George Anton Kiraz, *The Syriac Orthodox in North America (1895–1995): A Short History* (Piscataway, NJ: Gorgias Press, 2019). Pp. xxvii + 295, with 16 plates; $42.00.

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This interesting book immediately brings to mind a volume edited by G.S. Corey, *The First One Hundred Years: A Centennial Anthology Celebrating Antiochian Orthodoxy in North America* (Englewood, NJ: Antakya Press, 1995). "Antiochian Orthodoxy," the subject of Corey's volume, refers to the Greek (or: Rum) Orthodox from the patriarchate of Antioch, who first came to North America in the last decade of the nineteenth century. The "Syriac Orthodox" of Kiraz's book started arriving in North America in exactly the same period, and their homelands in the Ottoman Empire partly overlapped with those of the Rum Orthodox. Part of the Syriac Orthodox also shared with the Rum Orthodox their daily use of the Arabic language. It is clear, therefore, that the migration of the Syriac Orthodox and the rebuilding of their identity and culture in foreign lands are part of a much broader history of the diasporas of Eastern Christians in the New World. This interconnectedness of the recent histories of Eastern Christian communities—which also include the Church of the East, the Chaldeans, the Syriac Catholics, the Maronites, and the Armenians—unavoidably leads to a number of issues of identity and nomenclature that need to be sorted out (e.g., pp. 191–192 and 251). But by focusing on the Syriac Orthodox, this new book, which offers both a broad overview and an in-depth discussion of select themes and topics, ensures that this important group is given its proper place in the broader study of Eastern Christianities in the modern world.

In contrast to the Rum Orthodox, for whom right from the beginning (1895) the Syrian-Lebanese Raphael Hawaweeny served as priest (and between 1905 and 1915 as the first

Orthodox Bishop of Brooklyn), for the Syriac Orthodox, settling in North America and negotiating their new lives between the Old and the New World was a project of lay men and women. It was only in 1906 that a deacon among the immigrants, Hanna Koorie, the son of a priest in Diyarbakır, was selected to become a priest in Paterson, New Jersey. Following his ordination, for which he had to be sent to Jerusalem, the first Syriac liturgy was celebrated in September 1907 in an Episcopal church in Paterson (p. 51). The first Syriac Orthodox church building in North America was completed in 1927 in West New York, New Jersey. Only after World War II did the Syriac Orthodox receive their first resident bishop in the person of Archbishop Athanasios Yeshue Samuel.

The book is organized in six chapters, which span the history of the Syriac Orthodox communities in the United States and Canada between ca. 1895 and 1995. Each chapter consists of shorter sections, highlighting the main events, singling out important persons, and providing the necessary background information. Chapter 1, "Sayfo I . . . Immigrants I, 1880s–1900" (pp. 7–34), gives glimpses of Syriac Orthodox migration at the end of the nineteenth century. Even though the names of a few individuals are known who found their way to North America well before the final decade of the nineteenth century, the first Sayfo, the atrocities that took place in Eastern Turkey in 1895 and mainly targeted Christians, is seen as an important trigger for migration, especially for the Syriac Orthodox of Kharput, Diyarbakır, and Mardin. They were all "Syriac" Christians, as Syriac was the language of their church, but the Syriac Orthodox of Tur ʿAbdin spoke Aramaic, those of Kharput Turkish and Armenian, those of Diyarbakır Turkish, and those from the area around Mardin Arabic, while Kurdish was spoken in many villages (p. xxiii). Several of these migrants ended up in New England (Massachusetts and Rhode Island), New Jersey, and

New York, while others quickly found their way to Montreal, Canada, and to California.

Chapter 2, "Building a Society, 1900–1915" (pp. 35–76) continues the focus on the first wave of immigrants, until the outbreak of World War I. They knew each other as *Suryānī*, a term that was translated in English mostly as "Assyrian" (p. 36). They started publishing newspapers, such as *Intibāh* (Awakening, 1909) and *Bethnahrin* (1916), and set up an amazing number of associations, many of which were initiated and led by women. There was always concern for those who stayed behind in the homeland, coupled with a commitment to strengthening the communities in America. Education and the preservation of the Syriac language received special attention. Once an organization was set up, "chapters" were established at various locations. The *Intibāh* association had a special role in maintaining contacts between the communities in America and in the Middle East. Naum Faik, for example, participated and inspired the group from Diyarbakır, until he immigrated in 1912 and became a leading figure in the United States (pp. 53–58, 113-114, 128).

Chapter 3, "Sayfo II . . . Immigrants II, 1915–1927" (pp. 77–128), deals with the systematic violence ("Sayfo") perpetrated against Armenian and Syriac Christians in the Ottoman Empire, starting in 1915, and its aftermath. Much of the original homeland was lost, in particular in Tur ʿAbdin, resulting in massive relocation within the Middle East (to Aleppo, Homs, Jerusalem, and Bethlehem), and increased migration to the Americas. The international peace negotiations following the War did not yield any positive result for the Syriac Orthodox (or for any of the other Christian communities). The communities had to be rebuilt, therefore, based on their own strength. Within this process, the North American network of communities took on a leading role; they also were the driving force behind reforms intended to adapt the church to the modern world.

Chapter 4, "Bishops Visit . . . Churches Consecrated, 1927–1948" (pp. 129–172), describes the growth and expansion of Syriac Orthodox communities in North America in the years before, during, and after World War II. Due to their important status and unique resources, they regularly received visitors sent by the patriarch, not only to maintain warm relations with the diaspora communities, but also to collect funds, which were vital for the church at large. At the end of this period, a new wave of immigration resulted from the war in Palestine, which involved the dispossession of many Syriac Orthodox in the Jerusalem region. In 1948, the Archbishop of Jerusalem, Athanasios Yeshue Samuel, first came to visit the North American communities as an Apostolic Delegate. He then stayed in the United States for the rest of his life and became the determining figure for the Syriac Orthodox in North America for almost half a century (he died in 1995).

Chapter 5, "Formation of an Archdiocese, 1949–1960" (pp. 173–223), focuses on the first American decade of Archbishop Samuel, who in 1957 was given the responsibility for the newly-created "Archdiocese for the United States and Canada." In this chapter special attention is devoted to the conflict over the name (Assyrian vs. Syrian) and to Archbishop Samuel's involvement in the sale of four of the Dead Sea Scrolls.

Chapter 6, "Growth of the Archdiocese, 1961–1995" (pp. 224–255), highlights the work of Archbishop Samuel as an administrator and an editor of liturgical books, both in Syriac and in English, as well as his wisdom in dealing with the Syriac Christians from India, who started immigrating around the middle of the century (pp. 240–242 and 244–246). At the same time, many of the descendants of the old immigrants lost their attachment to the Syriac Orthodox Church and found their way to other denominations, mostly Episcopalian (p. 249).

An "Epilogue" (pp. 256–264) briefly considers the period after 1995. Following the death of Archbishop Samuel, the

Archdiocese of the United States and Canada was divided into three patriarchal vicariates (Eastern United States, Western United States, and Canada), which "would give the Patriarchate more control over the affairs of North America" (p. 256). Due to the continuous state of warfare in the Middle East, new immigrants arrived, creating new challenges and a new dynamic within the immigrant communities. The book ends with the election and installation, in 2014, of the new patriarch of the Syriac Orthodox Church, Mor Ignatios Aphrem II, who since 1996 had served as the Archbishop of the Eastern United States—indicating perhaps that the exchange and mutual enrichment between the center of the church and its most successful diaspora diocese had come full circle!

This is an extremely rich book. For the early period it is based on consultation of many of the immigrant newspapers and journals, written in a plethora of languages and hardly accessible to most of us, and on a small number of publications on the history of local communities. Descendants of the first immigrant families were consulted and interviewed. They also put their photographs at the author's disposal, who included them in a special quire, containing 25 images, two of them printed on large foldout sheets.

Much of the information, especially for the early period, is anecdotal, and thus, this pioneering study cries out for follow-up research, including more archival work. As Syriac scholars we cannot ignore this period of Syriac Christianity, which represents the latest link in the chain of transmission of Syriac knowledge and culture to our academic world and which, in more than one sense, brought *beth mardutho* to American soil. The author has succeeded masterfully in tracing the contours of this history and in enriching it with many pieces of information and with his personal insights. This is a wonderful achievement, for which we owe him a debt of thanks.