an election).²⁰ All these three levels are reflected, albeit to a different degree, in my investigations. In Chapters one and five, I examine the party system in Sweden (meso-level analysis) and the political parties supported by Assyrians/Syriacs in Sweden (micro-level analysis). I devote relatively little space to the Swedish immigration and integration policy as a whole²¹ (elements of macro-level analysis).

In Chapters four to six, I combine **constructivism** with the qualitative and quantitative method. Constructivism is a paradigm in international relations, but it also functions as a more general theory of society. Constructivists perceive reality as changing, impermanent, and socially constructed – that is, existing only through an agreement made by individuals. Constructivism began to gain popularity among political scientists in the 1980s²² and has proven to be useful while researching the effects of norms and values on the behavior of political actors, and as a framework for examining identities and ideas. In the early 1990s, the so-called constructivist turn took place, that is, when existing theoretical assumptions (especially the rationalist paradigm) were abandoned, as they were considered insufficient for a good understanding of reality. Copenhagen became the European “capital” of constructivist thought; a crucial breakthrough came in 1999 with the publication of a collection of articles with a constructivist profile in the “Journal of European Public Policy”.²³

In the context of this book, constructivist views regarding ethnic identities are particularly relevant. From a constructivist standpoint, ethnic identities are always constructed and therefore contextual, dynamic and variable.²⁴ Fredrik Barth argued that ethnicity is the result of specific interactions between groups, not an innate characteristic

²⁰ Ibidem, pp. 119–120.

²¹ I am not trying to do this in more detail than Anna Kobińska, who in the aforementioned publication *Między wielokulturowością a integracją...* defined the individual elements that constitute the Swedish system in a very detailed way: legal regulations, institutional networks, organisations created by immigrants, etc.

²² A. Skolimowska, *Konstruktywizm w badaniach integracji europejskiej*, [in:] *Przeszłość – Teraźniejszość – Przyszłość. Problemy badawcze młodych politologów*, ed. D. Miłkucka-Wójtowicz, Kraków 2010, p. 224.

²³ Ibidem, p. 226.

²⁴ J. Demmers, *Theories of violent conflict: an introduction*, New York 2012, p. 26.

of human groups. In his conception, ethnic groups are not culturally isolated, as ethnic identities are interconnected and shape each other. It is the members of an ethnic group that define the so-called ethnic boundaries: on the one hand, they are able to identify the remaining members of the group, on the other hand – using the same evaluation criteria – they identify others as strangers.²⁵ This categorisation may (but does not have to) lead to prejudice, xenophobia, discrimination, and in an extreme form, genocide. According to Gordon Allport, prejudices usually emerge on an ethnic basis, and social identities influence their formation to a greater degree than the feelings or thoughts of individuals.²⁶

Another, perhaps the most important method applied in this study is the **qualitative method**. Qualitative research aims to look at the world “out there” (current realities in their natural surroundings), as well as to describe, interpret and explain social phenomena “from the inside”.²⁷ The qualitative method is suitable for studying everyday human behaviours, collecting life stories and generally gathering in-depth knowledge on a given subject. Due to its costs and needed time, qualitative research is carried out less frequently than quantitative research. Qualitative data is mainly obtained through individual and group interviews and their transcriptions, as well as through participant observations.²⁸

From the outset, the DIMECCE project team has decided to use **interviews** as the most important source of new research material. Three types of interviews were planned. The first type was one-to-one, semi-structured interviews with active members of the community, such as Church representatives, secular leaders, and active members of organisations. Forty such interviews were conducted in each of the studied countries.²⁹ Their goal was to focus on the actors’ daily interactions in the public sphere. Close attention was paid to how identity was shaped or constructed, and to the impact it had on the relations

²⁵ F. Barth, *Introduction*, [in:] *Ethnic Groups and Boundaries: The Social Organization of Culture Difference*, ed. F. Barth, Boston 1969, pp. 9–38.

²⁶ Cf. G.W. Allport, *The nature of prejudice*, Cambridge–Reading (USA) 1954.

²⁷ G.R. Gibbs, *Analyzing Qualitative Data*, London 2007, p. x.

²⁸ *Ibidem*, pp. 21–22.

²⁹ In Sweden, 18 respondents classified themselves as Assyrians, 12 as Syriacs/Arameans, one as Assyrian/Syriac, and 9 as Chaldeans. When quoting, I provide their own identifications. I only shorten Syriacs/Arameans to Syriacs, although some of them introduced themselves as Arameans/Syriacs. I justify my decision with fact that the ‘Syriac’ component was always present, unlike the ‘Aramean’ component.

of the surveyed communities with representatives of the host country, the country of origin, as well as other immigrants.³⁰

The second type of interviews, with a total of 20, were individual semi-structured interviews with important actors of the host society. By such actors we understood state officials at various levels, representatives of Churches and people involved in civil society organisations. These interviews were aimed at deepening the understanding of how Middle Eastern Christians are perceived by those who interact with them while implementing national integration policies – or as individuals responsive to their presence in society. The gathered material was used mainly, but not exclusively, in Chapter five.

The third group of interviews was conducted in the final phase of the project. It took the form of focus groups – six for each country,³¹ each consisting of no more than ten participants belonging to the surveyed communities. The aim here was to gain insight into everyday group interactions by listening to community members exchange views about their identity and talk about their migration experiences. Importantly, focus group surveys were conducted in languages chosen by the invited guests – they did not have to “switch” to English. This required the services of translators from Swedish, Arabic and Neo-Aramaic (Turoyo) – and in my case, working with an assistant.

The choice of respondents³² was a matter of great significance – depending on whose voice is heard, differing visions of the community may be obtained. Therefore the team made efforts to guarantee a maximum level of diversity among the respondents, who were to differ in age, sex, class, function, country of origin (Turkey, Syria, Iraq, Sweden), perception of their identity (Assyrian, Aramean/Syriac, Chaldean) and their experiences. The interviewees lived in Södertälje, Stockholm and the surrounding area: Geneta, Hallunda, Fittja, Tumba,

³⁰ The first drafts of questionnaires were created by Dr. Lise Paulsen Galal and Dr. Sara Lei Sparre, who watched over the methodological correctness of qualitative research. I was personally responsible for including questions about the respondents' political preferences and choices in the forms.

³¹ In Sweden these were: an Assyrian group, a Syriac group, a mixed Assyrian/Syriac group, a group of young Assyrians, a group of older Assyrians, and a group of Iraqi Christians.

³² For some scholars, especially those dealing with biographical research, the use of the word “respondent” is unacceptable because, in their opinion, it objectifies the partner in the relationship. For stylistic reasons, I decided to use interchangeable words such as “respondent” and “interviewee”.

Järfälla, Jakobsberg, Norsborg and Botkyrka. I met one of the respondents in Västerås.

Initial interviews were conducted with members of the community with whom the researchers had established contact prior to beginning work on the project. These contacts included secular and religious leaders, representatives of various organisations and ordinary community members. These initial interviews were starting points for the “snowball” method. Those who agreed to be interviewed first functioned as “gatekeepers”³³ who suggested further candidates for interviewees. Still, the researchers selected further respondents themselves so that the gatekeepers, by providing a pool of their contacts, would not bias the results of interviews or focus groups. In the case of the latter, efforts were also made to ensure a diverse representation of communities in terms of gender, age and experience. In addition to taking note of what those present in the focus groups were saying, we paid attention to how it was being said, in order to analyse the internal dynamics of the groups.

All the interviews – both with individuals and groups – ended with a request to the participants to represent their national, ethnic and religious identity using cards selected from the set prepared by the DIMECCE team.³⁴ The aim of this task was to encourage the participants’ reflection on their own identity. The respondents were free to discuss the matter while arranging the cards or after completing the exercise. We were aware that identity was fluid: on another day, the same person might have arranged the cards slightly differently. The respondents were asked to select the cards that best reflected their current identity and rank them in order of importance. The most important identification was to be placed at the top, the least important at the bottom; there was no limit to the number of cards per row (cards placed in one row were treated as equally significant). In the case of focus groups, the entire group was asked to negotiate a single arrangement to reflect their shared identity. In my research I used English and Swedish language versions of the cards. The English-language set was as follows:

³³ In social sciences, this term is used to describe the key selectors of information.

³⁴ The respondents could also create new cards themselves if they felt that a category important to them was missing from the set. However, they rarely took advantage of this option.

IDENTITY CARDS			Ethiopian	Iraqi	Nubian
NATIONAL IDENTITIES			Sudanese	Suryoye	Syriac
British	Danish	Egyptian	Syrian		
English	Iranian	Iraqi	RELIGIOUS IDENTITIES		
Lebanese	Scottish	Swedish	Assyrian Church of the East		
Syrian	Turkish		Chaldean Catholic	Coptic Catholic	Coptic Orthodox
ETHNIC IDENTITIES			Maronite	Protestant	Syriac Catholic
Arab	Aramean	Assyrian	OTHER IDENTITIES		
Chaldean	Coptic	Egyptian	Syriac Orthodox	Christian	Middle East Christian
			Oriental Orthodox	Abrahamic	

Fig. 1. Matrix containing cards illustrating the identities of the respondents
Source: Auxiliary materials designed for the DIMECCE project.

The interviews were recorded on a dictaphone, transcribed and after deleting all sensitive data, entered into the NVivo program – a well-known qualitative data analysis software for social sciences. As part of the project, the research team established special codes (nodes) with which fragments of conversations on specific topics were then marked. All 70 nodes belonged to six collective categories: “community/church/organisation”, “family, friends, neighbours”, “meetings at the individual and institutional level in the host country”, “meetings with other migrants in the host country”, “homeland versus transnationality”, and “identities”. Establishing these nodes greatly simplified searching for answers to questions (for example, about first impressions in the host country, attitude towards Muslims or family relations): after selecting a relevant node, the program displayed all the matching answers. It was also possible to search by a specific keyword.

While interviews were certainly a valuable part of the project, we were aware of their limitations from the outset. Firstly, we were outsiders and did not belong to the community, and the respondents were known to traditionally adjust their responses to strangers based on what they imagined were proper answers. The help of my Assyrian assistant was invaluable in Sweden. As a member of the community she was able to break the ice and encourage my interlocutors (often before the interview) to provide honest answers. Secondly, the religious identity of the researchers was of significance – the respondents assumed (somewhat rightly) that the interviewers were Christians, which again influenced

their responses to some degree (for example, some respondents openly complained about Muslims or atheists). Thirdly, access to ordinary members of the community was regulated, or restricted, by the gatekeepers, which caused some narratives to appear more frequently than others; they emerged, as it were, as ‘mainstream’ narratives.

Fourthly, the vocabulary used during interviews and the language in which they were conducted (mainly English – neither the mother tongue of the respondents nor of some of the researchers) had its influence on the character of the answers. It had to be taken into account that in some cases, respondents would not fully understand the questions, or would misunderstand the intentions of the researchers and would as a result provide responses which did not entirely correspond to their true views. The team tried to conduct the interviews in languages which the respondents knew best (I conducted them in English and Arabic), and when communication was not possible, an assistant-interpreter (e.g. from Swedish or Neo-Aramaic) was needed. Young, well-educated members of the community did not have any difficulties with fluent conversation in English, while some of the older respondents chose the languages of their countries of origin (Arabic, Neo-Aramaic).

The biggest limitation of the qualitative method – of which we had been aware – is that the results may not necessarily be representative. The adoption of an interpretative approach limited the possibility of generalising the obtained results for the entire population, therefore it was very important to supplement qualitative research with quantitative data. **The quantitative method**, also known as the statistical method, is useful for the analysis of mass phenomena, such as migration processes. Using this method it is possible to pinpoint the characteristics of a community, outline specific laws governing mass phenomena, and see the cause and effect relationships affecting these phenomena; this makes it possible to trace and determine certain trends that may continue or occur in the future.³⁵ Quantitative research is usually carried out on samples of over 100 respondents, and surveys are the primary tool. As I had experience in conducting quantitative research, my task was to coordinate the preparation of an electronic questionnaire, which was then used throughout the project.³⁶ Its main goal was to collect data which would provide a frame-

³⁵ A.J. Chodubski, op. cit., pp. 127–128.

³⁶ I have described the process of designing the online survey on the project blog: M. Wozniak, *The light and dark sides of conducting an electronic survey*, 27.02.2014, https://arts.st-andrews.ac.uk/dimecce/?page_id=247&paged=2, accessed on February 2, 2018.

work for the later – qualitative – stage of research. Due to the scarce statistics on the studied communities, information obtained through the survey was meant to provide some general insight into the situation of these communities.

The survey consisted of four parts: personal data; identity; integration; and the challenges of living in the diaspora. In order to be able to compare the situation in the countries of interest to us, we asked exactly the same question, specifying that we were referring to Great Britain, Denmark or Sweden. Created in English, the questionnaire was translated into Arabic, Danish and Swedish. The first of these turned out to be particularly challenging, even for native speakers of this language employed in the project. They had to go to great lengths to express in Arabic what was written in English as faithfully as possible. After translation, all four language versions were input into the FluidSurveys program. The heads of the individual sections of the project and representatives of the non-academic partner – The Churches' Commission for Migrants in Europe – encouraged respondents to complete the electronic questionnaire via their contact networks and social media. In addition, paper copies were distributed to churches attended by members of the community – this was aimed mainly at the older faithful who might not necessarily use the Internet. However, the printed version of the survey was filled in reluctantly and often inaccurately, and was therefore not taken into account in the final analysis.

Symptomatically, the president of the Assyrian Federation in Sweden did not agree to distribute the survey among the 8 000 members of his organisation. In an official email sent to the DIMECCE project he objected to the use of the proper name “Suryoye” as an identity option in the questionnaire (even though a large proportion of Assyrians/Syriacs favour this Aramaic term for Syriac Christians). My personal meeting with the president was friendly, but he did not change his position. Thus, early on in the project, an important gatekeeper made an attempt to block the research in Sweden. Fortunately, several dozen members of the Assyrian Federation did not share these concerns; they completed the questionnaire without official encouragement, by following an Internet link or after receiving the survey from friends. It seems that the widespread use of the Internet allows one to bypass traditional mechanisms of filtering information.³⁷

³⁷ See more about the evolution of the gatekeeper role: M. Szpunar, *Wokół koncepcji gatekeepingu. Od gatekeepingu tradycyjnego do technologicznego*, [in:] *Idee i myśliciele*, ed. I.S. Fiut, Kraków 2013, pp. 60–61.

Ultimately, 393 people completed the survey, 244 of which were Assyrian/Syriac/Chaldean respondents from Sweden.³⁸ This group included 134 men and 110 women. 55% of the respondents were born in Sweden, the rest arrived at different times; the oldest interviewees came to the country in the 1970s – over forty years ago. The parents of the majority of respondents came from Turkey (more than 50%), Syria (more than 25%), Lebanon and Iraq (about 5% each). 42% were unmarried, 41% were married, 8% – engaged, and 7% were in an informal relationship. Two-thirds of respondents had no children; others had from one to three children: larger families were rare. More than half were employed full-time in various institutions, and a quarter were studying. Most of the respondents completed secondary (39%) or higher education (45%), thus the results of the survey can be treated as more representative of the elite of the group than of the entire community in Sweden – which is certainly due to its electronic form reaching mainly the younger generation, and people fluent in languages in which it was available.³⁹

Participant observation – taking part in various events important for the surveyed communities – was a method which permitted the scholars to observe how, through specific activities, group identity is shaped and strengthened. A part of this approach was to take into account the visual products of the community such as paintings, sculptures and gadgets, which often illustrated the ongoing process of politicising identity. We analyzed these activities and products through the lens of collective identity, which drives some members of individual factions to become politicised so that they deliberately struggle for influence – Assyrian versus Syriac. They are aware of mutual animosities and resentments, and try to blame their opponents and bring the sur-

³⁸ If fewer respondents answered a specific question, I mark this fact in the tables. I attribute the relative success of the survey in Sweden, in comparison to much fewer answers in the UK (116) and Denmark (33) mostly to the fact that Sweden is inhabited by a far more numerous, and also more mobilised, Assyrian/Syriac community than two other countries.

³⁹ In light of the research by Ö.A. Cetrez, most first-generation Assyrian/Syriac immigrant women had no education at all, and immigrant men generally completed five years of primary school. The second-generation level of education was higher – five years of primary school or secondary school in the case of women and primary, secondary or university for men. Both male and female members of the third generation completed at least secondary school and often university. Cf. idem, *The next generation of Assyrians in Sweden: religiosity as a functioning system of meaning within the process of acculturation*, “Mental Health, Religion & Culture”, Vol. 14, No. 5, June 2011, p. 477.

rounding actors⁴⁰ – mainly Swedish officials and people representing the media – into internal struggles of the community.

Only a combination of the above methods made it possible to describe the community in question and examine the perceptions of identity as well as the immigration and integration experiences of its members. Surveys, interviews and participant observations were carried out based on institutional and national ethical guidelines: the anonymity of the participants was ensured, or their consent to the use of the collected material was obtained. In addition, the participants of interviews and focus groups received two cards in their chosen language (English, Swedish, Danish or Arabic). The first of these cards contained general information on the DIMECCE project, the second – handed out at the end of our meeting – expressed our thanks and acknowledged the respondent's participation in the study.

2. Main categories

Identity, minority, diaspora, transnationality and acculturation were selected as key categories used to analyse the studied communities.⁴¹ These same categories were at the heart of my interview questions and functioned as analytical tools for deeper examination of the ways Assyrians/Syriacs construct their distinctiveness and interact with ethnic Swedes (people who can trace most of their ethnicity to Sweden going back at least 12 generations) and Swedish society as a whole.

The **identity** that defines an individual is a key concept for the study of Middle Eastern Christian communities. In the DIMECCE project, we emphasised that identity is subjective, fluid, negotiable and renegotiable.⁴² In place of identity as an outcome of factors such as place, community, culture or religion, I perceive identity in terms of the relationship between the individual and the "Other".⁴³ Meeting the "Other"

⁴⁰ Cf. B. Simon, B. Klandermans, *Politicized collective identity: A Social Psychological Analysis*, "American Psychologist", Vol. 56, No. 4, 2001, pp. 319–331.

⁴¹ I understand the community itself as *Gemeinschaft*, that is, a kind of social relations resulting from "organic will", from emotional closeness. *Gemeinschaft* is contrasted with the *Gesellschaft* (association), understood as a kind of social relationship based on "arbitrary will", a rational calculation, contract and exchange regulated by law. F. Tönnies, *Gemeinschaft und Gesellschaft*, Darmstadt 1887.

⁴² R. Brubaker, F. Cooper, *Beyond 'Identity'*, "Theory and Society", Vol. 29, No. 1, 2000, pp. 1–47.

⁴³ See: S. Hall, *New ethnicities*, [in:] *Race, culture and difference*, ed. J. Donald, A. Rattansi, New York 1992, pp. 252–259.

and assigning them some categories is extremely important for the formation of identity. Subject literature demonstrates that the question whether identity can develop without creating and stereotyping the “Other” is an ongoing debate.⁴⁴

To discuss collective identity, I refer to Benedict Anderson’s concept of “imagined communities”⁴⁵ which, on the one hand, generate intercultural encounters, and on the other, are their products. These communities ensure social and cultural capital used to distinguish from a significant “Other”.⁴⁶ Middle Eastern Christian communities can choose from various identity-forming strategies – based on their faith (**religious identity**), ethnicity/nationality, or a combination of the two. The “Others”, their community constructs, may be related to the homeland – for example, their Muslim compatriots – but they may also come from the host societies, in the form of their ethnic inhabitants or other immigrant groups. Cultural encounters of Middle Eastern Christians with “Others” and the ways in which they translate into transformations of their identities is an essential aspect of my research.

Ethnic identity emerges when an individual becomes aware of the differences between ethnic groups and strives to understand their own ethnicity in a social context.⁴⁷ A belief in common descent may or may not be reflected by reality. Jean S. Phinney argues that three elements play a key role in the formation of ethnic identity – race, language, and religion.⁴⁸ Race lets individuals self-identify through referring to common descent. Language mediates communication and the transmission of other elements of culture. Religion links an individual to a given vision of the world, its nature, laws and values. In her analysis of the process of shaping ethnic identity among ethnic minorities, the author distinguishes three stages. Stage I is characterised by a lack of interest in one’s ethnic identity, or a preference for the dominant cul-

⁴⁴ See more: J. Habermas, *Moral Consciousness and Communicative Action*, Baskerville (USA) 1990.

⁴⁵ B. Anderson, op. cit.

⁴⁶ See more: P. Bourdieu, *Language and Symbolic Power*, Cambridge 1991.

⁴⁷ J.S. Phinney, *Ethnic identity and acculturation*, [in:] *Acculturation: Advances in theory, measurement, and applied research*, ed. K.M. Chun, P. Balls-Organista, G. Marin, Washington 2003, p. 63.

⁴⁸ Quoted in: A. Nikitorowicz, *Procesy tworzenia się (konstruowania) małego narodu (kulturowego) na przykładzie mniejszości ukraińskiej w województwie podlaskim*, PhD thesis, Białystok 2013, pp. 67–68.

ture accompanied by a negative perception of one's own group. Stage II is the search for ethnic identity, which can take a long time – this process is associated with crisis, tension, active involvement in the life of one's community (reading, participation in cultural events, visiting museums, etc.). In Stage III, ethnic identity is either found or achieved; the individual appreciates their origin and achieves peace.⁴⁹

Ethnic identity can transform into national identity. Max Weber defined a nation as a group of people united by the conviction of a common origin, striving to obtain or maintain the independence of their country.⁵⁰ Radosław Zenderowski notices an ambivalence in the understanding of **national identity** – a subjectivist approach versus an objectivist approach. For on the one hand, national identity is a “collective self-portrait”, “a vision of the self” – an image of a group's beginnings and history, its “national character”, its land and everything else that seems to have special value in the life of a nation. On the other hand, national identity is also a certain “lifestyle” observed from the outside, a specific way of behaving in certain situations (often subconscious and not subject to reflection) – a “pattern of culture”, a specific set of values.⁵¹ Setting these two theoretical approaches – objectivist and subjectivist – in sharp opposition is not correct: the shape of national identity is a specific expression of the self-awareness of a large number of members of a given group living in a specific time and place.

Minority. This term applies to a group that shares a common identity and is located in an environment where “Others” are more numerous. Members of the group are therefore defined as a minority in relation to the dominant majority. However, this term can also refer to a group's position relative to the majority within an asymmetric structure of power.⁵² These political relationships explain why communities can identify as minorities and how their migrant experiences affect this perception. In terms of numbers, Middle Eastern Christians can be conceptualised as a minority not only in the Arab world, but also in Europe.⁵³

⁴⁹ J.S. Phinney, *Ethnic Identity in Adolescents and Adults: Review of Research*, “Psychological Bulletin”, Vol. 10, No. 3, 1990, pp. 502–503.

⁵⁰ Therefore, groups identifying with nations having their own states should be considered national minorities, and stateless groups should be regarded as ethnic minorities. Cf. J. Sozański, *Ochrona mniejszości w systemie uniwersalnym, europejskim i wspólnotowym*, Warsaw 2002, pp. 20–21.

⁵¹ R. Zenderowski, *Religia jako fundament...*, p. 107.

⁵² P. Thornberry, *Minorities – what are they?*, “Minorities and Human Rights Law”, Minority Rights Group Report No. 73, 1991.

⁵³ *Nationalism, Minorities and Diasporas: Identities and Rights in the Middle East*, ed. K.E. Schulze, M. Stokes, C. Campbell, London 1996.

The political implications of such an identification mean that the use of this term is questioned by some communities – especially Coptic Orthodox.⁵⁴ Hence, when I use the concept of minorities, it is to be treated as an analytical, rather than descriptive term. This approach allows me to investigate the ways in which power-inequalities affect the identity strategies of Middle Eastern Christians, and how power relations in the countries of origin are negotiated, changed and reconstructed in the migrant environment.

Diaspora. Migrant communities can also be viewed in a diasporic context. By diaspora I mean a group located outside its homeland, which meets the following criteria: the dispersion into a number of different territories; the foreign stay is permanent; communication is established between dispersed groups; the groups share a collective memory and an idea of return.⁵⁵ Members of a diaspora can therefore be seen as holding a national, ethnic, linguistic or other form of cultural or political membership while living outside their “homelands”. Assyrians/Syriacs, similarly to the Copts,⁵⁶ could be regarded as a global diaspora connected by a specific faith and identity.⁵⁷ By applying the category of a diaspora to these communities it is possible to examine the impact of self-categorisation on cultural encounters and on debates about the construction of collective identity.

Transnationality. This category refers to the border crossing process which creates lasting bonds between groups, regardless of their location and the type of social formation.⁵⁸ Instead of limiting the discussion of identity and belonging to the split between the country of origin and the host country, the transnational perspective suggests

⁵⁴ L. Paulsen Galal, *Coptic Christian Practices: Formations of Sameness and Difference*, “Islam and Christian-Muslim Relations”, Vol. 23, No. 1, 2012, pp. 45–58; F. McCallum, *Christian Religious Leadership in the Middle East: The Political Role of the Patriarch*, Lewiston–Queenston–Lampeter 2010.

⁵⁵ N. Van Hear, *New diasporas: The mass exodus, dispersal and regrouping of Migrant Communities*, London 1998; *Migration, diasporas and transnationalism*, ed. S. Vertovec, R. Cohen, Cheltenham (UK)–Northampton (USA) 1999.

⁵⁶ For more information about the identity of Copts, see: K. Kościelniak, *Changes of the Coptic identity*, [in:] *Change and Stability. State, Religion and Politics in the Contemporary Middle East*, ed. K. Kościelniak, Kraków 2010, pp. 79–92.

⁵⁷ F. McCallum, *Middle Eastern Christian Immigrant Communities as Diasporas*, [in:] *Border Terrains: World Diasporas in 21st Century*, ed. A. Eamer, Oxford 2012, pp. 64–71.

⁵⁸ *Diaspora and Transnationalism: Concepts, Theories and Methods*, ed. R. Bauböck, Th. Faist, Amsterdam 2010.

that migrants engage in multi-faceted social relationships which can span multiple locations in many countries.⁵⁹ Hence the transnational perspective does not favour one particular identity as an expression of belonging, but proposes a critical, contextual study of migrant identities with particular emphasis on building and sustaining transnational ties. In our project, this approach allowed us to adopt an international perspective. Rather than merely analysing the attitudes of Middle Eastern Christians towards their countries of origin, the transnational perspective sheds light on the ties and relationships between Middle Eastern Christian communities in different parts of the world.

Acculturation. Various definitions of the term “acculturation” exist – some are used in psychology, others in anthropology or sociology. The first and most cited definition of the term was proposed by Robert Redfield, Ralph Linton, and Melville J. Herskovits in 1936. These scholars defined acculturation as “phenomena as a result of which groups or individuals from different cultures come into constant direct contact, which results in changes in the original cultural patterns of one or both groups.”⁶⁰ Today, this definition is considered classical. I write of acculturation as “the process of change which occurs when individuals from different cultures interact and inhabit a common geographic space as a result of migration, political conquest or forced exile.”⁶¹ Importantly, the changes affect both cultures, while they affect the non-dominant group to a greater extent.⁶² Those who describe acculturation as a linear process tend to ignore the power of asymmetry between the immigrant and the host society.⁶³

Another important definition was developed by the International Organization for Migration (IOM) in 2004. According to this definition, acculturation means “The progressive adoption of elements

⁵⁹ P. Levitt, N. Glick-Schiller, *Conceptualizing Simultaneity: A Transnational Social Field Perspective on Society*, “The International Migration Review”, Vol. 38, No. 3, 2004, pp. 1002–1039.

⁶⁰ D.L. Sam, *Acculturation: conceptual background and core components*, [in:] *The Cambridge Handbook of Acculturation Psychology*, ed. D.L. Sam, J.W. Berry, Cambridge 2012, p. 11.

⁶¹ P. Balls Organista, G. Marín, K.M. Chun, *The Psychology of Ethnic Groups in the United States*, California 2010, p. 101.

⁶² J.W. Berry, *Acculturative Stress*, [in:] *Readings in ethnic psychology*, ed. P. Balls Organista, K. Chun, G. Marín, New York–London 1998, p. 117.

⁶³ H.J.M. Hermans, *The dialogical self: Toward a theory of personal and cultural positioning*, “Culture and Psychology”, Vol. 7, No. 3, 2001, pp. 243–281.

of a foreign culture (ideas, words, values, norms, behaviour, institutions) by persons, groups or classes of a given culture".⁶⁴ This definition of acculturation resembles the concept of assimilation; in fact, many scholars use these two terms interchangeably.⁶⁵ However, acculturation covers a much wider range of potential individual reactions to direct contact with the host society than assimilation in its usual sense: individuals do not have to accept elements of a foreign culture, but can also opt to reject or resist them.⁶⁶

3. The John W. Berry model

The theoretical model I use to describe the processes of identity construction is borrowed from John W. Berry, a Canadian specialist in intercultural and interethnic psychology. According to this scholar, "acculturation is a twofold process of psychological and cultural change that occurs as a result of contact between two or more groups and their individual members."⁶⁷ This model is extremely useful, as it allows to examine acculturation on the level of a group as well as the level of an individual. Berry emphasises how diverse the aforementioned changes can be. At the group level, these changes may affect social structures, institutions and cultural practices, while at the individual level the changes influence "identity, values, attitudes and behaviour".⁶⁸ According to Berry, acculturation has its roots in historical, political and economic baggage. This provides important context for a large set of phenomena created by the contact between two cultures. The researcher also remarks that psychological and cultural changes occur over longer periods of time. Moreover, in a multicultural society where the ethno-cultural community retains the features of its original culture, acculturation lasts long after the first contact between hosts and newcomers.

⁶⁴ International Organization for Migration, *Glossary on Migration*, Geneva 2004, p. 5, http://www.iomvienna.at/sites/default/files/IML_1_EN.pdf, accessed on June 22, 2018.

⁶⁵ Cited in: M. Ossowska-Czader, *Search for Identity in the Novels by Second Generation Immigrant Writers from South Asia and the Caribbean in Great Britain*, Łódź 2015, p. 44.

⁶⁶ D.L. Sam, op. cit., p. 11.

⁶⁷ J.W. Berry, *Immigration, acculturation, and adaptation*, "Applied Psychology: An International Review", Vol. 46, No. 1, 1997, pp. 5–68; idem, *Acculturation*, [in:] *Encyclopedia of Applied Psychology*, ed. Ch. Spielberger, Oxford–Boston 2004, pp. 27–34.

⁶⁸ D.L. Sam, op. cit., p. 12.

Another important aspect of the environment in which acculturation takes place are social factors such as the attitudes present in the host society which the immigrants have to face.⁶⁹ The societies that accept diversity and support cultural pluralism by adopting the ideology of multiculturalism necessarily constitute a friendlier environment, as they do not strive to “impose cultural change (assimilation) on immigrants or lead to their exclusion (segregation or marginalisation)”.⁷⁰ At the core of their principles is respect for the dignity of every human being. The price these societies pay is a question of how far state tolerance should extend to accommodate the immigrants’ attachment to their identity and cultural heritage. The assumption is that the immigrants do not have to renounce their cultural identity and model themselves on members of the host society to be able to fully function in it.⁷¹

On the other hand, the societies that do not accept diversity and seek to destroy it through forced assimilation, segregation or marginalization are a much more difficult environment for immigrants. But even in those societies which embrace diversity and support cultural pluralism, each individual ranks differently on a scale of “relative acceptance of specific cultural, racial and religious groups”, which can create problems with hostility, rejection or discrimination against these groups.⁷²

It is worthwhile to study the above diagram in the context of John W. Berry’s theory. The model is based on three key assumptions: cultural permanence, contact and participation, and the host society’s ability to determine how acculturation should progress. The model describes four strategies of acculturation, defined depending on their positive or negative orientation. The pluses indicate the intensity of a phenomenon (i.e. the frequency of interactions, cultural behaviour), and the minuses – its decline (occasional interactions, the abandonment of one’s original identity or culture).

From the point of view of a non-dominant ethnic-cultural group, the aforementioned strategies are: assimilation (when individuals do not intend to retain their original culture and instead adopt the cul-

⁶⁹ J.W. Berry, *Acculturation: Living successfully in two cultures*, “International Journal of Intercultural Relations”, Vol. 29, No. 6, 2005, p. 703.

⁷⁰ Ibidem.

⁷¹ J. Balicki, P. Stalker, *Polityka imigracyjna i azylowa. Wyzwania i dylematy*, Warsaw 2006, p. 254.

⁷² M. Ossowska-Czader, op. cit., p. 45.

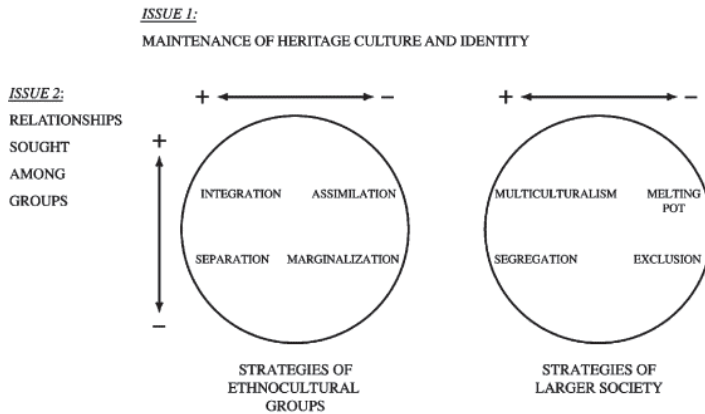


Fig. 2. The John W. Berry model – the acculturation of an ethno-cultural group and the host society

Source: John W. Berry, *Acculturation: Living successfully...*, p. 705.

ture of the host society), segregation (when individuals aim to maintain their original culture and do not want to participate in the culture of the host country), integration (individuals are interested in preserving the original culture, but are at the same ready to acquire some aspects of the host country's culture), and finally marginalization (when individuals do not want to maintain their original culture or they cannot maintain it, and at the same time do not want, or are not able, to participate in the culture of the host country). It is therefore possible to discuss individuals in the context of their assimilation, integration, segregation and marginalization.

Similar strategies are implemented by the host society. The cultural melting pot corresponds to the degree of assimilation imposed on ethnic and cultural groups. When the host society opts for the separation of minorities, the phenomenon that occurs is segregation. When marginalization is imposed, it is exclusion. Only an open society, willing to accept the diversity of individual ethno-cultural groups, can be called a multicultural society.⁷³ It should be emphasised after Berry that situations may arise in which the strategy adopted by an immigrant differs from the approach dominant in the host society – in these cases the newcomers are bound to face a number of difficulties.⁷⁴

⁷³ Cited in: J.W. Berry, *Acculturation: Living successfully...*, pp. 705–706.

⁷⁴ M. Ossowska-Czader, op. cit., p. 47.

4. Biculturalism

Many studies of acculturation indicate that biculturalism, that is the ability of an individual to function smoothly in two cultures, is not only possible, but also beneficial.⁷⁵ While it is easy to find research on how different migrants and refugees react to moving to a different culture,⁷⁶ the ways in which they integrate and become bicultural have not been studied in depth.⁷⁷ Particularly little is known about how people navigate cultural differences in their everyday life. Judit Arends-Tóth and Fons J.R. van de Vijver have asked an important question: “Does integration mean that immigrants combine both cultures in all their behaviours, or do they rather ‘switch’ between the two cultures?”⁷⁸ There is some evidence to suggest that both these strategies are applied⁷⁹: some migrants switch between two cultures with great ease⁸⁰ while others experience internal conflict and tension as they try to reconcile cultural differences.⁸¹ The latter case can be called an identity conflict.⁸²

According to Stella Ting-Toomey a problem that occurs during intercultural meetings is attaining by their participants a balanced sense of optimal distinctiveness.⁸³ Ting-Toomey notes that some people – whom she calls “dynamic biculturalists” – have learned how to creatively align themselves with, and distinguish themselves from, their

⁷⁵ J.W. Berry, *Acculturation and Biculturalism*, [in:] *Readings in ethnic psychology...*, p. 113.

⁷⁶ Np. C. Ward, S. Bochner, A. Furnham, *The psychology of culture shock*, Hove (UK) 2001.

⁷⁷ Ph. Collie, S. Kindon, J. Liu, A. Podsiadlowski, *Mindful identity negotiations: The acculturation of young Assyrian women in New Zealand*, “International Journal of Intercultural Relations”, Vol. 34, No. 3, 2010, p. 208.

⁷⁸ J. Arends-Tóth, F.J.R. van de Vijver, *Multiculturalism and acculturation: Views of Dutch and Turkish-Dutch*, “European Journal of Social Psychology”, Vol. 33, No. 2, 2003, p. 54.

⁷⁹ Ph. Collie et al., op. cit., p. 209.

⁸⁰ B.S.K. Kim, B.R. Brenner, Ch.T.H. Liang, P.A. Asay, *A qualitative study of adaptation experiences of 1.5 generation Asian Americans*, “Cultural Diversity & Ethnic Minority Psychology”, Vol. 9, No. 2, 2003, pp. 156–170.

⁸¹ M. Hedegaard, *Strategies for dealing with conflicts in value positions between home and school: Influences on ethnic minority students’ development of motives and identity*, “Culture and Psychology”, Vol. 11, No. 2, 2005, pp. 187–205.

⁸² J. Stuart, *Acculturation, development and ethnocultural identity conflict: the process and outcomes of identity negotiation for adolescent migrants in multicultural environments*, M.A. thesis, Wellington 2008.

⁸³ S. Ting-Toomey, *Identity negotiation theory: Cross cultural boundaries*, [in:] *Theorizing about intercultural communication*, ed. W.B. Gudykunst, Thousand Oaks (USA) 2005, pp. 211–233.

interlocutors, by tuning into certain aspects of the interlocutors' identity. According to the scholar, these people practice *mindful identity negotiation* – they are ready to shift their point of reference in a conversation and to use new categories in order to decipher cultural or ethnic differences.⁸⁴ On the other hand, those migrants who keep returning to familiar frames of reference and who are unaware of their internal identity negotiations engage in *mindless identity negotiation*.⁸⁵

5. Integration

From an immigrant's point of view, the acculturation strategy which is most desirable – due to the opportunities it offers – is integration. From the standpoint of the host country, one way to understand integration is to describe the process which the newcomers have to follow to become members of the host society. This requires achieving fluency in the language of the host country, acceptance of its laws and adoption of a set of common values. Adrian Favell lists a number of tools which may aid the process of integration, such as anti-discriminatory laws, legal and social protection, housing policies, education, and the possibility to establish unions.⁸⁶

Another definition refers to the policy implemented by the government or by local authorities in order to support, guide and manage the inclusion of newcomers into society.⁸⁷ This highlights the similarities and differences between integration and assimilation; the results of the processes are not dissimilar. Unlike assimilation, integration does not require giving up one's own culture; it may, however, require the elimination of certain aspects that are incompatible with the rights and values of the host society.

Hartmut Esser lists the following terms to define the stages of adaptation of immigrants to the host society:

⁸⁴ Ibidem, p. 226.

⁸⁵ Ph. Collie et al., op. cit., p. 209.

⁸⁶ A. Favell, *Interpretation Nations. The Nation-State and Research on Immigrants in Western Europe*, [in:] *The Multicultural Challenge. Comparative Social Research*, Vol. 22, ed. G. Brochmann, Bingley (UK) 2003, p. 14.

⁸⁷ R. Koopmans, *Tradeoffs between equality and difference: immigrant integration, multiculturalism, and the welfare state in cross-national perspective*, "Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies", Vol. 36, No. 1, 2010; *The Challenge of Diversity: Integration and Pluralism in Societies of Immigration*, ed. R. Bauböck, A. Heller, A.R. Zolberg, Avebury 1996; P. Odmalm, *Migration policies and political participation: inclusion or intrusion in Western Europe*, New York 2005.

– acculturation (cultural integration) refers to the acquisition of cultural knowledge and competences, including language;

– placement (structural integration) means gaining a position in society, for example in the educational or economic system. It is also the acquisition of rights connected to a specific position and the acquisition of cultural, social and economic capital. The prerequisite for placement is prior successful acculturation,

– interaction (social integration) means creating and developing relationships in everyday life,

– identification (emotional integration) refers to personal identification with a social system, indicating individuals who see themselves as parts of a larger whole.⁸⁸

In the context of immigration, integration is multifaceted: it may refer to economic integration in the labour market, or to the social dimension of integration – learning the language, culture, and tradition. Therefore an analysis of the degree of integration of foreigners in a given society should include a range of factors, including the level of unemployment among immigrants, average salary, level of education, participation in elections when entitled to vote, activity in social organisations, as well as organisations promoting the culture of the country of origin. The degree of “detachment” from native traditions can also determine the level of integration.⁸⁹ An interesting point was made by Renata Stefańska, who pointed out that successful integration occurs when immigrants sharing specific characteristics (such as a certain age bracket, gender, or education) occupy the same or very similar positions in the social structure as the native inhabitants of a given country.⁹⁰

⁸⁸ H. Esser, *Integration und ethnische Schichtung*, Mannheim 2001, pp. 8–16.

⁸⁹ A. Kobierecka, op. cit., p. 28.

⁹⁰ R. Stefańska, *Między multikulturalizmem a asymilacją. Polityki integracyjne w Europie*, [in:] *Problemy integracji imigrantów*, ed. A. Grzymała-Kozłowska, S. Łodziński, Warsaw 2008, p. 125.

1. SWEDEN'S MIGRATION AND INTEGRATION POLICY

Few countries still affirm and implement a multicultural policy. One such model country is Canada.¹ In Europe, Sweden is the best example of multiculturalism.² Without knowing the history of Sweden, its political system, its approach to multiculturalism and integration, its ethnic structure – in short, Swedish realities – it is not possible to understand the environment in which the Assyrian/Syriac minority has been functioning and evolving. With its ten million inhabitants³, the Kingdom of Sweden (*Sverige, Konungariket Sverige*) is a relatively small country. However, its exceptionally generous welfare system has given Sweden the reputation of one of the best places for immigrants. At the beginning of the 21st century, as many as one-fifth of Swedish citizens were born abroad or had a foreign-born parent. Precise data from 2012 shows that 14% of the Swedish population were born abroad.⁴ In 2014, Prime Minister Fredrik Reinfeldt gave a famous speech in which he encouraged his countrymen to “open their hearts”⁵. A year later, Sweden accepted almost 163 000 refugees,⁶ mainly from Syria, Iraq, Iran and Afghanistan – more per capita than any other European country.⁷

¹ See more: K. Wężyk, *Kanada. Ulubiony kraj świata*, Warsaw 2017.

² In 2010, German Chancellor Angela Merkel said in a meeting with young CDU activists that the multicultural policy in Germany “has utterly failed”. A year later, Nicolas Sarkozy admitted the failure of a multicultural policy in France.

³ *Population statistics*, Statistics Sweden, <http://www.scb.se/en/finding-statistics/statistics-by-subject-area/population/population-composition/population-statistics/>, accessed on June 25, 2018.

⁴ A. Kobierecka, op. cit., p. 134.

⁵ C.E. Schall, *The Rise and Fall of the Miraculous Welfare Machine: Immigration and Social Democracy in Twentieth-Century Sweden*, Ithaca–London 2016, p. 181.

⁶ Due to the introduction of stricter controls at the borders of European Union countries in 2016, this number dropped to 39 000. In 2017, less than 26 000 refugees applied for asylum in Sweden. Swedish Migration Agency, <https://www.migrationsverket.se/English/About-the-Migration-Agency/Facts-and-statistics-/Statistics.html>, accessed on March 27, 2018.

⁷ R. Cerrotti, *Sweden was among the best countries for immigrants. That's changing*, PRI, 11.09.2017, <https://www.pri.org/stories/2017-09-11/sweden-was-among-best-countries-immigrants-thats-changing>, accessed on January 3, 2018.

Sweden's integration policy did not emerge in a vacuum. It resulted from the country's history and its geographical location on the periphery of Europe,⁸ from the dominant role of the social democratic party and specific social assumptions put forward by Olof Palme⁹ as well as by influential journalists and columnists who came to the fore in the mid-1960s. All these factors influenced Sweden's emergence as an unrivalled model of the welfare state, and as a modern and secular country. In her book *Moralisći*, Katarzyna Tubylewicz describes a society that has chosen a seemingly utopian system of values and stubbornly persisted with it¹⁰ despite mounting problems with mass immigration, populism and nationalism. The Swedes decided that they would be virtuous and open to the "Other" without sacrificing their own beliefs and crucial democratic values. In order to understand them, we should revisit the beginnings of Swedish statehood, identity and culture.

1.1. The formation of Swedish statehood

According to Zenon Ciesielski, Scandinavian culture¹¹ is distinguished from the cultures of other European macroregions by three factors – the Nordic antiquity (remaining outside the Roman Empire, Viking heritage), the late adoption of Christianity (Western rite, universal conversion to Lutheranism) and the population (cultural role of the peasant class).¹² In Sweden, the third factor is least significant – Swedish culture is rooted in both peasant customs and the customs of higher social classes (first the nobility, then the bourgeoisie).¹³

⁸ M. Banaś, op. cit., p. 109.

⁹ Olof Palme was prime minister in 1969–1976; he was active internationally, among others in the Non-Aligned Movement. In domestic politics, he consistently strived to create a welfare state despite the high costs. He was murdered on February 28, 1986 in Stockholm, most likely because of his fight against apartheid. The circumstances behind his murder remain a mystery to this day.

¹⁰ From a review by Agnieszka Holland on the book's dust jacket. K. Tubylewicz, *Moralisći. Jak Szwedzi uczą się na błędach i inne historie*, Warsaw 2017.

¹¹ Scandinavia – a region of northern Europe which includes three countries: Sweden, Norway and Denmark. The broader term "Nordic countries" also includes Iceland and Finland.

¹² Z. Ciesielski, *Nad pojęciem kultury skandynawskiej*, [in:] *Z dziejów Polski i Skandynawii. Rozprawy i studia na X-lecie Instytutu Polsko-Skandynawskiego*, ed. E.S. Kruszewski, E. Ashøj, Copenhagen 1995, p. 5.

¹³ Ł. Bukowiecki, *Czas przeszły zatrzymany. Kulturowa historia skansenów w Szwecji i w Polsce*, Warsaw 2015, p. 55, 61.

The first settlements in the geographical area of present-day Sweden were established as early as around 10 000 BC.¹⁴ The period from the early 8th century to the late 11th century is known as the “Viking Age”, a time when Scandinavians earned the reputation of not only being pirates and plunderers, but also as merchants and founders of cities. During this period, all Scandinavian warriors spoke practically the same language, although some variations were already noticeable; these differences have deepened and finally culminated in the emergence of separate Nordic states. Numerous expeditions resulted in meetings of peoples from the overpopulated and poor North with the inhabitants of other countries, which accustomed the former to cultural diversity.¹⁵ Swedish Vikings expanded mainly eastward – to the territories of Rus, while Norwegian and Danish groups chose a westerly direction.

It is not possible to pinpoint the moment that the Swedish state was established, but it is certain that the foundations of statehood were laid in central Sweden, which was inhabited by the Svear tribe.¹⁶ Sweden probably owes its name to them. Once united, Sweden's policy was mainly focused on relations with Norway and Denmark. Throughout history, these three countries both waged wars with one another and attempted to unite.¹⁷ Sweden's ties to Finland also became closer – Finns were permitted to hold offices in Sweden, which encouraged them to emigrate.

The Thirty Years' War¹⁸ boosted Sweden's power in the Baltic Sea region. The Peace of Westphalia, signed in 1648, sanctioned Sweden's territorial gains in northern Germany and France. But this relative peace did not last long – the Swedish empire was beginning to disintegrate. In 1809 – after almost six hundred years, Sweden lost its Finnish territory to Russia. In 1818, seeking to stabilise the position of the state, Charles XIV John announced that Sweden's interests required it to refrain from engaging in any political disputes.¹⁹ The tradition

¹⁴ B.J. Nordstrom, *The History of Sweden*, Westport 2002, p. xv.

¹⁵ I. Andersson, *Dzieje Szwecji*, Warsaw 1967, p. 25.

¹⁶ W. Froese, *Historia państw i narodów Morza Bałtyckiego*, Warsaw 2007, pp. 57–58.

¹⁷ Cf. I. Andersson, op. cit., p. 32. In 1397–1523, Sweden, Denmark and Norway were joined in the Kalmar Union.

¹⁸ See Z. Anusik, *Gustaw II Adolf*, Wrocław 2009, pp. 156–165.

¹⁹ K. Doświad-Borysiak, *Polityka Szwecji i Finlandii w regionie Morza Bałtyckiego*, Toruń 2006, pp. 105–106.

of Sweden's neutrality initiated at that time strengthened the country and allowed it to avoid destruction wrought in the two world wars.²⁰

The progenitor of the new dynasty, Marshal of the French Empire Jean-Baptiste Jules Bernadotte – later Charles XIV John – focused on defeating Denmark and uniting Sweden with Norway, which was accomplished in 1814.²¹ Sweden has not waged any war since then, consistently maintaining neutrality. Scandinavism – a concept of thinking of all three Scandinavian countries as a single entity – became dominant in Sweden's foreign policy. Although this idea failed in the political sphere, it turned out to be a success in the field of culture and trade. The *rapprochement* between Scandinavian countries, which took place at the turn of the 19th century, had a long-lasting influence on the shape of their relations²² and, in part, influenced the present-day immigration policy of Sweden.

In 1952, the Nordic Council (associating Sweden, Denmark, Norway, Finland and Iceland) was formed; within it, a common market was established and numerous mechanisms were provided to facilitate the travel, employment and settlement of citizens in the associated countries. On January 1, 1995, Sweden joined the European Union. Initially, the Swedes were sceptical – they did not want to give up their rights or resign from their neutrality. Moreover, they feared that the European project might stand in conflict with their vision of building a welfare state.²³ Progressing European integration and expanding areas of cooperation within the EEC, then the EC, and finally the EU, finally changed Sweden's position. According to Anna Kobierecka, the prevailing opinion was that integration could not be avoided.²⁴

²⁰ World War II turned out to be an important event for Sweden due to the massive migration it caused. Sweden accepted over 36 000 Norwegians, 15 000 Danes and thousands of Finns. The total number of foreigners in Sweden in the spring of 1945 was around 300 000. Quoted from A. Kobierecka, op. cit., p. 70.

²¹ The union of Sweden and Norway lasted until 1905.

²² T. Cieślak, *Zarys historii najnowszej krajów skandynawskich*, Warsaw 1978, pp. 74–75.

²³ K.M. Johansson, G. von Sydow, *Swedish social democracy and European integration: enduring divisions*, [in:] *Social Democracy and European Integration: The Politics of Preference Formation*, ed. D.G. Dimitrakopoulos, Abingdon 2011, p. 160.

²⁴ A. Kobierecka, op. cit., p. 84.

1.2. The political system of Sweden

In terms of the political system, the Kingdom of Sweden is a constitutional monarchy, since the function of the head of state is performed by a king or queen, pursuant to §5 of the Instrument of Government.²⁵ The constitutional status of the Swedish monarch differs from that of crowned heads in other Scandinavian states, as a result of a reform carried out in 1969-1974 which eliminated the monarch from the mechanism of the separation of powers. Only ceremonial and representative functions have been left to the monarch of Sweden²⁶ – since 1973, Charles XVI Gustav. The powers of the Swedish monarch are even more limited than those of the British Queen, even though formally the monarch still represents executive power. After the separation of the state and the church in 2000, the Swedish king lost the title of head of the Church of Sweden. The king does not appoint the Prime Minister, approve ministers, or head the armed forces. The Instrument of Government specifies that the monarch is not responsible for his actions.

The country is governed on three levels: national, regional and local.²⁷ After Sweden joined the structures of the European Union in 1995, a European level was added. At the national level, legislative power is exercised by a unicameral parliament – *Sveriges Riksdag*, established in 1435 as an assembly of representatives of the Swedish nobility. In the 16th century, the *Riksdag* took formal shape as a bicameral organ; in 1919 it passed universal and equal suffrage for men and women,²⁸ and in 1969 it was transformed into a unicameral legislature.²⁹ In addition to legislative power, the *Riksdag* also has financial and con-

²⁵ The current Swedish constitution, which entered into force on January 1, 1975, is not a uniform piece of legislation. It consists of four fundamental acts: The Instrument of Government of February 28, 1974, the Act of Succession of September 26, 1810, the Act of Freedom of the Press of April 5, 1949, and the Act of Freedom of Expression of November 14, 1991. Cited in: *Prawo na Zachodzie. Studia źródeł prawa w systemie demokratycznym*, ed. W. Wołpiuk, Wrocław 1992, p. 163.

²⁶ *Konstytucja – ustroj polityczny – system organów państwowych*, ed. S. Bożyk, A. Jamróz, Białystok 2010, p. 49.

²⁷ Sweden is divided into 21 administrative regions (*län*). These regions are divided into 290 municipalities (*kommuner*).

²⁸ Two years later, the first women won seats in the *Riksdag* – there were five of them. M. Banaś, op. cit., p. 113.

²⁹ See more: M. Grzybowski, *Wolność wypowiedzi, wolność publikacji i dostęp do dokumentów publicznych na tle ewolucji szwedzkich aktów konstytucyjnych*, [in:] *Prawo, parlament i egzekutywa we współczesnych systemach rządów*, ed. S. Bożyk, Białystok 2009, p. 259.

trolling prerogatives – it makes decisions concerning taxes and their redistribution, supervises and manages formal processes.

Parliamentary elections are held every four years in 29 constituencies.³⁰ The elections are universal (all citizens aged 18 and over have active and passive voting rights), secret, direct and equal. 310 seats are permanent seats, and 39 are leveling seats (*utjämningsmandat*), distributed among the parties that enter the Riksdag after reaching the required 4% nationwide vote threshold. The electoral system is mixed. Swedish citizens vote for party lists, but they may select individual candidates by name. Seats are distributed first among the candidates who obtained at least 5% of votes by name, then the remaining seats are allocated according to a candidate's position on their party list. MPs are elected by proportional representation using a modified version of the Sainte-Laguë method.³¹ Each MP has at least three deputies (*ersättare*) who take over their duties when they are unable to do so for a period longer than a month. The presiding officer of the Riksdag is the Speaker (*talman*); this is the second highest office in the country after the king. Among the Speaker's responsibilities is appointing the Prime Minister.

Institutions of parliamentary control characteristic for the Riksdag are the Parliamentary Ombudsmen and Parliamentary Account Auditors.³² The role of the Justice Ombudsman, an institution established by the Instrument of Government of 1809, is to guarantee that citizens' rights are respected. The office of Military Ombudsman was established in 1915, and the Consumer Ombudsman – in 1971. MPs appointed by the Riksdag to serve as ombudsmen must enjoy high level of social trust and have an appropriate, usually legal, education.³³ The government appoints its own ombudsmen – their powers and responsibilities differ from those of parliamentary ombudsmen. The government exercises executive power and is accountable to the Riksdag. It consists of the Prime Minister, who has many prerogatives

³⁰ Until 1994, the term of office of the Riksdag was three years.

³¹ This method relies on finding the largest consecutive quotients from the number of votes obtained. The division is made by dividing the number of votes for each election committee by consecutive odd numbers: 1, 3, 5, 7, etc., and then from the quotients calculated in this way for all committees, the largest values – as many as the number of seats to be filled – are selected.

³² *Systemy ustrojowe państw współczesnych*, ed. S. Bożyk, M. Grzybowski, Białystok 2012, p. 209.

³³ *Ibidem*.

and a strong position³⁴ and 22 ministers – heads of ministries and ministers without portfolio. While the ministries lead and direct, central offices deal the same issues on a day-to-day basis (duality of government administration). In 2014, Stefan Löfven became Prime Minister of a minority government consisting of the PM and 23 ministers (including twelve women and five people from immigrant families).³⁵

1.3. The party system

In the post-war years, Sweden's political life was dominated by one party: the Swedish Social Democratic Workers' Party (SAP), founded in 1889. Most of its members are union activists. SAP is an advocate of the welfare state, social equality and women's equality.³⁶ The extreme left is the Left Party (VP), founded in 1990 as a successor of the communist party. Despite its radicalism, it accepts a parliamentary path to socialism. Another significant party is the Moderate Coalition Party (MSP), which declares support for conservative and liberal values. Members of this party support the monarchy and are in favour of reducing the scope of social benefits, as well as lowering taxes.

Another important party is the People's Liberal Party (FP). Like the conservatives, members of the FP are against state intervention and the expansion of the social benefit system. The liberals achieved considerable success in the 2002 elections, gaining the support of 13.3% of voters. The Centre Party is a centre-left group representing the interests of farmers and small entrepreneurs. Christian Democracy (KdS) describes itself as the centre – an alternative to the left and right. In 2014, the Greens also entered parliament.³⁷

Since 2010, the far-right, anti-immigrant Swedish Democrats (SD) have been represented in parliament. This party makes frequent references

³⁴ Sweden often had one prime minister for many years. For example, Tage Erlander served as PM between 1946 and 1969. See more: O. Ruin, *Tage Erlander: Serving the Welfare State, 1946–1969*, Pittsburgh 1990.

³⁵ *Sweden reveals new 'feminist' cabinet*, "The Local", <https://www.thelocal.se/20141003/live-blog-lofven-cabinet>, accessed on January 3, 2018.

³⁶ In Sweden, the participation of women in elected political bodies often reaches 50%. See: V. Brunila, B. Duguit, Z. Iovino, *Women in Politics in Sweden*, <http://www.mv.helsinki.fi/home/holli/01sweden.html>, accessed on January 3, 2018.

³⁷ Cf. D. Zyśk, *Szwecja: Przeciwni imigrantom Szwedzcy Demokraci liderem na prawicy*, "Gazeta Prawna", <http://www.gazetaprawna.pl/artykuly/1029518,szwecja-przeciwni-imigrantom-szwedzcy-demokraci-liderem-na-prawicy.html>, accessed on January 3, 2018.

to the “Danish model”.³⁸ It was founded as a party in the 1980s, but only gained popularity in the 21st century. In the 2014 elections, Swedish Democrats achieved their greatest success to date, receiving 12.9% of all votes. These results were met with a degree of shock; some Swedes were surprised that a party with Nazi roots gained meaningful support in an open and progressive country. Meanwhile, after the Syrian refugee crisis occurred in 2016, according to some statistics, 20% of Swedes declared their support for this party, despite its isolation from the ruling coalition in the Riksdag; 40% of respondents saw immigration as the greatest challenge for Nordic countries.³⁹ This demonstrates that the leaders of the Swedish Democrats who envisage an ethnically homogeneous Sweden⁴⁰ (which in fact has never existed), are not isolated.

1.4. The welfare state and the role of the Social Democratic Party

Between the mid-19th century and the 1950s, Sweden transformed from one of the poorest countries in Europe to one of the richest. The years after World War II brought dynamic development, industrialisation and an increase in production. The developing economy needed workers, and a labour force that would be brought into the country from outside of Scandinavia. This is where we should look for the sources of the transformation of a homogeneous society into a heterogeneous and multicultural one.⁴¹ The image of Sweden as a wealthy, modern, egalitarian and tolerant country began to take shape during this time. The most important social reforms carried out in the period in question⁴² were a continuation of the solutions introduced

³⁸ Sweden and Denmark have a similar approach to the welfare state, but a vastly different vision of immigration policy – Danish policies are very restrictive in this respect, focused on the selection of “socially useful” immigrants. K. Borevi, *Multiculturalism and welfare state integration: Swedish model path dependency*, “Identities. Global Studies in Culture and Power”, Vol. 21, No. 6, 2014, pp. 709, 711–713, 716–718.

³⁹ *Immigration concerns swell among Swedish voters*, “The Local”, 8.02.2016, <http://www.thelocal.se/20160208/immigration-concerns-swell-among-swedish-voter>, accessed on January 3, 2018.

⁴⁰ Which does not prevent their politicians from eating bulgur and pizza, as Jennifer Mack ironically states. Op. cit., p. 255.

⁴¹ E. Muciek, *Wielokulturowość w Szwecji – projekt polityczny i praktyka społeczna*, “Teki Komisji Politologii i Stosunków Międzynarodowych” 4, 2009, pp. 53–54.

⁴² See more: M. Hilson, *The Nordic Model: Scandinavia Since 1945*, London 2008; F. Sejersted, M.B. Adams, *The Age of Social Democracy: Norway and Sweden in the Twentieth Century*, Princeton 2011.

in the interwar period. New reforms included the mandatory, universal and uniform primary education, child benefits and employee pensions. These reforms were possible thanks to uninterrupted economic growth⁴³ and the broad public support for the ruling Social Democrats, who sought to build a welfare state based on interventionist policies. The dominating role of this party in Swedish politics at the turn of the 1960s and 1970s, and its values, based on the ideas of Olof Palme,⁴⁴ influenced the character of Sweden's integration and immigration policy. The country's integration policy gradually evolved towards facilitating the integration of foreigners into the host society. A guarantee of equality of the indigenous population and the newcomers, combined with a high standard of living made Sweden an attractive destination for new immigrants.⁴⁵

The social-democratic model of the Swedish welfare state (*välfärdsstat*)⁴⁶ assumes that the right to benefits applies not only to citizens but also to immigrants who legally reside in the country. The state was to be the main agent of redistributing income and power, regulating and controlling capital, and maximising employment and economic growth. Swedish Social Democrats opted to tame predatory capitalism in favour of social solidarity, equality, democratisation, full employment, economic efficiency and right to property.⁴⁷

The unique characteristic of Swedish social democracy is the nearly constant presence of the Swedish Social Democratic Workers' Party in the Riksdag. The Social Democrats were founded in 1889; in 1920, they formed their first independent government. In 1932, the party won the election and formed an alliance with the agrarian

⁴³ S. Thakur, M. Keen, B. Horvath, V. Cerra, *Sweden's Welfare State. Can the Bum-bee Keep Flying*, Washington 2003, p. 21.

⁴⁴ Palme's political ideology comprised social sensitivity, striving for equality and justice, rejection of communism, hostility to economic liberalism, radical anti-colonialism, sympathy and significant assistance to Third World countries. Quoted from: S. Hadenius, *Sveriges politiska historia från 1865 till våra dagar. Konflikt och samförstånd*, Stockholm 2008, pp. 145–188. More on Palme's role as "activist-gatekeeper" see: M. Tawat, *The birth of Sweden's multicultural policy. The impact of Olof Palme and his ideas*, "International Journal of Cultural Policy", July 2017.

⁴⁵ A. Kobierecka, op. cit., p. 54.

⁴⁶ Cf. *Democracy and the Welfare State*, ed. A. Gutmann, Princeton 1988; *Comparing Welfare States*, ed. A. Cochrane, J. Clarke, Sh. Gewirtz, London 2001; M. Cousins, *European Welfare States*, London 2005; *Nordic Welfare States in the European Context*, ed. J. Fritzell, B. Hvinden, M. Kautto, J. Kvist, H. Uusitalo, London–New York 2005.

⁴⁷ Ph. Whyman, *Sweden and the "Third Way". A Macroeconomic Evaluation*, Hampshire 2003, p. 17.

party; roughly since that time its chosen approach has been called “the third way”⁴⁸ between “divisive capitalist individualism and the totalitarian collectivism of communism”⁴⁹ – an approach known in Sweden as “home of the people” (*folkhemmet*).⁵⁰ Between the 1930s and the 1990s, Swedish Social Democrats received between 40% and 55% of the vote in all elections. This positions the SAP as one of the most popular political parties in the history of liberal democracy.⁵¹

Several factors have influenced the party’s popularity in Sweden: the intense industrialisation of the country in the 20th century, the relative homogeneity of the Swedish working class, the significance of trade unions, the support of farmers and the eventual support of white-collar workers. Combined, these determinants contributed to general social approval of the reforms aimed at improving overall quality of life. The reforms were based on three pillars. Firstly, the SAP developed the welfare state based on the tax system. Secondly, they pursued an active labour market policy, striving to reduce unemployment (also among women – the state provided healthcare and childcare through access to nurseries and kindergartens). Thirdly, pay inequalities were reduced to combat poverty.⁵² These solutions stopped many Swedes from emigrating to the United States for bread⁵³ and the country became an attractive destination for foreigners. Crucially, in 1974, religious and ethnic minorities’ right to preserve their culture⁵⁴ was constitutionally recognised and considerable funds were allocated to make this determination a reality.

In 1976, Social Democrats lost their dominance due to the banking crisis and an economic downturn, which necessitated a reduction of state funds allocated to social benefits. However, as early as in

⁴⁸ In 1936, the American journalist Marquis W. Childs published a book entitled *Sweden. The Middle Way*, in which he praised the Swedish model of the welfare state.

⁴⁹ M. Rojas, *Sweden after the Swedish Model. From Tutorial State to Enabling State*, Stockholm 2005, p. 7.

⁵⁰ Cf. Ł. Bukowiecki, op. cit., p. 51.

⁵¹ G. Therborn, *A Unique Chapter in the History of Democracy: The Swedish Social Democrats. A Century of the Social Democratic Labor Party in Sweden*, [in:] *Creating Social Democracy*, ed. K. Misgeld, K. Molin, K. Åmark, Pennsylvania 1996.

⁵² A. Björklund, R. Freeman, *Searching for Optimal Inequality/Incentives*, [in:] *Reforming the Welfare State: Recovery and Beyond in Sweden*, ed. R.B. Freeman, B. Swedenborg, R. Topel, Chicago 2010, p. 25.

⁵³ This was a problem prior to World War I.

⁵⁴ Sweden’s Constitution of 1974 with Amendments through 2012, https://www.constituteproject.org/constitution/Sweden_2012.pdf?lang=en, accessed on May 25, 2018.

1982, the new SAP government began to fight the crisis. The costs were evenly distributed among all social groups, while the policy towards foreigners already residing in Sweden was liberalised. The aim was to create a multicultural society based on a policy of integration.⁵⁵ Social Democrats fought against discrimination, unemployment and social exclusion – phenomena affecting foreigners above of all.

The greatest decline of support for SAP occurred in the 1990s. The economic crisis removed the Social Democrats from power. In 1994, Social Democrats returned to the government, but with lower public support. The SAP program adopted in 2001 emphasised the need to resist the message of populist parties calling for intolerance. The program expressed continuing support for immigration and vowed to combat xenophobia and ensure equality irrespective of ethnicity.⁵⁶ In 2002, Social Democrats won 40% of votes, in 2006 – about 35%, in 2010 – less than 31%. Currently, after the election of September 14th, 2014, SAP is in power again (it has 113 MPs in the 349-person Riksdag) in coalition with the Green Party (24) and with the support of the Left Party (21). The opposition includes the Moderate Coalition Party (83), the Center Party (22), Liberals (19), Christian Democrats (16), Swedish Democrats (46) and five independent MPs.⁵⁷ A few MPs gave up their party affiliation after the elections, but kept their seats in parliament.

1.5. Multiculturalism, the Swedish way

The multicultural policy of Sweden has always evolved in relation to the wider situation. This policy can be examined on two levels – the level of official documents and that of social practice.⁵⁸ Its specificity lies mainly in the extended social welfare system, which covers both native citizens and foreigners legally staying in the country.

⁵⁵ E. Michalik, *Socjaldemokracja w Szwecji*, [in:] *Doktryna i ruch socjaldemokratyczny. Historia i współczesność*, ed. E. Olszewski, Puławy 2001, p. 249.

⁵⁶ *Party Program of the Social Democratic Party. Adopted by the Party Congress in Västerås 6 November, 2001*, <http://library.fes.de/pdf-files/ialhi/90144/90144.pdf>, accessed on January 3, 2018.

⁵⁷ *Members and parties*, <http://www.riksdagen.se/en/members-and-parties/>, www.riksdagen.se/en/members-and-parties/, accessed on January 3, 2018.

⁵⁸ A. Gromkowska-Melosik, *Mniejszość muzułmańska w Szwecji: Między ekstremistycznym izolacjonizmem a procesami reprodukcji ekonomicznej*, "Studia Edukacyjne" 26, 2013, p. 67.

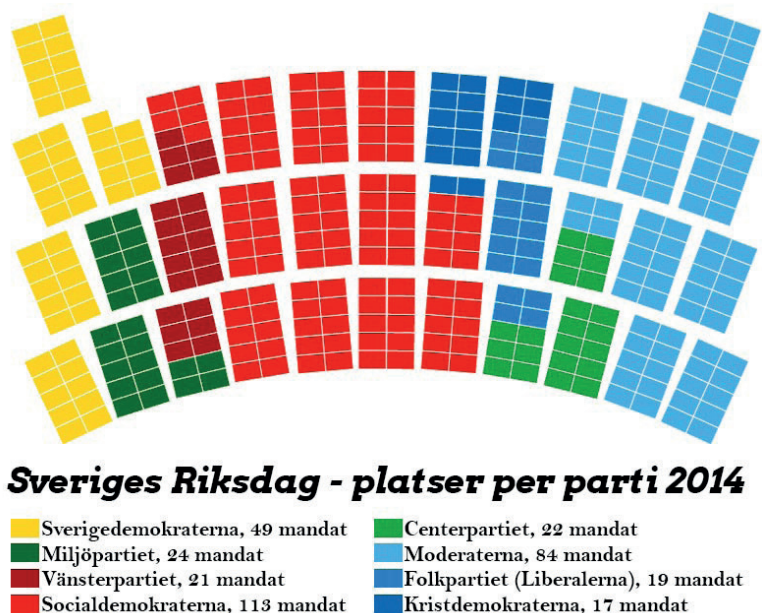


Fig. 3. The balance of power in the Riksdag after the 2014 parliamentary elections in Sweden

Source: <http://skillnadmellan.se/wp-content/uploads/2016/01/skillnaden-mellan-regering-och-riksdag.jpg>, accessed on January 3, 2018.

Historically, the largest minorities in Sweden came from Germany and from other Scandinavian countries – Denmark and Norway. Five communities are recognised as national minorities in Sweden (Sámi⁵⁹, Roma, Jews, Finns and Tornedalians⁶⁰). Immigrants formed another group – most of the asylum seekers and refugees came from the former Yugoslavia and the Middle East. Swedish multiculturalism is mainly a product of the necessity to regulate relations with visitors from outside Europe.⁶¹ Along with the influx of the latter, ethnic Swedes,

⁵⁹ An indigenous Finno-Ugric people – descendants of the original inhabitants of Scandinavia.

⁶⁰ Descendants of Finns who settled to the areas of today's Northern Sweden near the Torne Valley district. See more: S. Lipott, *The Tornedalian Minority in Sweden. From Assimilation to Recognition: A 'Forgotten' Ethnic and Linguistic Minority, 1870–2000*, "Immigrants & Minorities. Historical Studies in Ethnicity, Migration and Diaspora", Vol. 33, No. 1, 2015.

⁶¹ M. Banaś, *Fenomen wielokulturowej Skandynawii*, [in:] *Wzory wielokulturowości we współczesnym świecie*, ed. K. Golemo, T. Paleczny, E. Wiącek, Kraków 2006, p. 93.

associated in trade unions, became increasingly worried about losing their jobs and became vocal about their concerns. At the same time, a discussion of the rights of minorities and immigrants swept through Swedish newspapers; in particular, articles written by David Schwarz received a lot of public attention.⁶² This debate prompted the Swedish government to conduct an “immigration inquiry” (*Invandrarutredningen*) which lasted from 1968 to 1974. The final report emphasised that the state should not force minorities to abandon their language and culture.⁶³

The essence of the Swedish approach to multiculturalism is a developed system of integrating immigrants with the host society. Although no official assimilation policy exists, the Swedes expect that immigrants receiving state support – in the form of housing, language teaching or work – will be willing to adopt Swedish values and behaviours characteristic for native inhabitants of the country, *ergo* to act like ethnic Swedes while maintaining their own identity.⁶⁴ The litmus test of an immigrant's integration is finding and keeping employment⁶⁵. At the same time, there is a tendency in public discourse to view immigrants as “not yet integrated”. Irene Molina phrases this as follows: “[in Sweden, integration] is described as being always on the way to ‘becoming’ something, on the way into the society, on the way to being integrated into some kind of impossible company.”⁶⁶

At the beginning of the 20th century, the Swedes saw no need to control immigration into their country. It was not until the end of World War I that they began to require passports, visas and residence permits from incoming foreigners; Swedish deportation laws were established at that time. In the interwar period, people of colour were barred

⁶² David Schwarz, born in Poland, a former concentration camp prisoner, immigrated to Sweden in the early 1950s, where a decade later, in the pages of the most important Swedish daily, *Dagens Nyheter*, he reminded Swedes of the consequences of anti-Semitism, calling for better protection of minority rights. Other important publicists promoting multiculturalism in Sweden are: Inga Gottfarb, Amadeo Cottio, Voldemar Kiviaed, Géza Thinsz and Lukasz Winiarski. See: H. Román, *En invandrarpolitisk oppositionell: debattören David Schwarz syn på svensk invandrarpolitik åren 1964–1993*, Uppsala 1994.

⁶³ L. Camauër, *Ethnic Minorities and their Media in Sweden. An Overview of the Media Landscape and State Minority Media Policy*, “Nordicom Review” 2, 2003, p. 74.

⁶⁴ A. Kobierecka, op. cit., p. 42.

⁶⁵ K. Borevi, op. cit., p. 711.

⁶⁶ I. Molina, *Intersektionella rumslygter*, “Tidskrift för genusvetenskap” 3, 2007, pp. 7–21. Quoted in J. Mack, op. cit., p. 176.

from settling in Sweden⁶⁷ and the Roma were considered *personae non gratae* – the latter was changed in 1954. With World War II came an increased rate of immigration. From the 1950s, when the common Nordic free market was established, up until the 1970s, the majority of immigrants came to Sweden from other Scandinavian countries. Newcomers from Nordic countries are still treated preferentially in Sweden due to their cultural and historical similarity to the local population; obtaining Swedish citizenship is made easier for this group.⁶⁸

Following the Soviet Union's invasion of Hungary (1956) and then of Czechoslovakia (1968), Sweden began to accept political refugees from these states. The 1960s saw an increase of economic immigration, mainly from Greece and Turkey; the initial arrivals were mainly ethnic Turks from rural areas,⁶⁹ to be later joined by religious and ethnic minorities. In 1968, to manage these new arrivals, the Swedish Immigration Council was founded; at its disposal were tools both external (visas) and internal (permits to stay and work in the country).⁷⁰ At that time, an immigrant was able to obtain permanent residence after just two years, and citizenship after five. Swedes saw potential citizens in the temporary workers and gladly employed them. The oil crisis of the 1970s changed that – a law introduced in 1973 required Swedish employers to fund a 240-hour Swedish language course for foreign employees, which led to a decrease in the employment of foreigners.⁷¹

In 1975, at the request of the Parliamentary Migration Committee, the Riksdag adopted a resolution on the guidelines of Swedish immigration policy.⁷² It was decided that Sweden should be multicultural.

⁶⁷ D.S. Nordin, *A Swedish dilemma: a liberal European nation's struggle with racism and xenophobia, 1990–2000*, Oxford 2005, p. 17.

⁶⁸ This is regulated by the 2005 Foreigners Act. Cf. Utlänningslag (2005:716), <http://rkrattsbaser.gov.se/sfst?bet=2005:716>, accessed on January 3, 2018. It is the latest version of the Act on Foreigners of 1927, and amended many times. The legal system for admitting foreigners is based on this document, and on the Deportation Act of 1914. J.W. Dacyl, *Podstawy prawne szwedzkiej polityki migracyjnej i uchodźczej*, [in:] *Imigranci i społeczeństwa przyjmujące*, ed. J.E. Zamojski, Warsaw 2000, pp. 76–106.

⁶⁹ Ch. Westin, *Young People of Migrant Origin in Sweden*, “The International Migration Review”, Vol. 37, No. 4, Winter 2003, p. 987.

⁷⁰ A. Geddes, *The Politics of Migration and Immigration in Europe*, London 2003, pp. 107–108.

⁷¹ *Ibidem*, p. 108.

⁷² Regeringens proposition om riktlinjer för invandrar – och minoritetspolitik m. m. Proposition 1975:26, <https://data.riksdagen.se/fil/901A899E-1277-496B-9552-E70BCF5C3783>, accessed on January 3, 2018.

It was the first resolution in the world to grant the right to vote to foreigners – legal immigrants who had resided in Sweden for at least three years were allowed to vote in local and regional elections⁷³ and could use their right in the elections the following year. Foreigners were also guaranteed the right to an interpreter and to information.⁷⁴ In this phase of its development, Swedish integration policy was based on three principles: equality (immigrants residing in Sweden were to have access to the same rights and privileges as Swedes), freedom of choice (in terms of private life, immigrants were left free to choose to stay true to their own cultural identity and customs), partnership (it was assumed that while immigrants could remain faithful to the ideals and values of their culture, their behaviour should not stand in opposition to the key values of Swedish society).⁷⁵

In the 1970s, refugees from the Middle East and Latin America – and their families – were predominant among newcomers to Sweden.⁷⁶ The same period saw an influx of Assyrians/Syriacs seeking asylum due to religious persecutions. In the 1980s, Kurds have begun arriving in large numbers for the same reason. The following immigration of ethnic Turks and Assyrians/Syriacs was possible due to family reunification.⁷⁷ The late 1980s saw the arrival of asylum seekers from Somalia, Kosovo and countries of the former Soviet bloc, while in the 1990s, thousands of refugees arrived from former Yugoslavia (where a civil war had been raging since 1991). A number of cities have become overpopulated, causing the dissatisfaction of ethnic Swedes, and raising doubts as to whether immigrants should be granted this extent of state assistance; xenophobic and racist attitudes developed as a result. “Immigration ghettos” of sorts have appeared and their inhabitants faced increasing hostility. In 1997, immigration policy was tightened,

⁷³ Ibidem. Cf. P. Pogodzińska, *Integracja i przeciwdziałanie dyskryminacji imigrantów na szwedzkim rynku pracy*, <http://www.isp.org.pl/uploads/filemanager/dyskryminacjamiigrantownarynkupracy-Szwecja.pdf>, accessed on January 3, 2018.

⁷⁴ E. Muciek, op. cit., p. 56.

⁷⁵ A. Kobierecka, op. cit., p. 234.

⁷⁶ Ch. Westin, E. Dingu-Kyrklund, *Immigration and integration of immigrants and their descendants: the Swedish approach*, [in:] *The Integration of Immigrants in European Societies: National Differences and Trends of Convergence*, ed. F. Heckmann, D. Schnapper, Stuttgart 2003, p. 105.

⁷⁷ Ch. Westin, *Young People...*, p. 987.

and a new immigration resolution was adopted;⁷⁸ the following year the National Integration Office (*Integrationsverket*),⁷⁹ responsible for creating special integration programs,⁸⁰ was founded. Additional solutions were introduced due to Sweden's accession to the European Union.

In the second decade of the 21st century, refugees have come to Sweden from the war- and crisis-torn Middle East, Africa and Central Asia. In 2013, the Office for Migration and Refugees granted permanent residence to all Syrians and stateless people who fled the Syrian civil war. However, as soon as two years later – in 2015 – Swedish government introduced temporary border controls, explaining its decision by the rising numbers of migrants: only that year, 163 000 asylum seekers (including over 51 000 Syrians) came seeking refuge in the country – almost twice as many as in 1992 during the war in former Yugoslavia. It was also a very large increase compared to the previous year (2014), when the number of registered immigrants totalled 81 000. Such high numbers of people arriving in a very short span of time cause serious problems with housing and generate a number of other dilemmas, such as the care of unaccompanied minors; in 2015, there were over 35 000 such new arrivals.⁸¹

The Swedish asylum procedure is quite simple and transparent (shown in the diagram above), and can be seen as an incentive to apply. In 2016, selective identity checks were introduced to reduce

⁷⁸ The new policy states that immigrants should be treated as a group only for the first years after their arrival. The new regulations are designed to support and integrate individuals, protect democratic values and women's rights, and counter discrimination and racism. The responsibility of immigrants for their situation in Sweden was emphasised. Cf. Regeringens proposition. Sverige, framtiden och mångfalden – från invandrapolitik till integrationspolitik 1997/98:16, <https://www.regeringen.se/49bba3/contentassets/6cf1db3cc2254ab8a3e70038272f09e4/sverige-framtiden-och-mangfalden---fran-invandrapolitik-till-integrationspolitik>, accessed on January 3, 2018.

⁷⁹ *Immigration Policy in Sweden: Part Two*, "Borderless Adventures", 16.12.2012, <http://borderlessadventures.com/article/immigration-policy-in-sweden-part-two-303>, accessed on January 3, 2018.

⁸⁰ *UN Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination Report*, 22.08.2000, <http://sim.law.uu.nl/SIM/CaseLaw/uncom.nsf/804bb175b68baaf7c125667f-004cb333/fe5e70d4eac0aa12c125698300368cfc?OpenDocument>, accessed on January 3, 2018.

⁸¹ OECD, *Working Together: Skills and Labour Market Integration of Immigrants and their Children in Sweden*, Paris 2016, <http://www.oecd.org/publications/working-together-skills-and-labour-market-integration-of-immigrants-and-their-children-in-sweden-9789264257382-en.htm>, accessed on January 3, 2018.

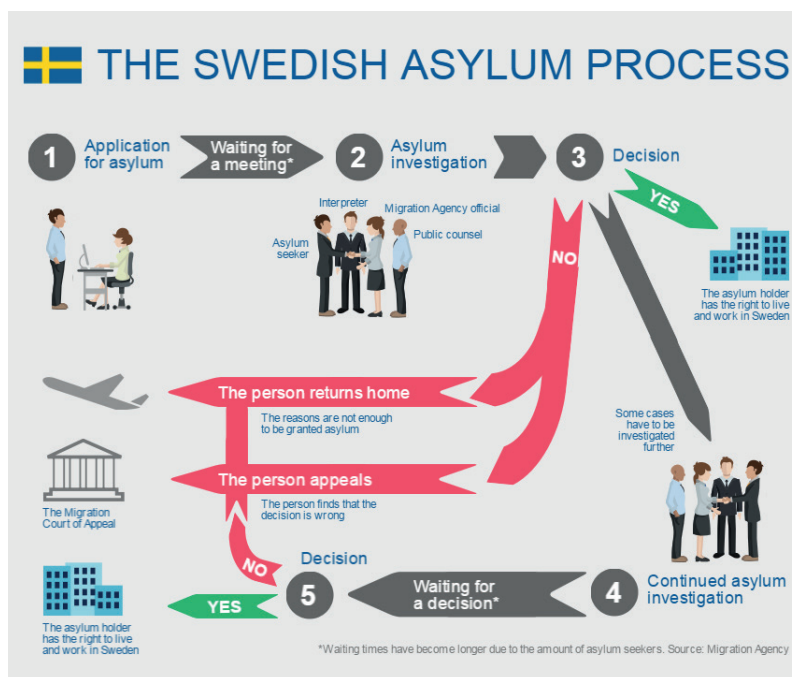


Fig. 4. Diagram illustrating the Swedish asylum procedure

Source: Based on <https://sweden.se/wp-content/uploads/2016/04/asylum-process.png>, accessed on May 24, 2018.

the number of asylum seekers – mainly coming from Iraq and Syria. However, Swedish authorities are aware that this is a temporary solution to the problem of excessive immigration; only the development of coherent and effective methods of integration may guarantee long-term success.

In recent years, much attention has been paid to improving the effectiveness of the immigrant integration policy and a number of changes were implemented. In 2010, a special introductory program was created to provide funding for an immigrant for a period of two years after obtaining a residence permit. The program contains an element of coercion – participation is compulsory for those not able to support themselves.⁸² Moreover, the responsibility for coordinating

⁸² Sweden's policy in this respect is much more liberal than that of other European countries. Immigrants who do not manage to find a job face no sanctions. All they have

integration activities was placed on Employment Agencies (*Arbetsförmedlingen*). Despite broad public support for these changes, growing opposition led by the Swedish Democrats cannot be ignored. So far, the party has managed to shift the political discourse from the issue of helping refugees and asylum seekers to criticising Social Democrats for spending too much on integration programs. The party also seemed to depart from a race-focused narrative in favour of emphasising cultural differences between “Swedes” and “immigrants”, especially followers of Islam.⁸³

The chart 1 presenting the number of arrivals illustrates the growing numbers in 2013–2015 and the subsequent reduction in immigration in 2016, caused by the introduction of a temporary law which impeded family reunification (introduced in November 2015).⁸⁴ According to Daniel Hedlund, this represented a tightening of Swedish immigration laws, but not a general deviation from the chosen course. Forecasts for 2018 estimate between 25 000 and 65 000 new asylum seekers.⁸⁵

The current structure of the largest national minorities in Sweden is presented in the tab. 1.

to do is meet with the designated officials. Participation in the program itself guarantees the receipt of funds; participants are not required to take any tests in the language or culture of Sweden. Those who cannot participate in the program are not at risk of expulsion from the country. K. Borevi, op. cit., p. 716.

⁸³ See more: Ch. Green Pedersen, P. Odmalm, *Going Different Ways? Right-wing parties and the immigrant issue in Denmark and Sweden*, [in:] *Immigration and Integration Policy in Europe: Why Politics – and the Centre-Right – Matter*, ed. T. Bale, London–New York 2009, p. 62. A good example of the promotion of Islamophobia by Swedish Democrats is the party’s advertising spot, showing an elderly Swedish pensioner seeking benefits, overtaken by aggressive Muslim women in burqas pushing prams: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pumIT31qqQQ>.

⁸⁴ Recently arrived immigrants with a residence permit have lost their right to immediately bring their closest relatives to Sweden. Cf. R. Cerrotti, op. cit.

⁸⁵ *Sweden’s asylum seeker forecast on track for 2017*, “The Local”, <https://www.thelocal.se/20170426/swedens-asylum-seeker-forecast-on-track-for-2017>, accessed on January 3, 2018.

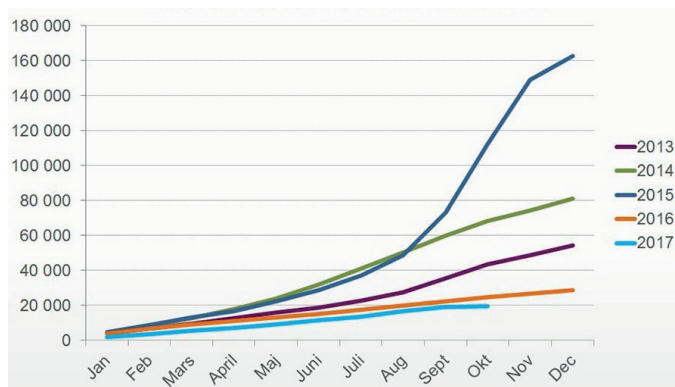


Chart 1. Number of asylum applications in Sweden submitted in 2013–2017

Source: <https://www.migrationsverket.se/English/About-the-Migration-Agency/Facts-and-statistics-/Statistics.html>, accessed on May 24, 2018.

No.	Country of origin	Number
1.	Syria	172 258
2.	Finland	150 877
3.	Iraq	140 830
4.	Poland	91 180
5.	Iran	74 096
6.	Somalia	66 369
7.	Former Yugoslavia	65 877
8.	Bosnia and Hercegovina	58 880
9.	Germany	50 863
10.	Turkey	48 299
11.	Afghanistan	43 991
12.	Norway	42 028
13.	Thailand	41 240
14.	Denmark	40 563
15.	Eritrea	39 081

Tab. 1. National minorities in Sweden in 2017

Source: *Utrikes födda samt födda i Sverige med en eller två utrikes födda föräldrar efter födelseland/ursprungsland*, December 31, 2016, Statistics Sweden.

Sweden has come a long way – from a state that did not implement any immigration or integration policies, through gradually creating the foundations of a legal and institutional system enabling partial control of immigration – which intensified in the 1950s and 1960s – to a country with a meticulous immigration policy and an immigration system covering almost all aspects related to it.⁸⁶ As a result, more effective and lasting integration was made possible, which is evidenced by relatively high naturalisation rates of immigrants in Sweden.⁸⁷

According to research being conducted at the University of Uppsala, Swedish society accepts the presence of immigrants (67% of respondents stated that studying or working with foreigners was a positive experience), but prefers the policy of integration to the previous multicultural policy. However, only 4% of ethnic Swedes declared a definite aversion to multiculturalism.⁸⁸ Popular support for a multicultural policy is influenced to some extent by the discourse which dominates in schools and public media, emphasising the positive aspects of accepting immigrants and hardly ever mentioning any downsides. Journalists – most of whom share liberal and left-wing views – tend to depict Swedish foreign policy through the lens of international solidarity and humanistic values. Most reports on immigration conclude with the statement that it enriches Sweden.⁸⁹

1.6. The Swedish immigration and integration policy system

In her book, Anna Kobierecka presents and convincingly proves the following hypotheses concerning the Swedish immigration and integration policy:

1. The welfare state system has a significant impact on the shape and nature of immigration and integration policies in Sweden.
2. Immigration and integration policies are conditioned by numerous domestic and international factors.

⁸⁶ A. Kobierecka, op. cit., p. 17.

⁸⁷ Of all OECD countries, Sweden has the highest rate of naturalisation. Cf. OECD, *International Migration Outlook 2010*, Paris 2010, p. 158. More on the naturalisation process in Sweden: A. Kobierecka, op. cit., pp. 260–267.

⁸⁸ Ch. Web, *Swedes more positive toward immigrants: study*, “The Local”, 29.10.2009, <http://www.thelocal.se/22954/20091029/>, accessed on January 3, 2018.

⁸⁹ See more: E. Borisenko, *Discourse on Immigration in Swedish Mass Media*, MA thesis, Linköping University, Linköping 2005.

3. Sweden's tradition of neutrality may have contributed to the initiation of mass immigration after the end of World War II.

4. There is a close correlation between the changes taking place in Sweden's immigration and integration policies.

5. The extensive integration policy aims to make foreigners more similar to the host society.

6. There is a clear link between the historical experiences of the Swedish nation and today's shape of its immigration and integration policy.⁹⁰

Ad 1) With its extensive welfare system, Sweden is very attractive to many migrants, who come from various directions and are driven by a range of motivations. The dominating reason to emigrate to Sweden is seeking security⁹¹ and material well-being for migrants and their families. The leading political party – Social Democrats – were determined to suppress discriminatory behaviours against immigrants.

Ad 2) Swedish politics was not born in a vacuum. Despite its neutrality, the country is open minded and actively participates in international politics. Thus, Sweden's migration policy takes into account such factors as armed conflicts around the globe and the resulting waves of refugees, membership in international organisations translating into specific regulations, or trends resulting from globalisation.

Ad 3) The neutrality which Sweden maintained during the First and Second World War spared it from destruction; the economy did not have to be rebuilt, and after 1945, the country began to experience an economic boom. Good economic conditions were an important stimulus for mass immigration, while the low population density created a need for additional labour.

Ad 4) In the case of Sweden, its immigration policy is closely related to the country's integration policy. Both were subject to changes resulting from the dynamic – internal and external – situation of the state. However, the general direction of these changes remained constant: the more immigration increased, the further the integration policy was formalised, allowing not only a greater degree of control of foreigners, but also a more complete system of support.

Ad 5) The integration policy was developed in order to reduce the differences between immigrants and ethnic Swedes, and in the longer term to reduce the likelihood of social unrest. No special measures

⁹⁰ A. Kobierecka, op. cit., p. 9.

⁹¹ Security (*trygghet*) is one of the key concepts for the Swedish model. Cf. E. Muciek, op. cit., p. 55.

were needed for immigrants arriving from neighbouring Scandinavian countries, however the situation changed with the increasing ethnic diversity of immigrants. The intense influx of foreigners and the settlement of large numbers of newcomers in major Swedish cities began to be perceived as a threat to Swedish culture and society.

Ad 6) Expeditions organised by Swedes from the Middle Ages onwards translated into their openness to other cultures. From the beginning of World War II, certain phases of immigration to Sweden can be clearly distinguished, and were influenced by many domestic and international factors. Each of these stages had its own specificity, motivation and nature.⁹²

The Riksdag – the Swedish parliament – determines the shape of the migration policy. The government specifies the Acts of the Riksdag by issuing specific regulations, such as a limit of the total number of admitted refugees. Implementation of the regulations set out by the parliament and government is handled by the Migration Office (Migrationsverket, UM).⁹³ This institution grants citizenship, asylum, issues visas, etc. Regional offices of the UM are also responsible for finding work for the refugees.⁹⁴ The Swedes treat the workplace as an environment that naturally aids integration. The rate of unemployment in Sweden is 6.8%;⁹⁵ among Swedish-born citizens the rate of unemployment is 4.2%, whilst among people born abroad it stands at 21.6%,⁹⁶ despite government campaigns supporting the employment of foreigners (including vocational training and information training for newcomers).

In addition to job assistance, two other very important factors impact integration success rates – housing programs and Swedish language courses. Even though the situation is not ideal and some cities suffer from a shortage of housing, a general improvement can be ob-

⁹² A. Kobierecka, op. cit., pp. 9–11.

⁹³ A direct translation from Swedish. Other names are also used, such as the “Swedish Migration Agency”.

⁹⁴ M. Banaś, *Szwedzka polityka...*, p. 153.

⁹⁵ Data for September 2017, Statistical Office of the EU, Bureau of Labour Statistics.

⁹⁶ *Sveriges Radio*, <http://sverigesradio.se/sida/gruppsida.aspx?programid=83&-grupp=10974&artikel=6523617>, accessed on January 3, 2018. Immigrants to Sweden are often well educated, trained as lawyers or engineers, but they do not work in their profession but as taxi drivers or cleaners. Swedes do not need specialists in Muslim law or building houses using Middle Eastern technologies. According to the OECD, the “professional overqualification rate” in Sweden is much higher than the EU average.

served in the housing market. High rates of immigration and a very accommodating monetary policy are important factors in robust growth;⁹⁷ the Swedish housing policy system additionally provides subsidies and reductions for the most disadvantaged groups, including immigrants.⁹⁸

As early as the mid-1970s, the Million Program (*Miljonprogrammet*) was launched – financed by the government, the programme's goal was to provide affordable housing for both foreigners and ethnic Swedes.⁹⁹ Flats built as part of this programme (their total number exceeded a million) were typically located relatively far away from workplaces and services, hence they were mostly occupied by foreigners. Over time, this tendency contributed to creating zones of poverty, unemployment and crime. The situation was exacerbated by another programme implemented in the 1980s, setting out specific communes for new immigrants. The newcomers arrived in already overcrowded areas, where the opportunities to find work were practically non-existent. Only in the 1990s were the immigrants finally allowed to choose their place of residence.¹⁰⁰

Apart from the housing policy, another important element of the integration policy is language teaching. The range of language courses includes training of vocational linguistic skills and teaching children of foreign origin. Since 1965, learning Swedish has been seen as every immigrant's right. The beginnings were modest: there was a shortage of teachers and adequate teaching materials. These deficits have been gradually dealt with and the state proceeded to guarantee free, non-compulsory courses for all immigrants aged sixteen and above who legally reside in Sweden.

Government-funded Swedish for Immigrants (Svenska för Invandrare, SFI) courses are aimed at adult foreigners with the aim of enabling them to master the language so that it becomes a sufficiently effective communication tool in various aspects of life.¹⁰¹ Students learn

⁹⁷ *Boom mieszkaniowy w Szwecji wciąż trwa*, "Obserwator Finansowy", <https://www.obserwatorfinansowy.pl/tematyka/makroekonomia/boom-mieszkaniowy-w-szwecji-wciaz-trwa/>, accessed on January 3, 2018.

⁹⁸ A. Kobierecka, op. cit., p. 233.

⁹⁹ A. Geddes, op. cit., p. 109.

¹⁰⁰ Ch. Westin, *Sweden: Restrictive Immigration Policy and Multiculturalism*, June 2006, <http://www.migrationinformation.org/usfocus/display.cfm?ID=406>, accessed on January 3, 2018.

¹⁰¹ A. Kobierecka, op. cit., pp. 234–238.

Swedish pronunciation, listening and reading comprehension, writing and speaking skills; they are also taught by various teaching aids and learning strategies. Learning at SFI is divided into three study paths (*studievägar*) marked with numbers 1, 2, 3 and courses A, B, C, D. This differentiation results from different needs and experiences of learners;¹⁰² it is possible to change the group during the course, if the pace of teaching does not suit the learner. Courses are held during the day or evening. Additionally, courses focusing on specialist vocabulary related to particular professions, such as Swedish for doctors, are being developed. The aforementioned division into study paths is structured as follows:

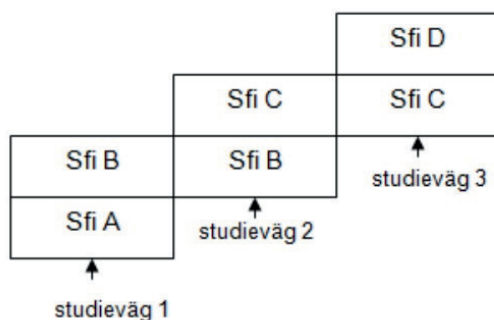


Fig. 5. Swedish for Immigrants study paths

Source: *Utbildning i svenska för invandrare*, <https://www.nora.se/utbildningbarnomsorg/vuxenlarandeenhet/hjernet/sfisvenskaforinvandrare.4.530ff22612628e6f44b800012282.html>, accessed on January 3, 2018.

Teaching language skills to immigrant children is particularly prioritised. The main principle is to give these children the opportunity to learn both Swedish and their mother tongue.¹⁰³ This allows for the

¹⁰² Theoretically, SFI 1 is aimed at students who cannot read and write or who have completed only a few years of primary school, SFI 2 for educated people who do not use the Latin alphabet, SFI 3 for those who have completed higher education and only need to learn Swedish. Despite this division, the courses are sometimes criticised for their low level resulting from the large variety of learners, even within individual stages and courses. Sometimes, former professors end up in classrooms together with illiterate people, and migrants from relatively safe and wealthy countries together with traumatised war refugees. Cf. N. Kołaczek, *SFI czyli nauka szwedzkiego w Szwecji*, 25.08.2014, <http://szwecjoblog.blogspot.com/2014/08/sfi-czyli-nauka-szwedzkiego-w-szwecji.html>, accessed on January 3, 2018.

¹⁰³ In 1975, the right to so-called mother tongue instruction was passed. It specified that it was possible to carry out up to two lessons a week in a minority language

development of bilingualism, which benefits both the children and the state.¹⁰⁴ In the 2016/2017 school year, 27% of Sweden's 1.34 million primary school pupils were entitled to participate in mother tongue classes.¹⁰⁵ A separate (but related to linguistic skills) issue is learning difficulties experienced by immigrant children. On the one hand, a survey of teachers from 519 primary and secondary schools showed that 60% of them have in their class students of foreign origin, who need support in the form of private tutoring in their mother tongue. On the other hand, some studies¹⁰⁶ have shown that newly arrived primary and secondary students from immigrant families are characterised by a strong desire to be 'normal', 'just like everyone else' and to make Swedish friends. What lowers their grades are the low expectations of teachers and counsellors, and retention in purely, or almost exclusively, immigrant classes.¹⁰⁷ Programmes aimed at supporting the intellectual development of immigrant children may not be perfect, but they do bring measurable results: the percentage of higher education graduates among immigrants is only two percentage points lower than the same metric for ethnic Swedes (36% to 38%).¹⁰⁸

1.7. Church-state relations in Sweden

The description of the Swedish model would not be complete without remarks on the role of religion and the Lutheran Church. The process of Christianisation of Sweden by Catholic missions was stretched over

in state schools, provided that a group of at least five children of immigrant origin came together. Since 1977, immigrant children have been guaranteed the right to learn their mother tongue. See: A. Geddes, op. cit., p. 121.

¹⁰⁴ See more: A. Kobierecka, op. cit., pp. 238–244.

¹⁰⁵ N. Bunar, *Migration and Education in Sweden: Integration of Migrants in the Swedish School Education and Higher Education Systems*, <http://nesetweb.eu/wp-content/uploads/2016/02/Migration-and-Education-in-Sweden.pdf>, accessed on January 3, 2018.

¹⁰⁶ Cf. *Nyanlända och lärande*, ed. N. Bunar, Stockholm 2015; F.J. Nilsson, N. Bunar, *Educational Responses to Newly Arrived students in Sweden: Understanding the Structure and Influence of Post-Migration Ecology*, "Scandinavian Journal of Educational Research", Vol. 60, No. 4, 2016, pp. 399–416; F.J. Nilsson, *Lived transitions*, Stockholm 2017.

¹⁰⁷ N. Bunar, *Migration and Education...*

¹⁰⁸ Sweden Ministry of Employment, *Pocket facts 2010 – Statistics on integration*, 2011, http://adapt.it/adapt-indice-a-z/wp-content/uploads/2014/05/sweden_facts_2011.pdf, accessed on January 3, 2018.

time and lasted from the 9th to the 12th centuries. It was only in the 16th century that Sweden became an overwhelmingly Lutheran state.¹⁰⁹

Currently, 6.1 million Swedes are members of the Church of Sweden (*Svenska kyrkan*),¹¹⁰ which corresponds to 61% of the 10 million population.¹¹¹ From the Reformation in the 1630s to 1860, a ban was in place on conversion from Lutheranism to another denomination or religion – a Swede was born and died as a member of the Church of Sweden, per the principle of “one country, one nation, one religion”.¹¹² Participation in the holy mass was considered a civic duty¹¹³ and deportation was the usual penalty for professing Catholicism.¹¹⁴ Jacek Kubitsky believes that the Swedes’ extraordinary trust in the authorities, even submission, to this day, stems from the past, when “obedience to ideas was the highest virtue, and deviation and disagreement – a mortal sin”.¹¹⁵ Sweden owed its religious homogeneity to a law under which any child born of Swedish parents would automatically become a member of the Church of Sweden. Freedom of religion was introduced as late as 1951; from that year on, the law permits anyone to leave the Church of Sweden without providing any reason.¹¹⁶

In addition to the Church of Sweden, a notable role is played by the so-called Free Churches (*frikyrkor*) – Protestant but independent of the Church of Sweden. Other major Christian denominations in Sweden are Roman Catholicism (92 000 believers) and Orthodox Christianity (100 000). The second most popular religion in Sweden

¹⁰⁹ As a result of the Reformation, Sweden severed its ties with the Holy See, recognising its monarch – Gustav Vasa as the head of the Church. From his coronation in 1523, there was a strong link between the state and the Church of Sweden for centuries. Each subsequent king had to be a follower of Lutheranism. E. Teodorowicz-Hellman, *Miejsce chrześcijaństwa w szwedzkiej szkole podstawowej: zarys historyczny i współczesny dyskurs społeczny*, “Forum Pedagogiczne” 1, 2014, p. 55.

¹¹⁰ Church of Sweden official statistics, <https://www.svenskakyrkan.se/statistik>, accessed on January 30, 2018.

¹¹¹ Situation for 2018; the percentage of members of the Church of Sweden declines by at least one percentage point each year.

¹¹² E. Teodorowicz-Hellman, op. cit., p. 55.

¹¹³ K. Orfali, *Model jawności: społeczeństwo szwedzkie*, transl. E. Trojańska, [in:] *Historia życia prywatnego. Tom 5: Od I wojny światowej do naszych czasów*, ed. A. Prost, G. Vincent, Wrocław 2006, p. 669.

¹¹⁴ J. Kubitsky, *Szwecja od środka*, Warsaw 1987, p. 119.

¹¹⁵ *Ibidem*.

¹¹⁶ Cf. M. Jännerä-Jareborg, *Religion and the Secular State in Sweden*, [in:] *Religion and the Secular State: National Reports*, ed. J. Martínez-Torrón, W. Cole Durham, Jr., Provo (USA) 2010, p. 671.

is Islam, professed by five percent of the population.¹¹⁷ Out of 20 000 Swedish Jews, seven to eight thousand declare themselves to be active believers. The rest of Swedish citizens are non-practitioners and members of other religious groups, such as worshippers of the old Norse gods (neo-pagans). Small communities of Buddhists, Hindus, Sikhs, Zoroastrians, Scientologists, followers of Hare Krishna, the Word of Faith movement, and the Unification Church (Moon) are concentrated in the larger cities.¹¹⁸ Atheism and agnosticism are popular among ethnic Swedes. Swedish law prohibits collecting information on the faith of individuals (hence the lack of accurate data in government reports), and no official recognition or registration is required to pursue religious activities.

The Swedish constitution guarantees a number of rights related to freedom of religion – since 2000, the Church of Sweden is no longer the state church. The reform carried out at that time was based on a decision made by the Riksdag in 1995 following consultations with the General Synod – the highest ranking decision-making body of the Church of Sweden – and over 3 000 advisory committees. As a result, the “Church Law” (*Kyrkio-Lag och Ordning*) was annulled and replaced by two new acts: the Act on Religious Communities (*Lag om trossamfund*) and the Act on the Church of Sweden (*Lag om Svenska kyrkan*). Since this reform, the Swedish government no longer appoints bishops or deans, nor does it interfere in other Church appointments. The Church of Sweden is responsible for burials – it is to provide places of burial for the deceased, regardless of their religion, as well as farewell rooms which do not feature religious symbols. In return, the Church receives financial compensation from the state for its role in the preservation and maintenance of cultural heritage. The parish tax has been replaced with an income-based fee that applies to all registered mem-

¹¹⁷ For more about Muslims in Sweden, see: A.S. Roald, *From “People’s Home” to “Multiculturalism”: Muslims in Sweden*, [in:] *Muslims in the West: From Sojourners to Citizens*, ed. Y. Yazbeck Haddad, Oxford 2002, p. 101; eadem, *Majority versus minority: ‘governmentality’ and Muslims in Sweden*, “Religions” 4, 2013, pp. 116–131; eadem, *Expressing Religiosity in a secular society: the relativisation of Faith in Muslim Communities in Sweden*, “European Review”, Vol. 20, No. 1, 2012, pp. 95–113. Cf. K. Pędziwiatr, *Szwecja*, [in:] idem, *Od islamu imigrantów do islamu obywateli: muzułmanie w krajach Europy Zachodniej*, Kraków 2007, p. 159.

¹¹⁸ J. Porterfield, *Sweden: A Primary Source Cultural Guide*, New York 2004, p. 65.

bers of the Church,¹¹⁹ which has greatly increased the financial transparency of the Church of Sweden.¹²⁰

Apart from the Church of Sweden, the eight officially recognised denominations have the right to receive contributions from their followers through the national tax system. These eight denominations are: the Mission Covenant Church of Sweden (*Svenska Missionskyrkan*), the Roman Catholic Church, the Swedish Alliance Mission (*Svenska alliansmissionen*), the United Methodist Church of Sweden (*Methodistkyrkan i Sverige*), the Baptist Union of Sweden (*Svenska Baptistsamfundet*), the Salvation Army, Pentecostal Church, and the Evangelical Church. In 2011, three Swedish Christian Churches – Baptist, Methodist and Presbyterian – joined together to form the Uniting Church in Sweden (*Equmeniakyrkan*), a Protestant religious association with a regulated legal status. All officially recognised denominations are entitled to direct government subsidies, and/or resources derived from the national tax system. Other religious communities can also receive state support, but only if they apply for it and are positively verified. Selected Christian holidays are public holidays (Epiphany, Good Friday, Easter Sunday, Easter Monday, Ascension, Pentecost, All Saints' Day, Christmas Day, Boxing Day). Students belonging to religious minorities have the right to a free day on their religious holidays.¹²¹

While Christianity and the Church have retained some importance, especially in the ritual sphere, Swedish society has become one of the most liberal in the world. In today's Sweden, no one seriously questions the right to abortion, cohabiting and having children outside of marriage; these are socially accepted behaviours. The Church of Sweden did not oppose these developments: in 2009, it decided to allow marriages of same-sex couples (Sweden legalised same-sex marriage the same year). In 2014, Antje Jackelén became the first woman to be elected Archbishop of Uppsala – and head of the Church of Sweden. At present, around 45% of the pastors of the Church of Sweden are

¹¹⁹ M. Jänterä-Jareborg, op. cit., p. 680.

¹²⁰ Detailed information about the Church of Sweden's income and its assets can be found on the official website www.svenskakyrkan.se.

¹²¹ See more: Ministry of Culture, Sweden, *Changed relations between the State and the Church of Sweden*, <http://www.sst.a.se/download/18.4c1b31c91325af4dad3800015546/1377188428760/Fact+sheet+about+state-church+relations.pdf>, accessed on January 30, 2018.

women (women have been ordained since 1960); women also form the majority of theology students preparing for the role of pastor.¹²² Moreover, Swedish clerics can be openly homosexual – for example, Bishop Eva Brunne lives in a legalised partnership with a woman.¹²³

1.8. The Swedish model

Sweden's "middle way" is a combination of socialist programs with democratic political principles and capitalist solutions. The result is a unique balance between the political and economic system.¹²⁴ It would not have been possible if it were not for specific cultural conditions – many authors mention the Protestant mindset or the Lutheran set of moral principles.¹²⁵ However, most of all, the Swedish welfare state model was achieved thanks to the commitment and cooperation of two sides – the governing and the governed, both sides consistently implementing the principles set out at the beginning of the 20th century. The advanced social development is a result of several dozen years of reforms and efficient organisation. Marta Banaś lists the most significant factors which contribute to Swedish *folkhemmet*:

- a well-developed public sector which is also the leading employer;
- strong and influential trade unions;
- mandatory collective agreements ensuring compliance with the principle of "equal pay for equal work";
- an active employment policy, developed in constant consultation with trade unions;
- egalitarianism;

¹²² Sweden, [in:] *Women's Lives around the World: A Global Encyclopedia*, ed. S.M. Shaw, N. Staton Barbour, P. Duncan, K. Freehling-Burton, J. Nichols, Santa Barbara 2018, p. 339.

¹²³ Archbishop Karl Gustav Hammar, who in 1997–2006 managed the Uppsala diocese, supported tolerance and equality of homosexual people. In 1998, he gave permission to show a photo exhibition by Elisabeth Ohlson, entitled *Ecce Homo*, which depicted Christ at the gay parade as a homosexual, transvestite and AIDS patient. The exhibition was criticised (for example, by Pope John Paul II), but highlighted issues of tolerance. K. Tubylewicz, *Kościół może być też taki – poznajcie Kościół Szwedzki*, "Na Temat", <http://ktubylewicz.natemat.pl/5633,kosciol-moze-byc-tez-taki-poznajcie-kosciol-szwedzki>, accessed on January 31, 2018.

¹²⁴ J. Mack, op. cit., p. 23.

¹²⁵ D. Kościewicz, *Kulturowe uwarunkowania państwa dobrobytu w Szwecji – wybrane zagadnienia*, "Społeczeństwo i Ekonomia" 1, 2014, p. 70.

- the highest degree of social “democratisation” according to the democracy index;
- the lowest poverty rate in the world;
- social consent to the implementation of the state policy of high taxation (income tax), which is necessary for the implementation of the welfare state.¹²⁶

Kristina Orfali attempts a concise approach to what *folkhemmet* is; in her view, “the Swedish model is in fact – more than it seems – a model of social ethics (...) and its ideological foundation is consent and openness”.¹²⁷ The pursuit of a universal consensus and transparency in all spheres of social life, both professional and personal, is to serve harmonious integration and the establishment of a classless, united and compassionate society.¹²⁸ The state intervenes in citizens’ lives in two ways – through powerful trade unions and other NGOs linked to political parties, and through the service sector, particularly the extended welfare apparatus.¹²⁹

Although subject literature contains many expressions of admiration for the Swedish multicultural society model,¹³⁰ it is its aforementioned aspect of control that raises the most reservations, which at times seem to obscure all the positive aspects of *folkhemmet*. The path of socio-economic development followed by Scandinavian countries generally did not enjoy good publicity. In countries such as Poland, the media, major opinion-forming organisations, as well as political and economic elites sharing a neo-liberal vision have been questioning – or, at best, ignoring – the achievements and successes of the Nordic model for two decades.¹³¹ In Sweden itself, this model has been criticised on a number of occasions,¹³² mainly on account of the increasing exclusion of foreign-born immigrants and their children, as well as stigmatisation and stereotyping. Despite all its imperfections, perhaps it is worthwhile looking at the Swedish system not as a model to be blindly

¹²⁶ M. Banaś, *Szwedzka polityka...*, p. 112.

¹²⁷ K. Orfali, op. cit., p. 661.

¹²⁸ Ł. Bukowiecki, op. cit., p. 50.

¹²⁹ Ibidem, p. 51.

¹³⁰ Cf. S. Castles, M.J. Miller, *The Age of Migration*, Basingstoke 2003.

¹³¹ W. Anioł, *Szlak Norden. Modernizacja po szwedzku*, Warsaw 2013, p. 244.

¹³² Cf. A. Pred, *Even in Sweden: Racisms, Racialized Spaces, and the Popular Geographical Imagination*, Berkeley 2000.

replicated, but rather as a “home” that the Swedes have built according to their needs and tastes.¹³³

1.9. Summary

In just half a century, Sweden made its way from a poor, peripheral Nordic country based on a rural economy to a modern, prosperous, urban state running increasingly nuanced social, economic and physical planning programmes. The Swedish model has attracted masses of migrants. In particular, recent events in the Middle East made Sweden the country with the highest number of asylum applications – relative to the number of citizens – in the European Union.¹³⁴ The migration crisis, which had been intensifying since 2012 due to the Syrian war, reached its peak in 2015 and brought great challenges to all of Europe, including Sweden.¹³⁵

Long perceived as an extremely open and tolerant country,¹³⁶ in the second decade of the 21st century Sweden had to confront political, economic and social issues. Even though support for multicultural policies remains high, the far-right, anti-immigrant Swedish Democrats have gained popularity and the support of those voters who envisage an ethnically uniform state. The Swedes have not begun to question accepting migrants just because of cultural differences, or for ideological reasons. It was easy to welcome immigrants when unemployment in the country was minimal and the economy kept growing stronger. After the financial crisis, the rate of unemployment increased and economic development slowed down. Additionally, a fear of Muslim terrorism

¹³³ Ł. Bukowiecki, op. cit., p. 54.

¹³⁴ T. Domański, *Wstęp*, [in:] *Migracje – wybrane problemy i wyzwania*, ed. T. Domański, Łódź 2018, p. 16.

¹³⁵ Cf. A. Kobierecka, *Migracje jako czynnik wielopłaszczyznowej destabilizacji na przykładzie Szwecji*, [in:] *Migracje – wybrane problemy i wyzwania...*, p. 113.

¹³⁶ In the light of research conducted within the European Union in 2014, as much as 72% of Swedes declared a positive attitude towards immigration from outside the EU. The overall results for the EU were much worse: as much as 57% of EU citizens described their attitude to immigration and immigrants from outside the European Union as negative. Against the pan-European background, Sweden appears – at least statistically – as the country most tolerant towards immigrants. Standard Eurobarometer 82, Autumn 2014, p. T61, http://ec.europa.eu/public_opinion/archives/eb/eb82/eb82_anx_en.pdf, accessed on January 31, 2018.

was born.¹³⁷ All this translated into rising intolerance and xenophobic behaviours.¹³⁸ The government, aware of the depth of social divisions, decided to redraw the limits of the welfare state policy, tighten asylum and migration laws, and restore border controls.¹³⁹ Never has the future of the “immigrants’ paradise” been more in question than it is today.

¹³⁷ R. Perring, *Sweden terror threat: Evil ISIS ready to attack ‘civilian targets’ in Stockholm*, “Express”, 26.04.2016, <https://www.express.co.uk/news/world/664619/Sweden-terror-attacks-Islamic-State-Stockholm-ISIS-fighters>, accessed on March 27, 2018.

¹³⁸ For example, in 2014 and 2015, cases of setting fire to mosques were reported in Uppsala, Eslöv and Eskilstuna. A. Kobierecka, *Migracje jako czynnik...*, p. 130.

¹³⁹ *Ibidem*, p. 118.

2. ASSYRIANS/SYRIACS: HISTORY OF THE COMMUNITY IN THE MIDDLE EAST

Even though the Middle East is the cradle of Christianity, it is currently home to less than one percent of the global population of Christians, according to the Pew Research Center.¹ The largest percentage of Middle Eastern Christians live in Lebanon (38%), followed by Syria (5.2%), Iraq (0.9%) and Turkey (0.1%).² Almost 44% of Christians living in the Middle East are Catholics – this number includes members of Eastern Catholic Churches (such as Melkites³ and Maronites⁴). Members of Orthodox Churches constitute roughly the same percentage, and more than 10% of Middle Eastern Christians belong to Protestant Churches.⁵

From the beginning of the 16th century to the end of the 19th century, the percentage of all Christians in the Middle East remained constant at 15%. As late as 1910, the followers of Christ made up over 13% of the region's population; however, over the course of the century, this number decreased to 4.6%.⁶ The main cause was the detrimental political situation, resulting in emigration from the region.⁷

¹ Pew Research Center, *Global Christianity – A Report on the Size and Distribution of the World's Christian Population*, <http://www.pewforum.org/2011/12/19/global-christianity-execl/>, accessed on January 16, 2018.

² I.N. Grigoriadis, *Minorities*, [in:] *The Routledge Handbook of Modern Turkey*, ed. M. Heper, S. Sayari, Abingdon–New York 2012, p. 287.

³ Melkites – here, the faithful of the Melkite Catholic Church, i.e. the Uniate Catholic Church of the Byzantine rite, or Greek Catholics. See more: K. Kościelniak, *Grecy i Arabowie. Historia kościoła melkickiego (katolickiego) na ziemiach zdobytych przez muzułmanów (634–1516)*, Kraków 2004.

⁴ Maronites – members of the Church that emerged in the 7th century, breaking away from the Melkite Church and entering a union with Rome. See: M. Moch, *Swoi i obcy: tożsamość Koptów i Maronitów w arabskich tekstach kultury*, Warsaw 2013.

⁵ Pew Research Center, op. cit.

⁶ Cf. T. Jossieran, F. Pichon, F. Louis, *Géopolitique du Moyen-Orient et de l'Afrique du Nord: Du Maroc à l'Iran*, Paris 2012.

⁷ See more: W. Cisło, P. Stachnik, *Imigranci u bram. Kryzys uchodźczy i męczeństwo chrześcijan w XXI w.*, Kraków 2017.

If this downward trend continues, then by 2025, the number of Christians remaining in the Middle East will shrink to 3.6%,⁸ while Christian diasporas across the world – including the Assyrian/Syriac diaspora – will expand.

It is difficult to determine the exact number of modern Assyrians/Syriacs. In 1914, the Assyrian population in the Middle East was estimated at 563 000 within the Armenian Patriarchate alone.⁹ In 1997, the Unrepresented Nations' and Peoples' Organization (UNPO) reported 3.3 million, 2.5 million of whom still lived in the Middle East.¹⁰ According to the Assyrian International News Agency, 1.5 million Assyrians currently live in Iraq, 700 000 in Syria, 100 000 in Lebanon, 50 000 in Iran and 24 000 in Turkey.¹¹ These, however, are rough estimates which cannot be verified.

It is possible, instead, to retrace the history of this community in the Middle East. Fernand Harvey's observation that "regional identities are products of history" can be used as a framework for connecting the issue of a group's identity with its history.¹² Narratives about the past form "cultural tools" used to (re)create collective identity.¹³ The past itself is a "discursive construct",¹⁴ and often a number of powers compete for control over it. The case of Assyrians/Syriacs is no different – the past plays an extremely important role in the formation of their identity, even though opposing factions emphasise different events, mythologize or appropriate elements of the past.

The purpose of this chapter is to outline the historical context and roots of Syriac Churches and the history of their faithful (until the Arab Spring and the emergence of the Islamic State), with particular emphasis on Assyrian nationalism and Assyrian political parties. The historical events described further in this chapter – even those distant in time – are still alive in the collective memory of Assyrians/Syriacs in Sweden and have had an impact on the functioning of their community in this

⁸ Pew Research Center, op. cit.

⁹ D. Gaunt, *Massacres, Resistance, Protectors: Muslim-Christian Relations in Eastern Anatolia During World War I*, Piscataway 2006, pp. 405–406.

¹⁰ S. Donabed, *Rethinking nationalism...*, p. 115.

¹¹ *Assyrians: Frequently Asked Questions*, "Assyrian International News Agency", <http://www.aina.org/faq.html>, accessed on January 16, 2018.

¹² F. Harvey, *Identity and Scales of Regionalism in Canada and Quebec: A Historical Approach*, "Norteamérica. Revista académica", Vol. 1, No. 2, July–December 2006, p. 79.

¹³ J.V. Wertsch, *Narrative tools of history and identity*, "Culture and Psychology", Vol. 3, No. 1, 1997, pp. 5–20.

¹⁴ L. Smith, *Uses of Heritage*, London 2006, pp. 11–13.

country. The divisions of Christianity in the first centuries often still determine the sympathies and antipathies of individual members of the community, while belonging to certain Middle Eastern political parties may translate into specific actions in the diaspora, which in turn inspire the approval or suspicion of the Swedish authorities.

2.1. Ancient roots of Syriac Churches

In ancient times, the geographic region of Mesopotamia was characterised by a highly advanced culture, both material and intangible. Great civilisations were built successively by the Sumerians, Akkadians, Babylonians, Assyrians, Persians, Greeks brought by Alexander the Great, Seleucids, Parthians, Sassanids, and finally the Arabs. While some Assyrian beliefs have many similarities to Babylonian ones, and have survived until the 10th century in locations such as Harran,¹⁵ and up to the 18th century in Mardin, according to some scholars,¹⁶ the great majority of Assyrians converted to Christianity between the 1st and 5th century AD.

According to legends, Jesus sent his apostle Addai (Thaddeus) to Edessa (today's Şanlıurfa in Turkey) to heal Abgar V, king of Osroene, from a terminal disease. Grateful for the healing, the ruler decided to Christianise his country.¹⁷ In fact, Jewish converts to Christianity came to Osroene most likely as early as the 1st century AD, and a local ruler became a follower of Christ in the 2nd century. When Christianity began to spread into Mesopotamia – via Babylon, Adiabene, Edessa and Nisibis¹⁸ – most of these areas were under Persian or Parthian rule, and from 224, under Sassanid rule. Syria, Turkey and Palestine were under Roman rule. Persian rulers, although officially professing Zoroastrianism, were generally tolerant of other religions. Nevertheless,

¹⁵ T.M. Green, *The City of the Moon God: Religious Traditions of Harran*, Leiden–New York 1992, pp. 94–161.

¹⁶ The belief in question was connected to the so-called worshippers of the sun (*Shamsiyya*, from Arabic: *shams* – sun), which over time was absorbed by the Syriac Orthodox Church. Solar symbols have survived in Syriac monasteries in southern Turkey, such as Deir az-Zafaran and Mor Gabriel. R. Donef, *The Shensi and the Assyrians*, Sydney 2010; S. Parpola, *National and Ethnic Identity in the Neo-Assyrian Empire and Assyrian Identity in Post-Empire Times*, [in:] *Assyrian Heritage: Threads of Continuity and Influence*, ed. Ö.A. Cetrez, S.G. Donabed, A. Makko, Uppsala 2012, p. 18.

¹⁷ A.S. Atiya, *A History of Eastern Christianity*, London 1967, pp. 242–246.

¹⁸ In Antiquity, Edessa and Nisibis were home to famous theological schools. Cf. G.P. Badger, *The Nestorians and Their Rituals*, London 1852, p. 7.

non-Zoroastrians were the target of repressions, especially in the 4th century, when Christians were increasingly perceived as allies of the Romans.¹⁹ Roman emperors persecuted the first Christians until the Edict of Toleration of Constantine the Great (the so-called Edict of Milan) was issued in 312. At that time, Christians made up about a tenth of the empire's population. The emperor himself was baptised on his deathbed in 337, but as early as the second decade of the 4th century he had actively promoted Christianity. In 392, Christianity was declared the official religion of the Roman Empire.²⁰

Quite naturally, those who spread the Gospel in the Middle East did so in Aramaic – the language of the apostles and of the Jews. The Edessan dialect of Aramaic – Syriac – gained great popularity and later dominated local Christian circles, as many intellectuals lived in Osroene. The association of this dialect with Christianity was so strong that “Syrian” (*Suroyo*) became synonymous with “Christian”; a contributing factor was the local Christians' wish to distinguish themselves from pagan Arameans. Christian theology developed under Roman rule in the first five centuries (in the territories of modern Syria, Egypt and Turkey) was influenced by Hellenism. The application of Greek philosophy in the formulation of theological ideas led to a clash between Syriac and Greek-speaking Christians.²¹

The 5th century saw two powerful schisms – the Council of Ephesus in 431 and the Council of Chalcedon in 451. In Ephesus, a division was drawn for the first time between East and West, Syrians and Greeks, Semites and Byzantines, Diophysites and Monophysites, Nestorians and Orthodoxes.²² Shortly before, or during this council, the (Assyrian) Church of the East, long known as the “Nestorian Church” was established, its historic centre in the lands of northern Mesopotamia (today's northern Iraq, north-eastern Syria, south-eastern Turkey and north-western Iran). The Council of Chalcedon, on the other hand, gave rise to the Syriac Orthodox Church, which originally encompassed the lands east of the Mediterranean basin (Turkey, Syria and Lebanon)²³. Other Churches following the same Chris-

¹⁹ S. Rassam, *Christianity in Iraq. Its Origins and Development to the Present Day*, Leominster (UK) 2005, pp. 11–13.

²⁰ F.D. Logan, *A History of the Church in the Middle Ages*, London–New York 2005, pp. 8–9.

²¹ S. Rassam, op. cit., pp. 15–16.

²² A.S. Atiya, op. cit., p. 247.

²³ More details about these events can be found in: M. Woźniak, *Współcześni Asyryjczycy...*, pp. 80–82.

tology are the Coptic, Ethiopian, and Armenian Churches, as well as the Malankara Church in India. They are all known as Oriental Churches. The Syriac Orthodox Church, which was officially called “Syrian Orthodox Church” in English till 2000, is sometimes called the West Syrian Church, and the Assyrian Church of the East – East Syrian.²⁴

The greatest theological problem of the 5th century was the question of the relationship between Jesus, the Son of God, His Father and the Holy Spirit. Dogmas of the Trinity and the Incarnation took time to solidify and aroused a lot of controversy. Theological terms, their meanings in different languages, clashes between different philosophical traditions and methods, as well as the personalities of theologians all contributed to the disagreements. For example, Theodore of Mopsuestia believed that Mary should be called Christotokos (Mother of Christ) in Greek and not Theotokos (Mother of God), in order to emphasise the human nature of Jesus. Nestorius, the Bishop of Constantinople, adopted this view and proceeded to attack the term “Theotokos” in public, which resulted in a counterattack by Cyril, the Bishop of Alexandria. The controversy was to be resolved by the Council of Ephesus in 431, but the two groups remained antagonistic towards each other, and Nestorius was hailed a heretic and dismissed from office. Christ’s dual nature remained the focus of further disputes; the Alexandrian school promoted the Miaphysite formulation, according to which two natures existed in Jesus “without mixing, without changing, without dividing and separating”.²⁵

2.2. The Assyrian Church of the East

The Church of the East²⁶ was not represented at the Council of Ephesus, hence its members came to be called “Nestorians”²⁷ or “Duophysites” – they were mistakenly suspected of believing in Christ in two different persons;²⁸ in fact, they believed that Jesus had “two

²⁴ S. Rassam, op. cit., p. 63.

²⁵ Ibidem, pp. 16–20.

²⁶ The Church of the East – since 1976, the Assyrian Church of the East. Cited in: J. Joseph, *The Modern Assyrians of the Middle East: Encounters with Western Christian missions, archaeologists, and colonial power*, Leiden–Boston–Köln 2000, p. 1.

²⁷ The group continued to call themselves Nestorians until the 19th century. J. Joseph, *The Modern Assyrians...*, p. 2.

²⁸ In the course of theological dialogue, it was found that the misunderstanding was due to the theological language used. R.G. Roberson, *The Eastern Christian Churches: A Brief Survey*, Rome 1995, p. 24.

natures in one person”.²⁹ In spite of its conflict with the Alexandrian school, the Church of the East was growing in strength in the Persian Empire³⁰ – thanks firstly to conversions,³¹ and secondly due to the Christian exodus from Roman territories.³² Successive Persian kings had varying attitudes to the new religion – persecutions did take place, but the intermittent periods of peace allowed the Christians living in Persia to organise their Church to be independent of the neighbouring Byzantine empire. Over time, the Church of the East became the national church, attaining greater freedom and a closer relationship with the Sassanid shah. The Church even sent missions to India, China, Iran, Central Asia, the Persian Gulf, Yemen and Socotra,³³ establishing schools, hospitals and monasteries.³⁴

Timur, also known as Tamerlane,³⁵ who between 1370 and 1405 conquered most of Central Asia, Iran, Iraq and the Transcaucasia with his hordes of nomads from the steppes, dealt a powerful blow to the East Syriac Church. Even Baghdad was razed to the ground. The cruel persecution of Assyrians resulted in the annihilation of all their missions, with the exception of the Malabar Church in southern India.³⁶

Groups to survive were those who travelled to the inaccessible regions of the Hakkari Mountains, stretching between Lake Urmia and Lake Wan. On the periphery of the Ottoman Empire, the Assyrian tribes were relatively safe;³⁷ there they survived the next few centuries,

²⁹ S. Rassam, op. cit., p. 21. Most of the information about this Church comes from either Catholic or Protestant authors. A.S. Atiya, op. cit., p. 241.

³⁰ For more about the history of the Church in Persia, see: A.S. Atiya, op. cit., pp. 252–256.

³¹ In the Abbasid period (750–1258) it was definitely a multi-ethnic Church. See more: H. Murre-van den Berg, *Chaldeans and Assyrians: the Church of the East in the Ottoman Period*, [in:] *The Christian Heritage of Iraq. Collected Papers from the Christianity of Iraq I–V Seminar Days*, ed. E. Hunter, Piscataway 2009, p. 148.

³² S. Rassam, op. cit., p. 29.

³³ For more details about the organisation and activities of this Church, see D. Wilmshurst, *The Ecclesiastical Organisation of the Church of the East 1318–1913*, Louvain 2000.

³⁴ Detailed information about the missions of the Church of the East can be found in: A.S. Atiya, op. cit., pp. 257–265.

³⁵ R. Haddad, *Syrian Christians in Muslim Society. An Interpretation*, Princeton 1970, p. 9.

³⁶ A.S. Atiya, op. cit., p. 266.

³⁷ The Assyrian chieftains (maliks) were subordinate to the patriarch who was responsible for contacts with Kurdish tribal leaders as well as the Turkish sultan and the Persian shah. M. Rzepka, *Kurdyjskie i asyryjskie projekty niepodległościowe w kontekście*

repelling Kurdish attacks³⁸ and resisting the Catholic missionaries' attempts at conversion.³⁹ Hundreds of manuscripts were written in Assyrian monasteries between 1500 and 1800 (around 2000 have survived to this day),⁴⁰ yet until the 19th century, only Rome remembered the Eastern Assyrians; peoples of the West did not know of their existence. The community was "discovered" in 1820 by Jean Claude Rich, a representative of the British East India Company who visited the site of ancient Nineveh. Austen H. Layard began to conduct systematic research of the community.⁴¹ The "Ancient Protestants of the East"⁴² caught the attention of British, and then American missionaries.⁴³

The Western missions have created many tensions, schisms and internal strife in the region;⁴⁴ nevertheless, they have also left a valuable legacy.⁴⁵ Thanks to educational centres established by missionaries – especially American Protestant missions in Urmia which has operated since 1831 – the literacy of local Christians gradually improved; according to some estimates, before the First World War, as many as 80% of Assyrian men and women could read and write.⁴⁶ American

konferencji paryskiej 1919–1920: transkulturowa historia Kurdystanu, [in:] Kurdystan. Perspektywy badawcze, ed. M. Hałaburda, M. Rzepka, Kraków 2018.

³⁸ The first serious split between Kurds and Assyrians took place in 1843, when Christian villages were attacked by mountain tribes led by Badr Khan of Buhtan, seeking the unification of Kurdistan. Many thousands of Assyrians then fled to the Caucasus region of Russia. A.S. Atiya, op. cit., p. 244.

³⁹ H. Aboona, *Assyrians, Kurds, and Ottomans: Intercommunal Relations on the Periphery of the Ottoman Empire*, Amherst-New York 2008, pp. 3–4.

⁴⁰ For more information about the contents of these manuscripts, see: H. Murrevan den Berg, op. cit., pp. 150–155.

⁴¹ A.H. Layard, *Nineveh and its remains: with an account of a visit to the Chaldean Christians of Kurdistan, and the Yezidis, or devil worshippers; and an inquiry into the manners and arts of the ancient Assyrians*, London 1849.

⁴² Members of the Church of the East were traditionally anti-papal, there were no icons in their churches, just simple crucifixes. A.S. Atiya, op. cit., pp. 241–242.

⁴³ Cf. A.H. Becker, *Revival and Awakening. American Evangelical Missionaries in Iran and the Origin of Assyrian Nationalism*, Chicago–London 2015.

⁴⁴ Hirmis Aboona writes that the divisions between Assyrians were largely created by missionaries, especially French, who – during the prohibition on converting Muslims – encouraged "Nestorians" to convert to Catholicism, often using bribes and preferential treatment of converts. Idem, op. cit., pp. 71–74.

⁴⁵ During the operation of American missions, the Assyrians in Iran not only mastered various European languages (English, German, French, Russian), but also developed culture, e.g. they staged theatrical performances. E. Naby, *Theater, Language and Inter-Ethnic Exchange: Assyrian Performance before World War I*, "Iranian Studies", Vol. 40, No. 4, September 2007, p. 503.

⁴⁶ A. Ishaya, *From Contributions to Diaspora: Assyrians in the History of Urmia, Iran*, "Journal of Assyrian Academic Studies", Vol. 16, No. 1, 2002, p. 24.

Protestants also standardised the Urmian dialect (Sureth), brought the printing press and began issuing religious and secular publications, translations of the Holy Scriptures, but also magazines such as “Zahrire d-Bahra” (“Rays of Light”, 1849–1915). Catholic and Protestant missionaries made it possible for members of local communities to travel, study and work in America and Europe, especially in Rome, Paris and London. As a result, Assyrians began to acquire a different view of the world and their Muslim neighbours.⁴⁷

Massacres and deportations of the First World War had a detrimental effect on the local Christian population. In 1925, the League of Nations awarded Hakkari to Turkey. Many Assyrians were then relocated to Iraq. When Iraq declared independence in 1932, King Faisal dissuaded Assyrian Patriarch Mar Shimun from internationalising the Assyrian question. Exiled to Chicago, he promoted Assyrian history and identity until 1973,⁴⁸ including at the UN forum.⁴⁹ His successors on the patriarchal throne, including Mar Gewargis III Sliwa, elected in 2015, remained faithful to Assyrianism. Today, members of the Assyrian Church of the East, especially those living in the United States, are the most active promoters of Assyrian nationalism, Assyrian emancipation, Assyrian territorial rights and Pan-Assyrian ideas. They also work in the field of human rights and publicise the instances of discrimination against their fellow believers.⁵⁰

2.3. The Chaldean Catholic Church

Some hierarchs of the Church of the East corresponded with Roman popes and professed Catholic faith to them. In 1237, the Patriarch of Syria did the same, with the Patriarch of Nisibis along with five other bishops following suit in 1245.⁵¹ The first serious, albeit unsuccessful, attempt to establish a union between the Church of the East and the Roman Catholic Church took place during the Council of Flor-

⁴⁷ H. Murre-van den Berg, *From a Spoken to Written Language: The Introduction and Development of Literary Urmia Aramaic in the Nineteenth Century*, Leiden 1995, p. 42.

⁴⁸ J. Messo, *Arameans and the Making of “Assyrians”*..., p. 87.

⁴⁹ *Ibidem*, p. 90.

⁵⁰ A. Boháč, *Assyrian Ethnic Identity in a Globalizing World*, [in:] *Beyond Globalisation: Exploring the Limits of Globalisation in the Regional Context*, Ostrava 2010, p. 70.

⁵¹ K. Matwiejuk, *Tradycja eucharystyczna w Kościele Chaldejskim*, “Warszawskie Studia Teologiczne”, Vol. XXIV, No. 1, 2011, p. 174.

ence (convened in Basel in 1431 and continued intermittently until 1445 in Ferrara, Florence and Rome). In 1445, Pope Eugene IV named the Uniate Church 'Chaldean'.⁵²

In the 16th century, frustration was growing within the Church of the East over the particular hereditary procedure of electing the patriarch.⁵³ In 1552, bishops who did not agree with this system elected John Sulaqa as anti-patriarch. Sulaqa accepted the Catholic creed and was ordained a patriarch by Pope Julius III, which marked the beginning of the Chaldean Catholic Church as a Uniate Church.⁵⁴ After returning to his homeland, he was arrested by the Ottoman authorities and murdered in 1555.⁵⁵ However, his Uniate Church survived,⁵⁶ although it was headed by patriarchs from various lines of succession. In 1692, the (Assyrian) Church of the East and the Chaldean Catholic Church were finally separated. In 1830, the Pope anointed Yohannan VIII Hormizd as the "Babylonian Patriarch of the Chaldeans" in Iraq, and his Church came to be commonly referred to as Chaldean.⁵⁷ Since then, the Church has maintained constant relations with the Holy See and sent its clergy to study in Rome. In 1844, it was recognised as a separate *millet* (Turkish: nation) by the Ottoman authorities.⁵⁸

⁵² One of the first authors to use the term "Chaldeans" (meaning "magicians", "sorcerers") for the Nestorians was Bar Hebraeus. J. Joseph, *The Modern Assyrians...*, p. 6.

⁵³ Shimun IV Basidi decided that the patriarch should be the closest male relative of the last patriarch, usually his nephew. The patriarch Shimun VII Ishoyahb, consecrated in 1538 or 1539, was highly unpopular. Cf. K. Marwiejuk, *op. cit.*, p. 175.

⁵⁴ The Patriarchs of the Church of the East did not recognise this fact for a long time, claiming to be the heads of both factions – Assyrian and Chaldean. J. Joseph, *The Modern Assyrians...*, p. 8.

⁵⁵ S. Rassam, *op. cit.*, p. 109.

⁵⁶ The permanence of the division, apart from the above-mentioned reasons, and the authentic orientation of the Chaldeans towards Western Christianity, was determined by internal tensions and linguistic issues: Assyrians from the mountains spoke Aramaic, their brothers from the region of today's south-west Turkey, especially in the Diocese of Diyarbakir, in Arabic. However, they did not necessarily feel ethnically different (at least initially). H. Murre-van den Berg, *Chaldeans and Assyrians...*, pp. 156–157.

⁵⁷ The Roman Catholic Church was very creative in word formation, describing the "Chaldeans of Assyria" or "Eastern Chaldeans of Catholic Assyria". However, these terms were not accepted by the interested parties. J. Joseph, *The Modern Assyrians...*, *op. cit.*, p. 7.

⁵⁸ S. Rassam, *op. cit.*, p. 110. The millet system functioned officially (though not always actually) until the fall of the sultanate after World War II. L. Dziegiel, *Współczesni Asyryjczycy: nowy obszar badań etnografii?*..., p. 107.

In modern Iraq, the Chaldean Catholic Church has evolved into the most influential of all Churches; under Saddam Hussein, around 70% of all Iraqi Christians belonged to it. Due to their loyalty to the Ottomans, the British (1917-1921),⁵⁹ and to all Iraqi regimes after 1921, the Chaldeans – unlike the Assyrians – enjoyed relative security and some privileges.⁶⁰ The difference in the treatment of Chaldeans and Assyrians was especially pronounced under the Ba’athist rule. Good relations with the regime and a preference for Arabic (or possibly Kurdish) language meant that Chaldeans were allowed to build new churches, religious schools and cultural clubs – as a result of which they have become the best educated group in Iraq. Their clergy were also better educated than the priests of other Churches. As a result, the Chaldean Church has become the only Oriental Catholic Church to gain more prominence than its Orthodox counterpart.⁶¹ However, the price for security and prosperity was assimilation,⁶² loss of identity and alienation from Assyrian brethren,⁶³ who began to view their Catholic countrymen as traitors and agents of the Vatican.⁶⁴

The attitude of Chaldean religious leaders was not without significance. The former Chaldean patriarch, Mar Raphael I Bidawid (1989–2003) famously stated that “Assyrian” is an ethnic identity, while “Chaldean” denotes a religious, rather than ethnic, identity.⁶⁵ The same patriarch also said: “Before I became a priest, I was an Assyrian; before I became a bishop, I was an Assyrian; I am Assyrian today, I will be Assyrian tomorrow and forever and I am proud of it.”⁶⁶ However, the next patriarch, Mar Emanuel III Delly (2003–2012), presented a completely different narrative when in 2006, he declared: “Any Chaldean who

⁵⁹ V. Petrosian, *Assyrians in Iraq*, “Iran and the Caucasus”, Vol. 10, No. 1, 2006, p. 125.

⁶⁰ A. O’Mahony, *The Chaldean Catholic Church: The Politics of Church-State Relations in Modern Iraq*, “The Heythrop Journal”, Vol. 45, No. 4, October 2004, p. 435.

⁶¹ F. McCallum, *Religious Institutions and Authoritarian States: Church-State Relations in the Middle East*, “Third World Quarterly”, Vol. 33, No. 1, 2012, p. 7.

⁶² J. Healey, *The Church Across the Border: The Church of East and its Chaldean Branch*, [in:] *Easter Christianity in the Modern Middle East*, ed. A. O’Mahony, E. Loosley, London–New York 2010, p. 46.

⁶³ V. Petrosian, op. cit., p. 127.

⁶⁴ A. Boháč, op. cit., p. 70.

⁶⁵ Interview with Mar Raphael I Bidawid, “Lebanese Broadcasting International Channel”, April 30, 2000.

⁶⁶ Interview with Mar Raphael I Bidawid, “Assyrian Star”, September–October 1974, p. 5.

calls himself an Assyrian is a traitor, and any Assyrian who calls himself a Chaldean is a traitor”.⁶⁷ The current Chaldean patriarch of Babylon, Baghdad resident Louis Raphaël I Sako, proposed in 2015 to merge his Church with the Assyrian Church of the East and the Ancient Church of the East⁶⁸ and create one “Church of the East” in union with Rome. The proposal was rejected by the hierarchs of the Assyrian Church of the East on the grounds that the Chaldean Church was too “latinised”.⁶⁹ Chaldeanism – Chaldean nationalism – has political representation, including the Chaldean Democratic Union Party (CDUP) in Iraq.⁷⁰

2.4. The Syriac Orthodox Church

The West Syrian Church was established in Syria, and also operated in Lebanon, Palestine and, to a lesser extent, Iraq. Similarly, to the Church of the East, it led a number of evangelising missions, including to Persia, Central Asia, India and the south of the Arabian Peninsula. At its peak, the maphrian⁷¹ headed over 31 dioceses,⁷² at least 100 churches, and 80 monasteries.⁷³

According to tradition, the evangelisation of Syria was initiated by Saint Paul, who persecuted Christians in Damascus before his conversion. His activities in Antioch made the city one of the three main centres of Christianity (next to Rome and Alexandria). Great theologians and bishops enriched the literary and cultural heritage of the Middle East and became widely known: St. Aphrem (c. 306–373), St. Cyril (c. 315–386), St. Gregory of Nazianzus (329–389), St. Gregory of Nysa (330–395), St. Basil the Great (330–379) and St. John Chrysostom (c. 347–407).⁷⁴ Ascetics and stylites who embodied strict monastic

⁶⁷ Interview with Mar Emmanuel Delly, “Ishtar Satellite TV”, May 7, 2006.

⁶⁸ In 1968, it broke away from the Church of the East. Its seat is Baghdad and its patriarch is Mar Addai II.

⁶⁹ *Chaldean Patriarch gambles on re-establishing “Church of the East”*, “La Stampa”, 25.06.2015, <http://www.lastampa.it/2015/06/25/vaticaninsider/eng/world-news/chaldean-patriarch-gambles-on-reestablishing-church-of-the-east-hsCiSJdKdXg2X-ceFSFwhRJ/pagina.html>, accessed on March 27, 2018.

⁷⁰ A. Boháč, op. cit., p. 70.

⁷¹ Maphrian (Syriac: maphryānā “consecrator”) – a metropolitan bishop with a specific, very broad jurisdiction, equal to the patriarchal jurisdiction.

⁷² S. Rassam, op. cit., p. 69.

⁷³ S. Andersson, *Assyrierna: En bok om präster och lekmän, om politik och diplomati kring den assyriska invandringen till Sverige*, Stockholm 1983, p. 17.

⁷⁴ A.S. Atiya, op. cit., p. 176.

ideals have gone down in history; the most famous among them was St. Simeon Stylites (c. 390–459).⁷⁵

In 381, the Patriarchate of Constantinople was established, followed by the Patriarchate of Jerusalem in 451.⁷⁶ Also in 451, the Syriac Orthodox Church emerged as a separate community after the Fourth Ecumenical Council in Chalcedon, at which the conviction of the dual nature of Christ – ideal God and ideal man, consubstantial with the Father – prevailed.⁷⁷ The first members of the Syriac Orthodox Church came from among those who did not accept the conciliar decisions and distanced themselves from the Churches in Rome and Byzantium. The Byzantines called them “Monophysites” in contrast to those who accepted the decisions of the council, thus deserving the term “Melkites” – the people of the King (both of these terms are not particularly well-suited, as they do not reflect the complexity of the problem).⁷⁸

While the main reason for the schism was theological (the rejection of duophysical Christology), other factors – political, social, ethnic and cultural – played their part as well.⁷⁹ As a result, two factions – Chalcedonian and non-Chalcedonian – began to fight each other in Syria and Egypt.⁸⁰ For a time, the persecutions of the Syriac Orthodox Church were so intense that it began to operate covertly and many of its members decided to flee to Sassanid territories. During the most difficult period, Jacob Baradeus (500–578)⁸¹ contributed greatly to the survival of his Church by ordaining many priests and deacons despite Byzantine oppression. His name is the root of the popular (if erroneous, underlining the role of a single bishop to an exaggerated degree) term for the community – “Jacobites”.

The Syriac Orthodox Church expanded under Arab rule and produced many prominent figures such as Michael the Syrian (c. 1126–1199), Dionysius bar Salibi (d. 1171) and Bar Hebraeus (1226–1286). Intellectual life flourished in monasteries, the most famous of which was the monastery of Mor Gabriel, founded in the 4th century; another well-known temple built a century later was the Deir az-Za-

⁷⁵ *Ibidem*, p. 186.

⁷⁶ S. Rassam, *op. cit.*, p. 57.

⁷⁷ More information about this Council: A.S. Atiya, *op. cit.*, pp. 178–180.

⁷⁸ S. Rassam, *op. cit.*, p. 59.

⁷⁹ More information about Jacob Baradaeus: A.S. Atiya, *op. cit.*, pp. 180–184.

⁸⁰ S. Rassam, *op. cit.*, p. 60.

⁸¹ *Ibidem*, p. 62.

faran. The best period for the Syriac community was the late 12th and early 13th century under Muslim rule. This prosperity came to an end with the Mongol invasion. In Aziz Atiya's words, "the modern history of Jacobite Church is very obscure compared with its ancient annals".⁸²

In the second half of the 20th century, the hierarchy of the Syriac Orthodox Church adopted "Assyrian" identification but then rejected it, causing a split among Western Syrians. Ignatius Ephrem I Barsoum, the Syrian Orthodox Archbishop of Damascus and Homs, who became Patriarch in 1933, was among those who initially believed that the term "Assyrians" could help his people gain recognition.⁸³ At the peace conference in London on April 2, 1920, he asked for help for "our Syrian people, descendants of the ancient Assyrian race" and spoke about the Assyrian-Chaldean civilisation. Unfortunately, his efforts to gain sympathy by using the terms "Assyrians" or "Assyrians-Chaldeans" was not successful.⁸⁴ In view of this, Patriarch Barsoum distanced himself from Western Churches and politicians.⁸⁵ He wrote and published a brochure entitled "The Syrian Church of Antioch. Its Name and History"⁸⁶ and by decree of December 2, 1952, stated that the identity of his Church was Syrian, i.e. Aramean.⁸⁷ At the same time, he banned the use of the term "Assyrian" as historically incorrect.⁸⁸ The current Patriarch of Damascus, Mor Ignatius Aphrem II, expressed his view in an interview on January 25, 2015: "These are all different names for the same people who have lived in the Middle East for thousands of years".⁸⁹

The faithful of the Syriac Orthodox Church who also support Arameanism – Aramean nationalism – are represented internationally by the World Council of Arameans (Syriacs). This organisation replaced the Syriac Universal Alliance (SUA) established in New Jersey, USA in 1983.⁹⁰

⁸² A.S. Atiya, op. cit., p. 212.

⁸³ N. Atto, op. cit., p. 286.

⁸⁴ J. Messo, op. cit., p. 86.

⁸⁵ Ibidem, p. 90.

⁸⁶ Mar Ignatius Ephrem I, *The Syrian Church of Antioch. Its Name and History*, Hackensack (USA) 1952, <https://universallibrary.org/details/syrianchurchofan0000hish/mode/2up>, accessed on March 27, 2018.

⁸⁷ N. Atto, op. cit., p. 288.

⁸⁸ W.M. Warda, *Aphrim Barsoum's Role in distancing the Syrian Orthodox Church from its Assyrian Heritage*, "Christians of Iraq", 2005, <http://www.christiansofiraq.com/barsoum.html>, accessed on March 28, 2018.

⁸⁹ Interview with Ignatius Aphrem II, *Syria belongs to its people: Syriac Orthodox Patriarch*, "Asharq Al-Awsat", 26.01.2015.

⁹⁰ A. Boháč, op. cit., p. 71.

2.5. The Syriac Catholic Church

Before a permanent union could be established between the Syriac Orthodox Church and the Roman Catholic Church, members of the former resisted for a long time. Though dissatisfied with their spiritual leadership, they took pride in the ancient roots of their Church and its distinct identity. However, under the influence of Capuchins, Jesuits and other orders that operated in the 17th century, many Orthodox families converted to Catholicism. In 1662, during a vacancy on the patriarchal throne, the pro-Catholic faction within the Syriac Orthodox Church, elected Andrew Akijan as the new Patriarch, which caused a split within the community, and that year came to be considered the beginning of the Uniate Church. In 1785, the Pope awarded Michael Jarweh the title of “Patriarch of the Syriac Catholic Church”, and Rome recognised the separate rites and customs of the new Church; this was followed by official recognition by the Ottoman authorities in 1843.⁹¹ Currently, the seat of the Syriac Catholic Church is in Beirut, and Ignatius Joseph III Younan has been its head since 2009.

2.6. Assyrian/Syriac Protestant Churches

Relatively little information is available on the contacts between Middle Eastern Christians and the British and American missions before the 19th century. Unlike Roman Catholics, representatives of the Church of England, and more specifically its Anglo-Catholic fraction, genuinely saw sending missions to the Middle East as a way to gain the recognition of “sister” Orthodox Churches.⁹² Americans, on the other hand, initially viewed “Oriental Christians” as the embodiment of Protestant ideals and wished to give their Churches a new impetus so that they would be able to evangelise Muslims.⁹³ Nevertheless, this approach has changed quite quickly, and in the second half of the 19th

⁹¹ S. Rassam, *op. cit.*, pp. 112–113.

⁹² See: W. Taylor, *Narratives of Identity: The Syrian Orthodox Church and the Church England 1895–1914*, Newcastle 2013, p. 2.

⁹³ Protestant missionaries were inspired by the so-called Great Awakening. Within a wide-ranging spiritual transformation initiated by American Protestantism, they sought the conversion of Jews and the modernisation of ancient Churches of the Middle East. Initially they focused on building schools and hospitals in Lebanon and Anatolia. E. Tejirian, R. Spector Simon, *Conflict, Conquest, and Conversion: Two Thousand Years of Christian Missions in the Middle East*, Columbia 2012, p. xiii.

century, independent Assyrian Churches were established: Presbyterian, Evangelical (Lutheran) and finally Pentecostal. The rivalry between British and American missions and Roman Catholics has fragmented and weakened local Oriental Churches.⁹⁴ On the other hand, mainstream Protestant Churches have abandoned proselytism and now usually operate in the Middle East as non-governmental organisations.⁹⁵

2.7. Under Muslim rule

Christian-Muslim relations have always been complex. The Arab victory in the 7th century seemed paradoxical, as the conquerors appeared to be less culturally advanced than the defeated, most of whom were Christians.⁹⁶ However, Muslims were quick learners and were not afraid of employing non-Muslims in the state administration. Meanwhile, the initial reaction of Middle Eastern Christians to the emergence of the Muslim community was not at all negative – the arrival of the Muslim community was interpreted in the light of Old Testament prophecies about the descendants of Ishmael, the firstborn son of Abraham. Non-Chalcedonian Christians saw Islam as God's judgment on their enemies – Chalcedonian Christians. However, in time, as Muslims grew in strength, the mutual relations deteriorated and Christians in the region often faced a choice – convert to the new religion for full rights, pay *jizya*⁹⁷ and accept an inferior status, or try to fight.⁹⁸ Many decided to convert to Islam; this process was gradual and spanned a number of generations.⁹⁹

Those who persevered in the Christian faith began to view Islam as a heresy, while the Muslims – after a relatively short period of open hostility – developed a more peaceful approach to the conquered Christians and Jews. They began to refer to these groups as “people of the Book” who

⁹⁴ S. Rassam, op. cit., p. 114.

⁹⁵ E. Tejirian, R. Spector Simon, op. cit., p. xiv.

⁹⁶ S.Kh. Samir, *La culture arabe chrétienne ancienne en interaction avec la pensée arabe musulmane*, “Islam-Christianity” 8, 1982, pp. 1–35; K. Kościelniak, *Akulturacyjny aspekt islamizacji w Arabii i islamizacja chrześcijan: kultura i religia na Bliskim Wschodzie w pierwszych wiekach islamu według Ibn Haldūna (1332–1406)*, “Analecta Cracoviensia” 32, 2000, pp. 289–306.

⁹⁷ *Jizya* – a poll tax paid by followers of revealed religions to the Muslim community. J. Danecki, *Kultura islamu. Słownik*, Warsaw 1997, p. 67.

⁹⁸ Y. Courbage, Ph. Fargues, *Christians and Jews under Islam*, London–New York 1994, p. 2.

⁹⁹ R. Haddad, op. cit., pp. 8–9.

ought to submit and in return, benefit from religious freedom. Detailed rules regulating Muslim lords' relations with the *dhimmi* (the protected, subordinate population) were known as the Umar Pact or the Covenant of Umar, even though they were written long after the reign of the second righteous caliph, most likely in the 8th or 9th century.¹⁰⁰ Regardless of the date of its creation, the pact, along with its various modifications, has become a canonical document in medieval Muslim jurisprudence.¹⁰¹

2.8. The Ottoman Empire – the millet system

When the Ottoman state was established at the end of the 13th century, Arab rulers were gradually replaced by Turkish rulers. Under Ottoman pressure in the 15th century, Byzantium fell, and the state that arose on its ruins in the next two centuries became a multi-ethnic and multilingual empire controlling 32 provinces and numerous vassal countries. To efficiently manage their numerous subjects, the Ottomans adopted a millet system previously used in Zoroastrian Sassanid Persia for members of the Church of the East. In the Ottoman state, every millet, i.e. ethno-religious community, enjoyed a degree of legal autonomy¹⁰² and its members paid a tax to the local ruler (*agha*) to guarantee their safety.¹⁰³ As the importance of the Church of the East declined, the main millets from the 14th to the 19th century were Muslim, Jewish, Armenian, Roman (or Orthodox) and Syriac Orthodox.¹⁰⁴ In the 19th century, some new millets were added to these main millets due to the activities of Catholic and Protestant missions.¹⁰⁵ In 1914 there were as many as thirteen millets.¹⁰⁶

¹⁰⁰ H. Goddard, *A History of Christian-Muslim Relations*, Edinburgh 2000, pp. 44–48.

¹⁰¹ See: M. Woźniak, *Wspólnoty chrześcijańskie na terenach opanowanych przez Arabów (VII–VIII w.)*, [in:] *Bizancjum i Arabowie. Spotkanie cywilizacji VI–VIII wiek*, ed. T. Wolińska, P. Filipczak, Warsaw 2015, p. 439.

¹⁰² S. Rassam, op. cit., pp. 105–106.

¹⁰³ See more: B. Braude, *Foundation Myths of the Millet System*, [in:] *Christians and Jews in the Ottoman Empire: The Functioning of a Plural Society*, ed. B. Braude, B. Lewis, New York 1982, pp. 69–88.

¹⁰⁴ *Sacrum w mieście 2: Epoka nowożytna i czasy współczesne*, ed. D. Quirini-Popławska, Ł. Burkiewicz, Kraków 2016, pp. 257–258.

¹⁰⁵ The Uniate Catholic Churches were founded much earlier, but they operated without official recognition. For more on Catholic missions in the Middle East, see: Ch.A. Frazee, *Catholics and Sultans: The Church and the Ottoman Empire 1453–1923*, Cambridge 2006. More information about the Protestant missions: J. Richter, *A History of Protestant Missions in the Near East*, New York 1970.

¹⁰⁶ J.-F. Colosimo, *Zbędni ludzie. Przekleństwo chrześcijan Bliskiego Wschodu*, Warsaw 2017, p. 169.

The patriarchs had the status of religious and political leaders responsible directly to the sultan.¹⁰⁷ Millets could issue their own laws and independently collect taxes; later they could also operate their own schools, hospitals and other public benefit organisations. Over time, their independence increased,¹⁰⁸ which on the one hand aided the survival of separate ethno-religious identities – religious identification almost blended with the ethnic-national one,¹⁰⁹ but on the other, caused the marginalisation of Christians in the Ottoman political system.¹¹⁰ Long before Assyrian national consciousness began to emerge, the factors that distinguished Assyrians from their Muslim neighbours¹¹¹ were Syrian Christianity and the Aramaic language.¹¹²

2.9. The difficult 20th century: Seyfo, Simele

The persecutions of Middle Eastern Christians in the first half of the 20th century have made a painful and indelible mark in the memories of those who survived them, as well as their children and grandchildren. The birth of nationalism in the Middle East was unfortunate for the Assyrians. After 1909, the Young Turk regime in Istanbul promoted aggressive Turkish nationalism, and with the advent of World War I, Assyrians found themselves trapped. Seyfo¹¹³ – the Assyrian/Syriac genocide – occurred in the same historical context as the Ar-

¹⁰⁷ F. McCallum, *Christian Religious Leadership in the Middle East...*, p. 15.

¹⁰⁸ W. Phares, *Middle East Christians: The Captive Nations*, [in:] *The Forgotten Millions: The Modern Jewish Exodus from Arab Lands*, ed. M. Hillel Shulewitz, London 1999, pp. 15–22.

¹⁰⁹ As late as the 1930s, Syrian Orthodox Jews from Harput, Diyarbakir, Urfa and Mardin identified themselves as Süryani Kadim. S. Donabed, Sh. Mako, *Ethno-cultural and Religious Identity of Syrian Orthodox Christians*, “Chronos” 19, 2009, p. 77.

¹¹⁰ Interestingly, Assyrian intellectual elites at the beginning of the 20th century were pro-Muslim, as evidenced by B. Trigona-Harany, *The Ottoman Suryani from 1908 to 1914*, Piscataway 2009.

¹¹¹ Who had a very similar culture; the similarities included food, clothes, dances, music, family structures.

¹¹² Only some members of the Church of the East and the Syriac Orthodox Church, especially those living in Mosul and Diyarbakir and surrounding villages, spoke Arabic. H. Murte-van den Berg, *Chaldeans and Assyrians...*, p. 149.

¹¹³ Assyrians have used three different names to describe the slaughter during World War I: *Seyfo* (Aramaic: sword), *firman* (an official document issued by the ruler, in this case against Christians) and *qaflat* (deportation, death in exile). The first term was most commonly used. M. Abdalla, *The term Seyfo in historical perspective*, [in:] *The Assyrian Genocide: Cultural and Political Legacies*, ed. H. Travis, London–New York 2018, p. 99.

menian Holocaust.¹¹⁴ Although 1915 is the year chosen to symbolise Seyfo, the slaughter of Assyrians/Syriacs continued throughout 1914–1918 and 1922–1925. In the Ottoman Empire and in neighbouring Persia, between 150 000 and 300 000 people were killed by Turks and Kurds. According to various estimates, one third or even two thirds of the Christian population of Turkey lost their lives.¹¹⁵

It should be noted that during World War I, the Assyrians/Syriacs supported the British¹¹⁶ and the Russians. 40 000 Assyrians descended from the Hakkari Mountains to unite with the allies against Turks in the lowlands of Mosul,¹¹⁷ which to some extent explains the reaction of the latter.¹¹⁸ After the Peace of Versailles, the Assyrians, dubbed “the smallest ally” by William A. Wigram,¹¹⁹ were abandoned by their recent protectors.¹²⁰ Despite the lack of official orders to deport surviving Christians, many survivors were forced to flee and seek refuge

¹¹⁴ These events are exhaustively described in: D. Gaunt, *Massacres, Resistance, Protectors...* Other important publications include: S. de Courtois, *The Forgotten Genocide of Eastern Christians. The Last Arameans*, New Jersey 2004; H. Travis, *Native Christians Massacred. The Ottoman Genocide of the Assyrians during World War I*, “Genocide Studies and Prevention” 1(3), 2006; idem, *The Assyrian Genocide: A Tale of Oblivion and Denial*, [in:] *Forgotten Genocides. Oblivion, Denial, and Memory*, ed. R. Lemarchand, Philadelphia 2011, pp. 123–136; R. Sempill Stafford, *The Tragedy of the Assyrians*, New Jersey 2006. A Polish translation of ‘BeḏMšīho Ne’mān d-Qarabāš, “Christian-Muslim relations in Turkey at the turn of the 19th and 20th centuries. A seminarian’s journal about the genocide of Armenians and Assyrians in 1895 and during World War I” was published in 2013, translation, preface and footnotes by M. Abdalla, Kraków 2013.

¹¹⁵ See more: E. Karsh, I. Karsh, *Empires of the Sand: The Struggle for Mastery in the Middle East, 1789–1923*, Cambridge 1999, p. 160. Today, Seyfo is commemorated annually by various Assyrian and Aramean associations; especially in the diaspora, demonstrations and exhibitions in memory of the tragic events of 100 years ago are popular. The Seyfo Center (Assyrian Genocide Research Center: <http://www.seyfocenter.com>) with its office in Germany is very active; its head is Sabri Atman. Monuments to the victims of Seyfo were erected in several countries: in France, Australia, Armenia, the USA and Sweden. A separate celebration takes place on August 7th, which the Assyrians/Syriacs call “Martyrs’ Day” or “National Day of Mourning”. They remember all the Assyrians who lost their lives, especially those killed in Simele. Beth Nahrin Assyrian Heritage Center, *Assyrian Martyrs Day 2017*, <https://www.bethnahrainahc.com/single-post/2017/08/04/Assyrian-Martyrs-Day-2017>, accessed on January 16, 2018.

¹¹⁶ Captain George F. Gracey, who represented British intelligence, encouraged Assyrians from Urmia to fight the Turks. V. Petrosian, op. cit., p. 130.

¹¹⁷ A.S. Atiya, op. cit., p. 284.

¹¹⁸ K. Cragg, *The Arab Christian. A History in the Middle East*, London 1992, p. 123.

¹¹⁹ W.A. Wigram, *Our Smallest Ally: A Brief Account of the Assyrian Nation in the Great War*, London–New York 1920.

¹²⁰ A.S. Atiya, op. cit., p. 285.

in the territories that today belong to Lebanon, Syria and Iraq.¹²¹ During the French mandate, all Christians who had settled in Syria were granted Syrian citizenship, unlike many Kurdish Muslims. After gaining independence in 1946, successive governments continued the policy of favouring Christians over Kurds. Christians living in an area in the north-east, known as Al-Jazira, were considered immigrants but supporters of the regime.¹²²

After World War I, many Christians from the former Persian and Ottoman empires – valiant highlanders and peaceful lowland farmers alike – ended up in a British-led camp in Baquba, Iraq, and were forced into cohabitation.¹²³ This was where national ideas and hopes of attaining a small state of their own gained wider popularity.¹²⁴ In 1920, the League of Nations handed Iraq over to Britain, which a year later established the Iraqi Levites – special units made up of Arabs Kurds, Turkmen and Assyrians, whose task was to keep the peace in the northern oil-rich areas. Assyrian Levites, whose organisation was modelled on the Hindu army, were mainly members of the Church of the East who had fled Hakkari in south-eastern Turkey, where they had previously enjoyed relative autonomy.¹²⁵ These units were used to suppress Iraqi and Kurdish revolts and to support the British presence in Iraq; consequently, they were seen by the Iraqis as a foreign element¹²⁶ and a part of the British “divide and rule” policy,¹²⁷ which to some extent explains the events of 1933.

800 armed Assyrians crossed the Iraqi-Syrian border. Their attempt at migration was a disaster. French authorities ordered the group to withdraw from Syria, and on August 7, the Iraqi army and Kurdish irregular troops massacred around 300 Hakkari refugees in Simele. The slaughter spilled over into the districts of Dohuk and Mosul, causing the deaths of several thousand. Probably no other event has shaped

¹²¹ K. Makiya, *Republic of Fear: The Politics of Modern Iraq*, Berkeley 1999, p. 167.

¹²² A. Rabo, op. cit., p. 182.

¹²³ A.I. Laing-Marshall, *Modern Assyrian Identity and the Church of the East: An Exploration of Their Relationship and the Rise of the Assyrian Nationalism, From the World Wars to 1980*, M.A. thesis, Toronto 2001, p. 59.

¹²⁴ L. Dziegiel, *Archeology and martyrology...*, p. 40.

¹²⁵ J. Messo, op. cit., p. 86.

¹²⁶ S. Donabed, *Iraq and the Assyrian Unimagining: Illuminating Scaled Suffering and a Hierarchy of Genocide from Simele to Anfal*, PhD thesis, Toronto 2010, p. 142.

¹²⁷ For a summary of the British mandate in Iraq, see: M. Dziekan, *Historia Iraku*, Warsaw 2002, pp. 148–149.

the Assyrian collective identity more than this tragedy.¹²⁸ The Assyrian national movement, small and never threatening to Iraqi independence, was crushed; August 7 was declared a national day of mourning.¹²⁹ Having heard about the massacre, 10 000 Assyrians left Iraq and entered French-controlled Syria, specifically the aforementioned Al-Jazira.¹³⁰

To save their communities, heads of the Chaldean and Syriac Orthodox Church distanced themselves from the Church of the East and wrote – probably under duress – letters of support for the Iraqi government; as a consequence, in an Iraqi context, “Assyrian” came to mean “Nestorian”.¹³¹ Effects of these historic decisions and animosities are still visible today.¹³² The Chaldean and Syriac Orthodox communities opted to cooperate with the regime and gain relative security at the expense of a partial Arabisation of their communities. However, Assyrians often chose to emigrate – to the United States, Australia, and Europe, and to create their enclaves in all their new homes.¹³³

They were not, and are not, safe in Iraq. At least 2 000 Assyrians were killed during the Anfal campaign, conducted in 1988 by the Iraqi government against the Kurds.¹³⁴ This fact is rarely mentioned next to the number of Kurdish victims – 50 000 to 200 000. Genocides often serve nationalist agendas.¹³⁵ In a nationalist perspective, recognition of the suffering of another ethnic group diminishes their own. Hence, Assyrian sacrifices have been regarded as secondary – not for the first time, and probably not for the last.¹³⁶

¹²⁸ Importantly, while the tragedy struck members of the Assyrian Church of the East, the members of the Syriac Orthodox Church from Tur Abdin adopted the same element of martyrdom, thus drawing closer to Eastern Assyrians. Cf. L. Dzięciel, *Archaeology and martyrology...*, p. 40.

¹²⁹ J.E. Lewis, *Iraqi Assyrians: Barometer of Pluralism*, “Middle East Quarterly”, Vol. 10, No. 3, Summer 2003, pp. 52–53.

¹³⁰ N. Awde, N. Lamassu, N. Al-Jeloo, *Modern Aramaic (Assyrian/Syriac) Dictionary & Phrasebook*, New York 2007, p. 11.

¹³¹ S. Donabed, *Rethinking...*, p. 122.

¹³² *Ibidem*, p. 123.

¹³³ J. Mack, *op. cit.*, p. 51.

¹³⁴ Ö.A. Cetrez, S.G. Donabed, A. Makko, *op. cit.*, p. 289.

¹³⁵ Viewing the Holocaust as an exclusively Jewish tragedy may be taken as a precedent. Cf. I. Zertal, *Israel's Holocaust and the Politics of Nationhood*, Cambridge 2002.

¹³⁶ The Armenians have appropriated the Armenian Holocaust of 1915, while the Kurds appropriated Anfal. An example is the conference “The Kurdish Holocaust in 1988”, which took place on April 2, 2009 in the European Parliament. The aim of the conference was to raise awareness of the Anfal campaign. When the Assyrians and their sympathisers in the audience said that the Assyrians had also suffered during the Anfal, they were verbally silenced and their comments cut short. Sargon Donabed's e-mail

2.10. The functioning of the communities in Middle Eastern countries

As it was previously mentioned, Assyrians/Syriacs living in Sweden come from various Middle Eastern countries and different historical backgrounds. To understand the significance of this, it is worthwhile focusing on the fall of the Ottoman Empire in 1908-1922 and the emergence of nation states in its place: Turkey in 1923, Iraq in 1932, Lebanon in 1943 and Syria in 1946. All these newly established state organisms had Christian minorities living in their territories. Representatives of these minorities wished to become full-fledged citizens and were politically active, primarily in the pan-Arab movement,¹³⁷ which was an alternative to the pan-Islamic ideology.¹³⁸ Although over the centuries, Christians have contributed to the development of Arab literature, science, medicine, and philosophy, and at the turn of the 19th and 20th centuries became co-architects of the Arab revival (*Al-Nahda*)¹³⁹ and promoters of secularism,¹⁴⁰ the growing Islamisation and authoritarian regimes successfully blocked their efforts. Christian politicians have never been numerous enough in the cabinets and parliaments of the Middle East for their voices to be heard.¹⁴¹

Both the official and unofficial restrictions, to which Christians in prominent positions in the Middle East are subject to, prove that the “equality”, proclaimed in constitutions and speeches on national unity, usually remains in the verbal sphere. The degree of political involvement of Middle Eastern Christians depends on the policies developed by the ruling elites of each country, who may perceive Christians

correspondence with the Assyria Council of Europe on April 3, 2009. *Iraq and the Assyrian...*, p. 268.

¹³⁷ Pan-Arabism – a political movement to unite the Arab world. M. Żmigrodzki, *Encyklopedia politologii: Myśl społeczna i ruchy polityczne współczesnego świata*, Kraków 2000, p. 273.

¹³⁸ Pan-Islamism – a political movement calling for the unity of all Muslims. It was established in the 1870s in the Ottoman Empire and quickly grew in popularity throughout the Islamic world. J. Danecki, *Kultura...*, p. 156.

¹³⁹ Y. Habbi, *Christians in Iraq*, [in:] *Christian Communities in the Arab Middle East: The Challenge of the Future*, ed. A. Pacini, Oxford 2004, pp. 302–303.

¹⁴⁰ Christians supported secular nationalism because they hoped it would be blind to religious affiliation, ending their discrimination in Muslim-dominated societies. Cf. R. Haddad, op. cit., p. 5.

¹⁴¹ See more: F. McCallum, *Christian political participation in the Arab world*, “Islam and Christian-Muslim Relations”, Vol. 23, No. 1, 2012, pp. 3–18.

as essentially entitled to the same privileges and obligations as the rest of the population (Syria, Turkey) or as minorities whose rights must be secured by adequate quotas in parliament (Iraq, Lebanon).

Syria. Knowing the current situation in Syria, it is difficult to believe how peaceful the country was until recently.¹⁴² The Alawite-dominated regime,¹⁴³ though ruthless to the opposition, has successfully minimised interreligious friction for four decades, invoking Arab nationalism based on a shared heritage and language.¹⁴⁴ Under the rule of Bashar al-Assad, and earlier his father Hafez, Christians – accounting for about 10% of the country's population – were present in the government, the National Assembly, the ranks of the Al-Ba'ath party, and in public administration. Despite a lack of official quotas, the regime made sure that a significant percentage of Christians were included in the Al-Ba'ath regional lists and that at least one Christian minister sat in the government. According to the law (article 3 of the constitution of 1973, amended in 2012), the only office that Christians cannot apply for is the office of the president.¹⁴⁵

This explains why most Christians have not turned their backs on Al-Assad in the face of civil war. Representatives of Syriac Churches remain neutral or support the regime¹⁴⁶ despite its numerous crimes against civilians – they fear fundamentalist Muslims and chaos. Since the beginning of the civil war in Syria in 2011, over 400 000 people have died and nearly 6 million have been left homeless – out of which over

¹⁴² M. Woźniak-Bobińska, *Polityka zagraniczna Syrii*, [in:] *Wprowadzenie do polityki zagranicznej muzułmańskich krajów Bliskiego Wschodu i Afryki Północnej*, ed. M. Woźniak-Bobińska, A.M. Solarz, Warsaw 2018, p. 62 et seq.

¹⁴³ Alawism (Nusayrism) is a religious current that had its roots in Ismailism and developed in the 9th century. Alawite beliefs were influenced by Christianity, Zoroastrianism and astral cults (belief in reincarnation). The Alawites worship the Prophet Muhammad's son-in-law, Ali ibn Abi Talib. Shiites consider them Muslims, but opinions are divided among Sunnis. For more on the Alawites, see: K. Pachniak, *Ezoteryczne odłamy islamu w muzułmańskiej literaturze herezjograficznej*, Warsaw 2012, pp. 186–233; J. Danecki, *Podstawowe wiadomości o islamie*, Warsaw 2011, pp. 351–360; E. Zisser, *The 'Alawis, Lords of Syria: From Ethnic Minority to Ruling Sect*, [in:] *Minorities and the State in the Arab World*, ed. O. Bengio, G. Ben-Dor, London 1999, pp. 129–145.

¹⁴⁴ More information about the Syrian political system and regime: Ł. Fyderek, *Pretorianie i technokraci w reżimie politycznym Syrii*, Kraków 2011, pp. 31–114.

¹⁴⁵ The Syrian Constitution: *Syrian Arab Republic: Constitution, 2012*, <http://www.refworld.org/docid/5100f02a2.html>, accessed on January 16, 2018.

¹⁴⁶ A. Rabo, op. cit., p. 182.

4.8 million have found refuge in Turkey, Lebanon, Jordan, Iraq and Egypt.¹⁴⁷ It is estimated that over 17% of the Syrian refugees were Christians.¹⁴⁸

The number of Christian oppositionists is very small; they belong to the Assyrian Democratic Association and the Syrian Unity Party.¹⁴⁹ Christian men fight on different sides – government forces, Kurdish troops (in the *de facto* autonomous enclave of Rojava, Western Kurdistan) in northern Syria, or among rebels (although their ranks are increasingly dominated by Muslim extremists). Christian civilians flee the country as soon as their family and financial situation allows it. This is why soon after the outbreak of the ‘Arab Spring’ a number of journalists have begun to call it a ‘Christian Winter’.¹⁵⁰

This term was particularly fitting considering the threats posed by the so-called Islamic State (IS). In 2012, in the territories it had captured in Iraq and Syria, the organisation imposed *jizya* on non-Muslims. Those who refused to pay or were not able to, were threatened with death.¹⁵¹ Many churches fell into disrepair as a result of military operations. Jadida, Aleppo’s Christian neighbourhood, was regularly bombed. It is estimated that around 30 000 Christians left Aleppo,¹⁵² and almost 50 000 Christian inhabitants of Homs were expelled by the rebels in 2013.¹⁵³ Also in 2013, the Christian Maaloula fell into the hands of Muslim extremists – fortunately, most of the residents had already fled to Latakia. After the government regained control of the city in November 2013,¹⁵⁴ only 150 families decided to return.¹⁵⁵ In February 2015, IS fighters attacked 35 Assyrian villages along the Khabur River in north-eastern Syria. They kidnapped 250 Assyrians, and deported 3 000 from the villages. Some of the abductees are still missing.¹⁵⁶ These are only the best-known cases of persecution of Christian minorities since the outbreak of the anti-Assad uprising.

¹⁴⁷ *Uchodźcy z Syrii: kryzys w liczbach*, <https://amnesty.org.pl/uchodzcy-z-syrii-kryzys-w-liczbach/>, accessed on January 16, 2018.

¹⁴⁸ J. di Giovanni, C. Gaffey, *The New Exodus. Christians Flee ISIS in the Middle East*, “Newsweek”, 3.04.2015, p. 29.

¹⁴⁹ S. Bednarowicz, *The “Arab Spring” and the Christian Linguistic Minorities in Syria*, “*Orientalia Christiana Cracoviensia*” 6, 2014, p. 53.

¹⁵⁰ Cf. R. Stice, *Arab Spring, Christian Winter: Islam Unleashed on the Church and the World*, Abbotford (USA) 2014.

¹⁵¹ N. Shea, *Barbarism 2014. On Religious Cleansing by Islamists*, “World Affairs”, November/December 2014, p. 40.

¹⁵² J. di Giovanni, Conor Gaffey, op. cit., p. 31.

¹⁵³ N. Shea, op. cit., p. 37.

¹⁵⁴ S. Bednarowicz, op. cit., p. 54.

¹⁵⁵ J. di Giovanni, Conor Gaffey, op. cit., p. 27.

¹⁵⁶ A detailed account of these events can be found in: J. Yacoub, Th. Oberlé, *Detailed Account of ISIS’ Mass Abduction of Assyrians in Syria*, “Assyrian International News

Lebanon. Historically, Lebanon saw numerous clashes between Christians and Druze, as well as Christians and Shiites.¹⁵⁷ The present situation of local Christians is tolerable, but a distinction should be made between Lebanese citizens and refugees. Among the latter, between 40 000 and 80 000 Assyrians/Syriacs,¹⁵⁸ many of whom do not have a residence permit, and are thus condemned, if not to prison, then to economic vegetation, while the Christians who are citizens of Lebanon enjoy many civil rights. The Lebanese confessional system is unique in that it allocates quotas for parliamentary and government seats based on demographic statistics. As the largest Christian denomination in the country – the Maronites – officially account for about 22% of the population,¹⁵⁹ Christians are doing whatever they can to maintain this system. Assyrians/Syriacs keep discussing whether the Maronites belong to their community; the Maronites themselves do not identify with Assyrians/Syriacs, who – according to legends – came to Lebanon in the 15th century from neighbouring areas in what is today's Syria. In the 18th century, Syriac Catholics moved their seat to Lebanon; in the 19th century the Syriac Orthodox people persecuted in Aleppo took refuge there, and in 1939 a Syriac Orthodox seminary, directly subordinate to the Patriarch, was established in Zahle.¹⁶⁰ As a consequence, Lebanon has long been regarded as a cluster of Assyrian/Syriac intellectual elites.¹⁶¹

Turkey. In 2017, only 2 000 Assyrians/Syriacs were living in Tur Abdin in south-eastern Turkey.¹⁶² Their social life took place in Mar-

Agency”, <http://www.aina.org/news/20170705125045.htm>; a list of attacks against Assyrians by ISIS fighters and other fundamentalist groups: *Attacks on Assyrians in Syria by ISIS and Other Muslim Groups*, “Assyrian International News Agency”, <http://www.aina.org/releases/20150226225711.htm>, accessed on January 16, 2018.

¹⁵⁷ Especially in the first half of the 19th century. Cf. R. Ożarowski, *Polityka zagraniczna Libanu*, [in:] *Poziomy analizy stosunków międzynarodowych*, Vol. II, ed. E. Haliżak, M. Pietraś, Warsaw 2013, p. 337.

¹⁵⁸ AFP, *Assyrians struggle in Lebanon after fleeing IS jihadists*, “Daily Mail”, <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/wires/afp/article-3000523/Assyrians-struggle-Lebanon-fleeing-IS-jihadists.html>, accessed on January 16, 2018.

¹⁵⁹ M.A. Faour, *Religion, Demography, and Politics in Lebanon*, “Middle Eastern Studies”, Vol. 43, No. 6, 2007, p. 917.

¹⁶⁰ M. Abdalla, *Asyryjska diaspora...*, p. 59.

¹⁶¹ *Ibidem*, p. 62.

¹⁶² J. Messo, op. cit., p. 35. In his book *From the Holy Mountain: A Journey Among the Christians of the Middle East* (New York 1997), English writer William Dalrymple predicted that the Christian community of Tur Abdin would cease to exist within a generation. In the second decade of the 21st century, this threat has temporarily abated.

din and Midyat¹⁶³ and the surrounding villages and Syriac Orthodox monasteries, the best-known of which are Mor Gabriel and Deir az-Zafaran.¹⁶⁴ These centres of spiritual life attract many Assyrian/Syriac visitors from the diaspora, who make various attempts at helping their compatriots. Turkey's small minority of indigenous Christians do not enjoy the rights given to the Muslim majority, despite official declarations of religious equality.¹⁶⁵ Officially, Turkey has been a secular state since 1928 (when the corresponding amendment to the constitution of 1924 was introduced); however, in the light of a survey conducted in 2014, 89% of Turks also define their national identity by their religion – Islam.¹⁶⁶ Turkish law contains a number of restrictions on the functioning of non-Muslim communities – many of them encounter problems already at the stage of registration. Numerous congregations are often forced to share space, as the Turkish state confiscates their property – churches, vicarages, orphanages, and other buildings.

Christians have not been present in the Turkish parliament for a long time. It was only in 2015 that three Armenians and one Syriac Orthodox became MPs after the June 7 elections.¹⁶⁷ Each of these MPs belongs to a different political party and represents different interests. Erol Dora of the Kurdish Peace and Democracy Party is fighting for Assyrian/Syriac homes and villages confiscated by the Turkish state to be returned,¹⁶⁸ to have anti-Assyrian content removed from Turkish

J. Carillet, *The Return of the Suriani. A Visit to a Christian Minority in Turkey That Refuses to Die*, "Touchstone", March 2006, p. 28.

¹⁶³ The Assyrians/Syriacs from the cities considered themselves much better than their relatives in the countryside. Particularly, powerful families from Midyat were united by their conviction of their cultural competence and civilised lifestyle that distinguished them from the people of the countryside. See: U. Björklund, *North to Another Country...*, p. 79.

¹⁶⁴ Descriptions of these monasteries and other major Christian sites of Tur Abdin: M. DelCogliano, *Syriac Monasticism in Tur Abdin: A Present-Day Account*, "Cistercian Studies Quarterly", Vol. 41, No. 3, 2006, pp. 311–349.

¹⁶⁵ M. Woźniak-Bobińska, *Turkey*, [in:] *Encyclopedia of Christianity in the Global South*, ed. M.A. Lampert, Lanham 2018, pp. 812–816.

¹⁶⁶ As recorded in the studies of Ersin Kalaycıoğlu from Sabancı Üniversitesi and Ali Çarkoğlu from Koç Üniversitesi entitled *Nationalism in Turkey and in the world*. Cited in: U. Bulut, *Churches in Turkey on the Verge of Extinction*, https://www.gates-toneinstitute.org/5584/turkey-churches#_ftn3, accessed on January 16, 2018.

¹⁶⁷ *Turkey's Christian minority sends four deputies to parliament*, "Hürriyet Daily News", 7.06.2015, <http://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/turkeys-christian-minority-sends-four-deputies-to-parliament-83623>, accessed on January 16, 2018.

¹⁶⁸ Th. Seibert, *The Syrian Orthodox Lawyer Erol Dora. Source of Hope for the Christian Minority*, <http://en.qantara.de/content/the-syrian-orthodox-lawyer-erol-dora-source-of-hope-for-the-christian-minority>, accessed on January 16, 2018.

textbooks,¹⁶⁹ and for the return of symbolic artifacts, such as the statue of the Assyrian man-headed bull (*lamassu*) to the city hall of Diyarbakir.¹⁷⁰ Unfortunately, the government in Ankara seems preoccupied with the issue of the Kurdish opposition and has been ignoring Christian voices, despite pressure from the European Union.

Assyrian-Kurdish relations in Turkey have been complicated since the events of Seyfo.¹⁷¹ In short, Assyrians resent the Kurds for having seized their property, while the Kurds are reluctant to give up Assyrian homes. In the 1980s and 1990s, a brutal conflict between the Turkish government and the Kurdistan Workers' Party (Kurdish: *Partiya Karkerên Kurdistanê*, PKK) claimed 30 000 victims. The Kurdish Hezbollah (which has nothing to do with the Lebanese organisation of the same name) actively persecuted Christians: Christian women were kidnapped and forced to marry Muslims, monks were kidnapped for ransom.¹⁷² The departure of many Assyrians/Syriacs from Turkish towns and cities increased the sense of insecurity among those who remained. Naures Atto wrote: "Aware there was safety in numbers, Assyrians/Syriacs who were more determined to continue to live in the *athro* (homeland), tried to convince others not to leave too. To live next to an empty house meant to be in a very vulnerable position".¹⁷³ At the beginning of the 21st century, the situation has slightly improved; in the last few years, several dozen Assyrian families have returned to Tur Abdin.¹⁷⁴

Iraq. Some scholars¹⁷⁵ believe that the future of the Assyrian/Syriac community in the Middle East is tied to Iraq, as this is where they are still the most numerous. The luck of Assyrians/Syriacs in this country has changed a number of times. Well treated by the Abd al-Karim Qasim

¹⁶⁹ In textbooks, Assyrians are portrayed as "traitors", "collaborators", responsible for "backstabbing". Their loyalty, according to some textbooks, is debatable. S. Onder, op. cit., pp. 104–105. Many Turkish scientific publications paint local Christians in a bad light. Cf. S.R. Sonyel, *The Assyrians of Turkey. Victims of Major Powers Policy*, Ankara 2013.

¹⁷⁰ P. Antonopoulos, *Turkey remove Assyrian sculpture from front of local city hall*, "Al Masdar News", 17.01.2017, <https://www.almasdarnews.com/article/turkey-remove-assyrian-sculpture-from-front-of-local-city-hall/>, accessed on January 16, 2018.

¹⁷¹ More details about the Assyrian perspective, see: M. Abdalla, *Asyryjczy w Tur Abdinie między kurdyjskim młotem a tureckim mieczem...*, pp. 276–278.

¹⁷² J. Carillet, op. cit., p. 28.

¹⁷³ N. Atto, op. cit., p. 199.

¹⁷⁴ J. Carillet, op. cit., p. 31.

¹⁷⁵ Cf. V. Petrosian, op. cit., p. 146.

regime (1958–1963), they felt a change for the worse with the Ba’athists assuming power. The Al-Ba’ath party pursued Arabisation, both open and covert; Arab nationalism overshadowed Assyrian ambitions.¹⁷⁶ The Assyrians dropped out of the Iraqi census in 1977 as an ethnic-linguistic minority group, although other ethnic groups – Arabs and Kurds – were included. Only the religious category of “Christians” remained.¹⁷⁷

Ba’athist “divide and rule” policies meant that some Christians were privileged,¹⁷⁸ and the dictator clearly favoured the meek Chaldeans¹⁷⁹ at the expense of Assyrians, who resisted the imposed Arabisation quite strongly and in consequence experienced infiltration, ostracism and various repressions.¹⁸⁰ With the prohibition of public use of the Aramaic language, Assyrian national and cultural life practically disappeared. Those Assyrians whose positions were secured by the Al-Ba’ath party had to renounce their identity and language and practically cease being Assyrian. The case of the Iraqi Prime Minister Tariq Aziz can serve as an extreme example of the aforementioned Arabisation: an Assyrian-Chaldean Christian, his real name was Michail Juhanna. His prominent position, and the fact that Saddam Hussein chose Christians as his cooks, served to keep the public façade of tolerance. In fact, the Al-Ba’ath party banned all religious activities that connected Iraqi Christians with their fellow believers abroad; for example, in 1978, the regime imprisoned over 500 Assyrian members of the Bible Study Committee.¹⁸¹

During the Iran-Iraq War, many Assyrians were drafted into the army and sent to the front lines. As a result, the percentage of deaths

¹⁷⁶ S. Donabed, *Iraq and the Assyrian Unimagining...*, p. 144.

¹⁷⁷ E. Naby, *From Lingua Franca to Endangered Language. The Legal Aspects of the Preservation of Aramaic in Iraq*, [in:] *On the Margins of Nations: Endangered Languages and Linguistic Rights*, ed. J.A. Argenter, R. McKenna Brown, Bath (UK) 2004, p. 198.

¹⁷⁸ Due to the ban on drinking alcohol for Muslims, Christians in Iraq have specialised in services: hotels, restaurants and liquor stores. Already in the 1940s, the Chaldeans owned numerous hotels and restaurants in Baghdad. Cf. D. Stewart, J. Haylock, *New Babylon: a portrait of Iraq*, London 1956, p. 58.

¹⁷⁹ This is one of the reasons why Chaldeans preferred to keep using a separate name. After the overthrow of Saddam Hussein, the “Chaldo-Assyrian” community in Iraq was frequently mentioned, even though the term had appeared in the early 20th century; it was used, among others, by Agha Petros, the famous Assyrian leader. Cf. H. Murre-van den Berg, *Chaldeans and Assyrians...*, pp. 160–161.

¹⁸⁰ M. Nisan, *Minorities in the Middle East: A History of Struggle and Self-Expression*, Jefferson (USA)–London 2002, p. 191.

¹⁸¹ J.E. Lewis, op. cit., p. 53.

was exceptionally high among them: fatal losses were estimated at up to 60 000, not counting the imprisoned and missing.¹⁸² The same happened during the war with Kuwait. In the sphere of domestic politics, the Anfal campaign was intended to “punish” the Kurds, but it also injured Assyrians. Many Assyrian villages were destroyed, 40 000 Assyrians fled with Kurds to neighbouring countries. The situation continued to worsen in 1991 and 1992, when Assyrians were split into two groups – one in the Kurdish-controlled northern Iraq and the other under the control of Baghdad, south of the 36th parallel. If Assyrians had not supported the Kurds in the north, they would have been denounced as “Saddam’s collaborators”; had they not obeyed the regime’s orders below the 36th parallel, they would have been brutally punished as “Kurdish collaborators”. Not surprisingly, those who stayed in the country tried to be loyal to local authorities; many others fled and emigrated to Kuwait, Lebanon, Australia, Canada and the United States.¹⁸³

An unintended consequence of Saddam Hussein’s compulsory Arabisation of religious minorities was the growing number of educated Assyrian and Chaldean young people. Iraqi Christians were generally perceived by their Muslim neighbours as educated and wealthy. However, their situation worsened drastically after the US invasion of Iraq in 2003.¹⁸⁴ Hundreds of thousands of Assyrians and Chaldeans were accused of collaborating with the occupiers and had to leave the country. The chaos gradually deepened over the years. In 2014, the self-proclaimed caliphate, the so-called Islamic State and heir to Sunni extremists emerged. Christians in Iraq were given a choice – either pay 550 000 Iraqi dinars (approximately 470 USD) of *jizya* per family, convert to Islam, or die.¹⁸⁵ Murder, kidnapping, rape and looting were rampant; according to Open Doors, the level of persecution against Christians reached extreme levels.¹⁸⁶

¹⁸² S. Donabed, *Reforging a Forgotten History...*, p. 191.

¹⁸³ V. Petrosian, op. cit., p. 128.

¹⁸⁴ More about the situation in Iraq after the overthrow of Saddam Hussein’s regime: M. Dziekan, *Irak. Religia i polityka*, Warsaw 2005, pp. 36–38.

¹⁸⁵ Ch. Mitchell, *ISIS Swallowing Iraq: ‘They’re Killing Children’*, <http://www1.cbn.com/cbnnews/world/2014/August/ISIS-Swallowing-Iraq-Theyre-Beheading-Children>, accessed on January 16, 2018.

¹⁸⁶ Out of all Middle Eastern countries inhabited by Assyrians/Syriacs, this was the worst result: in 2017, Iraq came 8th, Iran 10th, Syria 15th, and Turkey 31st. Open Doors, *World Watch List*, <https://www.opendoorsusa.org/christian-persecution/world-watch-list/>, accessed on January 16, 2018.

While Article 42 of the Iraqi constitution of 2005 mentions freedom of thought, conscience and religion, and Article 2 guarantees freedom to practice religion for all citizens including Christians, the new National Identity Card Law, passed in 2015, states that a Muslim cannot abandon his religion, and a minor child whose parent converts to Islam automatically becomes a Muslim. Yonadam Kanna of the Assyrian Democratic Movement spoke publicly about the inconsistency of this law with the constitution,¹⁸⁷ but this did not affect the policy of the government, for which the protection of Christians is not a priority. Additionally, the Christians themselves do not improve their own situation by emphasising divisions – particularly, a number of Chaldean bishops have strongly underlined the ethnic distinctiveness of their community.¹⁸⁸ All this weakens the position of Assyrians and reduces their influence on future events in Iraq.¹⁸⁹

Since 1991, hundreds of thousands of Assyrians have fled from the dangerous Iraq to the much quieter Kurdish Autonomous Zone, in particular the province of Nineveh.¹⁹⁰ The Kurdish Regional Government (KRG) promised them aid and protection. Over 30 Assyrian schools operate in the territories of the KRG, and 500 teachers teach Aramaic to almost 10 000 students; they are financed by the government budget.¹⁹¹ More than 20 churches have been renovated. Assyrians in Kurdistan can publish newspapers, broadcast TV and radio programs in their own language and establish political organisations.¹⁹² These conditions may lead to political activism.¹⁹³

¹⁸⁷ A. Mamouri, *How Iraq just legalized discrimination of minorities*, "Al Monitor. The Pulse of the Middle East", <http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2015/11/iraq-law-id-discrimination-minorities.html#ixzz54H4gqtL7>, accessed on January 16, 2018.

¹⁸⁸ On May 10, 2003, a memorandum prepared by Bishops Sarhad Jammo and Ibrahim Ibrahim officially reaffirmed the separate ethnic identity of the Chaldeans, denying common national or political goals with Assyrians. On September 3, 2003, Chaldean bishops sent a letter to Paul Bremer, the civilian administrator of Iraq. In the letter, they emphasised that "Chaldeans constitute 75% of the Christian community of Iraq and their identity is distinct from the Assyrians". Cited in: *Chaldean Bishops' Letter Undermines National Unity*, "Assyrian International News Agency", 6.10.2003, <http://aina.org/releases/2003/iraqbishops.htm>, accessed on January 16, 2018.

¹⁸⁹ V. Petrosian, op. cit., p. 142.

¹⁹⁰ S. Donabed, Sh. Mako, op. cit., p. 75.

¹⁹¹ F. Gasparini, M. Tosco, *Building a 'new' Semitic language: lexical enrichment in Modern Assyrian and its problems*, "Folia Orientalia" XLIX, 2012, p. 193.

¹⁹² V. Petrosian, op. cit., p. 140.

¹⁹³ Several Assyrian parties are active in Iraqi Kurdistan. In the last election in 2013, the Assyrians ran on three lists, applying for five seats in the 111-seat Kurdish

Overall, Kurdish-Assyrian relations in the region are correct, although many voices, especially from the diaspora, have accused the Kurds of seizing Assyrian lands. Since the 1990s, the Assyrian International News Agency (AINA) has claimed that the Assyrian population of Iraqi Kurdistan has suffered discrimination, its rights have been violated, their lands – confiscated, people – intimidated and attacked.¹⁹⁴ Christian political parties in the Middle East tend to oppose the creation of an independent Kurdish state, as this would likely be the end of their dream of creating an autonomous Assyrian region, or at least a safe haven in the Nineveh Plains.¹⁹⁵

2.11. Assyrian nationalism

After outlining the history of the community in the Middle East, it may be possible to extrapolate from it the moments, or rather key events, which contributed to the community's present-day self-identification. In general, scientists reject the modern Assyrians' claims of being descended from the ancients,¹⁹⁶ pointing to the role of Western missionaries in promoting this belief among many Middle Eastern Christians. In fact, the birth of a separate ethnic identity among the faithful of the Church of the East can only be traced back to the late 19th century. The creation of this separate identity was certainly influenced by national movements emerging in the world, but also by the increasing presence of representatives of the West – especially Catholics and Protestants – in northern Iraq and north-west Iran. Some scholars point to travellers' notes, in the light of which Assyrian identification was also present among the Syriac Orthodox faithful in Harput

National Assembly. Even before the election, some members of the Assyrian Democratic Movement, which is the most well-known Christian party in Iraq, stood as candidates on their own "Sons of Mesopotamia" list. The other two lists are "Rafidain" and the "United Chaldeans, Syrians and Assyrians". Cited in: Ishtar TV, <http://ishtar.tv.com/viewarticle,50336.html>, accessed on January 16, 2018.

¹⁹⁴ V. Petrosian, op. cit., p. 139.

¹⁹⁵ G.P. Jackson, *Iraqi Christians at Odds with World on Kurdish Independence Referendum*, "Christianity Today", 22.09.2017, <http://www.christianitytoday.com/news/2017/september/iraq-christians-kurds-independence-referendum-nineveh-plain.html>, accessed on January 16, 2018.

¹⁹⁶ S. Donabed, *Rethinking...*, p. 120. Representatives of Bible studies in particular prefer the term "Syriac Christians", as they associate Assyrians with the people who cruelly treated ancient Jews. Cf. S. Donabed, Sh. Mako, op. cit., pp. 83–91.

(present-day Elâziğ in Turkey) in the mid-19th century¹⁹⁷; however, an awakening of the Syriac Orthodox identity in the Ottoman Empire took place several decades later – particularly in the 1870s, under the influence of missionaries and Armenians, who had already developed their separate identity.¹⁹⁸ The popularisation of the well-known but previously rarely used term “Assyrian” at the end of the 19th century coincided with a new desire to distinguish themselves from Arabs, Turks and Kurds and to free themselves from Ottoman rule.¹⁹⁹

Helen Murre-van den Berg writes that the earliest modern use of the term “Assyrian” to describe Christians in northern Mesopotamia can be traced to the British explorer, Claudius James Rich (d. 1821).²⁰⁰ Importantly in this context, Rich did not write that the Chaldeans and Nestorians called themselves “Assyrians”, but rather referred to their geographic location – in a footnote, he indicated that he meant “the Christians of Assyria”.²⁰¹ Missionaries also used geographical criteria to name their stations.²⁰² The Church of England used the term “Christians of Assyria”²⁰³, and from 1870 replaced the earlier term “Nestorians” with “Assyrians”.²⁰⁴ French archaeologist Paul-Émile Botta and his British colleague Austen H. Layard have symbolically revived the dead civilisation of Assyria. Layard’s books reached and influenced many readers.²⁰⁵ Rudolf Macuch concludes that the French and British excavations in Mesopotamia “opened the eyes, not only of the West, but also of the ethnically nameless Aramean population in these regions

¹⁹⁷ For example, Horatio Southgate in his *Narrative of a Visit to the Syrian Church of Mesopotamia*, New York 1844, reported that Syrian Orthodox Harputs called themselves “the sons of Ashur” before 1844, even before Anglicans called them “Assyrians”. *Ibidem*, p. 77.

¹⁹⁸ J. Messo, *op. cit.*, p. 73.

¹⁹⁹ H. Murre-van den Berg, *Chaldeans and Assyrians...*, pp. 157–159.

²⁰⁰ *Ibidem*, p. 60.

²⁰¹ A.M. Butts, *Assyrian Christians*, [in:] *Companion to Assyria*, ed. E. Frahm, Malden 2017, p. 602.

²⁰² For example, the missions to Mosul, Mardin, Diyarbakir and Van were called “Assyrian missions”. J. Messo, *op. cit.*, p. 68.

²⁰³ Missionary George P. Badger wrote of how Anglicans searched for a better term for these peoples in 1869: “I have chosen to call them ‘Assyrians’ in order to distinguish them from other ‘Syrians’, such as the Jacobites”. G.P. Badger, *The Christians of Assyria, Commonly Called ‘Nestorians’ reproduced as Appendix B*, [in:] *Portuguese Discoveries Dependencies and Missions in Asia and Africa*, ed. A.J.D. D’Orsey, London 1893, p. 397.

²⁰⁴ J.F. Coakley, *The Church of the East and the Church of England: A History of the Archbishop of Canterbury’s Assyrian Mission*, Oxford 1992, p. 65.

²⁰⁵ J. Messo, *op. cit.*, p. 70.

which had been satisfied to identify itself by religious denominations”.²⁰⁶ Local Christians realised how valuable the ancient monuments were and began to say that they had been part of “their” cultural heritage, belonging to their “ancestors”.²⁰⁷ According to Leszek Dziegiel, “some people from Aramaic-speaking communities believed that they were members of a nation that they called Assyria. The amateur and intuitive hypothesis formulated by the British gentleman archaeologist [Austen H. Layard] has become a reality for thousands of Christians living in the Middle East”.²⁰⁸ In other words, the Assyrians, similarly to Berbers, Copts, and Jews, used the ancient past to construct their modern identity.²⁰⁹

This is especially true of Aramaic-speaking intellectuals, educated by missionaries who had instilled in them ideas such as secularism, freedom, equality, self-governance, and nationalism.²¹⁰ As for Assyrian nationalism – Assyrianism – its best-known supporter was Naum Faik (1868–1930), a teacher, writer and poet.²¹¹ Robert William De Kelaita distinguished three phases in the history of Assyrianism,²¹² Johnny Messo added a fourth.²¹³

Phase one: The birth of Assyrianism – from the 1880s to 1916

Continuous discrimination, harassment, including the massacres in the Ottoman Empire in 1894–1896, all strengthened the conviction that nobody protects Aramaic-speaking Christians and that they must take care of themselves: organise, defend themselves, and fight for independence and freedom. Assyrian intellectuals in Urmia sought “a rebirth of the nation”. However, Assyrian proto-nationalism was

²⁰⁶ R. Macuch, *Assyrians in Iran*, [in:] *Encyclopedia Iranica IV*, ed. E. Yarshater, London–New York 1987, p. 818.

²⁰⁷ J. Messo, op. cit., p. 72.

²⁰⁸ L. Dziegiel, *Archeology and martyrology...*, p. 32.

²⁰⁹ But unlike the Jews, they did not have powerful patrons or an equivalent of the Balfour Declaration. In the post-war reality, they found themselves again as a small, weak minority in contemporary Iran, Iraq, Lebanon, Syria and Turkey. J.E. Lewis, op. cit., p. 52.

²¹⁰ H. Murre-van den Berg, *A Syrian Awakening: Alqosh and Urmia as Centres of Neo-Syriac Writing*, [in:] *Symposium Syriacum VII*, ed. R. Lavenant, Rome 1998, p. 503.

²¹¹ Who, interestingly, also occasionally promoted “Aramaic” identity. Cf. G. Yonnan, *Journalismus bei den Assyern. Ein Überblick von seinen Anfängen bis zur Gegenwart*, Berlin 1985, p. 33 et seq. The memory of Naum Faik is honoured on February 5 (the anniversary of his death) in many Assyrian diasporas around the world. Cf. M. Abdalla, *Asyryjska diaspora...*, p. 58.

²¹² R.W. De Kelaita, *On the Road to Niniveh: A Brief History of Assyrian Nationalism, 1892–1990*, “Journal of the Assyrian Academic Society”, Vol. 8, No. 1, 1994, p. 6–30.

²¹³ J. Messo, op. cit., p. 75.

faced with Kurdish ambitions, Muslim responses and Turkish and Iraqi national aspirations. The ambitions of Assyrians were perceived as externally inspired – by the British and the Russians; the Church of England and the Russian Orthodox Church had sent out unrealistic assurances of aid.²¹⁴ On the other hand, Syriac Churches remained cautious – until 1911, they continued to encourage their community to remain faithful to local authorities and abandon political ambitions and aspirations of autonomy.²¹⁵

Phase two: Assyrianism defined and implemented, 1917-1947

After revolution in Russia broke out in February 1917, Urmia-born Dr. Freydun Beth-Avraham, who called himself Atturaya (Assyrian), together with Rabbi Benjamin Bet Arsanis and Dr. Baba Bet Parhad, founded the Assyrian Socialist Party (the first Assyrian political party). In April, the same year, having heard of the slaughter of Christians in the Ottoman Empire, Freydun Atturaya issued a declaration in Aramaic which set out the goals of “the Assyrian people”: gaining autonomy, which would guarantee peace and freedom for all Assyrians in their ancestral land.²¹⁶ The first article of the “Urmia Manifesto of United Free Assyria” reads as follows: “The aim and aspiration of the Union of Free Assyria is the establishment, in the future, of national government in the following areas: Urmia, Mosul, Tur Abdin, Nisibin, Jazira, and Jularmeg, and, the reunification with the great and free Russia in trade, industry, and military relations so as to be in a union with them.”²¹⁷

Magazines published by Assyrians in the Ottoman and Persian Empires,²¹⁸ which also reached Assyrian readers in Russia and North and South America, played a very important role in shaping national awareness in the interwar period. After the fall of the Ottoman Empire, Assyrians “needed a name when they demanded respect for human rights before the League of Nations”.²¹⁹ Various Syriac Churches and secular delegations pleaded for British, French or American guardianship over the mandate territories while lobbying for an autonomous

²¹⁴ M. Levene, *A Moving Target, the Usual Suspects and (Maybe) a Smoking Gun: The Problem of Pinning Blame in Modern Genocide*, “Patterns of Prejudice”, Vol. 33, No. 4, 1999, p. 14.

²¹⁵ J. Messo, op. cit., p. 75.

²¹⁶ Ibidem, p. 82.

²¹⁷ V. Petrosian, op. cit., p. 130.

²¹⁸ See more: J. Messo, op. cit., pp. 83–84.

²¹⁹ R. Macuch, op. cit., p. 817.

Assyrian “state”, whose borders were shown on the attached maps.²²⁰ These efforts constituted an attempt to integrate Assyrian particular interests into the mainstream of world politics, but they proved unsuccessful. The treaty in Sèvres, signed in August 1920, gave no hope to the Assyrians, but instead permitted for the establishment of an autonomous Kurdistan.²²¹ As Marcin Rzepka rightly points out, “the years 1919–1920 mark the beginning of Kurdish and Assyrian national narratives, and thus also the process of creating borders, perhaps more symbolic than real”.²²²

The following decades saw the rise of Turkey, Iran, Iraq, Syria and Lebanon, and the new reality demonstrated that the dreams of the fathers of Assyrianism were unrealistic;²²³ this disappointment was met with various reactions of particular Churches.²²⁴ At the head of the Assyrian political movement was the universally respected patriarch of the Church of the East, Mar Shimun XXIII Ishaya, who did his best to engage the League of Nations in the plight of the homeless Assyrians. He argued that they should be granted millet status, drawn from all over the world and settled in Iraq around Amadiya, Dohuk and Zakho.²²⁵

Phase three: From political to ethnic nationalism, 1948–1990

In 1948, the Assyrian patriarch abandoned his political activities and limited himself to acting as a spiritual leader. In 1970, he was invited to Iraq, where he was welcomed by thousands of Assyrians and treated by the Iraqi government as a true leader after he had called for complete obedience to the authorities and abandoning territorial claims.²²⁶ In 1973, the political parties that still believed in Assyrianism, sent

²²⁰ See more: C. Weibel Yacoub, *Le rêve brisé des Assyro-Chaldéens. L'introuvable autonomie*, Paris 2011.

²²¹ It never came into force. In connection with the overthrow of the sultanate in Turkey and the creation of the republic under the leadership of Kemal Atatürk, its arrangements were replaced on July 24, 1923 by the treaty in Lausanne concluded between the powers and the Turkish Republic. Turkey regained full sovereignty over Anatolia and Eastern Thrace and the Gallipoli peninsula, and the autonomy of Kurdistan was liquidated.

²²² For more on the activities of the Assyrians and Kurds during the Paris Conference (from January 18, 1919 to January 20, 1920) see: M. Rzepka, *Kurdyjskie i asyryjskie projekty...*

²²³ See more: F. McCallum, *Christian Political Participation...*

²²⁴ J. Messo, op. cit., p. 86.

²²⁵ J.E. Lewis, op. cit., p. 52.

²²⁶ J. Messo, op. cit., pp. 90–91.

a petition to the Iraqi government suggesting the creation of an Assyrian homeland in the “Assyrian” triangle in northern Iraq.²²⁷ They received no reply. In the same year, Mar Shimun resigned from office, and two years later was murdered by David Malek Ismail, who belonged to an influential Assyrian family which probably belonged to a faction disappointed by the patriarch’s abdication and his abandoning of efforts to promote Assyrian autonomy in Iraq.²²⁸ In 1976, the Church changed its name to “Assyrian” in a move which the murdered patriarch did not support. Some factions began to promote their “descent from the ancient Assyrians”, rejecting other identifications – i.e. Syriac, Aramean, Chaldean.²²⁹

Phase four: Assyrianism 1990–2017

While describing the fourth phase of Assyrianism, which evolved into a political ideology aimed at uniting the Assyrian people and creating a new Assyria – a safe homeland where the threatened Assyrians could take refuge, Johny Messo emphasises the failure of this project.²³⁰ Messo, one of the leading ideologists of Arameanism, points to Assyrian activists’ selective approach to history and their constant attempts to prove that they are descended from the ancients, such as: giving their children Assyrian names,²³¹ using Assyrian terminology in names of magazines and publications, Assyrianising dances and music, introducing the Assyrian calendar,²³² designing national symbols, maps, flags, and surrounding themselves with ancient-style sculptures and monuments. In Messo’s opinion, this is unlikely to persuade the international community to see Assyrians as a separate nation and grant them ownership of a territory.²³³ Indeed, not all members of the com-

²²⁷ R.W. De Kelaita, op. cit., p. 27 et seq.

²²⁸ J. Messo, op. cit., pp. 91–92.

²²⁹ Ibidem, p. 93.

²³⁰ Ibidem.

²³¹ Michael Abdalla writes that in the case of Assyrians, the name itself often proves the degree of attachment to nationality. At the same time, he notes that in the Middle East there are times when it is impossible to give children “national” names. There are also reverse situations when the child is deliberately given a universal name. Idem, *Problemy kultury ludności asyryjskiej na pograniczu...*, p. 138.

²³² April 1, Kha b-Nisan, the old Mesopotamian pagan holiday, is treated as New Year’s Day, which Syriac Orthodox people see as a paganisation of the Syriac Christian calendar, which includes New Year’s Day on October 1. J. Messo, op. cit., p. 102.

²³³ Leszek Dzięgiel thought similarly and wrote about Assyrianism as a political myth that manipulates historical facts in order to achieve immediate goals and fulfil

munity are entirely convinced of their “pure” Assyrian roots – many see themselves as Syriacs, Arameans or Chaldeans. Nonetheless, Assyrian activists continue in their efforts, which can be seen in the activity of Assyrian political parties.

2.12. Assyrian political parties

The first Assyrian political party was founded in Syria. The Assyrian Democratic Organization (*Mtakasta Demokrateta Atureta*, ADO) was founded in 1957 by a handful of Assyrian intellectuals and political activists seeking to create a separate Assyrian state. ADO, which at first operated undercover, has turned into a global movement with its own newsletter and meetings open to the public.²³⁴ Even though the Syrian government tried to crack down on forbidden forms of nationalism, it still allowed for a greater degree of freedom and democracy in comparison to Turkey.²³⁵ Three Assyrian/Aramean parties operate in Lebanon: Shuraya party – formed in 1978, long associated with the Maronite politician Bachir Gemayel – a party which now supports the creation of an Assyrian state in northern Iraq,²³⁶ the Aramean Democratic Organization (ArDO), operating since 1988,²³⁷ and the Syriac Union Party (SUP) founded in 2005.²³⁸

However, the largest number of Assyrian political parties can be found in Iraq; their multiplicity is not proof of strength, but rather of weakness caused by little national solidarity. For several decades, a characteristic division could be observed: Iraqi Assyrians living in cities supported the Arabs, while their compatriots from the provinces sympathised with the Kurdish movement. However, after the US invasion of 2003, it is no longer clear who the Assyrians support.²³⁹

Historically, many Assyrians have been members of the Iraqi Communist Party formed in 1934, due to its anti-regime nature. Some

social longings of the moment. Idem, *Współcześni Asyryjczycy: nowy obszar badań etnografii?*..., p. 103.

²³⁴ Although in the 1970s and 1980s, the Swedish authorities considered ADO a terrorist organisation, the 50th anniversary of its establishment was sumptuously celebrated in 2007 in Södertälje. J. Mack, op. cit., p. 48.

²³⁵ Ibidem, p. 49.

²³⁶ <https://www.lebanese-forces.com/>.

²³⁷ <http://www.aramaic-dem.org/>.

²³⁸ <http://www.syriac-union.org/>.

²³⁹ V. Petrosian, op. cit., pp. 124–125.

played prominent roles in this party. Assyrians built several ethnic opposition movements which sought to overthrow the Ba'athist regime. These were Assyrian counterparts of the Iraqi Turkmen Front, the Kurdish Democratic Party, and the Kurdistan Patriotic Union.²⁴⁰

Among the Assyrian parties in Iraq, the Beth Nahrain Democratic Party (BNDP) stands out. In 1970, the Assyrian National Movement, Beth Nahrain, was established with the ultimate goal of establishing an autonomous state for Assyrians in Beth Nahrain, i.e. Iraq. Six years later, it transformed into the Beth Democratic Party, also striving for an autonomous state in the ancient lands of Beth Nahrain.²⁴¹ Much more radical is the Assyrian Progressive Nationalist Party (APNP). In its view, the Kurds are not a separate ethnos, and Iraq is truly the homeland of Assyrians – if the Kurds are to be given a homeland, it should be within the borders of an Assyrian state, perhaps in Iran.²⁴²

The most successful Assyrian party in Iraq is the Assyrian Democratic Movement (ADM). Created in 1979, ADM advocates a free, democratic Iraq and the recognition of Assyrian national rights.²⁴³ Its ideology is largely a synthesis of earlier Assyrian cultural awareness of Urmia, Iran, and Harput, Turkey. The ADM, like the BNDP, calls for unity between Assyrians,²⁴⁴ but unlike the BNDP, it does not seek the creation of an autonomous Assyrian state. It is a pragmatic grouping that had fought the Ba'athist regime since 1982 alongside the Kurds.²⁴⁵ In 1990, ADM joined the Iraqi Kurdistan Front (IKF), becoming the only non-Kurdish organisation within it. The 1992 parliamentary elections in Kurdistan were a test of the stability of Assyrian-Kurdish relations. Iraqi Assyrians not only took part in them and assumed their posts, but also strongly supported the Kurdish leaders.²⁴⁶ In recognition

²⁴⁰ J.E. Lewis, op. cit., p. 54.

²⁴¹ <http://www.bet-nahrain.org/>.

²⁴² J.E. Lewis, op. cit., p. 55.

²⁴³ <http://www.zowaa.org/>.

²⁴⁴ To this end, since 2003, it has promoted the term “Chaldo-Assyrians”, which was much more warmly received in Iraq than in the diaspora. V. Petrosian, op. cit., pp. 117–118; A. Boháč, op. cit., p. 69.

²⁴⁵ M. Galletti, *Kurdistan: A Mosaic of Peoples*, “Acta Kurdica. The International Journal of Kurdish and Iranian Studies”, Vol. 1, 1994, p. 49.

²⁴⁶ When Saddam Hussein invaded Kuwait and was defeated, much of Iraqi Kurdistan became de facto autonomous as a no-fly zone was enforced by the West. Under Kurdish control, many Assyrian towns and villages armed themselves and formed their own militias. Since 1992, five members of the local Kurdish parliament have been Assyrians. Assyrian leaders and human rights defenders still protest against the mis-

of their loyalty, in December 1996, the Kurdish parliament officially recognised two Assyrian holidays: August 7, in memory of the victims of Simele (Martyrs' Day) and April 1, Akitu – the Assyrian New Year.²⁴⁷

The chairman of the ADM party, Yonadam Kanna, was a long time a target for Saddam Hussein's forces – he had been sentenced to death in absentia, and many other members of the party were imprisoned and tortured.²⁴⁸ Thanks to Assyrian Americans' lobbying and the influence of Republican Congressman Henry Hyde, President George W. Bush appointed ADM as an officially recognised Iraqi opposition movement and decided to financially support the party (under Articles 4 and 5 of the 1998 Iraqi Liberation Act).²⁴⁹ Kanna encouraged the US to attack Saddam Hussein: "If you don't attack, then you are contributing to the suffering of the Iraqi people... It would lead to the building of terrorism and the threat of future attacks".²⁵⁰ In the first official elections after the American invasion, in which Assyrians took part – that is, the election to the Constituent Assembly on January 30, 2005, only one Christian was elected – Yonadam Kanna.²⁵¹

The political and cultural activities of the Assyrians under the ADM were supported by the Assyrian Universal Alliance (AUA) established in France in 1968,²⁵² a member of the Unrepresented Nations and Peoples Organization (UNPO) since 1991.²⁵³ Although by 1992 the status of the AUA as an umbrella organisation was rejected by all Assyrian political parties, informal ties between the AUA and ADM led to scrutiny

treatment of Assyrians by Kurds, citing a number of rights violations. Meanwhile, the Assyrians are trying to strengthen their cultural autonomy under Kurdish rule, without much success. W. Phares, *Are Christian Enclaves the Solution? Disappearing Christians of the Middle East*, "Middle East Quarterly", Vol. VIII, No. 1, Winter 2001.

²⁴⁷ H.G.B. Teule, *Christians in Iraq: An analysis of some recent political developments*, "Der Islam" 88, 2012, p. 182

²⁴⁸ In Ba'athist Iraq, Assyrians were targeted frequently, not only because of their religion (Christian Armenians enjoyed relative peace) but due to their territorial demands – similarly to the Kurds, they were a threat to the regime. More information about the political persecution of ADM members can be found in: S. Donabed, *Iraq and the Assyrian...*, pp. 188, 270.

²⁴⁹ J.E. Lewis, op. cit., p. 55.

²⁵⁰ "The Modesto Bee", 28.09.2002. Cited in J.E. Lewis, op. cit., p. 55.

²⁵¹ F. Gasparini, M. Tosco, op. cit., p. 195.

²⁵² At the first meeting, it was decided to establish April 1 as the celebration of the ancient Assyrian New Year, and the Assyrian calendar was adopted starting from 4750 B.C. See: W. Heinrichs, *The modern Assyrians – Name and Nation*, [in:] *Semítica: Serta Philologica Constantino Tsereteli dictata*, ed. R. Contini, F.A. Pennacchietti, M. Tosco, Torino 1993, p. 100.

²⁵³ A. Boháč, op. cit., p. 70.

of Assyrian organisations in Iraq as they were suspected of collaborating with external forces. In addition, the Iraqi government spied on its Assyrian citizens and monitored their activities in the US and Europe.²⁵⁴

2.13. Summary

In the 21st century, Assyrians/Syriacs living in the Middle East are separated by borders of the nation-states of Syria, Lebanon, Turkey, Iraq and Iran. They speak different languages and belong to different Churches – mainly the Assyrian Church of the East, the Syriac Orthodox Church and the Chaldean Church of the East. Traditionally, each of these Churches saw itself as an ethno-religious community, group or even nation, and religious leaders have been unwilling to share power with secular organisations, leaders, or members of sister Churches. Although it is possible to refer to the birth of Assyrian nationalism in the late 19th century, it did not become the sole ideology of the community, even though it enjoyed great popularity following the First World War. In the second half of the 20th century, a competing Aramean project emerged in the diaspora, and at the beginning of the 21st century, Chaldean separatism is also visible. Largely due to their self-perception as a millet, Assyrians/Syriacs have failed to overcome their religious differences, achieve national unity and, as a result attain a nation-state, even though this idea still has its supporters.

Events of the Arab Spring and the activities of the so-called the Islamic State have hit the community hard, especially in Syria and Iraq, and resulted in its further dispersion. Some Assyrians/Syriacs decided to flee to the Kurdish Autonomous Zone, where the conditions for developing social and economic life are the best in the region. Some left for Turkey and Lebanon, and others joined their families in the West. More than ten thousand chose Sweden as their new home.

²⁵⁴ S. Donabed, *Iraq and the Assyrian...*, p. 185.

3. THE ASSYRIAN/SYRIAC DIASPORA IN SWEDEN: STAGES AND FORMS OF INSTITUTIONALISATION

The number of Assyrians/Syriacs living in Sweden is difficult to calculate – Swedish demographic statistics do not specify the ethnicity of immigrants.¹ According to the Swedish Agency for Support to Faith Communities (SST), in 2012 the Assyrian Church of the East had 7 112 members, while both Syriac Orthodox Churches had 50 396 members.² According to Önver Cetrez, at the beginning of the 21st century the Assyrian/Syriac community in Sweden consisted of between 70 000 and 80 000 people.³ Internal figures provided by the Assyrian/Syriac community are much higher – around 120 000 in 2013⁴ and probably even higher (150 000) today. Some community members claim the number is as high as 200 000;⁵ this is likely to be an exaggeration though.

In 2013, the total estimated number of Assyrians/Syriacs living in Södertälje – the unofficial capital of their community – stood at around 25 000, representing over a quarter of the overall city population.⁶ The mayor of Södertälje, Boel Godner, believed their number to be 30 000 – a third of the city's population.⁷ Around 50 000 Assyrians/Syriacs live in Stockholm and its vicinity. Large clusters of this ethnic group can also be found in Västerås, Göteborg, Norrköping, Jönköping, Linköping and Örebro.⁸

¹ The standards of political correctness in Sweden have resulted in banning inquiries about race, ethnic background, and religion in any documents, forms or statistics. The last Swedish census which asked about the citizens' faith was carried out in 1930. A. Gromkowska-Melosik, op. cit., p. 65.

² At the time of writing, more recent statistics were not available. Even in the newest publication prepared for SST the same data was used. Cf. Th. Arentzen, *Ortodoxa och österländska kyrkor i Sverige*, Stockholm 2016, p. 129.

³ Ö.A. Cetrez, *Meaning-making variations...*, p. 29.

⁴ P. BetBasoo, *Brief History of Assyrians*, "Assyrian International News Agency", 1.11.2013, <http://www.aina.org/brief.html>, accessed January 24, 2018.

⁵ Interview with the Chairman of the Assyrian Federation in Sweden, Södertälje, March 6, 2014.

⁶ Södertälje Kommun – statistics for 2013 [Author's own archive].

⁷ Interview with the mayor of Södertälje, Södertälje, June 3, 2014.

⁸ S. Lundgren, *The Assyrians – From Nineveh to Södertälje*, Lulu (USA) 2016, p. 80.

3.1. Reasons for emigrating to Sweden

Swedish official reports show that Assyrians/Syriacs applying for asylum usually did not specify their reasons for emigrating from the Middle East, apart from stating that they were running away from persecutions. Indeed, some Assyrians and Chaldeans from Iraq, particularly those who were politically engaged – such as writers or editors – could expect repression from the Ba’athist regime.⁹ Furthermore, ongoing conflicts and wars in the Middle East meant that even a neutral person’s life was at risk. Syriac Orthodox immigrants from Turkey claimed that in their homeland, their lives were in danger due to their religious beliefs; those from Lebanon pointed to the civil war.¹⁰ Naures Atto cites a typical reason given to Swedish authorities by immigrants from Turkey: “they were killing us” (Aram. *ktellalan*), which showed a stark division between “us” (Christians) and “them” (Muslims).¹¹ Furthermore, those reluctant to leave soon discovered the new difficulties in living next to their neighbours’ abandoned houses, or among only Kurds or Turks.¹² Ibrahim Sirkeci conceptualises the environment of uncertainty as a “set of push factors”.¹³ The uncertainty at the root of the Assyrians/Syriacs’ decision to emigrate had both a material dimension (having no access to education, healthcare, or well-paying jobs) and an intangible, spiritual dimension (the inability to freely express their cultural and linguistic identity).¹⁴

Middle Eastern Christians assumed that the world was well-informed about their difficult situation, and that European Christians were ready to welcome them with open arms and eager to help. Unlike most other immigrants, who dreamed of returning to their homelands as quickly as

⁹ Ch.J. Spurlock, *From the Tigris to the rouge: An exploratory study of Chaldean gendered ethnicity and gender transition*, PhD thesis, East Lansing (MI, USA) 2010, p. 67.

¹⁰ A. Rabo, op. cit., p. 184.

¹¹ N. Atto, op. cit., p. 186.

¹² Some Assyrian/Syriac families decided to emigrate from Tur Abdin to Europe in order to increase their daughters’ chances of meeting and marrying their countryman. B. Arikan, *Assyrian Transnational Politics: Activism From Europe Towards Homeland*, MA thesis, Ankara 2011, <https://etd.lib.metu.edu.tr/upload/12612893/index.pdf>, p. 55.

¹³ I. Sirkeci, *War in Iraq: Environment of Insecurity and International Migration*, “International Migration”, Vol. 43, No. 4, 2005, p. 201.

¹⁴ A. İçduygu, David Romano, I. Sirkeci, *The ethnic question in an environment of insecurity: the Kurds in Turkey*, “Ethnic and Racial Studies”, Vol. 22, No. 6, 1999, pp. 991–1010.

possible, Assyrians/Syriacs saw Sweden as their new home and believed that they did not stand a chance as a Christian minority in the Middle East. They found it difficult to understand why ethnic Swedes seemed indifferent to their mutual religious faith.¹⁵ At the same time Sweden – the country which opened its doors to them – was in the process of building its own utopia, one in which Christianity did not play a significant role. Migrants who were part of the first wave of Assyrian/Syriac arrivals of the 1970s were surprised to discover that to the Swedes, they represented the least welcome group of immigrants because of their Middle Eastern customs.¹⁶

Assyrians/Syriacs who live in Sweden today rarely paint themselves as victims, but the motif of repressions emerges sporadically in their conversations with ethnic Swedes – especially as a means to justify having left their homeland. A 27-year-old Assyrian respondent born in Sweden felt that he had to underline his Swedish identity just after he said Syria – a country from which his parents emigrated – was his homeland.

A 31-year-old Chaldean who left Iraq as a child in 1990 and was brought up in Sweden, returned in 2014 to record a documentary presenting the situation of his countrymen. He was struck by what he saw, and by the similarities between the situation in the 1990s, during the Iraq-Iran war, and the present conflict. The latter, however, was in his view driven entirely by religion:

I flew to Iraq, to Ankawa. I saw terrible things. People were living in tents or shabby buildings. They had no bathrooms at all, and only two-three toilets for hundreds of people. It was awful... We went to visit a camp just after it rained – it had been raining all night. Everything was covered in mud. The rain flooded into the tents. People couldn't sleep. It was horrible. When I saw these tents I remembered running away from Iraq to Turkey. We also moved from one camp to another and also lived in tents. I began to remember everything I had gone through. We slept in tents for six months. I remembered that time and thought to myself "It's happening again!". When we were running away, the conflict in Iraq was political. Now it is based on religion. Islam is really persecuting Christianity.

In reply to a question in the DIMECCE survey about their reasons for emigrating to Sweden (it was possible to select more than one answer), more than half of the respondents indicated the political situation in their homeland; a quarter indicated a wish to join their families who had already emigrated to Sweden; one fifth cited the economic sit-

¹⁵ A. Rabo, *op. cit.*, p. 184.

¹⁶ U. Björklund, *op. cit.*, p. 112.

uation in their home country; the same number wished to be granted refugee status. Only 13% of respondents admitted that they had emigrated for economic reasons.

This data should be viewed with caution – some respondents admitted in interviews that they had been forced to emigrate because of poverty in their home countries, and pretended to be asylum seekers in order to be granted entry to Sweden. Even though the electronic survey offered full anonymity, many respondents preferred to indicate reasons going beyond merely looking for work – several respondents admitted this in person.

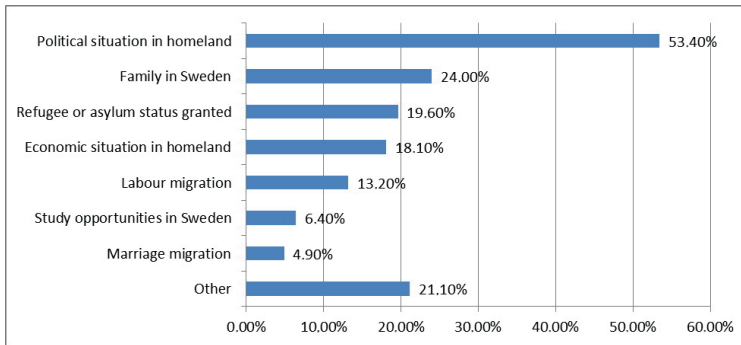


Chart 2. Reasons for emigrating to Sweden (respondents or respondents' parents)

Source: DIMECCE survey.

The overall situation of Middle Eastern Christians in Sweden can be assessed as good, however, specific cases vary depending on a range of factors, including: the socio-economic capital of a given family, its country of origin, and time elapsed since their arrival. Some Assyrian/Syriac families reside in Mediterranean-style villas clustered in the Lina Hage district of Södertälje,¹⁷ while many poorer Assyrians/Syriacs live in tower blocks which constitute ghettos of sorts (even if the surroundings of these blocks are clean and green, and entire neighbourhoods are far from the stereotypical image of so-called “ethnic ghettos”). Those who have just arrived from the Middle East frequently have to contend with provisional housing supplied by the Swedish government or by their families.

¹⁷ See more about this “Hollywood” district in: J. Mack, *op. cit.*, pp. 171–209.

3.2. The history of Assyrian/Syriac emigration to Sweden

The history of the emigration of Assyrians/Syriacs to Sweden and their situation, particularly in Södertälje, has been described by Göran Gunner,¹⁸ Samuel Rubenson,¹⁹ Fuat Deniz, Stefan Andersson, Ulf Björklund, Önver A. Cetrez, Annika Rabo, Svante Lundgren, Thomas Arentzen, Naures Atto, Jennifer Mack, and Michael Abdalla.²⁰ The works of these scholars paint a picture of subsequent waves of Assyrian/Syriac emigration to Sweden – early settlement caused by social and economic problems in Turkey at the turn of the 1960s and 70s; emigration caused by the Turkish invasion of Cyprus in 1974 and by the Islamic revolution in Iran in 1979; mass emigration from Iraq after the Gulf War in 1991, the war in 2003 and from 2014 onwards; emigration from Syria which began with the outbreak of war in 2011 and which continues today.

1967 is considered to be the beginning of the first wave: the World Council of Churches, aided by the United Nations High Commissioner, invited a group of Assyrian/Syriac stateless refugees from Lebanon. In accordance with set quotas, 205 people were flown to Sweden.²¹ Most of them came from the towns of Mardin and Şırnak in Turkey and belonged to the Syriac Orthodox Church. A few were members of the Assyrian Church of the East. Also among the newcomers were Syriac Catholics and Protestants, and even Muslims pretending to be Assyrians.²² By the end of the 1960s, as many as 50 000 Christians had left Tur Abdin. This group of newcomers had a sense of its own difference on arrival to Sweden.²³

These first immigrants were directed to the refugee centre of the Labour Market Board (*Arbetsmarknadsstyrelsen*, AMS), and from there

¹⁸ G. Gunner, *Mellanösterns religiösa minoriteter – med tyngdpunkt på kristna minoriteter*, "Delstudie" 10, 2000.

¹⁹ S. Rubenson, *Kyrka eller folk – den syrisk-ortodoxa kyrkan och det svenska samhället*, "Svensk Teologisk Kvartalskrift", Vol. 68, No. 2, 1992.

²⁰ M. Abdalla, *Asyryjczy imigranci w Szwecji między tradycją a współczesnością*, [in:] *Dylematy tożsamości europejskich pod koniec drugiego tysiąclecia*, ed. J. Mucha, W. Olszewski, Toruń 1997.

²¹ Svante Lundgren describes the engagement of the Church of Sweden, which at the time was very actively helping Middle Eastern Christians. Idem, op. cit., p. 79.

²² U. Björklund, op. cit., pp. 57–58.

²³ J. Mack, op. cit., p. 49.

to Eskilstuna, Märsta, Nyköping and Södertälje.²⁴ The last of these locations was already popular among Finns, Greeks and immigrants from the former Yugoslavia,²⁵ who in the 1950s transformed the city's character from "recreational" to "industrial" and who generated an increased demand for housing. Between 1965 and 1975, the Swedish government implemented the "Million" programme: its goal was to build a million new dwellings (mostly in blocks of flats and terraced houses).²⁶ When the economic crisis of the 1970s resulted in mass layoffs of employees from Finland, Greece and Yugoslavia, the flats they abandoned were occupied by Assyrians/Syriacs, called "B-refugees" because of their special status and permission to remain in the country.²⁷

Interestingly, originally only 17 Assyrians, members of three families, ended up in Södertälje.²⁸ They created a stimulus – they sent letters to their relatives in Turkey, Syria and beyond, and the response was more than enthusiastic. Assyrians/Syriacs arrived in large waves, usually as asylum seekers, and not – as newspaper headlines proclaimed – "illegal immigrants".²⁹ The voices of those who wanted to "keep Sweden Swedish" were already audible, even if this approach meant mandatory separation and dispersion of Assyrians/Syriacs across the entire country.³⁰ The adopted policy was to place no more than three families in one city, in order to facilitate assimilation – in theory. The newcomers considered this practice oppressive: in the Middle East, they had lived in close proximity to each other for centuries.³¹ Already at the AMS camp, they were afraid of getting separated. They believed they should not agree to separation, and aimed to establish a certain enclave.³²

²⁴ N. Atto, op. cit., p. 217.

²⁵ S. Lundgren, op. cit., p. 80.

²⁶ J. Mack, op. cit., pp. 58–59.

²⁷ A. Rabo, op. cit., p. 183.

²⁸ *Ankomsten*, "Bahro Suryoyo", Vol. I, No. II, November 1979, p. 19.

²⁹ For example, *Illegalt invandrade assyrier fortsätter ströma till Södertälje*, "Länstidningen", 9.12.1977, p. I; P.-E. Persson, *Massinvasion av assyrier: Kommunen hart ansträngd*, "Länstidningen", 19.09.1975, p. 8.

³⁰ In 1967, immigration was still a new element in the political discourse, and migrants were treated as exotic beneficiaries of Swedish generosity. J. Mack, op. cit., p. 35.

³¹ *Ibidem*, p. 21.

³² In 1984, the *Hela Sverige* (All of Sweden) policy was introduced. Mandatory placement of asylum seekers in different cities was intended to boost their integration and offer better chances of employment. This approach was eventually dismissed as inhumane and ineffective. In 1994, a new policy, *Eget boende* – EBO (Own residence) which allows immigrants to freely choose the city to settle, was introduced. *Ibidem*, p. 176.

They succeeded in Södertälje. This city, sometimes called “Little Assyria” or “Little Babylon”, has played a crucial role in forming diasporic and transnational networks and shaping the policies of identity in Sweden. Annika Rabo states that Södertälje is the only ethnic enclave in Sweden; Assyrians/Syriacs living in other Swedish cities are mixed in with other immigrants. Most non-European migrants in Sweden live in the suburbs, which the Swedish press often portrays as problematic, multi-ethnic ghettos.³³

It is difficult to specify unequivocally just what made Södertälje – out of all of the other cities – become the unofficial capital of Assyrians/Syriacs in Sweden; a city which offered them excellent conditions to mobilise along religious, national and ethnic lines. Many of the first immigrants were tempted by opportunities offered by Scania,³⁴ a global corporation selling trucks, buses and services, which recruited new employees directly from Turkey. Middle Eastern Christians from Tur Abdin saw themselves as victims of religious persecutions, but when they arrived at the invitation of Scania, Astra Zeneca and other companies,³⁵ they did not receive refugee status. Those who ended up living in Sweden for a longer period usually received a permit to stay for humanitarian reasons. In 1974 – after the Turkish invasion of Cyprus – another group of refugees was invited.³⁶ Many Middle Eastern Christians did not wait for the official invitation – they left the region on their own initiative, particularly after the outbreak of civil war in Lebanon in 1975. Previously they might have chosen to emigrate to North or South America, but having an anchor point in Sweden – their family members from the first wave of immigrants – meant they opted for this country instead.

Networks of family contacts worked especially well for the residents of Midyat in the Turkish Tur Abdin. Large Assyrian/Syriac families from Turkey, as well as from Syria and Lebanon, have reconstituted themselves in Södertälje.³⁷ Oscar Pripp’s description of the businesses run by Syriac Orthodox immigrants – mainly restaurants and pizze-

³³ A. Rabo, *op. cit.*, p. 183.

³⁴ Scania Aktiebolag (Scania AB) – Swedish company, founded in 1891, manufacturing heavy trucks, semi-trailer trucks, buses, diesel engines for trucks, marine and industrial vehicles.

³⁵ Astra Zeneca Plc – British-Swedish multinational pharmaceutical company founded in 1999 through a merger of UK’s Zeneca Ltd and Sweden’s Astra AB.

³⁶ U. Björklund, *op. cit.*, p. 57; N. Atto, *op. cit.*, p. 170.

³⁷ U. Björklund, *op. cit.*, pp. 60–63.



Il. 1. The railway station in Södertälje (photo: MWB)

rias – underlines the fact that not only do extended family members work in these establishments, but they also lend money to each other and enter into business partnerships.³⁸ Indeed, many Assyrians/Syriacs opened small restaurants, kebab or pizza places; both these dishes have become “national” dishes of Sweden.³⁹

This was made possible partially thanks to Swedish asylum policies, which at the time were less restrictive than, for example, the policies of Germany.⁴⁰ Many Assyrian/Syriac economic migrants, who had initially been working in German factories, decided to re-emigrate to Sweden. Those who left Germany, which they perceived as a temporary place of work, came to Sweden full of hope that it would become their new home. To get there, they often used the services of professional smugglers.⁴¹ In time, many stopped sending money to Tur Abdin and began investing in Sweden.

³⁸ O. Pripp, *Att vara sin egen...*, p. 61 et seq.

³⁹ A. Rabo, op. cit., p. 192.

⁴⁰ In 1973 Germany closed its borders to *gastarbeiters* from Turkey, ending a bilateral agreement signed in 1961. J. Mack, op. cit., p. 75.

⁴¹ A. Makko, op. cit., p. 266.

Meanwhile, Swedish authorities had not foreseen this sudden Assyrian/Syriac expansion – particularly the rapid influx of illiterate and uneducated farmers from Tur Abdin;⁴² in principle, asylum was to be granted to a limited number of well-educated and highly skilled individuals.⁴³ To paraphrase Naures Atto, once the Swedes began to modify their immigration policy, in a sense it was already too late. By then, Assyrians/Syriacs had discovered every possible – legal or illegal – way to emigrate to Sweden: using forged passports or passports of family members, hiding on trains, paying to be smuggled into the country, etc.⁴⁴ In response to the situation, in February and November of 1976 the Swedish Parliament voted in favour of two resolutions granting all Assyrians/Syriacs applying for asylum in Sweden a permit to stay in the country on humanitarian grounds. Ethnic Swedes, both secular and religious, loudly expressed disapproval for any deportations. Allan Björck, a former social affairs inspector, wrote an open letter on this matter to the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Sweden, Karin Söder.⁴⁵ The Committee for Migrants and Refugees within the Free Church Council of Sweden (*Sveriges frikyrkosamråd*) advocated accepting Assyrian/Syriac asylum seekers as political refugees;⁴⁶ on February 2, 1979 a delegation of eleven Swedish clergymen met the Prime Minister of Sweden to discuss the matter. The Assyrian Aid Committee was founded, and headed by Bishop Åga Kastlund.⁴⁷

The very first groups of Assyrians/Syriacs at the refugee camp were advised about the important role which associations played in Sweden. The newcomers quickly understood that by creating their own federations (*riksförbund*) and their local branches (*invandrarföreningar*), they could secure state funding to support their own identity. Assyrians from Turkey did not want to join existing Turkish associations, so they created their own. From the outset, they used associations to legitimise

⁴² Practically all Assyrian/Syriac women from Tur Abdin were illiterate. One of the reasons for not sending girls to school was the fear of kidnapping and forcing them to marry Muslims. Cf. M. Abdalla, *Asyryjczycy w Tur Abdinie między kurdyjskim młotem a tureckim mieczem...*, p. 280.

⁴³ K. Gardnell, *Asyrianerna i den svenska flyktingpolitikens skärself, [in:] Årsbok för kristen humanism*, Uppsala 1986, p. 79. Not all immigrants from Turkey were characterised by a poor level of education; for example, many Kurds represented educated elites purposefully seeking political recognition. Cf. Ch. Westin, op. cit., pp. 991–992.

⁴⁴ N. Atto, op. cit., p. 183.

⁴⁵ A. Björck, *Asyriefrågan*, “Hujadå” i/6, 1978, pp. 2–3.

⁴⁶ N. Atto, op. cit., p. 194.

⁴⁷ M. Abdalla, *Asyryjska diaspora...*, p. 68.

their community within the Swedish bureaucratic system, even though the Swedish standards and forms occasionally collided with their own traditional, hierarchical organisation.⁴⁸ Creating associations by means of voting, a commonplace idea for Swedes, was a *novum* for most Assyrians/Syriacs.⁴⁹

Nevertheless, the newcomers were keen to adapt to their new environment and play a constructive part in it. Apart from federations, various social, cultural, and political associations were founded. Churches were built and clubs opened. Numerous magazines and publications emerged.⁵⁰ In 1977, the Assyrian Association occupied a building in Ronna Centrum and began organising the life of the community: casual meetings, card games, discussions on Assyrian history and politics, and celebrations of the Assyrian New Year on April 1st. In short, Assyrians used the Swedish infrastructure for their national purposes.⁵¹

This visibility of Assyrians/Syriacs in Södertälje was seen as a provocation by *raggare* – members of anti-immigrant-leaning gangs, who between the 1950s and 1980s crossed Sweden in their huge American cars.⁵² In the 1970s, they regularly visited Södertälje, where they engaged in “the first race riot in Sweden”.⁵³ This event took place at the Bristol hotel on June 18th, 1977. One of the *raggare* began name-calling an Assyrian who was sitting in the hotel restaurant with his friends (he called him *svartskaller*, a ‘black head’). A fight broke out; 14 people ended up in hospital as a result. Further fights broke out regularly. Fronts of Assyrian shops and restaurants were frequently damaged, cars standing in front of buildings – vandalised, and even flats were burgled.⁵⁴ The police advised Assyrians not to appear in larger groups, recommending a strategy of invisibility.⁵⁵

⁴⁸ J. Mack, op. cit., p. 71.

⁴⁹ F. Deniz, op. cit., p. 82.

⁵⁰ See: M. Abdalla, *Asyryjczy imigranci w Szwecji...*, pp. 200–201.

⁵¹ J. Mack, op. cit., p. 81.

⁵² *Raggare* were inspired by the American *greaser* subculture, as well as the British *Teddy Boys*. Their aggressive demeanour was condemned by Swedish society and by international organisations. Andrew Young, a representative of the USA speaking at the United Nations forum in June 1977, asked the Swedish ambassador to ensure that Assyrian refugees are protected. G. Yonan, *Assyrer heute. Kultur, Sprache, Nationalbewegung der aramäisch sprechenden Christen im Nahen Orient*, Hamburg–Wien 1978, p. 204.

⁵³ S. Ambjörnsson, E. Janke, *Bråket på Bristol – Sveriges första raskravaller*, Sveriges Radio (SR) program, January 26, 2008.

⁵⁴ M. Abdalla, *Asyryjska diaspora...*, p. 68.

⁵⁵ J. Mack, op. cit., p. 81.



II. 2. The Assyrian Federation building in Södertälje (photo: MWB)

That was not easy, as the “general amnesty” attracted an even greater number of Assyrian/Syriac asylum seekers. In the 1980s, they were fleeing from a difficult situation in south-eastern Turkey. The conflict between the Turkish government and the Kurdistan Workers’ Party (PKK) did not leave room for neutrality: anyone who did not publicly support the Turkish military was automatically considered an ally of the Kurdistan Workers’ Party.⁵⁶ Assyrians/Syriacs from Tur Abdin felt that they had no means to protect their sons from military service (often synonymous with a death sentence),⁵⁷ their daughters from kidnapping and their land from being appropriated by their Muslim neighbours. Emigration looked like the most reasonable course of action. Present-day Assyrians/Syriacs from Turkey are well integrated, they work in a variety of sectors, have built churches and founded successful businesses. Pride stemming from these accomplishments sometimes translates into a certain superiority towards their compatriots who arrived in Sweden more recently and have been less fortunate.⁵⁸

⁵⁶ N. Atto, *op. cit.*, p. 201.

⁵⁷ Due to the high mortality of Christian recruits, some parents changed the date of birth of their sons to temporarily protect them from military service. Others advised their sons not to turn up at the recruitment commission. J. Mack, *op. cit.*, p. 47.

⁵⁸ Interview with an Assyrian politician, Stockholm, May 20, 2014.

Iraq was another country where life in the 1980s was exceptionally tumultuous: that decade was marked by the Iraq-Iran war (1980–1988), the Anfal genocide and the Halabja Massacre (1987–1988). Even though Assyrians/Syriacs were not the main target, some of them decided to leave the country. The mass emigration of Iraqi Christians began, however, only after the American invasion of Iraq in 2003, and the fall of Saddam Hussein's regime. In 2006, 90 percent of the 1 809 refugees who asked for asylum in Södertälje came from Iraq; in the end, 10 percent of all refugees from Iraq settled in the city. Most of them belonged to the Chaldean Catholic Church.⁵⁹

Assyrians/Syriacs were leaving Iraqi cities as well as villages. Many of them were well educated and well-off in their homeland. Unfortunately, no integration programs were suited to this group in the 1980s. As a result, many could not find employment, which in turn meant much slower integration into society. For linguistic reasons, this group sought emancipation from Assyrians/Syriacs from Turkey, among others by trying to establish their own churches, where service would be conducted in Arabic. In conversations with me, Iraqi Christians often underlined that they had already acquired a good education back in the Middle East – unlike their fellow believers from Turkey.⁶⁰

The last wave of Assyrian/Syriac refugees was brought on by the Arab Spring, the war in Syria⁶¹ and the emergence of the Islamic State. People fleeing these events were traumatised refugees who were unhappy that they had to leave their homeland, but motivated to find work in the new country, particularly as many of them belonged to the middle class.⁶² In September 2013, Swedish immigration authorities announced that all asylum seekers would receive a permit for permanent residence and would be allowed to bring their families.

Assyrians/Syriacs began to arrive in Södertälje once again, and the city faced a housing crisis. Around 110 000 Syrians arrived in Sweden between 2011 and 2015; most of them by plane from Turkey after

⁵⁹ N. Atto, *op. cit.*, pp. 206–207.

⁶⁰ Interview with a member of the parish council of the Saint Thomas church in Södertälje, March 7, 2014.

⁶¹ Earlier on, the main two reasons behind leaving Syria were: economic problems (drought threatened the farmers with hunger) and family considerations (Assyrian/Syriac women from Syria were fitting wives for Assyrian men living in Sweden).

⁶² Interview with the Director of the Integration and Employment Department in Södertälje, Södertälje, November 7, 2014.

months of hiding and clandestine travel over land.⁶³ Overwhelmed by the number of refugees, burdened by having to ensure adequate living conditions and the problem of rising crime,⁶⁴ the Swedish government voted in April 2016 to temporarily bring the asylum regulations down to the minimum defined by EU law and international conventions. At the same time, it promised a payment of up to 30 000 Swedish crowns to every refugee deciding to return to their homeland. The results were almost immediate – over 4 500 people withdrew their application for asylum by August 2016.⁶⁵

3.3. Beginnings of the socialisation of migrants in Swedish society and state

The most typical stories of emigrating to Sweden are told by the Assyrians/Syriacs who came from the Turkish Tur Abdin in the 1970s to work in Swedish industry, and who now form the most powerful group within the Assyrian/Syriac community. Behind their decision to leave was usually a mixture of political and economic reasons, amounting to an overwhelming realisation that they had no future in Turkey, and might be able to build a better life in Europe. Most of the first immigrants were men who found work in Sweden, bought apartments

⁶³ Cf. *The sea route to Europe: The Mediterranean passage in the age of refugees*, UNHCR, <http://www.unhcr.org/protection/operations/5592bd059/sea-route-europe-mediterranean-passage-age-refugees.html>, accessed on January 19, 2018. For Syrian refugee narratives, see: W. Bauer, *Przez morze. Z Syryjczykami do Europy*, Warsaw 2016.

⁶⁴ In 2010, Swedish police officers trained in Italy conducted “Operation Tore 2” and dismantled a large criminal network resembling a mafia structure. The so-called “Mafia of Södertälje” dealt with extorting money from Swedish social services, illegal banking transactions, money laundering, gambling, handling stolen goods and racketeering. The trial was conducted in 50 courts; 65 people were sentenced to prison for a total of 166 years and 10 months. Cf. S. Lundgren, op. cit., p. 80 and A. Makko, op. cit., p. 263. A recent publication by investigative journalist Baris Kayhan, *Nätverket: Södertäljemaffians uppgång och fall* (The Network: A Rise and Fall of the Mafia of Södertälje, Stockholm 2017) describes an execution of two brothers belonging to the Assyrian/Syriac community in front of the infamous Oasen club in Ronna, Södertälje, at Christmas 2010, and the investigation that followed – one of the largest in the history of Swedish police.

⁶⁵ Ch. England, *Sweden sees record numbers of asylum seekers withdraw applications and leave*, “Independent”, 25.08.2016, <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/europe/refugee-crisis-asylum-seekers-sweden-applications-withdrawn-record-numbers-a7209231.html>, accessed on January 19, 2018.

and went back to the Middle East to find suitable wives. This is why many Assyrian/Syriac women came to Scandinavia through the mechanism of family reunification; they were often illiterate. Nevertheless, their children born or raised in Sweden are predominantly well-versed in the Swedish language and culture; they enjoy the full spectrum of civil rights as Swedish citizens. A 33-year-old Syriac poet born in Sweden described his parents, who came from Turkey, as follows:

First my father came here. I don't know his reasons but I would guess he longed for a better life. His life was good but he wanted even better, you know. He was educated in Istanbul, he was an engineer. He came here. He re-educated himself and became a science teacher. And then, a couple years later, when he was established with an apartment, job and everything, he went back to look for a good wife, to pick one. And he found my mother and she chose him just to come to Sweden.

The political climate in Turkey at this time was indeed unfavourable to Christians. This was particularly true of families deprived of adult men – natural defenders of women and children. For these families, the option to leave was a true blessing. A 35-year-old Syriac Orthodox respondent who came to Sweden as a half-orphan described the situation:

My dad had died because of the land mine. He was driving a car and a mine was under the road. During early 1990s it was common that people were killed like that. And they were putting such kind of bombs. Car wars. Of course Turks said that Kurds did it: Kurdish guerrilla, PKK. But some other persons was killed with gun – also Arameans. And some people said also it might be Turkish intelligence. The corpses were found but you didn't know who did the killing. So it was difficult time during early 1990s. Especially because of the fight between Kurds and Turks. We didn't have anything to do with the fighting actually, but we were affected. We were afraid. So I emigrated with my mother and my three other brothers.

Trying to avoid mandatory military service in Turkey was another important reason behind emigrating – several interviewees told a very similar story. Their accounts speak of Christians being treated unfairly in the Turkish army, assigned the most dangerous tasks which carried a high risk of death or grave injury. Not surprisingly, the fear of being drafted was a common theme for the Assyrian/Syriac community in Turkey:

Usually some young people emigrated because they didn't want to do the military service in Turkey. And because it was very difficult thing

to do – they were treated badly. So they actually escaped and came to Europe. (Syriac male, born in Turkey, 35 years old)

Some Assyrians/Syriacs were helped by their families which were sometimes quite resourceful in inventing ways of bringing them into the country. Swedish law permitted people to bring their children, therefore those already allowed to remain in Sweden adopted their nephews and nieces to grant them entry. Such was the case of this Syriac respondent:

Well, I was born in 1962. We come from southeast Turkey, we lived near the Syrian-Turkish border, few kilometres from Qamishli, so sometimes I say I am from Qamishli but sometimes not. Me and my younger brother were about 10, 11 years old and although I was really good at school, we wouldn't have the possibility to continue, not in Turkish school. It was better to come to Sweden. So my uncle who had already been to Sweden, adopted me and my younger brother, and we came directly to Sweden from southeast Turkey because we had permission, and one year later my parents came to Sweden.

Not all interviewees came to Sweden directly; a large group arrived via Germany. To receive the status of political refugees, these people pretended to have just escaped from the Middle East. This happened in particular during the war in Lebanon, when Sweden opened its borders. An Assyrian 30-year-old told me frankly:

My parents came to Sweden with all of my siblings, we were all born in Syria. We fled due to poverty. And we actually fled to Germany first where we lived for 5 years. We couldn't stay there due to more strict foreign policies so we flew in groups to Sweden. Not ever mentioning we had ever lived in Germany before. And at that time there was a civil war in Lebanon. So all refugees said they were from Lebanon.

Naturally, not all of the newcomers pretended to have come from Lebanon – some have indeed lived there before the war and had left the country because of the conflict, like this 37-year-old Assyrian man:

I was born in Lebanon, but my parents were born in Syria in Qamishli and my grandparents were born in Turkey, so that is symbolic. That's modern history of the Assyrians people. My wife was born here in Sweden and her parents were born in southeast Turkey and her whole family is from southeast Turkey. My parents came in 1983, we fled the war in Lebanon and we lived in Sweden since then. I was 6 years old when we emigrated.

The situation and status of present-day Assyrians/Syriacs from other Middle Eastern countries depends on when, and from where, they arrived in Sweden. Many refugees from Iraq had, or still have, problems with integration – partly because of inadequate institutional support, and partly due to a tendency to stay within their own group. Similarly, Christians coming from Syria, recently torn apart by civil war, encounter an array of problems – above all, problems related to finding satisfactory work after completing two years of the Swedish introductory program.⁶⁶ Many are traumatised, they keep reminiscing on their past life or the dramatic circumstances of their journey to Europe. In the memories of this 31-year-old Chaldean, his father, leading the family out of the war-torn Iraq, is a hero:⁶⁷

I was born in northern Iraq in small town, outside Erbil. It's called Ankawa. In 1990, we fled. My dad was a military veteran, served in the Iraqi military for ten years. And he knew how to take care of himself and how to speak Kurdish, Turkish, Arabic, Armenian and imitate the Christian accents. A very smart and strong guy. So thanks to my father we actually made out from Iraq to Turkey, and from Turkey to Sweden. When we heard gunfire, he knew when it was a fight between Peshmerga, the Kurdish army, and Saddam's army, the Iraqi army. We took as much as we could with us, sat in the car and drove to the Turkish border. Then we left the car. We were among many other refugees who walked through the borders, through the mountains, through the first refugee camp. We went to the first camp, I remember, they were setting up tents for us and it was raining, it was muddy all over the place. And we were maybe three, four families living in one tent. Yeah, so you can imagine how tight it was inside. We hardly had any food and we lived in this situation for half a year. Then we were removed from one camp to another, and another. My dad applied for different visas to Sweden, Canada, America, Australia. He was smart so we actually received all these visas for all these countries. And the uncles, who lived in America and Sweden, agreed that Sweden is better because it is a good and safe place.

⁶⁶ The problem was not limited to this group. Only 494 out of 163 000 asylum seekers who came to Sweden in 2015 found permanent employment in the first year: *Fewer than 500 of 163,000 asylum seekers found jobs*, "The Local", 31.05.2016, <https://www.thelocal.se/20160531/fewer-than-500-of-163000-asylum-seekers-found-jobs>, accessed on January 23, 2018.

⁶⁷ American psychiatrists working with immigrants from the Middle East noticed that the loss of a male protector, family member due to war translated into greater adaptive stress, which is related to the traditional patriarchal order characteristic for the region. Cf. S.C. Nassar-McMillan, J. Hakim-Larson, *Counseling considerations among Arab Americans*, "Journal of Counseling and Development" 81, 2003, pp. 150–159.

To fully picture the scale of the cultural shock experienced by Assyrian/Syriac immigrants coming to Sweden in the 1960s and 1970s, one should remember that in the Middle East these people usually lived in villages, in close-knit family structures, and made their living by farming or selling handmade goods. Religion was an important marker of communal identity, with social life being concentrated around the local church or monastery. These people imagined Sweden above all as a Christian country⁶⁸ – after all, a cross is emblazoned on its flag – and a place of tolerance which they would never experience in Turkey or Iraq. For many, the imagined landscape of Sweden was the stereotypical vision of white polar bears, snow and great work opportunities.⁶⁹

Assyrians/Syriacs who were the first to arrive from Lebanon to Sweden in 1967 were taken to Alvesta – a small town in the south of the country – and from there to a refugee camp run by AMS. There they had to take communal showers: men were to shower alongside women, which – they said – was shocking and morally reprehensible. Medical examinations, mandatory for all immigrants, were also resisted. This was followed by many frustrating months in the camp and courses intended to shape the newcomers into model citizens. After completing these, they were finally relocated to ten communes in southern and central Sweden.⁷⁰

The living standards they encountered were unimaginable for them – at the time, Scandinavia and the Middle East were separated by a civilisational, cultural and aesthetic chasm. Michael Abdalla relates the account of an Assyrian woman who was shocked when she stepped onto a moving walkway at Arlanda airport – she thought that the ground was shifting under her feet. She encouraged her 7-year-old son to relieve his natural need into an ashtray, even though public toilets were nearby. Another Assyrian woman, not knowing the use of a bath, filled it with soil and planted some onions. Yet another woman saw a toilet bowl in her new Swedish flat and began thanking God for the blessing of showing her a water spring.⁷¹

⁶⁸ Assyrians and Coptic immigrants had similar ideas about Great Britain. In general, Middle Eastern Christians experienced cultural shock as they discovered the degree of secularisation of Western European societies. Cf. F. McCallum, *Shared Religion but Still a Marginalized Other...*

⁶⁹ J. Mack, op. cit., p. 19.

⁷⁰ Ibidem, pp. 49–50.

⁷¹ M. Abdalla, *Asyryjscy imigranci w Szwecji...*, p. 200.

A slightly different category of cultural shock was described by one of the Syriac respondents whose mother could not stop wondering about the everyday clothing of Swedes encountered at the airport – for her and her countrymen, air travel required elegant attire, while Scandinavians just wanted to feel comfortable:

When my mother came to Sweden in the 1970s, people were wearing shorts and wooden shoes at the airport. In our culture, you would never travel like this, in such clothes. So although it was summer, my mother came in full clothes and with many bags because her father bought her all these things, so she had them for her new life. She expected to come to some developed country but people were looking like farmers at the airport. And they thought she was some kind of Arabic queen because she was all dressed-up, you know. (Syriac male, born in Sweden, 33 years old)

Still, my interviewees, asked about their first impressions on arriving to Sweden, most often mentioned the weather – they were shocked by the cold and by the dark sky, contrasting with the sunny and hot Middle East. The snow was a leitmotif – often seen for the first time. Most of the respondents admired Swedish nature – the lush green trees and the unspoilt environment:

I saw that it was very green and very clean, and very civilised. So it was my first impression. (Syriac male, born in Turkey, 35 years old)

Some immigrants from the early 1980s were impressed by the hospitality of ethnic Swedes, who made them feel safe, welcome and accepted:

The first impression [of my parents], was it was like heaven. Because 35 years ago when immigrant came to Sweden, they [Swedes] gave him everything. From clothes to toothbrush. Everything. (Chaldean male, born in Sweden, 23 years old)

In the respondents' opinion, this was partially because at the time, there were few people from the Middle East in Sweden, and so they were a certain attraction:

Blondes and blue eyes, the first thing that I saw. I was only 14. And the other thing that shocked me, going to school with both boys and girls. I felt like I was in paradise. "Lunch time" was something new. A lot of blondes and beautiful people. There were very few immigrants, so the Swedes would look at us and touch our hair. When we went to school, the most important was that we didn't feel fear. And you could leave the class after just asking for permission, and you felt you were respected as a human being. At that time when I came to Sweden, there were few immigrants and we were special, interesting. They [Swedes] would ask us

about our origin, language. We discussed our country all the time, since they didn't know where Iraq was. Babylon was from the Bible. You were accepted like that! They would never leave us alone, having fun with us, accepting us into the society. (Assyrian male, born in Iraq, 50 years old)

However, most of the accounts were more neutral. Many immigrants arrived illegally and feared being stopped at the Swedish border. Without the help of their families they would not have gotten into the country:

We went to Denmark by train. In Denmark my sister's husband met us and took us by boat to Sweden, and when we passed the control, we were very frightened, whether they would stop us or not. They didn't. So we stopped in Gothenburg and there was a family my sister's husband knew and they let us in. It was about 11 o'clock at night. (Assyrian/Syriac male, born in Turkey, 45 years old)

Those who had just arrived often felt uneasy; this was especially true for those Assyrians/Syriacs coming from large, lively Middle Eastern cities and found themselves in small, sleepy Swedish towns. Often the only way to gain an elementary sense of safety was to move to a city where some of their countrymen had already settled. Looking for work and learning a new language was another challenge:

We came to a small town called Ödeshög, it's one hour from Jönköping. Not many people live there. It was strange for us. We had never encountered native Swedish people before. So we got to know them. But eventually we got used to our life there. It was hard. It was very hard because none of us knew the language. My dad knew some English. We didn't have any money. And here in Sweden it is hard to find a job if you are an immigrant. It's very, very hard. But eventually everything started to work. And after a year we moved to Jönköping because there were people from back home. And then you know, we started our lives in Sweden. (Chaldean male, born in Iraq, 31 years old)

Occasionally the first impressions of the host country were negative; however, they were usually quickly replaced by other, much more positive feelings, such as the perceptions of the Swedish customs and rituals, which were "exotic" to Assyrian/Syriac migrants:

The first impression was related to the airport jail. We were there one night, my first night in Sweden. It was on a hospital bed, the sheets were a paper. And then we came to the asylum camps. And I remember a big old oak there (...) I also remember "valborg" [Walpurgis Night - MWB], April 30th, when they welcome the summer or spring. I remember all that. It was exotic, new and positive. And during "valborg" when they burned

this pile of wood, it was dark and near the lake. And I also remember my first snuff! A Swedish guy was joking with me, I was 6 years old, I wanted to put it in my mouth and I took it and I chewed it and it was awful and he asked me to spit it out. And it was in Knivstad, in Uppsala. (Syriac male, born in Lebanon, 45 years old)

Most of the negative first impressions were not connected to the country itself, nor to its ethnic inhabitants, but rather to the poor housing situation – the necessity to share a flat with a group of people, usually family members. At present, with an increasing number of refugees coming from Syria, such situations are again quite common. The only difference is that today's refugees may wait considerably longer for new housing.

I didn't like it in the beginning as we were living with my brother and his family and he had three children of his own. It was a problem. He had three rooms and we were six persons and they were five. But we were living at my brother's place for a month or two and then we got our own flat. (Assyrian female, born in Turkey, 47 years old)

Some of the immigrants were desperately homesick and felt deeply unhappy to have left it behind – importantly, this was not due to mistreatment in Sweden, but rather as a result of a subjective sense of being uprooted. Such feelings were familiar to an Assyrian woman born in Syria, who arrived in Sweden in 1999 as a 14-year-old girl:

My homeland is Syria, first 6 months in Sweden were hell for me, I cried all the time. I missed the people, friends and family I loved. I remembered [even] stones of the roads [in Syria], the feeling of opening the doors, the walls, the smells, the taste of food, everything. But it's distant now for me. I have created a homeland inside me.

3.4. Assyrian/Syriac Churches in Sweden

The life of Assyrians/Syriacs in the Middle East was centred around churches and monasteries; they were their second homes, places where they met, prayed, talked and danced⁷² – naturally they wished to have their own places of worship in their new homeland. The first Syriac Orthodox priest, Father Yousef Said (d. 2012), came to Sweden in 1970.

⁷² B. Arian, *op. cit.*, p. 78.

He settled in Södertälje and began to serve the community a year later – mass was at first celebrated in private homes, and later on in various churches in Södertälje. The first Syriac Orthodox church in Sweden, dedicated to Saint Aphrem the Syrian, was built in 1983.⁷³

Because of an internal conflict and the ensuing split into Assyrian and Syriac factions, more than a dozen new churches were built or rented in the following years so that the supporters of different factions would not have to meet for religious ceremonies. According to a 70-year-old Syriac Orthodox priest from Turkey, the conflict had a direct influence on the construction of new churches (many of which might not have been built if were not for the conflict):

Bishop Aboodi left because he did not get along with some members of the Church, the people did not want him anymore, so the Patriarch moved him to Australia. We brought another bishop in 1987, Bishop Abdulahad Shabo, and the Patriarch came here to ordinate him. Within a few months this new Bishop faced some problems with the people too. The central board, consisting of representatives of all Churches' boards, had problems with him. We got divided; some stood by Bishop Abdulahad and some did not, we decided not to. As we did not stand by him, the church of St George stayed in the hands of those who did. That's why we wanted to build another church.⁷⁴

At present there are around 30 Syriac Orthodox churches across Sweden: a few in Södertälje and Stockholm and its surroundings – Hallunda, Norsborg, Flemingsberg, Tumba, Hallonbergen, Spånga, Märsta – as well as in Uppsala, Västerås, Eskilstuna, Huskvarna, Norrköping, Linköping, Lidköping, Jönköping, Enköping, Skövde, Gothenburg, Örebro, Malmö, Motala, Segeltorp, Trollhättan.⁷⁵

Uniquely on a global scale, Södertälje is home to two dioceses: the Syriac Orthodox (Metropolitan) Archdiocese of Sweden and Scandinavia headed by His Eminence Julius Abdulahad Gallo Shabo, whose seat is the Saint Jacob of Nsibin Syriac Orthodox Cathedral, and the Patriarchal Vicariate of the Archdiocese of Sweden under the guidance of His Eminence Mor Dioskoros Benjamin Atas of the Syriac Orthodox Church of Antioch, with a seat at the Cathedral of Saint Aphrem.

⁷³ *St Afrem Kyrkans Historia*, <http://www.stafrem.se/page.php?p=16>, accessed on January 23, 2018.

⁷⁴ More about these events in N. Atto, op. cit., pp. 344–348.

⁷⁵ Cf. *Syriac Orthodox Church*, “Le Parisien”, <http://dictionnaire.sensagent.leparisien.fr/Jacobite%20Syrians/en-en/>, accessed on January 23, 2018.

For several years, the community of Saint Jacob's Cathedral rented a church in the centre of Södertälje, until the construction of a new cathedral was completed in 1990. The old church, which had gradually become too small, was sold to the Copts (at present it houses the Coptic Orthodox church of Saint Mina). The new cathedral, also dedicated to Saint Jacob, was opened in Södertälje in 2009.

A general pattern emerged – the first Assyrian/Syriac immigrants to a Swedish city first rented buildings from the Church of Sweden, then either bought them or built their own. For example, the Syriac Orthodox community which today benefits from their own spacious church in Hallunda, used to rent a Swedish church in the centre of Norsborg. It was too small to accommodate all of the congregation, so the parish council met with municipal authorities and were given a plot of land for the construction of a new place of worship – the church of Saint George was built within a year (1989–1990). The aforementioned internal conflict has forced a part of the congregation to seek a new place of worship. For almost a decade, they used rooms at the cultural centre in Hallunda, which could not accommodate everyone. In 2000, municipal authorities assigned a new plot for a new Syriac Orthodox church; the construction took two years. The new church is fitted out with a large meeting room and dedicated spaces for women's groups, youth associations, scouts, and a library.⁷⁶

Arabic-speaking Christians from Iraq were initially so few in number that they had no choice but to attend mass in the Syriac language in Syriac Orthodox churches. In the late 1980s, Christians from Iraq, Syria and Lebanon prayed in Arabic at the church of Saint Barsoum, which was later closed due to tensions between the Assyrian and Syriac Churches. Iraqi Christians wanted to build a church together with the Arabic-speaking Christians from Syria, but the latter stepped back due to insufficient funds. In 2002, Syriac Orthodox Iraqi Christians – approximately 300 people at the time – asked Bishop Benjamin Atas to assign them an Arabic-speaking priest and allow them to have a separate liturgy. The bishop agreed, so the group's representatives agreed with the Church of Sweden to sublet space at the church of Saint Michael in Geneta for Friday and Sunday services. They did so until they built their own Saint Thomas Syriac Orthodox church in Södertälje.⁷⁷

⁷⁶ Interview with a Syriac priest, Hallunda, March 5, 2014.

⁷⁷ Interview with a member of the parish council of the Saint Thomas church in Södertälje, March 7, 2014.

The Assyrian Church of the East headed by Bishop Mar Odisho Oraham owns two churches – one in Jönköping and one in Skövde. New Assyrian churches are also being built in Fittja, Gothenburg, Linköping, Jönköping and Skövde.⁷⁸ Chaldeans and Syriac Catholics do not have a separate hierarchy but belong to the Roman Catholic Diocese and the Bishop of Stockholm, Anders Arborelius. Chaldeans from Södertälje have bought the Saint John church from the Church of Sweden in the 1990s; some attend mass at the Saint Ansgars Catholic church, where separate services are held for Chaldeans, Syriac Catholics and Armenian Catholics. They also own the Saint Michael (*Michaelmas*) church in Skärholmen and rent Protestant and Catholic churches in Nyköping, Jönköping, Linköping, Norrköping, Köping, Hallsberg, Blackeberg, Gävle, Sandviken, Eskilstuna, Örebro, Västerås and Gothenburg.⁷⁹ Syriac Catholics attend mass in Swedish Catholic churches and, for larger occasions, rent the Syriac Orthodox church of Saint Thomas in Södertälje.⁸⁰

3.5. Assyrian/Syriac associations in Sweden

Similarly to Kurds and Turks,⁸¹ Assyrians/Syriacs have consistently worked to institutionalise the life of their community in Sweden. 56% of respondents to the DIMECCE survey indicated that they were members of an Assyrian or Syriac organisation. The transition from informal actions to formalised, regular activity was naturally a gradual process. Present-day Assyrians/Syriacs in Sweden have many cultural associations at their disposal; the most important of these are based in Södertälje.

The Assyrian Federation of Sweden (*Assyriska Riksförbundet i Sverige*, ARF) founded in 1977 is an umbrella association of 33 affiliated organisations⁸² (such as the Assyrian Cultural Club in Södertälje, the Assyrian Women's Federation of Sweden, the Assyrian Youth Federation of Sweden) with approximately 10 000 members. The mission of the ARF is to strengthen Assyrian identity and culture, and boost cooperation between Assyrians.⁸³ Its Syriac counterpart is the Syriac

⁷⁸ Interview with an Assyrian priest, Fittja, June 3, 2014.

⁷⁹ Interview with a Chaldean priest, Södertälje, May 28, 2014.

⁸⁰ Interview with a member of the parish council of the Saint Thomas church in Södertälje, March 7, 2014.

⁸¹ A.N. Ahmed, *Neither Assimilation Nor Integration: The identity of the Turkish Diaspora in Sweden. A case study in Malmö*, MA thesis, Lund University, Lund 2013, p. 2.

⁸² Originally it consisted of 15 clubs. M. Abdalla, *Assyriska diaspora...*, p. 76.

⁸³ Interview with the President of the Assyrian Federation in Sweden, Södertälje, March 6, 2014.

Federation in Sweden (SRF), founded in 1978 in order to foster the identity of the Syriac (Aramean) diaspora in Sweden. The SRF is an association of 30 Syriac (Aramean) organisations such as the Syriac Aramaic Youth Federation (SAUF), the Syriac Orthodox Youth Federation, the Syriac-Aramean Academic Federation (SAAF). The SRF has 12 local branches and a total of 1600 members. Its head office is based in Södertälje, near the ARF office.⁸⁴

The head office of the World Council of Arameans (Syriacs) was also recently moved to Sweden. This global organisation represents a number of Aramean (Syriac) national federations.⁸⁵ A Demand For Action (ADFA), founded in 2014 by Nuri Kino, a Swedish journalist and activist of Assyrian origin, is a global initiative whose mission is to protect Assyrians, Chaldeans and Syriacs in the Middle East. Most of ADFA's sponsors are Assyrians from Sweden. Assyrians Without Borders (AWB) is a non-profit organisation founded in 2007 and based in Botkyrka; its goal is to improve the situation of Assyrian people in their countries of origin (Syria, Iran, Iraq, Turkey and Lebanon).⁸⁶

More than 250 Chaldeans meet in the Ishtar Club in Södertälje, which has been in operation since 1997. The office of the Chaldean Clubs Union in Sweden, established in 2004, can be found at the same address. The Ishtar Club is intentionally not involved in either politics or religion – it focuses on promoting Chaldean values, supporting democracy in Iraq and gender equality in Sweden.⁸⁷ Other Iraqi Christians, also members of the Assyrian Church of the East, can be members of the Assyrian Chaldean Syriac Association (ACSA), the Assyrian Church of the East Relief Organisation (ACERO), and the Inanna Family Association.⁸⁸

Many community initiatives have an educational character. The Edessa School began as a private initiative, and since 2008, has operated as a Syriac primary school, focusing on teaching Aramaic to around 120 children. Classes are held in a Swedish school in Norsborg on the outskirts

⁸⁴ Interview with a member of the board of the Syriac Aramaic Youth Federation, Västerås, March 11, 2014.

⁸⁵ Interview with the President of the World Council of Arameans (Syriacs), Stockholm, November 13, 2014.

⁸⁶ Interview with ADFA founder, Södertälje, March 20, 2014.

⁸⁷ Interview with the Chairman of the Chaldean National Association in Sweden, Geneta, June 6, 2014.

⁸⁸ Cf. S.L. Sparre, A. Hunter, A.R. Jørgensen, L. Paulsen Galal, F. McCallum, M. Wozniak, *op. cit.*, p. 3.

of Stockholm.⁸⁹ The Elaf school, opened in 2014 at the Villa Bellevue in Södertälje, is a Swedish primary school which runs a bilingual Swedish-Assyrian curriculum.⁹⁰ In 2016, 101 children attended the school.⁹¹

Among the rights granted by the Swedish authorities to Assyrian/Syriac communities was the right to broadcast their own media,⁹² including international TV stations such as Suroyo TV and Suryoyo Sat, from their studios in Södertälje. Suroyo TV was founded in 2004 as an outlet for Assyrians/Chaldeans/Syriacs; its goal is to present the cultural heritage, history and language of this group.⁹³ Suryoyo Sat, operating since 2006, is a channel similar to Suroyo TV, but linked to the Syriac Orthodox Church and with a distinct Syriac/Aramean focus.⁹⁴

Assyria TV is an Assyrian Internet TV station based in Stockholm which began broadcasting in 2012. It aims to strengthen Assyrian identity and oppose the injustice that affects Assyrian people in Middle Eastern countries.⁹⁵ “Hujādā”, an Assyrian newspaper published since 1978 in four languages, has a similar goal,⁹⁶ while its competitor – “Bahro Suryoyo” – has supported Syriac/Aramean identity and ideology since 1979 (at present both newspapers are published online).⁹⁷

Assyrians/Syriacs have formed over a dozen dance groups in Sweden (among others, Babylon, Shamiram, Ishtar, Niniveh, Urhoy)⁹⁸ and close to 30 football teams, including two famous rivals – Assyriska FF (founded in 1974) and Syrianska FC (founded in 1977) which share the stadium in Södertälje. Assyriska was the first immigrant football team in Europe to advance to the National Premier League. A film directed by Nuri Kino entitled “Assyriska: A National Team without

⁸⁹ Interview with a board member of the Edessa school, Stockholm, March 21, 2014.

⁹⁰ Interview with the headmaster of Elaf school, Södertälje, May 30, 2014.

⁹¹ N. Stallard, *For Assyrians, a New Home in Sweden*, “Assyrian International News Agency”, 29.02.2016, <http://www.aina.org/news/20160229021423.htm>, accessed on January 24, 2018.

⁹² The media owned by ethnic minorities do not receive regular state support; they usually operate on free market principles. Cf. L. Camauër, op. cit., p. 76.

⁹³ Interview with a member of the board of Suroyo TV, Södertälje, November 23, 2014.

⁹⁴ Interview with two employees of Suryoyo Sat, Södertälje, November 28, 2014.

⁹⁵ Interview with the Head of the Assyrian Media Institute and Assyria TV, Södertälje, November 26, 2014.

⁹⁶ In Aramaic, Arabic, Turkish and Swedish. M. Abdalla, *Asyryjska diaspora...*, p. 68.

⁹⁷ Interview with a journalist formerly employed at “Bahro Suryoyo”, Södertälje, March 9, 2014.

⁹⁸ M. Abdalla, *Asyryjska diaspora...*, p. 68.



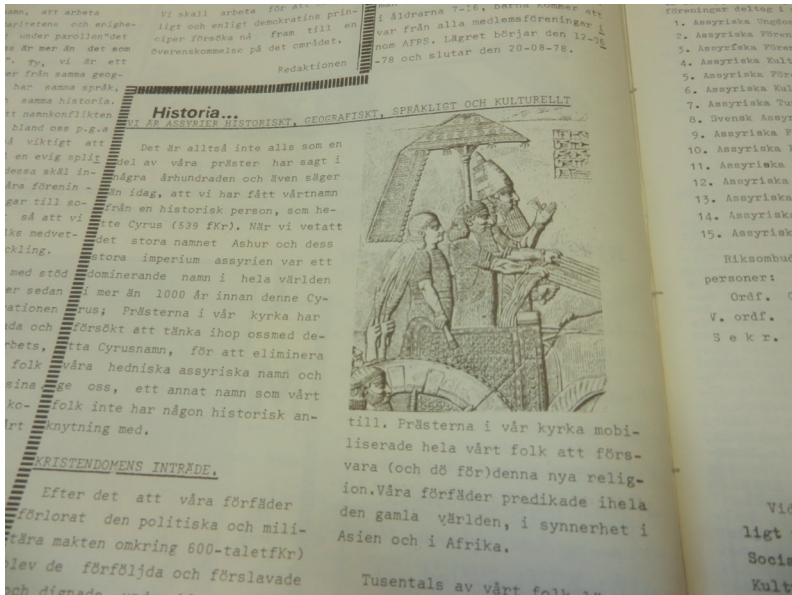
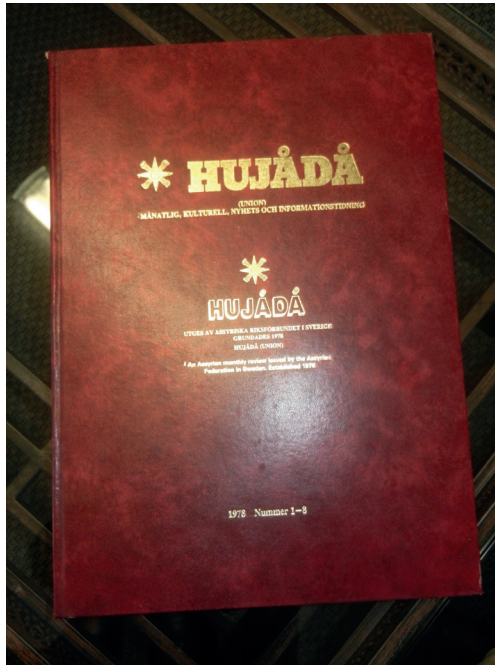
Il. 3. Suryoyo Sat TV station (photo: MWB)

a Nation” was awarded the Golden Palm at the Beverly Hills Film Festival in Los Angeles in 2006.⁹⁹

3.6. Outline of the activities of Assyrian/Syriac institutions in Sweden

Assyrian/Syriac institutions offer their members a wide range of activities. Apart from Assyrian and Syriac federations, whose leaders strive for recognition on a local and international level, many youth organisations and cultural associations operate in all major Swedish cities. Their members can meet other Assyrians/Syriacs, talk in Aramaic with their peers, take trips and summer camps, celebrate Akitu, Martyrs’ Day and other festivals, attend lectures and seminars, learn computer skills, practice traditional dances, prepare Middle Eastern dishes, play football, billiards, bowling, ping-pong, or cards. Classes

⁹⁹ *Assyrian Film Wins Golden Palm Award*, “Assyrian International News Agency”, 11.04.2006, <http://www.aina.org/ata/20060411155404.htm>, accessed on January 24, 2018.



Il. 4. The first issues of "Hujadâ" (photo: MWB)

are tailored to young people, children of several age groups, women, and senior citizens.¹⁰⁰

Some activities offered by these secular organisations are duplicated by classes organised by Middle Eastern Churches, which also offer seminars, lectures, and cultural excursions, help with translations and Swedish paperwork. Larger churches have a number of committees overseeing various kinds of activities. The majority of Assyrian/Syriac Churches run Sunday schools, teach Syriac liturgy and Kthobonoyo – the Syriac language. They also run choirs, seminar groups, and gym classes for senior citizens.¹⁰¹ Associations affiliated with Churches specialise in translations of liturgy and church books from Syriac to Swedish, teaching new immigrants Swedish, and general charity work. In some parishes, Assyrian/Syriac teachers visit churches as volunteers helping children with their homework assigned by Swedish schools.¹⁰²

The Saint Ignatios Theological Seminary is an exceptional institution, as its mission is to support ecumenical unity between Oriental and Eastern Churches.¹⁰³ The Seminary was founded in 2010 and operates as part of a college in Botkyrka, in cooperation with the Orthodox Education and Culture Study Association, which remains in close contact with Orthodox Churches in Sweden. It educates future priests and religious education teachers in Eastern (Byzantine/Slavic) and Oriental (Coptic and Syriac) Orthodox theology and tradition.¹⁰⁴ The aforementioned Edessa and Elaf schools, apart from the educational curriculum, teach Neo-Aramaic language to Syriac and Assyrian children.

A Demand for Action organises demonstrations in support of Christians in the Middle East, publishes articles and reports, releases films presenting their difficult situation, and lobbies for the creation of an autonomous Assyrian region in northern Iraq.¹⁰⁵ The Assyrians Without Borders run a variety of projects – digging wells, connecting buildings to the electrical grid or supplying generators, delivering food

¹⁰⁰ Interview with a member of the Assyrian Cultural Club, Botkyrka, March 8, 2014.

¹⁰¹ Interview with a member of the parish council of the Saint Jacob of Nsibin Cathedral, Södertälje, March 9, 2014.

¹⁰² Interview with a Syriac priest, Hallunda, March 5, 2014.

¹⁰³ Interview with the Coordinator of Eastern Churches of the Christian Council of Sweden, Stockholm, November 25, 2014.

¹⁰⁴ Interview with the headmaster of Botkyrka college and the Saint Ignatios Theological Seminary, Botkyrka, March 24, 2014.

¹⁰⁵ Interview with ADFA member, Södertälje, November 21, 2014.

and medicine to Christians in the Middle East. The organisation supplies school materials for children and funds scholarships for talented young people.¹⁰⁶ Assyrian/Syriac TV stations broadcast from Sweden to over 80 countries across the world 24 hours a day (even if some of the material is re-transmitted several times per day).¹⁰⁷ The best Assyrian/Syriac football teams used to play in *Allsvenskan* (the highest tier of Swedish football) but have since been relegated to *Superettan* (the second division). Many people still attend their matches.¹⁰⁸

Iraqi Christians are more active in their churches than in secular associations. For example, Iraqi parishioners of the Syriac Orthodox church of Saint Thomas are very proud of their choir, which has won many competitions held in the diocese. The building belonging to the parish has a number of classrooms used by the Sunday school. Bible classes are conducted in Arabic.¹⁰⁹ Arabic is also the main language of Chaldeans, who as Catholics are members of a larger community and take part in many activities within the framework of the Catholic Church. However, due to the distinct character of Chaldean liturgy and canon law, they prefer to attend their own churches rather than join other Catholics. The cooperation between Chaldean secular associations and the Chaldean Church is limited, although some people are active in both.¹¹⁰ Many young Chaldeans attend religion classes, sing in choirs, attend parties, picnics and summer camps.¹¹¹

3.7. Summary

When in 1967, Swedish authorities welcomed the first small group of Assyrian/Syriac refugees from the Middle East, they did not expect that within half a century this group would evolve into a community of about 150 000 people. Persecuted in their homelands, or simply looking for a better life, Assyrians/Syriacs arriving in Sweden in sev-

¹⁰⁶ Interview with the President of AWB, Södertälje, March 6, 2014.

¹⁰⁷ Interview with two employees of Suryoyo Sat, Södertälje, November 28, 2014.

¹⁰⁸ Interview with former Chair of the Assyrian Federation in Södertälje and a faithful fan of Assyriska FF, Södertälje, March 28, 2014.

¹⁰⁹ Interview with a member of the parish council of the Saint Thomas church in Södertälje, March 7, 2014.

¹¹⁰ Interview with a Chaldean priest, Södertälje, May 28, 2014.

¹¹¹ Interview with a Chaldean, former chairman of the Catholic Youth of Sweden, Södertälje, November 19, 2014.

eral waves predominantly saw their migration as a one-way journey.¹¹² Therefore, they were determined to adjust to the new reality, bring their entire families and achieve material success. At the same time, they did not wish to assimilate entirely. The enclave they created in Södertälje was key to this standpoint, and a unique phenomenon in Sweden.

Stefan Andersson wrote in 1983: “Since antiquity, Assyrians saw themselves as a community within a community. This approach collided with the requirements of a modern industrial society”.¹¹³ Swedish officials thought that they were offering the newcomers the gift of equality and freeing them from oppressive structures of the past. However, the centuries-old system of millets had meant that Assyrians/Syriacs had become accustomed to social and physical isolation. Their philosophy was based on standing apart and isolation.¹¹⁴ Churches, institutions and organisations they founded since the 1970s were – and still are – aimed at the preservation of their ethnic uniqueness. Despite a clear clash between the Swedish goals (to form a classless society) and Assyrian/Syriac priorities (to stand apart within a minority group), most of the interactions between hosts and newcomers can be characterised as peaceful co-existence; collisions were sporadic (vide the case of *raggare*).

“Today we are among the minorities which have successfully combined their own traditions with those of their new homeland. Within a few decades, we transitioned from pizza bakers to people with academic degrees and entrepreneurs”, wrote Rakel Chukri,¹¹⁵ underlining that Assyrians/Syriacs have entered into the mainstream of Swedish society. They remained faithful to their Middle Eastern traditions and simultaneously adapted to life in Sweden – now they could not imagine living elsewhere. The majority express their gratitude for being offered a safe harbour, a place where the Aramaic language can be used and developed, and Churches and organisations may flourish. The success of the community is rooted in the strategy of both integrating and staying ethnically apart. Assyrians/Syriacs have blended into Swedish society and shaped their organisations to fit within the Swedish model,¹¹⁶ although not necessarily following Swedish templates.¹¹⁷

¹¹² Cf. Ch.J. Spurlock, *op. cit.*, p. 69.

¹¹³ S. Andersson, *op. cit.*, p. 67.

¹¹⁴ J. Mack, *op. cit.*, p. 20, 36.

¹¹⁵ R. Chukri, *op. cit.*

¹¹⁶ A. Rabo, *op. cit.*, p. 192.

¹¹⁷ J. Mack, *op. cit.*, p. 52.

4. THE ASSYRIAN/SYRIAC DIASPORA IN SWEDEN – INTERNAL DYNAMICS OF THE COMMUNITY

While examining a group or community it is frequently tempting to view it as a monolith, a “container” for perceptions and generalisations.¹ Instead it might be worthwhile to problematise the concept of “community” as a group of individuals endowed with will. The relationship between the individual and the community is multi-dimensional: the group controls its members – to a certain extent; on the other hand, actions of talented individuals may bring the way an entire community functions to a higher level.² Internal actors may either cooperate or compete. Their aspirations may entirely or partially meet, or they may lead in opposing directions.

The aim of this chapter is to examine the internal dynamics of the Assyrian/Syriac community in Sweden, from the perspective of the people playing important roles in this group, and through survey responses representing opinions of diverse members of the Assyrian/Syriac community. This chapter will investigate a number of issues including: religion and the role of the Church; access to religious buildings and religious practices; Assyrian/Syriac homes; languages used in the Church and those used in daily life; traditions and rituals (baptisms, weddings, funerals); the role of young people and their experiences growing up; intergenerational relationships; the position of women; the various countries of origin; the last wave and its influence on the community; secular and clerical approaches; the Assyrian-Syriac conflict; self-identification, football, leaders and their perception by the community, and challenges for the future. Some of these issues are interrelated, others seem to function as separate questions; all of them contribute to the broad picture of the internal dynamics of the community in question. Furthermore, these themes illustrate the changes taking place in the community that are stimulated by the surrounding Swedish environment.

¹ Cf. D. Szablowski, *Transnational Law and Local Struggles: Mining, Communities and the World Bank*, Oxford–Portland (USA) 2007, p. 137.

² See: N. Mkhize, *Psychology: An African Perspective*, [in:] *Self, Community and Psychology*, ed. N. Duncan et al., Pretoria (RSA) 2007, pp. 4–25.

4.1. Religion and the role of the Church

In the Middle East, leading the life of a pious person can bring certain social and economic benefits.³ Interestingly, social pressure to conform to dominant social and religious norms among Christian minorities may be stronger than among the Muslim majority.⁴ My earlier studies have demonstrated that the vast majority of Assyrians/Syriacs abide by these norms. Most declare faith in God and attend mass (over 90%). More than 50% consider themselves practising believers with less than 5% describing themselves as non-practising non-believers.⁵ Many respondents see religious practices as a source of comfort and mental strength; for some, the possibility to meet their countrymen and spend time together is an important factor.⁶

Out of all respondents to the DIMECCE survey, 85% belong to the Syriac Orthodox Church, 5.3% to the Chaldean Catholic Church, 4% to the Assyrian Church of the East, 1.8% to the Syriac Catholic Church. This reflects the dominant position of the Syriac Orthodox religion within the Middle Eastern Christian community in Sweden. As regards personal approaches towards religion, 24.9% of Assyrians/Syriacs in Sweden attend mass every Sunday, and 54.5% attend once in a while. The percentage of individuals who never go to church (not even on religious holidays or for family celebrations) is very small and stands at 4.2%. It can therefore be assumed that over 95% of Middle Eastern Christians in Sweden participate in church ceremonies (such as weddings, baptisms and funerals) at least occasionally.

Thanks to the rituals these occasions provide, Syriac Churches play an important role: apart from fulfilling spiritual needs they bind the community together and allow it to maintain its identity and culture.

³ This is especially true of individuals belonging to the religious majority in a given country, whose rights are guaranteed by the constitution or other legal acts. Cf. D.I. Ahmed, T. Ginsburg, *Constitutional Islamization and Human Rights: The Surprising Origin and Spread of Islamic Supremacy in Constitutions*, "University of Chicago Public Law & Legal Theory Working Paper" 477, 2014.

⁴ Cf. L. Blaydes, R. Gillum, *Religiosity-of-interviewer effects: Assessing the impact of veiled enumerators on survey response in Egypt*, "Politics and Religion", Vol. 6, No. 3, 2013, pp. 459–482.

⁵ M. Woźniak, *Współcześni Asyryjczycy...*, pp. 238–240.

⁶ These motivations are similar for Copts living in the diaspora. Cf. J.M. Brinkerhoff, *Coptic Diaspora Survey Report 3: Religious Attitudes and Practices*, June 2015, p. 9, https://www.researchgate.net/publication/277660052_Coptic_Diaspora_Survey_Report_3_Religious_Attitudes_and_Practices, accessed on January 31, 2018.



Il. 5. Mass at the Syriac Orthodox Cathedral of Saint Jacob of Nsibin (photo: MWB)

Annika Rabo believes that the Syriac Orthodox Church allows Assyrians /Syriacs to stay united in the diaspora – without it, they would have “disappeared”.⁷ Older members of the congregation especially rely on the Church to direct and facilitate social contacts.⁸

However, other scholars point out that – unlike its counterpart in the United States, which manages to remain an institution at the centre of the life of the Assyrian community⁹ – the Syriac Orthodox Church in Sweden does not entirely meet the needs and expectations of its community.¹⁰ This is caused by its Middle Eastern organisational

⁷ A. Rabo, op. cit., p. 187.

⁸ Many Assyrians/Syriacs moved to Södertälje in order to be close to their elderly parents, many of whom attend mass in Syriac Orthodox churches every day. Södertälje is favourable to religious practices, as a safe place with adequate infrastructure. J. Mack, op. cit., p. 96.

⁹ Cf. D. Oshana, *Cultural identification, linguistic competency, and religious participation as mediating constructs in the development of ego identity among Assyrian-American adolescents*, PhD thesis, Chicago 2003.

¹⁰ See more: M. Freyne-Lindhagen, *Identitet och kulturmöte – syrianska kvinnors exempel. En diskussion om grounded theory*, PhD thesis, Lund 1997.

structure,¹¹ its patriarchal character, clan loyalties, gender segregation, deepening ethnic-religious divisions within the community, and finally the unwillingness to change and adjust to the new values adopted by its members.¹² As their religious worldview weakens, the common identity of Assyrians/Syriacs changes its character: religion has lost some of its social significance and new rituals and symbols are needed to reflect the current identity of the group.¹³

The Swedish context explains this to a large extent. Only 19% of Swedes consider themselves to be believers (while the global average stands at about 63%),¹⁴ and just 5% regularly attend church.¹⁵ Swedish society is occasionally described as the most secularised in Europe.¹⁶ This secular society tends to look down at religious individuals, especially those with an immigrant background. Lutheran Christianity is met with the highest degree of understanding; Eastern or Oriental Christianity is more alien. This impacts the Assyrians/Syriacs in Sweden, especially those who came from Syria and Turkey. The research of Önver Cetrez demonstrates that religious practices among these groups subside with each subsequent generation;¹⁷ this tendency is most visible in the second generation, and among men.¹⁸ For the third generation, religion becomes mostly a good memory and an element of childhood; other systems become central to adult life and religious institutions – and their representatives – are subjected to criticism. The process that has taken place could be called a privatisation of religion – the area of institutional *sacrum* has dwindled while the area of individualised *sacrum* has expanded.¹⁹

¹¹ Cf. S. Rubenson, op. cit.

¹² See also: F. Deniz, op. cit.

¹³ Ö.A. Cetrez, *The next generation...*, p. 476.

¹⁴ *Voice of the People 2015*, “Gallup”, <http://www.gallup-international.com/wp-content/uploads/2017/10/GIA-Book-2015.pdf>, accessed on April 15, 2018.

¹⁵ *Sweden 'least religious' nation in Western world*, “The Local”, 13.04.2015, <https://www.thelocal.se/20150413/swedes-least-religious-in-western-world>, accessed on April 15, 2018.

¹⁶ In reality, Estonians are even more secularised than Swedes, and Norwegian and Czech societies are not very different. O. Smith, *Mapped: The world's most (and least) religious countries*, “The Telegraph”, 14.01.2018, <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/travel/maps-and-graphics/most-religious-countries-in-the-world/>, accessed on April 15, 2018.

¹⁷ Ö.A. Cetrez, *The next generation...*, p. 473.

¹⁸ This can partially be explained by the fact that many men worked in restaurants and pizzerias, where keeping the Church-prescribed fast was very difficult, or even impossible. Ibidem, p. 483.

¹⁹ Ibidem, p. 485.

The theses above are confirmed in my research. For the first generation of Assyrians/Syriacs in Sweden – especially women – religious practices are a natural element of life, while many second generation immigrants stated that they were “forced to go to church”.²⁰ After reaching adulthood these people attended church sporadically – sometimes due to other duties and the lack of time and sometimes because they disagreed with some specific Church teachings – even so, the vast majority was convinced that the Church is an important institution and its rituals are worth maintaining:

My father forced me and my mother forced me to the church every Sunday... but you cannot... I don't go to the church every day. It's only on Christmas and Easter couple of other occasions like birthdays and funerals... it's also because of my work (...) (Syriac male, born in Sweden, 32 years old)

Some respondents declared that it did not matter which church they attended as long as it was one of the ‘Syriac/Aramean’ churches. This seems to be a view shared by a large group – many Assyrians/Syriacs do not mind going to a church of a denomination other than their own:

In Aleppo there are many churches in a small area, and people actually like going to different churches... This is not a problem. The differences between the churches are not that large. (Syriac male, born in Syria, 40 years old)

I am born and raised in the Syriac Orthodox Church but (...) when I went to Syria, I went to the Syriac Catholic Church. I felt like home because they spoke Syriac, spoke Aramaic and it's like... like clothes... Catholic but... nothing new. It's home. And when I went to Lebanon to Beirut and I saw Maronite... heard ‘Abwoon d'bashmoyo’ [Our Father in Aramaic] and everything, I knew that it was [also] my church (...) I don't make a difference between the churches. All churches... Aramaic Churches, [they are] different parts of the same [mystical] body [of Christ]. (Syriac male, born in Sweden, 32 years old)

Another Syriac man, who disagrees with a number of Church teachings and attends mass only occasionally in order to please his elderly mother, nonetheless sees the Church as an important institution and a vehicle for culture and identity:

I really appreciate the Syriac Orthodox Church and want to support it. Because I see it as a cultural statement, legacy. Identity and culture a way of

²⁰ Interview with a member of the board of the Syriac Aramean Youth Federation, Västerås, March 11, 2014.

expressing the culture. It's so old (...) you have the language and we have to thank the Church, the Church has made this possible. And all the rituals and all those things, I really appreciate it. (Syriac male, born in Lebanon, 45 year old)

Naturally, the position of Assyrian/Chaldean/Syriac Churches in the diaspora cannot be an exact reflection of what it used to be in the Middle East. Apart from a different social environment, the status of the Church in the diaspora shifts with each subsequent generation. Young Assyrians/Syriacs are more susceptible to secularisation, less willing to abide by certain rules and limits, such as fasting²¹ or spending much of their time at lengthy religious ceremonies. A Chaldean woman who came to Sweden with her parents as a four-year-old girl, notices the differences in how the older and younger generations approach religion and the Church; she openly distances herself from the former generation, as in her opinion, it consists of people who “just go to church all the time”:

A lot of older people fast. And some younger people still do that. We have a mass in church every day – they go and... I don't know (...) I only have a grandfather. He's very involved in church. That is his only hobby like [going to] church every day. (Chaldean female, born in the UK, 36 years old)

4.2. Access to religious buildings *versus* religious practices

The ownership of churches greatly influences the religious practices of a community. For Christian immigrants from the Middle East, the possibility to attend religious ceremonies in their own churches guarantees a sense of stability and psychological safety²² – during armed conflicts, churches and monasteries offered shelter; in peacetime they were a place where opinions could be shared freely and without fear.²³ Michael Abdalla states that the most visible manifestation of the spiritual life of Assyrian/Syriac immigrants in Sweden are the churches they own. Some were adapted to their needs, others were purpose-built to include three-nave altars and spacious rooms called salons, in which the members of the congregation meet after religious service and dis-

²¹ Traditionally, 140 days a year were fasting days, during which the Syriac Orthodox Church recommended refraining from eating meat and its derivatives, fat, eggs and dairy. M. Abdalla, *The fasting traditions among Assyrian Christians...*, p. 4.

²² T.D. Son, *Ritual Practices in Congregational Identity Formation*, Lanham–Boulder–New York–Toronto–Plymouth (UK) 2014, p. 190.

²³ J. Mack, op. cit., p. 41.

cuss current issues over cups of coffee. These rooms are also used for a variety of religious and secular ceremonies, such as wedding receptions, birthdays, baptisms, meetings of youth organisations or religious associations, seminars and talks.²⁴

Generally speaking, large and more prosperous communities were the first to secure municipal permission and collect funds to buy or build their churches. The Syriac Orthodox Church, which has many members in Sweden and considerable financial resources at its disposal, is generally free of any restrictions as far as religious practices are concerned.²⁵ This has not always been the case – the beginnings were difficult. Syriac Orthodox immigrants from Turkey used to organise prayer meetings in private homes and religious ceremonies were conducted in an informal fashion due to the absence of a priest. In 1969, the growing community asked the Patriarch to appoint a priest for them, and a year later Father Yousef Said arrived from Iraq. This coincided with the state decision to support “immigrant Churches”, and in 1971, Sweden provided the Syriac preacher with a salary. It would not be an overstatement to say that the arrival of Father Yousef changed the landscape of Assyrian/Syriac Sweden.²⁶

In the 1970s, as a temporary solution, the Church of Sweden rented several religious buildings in Södertälje to the Assyrians/Syriacs. These included, among others, the Church of Saint Ragnhild of Tälje in the old town centre, and the Church of Saint Olaf in Ronna. The Baptists had also shared their church with the newcomers. In the subsequent period, the Assyrian/Syriac congregation used the mission church. Subletting churches meant the necessity to move from one place to another, as it had been impossible to negotiate permanent hours. Furthermore, Lutheran churches were not well suited to Orthodox ceremonies and were too small in size – those who wished to attend but could not enter had to stand outside for many hours.²⁷

By the end of the 1970s, the Syriac Orthodox community had already begun planning to construct their own church. In 1980, representatives of the community contacted the municipality and requested to be assigned a plot for a church suitable for a congregation of one

²⁴ M. Abdalla, *Asyryjscy imigranci w Szwecji...*, p. 201.

²⁵ Interview with a Syriac priest, Hallunda, March 5, 2014.

²⁶ U. Björklund, op. cit., p. 63.

²⁷ J. Mack, op. cit., p. 98.



Il. 6. The Syriac Orthodox church of Saint Aphrem (photo: MWB)

thousand.²⁸ In 1981, against the reservations of ethnic Swedes, worried that the project would further increase the concentration of Middle Eastern Christians in Södertälje,²⁹ the Assyrian/Syriac community bought a plot of land in Geneta and constructed the Church of Saint Aphrem. The Swedish architect Per Hörlin designed a building to serve several hundred people: its opening in 1983 was a symbol of the community's choice to stay in Sweden. The original austere design, resembling Lutheran churches, was gradually transformed to reflect Eastern/Oriental tastes,³⁰ something which must have unnerved local Swedes as they tried to block the development. The addition of a bell tower and the subsequent ringing of bells at 8 am and 4 pm every day gave rise to further criticism from Swedish officials concerned about the well-being of local shift workers.³¹

The division of the community into Assyrian and Syriac fractions meant that the former group, which in the 1990s consisted of approximately 2 000 people aged 7 or older, asked the local authorities to assign them a plot of land for a new church. The Assyrians were given

²⁸ Ibidem.

²⁹ Ibidem, p. 101.

³⁰ Sculptors from Midyat created reliefs and columns; biblical scenes and quotes were painted on the ceiling, and figures of saints were rendered in stained glass. Ibidem, pp. 102–105.

³¹ Ibidem, p. 106.



Il. 7. The Syriac Orthodox Cathedral of Saint Jacob of Nsibin (photo: MWB)

permission to renovate the former Tax Office building from the 1930s situated near the train station in the centre of Södertälje. All internal walls had to be demolished to obtain the needed space;³² adapting the building cost hundreds of thousands of Swedish Krona. Nevertheless, a purpose-built church was the true goal; it was finally designed by Sam Matloub, dubbed the “designer of Södertälje” because of the number of projects to which he contributed. His work was not easy: the building permissions department interfered with every aspect of the project, and the community had a long list of wishes, many of which had to be carried out.³³ The construction of the Saint Jacob of Nsibin Syriac Orthodox Cathedral in Hovsjö – a large, white, domed temple – was supported by Assyrians from all over Europe. Painters and sculptors arrived from Germany. The hall adjacent to the church was adorned with Assyrian motifs – kings and warriors riding on chariots, lions, and mythological beasts. The project included a controversial permit to build a small, separate sanctuary where priests and bishops would

³² *Ibidem*, p. 110.

³³ *Ibidem*, p. 218.



Il. 8. The Syriac Orthodox church of Saint Thomas (photo: MWB)

be buried.³⁴ The consecration of the church on May 17th, 2009 was attended by the mayor of Södertälje, local politicians, bishops and priests from Syria as well as Great Britain, and representatives of the Church of Sweden.³⁵

Although Södertälje enjoys the reputation of a “paradise” for all Middle Eastern Christians, other groups are still working to create their own spaces. Iraqi Syriac Orthodox Christians have recently built the church of Saint Thomas – they previously rented a space at a Swedish church in Geneta. The creation of a new place of worship was motivated by the wish to conduct liturgy in Arabic and organise other activities in this language. The new church brought on an ongoing struggle to cope with payments – bills for electricity, water, services and other costs.³⁶

The Chaldeans living in Södertälje own one small church that does not satisfy their needs. In interviews, members of this group often underlined the importance of a proper place of worship with more sepa-

³⁴ Ibidem, pp. 112–116.

³⁵ Ibidem, p. 91.

³⁶ Interview with a member of the parish council of the Saint Thomas church in Södertälje, March 7, 2014.

rate rooms to accommodate various church groups. At present, to separate these groups during meetings, curtains are used to divide one large hall into several smaller spaces.³⁷ Both the Chaldean priests and parishioners believe that their community has a distinct, strong identity and that it should be able to make decisions independently of the Swedish Catholic Church. However, they cannot afford to build a church that would only serve their congregation. This stems from the limited size of their community, which is smaller in number when compared to Syriac Orthodox Christians. For a Chaldean priest from Södertälje:

The biggest challenge is we have no personality. Chaldean personality, you know? We depend on the Swedish Catholic Church and we have no churches of our own. We have not enough priests here. (...) We mainly use churches belonging to other Catholics (...) we haven't until now Chaldean bishop in Europe, [thus] we depend on the Catholic hierarchy and we depend on Anders Arborelius, bishop Arborelius, he's a good bishop.

These observations were confirmed by the impressions of a member of his congregation:

The problem is that our church is too small, we [Chaldeans] are around 4000 families in Södertälje, and our church can accommodate only 250 persons. It is so crowded. There is a plan to build a new church, but not a bigger one, a smaller one, because the financial resources are limited and we have no support. (Chaldean female, born in Iraq, 35 years old)

The plans to build the abovementioned church in Hövsjö are supported by the Catholic diocese of Stockholm. Some ethnic Swedes criticise this idea as they believe that the new investment would cement the Middle Eastern character of the district.³⁸ Syriac Catholics only have a small chapel in Stockholm, so for Christmas Eve, Good Friday and Easter they use the Iraqi Syriac Orthodox Church.³⁹

Almost all Middle Eastern Churches in Sweden celebrate mass on Sundays (and in many churches it is celebrated daily); most also organise Bible study groups, choirs, women's and youth groups, scout clubs, excursions, camps and activities for senior citizens. Assyrian/Syriac Churches in Sweden can operate even more effectively than they did in

³⁷ Interview with a Chaldean, former chairman of the Catholic Youth of Sweden, Södertälje, November 19, 2014.

³⁸ J. Mack, *op. cit.*, pp. 132–134.

³⁹ Interview with a member of the parish council of the Saint Thomas church in Södertälje, March 7, 2014.

the Middle East. Compared with Middle Eastern countries, Sweden offers a wider range of possibilities: for example, organising free courses is possible through cooperation with Bilda, an association founded in 1947 to popularise the education of adults;⁴⁰ today, Bilda member organisations are affiliated with Protestant, Catholic and Orthodox Churches.⁴¹

Many Assyrians/Syriacs try to buy apartments close to one of the Syriac Orthodox churches,⁴² which explains the concentration of this community in some districts of Södertälje, for example in Ronna. Some ethnic Swedes disapprove of this – large clusters of Middle Eastern population are places which ethnic Swedes find problematic because of, among other issues, the frequent littering:

Many Swedes were a little bit irritated, they thought it was annoying that so many people came to [our] church and parked many cars on the streets or threw paper or other things on the streets, especially when we went to the cemetery. The Swedes got annoyed too because too many people showed up and because they littered the place. (Syriac male, born in Turkey, 70 years old)

Ethnic Swedes are indeed irked by countless cars parked near Syriac churches and blocking traffic during mass hours and on other occasions. Buying more land and building a car park seems to be the only long-term solution; some Churches have even founded special committees to deal with this problem. It turns out that owning the church building is not enough, from the perspective of community life: large parking spaces are required, for those coming to attend religious ceremonies from further away. Another issue bothering ethnic Swedes are church services and other activities happening late at night, which disturb the quiet hours. These events sometimes attract unwanted attention, which especially troubles Iraqi Chaldeans in Södertälje.

⁴⁰ <https://bildanu/>.

⁴¹ Interview with Bilda's plenipotentiary for Catholic Churches, Stockholm, November 27, 2014.

⁴² Especially elderly illiterate women, unable to read newspapers, help children with homework, or talk to a neighbour, feel very lonely and alienated in Sweden. Through the Church they can recreate social connections. Following the old traditions and customs is a source of pride alongside material success in the new homeland. Cf. J. Hakim-Larson, R. Kamoo, S.C. Nassar-McMillan, J.H. Porcerelli, *Counseling Arab and Chaldean American Families*, "Journal of Mental Health Counseling", Vol. 29, No. 4, October 2007, p. 308.

The Chaldean Church of Saint John – bought from the Church of Sweden – is located in the middle of a district mainly occupied by ethnic Swedes:

We have a big problem. If you have a mass like 10 pm... We must lock the door because we get a lot of threats... Like drunk people trying to go inside. Unbelievable! (Chaldean male, born in Iraq, 35 years old)

4.3. Assyrian/Syriac homes

Soon after arriving in Sweden, Assyrians/Syriacs were able to enjoy the safety and the decent standards of living thanks to the apartments built through the Million program. Most of the immigrants still live in large blocks of flats, but the number of those able to afford their own house is gradually rising. The districts of Södertälje most popular among Assyrians/Syriacs – Ronna and Hovsjö – are often nicknamed “concrete ghettos” (*betonggetto*),⁴³ but only a few minutes’ drive separates them from the exclusive Lina Hage district, occupied almost exclusively by prosperous Syriac Orthodox families. These are the people who had spent the last few decades working in business, running restaurants or hair salons, and have achieved considerable wealth. Their social and financial advancement permitted them to carry out their architectural fantasies⁴⁴ which reveal a lot about the group mentality.

Lina Hage, hidden from the gaze of curious outsiders, is sometimes called “Hollywood” due to its distinctive look.⁴⁵ Unlike the Swedes, who value nature, simplicity and restraint, Assyrians/Syriacs erect high walls separating them from their neighbours and from the forest. A maximum amount of space is used for the house, even at the expense of the sidewalk or the street.⁴⁶ As Jennifer Mack points out, the houses in Lina Hage are built for show, to intimidate and impress.⁴⁷ Built to reflect the tastes of the community, and often Swedish regu-

⁴³ Katarzyna Tubylewicz points out that they resemble the Ursynów district of Warsaw rather than the ethnic ghettos of Paris. *Raj, mamy problem!*, “Voyage”, 29.07.2015, <https://www.voyage.pl/swiat/5177/raj-mamy-problem>, accessed May 2, 2018.

⁴⁴ J. Mack, op. cit., pp. 180, 214–215.

⁴⁵ Ibidem, p. 172.

⁴⁶ Ibidem, p. 190.

⁴⁷ The Swedes who know about Lina Hage often ask how “they” (Assyrians/Syriacs) were able to build “something like that”. Lina falls outside the stereotype of “wealthy Swede versus poor immigrant”. The answer they provide is that the migrants have erected these palatial residences using illegally obtained money. Gossip circulates about mafia operations and money laundering. Ibidem, p. 196.

lations, the houses are a source of pride and a means to express their owners' identity in the diaspora.⁴⁸ Thus they feature many adornments: columns, stucco, stained glass, fountains, sculptures of lions, bulls and other mythological creatures,⁴⁹ but also professional alarm systems – a sign of their owners' fears first instilled in Turkey, where Assyrians/Syriacs were constantly under threat.⁵⁰

The interior design is characteristic and predictable – there are many similarities between all Assyrian/Syriac housing in Sweden. An ideal living room is a spacious salon capable of accommodating many members of the family, with comfortable sofas and armchairs; photographs and large family trees spanning many generations decorate the walls. In the homes of Assyrian nationalists – as in the Assyrian Cultural Centre and the Cathedral of Saint Jacob of Nsibin – Christian iconography is placed side by side with Assyrian imperial motifs: the ubiquitous Ashurbanipal riding his war chariot, the Hanging Gardens of Babylon, ziggurats, reliefs from Nimrud, *lamassu* deities – winged bulls with human heads, a hand holding the Assyrian flag emerging from the ruins of Nineveh – the symbol of Assyrian perseverance.⁵¹ In some homes, the Swedish and Assyrian flags are placed side by side to underline the hybrid sense of patriotism.⁵²

Christian symbolism dominates in Syriac homes: crosses, figures and icons of Mary and the Saints such as Saint Charbel Makhlof. If a family feels associated with Syriac/Aramean culture, they may own small or large Syriac/Aramean flags, mugs or fridge magnets adorned with national symbols.⁵³ Some also own T-shirts with prints underlining their heritage, but unless they are fans of *Syrianska*, they rarely wear them in public.⁵⁴

⁴⁸ Ibidem, p. 222.

⁴⁹ A.H. Layard believed that the Neo-Aramaic speakers and inhabitants of the area between Tigris and Euphrates were descendants of ancient Assyrians. This thesis was challenged a number of times, but the iconography and scale of ancient palaces and temples discovered by Layard are still a source of pride for Assyrian nationalists. Cf. G. Leick, *Mesopotamia: The Invasion of the City*, New York 2001.

⁵⁰ J. Mack, op. cit., p. 201.

⁵¹ More symbols used in the present day by the Assyrian fraction can be found in L. Dzięgiel, *Archeology and martyrology...*, p. 42.

⁵² J. Mack, op. cit., p. 234.

⁵³ Interview with a former board member of the Syriac/Aramean Cultural and Sports Association, Fittja, June 3, 2014.

⁵⁴ Interview with a journalist formerly employed at “Bahro Suryoyo”, Södertälje, March 9, 2014.



Il. 9. Contemporary decorations stylised as ancient Assyrian reliefs – in a private home and in a church hall in Södertälje (photo: MWB)

4.4. Languages used by the Church

Assyrian/Syriac immigrants came to Sweden from different countries – Turkey, Syria, Iraq, Lebanon. Most belong to Churches which use classical Syriac (Kthobonoyo) as liturgical language⁵⁵ written with Serto script;⁵⁶ however, those who speak it fluently are in the minority.⁵⁷ Some scholars discuss a “bottom-to-top death”

⁵⁵ U. Björklund, op. cit., pp. 169–171.

⁵⁶ S. Bednarowicz, *The “Arab spring”...*, pp. 48–50.

⁵⁷ For this reason some scholars believe that calling Assyrians/Arameans Syriac-speaking Christians is a misrepresentation. Cf. S. Donabed, Sh. Mako, op. cit., pp. 96–97.

of the Syriac language, which appears to go extinct in lower-status domains, and remains active in higher, respected domains such as liturgy or literature.⁵⁸ Both my earlier research⁵⁹ and the DIMECCE survey demonstrate that approximately a third of Assyrian/Syriac inhabitants of Sweden know Kthobonoyo. Half of the respondents of the DIMECCE survey know Arabic, one fifth Turkish, and one tenth Kurdish. This explains why Syriac Orthodox priests in Sweden commonly decide to say the prayers in classical Syriac and then preach in Neo-Aramaic, and/or Arabic.⁶⁰

It is worthwhile to remember that several dialects of Aramaic exist, including: the Western Neo-Aramaic, spoken mainly by inhabitants of three villages in Syria (the Christian Maaloula, the Muslim Jubb'adin and Bakhah), Northern Neo-Aramaic – Sureth, spoken by Assyrians and Chaldeans in Iraq, northern Syria and cities such as Damascus or Aleppo, and Turoyo (meaning “mountain”, also referred to as Surayt) – the dialect of Assyrians/Syriacs from Tur Abdin in Turkey. To the disapproval of Western linguists, Iraqi Assyrians often call their dialect – Sureth – the Assyrian language, while the Chaldeans call it Chaldean. Kurdish, specifically the Kurmanji dialect,⁶¹ is spoken in, for example, the Syriac Orthodox church in Västerås;⁶² 70% of its parishioners come from Karboran (present-day Dargeçit in south-eastern Turkey), traditionally inhabited by ethnic Kurds.⁶³

⁵⁸ L. Campbell, M.C. Muntzel, *The Structural Consequences of Language Death*, [in:] *Investigating Obsolescence. Studies in Language Contraction and Death*, ed. N.C. Dorian, Cambridge 1989, pp. 185–186, quoted in: S. Bednarowicz, *Before and After Linguicide: A Linguistic Aspect of the Sayfo*, [in:] *Sayfo 1915. An Anthology of Essays on the Genocide of Assyrians/Arameans during the First World War*, ed. Sh. Talay, S.Ö. Barthoma, Piscataway 2018, p. 368.

⁵⁹ M. Woźniak, *Współcześni Asyryjczycy...*, pp. 187–188.

⁶⁰ Interview with a Syriac priest, Hallunda, March 5, 2014.

⁶¹ B. Isaksson, A. Lahdo, *Reflections on the linguistic situation in Anatolia and Northern Syria from a semitist's perspective*, [in:] *The Role of the State in West Asia*, ed. A. Rabo, B. Utas, London 2006, p. 107.

⁶² Interview with a member of the board of the Syriac Aramean Youth Federation, Västerås, March 11, 2014.

⁶³ In 1900 Karboran was inhabited by 300 Kurdish, Assyrian/Syriac and Armenian families. Before 1979 it was still inhabited by Kurds and Assyrians/Syriacs, although most of the latter emigrated after the murder of the local mayor, Andreas Demir Lahdik. The Turkish government then changed the name of the village, in which very few Assyrians/Syriacs were left. Thanks to funds from the diaspora, the Syriac Orthodox St. Cyril's church (Mor Kuraykos) was renovated. Two other churches – the Protestant and the Catholic church – are abandoned. *Dargeçit, Turkey*, <https://www.discoverworld.com/Turkey/Mardin-Province/Darge%C3%A7it>, accessed on April 29, 2018.

Well-educated Assyrians/Syriacs would prefer the prestigious Syriac language to remain the principal language of the Church, but even they take into account that most of their countrymen do not understand it. Young people born and raised in Sweden are happy to hear Swedish in church, or at least to be able to read translations into Swedish (some Churches use projectors to display translations of the prayers). On the other hand, activists – both young and old – aim to teach everyone at least basic Neo-Aramaic and Syriac to maintain the cultural heritage and reinforce group identity. In practice, the priests decide which languages are used, based on the languages they know, languages the congregation is familiar with, and their belief in the need to preserve common identity. A Syriac Orthodox priest from Hallunda describes the situation clearly:

I hold the masses in Syriac/Neo-Aramaic (80%) and Arabic (20%). I don't have a problem with this mix but I would like Syriac language to survive. In countries such as Sweden we do not need Arabic so much, we need Syriac language because we identify as Syriacs. However, we must compromise for the sake of the people who do not speak Syriac. Although I would prefer the Syriac only, that's why I speak Arabic too. We also have a projector with the translation of the mass on the wall, we've had that for more than a year. They have it in Norrköping (a city 150 km south of Stockholm) and Hallonbergen (Stockholm) too. In the beginning it was in Syriac and Swedish but now – as many have immigrated following the war in Syria – we added Arabic too. Now the written translation is in Arabic, Syriac and Swedish.

It should be pointed out that the translations into Syriac are not necessarily shown in the original alphabet – in some churches, Latin vocalisation is used, as many people know the spoken version of Syriac but were never taught to read or write in this language. Iraqi Assyrians /Syriacs attend mass in Arabic whenever possible – sometimes with added Syriac (if they belong to the Syriac Orthodox Church or the Assyrian Church of the East) or in Swedish (especially young Chaldeans who attend Catholic churches).⁶⁴ The majority of Chaldeans prefer a mixture of Arabic and Chaldean Neo-Aramaic:

It's always good to speak Arabic because everybody can understand it. But we have to remember ourselves that it's a Chaldean church. So it's good to speak Chaldean. But myself, I don't understand Chaldean. (Chaldean male, born in Sweden, 23 years old)

⁶⁴ Interview with a Chaldean parishioner of the Catholic church of Saint Oscar, November 27, 2014.

4.5. Languages used in everyday life

Referring to the role language plays in maintaining social identity, Bernard Spolsky suggests that, in a multi-ethnic environment, “the conflict around the choice of language often accompanies the development of new nations”.⁶⁵ The scholar further notes that “most ethnic groups believe that their language is the best medium to preserve and express their tradition”.⁶⁶ These statements seem to be true of Assyrians/Syriacs, who are very proud that they speak the language of Jesus.⁶⁷ The Bishop Dolabani,⁶⁸ wishing to underline the significance of the language for Assyrian/Syriac identity, famously said “our language is our homeland”.⁶⁹ Nevertheless, usually three to four generations of immigrants undergo a gradual process of almost complete cultural and linguistic assimilation into the dominating culture – usually the longest used vocabulary is associated with names of foods, dishes and preparing meals.⁷⁰

Asked in the DIMECCE survey about languages they know on a communicative level, Assyrians/Syriacs living in Sweden named more than ten various languages (see chart 3). In the family home most (74.4%) spoke Swedish, a large group spoke Neo-Aramaic (38.8%) and Arabic (31.5%); a considerably smaller percentage used Kurdish (6.4%) and Turkish (5.9%).

For Assyrians/Syriacs in Sweden, the primary carrier of identity in everyday life is still Turoyo – the dialect from Tur Abdin.⁷¹ Yet, char-

⁶⁵ B. Spolsky, *Sociolinguistics*, Oxford 2001, p. 58.

⁶⁶ *Ibidem*, p. 57.

⁶⁷ Contemporary research does not allow for certainty about the language spoken by Jesus. It was probably a Judeo-Palestinian variant of Aramaic, the Galilean dialect, now extinct. Jesus may also have known Greek and Hebrew. A. Tresham, *The languages spoken by Jesus*, “The Master’s Seminary Journal”, Vol. 20, No. 1, Spring 2009.

⁶⁸ Mor Philexinos Yuhanon Dolabani (1885–1969) was the Syriac Orthodox metropolitan bishop of Mardin, Turkey.

⁶⁹ Or “our language is our nation”. Cf. Inanna Foundation, *Assyrian Diaspora in Europe: Past, Present, Future*, May 2014, http://www.inannafoundation.org/Berlin_EPIA_Conference.html, accessed on April 29, 2018.

⁷⁰ Cf. information on the assimilation of Assyrians in the United States E.Y. Odisho, *Assyrian Language Maintenance and Erosion in U.S.: A World War I Immigrant Family Case Study*, “Journal of Assyrian Academic Studies” XI–II, 1999, pp. 3–14.

⁷¹ Turoyo functioned in a number of variants – differences exist between the sub-dialect of Midyat and the dialects of individual villages. In the diaspora these variants are homogenised. Almost everyone speaking Turoyo is bilingual or multilingual. They speak Kurdish, Turkish or Arabic. In Tur Abdin, even folk tales or songs were generally

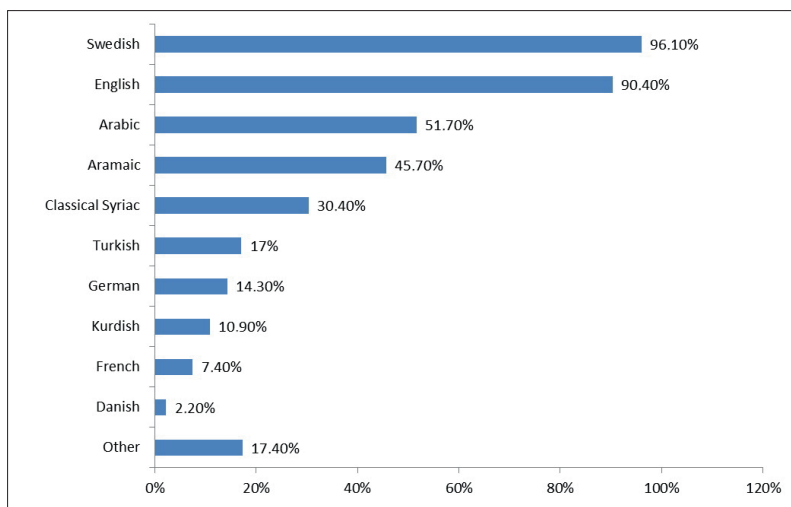


Chart 3. Knowledge of languages on a communicative level

Source: DIMECCE survey.

acteristically, many people regard Turoyo as a lesser dialect of Edessan Aramaic,⁷² which they consider to be the pure, more prestigious form of the language.⁷³ In his presentation *Mother Tongue and Integration – Surayt (Turoyo) as a Case Study*, Professor Shabo Talay from the Free University of Berlin made an appeal to protect Turoyo in order to preserve the identity of the community, especially the part that lives in the diaspora.⁷⁴ Unlike the literary Sureth, Turoyo was exclusively a spoken language. At the beginning of the 21st century, many efforts were made to standardise it – and write it down using Syriac script. Regardless of the good intentions of the creators of these systems, they did not catch on. Perhaps the pioneers lacked authority, popularity or the means.⁷⁵

An important attempt to standardise Turoyo was also made in the Swedish diaspora. In 1976, Swedish parliament decided that the children of immigrants should be given the opportunity to learn

expressed in Kurdish. S. Bednarowicz, *Translation as Corpus Planning: The Little Prince in the Neo-Aramaic Minority Language Turoyo*, [in:] *Moving Texts, Migrating People and Minority Languages*, ed. M. Borodo, J. House, W. Wachowski, Singapore 2017, p. 19.

⁷² Christians from Tur Abdin usually preferred to write in Kurdish using the Syriac alphabet (Garshuni). *Ibidem*, p. 20.

⁷³ J. Messo, *op. cit.*, p. 34.

⁷⁴ *Assyrian Diaspora in Europe: Past, Present, Future...*

⁷⁵ J. Messo, *op. cit.*, p. 33.

their native language, although learning it never became mandatory.⁷⁶ Turoyo speakers took advantage of this opportunity and according to the Swedish National Agency for Education, in 1979 Turoyo was already taught in 20 classes. A committee headed by Yusuf Ishak – who did not speak Turoyo and was not Syriac Orthodox – decided that this language should be written using the Latin alphabet.

The first book in Turoyo (or rather in a mixture of several subdialects) was published in 1983; it was a textbook entitled “Let’s Read” (*Toxu qorena*). In the following years, other textbooks and books were published.⁷⁷ The Syriac Orthodox Church and some national organisations sharply criticised this initiative.⁷⁸ The clergy saw Syriac script (particularly Serto) as an integral part of group identity,⁷⁹ while national organisations perceived the creation of a new language as an attempt to divide the nation.⁸⁰ Nonetheless, scholars continue their efforts to popularise Turoyo – the latest initiative in this field is an online course entitled “Surayt Aramaic Online”, which was prepared within the EU Erasmus+ Strategic Partnership program by the Free University in Berlin, the Bergen University, University of Cambridge, Leipzig University, and the Syriac-Orthodox monastery of Saint Aphrem in the Netherlands. It replaced the 2014–2017 “Aramaic-Online Project”.⁸¹

Linguistic issues give rise to heated discussions among all Assyrians/Syriacs living in Sweden. Young people find it difficult to even name the language they speak (Assyrian, Aramaic, Turoyo, Surayt).⁸² The Swedish education system requires learning two languages – Swedish and English; the children of immigrants can optionally learn the language of their country of origin. Interestingly, young Assyrians/Syr-

⁷⁶ Y. Ishaq, *Turoyo – from spoken to written language*, [in:] *Studies in Neo-Aramaic*, “Harvard Semitic Studies” 36, ed. W. Heinrichs, Atlanta (USA) 1990, pp. 189–199.

⁷⁷ One of the leading experts and propagators of this language living in Sweden is Jan Beth-Sawoce. See: S. Bednarowicz, *Translation as Corpus Planning...*, pp. 20–21. See more about the attempts to use Latin alphabet with Turoyo and its future – especially on the Internet: idem, *Neues Alphabet, neue Sprache, neue Kultur? Was kann die Adaptation der lateinischen Schrift für die Turoyo Sprache implizieren*, [in:] *Neue Aramäische Studien*, ed. D. Weltecke, Frankfurt am Main 2017.

⁷⁸ W. Arnold, *Die Aramäer in Europa auf der Suche nach einer Standardsprache*, [in:] *Sprache und Migration*, ed. U. Maas, Osnabrück 2005, pp. 86–87.

⁷⁹ Sh. Talay, *Die aramäische Sprache (Turoyo) und ihre Zukunftsaussichten in der Diaspora*, “Journal of Eastern Christian Studies”, Vol. 54, No. 1–2, 2002, p. 74.

⁸⁰ S. Bednarowicz, *Translation as Corpus Planning...*, p. 21.

⁸¹ It has five language versions: German, English, Swedish, French and Turkish. Cf. Surayt Aramaic Online, <http://www.surayt.com/>, accessed on April 29, 2018.

⁸² S. Bednarowicz, *Translation as Corpus Planning...*, p. 21.



Il. 10. The “Assyrian” alphabet – a display board at the Assyrian Cultural Centre (photo: MWB)

iacs do not always choose Aramaic: some prefer to choose Arabic, Turkish or even Spanish – languages which appear more practical.⁸³

Nevertheless, all of my interviewees were convinced that the Aramaic language is at risk, and as it is part of the common heritage, the heritage and identity are at risk as well. In some families, the older generation are more fluent in Aramaic while the younger generation are better at Swedish and English. This is not a general rule: some parents speak only Turkish or Kurdish, and their children – thanks to classes at the church or the Swedish school – learn Aramaic. As was mentioned before, so far two schools have specialised in teaching Aramaic – one founded by Syrians, the other by Assyrians. The first of these is Edessa, the other – Elaf.⁸⁴ However, these two schools attract a relatively small number of Assyrian and Syriac children, as

⁸³ Interview with a journalist formerly employed at “Bahro Suryoyo”, Södertälje, March 9, 2014.

⁸⁴ Ethnic Swedes did not support the opening of this school. The mayor of Södertälje openly opposed the idea: “I hate it. I think things like this are terrible because it becomes like a religious school. That is segregation for real. I talked with them when they were about to start up, and I said ‘I think this is completely wrong – no, no, no!’” While the mayor made many efforts to ensure the well-being of Assyrians/Syriacs in Södertälje, she was clearly against creating institutional enclaves. J. Mack, *op. cit.*, p. 256.

most parents prefer to send children to Swedish state schools that have practice in carrying out the governmental program of education. In contrast, Edessa and Elaf are relatively new institutions; many parents see them as “experimental schools” and few are willing to gamble with their children’s education.⁸⁵

These fears are understandable, partly because no modern textbooks of Aramaic are available on the market; therefore, teachers need to be creative and, out of necessity, must use a variety of different materials.⁸⁶ Another problem is posed by Aramaic vocabulary; the language lacks words to describe many contemporary phenomena. Therefore, most grown-up Assyrians/Syriacs are used to switching to other languages:

I believe that we should speak Aramaic at home but when the vocabulary is not enough what you do is automatically switch to Swedish language to explain the children how the society and environment work. (Syriac male, born in Turkey, 62 years old)

Assyrians/Syriacs from Iraq speak Neo-Aramaic and/or Arabic and /or Swedish. Young people are much less skilled at the first two:

When I went to school, they didn’t have Chaldean. They had only Arabic. And my mom made me go to the class from I was seven years old until I was ten. So I know the letters... The basic letters. And I read. And that’s why I understand some spoken Arabic. (Chaldean female, born in Sweden, 21 years old)

Older Assyrians/Syriacs from Iraq are usually fluent speakers of Arabic and “Assyrian” or “Chaldean” Neo-Aramaic⁸⁷ and often have problems with Swedish, which alienates them from the host society. Surprisingly, this does not prevent them from holding office in national institutions:

⁸⁵ On March 15, 2014 I had the opportunity to participate in the meeting of a branch of the Assyrian Federation of Sweden in Södertälje, during which the headmaster of Elaf tried to respond to Assyrian parents’ questions and reassure them about the school program. Most parents nevertheless decided to wait until the first graduates leave the school; based on their results they would decide whether the “Assyrian” school offers an education equivalent to one provided by Swedish schools.

⁸⁶ Interview with an Assyrian assistant headmistress of a school in Hallunda, Södertälje, May 29, 2014.

⁸⁷ Chaldeans have a positive attitude towards both Aramaic and Arabic. They regard Syriac (Kthobonoyo) as the most beautiful and prestigious language, a symbol of identity, childhood, and history. For this community, Arabic was in Iraq the official language, used in institutions and public places. T.A. Al-Obaidi, *Language Contact and the Neo-Aramaic Language of the Chaldo-Assyrians in Baghdad: A Sociolinguistic Study*, MA thesis, Beirut 2012, pp. 99–100.

It's like when we are a group in a bigger group, we always separate us from the other group and talk Arabic or Chaldean. Even the politics who are sitting in the parliament. Or here in Södertälje. So that's the biggest problem. (Chaldean male, born in Sweden, 23 years old)

4.6. Traditions and rituals

Traditions are an important element of group identity. In my earlier research, Assyrians/Syriacs mentioned manifestations of tradition such as myths and legends, music, dance, sayings, proverbs, cuisine and folk dress.⁸⁸ When discussing Assyrian/Syriac customs and traditions, one should be aware that many of them are common for many Middle Eastern ethnicities. Even though some dishes or melodies were identified by my interviewees as “authentically” Assyrian, Syriac/Aramean or Chaldean, they often belonged to a wider Middle Eastern heritage and had their counterparts in Arabic, Turkish or Iranian culture.

One such case is Akitu – the Assyrian New Year, usually celebrated on April 1st as a spring festival, filled with parades and parties. In Sweden, it is usually moved forward to the nearest weekend, so that the celebrations do not disrupt the working week. Some Assyrians, especially members of the Assyrian Church of the East living in Iraq, celebrate Akitu by wearing traditional costumes and dancing for many hours. They wish to revive ancient Assyrian customs, in which the coming of spring was an important occasion. In the 1950s, rising interest in Assyrianism led to the creation of the “Assyrian calendar”, which begins in the year 4750 BC (the approximate date of erecting the first temple in the city of Ashur in the Middle Ubaid period).⁸⁹ Enthusiasts of ancient history have then taken another step and brought back the springtime festival's old Akkadian name – Akitu. The main goal of an official calendar was to unite Assyrians in their nationalism. However, Assyrians are not the only nation to celebrate the Vernal equinox – celebrations named *Nouruz* (New Day) take place in Iran and neighbouring countries on March 21st. A similar festival is also observed by Kurds.⁹⁰

⁸⁸ M. Woźniak, *Współcześni Asyryjczycy i Aramejczycy...*, p. 223.

⁸⁹ The Ubaid period – the last prehistoric period in Mesopotamia, dated approximately from 6200 BC to 3800 BC. The name derives from the name of an archaeological site Tell al-Ubaid in northern Iraq.

⁹⁰ In 2010 this holiday gained international character (*International Nouruz Day*), <http://www.un.org/en/events/nouruzday/>, accessed on April 23, 2018.



Il. 11. A poster inviting the public to Akitu celebrations in Södertälje (photo: MWB)

The preservation and maintenance of more or less authentic traditions is of particular importance to the Assyrian Federation of Sweden and its affiliated organisations which also see supporting Assyrian identity as a priority. Syriac/Aramean and Chaldean organisations try to keep up with Assyrian organisations in this regard. It would take a long time to list all the activities organised in order to “maintain the traditions”. A young Assyrian woman describes them as follows:

We have a youth group with young people, of course Assyrians, and we do different things. So every three months we have activities like

theatre, we have seminars. We read poems, we sing and we prepare Christmas or Easter or Assyrian New Year (Akitu) and then we have the Martyrs' Day, 7th of August. (Assyrian female, born in Iraq, 23 years old)

Some customs are international while others have a clearly Middle Eastern provenance:

Personally, I'm involved in the women's activities, we do the international women's day, we have other activities before the fasting like "hana hana qriho": girls go around and knock on the doors saying: "Can you give us something?" and then you give them, sometimes bulgur, fat, eggs, and they make food out of it – all the girls sit together and eat. So that's the "hana hana qriho". (Assyrian female, born in Turkey, 47 years old)

As regards rituals, particularly religious ones, many of my Assyrian/Syriac interviewees noticed that in the diaspora, the rituals are gradually shortened in comparison with their duration in the Middle East. Interestingly, differences exist both between Middle Eastern countries and between European countries: "In the Netherlands, we adhere to the traditional program. In Sweden, however, they shorten the liturgy and other rituals. [The priests] omit quite some fragments" (Syriac male, born in the Netherlands, 36 years old). A Syriac priest who served in Turkey and Syria before coming to Sweden stated:

The rituals don't change, in all the Churches that believe in the seven sacraments of the Church, it is the same. But in Turkey they always keep the prayers and psalms longer than in Syria because they have a lot of time so the rituals get longer: the marriages, the baptisms – they don't shorten them. In Syria, they started shortening them because the people could not stand the long prayers, long marriages or baptisms. Here some of the Churches have shortened them even more, they say that the people don't stand a longer period than that. The sacrament doesn't change but the priests adjust to the people's demands. They shorten the wedding from one hour to 40 minutes and so on. (...) That's the difference, otherwise the Church liturgy is the same and the prayers are the same but it is depending on us and the place where we are.

Baptisms

This vision of the unchanging nature of rituals is more wishful thinking than reality. A good example of modifications brought on by a new host environment is the adoption of a more symbolic way of christening babies by some Syriac Orthodox priests, which was pointed out by the same Syriac cleric. In traditional Syriac custom, babies were

completely submerged in water three times. At present, most priests sit a child in a pool of water and pour a little water on his/her head.⁹¹

Some Assyrian/Syriac parents wait to baptise children after they turn three months, or even six months old. However, according to tradition, children were baptised almost immediately after birth. Baptism was combined with the sacrament of the Eucharyst (the equivalent of the Catholic First Communion) and confirmation. Many Syriac Orthodox priests and deacons regret the fact that some parents additionally send their children to confirmation at the Church of Sweden. This is less of an emblem of abandoning the Syriac Orthodox faith, and more of a certain religious syncretism motivated by aesthetic reasons:

Some parents prefer to send their children also to the Swedish church in Norsborg. And I don't like it, but it happens. It shows that we [as the Syriac Orthodox Church] haven't been able to attract them. We can't provide such similar good confirmations. But it is not only fault of the Church. Sometimes the parents have different kind of expectations. (Syriac male, born in Turkey, 35 years old)

Another significant difference is the fact that almost all important religious ceremonies, especially weddings and baptisms, gather far more people and are organised in a much more glamorous way than they would have been in the homelands of the respondents or their parents, who had limited resources at their disposal. Religious ceremonies bring out social differences: people who came to Sweden from large Middle Eastern cities (such as Damascus or Aleppo) seem generally more self-confident and do not care too much about their appearance; people from small villages choose their outfits very carefully, especially for church ceremonies.⁹²

Weddings

Assyrian/Syriac weddings in Sweden were the subject of a separate article, in which I demonstrated how these occasions become opportunities to manifest the social status of entire families.⁹³ The vast majority of Assyrian/Syriac marriages all over the world, including Swe-

⁹¹ Interview with a Syriac priest, Hallunda, March 5, 2014.

⁹² Interview with an active parishioner of the Syriac Orthodox Church of Saint Peter in Stockholm, Sollentuna, November 20, 2014.

⁹³ M. Woźniak-Bobińska, *Big fat Assyrian/Syriac weddings: rituals and marriage traditions among Middle Eastern Christians in Sweden*, "Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies", Special Issue: Rituals of Migration, Vol. 44, No. 16, 2018, pp. 2684–2700.

den, are endogamous marriages.⁹⁴ Only this kind of marriage is likely to gain approval in Assyrian/Syriac Södertälje – endogamy is the guarantee of the survival of the ethno-national group.⁹⁵ The pressure placed on women in this regard is a lot stronger than the pressure on men, and is exerted earlier in their lives. Young men often meet or date Swedish women without secrecy; some promise marriage, but it rarely happens – in the end most men decide to marry Assyrian/Syriac women.⁹⁶

Assyrians/Syriacs tend to agree on the type of partner sought after as a marriage prospect: a member of their own ethnic and religious group, but raised in Sweden, with the same cultural background. A fiancé, or fiancée from the Middle East, is a more questionable choice – young people raised in Sweden are concerned about potential differences in mentality. In the 1980s and 1990s, marrying someone from outside the community was a taboo; at present, Swedes, other Europeans, or other people from within the Christian cultural circle are generally accepted. Only Muslim life partners are out of the question. In the eyes of the community, people belonging to the culture of Islam are still enemies, those who persecute their brethren in the Middle East.⁹⁷

Sammanboende or *sambo* – long-term cohabitation without marriage, practised by many Swedish couples, is not popular in the Assyrian/Syriac community. The Swedish model of a good family and the Swedish family law puzzle the clerics of the Syriac Orthodox Church, who find it impossible to understand why a Swedish 15-year-old is allowed to have sex, but is not allowed to get married.⁹⁸ Assyrian/Syriac girls are expected to be virgins on the day of their wedding; this is why until quite recently, teenage girls were married.⁹⁹ Before a Middle Eastern couple can go out in public, the match must first be accepted by their families.¹⁰⁰

⁹⁴ Fuat Deniz points out that endogamy among Assyrians/Syriacs born or raised in Sweden is largely caused by a wish to avoid a conflict with family members. An Assyrian/Syriac spouse is a guarantee of ethnic and religious unity of the community, even if the couple participate in other aspects of Swedish culture. *Idem*, op. cit., p. 315.

⁹⁵ K. Nordgren, op. cit., p. 113.

⁹⁶ J. Mack, op. cit., p. 138.

⁹⁷ A. Rabo, op. cit., p. 187.

⁹⁸ *Ibidem*, p. 191.

⁹⁹ In Sweden, preventing forced marriages and child marriage is taken seriously. Since July 1st, 2014, legal regulations in this area have been tightened. Among others, Churches cannot obtain permission for marriages of underage partners. Interview with an Assyrian employee of SST responsible for a project related to ending child marriages, Stockholm, November 25, 2014.

¹⁰⁰ J. Mack, op. cit., p. 141.

An engagement is a serious event, requiring a minimum of two meetings between families. The first one takes place in the girl's home and is called "drinking coffee".¹⁰¹ The second meeting is organised a few days later. The family of the groom expresses its approval by gifting the bride a cross, usually made of gold with crystals, zirconia or small diamonds – it is an important symbol, particularly in Södertälje. The parents of the bride expect small gifts in the form of sweets, confectionery or cookies; if there is not enough, negotiations may even be broken off. An engagement party is not obligatory; sometimes it is funded by the family of the future bride or the bride herself.¹⁰²

Even though a wedding in the Syriac Orthodox Church, and in every other Oriental Church in Sweden, is not legally binding (a civil ceremony is necessary),¹⁰³ the religious ceremony in church is the focal point of wedding celebrations. Interestingly, the young couple can exert some pressure on the priest, not only regarding the duration of the ceremony, but also, to some degree, the contents of the sermon:

The priest used to recite a lot of verses from the Bible and say sexist things, but not anymore as we reacted against this. Now priests try to express gender equality. We've been to nine weddings this year in different parts of Sweden and we have noticed this in every wedding. (Assyrian male, born in Syria, 30 years old)

Assyrian/Syriac weddings are strikingly similar to each other,¹⁰⁴ but also remarkably different from Swedish weddings. In Sweden, the institution of marriage has been losing its significance since the 19th century. Weddings have gradually become modest occasions, to which a small number of guests are invited and celebrated unostentatiously, which is seen as a sign of good taste.¹⁰⁵ Meanwhile typical Assyrian

¹⁰¹ In one old custom the future bride added salt to the cup of coffee for her intended; he was obliged to drink it. Today this is rarely practised. *Ibidem*, p. 142.

¹⁰² M. Woźniak-Bobińska, *Big fat Assyrian/Syriac weddings...*, p. 5.

¹⁰³ Clerics of many faiths, including Islam, often receive special licenses from the Swedish state, which embitters Assyrians/Syriacs who are forced to "get married twice" – in the church and at the office, while the Muslims can take care of all formalities at the mosque. The main disagreement between Syriac clergy and Swedish officials is the minimum age of spouses (18 years of age in Sweden versus 16 or even younger, if permission is given by parents). Another issue is the fact that since May 1st, 2009, Swedish law permits same-sex marriage. A. Rabo, *op. cit.*, p. 188.

¹⁰⁴ J. Mack, *op. cit.*, p. 146.

¹⁰⁵ In the 1970s, when the total number of all Assyrians/Syriacs in Södertälje stood at around 100, members of the community prepared meals themselves for baptisms,

/Syriac weddings involve several hundred guests, showing off material possessions, and many rituals. One of the most popular traditions is dyeing hands with henna; another is assisting with the groom's bath (replaced by assisting with showering and dressing), breaking a jug with sweets and coins for good luck, a variety of dances,¹⁰⁶ sometimes with decorative canes and embroidered handkerchiefs. Swedish and Western influences can also be seen: drinks served at the start of the reception, the first dance of the bride and groom, cutting the wedding cake, and speeches made by the father or brother of the bride.¹⁰⁷

The family of the groom is expected to pay for a limousine, the wedding dress, a good live band, the wedding venue (in Södertälje, called "the city of weddings", they can choose *Panorama*, *Mona Lisa*, *Cleopatra*, as well as spaces at churches – a smaller hall at the Saint Gabriel and large halls at the Saint Aphrem and Saint Jacob). The groom's family is also obliged to pay for the food – of which there should be an excessive amount. The female guests cannot go to two events in the same dress, which in season, when there is a wedding almost every weekend – is quite a challenge. The dresses themselves are usually made of silk or velvet, decorated with sequins, sparkly and shiny. All guests are expected to bring signed envelopes containing appropriate amounts of money (they have almost entirely replaced presents), which are treated as "long-term loans" – sooner or later the money comes back to the benefactor or his family. As Jennifer Mack rightly observes, through their predictable and repetitive nature, Assyrian/Syriac weddings strengthen ties between members of the social group.¹⁰⁸

Funerals

The decision about where to bury their relatives faces immigrants with difficult questions about their identity and roots. In theory, they are free to bury their relatives in the host country, the country of origin or in a third country. According to Alistair Hunter, the first choice – decidedly the most frequently taken by Assyrians/Syriacs in Sweden

weddings and other events organised in private homes or at the Assyrian Association in Ronna Centrum. *Ibidem*, p. 141.

¹⁰⁶ The choice of music is important – it demonstrates taste, political preferences, national background; thus the choice of Lebanese, Syrian, Turkish, Iraqi, or Kurdish songs. J. Mack, *op. cit.*, p. 147.

¹⁰⁷ M. Woźniak-Bobińska, *Big fat Assyrian/Syriac weddings...*, p. 6.

¹⁰⁸ J. Mack, *op. cit.*, pp. 142–155.



Il. 12. A hall at the Assyrian Federation decorated for a wedding ceremony (photo: MWB)

– is one of the indicators of integration.¹⁰⁹ Based on the qualitative research in the DIMECCE project (all the interview fragments relating to funerals), Hunter points out that the reason why many Assyrians/Syriacs do not even consider burying family members in the Middle East is on the one hand the lack of security in the region, and on the other, the acceptance of exile.¹¹⁰ Many people feel that Södertälje has become their only home.

The city provides adequate infrastructure – the town cemetery run by the Church of Sweden is spacious, full of greenery and well suited to contemplation; it contains not only the graves of ethnic Swedes but also numerous Christian immigrants¹¹¹ from Eastern Europe, the former Yugoslavia, South America and the Middle East. Syriac Orthodox graves

¹⁰⁹ A. Hunter, *Staking a Claim to Land, Faith and Family: Burial Location Preferences of Middle Eastern Christian Migrants*, “Journal of Intercultural Studies”, Vol. 37, No. 2, 2016, p. 179.

¹¹⁰ *Ibidem*, p. 185.

¹¹¹ Unlike Muslims and Jews, who asked for separate places of burial in Sweden since the 1970s, Assyrians/Syriacs as Christians could be buried at existing Lutheran cemeteries. J. Mack, *op. cit.*, p. 165.



Il. 13. Assyrian/Syriac graves at the Södertälje cemetery (photo: MWB)

occupy a large area and have a distinct appearance – often with photographs of the deceased, dates of their birth and death, but also information on whether they belonged to the Assyrian or the Syriac fraction.¹¹²

The anthropologist Engseng Ho wrote about the significance of graves as follows:

Graves, while they are endpoints for migrants, are beginnings for the descendants, marking the truth of their presence in a land. For many diasporas, then, graves are significant places. Abroad, migrants who could no longer be closed to their parents can be visited by their own children. Graves provide a ready point of return in a return in a world where origins keep moving on. A gravestone is a sign whose silent presence marks an absence.¹¹³

After the death of a family member, Assyrians/Syriacs in Sweden usually do not place obituaries in newspapers; instead, priests read out the names of the deceased after the mass. If a famous person dies, the fact is likely to be announced in all Syriac churches, and a report will be broadcast on Suryoyo SAT or Suroyo TV.¹¹⁴ Family members of the deceased, particularly the widow, are expected to publicly display despair and grief, wail loudly, and almost give in to hysteria. This behaviour is unthinkable for the restrained Swedes, who try to hide their feelings of grief. They express their respect by dressing in elegant, formal attire and trying to look their best; Assyrians/Syriacs expect the opposite – they view dressing up for a funeral of a family member as something improper:

As Suryoyo, when you go to a funeral, you're not supposed to get your hair cut, shave yourself, a Suryoyo widow shouldn't make up, but in the Swedish society you're very elegant, shaved, made-up, as woman you get also your hair cut. The wife of the deceased one, she looks like she was going to a party. (Assyrian/Syriac male, born in Turkey, 45 years old)

The Assyrian/Syriac custom dictates that the family should mourn their dead in the place of death for a long period of time – processions of guests wishing to extend their condolences last many days, and lifts in blocks of flats get crowded for days. This irritates Swedish neigh-

¹¹² Ibidem, p. 160.

¹¹³ E. Ho, *The Graves of Tarim. Genealogy and Mobility across the Indian Ocean*, Berkeley 2006, p. 3.

¹¹⁴ Assyria TV generally avoids programs of this type, but occasionally makes an exception for people strongly involved in Assyrian matters. J. Mack, op. cit., p. 158.

bours – but not as much as the picnics Assyrians/Syriacs take at cemeteries on Easter Monday – the Orthodox All Saints’ Day¹¹⁵ (Aram. *Thnabto de mithe*). Families, especially these with Turkish roots, assemble at cemeteries, bring baskets with hard boiled eggs, drink coffee, share freshly baked bread, decorate graves with candles and flowers. In the eyes of Swedes, they appropriate the space of the cemetery and behave in what they regard as a blasphemous manner. They also litter – indeed, after *Thnabto* it is easy to find wrappers of sweets or even abandoned picnic baskets at the cemetery.¹¹⁶

4.7. The role of young people

Diverse Assyrian and Syriac youth organisations – both secular and religious – function in Sweden. Young people are seen as the future of the Church and the community. This does not mean, however, that specific Churches or organisations know how to attract the young, or how to shape the behaviour and opinions of the younger generation:

Speaking about working with the youth organisation, it’s a blessing, it’s very good to be able to work with the youth but you can also see what is lacking. You see that one of the main problems is that we have priests who don’t speak Swedish. (...) The new canon law that the Church approved in 2002 says that the priest must know the language of the country he resides or works in. (...) We have a kind of gap between the youth and the old... [In future] those who sit in the parish council will be much younger and more educated. (Swedish male belonging to the Syriac Orthodox Church, 31 years old)

Some of the classes are organised by the older generation, others are young people acting on their own initiative. For religious members of the community, the primary goal is to keep young people in the Church, while leaders of secular organisations aim to attract enough new members to develop and grow as an organisation. The following quote illustrates the perspective of the Syriac Orthodox Church:

We are trying to establish activities in the Church for the youth to be keep them in Church. We have, in some of our parishes, we have homework helping, we have teachers coming there to help them in the church with different homework. We have lectures, we have theological camps,

¹¹⁵ The Church of Sweden celebrates All Saints’ Day (*Alla helgons dag*) on a Saturday between October 31st and November 6th.

¹¹⁶ J. Mack, op. cit., pp. 163–164.

we have a big day every year – we have the choir festival, where all different choirs in our diocese take part and sing the traditional Syrian Orthodox hymn, and so forth. So we try to work as much as we can to be able to provide a good environment for the Syriacs, to be rooted in the own faith, history and tradition but also to be able to be a good Swedish citizens. (...) Because of the influence of Islam, we lack pedagogy. You don't have, you don't have the great pedagogy. So we still have teachers who beat the children and try to get them to understand. And this is not the way. And we still have this problem in some parts here in Sweden but of course at home still. And some of the monasteries as well. I've seen it myself... This is something that we need to change. (Swedish male belonging to the Syriac Orthodox Church, 31 years old)

Members of ethnic organisations do not want young people to be entirely assimilated and absorbed by Swedish society – preventing this process from happening is a challenge for Assyrian/Syriac teachers and educators, who try to make up for what is not always successfully done by the parents, which is, to provide answers to important questions:

There was more dialogue between the fathers, mothers and the youth in Iraq [in comparison to] we have today in Sweden. (...) I worked with the youth between 12 and 18. They asked me this kind of questions they could not ask [at home], like “Why we cannot have sex before the marriage?”, “Why we must think that about God?”. And the big problem is, fathers and mothers don't understand that these questions are very important. And we must have some kind of answer. (Chaldean male, born in Iraq, 35 years old)

Young Assyrians/Syriacs also participate in international meetings, the goal of which is to forge future elites:

We have the WCA Youth Academy, which has organized various activities such as study sessions. Once in Strasbourg, for example, when 30 Arameans from all over the world joined there for a whole week. We trained them to become the next generation of Aramean leaders. A handful of them represented the Syriac Aramean Youth Federation and the Syriac/Aramean Academics Federation in Sweden. (Syriac male, born in the Netherlands, 36 years old)

Of course, only a small number of young Assyrians/Syriacs will become leaders, but for the future prosperity of the community in Sweden, as many young people as possible must have access to good education. The story told by members of the community presents all young

Assyrians/Syriacs as very well educated; the reality, however, is more complex. Charles Westin studying young people of Turkish origin, including Assyrian/Syriac youth, writes that the second generation of immigrants is indeed characterised by an over-representation of academically successful young people compared to ethnic Swedes, but on the other hand, there is a significant percentage of those who did not manage to complete the nine-year primary school course.¹¹⁷ This is usually influenced by the situation at home – Assyrians/Syriacs who came to Sweden from Turkey were poorly educated; for a part of this group, rapid material success was the primary goal, and therefore, they did not plan academic careers for their children. However, many were aware that education is necessary for social advancement – these encouraged their children to learn.¹¹⁸ So far, the outcomes of Assyrian/Syriac children at school have been mixed: some children from immigrant families do very well at school, others struggle to complete the curriculum. There are quite few average students.¹¹⁹

These studies are important, because they contradict the stereotypical image of the second generation of non-Europeans as “the lost generation” who did not stand a chance from the outset. Many Assyrians/Syriacs decide to pursue higher education and successfully gain entry to university. Interestingly, while still at school, they report higher levels of satisfaction with life and fewer psychological problems than their Swedish counterparts. One of the reasons is that from their early childhood, Swedish people are taught to question authority, which sometimes translates into problems with discipline at primary schools. Teenagers of Middle Eastern origin do not question the authority of elders as early as Swedish teens; their rebellion, if it surfaces at all, takes place in secondary school or at university.¹²⁰

¹¹⁷ In the Swedish system, children must attend school from the age of 7 to 16 – regardless of their legal status. Some children leave primary school earlier through persistent absences – they are not promoted to the final class. After 9th grade, 75–80% of children attend a 3-year high school which is not compulsory, but necessary to apply to university. One third of students of Turkish descent do not reach high school – a percentage much higher than among Swedish children. Ch. Westin, *op. cit.*, pp. 996–998. It is difficult to determine the number of Assyrian/Syriac children within this group at risk of marginalisation – in Westin’s research, students were categorised by Turkish descent.

¹¹⁸ *Ibidem*, p. 993.

¹¹⁹ *Ibidem*, p. 1001.

¹²⁰ *Ibidem*, pp. 1006–1007.

4.8. Intergenerational relations

In the Middle East, most Assyrians/Syriacs lived in villages. Within their limits, families were almost entirely self-sufficient and strongly focused on themselves; people spent their entire lives surrounded by the same group of relatives and friends.¹²¹ The inhabitants of villages began their new lives as immigrants thanks to the principle of reciprocity between relatives: the pioneers who had made a success of moving abroad felt obliged to help their families – sponsor their journey, and help them find their first job and an apartment.¹²² Those who opened restaurants or pizzerias in Sweden were able to invite and hire many countrymen.¹²³ In time, social capital became generalised, causing entire villages to migrate.

Research conducted by Önver Cetrez among the Syriac Orthodox community in Sweden has shown that the significance of the nuclear family is growing at the expense of large family groups, although these still play an important role, particularly in ethnic organisations and churches.¹²⁴ Uncles and aunts still have the right to interfere with the lives of their nieces and nephews. The responsibility for the children of one's brothers and sisters strengthens family ties and is seen as a personal duty.¹²⁵ Traditionally, young people were guided by the older generation and were taught to interact with their social environment by showing respect and humility.¹²⁶ This contrasts with the Swedish custom, in which children are taught independence and self-reliance;¹²⁷ they are also protected by an array of laws, including a complete ban on the corporal punishment of children, introduced in 1979, and the Convention on the Rights of the Child signed in 1989.¹²⁸

¹²¹ F. Deniz, op. cit., p. 142.

¹²² Por. Th. Faist, *The Volume and Dynamics of International Migration and Transnational Social Spaces*, Oxford 2000.

¹²³ For Chaldeans in the USA these were large shops and shopping centres. Cf. Ch.J. Spurlock, op. cit., p. 72.

¹²⁴ A. Rabo, op. cit., p. 185.

¹²⁵ Ch.J. Spurlock, op. cit., p. 89.

¹²⁶ This was visible in focus groups – young participants treated their elders, especially men, with obvious respect. They gave up the best seats and armchairs, served water, tea and coffee, waited for their elders to speak first, listened to long speeches without interrupting, even if the conversation was conducted in Aramaic while the young people only spoke Swedish.

¹²⁷ A. Rabo, op. cit., p. 193.

¹²⁸ *Children in Sweden*, <https://sweden.se/society/children-and-young-people-in-sweden/>, accessed on April 25, 2018.

Young Assyrians/Syriacs in present-day Sweden mention the gap between their own generation and that of their parents.¹²⁹ They often feel torn between the expectations of their parents and the obligations of Swedish society: their own ethnic community pressures them not to act “too Swedish”, while ethnic Swedes remain reserved and cold towards them. Önver Cetrez points out that Assyrian teenagers find it difficult to function as integrated individuals, because the Swedes tend to treat them as foreigners even if they had spent their entire lives in Sweden.¹³⁰ For this reason, young people look for new ways to express their identity outside the stereotypical patterns and social norms imported from Syria, Turkey, Iraq or Lebanon.¹³¹ They are keen to blend in with their peers from other ethnic groups and adapt to local culture.¹³² Like other young people from migrant families,¹³³ they absorb the language, norms and values of Swedish society faster than their parents, and this is how the “acculturation gap” is formed within families.¹³⁴

Many young Assyrians/Syriacs deal with cultural differences by adopting various identities at home and at school and adjusting their behaviour accordingly. This strategy has been called *bridge-building* or *dynamic biculturalism*.¹³⁵ Young people describe how they deal with the cultural divide by “mixing” or “blending” these cultures, for example, by going to dates, but waiting to get married to have sex.¹³⁶ Even though older Assyrians/Syriacs say that they do understand young people’s dilemmas and problems,¹³⁷ in the light of Önver Cetrez’s research they do not necessarily believe that young people can (and should) switch between two cultures in this way. This seems to align with the observations of Hubert Herman,¹³⁸ who points out that for first and

¹²⁹ A. Rabo, op. cit., p. 186.

¹³⁰ See more: Ö.A. Cetrez, *Meaning-making variations...*

¹³¹ J. Mack, op. cit., p. 238.

¹³² This tendency is also expressed by a specific language used in everyday conversation between peers, in which Turkish, Kurdish, Arabic, Persian, Spanish and Finnish words are mixed in with the Swedish. Ch. Westin, op. cit., p. 1006.

¹³³ M. Zhou, *Segmented assimilation: Issues, controversies, and recent research on the new second generation*, “The International Migration Review”, Vol. 31, No. 4, 1997, pp. 975–1008.

¹³⁴ Cf. Ö.A. Cetrez, *Meaning-making variations...*

¹³⁵ Cf. S. Ting-Toomey, op. cit.

¹³⁶ Cf. J.S. Phinney, M. Devich-Navarro, *Variations in bicultural identification among African American and Mexican American adolescents*, “Journal of Research on Adolescence” 7, 1997.

¹³⁷ A. Rabo, op. cit., p. 187.

¹³⁸ H.J.M. Hermans, op. cit., pp. 243–281.

second generation immigrants it is not at all clear which culture should dominate at a given moment. In such ambivalent situations, the immigrants benefit from *mindful identity negotiation*.¹³⁹ Some may be unaware of this internal conflict, while others realise that it is the case, such as this Chaldean respondent:

The big problem is that young people have two faces. The first face – the real face – that’s more integrated in the Swedish culture. And another face... Yes, home face, that’s not real. (Chaldean male, born in Iraq, 35 years old)

This statement may be surprising – the family home is usually perceived as a place where one can remove all, or almost all, masks. Apparently, this is not the case for many children of Assyrian/Syriac immigrants in Sweden, forced to navigate between the expectations of their parents, who demand obedience and respect, and the freedom-based assumptions of Swedish society. The expectations of the latter are well expressed in this statement:

Every child who obeys his family and goes to the church should be meek and humble, he should not show arrogance by crossing his legs before elder, etc. The situation now is ok. In the future I do not know. (Syriac male, born in Iraq, 69 years old)

Interestingly, most of my interviewees – both young and older – believe that in spite of the necessity to juggle appearances and conventions, intergenerational relations are nonetheless better among Assyrians/Syriacs than among ethnic Swedes. Young respondents frequently stress how closely connected they feel to their families, especially to their closest family members. Similar responses have been given in Anika Rabo’s research – many young Assyrians/Syriac respondents underlined their attachment to their parents.¹⁴⁰ At times, these declarations were accompanied by a highly critical judgment of the behaviour and family relationships of young Swedes:

I would do anything for my parents. I love my parents. But what I’ve seen is a lot of Swedes, you know... they would curse their parents. They would throw out their parents. And I’ve seen that a lot. (Chaldean male, born in Iraq, 31 years old)

¹³⁹ Ph. Collie et al., op. cit., p. 210.

¹⁴⁰ A. Rabo, op. cit., p. 187.

This unity of Assyrian/Syriac families is influenced by several factors. One of these is the collectivist approach of the entire group (while Swedes rank high on the scale of individualism). The close ties between Assyrian/Syriac parents and children have many positive aspects, but drawbacks also exist – one of them is the problem of trauma which is passed on from one generation to another in the process of socialisation. In his presentation, *Breaking the Silence: An Intergenerational Transmission of Fear and Distrust*, Önver Cetrez analysed the influence of the trauma of Seyfo on subsequent generations. The scholar concluded that as a result of being exposed to specific narratives communicated by their elders, many Assyrian/Syriacs, including those born and brought up in the safety of the diaspora, have accepted imperatives such as “Do not trust Muslims!” and “They were killing us, because we were Christians!” as their own. This in turn translates into perceiving the present-day situation in the Middle East through the perspective of the tragic community’s history.¹⁴¹

Bringing up children to become moral, responsible adults in a tricky, globalised world is a challenge for Assyrian/Syriac mothers, many of whom are well aware of the new dangers:

I would say that it is a big challenge to raise your family now because of the globalisation, everything is so mixed. My mother and father, when they were raised up there wasn’t any globalisation, they weren’t like “Oh, you can take drugs”, of course there were troubles also then, but other problems compared with now. And in this society, I mean in the whole Europe and the western world, there are many things that are difficult to see, that your children can choose to take part in and you don’t have control over it. Like drugs, narcotic, alcohol and so on. So this is a problem of every family, not only Assyrian one. (Assyrian female, born in Sweden, 32 years old)

The problem with excessive drinking and drug use began as early as the turn of the 1980s and 1990s.¹⁴² The Assyrian Federation believed the roots of these harmful habits stemmed from the disconnection from traditional rural lifestyle and the abrupt transition to an industrial society. In 1987, the Federation organised the first major campaign warning against the dangers of using drugs.¹⁴³

¹⁴¹ Cf. *Assyrian Diaspora in Europe: Past, Present, Future...*

¹⁴² A. Makko, op. cit., p. 276.

¹⁴³ “Hujāda” 10/105, 1987, p. 4.

4.9. The position of women

Gender equality is one of the foundations of Swedish society. In the *Global Gender Gap Report*, a worldwide ranking of gender equality which assesses equality in such domains as economics, politics, education and health, Sweden has never dropped below fourth place.¹⁴⁴ It is no wonder that the position of Assyrian/Syriac women is gradually improving in the Swedish diaspora – many of them study and work and can independently support themselves.¹⁴⁵ Although they have more duties than their Swedish counterparts, Assyrian/Syriac girls say that they have more freedom than their mothers.¹⁴⁶

In the Middle East, arranged marriages were the rule; young married women, usually illiterate, moved into the multi-generational family home of their husbands, in which the eldest man made practically all the decisions.¹⁴⁷ The situation of young women was not much better than the situation of Muslim, Turkish or Kurdish women – with the exception of honour killings, practically non-existent among Christians.¹⁴⁸ Interestingly, the accusations of sharing a culture of honour killings with Kurds or Yazidis which appeared in Swedish media have motivated Assyrians/Syriacs as a group to quickly modify their stance on gender equality and begin to implement certain changes.¹⁴⁹ Women were elected leaders of several local associations; the Assyrian Women's Federation (*Assyriska Kvinnoförbundet*) was founded. In recent years, this process has slowed, and men have once again begun to dominate the boards of organisations.¹⁵⁰

In the diaspora, Assyrian/Syriac men have attempted to recreate the Middle Eastern patrilineage to some degree on the basis of their social capital. Traditional norms dictated that their role was to be protectors of their wives and children, as well as unmarried girls and boys,

¹⁴⁴ *Gender Equality in Sweden*, <https://sweden.se/society/gender-equality-in-sweden/>, accessed on April 25, 2018.

¹⁴⁵ Another example of the emancipation of Assyrian/Syriac women and girls is the fact that they constituted the majority of participants of the focus groups – they were more willing to take part in group interviews than men. During the meetings they sat together, usually allowed the men to talk first, talked for a shorter time but in a relevant way. Older women were more assertive than girls, and disagreed with the men more often.

¹⁴⁶ Ch. Westin, op. cit., p. 994.

¹⁴⁷ Ch.J. Spurlock calls this situation “a classic patriarchal order”. Idem, op. cit., p. 81.

¹⁴⁸ Ibidem, p. 76.

¹⁴⁹ A. Makko, op. cit., p. 279.

¹⁵⁰ Ibidem.

unmarried siblings, nieces, nephews, and cousins. The reaction of individual men to the emancipation of women who were related to them in the diaspora depended on a number of factors – growing up in a city or village, level of education, and the degree of engagement in social life in the host country.¹⁵¹ Most men have adopted the norms prevailing in Swedish society to some degree and accepted the pro-partnership approach of Scandinavians:¹⁵²

I think that gender roles is something that Swedish people try to erase more and more. I'd like to think that I agree with that and sometimes tend to do same things as my wife. I wash clothes, I clean the house, I take care of her as much as I would want her to take care of me. It's not necessarily erasing gender roles, it's more a common respect for each other and taking care of each other. (Assyrian male, born in Sweden, 30 years old)

Other voices are heard as well – some respondents believe that Swedes have gone too far in their support for gender equality and had caused the blurring of boundaries between the sexes, which they view as detrimental to society. They believe that emancipation of women in Sweden is too advanced and they would definitely want to save at least some domains as “exclusively for men”:

My impression of gender roles in Sweden? It's quite equal. I think it's one of the most equal countries. And sometimes I think there's too much focus on it. Like in every aspect it has to be equal. So it's not always relevant, I would say. Let's take football and TV. Now they have those experts doing the comments, they have to be a woman and a guy. And normally women are not so good at discussing football. (...) But of course, it's an achievement – equality. It influences Syriac girls as well. They can go to other cities, rent an apartment and study or work. (Syriac male, born in Turkey, 32 years old)

Traditional structures of Syriac Churches do not enhance the social position of women. Unlike the Church of Sweden, which ordains women as priests, Syriac Churches offer limited possibilities for women. They are allowed to sing in choirs and work in church organisations; indeed, young women make up a significant percentage of their members. A number of Syriac Orthodox activists wishing to return to the

¹⁵¹ Ch. Westin, *op. cit.*, p. 996.

¹⁵² Swedes believe that Assyrians/Syriacs have a lot of work to do in this regard – they do not offer enough help at home. In their view, young Assyrian/Syriac women offer 100% devotion to their work, and 100% to their home and family. Interview with the Mission church pastor, Södertälje, March 12, 2014.

roots and traditions insist on women wearing veils in churches (this is practised in Oriental and Orthodox churches but in Sweden many Assyrian/Syriac women have abandoned this practice). The gender divide is underlined by the seating arrangement in church – men and women sit on two sides of the temple, separated by an invisible line through the middle of the church. This irritated some of my interviewees, particularly young men attending church with their wives. Some wives sit next to their husbands on the “male side” but this tends to be an exception rather than the rule.¹⁵³

Almost all respondents declare their support for the departure from a more patriarchal culture, even if it generates certain problems, related, for example, to the loss of status for those men whose relatives have broken the traditional rules of the community. Furthermore, independent, well-educated and career-oriented women find it difficult to find suitable life partners. According to Swedish reports, girls from immigrant families perform at school much better than immigrant boys.¹⁵⁴ This is, however, a wider problem across Sweden: differences between the school performance of boys and girls have been observed for some time, with girls achieving superior results. On average, 74% of girls and 70% of boys graduate from high school; almost 50% of women aged 25–34, and a third of men in the same age bracket complete higher education.¹⁵⁵

In a typical Assyrian/Syriac family in Sweden, the grandmother is the lady of the house, the grandfather had worked almost exclusively outside the home, the mother works both at her job and at home, the father works outside the home but helps with household chores a little, and the youngest generation who were brought up in Sweden want more equal division of duties and more partnership. Looking at family relationships from a generational angle is reasonable – several respondents said that the approach to housework depends mostly

¹⁵³ Interview with an Assyrian politician, Södertälje, March 14, 2014.

¹⁵⁴ This is in spite of the fact that practically all household duties are left to them and as a result they have no time for homework or studying. Swedish teachers noticed this problem. The solution was lengthening the time spent by immigrant girls at school under the pretext of extra school classes (in reality, the girls were given a quiet space to complete their homework). Parents were told that these classes are mandatory. Interview with the Chair of the Education Committee in Södertälje, Södertälje, June 2, 2014.

¹⁵⁵ OECD, *Closing the Gender Gap. Sweden*, <https://www.oecd.org/sweden/Closing%20the%20Gender%20Gap%20-%20Sweden%20FINAL.pdf>, accessed on April 26, 2018.

on age rather than social background.¹⁵⁶ Some pointed out that even the Swedish society has not yet arrived at true equality, since women still earn less than men.¹⁵⁷

The Assyrian/Syriac community expects men to achieve material success and high social status; women are to be frugal, clean and modest.¹⁵⁸ Unlike boys, girls are not free to make decisions about their emotional and sexual life and are under much stricter control.¹⁵⁹ All-night parties, drinking alcohol, smoking, being seen in the wrong company, or even drinking a cup of coffee with a boy is frowned upon or completely off limits, as many families see these behaviours as destructive for the family reputation.¹⁶⁰ This pressure begins to lessen for women who reach 30 – even if they remain unmarried.¹⁶¹

A separate issue is that of domestic violence, which predominantly affects women; it is, however, not unique to the Assyrian/Syriac community, but rather a wider social problem – women from all social and ethnic backgrounds can become victims. Swedish women's organisations have made many efforts to tackle this problem over the years and have been cooperating with Assyrian women's organisations in this regard. An Assyrian priest who was interviewed for the project offered an interesting point of view. He approved of Swedish laws, as he believed they permitted Middle Eastern women to free themselves of violent husbands. Divorce, generally condemned by all Churches, was to him a lesser evil in comparison with allowing the abuse to continue:¹⁶²

¹⁵⁶ Interview with a young Chaldean woman, Södertälje, November 24, 2014.

¹⁵⁷ *Women and men in Sweden 2016: Women have lower salaries, incomes and pensions than men*, SCB, 4.07.2016, <http://www.scb.se/en/finding-statistics/statistics-by-subject-area/living-conditions/gender-statistics/gender-statistics/pong/statistical-news/women-and-men-in-sweden-2016/>, accessed on April 26, 2018.

¹⁵⁸ Ch.J. Spurlock, op. cit., p. 98. Interestingly, the required modesty does not include dressing, which may be related to the necessity to attract the right suitors: young Assyrian/Syriac women are often seen in plunging necklines, tight-fitting trousers, high heels, strong makeup and ostentatious jewellery. This look contrasts with the everyday, casual style of young Swedish women – it evokes a certain distaste among older Swedish women. Interview with the Director of the Department of Diversity, Human Rights, Gender Equality and Churches in Södertälje, Södertälje, November 3, 2014.

¹⁵⁹ Preferring boys springs from the fact that they were able to look after their aging parents, while the girls were “lost” – after getting married they began living with their husbands and helped their parents-in-law. Ch.J. Spurlock, op. cit., p. 103.

¹⁶⁰ J. Mack, op. cit., p. 139.

¹⁶¹ *Ibidem*, p. 140.

¹⁶² No studies are available concerning domestic abuse in Assyrian/Syriac families in Sweden. A study of gender relationships among Chaldeans in the US discusses the ways in which Chaldean women resist the men who try to control and exploit them.

Some women could fight for their dignity only in Sweden, i.e. divorcing brutal husbands. In Iraq of course people had problems and they weren't always in love. That wasn't the perfect situation, neither is it here. In the home country you had shame, and it's very shameful to get divorced, and therefore a lot of women were disgraced and treated very badly and unfairly in their homes. They could be beaten, their husbands were not good. And that was very wrong. Those women who were treated unfairly, that came here with their families, it was like having a breakthrough and they could get rid of all that unfairness in their life, and they were trying to get back and get revenge on their man. (...) 2 out of 10 Assyrians in Europe are maybe getting divorced. (Assyrian male, born in Iraq, 52 years old)

Contrary to stereotypes, some young men from the Middle East want their wives to work, so that the couple can enjoy a better material status. Some young men do not wish to be cast in the role of the head of the family and the sole breadwinner.

Now it has changed definitely, you know. I remember my mom, she didn't work. She worked earlier, when she was young, before she got married. And then she had children and was a housewife. But now, we have grown up and the society has changed a lot in 20–25 years. So she's working now. And she wants to work, you know. "I want to make my own money", she says sometimes. And that's positive. You know, if my wife said "I want to be a housewife", I would say "You are lazy one. You have to work and bring us money". But it's a new world. Men do more at home and females go out and work. This has changed, definitely. (Assyrian male, born in Sweden, 26 years old)

Although most Middle Eastern Christian women in Sweden would not outright call themselves feminists, their views are often fundamentally feminist and based on equal rights:

Most of them [Assyrian women] won't call themselves feminists, but if you ask "Should men and women earn the same?" "Yes!" "Should there be violence against women?" "No, of course not!" You see they are more modern than they claim to be and more modern than their parents, but not like the Swedish people yet. (Assyrian male, born in Sweden, 28 years old)

The scholar views Chaldean masculinity as oppressive; violence against women is sanctioned by family and the Church. B.G. Gallagher, *Chaldean immigrant women, gender and family*, PhD study, Michigan (USA) 1999.

4.10. Countries of origin

The immigrants' country of origin, typically correlated with the time of emigrating, is a significant factor contributing to the emergence of the Assyrian/Syriac hierarchy in Sweden. At the bottom of this structure are those who arrived recently and do not know the local language and customs. Their countrymen who had come to Sweden years ago, particularly members of their own family, help them but treat them somewhat patronisingly because of their lack of cultural competence.¹⁶³ In conversations with Assyrians/Syriacs – even those already born in Sweden – their attachment to a specific Middle Eastern homeland is striking, as is national pride, the sense of superiority towards nations from neighbouring countries based on a very specific cultural heritage. However, many Assyrians/Syriacs living in Sweden are exasperated by the dominating position of several families or entire clans originating from Turkey which usurp a dominating position in the community.¹⁶⁴

Assyrians/Syriacs from Iraq believe that their place in the social hierarchy is above their counterparts from other countries. They are proud to be Iraqi and proud to belong to families which raised engineers, teachers and doctors – representing professions highly respected in the Middle East.

I would say Assyrians from Iraq are much more educated. During Saddam's time, Iraq was richer country than Syria, so Assyrians from Iraq are all very well educated. (...) You have educated and non-educated people in Turkey as the government didn't let them to educate themselves, they were oppressed by both the Turkish and Kurdish. I mean my dad was high school teacher in math and physics [in Iraq]. My uncle and his wife are both lawyers. (Assyrian female, born in Iraq, 23 years old)

The professional and social competences of Christian Iraqis were confirmed by several of my Swedish interviewees who believed that the mentality of Iraqis from large cities is best suited to the Swedish way of life.¹⁶⁵ Even though many Iraqi refugees were well-educated, Turkish Assyrians/Syriacs were the group who achieved the greatest and most

¹⁶³ Interview with a former board member of the Syriac/Aramean Cultural and Sports Association, Fittja, June 3, 2014.

¹⁶⁴ Interview with a journalist formerly employed at "Bahro Suryoyo", Södertälje, March 9, 2014.

¹⁶⁵ Interview with the Mission church pastor, Södertälje, March 12, 2014.

evident success. A young Assyrian politician of Iraqi descent explains this by differences in mentality and the paralysing legacy of the Ba'ath Party:

Assyrians who came from what is Turkey today are very successful, and when you read a book about the Assyrians in Sweden they will only talk about the Turkish ones. They don't really realise that the majority of people from Iraq and Syria are raised in Ba'athist socialist dictatorships that's why they are not as successful, they are not entrepreneurs in the same way, they are not rich in the same way. It's very, very close to the communist era: we will take care of you, please just sit down, don't think, there is no reason to be successful, we will decide if you will be successful, we will pick you, we will lift you up. So that's the main issue, waking them from apathy. (Assyrian male, born in Sweden, 28 years old)

Most Assyrian/Syriac immigrants came from a Syrian region of Al-Jazira, situated near the Turkish border. The prevailing stereotype is that this region is a backward, primitive place, inhabited by feudal, uneducated Kurds, Arabs and Christians. However, as Annika Rabo rightly points out, Christians played a very important role in raising the standard of agriculture in northern Syria, while the main centres of Al-Jazira – Qamishli and Al-Hasakah – had, until recently, excellent communication links with other parts of the world; for example, Qamishli had direct flight connections with Paris and Beirut.¹⁶⁶ This translated into changes in the mentality of the local population. According to some Assyrian/Syriac women, they paradoxically enjoyed more social freedom in Al-Jazira than in Södertälje.¹⁶⁷

4.11. The last wave of migration and its influence on the community

Since the outbreak of war in Syria, Södertälje has been facing a housing crisis, local schools are packed with new pupils,¹⁶⁸ and teachers can barely keep up with the number of courses for foreigners. In the summer of 2015, the mayor of Södertälje stressed that newly arrived migrants – especially those who were poorer and less educated – should not end

¹⁶⁶ A. Rabo, *op. cit.*, p. 183.

¹⁶⁷ *Ibidem*, p. 187.

¹⁶⁸ The priority is to enrol the children of immigrants into school as quickly as possible. The mayor of Södertälje said: "Sometimes they arrive in Sweden on Friday, on Saturday they come to Södertälje, and on Monday they go to school". Interview with the mayor of Södertälje, Södertälje, June 3, 2014.

up in “zones of alienation”,¹⁶⁹ in an environment that is “not Swedish” and where “one cannot learn Swedish”.¹⁷⁰ This was an acknowledgement of the difference between the status of newly arrived refugees and the position of their countrymen already established and living in the country for years. She also repeated an opinion common among Swedes that immigrants always end up in so-called “worse” districts, moreover – they create those districts. The mayor then said she hoped that all the communes would get involved in assisting the newcomers;¹⁷¹ three years onwards, it can be confirmed that this did not happen.

The Swedish Red Cross did take action. Its Centre for the Rehabilitation of Tortured Refugees, based in Stockholm, has functioned since 1985 as an independent institution. Fourteen full time employees of the centre – psychiatrists, psychologists, social workers, translators – see 250 patients a year, all of whom are over 18 and have a permanent stay permit (which can be obtained as soon as only a few months of being in the country). These are not only people who had experienced torture first-hand (these account for around 40%), but also their families. Referrals are given by doctors or employment office staff; some people seek help directly. All cases are considered individually by a specially founded commission, which then proceeds to recommend an optimum therapy.¹⁷² The vast majority of patients are diagnosed with *post-traumatic stress disorder – PTSD*,¹⁷³ which often makes learning Swedish impossible and consequently impedes integration with the host society.¹⁷⁴

Most of my Assyrian/Syriac interviewees were people who either came to Sweden many years ago or they were born in this country. If none of their friends or extended family members were among

¹⁶⁹ Swedish: *utanförskapsområde*. A term promoted by Swedish moderates. J. Mack, op. cit., p. 175.

¹⁷⁰ Ibidem.

¹⁷¹ Ibidem.

¹⁷² Interview with an employee of the Red Cross Centre for the Rehabilitation of Tortured Refugees, Stockholm, November 25, 2014.

¹⁷³ The American Psychiatric Association has initially recognised the post-traumatic stress disorder syndrome associated with fear and depression in 1980. In the United States, in large cities specialised institutions are devoted to aid PTSD-affected Arabs and Chaldeans. The obstacles the patients overcome on the way to recovery include the stigma of mental illness, shame, fear of family dishonour, and fatalism. Including priests or spouses into the treatment process may be helpful. Cf. J. Hakim-Larson, R. Kamoo, S.C. Nassar-McMillan, J.H. Porcerelli, op. cit., pp. 309–314.

¹⁷⁴ Interview with a teacher working in a Hagaberg school responsible for teaching Swedish to foreigners, Södertälje, November 6, 2014.

the new arrivals, their contact with this new group was very limited. They usually noticed a few new families attending mass in their parish church. In some parishes, so many people joined the congregation that the language spoken during mass had to be changed, or a new translation added – Arabic was added to Syriac and Aramaic, which was occasionally met with protest from the Turkish-speaking members of the congregation.¹⁷⁵

My interviewees tried to help the newcomers by funding various charity organisations and participating in charitable actions. Churches have played a hugely important role in this process. As soon as they arrived, most new immigrants to Sweden took their first steps to church – a place they knew would provide spiritual and material help. Thus, the churches served as points of contact and additionally took on many tasks related to managing the new arrivals:¹⁷⁶

We saw this book, it was about Christians in Iraq. We sold it for 100 Krona [about 10 USD] (we bought it for 50 Krona). Everything that we gained, the money, we collected, we gathered for Christian refugees from Iraq. That were... They didn't have any papers. We let them come to St. Jacob church in Södertälje and also Mar Gabriel church in Göteborg. And we gave them money, you know. And we helped to gather clothes and everything. (Assyrian male, born in Sweden, 26 years old)

Some Assyrians/Syriacs born in Sweden were afraid of the negative effects of such a large influx of refugees from the Middle East – even those sharing their faith. They worried that the initial warm feelings towards the newcomers may in time – and with rising numbers of immigrants – transform into animosity or even hatred of the newcomers, and in time perhaps of all immigrants from the Middle East. These respondents were in favour of helping the victims of conflicts in their homelands, and in favour of changing Swedish immigration policy. They also supported the mandatory location of new immigrants across different Swedish cities, which in their view could prevent potential future problems.¹⁷⁷ These opinions were common mainly in Södertälje, where Assyrians/Syriacs already constituted a high percentage of the

¹⁷⁵ Interview with a former board member of the Syriac/Aramean Cultural and Sports Association, Fittja, June 3, 2014.

¹⁷⁶ Interview with a member of the board of the Church of Saint Jacob of Nsibin, Södertälje, March 9, 2014.

¹⁷⁷ Interview with a member of the board of the Syriac Aramean Youth Federation, Västerås, March 11, 2014.

population – even before the outbreak of war in Syria. A characteristic trait of these respondents was that they were unclear about where the newly arrived migrants may live:

I don't know where they have places in Södertälje. I know perhaps three or four Syrian families of the newcomers – they come to the Chaldean church. (Chaldean male, born in Iraq, 71 years old)

The concern about the future opinions and actions of ethnic Swedes in reaction to the rising numbers of immigrants was motivated by worries about the respondents' own safety and well-being:

In Stockholm and Södertälje, we have seen a lot [of new arrivals]. It's a struggle for Södertälje, this city has a lot of immigrants. Even before people from Syria had come and before from Iraq... They [the Swedes] thought it had been too much... First Syriacs from Turkey, then Syriacs from Iraq and now Syriacs from Syria... It's a heavy burden for Södertälje and the Swedes get a negative picture of the people... In some way it's not good for our people... I want to see another solution, like spreading. Because now in Sweden you can live wherever you want and this 'whatever you want', it's not always good. (Syriac male, born in Sweden, 32 years old)

I was told many times that Södertälje accepted more refugees from Iraq than the United States and Canada combined,¹⁷⁸ which prompted journalists from all over the world to write about the phenomenon of “a city with a worn-out doormat”.¹⁷⁹ A “joke” circulated, according to which Iraqis could not find Sweden on the map, but everyone knew how to get to Södertälje.¹⁸⁰ The new refugees were a concern for both ethnic Swedes and the established Assyrians/Syriacs: both groups worried about the potential rise of pickpocketing and concerned that the newcomers would ignore the rules of social conduct in Sweden.¹⁸¹ On the one hand, Södertälje enjoyed the reputation of a safe harbour for Syrian and Iraqi asylum seekers, on the other

¹⁷⁸ This is a quote from the previous mayor of the city, Andrew Lago, who in 2008 gave a speech at the United States Congress. C. Bohmer, *Asylees and Refugees. A Comparative Examination of Problems of Integration*, [in:] *Managing Ethnic Diversity after 9/11: Integration, Security, and Civil Liberties in Transatlantic Perspective*, ed. A. Chebel d'Appollonia, S. Reich, New Brunswick–New Jersey–London 2010, p. 226.

¹⁷⁹ I. Ekman, *Södertälje Journal: Far from War, a Town with a Well-Used Welcome Mat*, “New York Times”, 13.06.2007.

¹⁸⁰ J. Mack, op. cit., p. 9.

¹⁸¹ *Ibidem*.

– newspapers were filled with headlines raising alarm about immigrant unemployment;¹⁸² organised crime and a poor level of education in schools.

A Norwegian report from 2015 presented Södertälje as a city containing parallel societies, governed by their own norms and institutions.¹⁸³ In February 2016, an unpublished police report was widely quoted; it marked out the most dangerous places in Sweden and included districts of Södertälje – Ronna, Geneta and Lina.¹⁸⁴ International media painted Södertälje as a city of burning cars, streets controlled by the Assyrian/Syriac mafia and refugees living in overcrowded blocks. However, local residents, and anyone who has lived in Södertälje for some time, regard these descriptions as far from reality. The most likely prediction is that with some help, the new wave of Assyrian/Syriac immigrants will in time join the “best in class” – their countrymen who arrived earlier on.

4.12. Secular *versus* clerical

Poor communication between the clergy and the people is a frequent topic of conversation with Assyrians/Syriacs; most of my interviewees believed that its cause is the insufficient level of education of Syriac Orthodox priests. Many people, especially the younger generations, complain that the priests do not speak Swedish well enough to understand Swedish society; their knowledge is outdated and rooted in Middle Eastern culture. Some priests also lack a deeper knowledge of theology and spirituality:

For example Fr. X – I’ve always asked the priests this question “If God has created us, who has created God?” And no one could answer me. But when I was a teenager, I wanted to know. And Fr. X used to say “No my son, it’s not the question to ask”. So that’s the problem with our

¹⁸² This was not due to bad intentions of the Syrian Christians. Swedish officials considered this group particularly motivated to work and well-educated. However, there was little need in Södertälje for their skills and services. Interview with the Director of the Integration and Employment Department in Södertälje, Södertälje, November 7, 2014.

¹⁸³ E. Haakaas, F. Sætran, *-Vi bor alle i samma by, men ikke i same verden*, “Aftenposten”, 15.05.2005, <https://www.aftenposten.no/norge/i/8JGd/--Vi-bor-alle-i-samme-by-men-ikke-i-samme-verden>, accessed on April 26, 2018.

¹⁸⁴ A. Johansson, L. Hjertén, *Polisens hemliga rapport: Här är Stockholms läns farligaste områden*, “Aftonbladet”, 3.02.2016, <https://www.aftonbladet.se/nyheter/krim/article22190105.ab>, accessed on April 26, 2018.

priests. They are very good and know very much about the history of the Church... but they were all educated in Iraq. (Chaldean male, born in Sweden, 23 years old)

Syriac Orthodox young people would like their priests to be educated in the West and to use Western teaching methods. Some priests are of course well liked, respected and praised for their devotion to their parishioners, but they seem to be in the minority. Interestingly, parish councils or even individual parishioners can influence the behaviour of specific priests, for example by paying them to shorten a religious ceremony, or to agree to marrying previously divorced people *etc.* The Syriac Orthodox Church appears to display a lot of flexibility in the diaspora, perhaps because of competition – those who are not satisfied with their local church may switch to another temple in the neighbourhood. This probably applies to all Assyrian/Syriac Churches in Sweden.

In the past, however, the priests did abuse their power over the parishioners, for example, by refusing to give baptised children certain names. In the 1980s, this affected many couples who chose typically Assyrian names for their children – Syriac-oriented priests would not agree and instead gave the children classic Christian names. This was yet another manifestation of the Assyrian-Syriac conflict, in which the Syriac Orthodox Church supported the Syriac fraction.¹⁸⁵

It is important to remember that the question of names is particularly controversial: even though patriarchs have always recommended choosing Christian names, Assyrians/Syriacs in Arabic countries, particularly Iraq, were often forced to change to Arabic-Muslim names for safety reasons. In Turkey, many changed their sons' names before they began military service; the matter was not trivial – men named Gabriel, Malke or Barsomo were more likely to be killed: they were sent on the most dangerous missions. In Sweden, many Syriac parents gave their children fashionable European names sounding French, Italian or British, while Assyrian parents gave their children ancient Assyrian names such as Ashur, Ashurina, Ashurbanipal, Ishtar, Nineveh, Ninorta, Sargon, Sargonta, or Sharukkin.¹⁸⁶ An Assyrian woman whose name sounded European told me how her father had selected this name for her:

¹⁸⁵ Interview with an Assyrian headmistress of a school in Hallunda, Södertälje, May 29, 2014.

¹⁸⁶ Por. J. Messo, *op. cit.*, p. 101.

I was born in the early 1980s and what my mother and father and family told us is that there were [internal] clashes in the early 1980s. (...) So my mother told the priest “I would like to baptise my daughter Nineveh” and he said “Oh, it’s not appropriate, you shouldn’t choose Nineveh, maybe you should think about another name”. My father was already thinking about another name, he was like “I am trying to find a name that is appropriate in both Assyrian and Swedish”. So my father chose my name. (Assyrian female, born in Sweden, 32 years old)

4.13. The Assyrian-Syriac conflict

Sargon Donabed and Shamiran Mako suggest that two ethnogeneses took place – first Assyrian, then Aramean.¹⁸⁷ Zeki Yalcin believes that the clash between the Assyrian and Syriac/Aramean fraction broke out due to a mismatch between the Occidental nationalism and an Oriental community, for whom Christian religion has been central for almost two millennia.¹⁸⁸ The Western type of nationalism has not freed the people from their religious ties, nor did it unite the community – on the contrary, it introduced new divisions.¹⁸⁹ The birth and development of Assyrian nationalism was already described in the chapter outlining the history of the community. Arameanism flourished a few decades later; a fundamental role in its emergence was played by Syriac Orthodox clergy, and especially by Ignatius Aphrem I Barsoum. Arameanism can partially be considered a reaction of the Syriac Orthodox Church to the secular ideology promoted by the Assyrian Democratic Organisation from the end of the 1950s.¹⁹⁰

The conflict around the name for the community (‘name debate’,¹⁹¹ Swedish: *namnkonflikten*) began in Sweden in 1975. Fuat Deniz relates the suspicions of Säpo who believed that ADO was planning subversive operations.¹⁹² Even though the Swedes would rather deal with ethnic groups than religious communities, the Syriac Orthodox Church did

¹⁸⁷ S. Donabed, Sh. Mako, op. cit., p. 75.

¹⁸⁸ Z. Yalcin, *Orientalisk eller västerländsk nationalism?*, “Hujädä” 22/257, 2000, pp. 11–12.

¹⁸⁹ A. Makko, op. cit., p. 280.

¹⁹⁰ Ibidem, pp. 80–99. On April 15, 1977, ADO issued a classified document confirming the existence of strategies promoting Assyrianism. Leaders of the movement in Sweden wanted, among others, to change the name of the Syriac Orthodox Church to “Assyrian”, to change names on plates and signboards. Cf. J. Messo, op. cit., p. 105.

¹⁹¹ Cf. N. Atto, op. cit., pp. 323–392.

¹⁹² F. Deniz, op. cit., p. 209.

not wish to allow a division of the ethno-religious identity of its members. In 1976, the Patriarch communicated via Bishop Apherem Aboodi that the Syriac Orthodox people in Sweden are not to call themselves Assyrians.¹⁹³ In 1980, the newly elected Patriarch Ignatius Zakka I Iwas adopted an even more radical stance, ordering Bishop Aboodi to decline the sacraments – baptism, marriage, and funeral at church – to anyone who would call themselves Assyrian.¹⁹⁴

The Syriac Orthodox community in Sweden then split. On March 31, 1990, Bishop Julius Abdulahad Gallo Shabo was thrown out of the Church for subversive activity. People who identified themselves as Assyrians gathered around him. For some time, they stopped attending church altogether, before renting a church and finally building their own.¹⁹⁵ Their antagonists were mostly Syriacs/Arameans from Tur Abdin – people from this group took down and broke the “Assyriska Kyrkan” (Assyrian Church) sign from the door of the Saint Apherem church in Södertälje in 1977.¹⁹⁶

It was not without significance for the perception of the group in Sweden that all translators belonged to the Assyrian fraction¹⁹⁷ and the term “Suryoyo”, ambiguous in their language, was always translated as “Assyrian”.¹⁹⁸ Interestingly, “side switches” were sometimes made – Syriac clubs in Sweden were often funded by former activists of Assyrian clubs.¹⁹⁹ The conflict around the naming of the community was particularly acute in the 1970s and 1980s – during that time, Assyrian social and cultural organisations, and their Syriac/Aramean counterparts were founded.²⁰⁰ Both movements – Assyrian and Syriac/Aramean – intensified and became increasingly politicised. Public threats and accusations of defrauding funds were made, and there was even an attempt to burn the Bishop’s villa.²⁰¹

¹⁹³ Interestingly, just as the Swedish term “Assyriska” was opposed, so was the term “Arameiska”. The Church only accepted the name “Syrianskt”. J. Mack, op. cit., p. 110.

¹⁹⁴ *Ibidem*, p. 109

¹⁹⁵ *Ibidem*, p. 110.

¹⁹⁶ N. Atto, op. cit., p. 329.

¹⁹⁷ In early 1970s, Assyrian identification was not limited to a narrow elite. It was generally adopted by all younger members of the community, while older people preferred to identify with their religion. A. Makko, op. cit., p. 269.

¹⁹⁸ N. Atto, op. cit., p. 325. Older Syriacs/Arameans told Johny Messo that translators refused to help them if they didn’t agree to the translation “Suryoye” for “Assyrians”. *Idem*, op. cit., p. 105.

¹⁹⁹ S. Donabed, Sh. Mako, op. cit., p. 98.

²⁰⁰ See more: K. Nordgren, op. cit.

²⁰¹ A. Rabo, op. cit., p. 184.

At the moment the conflict is not as bitter as it used to be. Both sides explain that the conflict had an ideological background and believe that the version of common history they promote is right. In general, Assyrians would like to include Syriacs/Arameans and Chaldeans, while Syriacs/Arameans wish to be separated from Assyrians and treated as a separate group; they believe that “true” Assyrians are the old “Nestorians”, members of the Assyrian Church of the East, and that the Assyrian-minded members of the Syriac Orthodox Church are mistaken about their identity, and are in essence Arameans. Syriacs/Arameans underline the religious and ethnic aspects of their group identity, while Assyrians pay attention to ethnic and national aspects. Generally, entire families belong to one fraction, but many families are split into two camps.²⁰²

The following statement, made by a Swedish converted deacon of the Syriac Orthodox Church, illustrates the Syriac/Aramean point of view:

And then of course the different divisions that have occurred, regarding different ideological ideas, that affected the Church. Especially the Assyrian ideology. If you want to call yourself an Assyrian, I respect that - but... I think that if you see it in historical perspective, and you try to be objective, you can't... you don't find any legitimacy to use that name. And it has caused a lot of problems and it's still causing a lot of problems. (...) we have different political organisations - perhaps you will never be able to find the consensus. We have... Every person has freedom to call themselves whatever they want. But we need to find - for the Church and for the youth, and for the future - we need to find the ways to work. And perhaps we can have two dioceses here in Sweden but not in the way that they are divided now. It must be a geographical division because this is not. This is not something that you can find support of in the Church tradition. It's against the Council of Nicaea, and so forth. That you have two bishops in the same city and just in the same, just two kilometres from each other. This is something that has affected us very much. (Swedish male belonging to the Syriac Orthodox Church, 31 years old)

The following quote represents the point of view of a representative of the Assyrian Church of the East:

There are two parts of the Syriac Church, those who call themselves original Assyrians and those who call themselves Arameans. We have more contact and more interaction with those who call themselves Assy-

²⁰² Ibidem, p. 185. The family of one of the popularisers of Arameanism, Johnny Messo, can serve as an example. In the introduction to his book he describes how one of his cousins became convinced of her Assyrian identity after seeing ancient artifacts in European museums. Idem, op. cit., p. 9.

rians. And of course we accept it. Even their parties cooperate with our parties. We have one goal. To go back and have our own nation. The Assyrians-Arameans they are both Assyrians and we are linked together through our religion and in our origin. So there are very strong links. (Assyrian male, born in Iraq, 52 years old)

Some people are less optimistic – they doubt if this conflict can ever be resolved. They are aware of its destructive character:

We're hold back by the internal conflicts, there's been too much focus on fighting each other than just going your own way, doing it your own way. And to be frank, you will never be able to convince someone to choose "Syrian" or "Assyrian" or "Chaldean". (Assyrian male, born in Sweden, 28 years old)

4.14. Self-identification

Assyrians/Syriacs represent an important case study of identity negotiation, as they are not widely known outside the Middle East and they often have to explain their background to other people.²⁰³ A part of the DIMECCE project was an attempt to encourage the respondents to look at their ethnic identity²⁰⁴ and try to define it. The electronic survey allowed respondents to select more than one answer. The results contained as many as 34 variants of 8 identities (see tab. 2).²⁰⁵ The most popular choice was the Assyrian variant (19.9%) and the Aramean/Suryoyo/Syriac variant (17.2%). Within all the variants, the most frequently selected terms were Syriac and Suryoyo (50.6% each), followed by Aramean (36.6%), Assyrian (31.2%), Syrian (9.9%), Chaldean (4.5%), Arabic and Iraqi (1.8% each). Only six (2.7%) respondents selected both Assyrian and Aramean identity, and all of these respondents also selected additional identities. One should remember that the survey was taken mostly by activists representing both the Assyrian and the Syriac/Aramean fraction in Sweden. Within the group taking the survey, Syriacs/Arameans were twice as numerous as Assyrians, which reflects Swedish statistics on membership in Syriac/Aramean and Assyrian federations in Sweden. It should be pointed out that respond-

²⁰³ Ph. Collie et al., *op. cit.*, p. 210.

²⁰⁴ This survey enquired about national, ethnic and religious identity. Religious identity was described earlier in this chapter, and national identity will be discussed alongside the idea of citizenship, in the next chapter.

²⁰⁵ It is likely that a larger group would yield even more variants.

ents from the Syriac/Aramean group rarely described themselves solely as Syriacs (13.1%) or Arameans (5.4%), while the Assyrians kept to just one term.

No.	Identity	Number of answers (total 221)
1.	Assyrian	44
2.	Aramean, Suryoyo, Syriac	38
3.	Syriac	29
4.	Suryoyo, Syriac	17
5.	Suryoyo	17
6.	Aramean	12
7.	Assyrian, Suryoyo	9
8.	Aramean, Syriac	7
9.	Aramean, Suryoyo, Syriac, Syrian	7
10.	Aramean, Suryoyo	4
11.	Assyrian, Suryoyo, Syriac	4
12.	Chaldean	3
13.	Aramean, Assyrian, Suryoyo, Syriac	3
14.	Syriac, Syrian	3
15.	Syrian	2
16.	Syrian, Iraqi	2
17.	Suryoyo, Syriac, Syrian	2
18.	Aramean, Chaldean, Suryoyo, Syriac	2
19.	Assyrian, Syriac	1
20.	Assyrian, Chaldean	1
21.	Arabic, Suryoyo	1
22.	Arabic, Syrian	1
23.	Suryoyo, Syrian	1
24.	Arabic, Aramean, Syriac	1
25.	Iraqi, Suryoyo, Syriac	1
26.	Aramean, Syriac, Syrian	1
27.	Assyrian, Chaldean, Suryoyo	1
28.	Assyrian, Suryoyo, Syrian	1
29.	Arabic, Aramean, Syriac, Syrian	1
30.	Aramean, Assyrian, Chaldean, Suryoyo	1
31.	Assyrian, Chaldean, Suryoyo, Syriac	1

No.	Identity	Number of answers (total 221)
32.	Assyrian, Iraqi, Suryoyo, Syrian	1
33.	Aramean, Assyrian, Suryoyo, Syriac, Syrian	1
34.	Aramean, Assyrian, Chaldean, Suryoyo, Syriac, Syrian	1

Tab. 2. Ethnic identities of Assyrians/Syriacs in Sweden

Source: The DIMECCE Survey.

The interrelations between the four main ethnic identities of Assyrians/Syriacs in Sweden (Assyrian, Aramean, Suryoyo and Syriac) are illustrated on the next page.

The qualitative study confirmed the findings presented above. At the end of each of the 40 individual interviews, respondents were asked to visualise their identity using special cards featuring the following categories: national identity (British, Danish, Egyptian, English, Iranian, Iraqi, Lebanese, Scottish, Swedish, Syrian, Turkish), ethnic identity (Arabic, Aramean, Assyrian, Chaldean, Coptic, Egyptian, Ethiopian, Nubian, Sudanese, Suryoyo, Syriac, Syrian), religious identity (the Assyrian Church of the East, the Chaldean Catholic Church, the Coptic Catholic Church, the Coptic Orthodox Church, Maronite Church, Protestant Church, Syriac Catholic Church, Syriac Orthodox Church), and other identities (Arabic Christian, Middle Eastern Christian, Christian, Oriental Orthodox, Abrahamic).²⁰⁶

As for dominant identities, the results of this survey were as follows: everyone who regarded themselves as Assyrian (18 people) picked the Assyrian card and placed it at the top; 8 people did not choose any additional cards. Exactly half of the 12 respondents who regarded themselves as Syriac/Aramean picked the “Aramean” card and placed it at the top; the same number selected the “Syrian” or “Syriac” card instead. Four people placed the “Syriac” and “Aramean” on top side by side, to signify their equal importance. In the Chaldean group, 5 out of 9 respondents placed the “Chaldean” or “Chaldean Catholic” card on the top; 3 respondents chose the “Christian” card, and one the “Iraqi” card.

Other identities selected as important by Syriacs/Arameans were: Christian, Middle Eastern Christian and Swedish. 10 Syriac/Aramean

²⁰⁶ During my research in Sweden I did not use all the cards. I did not need to use the cards representing British, English, Danish, Scottish, Ethiopian or Nubian identities.

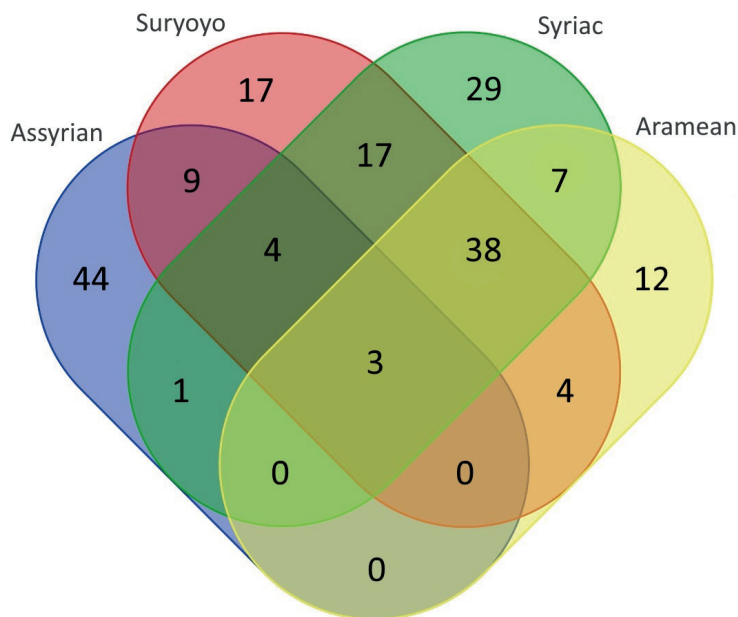


Fig. 6. The main ethnic identities of Assyrians/Syriacs in Sweden

Source: Own work based on the DIMECCE survey.

respondents included the Syriac Orthodox card, and one person placed it on top. 11 out of 18 Assyrians also picked the Syriac Orthodox identity, but none of them selected it as the main term; others selected the Assyrian Church of the East or defined themselves as not religious. 14 Assyrians selected a card representing Swedish identity (with 7 deciding that the Swedish card is of equal importance with the Assyrian/Syriac card); the same card was picked by 5 Syriacs/Arameans and 4 Chaldeans. 12 Assyrians and 8 Syriacs/Arameans included the term in their own language – “Suryoyo”. This card was not picked by any Chaldean respondents, but as many as 5 Chaldeans selected the Iraqi identity.

The exercise with cards was also performed in focus groups – their goal was to negotiate a common term for their identity. A group solely consisting of Assyrians chose two terms: “Assyrian” and “Suryoyo” as general names that could accommodate many other identities. The Syriac/Aramean group decided that terms such as Aramean, Syriac, Suryoyo, Assyrian, Chaldean, Syrian, Iraqi, Maronite, Lebanese, and Swedish are all of equal importance. The third group was mixed

and consisted of both Assyrians and Syriacs/Arameans. This group selected more terms than the purely Assyrian group, but fewer than the Syriac/Aramean group. They agreed on the following terms: Aramean, Syriac, Suryoyo, Assyrian, Chaldean. The conclusion which emerges from this study is that in general, Assyrians have quite a precise sense of their common identity and represent a rather exclusive approach. On the other hand, the Syriacs/Arameans, whose religious and secular leaders have over the last 50 years changed the official terms naming their group, prefer to choose more terms to identify themselves in order to feel secure – their approach is more inclusive. A merger of these two attitudes results in a middle ground approach.

Interviews reveal the reasons for which respondents select specific terms to describe their identity. Many Assyrians select the Assyrian card and are satisfied to be described by this single term:

This one, Assyrian, it's very, very important – the most important thing for me, this is Assyrian, this is what I want to pass to my children. That they would know our history. (Assyrian female, born in Syria, 36 years old)

Assyrians often include religious identity in their ethnic identity, although some of their ideological leaders had stressed that “Assyrian” is an ethnic, not a religious term:

Most of the times I don't say I'm Christian, I say 'I'm Assyrian' and by Assyrian I mean I'm Christian and I'm Syriac Orthodox. There are many types of Assyrian but I say I'm Syrian Orthodox but if someone asks me 'What religion do you have?' Then I answer 'I'm a Christian.' (Assyrian male, born in Sweden, 24 years old)

For a relatively small group of Assyrians, religious identity does not matter, but ethnic background does. These are often Assyrian activists; some were directly involved in the conflict with the Syriac Orthodox Church in previous decades, and still feel bitter towards it.

To me religion means nothing. You can be Assyrian, Aramean and at the same time be a communist but you are still Assyrian, Syriac and Aramean. Everyone belongs to a community. (Assyrian male, born in Syria, 54 years old)

The power of Assyrian nationalism in the diaspora can be illustrated by the statement made by a middle-aged Assyrian woman, who placed the Assyrian card at the top and admitted that she had not known that

she was Assyrian before she came to Sweden. In her homeland, the only name she described herself with was “Suryoyo”. Characteristically, this respondent only learned Aramaic in Sweden:

I come from Assyrians, I know, but until I was 18 years old, I only knew myself as Suryoyo, I had not heard of Assyrians. I lived until I was 37 years old in Turkey and I only spoke Turkish and until now my Turkish is better than all other [languages]. (Assyrian female, born in Turkey, 54 years old)

Among the most recent wave of refugees from Syria, there are many people who still “do not know” that they are Assyrians or Arameans. The Assyrians/Syriacs who have been settled in Sweden for years notice that for the newcomers from the Middle East, religious identity dominates:

Those from Syria don't call themselves Syrian Arabs. They say commonly that they're Suryani. But their religious identity is stronger than the national. Maybe they were not allowed in the homeland to show it [this national identity] at least openly. Some people have it of course. (Syriac male, born in Turkey, 35 years old)

This fits into Jean S. Phinney's typology: As a group, Assyrians/Syriacs can be located between the second and third stage of the formation of ethnic identity. Some of them feel that they have found their identity and appreciate it, but there are also those, predominantly recent arrivals from Syria, who mainly identify themselves as a Christian religious minority. This group needs time to join the life of the community in the diaspora, to come to terms with the surrounding host society and arrive at a new self-identification in the process. Notwithstanding, many Assyrians/Syriacs, even those born and raised in Sweden, consider their religion – at least declaratively – more important than their ethnic background. Still, ethnic background has its significance – this respondent underlined that he did not belong to the Arab ethnos:

First of all, I am Christian because when I stand in front of my Lord, He will test me (...) Are you Syrian Christian, Coptic Christian, how do you identify yourself? He won't care about that. I'm Christian. This is the most important for me. After that, I'm Syriac, I belong to the Syriac Oriental family. Syrian Orthodox. I'm Suryoyo, that's my language also. (...) We are Middle East Christians. (...) We are Syrians... but we are not Arabs. (Syriac male, born in Sweden, 25 years old)

The following quote illustrates the inclusive approach of moderately ideologically minded Syriacs/Arameans – it seems less important

whether the mentioned terms are indeed synonymous (they are not). What matters is that people believe that this is the case:

These are all technical terms. 'Syriac', 'Syriac Orthodox', 'Suryoyo', 'Aramoye'. It's synonymous. They are all the same. (Syriac male, born in Sweden, 33 years old)

In the Syriac/Aramean group, some respondents shared very strong opinions and described themselves in opposition to other, more assimilated members of their subgroup:

Some people, they show it out a lot – but in reality they don't live the Aramean life. I don't like to show it out so much. But I try to keep as much of my culture – language and other part of my identity. (...) One of my brothers is less Aramean. At least he doesn't come to the church so often. He lives in area with mostly Swedes. And his kids don't speak so much Aramaic. So it is different. (Syriac male, born in Turkey, 35 years old)

Some of the older respondents feel proud of teaching their children Aramaic and instilling a strong sense of their cultural background (it is difficult to determine whether these children, now grown up, would have agreed with their father – and if indeed they do not feel Swedish at all, which is difficult to believe):

What we [I and my wife] have succeed is that I have planted in their minds that they are not Swedes [but] they are Arameans, Syriac-Arameans, and this is their language and we have the Church, although we are facing enormous problems as well. (Syriac male, born in Turkey, 62 years old)

Younger Chaldeans almost always feel Swedish to some degree, regardless of whether they were born in Iraq, or in the diaspora. They differ mainly in indicating either Iraqi, or Assyrian identity:

First of all, I feel Chaldean Catholic, secondly Swedish, thirdly Iraqi Christian. I always say I'm Chaldean. And I say "You know what Assyrian or *Assyrier* is?" "It's exactly like them." (Chaldean male, born in Iraq, 35 years old)

'Assyrian'. I can identify with this card. I understand it and I feel comfortable with it. And I think it's as important for me my religion, 'Christian'. And then 'Chaldean Catholic'. And 'Swedish' also. Because I told you – this is my homeland. (Chaldean female, born in Sweden, 21 years old)

Although the above quotes are only a small fraction of the interviews I collected, they illustrate certain tendencies. For people self-identifying as Assyrians, ethnic identity is more important than religious identity. In turn, Syriacs/Arameans are uncertain about which terms are relevant to them. Should they maintain the old terms – Syrian or Syriac, or solely adopt an Aramean identity? More frequently than Assyrians, Syriacs/Arameans decide to adopt the term in their own language – Suryoyo (many Assyrians also consider it appropriate). Chaldeans stress their Catholicism much more than their kinship with Assyrians and their Christian Iraqi roots. These findings do not come as a surprise since Assyrianism is over a hundred years old and considerably older than Arameanism, and taking into account the extensive Arabisation of Iraq.

4.15. Football and national identity

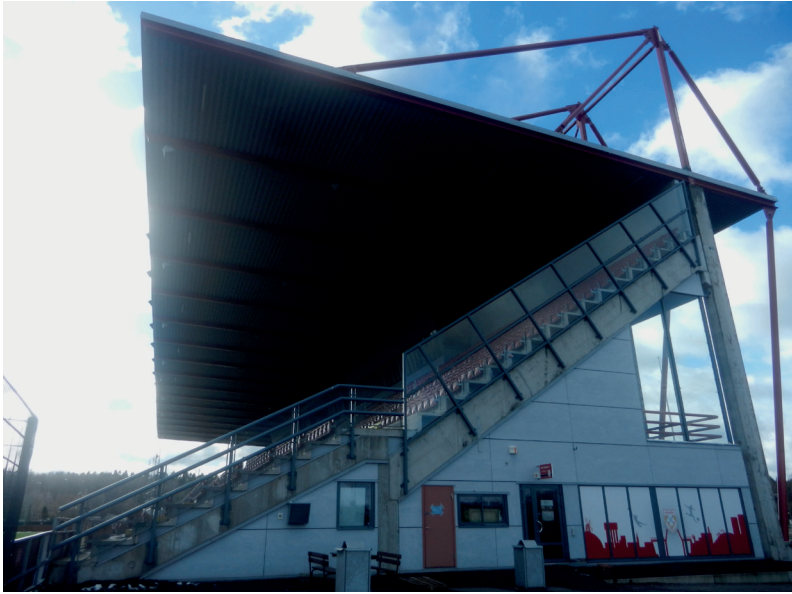
The division into the Assyrian and Syriac/Aramean fractions can be seen with exceptional clarity in the sphere of football: it is also where it generates particularly strong emotions. Football is often described as a religion in itself; stadiums are present-day temples and the fans are believers who place their faith in the players.²⁰⁷ The derby between Assyriska FF, founded in 1974, and Syrianska FC, founded three years later, resemble the World Cup in micro-scale. The games attract fans from the United States, Germany, Turkey – all of them come to the suburbs of Geneta, where the Södertälje Fotbollsarena stadium is located;²⁰⁸ local residents call the venue “Jallavallen”.²⁰⁹ Jennifer Mack describes it as a new “pilgrimage destination” and the culmination of a long journey – from forming informal teams that played for pleasure, through establishing two professional teams to ascending to the first league.²¹⁰ To the Assyrians, Assyriska is a special symbol of their integration; it is their belief that ethnic Swedes see it as such.

²⁰⁷ J. Mack, op. cit., p. 117.

²⁰⁸ Built as a common investment of Assyriska, Syrianska and the city, the stadium was opened in 2006 and can host 3500 people seated and 3000 people standing, it has VIP boxes (mainly for bishops and priests). Matches are transmitted worldwide by Suryoyo SAT, Suroyo TV and Assyria TV. Ibidem, p. 118.

²⁰⁹ *Jalla* – Arab. “hurry up”, *vall* – Swedish “pasture”. Ibidem, p. 124.

²¹⁰ Ibidem, p. 130.



Il. 14. The football stadium in Södertälje (photo: MWB)

Meanwhile, research conducted by Torbjörn Andersson indicates the opposite – for the ethnic inhabitants, Södertälje is not a city of football but of ice hockey;²¹¹ less than a quarter of ethnic Swedes were interested in watching the Assyriska matches even when the club belonged to the first league.²¹² It would seem that Assyrians overestimate the interest of ethnic Swedes in their sports achievements, and perhaps do not fully appreciate the negative emotions stirred by their teams, which are still viewed as composed of players belonging to ethnic minorities. Complaints voiced by Swedes since the 1960s concerning football players from southern Europe – Yugoslavians, Spaniards, Greeks – may provide the needed context. The aforementioned players tended to play in the lower leagues, in teams deemed “foreign”. These were often presented in newspaper headlines as problematic, associ-

²¹¹ In fact, at present this sport plays a secondary role in Södertälje. T. Andersson, *Immigrant teams in Sweden and the case of Assyriska FF*, “Soccer & Society”, Vol. 10, No. 3–4, May–July 2009, p. 412.

²¹² *Ibidem*, p. 411. In Sweden, the first league is called Allsvenskan (Assyriska played in it in 2005, and Syrianska in 2011–2013), the second league is Superettan, and the third – Division 1. In 2003 Assyriska was one win away from qualifying for UEFA games. Cf. R. Erickson, *Det assyrisk-syrianska fotbollsundret*, Stockholm 2010.

ated with hooliganism, fights between the players and fights amongst the fans – on and off the pitch.²¹³

Assyriska was also perceived as a “problematic” team for a long time; the matches were an arena of a certain clash of cultures. Swedish football culture requires self-control, discipline and collectivism, while the immigrants from the south are used to showing extreme emotions at the games, hugging each other after a goal is scored, or open aggression. These behaviours are now changing. At present, the identity of immigrant clubs is not as strong as it used to be, as the composition of teams is increasingly mixed.²¹⁴ Some behaviours common in the 1970s and 1980s have disappeared, including eating kebabs during the game, munching on nuts and spontaneous dancing.²¹⁵

According to Fuat Deniz, racism against Assyrians/Syriacs was at its height in the 1970s. Their portrayal in the media was also rather negative. The situation improved in the 1990s, to some degree also thanks to the successes of Assyriska,²¹⁶ therefore Assyrians/Syriacs share a belief in football as an antidote for racism.²¹⁷ Furthermore, in a wider European context, football tends to be one of the rare avenues for immigrant children to make a career, a name for themselves, and in time even to become a role model (some examples are Zinedine Zidane, who came to France with his parents – Kabyle people from Algeria, or Zlatan Ibrahimović, a Swedish international footballer of Bosnian-Croatian descent). Assyriska and Syrianska also offered this opportunity to individuals, but they also represent the advancement of the entire Assyrian/Syriac community, and additionally strengthens the feeling of unity in the way national teams engender.²¹⁸

Assyriska and Syrianska have become key to the self-identification of Assyrian and Syriac youth in Södertälje. From the beginning of these football teams’ existence, many parents thought they had a positive influence on their children; this view was shared by Swedish officials – the communes had supported the development of immigrant sports clubs. To many Assyrians, being a Zelge fan (a fan of As-

²¹³ T. Andersson, *op. cit.*, p. 398.

²¹⁴ *Ibidem*, p. 405.

²¹⁵ J. Mack, *op. cit.*, p. 125.

²¹⁶ T. Andersson, *op. cit.*, p. 407.

²¹⁷ *Ibidem*, p. 413.

²¹⁸ J. Mack, *op. cit.*, p. 119. When the fans shout “Suryoye, Suryoye!” there is some confusion – both fractions identify with this term. *Ibidem*, p. 129.



II. 15. Club shops for fans of Assyriska FF and Syrianska FC (photo: MWB)

syriskä) strengthened the sense of national identity. Today, practically only the school is a neutral space, free of any conflict between the fans of Assyriska and Syrianska, and some children are still reluctant to go to school the day after the derby.²¹⁹

Carl Rommel sees football as a channel for identity formation²²⁰ for Assyrians/Syriacs in Sweden. The scholar points out that the striking feature of the football games at the Södertälje stadium is not how they differ from other aspects of life in the city, but how they resemble life in the city: they are an extension of conflicts happening off the pitch.²²¹ Speaking Swedish during training meetings or singing Swedish football songs may be seen as proof of a greater professionalisation of Assyriska; Assyrians tend to see themselves as more modern, secular, and enlightened than the traditionally-minded and – at least outwardly – more religious Syriacs/Arameans. In turn, the Syrianska players believe they are the more passionate team; they criticise the playing style of Assyriska as “too Swedish” and blame Swedish coaches and players.²²²

The arbitrary “differences” are constructed between “imagined communities”,²²³ which follow “invented traditions”.²²⁴ Not only do the fans of Assyriska and Syrianska exchange insults,²²⁵ but they also disagree about how to tell their story to the Swedes who watch the matches on TV. When Assyriska is playing, the stadium is full of symbols of the ancient god Ashur, the Babylonian Ishtar Gate and the Assyrian four-pointed star banner. Fans of Syrianska wave red-and-yellow flags depicting the winged sun disc; they would not display the Ishtar Gate, as they do not wish to be connected to ancient Assyria.²²⁶ Both groups believe that they are the true Suryoyo. When in 2009 the bells

²¹⁹ Ibidem, p. 128.

²²⁰ Victories and defeats of football teams as a source of generalisations about the place of nations in global hierarchy and particular national traits are discussed in: Z. Melosik, *Pilka nożna. Tożsamość, kultura i władza*, Poznań 2016.

²²¹ C. Rommel, *Playing with difference: football as a performative space for division among Suryoye migrants in Sweden*, “Soccer & Society”, Vol. 12, No. 6, November 2011, p. 853.

²²² Ibidem, p. 858.

²²³ Cf. B. Anderson, op. cit.

²²⁴ See: E. Hobsbawm, *Introduction*, [in:] idem, *Nations and Nationalism since 1780: Programme, Myth, Reality*, Cambridge 1990.

²²⁵ For example, some Assyrian people say that Syriacs/Arameans are “uncivilized barbarians”, Syriacs/Arameans pay them back by calling them “cows” (in connection to the Assyrian bull sculptures) or denying Assyrians’ faith in God. J. Mack, op. cit., pp. 128–129.

²²⁶ C. Rommel, op. cit., p. 856.



Il. 16. A young football fan holding a flag during an Assyriska football match (photo: MWB)

of the Cathedral of Saint Aphrem were ringing to announce the victory of Syrianska over Assyriska, it became clear which fraction had the support of the Syriac Orthodox Church, which was a painful blow to the Assyrian fraction.²²⁷

4.16. Leaders and their perception by the community

Assyrians and Syriacs/Arameans complain a great deal about the leadership of their communities. Apart from several activists on both sides, closely linked to specific leaders and able to bring their names into a conversation, most Assyrians/Syriacs describe a lack of adequate leadership.²²⁸ The aforementioned activists, close to individual decision-makers, claim that the current leaders are good and have good ideas, but that these ideas are often blocked by members of boards and councils (which often consist only of older men who disagree on many issues); thus the activists believe problems arise from the structure of organisations.²²⁹ Next to the eldest leaders belonging to the first gen-

²²⁷ Ibidem, p. 859.

²²⁸ Por. N. Atto, *A Flock without a Shepherd*, "Parole de l'Orient" 36, pp. 191–200.

²²⁹ Interview with a journalist formerly employed at "Bahro Suryoyo", Södertälje, March 9, 2014.

eration of immigrants, a second generation – at present in their thirties – has assumed leading roles. This new group of leaders, born or raised in Sweden, find it difficult to attract and convince people to support their causes. As though to justify themselves, many of them say that they are still learning, underline the importance of communicating and passing their experience on to young people, perhaps by founding new schools or academies to forge the leadership of tomorrow.²³⁰

Many other Assyrian/Syriac respondents briefly point to the Syriac Orthodox Church, or a specific bishop as their spiritual guide, and then describe secular leadership at length. Perhaps this demonstrates the impact of Swedish society, in which the clergy is not seen as representative of the community. Inadequate cooperation between the spiritual and secular leadership is a serious problem for Assyrians/Syriacs, convinced that the Church should lead them to life in Heaven, but lack the skills necessary to improve life on Earth.²³¹

Some believe that the way the Assyrian and Syriac communities are managed – particularly Syriac – is undemocratic, as the leaders, elected in theory, are *de facto* members of a few powerful families from Turkey. For the first three decades, a few families have indeed dominated the positions of power in Assyrian/Syriac secular organisations and churches.²³²

The leadership is... For example in the World Council of Arameans, there is X, everybody knows about him. You can talk about him as one of the leaders. In SRF [Syrianska Riksförbundet – Syriac National Federation] there is Y, you can count him as one of them. There is a structure with a grey eminence – somebody is pulling the strings from behind. There are different families and members in families that have influenced politics and so on. We know the names, and this can be a problem because often it's the same people who are in charge. The same faces/names who have ruled. That's my opinion, but I haven't been there, I haven't been involved in this. (Syriac male, born in Lebanon, 45 years old)

The theme of a certain tribalism hidden behind a facade of democracy has returned many times. This respondent seemed to accept this

²³⁰ Interview with the President of the World Council of Arameans (Syriacs), Stockholm, November 13, 2014.

²³¹ Interview with a member of the board of the Syriac Aramean Youth Federation, Västerås, March 11, 2014.

²³² A. Makko, *op. cit.*, p. 281.

situation, however, he himself belonged to a powerful family and was able to take advantage of the fact:

We have different ways of leaderships, people are elected many times, yes, but they are elected in the sense of belonging to a big family, it's like tribes almost, so one of the reasons why I love my family is that it belongs to a very big tribe, probably the biggest one among the Suryoyo community, spread all over ten countries. In Södertälje we have at least 250 men, I'm talking only about men. (Assyrian/Syriac male, born in Turkey, 45 years old)

The quote above illustrates gender imbalance – women are not seen as members of the clan in their own right. Women are active in youth organisations or women's organisations where they sometimes assume leadership, but "real power" remains the domain of men. Some of my interviewees considered this a problem; for example, a young Assyrian politician from Iraq clearly stated that he would like to see more women in power, and vowed to support and promote them; however, his views were the exception rather than the rule.²³³ The vast majority of respondents talked about the lack of leadership:

I do not see anybody in our community as our leader. I understand the priests have a leadership role but I do not see them as my leaders. So I do not look up to anybody. (Assyrian male, born in Syria, 30 years old)

Members of the Assyrian Church of the East in Sweden are in a slightly different situation, as their bishop is trying to act as an intermediary between Assyrian politicians. They are well aware that the easiest way to reach potential voters is through the bishop, and this results in the blending of the religious and secular spheres:

We have a few political parties (...) everything is linked to the Church. The people that are in these parties or unions they come to church if they want something (...). Once a month political parties meet with the bishop to talk and see what's going on. And if they want to speak publically, they ask the bishops to help them. During voting time for the European parliament, they were all here [in the church], also when it was time for voting in Iraq. They were given a few minutes before breakfast and the bishop said [to the people] "Sit down and listen" and the people listened. (Assyrian male, born in Iraq, 52 years old)

Only at the turn of the 20th and 21st centuries did the young, Swedish-born or Swedish-educated Assyrians/Syriacs begin to challenge

²³³ Interview with an Assyrian politician, Stockholm, May 28, 2014.

their traditional elites. The challengers were journalists, students, young politicians, artists, scholars. From the standpoint of Hartmut Esser's typology, they achieved considerable success in acculturation and emplacement; however, they still struggled with social integration, especially on an emotional level.²³⁴ A dozen years on, they are aware that they did not entirely succeed, and feel the need to educate and prepare their successors. One respondent explains it as follows:

We need more time to train and develop our youth. Unfortunately, in the last two decades we were so busy with so many heavy questions. We just came from the home countries that we simply had other hot issues to focus on. (...) I cannot do this work eternally. Even if I can, I don't want to. (...) My point is that good leaders are those who can find, inspire and produce even better leaders. So, that's what I'm searching for: charismatic people with fresh ideas who can take over our positions and be better leaders by growing our organizations and bringing our people to higher levels. (Syriac male, born in the Netherlands, 36 years old)

4.17. Challenges facing the community

The challenges facing any community – as well as those facing smaller groups within communities – are as diverse as the resources and capabilities of the group and its members. For Assyrians/Syriacs belonging to the Syriac Orthodox Church, who arrived to Sweden a few decades ago and have achieved a range of goals (built churches, founded organisations and media, achieved material success), the main problem is the split within the community – the naming conflict underpinned by serious ideological differences. The two fractions – the Assyrians and the Syriacs/Arameans – clash with one another on various levels. Even municipal officials occasionally block initiatives coming from “the other side”.²³⁵ This conflict weakens the community, and its members are aware of it. The naming conflict has, among others, created problems with international recognition of the Seyfo issue. The question whether the genocide perpetrated during the Great War should be called Assyrian or Syriac/Aramean is not helping Swedish officials. Municipal authorities in Södertälje were delaying permis-

²³⁴ A. Makko, *op. cit.*, p. 281.

²³⁵ Interview with the Chair of the Education Committee in Södertälje, Södertälje, June 2, 2014.

sion for erecting a statue commemorating this tragedy, as the officials did not want to decide for the community which words should be carved on the memorial.²³⁶

Apart from internal divisions, Assyrians/Syriacs are certainly worried about assimilation – the loss of their language and traditions:

Södertälje is an example: you have those who call themselves Assyrians, Syriacs, Arameans, they don't come together, and this is not good. We are getting assimilated in other countries. I don't know how my children and their children will be. I have two sons and one daughter, they can choose to study Aramaic in Uppsala, and they can also choose to learn Spanish or Arabic or other language. It's more about status; you can earn money by knowing other languages. Since we live in different countries and we don't have our own country, if we want to succeed in Sweden, we have to assimilate and don't reclaim our ethnic identity. (Syriac male, born in Lebanon, 45 years old)

Members of the community would like to maintain a balance between old traditions and new customs, but this is very difficult. They often say that they support integration, not assimilation, thus they enthusiastically display Assyrian or Syriac/Aramean flags together alongside Swedish ones, which symbolises their complex identity. They are concerned about the Swedish Democrats and the rise of nationalism:

There is a party called Swedish Democrats, and they are gaining more and more support. You have numbers/statistics that people are unhappy with the number of immigrants that are coming to Sweden. If you look at it from a European level, Sweden is taking in more than the other European countries. They are saying they are a democratic party but you have no idea what they will do if they get in charge. What will happen with the immigrants that are already here? Will they create an apartheid system? (Syriac male, born in Lebanon, 45 years old)

The migrants who just recently came from Syria are in an entirely different situation – they are in need of housing, money, work, knowledge of the local language and culture. A huge challenge ahead for this group is learning Swedish – particularly as in Södertälje, where their countrymen are almost a third of the population and it is possible to function without knowing Swedish – for mere “survival”, speaking

²³⁶ In 2015 a monument commemorating Seyfo was erected in Norrköping. Its unveiling was attended by the Swedish MEP Lars Adaktusson, who described it on his blog: <http://adaktusson.eu/anforande-vid-invigning-av-seyfo-monument-i-norrkoping/>, accessed on April 28, 2018.

Arabic or Aramaic is enough. The Assyrian Church of the East and the Chaldean Catholic Church in Sweden need more help and resources to build temples for their members – Chaldeans in Södertälje are crammed into a small church and the Assyrians of the East in Fittja are slowly building a church, but have to fit into a small prayer room until it is completed.

4.18. Summary

Assyrians/Syriacs living in Sweden are definitely not a homogenous group. They came from the Middle East in several waves; the last wave of arrivals – from Syria – is still in progress. The socio-economic status of migrants varied in their countries of origin; generally, immigrants from Iraq were better educated and wealthier than their counterparts from Tur Abdin – however, the Syriac Orthodox immigrants from Turkey are at present the best-integrated group and have developed the most extensive infrastructure. One of the reasons is undoubtedly the fact that they have lived in Sweden the longest, since the late 1960s. The latest newcomers from Syria are in the most difficult situation – they are often dependent on their families or on the Swedish state; in spite of good intentions, they are not likely to find work quickly.

As for the role of Syriac Churches, they still remain the stronghold of religious identity and the guardians of classic Syriac language – but their influence on the life of the community, especially on young people or those engaged in national movements, is on the wane. The clergy, educated in the Middle East and reluctant to change, are increasingly criticised. Most Assyrians/Syriacs go to church infrequently, mainly to attend important ceremonies such as baptism, weddings or funerals; daily masses are attended mostly by older women. The Church plays a key role in their lives and is their main axis around which life is organised, which explains the wish to find housing in the vicinity of churches. The second generation of immigrants are usually well integrated into society but choose to live close to their aging parents.

The key condition of integration is learning to speak fluent Swedish – this is achievable mainly for the children of immigrants. The vast majority of children are bilingual or speak a number of languages. In Assyrian/Syriac homes, a mixture of Swedish and Aramaic is spoken, optionally Arabic or Turkish, more rarely Kurdish. The intergenerational

relations are predominantly close and warm, although the young people feel torn between the norms and values represented by their parents and ones adopted by their peers. Family pressure is particularly strong in the area of choosing husbands and wives – endogamous marriages are strongly encouraged, as they maintain the ethnic and religious character of the community. Traditionally, the status of a young woman depended on finding a good match – in Sweden, Assyrian/Syriac women have been emancipated to a large degree, some have achieved significant academic and professional success, nevertheless women are still underrepresented in the boards of Assyrian/Syriac organisations.

The organisations themselves seem to be undergoing a crisis, as complaints about the lack of adequate leadership are common in the Swedish diaspora. Since the 1970s, a lot of energy has been consumed by the conflict around naming the group, which is both a clash of two ideologies and historical narratives, and a conflict between specific Middle Eastern families. Attempts to end the *namnkonflikten* is not made easier by Assyrisk and Syrisk – two well-known football clubs from Södertälje which inspire nationalistic ideas on both sides. Different terms promoted by Churches and secular organisations over a long time are responsible for the present situation, in which almost each respondent to the DIMECCE survey sees his or her identity differently. The divisions between Assyrians and Arameans/Suryoye/Syriacs are deep and will not be easy to bridge. Apart from ending the Assyrian-Syriac conflict, most respondents see “integration without assimilation” as the most serious challenge for the future – they wish to maintain the valuable traditions of their home countries and combine them with the best practices governing Swedish society.

5. THE ASSYRIAN/SYRIAC DIASPORA IN RELATION TO THE SOCIO-POLITICAL ENVIRONMENT OF SWEDEN

Emigration means living in a world where the surrounding actors represent an entirely different culture, complete with different customs, traditions and lifestyles. The acculturation of migrants in host countries takes place on three levels – macro, meso and micro. The macro-level includes the norms and values of the host society which define the limits of what is permitted and what is prohibited – these norms are usually reflected by the politics and laws of the host country. The macro-level also includes economic conditions, educational opportunities, as well as the attitudes of native inhabitants of the host country towards immigrants. The meso-level refers to the relationship of individuals with their social environment – school and work colleagues, fellow parishioners at church and so on. At the micro-level, personal characteristics of individuals determine how easily they adapt to a new environment. Through their interactions with surrounding actors, the migrants' identity and sense of belonging are able to evolve.¹

This chapter examines the interactions of the Assyrian/Syriac community on all three of these levels, with the meso-level analysed in most detail.² Ethnic Swedes are the most important surrounding actors for Assyrians/Syriacs living in Sweden, hence the issues of Swedishness and the mutual perception of hosts and migrants will be discussed first.

¹ J. Kunz, *Facilitating the Participation of Immigrant Students in Canada's Schools*, [in:] *Citizen Participation at the Local Level in China and Canada*, ed. A. Sancton, Ch. Zhenming, B. Raton, London–New York 2015, p. 245.

² The meso-structural level is the theoretical space in which most reflections on migration movements are formulated today. Cf. A. Terelak, S. Kołodziejczak, *Praca za granicą w świadomości emigrantów zarobkowych z województwa zachodniopomorskiego*, Szczecin 2012, p. 18.

5.1. Assyrians/Syriacs *versus* ethnic Swedes

Assyrians/Syriacs were the first group of immigrants to Sweden who were found to be significantly different from ethnic Swedes. This realisation inspired a number of public debates concerning the “patriarchal” and “oriental” character of the Assyrian/Syriac community, as well as criticism of the influence of the Syriac Orthodox Church on the daily lives of the community, which was deemed excessive.³ Moreover, the fact that a large number of Middle Eastern asylum seekers were offered Swedish social benefits in the 1970s generated some resentment.⁴ A proportion of Swedes believed that the newcomers did not try hard enough to find work, even though the truth was much more complex.⁵ In time, most Assyrians/Syriacs obtained Swedish citizenship, found employment and blended into the social landscape of Swedish cities, particularly Södertälje.

However, many ethnic Swedes still see them as the “Other”,⁶ “non-Swedish”, as “Swedishness” in the traditional sense is not equal with Swedish citizenship. Young Swedes define the concept similarly to how it was perceived by previous generations – in the context of a specific cultural background, the ability to follow certain cultural and social norms.⁷ The Swedish language is a particularly important component of national identification – and perhaps the most important factor that impacts the integration of immigrants.⁸ Ethnic Swedes do not feel an aversion towards the newcomers, but rather experience a degree of discomfort – at times accompanied by compassion – which sometimes causes subconscious discrimination against foreigners.⁹ Symptomatically, even though the assimilation policy was officially abandoned in the 1960s, many Swedes long continued to assume that the

³ A. Rabo, op. cit., p. 181.

⁴ U. Björklund, op. cit., p. 122.

⁵ Most often, however, insufficient command of Swedish caused problems with finding decent employment. Ch. Westin, op. cit., p. 1004.

⁶ In everyday, xenophobic discourse, all Assyrians/Syriacs, as well as all non-Europeans or visitors from southern Europe, were since the 1970s referred to as “Turks”. This was an unintended result of the fact that only the nationality of immigrants was recorded in the statistics, and newcomers from Turkey were very numerous. *Ibidem*, p. 993.

⁷ M. Krutmeijer, L. Suurpää, *Black Light, White Shadows: young people in the Nordic countries write about racism*, Copenhagen 1998, p. 23.

⁸ H. Löden, *Swedish: Being or Becoming? Immigration, National Identity and the Democratic State*, “International Journal of Social Sciences”, 3/4, 2008, p. 257.

⁹ M. Zaremba-Bielawski, *Zamieszki w Szwecji. Orient-Express do blokowisk*, “Newsweek”, 5.06.2013.

newcomers would wish to become Swedes themselves.¹⁰ Only quite recently have they realised that this assumption cannot be automatically made, and have begun to examine the migrants' motivations.

Swedish officials and other people who stay in regular contact with members of the Assyrian/Syriac community notice traumas in the newcomers, and some deficits in integration in those who have lived in the country for some time. These deficits are embedded on an emotional level and resemble a type of inferiority complex towards the hosts. A Swedish headmaster of a school in Botkyrka described it as follows:

They have a double nature. On the one hand, they are very proud. It's good to be an Assyrian. But on the other hand, they lack confidence in themselves.¹¹

Despite this uncertainty – and at times, deep internal conflict – compared to other immigrants, especially Copts, Assyrians/Syriacs appear to be an assertive group. They issue many demands, including requests for access to good schools, jobs, housing, and assistance with bringing relatives from Syria or Iraq to Sweden. Assyrian/Syriac immigrants frequently overestimate the powers and capabilities of Swedish officials and often assume that the municipal office can help them with everything. On the other hand, although they often emphasise their loyalty to Swedish society,¹² they do not necessarily wish to adapt to all norms prevailing within it. For example, the mayor of Södertälje – Boel Godner – may be the most important person in the city, but, being a woman, she is not allowed to speak from pulpits in Syriac Orthodox churches.¹³ The mayor herself believes that this ought to change – customs brought from the Middle East cannot be tolerated indefinitely, especially considering the financial support of the immigrants funded by Swedish taxpayers.¹⁴ Other municipal officials also voice their complaints:

¹⁰ J. Mack, op. cit., p. 20.

¹¹ Interview with the headmaster of the college in Botkyrka and of the Theological Seminary of St. Ignatios, Botkyrka, March 24, 2014.

¹² Perhaps these assurances stem from a vivid memory of accusations of separatism, being a “fifth column” in Iraq, or a “stab in the back” in Turkey, and the fear of being perceived as a threat to the majority. Cf. B. Arian, op. cit., p. 68.

¹³ It wouldn't be a problem if the mayor were male. In Orthodox churches, women are not allowed to enter the altar area; it is sometimes justified by female nature, physiology, often understood as ritual impurity. Cf. K. Kojder-Demska, *Matuszki. Żony księży prawosławnych w Polsce*, “Zeszyty Etnologii Wrocławskiej”, Vol. 1. No. 20, 2014, p. 140.

¹⁴ For example, when in the spring of 2012, 150 new children, mainly Syrian, suddenly turned up in Södertälje, it was necessary to open a kindergarten especially

[Assyrians/Syriacs] have their own society within a society which means that ‘multiculturalism’ is absolutely a true word to use for Södertälje but not ‘interculturalism’. It means they have no connection with other [ethnic groups] at all. They have their own laws, they have their own everything.¹⁵

Despite Sweden’s generosity – especially when compared to other Western countries – some Assyrians/Syriacs have long accused the Swedes of racism.¹⁶ These accusations were disproved by the research of the Discrimination Committee (*Diskrimineringsutredningen*). In 1982, it published a report which demonstrated that the attitude of Swedes towards immigrants and immigration is definitely positive. However, four decades of admitting refugees into the country have somewhat changed the prevailing attitudes. In the light of a survey conducted in 2016, as much as 40% of ethnic Swedes were concerned about the volume of immigration to their country. Respondents to this survey also mentioned the shortcomings of the educational system, unemployment, and inadequate social services. Although the problems posed by the presence of immigrants are a somewhat taboo subject in public discourse, however, in private conversations, Scandinavians mention overcrowded classrooms, long lines at the doctor’s office and other issues.¹⁷

Assyrians/Syriacs are aware of these views and respond with bitterness; it seems to them that Swedishness seems to be reserved only for ethnic Swedes, and that growing up in Sweden and knowing the Swedish language and culture is not enough:

The first generation Swedes, which they call first generation immigrants in this country, even though they’re Swedish people... They have very hard time making it in this country, the rules, the barriers from knowing the language. If you don’t speak Swedish perfectly then... it’s not like in the UK or other places, the US. In Sweden you have to speak perfect Swedish, your degree has to be Swedish, you have to know all the rules, you have to act exactly according to the cultural settings of Sweden and if you don’t understand them... you’re weird, there is a perception that immigrant’s or new Swedish person’s degree is not worth as much.

for them; this could not be foreseen or budgeted in advance. Interview with the mayor of Södertälje, Södertälje, June 3, 2014.

¹⁵ Interview with the Director of the Diversity, Human Rights, Gender Equality and Churches Department in Södertälje, Södertälje, November 3, 2014.

¹⁶ In 1980, “Hujādā” published a letter in which a reader wrote that Assyrians in their countries of origin had not been treated as equal citizens, and yet in Sweden they were not treated as human beings. A. Makko, op. cit., p. 272.

¹⁷ M. Zaremba-Bielawski, op. cit.

So we have very big issues with this and it usually hits the first generation harder than the second generation. (Assyrian male, born in Sweden, 28 years old)

Many respondents express their criticism towards these attitudes and purposefully construct their identity in opposition to the imagined Swedish identity, especially the contemporary version of it, which seems even less open than it was 30 or 40 years earlier. My interviewees emphasised that it is difficult to make friends with ethnic Swedes; in their opinion, a typical Swedish person has only two or three friends, usually met in childhood.¹⁸ Assyrians/Syriacs are also irritated by Swedish political correctness, which they interpret as duplicity:

Syriac people used to have very high opinion of the Swedish society and regarded it as very human, open-minded, tolerant, helpful, but today I believe that most of Syriac-Aramean people regard Swedes as a bit naïve because they are afraid of each other and cannot discuss anything openly... In the last 15-20 years the Swedish people became more closed – they are showing you one face when they are speaking to you but act another way when you don't see and this makes some kind of the irritation and inconvenience [because you don't know] how to act with them. (Syriac male, born in Turkey, 62 years old)

Most Assyrians/Syriacs perceive Swedishness as a list of typical defining characteristics of an ethnic Swede,¹⁹ which stand in stark contrast with the attributes of a model Assyrian/Syriac, filled with the spirit of the Middle East. These two identities appear as opposites:

A typical Swedish person is a bit reserved, I would say, and maybe very proper, diplomatic and sometimes cold, I would say, yeah. Liberal. And not so individualistic, not so family-oriented, not so traditional, not so religious. [A typical Assyrian is] very warm, very open, family oriented, social, loud. (Assyrian female, born in Sweden, 26 years old)

¹⁸ M. Woźniak, *Far from Aram-Nahrin: The Suryoye Diaspora Experience*, [in:] *Border Terrains...*, p. 75.

¹⁹ However, these are not necessarily the features listed by scholars who study the Swedish national character. For example, Åke Daun identified six qualities as the most important: shyness, modesty, independence, conflict avoidance, honesty, and homogeneity. It is worth noting that shyness is highly valued in Swedish society and is associated with reflexivity, unpretentiousness and listening to others. Idem, *Swedish Mentality*, Pennsylvania 1996, p. 31. More about Swedish stereotypes: J. Philips-Martinsson, *Swedes as Others See Them: facts, myths or the communication complex?*, Kristianstad 1981; J. Andersson, M. Hilson, *Images of Sweden and Nordic Countries*, "Scandinavian Journal of History", Vol. 3, No. 34, 2009, pp. 219–228.

Some second generation immigrants, such as a young Chaldean respondent, consider themselves partly Swedish – not only due to having lived in Sweden for many years, but because of their ties to Swedish culture and having assimilated well. These Assyrians/Syriacs have become bicultural:

I think that Sweden is a very cold country – not only the weather, even the people. And I can see a lot of that in me. Because I work in a store and when I get a customer that is overly nice, I get shocked. (...) I keep the Swedish coldness but inside I have this warm person. But I'm not the person who goes and talks to people, strangers. (...) It was like the first time my aunt wrote to me – we used MSN Messenger – she wrote to me and she was like “Hi, habibi, how are you?” and I was like “Good.” And my mother said “You can't be that cold. You have to give more of yourself. Can't be just “Good.” (Chaldean female, born in Sweden, 21 years old)

5.2. Model citizens?

While the opposition “Assyrians versus Swedes” or “Syriacs versus Swedes” comes to the fore with first-generation immigrants, for second-generation immigrants, as the quote above shows, the compound nouns “Assyrian-Swedes” or “Syriac-Swedes” would be far more adequate. Fuat Deniz wrote about “Swedified” Assyrians.²⁰ Formally, it is possible to speak of Swedish Assyrians/Syriacs, or Assyrian/Syriac Swedes, from the moment they are granted Swedish citizenship, which can be acquired mainly along the principle of *jus sanguinis* (“right of blood”) – through having at least one Swedish parent, regardless of their place of birth – but other possibilities also exist. Swedish immigration law is liberal. Recognised refugees and stateless persons have the right to stay in Sweden for four years.

After five years of permanent residence, an immigrant can apply for naturalisation after submitting appropriate documentation. Since 1980, knowledge of Swedish is not required, neither is taking any cultural knowledge tests.²¹ Children born in Sweden to foreign parents do not automatically receive Swedish citizenship but can apply if they remain in Sweden. Those married to or living with Swedish citizens can apply for Swedish citizenship after three years. Dual citizenship has been allowed since 2001 – this right is not subject to any additional

²⁰ F. Deniz, *Vart är vi på väg*, “Hujåda” x/105, 1987, pp. 10–11.

²¹ K. Borevi, *op. cit.*, p. 716.

conditions, and the acquisition of Swedish citizenship does not exclude the citizenship of the country of origin.²²

In the DIMECCE survey, 81.4% of respondents declared that they were Swedish, 20.4% – Syrian, 7.1% – Turkish, 4.4% each – Iraqi and Lebanese. Even though nationality does not equal citizenship, it can be assumed that the vast majority were Swedish citizens, while some retained the citizenship of their native countries; a small percentage of respondents who arrived relatively recently were still waiting for their citizenship to be granted. The vast majority of my interlocutors had Swedish citizenship (36 out of 40 people). However, this did not necessarily translate into a feeling of being Swedish, but rather into gratitude for being offered an environment for the development of the Assyrian/Syriac community. While discussing Muslims in Sweden, Agnieszka Gromkowska-Melosik used the term “immigrant ethnification” to describe their return to the roots:²³ “roots, ethnicity, religion, (...) become increasingly dominant, and (...) individualism is replaced increasingly by what is referred to as *tribalism*”.²⁴ This description partially suits the community of Assyrians/Syriacs living in Sweden, who also nurture their past collective identity:

If I say that I am Swedish then I would rejected my history, my tradition and customs but at the same time, I love this nationality [Swedish], I love Sweden, I respect these people. They have given us a lot, to be honest, the things that we've got here are things that we could not get in the Middle East, not from the Arabs, not from the Iranians nor from the Turks. We were treated as second class citizens. Here, the possibilities are open to our people, we can unite, we can reach a very, very high level. (...) I respect Sweden because it opened its doors to our people 40 years ago and treated us in a humanitarian way. When I am abroad, I say of course that I am Assyrian but living in Sweden, with Swedish nationality. (Assyrian male, born in Sweden, 54 years old)

None of my respondents dreamed of becoming a Swedish citizen; some wondered if they were being treated equally as holders of citizenship. Most ultimately believe that they are treated equally, although

²² Government Offices of Sweden, Regeringskansliet, *Act on Swedish Citizenship*, <http://www.government.se/content/1/c6/10/57/28/3ddfc07b.pdf>, accessed on May 6, 2018.

²³ A. Gromkowska-Melosik, op. cit., p. 69.

²⁴ J. Friedman, *Transnationalization, Socio-political Disorder, and Ethnification as Expressions of Declining Global Hegemony*, “International Political Science Review”, Vol. 19, No. 3, 1998, p. 237.

almost everyone could provide examples of hidden discrimination or mistreatment caused by their ethnic origin and appearance:

I've been living here for over 35 years. My friends see me as Swedish but people who don't know me and see me on the street, they don't know who I am, they only see a girl with black head and probably think that I am loud... The Swedish people like silence. (Assyrian female, born in Germany, 37 years old)

I don't think that Assyrians are treated like equal citizens. Maybe not everywhere but I think sometimes there are difficulties. For example, in my work, I'm a jurist. When I talk to them [ethnic Swedes] on the phone, they think I'm a Swedish girl but when they meet me in the court, I often see the difference, I see the looks and so on, they don't say or mention anything but I feel it. (Assyrian female, born in Sweden, 34 years old)

Immigrants and children of immigrants – not only those belonging to the Assyrian/Syriac community – most frequently encounter discrimination in professional situations. Their foreign-sounding names and Middle Eastern facial features mean that they are often discriminated against in job interviews, despite being highly qualified:

It was proved that if you want to work and you have a Swedish last name, it will be so much easier. I could change my last name but I will never do that. I'm proud of it. I love my roots. (...) If someone don't want to hire me, it's his loss. I know that I'm good, I know I have education, my grades are very, very good. I can speak five languages. How many [Swedes] can say that? (Assyrian female, born in Iraq, 23 years old)

Another manifestation of ethnic discrimination, according to my interviewees, is the fact that Assyrians/Syriacs born and raised in Sweden are obliged to take a special exam testing their Swedish.²⁵ In fact, many immigrant children attend schools where ethnic Swedes are a minority, and some leave school with a limited command of the Swedish language. Swedish authorities are aware of this, unlike some members of the community:

²⁵ The TISUS (Test in Swedish for University Studies) and Swedex examinations are designed for non-native speakers of Swedish. The former is necessary to be able to study in Swedish, the latter, partially financed by the European Commission, is recognised by employers, but does not result in the right to study in Swedish. See more: *Study in Sweden*, <https://studyinsweden.se/plan-your-studies/learn-swedish/proficiency-tests/>, accessed on May 7, 2018.

I think that now at school they have a special exam in Swedish for kids that have another cultural background. And my Swedish, I know, is sometimes better than some of my native Swedish [friends], so I feel like, why should I take this special exam and not them? Just because I have a foreign background? They're going to check me to see if I'm good enough in Swedish... (Assyrian woman, born in Sweden, 32 years old)

From this perspective, speaking fluent Swedish seems to be a condition for being perceived as a good Swedish citizen. Assyrians/Syriacs consider themselves model citizens as they wish to make a positive contribution to society:

I humbly think that our people can contribute in meaningful ways to the new societies we live in, especially as a source of inspiration for other migrant groups. It is noteworthy how we have shown our successful integration in many societies in the world. We are a peaceful and entrepreneurial group that is, moreover, grateful and loyal to the society which has embraced us. We always pursue the advancement, happiness and welfare of our environment. (Syriac male, born in Netherlands, 36 years old)

In particular, they point to economic success, investing in Sweden, as well as social advancement made possible by education:

I can tell you the Greek people or the Turkish people work in Sweden and they invest all the money in Turkey or in Greece. They buy houses and things like that. The Assyrian people don't have that opportunity so they invest everything in Sweden. They invest all their money... maybe not all their money but a lot of their money here in Sweden. So they develop very well. For example when I begin to study law, after the Swedish people (who were like 90% of the class), the next biggest group was Assyrian or Syriac or what do you call them. We were the next biggest group after the native Swedes. (Assyrian male, born in Sweden, 24 years old)

While none of my Swedish interlocutors envied Assyrians/Syriacs, and especially not in the sphere of relations between women and men within the family, the Assyrians/Syriacs themselves seemed certain that the economic success of their community was evident, and that their family relationships were a shining example for their host society:

I think even the Swedes are impressed by our capacity to be successful people in businesses. But also they are envious about how our relation to each other and the family look like... Also when it comes to food, kinds of food that Swedes didn't know - they are very common today. And what would be more? Food, family relations, hard work. And we are able also

to show that you can both, to some extent, keep your identity but also be a part of society. For people say, we are good actually. Even if we are foreign, I think the Swedes say they don't have any problems with us as the people. It is easy to communicate with us. So we can be a good example that you can try to be people of your own and cherish your identity, but also be a part of the society and be engaged in the political life or other parts of the society. (Syriac male, born in Turkey, 35 years old)

Well-integrated Assyrians/Syriacs do not shy away from paying the high Swedish taxes – they tend to interpret this duty as a fair price for the comfort of their elderly relatives who benefit from Swedish social welfare, even though some of them have never done any work in Sweden:

I remember my grandmother – she came to Södertälje, to Sweden, in an advanced age. She couldn't work here. So when I pay taxes, it's like I pay also for her. That's how I am. We pay for our cousins, and our grandmothers and our grandfathers who cannot work. (Chaldean male, born in Sweden, 23 years old)

However, this is not necessarily the rule. Many newcomers from the Middle East avoid paying taxes, which is not necessarily due to dishonesty. The Swedish tax system is less than straightforward and immigrants usually need professional help to settle their accounts. A Swedish pastor explains it thus:

Even if they [Assyrians/Syriacs] don't feel like Swedish people feel but they are free to do whatever they like to do... And sometimes some of them go too far in this freedom as you see in the mafias and so on. And also with the taxes. I know that... I noticed that most of Arabic-speaking people don't understand our tax system.²⁶

The only reflection on how the Assyrian/Syriac community might become better as Swedish citizens, was offered to me by a Swedish convert to the Syriac Orthodox faith. The plural he uses refers to him and the priests with whom he works. Unlike many members of the community, convinced that they have already become model citizens, he believes that while much has been achieved, a lot remains to be done, especially in the sphere of democracy and accountability. He did not believe that the community can afford to be complacent:

We try to work as much as we can to be able to provide a good environment for the Syriacs, to be rooted in their own faith, history and tradition but also to be able to be good Swedish citizens. We try to teach them

²⁶ Interview with the pastor of the Mission church, Södertälje, March 12, 2014.

democracy, when we have different elections every year for the boards in both local and national organisation. We try to enlighten them and have different courses on how the Swedish society works and also we try to give them responsibility for different things. (...) And many of our members have been active, have become doctors, and lawyers, and economists, and so forth. (Swedish male belonging to the Syriac Orthodox Church, 31 years old)

5.3. Södertälje – the Assyrian/Syriac “capital city”

Södertälje, geographically peripheral and of marginal social importance to most Swedes, is of great importance to the Assyrians/Syriacs.²⁷ In the 1980s, they abandoned the identity of passive recipients of social programs and became active actors and designers of the city, which gained numerous religious and secular buildings as a result.²⁸ In the second decade of the 21st century, a steady stream of football fans, members of the Syriac Orthodox Church, and couples on their honeymoon have visited Södertälje, “the capital of their global diaspora, a destination of pilgrimages made in search of a cultural experience”.²⁹ Older, religious Assyrians/Syriacs like to live close to their churches, which affords them easy access to spiritual comfort and the opportunity to spend time with their compatriots. As a result, entire districts of Södertälje have undergone a transformation described by Jennifer Mack as “urban design from below”.³⁰ Various groups of Middle Eastern Christians concentrated in different parts of Södertälje, have recreated the pattern of defensive enclaves known from their history.

One such district is Ronna,³¹ home to an Assyrian clubhouse, a grocery store offering many products from the Middle East, and, since 2011, a multicultural clinic where doctors speak English, Aramaic,

²⁷ J. Mack, *op. cit.*, p. 130.

²⁸ *Ibidem*, p. 16.

²⁹ *Ibidem*, p. 9.

³⁰ *Ibidem*, p. 1. Assyrian/Syriac buildings are larger than the Swedish architecture in the area. Aesthetic decisions made by Middle Eastern Christians – to feature lights switched on throughout the night, bold decorations, and other embellishments – make their buildings stand out from the uniform background and emphasise the difference. These places are exclusively Assyrian/Syriac. *Ibidem*, p. 134.

³¹ Södertälje has been designated a model city under the Million program. In order to attract workers to labour in factories, several satellite districts were created: Fornhöjden, Geneta, Hovsjö, Ronna, Saltskog. Modernist skyscrapers and rational planning characterised these new areas that shifted the town's centre of gravity from the centre to the periphery. *Ibidem*, p. 7.



Il. 17. Assyrian/Syriac owned restaurant and pizzeria and grocery store in Ronna (photo: MWB)

Arabic and Romanian.³² For its residents, Ronna is a quiet suburb, cosy and safe. Assyrian/Syriac families who had left Turkey, were reunited here: sometimes, one extended Assyrian/Syriac family would monopolise an entire section of a block of flats. This tendency to group together reflected a desire for safety but had an unintended effect of many Swedes leaving the area.³³ They no longer felt comfortable. They complained about the noise, particularly in areas surrounding the stadium, the crowded areas, and the dozens of cars blocking streets in the vicinity of Syriac Orthodox churches. They feared the Assyrian/Syriac mafia of Södertälje.³⁴ Additionally, Swedish media and the Swedish Democrats often describe Ronna as a place of segregation, or even a ghetto which should be avoided; it is presented as a gang-controlled district, where murder and money laundering is to be expected.³⁵

Today, the absence of Swedish residents reflects the character of this area much more than the concentration of any particular ethnic group.³⁶ The headmaster of a school in Botkyrka, an ethnic Swede, described the changes that had taken place in areas densely populated by Assyrians/Syriacs:

The Swedes have left because... Have you heard about the Swedish Million Homes Programme (*Miljonprogrammet*)? When they built these houses in 1965–1975, but in Norra Botkyrka from 1969 to 1972 or 1975. Mostly people from other parts of Sweden moved here in the beginning. You can still find some older Swedes living here. A lot of people in my congregation moved to detached houses in 1972. They were teachers, some doctors, some engineers, and so on. They have stayed but their children have moved. But not so far. Now, here in Norra Botkyrka, northern part of the commune the Swedes are very few. In most classes in Fittja, the most segregated area, only one child would have grandparents born in Sweden. In Hallunda-Norsborg there are some but few. When I talked with the members of my congregation who were moving out, leaving

³² A. Samimi, *Vård på flera språk i Ronna*, "Länstidningen", 28.07.2011, <https://www.lt.se/stockholm/sodertalje/vard-pa-flera-sprak-i-ronna>, accessed on May 7, 2018.

³³ S. Andersson, op. cit., p. 70.

³⁴ This is not just a problem for Södertälje. One of the first organised street gangs in Sweden operating in Gothenburg in the early 1990s under the name "Original Gangsters" (OG) was founded by Assyrian immigrant Denho Acar, who ran the organisation until his escape to Turkey. OG is still in operation and its members tattoo the Assyrian flag as their hallmark. A. Makko, op. cit., pp. 262–263.

³⁵ Examples given here include the murder of Assyrian footballer Eddie Moussa and his brother Yaacoub in Oasen in 2010, and the molestation of a Finnish-Swedish girl by Syriac Orthodox teenagers. J. Mack, op. cit., p. 86.

³⁶ J. Mack, op. cit., p. 178.

their home (...) they said “We will sell it to Syrians”, and the Syrian Orthodox people would pay two or three hundred thousand more to buy those semi-detached houses, 136 m², because they want to live close to their churches.

Assyrians/Syriacs have learned the principles of living in Sweden through trial and error. In the early 1980s, ethnic Swedes complained that Assyrians were throwing rubbish off their balconies or used communal laundries without waiting their turn.³⁷ Some Swedish residents of Södertälje believed that Assyrians received special state coupons to buy fruit and vegetables, as the Middle Easterners were buying them by crates – they had to feed large families with as many as eight children.³⁸ Many similar cultural misunderstandings arose. One of my interviewees mentioned that in the 1970s it was not possible to buy garlic in a Swedish grocery store:

You couldn't buy garlic in the stores. It was considered medicine. You bought it from the pharmacy. You can hardly cook anything without garlic! Maybe some recipes are better with no garlic... But not many. And then they [Assyrians/Syriacs] understood “We must open our own restaurants and shops in order to survive”. And then the stores started to buy and sell garlic and other stuff. (Syriac male, born in Sweden, 33 years old)

The Swedes were irritated by the Assyrians/Syriacs talking too loudly in the streets, dressing up in gold chains and expensive suits in the middle of the week, and congregating in the streets. Meanwhile, Middle Eastern Christians, especially those applying for a job, wanted to make the best possible impression on their employers, which is why they wore elegant formal clothes. It took them some time to realise that Swedes did not expect it, on the contrary – that it had irritated them as an expression of extravagance. Meanwhile, the Assyrians/Syriacs believed that the Red Cross or the World Council of Churches had built luxury apartments for them, but that the Swedes were hiding them and claiming that housing is difficult to find.³⁹

At present, Assyrians/Syriacs are aware that ethnic Swedes may be tired of some emblems of their presence in public space, and whenever financial opportunities allow, they try to improve existing infrastructure around churches, especially parking lots:

³⁷ *Ibidem*, p. 77.

³⁸ *Ibidem*, p. 78.

³⁹ *Ibidem*, p. 80.

Before, many Swedes were a little bit irritated, they thought it was annoying that so many people came to church and parked many cars on the streets or threw paper or other things on the streets, especially when we went to the cemetery. They got annoyed there too because too many people showed up and because they soiled down the place. But when our people became more numerous and we built new churches, many started to rejoice the fact that we came here from far away countries and brought our faith with us and built churches here. And we were not a burden for them anymore as we had our own facilities. (Syriac male, born in Turkey, 70 years old)

While it is hardly conceivable that bringing the Syriac Orthodox Church to Sweden somehow compensates for the litter on pavements and lawns, the Syriac community is looking forward to further transformations – naming the streets in a way that would reflect the ethnic structure of the city (which would translate into Middle Eastern Christians identifying with the location more strongly and taking better care of it). It was proposed that one of the main streets, Klockarvägen, be called St. Aphrem, but the municipal office rejected the request. In 2004, the bus stop in front of the Cathedral of Saint Aphrem the Syrian, and the adjoining square were both named after the saint. Apparently, some residents did not like this decision; the most extreme expressions of disapproval included defecating in the aforementioned square.⁴⁰

Nevertheless, activities such as naming the square after a fourth century Syriac Orthodox saint and installing a plaque featuring Aramaic and Swedish inscriptions can be interpreted as a manifestation of Michael Billig's "daily 'flagging' of the homeland".⁴¹ Assyrians/Syriacs do indeed view Södertälje as their homeland, and believe in their right to fill the city with symbols important to them – both ephemeral (such as Assyrian, Syriac/Aramean or Chaldean flags in cars) and permanent (such as shop signs, signs and plaques on churches and clubhouses). Swedish authorities and neighbours do not appreciate these emblems of ethnic nationalism, as they associate it with unwanted separatism and with the ghettoisation as described in the press.

Despite some issues, Assyrians/Syriacs appear to be a community that has learned its lesson quite well, particularly when compared to other immigrant groups. One example is the problem of waste segrega-

⁴⁰ Ibidem, p. 131.

⁴¹ Chapter 5, M. Billig, *Banal Nationalism*, London–Thousand Oaks–New Delhi 1995.



Il. 18. The Saint Aphrem Square in Södertälje (photo: MWB)

tion. The Swedes organise special trainings for the newcomers, during which they explain the importance of looking after the environment, and the benefits of sorting rubbish. Assyrians/Syriacs who had come to Sweden years ago learned this well and now they complain about the disorderly behaviour of African immigrants. The problem is especially acute in Fittja, where many different ethnic groups converge:

It's not just the Swedes that want to leave or change their homes because of the immigrants that are coming in, even the ones who have lived here for a long time consider the newcomers as foreigners that have ruined the neighbourhood and want them to leave. It's not strange. It's a trend among us, we are constantly changing houses. We don't want our children to hang around with such and such people. There were many Assyrians living here, now 2/3 has moved away. A lot of Somalis have moved in, it's not a matter of hating anyone, it's a matter of the quality of life and how it has changed. They come from a country with a lower status than Iraq had. Iraq was developed; we are used to a certain standard of life, cleanliness. When others don't respect that, it's a big problem. There are big containers for garbage, instead of opening them and throwing the litter in, they put the garbage outside. All the neighbours are un-

happy and thinking about leaving. Even the government is not cleaning the streets and taking care of garbage, they hire all companies which do not do their job. (Assyrian male, born in Iraq, 52 years old)

Ulf Björklund wrote that Assyrians/Syriacs moved “north to another country” in his analysis of how Swedish norms and standards had clashed with the expectations of a group, for whom isolation was a way of life in the Middle East. This isolation was recreated to some extent in the diaspora; it symbolises a lasting sense of otherness – both religious and socio-cultural – distinguishing this group from the Swedes and from other immigrants. In Södertälje, Assyrians/Syriacs as a group have reverted to diasporic nationalism and seeing themselves as a minority.⁴²

On the other hand, some people are not satisfied with this isolation and plan to move away from the city. For them, leaving a type of an Assyrian/Syriac ghetto is an opportunity to raise their social status and build a better life for their children. If the children attend a school where the majority are ethnic Swedes (which is practically impossible in Södertälje), they will learn to speak better Swedish, which will then boost their career or job prospects. Additionally, they will avoid constant social control. After all, Assyrians/Syriacs are never anonymous in Södertälje and must, to a larger or smaller extent, adapt to the community’s expectations and moral principles.⁴³

5.4. Moral issues and debates

“In Sweden, it is easier to talk about sex than to talk about faith”, said Antje Jackelén, head of the Church of Sweden.⁴⁴ There is a lot of truth in that statement. 71.4% of Swedes believe that premarital sex is completely justified in any circumstances; 59.3% hold the same view about homosexuality, 43.5% – about abortion, and 51% about divorce.⁴⁵ Unfortunately, no analogous study was conducted among Assyrians/Syriacs in Sweden, but my research demonstrates that most of them have come to terms with the fact that neither divorce nor homosexuality are a problem for Swedes. Attitudes towards these is-

⁴² J. Mack, op. cit., p. 51.

⁴³ Ibidem, p. 135.

⁴⁴ A. Nowacka-Isaksson, *Kościół w Szwecji traci wiernych*, “Rzeczpospolita”, 9.08.2016.

⁴⁵ Cited in: Research from 2012, World Values Survey Wave 6: 2010-2014, <http://www.worldvaluessurvey.org/WVSOnline.jsp>, accessed on April 27, 2018.

sues are of interest to Assyrians/Syriacs as well; the number of divorces in the community has gradually risen over the years, especially in the diaspora, where the attitude of the Syriac Orthodox Church has become increasingly forgiving.⁴⁶

Representatives of this Church do not publicly express their views on abortion (my interlocutors believed that it was not a big problem), and even though the Church officially condemns homosexuality, they also do not openly attack it. When Robert Hannah – a young politician of Iraqi descent describing himself as a “non-practicing Assyrian /Chaldean/Syriac” – stood in the Riksdag elections, he was allowed to speak in churches in front of hundreds of Assyrians despite being openly homosexual.⁴⁷ Moreover, the votes he gathered thanks to the church speeches helped him secure his seat; he is now very active in the Swedish parliament, frequently lobbying for the Assyrian cause. This is how a young Assyrian activist from Iraq describes the MP:

Robert is my friend but also a great politician who promotes good values such as equality and human rights, thus everyone should support him. His sexual preferences are of no importance. (Assyrian female, born in Iraq, 23 years old)

Young Chaldeans sometimes explain at school that they have nothing against homosexuals despite the Catholic doctrine. They are aware that adopting a different view would earn them the label of fundamentalists and would likely be ostracised by their peers.⁴⁸ As Catholics, they often feel that in the eyes of Swedish Lutherans they are “inferior”, “less rational” Christians.⁴⁹ On the other hand, Assyrian/Syriac priests, *ex officio*, feel obliged to defend the purity of the doctrine; some indeed believe that it should be underlined that homosexuality is forbid-

⁴⁶ This change should not be taken for granted. For example, the Coptic Orthodox Church maintains its prohibition of divorce in full force, even in the diaspora.

⁴⁷ In addition to Robert Hannah, several other Assyrians/Syriacs decided to ‘come out’, i.e. publicly disclose their sexual orientation. Assyrian activists took part in the Pride Parade in Stockholm in 2015 and 2016. They carried the banner “Proud Assyrians for Human Rights”. Cited in: Pride 2016: Assyrians for human rights, 3.08.2016, <http://www.assyriatv.org/2016/08/pride-2016-assyrians-human-rights/>, accessed on May 6, 2018.

⁴⁸ Interview with a young Chaldean woman, Södertälje, November 24, 2014.

⁴⁹ Swedish textbooks and the media, which often portray Catholics and Muslims in a negative light, are partly to blame for this state of affairs, according to Catholic clergy. Interview with the Catholic Vicar General for Evangelisation, Stockholm, November 27, 2014.

den by the Bible, and that girls should save their virginity until marriage. However, officials of Syriac Churches are aware that a very strict insistence on these principles would probably result in losing many of their faithful. The impact of the Swedish environment means a liberalisation of both the believers and the priests, who feel more inclined to absolve behaviour which would have been severely condemned in the Middle East.

Young Assyrian/Syriac men claim that young women in their community tend to offer assurances of their virginity – which may or may not be true.⁵⁰ Twenty years ago, it was almost unthinkable for young Assyrian/Syriac women to meet, let alone date, young men. Over the last two decades, many attitudes in this sphere have changed, including views on what constitutes decent female attire. At present, Assyrian/Syriac women in Sweden often wear trousers to church (even though they still usually cover their heads with a lace scarf) – two decades back, a dress or skirt was the only acceptable choice.

The mentality changes affecting members of the Assyrian/Syriac community due to extended contact with Swedish society are much deeper – some young people declare that they would accept female priests, even though most cannot see any particular benefit of admitting women to the priesthood. The Chaldeans, on the other hand, are wholly against the idea of ordaining women and fully support the stance of the Roman Catholic Church. Unsurprisingly, senior members of the Assyrian/Syriac community – especially priests – oppose the ordination of female priests, divorce, etc., and traditionally blame the Swedes for a perceived decline of morals. Intergenerational tension in the sphere of moral issues is quite universal – since the dawn of history, the elders have lamented the decline of morals among young people; there are, of course, exceptions to this rule – some young people are more conservative than their parents.

I think that for the older generation such issues [homosexuality, abortion, women priests] are a threat, I think they are rather closed. But the younger generation can understand it, as I told you, the respect for human rights and equal worth, they're aware of those things. Of course it's individual. (Syriac male, born in Lebanon, 45 years old)

In general, Middle Eastern Christians in the diaspora tend to be more open-minded than their brethren who remained in the homeland:

⁵⁰ Interview with an Assyrian politician, Stockholm, May 28, 2014.

We start, for instance, thinking about the role of females, their role in the society, their role in the family. Also we had quite a lot of discussion last year about honour, not about honour killing, but about the family honour, family morals, that has been discussed. So yes, I think it's becoming more and more. Now that we have Assyria TV, we start to discuss subjects that might be taboo 10, 15 years ago. (Assyrian male, born in Sweden, 32 years old)

Priests often opt for "strategic silence" in order not to provoke unwanted reactions from their parishioners. For example, they choose not to discuss abortion:

Here in Sweden, abortion it's something you don't talk about, it's OK... It's not taboo. I know some women who have done it, maybe because some difficulties... The Church says "No", they say "No condom" and nothing like that but they know that everyone uses that... Maybe officially they do [condemn abortion] but I haven't heard anyone, [not even] the priest saying you are not allowed to do abortion... (Assyrian female, born in Sweden, 34 years old)

The tendencies dominant in Western society and values such as individualism and personal happiness have certainly had an influence on the increase of the divorce rate among the Assyrians/Syriacs. Moreover, unlike in the immigrants' countries of origin, divorcees are not ostracised in Sweden:⁵¹

Indeed [Syriac people] get affected, especially when it comes to marriages. Many compare themselves with the Swedes. For the Swedes it is normal to get a divorce while it is much more foreign to us, especially in Church and in the Syriac community. Today if you ask a young man why he wants to separate from his wife, and they have been married for less than a year sometimes, when we ask why, they say: "We don't get along so why should we continue living together? If the Swedes do it, why can't we?". So there are things in the social life of the Swedish society, especially when it comes to family relations and marriage that affect our people a little bit. (Syriac male, born in Turkey, 70 years old)

⁵¹ Interestingly, the divorce rate among Middle Eastern or African couples who emigrated to Sweden is more than double that of ethnic Swedes. According to researchers, women from these regions more often decide to divorce in Sweden, as it is a chance for a better, more peaceful life; besides, they know that they will be able to support themselves. Since 2017, Sweden has been implementing a program to reduce unemployment among immigrant women. Previously, career counselling and free language courses were available. A. Semuels, *When Divorce Is an Opportunity*, "The Atlantic", 9.02.2018, <https://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2018/02/when-divorce-is-an-opportunity/552230/>, accessed on May 6, 2018.

Some respondents perceive secularisation as a serious threat, but the debates taking place in Sweden concerning a variety of moral issues have already had an impact on members of the Assyrian/Syriac community, especially those who had lived in Scandinavia longer. Asked whether Assyrians/Syriacs have changed for the better thanks to the influence of Swedes, the interviewees split into two camps of those who agreed and those who disagreed.

Yes, of course they [Swedes] affect us. I mean there are two kinds of people. The people who are listening and letting themselves to change and accept others and there are people who, if they hear anything about homosexuality for example, they would be like “Nooooo, never... in our culture! What is this?” (Assyrian female, born in Syria, 36 years old)

The Church of Sweden used to preach conservative truths; in Sunday schools, children were taught a non-metaphorical interpretation of the Bible. Ewa Teodorowicz-Hellman shows how the place of Christianity in Swedish primary school curricula has changed over time. The scholar demonstrates the evolution of the subject of class from Luther’s catechesis to the knowledge of religions across the world and lessons on ethical issues. The nature of the subject and its content seem to be determined not only by the secularisation of Swedish society, but also by universal relativism.⁵² Since 2008, the law prohibits teachers from smuggling religious doctrines into lessons devoted to other subjects, especially creationism. On the one hand, some members of the Assyrian/Syriac community condemn the Swedish approach to moral issues and disagree with school policies on subjects such as gender and sexuality:⁵³

In my daughter’s class, the teacher is a Swede. Once he said loud that in the whole Bible there is nothing against homosexuality. Everybody believed him, ‘cause they haven’t read the book. But I had showed my daughter before, so she said “Yes, there is”, and with God’s help she showed the teacher the right page in the Bible. And he blushed. What would happen if there wasn’t this little girl, who could challenge him? He would have brainwashed the whole class, all 30 students. That’s scary. (Assyrian male, born in Iraq, 52 years old)

⁵² E. Teodorowicz-Hellman, *op. cit.*, p. 55.

⁵³ Similarly, Chaldeans in the United States feel they are in moral danger due to a lack of respect for the unborn, a different understanding of marriage, and a general lack of respect for Christian values. Cf. *Iraq’s Refugees After War, Chaldean Catholics Face Moral Risks in United States*, “Signs of the Times”, 4–11.06.2012, p. 6.

On the other hand, many young Assyrians/Syriacs approve of these changes – particularly the issue of greater equality of women and men – and believe that their community will in time behave increasingly like their Swedish hosts:

In Sweden, men and women are equal. But among our people the women have some obligations, and the men have others. In future, we will be like the Swedish people. My grandmother didn't work, her job was to raise the children. And my mother had to raise the children but at the same time she had to work, so she made my dad help at home. My fiancée helps at home, so he will also help at our home. (Chaldean female, born in Sweden, 21 years old)

5.5. Relationship with the Church of Sweden

Although the Church of Sweden is the seventh most trusted institution in the country,⁵⁴ religiosity itself plays a very limited role in Sweden and is certainly considered a matter of individual choice and conscience. In the Swedish context, the term “Christian” means a member of a community of believers, rather than an individual who behaves in a certain way and follows a set of norms. Herbert Tingsten argues that the great majority of Swedish Christians are Christians in name only, as they do not accept Christian doctrines and do not attend mass.⁵⁵ The term “post-Christians”⁵⁶ seems to be more appropriate in this context. In 2009, when asked whether religion is important in their daily lives, only 17% of Swedes replied in the affirmative.⁵⁷ Religious topics are rarely covered by the Swedish mass media. Swedish schools, uniquely in Europe, apply “objective”, or factual, teaching of religion, making it *de facto* religious studies. Sweden is indeed one of the most secularised countries in the world, but its citizens are not hostile to religion or to clergy – indifference is the dominant attitude.⁵⁸

⁵⁴ A. Nowacka-Isaksson, op. cit.

⁵⁵ Cited in: R.F. Thomasson, *Religion is Irrelevant in Sweden*, [in:] *Religion in Radical Transition*, ed. J.K. Hadden, New Jersey 1973, p. 115. The smallest number of Swedes attend Sunday mass in Stockholm – 1.1%. The overall statistics are raised by the rural parishes in the north of the country, where about 6% attend church regularly. Ibidem, p. 133.

⁵⁶ M. Martinson, *The Irony of Religious Studies. A Pro-theological Argument from the Swedish Experience*, [in:] *Theology and Religious Studies in Higher Education: Global Perspectives*, ed. D.L. Bird, S.G. Smith, London 2009, p. 83.

⁵⁷ S. Crabtree, *Religiosity Highest in World's Poorest Nations*, “Gallup”, 31.08.2010, <http://news.gallup.com/poll/142727/religiosity-highest-world-poorest-nations.aspx>, accessed on May 2, 2018.

⁵⁸ R.F. Thomasson, op. cit., pp. 111–112.

Despite the steadily decreasing number of the active faithful, the Church of Sweden remains involved in many social initiatives, supports minority rights and assists asylum seekers. Officials of the Church of Sweden often express their criticism of instances of social injustice; for example, Bishop Anders Wejryd is one of the authors of a new report describing the problems of ethnic minorities in Sweden.⁵⁹ Recently, the Church of Sweden has been attempting to address the problem of the homeless Roma.⁶⁰ Katarzyna Górak-Sosnowska points out an interesting correlation: Western European societies which are more open to Roma peoples tend to be more friendly to Muslims, as well as to other minorities – homosexual, HIV-positive people, or people suffering from mental illnesses.⁶¹

The relationship between the Swedish state and the Church – as described in Chapter One – is very different from that relationship in the Middle East; therefore, Middle Eastern Churches must learn to navigate in a new environment. Firstly, they need to develop a relationship with the state, keep in mind that none of them are among the eight officially recognised denominations, and learn to apply for funds. Secondly, Middle Eastern Churches should maintain good relations with the Church of Sweden. This was not difficult in the past: the Church of Sweden used to extend help to Christian immigrants, and the Middle Eastern Churches graciously accepted.

In time, mutual relations have become considerably more difficult due to growing differences in attitude to such issues as divorce, homosexuality and the priesthood of women. In the 20th century, the Church of Sweden quickly liberalised its position on the above issues,⁶² while the Middle Eastern Churches have remained conservative.

⁵⁹ K. Tubylewicz, *Kościół może być też taki...*

⁶⁰ According to government estimates, in 2014 there were about 4000 of them. In interviews they said that they would prefer to stay in Romania but begging in Sweden earned them twice as much – on average, 1000 EUR a month. They demanded admission of their children to Swedish schools, free healthcare and benefits. I. Carlqvist, *Sweden: A Beggar on Every Corner*, "Gatestone Institute", 9.04.2016, <https://www.gatestoneinstitute.org/7782/sweden-roma-beggars>, accessed on May 3, 2018.

⁶¹ K. Górak-Sosnowska, *Muslims in Europe: different communities, one discourse? Adding the Central and Eastern European Perspective*, [in:] *Muslims in Poland and Eastern Europe. Widening the European Discourse on Islam*, ed. eadem, Warsaw 2011, p. 19.

⁶² The most recent example of this liberalisation may be an instruction for the pastors of the Church of Sweden not to use the pronoun "He" and the term "Lord" when speaking of God as a way of conveying a theological principle: God is above gender divisions. L. Smith, *Church of Sweden to stop using 'he' and 'Lord' in push for gender-neutral*

Dialogue is not made easier by the fact that almost half of the pastors of the Church of Sweden are women. From the perspective of most Oriental Churches, women are ritually unclean, in Orthodox temples – as it was previously mentioned – women are not even permitted to approach the altars. It is therefore difficult to imagine common prayers or deeper forms of cooperation. Furthermore, Middle Eastern Churches do not allow same-sex marriage, believing that it is forbidden by the Bible. Thus, pastoral paths of Oriental Churches and the Church of Sweden increasingly diverge, despite many efforts on the part of the latter to overcome mutual differences and to offer assistance, particularly to the newly arrived from the Middle East.

Church structures and high-level Church officials make many ecumenical efforts, but at the lower levels of the structure, few parishioners are aware of it. With the exception of a few people deeply engaged in dialogue with other religions, Middle Eastern Christians in Sweden live in religious bubbles. This fact has been noticed by the Church of Sweden, which is trying to counteract – specialised divisions of the Church dealing with refugees and ecumenical relations have operated since the 1990s.⁶³

The sharing, or subletting, of premises was an essential element of the ecumenical relationship between Syriac Churches and the Church of Sweden in the first years after the arrival of large groups of Assyrians/Syriacs. They built their own churches relatively quickly, although they still occasionally rent places of worship. My interviewees, laypeople and clerics alike, did not have much to say about relations with the Church of Sweden in the 1980s. The only respondent who expressed a lot of gratitude to the Church of Sweden was a Syriac Orthodox deacon of Swedish origin. Nevertheless, even he criticised it for making too many far-reaching concessions to the state and for compromising on its true doctrine. This view is shared by many Assyrians/Syriacs in Sweden:

Well, regarding the Church of Sweden, I think that everybody, including patriarch Zakka Iwas and everybody who is Syriac Orthodox, realises what help and great love the Church of Sweden gave to Syriac

language, “Independent”, 24.11.2017, <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/europe/church-of-sweden-gender-neutral-language-he-lord-god-evangelical-lutheran-church-a8073426.html>, accessed on May 2, 2018.

⁶³ Interview with a deacon of the Church of Sweden responsible for migration and integration, Stockholm, November 27, 2014.

Orthodox Community when we first came here. Until this day we rent the churches for different services when we don't have our own church. And we have found there a great deal of respect and great deal of understanding. (...) However, the Church of Sweden's problem is that the politicians and the state have directed or led the Church in a secularised way, i.e. by enforcing women priests. (Swedish male belonging to the Syriac Orthodox Church, 31 years old)

A Syriac Orthodox priest, on the other hand, noted that relations between his Church and the Church of Sweden had been better in the past, which he attributed to the fact that Syriac Orthodox immigrants were a kind of attraction for Swedes in the 1980s:

Before we had more relations. Now they have decreased a bit because we have so many churches. Before we had few churches so they wanted to see our Church liturgy, our culture, our prayers so they invited us to their churches, they asked us to bring the girls from our choir and invited us to hold services together. They also wanted the priest, meaning me, to read the Bible in Syriac or read Psalms in Syriac. In 1982, it was my first year as a priest here, they invited us to Uppsala to Domkyrkan, the big church. I brought the girls from the choir and they gathered Swedes, Serbians and Armenians too and we sang Psalms in our languages and we read the Bible in all of our languages. That was the first time, and another time we went to Tyresö⁶⁴ to do the same thing but then it was only our Church and choir together with the Church of Tyresö.

The same priest noticed that the wish to establish relations has usually come from the pastors of the Church of Sweden, and has mostly concerned Syriac liturgical traditions:

Here in Botkyrka, the first Swedish priest that worked here, his name was X. He liked to attend the service in our [Syriac] church. We were neighbours so the priest came and said that he would like to learn about how we prepare the holy communion (*faghro*). He wanted to learn that tradition. And often, as long as he was working, we were organising services together, sometimes in the church of Norsborg centre and sometimes in Botkyrka church. When he left the area and a new priest came, we had relations but not as much as before.

However, some good relations have survived until the present day, for example, the Easter celebrations organised jointly in some parishes:

Very often when Protestant and Orthodox Easter happens on the same day, we organise a kind of demonstration: we walk together from Botkyrka

⁶⁴ A Swedish municipality in the Stockholm region.

church carrying crosses and lanterns and singing psalms in different languages. We walk from Botkyrka church to the church of Norsborg, before we used to walk to the church of Norsborg but now we walk to this church [in Hallunda] and from here we walk to Saint Georgis. We walk to show the people that the Christians are one despite different fractions: the Protestants, Catholics and Orthodox – we all believe in Jesus and we have one belief/religion. (Syriac male, born in Turkey, 70 years old)

5.6. Ecumenical relations on a national level

Ecumenical activity at the national level has been given an organisational framework through the Christian Council of Sweden (*Sveriges Kristna Råd*).⁶⁵ It was established in 1992 as a new ecumenical body with a broad membership base and new functions compared to its predecessor, the Ecumenical Council of Sweden (*Svenska Ekumeniska Nämnden*) which had operated since 1932. The Christian Council of Sweden supports global justice, fair trade, and runs a variety of projects with schools, hospitals, prisons, and universities. I interviewed the ecumenical coordinator on behalf of Orthodox Churches in Sweden,⁶⁶ whose main task is to mediate between two traditions: Oriental and Orthodox. On the subject of ecumenical activities on a national level, he frankly presented his view concerning Orthodox Christians in Sweden:

I would say that still the Orthodox are rather inactive. They are very occupied with their own Churches. They live in their own ethnic backyards or enclaves. So a big task is to make... I think, we have to make one Church.⁶⁷

In fact, the vast majority of members of the Syriac Orthodox Church are not interested in Churches other than their own – they have limited knowledge about other Middle Eastern Christian communities. For example, many Assyrians/Syriacs refer to Copts as “Arabs” (the Copts reciprocate the prejudice by calling Assyrians/Syriacs “Turks”).⁶⁸ Against this backdrop, a conversation of two Iraqi Assyrian ladies I heard at a bus stop in Södertälje was an interesting exception: when one

⁶⁵ <http://en.skr.org/>.

⁶⁶ There are twelve of them, and they belong to both the Oriental and Byzantine (Orthodox) traditions.

⁶⁷ Interview with the Ecumenical Coordinator for the Orthodox Churches, Christian Council of Sweden, Stockholm, November 25, 2014.

⁶⁸ Interview with a Copt, Södertälje, March 10, 2014.

of the women confessed that her child had lost its hearing in an explosion, the other advised her to seek a *baraka* (Arabic: blessing) from a Coptic *abba* (Arabic: father, priest) as the Copts are known to possess healing powers. Everyday conversations between members of the Syriac Orthodox community demonstrated their pride, and sometimes, ignorance (the Copts have their own temples in Sweden, but are not as numerous or wealthy as Syriac Orthodox Churches):

If you take our [Syriac Orthodox] Church in Sweden, we have many big churches. Yes, we are the most powerful Church and there are many other people who come to our church. I don't know exactly how many Coptic people come to our church because they don't have their own churches. (Assyrian male, born in Sweden, 24 years old)

Cultural superiority is also manifested by the aesthetic assessment of the temples of other rites. My Assyrian colleague who accompanied me during my visit to the Coptic Church of St. Mina said that it used to look much better when it had been an Assyrian church dedicated to Saint Jacob. Other people underlined a distinction between similarities on a religious level and cultural similarities, and explained they felt culturally closer to Greeks and Armenians:

For example the Copts – I know that some Orthodox Syriacs believe that we are very close to them. In the term of religion, we go to the church, 'ahh this is similar, but culturally? No. Not culturally. We have different backgrounds. Culturally, we are more like Armenians. Some Syriacs feel culturally close to Greeks as well, because you can see similarities – we have similar churches and culture. (Syriac male, born in Sweden, 32 years old)

The pastor of the Swedish Missionary Covenant Church, who maintains very good relations with the Copts (who – in his view – represent “a minority Church”), believes that members of the Syriac Orthodox Church (a “majority Church” in Södertälje) are not interested in ecumenical dialogue with minority groups in general – not only with the Copts, but also with other minorities, such as the Mandeans,⁶⁹ despite the good intentions of the latter:

Mandeans, they prefer to call themselves ‘cousins of Christians’. But I noticed among the Syriacs, well, the Syriacs don't consider them co-

⁶⁹ More information about the Mandeans: W.P. Turek, *Mandajczy – wczoraj i dziś*, [in:] *Niemuzułmańskie mniejszości Iraku. Historia – kultura – problemy przetrwania*, ed. M. Abdalla, Poznań 2005, pp. 53–62.

usins at all. And they think that they are different and so on. They can't recognise this phenomenon that we all are humans.⁷⁰

The respondents had varying views on ecumenical relations. As the two quotes below demonstrate, often, even members of a single parish – in this case, the Chaldean Church of Saint John in Södertälje – see the situation quite differently:

We have good relation with the other Oriental Christians. It's not a problem. We have no relations with the Swedish Church. I don't know why. We tried but... it didn't work. (Chaldean male, born in Iraq, 35 years old)

We don't have good relations to the other – the Syriac Catholic, the Aramean Catholic. Because, first of all, their mass is in another language. We speak Chaldean, they speak Aramaic and Arabic, another speak Syriac and Arabic. And secondly, the priests don't cooperate. (Chaldean male, born in Sweden, 23 years old)

The first statement relates to the 1990s, when the relationship between the Assyrian Church of the East and the Chaldean Catholic Church was established – in 1996, the Assyrian Patriarch Mar Dinkha signed a cooperation agreement with the Chaldean Patriarch Raphael I Bidawid in Southfield, Michigan, USA. The conflict between the Assyrian Church of the East and the Syriac Orthodox Church only ended in the late 20th century.⁷¹ At a meeting in 1997, patriarchs Mar Dinkha and Ignatios Zakka I agreed to establish a bilateral commission whose task was to bring the two Churches closer together; they soon annulled the mutual anathemas that had been in effect for centuries. Relations between Syriac Orthodox Christians and other Oriental Christian Churches – Coptic, Armenian and Ethiopian – had improved much earlier.⁷² Additionally, in 1960 the Syriac Orthodox Church became a member of the World Council of Churches (WCC)⁷³ and one of the founding members of the Middle East Council of Churches (MECC).⁷⁴

Interestingly, the second respondent suggests that Aramaic dialects (Syriac or Chaldean) are separate languages which cannot be mutually understood, and draws attention to the lack of interest in deeper coop-

⁷⁰ Interview with the pastor of the Mission church, Södertälje, March 12, 2014.

⁷¹ L. Dzięgiel, *Asyria zmartwychwstała...*, p. 121.

⁷² *Ecumenical Relations of the Syriac Orthodox Church*, <http://sor.cua.edu/Ecumenism/index.html>, accessed on May 30, 2018.

⁷³ <https://www.oikoumene.org/en>.

⁷⁴ <http://mecc.org/>.

eration on the part of priests. Nevertheless, some examples of ecumenical commitment at the national level can be found. The most interesting initiatives are connected to the establishment of St. Ignatius College (*Sankt Ignatios Folkhögskola*). Initially, this institution operated as part of Botkyrka college. In 2016, it became independent, state-funded college and established own campus in Södertälje. In 2018, it started collaboration with Stockholm School of Theology (University College Stockholm), one of Scandinavia's most prestigious theological schools. Sankt Ignatios teaches Orthodox theology and combines the Byzantine (Greek and Slavic), the Syriac, the Coptic and the Tewahedo (Eritrean-Ethiopian) traditions.⁷⁵ This is how the college was described by the sole secular member of its Board:

I am in the board, together with the bishops. So there are five bishops and me. (...) So actually that's a very interesting initiative that we... the Churches have done together. It's a quite unique initiative internationally even, when the Eastern and Oriental Churches together try to have a meeting place, or where also we can have some common views on issues in the society as Orthodox Churches. Because normally we are too weak to... We are not so many. (Syriac male, born in Turkey, 32 years old)

Another institution where the Syriac Orthodox faithful can deepen their knowledge is the Jesuit Newman Institute in Uppsala.⁷⁶ Religious Assyrians/Syriacs sometimes point to their closeness to Catholics, who seem to wish to combine spirituality and theology, just as Orthodox Christians do. The deacon of the Syriac Orthodox Church in Stockholm believes that this sets them apart from the Protestant majority in Sweden:

One of our goals is to develop theological studies since a lot of us have come to Sweden, Germany, Switzerland, Italy, United States. But when we check how many of our priests have studied theology in Europe or in North America or South America, there's not that many. We still have this traditional way of studying in the monasteries in homelands so... we want to show them that there's a Western way (...). There are a lot of places where you can study but we've chosen to study in the Newman Institute, the Catholic-Jesuit one. Since we feel that they are pretty close to our cultural life and spirituality. That's important to stay close to tradition and another reason why we chose them

⁷⁵ <https://www.sanktignatios.org/our-story/>.

⁷⁶ The Newman Institute for Catholic Studies offers courses in theology, philosophy and culture in Swedish and English. It was founded by the Jesuits in 2001. Its patron, Cardinal John Henry Newman (1801–1890) was an English philosopher and writer. *Newmaninstitutet*, <http://newman.se/>, accessed on May 18, 2018.

[the Newman Institute] is... we have become closer to Catholics but not to Protestants in theology. It's because we don't separate spirituality and theology. They both belong to us. When you study with Protestants, my experience is you don't have to have faith and you don't have to have spirituality, it doesn't matter [for them]. (Syriac male, born in Sweden, 23 years old)

Historically, the Assyrian Church of the East used to have a much closer relationship with the Church of Sweden. Even now the two occasionally cooperate, although the Assyrian side is disappointed to find out that in the relationship between Church and state, the state – represented by the government and secular institutions – ultimately makes the decisions, even those concerning Middle Eastern Christians:

We have a lot of cooperation with different Churches, mostly Swedish Lutheran and “Syrianer” [Syriac Orthodox]. There was a time when they [Swedish government] were kicking our Christians from Sweden. The Swedish Church was with us 100% but not the government. They kind of let us down. About 5 years ago all the Churches stood together, 10 000-12 000 people went out demonstrating for this and the Swedish Church and the bishop from their side as well as the Assyrians, Syriacs and Chaldeans and all the heads of Churches were together united for this issue, trying to keep the Assyrians here. They wrote a very serious and strong letter to the Migration Office. And the answer was: “We have nothing to do with this, it's the government, if you can affect them”... And then they [the representatives of Assyrian case] went there and saw the ministers. They [the ministers] were all positive, they all wanted to support and help but then nothing happened since we didn't really know who was in charge of this. The Church was helpful but the government could have done more. The Church is not as strong in Sweden as it used to be. There aren't many believers. Nowadays, the Swedish priests try to help but nothing happens. (Assyrian male, born in Iraq, 52 years old)

5.7. Ecumenical relations at a local level

A few decades ago, Assyrians/Syriacs were a new and interesting group from the point of view of the Church of Sweden. However, now they have an extensive infrastructure with more issues than at the beginning – for example, the Syriac Orthodox Church deals with new immigrants from Syria, while the Church of Sweden is committed to helping Roma beggars from Romania and Bulgaria.⁷⁷ It is difficult

⁷⁷ Interview with a deacon of the Church of Sweden responsible for migration and integration, Stockholm, November 27, 2014.

to track the development of relations between Syriac Churches and the Church of Sweden at a local level.⁷⁸ At this level, contacts between different Middle Eastern Churches are much more frequent, especially in the sphere of interfaith weddings and funerals of people whose families belong to different rites:

Yesterday, during the funeral we were four priests: two Chaldean, one Syriac Catholic, one Syriac Orthodox. Sometimes I call the Syriac priest or they call me to help with prayers. Next month, I will have three mixed marriages – the couples are Catholic-Orthodox. It's normal but in the light of canon law, I have to ask people in front of what priest they want to be married. I say my prayer, other [priest] says other prayer, but we arrange everything together. (Chaldean male, born in Iraq, 71 years old)

On some occasions, ecumenical relations take the form of joint demonstrations for common causes – in defence of individuals, places, in protest against violence or injustice:

Everyone has their own little church where they gather and see friends and family. On big occasions it does happen that they come here. When they [Syriac Orthodox] had their demonstrations for their bishop, we [members of the Assyrian Church of the East] were out with them demonstrating. When two bishops were kidnapped in Syria,⁷⁹ we were with them [Syriac Orthodox] at the demonstration against violence. That's unity. (Assyrian male, born in Iraq, 52 years old)

In recent years, a few grassroots initiatives have emerged in Södertälje with the aim of ending the Assyrian-Syriac dispute, at least at the level of Churches. My respondents noticed some positive changes in a local context:

Actually something new has started to happen here in this town. Because there is a group of people representing Mar Aphrem, Mar Jacob, Mar Gabriel and Mar Thoma. These four [Syriac Orthodox] churches. The old people have a small group and the young people have a small group. I don't know much about this because I've done something else, but it's only about these local churches coming together and doing stuff together. (Assyrian male, born in Sweden, 26 years old)

⁷⁸ For example, in Södertälje, a person was employed to revitalise these relations – symptomatically, a young laywoman. Interview with the representative of the Church of Sweden appointed for ecumenical contacts, Södertälje, March 26, 2014.

⁷⁹ On April 22, 2013, in Syria, near the Turkish border, two Orthodox bishops – the Syriac Orthodox archbishop of Aleppo Yohanna Ibrahim, and the Greek Orthodox archbishop of Aleppo Paul Yazigi were kidnapped. 5 years later their fate was still unknown.

Some Middle Eastern Christians attend churches of other denominations, especially ones with similar rites and traditions, and especially if their own temple is located further away. In almost every congregation, several families formally belong to a different denomination. In addition, occasional mixed marriages occur (for example, Assyrian/Syriac-Swedish). A Syriac Orthodox priest commented at length on the longevity of such relationships:

95% of the [Syriac] people marry Syriacs and 5% marry Swedes, Chileans, Polish and so on. But most of those who marry non-Syriacs end up leaving each other, most of them divorce after a few years. But I have observed that the girls who marry Swedes stay more often in the relationship than men who marry Swedes. And many of the Swedish men who marry Syriac women embrace our traditions, they become pretty much Syriacs, they like getting a new baptism because they get baptised in Protestant churches with only water so we complete their baptism by oiling them with myrrh and they come to the church and they like our traditions and culture very much. Some even take handicapped girls and they live with them, and take care of them and they get children too. Swedish men don't divorce handicapped girls. A Syriac man does not marry handicapped girl no matter how beautiful she is.

The main source of tension arising between individual Churches is the fear of proselytism – mutual attempts at conversion. From the point of view of Assyrian/Syriac priests, the activity of Pentecostals, whose religious offer is tempting, is very problematic, especially when directed at young members of the Syriac Orthodox Church:

Some people from the community converted to Pentecostal Church and even became pastors. And they preach to our members that infant baptism is wrong and so forth. So they have created a lot of tensions and problems. This is the main reason why we have such attitude towards them. But of course, you can find the positive examples from the Pentecostal Church as well. For instance X. has written a lot of books about the Church Fathers. He's a Pentecostal pastor but he shows a great respect to the Orthodox and to the Catholics and tries to create a better understanding. But many Pentecostals view the Catholics or Orthodox as non-Christians who need to be re-evangelised... (Swedish male belonging to the Syriac Orthodox Church, 31 years old)

The pastor of the Swedish Missionary Church is aware that Syriac Orthodox priests fear the proselytism of Protestant Churches. He also speaks openly about the challenges that arise in relations with Oriental Christians – alongside other disagreements, a bone of contention is the position of women and their role in the Church:

We have relations with the Syriac Orthodox Church, but it is quite closed, not transparent. And they sometimes feel that we are taking their members, which is not true, because we have only addressed those who are Evangelical Christians. We have relations with the Copts, and it is much easier. They are open, they are more interested in our culture and in our traditions and they are more open to female pastors. We have female pastors here. And when they meet my colleague X., they are very open, very polite and they ask for her help! And that's great. They trust her as a woman, as a human being, as a pastor. And that would never happen in the case of the Syriac Orthodox Church. Once I went there and I was in my lay clothes and X. wore the pastoral robe. When they saw me, they greeted me "Hello, pastor. It's nice that you brought your co-worker to help here". They didn't address her as a pastor.⁸⁰

Representatives of the Church of Sweden also mention that the Middle Eastern Christians' refusal to recognise women as priests is a problem. It is a major obstacle for mutual relations, especially since male pastors are not always interested in ecumenical activities, which require in-depth directional knowledge.⁸¹ Interestingly, some Lutheran clerics hope that in time, Middle Eastern Churches will reform and ordain women. This was expressed by one of the Lutheran deacons:

I hope so. I hope so very much. Because it will make a difference in teaching, I think. And women know other aspects of life and it would add something to the Orthodox Church.⁸²

A friend of my interlocutor, also a pastor serving in Rinkeby, an immigrant district of Stockholm, told me that Syriac Orthodox priests did not permit divorced Assyrians/Syriacs to sing in the choir, probably treating this activity as an honour reserved for parishioners with an untarnished moral reputation. Stigmatised in their own Church, some women preferred to attend mass in the Church of Sweden instead.⁸³

⁸⁰ Interview with the pastor of the Mission church, Södertälje, March 12, 2014.

⁸¹ For example, in a special school educating adult immigrants in Hagaberg, attempts were made to organise ecumenical masses for Lutherans and Middle Eastern Christians, which was particularly important to the director of the institution, but the problem was to find a male minister who would take on the task. There were many willing female pastors. Interview with a teacher at the Hagaberg school, Södertälje, November 6, 2014.

⁸² Interview with a deacon of the Church of Sweden, Stockholm, November 27, 2014.

⁸³ Interview with the pastor of the Church of Sweden in Rinkeby, Stockholm, November 21, 2014.

5.8. Relations with Muslims

For Middle Eastern Christians, relations with Muslims have always been of the utmost importance. On arriving in Sweden, many Assyrians/Syriacs imagined Swedes as fellow Christians waiting for them with open arms; they assumed that Muslim immigrants would be either sent back or at worst, treated equally with other immigrants. The reality turned out to be different. Complaints from Assyrians/Syriacs soon followed: many complained that Muslims were granted more residence permits than they – the persecuted and oppressed Christians.⁸⁴ In fact, the Swedish authorities did not intend to favour any specific group or apply religious criteria – geographical factors are used to categorise migrants. This was evident in the appointment of a special official in 2012, responsible for contacting both Muslims and Middle Eastern Christians by the aforementioned Swedish Agency for Support to Faith Communities (SST).⁸⁵

Instances of intimidation of Middle Eastern Christians by Muslims in Swedish refugee centres have made things worse. In February 2016, Swedish radio broadcast a programme about two Iranian Christian women who had been harassed by a group of Muslims. The Östra Småland newspaper reported that a group of Christian refugees from Iraq and Syria had been forced to leave the Kalmar refugee centre because of Muslim-instigated violence. In the same city, a 26-year-old Muslim who claimed to have fought jihadists in Syria threatened to cut the throat of a Christian refugee. He was given a suspended sentence and obliged to pay a fine of 8000 Krona (900 USD) – a relatively modest punishment which signalled that the authorities do not wish to get involved in disputes between asylum seekers. The Swedish Migration Office does not intend to open special centres for Middle Eastern Christians, although it had agreed to open four centres for LGBT refugees.⁸⁶ The Assyrian journalist and activist Nuri Kino, who has publicised the problem in a series of articles in the Swedish and international

⁸⁴ U. Björklund, *op. cit.*, p. 118.

⁸⁵ Myndigheten för stöd till trossamfund, *Handläggare för kontakt med ortodoxa och muslimska samfund: presentation*, <https://www.myndighetsst.se/om-oss/nyheter/nyhetsarkiv-aktuellt/2012-05-14-handlaggare-for-kontakt-med-ortodoxa-och-muslimska-samfund-presentation.html>, accessed on May 18, 2018.

⁸⁶ J. Rudolfsson, *Christian Refugees Persecuted in Sweden*, “Providence. A Journal of Christianity & American Foreign Policy”, 9.03.2016, <https://providencemag.com/2016/03/christian-refugees-persecuted-sweden/>, accessed on May 22, 2018.

press, is attempting to create a private centre for Christian refugees;⁸⁷ his project is supported by the Swedish Evangelical Society.⁸⁸

Members of the Assyrian/Syriac community find it difficult to accept that, like the Swedish secular organisations dealing with migrants, the Church of Sweden does not intend to categorise refugees on the basis of their religion, and has always been interested in dialogue with Christians from the Middle East as much as with the followers of Islam (or indeed more interested in the latter). A speech made by the Bishop of Stockholm, Eva Brunne, appealing to temporarily open one of the Lutheran churches to people of other faiths can be treated as extreme, but symptomatic. In 2015, the bishop suggested removing Christian symbols from the temple and marking the direction of Mecca on the temple floor.⁸⁹

Other Protestant Churches are also open to Muslims and occasionally try to mediate between them and Middle Eastern Christians. The Swedish Missionary Church of the Covenant in Södertälje once launched an initiative to organise interfaith meetings for Middle Eastern Christians and Muslims, but the project failed:

We invited Muslim People for Peace. It's a movement in Sweden. We invited them to our church because we wanted to have this multicultural, ecumenical meeting with Christians and Muslims from the Middle East. And it ended up in a catastrophe... Because of hundreds years of oppression and hundreds years of distrust... It collapsed. It was very, very sad and tough situation. Very aggressive. For most Christians from the Middle East Islam is a big problem.⁹⁰

In general, Assyrians/Syriacs tend to fear Muslims and avoid them. This is not difficult in Södertälje, where Muslims are few in number (they tend to select locations close to mosques and larger groups of their fellow believers).⁹¹ Muslims living in Södertälje, especially

⁸⁷ In one of the articles, he cited data from the Open Doors report "Violence Against Christian Refugees in German Accommodations for Asylum Seekers" from May 2016, according to which three-quarters of Christian asylum seekers experienced persecution in Germany. N. Kino, *They Are Persecuted Again – This Time in Europe*, "HuffPost", 19.05.2016, https://www.huffingtonpost.com/nuri-kino/they-are-persecuted-again_b_10027104.html, accessed on May 22, 2018.

⁸⁸ J. Rudolfsson, op. cit.

⁸⁹ A. Nowacka-Isaksson, op. cit.

⁹⁰ Interview with the pastor of the Mission church, Södertälje, March 12, 2014.

⁹¹ According to various estimates, there are between 350 000 and 810 000 Muslims in Sweden. The most important mosques were built in Malmö (1984), Uppsala (1995), Stockholm (2000), Umeå (2006) and Fittja (2007). See more: M. Woźniak, *Czy mu-*

Somalis, complain about harassment from Middle Eastern Christians; cases of harassment and even assault were confirmed by local police and the Swedish media. For example, in its “Mission: Investigate” (*Uppdrag Granskning*) series, the SVT station broadcast a report about attacks on mosques, in which temples were set on fire or desecrated (incidents included a pig’s head being thrown into the building); according to journalists, the main suspects of these acts of vandalism were Syrian Orthodox. Young Assyrians/Syriacs were also accused of throwing stones and eggs at Muslim homes.⁹² The Assyrian/Syriac community felt offended and protested against this portrayal on Swedish television – a petition sent to the board was signed by 2200 people.⁹³

The head of the Democracy and Diversity Department at the Södertälje municipality office was one of the few respondents not afraid to discuss Assyrian/Syriac Islamophobia – most Swedish officials avoid this sensitive subject. According to my interlocutor, the problem is serious, especially in the Hovsjö district, and requires special measures. She herself implemented several programs to prevent the situation from worsening, including organised meetings of representatives of various religions.⁹⁴

Many Christians in this municipality came from countries where they were extremely Islamophobic... It all came to a very burning point in 2010... On the 7th of September, five Muslim women were harassed – they [Assyrians/Syriacs] threw some stones at them. The women were from the Middle East [and Africa], not all of them were from Somalia. So these women were harassed and this was not the first time and this was not the last. (...) [Assyrians/Syriacs] do their physiological need and when they go to the toilet they put it in the plastic bag and throw it in the mailbox [of some Muslims] and this is [still] nothing. One and half year

zulfmanie mogą być „lagom”? Różne oblicza islamu w Szwecji, [in:] *Islam w Europie. Bogactwo różnorodności czy źródło konfliktów?*, ed. M. Widy-Behiesse, Warsaw 2012, pp. 231–243.

⁹² *Muslimhat känslig fråga i Södertälje*, SVT, <https://www.svt.se/nyheter/granskning/ug/muslimhat-kanslig-fraga-i-sodertalje>, accessed on May 3, 2018.

⁹³ Authors of the petition expressed their sadness at unfair generalisations on Swedish TV about their ethnic group. According to them, Islamophobia is a problem of individuals, not of the community, and such programs only fuel a spiral of inter-faith hatred. *Namninsamling efter Uppdrag granskning om islamofobi*, <https://www.svt.se/nyheter/inrikes/namninsamling-efter-uppdrag-granskning-om-islamofobi>, accessed on May 3, 2018.

⁹⁴ They are held every two months, the mayor of Södertälje participates in them alongside representatives of twenty Christian denominations, Muslims and Mandeans. Interview with the mayor of Södertälje, Södertälje, June 3, 2014.

ago, Somali lady, pregnant and walking with five kids, was attacked by five [Assyrian/Syriac] teenagers who grabbed her, opened her mouth and spitted in it.⁹⁵ And three weeks ago they vandalised local house where the Muslims usually gather.⁹⁶

Although the Syriac Orthodox Bishop Benjamin Atas officially condemned Islamophobia, adding that the Christian requirement to “love thy neighbour” applies to Muslims,⁹⁷ the overwhelming majority of my respondents view the followers of Islam through the prism of problems such as Seyfo, the political struggle for historical recognition by Turkey, and the activities of the so-called Islamic State. They do not understand why Sweden defends the rights of the Muslim minority and, in their view, does not care about the Christian majority⁹⁸. Some would like to warn the “naïve” Swedes and defend them against the “bloodthirsty” followers of Islam:

They [Swedes] bring Muslims from all over the world, from Somalia, Middle East, Albania... What they're doing is they are letting the conflict from the Middle East to continue here, yes. And also the Christian culture is threatened... “Stop talking about Christianity or we're gonna kill you”. But when you do same thing with the Muslim culture and religion, Muslims threaten you: “We're gonna kill you”. (Chaldean male, born in Iraq, 31 years old)

Swedes involved in helping Christian immigrants are aware of these feelings but believe that these attitudes can be changed through discourse. In Swedish schools, pupils' religion is not registered – only their mother tongue. The head of a school teaching Swedish to adults in Södertälje, half of whom speak Arabic in their daily life, described the attitudes of the students:

Our students feel that they have been forced to leave the country because they're Christians. I was talking to some students and they said “You don't have to tell us about treating other religions equally. We know what it is, we were not treated equally”. And I answered “I have full respect for your previous experiences. I'm only explaining the legislation in Sweden”. We had various discussions and a few topics but the one con-

⁹⁵ They were convicted for this both by the district court and the appellate court. Most Assyrians/Syriacs in Södertälje do not believe in the guilt of the teenagers and consider the story a fabrication. *Muslimbat känslig fråga i Södertälje...*

⁹⁶ Interview with the Director of the Diversity, Human Rights, Gender Equality and Churches Department in Södertälje, Södertälje, November 3, 2014.

⁹⁷ *Muslimbat känslig fråga i Södertälje...*

⁹⁸ F. McCallum, *Shared Religion but Still a Marginalized Other...*

cerning religion was actually very, very difficult, because of very strong personal experiences of many students.⁹⁹

Several respondents admitted that their community is familiar with anti-Muslim prejudices and feelings. They felt that because of negative personal experience, the older generation of Assyrians/Syriacs were entitled to being fearful and bitter, as were newcomers from Syria and Iraq; in their view, young people brought up in Sweden should be more positive about Muslims.¹⁰⁰ Some Assyrians/Syriacs sympathised with the Muslims of Södertälje:

Muslims have problems with Assyrians. They have a mosque which is underground, we don't know where. They don't dare to show that they have any place, they've had so many problems here. But Iraqi... even Iraqi Christians, who don't speak Assyrian language, they had problems with their kids in school. If the kids speak only Arabic, Assyrian kids say "You are like Muslims". It's a very, very big problem here in Södertälje and they have been writing about it in the newspapers... that Muslims don't dare to live in Södertälje. (Assyrian female, born in Syria, 36 years old)

The same Assyrian told me the story of her friendship with a Muslim woman; her own attitude towards followers of Islam had changed after having been in personal contact with a person representing this religion. My respondent intends to instil in her children the principles of tolerance and religious openness:

I was raised in Syria where there was a difference between Muslims and Christians. And when I came to Sweden I kept company only with people who were like me. Then, at university I met a woman from Bosnia, and she talked about Muslims and the Serbs and I talked about Sharia and about the political Islam and we were fighting all the time. But later we got to be best friends. And I was so ashamed about my [previous] reaction and she was too. It's a process, it's not easy, it's a journey. And my kids, they will love and respect the Muslims.

An aspiring Assyrian politician who was personally involved in working with young Muslim women in Somalia went a step further. She proved that members of the Assyrian/Syriac community are able to abandon their prejudices and begin building a new social reality, in which ethnicity and religion do not play a major role:

⁹⁹ Interview with the Headmaster of the Swedish School for Immigrants (SFI), Södertälje, November 14, 2014.

¹⁰⁰ The President of the Aramean/Syriac Youth Federation, Jonathan Varli, believes that young people fleeing the Islamic State from Syria and Iraq pass on their fear on to their Swedish-born peers, which fuels further hatred. *Muslimhat känslig fråga i Södertälje...*

I got some special education through the Red Cross. It was very good because I educated myself and then I helped people. I had a group of young girls – I helped them with different things, we had different activities – a bit like feminists [laughter]. And then we had the family from Africa, people from Somalia, who came after the war... They didn't have contact with their families so I help them too. (Assyrian female, born in Iraq, 23 years old)

5.9. Assyrians/Syriacs and other migrants

As a community, Assyrians/Syriacs in Sweden tend to look inward; however, Assyrian/Syriac organisations cooperate with other ethnic groups through the Cooperation Group of Ethnic Associations of Sweden (*Samarbetsorgan för etniska organisationer i Sverige*, SIOS) and the Federation of Migrants (*Migranternas Förbund*).¹⁰¹ Many respondents, especially those living in Södertälje, emphasise that their contact with other immigrants is limited:

We don't intermedate with each other so much. I believe we are acting in our homes as Syriacs/Arameans and outside we act more like Swedes; and we defend this Swedish country and the Swedish values. We live in a society which consists of many groups today so I don't think that there are any special groups that Syriac/Aramean people are working with. (Syriac male, born in Turkey, 62 years old)

Exposure to contact with other migrants undoubtedly depends on the area where my interviewees live and work. Some live in multi-cultural neighbourhoods, where everyday contact with other immigrants shape their views:

It depends on where you live. For example in Botkyrka, where I lived, we have quite a lot of people from the Balkan area, from Eastern Europe, so I grew up with them and in that sense I got connected with that kind of communities. Most of my experiences are positive, I haven't had any negative encounters, not with other Christians, Muslims or non-religious people. (Assyrian male, born in Sweden, 32 years old)

Deeper friendships with other immigrants begin on a personal level – at school, at university or at work. Respondents mentioned having friends and acquaintances from Korea, China, the Philippines and elsewhere. Sometimes these friendships turn into romantic rela-

¹⁰¹ A. Makko, op. cit., pp. 278–279.

tionships and occasionally result in marriages with Armenian, Russian, Ethiopian, Chilean, and Polish partners – most often Christians. Nevertheless, certain stereotypes can be observed in the community. Chaldeans occasionally complain about the Poles – another large group of Catholic immigrants, with whom they share churches. Both communities have strong national identities and distinct mentalities that at times come into conflict. A member of Bilda, a Swedish association of Churches, a Chaldean from Iraq, shared his perceptions of Polish parishioners:

Polish parishioners don't always accept colour priests. The parish priest, if he is black, he is not popular, I can tell you. And if you are from the Middle East, they don't like you. (...) Polish, they think they are the one and only and really true Catholics, and they could look down on others. Especially if you are from Africa or from Asia, you're not really Catholic. Sometimes we actually just joke. "Well, of course because Mary was Polish, yeah, and Jesus was actually born in Gdansk".¹⁰²

However, the group most disliked by Assyrians/Syriacs are Somalis, whom several of my interlocutors criticised for their poor Swedish, for arriving in large groups and not respecting order in public space. Many ethnic Swedes share this opinion. The pastor of a Swedish church in a Rinkeby parish admitted that relations with Muslims are strained, despite her attempts to initiate dialogue:

Ok, I can meet Muslim head/chief/boss, and we are very polite and we like each other. But you never know what they [Muslims] are talking about. And the Muslims on Rinkeby square, they spit when you go. So I don't show my clerical collar. (...) I am on an Avpixlat¹⁰³ as they call it – site in the Web where Muslims put my name. "She is baptising Muslims." [Ethnic Swedes] don't dare to come here. They're afraid. (...) Nearly all women here wear niqab. And men have long beards. It becomes more and more extreme. The last two-three years.¹⁰⁴

In this context, an exceptional statement was made by a Syriac respondent who showed a great deal of common sense, noticing that the Somalis coming to Sweden resemble Assyrians/Syriacs of twenty years ago:

¹⁰² Interview with Bilda's Plenipotentiary for Catholic Churches, Stockholm, November 27, 2014.

¹⁰³ Swedish news website and blog related to anti-immigrant Swedish Democrats. It described itself as an independent, Swedish-friendly news and opinion site. In 2017, it was replaced by the xenophobic, racist and right-wing *Sambällsnytt. Avpixlat har fått utgivningsbevis*, SVT, 2.06.2014, <https://www.svt.se/kultur/avpixlat-har-fatt-ansvarig-utgivare>, accessed on May 14, 2018.

¹⁰⁴ Interview with the pastor of the Church of Sweden, Stockholm, November 21, 2014.

I work in Rinkeby – there are many, many people from Somalia. Almost all of them speak very bad Swedish. But they learn. It could be because they are getting more and more integrated into the Swedish community. I mean, if you're talking about us [Syriacs], where we were 20 years ago, I'm sure we were as... as Somalis today. So in 20 years, we have changed and so will change the Somali people... (Syriac male, born in Syria, 40 years old)

5.10. Religion as taboo and the problem of misidentification

Assyrians/Syriacs who have lived in Sweden for some time know that religion is not the best topic for conversation with most ethnic Swedes, most of whom see it as a kind of superstition. Flaunting one's religiosity is perceived as backward and irrational. The Catholic Church is seen as fanatical and fundamentalist due to its stance on abortion, same-sex marriage, and the ordination of women. Evangelical Churches are viewed as too small, too strict, and also fundamentalist – quoting the Bible instead of employing philosophical or theological arguments. The Church of Sweden offers beautiful settings, but most Swedes find its teachings completely uninteresting.¹⁰⁵

Immigrants learn that it is easier to discuss religion with other foreigners, especially if religion played an important role in their countries of origin. This Assyrian respondent believes that religion translates into identity:

Religion rarely becomes a topic, if so, it is never a hostile topic or a negative one. It's mainly emphasising the similarities and it's actually more with strangers than with friends and that applies to almost all groups. I feel religion is much less taboo with other foreigners since it's a bigger question in their countries than it is in Sweden. Even if they come from another religion, it's not a bad thing emphasising on your religion, it's more a way of identifying yourself as well. (Assyrian male, born in Syria, 30 years old)

In turn, this Syriac respondent does not find it difficult to talk about his faith. He is nevertheless irritated when people confuse him with an Arab, and/or Muslim, and frustrated by the need to explain

¹⁰⁵ J. McDermott, *Christ and Secular Sweden: An interview with Klaus Dietz about the Swedish church*, "America. The Jesuit Review", 24.12.2007, <https://www.americamagazine.org/issue/639/article/christ-and-secular-sweden>, accessed on May 2, 2018.

his identity,¹⁰⁶ as few Swedes are aware that the Middle East is not only inhabited by Muslims:

I often, often mention my Christian religion. My mother tongue is Arabic, I learned Syriac here in Södertälje. And when they know I speak Arabic it's like an equation, Arabic=Muslim. And few are aware that in the Middle East there are people who are Christian. I really have to explain, sometimes I think of wearing a cross only to show it. (Syriac male, born in Lebanon, 45 years old)

Wearing a cross necklace is usually perceived as an expression of religious fundamentalism by most Swedes, therefore the decision to wear it openly is not easy, especially for young Assyrians/Syriacs who would like to be accepted by their peers. However, at times the opinion of their own community is more important – this is so for young engaged couples: a golden cross necklace given to a young woman by her parents-in-law symbolises her “decency”, but she wears it only on some occasions:

Sometimes I put my cross. But not in school but when I go out with my fiancé and with his family. Apart from these situations, I don't wear it. Like now I got a job as a teacher. So I don't think it's right to wear a cross. It's only between me and my religion. And religion is a kind of taboo topic. Because especially Catholics, they are so strict in Swedish eyes... (Chaldean female, born in Sweden, 21 years old)

The next quote underlines the fact that the assumption that ethnic Swedes are always going to interpret a cross as a symbol of Christianity may be slightly naïve: some may read it that way while others might see it as no more than an ornament carrying no deeper meanings. Most often, the colour of a person's skin combined with a “Middle Eastern appearance” determine the first-glance categorisation as “Muslim”. A characteristic tendency of many Swedes is to presume that an immigrant from the Middle East is Muslim out of excessive political correctness and a desire to avoid a cultural *faux pas*:

¹⁰⁶ Similar statements were gathered by scholars studying the Assyrian community in New Zealand. According to respondents, most New Zealanders have never heard of Assyrians, hence the constant questions about their origin (even if they have lived in New Zealand all their lives). When the New Zealanders found out that the newcomers came from Iraq, they often assumed they were Muslims and attributed to them a number of stereotypical features of the Middle East. Therefore, interlocutors were quick to inform new acquaintances that the Assyrians are Christians, “peaceful people”, very different from Iraqi Muslims. Ph. Collie et al., op. cit., p. 213.

Swedes have problems with their views on others. They want to be so welcoming that they become, you know, racist in this. They want to be so nice that they will overdo and they will reveal their true feelings... For example, I can have a cross visible, when I have my shirt unbuttoned, and they can still ask "Do you eat pork?". (Syriac male, born in Sweden, 33 years old)

Most Assyrian/Syriac respondents were mistaken for someone else in Sweden at least once. They are frequently taken for Turks;¹⁰⁷ ethnic Swedes also took Assyrians/Syriacs for Italians, Spaniards, or South Americans.

What I've heard is that I look like a Persian. Some have said Spanish or South American. When I was 25, I had long hair and some thought I was an Indian. Now, I don't know. Some ask: "Are you Kurdish?" They see I'm not Swedish, but they can't see where I come from. (Syriac male, born in Lebanon, 45 years old)

The physical appearance of a narrow group of respondents lacks the typical Middle Eastern features – as a result, both ethnic Swedes and members of their own community do not know how to classify them, which sometimes leads to funny misunderstandings:

When you go to Detroit, to the States, and say "I'm Chaldean", there is "Hooo! Haaa! The Chaldean, ok." They know you. Here in Sweden they don't know who Chaldean is. They think that I am from Spain, Italy, or Greece. And when I say Iraq, the Swedes are like "What?!". They don't believe because I have blue eyes. And my customers from the Middle East, they are like "What?!" too. And it's so funny. They talk, talk, talk and I listen, listen, listen. And then I say something in their language. They are like "What?! Are you...?! You don't look like Iraqi." I answer "But I'm Chaldean, and this is how we look". (Chaldean female, born in the UK, 36 years old)

5.11. The image of Assyrians/Syriacs in the media

In 1766, Sweden became the first country in the world to ban censorship in the press. The Freedom of the Press Act, introduced that year, marked the beginning of the "Age of Liberty" (*Frihetstiden*).

¹⁰⁷ The Assyrian identity that was taking shape in Sweden was by definition in opposition to the Turkish identity. The Assyrians associated Turkishness with genocide, persecution and discrimination; moreover, in the eyes of Assyrian nationalists, the Turks had occupied their lands. In October 1978, Assyrians boycotted *Temadagarna* (Theme Days), a festival highlighting multiculturalism in Södertälje, just because it was advertised by a poster featuring a Turkish flag. A. Makko, op. cit., p. 269.

Today, Swedes are among nations that read the press the most. Almost every town has its own local newspaper. The most important national newspapers are “Dagens Nyheter”, “Göteborgs-Posten”, “Svenska Dagbladet” and “Sydsvenska Dagbladet”. The two largest tabloids are “Aftonbladet” and “Expressen”. The free, street newspaper, “Metro”, has the largest circulation in the world. Until the 1990s, public television (SVT1 and SVT2) had a monopoly on terrestrial broadcasting. In 1987, TV3 began broadcasting via satellite from London. In 1992, the first commercial channel TV4 was launched. Apart from these channels, Kanal 5 is also very popular. Sveriges Radio (SR) has four state channels (P1, P2, P3 and P4). Commercial radio stations were licensed in the early 1990s. In 2017, 95% of Swedes had access to the Internet.¹⁰⁸

Assyrians/Syriacs rarely initiate contacts with local or national media, nevertheless Swedish media do produce programmes and articles about Middle Eastern Christians. Their community is rarely satisfied with the way it is presented and consider their image to be distorted and unfair. This was even more so in the 1970s, when many articles critical of Assyrians/Syriacs were published in local newspapers.¹⁰⁹ In time, the community succeeded in improving its image.¹¹⁰ Still, Swedish newspapers inform the public of how much the government spends on refugees (approximately 1% of GDP) and about the crimes they commit.¹¹¹ Compared to relatively sparse information about the persecution of Middle Eastern Christians by the so-called Islamic State, the Swedish press publishes a large number of reports concerning the “Assyrian/Syriac mafia” and Islamophobia in the Syriac Orthodox community.

Södertälje regularly reappears as an infamous dangerous place where rivalry between two factions and their sports clubs – Assyriska and Syrianska – leads to fights and sometimes even killings. When the Swedish national station TV3 aired the reality show *Mitt stora feta syrianska bröllop* (“My big fat syriac wedding”) in the autumn of 2011, Assyrians/Syriacs were deeply saddened to find out that their community had

¹⁰⁸ More about the structure and evolution of the media in Sweden: O. Westlund, *Digital News Report. Sweden*, 2017, <http://www.digitalnewsreport.org/survey/2017/sweden-2017/>, accessed on May 5, 2018.

¹⁰⁹ The newspapers openly wrote about an “Assyrian invasion”. They portrayed the Assyrians as illegal immigrants and criminals. Cf. A. Makko, op. cit., pp. 266, 272.

¹¹⁰ Ch. Westin, op. cit., p. 994. Assyrian organisations encouraged their members to respect the law in Sweden while opposing discrimination against refugees and immigrants. A. Makko, op. cit., p. 272.

¹¹¹ M. Zaremba-Bielawski, op. cit.

been depicted as extremely materialistic and pretentious. Despite these reservations, most of my interlocutors (those fluent in Swedish) watch Swedish TV and read the Swedish press.

I don't think I read much about [Assyrians/Syriacs] in media. We've had some scandals rather than positive things. Like, when the building of the Assyrian organisation - next to the church - was burnt... And football scandals... Just two years ago the scandal about the Syriac [Universal] Alliance about the money and the Södertälje mafia or what do they called them... I think the Assyrian group has been portrayed negatively in media. A couple of years ago we had *Mitt stora feta syrianska bröllop* ["My big fat Syriac wedding"], which was about young Syriacs getting married. Have you heard about this programme? They portrayed us as dumb people, you know. Only caring about luxury and elegance. It was about young people wanting to exploit themselves. I was very upset... I will get married in a year... So I called the [Nya] Dagen, which is a Christian newspaper. Of course, it's Protestant. But they write a lot about minorities, and Assyrians, they published a lot. (...) I wanted to show them that there is a liturgy in our Church that's 2,000 years old. And this is something that should be showed more in media, something that is ancient. (Assyrian male, born in Sweden, 26 years old)

I had the opportunity to interview the editor-in-chief of "Nya Dagen", a daily newspaper which has been published since 1945 and now has a circulation of approximately 50,000 readers. The newspaper was originally an organ of the Pentecostal movement, but today it represents a variety of faiths, including Middle Eastern Christianity. According to its editor-in-chief, in the last few years, and especially since the emergence of the so-called Islamic State, "Nya Dagen" publishes an increasing number of articles devoted to Middle Eastern Christians. Earlier, the Swedish media was very careful to avoid any criticism of Muslims whatsoever, to prevent any potential tensions between Muslims and ethnic Swedes.¹¹² Thanks to Nuri Kino, a Swedish-Assyrian lobbyist and journalist, the latter are now beginning to notice that their country is home to various Middle Eastern Christian communities. Here is how the editor described the work and contacts of her journalists:

¹¹² There is still a consensus among Swedish mainstream media such as the Swedish TV station SVT and Swedish radio (SR) that the state's immigration policy and immigrants, especially Muslims, should not be presented in a negative light, even at the cost of hiding inconvenient facts and blocking discussions. L. Sun, *Is the Swedish media biased? How is the immigration being reported in Sweden?*, "Quora", 15.03.2017, <https://www.quora.com/Is-the-Swedish-media-biased-How-is-the-immigration-being-reported-in-sweden>, accessed on May 24, 2018.

We've been taking part in the different demonstrations, manifestations that have been organised in Sweden. If I just take the last year as an example, we've been there, we've been talking to people. We have been on the phone with mostly Assyrians, from Iraq and from Syria, interviewing them via Skype and phone, this type of things. And then also we have a regular contact with the representatives of for example A Demand for Action or different priests of these denominations. I would say it's more that we seek contact with them. But it happens that they get in touch with us. One thing that makes them call us or e-mail us is if we mix the names – Assyrian with Syriac. For example, it's mostly Assyrians from the Nineveh Plains, but you have always some Syriacs who don't agree with this name. Or if we write "Syriacs, also called Assyrians and Chaldeans", they will get angry – because this time we put the 'Syriacs' first, not 'Assyrians'. And the other way round. So that makes them keeping in touch with us.¹¹³

5.12. Political engagement

Sweden's political culture is radically different from that of Syria, Iraq or Turkey. One of the main differences concerns politicians and their relationship with the electorate. Swedish politicians are much more approachable than their Middle Eastern counterparts – voters can and do approach them in the store or on the street, they communicate with their constituents via Twitter or Facebook.¹¹⁴ Politicians who want Assyrian/Syriac votes make promises to handle issues important to this group. On March 11, 2010, the Swedish parliament was the first in the world to recognise Seyfo – the Assyrian/Syriac genocide perpetrated during the First World War;¹¹⁵ in response to this decision, the Turkish government recalled its ambassador to Sweden for two weeks. In 2014, Social Democrat Stefan Löfven promised in an interview for Assyria.TV that if his party won the elections, he would push for the recognition of Seyfo by the government as well. However, four years later, as Prime Minister of Sweden, he stated that the matter was complex and that it was one thing for Seyfo to be recognised by the parlia-

¹¹³ Interview with the editor-in-chief of "Nya Dagen", Stockholm, November 17, 2014.

¹¹⁴ Interview with the mayor of Södertälje, Södertälje, June 3, 2014.

¹¹⁵ Admittedly, he made it with the advantage of only one vote 131 vs. 130. *Riksdagen sa ja till en flerpärtimotion som innehåller krav på att Sverige ska erkänna folk-mordet 1915 på armenier, assyrier/kaldéer och pontiska greker*, 11.03.2010, http://www.riksdagen.se/sv/dokument-lagar/arende/betankande/mellanostern-och-nordafrika_GX01UU9, accessed on May 6, 2018.

ment and another to be recognised by the government.¹¹⁶ This has led to criticism from Assyrian/Syriac liberal MPs who stated that “Löfven spills salt on the wounds of a community at risk of physical extermination” and that “to describe Social Democrats as those who care most about the weakest is hypocrisy”.¹¹⁷ Metin Rhawi, an Assyrian/Syriac politician who had represented the community on the municipal council of Södertälje since 2010, left the ranks of the Social Democrats in protest.¹¹⁸ I interviewed Metin Rhawi in 2014, when he was running for a seat in the European Parliament. He offered the following comment:

I felt politics was a new platform for me to try to do something for my people but at the same time my people is part of the Swedish society, the society of Södertälje, so doing something for my community was doing something for the Swedish society and vice versa. At the same time, taking responsibility for Södertälje was taking responsibility for my community. Now I belong to two communities (...) I'm social democrat, I've always been it in my heart. As social democrat, I believe in democracy, integration in real sense. (...) Solidarity – it's very important to me.

His party colleague and the mayor of Södertälje, Boel Godner, has also expressed her disappointment with the Prime Minister's decision on Seyfo.¹¹⁹ She said she herself could not afford to ignore Assyrian/Syriac voters, and was obliged to discuss Middle Eastern politics on a daily basis, stay informed about Al-Assad's policies in Syria as well as new developments in Iraq and south-eastern Turkey. She is planning a trip to Tur Abdin, and feels obliged to visit places important to so many of her associates and voters.¹²⁰

When Assyrians demonstrated in Södertälje on June 22, 2014 against the Kurdish occupation of Assyrian villages in the Nineveh Plains, they were backed by Mats Pertoft, a Swedish Green Party MP, who said: “No group in Iraq should use the current situation as a pretext to oppress another group, Kurdish leaders should not make this

¹¹⁶ *Stefan Löfvens (S) besked: Inga planer på folkmordserkännande från regeringen*, SVT, 1.05.2018, <https://www.svt.se/nyheter/lokalt/sodertalje/stefan-lofven-besoker-sodertalje-far-fragor-om-folkmordserkannande>, accessed on May 8, 2018.

¹¹⁷ *(S)veket i Seyfofrågan*, LT, 8.05.2018, <https://www.lt.se/opinion/debatt/s-veket-i-seyfofragan>, accessed on May 11, 2018.

¹¹⁸ *Löfven (S) erkänner inte folkmord – Södertäljepolitiker lämnar partiet*, <https://sverigesradio.se/sida/artikel.aspx?programid=103&artikel=6946001>, accessed on May 11, 2018.

¹¹⁹ *Löfven (S) erkänner inte folkmord...*

¹²⁰ Interview with the mayor of Södertälje, Södertälje, June 3, 2014.

an excuse to deny Assyrians their rights".¹²¹ His opinions were echoed by Afram Yacoub, chairman of the Assyrian Federation in Sweden, who argued that the Kurds were taking advantage of the turmoil in the region to introduce occupation.¹²² This example demonstrates that the Assyrians/Syriacs in Sweden are politically active and try to influence political decisions, both in Sweden and internationally. This is confirmed by the DIMECCE survey: 82% of respondents took an active part in the 2010 Swedish elections, and an even larger group (almost 85%) declared their willingness to vote in the future. Therefore, the proportion of Assyrians/Syriacs exercising passive voting rights is the same as that of ethnic Swedes (also just above 80%).¹²³

If voting in a host country (provided that it is a democratic state) is a measure of the social integration of immigrants,¹²⁴ then Assyrians/Syriacs are a well-integrated group – especially compared to other foreigners. Pieter Bevelander and Ravi Pendakur investigated the connections between ancestry and political participation in Sweden. In addition to demonstrating that immigrants do not vote as often as ethnic Swedes (less than 60%), the researchers have highlighted the importance of age, education and income as factors that impact the likelihood of voting in elections (the higher one's age, education and income, the more likely one is to vote). Scholars also observed that for immigrants, obtaining citizenship of the host country was correlated positively with the willingness to vote.¹²⁵

The vast majority of Assyrians/Syriacs are Swedish citizens, many are educated and relatively wealthy – these socioeconomic factors mean that, compared to other immigrants, they are more likely to participate in elections. Furthermore, only few can take part in elections in the Middle East (even though many still hold Syrian, Turkish or Iraqi citizenship), yet Assyrian/Syriac politicians in Sweden encourage them to do so.¹²⁶

¹²¹ *Assyrians in Sweden Protest Against Kurdish Occupation of Assyrian Villages*, "Assyrian International News Agency", 23.06.2014, <http://www.aina.org/news/20140623174038.htm>, accessed on May 14, 2018.

¹²² *Ibidem*.

¹²³ H. Oscarsson, S. Holmberg, *Swedish Voting Behavior*, "Swedish National Election Studies", October 2017.

¹²⁴ Cf. P. Bevelander, R. Pendakur, *Voting and Social Inclusion in Sweden*, "International Migration", Vol. 49, No. 4, August 2011, p. 68.

¹²⁵ *Ibidem*, p. 80.

¹²⁶ For example, on May 10, 2018, Robert Hannah reminded on his Facebook profile that Assyrians/Syriacs holding Iraqi citizenship can take part in elections to the

Assyrians/Syriacs holding dual citizenship note the difference between elections in the Middle East and in Sweden. A young Syriac respondent encouraged his brethren to participate in the elections in Sweden:

If you vote in Iraq when they vote... they vote for the majority and the majority puts pressure on the minority. Here in Sweden the majority lifts up the minority; they try to help them. They don't take away their rights. That's difference in mentality. (Syriac male, born in Sweden, 25 years old).

	always	often	some-times	seldom	never	total answers
local in Sweden	117 (79.6%)	11 (7.5%)	12 (8.2%)	1 (0.7%)	6 (4.1%)	147
national in Sweden	121 (78.1%)	9 (5.8%)	9 (5.8%)	3 (1.9%)	13 (8.4%)	155
in the country of origin	9 (6.3%)	1 (0.7%)	1 (0.7%)	2 (1.4%)	129 (90.8%)	142

Tab. 3. Assyrians/Syriacs voting in elections

Source: The DIMECCE Survey.

In Sweden, elections are held on three levels – to 290 municipal assemblies, to 20 regional councils and to the Riksdag (Parliament). As mentioned previously, in 1975, Sweden granted the right to vote in local elections (to municipal assemblies and regional councils) to non-nationals holding resident status. The vast majority of Assyrians/Syriacs exercise their right to vote – locally as residents and nationally as citizens. Interviewees emphasised that voting is an expression of responsibility for their new homeland: “I think it is very important to vote. I was born here, but even if I were not, it is our [Assyrian/Syriac] duty as citizens to vote”. (Syriac male, born in Sweden, 25 years old). As regards support for specific Swedish parties at the local level, chart 4 show how Assyrian/Syriac respondents voted in the 2010 elections.

I juxtaposed this data with statistics for the total number of voters in Sweden. Compared to the overall results, Assyrian/Syriac support for Social Democrats, Christian Democrats, Liberals, the Left Party and the Socialists (who did not win seats) on a local level was high-

Iraqi parliament and vote in Stockholm, Gothenburg, Södertälje, Linköping, Västerås, Malmö and Uppsala.

er than the national average, while support for the Moderate Party, the Green Party, the Centre and Swedish Democrats – lower than the average. The traditionally high support for Social Democrats among Assyrian/Syriac voters has its roots back in the Middle East, where Christians backed political parties and regimes which pursued secular, often national, and/or socialist policies, to the same degree as the religious parties promoted Muslims' rights and values.¹²⁷ In the first years following their arrival in Sweden, Assyrians/Syriacs had a strong sense of belonging to the global labour movement and happily celebrated May 1st.¹²⁸ They did not shy away from Marxist rhetoric, often referred to “solidarity” and “means of production” and willingly participated in left-wing initiatives alongside Chileans, Colombians, Iranians and even Kurds.¹²⁹ Today, the memory of the Social Democrat Olof Palme has its significance as well. In the eyes of the first Assyrian/Syriac immigrants, he symbolised the generosity of Sweden, a “humanitarian superpower”. It is no wonder that his death profoundly shook the community.¹³⁰

My father also talked a lot about [Olof] Palme who was the Swedish Prime Minister. He [my father] saw him on television and Sweden opened its doors to us. (Syriac male, born in Sweden, 32 years old)

On the other hand, Assyrian/Syriac support for the Swedish Democrats stems from the clearly anti-Muslim character of this party, as well as the assumption that in the event of a victory the Swedes would allow Middle Eastern Christians to remain, while the Muslims would have to leave. In 2014, the municipality of Södertälje was the only one where most people on the electoral list of Sweden's anti-immigrant Democrats were people of immigrant descent – Assyrians/Syriacs.¹³¹ With a result of 7.31% (3,447 votes), the Swedish Democrats on the Södertälje list received 5 of the 65 seats on the municipal council;¹³² the

¹²⁷ Cf. F. McCallum, *Shared Religion but Still a Marginalized Other...*

¹²⁸ A. Makko, op. cit., p. 268.

¹²⁹ Ibidem, p. 271.

¹³⁰ Cf. “Hujäda” 9/95, 1986.

¹³¹ *SD har flest invandrare på vallistan*, LT, 23.04.2010, <https://www.lt.se/artikel/stockholm/sodertalje/sd-har-flest-invandrare-pa-vallistan>, accessed on May 28, 2018.

¹³² *Val till kommunfullmäktige i Södertälje – Valsedlar*, Val.se, 21.09.2010, <https://data.val.se/val/val2010/valsedlar/K/kommun/01/81/valsedlar.html#id0110>, accessed on May 28, 2018.

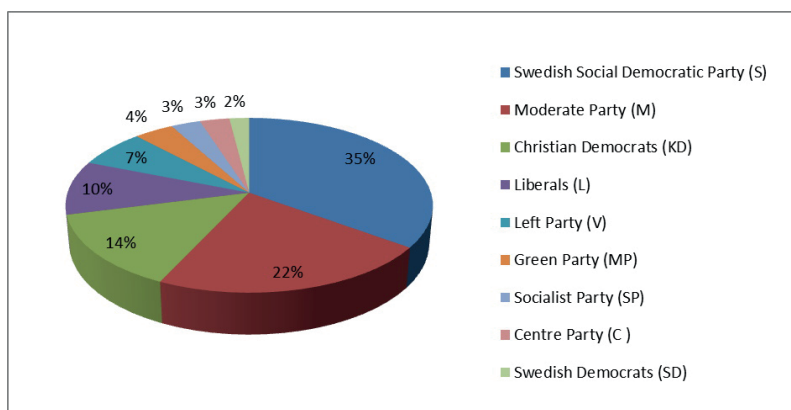


Chart 4. Political preferences of Assyrians/Syriacs on a local level in 2010

Source: The DIMECCE survey.

elected politicians included a Chaldean, Nader Helawi.¹³³ In 2010, support for Swedish Democrats was not yet that high. None of the Assyrians/Syriacs I interviewed admitted to supporting this party – on the contrary, some openly expressed concerns that if the Swedish Democrats came to power, they might withdraw or limit the funding granted to Assyrian/Syriac organisations.¹³⁴

	S	M	MP	L	C	SD	V	KD
Total Swedes (governmental data)	32.4	26.2	7.1	7.9	7.6	4.9	5.6	4.4
Assyrians/Syriacs in Sweden (The DIMECCE Survey)	35	22	4	10	3	2	7	14

Tab. 4. Local elections in Sweden in 2010 (data in %)

Source: Governmental data, DIMECCE survey.

Several Assyrians and Syriacs are currently employed in the municipal office of Södertälje, and a number of politicians represent Assyrian/Syriac interests both at the level of municipalities and regions

¹³³ *Slutlig röstärkning och mandatfördelning – Val till kommunfullmäktige 2010-09-19*, Val.se, 20.09.2010, https://data.val.se/val/val2010/slutresultat/protokoll/protokoll_0181K.pdf, accessed on May 28, 2018.

¹³⁴ Interview with a former journalist of “Bahro Suryoyo”, Södertälje, March 9, 2014.

– these politicians represent various parties. The Swedish chairman of the Södertälje Education Committee commented on Assyrian/Syriac representation in local politics:

In Södertälje, it's a bit complicated because you have little integration in some areas and very much integration in other areas. In the politics we are very, very integrated. For example, in the Education Board we have two people from the Assyrian/Syriac group. We were five... we are four now. The problem is the Assyrian/Syriac group is so big that you have different factions and each faction has also different political views and aims.¹³⁵

Political commitment is seen as a worthwhile pursuit by the community; older Assyrians/Syriacs often encourage young people, especially sons, to actively engage in politics. Syriac Orthodox priests share this approach:

I want our youth to get involved in the parties. My entire family, my wife and all my children are involved in the Christian Democrats. One of my sons, Y., is the vice-president of the Botkyrka fraction of this party. Before him my other son had that position but he had to move to northwest of Stockholm for work. Y. is in the Christian Democrats and in the municipality and in the county so he has many responsibilities in the city. We all, all my sons, are very involved and I encourage that they get involved in other parties too but they have chosen this party. I encourage very much all our youth to get involved in parties, any party they like: the Social Democrats, the Liberal Party, all parties. (Syriac male, born in Turkey, 70 years old)

Assyrians/Syriacs from Iraq are less involved in politics at a local level than their countrymen from Turkey, but support several politicians who represent their community. One of the respondents, a young Iraqi Assyrian politician, is very active locally:

Young generation of Assyrians is engaging more and more in politics. (...) I'm active in the Liberal People's Party in Sweden and I had internship in the Swedish parliament. (...) After coming back from Iraq in 2012, I made an exhibition at the town hall. I had interviewed people in Iraq and gathered a collection of different cultural things and then I made an exhibition about the Assyrians in Iraq, Syria, and the genocide 1915 and Simele 1933... And it was very big and all the politicians came so it was really great.

¹³⁵ Interview with the chairman of the Education Committee of the municipality of Södertälje, Södertälje, June 2, 2014.

I got the place for almost two months. (Assyrian female, born in Iraq, 23 years old)

Assyrians/Syriacs are also active at the national level. Chart 5 shows how the Assyrian/Syriac community voted in the 2010 Riksdag elections.

Similarly to local elections, compared to the total number of Swedish voters, the rate of Assyrian/Syriac voters who supported Social Democrats, Christian Democrats, Liberals, Left and Socialists (who did not enter parliament) was higher, and the rate of their support for Moderates, Greens, Centre and Swedish Democrats was lower.

	S	M	MP	L	C	SD	V	KD
Total Swedes (governmental data)	30.7	30.1	7.3	7.1	6.6	5.7	5.6	5.6
Assyrians/Syriacs in Sweden (the DIMEECE Survey)	37.4	20.0	4.3	10.4	1.70	1.7	6.9	14.8

Tab. 5. 2010 elections at the national level (data in %)

Source: Government data, DIMEECE survey

The first Assyrian to enter the Riksdag – in 1978 – was the Social Democrat Yilmaz Kerimo from Midyat.¹³⁶ However, for many years now, the best-known politician of Assyrian/Syriac origin has been Ibrahim Baylan, born in 1972 to a Syriac Orthodox family who emigrated from Turkey to Sweden in 1980. In 1999, Baylan graduated in economics from the University of Umeå. He became involved in the activities of the Swedish League of Young Social Democrats and became the chairman of its structures in Umeå. From 2004 to 2006, he was the Minister for Education. In 2006, he was elected to sit in the Riksdag, and kept his seat after the 2010 and 2014 elections. In 2009–2011 he was Secretary General of the Swedish Social Democratic Party. In the minority government formed in October 2014 by the Social Democrats and the Greens, he took the office of the Minister of Energy, and in May 2016, he also became the Minister for Policy Coordination.¹³⁷

¹³⁶ Cf. Cover of “Hujādā” 21/243, 1998.

¹³⁷ *Ibrahim Baylan*, Sveriges Riksdag, http://www.riksdagen.se/sv/ledamoter-partier/ledamot/ibrahim-baylan_0973474532717, accessed on May 15, 2018.

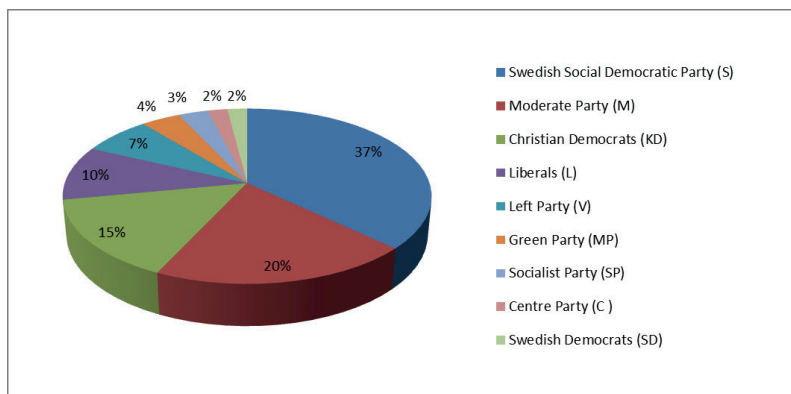


Chart 5. Political preferences of Assyrians/Syriacs at the national level in the 2010 elections

Source: DIMECCE survey.

In 2014, six Assyrians/Syriacs were elected to the Riksdag. Apart from Ibrahim Baylan, there are: two other Social Democrats – Yilmaz Kerimo and Emmanuel Öz; two liberals – Robert Hannah and Roger Haddad, and one representative of the Christian Democrats – Robert Halef.¹³⁸ In earlier years, Moderates Edip Noyan (2011–2013) and Metin Ataseven (2010–2014) sat on the parliamentary benches.¹³⁹ The number of politically active Assyrians/Syriacs in Sweden is steadily rising. In 2006, 140 Assyrian/Syriac candidates ran for 174 different political positions.¹⁴⁰ Hundreds of Assyrian/Syriac candidates run in municipal elections all over Sweden.

I interviewed several Assyrian and Syriac politicians, including Ninos Maraha, Isak Betsimon and Robert Hannah. Ninos Maraha believed that his activity in Assyrian associations helped him pursue a political career in Sweden, as he could count on the broad support of his community:

I belong to the liberal party in Sweden, Folkpartiet, and I've been there since 2003. Right now I have a seat in the Stockholm county council and I also have a seat in Södertälje municipal council, so I'm very active in Folk-

¹³⁸ 5 Assyrians Elected to Swedish Parliament, 19.09.2014, <http://www.aina.org/news/20140919150524.htm>, accessed on May 6, 2014.

¹³⁹ A. Makko, op. cit., p. 286.

¹⁴⁰ A. Barryakoub, *Valet-06: Rekordmånga assyrier kandiderar i valet*, "Hujada", 8.09.2006, http://www.hujada.com/article_print.php?ar=54, accessed on June 1, 2018.

partiet. (...) Having an Assyrian background, actually it was easier to be elected [to these bodies] in a way, more difficult in another, because I've also been active in the Assyrian community in different associations and people know me and I know a lot of people so I was able to use my contacts when I was doing my campaign. In 2006 not so much but in 2010 I was doing a bigger campaign and I visited a lot of associations, having debates, meetings and different kinds of debates, so yes, I could use my Assyrian contacts in a good way and inform about Folkpartiet's policy and our main questions and the questions I want to work for.

Isak Betsimon of the Green Party held a similar view and estimated that half of his voters are Assyrians, and the other half – ethnic Swedes. Asked about the issues most important to him as a political leader, he replied:

If it's international questions then it's democracy in the Middle East or actually the entire Europe and the Middle East and North Africa. Also financial stability. (...) And then for local, it's education, nursing for elderly, and issues related to the environment – trying to build up a society where we don't need that much energy and where we can work out without spending that much.

Robert Hannah was the first Assyrian of Iraqi descent to become a member of the Swedish parliament (before being elected, he was interviewed by me and explained how difficult it was for someone born to Iraqi immigrants to achieve political success). His comments about the generational perception of politics in Sweden by members of the Assyrian/Syriac community were interesting:

I was always interested in politics, and I was always sure that the liberal party was my party because it saw the individual and not the group and saw me as who I am not the immigrant guy or whatever. (...) I grew up in Gothenburg which is one of the biggest places.... I grew up in an area called Frölunda which we call Assyrlunda – out of 25 kids in my class we were 8 Assyrians, when I grew up so we were more numerous than the ethnic Swedes. Everyone knew who we were. (...) So it's very hard to have a role model if you've never seen any... but there are some in Södertälje. But in general I was not raised with political role models and I think the road is very hard if you have an immigrant background because if you don't know a politician, your picture of politics is weird and your parents, especially the Assyrians who come from Iraq and now the same ones who come from Syria have the same experience, that politics is dirty, politics will kill you, politics is something that weakens us, you know... I usually say that Assyrians, the older ones, they're not involved in society enough. They sit and discuss politics as if we're still living in Iraq so the politics they're discussing is not the politics that we're seeing. (...) And to be frank

with you, if you look at the Assyrian group, you have football, you have politicians, you have famous people, much more than there should be. But they're all originally from Turkey, I am the only politician who has Iraqi background, I'm basically the only one who is in politics, media, etc., who has the eastern Assyrian roots.

Symptomatically, politicians of Assyrian/Syriac origin seemed far less “politically correct” than ethnic Swedes, which was clearly demonstrated by their speeches in parliament, statements for the media and posts on Facebook. Among other postulates, they demanded that “Sweden remain Sweden” even at the cost of tightening current regulations and requiring that new immigrants adapt to the host society – especially in terms of respecting the separation of religion from the state and the equality of women and men. They were primarily concerned with Muslims,¹⁴¹ even though they rarely stated this openly to avoid accusations of racism. On May 11, 2018, Robert Hannah published the following statement on his Facebook profile (in Swedish):

Today once again I have received a critical comment that I exaggerate about the situation in Swedish suburbs and exaggerate about the repression of honour. These types of “opinions” don't bite me at all. My family fled to Sweden from Iraq. In Sweden, they were able to walk the streets [safely] for the first time. For the first time, they had a state based on human rights, democracy and freedom of speech. They could say exactly what they thought. The state was on their side. But due to lack of integration and especially lack of courage of the Swedish politicians and rulers to stand up for the Swedish law, the areas with many new Swedes have ended up as outside areas where criminal networks cause terror and religious moral police officers take over. Swedish born children have therefore inherited their parents' exclusion. When I visit schools, I see that Swedish-born children do not speak fluent Swedish. So am I exaggerating? This week I have visited a school where a student was wearing niqab – a complete veil of her face... In my Sweden the girls should be given the same rights as boys! Most people who have fled to Sweden came here to live in freedom. But here they have experienced similar oppression as in their home countries. Swedish politicians actually need to start standing

¹⁴¹ In the first half of 2018, Assyrians/Syriacs loudly protested against the Swedish government's decision to give a second chance to 9000 Afghan men whose asylum applications had been rejected by the Office of Migration. They demanded that the Swedish authorities take care of their community instead, and not “send back Assyrian/Chaldean/Syriac refugees from Iraq to certain death”. According to estimates by Assyrian organisations, about 2000 Assyrians, Yazidis and Mandeans are currently in hiding in order to avoid deportation from Sweden. A Demand for Action, Facebook page, <https://www.facebook.com/DemandforAction/photos/a.293615564151252.1073741831.293404620839013/1155065064672960/?type=3&theater>, accessed on April 30, 2018.

up for the beautiful words written in our constitutional laws on freedom of speech, freedom of movement, equality and more. So no, I'm not exaggerating and I will not give up until all girls – regardless of their ethnicity or the place in Sweden where they live – have the same rights and opportunities as everyone else in Sweden. Here democratic principles, human rights and Swedish laws should apply.

Assyrian/Syriac politicians in Sweden further the agendas of their parties and occasionally engage in issues that are important to their community. They also try to gain the support of Swedish politicians. When Patriarch Ignatius Aphrem II blessed the Seyfo monument in Norrköping on June 1, 2015, one of the most important attendees was Lars Adaktusson – former journalist,¹⁴² TV presenter and correspondent in the Middle East, and then a Christian Democrat MEP. After visiting Iraq in 2015, Adaktusson returned with a strong conviction that Europe should take action. He tabled a motion for a resolution on the systematic mass murder of religious minorities by the Islamic State.¹⁴³ On February 4, 2016, the project was approved by the European Parliament, which thus officially marked the crimes of ISIS as genocide against Christians and other religious minorities.¹⁴⁴ Despite this, Adaktusson did not avoid accusations of favouring the Kurds at the expense of the Assyrian cause, especially after he had organised an international conference entitled “A Future for Christians in Iraq” in Brussels on June 28–30, 2017. The event was boycotted by the Chaldean Church and the Assyrian Democratic Movement.¹⁴⁵

5.13. Summary

For Assyrians/Syriacs in Sweden, the surrounding actors are mainly ethnic Swedes. The first-generation immigrants construct their identity somewhat in opposition to them; second-generation migrants par-

¹⁴² H. Johansson, *Patriark invigde monument över folk mord*, Nt.se, 1.06.2015, <http://www.nt.se/nyheter/norrkoping/patriark-invigde-monument-over-folk-mord-11100893.aspx>, accessed on May 6, 2018.

¹⁴³ *European Parliament resolution of 4 February 2016 on the systematic mass murder of religious minorities by the so-called 'ISIS/Daesh' (2016/2529(RSP))*, 27.01.2016, https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/TA-8-2016-0051_EN.html, accessed on May 6, 2018.

¹⁴⁴ M. Cusimano Love, *Christian Transnational Networks Respond to Persecution*, [in:] *Under Caesar's Sword: How Christians Respond to Persecution*, ed. D. Philpott, T.S. Shah, Cambridge 2018, p. 466.

¹⁴⁵ M.J. Joseph, *An EU Conference for the KRG, by the KRG*, “Medium”, 26.06.2017, <https://medium.com/@DeadmanMax/an-eu-conference-for-the-kr-by-the-kr-b28726107192>, accessed on May 6, 2018.

tially feel Swedish, but it is nevertheless difficult to talk about their assimilation. The host society is partly responsible for this state of affairs. The Swedes believe that the subject of cultural or religious differences should be confined to within the four walls of the home, and that equality understood as similarity should prevail in the public sphere.¹⁴⁶ Such assumptions contribute to the reinforcement of differences and slow down the integration of immigrants into Swedish society.

Members of the Assyrian/Syriac diaspora in Sweden have repeatedly expressed their loyalty and gratitude for the support they have received from the Swedes. However, their encounters with ethnic Swedes were not always friendly.¹⁴⁷ From underlining the bonds and connection, the discourse gradually became a narrative that emphasised isolation, difference and frustration. Many members of the community immersed themselves in purely Assyrian/Syriac activities – annual summer camps, Aramaic language courses, etc. The multicultural policy turned out to maintain the differences rather than to blur them, and Assyrian and Syriac/Aramean identities were strengthened in the diaspora. Swedish officials feared segregation and ghettoisation, while Assyrians/Syriacs protested against attempts to disperse them across the country.¹⁴⁸ Despite these strong tendencies to isolate themselves as a collective and to form enclaves, at the individual level Assyrians/Syriacs tend to choose integration out of the four options in John W. Berry's model. Separation is only a second choice. Assimilation and marginalisation do not have many supporters and can be practically ruled out.¹⁴⁹

The beneficiaries of the Swedish model are young immigrants, especially Swedish-born girls – they can achieve much more through integration than through other strategies. Many young Assyrians/Syriacs of both sexes thrive in higher education and manage to succeed in the labour market, which, according to some Swedish scholars, is reason for optimism, especially considering the problems that usually arise in the transformation of society from monocultural to multicultural.¹⁵⁰

¹⁴⁶ Å. Sander, *The Status of Muslim Communities in Sweden*, [in:] *Muslim Communities in the New Europe*, ed. G. Nonneman, T. Niblock, B. Szajkowski, Berkshire (UK) 1996, p. 274.

¹⁴⁷ Assyrian/Syriac organisations have often publicly expressed their gratitude and promised to contribute to the growth of Swedish welfare. Cf. *I sambällets utveckling*, "Hujada" iv/37, 1981, pp. 1–2.

¹⁴⁸ A. Makko, op. cit., p. 273.

¹⁴⁹ Ch. Westin, op. cit., p. 1008.

¹⁵⁰ *Ibidem*, p. 1009.

The Assyrians/Syriacs consider themselves model citizens who contribute to the economic development of Sweden with their entrepreneurship. They often recall the success of their restaurants and the current popularity of Middle Eastern food; indeed, it is easier to eat kebabs than *kottbullar* – traditional Swedish meatballs – in Stockholm today. Assyrians/Syriacs are also proud of their football teams and the capacity to gather hundreds of believers in the churches of Södertälje.

This city is a global phenomenon and the only place in the world where Assyrians/Syriacs are so prominent and play such a significant role that they can be conceptualised as a “majority within the minority”, as distinct from a “minority within the minority”.¹⁵¹ But apart from being the unofficial Assyrian/Syriac capital, Södertälje has other faces. The narrative promoted by local authorities presents the city as a pioneering achievement, a model for other municipalities, especially in the area of providing education for immigrant children, even when they appear in the city unannounced and in large numbers. The challenge is to provide a sufficiently large number of apartments of an appropriate standard for the newcomers, who are often forced to stay in the homes of their relatives. Partly because of this, but also because of the media portrayals of the Assyrian/Syriac mafia in Södertälje, the city has quite a poor reputation among ethnic Swedes.

As for the Assyrians/Syriacs themselves, a lot has changed over the past few decades in terms of how they have been perceived. First of all, the stigma of “Oriental” newcomers from the 1970s has eased; today it has been transferred onto migrants from Somalia. Additionally, as Anika Rabo points out, fairly common Islamophobia works to the advantage of Middle Eastern Christians.¹⁵² It is not without significance that the Assyrian/Syriac community itself is undergoing a transformation. Several decades spent in one of the world’s most secularised societies have contributed to the democratisation and liberalisation of the group. Members of the community are able to accept many phenomena that would have been unthinkable in the Middle East, such as meetings before marriage or the evident emancipation of women.

¹⁵¹ This term – a minority within a minority, or a double minority – reflects the situation of Christians, who are a minority among Middle Eastern refugees and immigrants coming to Europe. Cf. L. Paulsen Galal, A. Hunter, F. McCallum, S.L. Sparre, M. Wozniak-Bobinska, op. cit., p. 18.

¹⁵² A. Rabo, op. cit., p. 192.

Syriac Churches are trying to play the role of bastions of faith and tradition, and succeed to a large extent, despite some criticism and gradual secularisation. However, they too are forced to partially adapt to Swedish laws, for example with regard to the minimum age for marriage. Along with the growing wealth and expansion of infrastructure, their dependence on the Church of Sweden decreases, whereas in the 1970s and 1980s it used to provide them with rooms for religious ceremonies and its general protection. Despite some initiatives, the paths of these Churches are diverging, and issues such as the ordination of women as pastors and the weddings of homosexuals are a bone of contention. The Church of Sweden and other Protestant Churches regard Syriac Churches as close-minded and in need of reform. In addition, Swedish pastors and officials are concerned about the anti-Muslim sentiment among Middle Eastern Christians, fuelled in recent years by events in the Middle East and the activities of the so-called Islamic State. While many of the young Assyrians/Syriacs I spoke with were privately friends with people of different nationalities and religions, as a group they often considered themselves superior to immigrants from Africa or Central and Eastern Europe.

The misidentification of Assyrians/Syriacs as Muslims, quite common among ethnic Swedes outside of Södertälje, dismays Middle Eastern Christians. Members of the community try to emphasise their Christian faith and warn Swedes of the perceived Muslim threat. The theme of having to face the advancing Islamisation “before it is too late” has often emerged in conversations with Middle Eastern Christians; relatively numerous Assyrian/Syriac politicians belonging to various Swedish parties have also brought the subject up in public. Among the postulates of this community, which is strongly involved in political life in Sweden, the most important was perhaps the recognition of its history and martyrdom, especially Seyfo. This request was met with resistance by Swedish politicians, who would prefer initiatives aimed at reconciliation and building a multicultural society to recalling events from 100 years ago and opening up old wounds.

Despite their educational and economic success, which Hartmurt Esser calls “placement”, Assyrians/Syriacs carry traumas from the past that hinder their integration on an emotional level.¹⁵³ Aryo Makko pointed to the importance of a psychological barrier in the process

¹⁵³ H. Esser, *op. cit.*, pp. 8–16.

of full integration of this group. He quoted Nisha Besara – a well-known Social Democrat of Assyrian origin, editor of the online newspaper “Dagens Arena”, and one of the candidates for the Minister of Culture in Löfven’s government. Married to an ethnic Swede, Besara repeatedly emphasised that in Sweden, she is still perceived as a foreigner, because the colour of her hair and her foreign name are more important to the public than anything she has done.¹⁵⁴

¹⁵⁴ A. Makko, *op. cit.*, p. 285.

6. THE ASSYRIAN/SYRIAC DIASPORA IN SWEDEN AND ITS TRANSNATIONAL CONNECTIONS

At the beginning of the 21 century, the approach taken by social sciences towards diasporas has evolved. Until then, migration was generally perceived in static terms, and research concentrated around diasporas which were already formed and established. Today it is often underlined that migrants are attached “to families, communities, traditions and causes outside the boundaries of the nation-state to which they have moved.”¹

Globalisation and the development of communication technologies have enabled migrants to engage more actively in various processes in their countries of origin. These interactions and networks connecting people and institutions across national borders have been called ‘transnational’. There is no consensus on whether the transnational approach is a *novum* in migration practice research,² nevertheless it is a very useful analytical tool.³

Shifting the focus from a diaspora to its transnational aspects creates an opportunity to analyse the *belonging* of migrants as a multi-directional and situational phenomenon. Unlike traditional diaspora studies,⁴ the transnational approach does not prioritise the immigrants’ ties to their country of origin – their homeland – but instead encourages the exploration of their concurrent attachments. Peggy Levit and Nina Glick-Schiller suggest that there is no contradiction in an immigrant simultaneously belonging to their country of origin and the host country, and maintaining transnational connections.⁵ These include

¹ S. Vertovec, *Transnationalism and Identity*, “Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies”, Vol. 27, No. 4, 2001, p. 574.

² A. Portes, L.E. Guarnizo, P. Landolt, *The Study of Transnationalism: Pitfalls and Promise of an Emergent Research Field*, “Ethnic and Racial Studies”, Vol. 22, No. 2, 1999, pp. 217–237.

³ S. Mamattah, *Migration and Transnationalism: the Complete Picture? A Case Study of Russians Living in Scotland*, “Identity and Marginality”, Vol. 6, No. 2, Spring 2006.

⁴ Cf. R. Cohen, *Global Diasporas: An Introduction*, Seattle 1997.

⁵ P. Levitt, N. Glick-Schiller, op. cit., p. 1003.

– among others – family ties and networks of friends in a third country, which had evolved as a result of dispersion or *serial migration*. The concurrent attachments or allegiances may weaken or strengthen one another. Travelling becomes an immanent element of belonging. James Clifford suggests that closer attention should be paid to “everyday practices of travelling-in-dwelling and dwelling-in-travelling”.⁶

Lise Paulsen Galal, a scholar studying the Middle Eastern Christian community in Denmark, proposed a model in which their transnational relations can be encompassed in the following four categories: *dwelling-in-displacement*, *dwelling-in-transnationality*, *dwelling-in-internationalization* and *dwelling in the host country* – in the aforementioned case: *dwelling-in-Denmark*.⁷ Their *dwelling-in-displacement* was caused by traumatising events in the Middle East, which led to exile without prospects of return. Thus Assyrians/Syriacs had to struggle to be recognised as a religious and ethnic group both in their countries of origin and in the host countries. All of my respondents identified with this fight for recognition, even though their belonging manifested itself in varying ways.⁸ Second-generation Assyrians/Syriacs frequently mentioned having a feeling of attachment toward Sweden (*dwelling-in-Sweden*), but only a few saw it as their only homeland.

The dominating attitude was one which could be called “a conditional will to return”.⁹ Syria, Iraq (especially the Nineveh Plains), and Tur Abdin in Turkey have become mental destinations which give meaning and value to the daily existence of Assyrians/Syriacs in Scandinavia. The return migration of Assyrians and the myth of return was explained by Soner Onder at the conference summarising the DIMECCE project in St Andrews. The scholar divided returning migrants into categories of realists, idealists, partial idealists and disillusioned idealists,¹⁰ and linked the process of return to the concepts of *ethnic return*¹¹ and

⁶ J. Clifford, *Travelling Cultures*, [in:] *Cultural Studies*, ed. L. Grossberg, C. Nelson, P.A. Treichler, New York 1992, p. 108.

⁷ L. Paulsen Galal, “If I want to travel, I just travel.” – *Travels and Dwellings among Assyrians and Copts in Denmark*, [in:] *Middle Eastern Christians and Europe...*, pp. 133–142.

⁸ Por. Ibidem, p. 133.

⁹ Ibidem, p. 143.

¹⁰ S. Onder, *Return Migration of Assyrians: The Myth of Returning Home*, a talk at the DIMECCE Conference “Middle Eastern Christians in Diaspora: Past and Present, Continuity and Change”, St Andrews (Scotland), May 27, 2015.

¹¹ Often associated with marginalisation or rejection by the former surrounding society. Cf. T. Tsuda, *Diasporic Homecomings: Ethnic Return Migration in Comparative Perspective*, Stanford 2009.

roots migration.¹² At the same time the scholar underlined that this applied only to a narrow group of people (even if the vast majority placed the mythologised homeland at the centre of their identity). In fact, Assyrians/Syriacs in Sweden have become a well-organised settled community.¹³ This does not mean, however, that their individual and group interactions with their countrymen living outside Sweden are not important to them – on the contrary.¹⁴

The task of this chapter is to discuss the transnational relations of Assyrians/Syriacs living in Sweden – their family ties, and the connections made through organisations and political alignments. Organisations such as Assyrians Without Borders and A Demand for Action – both founded in Sweden – will be examined, as they can be seen as characteristic examples of the transnational activities of Assyrians/Syriacs in this country. The chapter also explores the question of the potential return of people belonging to the Scandinavian diaspora to the Middle East, alongside their own definitions of the concept of homeland. Hopefully, these pages might help fill a gap in research – Fiona Adamson points out that “transnational practices of migrant networks are often overlooked in research, as they are difficult to assign to any single sub-domain of political studies”.¹⁵

6.1. Transnational contacts and relationships: family ties

The section of the DIMECCE survey devoted to transnational connections was aimed above all at sketching out general tendencies while distinguishing between the relations of Swedish Assyrians/Syriacs with their countrymen in the Middle East, and their relations to those in other countries. The main way to stay in touch with members of their community living in the Middle East, selected by more than

¹² Applying to the second generation of migrants, who return to the country of their parents motivated by nostalgia and the desire for an “ideal homeland”. S. Wessendorf, ‘Roots Migrants’: *Transnationalism and ‘Return’ among Second-Generation Italians in Switzerland*, “Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies”, Vol. 33, No. 7, 2007.

¹³ J. Mack, op. cit., p. 92.

¹⁴ Cf. M.C. Howard, *Transnationalism in Ancient and Medieval Societies: The Role of Cross-Border Trade and Travel*, Jefferson (USA)–London 2012, p. 242.

¹⁵ F. Adamson, *Mobilizing for the transformation of home: Politicized identities and transnational practices*, [in:] *New Approaches to Migration? Transnational Communities and the Transformation of Home*, ed. N. Al-Ali, Kh. Koser, London–New York 2002, p. 156.

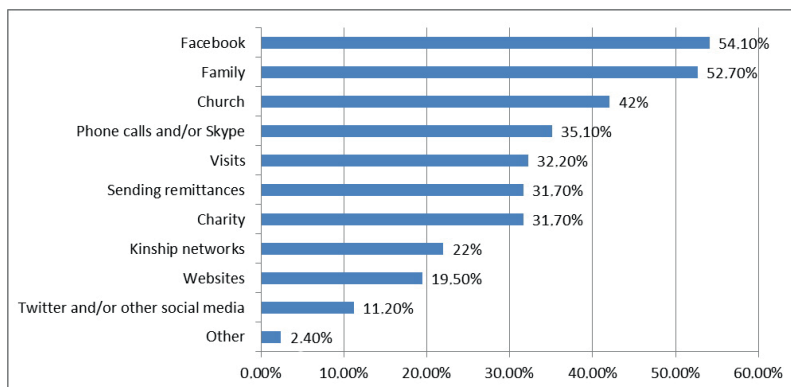


Chart 6. Means of maintaining relationships with the community in the Middle East

Source: DIMECCE survey.

50% of the respondents, is by contacting their own families – most often their elders: grandparents, uncles, aunts; less frequently siblings or cousins. Assyrians/Syriacs from Iraq had statistically the largest number of relatives in their homeland and more widely in the Middle East; this was not so for Assyrians/Syriacs from Turkey – entire villages located in Tur Abdin emptied after their inhabitants emigrated to Sweden, Germany and the Netherlands. Over one fifth of respondents stated that their clan ties encompassed a group wider than their immediate family in the Middle East.

Members of the older generation call their relatives using Skype (previously, using landline connections), while younger generations prefer Facebook, Twitter and other social media, as well as reading articles on the Web.¹⁶ Two fifths of respondents remain connected to their community through churches or charity organisations; one third send some financial resources to the Middle East. In addition, a third of the respondents occasionally visit the region. The percentage of Assyrians/Syriacs who regularly visit Syria has dwindled as a result of the ongo-

¹⁶ Hundreds of Assyrian/Syriac websites, blogs, forums and chat rooms in various languages can be found on the Internet; this phenomenon can be called cyber-diasporas. On the one hand, Assyrian and Syriac immigrants are very active in supporting their countrymen in the Middle East through the Internet, on the other hand they continue to bitterly argue – the naming conflict makes members of opposing groups perceive one another as traitors and propagandists. Arguments on the web translate into deepening divisions in real life. A. Boháč, op. cit., pp. 71–72.

ing war in that country. The respondents declared that they still visit Lebanon, Turkey, and locations in Iraq that are considered safe. Many respondents were worried about members of their families living in Aleppo (Syria) and Ankawa (Iraq) – cities directly affected by armed conflicts.

For many young people, language is often a problem which makes keeping in touch with relatives living in the Middle East challenging – they often do not speak Arabic, Turkish or Kurdish, or they know these languages on too basic a level to communicate beyond occasional greetings or good wishes. As a result, their conversations with relatives abroad are very limited. Another factor limiting the contacts of young Assyrians/Syriacs living in the diaspora with their countrymen in the Middle East is the time factor – young people raised in Sweden are simply too busy to spend hours on Skype talking to relatives they hardly know; they prefer to concentrate on studies or work.¹⁷ It may be easy to connect with relatives, but this does not mean that all relationships are going to be maintained. Nevertheless, the evolution of communication technologies is generally highly appreciated; this aspect of globalisation is commonly seen in a positive light:

In late 1980s, they phoned each other, but now that we have these smart phones, my mother says ‘Oooh, can you call up your aunt on Tango’, she doesn’t have a smartphone. So we call each other using smartphones. And this is the globalisation and this is something very positive, because I’m able to have good relations with my relatives who are abroad. This is fantastic because it’s not certain that it would be like that. Before, like I said, my father sent letters to his sister in Istanbul and she sent letters back with pictures of her children ‘Look, they are this big now’. My mother’s oldest sister, she wrote letters on the back of her pictures to her husband. He was her fiancé at that time, so they sent love letters to each other on the back of the pictures and they have kept these letters and show us. It’s quite fantastic how it developed. (Assyrian female, born in Sweden, 32 years old)

Flying to the Middle East has become easier than it used to be, thanks to the large number of airlines, connections and cheap flights. Many Assyrians/Syriacs underlined that as newcomers to Sweden they could not afford to travel and visit their homelands. In time, their financial situation improved and they then began visiting their countries of origin:

¹⁷ Interview with a young Chaldean woman, Södertälje, November 24, 2014.

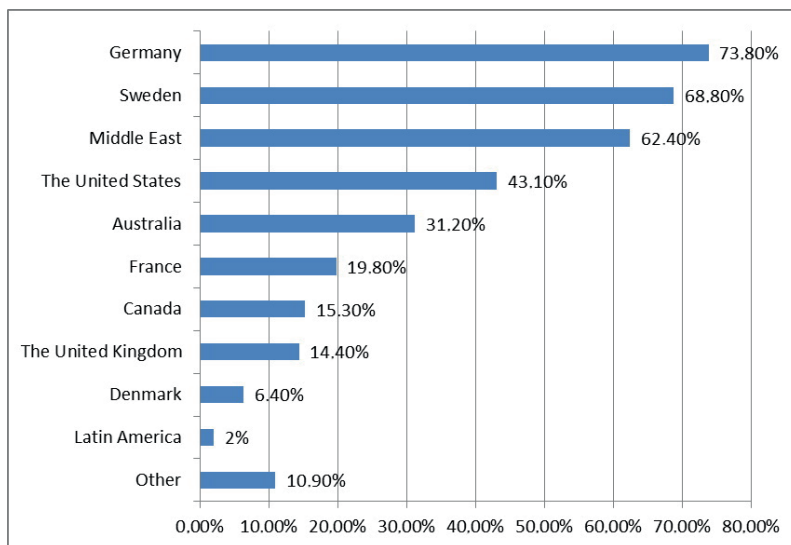


Chart 7. Contact with members of the community living in other countries

Source: DIMECCE survey.

I have visited Midyat and Qamishli many times. We went back when I was adult. Because when I was younger, we were poor. We didn't travel so much. But when I started to work, I was successful and then I started to travel with my mother and my family. (Syriac male, born in Sweden, 33 years old)

In 2005, Annika Rabo interviewed Assyrians/Syriacs to gather material for a project exploring the transnational relations of Syrians. Her respondents underlined the significance of family and relatives. Many had very large families, dispersed across many countries: Syria, Lebanon, Iraq, the Netherlands, Germany, Belgium, Austria, Switzerland, Australia, Venezuela, Canada and the United States.¹⁸ The same countries were listed by respondents to the DIMECCE survey. Almost 70% of Assyrians/Syriacs living in Sweden had relatives in the country; over 70% also had family in Germany. European countries mentioned the most frequently were: France, Great Britain and Denmark. Over 40% of respondents had relatives in the United States, over 30% – in Australia, and over 15% in Canada.

¹⁸ A. Rabo, op. cit., p. 185.

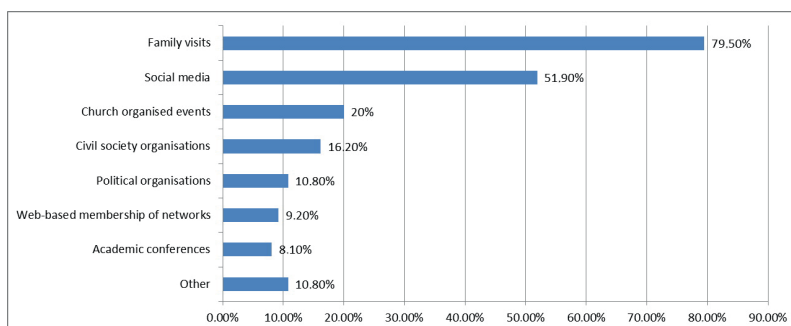


Chart 8. Forms of contact with community members living in other countries

Source: DIMECCE survey.

Assyrians/Syriacs are a truly global community, having formed many diasporas across a number of Western countries. Members of these diasporas in Europe visit each other at important family occasions such as weddings, funerals, and baptisms (almost 80%). Those who live in the United States, Canada or Australia, travel rarely – mainly for logistical and financial reasons. Families keep in touch using applications such as Facebook, Skype, WhatsApp, as well as others. A fifth of the respondents meet others at events organised by their Churches, while over 15% are connected by social organisations and over 10% by political organisations.

The statement made by an elderly Syriac priest about his family being scattered across the Western world illustrates the situation that many Assyrians/Syriacs in Sweden find themselves in; it also demonstrates that in some Middle Eastern countries, Christian cultural factors have been virtually eliminated. Interestingly, he recollects sending traditional letters as well as e-mail messages (in order to send them, he asks for help from other people competent in modern communication technology):

I have no family left in Turkey nor in Syria nor Lebanon but we have friends and bishops, priests, our Patriarch in Damascus, that's my family now. My real family lives in the USA, and in Europe, some in France, Germany and Sweden. My wife has no family left there [in the Middle East] neither. She had only one brother left there, a doctor, and when the troubles started in Syria, he and his wife moved to Lebanon but he has one son living here in Norsborg and another living in Germany who is finishing medical school there. We sometimes make phone calls and other times we

send letters. I don't know how to use emails so I send letters but sometimes when I [really] need to, I ask my children or deacons to help me send emails too.

Characteristically, the older generation¹⁹ is most involved in the exchange of information and maintaining relationships with family members living in the Middle East or in Western countries. A young Assyrian from Iraq admits that his parents, especially his mother, take the responsibility for staying in touch with relatives:

My mom keeps in touch with them much more, it's not like I speak to them every day, no. I have relatives in Australia, Canada, Holland, the US, a lot of different places, I have relatives in Greece, but it's my parents who speak to them. (Assyrian male, born in Sweden, 28 years old)

Both in my research and in the studies conducted by Annika Rabo, the differences between the pace of life in the Middle East and in the diaspora were a recurrent theme. Many respondents believed that although migrating to Sweden itself did not change their views on the importance of family and relatives, their way of life in Södertälje differs greatly from the one they were used to in the Middle East. Just after arriving in Sweden, they were not yet employed and easily found time to visit one another; getting a job resulted in having much less time to spare. Some respondents complained about the loosening of family ties, while others believed that a faster pace of life is natural for young people.²⁰

6.2. Transnational connections of Syriac Churches in Sweden

As was mentioned in previous chapters, many Assyrians/Syriacs are growing weary of the internal split of the Syriac Orthodox Church in Sweden and express their frustration with it. Some are equally critical of the official position of the highest authorities of the Syriac Orthodox Church, based in Damascus, concerning the war in Syria (ongoing since 2011). The difficult situation in the country (war, destruction of local infrastructure, food and medicine shortages, terrorist and fundamentalist militant groups targeting Christians and other minorities) combined with a fairly long history of good relations between Church

¹⁹ Annika Rabo specified that typically, people in middle age enjoyed the strongest relationships with their relatives. *Ibidem*, p. 186.

²⁰ Cf. *Ibidem*, pp. 185–186.

and State means that the officials of the Syriac Orthodox Church express support for the regime of Bashar Al-Assad.²¹

In late March 2014, following the death of the Patriarch, Mor Ignatius Zakka I, the Holy Synod of the Syriac Orthodox Church of Antioch elected Moran Mor Ignatius Aphrem II. The new patriarch paid a visit to President Al-Assad and assured him that the Syriac Orthodox Patriarchate supports “the Syrian people’s struggle against terrorism”.²² The Syriac Orthodox Church in Sweden felt obliged to explain this declaration to the Swedish public. General Secretary of the Syriac Orthodox Church’s youth organisation in Sweden said that the patriarch’s meeting with Bashar Al-Assad should not be interpreted as taking a pro-regime position in the Syrian conflict.²³

Pro-democratic Assyrians/Syriacs believe that their clergy in Syria are forced to conduct a peaceful dialogue with the government; they are nevertheless aware that supporting a violent dictator and his oppressive regime does not build authority nor credibility of the Syriac Orthodox Church. On the other hand, some Assyrians/Syriacs living in Sweden indeed see Al-Assad as the lesser evil and therefore agree with the political strategy of the Patriarch. This dynamic influences the relationship of the Syriac Orthodox community in Sweden with its mother Church based in Damascus – the relations are polite, but not without hidden tensions. They are clearly felt by a young Assyrian politician and member of the Syriac Orthodox Church, who believes in democracy:

The authorities of the Syriac Orthodox Church in Damascus...
The problem with them is that we don’t know if it’s their own voice or the government’s voice and unfortunately... We don’t know if it’s forced or if it’s corrupt. So it’s difficult for us to understand... it’s difficult to know what they actually mean. But we have good relations, many of us visit our homeland every year. (Assyrian male, born in Sweden, 32 years old)

²¹ In doing so, they join the long line of Oriental Churches which had extended their support to Middle Eastern authoritarian regimes; this tradition stems from the dynamic of the relationship between the Christian minority and the Muslim majority. The loyalty to ruling regimes expressed by Christian religious authorities serves, in their belief, to protect their faith communities. Cf. F. McCallum, *Religious Institutions and Authoritarian States...*

²² N. Mihailova, *Syria’s Al-Assad receives Syriac Orthodox Church’s new patriarch*, “Ahrām Online”, 10.04.2014, <http://www.pravmir.com/syrias-al-assad-receives-syriac-orthodox-churchs-new-patriarch/>, accessed on May 23, 2018.

²³ “Dagen”, 4.04.2014, <http://www.dagen.se/nya-patriarken-traffade-syriens-president-1.93256>, accessed on May 23, 2018.

The Syriac Orthodox Church in Sweden is sufficiently strong and well-funded to send its representatives to other countries to study theology in Syriac monasteries or extend humanitarian aid to Syriac Orthodox communities in the Middle East. However, these visits are not regular. Young Assyrians/Syriacs living in Sweden who still have relatives in the Middle East tend to combine private family visits with work for the benefit of their religious community.²⁴ The Syriac Orthodox Youth Organisation in Sweden (*Syrisk Ortodoxa Ungdomsförbundet*, SOUF), which has over 3700 official members across 21 local units, offers many possibilities in this area: several trips and camps are organised each year. The SOUF website states that its members visited Jerusalem in 2013, Tur Abdin in 2014, Brasil in 2015, and Switzerland and Lebanon in 2016.²⁵

The first *Suryoyo Youth Global Gathering* was organised in 2015 in Lebanon; a year later, the meetup was organised in the Netherlands, the next one – back in Lebanon; in 2018, another event was planned to take place in New Jersey, USA.²⁶ The participants are aged between 18 and 30. The aim of these meetings of young Syriacs/Arameans from all across the globe is spiritual enrichment, strengthening connections with the Syriac Orthodox Church and its clergy, and making new personal connections. Members of SOUF have participated in all of these events to date. A member of this organisation, and at the same time a deacon of the Syriac Orthodox Church in Sweden, told me about the transnational contacts maintained by his Church and explained what drives him and his colleagues to get involved on an international level. He was clearly filled with pride and hoped to present the Syriac Orthodox Church in the best possible light:

Sometimes we do charity work, we went to India a few years ago – to the Syrian Malankara Church [The Malankara Orthodox Syrian Church]. We've done the same in Syria, in Turkey, Tur Abdin, in Lebanon. If somebody visits Sham [the Levant], where their parents lived, so this person teaches English, does the washing, prepares food, whatever is needed. We do all kind of work. The important thing is that everything we do, we do in the name of the [Syriac] Church, as its representatives. So we have to stand out and know how to behave, what to say and what not to say. (Syriac male, born in Sweden, 25 years old)

²⁴ Interview with the secretary of Assyrians Without Borders, Södertälje, May 29, 2014.

²⁵ <http://souf.nu/>.

²⁶ <http://www.sy-gg.org/>.

The same young activist also informed me that the SOUF made it possible to renovate a Syriac Orthodox temple in Azeh, Tur Abdin. The decision to get involved was probably influenced by family connections:

I was born here, in Sweden. But I usually add that my spirit was born in Azeh. (...) We have few family members in Azeh, but really only few. Azeh is now a city almost cleansed [of Christians]. Economically, they manage. They have their way of life. They manage. If they didn't, we would help. We visit them regularly. We donated money to renovate the church in Azeh. We helped them to renovate it and prepared visiting rooms for people coming from Europe so they can stay at the church instead of going to other cities.

Assyrians/Syriacs are proud of their temples in Sweden and see them as their new “homes” in the diaspora; understandably, they wish for similar “homes” in their countries of origin – especially in Turkey, once home to a dense network of Syriac Orthodox churches and monasteries. Syriac Churches in Europe, including Sweden, engage in transnational activities aimed at protecting holy sites, churches, monasteries and cemeteries in the Middle East, and make efforts to steer the politics in the region towards an approach of greater tolerance and respect for minorities.²⁷

6.3. Assyrians Without Borders as an example of a transnational aid organisation

Secular organisations partially complement, and partially mirror the activities of Syriac Churches. The concept of Assyrians Without Borders (Assyrier Utan Gränser, AWB)²⁸ – a non-governmental organisation based in Sweden, whose main goal is to aid Middle Eastern Christians in their homelands – was born in the summer of 2006, when a group of young Assyrians visited Tur Abdin in Turkey. They came to explore their roots. What they witnessed – the poverty and the political, cultural and religious discrimination of their fellow believers – shook them so much that they decided to offer more than short-term help. One year later, in 2007, they founded Assyrians Without Borders. The former President of the organisation reminisced about its beginnings:

²⁷ B. Arian, op. cit., pp. 80-81.

²⁸ <http://assyrierutangranser.se/>. For more on this organisation, see: M. Wóznia-Bobińska, *Assyrians Without Borders' in Sweden: Middle Eastern Christians towards a new form of citizenship*, “*Studia Religiosa*” [in print].

It was a group of younger people who were on a trip to their native countries, especially Turkey, Tur Abdin area, and they felt the need of starting an aid organisation to help their people there establish themselves better. And then it grew, people got interested in helping. It was first you might say an organisation 'from us to us', from the Assyrians to the Assyrians. (Assyrian male, born in Syria, 30 years old)

Assyrians Without Borders is a small organisation – it counts only 10–15 active members – but the scope of its activity is extensive. Thanks to the financial support of their countrymen, and not only from Sweden, they are able to plan and carry out transnational projects, which are aimed at helping Christians in the Middle East. The organisation directs its efforts at three main areas of activity: humanitarian aid, development projects and educational grants. In the area of humanitarian aid, AWB has delivered medicines, food and wheelchairs to refugees in Damascus; in Hassake, Qamishli and the Khabur area the organisation provided local residents with drinkable water, electricity and food. AWB supervised digging a new well, supplied electric generators and sent money so that the local community could afford groceries. Numerous other activities of AWB have been focused on education. These efforts include providing transport for pupils from remote villages in northern Iraq to their primary schools, and renovating and enlarging a student dormitory in Baghdad. In Lebanon, AWB sponsored boards and markers and covered school fees for refugees' children. Perhaps most importantly, the charity provides scholarships for young Assyrians, enabling them to study in Syria, Iraq, Iran and Lebanon.²⁹

Assyrians who volunteer in Assyrians Without Borders believe that this organisation stands out from many others thanks to its focus on the needs of people living in the Middle East, who are in need of help more than those living in the diaspora. A member of the board of AWB related her experiences working for the organisation and underlined the rewarding nature of working to increase people's happiness:

[We work] 100% voluntarily, all of us, and we all work and study full time so it's very difficult. (...) but there are so many things that are good: the happiness, it's the best thing. Gratitude, I mean not like "Oh, I've done a good thing". But it's like you know when people don't have enough clean water to drink, they don't have gas... Basic things just to heat their food, to clean, medications... I mean here in Sweden we get contribu-

²⁹ Interview with a member of the Board of Assyrians Without Borders, Södertälje, March 25, 2014.

tions from the state to go to the university, we can do whatever we want. If I'm not happy with my education or I want to do something else I can do that. But over there everything is about money. So we give the scholarships. It's so nice to know that we can help somebody to fulfil their dream, help their family to get a job, keep going to school. That's number one for me. (Assyrian female, born in Sweden, 26 years old)

Young Assyrian activists often combine private visits to the Middle East (usually visiting their families) with charitable activities for the benefit of their community. This is motivated by financial concerns – they wish to avoid wasting the organisation's money. Another member of AWB spoke about her activities in Turkey:

In 2010, I travelled officially for AWB to Turkey to try to understand the situation of the Assyrians. But I had been there many times unofficially, during my private travels to Turkey. Turkey is my responsibility when it comes to the projects. So when I am in Turkey during my private travels, I also try to reach my contacts: to see them and speak to them, and understand the situation of the Assyrians there. Like now, I was at my cousin's wedding in Istanbul and I tried to find time to meet people in Istanbul and those who have escaped from Syria and think about coming to Europe. I did meet them, I saw the conditions they live in. We try to use every opportunity that we have [to reach our people in the Middle East], because we also think of AWB's budget and don't want to use too much money on travels which we do anyhow. (Assyrian female, born in Sweden, 32 years old)

Another member of AWB wrote on the Facebook profile page of her organisation³⁰ about spending a day of her family holiday in Lebanon, in the summer of 2016, visiting one of the local schools. The principal of the school asked her for boards and markers; she then bought these supplies using AWB's funds to make sure the classrooms were ready for the upcoming school year. Even though she did not mention it directly, it was clear that her engagement strengthened her ties to the community and imprinted an image of homeland – in her case, a “bigger Assyria”:

It was about 2009 when I started to attend the meetings of AWB. I am a member of the board right now. (...) I've been in Lebanon many times. I would like to go to Tur Abdin and Qamishli, especially to see where and how my mom was brought up, it was like a centre of culture in the 1950s and 1960s. So I would like to go there, but I see it more like, Assyria, the bigger.

³⁰ Assyrians Without Borders, Facebook page, *Reseberättelse Libanon*, 1.08.2016, <https://www.facebook.com/AssyriansWithoutBorders/posts/10153796169801220>, accessed on May 23, 2018.

That would be a dream to see it [this bigger Assyria]. (Assyrian female, born in Sweden, 26 years old)

Although Assyrians Without Borders is a secular organisation, it does not hide its ties to the Syriac Orthodox Church. Photographs of members of the organisation standing side by side with Church dignitaries make their activities more credible to the community – especially if the images were taken in the Middle East. For example, in an official photograph from Lebanon, members of AWB pose next to the Patriarch and the Bishop. The heading above the photo reads “AWB asks for donations”, and the caption in Swedish and English says:

29 May 2018. We have just returned from the meeting with Patriarch of the Syriac Orthodox Church, H.H. Mother Ignatius Aphrem II. During the meeting, we discussed the difficulties in the Middle East among internal refugees and the challenges of aid organisations.³¹

6.4. A Demand for Action as an example of a transnational political organisation

A Demand for Action (ADFA) is – according to its website³² – a global initiative based in Sweden, whose goal is to ensure the protection of Assyrian/Chaldean/Syriac Christians and other ethno-national minorities in the Middle East. The organisation was founded in June 2014 (shortly after Islamic State troops occupied Mosul) and since then it has organised numerous rallies and demonstrations in various cities across the world. ADFA’s lobby groups have reached international media and parliamentarians in several countries, impacting resolutions such as:

- The National Defense Authorization Act, approved by the United States Congress, supporting local security forces in the Nineveh Plains. The Act was signed by President Barack Obama on December 19th, 2014.
- The European Parliament Joint Motion for a Resolution, which recommended, among others, the creation of a safe haven for minorities in the Nineveh Plains.

³¹ Assyrians Without Borders, Facebook page, https://www.facebook.com/AssyriansWithoutBorders/?hc_ref=ART84fBmvoY6LlHZ5_FOD-IoClo2otPoWdD8AgQ-6TrgpcW3yqqETyMswNxBuhiyQ40, accessed on May 30, 2018.

³² A Demand For Action, <http://www.ademandforaction.com>, accessed on May 23, 2018.

A Demand For Action is a point of contact for people living in Syria or Iraq – journalists, activists, as well as people whose relatives have disappeared or who suffer from shortages of food or water. Assyrians from Sweden and other Western countries also contact the organisation. Nuri Kino – a Swedish-Assyrian journalist – is ADFA’s founder and president. His articles about the persecutions of Middle Eastern Christians in refugee camps and the harassment of Christians in Swedish accommodation for asylum seekers have been broadly debated in the largest Swedish media outlets. Nuri Kino’s good relations with Lars Adaktusson, Swedish journalist and politician, influenced the European Parliament’s decision to formally recognise Islamic State’s persecution of Christian minorities as genocide. ADFA also campaigned for international troops to enter the Middle East to combat Islamic State and ensure the safe return of Middle Eastern Christians to their homes in Syria and Iraq. According to the Swedish daily, “Svenska Dagbladet”, ADFA is one of the most important organisations in Sweden.³³

The number of ADFA’s members is unclear – information is not available on the organisation’s website – but it is certain that its driving force is its founder, Nuri Kino. ADFA’s activities are funded by several hundred donors listed by name and surname on the organisation’s web page. I interviewed an active member of ADFA six months after the organisation was founded. He spoke about the organisation’s goals and the hard work of everyone involved. He was filled with pride and enthusiasm:

It’s a Swedish organisation founded by an investigative journalist called Nuri Kino. Nuri has always been working with the humanitarian issues... So when this issue started in Iraq... the Islamic State invaded Mosul and the Nineveh plains, Nuri founded A Demand for Action. And he was thinking “Enough is enough. We have to do something now. We have to raise awareness”. (...) We want the Western governments to drive out the Islamic State from Nineveh Plains so we can start rebuilding our homes. The refugees should return home. That’s what we want right now and every day we are pushing the politicians to take an action, to raise awareness... Nuri and other members, we are doing it nonstop. A lot of us, you know, sleep like 3 hours per day, working nonstop. Just to help these people. (Chaldean male, born in Iraq, 31 years old)

³³ “Svenska Dagbladet” 23.12.2015, quoted in: A Demand for Action, Facebook page, <https://www.facebook.com/DemandforAction/posts/495185990660874>, accessed on May 23, 2018.

Assyrian/Syriacs in Sweden generally seem to view this organisation in a very positive light and approve of its mission. A Syriac Orthodox lady (because of her involvement with SST, the Swedish Commission for Government Support to Faith Communities, she was interviewed as non-community Swedish) mentioned having bought blankets and sleeping bags with her own money and giving them to ADFA to be sent to the Middle East:

Today I have bought some blankets to send them with this... A Demand for Action, I think that's the name. So we've bought [these blankets], me and my friend. Just private. Almost 100 different blankets and sleeping bags as well. We'll bring them [to ADFA] this afternoon and they will send them to the people in the Middle East.³⁴

A Demand for Action successfully united many Assyrians, some Chaldeans and – to a lesser degree – Syriacs, primarily on Facebook (their profile on this platform had over 25 000 followers in May 2018), and also at demonstrations organised in Swedish cities. A member of ADFA recollects these events:

And then people, you know, started joining this organisation, and talked about it on Facebook, and shared their tweets. So that's how I got to know about it. Also we made a few demonstrations and manifestations in Stockholm – for example on the 2nd of August [2014]. And we've organised a 'multi manifestation' for all our people, also Chaldean and Syriac. People gathered in Stockholm and also in different cities in Sweden. We had [demonstrations] in Jönköping, in Linköping, and I think in Norrköping. And Göteborg also. But also in different countries: in Canada, America, different cities in America, and Germany, and many other places. That's how it started. Now we have members in 19 different countries who raise awareness about the Christians: Assyrians, Chaldeans and Syriacs, and also other minorities in Iraq and Syria. (Chaldean male, born in Iraq, 31 years old)

The same young man talked about his own involvement, his journey to Iraq and filming a documentary about the situation of local Christians fleeing the Islamic State:

Like everybody here, from our Christian people in Södertälje, I wanted to help my own people because they have been persecuted for such a long time, for hundreds of years, mainly by Islam. So I was thinking "I can't just sit at home, while my people in Iraq and Syria are dying."

³⁴ Interview with an Assyrian employee of SST responsible for a project related to ending child marriages, Stockholm, November 25, 2014.

So I was thinking about doing something. (...) And I had this idea: “I want to go to Iraq and make a documentary movie, so we can present it to the Swedish media and they can show it to the Swedish people, Swedish government.” (...) Before going to Iraq, I contacted Nuri Kino. (...) I went to Ankawa and started filming. I was there for a week. It was horrible what I saw. (...) I put some material on Facebook and Nuri liked it and asked me for more.

Since the foundation of ADFA its members have consistently and purposefully used the compound term *Assyrians/Chaldeans/Syriacs* in an attempt to avoid further splits, and instead to reinforce the sense that the organisation represents the entire community. The organisation’s focus was directed at ethnicity rather than religion. ADFA’s web-site states:

July 4 [2014] – We opened a Twitter account and started our social media campaign by tweeting any media outlet calling us Iraqi Christians or Christian Arabs – and anyone else referring to us as anything else but Assyrians/Syriacs/Chaldeans, and through our efforts several media outlets corrected their articles and referred to us by our true ethnicity.³⁵

Many members of ADFA, regardless of whether they had been brought up in Assyrian or Chaldean families, underlined that the name of the community is not important, as they feel they are all one people:

In A Demand for Action, every time we use a word “Christian”, we often use “Assyrian/Chaldean/Syriac” to include everybody, never to exclude anybody, because we need everybody’s help. It’s one people, the same people with three different names. For me, you know, I don’t care what you call me. If you call me Assyrian, Chaldean or Syriac. You know, at the end we are still one people. (Chaldean male, born in Iraq, 31 years old)

6.5. Assyrians/Syriacs in Sweden and politics in their countries of origin

Most Assyrians/Syriacs in Sweden follow the events in the Middle East by watching television; this is particularly true of the older generation. Younger people read Internet sites. However, few members of the community are deeply engaged in Middle Eastern politics. Even those who serve as politicians in Sweden are not always particularly interest-

³⁵ A Demand for Action: Updates, <http://www.ademandforaction.com/archive/>, accessed on May 23, 2018.

ed in Middle Eastern politics, nor do they necessarily actively support Middle Eastern causes. They seem more likely to campaign for specific issues in their own countries of origin than in the region as a whole.

However, some groups – mainly of Assyrians, rather than Chaldeans or Syriacs – wish for a Christian autonomous area in the Middle East. This idea has circulated for over 15 years. A new round of requests was initiated in 2004 by Sarkis Aghajan, the former Minister of Finance of Kurdistan, who is Assyrian. He wished to reverse migration trends and repopulate the towns and villages,³⁶ and offered to build new homes in the predominantly Christian part of northern Iraq for those whose homes had been destroyed, hoping to convince them not to leave the country.

Soon afterwards, the Islamic State emerged; in the summer of 2014 it re-established itself as a caliphate and commenced exceptionally brutal persecutions of non-Muslim minorities. Many Christians fled to the Kurdish region and tens of thousands of others travelled to Turkey, Jordan, and Lebanon which became stopovers on the way to Europe, the United States and Australia. For the first time, the Nineveh Plains – previously settled by Assyrians/Chaldeans, as well as Arabs, Kurds, Shabaks³⁷ – was almost completely emptied of its Aramaic-speaking inhabitants. This period coincided with my interviews in Sweden. My respondents did not yet know that Bakh-dida, a city in northern Iraq inhabited mostly by Assyrians, would be freed from the grip of the Islamic State on October 20th, 2017, nor that there would be further calls to establish a semi-autonomous region for minorities in the Nineveh Plains after the final defeat of the Islamic State.³⁸

The concept of creating an autonomous province in the Nineveh Plains acquired the support of the Kurdish Regional Government in 2009. In 2014, the Iraqi cabinet agreed to create three new provinces in the Nineveh Plains: Article 125 of the Iraqi Constitution pro-

³⁶ Sh. Hanish, *Autonomy for Ethnic Minorities in Iraq: The Chaldo-Assyrian Case*, “Digest of Middle East Studies”, Vol. 20, No. 2, 2011, p. 166.

³⁷ The Shabaks are one of the peoples living in Iraq who follow a syncretic religion combining the elements of Shia Islam with Yazidism, Sufism and Christianity, and speak a dialect of Kurdish. This group has its own culture and customs. *Ibidem*, p. 162.

³⁸ J. Messo, *op. cit.*, p. 94. Despite the fact that in 2016 the Iraqi Parliament decided that a new “Christian” province in the Nineveh Plains will not be created. J. Macintyre, *Iraqi Parliament Votes Against New Christian Province In Nineveh Plain*, “Christian Today”, 27.09.2016, <https://www.christiantoday.com/article/iraqi-parliament-votes-against-new-christian-province-in-nineveh-plain/96511.htm>, accessed on May 23, 2018.

vided legal grounds for this solution.³⁹ Many Assyrians/Syriacs would like to see the Nineveh Plains transformed into an autonomous region, independent of Baghdad and Erbil, and instead maintaining close relations with the central government and the Kurdish Regional Government.⁴⁰ However, some members of the community express an opposing view. They worry about the potential scenario in which a section of the Nineveh Plains is carved out only to be incorporated into Kurdistan as a “Kurdified Assyrian region”. They accuse the Kurds of backing attacks against Christians in order to steer them to the Kurdish region, or of wanting to create a “Christian” buffer zone between the Kurdish and Arabic regions.⁴¹

The Assyrian Democratic Movement (ADM), the main Assyrian political organisation in the region, commands its own armed forces independent from the Kurds.⁴² The Nineveh Plain Protection Units, NPU, were formed in 2014 and consist of 1000 to as many as 5000 people (including reservists); their goal is to fight the Islamic State and to protect Assyrians in Iraq.⁴³ The leader of the NPU and Secretary-General of ADM, Yonadam Kanna, advocated self-governance rather than autonomy: he argued that an autonomy would separate Assyrians from other parts of Iraq, and therefore it would be better not to change the administrative borders of the Nineveh province. He phrased his argument as follows: “some European and American

³⁹ J. Messo, op. cit., p. 94.

⁴⁰ Ibidem, p. 95.

⁴¹ Sh. Hanish, op. cit., p. 168.

⁴² Other Assyrian parties in Iraq also command their own military forces, smaller in numbers, such as the military unit of the Assyrian Patriotic Party (*Atranaya*) allied with the Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP), the Dwekh Nawsha (Aram. “One who makes the sacrifice”) consisting of approximately 250 fighters. Foreigners are allowed to serve in the Dwekh Nawsha. Among those who serve are American, Australian, British and French citizens. Cf. R. Collard, *Meet the Americans Who Have Joined an Iraqi Militia to Fight ISIS*, “Time”, 27.03.2015, <http://time.com/3761211/isis-americans-iraqi-militias/>, accessed on June 3, 2018. Christian militia operating in Iraq differ mainly in their standpoint on the cooperation with the Kurdish Peshmerga – some favour the cooperation while others oppose it. M. Cetti-Roberts, *Inside the Christian Militias Defending the Nineveh Plains*, “War is Boring”, 6.03.2015, <https://medium.com/war-is-boring/inside-the-christian-militias-defending-the-nineveh-plains-fe4a-10babeed>, accessed on June 3, 2018.

⁴³ NPU fighters were trained by former U.S. soldiers, and funded, among others, by the Assyrian diaspora in the United States and Europe. Cf. J. Burger, *Christians in Iraq Forming Militia to Defend, and Possibly Retake, Ancestral Lands*, “Aleteia”, 4.12.2014, <https://aleteia.org/2014/12/04/christians-in-iraq-forming-militia-to-defend-and-possibly-retake-ancestral-lands/>, accessed on June 3, 2018.

parties – as part of a strategy of the defence of Iraqi Christians – propose the creation of an autonomous region. Those who put forward such proposals are people from outside of Iraq, while we work hard in our Parliament to underline the principles set out in the Iraqi Constitution, and to remember how important it is for us to live in one motherland. The calls to create an autonomous region are racist in nature and can only introduce divisions”⁴⁴

His opinion is shared by the leader of the Chaldean Democratic Party, Ablahad Afraim Sawa, who believes that acquiring an autonomous Christian region in Iraq is a dream too far removed from achievable reality, as isolating and concentrating Christians without providing a heavily protected border would only enable terrorists to exterminate them. Chaldean Patriarch Louis Sako also opposes the idea of a “Christian enclave” – in his view, only protecting Christians would violate both Iraqi tradition and history, and Christian principles. Arabic parties are opposed to the idea of an autonomous region in general; they believe it would lead to the division of Iraq and its people.⁴⁵

Many voices claim that Assyrians are not ready for such an experiment and that the area, which would become their land, lacks adequate infrastructure and financial resources. Assyrians/Syriacs in the diaspora do not want to financially support such a project.⁴⁶ Given all these counter-arguments and the development of the situation in the region, it became clear that the long held dream of Assyria would materialise – but as Kurdistan, the land of the Kurds. Seeing no other option, many Aramaic-speaking Christians voted for the independence of Kurdistan in the referendum on September 25, 2017. The KRG keeps talking to Christian political parties whose aims are to advance their agenda; many of their members believe that an agreement to be part of the new Kurdish state would mean recognition by the Kurdish state, rights, security and autonomy.⁴⁷ They point out that when in 1991 Kurdistan received a degree of autonomy, it was also a success for the Assyrians, who won five seats in the Parliament the following year (four were

⁴⁴ M. Saadoun, *Yonadam Kanna: Iraqi Christians no to Nineveh autonomy*, “Agenfor International”, 23.05.2017, <https://www.agenformedia.com/publications/2017/03/yonadam-kanna-iraqi-christians-no-nineveh-autonomy>, accessed on May 23, 2018.

⁴⁵ Sh. Hanish, *op. cit.*, pp. 169-170.

⁴⁶ *Ibidem*, p. 169.

⁴⁷ J. Messo, *op. cit.*, p. 96.

occupied by ADM, the fifth was taken by Sarkis Aghajan who then represented the Kurdish Christian Union).⁴⁸

Asked about Middle Eastern politics, Assyrians/Syriacs living in Sweden usually present it only from the perspective of their local community. The exception to this rule is the engagement of Suroyo TV, as described by Swedish reporter Carl Drott. Suroyo TV is associated with *dawronoye* – a secular, left-wing movement which emerged in the 1980s in Midyat, Turkey, and encompasses certain progressive and socialist policies. At present, the movement promotes the idea of Assyrian-Kurdish-Arabic unity; its aim is to form a state or autonomous region in Beth Nahrin, i.e. Mesopotamia.⁴⁹ The *dawronoye* network consists of more than a dozen parties and organisations. The most important of these are: the Beth Nahrin Patriotic Union, HBA,⁵⁰ the Nineveh Plain Forces, NPF,⁵¹ the European Syriac Union⁵² and the Beth Nahrin National Council, MUB.⁵³ Interests of the *dawronoye* are also represented by the Syriac Union Party (SUP),⁵⁴ a partner of the Movement for Democratic Society (TEV-DEM) – a coalition led by the Kurdish Democratic Union Party (PYD) which controls Rojava. The Syriac Union Party oversees the Syriac Military Council (MFS) and

⁴⁸ G.R.V. Stansfield, *Iraqi Kurdistan Political Development and Emergent Democracy*, London–New York 2003, p. 203.

⁴⁹ C. Drott, *The Revolutionaries of Bethnahrin. Reportage*, “Warscapes”, 25.05.2015, <http://www.warscapes.com/reportage/revolutionaries-bethnahrin>, accessed on June 3, 2018.

⁵⁰ *The establishment of Nineveh Plain Forces – NPF*, “Syriac International News Agency”, 7.01.2015, <http://www.syriacsnews.com/establishment-nineveh-plain-forces-npf/>, accessed on June 3, 2018.

⁵¹ *NPF: Chaldean-Syriac-Assyrian people of Iraq liberate their Christian homeland from ISIS*, “Syriac International News Agency”, 30.05.2016, <http://www.syriacsnews.com/npf-chaldean-%C2%ADsyriac-assyrian-people-iraq-liberate-christian-homeland-isis/>, accessed on June 3, 2018.

⁵² Its member is the Syriac-Assyrian Federation in Sweden (*Syrianska-Assyriska Riksförbundet i Sverige*) and one of the most active members is Metin Rhawi, an Assyrian/Syriac politician living in Sweden. Cf. *Interview about Afrin – With Metin Rhawi*, 4.02.2018, <https://www.european-syriac-union.org/news-reader/interview-about-af-rin-with-metin-rhawi.html>, accessed on June 3, 2018.

⁵³ A separatist party aiming to create an Assyrian/Syriac autonomic zone in the region of Bethnahrin, known until 2005 as the Bethnahrin Freedom Party (GHB). Initially its members cooperated closely with the Kurdistan Workers’ Party (PKK) – among others, by ambushing the Peshmerga from the Kurdistan Democratic Party, in retaliation for the rape and murder of an Assyrian woman, Helen Sawa. C. Drott, op. cit.

⁵⁴ On August 15, 2012, Swedish police arrested more than ten members of SUP who stormed the grounds of the Syrian embassy near Stockholm to protest against Bashar Al-Assad’s government. Malcolm, *Syrian embassy protest sees several detained in Sweden*, “Icenews”, 15.08.2012, <http://www.icenews.is/2012/08/15/syrian-embassy-protest-sees-several-detained-in-sweden/#ixzz2666E5Wao>, accessed on June 3, 2018.

the Syriac Security Office (*Sutoro*). The Nineveh Plain Forces (NPF) have been operating in Iraq since January 2015 and consist of approximately 200 militants; they are affiliated to the Democratic Party Beth Nahrin and the aforementioned Beth Nahrin Patriotic Union (HBA).⁵⁵ The goal of these paramilitary organisations is to combat the Islamic State in collaboration with the Kurds, and to defend Assyrian/Syriac villages in Al-Hassaka and Al-Qamishli in Syria, and in the Nineveh Plains in Iraq.⁵⁶

When on November 23, 2014, I visited the office of Suroyo TV in Södertälje, the station was broadcasting a programme detailing recent successes of the Suryoyo Military Council (MFS). One of the station's founders elaborated in detail about the situation in north-eastern Syria:

We are not strong enough to have Aramean, Assyrian or Syriac – whatever you would call it – autonomy. (...) The Syriac people, the Suryoye, are engaging themselves now in self-defence mainly together with [Kurdish] YPG (People's Defense Units) and some Arabic tribes. We have a military council, Suryoyo Military Council (MFS). Young people, some even from Europe come there to help. But mainly people from Gozarto, from Qamishli region, close to Hassake. In January 2014, they declared three regions as self-ruling regions. It's Kobani (mainly Kurds), Afrin (mainly Kurds), but Gozarto or Hassake is Suryoye along with some Kurds. They want to establish in Syria a democratic society where people depend on each other and live together, and are equal to each other. No matter religion, no matter ethnicity. (...) The support from outside is very limited. Still America has not decided which way to take. And some from our community are against, in particular from Sweden, the Assyrian Federation of Sweden. Because anything that it's not named Assyrian, they've got problem with it. (Assyrian/Syriac male, born in Turkey, 45 years old)

The Assyrian Federation, and other organisations and Churches which promote a more traditional vision of Assyrian identity, indeed do not support the *dawronoye* ideology, whose supporters try to overcome the Assyrian – Syriac divide by using both names or raising both flags at demonstrations.⁵⁷ Nor do the members of the Federation believe in cooperating with the Kurds – in their view, the Kurds' hidden agenda is to cause conflict and take advantage of Assyrians in Syria and Iraq. The Assyrian/Syriac community has traditionally regarded

⁵⁵ See more: A. BarAbraham, *op. cit.*

⁵⁶ C. Drott, *op. cit.*

⁵⁷ *Dawronoye* do have their supporters in Sweden – each year they manage to collect between one and one and a half million Swedish crowns, donated mainly by owners of pizzerias and other Assyrian/Syriac business owners. *Ibidem.*

the Kurds with distrust.⁵⁸ The views of this young Iraqi Assyrian are typical for the Assyrian/Syriac diaspora in Sweden:

The situation in general is very bad because you have the Kurdish government (KRG) that are against minorities and are working against the Assyrians. It doesn't matter what they [Middle Eastern Christians] do, they are being threatened by the government and other people who want them to give up and leave the country. One of the biggest issues in Iraq, is land and villages confiscation. The government is very, very smart because they are not just taking the land, they are using international companies, for example to look for oil in the middle of the village, saying 'We are trying to develop infrastructure'. You have to be very engaged to really know those things. But the Kurds in Sweden... They say that they are who suffer and help Christians, and use their good reputation, so it's hard to learn that it's not truth. (Assyrian female, born in Iraq, 23 years old)

The second generation of immigrants often declare that they consider politics in their countries of origin as important, but few have the right to vote in the Middle East, thus their potential to influence Middle Eastern reality is usually very limited. Children and grandchildren of Assyrians/Syriacs who had emigrated from Tur Abdin did mobilise around defending the Mor Gabriel monastery (the oldest functioning Syriac Orthodox monastery in the world, seized by Turkish authorities), as well as around Seyfo and historical issues:

Foreign politics is important for us. Especially what happens in Tur Abdin with our properties. And we have problem with Mor Gabriel monastery. Even in the schoolbooks there are bad information about our people during the genocide. We are not recognised minority yet in Turkey. The Seyfo question is still denied. So some kind of problems are important, they should be addressed and then become a part of the discussion how to improve the situation. So I would prefer an organisation which was able to act both locally and internationally. (Syriac male, born in Turkey, 35 years old)

Interestingly, Swedish Assyrians/Syriacs who came from Iraq often believe that too much attention is paid to the question of Tur Abdin, because they feel more is now at stake in Syria and in Iraq:

X [Syriac] from the Christian Democrats, he only cares about what is happening in Turkey. There're 15 000 people left there. Why do you only care about these people? Care about the people in Syria, care about the people in Iraq, come on, there are the big numbers, they are the poor

⁵⁸ Cf. M. Tamcke, *The Thieving Kurds: A Stereotype among the Syrian Christians Concerning their Coexistence with the Kurds*, [in:] *Religious Minorities in Kurdistan: Beyond the Mainstream*, ed. Kh. Omarkhali, Wiesbaden 2014, pp. 339–352.

ones, they are the mothers who cannot support their kids, who wanted to sell their homes but couldn't as the Islamists did not let them – they can take Christian people's houses for free. (Assyrian male, born in Sweden, 28 years old)

Although most Chaldeans believe that the situation in Iraq is very bad, and that there seems to be no chance for peace, stability or return, a few activists have a vision similar to the one shared by the Assyrians who wish for an independent state, or at least an autonomic zone:

Chaldeans were among the first that asked international organisations to take care of Arab Christians whether by establishing a secure autonomous region for them, or a governorate. But such region must have the sponsorship of the international organisation. It is impossible to leave innocent lambs alone with wolves. The wolves will kill the lambs. (...) We Chaldeans represent around 80% of the Christians in Iraq. We are in all Iraqi governorates. [But] the culture in the Middle East is very intolerant. They call us 'kuffar' (infidels), and they want to exterminate us. The culture in the region is still intolerant, sectarian and Bedouin. We hope we will have our own state, we hope armies will build us a wall like the one in Israel, and declare the Chaldean kingdom. (...) We want autonomy, we want a Christian governorate, we want self-determination, we want a state. Give us a state! (Chaldean male, born in Iraq, 64 years old)

The war in Syria has caused a new split. Some Assyrians/Syriacs support Bashar Al-Assad while others are against him. The Swedish media, generally supporting democracy, tend to condemn the Syrian president. Assyrians/Syriacs who see themselves as political realists are convinced that there is no hope for democracy in the Middle East and that Al-Assad represents "the lesser evil". This explains why Swedes who ask Assyrians/Syriacs for their opinions on the situation in Syria often receive contradictory responses. For example, this Syriac respondent criticised the Free Syrian Army which attempts to overthrow Al-Assad:

We have a lot of problems in Syria now with the Free Syrian Army and the Syrian National Council and all of these Western friendly organisations. They are actually killing us in Syria. I'm fully supporting democracy but what's happening now, it's worse than under Al-Assad so that's a problem... I remember when they stormed the church in Iraq and they killed a lot of people, almost 50 people, and I've heard some of the people they taped their phone calls about what they did to them. I've read about witnesses, what they told, it was just horrible. (Syriac male, born in Sweden, 25 years old)

Conflicts between Assyrians/Syriacs in the sphere of personal convictions, regarding Middle Eastern issues, extend to entire families and clans. I heard many activists praise their parents' involvement in the Assyrian or Syriac cause, and vice versa – expressions of pride that the younger generation has become involved in political parties and organisations supported by their parents. Entire families were either in favour of, or against Al-Assad; political views were handed down from one generation to another in the process of socialisation. The only person to mention differences between generations, and not between specific families, was a young politician of Iraqi descent who believed that older Assyrians from Iraq are interested solely in Iraqi politics – and that they analyse it from their own, traditional minority point of view, and thus cannot perceive political phenomena from a wider perspective:

I usually say that Assyrians, the older ones, they're not involved in the society enough. They sit and discuss politics as if we're still living in Iraq so the politics they're discussing is not the politics that we're seeing. They discuss Assyrian politics: will we ever have our own country? What do the Turkish people do, what does Saddam Hussein do, was it a good thing for us? Was the US invasion good for us? So it's always from an "us" perspective but from there, not here. (Assyrian male, born in Sweden, 28 years old)

6.6. A return to the homeland?

In 1991, in a partially autobiographical novel, *I fikonträdet skugga: ett syrianskt utvandrarepos* (In The Shadow of The Fig Tree: An Epic Syrian Migrant Story), Bahdi Ecer condemned the eroding relationship between Assyrians/Syriacs living in Sweden and the countries from which they emigrated.⁵⁹ Indeed, unlike – for instance – ethnic Turks, who as immigrants often invested in apartments or houses in Turkey, with the intention of returning there in their retirement years,⁶⁰ Assyrians/Syriacs have concentrated mainly on integration with their host societies in Europe. Two decades ago, conversations about the possi-

⁵⁹ B. Ecer, *I fikonträdet skugga: ett syrianskt utvandrarepos*, Uppsala 1992.

⁶⁰ Their children grew up in families which spoke only Turkish, watched Turkish television and upheld Muslim traditions. Combined with the lack of support from their poorly educated parents, this made school more challenging and later translated into low social status. Cf. A. Skowron-Nalborczyk, *Wykluczenie – nie islam – rodzi przemoc*, "Kultura Liberalna", Vol. 445, No. 29, 2017.

bility of return were still very rare.⁶¹ Heidi Armbruster's research, conducted among German Assyrians/Syriacs from Tur Abdin, demonstrated that feelings towards the ancestral land tend to undergo a gradual change – from the trauma of loss, to nostalgia which replaces an active willingness to return.⁶²

The majority of respondents to the DIMECCE survey have also declared that they wish to stay in Sweden;⁶³ events in the Middle East, especially activities of the so called Islamic State, have accelerated the processes which had begun decades earlier – the Christian exodus from the region. What remains of many Assyrian villages in Iraq and Turkey are abandoned places, or are new locations inhabited by Kurds. Few Assyrians/Syriacs still live in the villages of Tur Abdin: 45 000 people emigrated from the region in the 1990s, fleeing from the conflict between Turks and Kurds from the PKK.⁶⁴ In many instances, these formerly Christian places have become Turkified; governmental agencies gave many Christian estates to Muslim newcomers from the Balkans.⁶⁵

The arrest and imprisonment of the leader of the PKK, Abdullah Öcalan in 1999, finally improved the situation of Christians in south-eastern Turkey. Although problems with the PKK's activities still exist,⁶⁶ Turkish security forces are able to guarantee relative peace and the authorities in Ankara – after having denied the group's existence for years – have now rediscovered the Assyrians/Syriacs as exotic, but needed “human resources”.⁶⁷ In 2002, Prime Minister Bülent

⁶¹ B. Arikian, op. cit., p. 86.

⁶² See: H. Armbruster, *Homes in Crisis: Syrian Orthodox Christians in Turkey and in Germany*, [in:] *New Approaches to Migration? Transnational Communities and the Transformation of Home*, ed. N. Al-Ali, Kh. Koser, London–New York 2002, pp. 17–33.

⁶³ Cf. J. Mack, op. cit., p. 134.

⁶⁴ 40 Assyrians were killed in the fire exchange between Turkish forces and the PKK. H. Samur, *Turkey's Europeanization Process and The Return of the Syriacs*, “Turkish Studies”, Vol. 10, No. 3, September 2009, p. 329. The President of the Assyrian Federation accused the Turkish authorities of taking insufficient measures to protect Christians remaining in the region. Interestingly, this did not have a negative impact on the relations with the Turkish Federation in Sweden; the relations deteriorated a few years later because of the conflict around the recognition of the Seyfo genocide. A. Makko, op. cit., pp. 278–279.

⁶⁵ Th.W. Smith, *Civic Nationalism and Ethnocultural Justice in Turkey*, “Human Rights Quarterly”, Vol. 27, No. 2, 2005, p. 443.

⁶⁶ In July 2015 the conflict between PKK and Turkish forces erupted anew. M. Sofuoğlu, *Assyrians return to Turkey from Europe to save their culture*, “TRT World”, 5.09.2017, <https://www.trtworld.com/magazine/assyrians-return-to-turkey-from-euro-pe-to-save-their-culture-10131>, accessed on May 23, 2018.

⁶⁷ S. Onder, op. cit., p. 101.

Ecevit encouraged Assyrians/Syriacs from Europe to return to Turkey,⁶⁸ while the Turkish Ministry of Culture and Tourism aimed to attract the largest possible number of Assyrian/Syriac tourists to Mardin using the slogan, “Your ancestors lived on these lands”.⁶⁹ The Ministry also planned to fund an Assyrian festival in Stockholm and a twin event in Midyat. These may seem to have been constructive initiatives, but in reality they relied on ignoring the reasons for the initial Assyrian/Syriac emigration and were based on a conviction that they can only benefit the country as tourists bringing money they earned in the West. Moreover, the Turkish government sends conflicting messages to Assyrians/Syriacs: on the one hand, it underlines its tolerance for “loyal” minorities, on the other it portrays their ancestors as traitors and tries to alter the decision of the Swedish Parliament regarding Seyfo’s status as genocide.⁷⁰

At the beginning of the 21st century, it has also become apparent that the Syriac Orthodox Church is experiencing a certain renaissance in Tur Abdin. Both Christians and Muslims visit monasteries on a scale which would have been unthinkable a few years prior. The process of reconstruction and restoration is underway.⁷¹ Some scholars observe a trend: Assyrians/Syriacs living in Europe increasingly aim to renew their ties with their hometowns in the Middle East – mainly Mardin, Midyat, Nusaybin and the surrounding area – through re-emigration or extended stays.⁷²

To date, approximately 180–200 Assyrian/Syriac families have returned to these three cities and twenty surrounding villages – more than half of this group returned from Germany and around 14% from Sweden. Over 90% of these families had left before the 1990s and the vast majority of them believe that European countries in which they had lived offered much greater freedom to practice their religion.⁷³ The main reason for their return was longing for their homeland – the majority of respondents were already retired, so these were to a much larger extent “ethnic returns” rather than “migrating back to one’s roots”. Around 10% returned for socio-religious reasons – they wanted

⁶⁸ M. Sofuoglu, *op. cit.*

⁶⁹ S. Onder, *op. cit.*, p. 101.

⁷⁰ *Ibidem*, p. 103.

⁷¹ M. DelCogliano, *op. cit.*, p. 317.

⁷² H. Samur, *op. cit.*, p. 329.

⁷³ *Ibidem*, p. 331.

to be closer to the churches and monasteries of Tur Abdin. They also mentioned financial reasons and the warmer, healthier climate. Those who returned see themselves as an *avant-garde*, whose role is to pave the way for those who will follow. The older generation use their savings to restore villages not just for themselves, but for their children and grandchildren.⁷⁴

The Assyrian/Syriac youth from Europe are offered summer trips to Tur Abdin to discover the lands of their ancestors. The organisers of these trips are aware that at the moment these young people will not be able to continue learning or working in Turkey.⁷⁵ Furthermore, these young visitors are used to high living standards and unwilling to tackle the problems associated with poor local infrastructure (electricity, water, roads)⁷⁶. In turn, most middle-aged or older Assyrian/Syriac women can no longer imagine functioning without the Swedish social welfare system, which has given them the opportunity to gain a certain degree of financial independence and control over their own lives.⁷⁷ Nevertheless, Assyrian/Syriac migrants who have returned notice some positive tendencies – in their view, life in Turkey is better today than it was when they made the decision to emigrate, even though it is still far from ideal. They do not consider Turkey a European country but would vote in favour of its accession to the European Union – they perceive membership in the EU as a potential antidote for the ills of the region. The majority – as much as 86% – are happy with their return.⁷⁸

The DIMECCE project included questions about the respondents' own definition and significance of "homeland". It turned out to be an ambiguous term which does not necessarily signify a contemporary Middle Eastern region such as Tur Abdin, from which most Swedish Assyrians/Syriacs originate. A number of respondents who support Assyrian nationalism indicated Assyria. Respondents with strong Aramean identity selected Aram Nahrin (i.e. "Aram between rivers" – Tigris and Euphrates). Some Assyrian/Syriac respondents select-

⁷⁴ Before the year 2000, the Assyrian diaspora used to send money to churches in Tur Abdin but the funds were often lost. After 2000 the number of transfers increased and many people began to bring money personally. *Ibidem*, p. 332.

⁷⁵ *Ibidem*, p. 334.

⁷⁶ *Ibidem*, p. 335.

⁷⁷ A. Rabo, *op. cit.*, p. 186.

⁷⁸ H. Samur, *op. cit.*, p. 336.

ed Beth Nahrin (Mesopotamia, a land between the two rivers), others – Tur Abdin. Many Chaldean respondents indicated Iraq, and Syriac /Aramean respondents – Lebanon or Syria. Some respondents named two countries; young people often only indicated Sweden. One of the interviewees – a 37-year-old Assyrian born in Lebanon – indicated specifically Södertälje.⁷⁹ Finally, there were also those who declared they have no homeland.

In response to the question whether they considered the return to their ancestral lands, as many as a third of the respondents to the DIMECCE survey declared their wish to return; two thirds did not see such a possibility. These responses should, however, be viewed with caution: by confirming their attachment to the idea of return to their homeland, the respondents have constructed their own identity. A telling example is the statement made in 2012 by Nail Yoken, former President of Assyriska Football Club, in an interview: “The Swedish Football Federation gave us all kinds of opportunities, but we keep asking why we cannot play for our own country. Oh, how I would like Assyriska to play in Midyat one day!”⁸⁰ Similar dreams are shared by many of his compatriots in Sweden. However, few people make the decision to return; those who do predominantly belong to the first generation of immigrants.⁸¹ Even those who decide to return do not cut ties with Sweden, which has become the country in which their families now live. Thus, they exemplify the Cliffordian model of *traveling-in-dwelling*:

And I have two uncles who chose to move back to Tur Abdin to work for people. They waited until their kids grew up. And now they moved there but they're coming here and then going back. They work in organisation that works for our people. So they are active on political, and cultural, and religious level. (Assyrian female, born in Sweden, 32 years old)

⁷⁹ A. Rabo pointed out that “In many of the interviews, it's not ‘Sweden’ that is identified as the homeland but rather Södertälje... There is no doubt that Södertälje is perceived to be the center of ‘syriansk/assyriskhet’ [syriansk/assyrier-ness]”. Eadem, *Familjen betyder allt' eller 'Vi blir snart lika kalla som svenskarna: Assyrier/syriener i Södertälje*, [in:] *Globala familjer: Transnationell migration och släktskap*, ed. M. Eastmond, L. Åkesson, Hedemora 2007, pp. 216–217.

⁸⁰ Sh. Ahmed, *The Assyrian community in Sweden holding on to its roots*, “These Football Times”, 3.11.2016, <https://thesefootballtimes.co/2016/03/11/the-assyrian-community-in-sweden-holding-on-to-its-roots/>, accessed on May 23, 2018.

⁸¹ Especially the migrants newly arrived from Syria are eager to return – those who have not yet become rooted in Sweden. Interview with a Syriac Orthodox priest, Halunda, March 5, 2014.

Even those respondents self-identifying as Assyrian patriots usually place a condition on their return – the region must be sufficiently safe:

I am Assyrian nationalist, patriot, but moving to Tur Abdin right now is not possible for me. (Assyrian female, born in Germany, 37 years old)

Most respondents will never return to the Middle East but will stay in touch with relatives and friends who still live there. Some dream of regular visits, and perhaps about owning a summer house in the Middle East.⁸² In general, respondents representing the first generation of immigrants are aware that their children would not be happy to move back to the Middle East:

I have been living here for 34 years. We have no life there [in the Middle East], even if we go, our children can never ever survive there. Our children are used to clean water, clean air, high quality of life, Swedish food. We as old and retired people can live there and adjust, but our children have no chance, the country [Iraq] is full of dirt, no electricity, no security, no safety. Every couple of kilometres there is a checkpoint and inspection. (Syriac male, born in Iraq, 69 years old)

The awareness of the civilisational gap between Scandinavia and the chaos-ridden Middle East did not prevent some older respondents, especially those closely attached to the ideas of Assyrianism, from day-dreaming about their children's return to the lands of their ancestors:

We will never be Swedes. And Swedes won't let us be 100% Swedes. (...) We try to teach our children and the people who grow up here to have some kind of connection with Iraq. They get that kind of feeling, I belong here. So maybe when they get older, they will like to come back here. Safe Haven. (Assyrian male, born in Iraq, 52 years old)

The belief in the possibility of return, if not one's own, then perhaps the young generation's return, is one of the motivations for those who engage in the *mobilization for the transformation of home*.⁸³ For Swedish Assyrians/Syriacs this has so far been illustrated by – among others – the participation in demonstrations for the official recognition of Seyfo as genocide by Turkey,⁸⁴ and for the release of father Yusuf Ak-

⁸² Interview with an Assyrian politician, Stockholm, May 28, 2014.

⁸³ Cf. F. Adamson, *op. cit.*

⁸⁴ On March 13, 2013 Assyrians demonstrated together with Armenians during the speech of the Turkish President Abdullah Gül in the Swedish Parliament. *Assyrians and Armenians Protest As Gül Addresses Swedish Parliament*, "Assyrian Interna-

bulut,⁸⁵ as well as against the activities of the militant arm of the Kurdish Democratic Union Party (PYD) in Syria⁸⁶ and against the crimes of the Islamic State in Iraq.⁸⁷ The common denominator for all these initiatives is the fact that the mobilisation happens around martyrology. Leszek Dziegiel rightly observes that “martyrology is one of the most important factors uniting Assyrians/Syriacs around the world”.⁸⁸

In 2008, the attention of the community became focused on Turkey when the Turkish government, aided by the local Muslim community, seized the grounds of the Syriac Orthodox monastery Mor Gabriel.⁸⁹ Demonstrations against this action happened in a number of countries.⁹⁰ Faced with the loss of a priceless monastery, the Assyrian and Syriac fractions came together in an unprecedented way, albeit briefly. Both fractions were in agreement about the crisis and lobbied together in the European Parliament to reclaim the monastery.

tional News Agency”, 13.03.2013, <http://www.aina.org/news/20130313111715.htm>, accessed on May 21, 2018.

⁸⁵ In 2000, father Yusuf Akbulut from the parish of the Virgin Mary in Diyarbakir was incarcerated after he was interviewed for “Hürriyet” and spoke about the 1915 genocide. He was accused of inciting to ethnic and religious hostility (paragraph 312 of the Turkish Criminal Code). Assyrian organisations in the West exerted pressure on their governments and as a result, Akbulut was released six months later. “Hujada” xxiii/269, 2000, pp. 9–12. I had the opportunity to meet him in person in 2007; he did not bear a grudge towards Turkish authorities.

⁸⁶ On January 17, 2016, 200 people turned up for a demonstration organised in Stockholm by the Assyrian Federation in Sweden. The direct cause was a Kurdish attack on Assyrian posts surrounding a district of Qamishli five days earlier. *Assyrians in Sweden Demonstrate Against Kurdish Aggression in Syria*, “Assyrian International News Agency”, 19.01.2016, <http://www.aina.org/news/20160118205844.htm>, accessed on May 21, 2018.

⁸⁷ On August 2, 2014, after the Islamic State forced Christians out of Mosul, Assyrians/Syriacs protested all across the globe, including in Stockholm and Jönköping. *Assyrians Demonstrate Worldwide Against ISIS Persecution*, “Assyrian International News Agency”, 2.08.2014, <http://www.aina.org/news/20140802155939.htm>, accessed on May 21, 2018.

⁸⁸ L. Dziegiel, *Archaeology and martyrology...*, p. 39.

⁸⁹ The Justice and Development Party MPs and Kurdish leaders of Yayvantepe, Eglence and Candarli towns argued that the monastery did not need its grounds to conduct prayers, and that they would better serve the villagers as meadows for cattle grazing. *Turkey Attempting to Confiscate Assyrian Monastery's Land*, “Assyrian International News Agency”, 16.09.2008, <http://www.aina.org/releases/20080916151651.htm>, accessed on May 23, 2018.

⁹⁰ The largest in Germany – 19 000 people turned up for just one of the demonstrations organised in Berlin by “Aktion Mor Gabriel”. *Open Letter From 19,000 Assyrians to Turkey: Do Not Touch St. Gabriel Monastery*, “Assyrian International News Agency”, 4.02.2009, <http://www.aina.org/news/20090204175247.htm>, accessed on May 21, 2018.



Il. 19. A poster commemorating Seyfo at the offices of Suroyo TV (photo: MWB)

Syriac Churches in Sweden made an official statement condemning the actions of the Turkish authorities; an Assyrian MP, Robert Hannah, took up the case in the Swedish parliament; earlier the point was raised by Assyrian/Syriac parliamentarians Yılmaz Kerimo and Robert Halef.⁹¹

⁹¹ Stockholm Center for Freedom, *Syriacs in Sweden to launch an initiative to take their seized properties in Turkey*, 21.07.2017, <https://stockholmcf.org/syriacs-in-sweden-to-launch-an-initiative-to-take-their-seized-properties-in-turkey/>, accessed on May 21, 2018.

The defence of the monastery was placed in the context of human rights; Assyrians/Syriacs counted on the European Union to compel Turkey (a candidate for accession) to accept its terms.⁹² In November 2017, Mor Gabriel was returned to the Syriac Orthodox community; additionally, a promise was made to return 30 other illegally seized churches, monasteries, and cemeteries to local Christians.⁹³ It should be underlined that unlike in the past, the Assyrian organisations in Sweden throughout this dispute managed to maintain official relations with the Swedish government and with the Turkish ambassador to Sweden.⁹⁴ After the Assyrians/Syriacs had publicised the attempt to take over the monastery, it has become one of the arguments used by the opponents of Turkey's accession to the European Union.⁹⁵

6.7. Summary

Sophie Mamattah rightly states that an “absolute return” of migrants is not possible due to the changeable nature of identity, both individual and communal.⁹⁶ Only a few Assyrians/Syriacs risk leaving the Swedish paradise and are mainly those who elect an “ethnic return” – first-generation migrants filled with nostalgic feelings. For most young people, a visit to their country of origin is meaningful enough. Many respondents underlined that although they visited, or would like to visit, the Middle East and keep in touch with their relatives there, Sweden is still their home.⁹⁷ To use the terminology of Benedict Anderson, Assyrians/Syriacs have “imagined themselves” anew – as a group, they have internalised too many European values to wish to function in the Muslim socio-cultural environment. Nevertheless, in exceptional situations they can and will attempt to influence Middle Eastern politics, as was exemplified by the protests and petitions to save the Mor Gabriel monastery. This mode of functioning seems to correspond to *periodically selective transnationality* described by Lise Paulsen Galal.⁹⁸

⁹² B. Aarikan, op. cit., p. 74.

⁹³ H. Boyacıoğlu, *Turkey's Assyrian Community Welcomes Monastery's Return*, “Assyrian International News Agency”, 7.02.2018, <http://www.aina.org/news/20180207145714.htm>, accessed on May 21, 2018.

⁹⁴ A. Makko, op. cit., p. 284.

⁹⁵ *Turkey Attempting to Confiscate...*

⁹⁶ Cf. S. Mamattah, op. cit., p. 2.

⁹⁷ A. Rabo, “*Without our church we will disappear*”..., p. 186.

⁹⁸ Por. L. Paulsen Galal, *Copts in Diaspora: Transnational Belonging as 'Home' is Changing*, [in:] *Border Terrains...*, pp. 85–94.

The four categories describing the experiences of Middle Eastern Christians in Europe (displacement, transnationality, internationalisation and inhabiting the host country), proposed by Paulsen Galal, are certain ideal types. In practice, most of the respondents in the DIMECCE project find themselves somewhere in between two or three categories, or a category that can be applied to them but only temporarily. While the second and third category refer mostly to the Copts in Scandinavia, the situation of Assyrians/Syriacs in Europe is best reflected by the first and last category. One could state that the first generation lives in a certain displacement – physically in Sweden but mentally still in the Middle East; the following generations inhabit the host country.

Immersed in Swedish reality and daily life, Assyrians/Syriacs mobilise for causes related to their Middle Eastern homelands only once in a while. Their transnational political engagement has been visibly greater since 2000. This correlates with the consolidation of Assyrian/Syriac identity in Europe: in brief, only in the diaspora did the Assyrian/Syriac community discover its identity.⁹⁹ The more than fifty years of living in Scandinavia has shaped this community to adopt many European values, and on the other hand – to take advantage of the rights and possibilities offered by governments and laws of host countries, in this case Sweden, to support their transnational activities.¹⁰⁰

However, the questions Assyrians/Syriacs living in Sweden ask themselves – “why” and “how” they should rekindle the connection with the homeland they left behind, differ greatly from questions asked by Assyrians/Syriacs in Istanbul and elsewhere. The latter tend to ask “what” they can influence and “how” they can improve the living conditions of their compatriots in Tur Abdin. Internal migrants do not experience the abrupt and often destructive loss of their former identity and do not lose their homeland in the way external migrants do. On the other hand, they do not have the opportunities to act that are available to those Assyrians/Syriacs who had settled in Europe or the United States and who can benefit from the laws of their host countries to exert transnational political influence in their countries of origin.¹⁰¹

⁹⁹ B. Arikan, *op. cit.*, s. iv.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibidem*, p. 64.

¹⁰¹ *Ibidem*, p. 10.

CONCLUSIONS

We are happy here in Sweden but in my heart I will always be Suryoyo
Othuroyo – Syriac Assyrian. (Assyrian male, born in Syria, 54 years old)

As Gary Freeman rightly points out, in the West, “multiculturalism is not so much a choice as an unintended and often unwanted result”¹ of political decisions. Having deliberately made multiculturalism its official integration policy, Sweden stands as an exception to the above rule; unlike other European states, it follows its own path.² Regulations introduced in the 1970s led the Swedes to abandon the traditional approach which relied on assimilating foreigners, and began to see themselves as an ethnically pluralist society. Animated by a desire to become a “humanitarian superpower”, they opened the door to refugees and migrants who transformed the shape of modern Sweden, forcing their hosts to verify and reinterpret their Swedishness.³ The provisions of the 1974 constitution were extremely significant in this context, as they guaranteed ethnic and religious minorities the right to preserve their native culture; moreover, these decisions were supported with considerable funds.⁴ The new wording even implied that foreigners would retain the choice between their ethnicity and mainstream Swedish culture.⁵

The hypothesis put forward in the introduction was that as a community, Assyrians/Syriacs would not have been who they are today had they not come to Sweden. It was confirmed by my observations and research, which demonstrated that Assyrian/Syriac ethnic and national identity is not a simple derivative of the identity of this group in the Middle East, but a hybrid of various elements. By migrating to Sweden, Middle Eastern Christians became the beneficiaries of its legal

¹ G. Freeman, *Immigrant Incorporation in Western Democracies*, “The International Migration Review”, Vol. 38, No. 3, 2004, pp. 945–969.

² K. Borevi, op. cit., p. 718.

³ E. Muciek, op. cit., p. 62.

⁴ Y. Akiş Kalaylıoğlu, M. Kalaylıoğlu, *Organising of Turkish migrants in metropolitan Stockholm: From national federation to women, youth and other associations*, [in:] *Migration from Turkey to Sweden...*, p. 185.

⁵ K. Borevi, op. cit., p. 711.

system. Eagerly exercising the laws permitting ethnic organisations to apply for state funding, they established a number of institutions. This has given their community a range of opportunities for development which would have been out of reach in the countries of origin, where they could not count on civil liberties, and had to struggle with economic difficulties. By having to answer questions about their identity, first asked by Swedish officials and then by work or school colleagues, Assyrians/Syriacs have “reimagined” themselves, in an Andersonian sense,⁶ or reconstructed themselves anew by selecting certain elements of their long history. In addition, the identity in question is not a single construct, but rather a few – if not a few dozen – variants (although a polarisation resulting in the divide between Assyrians and Arameans/Suryoye/Syriacs is visible). This illustrates the multitude of influences shaping this community, and distinguishes it from groups such as, for example, Turkish or Kurdish immigrants, whose ethnic identities solidified upon arrival in Sweden.

The research process also provided answers to questions concerning the internal dynamics of the group, its socio-political environment, and transnational connections. In terms of internal dynamics, Churches have played a key role in shaping the ethnic and national identity of Assyrians and Syriacs. This is not surprising; the Syriac Orthodox millet – an ethnic and religious group with clearly defined borders and its own laws – has operated within the Ottoman Empire for centuries. Assyrianism, an ideology established in the late 19th century, referencing the ancient Assyrian empire, had supporters both among secular intellectuals and among the hierarchs of the Assyrian Church of the East and the Syriac Orthodox Church.⁷ In fact, the ideology is still supported by the former and by some officials of the latter. Its purpose is to (re)build the Assyrian nation. On the other hand, its rival ideology – Aramean nationalism – was a reaction of the Syriac Orthodox clergy who wanted to emphasise the group’s Christian roots and reject the pagan past. The key role in this process was played by Patriarch Ignatius Aphrem I Barsoum, who initially backed the term “Assyrians”, but who with time changed his mind and proceeded to promote the Syrian, i.e. Aramean, identity.⁸ Today, the Syriac Orthodox Church poses

⁶ B. Anderson, *op. cit.*

⁷ R.W. De Kelaita, *op. cit.*

⁸ N. Atto, *op. cit.*, pp. 286–290.

a problem for secular Aramean/Syriac activists; it legitimises their activities, but they would prefer to emancipate themselves and abandon religious nationalism in favour of ethnic nationalism in order to forge an Aramean nation. This situation is very difficult: the Church has had a monopoly on leadership for a long time and is not going to support competing providers of meaning. To complete the picture, it should be mentioned that the Chaldean Catholic Church promotes yet another national ideology – Chaldean nationalism,⁹ which emphasises cultural elements indicating Iraqi and Catholic heritage.

The Swedish authorities' preference to deal with ethnic, rather than religious entities, strengthens the position of Assyrian and Syriac secular organisations. The importance of Syriac Churches for the diaspora is gradually decreasing, nevertheless they remain the depositaries of Syriac identity and language; they also organise communal activities, particularly for older women, assist newcomers to the country, and provide a centre around which families unite at religious holidays and celebrations. While secularisation is visible, especially in the second generation of immigrants, the great majority of Assyrians/Syriacs in Sweden see themselves as religious believers and visit a church at least a few times per year. Apart from performing their worship-related functions, the churches provide a space where the community can be socially and politically mobilised – Assyrian/Syriac activists and politicians often speak to the community gathered in large church halls after mass. The Syriac clergy encourage young people to get involved in Swedish political life. Assyrians/Syriacs are well represented in politics, especially at the communal level; they exercise their right to vote as much as ethnic Swedes, which distinguishes them from other immigrants. Representatives of the Assyrian/Syriac community sit in the Riksdag – some on ministerial benches.

Unfortunately, the Assyrian/Syriac voice is weakened by an internal dispute, which in Sweden is referred to as *namnkonflikten* ('name debate', the conflict regarding the name of the community).¹⁰ This disagreement dates back to 1975 and so far there has been little indication that it will come to an end in the near future, although since the turbulent 1980s and 1990s, when two rival Syriac Orthodox dioceses were established in Sweden, it has somewhat subsided. Its legacy are

⁹ A. Boháč, op. cit., p. 70.

¹⁰ N. Atto, op. cit., pp. 323–392.

duplicate institutions; Assyrian institutions are usually a few years older than their Syriac/Aramean counterparts. The best-known example of this are the two football teams that share the stadium in Södertälje – Assyriska FF and Syrianska FC; these teams strengthen the feelings of national pride of Assyrians and Syriac/Aramean fractions.¹¹ The television stations – Assyria TV, Suroyo TV, and Suryoyo SAT – play a similar role. Importantly, Assyrians and Syriacs/Arameans often come from the same families, and even in the families of the chief activists of one faction there are those who have chosen the rival identity. In the visual sphere, allegiance to either faction is represented by symbolic imagery – winged bulls, the Ishtar gate and the god Ashur on the Assyrian side, and the red-and-yellow flag with the winged solar disk representing the Aramean side.

The *Assyrier/Syrianer* divide is the most significant, but not the only source of friction. Other tensions can be observed – between the conservative older generation and younger people, better educated and open-minded; between men, who played dominant roles in the Middle East and women who have become emancipated in Sweden; between newcomers from Syria, Iraq and Turkey, who differ in customs, languages or dialects, the time of arrival in Scandinavia, and therefore their economic position and degree of integration. Assyrians/Syriacs who originate from Turkish Tur Abdin arrived in Sweden in large numbers in the 1970s and have lived there the longest; this group founded most of the institutions which now serve the entire community and are a source of pride. Iraqi refugees, often well educated and wealthy, were less fortunate as they arrived at a time when the Swedish authorities were not logistically prepared to receive them. New procedures have been implemented since then, which still occasionally fail when an overwhelming number of immigrants arrive from war-torn Syria.

The social and political environment surrounding Assyrians/Syriacs consists mostly of ethnic Swedes and other migrants. For the average Swede it does not matter whether immigrants from the Middle East follow Christianity or Islam – in fact, in order to prevent stigmatisation, Swedish institutions record the country of origin and native language of immigrants, but not their faith. This approach is best illustrated by the fact that at the Swedish Agency for Support to Faith Communities (SST), a single member of staff is responsible for

¹¹ C. Rommel, *op. cit.*

communicating with both Muslims and Middle Eastern Christians. Assyrians/Syriacs have found this frustrating – for years, they had not quite come to terms with the fact that their Christianity was not in itself a ticket to mainstream society.¹² For many Swedes, all migrants from the South are, and always have been, *svartskaller* (black heads) – second-class citizens. A shared religion does not prevent prejudice, while xenophobic attitudes are not underpinned by religion as much as by otherness in general.¹³ Apart from Södertälje, where a third of the population is Assyrian/Syriac and which is the community's "capital", in most parts of Sweden, members of this community are still forced to explain who they are, and usually clarify that they are not Muslims (which enables them to underline their similarity to ethnic Swedes and gain their approval). The image of the Assyrian/Syriac community in the media has changed over the years. In the 1970s, local newspapers described it in decidedly negative terms, emphasising its patriarchal and oriental character; over the years this narrative has improved, partly thanks to the successes of *Assyriska* and *Syrianska*, but also due to the "domestication" of the group, which became renowned for its restaurants, pizzerias and hairdressing salons. This may demonstrate that even very negative immigrant stereotypes can gradually change for the better, if not entirely disappear.¹⁴ Nevertheless, the subject of the Assyrian/Syriac mafia in Södertälje or the group's Islamophobia reemerges from time to time.

In general, Middle Eastern Christians – Assyrians/Syriacs as well as Copts – transfer experiences from their homelands to the host countries, and thus maintain their prejudices against Muslims from the Middle East and Africa. Similar attitudes can be found on the other side, hence the attacks of Middle Eastern Muslims on Christians (especially in refugee centres) and on the other hand, Assyrian/Syriac attempts to retaliate, directed mostly against Somali Muslims in Södertälje. In this context, it is difficult to discuss the seeking of common ground, although Swedish authorities and representatives of Churches encourage dialogue by organising appropriate meetings. Measures taken so far by the Swedish side are, however, disproportionate to the scale of the problem. Some hope can be found in instances of person-

¹² Cf. F. McCallum, *Shared Religion but Still a Marginalized Other...*

¹³ J. Mack, op. cit., pp. 11, 256.

¹⁴ A. Rabo, "Without our church we will disappear"..., p. 192.

al friendships formed at universities or at work between young Middle Eastern Christians and Muslims, often belonging to the second generation of immigrants. Deeper, meaningful relationships like these are most likely to break down the stereotypes reinforced by events in the Middle East – particularly the crimes of the Islamic State.

Relations of the Assyrian/Syriac community with non-Muslim immigrant groups do not play a major role. The attitude of Assyrians/Syriacs to other minorities in Södertälje is most often marked by indifference, occasionally tinged with superiority. Personal friendships between Assyrians/Syriacs and people from other countries (including Korea, China and the Philippines) seem to happen more often than friendships with Muslims. Personal relationships with Christians from other countries (such as Armenia, Russia, Poland, Ethiopia, Chile) can sometimes even result in marriage. However, the vast majority of Assyrians/Syriacs ultimately choose endogamous marriages; mixed marriages are a small, albeit growing ratio. In this category, ethnic Swedes are the most frequently chosen partners. Apart from Muslims, Swedes are the group that can be described as a significant “Other”, unlike, for example, immigrants from Southeast Asia.

Swedishness is often perceived in opposition to Assyrian/Syriac identity and characterised using terms such as coolness, distance, individualism, political correctness, frugality (versus emotions, closeness, collectivity, honesty, generosity). In the narratives of older first-generation respondents, the division into “us” and “them” is almost transparent; the situation is more complicated for young people brought up in Sweden. Depending on their personal experiences (acceptance-rejection), they admit or do not admit to internalising at least some Swedish values and cultural codes; they feel Swedish to some degree. If we recall John Berry’s typology, of the four options (integration, assimilation, marginalisation, separation) most choose and implement the first one.¹⁵ Integration does not mean that Assyrian/Syriac immigrants combine both cultures in all of their behaviours – rather, they “switch” between cultures depending on the situation; some do this with ease while others struggle to reconcile cultural differences. Those who engage in “deliberate identity negotiations” achieve greater intercultural effectiveness; they can be described as “dynamic biculturalists”.¹⁶ However, the separation strate-

¹⁵ Ch. Westin, *op. cit.*, p. 1008.

¹⁶ S. Ting-Toomey, *op. cit.*, p. 225.

gy is easier in some respects, as it minimises the number of situations in which one needs to deliberately negotiate one's identity – be prepared to switch points of reference and use new categories to understand cultural or ethnic differences. Additionally, immigrants who choose the separation strategy can quickly return to a familiar frame of reference – they are essentially unaware of their internal identity negotiations.¹⁷

The attitude of the host society is not without significance. Consecutive opinion polls have shown that Swedes are still one of the most open nations, respectful of cultural differences to the extent that in the case of conflict between their own norms and those of adopted groups, they are ready to accept many things. This is slowly changing. Recently introduced or amended laws (such as those prohibiting juvenile marriages) are aimed at protecting the values that are important to Swedes. In spite of the fact that the mainstream media does not discuss any negative aspects of immigration into the country, the popularity of the Swedish Democrats – a party which relies on the fears and frustrations of Swedish taxpayers – is growing. Surprisingly, this political party has had some support from Assyrians/Syriacs – people who feel largely Swedish and/or those who wish to protect the country from being flooded by further waves of immigrants, especially Muslims. Most Assyrians/Syriacs believe that ethnic Swedes will never let them feel 100% Swedish; however, this does not prevent them from declaring loyalty to Sweden.

Speaking of themselves, Assyrians/Syriacs tend to emphasise that they are a peaceful group, focused on growth, social advancement and economic success; they point out that many members of their community achieved highly respected positions and made significant fortunes in Sweden. They do not always realise that the investments in Södertälje, of which they are very proud (monumental churches, luxurious villas) and certain customs and behaviours (picnics in cemeteries, loud wedding parties attended by several hundred people, cars blocking streets around the temples) irritate ethnic Swedes. In terms of their numbers, Assyrians/Syriacs can be conceptualised as a minority not only in the Arab world, but also in the diaspora, where they are a “minority within the minority” or “double minority”.¹⁸ However, in Södertälje they form such a large group that traditional power-in-

¹⁷ Ph. Collie et al., *op. cit.*, p. 209.

¹⁸ L. Paulsen Galal, A. Hunter, F. McCallum, S.L. Sparre, M. Wozniak-Bobinska, *op. cit.*, p. 18, 20.

qualities between the hosts and the immigrants are distorted, and the concept of “a majority within the minority”¹⁹ seems to be more adequate. The power relations in Södertälje are certainly entirely different than in the immigrants’ countries of origin.

This situation creates a dilemma for Swedish decision-makers, who must delineate the limits of state tolerance towards the immigrants’ attachment to their identity and cultural heritage. The official and prevailing belief is that it is not necessary to give up one’s own cultural identity and blend with the mainstream to function in society without problems. As a community, Assyrians/Syriacs in Sweden represent a settled diaspora,²⁰ which still retains the characteristics of a classic diaspora: they were dispersed in specific historical circumstances, can be easily distinguished from their host society, myths of their homeland are still vivid, they have not entirely given up on returning, they still support their compatriots left in the countries of origin, and their collective consciousness is rooted in memories of the Middle East.²¹

Assyrian/Syriac transnational activities are also connected to the Middle East (mobilisation for the transformation of homeland), and in some cases to countries where their family members have settled. Since the beginning of the 21st century, the myth of returning to the homeland has been reawakened; some call their homeland Assyria, others Aram Nahrin, for others it is Tur Abdin in Turkey, Rojava in Syria, or the Nineveh Plains in Iraq. For most, return is a beautiful dream, detached from reality; only for a small group, especially older people longing for Tur Abdin, is it a real option (a so-called ethnic return). Young people brought up in Sweden cannot imagine living a harsh and dangerous life in the Middle East, but they are keen to visit the lands of their ancestors. Sweden is home to both A Demand For Action (ADFA) and Assyrians Without Borders (AWB) – two organisations instrumental in helping Assyrians/Syriacs living in the Middle East.

While not as numerous as the Kurds, or as well-organised as the Armenians,²² Swedish Assyrians/Syriacs do occasionally try to influence Middle Eastern politics, in an approach which Lise Paulsen Galal describes as “temporarily selective transnationality”. A good example of this strategy are the demonstrations organised by the Assyrian Fed-

¹⁹ Ibidem, p. 18.

²⁰ J. Mack, op. cit., p. 92.

²¹ J. Clifford, *Diasporas*, “Cultural Anthropology”, Vol. 9, No. 3, 1994, p. 305.

²² L. Dziegiel, *Archeology and martyrology...*, p. 43.

eration and ADFA in Stockholm and other Swedish cities condemning the Islamic State, the Kurdish militia in Syria and Iraq, as well as protests over the Mor Gabriel monastery in Turkey. For many years, the Assyrian/Syriac community has requested that Ankara recognise Seyfo as a genocide of their people which took place during the First World War. A memorial to the victims of Seyfo was erected in Norrköping in 2015; discussions are still in progress about placing a similar monument in Södertälje.

The case of the Assyrian/Syriac community in Sweden is interesting in many ways. It shows that adaptation is a two-way process – not only do the newcomers adapt to the hosts, the mechanism also works in the other direction. Strong diasporic organisations can make immigrants feel at home in the host country,²³ begin to transform their immediate environment, and then want to influence change in their countries of origin as well. Former asylum seekers and refugees lived to see members of their community become respected politicians, entrepreneurs and football stars, but they also saw a group of frustrated young people form the ranks of Sweden's first genuine mafia organisation. This ambivalence – successful integration of the majority contrasted with a minority lost to crime – can partially be explained by the fact that, in light of Hartmut Esser's typology, Assyrians/Syriacs as a group coped exceptionally well with the so-called placement (winning one's individual position in society, e.g. in the educational or economic system), but some people still struggle to identify with Swedish society and its social system on an emotional level.²⁴

For many Assyrians/Syriacs, coming to Sweden was associated with the expectation that they would settle in a Christian country which would support other fellow Christians. These expectations of solidarity were partially met by the Church of Sweden – especially in the 1970s and 1980s – but in time, the equality and freedom their new homeland offered proved to be much more important. While people of immigrant origins are rarely seen as models of modern Swedishness,²⁵ looking at Assyrians/Syriacs living in Sweden, one could conclude that they are separate, yet equal. Integration is considered successful when immigrants with certain characteristics occupy the same, or very similar

²³ A. Rabo, *op. cit.*, p. 192.

²⁴ A. Makko, *op. cit.*, p. 285.

²⁵ A. Rabo, *op. cit.*, p. 193.

positions as members of the host society. The Assyrian/Syriac community in Sweden cannot be accused of not adopting a proactive attitude: they showed ambition, diligence and the will to become “best in class”. They have largely succeeded – and they continue to contribute to the development of their adopted homeland in various ways. In their case the Swedish model, albeit imperfect, has worked well.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Books

- Abdalla, Michael, *Kultura żywienia dawnych i współczesnych Asyryjczyków*, Dialog, Warsaw 2001.
- Aboona, Hirmis, *Assyrians, Kurds, and Ottomans: Intercommunal Relations on the Periphery of the Ottoman Empire*, Cambria Press, Amherst–New York 2008.
- Ackfeldt, Anders, Dan-Erik Andersson, *Assyrier och Syriener i Sverige: en forskningsöversikt med bibliografi*, Center for Middle Eastern Studies, Lund 2012.
- Anderson, Benedict, *Imagined Communities: Reflections of the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, Verso, London 1983.
- Andersson, Ingvar, *Dzieje Szwecji*, Wydawnictwo Naukowe PWN, Warsaw 1967.
- Andersson, Stefan, *Assyrierna: En bok om präster och lekmän, om politik och diplomati kring den assyriska invandringen till Sverige*, Tiden, Stockholm 1983.
- Anioł, Włodzimierz, *Szlak Norden. Modernizacja po szwedzku*, Elipsa, Warsaw 2013.
- Anusik, Zbigniew, *Gustaw II Adolf*, Zakład Narodowy im. Ossolińskich, Wrocław 2009.
- Arentzen, Thomas, *Ortodoxa och österländska kyrkor i Sverige*, Nämnden för statligt stöd till trossamfund, Stockholm 2016.
- Atiya, Aziz S., *A History of Eastern Christianity*, Methuen & Co Ltd., London 1967.
- Atto, Naures, *Hostages in the homeland, orphans in the diaspora: identity discourses among the Assyrian/Syriac elites in the European diaspora*, Leiden University Press, Leiden 2011.
- Awde, Nicholas, Nines Lamassu, Nicholas Al-Jeloo, *Modern Aramaic (Assyrian/Syriac) Dictionary & Phrasebook*, Hippocrene Books, New York 2007.
- Badger, George P., *The Nestorians and Their Rituals*, Joseph Masters, London 1852.
- Balicki, Janusz, Peter Stalker, *Polityka imigracyjna i azylowa. Wyzwania i dylematy*, Wydawnictwo UKSW, Warsaw 2006.
- Balls Organista, Pamela, Gerardo Marín, Kevin M. Chun, *The Psychology of Ethnic Groups in the United States*, Sage, California 2010.
- Banaś, Monika, *Szwedzka polityka integracyjna wobec imigrantów*, Wydawnictwo WUJ, Kraków 2011.

- Bauer, Wolfgang, *Przez morze. Z Syryjczykami do Europy*, Wydawnictwo Czarne, Warsaw 2016.
- Becker, Adam H., *Revival and Awakening. American Evangelical Missionaries in Iran and the Origin of Assyrian Nationalism*, The University of Chicago Press, Chicago–London 2015.
- ‘BedMšīho Ne‘mān d-Qarabāš, *Relacje chrześcijańsko-muzułmańskie na terenie Turcji na przełomie XIX i XX wieku. Dziennik seminarzysty o ludobójstwie Ormian i Asyryjczyków w roku 1895 i w latach I wojny światowej*, translation, edition and preface by Michael Abdalla, Wydawnictwo UNUM, Kraków 2013.
- Berg, Heleen Murre-van den, *From a Spoken to Written Language: The Introduction and Development of Literary Urmia Aramaic in the Nineteenth Century*, Nederlands Instituut Voor Het Nabije Oosten, Leiden 1995.
- Beyme, Klaus von, *Współczesne teorie polityczne*, Wydawnictwo Naukowe Scholar, Warsaw 2007.
- Billig, Michael, *Banal Nationalism*, Sage, London–Thousand Oaks–New Delhi 1995.
- Björklund, Ulf, *North to Another Country: The Formation of a Suryoyo Community in Sweden*, University of Stockholm, Stockholm 1981.
- Bourdieu, Pierre, *Language and Symbolic Power*, Polity Press, Cambridge 1991.
- Brague, Rémi, *Il futuro dell’Occidente*, Bompiani, Milan 1998.
- Bukowiecki, Łukasz, *Czas przeszły zatrzymany. Kulturowa historia skansenów w Szwecji i w Polsce*, Campidoglio, Warsaw 2015.
- Castles, Stephen, Mark J. Miller, *The Age of Migration*, Palgrave Macmillan, Basingstoke 2003.
- Cetrez, Öner Andreas, *Meaning-making variations in acculturation and ritualization. A multi-generational study of Suroyo migrants in Sweden*, Uppsala University, Uppsala 2005.
- Childs, Marquis W., *Sweden. The Middle Way*, Yale University Press, New Haven 1936.
- Chodubski, Andrzej J., *Wstęp do badań politologicznych*, Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Gdańskiego, Gdańsk 2004.
- Cieślak, Tadeusz, *Zarys historii najnowszej krajów skandynawskich*, Wydawnictwo Naukowe PWN, Warsaw 1978.
- Cisło, Waldemar, Paweł Stachnik, *Imigranci u bram. Kryzys uchodźczy i męczeństwo chrześcijan w XXI w.*, Wydawnictwo Biały Kruk, Kraków 2017.
- Coakley, James Farwell, *The Church of the East and the Church of England: A History of the Archbishop of Cantenbury’s Assyrian Mission*, Clarendon Press, Oxford 1992.
- Cohen, Robin, *Global Diasporas: An Introduction*, University of Washington Press, Seattle 1997.

- Colosimo, Jean-François, *Zbędni ludzie. Przekleństwo chrześcijan Bliskiego Wschodu*, Dialog, Warsaw 2017.
- Comparing Welfare States*, ed. Allan Cochrane, John Clarke, Sharon Gewirtz, Sage, London 2001.
- Corm, Georges, *La Question religieuse au XXIe siècle. Géopolitique et crise de la post-modernité*, La Découverte, Paris 2007.
- Courbage, Youssef, Philippe Fargues, *Christians and Jews under Islam*, I.B. Tauris, London–New York 1994.
- Courtois, Sébastien de, *The Forgotten Genocide of Eastern Christians. The Last Arameans*, Gorgias Press, New Jersey 2004.
- Cousins, Mel, *European Welfare States*, Sage, London 2005.
- Cragg, Kenneth, *The Arab Christian. A History in the Middle East*, Mowbray, London 1992.
- Dalrymple, William, *From the Holy Mountain: A Journey Among the Christians of the Middle East*, HarperCollins, New York 1997.
- Danecki, Janusz, *Kultura islamu. Słownik*, WSiP, Warsaw 1997.
- Danecki, Janusz, *Podstawowe wiadomości o islamie*, Dialog, Warsaw 2011.
- Daun, Åke, *Swedish Mentality*, Pennsylvania State University Press, Pennsylvania 1996.
- Democracy and the Welfare State*, ed. Amy Gutmann, Princeton University Press, Princeton 1988.
- Deniz, Fuat, *En minoritets odysse: upprätthållande och transformation av etnisk identitet i förhållande till moderniseringsprocesser: det assyriska exemplet*, Uppsala University, Uppsala 1999.
- Diaspora and Transnationalism: Concepts, Theories and Methods*, ed. Rainer Bauböck, Thomas Faist, Amsterdam University Press, Amsterdam 2010.
- Donabed, Sargon, *Reforging a Forgotten History: Iraq and the Assyrians in the Twentieth Century*, Edinburgh University Press, Edinburgh 2015.
- Donef, Racho, *The Shemsi and the Assyrians*, s.n., Sydney 2010.
- Dośpiał-Borysiak, Katarzyna, *Polityka Szwecji i Finlandii w regionie Morza Bałtyckiego*, Wydawnictwo Adam Marszałek, Toruń 2006.
- Dziekan, Marek, *Historia Iraku*, Dialog, Warsaw 2002.
- Dziekan, Marek, *Irak. Religia i polityka*, Elipsa, Warsaw 2005.
- Easton, David, *A Systems Analysis of Political Life*, John Wiley & Sons New York–London–Sydney 1965.
- Ecer, Bahdi, *I fikonträdet skugga: ett syrianskt utvandrarrepos*, Uppsala University, Uppsala 1992.
- Encyklopedia politologii*, Vol. 1, ed. Wojciech Sokół, Marek Żmigrodzki, Kantor Wydawniczy Zakamycze, Zakamycze 1999.
- Erickson, Robert, *Det assyrisk-syrianska fotbollsundret*, GML Förlag, Stockholm 2010.

- Esser, Hartmut, *Integration und ethnische Schichtung*, Mannheimer Zentrum für Europäische Sozialforschung, Mannheim 2001.
- Faist, Thomas, *The Volume and Dynamics of International Migration and Transnational Social Spaces*, Oxford University Press, Oxford 2000.
- Frazee, Charles A., *Catholics and Sultans: The Church and the Ottoman Empire 1453–1923*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 2006.
- Froese, Wolfgang, *Historia państw i narodów Morza Bałtyckiego*, Wydawnictwo Naukowe PWN, Warsaw 2007.
- Fyderek, Łukasz, *Pretorianie i technokraci w reżimie politycznym Syrii*, Księgarnia Akademicka, Kraków 2011.
- Gaunt, David, *Massacres, Resistance, Protectors: Muslim-Christian Relations in Eastern Anatolia During World War I*, Gorgias Press, Piscataway 2006.
- Geddes, Andrew, *The Politics of Migration and Immigration in Europe*, Sage, London 2003.
- Gibbs, Graham R., *Analyzing Qualitative Data*, Sage, London 2007.
- Goddard, Hugh, *A History of Christian-Muslim Relations*, Edinburgh University Press, Edinburgh 2000.
- Green, Tamara M., *The City of the Moon God: Religious Traditions of Harran*, E.J. Brill, Leiden–New York 1992.
- Habermas, Jürgen, *Moral Consciousness and Communicative Action*, The MIT Press, Baskerville (USA) 1990.
- Haddad, Robert, *Syrian Christians in Muslim Society. An Interpretation*, Princeton University Press, Princeton 1970.
- Hadenius, Stig, *Sveriges politiska historia från 1865 till våra dagar. Konflikt och samförstånd*, Hjalmarson & Högberg, Sztokholm 2008.
- Halliday, Fred, *Islam and the Myth of Confrontation: Religion and Politics in the Middle East*, I.B. Tauris & Co Ltd, London–New York 2003.
- Hear, Nicholas Van, *New diasporas: The mass exodus, dispersal and regrouping of Migrant Communities*, UCL Press, London 1998.
- Hilson, Mary, *The Nordic Model: Scandinavia since 1945*, Reaktion Books, London 2008.
- Ho, Engseng, *The Graves of Tarim. Genealogy and Mobility across the Indian Ocean*, University of California Press, Berkeley 2006.
- Howard, Michael C., *Transnationalism in Ancient and Medieval Societies: The Role of Cross-Border Trade and Travel*, McFarland & Company, Jefferson (USA)–London 2012.
- Implementacja zasad religijnych w sferze politycznej*, ed. Ryszard Michalak, Wydawnictwo Morpho, Zielona Góra 2016.
- Jag behöver rötter och vingar om assyrisk/syriansk identitet i Sverige*, ed. Göran Gunner, Sven Halvardson, Artos & Norma, Skellefteå 2005.
- Jević, Miroljub, *Political Relations and Religion*, Center for Study of Religion and Religious Tolerance, Belgrade 2011.

- Jevtić, Miroljub, *Religion and Power-Esseys on Politology of Religion*, Center for Study of Religion and Religious Tolerance, Belgrade 2008.
- Jevtić, Miroljub, *The Problems of Politology of Religion*, Center for Study of Religion and Religious Tolerance, Belgrade 2012.
- Joseph, John, *The Modern Assyrians of the Middle East: Encounters with Western Christian missions, archaeologists, and colonial power*, Brill, Leiden–Boston–Köln 2000.
- Josseran, Tancrede, Frédéric Pichon, Florian Louis, *Géopolitique du Moyen-Orient et de l'Afrique du Nord: Du Maroc à l'Iran*, Presses Universitaires de France, Paris 2012.
- Karsh, Efraim, Inari Karsh, *Empires of the Sand: The Struggle for Mastery in the Middle East, 1789–1923*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge 1999.
- Kayhana, Barisa, *Nätverket: Södertäljemaffians uppgång och fall*, Norstedts, Stockholm 2017.
- Knutsson, Bengt, *Assur eller Aram: språklig, religiös och nationell identifikation hos Sveriges assyrier och syrianer*, SIV Rapport, No. 4/82, Statens invandrarverk (SIV), Norrköping 1982.
- Kobierecka, Anna, *Między wielokulturowością a integracją. Ewolucja polityki Szwecji w świetle zmieniających się wyzwań migracyjnych*, Wydawnictwo Ibidem, Łódź 2016.
- Konstytucja – ustrój polityczny – system organów państwowych*, ed. Stanisław Bożyk, Adam Jamróz, Temida 2, Białystok 2010.
- Kościelniak, Krzysztof, *Grecy i Arabowie. Historia kościoła melchickiego (katolickiego) na ziemiach zdobytych przez muzułmanów (634–1516)*, Wydawnictwo UNUM, Kraków 2004.
- Krutmeijer, Malin, Leena Suurpää, *Black Light, White Shadows: young people in the Nordic countries write about racism*, Nordic Council of Ministers, Copenhagen 1998.
- Kubitsky, Jacek, *Szwecja od środka*, PIW, Warsaw 1987.
- Kucukkaplan, Verde, Marianne Freyne-Lindhagen, *Syrianska kvinnobilder*, Örebro University Press, Örebro 2003.
- Layard, Austen H., *Nineveh and its remains: with an account of a visit to the Chaldean Christians of Kurdistan, and the Yezidis, or devil worshippers; and an inquiry into the manners and arts of the ancient Assyrians*, John Murray, London 1849.
- Lei Sparre, Sara, Alistair Hunter, Anna Roselund Jørgensen, Lise Paulsen Galal, Fiona McCallum, Marta Wozniak, *Middle Eastern Christians in Europe. Histories, Cultures and Communities*, DIMECCE, St Andrews 2015.
- Leick, Gwendolyn, *Mesopotamia: The Invasion of the City*, Penguin Books, New York 2001.
- Leksykon politologii*, ed. Andrzej Antoszewski, Ryszard Herbut, Atla 2, Wrocław 1997.

- Logan, Francis Donald, *A History of the Church in the Middle Ages*, Routledge, London–New York 2005.
- Lundgren, Svante, *Hundra år av tveksambet: Osmanska folkmordet på kristna och Sveriges reaction*, Tigris Press, Södertälje 2015.
- Lundgren, Svante, *The Assyrians – From Nineveh to Södertälje*, Nineveh Press, Lulu (USA) 2016.
- Mack, Jennifer, *The Construction of Equality. Syriac Immigration and the Swedish City*, University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis–London 2017.
- Makiya, Kanan, *Republic of Fear: The Politics of Modern Iraq*, University of California Press, Berkeley 1999.
- Marczewska-Rytko, Maria, *Religia i polityka w globalizującym się świecie*, Wydawnictwo UMCS, Lublin 2010.
- McCallum, Fiona, *Christian Religious Leadership in the Middle East: The Political Role of the Patriarch*, Edwin Mellen Press, Lewiston–Queenston–Lampeter 2010.
- Melosik, Zbyszko, *Piłka nożna. Tożsamość, kultura i władza*, Wydawnictwo Naukowe UAM, Poznań 2016.
- Messo, Johny, *Arameans and the Making of “Assyrians”. The Last Aramaic-speaking Christians of the Middle East*, Aramaic Press, Germany 2017.
- Migration, diasporas and transnationalism*, ed. Steven Vertovec, Robin Cohen, Elgar, Cheltenham (UK)–Northampton (USA) 1999.
- Moch, Michał, *Swoi i obcy: tożsamość Koptów i Maronitów w arabskich tekstach kultury*, Wydawnictwo Agade, Warsaw 2013.
- Nationalism, Minorities and Diasporas: Identities and Rights in the Middle East*, ed. Kirsten E. Schulze, Martin Stokes, Colm Campbell, I.B. Tauris, London 1996.
- Nilsson, Folke J., *Lived transitions*, Stockholm University, Stockholm 2017.
- Nisan, Mordechai, *Minorities in the Middle East: A History of Struggle and Self-Expression*, McFarland, Jefferson (USA)–London 2002.
- Nordgren, Kenneth, *Vems är historien?: historia som medvetande, kultur och handling i det mångkulturella Sverige*, Umeå University, Umeå 2006.
- Nordic Welfare States in the European Context*, ed. Johan Fritzell, Bjørn Hvin-den, Mikko Kautto, Jon Kvist, Hannu Uusitalo, Routledge, London–New York 2005.
- Nordin, Dennis Sven, *A Swedish dilemma: a liberal European nation’s struggle with racism and xenophobia, 1990–2000*, UPA, Oxford 2005.
- Nordstrom, Byron J., *The History of Sweden*, Greenwood Press, Westport 2002.
- Nyanlända och lärande*, ed. Nihad Bunar, Natur & kultur, Stockholm 2015.
- Odmalm, Pontus, *Migration policies and political participation: inclusion or intrusion in Western Europe*, Palgrave Macmillan, New York 2005.
- OECD, *International Migration Outlook 2010*, SOPEMI, Paris 2010.

- Ossowska-Czader, Małgorzata, *Search for Identity in the Novels by Second Generation Immigrant Writers from South Asia and the Caribbean in Great Britain*, University of Łódź, Łódź 2015.
- Pachniak, Katarzyna, *Ezoteryczne odłamy islamu w muzułmańskiej literaturze herezjograficznej*, Dialog, Warsaw 2012.
- Philips-Martinsson, Jean, *Swedes as Others See Them: facts, myths or the communication complex?*, Studentlitteratur, Kristianstad 1981.
- Porterfield, Jason, *Sweden: A Primary Source Cultural Guide*, The Rosen Publishing Group, New York 2004.
- Prawo na Zachodzie. Studia źródeł prawa w systemie demokratyczny*, ed. Waldemar Wołpiuk, Zakład Narodowy im. Ossolińskich, Wrocław 1992.
- Pred, Allan, *Even in Sweden: Racisms, Racialized Spaces, and the Popular Geographical Imagination*, University of California Press, Berkeley 2000.
- Pripp, Oscar, *Att vara sin egen: om småföretagande bland invandrare – mönster, motiv och möten*, Mångkulturellt centrum, Tumba 1994.
- Pripp, Oscar, *Företagande i minoritet: om etnicitet, strategier och resurser bland assyrier och syrianer i Södertälje*, Mångkulturellt centrum, Tumba 2001.
- Rassam, Suha, *Christianity in Iraq. Its Origins and Development to the Present Day*, Gracewing Publishing, Leominster (UK) 2005.
- Religia i polityka. Zarys problematyki*, ed. Piotr Burgoński, Michał Gierycz, Instytut Politologii UKSW, Elipsa, Warsaw 2014.
- Religijne determinanty polityki*, ed. Ryszard Michalak, Wydawnictwo Morpho, Zielona Góra 2014.
- Richter, Julius, *A History of Protestant Missions in the Near East*, AMS Press, New York 1970.
- Roberson, Ronald G., *The Eastern Christian Churches: A Brief Survey*, Orientalia Christiana, Rome 1995.
- Rojas, Mauricio, *Sweden after the Swedish Model. From Tutorial State to Enabling State*, Timbro, Stockholm 2005.
- Román, Henrik, *En invandrarpolitisk oppositionell: debattören David Schwarz syn på svensk invandrarpolitik åren 1964–1993*, Centre for Multiethnic Research, Uppsala 1994.
- Rosiak, Dariusz, *Ziarno i krew. Podróż śladami bliskowschodnich chrześcijan*, Wydawnictwo Czarne, Wołowiec 2015.
- Ruin, Olaf, *Tage Erlander: Serving the Welfare State, 1946–1969*, University of Pittsburgh Press, Pittsburgh 1990.
- Sacrum w mieście 2: Epoka nowożytna i czasy współczesne*, ed. Danuta Quirini-Popławska, Łukasz Burkiewicz, Akademia Ignatianum, Wydawnictwo WAM, Kraków 2016.
- Schall, Carly Elizabeth, *The Rise and Fall of the Miraculous Welfare Machine: Immigration and Social Democracy in Twentieth-Century Sweden*, Cornell University Press, Ithaca–London 2016.

- Sejersted, Francis, Madeleine B. Adams, *The Age of Social Democracy: Norway and Sweden in the Twentieth Century*, Princeton University Press, Princeton 2011.
- Sempill Stafford, Ronald, *The Tragedy of the Assyrians*, Gorgias Press, New Jersey 2006.
- Siewierska-Chmaj, Anna, *Religia a polityka. Chrześcijaństwo*, WUW, Warsaw 2013.
- Smith, Laurajane, *Uses of Heritage*, Routledge, London 2006.
- Son, Timothy D., *Ritual Practices in Congregational Identity Formation*, Lanham–Boulder–New York–Toronto–Plymouth (UK) 2014.
- Sonyel, Salahi R., *The Assyrians of Turkey. Victims of Major Powers Policy*, Türk Tarih Kurumu, Ankara 2013.
- Southgate, Horatio, *Narrative of a Visit to the Syrian Church of Mesopotamia*, Dana and Co., New York 1844.
- Sozański, Jarosław, *Ochrona mniejszości w systemie uniwersalnym, europejskim i wspólnotowym*, Kodeks, Warsaw 2002.
- Spolsky, Bernard, *Sociolinguistics*, Oxford University Press, Oxford 2001.
- Stansfield, Gareth R.V., *Iraqi Kurdistan Political Development and Emergent Democracy*, Routledge, London–New York 2003.
- Stewart, Desmond, John Haylock, *New Babylon: a portrait of Iraq*, Collins, London 1956.
- Stice, Ralph, *Arab Spring, Christian Winter: Islam Unleashed on the Church and the World*, ANEKO Press, Abbotsford (USA) 2014.
- Systemy ustrojowe państw współczesnych*, ed. Stanisław Bożyk, Marian Grzybowski, Temida 2, Białystok 2012.
- Szablowski, David, *Transnational Law and Local Struggles: Mining, Communities and the World Bank*, Hart Publishing, Oxford-Portland (USA) 2007.
- Taylor, William, *Narratives of Identity: The Syrian Orthodox Church and the Church England 1895–1914*, Cambridge Scholars Publishing, Newcastle 2013.
- Tejirian, Eleanor, Reeva Spector Simon, *Conflict, Conquest, and Conversion: Two Thousand Years of Christian Missions in the Middle East*, Columbia University Press, Columbia 2012.
- Terelak, Albert, Sebastian Kołodziejczak, *Praca za granicą w świadomości emigrantów zarobkowych z województwa zachodniopomorskiego*, Zapol, Szczecin 2012.
- Thakur, Subhash, Michael Keen, Balazs Horvath, Valerie Cerra, *Sweden's Welfare State. Can the Bumblebee Keep Flying*, Intl Monetary Fund, Washington 2003.
- The Assyrian Heritage: Threads of Continuity and Influence*, ed. Önver A. Cetreza, Sargon G. Donabed, Aryo Makko, Uppsala University, Uppsala 2012.
- The Challenge of Diversity: Integration and Pluralism in Societies of Immigration*, ed. Rainer Bauböck, Agnes Heller, Aristide R. Zolberg, Aldershot, Avebury 1996.

- Tönnies, Ferdinand, *Gemeinschaft und Gesellschaft*, Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, Darmstadt 1887.
- Trigona-Harany, Benjamin, *The Ottoman Suryani from 1908 to 1914*, Gorgias Press, Piscataway 2009.
- Tsuda, Takeyuki, *Diasporic Homecomings: Ethnic Return Migration in Comparative Perspective*, Stanford University Press, Stanford 2009.
- Tubylewicz, Katarzyna, *Moralisci. Jak Szwedzi uczą się na błędach i inne historie*, Wielka Litera, Warsaw 2017.
- Ward, Colleen, Stephen Bochner, Adrian Furnham, *The psychology of culture shock*, Routledge, Hove (UK) 2001.
- Weibel Yacoub, Claire, *Le rêve brisé des Assyro-Chaldéens. L'introuvable autonomie*, Cerf, Paris 2011.
- Węzyk, Katarzyna, *Kanada. Ulubiony kraj świata*, Agora, Warsaw 2017.
- Whyman, Philip, *Sweden and the "Third Way". A Macroeconomic Evaluation*, Ashgate, Hampshire 2003.
- Wigram, William Ainger, *Our Smallest Ally: a Brief Account of the Assyrian Nation in the Great War*, Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, The Macmillan Company, London–New York 1920.
- Wilmshurst, David, *The Ecclesiastical Organisation of the Church of the East 1318–1913*, Peeters Publishers, Louvain 2000.
- Woźniak, Marta, *Współcześni Asyryjczycy i Aramejczycy: bliskowschodni chrześcijaństwo w poszukiwaniu tożsamości narodowej*, WUŁ, Łódź 2012.
- Yonan, Gabriel, *Assyrer heute. Kultur, Sprache, Nationalbewegung der aramäisch sprechenden Christen im Nahen Orient*, Gesellschaft für Bedrohte Völker, Hamburg–Wien 1978.
- Yonan, Gabriel, *Journalismus bei den Assyryern. Ein Überblick von seinen Anfängen bis zur Gegenwart*, Beth–Nahrin, Berlin 1985.
- Zenderowski, Radosław, *Religia a tożsamość narodowa i nacjonalizm w Europie Środkowo-Wschodniej. Między etnicznością religii a sakralizacją etnosu (narodu)*, Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Wrocławskiego, Wrocław 2011.
- Zertal, Idith, *Israel's Holocaust and the Politics of Nationhood*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 2002.
- Żmigrodzki, Marek, *Encyklopedia politologii: Myśl społeczna i ruchy polityczne współczesnego świata*, Kantor Wydawniczy Zakamycze, Kraków 2000.

PhD and Master's Theses

- Ahmed, Ahmed Nuri, *Neither Assimilation Nor Integration: The identity of the Turkish Diaspora in Sweden. A case study in Malmö*, MA thesis, Lund University, Lund 2013.
- Al-Obaidi, Tiba AbdulKareem, *Language Contact and the Neo-Aramaic Language of the Chaldo-Assyrians in Baghdad: A Sociolinguistic Study*, MA thesis, Middle East University, Beirut 2012.

- Arikan, Burçak, *Assyrian Transnational Politics: Activism From Europe Towards Homeland*, MA thesis, Middle East Technical University, Ankara 2011.
- Borisenko, Elena, *Discourse on Immigration in Swedish Mass Media*, MA thesis, Linköping University, Linköping 2005.
- Donabed, Sargon, *Iraq and the Assyrian Unimagining: Illuminating Scaled Suffering and a Hierarchy of Genocide from Simele to Anfal*, PhD thesis, University of Toronto, Toronto 2010.
- Freyne-Lindhagen, Marianne, *Identitet och kulturmöte – syrianska kvinnors exempel. En diskussion om grounded theory*, PhD thesis, Lund University, Lund 1997.
- Gallagher, Barbara George, *Chaldean immigrant women, gender and family*, PhD thesis, Wayne State University, Michigan (USA) 1999.
- Laing-Marshall, Andrea Irene, *Modern Assyrian Identity and the Church of the East: An Exploration of Their Relationship and the Rise of the Assyrian Nationalism, From the World Wars to 1980*, MA thesis, University of Toronto, Toronto 2001.
- Nikitorowicz, Andrzej, *Procesy tworzenia się (konstruowania) małego narodu (kulturowego) na przykładzie mniejszości ukraińskiej w województwie podlaskim*, PhD thesis, Uniwersytet w Białymstoku, Białystok 2013.
- Oshana, Domarina, *Cultural identification, linguistic competency, and religious participation as mediating constructs in the development of ego identity among Assyrian-American adolescents*, PhD thesis, Loyola University of Chicago, Chicago 2003.
- Spurlock, Charles Johnson, *From the Tigris to the rouge: An exploratory study of Chaldean gendered ethnicity and gender transition*, PhD thesis, Michigan State University, East Lansing (MI, USA) 2010.
- Stuart, Jaimee, *Acculturation, development and ethnocultural identity conflict: the process and outcomes of identity negotiation for adolescent migrants in multicultural environments*, MA thesis, Victoria University of Wellington, Wellington (New Zealand) 2008.

Book chapters

- Abdalla, Michael, *Asyryjczycy w Tur Abdinie między kurdyjskim młotem a tureckim mieczem*, [in:] *Konflikty etniczne. Źródła – Typy – Sposoby rozstrzygnięcia*, ed. Iwona Kabzińska-Stawarz, Sławoj Szynkiewicz, Instytut Archeologii i Etnologii Polskiej Akademii Nauk, Warsaw 1996.
- Abdalla, Michael, *Asyryjczycy imigranci w Szwecji między tradycją a współczesnością*, [in:] *Dylematy tożsamości europejskich pod koniec drugiego tysiąclecia*, ed. Janusz Mucha, Wojciech Olszewski, UMK, Toruń 1997.

- Abdalla, Michael, *Problemy kultury ludności asyryjskiej na pograniczu syryjsko-turecko-irackim*, [in:] *Pogranicze jako problem kultury*, ed. Teresa Smolińska, Instytut Filologii Polskiej Uniwersytetu Opolskiego, Opole 1994.
- Abdalla, Michael, *The fasting traditions among Assyrian Christians*, [in:] *Islam i chrześcijaństwo. Materiały sympozjum, Kraków 12–14 IV 1994*, ed. Andrzej Zaborski, Papieska Akademia Teologiczna, Kraków 1995.
- Abdalla, Michael, *The term Seyfo in historical perspective*, [in:] *The Assyrian Genocide: Cultural and Political Legacies*, ed. Hannibal Travis, Routledge, London–New York 2018.
- Adamson, Fiona, *Mobilizing for the transformation of home: Politicized identities and transnational practices*, [in:] *New Approaches to Migration? Transnational Communities and the Transformation of Home*, ed. Nadje Al-Ali, Khalid Koser, Routledge, London–New York 2002.
- Akiş Kalaylıoğlu, Yasemin, Mahir Kalaylıoğlu, *Organising of Turkish migrants in metropolitan Stockholm: From national federation to women, youth and other associations*, [in:] *Migration from Turkey to Sweden: Integration, Belonging and Transnational Community*, ed. Bahar Başer, Paul T. Levin, I.B. Tauris & Co Ltd, London 2017.
- Allport, Gordon W., *The nature of prejudice*, Addison Wesley, Cambridge–Reading (USA) 1954.
- Armbruster, Heidi, *Homes in Crisis: Syrian Orthodox Christians in Turkey and in Germany*, [in:] *New Approaches to Migration? Transnational Communities and the Transformation of Home*, ed. Nadje Al-Ali, Khalid Koser, Routledge, London–New York 2002.
- Arnold, Werner, *Die Aramäer in Europa auf der Suche nach einer Standardsprache*, [in:] *Sprache und Migration*, ed. Utz Maas, V&R unipress, Osna-brück 2005.
- Babiński, Grzegorz, *Etniczność i religia – formy, płaszczyzny i poziomy powiązań*, [in:] *Etniczność a religia*, ed. Aleksander Posern-Zieliński, Wydawnictwo Poznańskie, Poznań 2003.
- Badger, George P., *The Christians of Assyria, Commonly Called 'Nestorians' reproduced as Appendix B*, [in:] *Portuguese Discoveries Dependencies and Missions in Asia and Africa*, ed. Alexander J.D. D'Orsey, London, W.H. Allen & Co., London 1893.
- Banaś, Marta, *Fenomen wielokulturowej Skandynawii*, [in:] *Wzory wielokulturowości we współczesnym świecie*, ed. Karolina Golemo, Tadeusz Paleczny, Elżbieta Wiącek, WUJ, Kraków 2006.
- Barth, Fredrik, *Introduction*, [in:] *Ethnic Groups and Boundaries: The Social Organization of Culture Difference*, ed. Fredrik Barth, Boston 1969.
- Bärsch, Claus-Ekkehard, *Volk und Nation. Das Problem kollektiver Identität unter der Perspektive der Religionspolitik*, [in:] *Demokratie, Verfassung*

- und Nation: Die politische Integration moderner Gesellschaften*, ed. Jürgen Gebhardt, Nomos Verlagsgesellschaft, Baden–Baden 1994.
- Bednarowicz, Sebastian, *Neues Alphabet, neue Sprache, neue Kultur? Was kann die Adaptation der lateinischen Schrift für die Turoyo Sprache implizieren*, [in:] *Neue Aramäische Studien*, ed. Dorothea Weltecke, Peter Lang GmbH, Frankfurt am Main 2017.
- Bednarowicz, Sebastian, *Before and After Linguicide: A Linguistic Aspect of the Sayfo*, [in:] *Sayfo 1915. An Anthology of Essays on the Genocide of Assyrians /Arameans during the First World War*, ed. Shabo Talay, Soner Ö. Barthoma, Gorgias Press, Piscataway 2018.
- Bednarowicz, Sebastian, *Translation as Corpus Planning: The Little Prince in the Neo-Aramaic Minority Language Turoyo*, [in:] *Moving Texts, Migrating People and Minority Languages*, ed. Michał Borodo, Juliane House, Wojciech Wachowski, Springer, Singapore 2017.
- Berg, Heleen Murre-van den, *A Syrian Awakening: Alqosh and Urmia as Centres of Neo-Syriac Writing*, [in:] *Symposium Syriacum VII*, ed. René Lavenant, Pontificio Istituto Orientale, Rome 1998.
- Berg, Heleen Murre-van den, *Chaldeans and Assyrians: the Church of the East in the Ottoman Period*, [in:] *The Christian Heritage of Iraq. Collected Papers from the Christianity of Iraq I–V Seminar Days*, ed. Erica Hunter, Gorgias Press, Piscataway 2009.
- Berry, John W., *Acculturation*, [in:] *Encyclopedia of Applied Psychology*, ed. Charles Spielberger, Academic Press, Oxford–Boston 2004.
- Berry, John W., *Acculturation and Biculturalism*, [in:] *Readings in ethnic psychology*, ed. Pamela Balls Organista, Kevin Chun, Gerardo Marín, Routledge, New York–London 1998.
- Berry, John W., *Acculturative Stress*, [in:] *Readings in ethnic psychology*, ed. Pamela Balls Organista, Kevin Chun, Gerardo Marín, Routledge, New York–London 1998.
- Björklund, Anders, Richard Freeman, *Searching for Optimal Inequality/Incentives*, [in:] *Reforming the Welfare State: Recovery and Beyond in Sweden*, ed. Richard B. Freeman, Birgitta Swedenborg, Robert Topel, University of Chicago Press, Chicago 2010.
- Boháč, Artur, *Assyrian Ethnic Identity in a Globalizing World*, [in:] *Beyond Globalisation: Exploring the Limits of Globalisation in the Regional Context*, University of Ostrava, Ostrava 2010.
- Bohmer, Carol, *Asylees and Refugees. A Comparative Examination of Problems of Integration*, [in:] *Managing Ethnic Diversity after 9/11: Integration, Security, and Civil Liberties in Transatlantic Perspective*, ed. Ariane Chebel d'Appollonia, Simon Reich, Rutgers University Press, New Brunswick–New Jersey–London 2010.

- Braude, Benjamin, *Foundation Myths of the Millet System*, [in:] *Christians and Jews in the Ottoman Empire: The Functioning of a Plural Society*, ed. Benjamin Braude, Bernard Lewis, Holmes & Meier Pub, New York 1982.
- Burgoński, Piotr, Michał Gierycz, *Politologia i religia. Wprowadzenie*, [in:] *Religia i polityka. Zarys problematyki*, ed. Piotr Burgoński, Michał Gierycz, Elipsa, Warsaw 2014.
- Butts, Aaron Michael, *Assyrian Christians*, [in:] *Companion to Assyria*, ed. Eckart Frahm, Wiley-Blackwell, Malden 2017.
- Campbell, Lyle, Martha C. Muntzel, *The Structural Consequences of Language Death*, [in:] *Investigating Obsolescence. Studies in Language Contraction and Death*, ed. Nancy C. Dorian, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 1989.
- Ciesielski, Zenon, *Nad pojęciem kultury skandynawskiej*, [in:] *Z dziejów Polski i Skandynawii. Rozprawy i studia na X-lecie Instytutu Polsko-Skandynawskiego*, ed. Eugeniusz S. Kruszewski, Emil Ashøj, Instytut Polsko-Skandynawski, Copenhagen 1995.
- Clifford, James, *Travelling Cultures*, [in:] *Cultural Studies*, ed. Lawrence Grossberg, Cary Nelson, Paula A. Treichler, Routledge, New York 1992.
- Cusimano Love, Maryann, *Christian Transnational Networks Respond to Persecution*, [in:] *Under Caesar's Sword: How Christians Respond to Persecution*, ed. Daniel Philpott, Timothy S. Shah, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 2018.
- Dacyl, Janina W., *Podstawy prawne szwedzkiej polityki migracyjnej i uchodźczej*, [in:] *Imigranci i społeczeństwa przyjmujące*, ed. Jan E. Zamojski, Neriton, Warsaw 2000.
- Demmers, Jolle, *Theories of violent conflict: an introduction*, Routledge, New York 2012.
- Domański, Tomasz, *Wstęp*, [in:] *Migracje – wybrane problemy i wyzwania*, ed. Tomasz Domański, WUŁ, Łódź 2018.
- Favell, Adrian, *Interpretation Nations. The Nation-State and Research on Immigrants in Western Europe*, [in:] *The Multicultural Challenge. Comparative Social Research*, Vol. 22, ed. Grete Brochmann, Emerald Group Publishing Limited, Bingley (UK) 2003.
- Gardnell, Karl, *Assyrianerna i den svenska flyktingpolitikens skärseld*, [in:] *Årsbok för kristen humanism*, Förbundet för kristen humanism och samhällssyn (KHS), Uppsala 1986.
- Gaunt, David, *Identity and the Assyrian Genocide*, [in:] *Shatterzone of Empires. Coexistence and Violence in the German, Habsburg, Russian and Ottoman Borderlands*, ed. Omer Bartov, Eric D. Weitz, Indiana University Press, Bloomington 2013.
- Górak-Sosnowska, Katarzyna, *Muslims in Europe: different communities, one discourse? Adding the Central and Eastern European Perspective*, [in:] *Muslims*

- in *Poland and Eastern Europe. Widening the European Discourse on Islam*, ed. Katarzyna Górak-Sosnowska, University of Warsaw, Warsaw 2011.
- Green Pedersen, Christoffer, Pontus Odmalm, *Going Different Ways? Right-wing parties and the immigrant issue in Denmark and Sweden*, [in:] *Immigration and Integration Policy in Europe: Why Politics – and the Centre-Right – Matter*, ed. Tim Bale, Routledge, London–New York 2009.
- Grigoriadis, Ioannis N., *Minorities*, [in:] *The Routledge Handbook of Modern Turkey*, ed. Metin Heper, Sabri Sayari, Routledge, Abingdon–New York 2012.
- Grott, Bogumił, *Słowo wstępne*, [in:] *Religia i polityka*, ed. Bogumił Grott, WUJ, Kraków 2000.
- Grzybowski, Marian, *Wolność wypowiedzi, wolność publikacji i dostęp do dokumentów publicznych na tle ewolucji szwedzkich aktów konstytucyjnych*, [in:] *Prawo, parlament i egzekutywa we współczesnych systemach rządów*, ed. Stanisław Bożyk, Temida 2, Białystok 2009.
- Habbi, Yūsuf, *Christians in Iraq*, [in:] *Christian Communities in the Arab Middle East: The Challenge of the Future*, ed. Andrea Pacini, Oxford University Press, Oxford 2004.
- Hall, Stuart, *New ethnicities*, [in:] *Race, culture and difference*, ed. James Donald, Ali Rattansi, Sage, New York 1992.
- Healey, John, *'The Church Across the Border': The Church of East and its Chaldean Branch*, [in:] *Easter Christianity in the Modern Middle East*, ed. Anthony O'Mahony, Emma Loosley, Routledge, London–New York 2010.
- Heinrichs, Wolfhart, *The modern Assyrians – Name and Nation*, [in:] *Semitica: Serta Philologica Constantino Tsereteli dictata*, ed. Riccardo Contini, Fabrizio A. Pennacchietti, Mauro Tosco, Zamorani, Torino 1993.
- Hobsbawm, Eric, *Introduction*, [in:] Eric Hobsbawm, *Nations and Nationalism since 1780: Programme, Myth, Reality*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 1990.
- Ishaq, Yusuf, *Turoyo – from spoken to written language*, [in:] *Studies in Neo-Aramaic*, „Harvard Semitic Studies” 36, ed. Wolfhart Heinrichs, Scholars Press, Atlanta (USA) 1990.
- Jänterä-Jareborg, Maarit, *Religion and the Secular State in Sweden*, [in:] *Religion and the Secular State: National Reports*, ed. Javier Martínez-Torrón, W. Cole Durham, Jr., Digital Legend Press, Provo (USA) 2010.
- Karl M. Johansson, Göran von Sydow, *Swedish social democracy and European integration: enduring divisions*, [in:] *Social Democracy and European Integration: The Politics of Preference Formation*, ed. Dionyssi G. Dimitrakopoulos, Routledge, Abingdon 2011.
- Kobierecka, Anna, *Migracje jako czynnik wielopłaszczyznowej destabilizacji na przykładzie Szwecji*, [in:] *Migracje – wybrane problemy i wyzwania*, ed. Tomasz Domański, WUŁ, Łódź 2018.

- Kościelniak, Krzysztof, *Changes of the Coptic identity*, [in:] *Change and Stability. State, Religion and Politics in the Contemporary Middle East*, ed. Krzysztof Kościelniak, Wydawnictwo UNUM, Kraków 2010.
- Kunz, Jean, *Facilitating the Participation of Immigrant Students in Canada's Schools*, [in:] *Citizen Participation at the Local Level in China and Canada*, ed. Andrew Sancton, Chen Zhenming, Routledge, Boca Raton–London–New York 2015.
- Mack, Jennifer, *Making Mesopotámje*, [in:] Jennifer Mack, *The Construction of Equality: Syriac Immigration and the Swedish City*, University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis–London 2017.
- Macuch, Rudolf, *Assyrians in Iran*, [in:] *Encyclopedia Iranica IV*, ed. Ehsan Yarshater, Mazda Pub, London–New York 1987.
- Makko, Aryo, *In Search of a New Home: The Assyrian Diaspora in Sweden*, [in:] *Migration from Turkey to Sweden: Integration, Belonging and Transnational Community*, ed. Bahar Başer, Paul T. Levin, I.B. Tauris & Co Ltd, London 2017.
- Martinson, Mattias, *The Irony of Religious Studies. A Pro-theological Argument from the Swedish Experience*, [in:] *Theology and Religious Studies in Higher Education: Global Perspectives*, ed. Darlene L. Bird, Simon G. Smith, Bloomsbury Academic, London 2009.
- McCallum, Fiona, *Middle Eastern Christian Immigrant Communities as Diasporas*, [in:] *Border Terrains: World Diasporas in 21st Century*, ed. Allyson Eamer, Inter-Disciplinary Press, Oxford 2012.
- Michalak, Ryszard, *Wstęp. Politologia religii – postulowana subdyscyplina politologii*, [in:] *Religijne determinanty polityki*, ed. Ryszard Michalak, Wydawnictwo Morpho, Zielona Góra 2014.
- Michalik, Elżbieta, *Sojaldemokracja w Szwecji*, [in:] *Doktryna i ruch socjaldemokratyczny. Historia i współczesność*, ed. Edward Olszewski, Puławska Szkoła Wyższa, Puławy 2001.
- Mkhize, Nhlanhla, *Psychology: An African Perspective*, [in:] *Self, Community and Psychology*, ed. Norman Duncan, Kopano Ratele, Derek Hook, Nhlanhla Mkhize, Peace Kiguwa, Anthony Collins, Juta and Company Ltd, Pretoria (RSA) 2007.
- Isaksson, Bo, Ablahad Lahdo, *Reflections on the linguistic situation in Anatolia and Northern Syria from a semitist's perspective*, [in:] *The Role of the State in West Asia*, ed. Annika Rabo, Bo Utas, I.B.Tauris, London 2006.
- Naby, Eden, *From Lingua Franca to Endangered Language. The Legal Aspects of the Preservation of Aramaic in Iraq*, [in:] *On the Margins of Nations: Endangered Languages and Linguistic Rights*, ed. Joan A. Argenter, R. McKenna Brown, The Foundation for Endangered Languages, Bath (UK) 2004.
- Onder, Soner, *Minority Rights in Turkey: Quo Vadis, Assyrians?*, [in:] *The Slow Disappearance of the Syriacs from Turkey and of the Grounds of the Mor Ga-*

- riel Monastery*, ed. Pieter Omtzigt, Markus K. Tozman, Andrea Tyndall, LIT Verlag, Zurich–Berlin 2012.
- Orfali, Kristina, *Model jawności: społeczeństwo szwedzkie*, przeł. Edyta Trojańska, [in:] *Historia życia prywatnego. Tom 5: Od I wojny światowej do naszych czasów*, ed. Antoine Prost, Gerard Vincent, Zakład Narodowy im. Ossolińskich, Wrocław 2006.
- Ożarowski, Rafał, *Polityka zagraniczna Libanu*, [in:] *Poziomy analizy stosunków międzynarodowych*, Vol. II, ed. Edward Haliżak, Marek Pietraś, Rambler, Warsaw 2013.
- Parpola, Simo, *National and Ethnic Identity in the Neo-Assyrian Empire and Assyrian Identity in Post-Empire Times*, [in:] *Assyrian Heritage: Threads of Continuity and Influence*, ed. Önver A. Cetrez, Sargon G. Donabed, Aryo Makko, Uppsala University, Uppsala 2012.
- Paulsen Galal, Lise, „*If I want to travel, I just travel.*” – *Travels and Dwellings among Assyrians and Copts in Denmark*, [in:] *Middle Eastern Christians and Europe: Historical Legacies and Present Challenges*, ed. Andreas Schmolter, LIT Verlag, Wien 2018.
- Paulsen Galal, Lise, *Copts in Diaspora: Transnational Belonging as ‘Home’ is Changing*, [in:] *Border Terrains: World Diasporas in the 21st Century*, ed. Allyson Eamer, Inter-Disciplinary Press, Oxford 2012.
- Pawluczuk, Włodzimierz, *Religia*, [in:] *Encyklopedia Socjologii*, Vol. 3, O–R, ed. Henryk Domański, Witold Morawski, Jerzy Szacki, Janusz Mucha, Marek Ziółkowski, Maria Ofierska, Oficyna Naukowa, Warsaw 2000.
- Pędziwiatr, Konrad, *Szwecja*, [in:] Konrad Pędziwiatr, *Od islamu imigrantów do islamu obywateli: muzułmanie w krajach Europy Zachodniej*, Nomos, Kraków 2007.
- Phares, Walid, *Middle East Christians: The Captive Nations*, [in:] *The Forgotten Millions: The Modern Jewish Exodus from Arab Lands*, ed. Malka Hillel Shulewitz, Continuum, London 1999.
- Phinney, Jean S., *Ethnic identity and acculturation*, [in:] *Acculturation: Advances in theory, measurement, and applied research*, ed. Kevin M. Chun, Pamela Balls-Organista, Gerardo Marín, American Psychological Association, Washington 2003.
- Rabo, Annika, „*Without our church we will disappear*”: *Syrian Orthodox Christians in diaspora and the family law of the church*, [in:] *Family, religion and law: cultural encounters in Europe*, ed. Prakash Shah, Marie-Claire Foblets, Mathias Rohe, Routledge, Farnham 2014.
- Rabo, Annika, *Familjen betyder allt’ eller ‘Vi blir snart lika kalla som svenskar-na’*: *Assyrier/syrianer i Södertälje*, [in:] *Globala familjer: Transnationell migration och släktskap*, ed. Marita Eastmond, Lise Åkesson, Gidlunds förlag, Hedemora 2007.

- Roald, Anne Sofie, *From "People's Home" to "Multiculturalism": Muslims in Sweden*, [in:] *Muslims in the West: From Sojourners to Citizens*, ed. Yvonne Yazbeck Haddad, Oxford University Press, Oxford 2002.
- Rzepka, Marcin, *Kurdyjskie i asyryjskie projekty niepodległościowe w kontekście konferencji paryskiej 1919–1920: transkulturowa historia Kurdystanu*, [in:] *Kurdystan. Perspektywy badawcze*, ed. Marek Hałaburda, Marcin Rzepka, Stowarzyszenie Twórców Nauki i Kultury Episteme, Kraków 2018.
- Sam, David L., *Acculturation: conceptual background and core components*, [in:] *The Cambridge Handbook of Acculturation Psychology*, ed. David L. Sam, John W. Berry, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 2012.
- Sander, Åke, *The Status of Muslim Communities in Sweden*, [in:] *Muslim Communities in the New Europe*, ed. Nonneman, Gerd, Tim Niblock, Bogdan Szajkowski, Ithaca Press, Berkshire (UK) 1996.
- Schmoller, Andreas, *Introduction*, [in:] *Middle Eastern Christians and Europe: Historical Legacies and Present Challenges*, ed. Andreas Schmoller, LIT Verlag, Wien 2018.
- Skolimowska, Anna, *Konstruktywizm w badaniach integracji europejskiej*, [in:] *Przeszłość – Teraźniejszość – Przyszłość. Problemy badawcze młodych politologów*, ed. Dominika Mikucka-Wójtowicz, Libron, Kraków 2010.
- Stefańska, Renata, *Między multikulturalizmem a asymilacją. Polityki integracyjne w Europie*, [in:] *Problemy integracji imigrantów*, ed. Aleksandra Grzymała-Kozłowska, Sławomir Łodziński, WUW, Warsaw 2008.
- Sweden*, [in:] *Women's Lives around the World: A Global Encyclopedia*, ed. Susan M. Shaw, Nancy Staton Barbour, Patti Duncan, Kryn Freehling-Burton, Jane Nichols, ABC-CLIO, Santa Barbara 2018.
- Szpunar, Magdalena, *Wokół koncepcji gatekeepingu. Od gatekeepingu tradycyjnego do technologicznego*, [in:] *Idee i myśliciele*, ed. Ignacy S. Fiut, Aureus, Kraków 2013.
- Tamcke, Martin, *'The Thieving Kurds': A Stereotype among the Syrian Christians Concerning their Coexistence with the Kurds*, [in:] *Religious Minorities in Kurdistan: Beyond the Mainstream*, ed. Khanna Omarkhali, Otto Harrassowitz, Wiesbaden 2014.
- Therborn, Göran, *A Unique Chapter in the History of Democracy: The Swedish Social Democrats. A Century of the Social Democratic Labor Party in Sweden*, [in:] *Creating Social Democracy*, ed. Klaus Misgeld, Karl Molin, Klas Åmark, Pennsylvania State University Press, Pennsylvania 1996.
- Thomasson, Richard F., *Religion is Irrelevant in Sweden*, [in:] *Religion in Radical Transition*, ed. Jeffrey K. Hadden, Routledge, New Jersey 1973.
- Ting-Toomey, Stella, *Identity negotiation theory: Cross cultural boundaries*, [in:] *Theorizing about intercultural communication*, ed. William B. Gudykunst, Sage, Thousand Oaks (USA) 2005.

- Travis, Hannibal, *The Assyrian Genocide: A Tale of Oblivion and Denial*, [in:] *Forgotten Genocides. Oblivion, Denial, and Memory*, ed. René Lemarchand, University of Pennsylvania Press, Philadelphia 2011.
- Turek, Waclaw Przemysław, *Mandejczycy – wczoraj i dziś*, [in:] *Niemuzułmańskie mniejszości Iraku. Historia – kultura – problemy przetrwania*, ed. Michael Abdalla, Wydawnictwo Poznańskie, Poznań 2005.
- Westin, Charles, Elena Dingu-Kyrklund, *Immigration and integration of immigrants and their descendants: the Swedish approach*, [in:] *The Integration of Immigrants in European Societies: National Differences and Trends of Convergence*, ed. Friedrich Heckmann, Dominique Schnapper, Lucius & Lucius DE, Stuttgart 2003.
- Woźniak, Marta, *Asyryjski Kościół Wschodu i Syryjski Kościół Ortodoksyjny a kształtowanie się współczesnej tożsamości asyryjsko-aramejskiej*, [in:] *Religia w stosunkach międzynarodowych. 10-lecie współpracy Instytutu Stosunków Międzynarodowych Uniwersytetu Warszawskiego ze Zgromadzeniem Słowa Bożego (SVD)*, ed. Anna M. Solarz, Hanna Schreiber, WUW, Warsaw 2012.
- Woźniak, Marta, *Czy muzułmanie mogą być „lagom”? Różne oblicza islamu w Szwecji*, [in:] *Islam w Europie. Bogactwo różnorodności czy źródło konfliktów?*, ed. Marta Widy-Behiesse, Dialog, Warsaw 2012.
- Woźniak, Marta, *Far from Aram-Nahrin: The Suryoye Diaspora Experience*, [in:] *Border Terrains: World Diasporas in 21st Century*, ed. Allyson Eamer, Inter-Disciplinary Press, Oxford 2012.
- Woźniak, Marta, *Wspólnoty chrześcijańskie na terenach opanowanych przez Arabów (VII–VIII w.)*, [in:] *Bizancjum i Arabowie. Spotkanie cywilizacji VI–VIII wiek*, ed. Teresa Wolińska, Paweł Filipczak, Wydawnictwo Naukowe PWN, Warsaw 2015.
- Woźniak-Bobińska, Marta, *Turkey*, [in:] *Encyclopedia of Christianity in the Global South*, ed. Mark A. Lamport, Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Lanham 2018.
- Zenderowski, Radosław, *Religia jako fundament i rdzeń tożsamości narodowej*, [in:] *Polityka jako wyraz lub następstwo religijności*, ed. Ryszard Michalak, Wydawnictwo Morpho, Zielona Góra 2015.
- Zisser, Eyal, *The 'Alawis, Lords of Syria: From Ethnic Minority to Ruling Sect*, [in:] *Minorities and the State in the Arab World*, ed. Ofra Bengio, Gabriel Ben-Dor, Lynne Rienner Pub, London 1999.

Journal articles

- Abdalla, Michael, *Asyryjska diaspora*, “Sprawy Narodowościowe. Seria nowa”, Vol. 3, No. 1(4), 1994.
- Ahmed, Dawood I., Tom Ginsburg, *Constitutional Islamization and Human Rights: The Surprising Origin and Spread of Islamic Supremacy in Constitu-*

- tions, "University of Chicago Public Law & Legal Theory Working Paper" 477, 2014.
- Andersson, Jenny, Mary Hilson, *Images of Sweden and Nordic Countries*, "Scandinavian Journal of History", Vol. 3, No. 34, 2009.
- Andersson, Torbjörn, *Immigrant teams in Sweden and the case of Assyriska FF*, "Soccer & Society", Vol. 10, No. 3–4, May–June 2009.
- Arends-Tóth, Judit, Fons J.R. van de Vijver, *Multiculturalism and acculturation: Views of Dutch and Turkish-Dutch*, "European Journal of Social Psychology", Vol. 33, No. 2, 2003.
- Banek, Kazimierz, *Główne problemy politologii religii*, "Nomos. Kwartalnik Religioznawczy" 34–36, 2001.
- Banek, Kazimierz, *Politologia religii. Zakres tematyczny, cele i perspektywy rozwoju*, "Pantheon" 2, 2007.
- Bednarowicz, Sebastian, *The "Arab Spring" and the Christian Linguistic Minorities in Syria*, "Orientalia Christiana Cracoviensia" 6, 2014.
- Berry, John W., *Acculturation: Living successfully in two cultures*, "International Journal of Intercultural Relations", Vol. 29, No. 6, 2005.
- Berry, John W., *Immigration, acculturation, and adaptation*, "Applied Psychology: An International Review", Vol. 46, No. 1, 1997.
- Bevelander, Pieter, Ravi Pendakur, *Voting and Social Inclusion in Sweden*, "International Migration", Vol. 49, No. 4, August 2011.
- Blaydes, Lisa, Rachel Gillum, *Religiosity-of-interviewer effects: Assessing the impact of veiled enumerators on survey response in Egypt*, "Politics and Religion", Vol. 6, No. 3, 2013.
- Borevi, Karin, *Multiculturalism and welfare state integration: Swedish model path dependency*, "Identities. Global Studies in Culture and Power", Vol. 21, No. 6, 2014.
- Brubaker, Rogers, Frederick Cooper, *Beyond 'Identity'*, "Theory and Society", Vol. 29, No. 1, 2000.
- Camauër, Leonor, *Ethnic Minorities and their Media in Sweden. An Overview of the Media Landscape and State Minority Media Policy*, "Nordicom Review" 2, 2003.
- Carillet, Joel, *The Return of the Suriani. A Visit to a Christian Minority in Turkey That Refuses to Die*, "Touchstone", March 2006.
- Cetrez, Öner Andreas, *The next generation of Assyrians in Sweden: religiosity as a functioning system of meaning within the process of acculturation*, "Mental Health, Religion & Culture", Vol. 14, No. 5, June 2011.
- Clifford, James, *Diasporas*, "Cultural Anthropology", Vol. 9, No. 3, 1994.
- Collie, Philippa, Sara Kindon, James Liu, Astrid Podsiadlowski, *Mindful identity negotiations: The acculturation of young Assyrian women in New Zealand*, "International Journal of Intercultural Relations", Vol. 34, No. 3, 2010.

- De Kelaita, Robert W., *On the Road to Niniveh: A Brief History of Assyrian Nationalism, 1892–1990*, "Journal of the Assyrian Academic Society", Vol. 8, No. 1, 1994.
- DeCogliano, Mark, *Syriac Monasticism in Tur Abdin: A Present-Day Account*, "Cistercian Studies Quarterly", Vol. 41, No. 3, 2006.
- Donabed, Sargon, *Rethinking nationalism and an appellative conundrum: historiography and politics in Iraq*, "National Identities", Vol. 14, No. 2, June 2012.
- Donabed, Sargon, Shamiran Mako, *Ethno-cultural and Religious Identity of Syrian Orthodox Christians*, "Chronos" 19, 2009.
- Dzięgiel, Leszek, *Archeology and martyrology: sources of the integration of Assyrian Christian communities in the contemporary world*, "Hemispheres. Studies on Cultures and Societies" 5, 1988.
- Dzięgiel, Leszek, *Asyria zmartwychwstała: etnograf wobec mitów i faktów*, "Zeszyty Naukowe Uniwersytetu Jagiellońskiego. Prace Etnograficzne" 28, 1991.
- Dzięgiel, Leszek, *Współcześni Asyryjczycy: nowy obszar badań etnografą?*, "Lud" 70, 1986.
- Faour, Muhammad A., *Religion, Demography, and Politics in Lebanon*, "Middle Eastern Studies", Vol. 43, No. 6, 2007.
- Freeman, Gary, *Immigrant Incorporation in Western Democracies*, "The International Migration Review", Vol. 38, No. 3, 2004.
- Friedman, Jonathan, *Transnationalization, Socio-political Disorder, and Ethnification as Expressions of Declining Global Hegemony*, "International Political Science Review", Vol. 19, No. 3, 1998.
- Galletti, Mirella, *Kurdistan: A Mosaic of Peoples*, "Acta Kurdica. The International Journal of Kurdish and Iranian Studies" 1, 1994.
- Gasparini, Fabio, Mauro Tosco, *Building a 'new' Semitic language: lexical enrichment in Modern Assyrian and its problems*, "Folia Orientalia" XLIX, 2012.
- Gromkowska-Melosik, Agnieszka, *Mniejszość muzułmańska w Szwecji: Między ekstremistycznym izolacjonizmem a procesami reprodukcji ekonomicznej*, "Studia Edukacyjne" 26, 2013.
- Gunner, Göran, *Mellanösterns religiösa minoriteter – med tyngdpunkt på kristna minoriteter*, "Delstudie" 10, 2000.
- Hakim-Larson, Julie, Ray Kamoo, Sylvia C. Nassar-McMillan, John H. Porcerelli, *Counseling Arab and Chaldean American Families*, "Journal of Mental Health Counseling", Vol. 29, No. 4, October 2007.
- Hanish, Shak, *Autonomy for Ethnic Minorities in Iraq: The Chaldo-Assyrian Case*, "Digest of Middle East Studies", Vol. 20, No. 2, 2011.
- Harvey, Fernand, *Identity and Scales of Regionalism in Canada and Quebec: A Historical Approach*, "Norteamérica. Revista académica", Vol. 1, No. 2, July–December 2006.

- Hedegaard, Mariane, *Strategies for dealing with conflicts in value positions between home and school: Influences on ethnic minority students' development of motives and identity*, "Culture and Psychology", Vol. 11, No. 2, 2005.
- Hermans, Hubert J.M., *The dialogical self: Toward a theory of personal and cultural positioning*, "Culture and Psychology", Vol. 7, No. 3, 2001.
- Huczek, Agnieszka, *Zastosowania analizy systemowej jako metody badawczej w naukach politycznych – perspektywa porównawcza*, "Wrocławskie Studia Erazmiańskie" 2010.
- Hunter, Alistair, *Staking a Claim to Land, Faith and Family: Burial Location Preferences of Middle Eastern Christian Migrants*, "Journal of Intercultural Studies", Vol. 37, No. 2, 2016.
- İçduygu, Ahmet, David Romano, Ibrahim Sirkeci, *The ethnic question in an environment of insecurity: the Kurds in Turkey*, "Ethnic and Racial Studies", Vol. 22, No. 6, 1999.
- Ishaya, Arienne, *From Contributions to Diaspora: Assyrians in the History of Urmia, Iran*, "Journal of Assyrian Academic Studies", Vol. 16, No. 1, 2002.
- Jevtić, Miroljub, *Political Science and Religion*, "Politikologija Religije" 1, 2007.
- Kim, Bryan S.K., Bradley R. Brenner, Christopher T.H. Liang, Penelope A. Asay, *A qualitative study of adaptation experiences of 1.5 generation Asian Americans*, "Cultural Diversity & Ethnic Minority Psychology", Vol. 9, No. 2, 2003.
- Kojder-Demska, Kaja, *Matuszki. Żony księży prawosławnych w Polsce*, "Zeszyty Etnologii Wrocławskiej" Vol. 1, No. 20, 2014.
- Koopmans, Ruud, *Tradeoffs between equality and difference: immigrant integration, multiculturalism, and the welfare state in cross-national perspective*, "Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies", Vol. 36, No. 1, 2010.
- Kościelniak, Krzysztof, *Akulturacyja muzułmańska i arabizacja chrześcijan: kultura i religia na Bliskim Wschodzie w pierwszych wiekach islamu według Ibn Haldūna (1332–1406)*, "Analecta Cracoviensia" 32, 2000.
- Kościewicz, Dawid, *Kulturowe uwarunkowania państwa dobrobytu w Szwecji – wybrane zagadnienia*, "Społeczeństwo i Ekonomia" 1, 2014.
- Lei Sparre, Sara, *(In)visibility and the Muslim other: Narratives of flight and religious identity among Iraqi Christians in Denmark*, "Ethnicities" 2020.
- Levene, Mark, *A Moving Target, the Usual Suspects and (Maybe) a Smoking Gun: The Problem of Pinning Blame in Modern Genocide*, "Patterns of Prejudice", Vol. 33, No. 4, 1999.
- Levitt, Peggy, Nina Glick-Schiller, *Conceptualizing Simultaneity: A Transnational Social Field Perspective on Society*, "The International Migration Review", Vol. 38, No. 3, 2004.
- Lewis, Jonathan Eric, *Iraqi Assyrians: Barometer of Pluralism*, "Middle East Quarterly", Vol. 10, No. 3, Summer 2003.

- Lipott, Sigrid, *The Tornedalian Minority in Sweden. From Assimilation to Recognition: A 'Forgotten' Ethnic and Linguistic Minority, 1870–2000*, "Immigrants & Minorities. Historical Studies in Ethnicity, Migration and Diaspora", Vol. 33, No. 1, 2015.
- Lödén, Hans, *Swedish: Being or Becoming? Immigration, National Identity and the Democratic State*, "International Journal of Social Sciences", Vol. 3, No. 4, 2008.
- Mamattah, Sophie, *Migration and Transnationalism: the Complete Picture? A Case Study of Russians Living in Scotland*, "Identity and Marginality", Vol. 6, No. 2, Spring 2006.
- Matwiejuk, Kazimierz, *Tradycja eucharystyczna w Kościele Chaldejskim*, "Warszawskie Studia Teologiczne", Vol. XXIV, No. 1, 2011.
- McCallum, Fiona, *Christians in the Middle East: A New Subfield?*, "International Journal of Middle East Studies", Vol. 42, No. 3, August 2010.
- McCallum, Fiona, *Christian Political Participation in the Arab World*, "Islam and Christian-Muslim Relations", Vol. 23, No. 1, 2012.
- McCallum, Fiona, *Religious Institutions and Authoritarian States: Church-State Relations in the Middle East*, "Third World Quarterly", Vol. 33, No. 1, 2012.
- McCallum, Fiona, *Shared Religion but Still a Marginalized Other: Middle Eastern Christians' Encounters with Political Secularism in the United Kingdom*, "Journal of Church and State", Vol. 61, No. 2, Spring 2019.
- Molina, Irene, *Intersektionella rumsligheter*, "Tidskrift för genusvetenskap" 3, 2007.
- Mrozek, Andrzej, *Pierwsze wieki chrześcijaństwa*, "Porównawcze Studia Cywilizacji. The Polish Journal of the Art and Culture" 3, 2012.
- Muciek, Elżbieta, *Wielokulturowość w Szwecji – projekt polityczny i praktyka społeczna*, "Teki Komisji Politologii i Stosunków Międzynarodowych" 4, 2009.
- Naby, Eden, *Theater, Language and Inter-Ethnic Exchange: Assyrian Performance before World War I*, "Iranian Studies", Vol. 40, No. 4, September 2007.
- Nassar-McMillan, Sylvia C., Julie Hakim-Larson, *Counseling considerations among Arab Americans*, "Journal of Counseling and Development" 81, 2003.
- Nilsson, Folke J., Nihad Bunar, *Educational Responses to Newly Arrived students in Sweden: Understanding the Structure and Influence of Post-Migration Ecology*, "Scandinavian Journal of Educational Research", Vol. 60, No. 4, 2016.
- O'Mahony, Anthony, *The Chaldean Catholic Church: The Politics of Church-State Relations in Modern Iraq*, "The Heythrop Journal", Vol. 45, No. 4, October 2004.
- Odisho, Edward Y., *Assyrian Language Maintenance and Erosion in U.S.: A World War I Immigrant Family Case Study*, "Journal of Assyrian Academic Studies" XI–II, 1999.
- Oscarsson, Henrik, Sören Holmberg, *Swedish Voting Behavior*, "Swedish National Election Studies", October 2017.

- Paszko, Artur, *Politologia religii*, "Przegląd Religioznawczy", No. 3–4, 1998.
- Paulsen Galal, Lise, Alistair Hunter, Fiona McCallum, Sara Lei Sparre, Marta Wozniak-Bobinska, *Middle Eastern Christian Spaces in Europe: Multi-sited and Super-diverse*, "Journal of Religion in Europe", Vol. 9, No. 1, 2016.
- Paulsen Galal, Lise, *Coptic Christian Practices: Formations of Sameness and Difference*, "Islam and Christian-Muslim Relations", Vol. 23, No. 1, 2012.
- Petrosian, Vahram, *Assyrians in Iraq*, "Iran and the Caucasus", Vol. 10, No. 1, 2006.
- Phares, Walid, *Are Christian Enclaves the Solution? Disappearing Christians of the Middle East*, "Middle East Quarterly", Vol. VIII, No. 1, Winter 2001.
- Phinney, Jean S., *Ethnic Identity in Adolescents and Adults: Review of Research*, "Psychological Bulletin", Vol. 10, No. 3, 1990.
- Phinney, Jean S., Mona Devich-Navarro, *Variations in bicultural identification among African American and Mexican American adolescents*, "Journal of Research on Adolescence" 7, 1997.
- Portes, Alejandro, Luis E. Guarnizo, Patricia Landolt, *The Study of Transnationalism: Pitfalls and Promise of an Emergent Research Field*, "Ethnic and Racial Studies", Vol. 22, No. 2, 1999.
- Rieffer, Barbara Ann, *Religion and Nationalism: Understanding the Consequences of a Complex Relationship*, "Ethnicities" 3, 2003.
- Roald, Anne Sofie, *Expressing Religiosity in a secular society: the relativisation of Faith in Muslim Communities in Sweden*, "European Review", Vol. 20, No. 1, 2012.
- Roald, Anne Sofie, *Majority versus minority: 'governmentality' and Muslims in Sweden*, "Religions" 4, 2013.
- Rommel, Carl, *Playing with difference: football as a performative space for division among Suryoye migrants in Sweden*, "Soccer & Society", Vol. 12, No. 6, November 2011.
- Rubenson, Samuel, *Kyrka eller folk – den syrisk-ortodoxa kyrkan och det svenska samhället*, "Svensk Teologisk Kvartalskrift", Vol. 68, No. 2, 1992.
- Rzepka, Marcin, *Payām-e Āšuriyān – the Assyro-Chaldean publications in the Persian language in post-revolutionary Iran*, "Orientalia Christiana Cracoviensia" 2, 2010.
- Rzepka, Marcin, *Zanikająca społeczność. Katolicki Kościół Chaldejski w Iranie po rewolucji irańskiej 1979 roku*, "Teologia i Człowiek", Vol. 40, No. 4, 2017.
- Samir, Samir Khalil, *La culture arabe chrétienne ancienne en interaction avec la pensée arabe musulmane*, "Islam-Christianity" 8, 1982.
- Samur, Hakan, *Turkey's Europeanization Process and The Return of the Syrians*, "Turkish Studies", Vol. 10, No. 3, September 2009.
- Shea, Nina, *Barbarism 2014. On Religious Cleansing by Islamists*, "World Affairs", November/December 2014.

- Simon, Bernd, Bert Klandermans, *Politicized collective identity: A Social Psychological Analysis*, "American Psychologist", Vol. 56, No. 4, 2001.
- Sirkeci, Ibrahim, *War in Iraq: Environment of Insecurity and International Migration*, "International Migration", Vol. 43, No. 4, 2005.
- Skowron-Nalborczyk, Agata, *Wykluczenie – nie islam – rodzi przemoc*, "Kultura Liberalna", Vol. 445, No. 29, 2017.
- Smith, Thomas W., *Civic Nationalism and Ethnocultural Justice in Turkey*, "Human Rights Quarterly", Vol. 27, No. 2, 2005.
- Talay, Shabo, *Die aramäische Sprache (Turoyo) und ihre Zukunftsaussichten in der Diaspora*, "Journal of Eastern Christian Studies", Vol. 54, No. 1–2, 2002.
- Tawat, Mahama, *The birth of Sweden's multicultural policy. The impact of Olof Palme and his ideas*, "International Journal of Cultural Policy", July 2017.
- Teodorowicz-Hellman, Ewa, *Miejsce chrześcijaństwa w szwedzkiej szkole podstawowej: zarys historyczny i współczesny dyskurs społeczny*, "Forum Pedagogiczne" 1, 2014.
- Teule, Herman G.B., *Christians in Iraq: An analysis of some recent political developments*, "Der Islam" 88, 2012.
- Thornberry, Patrick, *Minorities – what are they?*, "Minorities and Human Rights Law", Minority Rights Group Report No. 73, 1991.
- Travis, Hannibal, *Native Christians Massaced. The Ottoman Genocide of the Assyrians during World War I*, "Genocide Studies and Prevention", Vol. 1, No. 3, 2006.
- Tresham, Aaron, *The languages spoken by Jesus*, "The Master's Seminary Journal", Vol. 20, No. 1, September 2009.
- Vertovec, Steven, *Transnationalism and Identity*, "Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies", Vol. 27, No. 4, 2001.
- Wertsch, James V., *Narrative tools of history and identity*, "Culture and Psychology", Vol. 3, No. 1, 1997.
- Wessendorf, Susanne, *'Roots Migrants': Transnationalism and 'Return' among Second-Generation Italians in Switzerland*, "Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies", Vol. 33, No. 7, 2007.
- Westin, Charles, *Young People of Migrant Origin in Sweden*, "The International Migration Review", Vol. 37, No. 4, Winter 2003.
- Woźniak, Marta, *National and Social Identity Construction among the Modern Assyrians/Syrians*, "Parole de l'Orient" 36, 2011.
- Woźniak, Marta, *The Modern Arameans: In Search for National Identity*, "Parole de l'Orient" 40, 2015.
- Woźniak-Bobińska, Marta, *Big fat Assyrian/Syriac weddings: rituals and marriage traditions among Middle Eastern Christians in Sweden*, "Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies", Special Issue: Rituals of Migration, Vol. 44, No. 16, 2018.

- Wozniak-Bobińska, Marta, *Assyrians Without Borders in Sweden: Middle Eastern Christians towards a new form of citizenship*, "Studia Religiologica" [in print].
- Zhou, Min, *Segmented assimilation: Issues, controversies, and recent research on the new second generation*, "The International Migration Review", Vol. 31, No. 4, 1997.

TV, radio and newspaper materials, and conference talks

- "Hujādā" 10/105, 1987.
- "Hujādā" 21/243, 1998.
- "Hujādā" 9/95, 1986.
- "Hujādā" xxiii/269, 2000.
- "The Modesto Bee", 28.09.2002.
- Ambjörnsson, Siri, Emma Janke, *Bråket på Bristol – Sveriges första raskravaller*, Sveriges Radio (SR) program, January 26, 2008.
- Ankomsten*, "Bahro Suryoyo", Vol. I, No. II, November 1979.
- Björck, Allan, *Assyriefrågan*, "Hujādā" i/6, 1978.
- Deniz, Fuat, *Vart är vi på väg*, "Hujādā" x/105, 1987.
- Ekman, Ivar, *Södertälje Journal: Far from War, a Town with a Well-Used Welcome Mat*, "New York Times", 13.06.2007.
- Giovanni, Janine di, Conor Gaffey, *The New Exodus. Christians Flee ISIS in the Middle East*, "Newsweek", 3.04.2015.
- I sambällets utveckling*, "Hujādā", iv/37, 1981.
- Illegalt invandrade assyrier fortsätter ströma till Södertälje*, "Länstidningen", 9.12.1977.
- Iraq's Refugees After War, Chaldean Catholics Face Moral Risks in United States*, "Signes of the Times", 4–11.06.2012.
- Nowacka-Isaksson, Anna, *Kościół w Szwecji traci wiernych*, "Rzeczpospolita", 9.08.2016.
- Onder, Soner, *Return Migration of Assyrians: The Myth of Returning Home*, a talk at the DIMECCE Conference "Middle Eastern Christians in Diaspora: Past and Present, Continuity and Change", St Andrews (Scotland), May 27, 2015.
- Persson, Per-Erik, *Massinvasion av assyrier: Kommunen hart ansträngd*, "Länstidningen", 19.09.1975.
- Interview with Ignatius Aphrem II, *Syria belongs to its people: Syriac Orthodox Patriarch*, "Asharq Al-Awsat", 26.01.2015.
- Interview with Mar Emmanuel Delly, "Ishtar Satellite TV", May 7, 2006.

- Interview with Mar Raphael I Bidawid, "Assyrian Star", September–October 1974.
- Interview with Mar Raphael I Bidawid, "Lebanese Broadcasting International Channel", April 30, 2000.
- Yalcin, Zeki, *Orientalisk eller västerländsk nationalism?*, "Hujada" 22/257, 2000.
- Zaremba-Bielawski, Maciej, *Zamieszki w Szwecji. Orient-Express do blokowisk*, "Newsweek", 5.06.2013.

Articles, documents and reports online

- 5 Assyrians Elected to Swedish Parliament, 19.09.2014, <http://www.aina.org/news/20140919150524.htm>, accessed on May 6, 2014.
- A Demand for Action, Facebook page, <https://www.facebook.com/Demand-forAction/photos/a.293615564151252.1073741831.293404620839013/1155065064672960/?type=3&theater>, accessed on April 30, 2018.
- A Demand for Action, Facebook page, <https://www.facebook.com/Demand-forAction/posts/495185990660874>, accessed on May 23, 2018.
- A Demand For Action, <http://www.ademandforaction.com>, accessed on May 23, 2018.
- A Demand for Action: Updates, <http://www.ademandforaction.com/archive/>, accessed on May 23, 2018.
- Adaktusson, Lars, blog, <http://adaktusson.eu/anforande-vid-invigning-av-seyfo-monument-i-norrkoping/>, accessed on April 28, 2018.
- AFP, *Assyrians struggle in Lebanon after fleeing IS jihadists*, "Daily Mail", <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/wires/afp/article-3000523/Assyrians-struggle-Lebanon-fleeing-IS-jihadists.html>, accessed on June 16, 2018.
- Ahmed, Shuaib, *The Assyrian community in Sweden holding on to its roots*, "These Football Times", 3.11.2016, <https://thesefootballtimes.co/2016/03/11/the-assyrian-community-in-sweden-holding-on-to-its-roots/>, accessed on May 23, 2018.
- Antonopoulos, Paul, *Turkey remove Assyrian sculpture from front of local city hall*, "Al Masdar News", 17.01.2017, <https://www.almasdarnews.com/article/turkey-remove-assyrian-sculpture-from-front-of-local-city-hall/>, accessed on January 16, 2018.
- Assyrian Film Wins Golden Palm Award*, "Assyrian International News Agency", 11.04.2006, <http://www.aina.org/ata/20060411155404.htm>, accessed on January 24, 2018.
- Assyrians and Armenians Protest As Gül Addresses Swedish Parliament*, "Assyrian International News Agency", 13.03.2013, <http://www.aina.org/news/20130313111715.htm>, accessed on May 21, 2018.

- Assyrians Demonstrate Worldwide Against ISIS Persecution*, "Assyrian International News Agency", 2.08.2014, <http://www.aina.org/news/20140802155939.htm>, accessed on May 21, 2018.
- Assyrians in Sweden Demonstrate Against Kurdish Aggression in Syria*, "Assyrian International News Agency", 19.01.2016, <http://www.aina.org/news/20160118205844.htm>, accessed on May 21, 2018.
- Assyrians in Sweden Protest Against Kurdish Occupation of Assyrian Villages*, "Assyrian International News Agency", 23.06.2014, <http://www.aina.org/news/20140623174038.htm>, accessed on May 14, 2018.
- Assyrians Without Borders, Facebook page, https://www.facebook.com/AssyriansWithoutBorders/?hc_ref=ART84fBmvoY6LlHZ5_FOD-IoClo2otPoWdD8AgQ6TrgpcW3yqgETyMswNxBuhiyQ40, accessed on May 30, 2018.
- Assyrians Without Borders, Facebook page, *Reseberättelse Libanon*, 1.08.2016, <https://www.facebook.com/AssyriansWithoutBorders/posts/10153796169801220>, accessed on May 23, 2018.
- Assyrians: Frequently Asked Questions*, "Assyrian International News Agency", <http://www.aina.org/faq.html>, accessed on January 16, 2018.
- Attacks on Assyrians in Syria by ISIS and Other Muslim Groups*, "Assyrian International News Agency", <http://www.aina.org/releases/20150226225711.htm>, accessed on January 16, 2018.
- Barryakoub, Afram, *Valet-06: Rekordmänga assyrier kandiderar i valet*, "Hujada", 8.09.2006, http://www.hujada.com/article_print.php?ar=54, accessed on June 1, 2018.
- BetBasoo, Peter, *Brief History of Assyrians*, "Assyrian International News Agency", 1.11.2013, <http://www.aina.org/brief.html>, accessed on January 24, 2018.
- Beth Nahrin Assyrian Heritage Center, *Assyrian Martyrs Day 2017*, <https://www.betnahrainahc.com/single-post/2017/08/04/Assyrian-Martyrs-Day-2017>, accessed on January 16, 2018.
- Boom mieszkaniowy w Szwecji wciąż trwa*, "Obserwator Finansowy", <https://www.obserwatorfinansowy.pl/tematyka/makroekonomia/boom-mieszkaniowy-w-szwecji-wciaz-trwal/>, accessed on January 3, 2018.
- Boyacıoğlu, Hacer, *Turkey's Assyrian Community Welcomes Monastery's Return*, "Assyrian International News Agency", 7.02.2018, <http://www.aina.org/news/20180207145714.htm>, accessed on May 21, 2018.
- Brinkerhoff, Jennifer M., *Coptic Diaspora Survey Report 3: Religious Attitudes and Practices*, June 2015, https://www.researchgate.net/publication/277660052_Coptic_Diaspora_Survey_Report_3_Religious_Attitudes_and_Practices, accessed on January 31, 2018.
- Brunila, Viivi, Baptiste Duguit, Zena Iovino, *Women in Politics in Sweden*, <http://www.mv.helsinki.fi/home/holli/01sweden.html>, accessed on January 3, 2018.

- Bulut, Uzey, *Churches in Turkey on the Verge of Extinction*, https://www.gatestoneinstitute.org/5584/turkey-churches#_ftn3, accessed on January 16, 2018.
- Bunar, Nihad, *Migration and Education in Sweden: Integration of Migrants in the Swedish School Education and Higher Education Systems*, <http://nesetweb.eu/wp-content/uploads/2016/02/Migration-and-Education-in-Sweden.pdf>, accessed on January 3, 2018.
- Burger, John, *Christians in Iraq Forming Militia to Defend, and Possibly Retake, Ancestral Lands*, "Aleteia", 4.12.2014, <https://aleteia.org/2014/12/04/christians-in-iraq-forming-militia-to-defend-and-possibly-retake-ancestral-lands/>, accessed on June 3, 2018.
- Carlqvist, Ingrid, *Sweden: A Beggar on Every Corner*, "Gatestone Institute", 9.04.2016, <https://www.gatestoneinstitute.org/7782/sweden-roma-beggars>, accessed on May 3, 2018.
- Cerrotti, Rachael, *Sweden was among the best countries for immigrants. That's changing*, PRI, 11.09.2017, <https://www.pri.org/stories/2017-09-11/sweden-was-among-best-countries-immigrants-thats-changing>, accessed on January 3, 2018.
- Cetti-Roberts, Matt, *Inside the Christian Militias Defending the Nineveh Plains*, "War is Boring", 6.03.2015, <https://medium.com/war-is-boring/inside-the-christian-militias-defending-the-nineveh-plains-fe4a10babeed>, accessed on June 3, 2018.
- Chaldean Bishops' Letter Undermines National Unity*, "Assyrian International News Agency", 6.10.2003, <http://aina.org/releases/2003/iraqbishops.htm>, accessed on January 16, 2018.
- Chaldean Patriarch gambles on re-establishing "Church of the East"*, "La Stampa", 25.06.2015, <http://www.lastampa.it/2015/06/25/vaticaninsider/eng/world-news/chaldean-patriarch-gambles-on-reestablishing-church-of-the-east-hs-CiSJDkdXg2XceFSFwhRJ/pagina.html>, accessed on March 27, 2018.
- Children in Sweden, <https://sweden.se/society/children-and-young-people-in-sweden/>, accessed on April 25, 2018.
- Chukri, Rakel, *Vi syriener är bäst i klassen*, "Expressen", 20.09.2005, <https://www.expressen.se/debatt/vi-syriener-ar-bast-i-klassen/>, accessed on January 26, 2018.
- Church of Sweden official statistics*, <https://www.svenskakyrkan.se/statistik>, accessed on January 30, 2018.
- Collard, Rebecca, *Meet the Americans Who Have Joined an Iraqi Militia to Fight ISIS*, "Time", 27.03.2015, <http://time.com/3761211/isis-americans-iraqi-militias/>, accessed on June 3, 2018.
- Crabtree, Steve, *Religiosity Highest in World's Poorest Nations*, "Gallup", 31.08.2010, <http://news.gallup.com/poll/142727/religiosity-highest-world-poorest-nations.aspx>, accessed on May 2, 2018.

- „Dagen”, 4.04.2014, <http://www.dagen.se/nya-patriarken-traffade-syriens-president-1.93256>, accessed on May 23, 2018.
- Dargeçit, Turkey*, <https://www.discoverworld.com/Turkey/Mardin-Province/Darge%C3%A7it>, accessed on April 29, 2018.
- Drott, Carl, *The Revolutionaries of Bethnahrin. Reportage*, “Warscapes”, 25.05.2015, <http://www.warscapes.com/reportage/revolutionaries-bethnahrin>, accessed on June 3, 2018.
- Ecumenical Relations of the Syriac Orthodox Church*, <http://sor.cua.edu/Ecumenism/index.html>, accessed on May 30, 2018.
- England, Charlotte, *Sweden sees record numbers of asylum seekers withdraw applications and leave*, “Independent”, 25.08.2016, <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/europe/refugee-crisis-asylum-seekers-sweden-applications-withdrawn-record-numbers-a7209231.html>, accessed on January 19, 2018.
- European Parliament resolution of 4 February 2016 on the systematic mass murder of religious minorities by the so-called ‘ISIS/Daesh’ (2016/2529(RSP))*, 27.01.2016, https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/TA-8-2016-0051_EN.html, accessed on May 6, 2018.
- Fewer than 500 of 163,000 asylum seekers found jobs*, “The Local”, 31.05.2016, <https://www.thelocal.se/20160531/fewer-than-500-of-163000-asylum-seekers-found-jobs>, accessed on January 23, 2018.
- Gender Equality in Sweden*, <https://sweden.se/society/gender-equality-in-sweden/>, accessed on April 25, 2018.
- International Organization for Migration, *Glossary on Migration*, Geneva 2004, http://www.iomvienna.at/sites/default/files/IML_1_EN.pdf, accessed on June 22, 2018.
- Government Offices of Sweden, Regeringskansliet, *Act on Swedish Citizenship*, <http://www.government.se/content/1/c6/10/57/28/3ddfc07b.pdf>, accessed on May 6, 2018.
- Haakaas, Einar, Frode Sættran, *-Vi bor alle i samma by, men ikke i same verden*, “Aftenposten”, 15.05.2005, https://www.aftenposten.no/norge/i/8JGd/--Vi-bor-alle-i-samme-by_-men-ikke-i-samme-verden, accessed on April 26, 2018.
- Ibrahim Baylan*, Sveriges Riksdag, http://www.riksdagen.se/sv/ledamoter-partier/ledamot/ibrahim-baylan_0973474532717, accessed on May 15, 2018.
- Immigration concerns swell among Swedish voters*, “The Local”, 8.02.2016, <http://www.thelocal.se/20160208/immigration-concerns-swell-among-swedish-voter>, accessed on January 3, 2018.
- Immigration Policy in Sweden: Part Two*, “Borderless Adventures”, 16.12.2012, <http://borderlessadventures.com/article/immigration-policy-in-sweden-part-two-303>, accessed on January 3, 2018.

- Innana Foundation, *Assyrian Diaspora in Europe: Past, Present, Future*, May 2014, http://www.inannafoundation.org/Berlin_EPIA_Conference.html, accessed on April 29, 2018.
- International Nowruz Day*, <http://www.un.org/en/events/nowruzday/>, accessed on April 23, 2018.
- Interview about Afrin – With Metin Rhawi*, 4.02.2018, <https://www.european-syriac-union.org/news-reader/interview-about-afrin-with-metin-rhawi.html>, accessed on June 3, 2018.
- Ishtar TV, <http://ishtartv.com/viewarticle,50336.html>, accessed on January 16, 2018.
- Jackson, Griffin Paul, *Iraqi Christians at Odds with World on Kurdish Independence Referendum*, “Christianity Today”, 22.09.2017, <http://www.christianitytoday.com/news/2017/september/iraq-christians-kurds-independence-referendum-nineveh-plain.html>, accessed on January 16, 2018.
- Johansson, Anders, Linda Hjertén, *Polisens hemliga rapport: Här är Stockholms läns farligaste områden*, “Aftonbladet”, 3.02.2016, <https://www.aftonbladet.se/nyheter/krim/article22190105.ab>, accessed on April 26, 2018.
- Johansson, Henrik, *Patriark invigde monument över folkmord*, Nt.se, 1.06.2015, <http://www.nt.se/nyheter/norrkoping/patriark-invigde-monument-over-folkmord-11100893.aspx>, accessed on May 6, 2018.
- Joseph, Max J., *An EU Conference for the KRG, by the KRG*, “Medium”, 26.06.2017, <https://medium.com/@DeadmanMax/an-eu-conference-for-the-kr-by-the-kr-b28726107192>, accessed on May 6, 2018.
- Kino, Nuri, *They Are Persecuted Again – This Time in Europe*, “HuffPost”, 19.05.2016, https://www.huffingtonpost.com/nuri-kino/they-are-persecuted-again_b_10027104.html, accessed on May 22, 2018.
- Kończek, Natalia, *SFI czyli nauka szwedzkiego w Szwecji*, 25.08.2014, <http://szwecjoblog.blogspot.com/2014/08/sfi-czyli-nauka-szwedzkiego-w-szwecji.html>, accessed on January 3, 2018.
- Löfven (S) erkänner inte folkmord – Södertäljepolitiker lämnar partiet*, <https://sverigesradio.se/sida/artikel.aspx?programid=103&artikel=6946001>, accessed on May 11, 2018.
- Macintyre, James, *Iraqi Parliament Votes Against New Christian Province in Nineveh Plain*, “Christian Today”, 27.09.2016, <https://www.christian-today.com/article/iraqi-parliament-votes-against-new-christian-province-in-nineveh-plain/96511.htm>, accessed on May 23, 2018.
- Malcolm, *Syrian embassy protest sees several detained in Sweden*, “Icnews”, 15.08.2012, <http://www.icnews.is/2012/08/15/syrian-embassy-protest-sees-several-detained-in-sweden/#ixzz2666E5Wao>, accessed on June 3, 2018.
- Mamouri, Ali, *How Iraq just legalized discrimination of minorities*, “Al Monitor. The Pulse of the Middle East”, <http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/>

- originals/2015/11/iraq-law-id-discrimination-minorities.html#ixzz54H-4gqtL7, accessed on January 16, 2018.
- Mar Ignatius Ephrem I, *The Syrian Church of Antioch. Its Name and History*, Hackensack (USA) 1952, <https://universallibrary.org/details/syrianchurchofan0000hish/mode/2up>, accessed on March 27, 2018.
- McDermott, Jim, *Christ and Secular Sweden: An interview with Klaus Dietz about the Swedish church*, "America. The Jesuit Review", 24.12.2007, <https://www.americamagazine.org/issue/639/article/christ-and-secular-sweden>, accessed on May 2, 2018.
- Mellanösterns kristna i Europa: historier, kulturer och samfund*, Marta Wozniak (med flera), 2015: <http://www.myndighetenst.se/kunskap/religionsliv---en-kunskapsbank-om-trossamfund-och-religion/ortodoxa-och-osterlandska-kyrkor.html>, accessed on May 24, 2018.
- Members and parties, <http://www.riksdagen.se/en/members-and-parties/>, www.riksdagen.se/en/members-and-parties/, accessed on January 3, 2018.
- Mihailova, Natalya, *Syria's Al-Assad receives Syriac Orthodox Church's new patriarch*, "Ahram Online", 10.04.2014, <http://www.pravmir.com/syrias-al-assad-receives-syriac-orthodox-churchs-new-patriarch/>, accessed on May 23, 2018.
- Ministry of Culture, Sweden, *Changed relations between the State and the Church of Sweden*, <http://www.sst.a.se/download/18.4c1b31c91325af-4dad3800015546/1377188428760/Fact+sheet+about+state-church+relations.pdf>, accessed on January 30, 2018.
- Mitchell, Chris, *ISIS Swallowing Iraq: 'They're Killing Children'*, <http://www1.cbn.com/cbnnews/world/2014/August/ISIS-Swallowing-Iraq-Theyre-Beheading-Children>, accessed on January 16, 2018.
- Muslimhat känslig fråga i Södertälje*, SVT, <https://www.svt.se/nyheter/granskning/ug/muslimhat-kanslig-fraga-i-sodertalje>, accessed on May 3, 2018.
- Myndigheten för stöd till trossamfund, *Handläggare för kontakt med ortodoxa och muslimska samfund: presentation*, <https://www.myndighetenst.se/om-oss/nyheter/nyhetsarkiv-aktuellt/2012-05-14-handlaggare-for-kontakt-med-ortodoxa-och-muslimska-samfund-presentation..html>, accessed on May 18, 2018.
- Namninsamling efter Uppdrag granskning om islamofobi*, <https://www.svt.se/nyheter/inrikes/namninsamling-efter-uppdrag-granskning-om-islamofobi>, accessed on May 3, 2018.
- Newmaninstitutet, <http://newman.se/>, accessed on May 18, 2018.
- NPF: Chaldean-Syriac-Assyrian people of Iraq liberate their Christian homeland from ISIS*, "Syriac International News Agency", 30.05.2016, <http://www.syriacsnews.com/npf-chaldean-%C2%ADsyriac-assyrian-people-iraq-liberate-christian-homeland-isis/>, accessed on June 3, 2018.

- OECD, *Closing the Gender Gap. Sweden*, <https://www.oecd.org/sweden/Closing%20the%20Gender%20Gap%20-%20Sweden%20FINAL.pdf>, accessed on April 26, 2018.
- OECD, *Working Together: Skills and Labour Market Integration of Immigrants and their Children in Sweden*, Paris 2016, <http://www.oecd.org/publications/working-together-skills-and-labour-market-integration-of-immigrants-and-their-children-in-sweden-9789264257382-en.htm>, accessed on January 3, 2018.
- Open Doors, *World Watch List*, <https://www.opendoorsusa.org/christian-persecution/world-watch-list/>, accessed on January 16, 2018.
- Open Letter From 19,000 Assyrians to Turkey: Do Not Touch St. Gabriel Monastery*, "Assyrian International News Agency", 4.02.2009, <http://www.aina.org/news/20090204175247.htm>, accessed on May 21, 2018.
- Party Program of the Social Democratic Party. Adopted by the Party Congress in Västerås 6 November, 2001*, <http://library.fes.de/pdf-files/ialhi/90144/90144.pdf>, accessed on January 3, 2018.
- Perring, Rebecca, *Sweden terror threat: Evil ISIS ready to attack 'civilian targets' in Stockholm*, "Express", 26.04.2016, <https://www.express.co.uk/news/world/664619/Sweden-terror-attacks-Islamic-State-Stockholm-ISIS-fighters>, accessed on March 27, 2018.
- Pew Research Center, *Global Christianity – A Report on the Size and Distribution of the World's Christian Population*, <http://www.pewforum.org/2011/12/19/global-christianity-exec/>, accessed on January 16, 2018.
- Pogodzińska, Patrycja, *Integracja i przeciwdziałanie dyskryminacji imigrantów na szwedzkim rynku pracy*, <http://www.isp.org.pl/uploads/filemanager/dyskryminacjamiigrantownarynkupracy-Szwecja.pdf>, accessed on January 3, 2018.
- Population statistics*, Statistics Sweden, <http://www.scb.se/en/finding-statistics/statistics-by-subject-area/population/population-composition/population-statistics/>, accessed on June 25, 2018.
- Pride 2016: Assyrians for human rights*, 3.08.2016, <http://www.assyriatv.org/2016/08/pride-2016-assyrians-human-rights/>, accessed on May 6, 2018.
- Regeringens proposition om riktlinjer för invandrar – och minoritetspolitik – en m. m. Proposition 1975:26, <https://data.riksdagen.se/fil/901A899E-1277-496B-9552-E70BCF5C3783>, accessed on January 3, 2018.
- Regeringens proposition. Sverige, framtiden och mångfalden – från invandrapolitik till integrationspolitik 1997/98:16, <https://www.regeringen.se/49bba3/contentassets/6cf1db3cc2254ab8a3e70038272f09e4/sverige-framtiden-och-mangfalden---fran-invandrapolitik-till-integrationspolitik>, accessed on January 3, 2018.
- Riksdagen sa ja till en flerpartimotion som innehåller krav på att Sverige ska erkänna folkmordet 1915 på armenier, assyrier/kaldéer och pontiska greker*, 11.03.2010,

- http://www.riksdagen.se/sv/dokument-lagar/arende/betankande/mellanostern-och-nordafrika-_GX01UU9, accessed on May 6, 2018.
- Rudolfsson, Jacob, *Christian Refugees Persecuted in Sweden*, "Providence. A Journal of Christianity & American Foreign Policy", 9.03.2016, <https://providencemag.com/2016/03/christian-refugees-persecuted-sweden/>, accessed on May 22, 2018.
- S:t Afrem Kyrkans Historia, <http://www.stafrem.se/page.php?p=16>, accessed on January 23, 2018.
- Saadoun, Mustafa, *Yonadam Kanna: Iraqi Christians no to Nineveh autonomy*, "Agenfor International", 23.05.2017, <https://www.agenformedia.com/publications/2017/03/yonadam-kanna-iraqi-christians-no-nineveh-autonomy>, accessed on May 23, 2018.
- Sambällsnytt. Avpixlat har fått utgivningsbevis*, SVT, 2.06.2014, <https://www.svt.se/kultur/avpixlat-har-fatt-ansvarig-utgivare>, accessed on May 14, 2018.
- Samimi, Ardalan, *Vård på flera språk i Ronna*, "Länstidningen", 28.07.2011, <https://www.lt.se/stockholm/sodertalje/vard-pa-flera-sprak-i-ronna>, accessed on May 7, 2018.
- SD har flest invandrare på vallistan*, LT, 23.04.2010, <https://www.lt.se/artikel/stockholm/sodertalje/sd-har-flest-invandrare-pa-vallistan>, accessed on May 28, 2018.
- Seibert, Thomas, *The Syrian Orthodox Lawyer Erol Dora. Source of Hope for the Christian Minority*, <http://en.qantara.de/content/the-syrian-orthodox-lawyer-erol-dora-source-of-hope-for-the-christian-minority>, accessed on January 16, 2018.
- Samuels, Alana, *When Divorce Is an Opportunity*, "The Atlantic", 9.02.2018, <https://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2018/02/when-divorce-is-an-opportunity/552230/>, accessed on May 6, 2018.
- Slutlig rösträkning och mandatfördelning – Val till kommunfullmäktige 2010-09-19*, Val.se, 20.09.2010, https://data.val.se/val/val2010/slutresultat/protokoll/protokoll_0181K.pdf, accessed on May 28, 2018.
- Smith, Lydia, *Church of Sweden to stop using 'he' and 'Lord' in push for gender-neutral language*, "Independent", 24.11.2017, <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/europe/church-of-sweden-gender-neutral-language-he-lord-god-evangelical-lutheran-church-a8073426.html>, accessed on May 2, 2018.
- Smith, Olivier, *Mapped: The world's most (and least) religious countries*, "The Telegraph", 14.01.2018, <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/travel/maps-and-graphics/most-religious-countries-in-the-world/>, accessed on April 15, 2018.
- Sofuoglu, Murat, *Assyrians return to Turkey from Europe to save their culture*, "TRT World", 5.09.2017, <https://www.trtworld.com/magazine/assyrians-return-to-turkey-from-europe-to-save-their-culture-10131>, accessed on May 23, 2018.

- Stallard, Natasha, *For Assyrians, a New Home in Sweden*, "Assyrian International News Agency", 29.02.2016, <http://www.aina.org/news/20160229021423.htm>, accessed on January 24, 2018.
- Standard Eurobarometer 82, Autumn 2014, http://ec.europa.eu/public_opinion/archives/eb/eb82/eb82_anx_en.pdf, accessed on January 31, 2018.
- Stefan Löfvens (S) besked: Inga planer på folkmordserkännande från regeringen*, SVT, 1.05.2018, <https://www.svt.se/nyheter/lokalt/sodertalje/stefan-lofven-besoker-sodertalje-far-fragor-om-folkmordserkannande>, accessed on May 8, 2018.
- Stockholm Center for Freedom, *Syriacs in Sweden to launch an initiative to take their seized properties in Turkey*, 21.07.2017, <https://stockholmcf.org/syriacs-in-sweden-to-launch-an-initiative-to-take-their-seized-properties-in-turkey/>, accessed on May 21, 2018.
- Study in Sweden*, <https://studyinsweden.se/plan-your-studies/learn-swedish/proficiency-tests/>, accessed on May 7, 2018.
- Sun, Lei, *Is the Swedish media biased? How is the immigration being reported in Sweden?*, "Quora", 15.03.2017, <https://www.quora.com/Is-the-Swedish-media-biased-How-is-the-immigration-being-reported-in-sweden>, accessed on May 24, 2018.
- Surayt Aramaic Online, <http://www.surayt.com/>, accessed on April 29, 2018.
- (S)veket i Seyfofrågan*, LT, 8.05.2018, <https://www.lt.se/opinion/debatt/sveket-i-seyfofragan>, accessed on May 11, 2018.
- Sveriges Radio, <http://sverigesradio.se/sida/gruppsida.aspx?programid=83&grupp=10974&artikel=6523617>, accessed on January 3, 2018.
- Sweden 'least religious' nation in Western world*, "The Local", 13.04.2015, <https://www.thelocal.se/20150413/swedes-least-religious-in-western-world>, accessed on April 15, 2018.
- Sweden Ministry of Employment, *Pocket facts 2010 – Statistics on integration, 2011*, http://adapt.it/adapt-indice-a-z/wp-content/uploads/2014/05/sweden_facts_2011.pdf, accessed on January 3, 2018.
- Sweden reveals new 'feminist' cabinet*, "The Local", <https://www.thelocal.se/20141003/live-blog-lofven-cabinet>, accessed on January 3, 2018.
- Sweden's asylum seeker forecast on track for 2017*, "The Local", <https://www.thelocal.se/20170426/swedens-asylum-seeker-forecast-on-track-for-2017>, accessed on January 3, 2018.
- Sweden's Constitution of 1974 with Amendments through 2012, https://www.constituteproject.org/constitution/Sweden_2012.pdf?lang=en, accessed on May 25, 2018.
- Swedish Migration Agency, <https://www.migrationsverket.se/English/About-the-Migration-Agency/Facts-and-statistics-/Statistics.html>, accessed on March 27, 2018.

- Syriac Orthodox Church*, “Le Parisien”, <http://dictionnaire.sensagent.leparisien.fr/Jacobite%20Syrians/en-en/>, accessed on January 23, 2018.
- The establishment of Nineveh Plain Forces – NPF*, “Syriac International News Agency”, 7.01.2015, <http://www.syriacsnews.com/establishment-nineveh-plain-forces-npfl>, accessed on June 3, 2018.
- The sea route to Europe: The Mediterranean passage in the age of refugees*, UNHCR, <http://www.unhcr.org/protection/operations/5592bd059/sea-route-europe-mediterranean-passage-age-refugees.html>, accessed on January 19, 2018.
- The Syrian Constitution: *Syrian Arab Republic: Constitution, 2012*, <http://www.refworld.org/docid/5100f02a2.html>, accessed on January 16, 2018.
- Thiry, *Assyriska Soccer*, <http://www.shlama.be/shlama/content/view/249/213/>, accessed on January 8, 2018.
- Tubylewicz, Katarzyna, *Kościół może być też taki – poznajcie Kościół Szwedzki*, “Na Temat”, <http://ktubylewicz.natemat.pl/5633,kosciol-moze-byc-tez-taki-poznajcie-kosciol-szwedzki>, accessed on January 31, 2018.
- Tubylewicz, Katarzyna, *Raj, mamy problem!*, “Voyage”, 29.07.2015, <https://www.voyage.pl/swiat/5177/raj-mamy-problem>, accessed on May 2, 2018.
- Turkey Attempting to Confiscate Assyrian Monastery’s Land*, “Assyrian International News Agency”, 16.09.2008, <http://www.aina.org/releases/20080916151651.htm>, accessed on May 23, 2018.
- Turkey’s Christian minority sends four deputies to parliament*, “Hürriyet Daily News”, 7.06.2015, <http://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/turkeys-christian-minority-sends-four-deputies-to-parliament-83623>, accessed on January 16, 2018.
- Uchodźcy z Syrii: kryzys w liczbach*, <https://amnesty.org.pl/uchodzcy-z-syrii-kryzys-w-liczbach/>, accessed on January 16, 2018.
- UN Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination Report*, 22.08.2000, <http://sim.law.uu.nl/SIM/CaseLaw/uncom.nsf/804bb175b68baaf7c125667f004cb333/fe5e70d4eac0aa12c125698300368cfc?OpenDocument>, accessed on January 3, 2018.
- Utlänningslag (2005:716), <http://rkrattsbaser.gov.se/sfst?bet=2005:716>, accessed on January 3, 2018.
- Val till kommunfullmäktige i Södertälje – Valsedlar*, Val.se, 21.09.2010, <https://data.val.se/val/val2010/valsedlar/K/kommun/01/81/valsedlar.html#id0110>, accessed on May 28, 2018.
- Voice of the People 2015*, “Gallup”, <http://www.gallup-international.com/wp-content/uploads/2017/10/GIA-Book-2015.pdf>, accessed on April 15, 2018.
- Warda, William M., *Aphrim Barsoum’s Role in distancing the Syrian Orthodox Church from its Assyrian Heritage*, “Christians of Iraq”, 2005, <http://www.christiansofiraq.com/barsoum.html>, accessed on March 28, 2018.

- Web, Charlotte, *Swedes more positive toward immigrants: study*, "The Local", 29.10.2009, <http://www.thelocal.se/22954/20091029/>, accessed on January 3, 2018.
- Westin, Charles, *Sweden: Restrictive Immigration Policy and Multiculturalism*, June 2006, <http://www.migrationinformation.org/usfocus/display.cfm?ID=406>, accessed on January 3, 2018.
- Westlund, Oscar, *Digital News Report. Sweden, 2017*, <http://www.digitalnewsreport.org/survey/2017/sweden-2017/>, accessed on May 5, 2018.
- Women and men in Sweden 2016: Women have lower salaries, incomes and pensions than men*, SCB, 4.07.2016, <http://www.scb.se/en/finding-statistics/statistics-by-subject-area/living-conditions/gender-statistics/gender-statistics/pong/statistical-news/women-and-men-in-sweden-2016/>, accessed on April 26, 2018.
- World Values Survey Wave 6: 2010-2014*, <http://www.worldvaluessurvey.org/WVSONline.jsp>, accessed on April 27, 2018.
- Wozniak, Marta, *The light and dark sides of conducting an electronic survey*, 27.02.2014, https://arts.st-andrews.ac.uk/dimecce/?page_id=247&paged=2, accessed on February 2, 2018.
- Yacoub, Joseph, Thierry Oberlé, *Details Emerge of ISIS' Mass Abduction of Assyrians in Syria*, "Assyrian International News Agency", <http://www.aina.org/news/20170705125045.htm>, accessed on January 16, 2018.
- Zyśk, Daniel, *Szwecja: Przeciwni imigrantom Szwedzcy Demokraci liderem na prawicy*, "Gazeta Prawna", <http://www.gazetaprawna.pl/artykuly/1029518,szwecja-przeciwni-imigrantom-szwedzcy-demokraci-liderem-na-prawicy.html>, accessed on January 3, 2018.

Internet sources

- <http://assyrierutangranser.se/>
<http://mecc.org/>
<http://religionandpolitics.pl/>
<http://souf.nu/>
<http://www.aramaic-dem.org/>
<http://www.bet-nahrain.org/>
<http://www.ccme.be/>
<http://www.inannafoundation.org/>
<http://www.ip.uz.zgora.pl/index.php/badania-naukowe/politologia-religi>
<http://www.sy-gg.org/>
<http://www.syriac-union.org/>
<http://www.zowaa.org/>
<https://arts.st-andrews.ac.uk/dimecce/>

https://arts.st-andrews.ac.uk/dimecce/?page_id=922
https://arts.st-andrews.ac.uk/dimecce/?page_id=1007
<https://bilda.nu/>
<https://www.lebanese-forces.com/>
<https://www.oikoumene.org/en>
<https://www.sanktignatios.org/our-story/>
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pumIT31qqQQ>
www.svenskakyrkan.se

LIST OF CHARTS, FIGURES, ILLUSTRATIONS AND TABLES

Chart 1. Number of asylum applications in Sweden submitted in 2013–2017	65
Chart 2. Reasons for emigrating to Sweden (respondents or respondents’ parents)	122
Chart 3. Knowledge of languages on a communicative level	167
Chart 4. Political preferences of Assyrians/Syriacs on a local level in 2010	273
Chart 5. Political preferences of Assyrians/Syriacs at the national level in the 2010 elections	276
Chart 6. Means of maintaining relationships with the community in the Middle East	288
Chart 7. Contact with members of the community living in other countries	290
Chart 8. Forms of contact with community members living in other countries	291
Fig. 1. Matrix containing cards illustrating the identities of the respondents	31
Fig. 2. The John W. Berry model – the acculturation of an ethno-cultural group and the host society	42
Fig. 3. The balance of power in the Riksdag after the 2014 parliamentary elections in Sweden	58
Fig. 4. Diagram illustrating the Swedish asylum procedure	63
Fig. 5. Swedish for Immigrants study paths	70
Fig. 6. The main ethnic identities of Assyrians/Syriacs in Sweden	206
Il. 1. The railway station in Södertälje	126
Il. 2. The Assyrian Federation building in Södertälje	129
Il. 3. Suryoyo Sat TV station	144
Il. 4. The first issues of “Hujāda”	145
Il. 5. Mass at the Syriac Orthodox Cathedral of Saint Jacob of Nsibin ...	151
Il. 6. The Syriac Orthodox church of Saint Aphrem	156
Il. 7. The Syriac Orthodox Cathedral of Saint Jacob of Nsibin	157
Il. 8. The Syriac Orthodox church of Saint Thomas	158

Il. 9. Contemporary decorations stylised as ancient Assyrian reliefs – in a private home and in a church hall in Södertälje	163
Il. 10. The “Assyrian” alphabet – a display board at the Assyrian Cultural Centre	169
Il. 11. A poster inviting the public to Akitu celebrations in Södertälje ...	172
Il. 12. A hall at the Assyrian Federation decorated for a wedding ceremony	178
Il. 13. Assyrian/Syriac graves at the Södertälje cemetery	179
Il. 14. The football stadium in Södertälje	211
Il. 15. Club shops for fans of Assyriska FF and Syrianska FC	213
Il. 16. A young football fan holding a flag during an Assyriska football match	215
Il. 17. Assyrian/Syriac owned restaurant and pizzeria and grocery store in Ronna	234
Il. 18. The Saint Aphrem Square in Södertälje	238
Il. 19. A poster commemorating Seyfo at the offices of Suroyo TV	319
Tab. 1. National minorities in Sweden in 2017	65
Tab. 2. Ethnic identities of Assyrians/Syriacs in Sweden	204
Tab. 3. Assyrians/Syriacs voting in elections	271
Tab. 4. Local elections in Sweden in 2010 (data in %)	273
Tab. 5. 2010 elections at the national level (data in %)	275