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THE SYRIAC ORTHODOX AND COPTIC ORTHODOX CHURCHES IN AUSTRIA: INTER-CHURCH RELATIONS AND STATE RECOGNITION

Abstract
This article explores the inter-church and church-state relations of the Syriac Orthodox and Coptic Orthodox Churches in Austria. The strong historic role of the Catholic Church in Austria's political landscape provides the central framework to understand the "story of success" regarding relations with both the Catholic Church and state authorities in Austria. Summarizing the history of migration and establishment of diaspora churches in Austria, the article explores the impact of the support of the Catholic Church in the process of institutionalization. In addition, state recognition and examples of church-state interaction are highlighted. The findings support the conclusion that minority churches from the Oriental Orthodox tradition have benefitted strongly from their relations with the majority church and the state. However, their authority in both religious and political contexts also affects personal leadership and internal affiliations which can lead to divisions within the church communities.

INTRODUCTION

Patriarch Mor Ignatius Aphrem II Mor Karim on his first visit to Austria from 4–8 December 2014 declared: "Austria has embraced us."[2] This potentially included both church and state actors. The statement reflects that for a minority migrant church, relations with the majority church and the political powers of the state are often interconnected. An estimated 5,000 Syriac Orthodox Christians and 10,000 Coptic Orthodox Christians live in Austria. These numbers cannot be verified as there are no longer official statistics to confirm these estimations given by the Church representatives.[3] In 2001, when the Austrian census last registered religious affiliation, 1,589 Syriac Orthodox, 283 Syriac Catholic Christians, and 1,633 Coptic Orthodox Christians were registered with 72 percent of them holding Austrian citizenship.[4] As

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will be shown, although both denominations have been recognized by the state of Austria, their existence in Austria has gone unnoticed for many decades in the wider public and in academia.

The Syriac Orthodox Church and the Coptic Orthodox Church, together with the Armenian Apostolic and the Ethiopian Orthodox Churches, belong to the family of Oriental Orthodox Churches. These churches share the "one nature" Christology that was rejected by the Council of Chalcedon in 451. They have traditionally been referred to as "Monophysite" churches, which today is considered not only offensive but also misleading.[5] The Syriac Orthodox Church still celebrates the Aramaic rite of Antioch and counts around five million adherents worldwide, with more than three million of them residing in southwest India. Until the end of the nineteenth century this church was only present within the Ottoman Empire and in south-west India.[6] The designation Syriac Orthodox Church (or Syrian Orthodox Church) refers to the Syriac liturgical tradition of the church and not to the modern state of Syria, although it so happens that the seat of the Patriarchate of Antioch is in Damascus, Syria. Like the Armenians, the Syriac Christians had a tragic fate under the Ottoman Empire at the end of the nineteenth century and the early twentieth century. The traumatic experience of massacres, collective violence, and large-scale displacement is referred to as the *Sayfo*, Aramaic for sword. 1915, as the "Year of the Sword," symbolizes these events that were and still are perceived by the community as a "forgotten genocide," in comparison to the Armenian genocide which has been recognized in some countries worldwide such as Sweden, Austria, Germany, and the Netherlands.[7]

The Coptic Orthodox Church is centered in Egypt and organized into a patriarchate (Alexandria) and "a system of bishoprics, both inside and outside Egypt."[8] The word "Copt" and its adjective "Coptic" is derived from the Greek *Aigyptos/Aigyptios*, which became *Qibt* in Arabic, and thus "Copt" in English which supports the common understanding that Copts are Egyptian Christians. Their patriarch has the title of the Patriarch of Alexandria on the Holy See of Saint Mark the Apostle, which emphasizes the apostolic roots of the church. Estimations of the Coptic community in Egypt vary significantly from 5.5 percent to 20 percent of Egypt's population (100,000,000) and generally reveal unverifiable discrepancies between the lower numbers of the Egyptian census and the high estimates provided by the Coptic Orthodox Church. Even if according to Fargues, a lower percentage is more likely, it is evident that Coptic Christians form the largest group

of Christians in the Middle East.[9] Coptic Orthodox is the largest Christian denomination in Egypt, but there are also Coptic Catholic and Coptic Evangelical churches and various other churches of Greek, Catholic, or Protestant tradition.

This article explores the establishment and institutionalization process of these two minority churches in Austria from a historical perspective by addressing three questions. The first asks how the establishment of diaspora church structures organized by the mother churches affected migration experiences in Austria. The second explores the ways in which the Catholic Church in Austria has contributed to this process in organizational and economic terms. Finally, the third examines the significance of interactions with the state and ensuing state recognition. Both case studies show how ecumenical relations and state relations are interconnected and that the global context of ecumenism in these churches is highly relevant. The article argues that the strong historic role of the Catholic Church in Austria's political landscape and the importance of Pro Oriente as a religious organization, provide the central framework to understand the "story of success" of both case study churches. By success I mean their ability to become established in Austria as local diasporas that organize and represent their community in both religious and political terms.

For this article, I use both unpublished and published sources including archival and autobiographical documents originating from the communities, interviews, blogs, and columns from Austrian newspaper and periodicals.[10] The historical discussion on the Coptic Orthodox and Syriac Orthodox Churches is based on existing academic literature and interviews with clerics and laity from each community. The head of the Syriac Orthodox Church in Austria also provided me with documents on the early period of the church in Austria, such as correspondence with the Syrian Patriarchate in Damascus and the Archdiocese of Vienna.

THEORETICAL CONSIDERATIONS: RELIGION IN DIASPORA AND THE CASE OF MIDDLE EASTERN CHURCHES

In the Middle East, most Christians accept their church in its dual role as spiritual and civil leader. Throughout history, Eastern Christian churches have represented the community beyond the realm of religious matters. Various factors related to globalization and crises of state have not only contributed to a general religious revival throughout the Middle East in the past decades, but also reinforced the political and public role of the church and its clerical hierarchy. "In a

difficult and frequently insecure environment, the church can act as a haven for the community," summarizes McCallum on the regained importance of religious institutions in the region.[11] Through organizational efforts, the mother churches tried to maintain this role in the diaspora. This is well documented for the Coptic Orthodox Church worldwide.[12] Even if critical assessment is required, the Coptic Church has gone through a process of revitalization and reform in past decades and is perceived as religiously vibrant. Episcopal reforms under Pope Shenouda strengthened the power of the patriarch who is recognized as the sole representative of the Copts by a vast majority of his community. The central role of the church in the provision of social and welfare services in Egypt is echoed in the diaspora as the parishes provide assistance for new arriving migrants and organize educational, cultural, and social life. Therefore, Coptic migrant socialization is centered around the church.[13]

Whereas it might seem accurate to speak of the Copts as "Egyptian Christians" because their history and religious heritage are comprised within the boundaries of what became the Egyptian state, this cannot be said of the Syriac Orthodox Christians, who originated mostly from Tur Abdin in Turkey, Syria, or Lebanon. Besides being dispersed in the global diaspora, the community is split between ethnic and neo-ethnic identities and is occupied with internal factions and crises. Furthermore, the hierarchy of the Syriac Orthodox Church is "facing chronic uncertainty" and suffers equally from turmoil in the Middle East.[14] Secularization and individualization of religion minimized the religious authority of churches in a pluralistic religious landscape. Middle Eastern churches are not exempt, especially in strongly secularized host countries such as Sweden and Germany that are home to the largest diasporas of Syriac Orthodox Christians. Despite this, several studies show that for many Oriental Christians the church "continues to present an important network for social relations among the community."[15] Even if members hold religious beliefs that are unorthodox and syncretistic or their political claims do not match those represented by clerical hierarchies, they identify with the church and show a strong sense of belonging through participation in its activities and care for the maintenance of the religious heritage.[16] This identification may also be relevant in religious terms as communal ties, including family, neighborhood, and ethnoreligious faith community, that strengthen the persuasiveness of religious feelings.[17]

Finally, recognition of the authoritarian environment is central to the understanding of churches in the Middle East such as the Coptic

Orthodox Church in Egypt and the Syriac Orthodox Church in Syria.[18] In return for the acceptance of regime politics, these churches enjoy a strong intracommunal authority that echoes the historical system of millets in the Ottoman Empire. Diaspora members of the communities, however, who were raised in pluralist societies, tend to define religion more by separating it from the other domains of life and see it as a feature of personal identity. Diaspora churches often attempt to strengthen the ties between the spiritual and material aspects of religion, and thus, engage in political representation of the community including the position vis-à-vis authoritarian regimes in the homeland. This article tries to contribute to the small body of research on the significance of state relations and religious institutions in host societies.

MIGRATION AND THE FOUNDATION OF DIASPORA CHURCHES

The presence of a permanent Syriac community and the foundation of a Syriac Orthodox Church congregation in Austria are inseparable from the Austrian history of migration. Consequently, prior to the second half of the twentieth century there was no Syriac presence in Austria. Due to labor shortages, Austrian companies hired foreigners from different countries in a first recruitment phase between 1960 and 1968 based on the "rotation principle," which would force the recruited workers, known as *Gastarbeiter* (guest workers), to return to their home countries after a set period.[19] The rotation idea proved to be unrealistic, and thus, was never executed. The first Syriac Christians from Turkey came to Austria independently before the recruitment agreement between Austria and Turkey was signed in 1964. A small number of families originating from the Tur Abdin region settled in Vienna.[20] Gabriel Garipoglu, who arrived in 1962, claimed that from the beginning he had regular contact with the Syriac Orthodox Patriarch in Damascus, calling him on various occasions in order to discuss community matters.[21] On 7 March 1974, when the Syriac community in Austria was no more than thirty families, Patriarch Ignatius Yacoub III (1912–1980) declared the founding of "a Syriac-Orthodox church community in the city of Vienna" and appointed Father Emanuel Aydin as its responsible priest.[22] Aydin, born in 1947 in Midyat, a city in the Tur Abdin region of Turkey, had come to Vienna in 1969 via the St. George College in Istanbul to study theology. The Greek Orthodox Church advised him to seek support from the Catholic Church and its Cardinal Franz König (1905–2004).[23]

Further waves of emigration since the late 1970s from Turkey, Lebanon, Syria, and other parts of the Middle East turned the Syriac

Orthodox Church of Antioch into a predominantly global diaspora church.[24] In Europe, the largest Syriac Orthodox communities developed in Germany and Sweden (each ca. 100,000 members).[25] Father Aydin was committed to assisting Syriac asylum seekers from the Tur Abdin region from 1975, from Lebanon from 1978, and from Iraq from the early 1980s.[26] He was successful in providing people with jobs, authenticating diplomas, procuring right-to-stay permits, and aiding them in finding accommodation. Furthermore, as he was known for having good connections with the state authorities, and thus, able to intervene successfully, Aydin was repeatedly consulted by members of the community to help in cases of Syriacs facing expulsion from the asylum seeker accommodation center in Traiskirchen to their home country. Aydin's personal commitment demonstrates that he fulfilled the role both as religious leader and as political representative of the whole community in social and political issues. This confirms other research on the political agency of migrant's religious organizations in Islamic and Orthodox communities in Austria.[27]

Migration of Egyptians to Austria can be traced back to the early nineteenth century in the context of Muhammed Ali's efforts to modernize Egypt through the exchange of students and expertise between Egypt and European countries.[28] In Egyptian families, the memory of Austria's universities, especially in the domain of medicine, endured the period of World War I; in interwar Austria, in Vienna and Graz, there were numerous Egyptian students, among them also Copts.[29] From a global perspective, however, the dispersion of Copts is a considerably newer phenomenon in contrast to Syriac and Armenian Christians, as shown below.[30] The creation of diaspora churches started in the 1950s and 1960s, mainly in the United States, Canada, and Australia. Smaller groups emigrated to Latin America, Africa, the Gulf, and Europe. During the Nasser regime and especially after the Suez Crisis in 1956, an estimated few dozen Copts came to Austria as students.[31] Results from fieldwork indicate that Copts lived not only in the capital Vienna, but also in other cities like Graz and Innsbruck, which offered a wide range of technical, economical, and medical studies that had a strong international reputation. The first Coptic meetings in Vienna were organized in the tradition of the Coptic Sunday School movement, a twentieth century reform movement initiated by Habib Girgis and dedicated to the reformation of the Coptic Church.[32] Lay persons who had already been Sunday school teachers in Egypt prepared bible lessons.[33] Protestant and Catholic groups facilitated the reunions. For a few months, the YMCA offered their

rooms close to the central train station of Vienna. Coptic liturgies were celebrated irregularly from 1968, mainly in the Armenian church in the third district of Vienna but on some occasions also in Catholic churches. Interconfessional networks and aid such as the sharing of worship places, developed within the framework of theological self-images.[34] The support of the Armenian Apostolic Church, which was also a migrant church with a few thousand members in Austria, reflects the closeness between the two Oriental Orthodox Churches.[35] The early Coptic community consisted of students who migrated in the 1960s for educational reasons. This was due to a strict emigration policy that was only possible under specific circumstances and with special permits. Many of them decided not to return to Egypt after graduation. Among them were medical doctors, pharmacists, engineers, and business managers. Most of these first-generation migrants had become Austrian citizens.[36] Austrian naturalization law is considered to be one of the most restrictive compared to other European countries as it is relatively costly, does not allow dual citizenship, and the general waiting period is ten years.[37]

In the 1970s, Egyptian president Anwar al-Sadat liberalized the emigration policy, and due to the more difficult employment situation in Egypt, work migration of Egyptians to Austria tended to rise. In 1972 The Egyptian Club for Culture and Social Issues (*Ägyptischer Club für Kultur und Soziales*) was founded by Isamel Fahmy and Gamal Aldeen to campaign for better working conditions together with an Austrian newspaper. In 1983, an unusual government decision enabled the duration of stay for foreigners to be prolonged if they were employed as newspaper sellers.[38] Many Egyptians coming to Austria on a tourist visa made use of this regulation in order to extend their stay, leading to the general impression for a certain period that all Viennese newspaper sellers were Egyptians. In fact, the regulation led to problematic dependencies of the sellers to their employees. The former would rather accept harsh working conditions instead of losing their job and consequently the extension of the stay permit. When the newspapers stopped hiring Egyptians and instead hired more Bangladeshi and Indian migrants in order to avoid the Egyptian community becoming too strong, the Egyptian Club founded a non-confessional interest group for newspaper sellers in 1987 (*Verein der Zeitungskolporteure*). Furthermore, the Coptic community of that time fluctuated as it also consisted of United Nations staff who stayed in Vienna only for a limited period.

THE ROLE OF THE AUSTRIAN CATHOLIC CHURCH AND THE PRO ORIENTE FOUNDATION

Cardinal Franz König, who was the head of the Archdiocese of Vienna from 1956 to 1985, repeatedly offered his support to Oriental Christians in Austria. In particular, the Syriac Orthodox Church benefitted from this opportunity. Not having permanent access to the cardinal, Father Aydin made use of the weekly consultation hours of König's secretary and auxiliary Bishop Franz Jachym (1910–1984), who was a progressive theologian, loyal to König, and perceived as extremely efficient in relation to administrative matters.[39] He was viewed as being open to the Syriac Christians and was a substantial network partner.[40] For example, when the Syriac Orthodox Church Council requested a meeting with the cardinal in March 1974, they asked to have their own church building.[41] Within a few months, the former Catholic parish church in the thirteenth district of Vienna was handed over to the Syriac community and inaugurated by the patriarch on 22 September 1974 as one of the first Syriac churches in Europe. The church building initially remained part of the property of the archdiocese and was provided for use without payment of rent. Years later, the property rights were reassigned to the Syriac Orthodox Church of Austria. The Archdiocese of Vienna also provided an apartment for the Syriac Orthodox priest and his growing family free of charge, which still houses the community office and meeting rooms to this day.[42] Even more remarkably, the Catholic Church decided to pay Aydin a regular remuneration as priest of his community, and in that sense, he was treated equally to Catholic priests in the diocese.[43] This regulation appears to be unique in the sense that the regulation was offered to Aydin personally. Neither the two Syriac Orthodox priests who serve now in Austria nor any of the Coptic Orthodox priests have benefitted from a similar arrangement. Aydin confirmed that this benefit caused resentment in his community.[44] In 1978, the community council decided to take out a loan in order to buy a car for Aydin whose pastoral and social activities (for example, support of asylum seekers) and meetings with Syriac clerics around Europe required extensive mobility. Community members who, as was argued by the council, benefitted from this investment were supposed to support the repayment. Some members judged this a disproportionate burden for the community finances and an unnecessary privilege for Aydin because he was paid by the diocese. Other economic aspects demonstrate the close ties between the Catholic and Syriac Orthodox Churches that have developed from the very beginning and facilitated the foundation of St. Ephraim. For instance, in 1976 the first Syriac

magazine worldwide *Nuhro* was launched. The magazine had articles in Suryoyo,[45] Arabic, English, and German, and was sent to Syriac Christians all over the world. During the first two years, the Catholic Church bore the postal expenses for sending the magazine to recipients.[46] Another example is the allocation of part of the central cemetery of Vienna (*Wiener Zentralfriedhof*) in 1983 for the use of the Syriac Orthodox community.

In contrast, the support of the Coptic Orthodox Church provided by the Austrian Catholic Church was considerably less substantial in the early period. One explanation may be that the Coptic patriarchy in Cairo and the Pro Oriente Foundation took a more central role in building contacts between the two churches. The Pro Oriente Foundation was a significant actor in terms of network building and ecumenical relations of the Oriental Orthodox Churches. The foundation was established by Cardinal König in the context of the Second Vatican Council in 1964 as a platform for theological dialogue between the Catholic Church and the Orthodox churches with the aim to overcome theological divisions.[47] Pro Oriente is not an official tool of the Vatican but an institution of the Catholic Archdiocese of Vienna, which "intends to contribute to ecumenical dialogs on an unofficial level."[48] This means that the Vatican is not directly involved in the forum. In theory, the Pro Oriente dialogue is intended to prepare and facilitate the official dialogue of these churches with the Vatican. The Vienna Christological Formula of 1971 is seen as a milestone in the history of Pro Oriente as it achieved a Christological consensus between the Catholic and the Oriental Orthodox Churches in the doctrine of the nature of Christ overcoming the doctrinal controversies of the fifth century.

From 7–12 September 1971, Bishop Shenouda, the future Patriarch Shenouda III, took part in the "first unofficial ecumenical consultation between theologians of the Oriental Orthodox Churches and the Roman Catholic Church."[49] Shenouda preached during a mass concelebrated by Cardinal König at St. Stephen Cathedral. A few months later, from 6–21 February 1972, the President of Pro Oriente Theodor Piffl-Percevic visited the now consecrated Pope Shenouda III by invitation from Egypt. In 1975, a delegation of Pro Oriente under Cardinal König attended Pope Shenouda in Egypt and met with Egyptian President Anwar al-Sadat and numerous religious leaders.[50] Sadat is known for having a good relationship with the Austrian Chancellor Bruno Kreisky, especially after their meeting in Salzburg in 1975.[51] Because of Kreisky's involvement, the neutral state of Austria

managed to play a strong role in international relations in the Arab world. Of Jewish origin, Kreisky was known for questioning Zionism and recognizing the PLO.

This ecumenical diplomacy initiated by the Viennese cardinal with the Oriental Orthodox Churches has a prominent place in the social memory of the first generation of migrants but also encouraged the Coptic pope to send a German-speaking priest to Austria.[52] In 1976, Father Yuhanna al-Baramusi, who had studied German and theology in Cairo, arrived in Vienna.[53] By a joint initiative of Bishop Samuel and Cardinal König, Father Yuhanna was enabled to continue his studies in theology at the University of Vienna and to live in the Catholic monastery *Schottenkloster* while he was the Coptic priest in Austria. During this period, it is noticeable that both the Coptic Orthodox Church and the Coptic community in Austria of an estimated 500–700 members in the mid-1980s kept a low public profile.[54] Therefore, it is not surprising that unlike Coptic communities in other countries, the Austrian diaspora did not try to lobby the government after Pope Shenouda was exiled by President Anwar al-Sadat in 1981. The banishment to a desert monastery was the result of escalating tensions between Shenouda and Sadat who considered the former to be a political opponent whose disempowerment became inevitable.[55] Furthermore, the community did not publish a magazine to connect the Viennese or Austrian Copts and to establish themselves more as a distinct group; instead, it was regarded sufficient that Father Yuhanna, the Coptic priest in Austria, sent around 100–150 copies of each issue of the Patriarchal journal *al-Keraza* to Copts in Austria.[56]

EXPANSION OF CONGREGATIONS

After the death of Father Yuhanna in January 2000, Pope Shenouda established the Coptic Orthodox Diocese of Vienna and all Austria, and ordained Bishop Gabriel head of the Coptic Orthodox Church in Austria and German-speaking Switzerland in August 2000.[57] Gabriel was the tenth Coptic Orthodox bishop installed in Europe.[58] The growth and increasing financial possibilities of the church are evident regarding the inauguration of new congregations in Vienna and elsewhere in Austria. In 1998, the church acquired land in Vienna and Graz and started the construction of church buildings. In 2002, the main Coptic center, which includes the Holy Virgin of Zeitoun Church in Vienna, was inaugurated by Pope Shenouda III. Both events were covered in the Catholic press including the weekly journal of the Archdiocese *Der Sonntag*. Until then, the *Russenkirche* (Russians'

Church), the name of the small building alluding to the Russian prisoners of war who built the church in 1915, next to the UN headquarters in the twenty-second district of Vienna, had been the principal church for Viennese Copts. It was first provided free of charge by the Viennese parish *Kaisermühlen* as part of a five-year treaty that was then extended. In 2004, the church building was finally gifted to the Coptic Diocese of Austria, which is now the permanent owner of the building and financially responsible for its preservation. In 2001, the Coptic Orthodox Church also bought the former castle of Prince Eugene of Savoy, east of Vienna in Obersiebenbrunn, to open a monastery after renovation (which was partially rendered by volunteers from the community) in 2007. The site also serves as the seat of the bishop, guesthouse for the Coptic pope, and the Coptic Shenouda III Theological Seminary for students of Coptic theology. In 2006–2007, Bishop Gabriel also bought and adapted a building in the tenth district to establish a third Viennese congregation. In 2013, a fourth congregation was built in the eighteenth district to facilitate the reunion of Copts living in the western part of Vienna and quickly flourished. The church was gifted by the Catholic Diocese of Vienna. In December 2015, finally, the Copts received one of the most well-known Viennese church buildings—*Maria vom Siege*—in close proximity of the central train station in the fifteenth district.[59] In recent years, Cardinal Schönborn has been restructuring the diocese with the aim of reducing the number of abandoned church buildings to around 300 in Vienna. These are due to the constant loss of members and the retirement of priests. Endowments to continuingly growing Orthodox communities, such as the Serbian, Romanian, or Coptic Orthodox Churches, is the option favored by the cardinal as it guarantees that the buildings continue to be used as Christian places of worship.[60] The permanent transfer of ownership for free is conceived as a generous gesture by the beneficiaries but it is no secret that this strategy disburdens the Archdiocese of Vienna from the costly preservation of heritage-listed church monuments.

The Syriac Orthodox Church of Austria belongs to the Syriac Orthodox Diocese of Switzerland and Austria. The current bishop Mor Dionysios Isa Gürbüz resides in Arth-Goldau in Switzerland. The Austrian community split into three church congregations in the 2000s, mainly due to internal conflicts rather than due to the increasing size of the diaspora community.[61] As Armbruster has analyzed by comparing similar cases in Vienna and Berlin, "Affiliations and divisions were encoded in the village of origin and in the interests of

priests and extended family groups" and disputes evolved over property deals which were intended to build new churches.[62] In Vienna, the first separation occurred in the early 2000s and split the community "along lines that separated the educated and university graduates from 'illiterate' village elders; members from Midyat and members from the village of Enhil," two camps accusing each other "of profiteering from church funds."[63] The reasons for the second split, which took place between 2011 and 2013, remain difficult to identify but are also connected to an abandoned church or community center building project in the twenty-first district of Vienna (*Leopoldauer Platz*). During fieldwork in 2014 and 2015, many conversations gave the impression that these divisions were mostly apparent through polarized views concerning Father Aydin, either in a defensive manner from inside his congregation, which remains the largest of the three existing congregations, or in forms of harsh accusations against him coming from the two other churches. This controversial standing of Father Aydin within the Syriac Orthodox community may be a relevant context for his personal emphasis on ecumenical and interreligious dialogue as one of his priorities.

In 2019, the third congregation St. Mary finally succeeded in its plan to build the first Syriac Orthodox newly built church in Austria.

STATE RECOGNITION AND CHURCH-STATE INTERACTIONS

The evolution of the Syriac and the Coptic Orthodox Church in Austria benefits from both interconfessional relations that are symbolically and economically relevant for the establishment of infrastructure (for example, church endowment) and the cooperative system of religious governance in Austria. On 25 February 1988, the Syriac Orthodox Church was officially recognized as a corporation under public law and, thus, became the first in Europe to obtain a legal status equal to the major denominations.[64] The Coptic Orthodox Church of Austria started to apply for state recognition in the 1990s. The main motivation to achieve this legal status according to Bishop Gabriel was the possibility of offering religious education in state schools. Due to a law passed in January 1998, the recognition of communities contained new regulations that were detrimental for communities like the Coptic Orthodox Church and generally judged negatively by juridical experts.[65] Two regulations particularly affected the Coptic Orthodox Church. The first concerned the number of members which now had to constitute at least 0.2 percent of the national population. The second regulation affirmed that state recognition as corporation of public law

was only possible for communities who already had existed on a different legal status.[66] The Coptic Orthodox Church did not fulfil either condition, which resulted in a refusal of their application in 1998. The church was attributed the lower status instead, which the authorities of the Coptic Orthodox Church, Father Yuhanna and Pope Shenouda III, considered as scandalous. In their reaction to the refusal, theological concepts played a major role. Bishop Gabriel and lay representatives of the Copts perceived Austria as treating their church as a second-class church by classifying them in the same category of religious communities as Jehovah Witnesses and Mormons.[67] The fact that two of their sister churches, the Armenian Apostolic and the Syriac Orthodox Church, were already state-recognized churches made the apparent injustice feel much worse.

Pope Shenouda extended this church-state relations affair into the domain of interchurch relations by expressing the threat to stop all forms of contact in the framework of Pro Oriente.[68] Winkler suggests that this incident aggravated the breakdown of the Pro Oriente dialogue between the Catholic Church and the Oriental Orthodox Churches, caused by the Coptic Orthodox Church in 1996.[69] Metropolitan Bishoy, Secretary of the Coptic Synod and Commissioner in Ecumenical Affairs, refused the extension of Pro Oriente initiatives towards the Assyrian Church of the East, which is still considered heretic by the Coptic Orthodox Church.[70] The fact that Pope Shenouda implicitly blamed Pro Oriente for the failure of the state recognition in 1998 demonstrates that Pro Oriente is perceived as a religious institution of the Catholic Church with strong political influence.

In that sense, the reaction of the patriarch shows to what extent religious issues such as ecumenism can be transformed into political issues by insinuating that the state of Austria is putting interconfessional dialogue at risk by not recognizing a certain church. Furthermore, it confirms the role of the patriarch as the sole political leader of his church even in apparently regional juridical matters such as church recognition in Austria by responding to them in the global context of interconfessional relations of Christian churches.[71]

Actors such as Pro Oriente, but also the Coptic Church and individual Copts, were involved in finding a solution to the problem of state recognition. A law (*Orientalisch-orthodoxes Kirchengesetz*) was created in 2003 to unite the Oriental Orthodox Churches under one umbrella without acknowledging their separate jurisdiction.[72] According to Potz and Schinkele, creating one law for Oriental Orthodox Churches corrected the legal situation so that the Coptic

Orthodox Church was treated equally to the two other Oriental Orthodox Churches which had been recognized previously—in 1972 (Armenian Apostolic Church) and 1988 (Syriac Orthodox Church).[73]

The achievement of state recognition clearly strengthened the ability of self-organization for the Coptic Orthodox Church by opening up new fields of activities.[74] In 2014–15, the church organized religious education for around 1,300 Copts in eighteen primary schools, seventeen secondary schools in Vienna, and several schools in Graz, in addition to holding Sunday school in most congregations. The Coptic Orthodox Church mostly appoints priests for that function, which means that the priests are remunerated by the state for their teaching activities. Consequently, the church has considerably less expenses for its priests which are normally covered by income from collections at Sunday mass. This incorporation of Coptic priests into the state-school system, by having them employed as teachers in religious instruction, not only enables the church to reach out to the whole Coptic Orthodox community, including those who do not regularly attend Sunday mass and Sunday school, but also leads to a substantial economic contribution by the state which allows financial flexibility. To illustrate the dynamics of this recent period, today the Coptic Church of Austria consists of nine congregations and is served by sixteen priests, nine of them married, and seven monks.

In the 2010s, the Syriac Orthodox Church in Austria was interacting with the state on several issues. To understand its success, we must go beyond the system of religious governance explained above and consider wider developments in the ecumenical dialogue between the Syriac Orthodox Church and the Roman Catholic Church. In 1984, Patriarch Ignatius Zakka Iwas and Pope John Paul II made a common declaration that marks a progress in ecumenical relations which the Catholic Church has not achieved with any other Oriental Orthodox Church. The document relates to the diaspora situation of the Syriac Church and explains practical decisions that are seen as a logical consequence of the achieved unity between these two churches. Areas included the core of worship, religious life, and religious education of the church members, as point nine of the declaration highlights:

> It is not rare, in fact, for our faithful to find access to a priest of their own Church materially or morally impossible. Anxious to meet their needs and with their spiritual benefit in mind, we

> authorize them in such cases to ask for the sacraments of Penance, Eucharist, and Anointing of the Sick from lawful priests of either of our two sister churches, when they need them. It would be a logical corollary of collaboration in pastoral care to cooperate in priestly formation and theological education. Bishops are encouraged to promote sharing of facilities for theological education where they judge it to be advisable.[75]

This ecumenical agreement between Pope John Paul II and Patriarch Zakka Iwas and the strong interconfessional bonds between the Catholic Church and Syriac Orthodox Church in Austria, reinforced by Pro Oriente, finally resulted in new institutional support for the global Syriac Orthodox Church by the Austrian State. In October 2014, the first professorship on History and Theology of Syriac Christianity was inaugurated for a period of five years at a state university. The aim of the professorship was to incorporate a Master of Arts in Syriac Theology under the guidance of Patriarch Mor Ignatius Aphrem II within the Faculty of Catholic Theology. This institutionalization of religious study and education in a Catholic faculty implemented the proposal of the abovementioned ecumenicalism from 1984 of collaboration in pastoral care and cooperation in theological education by sharing facilities. The decision in favor of this project, which was devised by the Faculty of Theology, was made by the Minister of Science at the time, Karl Heinz Töchterle, a member of the Austrian People's Party (*Österreichische Volkspartei*, ÖVP). Anonymous sources suggest that the minister, who quit office a few weeks later, was influenced by increasing threats against Christians in Syria since the outbreak of the war in 2011 as well as the subsequent lobbying of some factions within the ÖVP and the Syriac Orthodox Church under the leadership of Emanuel Aydin to receive Christian refugees from Syria.

In August 2013, then Foreign Minister Michael Spindelegger announced that Austria would admit 500 Syrian refugees.[76] NGOs in Austria were pleasantly surprised about the government's decision because in prior cases—especially that of Iraqi refugees after the conflict in 2003—Austria had not participated in any resettlement project, unlike other European countries such as Germany. The small number of refugees who would benefit from the humanitarian admission program was criticized by the media and opposition political parties, given the high number of Syrian refugees in neighboring countries—Lebanon, Jordan, Turkey, and Iraq. The fact

that the minister was specific about the groups that Austria would admit—women, children, and Christians—was deemed controversial. Left wing parties and media—both mainstream and left-wing oriented media—objected, arguing that humanitarian aid should not be based on religious affiliation as it contradicts one of the most important humanitarian principles, namely impartiality. The only criteria may be the degree of need, and the most urgent cases should be prioritized. In the middle of the 2013 parliamentary election campaign, with the poll being held on 29 September, some interpreted this initiative as an effort by the ÖVP to shore up its core support as well as cement its credentials as a rightwing party. Thus, the preference towards Christians insinuated that Christians "assimilate" better into Austrian society than Muslims, which is the position held by the rightwing extremist Austrian Freedom Party (*Freiheitliche Partei Österreichs*, FPÖ).

Emmanuel Aydin was also individually successful in encouraging ministers from the ÖVP to act concerning the situation of Christians in Syria. He met with Interior Minister Mikl-Leitner in 2012 to ask for initiatives supporting Syrian Christians and received a favorable response. When the government's decision was made public in August 2013 and faced criticism, Father Aydin published a declaration on 5 September which was picked up by numerous media outlets.[77] His concluding remark that "for reasons of efficient integration relatives from Syrian families who are already settled in Austria should be preferred," was seen as referring to eligibility for the program and was probably intended to give the debate a new direction by addressing more practical issues such as integration. His political agency, consequently, was strengthened by Mikl-Leitner who officially confirmed that the Syriac Orthodox Church would be involved in the discussion about admission procedure.[78] In response to the controversy, the government decided to divide the program into two parts.[79] 250 Syrian refugees would be admitted within the scope of family reunification organized by the Austrian authorities who would focus on Christian refugees. A second contingent of 250 refugees with urgent protection needs would be admitted to Austria in cooperation with the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) as demanded by numerous critics. To carry out the first part, the Austrian authorities cooperated with the different churches by instructing them to present lists with names that should be admitted. The Catholic Church of Austria, the Greek Orthodox Church, NGOs, as well as citizens in general, were also tasked to deliver names. The Syriac Orthodox Church, however, was allowed the largest quota with

150 names proposed by its leader Emanuel Aydin.[80] Before Christmas, the Syriac Orthodox Christians from Aydin's list had all arrived in Vienna, whereas the UNHCR program started very slowly, which was criticized by journalists in early 2014 who asked for an explanation for the perceived delay.[81] Many Middle Eastern diaspora Christians in Austria, who were unable to get the names of family members on the list, felt betrayed by Aydin and have either implicitly or explicitly accused him of a lack of transparency and/or corruption. Additionally, anonymous community members close to Aydin disapproved of his role in the issue and would have preferred that state authorities or the Catholic Church would have been in charge instead. Others, like the Melkite priest Hanna Ghoneim, argued that Syrian Christians should stay in Syria and Austria should support them there rather than relocating them to Austria. There is evidence that this question was strongly discussed and caused many worshippers to change their usual community based on political opinion rather than denomination.[82] Consequently, the historical role of religion in Austrian politics and its impact on political culture is significant in understanding the part played by the Syriac Orthodox Church in the controversial issue of refugee admission procedure. Church-state interactions that seem to benefit a particular church in one respect can be the cause of deep intracommunal controversies that are detrimental to both the political and religious authority of church leaders.

HISTORICAL CONTEXT OF RELIGION IN POLITICS

Even if there is a "long-term trend against Catholic dominance," it is clear that Austria has been characterized for many centuries by a Catholic hegemony.[83] The percentage of Catholics in Austria has declined from 89 percent in 1951 to 73.6 percent in 2001 and 64 percent in 2016.[84] Those claiming no denomination have become the second largest group within that period, which shows the trend of secularization and/or the "church's disappearance from religion," leading to the increasing individualization of faith.[85]

Due to its historical strength, the Catholic Church is still privileged compared to other Christian churches and religious organizations in Austria. The Concordat concluded with the Vatican in 1960 strengthened the "bishops' church," which is particularly divided from the people's church and lay initiatives that reflect the pluralistic views of Austrian Christians. The bishops' conference is the official representation and partner of the Austrian government.[86] On the historical basis of this dominant position of the Catholic Church and as

"part of inheritance from the times of the Austro-Hungarian Empire," Austria has developed "a system of mutual recognition between the government and the most important religious organizations" in the Second Republic (since 1945).[87] Similar to Germany, Austria renounced a stringent separation of church and state. Religious governance in Austria is based on a "system of selective cooperation," which means that the state "cooperates regularly and institutionally with selected religious bodies who are officially recognized as 'privileged corporations of public law.'"[88] These communities enjoy several advantages compared to other confessional communities. They have full independence regarding internal affairs such as the right to organize religious instruction in state schools according to the doctrines of the individual religious organization. They can train teachers for that purpose in state universities (who are then remunerated by the state) and open private confessional schools.[89] The Austrian state treats all recognized denominations, which are currently eighteen Christian and four non-Christian religious bodies, to equal economic associations and invites them to participate in the legislative process.[90] As explored above, both the Syriac Orthodox and the Coptic Orthodox Church benefit from this status.

As Pelinka states, "The position and the function of the churches are part of a culture of corporatism that goes beyond economic interests."[91] Austria indeed is marked by corporatist arrangements in politics which correlate with the strong role of Austrian political parties. Austrian government policy after 1945 was dominated by grand coalitions between its two major parties—the Social Democrats *(Sozialdemokratische Partei Österreichs*, SPÖ) and the aforementioned Austrian People's Party—and a balanced "clientelism throughout most of society," which means recruitment of personnel through the channels of the political camp for positions in government, state administration, chambers, or interest groups. Studies on the religious profile of voters indicate that even though the ÖVP was no longer the political arm of the Catholic Church, as had been the case until 1938 (note that the party was named the Christian Social Party until this point), the attachment of Austrian Catholics has been maintained. Consequently, they identify more with the ÖVP than with any other political party.[92] The same milieu persistence is noticeable on the level of recruitment patterns of the ÖVP for the period after 1945. Most individuals who started political careers in the party came "from organizations that still exhibited the close connection between church and party."[93]

The executive board of Pro Oriente was characterized for more than three decades by individuals who had political functions in the ÖVP such as the previously mentioned Theodor Piffl-Percevic, Minister of Education from 1964 to 1969 before he was President of the foundation for twenty years, from 1969 to 1989, and Alfred Stirnemann, General Secretary from 1973 to 1993 and president from 1993 until his death in 2000.[94] Stirnemann was the head of the party academy of the ÖVP *(Politische Akademie*) and taught political science. These examples represent a common pattern which, in this context, could be a suitable channel to gain access to political parties, and thus, government politicians through ecumenical relations. It is clear that the two case study churches have used these ties and traditions to their advantage when navigating their place and role in the diaspora context of Austria.[95]

CONCLUSION

Though the Oriental Christian Churches in Austria have historically praised their situation in Austria due to the judicial privileges that they enjoyed and the efficient support they received from the Catholic Church, it appears that maintaining a group identity is not only dependent on interconfessional relations and official state relations, but also on public and political discourses in the host society. Political agency and involvement in bureaucratic procedures—as manifested in the Syriac Orthodox Church in Austria's commitment to the Christian refugees fleeing the Syrian war—may have disturbing effects on both intra- and intercommunal relations. Religious leaders who represent their communities in political matters should not ignore the principles and frames of discourses such as impartiality in humanitarian aid that are seen as imperative by Western host societies as well as for many Christians. The argument put forward by Middle Eastern Christians—both in the region and amongst diaspora communities—that secularism is the only chance for religious minorities to survive in Muslim countries, loses credibility when their religious affiliation is prioritized to justify resettlement.[96] Rather, such actions raise suspicions among Austrian society concerning those institutions (the churches), which in both discussed cases, claim—and exercise—political authority and leadership for the entire diaspora community. The Austrian example suggests that the political ties the established Catholic Church has to ruling political parties, such as the ÖVP, also prove applicable for the Oriental Orthodox Churches. Their capacity to influence government decisions and administrative procedures, which has proven effective for the Coptic Orthodox Church and Syriac

Orthodox Church, relies on the perception within Austrian politics that these Oriental Churches share the same legitimacy and authority as the Catholic Church, who has considered them as equal Christian churches in many aspects. The Catholic Church of Austria has supported both churches in organizational and economic terms. The Pro Oriente Foundation, dedicated to the theological rapprochement between these churches, proved to be a decisive partner in both church-church and church-state relations; this is partly due to the attachment of its leaders to Austrian politics. The double role as gate opener is also echoed in the allegations raised against Pro Oriente by the Coptic Orthodox Church when the full state recognition of the Coptic Orthodox Church failed in 1998 due to changes in jurisdiction. Until now, we know less about the role of the Ecumenical Council of Churches in Austria (*Ökumenischer Rat der Kirchen in Österreich*) as a religious network partner. Future research should address how Oriental Churches, who are members of this council, interacted with this inter-Christian platform and would enrich our understanding of the relevance of theological and ecumenical self-perceptions of migrant churches in their endeavour to organize their existence in the diaspora.

It is interesting to note that the Syriac Orthodox Church, which has successfully negotiated more ecumenical agreements with the Catholic Church globally than with the Coptic Orthodox Church, has seemingly developed stronger church-state relationships. This connection, however, may be just a coincidence as this type of relation depends strongly on personal characters and personal continuity, as was the case with Father Aydin in Vienna for over four decades. Generally, it appears tempting for both case study churches to base political agency on these structures of belonging as long as their efforts continue to be successful. The analyzed debate that arose in 2013 in the context of the Syrian refugee crisis gives reason to believe, however, that such incidents could considerably harm the authority of the churches as officially recognized representatives of the Syriac Orthodox and Coptic Orthodox community. The negative effects can be twofold: The churches could lose credibility in their relationships to civil society and the wider public on the one hand and they could alienate those members in their communities who prefer—as more and more Austrian Christians do—a church hierarchy that keeps equal distance to all political factions.

NOTES

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[2] Born 1965 in Qamishli, Syria, he was ordained as a priest in 1985 and as a bishop in 1996. Prior to his election as patriarch, he served as Metropolitan Syrian Orthodox Patriarchal Vicar for the eastern United States and was named Cyril Mar Aphrem Karim. He was enthroned as Patriarch of Antioch on 29 May 2014 in Damascus.

[3] Bishop Gabriel, interview by author (Vienna, 1 March 2015).

[4] Statistik Austria, "Bevölkerung 2001 nach Religionsbekenntnis und Staatsangehörigkeit," Statistik Austria, accessed 3 March 2020, http://www.statistik.at/web_de/statistiken/bevoelkerung/volkszaehlungen_registerzaehlungen_abgestimmte_erwerbsstatistik/bevoelkerung_nach_demographischen_merkmalen/022894.html.

[5] Sebastian Brock, "The Syrian Orthodox Church in Modern History," in *Christianity in the Middle East: Studies in Modern History, Theology, and Politics*, ed. O'Mahony (London, UK: Melisende, 2008), 19.

[6] Ibid., 19.

[7] See David Gaunt, *Massacres, Resistance, Protectors: Muslim-Christian Relations in Eastern Anatolia during World War I* (Piscataway, NJ: Gorgias Press, 2006).

[8] Janet A. Timbie, "Coptic Christianity," in *The Blackwell Companion to Eastern Christianity*, ed. Parry (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2007), 94.

[9] Philippe Fargues, "The Arab Christians of the Middle East: A Demographic Perspective," in *Christian Communities in the Arab Middle East: The Challenge of the Future*, ed. Pacini (Oxford, UK: Clarendon Press, 1998), 58.

[10] This work was accomplished as part of the funded project "Narratives of Diaspora: Oriental Christians from the Middle East in Austria," which was supported by the Science Fund of the Austrian National Bank (*Jubiläumsfond*) under Grant 15,825.

[11] Fiona McCallum, *Christian Religious Leadership in the Middle East: The Political Role of the Patriarch* (Lewiston, NY: Edwin Mellen Press, 2010), 38.

[12] Grégoire Delhaye, "Les racines du dynamisme de la diaspora copte," *EchoGéo* (2008), accessed 23 July 2014, https://doi.org/10.4000/echogeo.6963http://echogeo.revues.org/6963;

Saad M. Saad, "The Contemporary Life of the Coptic Orthodox Church in the United States," *Studies in World Christianity* 16, no. 3 (2010): 207–25; Fiona McCallum, "The Coptic Orthodox Church," in *Eastern Christianity and Politics in the Twenty-First Century*, ed. Leustean (New York, NY: Routledge, 2014), 521–41.

[13] See Delhaye, "Les racines du dynamisme."

[14] Erica Hunter, "The Syrian Orthodox Church," in *Eastern Christianity and Politics in the Twenty-First Century*, ed. Leustean (New York, NY: Routledge, 2014), 555.

[15] Soner Onder Barthoma, "The Transformation of Social Capital Among Assyrians in the Migration Context," in *Orthodox Identities in Western Europe: Migration, Settlement and Innovation*, ed. Hämmerli and Mayer (Farnham, UK: Ashgate Publishing Ltd., 2014), 83.

[16] See Heidi Armbruster, *Keeping the Faith: Syriac Christian Diasporas* (Canon Pyon, UK: Sean Kingston, 2013).

[17] In that respect, it is interesting that, according to Atto, the Syriac Orthodox Church or the patriarch come closest to a connecting political figure in the intercommunal rivalry between the Assyrian and Syriac (Aramean in the German-speaking context) movements, although the Syriac Church, out of its anti-Assyrian stance, supported the ideology of Arameanism. See: Naures Atto, "The Myth of an Ideal Leader: The Case of the Syriac Orthodox Community in Europe," in *Orthodox Identities in Western Europe: Migration, Settlement and Innovation*, ed. Hämmerli and Mayer (Farnham, UK: Ashgate Publishing Ltd, 2014), 51–66.

[18] Fiona McCallum, "Religious Institutions and Authoritarian States: Church-State Relations in the Middle East," *Third World Quarterly* 33, no. 1 (2012): 109–24.

[19] Armbruster, *Keeping the Faith*, 115–30.

[20] Tur Abdin is an area in southeast Turkey and is seen as part of the Syriac historical heartland in Eastern Anatolia. See Armbruster, *Keeping the Faith*.

[21] Peter Mallat, *Die syrisch-orthodoxen Christen in Österreich: Zum 10jährigen Bestehen der Gemeinde von St. Efrem in Wien-Lainz* (Vienna, AT: Nuhro, 1984), 64–73.

[22] Archive of Syriac Orthodox Parish of St. Ephrem in Vienna, Letter Syrian Patriarchate of Antioch and all the East, Damascus, 7 March 1974.

[23] Emanuel Aydin, interview by author (Vienna, 8 July 2014).

[24] Brock, "The Syrian Orthodox Church," 25–28.

[25] Andreas Schmoller, "Middle Eastern Minorities in Diaspora," in *Routledge Handbook of Minorities in the Middle East*, ed. Rowe (London, UK: Routledge, 2019), 354.

[26] Emanuel Aydin, *Ya Rab! Mar li.: "Oh Herr! Sag mir."* (Vienna, AT: Selbstverlag, 2009), 145–47, 152–54.

[27] Julia Mourao Permoser, Sieglinde Rosenberger, and Kristina Stoeckl, "Religious Organizations as Political Actors in the Context of Migration: Islam and Orthodoxy in Austria," *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* 36, no. 9 (2010), accessed 7 June 2013, https://doi.org/10.1080/1369183X.2010.500819.

[28] See Marcel Chahrour, "'Akademische Exoten': Studienmissionen und Studenten aus Ägypten in der Habsburgermonarchie," (Vienna, AT: Diplomarbeit Universität, 2004)

[29] Walter Höflechner, "Ausländische Studierende an der Universität Graz 1918–1938," in *Wegenetz europäischen Geistes II: Universitäten und Studenten*, ed. Plaschka and Mack (Vienna, AT: Verlag für Geschichte und Politik, 1987), 282.

[30] Herman G. B. Teule, "Middle Eastern Christians and Migration," *Journal of Eastern Christian Studies* 54, no. 1 (2002): 1–23.

[31] Valeria Heuberger, "Armenier und Kopten in Wien: Eine Pilotstudie über die armenisch-apostolische und koptische Kirchengemeinde in Wien" (Vienna, AT: Diplomarbeit Universität, 1986), 146–51.

[32] Wolfram Reiss, *Erneuerung in der Koptisch-Orthodoxen Kirche: Die Geschichte der koptisch-orthodoxen Sonntagsschulbewegung und die Aufnahme ihrer Reformansätze in den Erneuerungsbewegungen der Koptisch-Orthodoxen Kirche der Gegenwart*, Studien zur orientalischen Kirchengeschichte 5 (Hamburg, DE: Lit, 1998).

[33] Hanno Zaki, interview by author (Purkersdorf, 26 July 2014).

[34] Ulf Plessentin, "Die zivilgesellschaftlichen Potentiale der Syrisch-Orthodoxen Kirche," in *Religiöse Netzwerke: Die zivilgesellschaftlichen Potentiale religiöser Migrantengemeinden*, ed. Nagel (Bielefeld, DE: Transcript, 2015), 134.

[35] On the Armenians in Austria, see Jasmine Dum-Tragut, "Armenier in Salzburg: Eine Unbekannte christliche Gruppe," in *Ostkirchliches Christentum in Salzburg*, ed. Hofrichter (Salzburg, AT: Pro Oriente Salzburg, 2006).

[36] Heuberger, "Armenier und Kopten in Wien," 152.

[37] Dilek Çınar, "Integration vor Einbürgerung: die Staatsbürgerschaftsrechtsnovelle 2005," in 2. *Österreichischer Migrations- und Integrationsbericht 2001–2006: Rechtliche Rahmenbedingungen, demographische Entwicklungen, sozioökonomische Strukturen*, ed. Fassmann (Klagenfurt/Celovec, AT: Verlag Drava, 2007), 45.

[38] Thomas Schmidinger, "Verein der Zeitungskolporteure," in *Gastarbajteri: 40 Jahre Arbeitsmigration*, 308. Sonderausstellung des Wien Museums, eds. Gürses, Kogoj, and Mattl-Wurm (Vienna, AT: Mandelbaum, 2004), 139.

[39] Annemarie Fenzl, ed., *Franz Jachym: Eine Biographie in Wortmeldungen* (Vienna, AT: Herold-Verlag, 1985).

[40] Emanuel Aydin, interview by author (Vienna, 3 October 2014).

[41] Mallat, *Die syrisch-orthodoxen Christen,* 64–73.

[42] Erzbischöfliches Ordinariat Wien, 9 July 1974, Letter "ZL 1007/74."

[43] Erzbischöfliches Ordinariat Wien, 20 September 1974, Letter "ZL 1007/3/74."

[44] Aydin, *Ya Rab! Mar li.,* 132–33.

[45] Emic term for the modern Aramaic language that in the context of diaspora is used for the spoken language by the majority of the community instead of Surayt. Before this, Suryoyo was used to refer to the (written) language, classical Syriac.

[46] Emanuel Aydin, interview by author (Vienna, 3 October 2014).

[47] Dietmar W. Winkler, "Ökumene zwischen Stolper- und Meilensteinen: Der Dialog von PRO ORIENTE mit den orientalisch-orthodoxen Kirchen," in *Denkwerkstatt Pro Oriente: Erfolgsgeschichte eines Ost-West-Dialogs (1964–2014)*, ed. Marte and Prokschi (Innsbruck, AT: Tyrolia, 2014).

[48] Dietmar W. Winkler, "Growing Consensus: The Dialogue Between the Catholic Church and the Oriental Orthodox Churches," *Ortodoksia* 53 (2013): 85.

[49] Alfred Stirnemann and Gerhard Wilflinger, *30 Jahre Pro Oriente: Festgabe für den Stifter Franz Kardinal König zu seinem 90. Geburtstag*, Pro Oriente 17 (Innsbruck, AT: Tyrolia, 1995), 445.

[50] Andreas Schmoller, "Ecumenical Engagement with Eastern Minority Churches in Muslim States: Pro Oriente's Encounters and Legacies in Syria and Egypt," *Islam and Christian–Muslim Relations* 30, no. 2 (2019), https://doi.org/10.1080/09596410.2019.1599194.

[51] Christoph Cornaro, "Alte Freundschaft neu gelebt: Das Österreichbild in Ägypten," in *Mit anderen Augen gesehen: Internationale Perzeptionen Österreichs 1955–1990*, ed. Rathkolb (Vienna, AT: Böhlau, 2002), 689–717.

[52] Bishop Gabriel, interview by author (Vienna, 1 March 2015).

[53] Victor Elkharat, *"Ihr seid das Licht der Welt": Biographie und Werke Paters Johannes Elbaramosy* (Cairo, EG: Youssef Kamal Press, 2008), 37–38.

[54] Heuberger, "Armenier und Kopten in Wien," 142.

[55] Magdi Guirguis and Nelly van Doorn-Harder, *The Emergence of the Modern Coptic Papacy, The Popes of Egypt* 3 (Cairo, EG: American University in Cairo Press, 2011), 160–64.

[56] Hanno Zaki, interview by author (Purkersdorf, 26 July 2014).

[57] Johann Hirnsperger and Christian Wessely, eds., *Wege zum Heil?: Religiöse Bekenntnisgemeinschaften in Österreich*, Theologie im kulturellen Dialog 7 (Innsbruck, AT: Tyrolia, 2002), 121–22.

[58] Dioceses had already been founded in neighboring countries with comparable community sizes, such as in Germany (Bishop Michael for Southern Germany and Bishop Damian for Northern Germany) or in Italy, which raises the question why this had not occurred in Austria. Bishop Gabriel (2015) claims that Shenouda had great sympathy for Yuhanna and wanted to ordain him Bishop of Austria but did not dare do so due to the total deafness which Yuhanna suffered from since 1988. This explanation suggests that Shenouda refrained from creating a diocese and ordaining a bishop mainly out of respect for Father Yuhanna, who would have merited the position.

[59] Erzdiözese Wien, "'Maria vom Siege' wird an die Kopten übergeben," *Erzdiözese Wien*, accessed 3 March 2020, https://www.erzdioezese-wien.at/site/home/nachrichten/article/47130.html.

[60] Erzdiözese Wien, "Gotteshaus wird an syrisch-orthodoxe Kirche übergeben," *Erzdiözese Wien*, 15 September 2014, accessed 3 March 2020, http://www.erzdioezese-wien.at/site/home/nachrichten/article/38622.html.

[61] Andreas Schmoller, "Of Safe Havens and Sinking Ships: The Church in Oral Histories of Middle Eastern Christians in Austria," in *Middle Eastern Christians and Europe: Historical Legacies and Present Challenges,* Orientalia - patristica - oecumenica 13, ed. Schmoller (Vienna, AT: Lit, 2018), 179–89.

[62] Armbruster, *Keeping the Faith,* 153.

[63] Ibid., 153.

[64] Walter Reichel, "Religionen in Österreich" (Vienna: Bundespressedienst, 2011).

[65] Richard Potz and Brigitte Schinkele, *Religionsrecht im Überblick*, 2nd ed., Manual (Vienna, AT: Facultas.wuv, 2007), 195.

[66] Ibid., 46–47.

[67] Bishop Gabriel, interview by author (Vienna, 1 March 2015).

[68] Ibid.

[69] Dietmar W. Winkler, interview by author (Salzburg, 10 March 2015).

[70] Winkler, "Ökumene zwischen Stolper," 114–19.

[71] See McCallum, *Christian Religious Leadership*.

[72] Österreichische Nationalrat, *Orientalisch-orthodoxes Kirchengesetz: OrientKG, 2003 (2003)*, accessed 3 March 2020, https://www.ris.bka.gv.at/Dokumente/BgblPdf/2003_20_1/2003_20_1.pdf.

[73] Potz and Schinkele, *Religionsrecht im Überblick*, 195.

[74] Alexander-Kenneth Nagel, "Religiöse Netzwerke: Die zivilgesellschaftlichen Potentiale religiöser Migrantengemeinden," in *Religiöse Netzwerke: Die zivilgesellschaftlichen Potentiale religiöser Migrantengemeinden*, ed. Nagel (Bielefeld, DE: Transcript, 2015), 30.

[75] Jeffrey Gros, Harding Meyer, and William G. Rusch, eds., *Growth in Agreement II: Reports and Agreed Statements of Ecumenical Conversations on a World Level (1982–1998)*, Faith and Order Paper, no. 187 (Geneva, CH: WCC Publications; Grand Rapids, MI: W. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2000), 692–93.

[76] Austrian Press Agency, 29 August 2013.

[77] Emanuel Aydin, "Flüchtlingskatastrophe Syrien: Österreichische Initiative zur Aufnahme von Flüchtlingen sehr begrüßenswert. Bevorzugung von Christen unbedingt erforderlich!," news release, 5 September 2013, accessed 3 March 2020, http://foref.info/archive/news/international/christliche-fluechtlinge-in-syrien-massiv-betroffen/index.html.

[78] "Flüchtlinge: Orthodoxer Bischof macht Druck," *Der Kurier*, 8 September 2013, accessed 3 March 2020, http://kurier.at/chronik/wien/fluechtlinge-orthodoxer-bischof-macht-druck/25.905.067.

[79] UNHCR, "2nd Humanitarian Admission Program," UNHCR, accessed 22 July 2015, www.unhcr.at/unhcr/in-oesterreich/syrien-aufnahemprogramm.html.

[80] Emanuel Aydin, interview by author (Vienna, 8 July 2014).

[81] Anna G. Fink, Martin Staudinger, and Robert Treichler, "Syrien: Warum bisher nur 169 Flüchtlinge in Österreich sind," *Das Profil*, 21 January 2014, accessed 3 March 2020, http://www.profil.at/articles/1404/982/371813/syrien-warum-169-fluechtlinge-oesterreich.

[82] I am thankful to one of the anonymous reviewers for this observation.

[83] Anton Pelinka, *Austria: Out of the Shadow of the Past, Nations of the Modern World, Europe* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1998), 7.

[84] Anne Goujon, Sandra Jurasszovich, and Michaela Potancokova, *Religious Denominations in Vienna & Austria: Baseline Study for 2016 - Scenarios until 2046*, Vienna Institute of Demography Working Papers (Vienna, AT: Vienna

Institute of Demography, 2017), accessed 3 March 2020, https://www.oeaw.ac.at/fileadmin/subsites/Institute/VID/IMG/Publications/Working_Papers/WP2017_09.pdf.

[85] Paul M. Zulehner, "Religion in Austria," in *Religion in Austria*, ed. Bischof, Denz, and Pelinka (Innsbruck, AT: Transaction Publ./Studienverlag, 2005), 41.

[86] Pelinka, *Austria: Out of the Shadow of the Past*, 109.

[87] Permoser, Rosenberger, and Stoeckl, "Religious Organizations as Political Actors in the Context of Migration."

[88] Richard Potz, "State and Church in Austria," in *State and Church in the European Union*, ed. Robbers, 2nd ed. (Baden-Baden, DE: Nomos, 2005), 235.

[89] Lukas Wallner, *Die staatliche Anerkennung von Religionsgemeinschaften: Die historische und aktuelle Umsetzung der religiösen Vereinigungsfreiheit in Österreich unter Berücksichtigung des deutschen Religionsrechts,* Wissenschaft und Religion 18 (Frankfurt am Main, DE: P. Lang, 2007).

[90] Austria was the first state to officially recognize Islam as a religious community due to the regulation made under the Austro-Hungarian Empire for the Muslim population in Bosnia in 1912.

[91] Pelinka, *Austria: Out of the Shadow of the Past*, 93.

[92] See: Pelinka, *Austria: Out of the Shadow of the Past*, 108, 97–111.

[93] Ibid., 104.

[94] Documented in: Johann Marte and Rudolf Prokschi, eds., *Denkwerkstatt Pro Oriente: Erfolgsgeschichte eines Ost-West-Dialogs (1964–2014)* (Innsbruck, AT: Tyrolia, 2014), 472.

[95] Finally, it is of note that during my fieldwork I came across several Copts of different age groups who were active members of the ÖVP.

[96] See Fiona McCallum, "Shared Religion but Still a Marginalized Other: Middle Eastern Christians Encounters with Political Secularism in the UK," *Journal of Church and State* 61, no. 2 (2019): 242–61.