

Correspondence between the Syrian Patriarch of Antioch and the Holy See in the last decade of the seventeenth century

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Abstract

The research aims at elaborating the establishment of the Syrian catholic church and its status in the Levant in the last decade of seventeenth century depending on various manuscripts sent by the Catholic Patriarch of Antioch to the Holy See of Rome and its representative in Constantinople. The manuscripts written in Arabic depict the status of the church in the Ottoman Empire, and its relationship to the European authority including France and Spain. On the other hand, the manuscripts describe set of events related to the relation between the Syrian catholic church and its sister, the orthodox Syrian church and the attitude of the Ottoma Empire toward them.

Keywords: Ottoman Empire, Levant, Syria, church, France

Introduction

Christianity has known during its long history lots of splits and different doctrines resulted from the ideological diversity of explaining the dogma, which was brought by the Christ and promulgated by his disciples. After the first three centuries, which paved the way for spreading the new religion between the pagans in the eastern and western world, Alexandria and Antioch represented two different Christian schools that tried in many ways to defend and protect Christianity against the heathen attacks.

All of that led to a variety of interpretations of the nature of Christ, father and Virgin Mary. Whereas the church of Antioch adopted the mystical tendency and symbolic analysis for the Gospel, the church of Alexandria was in quiet contrary, relied on ethics and philosophy. Despite the success of defending Christianity as well as prevention of apostasy movements, the different interpretations among churches had increased the crack between them, which led to a set of events over the fourth and fifth centuries.¹

The controversy and debate about how Christ could be a Man and God at the same time, represented in four different councils starting with the assembly of Nicea 325 A.D. The argument of this council was about the ideas of one of the bishops of Alexandria called Arius who said that the father is the only true God who was not born, the son is not equal to

¹ Samir, Abdeh. الطوائف المسيحية في سورية اصلها تطورها تعدادها [The Christian Communities in Syria, their Origins – Development – Census], First edition, Damascus: Hasan Malls Press, 2003, 13–14.

the father, who initially has been alone, who created him out of nothing by his will, the father could not be seen or revealed even to the son because who has an onset does not know the eternal. According to these instructions a cute debate raised, the first Christian Emperor to Rome Constantine the Great wanted to examine the outstanding differences and figure out the best way for uniting the church. The council exiled Arius to the desert of Libya.² During the debate among the adherents of Arius and his proponents, another Antiochen bishop named Nestorius ascended the patriarchate of Constantinople in 428, bringing with him new thoughts and explanations.

We should bear in mind that the instructions of Nestorius, who was influenced by Syriac culture and literature, seemed to have seen in developing a cult of Mary a dangerous tendency to pay her honors that belonged to God alone. For him, Mary was not the mother of God but she was just the mother of the man. Therefore, he developed a theory regarding the nature of Christ's personhood and stated that Christ was just the son of Mary as a man. The theory of Nestorius was not the only matter which led up to the council of Ephesus, but the rivalry between the Alexandria and Antioch was an essential factor in this debate.

A second factor was the rivalry between the sees of Alexandria and Constantinople and the own jealousy that Cryles the patriarch of Alexandria felt toward Notorious. In 431, the Emperor summoned a council to meet at Ephesus and settled up this matter. The situation developed to the favor of Cryles since the envoy of Pope and the delegation of Antioch did not arrive, Cryles was able to absorb the patriarch of Jerusalem's support and the archbishop of Ephesus, who prevented Nestorius and his adherents from entering the church. The council excommunicated Nestorius and his adherents. The Pope of the Vatican and Emperor ratified the articles, and they imposed the provisions upon the Patriarch of Antioch to be accepted. Among the conflicting views as well as differences in opinion a new theological ideas had appeared when one of the bishops of Constantinople Eutyches had gone too far in resisting the Nestorius theology and assuring the creed of Cryles, the previous patriarch of Alexandria until he fell off in his mistake when he said (the Christ manhood was swallowed up in his Godhead).³

The Chalcedon council (451) was held and decision of Eutyches's excommunication was taken and the anathema of Nestorius and his doctrine was renewed. Despite the common theological ideas between all the churches in the east and west which had seen in Jesus two nature in one essence, the debate did not end since the eastern churches emphasized that Christ is of two natures, while the deputy of Pope and the delegate of the Emperor wanted the council to adopt that Christ was in two natures. In addition to the first idea, the council did mention the tenets of Cryles, which was the cornerstone of the orthodox belief that for him and his adherents, the One could recognize the two natures only by ideology or thinking.

The Chalcedon tenets dismissed all the doctrines which believe in two natures before the union and who admitted in just one nature after incarnation of Christ, for sure this dogma needs more explanation since the beliefs of the church of the east relied on the instructions of Cryles the Alexandrian patriarch who said (one nature embodied for the word of

² The history of church and the converting from monotheism to the triangulation, the electronics committee of call, 2015, p9. www.edc.org.kw; <http://ar.islamforchristians.com>.

³ Abona, Hirmis. *Assyrians, Kurds, and Ottomans*. New York: Camperia Press, 2008, 52.

the God) which consisted of two natures unmixed and the continuing existence of two natures in the union. This spilling dilemma was the cornerstone of dividing Christianity into catholicism in the west and orthodoxy in the east.⁴

The church of Antioch was affected in the councils in various ways, and to be understood the dimension of the dilemma, we should examine the historical and demographic composition of the region, which was under the sovereignty of this patriarchate. The sovereignty of the patriarchate of Antioch ranged from Torus Mountains in the north to the desert of Sinai in the south and between the Mediterranean Sea in the west to the border of the Persian kingdom in the east. The indigenous inhabitants of this land in the early dawn of christianity composed of Syrian or Syriacs (*surians*), and they are kind of old semantic groups dwelled in Syria during the old ages as Canaanites, Arameans, Phoenicians, and Amorites. Syriac language was the tongue of the people until the invasion of Alexander the Great in the the fourth century B.C. that this land started to have a Grecian character since the language of the science, education, and state started to be Grecian. On this ground, in the fifth century, three different literate styles could be recognized. The first one is Syriac, the language of the people along with the Arabic language since there were many Christian Arabic tribes; the second is the Grecian, which was the language of education, finally the Latin, the official language of the Roman Empire. The Chalcedon council was supposed to unite christianity, but the dispute mentioned above was expanded by the time went; the patriarchate of Alexandria refused the articles of the committee since its tenets went against the creed of Cryles.

The patriarchate of Antioch divided into three different creeds, the Melekiate church of Antioch which proponents named the royal Romans, Jacobites related to Jacob el-Baradei who said in one essence and one nature regarding the Christ, the adherents of this church named western Syrians or Syrian Orthodox, and the Nestorians in the eastern territories who adopted the Nestor's point of view who said in two essences and two natures in the Christ and his followers called the eastern Syrians.⁵ The Chalcedon or Malekiate patriarchate of Antioch, which adopted the chapters of the council in 451, had no contradiction to the Vatican that the principle and the terms of interpretations of the creed were the same, except that the church of Antioch in its heritage and legacy was of oriental origins.

In early history, the Antioch's relationships with the other patriarchate established on the grounds of equilibrium and collaboration. The Malekiate church of Antioch did not get involved in any dispute or disagreement with Rome or break until the Islamic invasion of Syria. Afterward, the final blow came true based on the controversy between Constantinople and Rome in 1054, that the church of Antioch had embraced the Constantinople clergy point of view. After this date, the eastern world became the castle of the orthodox church, and catholicism had no influence there until the sixteenth centuries with the exception of the era crusading wars.

Catholicism did not flourish in Syria until the Ottoman era through the missionary expedition's activities; despite Mehmet's canons, the conqueror who had addressed to his

⁴ Bishop Bishoy. *المسيحية عبر تاريخها في المشرق* [The Christianity in the East During its History], Second edition, Beirut: The Committee of Eastern Churches, 2002, 212–213.

⁵ The father Ignatius Diek. *On the paths of Christian unity, articles and journals in the ecumenical movments*.

Christian and Jewish subjects (millet system)⁶ the European countries breached the Ottoman through privileges and capitulations. Therefore, those rules and canon law did not implement exactly in sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.⁷

The political and diplomatic tendency of the European countries towards the Ottoman Empire in the early centuries was to have more privileges, especially in the trade fields, in the case of Venice⁸ and finding a new ally who could serve their aspiration in the case of France. The shared animosity towards Hapsburg led the French and the Ottoman to have their treaty in 1534 since the Ottomans had no interest in the French land which located beyond their capacity; in return the French government found in the catholic of the East a vital issue could be used to reinforce the political status of the French king in the west.⁹

The privileges which were gained by France at the time of the most powerful man in the history of the Ottoman Empire opened the door, as the time went by, to new treaties and privileges which made the Ottoman Empire during the time of weakness under control of foreign powers.¹⁰ Those covenants and capitulations facilitated the movement of missionary expeditions in the Levant and gave them a chance to make more influence inside the eastern Christian communities since there would be many professions and conversions to the catholic faith as well as recognition the supremacy of the pope upon all the Christians by lots of patriarchs and bishops as would be seen in the manuscripts. The bishops and patriarchs who converted to catholicism sought to procure a legal status for their authority on the one hand. On the other hand, they found in the Vatican and other European countries the shelter or sanctuary against the Ottoman prosecutions. The pope of Vatican and his hierarchy found these methods is the only way to achieve their allegedly dreams in restoring Jerusalem that those new believers would be the spearheaded against any Islamic invasion towards Europe in the future to come and might constitute a forward base to any crusade later.

On these grounds, the journey of delegations, embassies, and correspondence between west and east had started for centuries leaving behind it many pieces of evidence and proofs contributed in enriching the history of humanities and social science. The search aims at elaborating issues regarding the Syrian catholic church's status and its relations to the Ottomans, European countries, and the Vatican, depending on correspondence between the patriarch of Antioch and the pope of Vatican as well as his deputy in Constantinople. The research presents many questions that the Ottoman Empire facilitated the movement of missionary expeditions in its land, but to what extent the Ottomans considered the Syrian catholics a part of the social fabric of the Ottoman community. This question opens the door to many other issues related to this content. First of all, had the Ottoman Empire looked at the catholic church as a foreign entity on its lands or an aggressive body? Secondly, was the catholic church of Syria attached to millet system? Or she had kind of self-autonomy in its affairs? Finally, what kind of relationships the catholic church had with the

⁶ Öztürk, Fatih. The Ottoman Millet system. *Güneydoğu Avrupa Araştırmaları Dergisi* 16 (2009): 71–86.

⁷ Muhana, Muhammad al-. الجاليات الأوروبية في حلب [The European Communities in Aleppo], Damascus, 2009, 151.

⁸ Frazee, Charles A. *Catholics and Sultans*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 1983, 10.

⁹ Bilateral Capitulations Ottoman French Contract (942 A.H. / 1536 A.D. and 1084 A.H. / 1673 A.D.). Irbaya, Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü Dergisi Sayı: 39 Yıl: 2015/2, 67–107.

¹⁰ Sabbagh, Layla al-. الجاليات الأوروبية في بلاد الشام [The European communities in Bilad al-Sham], Second volume, Beirut, 778.

European countries? These problematic issues exhibited by the research in mere political content, despite being covered by religious framework, it will be far from any religious fanaticism. Objectivity and impartiality will be the way of research to reach honest truths by analyzing the documents which placed between our hands according to the inductive scientific approach, which is the only way of obtaining the facts.

The first manuscript¹¹

الى جناب السادة الكرام الكردينالية الفخام الموكلين على انتشار الايمان ومدبري سائر الامصار والاقطار سلمهم الله تعالى وأبقاهم في خير وعافية.
إلى حضرة المقر الكريم العالي الموسوي مجد الأمة المسيحية فخر البيعة الكاثوليكية حرس الله نعمهم ووفر لهم من السعادة حظهم وقسمهم أمين أما بعد فالذي نعرضه على الحضرة الشريفة والبهجة اللطيفة لازالت عن سماع المكروه سليمة ودائما في خير وعافية مقيمه هو أنه نعلم جنابكم الشريف من خصوص (بخصوص) محبيننا العظام أي حضرة زمريا جلبي منير وأخوته العزيزين أنهم أناس مشرفون بجميع الفضائل كما ذكرنا لقدسكم العالي سابقا وأنهم قائمون على قدم الهمة والمساعدة في قضاء ما يخصنا بهذه الغيرة الإلهية فجزاهم الله عنا خير الجزاء فما عدا سعيهم الأول فبهذه المرة لما كان مطراننا مطران إسحاق الذي رسمناه الآن مطران وجعلناه نائبا ومتصرف في جميع أمورنا اذ تضايق هذا المطران المذكور في مدينة القسطنطينية على دراهم لأجل مصروف الخط الشريف فزمريا جلبي موسى منير ما عدا سعيه ومعاونته إياه أقرضه مبلغا وافرا من الدراهم حسنه الله لا فائدة ولا عايدة ولما قضى شغله في القسطنطينية واتى اخونا المطران صحبة الخط الشيف إلى حلب فأخوه الثاني باولو جلبي موسى منير سعى السعي الكلي في سجل الخط الشريف وكسر لهراطقة وما عدا ذلك فأقرضنا جميع المصروف لذي راح لنا على سجل الخط الشريف من كيسه دين قرض حسنة لله لا فائدة ولا ربح ودائما على طول المدى كلما قصدناهم بأمر من الأمور يبذلون كل مجهودهم وينفقون من مالهم ليقضوا ذلك الشغل كونهم مقبولين عند الحكام وكلمتهم نافذه لا ترد قط والأن فقصدنا مكافأتهم ببعض من أتعايبهم معنا ومساعدتهم لنا فلذلك نرجو من الهمم العالية أنكم تشرفوا محبنا الصادق وحضرة باولو جلبي أخوهم الثاني بصليب وبطنته وكواليرات كما انعمتم على أخيهم الأكبر زمريا جلبي فلا ريب ولا شك أيها السادات الكرام أنهم أهل لذلك ومستحقون لهذه لدرجة وأرقى منها لأنهم أناس ممتازون عن العام بأخلاقهم المرضية بمساعدتهم للإيمان الكاثوليكي ويقدم وشرف نسلهم وواجقهم كون أربعتهم أي زمريا جلبي وباولو جلبي ويوسف جلبي وكريستوفر مشرفين بكواليرات قبر المقدس ووكالات

¹¹ Österreichisches Staatsarchiv, Haus-, Hof- und Staatsarchiv, Turki V.K.23 (1526–1584). N89.

القدس الشريف وأجدادهم أيضا من قبلهم لأجل ذلك أيها السادات الكرام المرجو من همتكم العلية أن تزيدوا شرفهم وترسلوا إلى حبيينا بالوا جلبي صليب وبطنته وكواليرات من الكواليرات المعتبرات التي في تصرفكم تكون لائقة بشأنهم حتى يعلموا أننا ليس عارفين بالخير الذي دائما يعملوه معنا ومع جميع طوائف النصرى الكاثوليكين لجل انتشار الايمان الحقيقي وليكون معلوم قدسكم أنه سابقا ارسلنا مکتوب اخر مثل هذا لعله يكون وصل فالمراد من الحضرة الشريفة ألا تردوا سؤالنا فارغ وألا تخيبوا املنا من هذا الرجاء بل تقرنوا الجواب بصليب وبطنته كواليرات من الكواليرات (مرتبة فارس عالاغلب) المعتبرات ليزاد شوقه وتكثر محبته لأجل انتشار الايمان المقدس امامنا وامام سائر طوائف النصرى الكاثوليكين ويا ساداتنا احسبوا هذا الجميل الذي تعملوه معنا هو عائد الينا بسبب التعب الذي يتعبه قدامنا وامام الايمان الكاثوليكي ودمتم سالمين برب العالمين وقد كتب تحرير في اليوم الثامن من تموز في سنة الف وستمائة وأربعة وتسعين. اغناطيوس بطرس بطريرك انطاكية.

It is to the honorable masters, the pious cardinals, who are delegated in spreading the faith, the directors of all territories and provinces, may God almighty protect and keep their health and wellness. To the high honorable Moussaoui seat, the pride of the christian nation, the proud of the catholic church, may God protect him and safeguard their grace. Amen.

Having said that, what I shall present to the noble Esquire and delightful face is our confirmation about our great lovers who they are Zameria Chalabi Monier and his dearest brothers whom, they are honorable men spared no effort helping us regarding our duties, as we mentioned to you earlier, may God bless them on behalf of us for this divine ardency. Except of their first endeavors, this time, when our bishop Isaac whom we appointed him as a bishop, deputy, and vicar to our affairs, faced financial distress in Constantinople relating to the payments of the decree Zameria Chalabi Mousis Munir lent him a considerable amount of money without spoil.

When the bishop has finished his work, he came with the decree to Aleppo, the second brother Paolu Chalabi Musa Monier made every effort to register the order and defeat the heretics, except that he lent us all the expenses regarding the registration of the decree in Aleppo without spoil or interest. All the time when we need their help, they make every effort and spend money for completion our goals for being acceptable by the governors and their authority is adequate.

Now we would like to reward them for some of their efforts and contribution with us, thereby we hope from your excellence to honor our lover, Master Paolu Chalabi the second brother by a Christ Cross and a rank of cavalry as you reward their oldest brother Zameria Chalabi. Since there is no doubt or suspicious of being well deserved and eligible to this degree and more than that, they are extraordinary people through their help to the catholic faith. The four brothers Zameria Chalabi, Paolo Chalabi, Joseph Chalabi, and Kristopher are supervisors on the sacred grave and all agencies in Jerusalem and their ancestors before them. For that, our Master we hope from your Majesty to increase their honor by sending a Cross of Christ and a rank of cavalry, which is under your authority.

To be known for your holiness we sent previously another letter like this and we hope it was delivered to you and what we would like to ask your Esquire is not to disappoint or disillusion us on this request but associate your answer with the Cross and the rank of cavalry to increase their affection and love of spreading the catholic faith. Our Masters keep in your mind the kindness, which you are going to do; it will return to us because of their significant pains on our path and for the catholic communities. God bless you. It was written in the eight of July in 1694. Peter Ignatius, the patriarch of Antioch.

The second manuscript¹²

الى جناب السادة الكرام الكاردينالية الفخام الموكلين على انتشار الايمان ومدبري سائر الأمصار والأقطار سلمهم الله تعالى وأبقاهم في خير وعافيه.

إلى حضرة المقر الكريم العالي المولوي السيدي جد الامة المسيحية فخر البيعة الكاثوليكية حرس الله نعمهم ووفّر من السعادة حظهم وقسمهم امين . نعلم سيادتكم من ميل أحننا مطران إسحاق الذي كان مطران مدينة أمد ولم يزل من صغره إلى الآن مجاهد عن الايمان الكاثوليكي الذي تعلمه وقبلة من ابهاتنا الكيوجيين المرسلين الى مدينة الموصل ومدينته وقد احتمل مشقات عظيمة عوضا عنا وانه رجل معلم وقد تعلم اللاهوت والفلسفة على يد أحد الأباء الكيوجيين المرسلين وفسروا الفلسفة واللاهوت من اللغة اللاتينية الى اللغة العربية وهو خبير باللغات السريانية والعربية والتركية وقد ألف كتاب بالسرياني والعربي والأمن لما ارسلناه الى القسطنطينية لإرسال الخط الشريف فكابد مشقات عظيمة وحاجج الهراطقة بالشكاوات امام السلطان والوزير وسائر ارباب الدولة واخرج لنا الخط الشريف بحماية ايلجي سلطان فرنسا وبعد عودته إلى عندنا إلى حلب لم يزل كل يوم يوعظ ويكرز في الكنيسة على رؤوس الملام بالإيمان الكاثوليكي أن المسيح طبيعتين وقنوم واحد وثبت رياسة الكرسي الكاثوليكي على الملام امام ابهاتنا المرسلين فلأجل حسن عقله وتدبيره اتفق الرأي مع ابهاتنا المرسلين واكابر طايفتنا ورسمناه مطرانا وقد سلمناه كل تدبيرنا ومرسومنا ليأمر وينهي كما يشاء ويريد والطائفة وابائنا المرسلين ونحن وكهنتنا راضين عن علمه وعمله وتدبيره وحسن نظامه ولذلك أعلمنكم بهذه الأحوال حتى يكن بإذنكم ودستوركم ويكون اسمه معلوم عند حضرتكم فانه نائبنا ووكيلنا وكل شي يعمله ويرسله الى جنابكم مقبول لنا وأنا اضع ختمي وخطي بديل الكتاب شهادته من بذلك امام الله وأمامكم ودمتم سالمين برب العالمين حرر في 8 تموز سنة 1694 مسيحية.

اغناطيوس بطرس بطريرك انطاكية.

¹² Österreichisches Staatsarchiv, Haus-, Hof- und Staatsarchiv, Turki V.K.23 (1526–1584). N93.

It is to the honorable masters, the pious cardinals, who are delegated in spreading the faith, the directors of all territories and provinces, may God protect and keep their health and wellness. To the high honorable Moussaoui seat, the pride of the christian nation, the proud of the catholic church, may God protected them and safeguarded their grace. Amen. We confirm you regarding our brother Isaac, the bishop of Amed previously and since his youth, he stands up for the catholic faith, which he accepted on the hand of our capuchin fathers whom sent to his town (Mosul). He has endured great hardships on behalf of us and he is an educated man, knows philosophy and theology.

He interpreted the philosophy and theology from Latin to Arabic language, and he is an expert in Syrian, Arabic and Turkish. He wrote a book in Arabic and Syrian, and now, when I sent him to the Constantinople to extract the imperial decree, he sustained great hardship and argued the heretics by the charges before the Sultan and minister as well as the entire high-ranking officials. He extracted the imperial decree under the protection of the ambassador of France and after his returning in Aleppo, he is still preaching people every day publicly in the church, converting them to the catholic faith that Christ has two natures and one essence. He fixed the Holy See publicly in front of our capuchin fathers. For his mental ability and management, we came up with an agreement between our sending fathers and highly members of our community, and we appoint him as a bishop, with giving him all our power and authority to do whatever he wants. Therefore, we inform you about this situation to be in your permission and to be his name known by you as a deputy and representative of us. I put my signature and seal on the custom footer as a testimony in front of God and you. May God save and protect you. Issued in eighth of July 1694.

The third manuscript¹³

هو الى جناب عمدة الاجلاء وفخر الأجداد الاخلاء حضرة الاب المكرم الكردينال ادوارد جيبو دام محترماً.
الى حضرة المقر الكريم المقر العالي الموسوي مجد المة المسيحية فخر البيعة الكاثوليكية حرس الله نعمه ووفر من السعادة حظه وقسمة امين. اما بعده فالذي نعرضه على الحضرة الشريفة والبهجة اللطيفة لا زالت عن سماع المكروه سليمة ودايماً في خير وعافيه مقيمة هو أنه كنا قد ارسلنا سابقاً لحضرتكم الشريفة عدة مكاتيب وما جانا جوابها لعل المانع الى خير وهي تتضمن شرح حالنا كف ان ايلجي سلطان فرنسا سعى واجتهد وطالع لنا خط شريف من باب الدولة العلية ورجعنا الى كرسينا بخير وسلامة نشكر الله تعالى على انعامه التي جاد بها علينا بهتمكم وبركة دعاكم وسائر البلدان وعلى منع مقاومة الهراطة وأيضا قد كان تجمد علينا ديون كثيرة في عزلتنا لان البطريك الهرطوقي في كل مدة كان يشتكي علينا وعلى مطارنتنا بدعوات زور وبهتان حتى يخسرنا دراهم وكان صحبة المكاتيب عرض محضر لحضرتكم الشريفة يتضمن شرح الخير الذي عملة معنا ايلجي سلطان فرنسا المظفر

¹³ Österreichisches Staatsarchiv, Haus-, Hof- und Staatsarchiv, Turki V.K.23 (1526–1584). N23.

بإخراج الخط الشريف ادام الل بقاكم وبقاه اجمعين وحرصكم واياه الى يوم الدين ثم نعلم سيادتكم من ميل أخيننا انتاسيوس اسقف سفر انا كنا قد رسمناه مطرانا على ماردين وارسلناه الى حضرتكم الشريفه لاقضاء مصالحنا ليساعدنا في لم الحسنات لاجل انتشار الايمان الكاثوليكي كونه رجل مستقيم خايف الله ومجاهد عن الايمان الكاثوليكي ولما جاء الى حضرتكم ساعدتموه بالبركة والمكاتيب والصدقات كثر الله خيركم وبارك في هممكم ومن هناك توجه إلى اسبانيا ثم الى بلاد الهند وجمع شيئا من حسان المؤمنين وصدقاتهم لأجل انتشار الايمان الكاثوليكي في هذه البلاد لان معلومكم الشريف لا يصير شي هنا بلا دراهم والأن لما عاد من الهند إلى اسبانيا ثلثه (اتهمه) بعض أناس امام الحكام والمطارين والرؤساء أنه رومي وهرطوقي وجاسوس مضاد الايمان لهذا السبب مسكه امير قادس وضبط منه بدستور ملك اسبانيا كل المال الذي جمعه من الهند بقي الاسقف حيران بروحه وسمعنا أنه أعلمكم بحاله لتساعدوه امام بالمكاتيب إلى حضرة سلطان اسبانيا المومى اليه حتى يخلص هذه الدراهم ونحن نعلم أن مروتكم كاملة ولا يحتاج لكم حشيمة ونحن مصدقون ومحققون بأنكم سعيتم إلى تخلص هذه لدراهم فالمراد من الحضر الشريفة ان كان للان ما جاءت هذه الدراهم على مدينة رومية ليديكم (استخدم اليد للكتابه) تكلفوا خاطر وتكتبوا إلى سلطان اسبانيا المشار اليه ولكل من يحتاج الامر اليه وتخبروهم بأحوالنا إني بطيريك كاثوليكي مطيع الكرسي الروماني منذ سبعة عشر عام ثبتت من سيدنا البابا وان الاسقف المذكور هو مطراني ومن طرفي ووكيلي بتسلم التصدقات وأنه كاثوليكي وانا ارسلته على تلك الأماكن لاجل مساعدة المؤمنين إيانا لانتشار الايمان في هذه البلاد حتى يتبين عرضه وعرضنا وبيان غش الذين ثلبوه. وبعد ما تجيبون المال المذكور إلى رومية تجيبون منه سبعة الاف قرش على يد البادرة اميروسوس الكيوجي لنوفي ديونا ونحمي منصوبنا في باب الدولة العلية حتى لا يصير علينا عزلة أخرى والباقي حطوه عن رجل مستقيم بالمعاملة(تشغيل رأس المال) وكل سنة ارسلوا لنا محصوله ودبروه بمعرفتكم لأن معقولكم يغني عن الجميع وما يراه الحاضر لا يراه الغايب ويبقى المال هنالك عندكم إلى وقت الحاجة ومتى اردنا شيء من رأس المال نخبر جنابكم وإن كانت كنيسةنا مطيعة لكم وتحت تدبيركم ولا بأس إن كانت أموالها أيضا تحت تدبيركم فبجاه رأسكم أن تتقيدوا التقيد لكلي على تميم هذا الشغل تخلصونا من الديون وأرباحها وقد جعلنا وكيلنا مونسينو كاردينال جيبو وكيل على هذا المال وكل شيء تعملوه يكون بأمره ودستوره وهو أيضا وكيلنا على سائر مصالحنا امام الجمع المقدس ولكثرة انشغاله قد نصبنا البادرة اميروسوس نائب رئيس الكيوجيين او الكبوشيين حتى ياخذ جواب يعطي جواب ويسلم لحضرتكم السيدة مكاتيبنا ويتسلم البادرة من يد مونسينيور كاردينال جيبو وكل مكتوب يعطيك إياه من طرفنا اقبلوه

وامسكوه واعملوا ما به فإنه مقبول لنا ويكون معلوم سيادتكم أن بارنت (لا اعلم ما هذا يمكن اعانة مالية) السنه وعام اول ما جاءنا ما نعلم انتم ما ارسلتموها ام ارسلتموها وما وصلت والمرو تفتشوا عليها وان ترسلوها ودمتم سالمين بجاه رب العالمين. اغناطوس بطريرك انطاكية.

It is to the Mayer of Noblemen, the proud of ancestors, the honorable father, Edward Gebo, the cardinal whom respect is still to continue forever, to the high reputable Moussaoui seat, the pride of christian nation, the proud of the catholic church, may God protect them and safeguarded their grace. Amen.

Having said that, what I would present on the noble Esquire and delightful face, that I have sent previously many letters to your Majesty, but we did not get any response, whatever was the cause I hope it is all right? Those letters include our status and how the Ambassador of France endeavored and spared no effort to extract our imperial decree and we returned to our chair safety and sound. We thank God for his graces, which lay upon us by your prayers and efforts. We have tremendous debt during our isolation, because of the heretics Pope and his fake charges, which make us, lose money therefore, we accompanied the letters with court transcript for your majesty including the charity of the ambassador of the victorious king of France, which he had done to us by extracting the imperial decree. May God protect you and him to the judgment day. After that, we confirm you regarding our brother Atanasious, the bishop of Safer that we had appointed him as a bishop in Mardin and we sent him to your Majesty to look after our interests and help in collecting charities for spreading the catholic faith for being a straight man, fears God and a defender of catholic belief.

When he came to your Majesty you helped him with ponds, letters, and charities, may God bless you, and then he went to Spain completed his way to India, and he collected some alms and handout of the people for spreading the catholic faith in this country because as far as you know, there is nothing occurs here without paying money. Now when he returned from India to Spain, some people charged him in front of the governors, cardinals, and leaders with heresy, Rumi, and spay against the faith. Thereby the prince of Cadiz arrested him according to the authority of the king of Spain and confiscated all the collected money from India. The bishop was confused and we heard that he informed you to help him with letters to the king of Spain to get the money back. We know your magnanimous is full and we do not need to ask you. We believe that you strived and sought to get the money back.

What we need from your Esquire since the money did not come until now to Rom, please bother yourself and write to the king of Spain whom mentioned and to whom it concerns that I am a catholic patriarch obedient to papacy since seventeen years appointed by our Pope and the said bishop is my bishop and a deputy of mine, he is a catholic and I sent him there to help in spreading the faith in this country until the truth appeared. After taking the money to Rome, give seven thousand pennies to the hand of capuchin leader Improsius to pay our debts and protect our chair in the Ottoman Empire for avoiding isolation again. The rest of the capital is to put in the hand of a straight man for running and every year send us the income and manages it by your knowledge because your reason is unquestionable. The money stays with you until the time of need and when we need anything of capital,

we will inform your holiness. If our church was faithful to you and under your supervision, it is okay to be its money under your control. In God's name commit yourself to this will and finish our debts and its benefits our representative, Monsignor cardinal Jibo before the sacred community will be responsible for that money but for being busy, we appointed al-Badra Amprosious the deputy of capuchin sect in his place to take and give answers as well as deliver our letters to your holiness. For your information, the aid of this year and the last one did not come, and we did not know if you did not send it or not. Therefore, we ask your holiness to search about it and send it. May God protect you. The Patriarch of Antioch, Peter.

The fourth manuscript¹⁴

هو الى جناب اب الإباء رئيس الرؤساء الحبر الأعظم الجالس على الكرسي الرسولي سيدنا الباب اينشنسيوس الثاني عشر نائب السيد المسيح دام محترما. نقبل الأرض ونجتو راعين امام الحضرة الابوية والطلعة الرسولية المتقلدة المفاتيح الملكوتية نائب ربنا ومخلصنا يسوع المسيح الجالس على الكرسي الرسولي الصحيح المؤمن على رياسة الكهنوت الخاضع لرئاسته نبي الملك والملكوت ادام الله قدسه وعلى بالسعد والاقبال انسه امين يا معين والمعروض من بعد الدعاء المفروض سبب تسطيره كثرة الاشواق الى تقبيل الانامل المقدسات ولثم الاقدام الطاهرات واستنشاق الروائح الطيبة لا زالت دائمة البقاء وان تموج بحر قدسكم وعن حقارتنا سألتم فله الحمد واننا واياكم على بروج الصحة مقيمين ولحياتكم داعين والذي نعرف به قدسكم هو انه كنا سابقا قد ارسلنا لحضرتكم عبودية تتضمن طاعتنا لقدسكم وللكرسي الرسولي واعترفنا بانكم انتم الحبر الأعظم نائب سيدنا المسيح لذلك أرسلت اقدم طاعة مثل العادة الواجبة علي وأيضا تتضمن شرح كيف أن ايلجي سلطان فرنسا الأمير دوشنطوف سعى واجتهد حتى طالع لنا خط شريف من باب الدولة العلية ورجعنا الى كرسينا بعد عزلتنا عنه ثلاثة سنوات ونشكر الله تعالى على انعامه التي جاد بها علينا بهمتكم ودعاكم بواسطة هذا الأمير المبارك ونعلم سيادتكم الشريفة انه قد تزايدت الديون علينا بسبب استخراج الخط لشريف من باب الدولة العلية وعلى سجله في حلب وسائر البلدان وعلى منع اضطهاد الهراطقة وأيضا كان قد تجمد علينا ديون كثيرة في عزلتنا لان البطريرك الهرطوقي كان يدعي علينا وعلى مطاريننا دعاوى زور وبهتان وكان صحبة العبودية عرض محضر للجمع المقدس شرح الخير الذي عمله معنا ايلجي سلطان فرنسا المظفر ثم نعلم قداستكم من ميل أخينا اتناسيوس اسقف سفر اننا كنا قد رسمناه مطران على ماردين وارسلناه الى الكرسي الرسولي ليقدم طاعة بدلا عنا ويقضى اشغالنا امام الجمع المقدس وبعد ان أدى دستور الكرسي

¹⁴ Österreichisches Staatsarchiv, Haus-, Hof- und Staatsarchiv, Turki V.K.23 (1526–1584). N18.

الرسولي والمجمع المقدس توجه الى اسبانيا م الى الهند ليجمع شيئاً من تصدقات المؤمنين لننفقها في بلادنا لاجل انتشار الايمان لان معلوم قدسكم هنا لا يصير شيء بلا دراهم والآن لما عاد من الهند إلى اسبانيا تلبه (اتهمه) بعض أناس امام الحكام والمطارين والرؤساء أنه رومي وهرطوقي وجاسوس مضاد الايمان لهذا السبب مسكه امير قادس وضبط منه بدستور ملك اسبانيا كل المال الذي جمعه من الهند بقي الاسقف حيران بروحه وسمعنا أنه أعلم الجمع المقدس بحاله ليساعده بالمكاتيب إلى حضرة سلطان اسبانيا المومى اليه حتى يخلص هذه الدراهم وايضا اعلم قدسكم بهذه القضية ونحن نعلم أن مروتكم كاملة ولا يحتاج لكم حشيمة ونحن مصدقون ومحققون بأنكم سعيتم إلى تخليص هذه لدراهم فالمراد من الحضر الشريفة ان كان للان ما جاءت هذه الدراهم على مدينة رومية ليدكم (استخدم اليد للكتابه) تكلفوا الخاطر وتكتبوا إلى سلطان اسبانيا المشار اليه وكل من يحتاج الامر الية وتعرفوه بأحوالنا بأنا بطرك كاثوليكي مطيع الكرسي الرسولي ومثبت منذ سبعة عشر سنة وإنّ الاسقف وكيلي ومطراني ومن طرفي وكلفته بلم التصدقات وانا ارسلته الى تلك الأماكن لأجل مساعدة المؤمنين لنا في انتشار الايمان الكاثوليكي في هذه البلاد حتى يتبين عرضه ورضنا وبيان غش الذين تلبوه ويكون معلوم قدسكم ان اخانا اتناسيوس رجل مؤمن كاثوليكي ولم يزل ساعيا في انتشار الايمان الكاثوليكي وإقامة الأمانة الارثوذكسية وقد احتمل بلايات ومشقات في هذه البلاد لأجل الايمان الأرثوذكسي ولذلك ارسلناه الى تلك البلاد ليجاهد لإقامة الايمان المستقيم ويا سيدنا قد اعلمنا الجمع المقدس بعد مجيء المال الى روميه ان يرسلوا لنا منه سبعة الاف غرش على يد البادرة امبروسيوس المبجل نائب رئيس الكبوشيين والباقي يضعوه عند رجل مستقيم بالمعاملة وكل سنة يرسلوا لنا محصوله لقضاء مصالحنا والباقي يبقى وقت الحاجة الية ولمطلوب من الجنب الرشيد ان تقبلوا سؤالنا وتكملوا مرادنا بما اعلمنا قدسكم املين سيدنا يسوع المسيح أن يطيل بقائكم ويعمر الكنيسة في زمانكم ويجعل الرعية واحد لراع واحد الذي انتم وكيله ونائبه ونأمل من قدسكم ان ترفوا يمينكم وتباركوا علينا. تحريراً سنة 1694 مسيحية. بطرس اغناطيوس بطريرك انطاكية.

It is to the general father of fathers, the supreme pontiff, the head of the inhabited world, the leader of humankind who is sitting on the apostolic chair, our lord the Pope Innocent XII, the authorized representative and agent of Jesus Christ. We kiss the land and bend the knee before his papal Majesty, the apostolic countenance who has the keys of the world. The vice God and redeemer Messiah, who is sitting on the apostolic chair, who is entrusted with the presidency of priesthood, the prophet of God and the world, may God gives him long lifetime and happiness. After the eligible prayer caused by the immense yearnings to kiss the holy hands and touch the pure feet and inhale the splendid scents, which is still standing.

I would like to inform you that I have sent earlier to your holiness a transcript contains our obedience to your devotion and the Holy See and we admit that you are our supreme pontiff, the authorized representative of Jesus Christ. Therefore, I have sent this as usual to submit my obedience to you including an explanation about how the Ambassador of France Doshentov endeavored and spared no efforts for extracting our imperial decree from the Topkabi palace and I returned to the chair after three years of isolation. We thank God for his graces, which lay upon us by your prayers and your effort of being sent this blessed prince. I inform your holiness that our debt increased for extracting the imperial decree from Topkabi palace and for its registration in Aleppo and other countries as well as for stopping our persecution by the heretics. We have also got tremendous debt during our isolation for being accused of forged charges by the heretic Pope. There was with our confession a transcript explains the goodness which made by the Ambassador of France. We inform you regarding our brother Atanasious, the bishop of Safer that we appointed him as a bishop of Mardin and we sent him to your Majesty to submit our obedience on behalf of us and to manage our work before the sacred community. After his oath to the Holy See and to the holy community, he went to Spain completed his way to India, and he collected some ponds and charities from the people for spreading the catholic faith in this country because as far as you know, there is nothing occurs here without paying money. Now when he returned from India to Spain, some people charged him in front of the governors, cardinals, and leaders with heresy, Rumi, and spay against the faith. Thereby the prince of Cadiz arrested him according to the authority of the king of Spain and confiscated all the collected money from India. The bishop was confused and it came to my ears that he informed the sacred community to help him with letters to the king of Spain to get the money back and I believe your magnanimous is full there is no need to remind you. We believe that you strived and sought to get the money back.

Since the money did not come until now to Rome, please bother yourself and write to the king of Spain whom mentioned and to whom it concerns that I am a catholic patriarch obedient to the papacy since seventeen years appointed by our Pope and the said bishop is my bishop and a deputy of mine for receiving charities, he is a catholic and I sent him there to help in spreading the faith in this country. For your knowledge, he is a catholic believer spared no effort in spreading the catholic faith and establishing orthodox integrity, and he sustained the greatest scourges and toil in this country for orthodox belief. Thereby, we sent him to that country to establish the strait belief. Our Master, I informed the sacred community of that, after arriving the money to the Rome is to send seven thousand to al-Badra Amprosious, the noble deputy of capuchin sect and the rest of the money to be placed with a straight man for running and send us the profits every year to manage our works. What is required from the Holiness is to accept our demands and complete our objectives of what we informed you earlier? May Jesus Christ give you long life, build the church up in your time, and render the congregations one for one God whom you are authorized representative. It was written in 1694. Peter Ignatius, the patriarch of Antakya.

Historical review

As has been seen the apostles sent by the patriarch of the Syrian catholic church of Antioch to the catholic patriarch of Constantinople and to the Pope of Vatican in the last decade of

the seventeenth century. The Syrian catholic patriarchate of Antioch originated from the Syrian orthodox church or Syrian jacobite church as its opponent's which did not accept the Chalcedon council resolutions.

The adherents of this church suffered from the persecution of the Byzantine's authority for long time until the Islamic invaders finally secured the Jacobite rights and privileges since the Syriac monophysites did not fight back the Muslims and Arabs who were already in significant portion of them in the adjacent area converted to Islam.¹⁵ On the other hand, the instructions and guidance of the holy book of Islam professed and confessed that Christ, if he was not the Son of God, he was at very least his Prophet¹⁶ therefor the orthodox christians felt comfortable with the newcomers.

During the Ottoman Empire era, the Jacobite church, according to the millet system, was under the jurisdiction of the orthodox Armenian church.¹⁷ Therefore, their access to the Ottoman government was through the Grecian patriarch of Constantinople, who seemingly did not serve their interest. According to the Charles A. Frazee in his book catholic and sultans, the first attempt of approaching the Vatican by the monophysites, started with the patriarch Ignatius Yahkup XIV when he sent Moses the monk of Mardin to have some liturgical Syriac books printed there. The orthodoxy bishop made a profession of faith to catholicism before the Pope Julius III and found in the Ferdinand of Habsburg a new custodian for his affairs.¹⁸

The initiative was of importance since it would be followed with a practical process from the Jacobite church, which sought to be in communion with Rome. In 1566 Ni'matalah, the patriarch of the Syrian church sent an apostle to Rome with Yuhanna Cacha offering his willingness to be in union with the Vatican and adopting the Latin faith. The correspondence between the Patriarch and the pope continued until the 1571, but as usual, this initiative did not see the sunlight since the patriarch was under the persecution of the Ottoman authority.¹⁹

Keeping his life, he found himself obliged to convert to Islam; afterward, he fled his residence and sought refuge in Rome, and there he made a profession to catholicism. Another tale mentioned that the patriarch was of great personality therefor the Ottoman governor of Diyarbakir admired him and put his turban on his head, claiming that he became a Muslim.²⁰ During the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, the movements of conversion of the populations on the hands of Capuchins and Jesuits in the Levant increased, and many christian families adopted the catholic faith.²¹ For instance, the Jacobite doctrine in Aleppo, with the beginning of the eighteenth century, was diminished entirely and just a few fami-

¹⁵ Abdeh, Samir. *المسيحيون السوريون خلال ألفي عام* [Syrian Christians During the Two Thousand Years], Damascus: Alaa Al-Din Press, 2000.

¹⁶ "إنما المسيح عيسى بن مريم رسول الله وكلمته" سورة ال عمران 45 [Messiah who is the son of Mary is the God's prophet and his word] Surat al-Omran. N 45.

¹⁷ Sanjian, Avedis K. *The Armenian Community of Syria under the Ottoman Dominion*. Harvard University Press, 1965, 33.

¹⁸ Frazee, *Catholics and Sultans*. 53.

¹⁹ Abona, *دليل إلى قراءة تاريخ الكنائس الشرقية*, 132.

²⁰ Issac, Remleh. *The Pretty Flower in the Syrian Patriarchate of Antioch*. Beirut, 1909, 85.

²¹ Abona, *دليل إلى قراءة تاريخ الكنائس الشرقية*, 133.

lies still embraced their old faith.²² Therefore, the Maronite Patriarch ordained a Syrian monk making him a catholic bishop in Aleppo.²³

Although, the golden era of Syrian catholic did not reach its peak until the duration of Ignatius Peter, the catholic patriarch of Antioch who sent those apostles and at the same time declined to the bottom as well. All the manuscripts pointed out the toil and hardship, which had countered Bishop Isaac, who sought to extract a decree from the Ottoman court, which was essential to legitimate the practice of catholic doctrine. As has been seen, the decree was procured, the money was paid for the high-ranking official, and the France ambassador interfered in favor of the Catholics to guarantee the official documents.

Although, the number of documents and the genre of manuscripts illustrates that the catholic patriarch was in lousy time asking for help and support from the Pope, reminding him about his weak subjects in the Near East. During the patriarchate of Peter Augustine, the debate and struggle between the Jacobite and catholic reached its peak and allegedly was affected and connected to the internal and external affairs of the Ottoman Empire.

In 1676 Mustafa Basha Coperyali was enacted in the Grand Vezir position until his capital punishment in 1688. Since he was of greed personality and had hatred against the foreigners mainly, he spared no effort of abusing his office through imposing fines and taxes upon the subjects, merchants, and the councils of other countries. There are no doubt the commercial and financial disturbances of the Othman Empire were not of less importance since the need of money for the expenses of war mad the Ottomans exploit every case could be of benefit for them.

Seemingly the Ottoman government exploited the struggle on the chair of the patriarchate of Antioch that in 1678 the Chapuchins and Jesuites missionaries obtained from Ottoman court a decree recognized Peter as a patriarch of all Syrians. His rival, the patriarch of Jacobites Abd al-Massih, fled from Aleppo into Diyarbakir, and from there, he set out to Constantinople. In 1680, a tremendous amount of money was paid, and a new order was issued, which was quite contrary to the first.

The patriarch of the Jacobite church seized the patriarchate chair; therefore, the catholic patriarch sought refuge again in Constantinople, the France ambassador De Guilleragues, and Franciscan friars started their work to win over the Jacobite church. In 1682 a new decree was enacted, and the catholic patriarch returned to be the head of all Syrian christians. The struggle was still to continue in later years that both contingents had won over each other using all weapons when the Ottoman Empire had one of the most complicated wars in its history.²⁴ In 1693, the Catholic Syriac seized power upon the Syriac patriarchate with the support of the King of France, who interfered personally in this case that all the documents pointed out his efforts.

²² Kamel bin Hassan bin Mustafa Bali. *نهر الذهب في تاريخ حلب* [The Golden River in the History of Aleppo], First part, Aleppo: The Maronite Press of Aleppo, 192.

²³ Gemayel, Bishop Mikhail. *دليل إلى قراءة تاريخ الكنيسة* [A Guide to Comprehend the Church History], Beirut: Orient House Press, 1997, 129–130.

²⁴ Mantran, Robert. *History of the Ottoman Empire*. Translated by Basheer Al-Sibai, 2 parts, First part, Cairo, 1993, 373.

We should bear in mind that the Ottoman Empire was in confronting of the so-called Holy League,²⁵ and there is no primary reason for gaining a new front or enmity with another European power. France from its side was engaged in wars within European territories that the king of France who had expanding ambitions in the Netherlands and Spain thrown took advantage of the coalition with Ottoman Empire, which already had its war with Habsburg, the main rivalry of the king, Louis XIV.²⁶

The common interest of both reflected in maintaining proper relationships, and since the catholics of the Ottoman Empire were included in the protection of the king of France, Ottomans needed to assure their honesty in this coalition. Quite the contrary, the reflection of confrontation between France and Spain will be apparent in the fourth and fifth documents that the patriarch sent a bishop for collecting charities called Atanasious who was imprisoned after charging him of being heretic.

The patriarch asked for the help of Pope and the patriarch of Constantinople through emphasizing that the bishop was catholic, so why one of the ecclesiastical hierarchy put in prison arbitrarily? What makes us go far in this way is the political importance in such cases. For instance, Peter, the patriarch of the Syrian catholic deposed from his chair again in 1696. In 1697, the Ottoman-Habsburg war came into its end, and the loss of the Ottoman Empire was declared. The Pope of Vatican invoked to the Habsburg king Lobeld the first to implement in the peace treaty of Carlowitz 1699 as an additional provision that would allow the Syrian catholic patriarch to assume the office of the patriarchate again.²⁷

The patriarch resumed the office again by order of the Sultan Mustafa II for the fourth and last time in his life. The new decree gave him authority above all the Jacobite and Catholic Syrians, and his jurisdiction extended into or included provinces of Diyarbakir, Aleppo, Damascus, Mardin, and Mousel. From aforementioned information, one could conclude that the arrest of the bishop was not because of his heretical doctrine since he was catholic nor because of the money but in quite contrary, because of being an Ottoman bishop including in the king of France's protection.

The documents mentioned a Palestinian family of al-Monier and their efforts in supporting the patriarch. Therefore, the patriarch demanded the Pope of Vatican to reward them by vesting them with the knight-rank. The documents also mentioned Atanasious, bishop of Safer and the voyage through Europe to India, and the hardship and toil which had faced but what the materials did not invoke that the bishop was a member of the French delegation presided by François Picquet which sent by the France king to Persian Shah. In 1685, the bishop transported more letters to the French king from the Persian Shah, hence, the bishop appears as political messenger rather than as an archbishop who would collect charities through Europe.²⁸ Other names were mentioned in the documents: Monsignor Cardinal Jibo and al-Badra Amprosious the deputy of capuchin who linked the catholics of Levant to the Holy See in 1694 and 1695.

²⁵ Eickelman, Dale F. *Social, Economic, and Political Studies of the Middle East and Asia*, Leiden – Boston, 133.

²⁶ Boone, Richard John. *Louis XIV*. University of Leicester, 2012, 1–4.

²⁷ Ephram, Dionysius. *هداية الرحمن في هداية السريان* [The Blessing of the Lord in Conversions of the Syrians], Beirut, 1910, 109.

²⁸ Terazi, Philip de. *السلاسل التاريخية في ذكر أساقفة الابرشيات السريانية* [The Historical Series in Mentioning the Bishops of Syriac Dioceses], Beirut, 1910, P 3, 72, 73.

All the manuscripts were sent to assure the catholic faith, and mentioned the help and support of French ambassador. On the other hand, the patriarch of Antioch was looking forward to the assistance of the Pope against the orthodox, and the case of an imprisoned bishop and confiscated money which would be in grand portion of it, a debt to a Palestinian family.

Conclusion

The Ottoman Empire's Sultans, as well as a previous Islamic state, depended on the Sharia law in dealing with their non-Muslim subjects. The system divided the society into believers (Muslims) and none believers (the people of the book).

According to that system, which the so-called millet system, the Sultan Mehmet the Conqueror organized his subjects into coherent entities based on a common religious creed. Therefore, the one can recognize the orthodox millet, Jewish millet, and Armenian Millet. The system which was applied in all the Ottoman lands guaranteed a considerable autonomy to non-Muslims in their administrative affairs, education, and family law and theoretically in all legal cases which contained a member of their community and had no relation to the Muslims.²⁹

On the other hand, the leaders of the millet communities who gain a Pasha-rank inside the Ottoman court had pledged loyalties to their Ottoman supreme master in Constantinople and held the responsibility for collecting taxations, and other duties could be in need. This system looks sufficient from outside and could achieve the Ottoman goals in the early time, but the progress of the relationships of the Ottoman Empire, and the diversity of the Zimmi (protected non-Muslims) approved the opposite. For instance, the land of the Ottoman Empire was the home of other christian communities, a Nestorians, Jacobite, and later Catholics. Some authors and writers depending on some materials attached those communities to Arminian patriarch in Constantinople.

Some others considered them completely independent fiction and had their leaders have the same or equal rights in the case of Monophysites Syrian church and Armenian patriarchate. In the 16th and 17th centuries, the Ottoman land started to be the place of catholic missionary activity, and as time went by, their work flourished, and a new catholic elite and subordinates were existed.

In the correspondence between the newly converted patriarch and the Pope of Vatican and his deputy illustrated that the Syrian catholic community in Levant did not just rely on the Ottoman authority to legislate their practice. There is no doubt all the documents mentioned the orders of Sultans of being the last and first element who determines their status in Levant, but these orders and *fermans* could not be issued without the French ambassador interface. The mediation of the French ambassador opens the door to another issue of to what extent the French government had influenced the internal and external affairs of the Ottoman Empire in the 17th century. The documents pointed out that the French king had the right to protect the Syrian catholic, and the Ottoman sovereignty was shrunk in front of other European governments. It could be said the capitulations and privileges dates back to

²⁹ Baramova, Maria and Plamen Mitev. *Ivan Parvev and Vania Rachiva. Power and Influence in South Eastern Europe 16th–19th centuries.* 99–102

Suleiman the Magnificent and his successors confined the Ottoman domination. On the other hand, the Syrian catholic bishops and patriarchs obliged loyalty to the catholic doctrine, and they appealed and sought the Vatican's help, the millet system was created to secure the Ottoman control upon the Christians was breached and would expand during the 18th and 19th centuries to the so-called the Holy Land crises. It was evident from the documents the Syrian Catholics had two loyalties to the Sultan and the king of France as well as the Pope since the nation state and national notions did not exist; the religious attachments had its priorities.

From an objective point of view, the Syrian Catholic practice was usual since it did not engage in any hostile actions against the government, but in quite the contrary, they were exposed to an aggressive oppression according to the manuscripts. The debate and struggle between Catholic and Jacobite mentioned in the documents many times since the latter did not want to lose its sovereignty upon the Monophysites to the new Catholic elite.

The relationships of Syrian Catholics to the French government were adequate; on the other hand, the Spanish government seized a bishopric prelate accusing him of heresy and since the bishop had assertions of his honest belief, the custody was for his attachment to the king of France and Ottoman who had common enmity toward Spain. The manuscripts also an apparent evidence for the success of missionary expeditions that finally the dreams of the Popes came true but at the same time could be said it was not enough to confine all Christians under his jurisdiction nor to seize Jerusalem since the other Christians had stuck to their tenets refusing the unity with the Vatican.

The millet system, which had been founded by Mehmet the Conqueror, depending on the sharia law, as well as canons, diminished and breached by the capitulations of the Magnificent Suleiman. Finally, the Ottoman government did not have a clear vision to their any-Muslims subjects at least in the last decade of 17th century that both patriarchs of catholic and Jacobite Syrians were vulnerable to isolation depending on the situations.