CHAPTER 7

INHERITANCE RIGHTS: AN ANALYSIS BASED ON AWARENESS, KNOWLEDGE AND ATTITUDES OF SYRIAN CHRISTIAN WOMEN

Inheritance rights among Christians in Kerala have been ruled by the Indian Succession Act (1925), since 1986 which entitle an equal share to all children in the intestate property of the parents without any gender discrimination. Besides, due to the Retrospective Effect imposed by the Act from 1951 onwards, even women who got married by giving dowry could still claim their share in the property. The researcher felt that it was imperative to find out whether the Syrian Christian women of the study were aware of the implementation of the Act in Kerala and the legal changes that had taken place with regard to the inheritance rights thereafter. Awareness and knowledge regarding the legal provisions of the Act are essential to form an opinion towards legally acquired inheritance rights. Both awareness and knowledge could contribute to attitude formation among Syrian Christian women. Developing a positive attitude could favour towards entitlement of equal inheritance rights for women. It could also be the case that the women might not be in favour for equal inheritance rights on the basis of some grounds. The socio-economic and demographic factors of these women could determine their awareness and attitude along with other contributory factors.

In this chapter, an attempt was made to bring out the awareness, knowledge and attitudes of the respondents on issues relating to Inheritance right. As dowry is allied with inheritance, respondents’ perceptions on dowry were also taken into consideration. Cross analysis on these aspects and Syrian Christian denominations such as Orthodox Syrian and Reformed Syrian was carried out. The purpose of the cross analysis was to find out whether there would be any significant differences or similarities in the responses of women belonging to the two denominations on issues focused. Assessment regarding the wealth respondents received in connection with marriages from their natal families, and their intentions on claiming their share in the parental property were also studied. Due to the absence of women who had utilised or availed themselves of the law among the sampled
Syrian Christian women, the analysis on utilisation aspect of the law could not be reported in this chapter. However, utilisation of the Act was covered to some extent in the study by undertaking a few case studies, in a qualitative manner, and the cases studied were outside the sample frame.

7.1 EXTENT OF LEGAL AWARENESS AND KNOWLEDGE OF THE INDIAN SUCCESSION ACT (1925)

The Indian Succession Act (1925) was implemented for Christians in Kerala in 1986. This was in the limelight and since it was so revolutionary, it gained considerable public attention, and was a hot topic of discussions and debate among the Church communities, legal luminaries, politicians and state administrations. So it was important to learn about the Syrian Christian women’s awareness and knowledge level regarding the inheritance rights which was essential for them to develop an attitude towards legal provision and to avail the law if desired also it would reflect on their empowerment level.

7.1.1 Awareness regarding the Change in Inheritance Law for Christians in Kerala

After the implementation of the Indian Succession Act (1925), the findings of one of the studies conducted by Chandy (1995) in two districts of North Kerala have shown that implementation of the Act in Kerala State, enabling equal inheritance rights to both sexes among Christians, was not known to many Christian respondents of the study. This indicated a low awareness level of the respondents with regard to change of law in inheritance, which was a negative factor for the empowerment of women, especially in Kerala since educational status of Kerala women has been very high. In order to find out whether the respondents of the study were aware of the change in law regarding inheritance and implementation of the Indian Succession Act (1925) in Kerala, which entitled inheritance rights to Christian women, were assessed their awareness level and the findings are reported in Table 7.1.
Table (7.1)
Percentage Distribution of Respondents According to Awareness Regarding Change of Law
Relating to Inheritance by Denominations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Awareness Regarding Change of Law relating to Inheritance</th>
<th>Orthodox Syrian (N = 136)</th>
<th>Reformed Syrian (N = 164)</th>
<th>Total (N = 300)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>82.4 (112)</td>
<td>90.2 (148)</td>
<td>86.7 (260)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>17.6 (24)</td>
<td>9.8 (16)</td>
<td>13.3 (40)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Chi-Square = 4.006   df = 1   p = 0.045

(Figures in parenthesis correspond to actual number of respondents)

It was noted that a large proportion (86.7%) of respondents were aware of the change in inheritance law for Christians in Kerala irrespective of denominations. Denomination wise distribution of respondents showed that a higher per cent (90.2 %) of the Reformed Syrians were aware as compared to (82.4 %) of the Orthodox Syrians. This means that women from the Reformed Syrian denomination had a higher level of awareness regarding the change in inheritance law compared to the of Orthodox Syrian denomination. It was also observed that women from both the denominations knew that the new law entitled Christian women the right to inherit parental property i.e., the right to become heirs like that of men. However, the respondents were not aware of the name of the Act or the year in which the Act came into force in the State, barring a handful of the respondents. All they could recall was the change took place some 15 or 20 years ago. It was also noted that quite a number of the respondents were trying to associate the legal change in inheritance law with that of Mary Roy, (mentioning her name by some or making reference as ’that woman’ by a few who could not recollect her name) whom they felt was instrumental in bringing about the change. The respondents were of the opinion that the earlier law was very much gender biased as the Christian women were deprived from inheritance and *streedhan* was the only wealth a woman could get from the parental home.

The association between the awareness level of respondents regarding the change in inheritance law and denomination was found to be significant (at 0.05 level).
It is clear that Syrian Christian women respondents in the study were aware of the change in the law relating to inheritance for Christians in Kerala and also that women could inherit parental property like men, irrespective of their denominational affiliations. The awareness level was observed to be slightly higher among the Reformed Syrian denomination than among the Orthodox Syrian. Higher education and exposure to media could have contributed to their higher level of awareness.

### 7.1.2 Knowledge regarding the Intestate Property

The awareness of Syrian Christian women regarding the change in inheritance law was found to be very high. However, it is also imperative to know the type of property that could be inherited by family members. As per the Indian Succession Act (1925), the property that could be devolved among the surviving family members of the deceased such as spouse (husband/wife) and children, is the intestate property i.e., property for which there is no Will documented by the deceased person. Mostly all the respondents, irrespective of their backgrounds, were familiar with the concept of Will (known as *vilpatram* in Malayalam). A Will or testament is a legal document which represents the declaration of intentions of parents regarding the succession of property among the surviving members of the family after his/her death. This means that, in the absence of a Will, the property of the deceased would devolve among the immediate family members entitling a share to all, as per the provisions stated in the Act.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Knowledge on Intestate Property</th>
<th>Orthodox Syrian (N = 136)</th>
<th>Reformed Syrian (N = 164)</th>
<th>Total (N = 300)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Property without a Will</td>
<td>59.6 (81)</td>
<td>67.1 (110)</td>
<td>63.7 (191)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don’t know</td>
<td>40.4 (55)</td>
<td>32.9 (54)</td>
<td>36.3 (109)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Chi-Square = 1.815  df = 1  p = 0.178
It was observed that 63.7 per cent of the respondents irrespective of denominations, knew that devolution of property for family members was applicable for that property for which the Will was not written (intestate) by the deceased parent. According to the denomination wise variations, it was found that a higher percentage (67.1%) of respondents was from the Reformed Syrian in comparison to that of the Orthodox Syrian (59.6%).

The above Table shows that though a good proportion of Syrian Christian women of both denominations knew about the type of property that could be inherited by family members through devolution, Reformed Syrian was comparatively more knowledgeable than Orthodox Syrian.

7.1.3 Knowledge regarding the Division of the Intestate Parental Property among Children

Syrian Christian women of the study were aware of the change in inheritance law and had a fair knowledge about the intestate property that was inheritable in nature by the surviving members of the family. However, in order to develop a positive outlook or an attitude towards the change that brought about a different inheritance status for Christian women, with specific reference to daughters in the Christian families, it was essential that the women should also know the provisions given as per the law. According to the Indian Succession Act (1925), both sons and daughters are entitled to get an equal share in the intestate property of parents.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Knowledge Regarding Division of Property among Children</th>
<th>Orthodox Syrian (N = 136)</th>
<th>Reformed Syrian (N = 164)</th>
<th>Total (N = 300)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Equal Share</td>
<td>82.4 (112)</td>
<td>89.6 (147)</td>
<td>86.3 (259)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do not know</td>
<td>17.6 (24)</td>
<td>10.4 (17)</td>
<td>13.7 (41)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Chi-Square = 3.341  df = 1  p = 0.068
A greater proportion (86.3 %) of respondents, irrespective of denominations, knew that all children were entitled for an equal share in intestate property, without gender difference i.e., a daughter gets an equal share like a son does too. Denomination wise data showed no vast difference in the knowledge level among the respondents - 89.6 per cent of the Reformed Syrians and 82.4 per cent of the Orthodox Syrians had the knowledge about the daughter’s share.

It was evident from the above findings that an exceedingly large proportion of women from both the denominations knew that both sons and daughters could inherit an equal share in the intestate parental property. A slight increase in knowledge was noticed among the Reformed Syrians.

7.1.4 Awareness regarding the Retrospective Effect relating to Inheritance

Syrian Christian women had demonstrated fair awareness and knowledge regarding the provisions in the law relating to inheritance which also indicated their empowerment level to some extent. Probing further regarding the law, the respondents were asked about the Retrospective Effect of the Indian Succession Act (1925). The knowledge was important especially for the women in the older age group to claim their share. As discussed earlier, when the Act was made applicable to Christians in Kerala in 1986, it carried a retrospective effect from 1951 onwards taking into consideration of the enactment of the Part (B State Laws) Act in 1951. This meant that women could claim an equal share in the intestate property from 1951 onwards, irrespective of dowry was given at the time of marriage or not.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Awareness on Retrospective Effect of the Act</th>
<th>Orthodox Syrian (N = 136)</th>
<th>Reformed Syrian (N = 164)</th>
<th>Total (N =300)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>0.7 (1)</td>
<td>11.0 (18)</td>
<td>6.3 (19)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>99.3 (135)</td>
<td>89.0 (146)</td>
<td>93.7 (281)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Chi-Square = 13.142  df = 1  p = 0.000
Inquiry into the retrospective effect of the inheritance law revealed that an exceedingly high proportion (93.7%) of respondents were not aware about the retrospective effect concerning inheritance irrespective of denominations. Across the denominations, an overwhelming majority (99.3%) of respondents who were not aware of the retrospective effect were the Orthodox Syrians while among the Reformed Syrians it was (89.0%). The association between the denominations and knowledge regarding the retrospective effect was found to be highly significant at 0.01 level.

This indicated that though the women knew about the equal inheritance rights and the type of property that could be inherited, other important legal aspects of the Act like the retrospective effect was not known to a vast majority of women under study with marginal difference among the denominations. Those who knew about the retrospective effect felt, that it should be cancelled and should be made applicable from 1986 onwards mainly to avoid many administrative and familial problems.

The findings regarding the Retrospective Effect of the Indian Succession Act (1925) showed a very high rate of non-awareness among women of both denominations and suggested the need to address the Syrian Christian women about the Retrospective Effect and inheritance right for better utilisation of the law and for the promotion of equal inheritance right.

7.2 ATTITUDES TOWARDS INHERITANCE RIGHTS

7.2.1 Attitudes towards Equal Inheritance Right in Intestate Parental Property

The information gathered regarding the awareness and knowledge of Syrian Christian women regarding inheritance rights was quite positive. According to Chandy (1995), a positive attitude towards Christian women inheriting intestate parental property was shown by some of the respondents of her study, but only a few were able to say whether inheritance was over and above the dowry given to women in connection with marriages. The researcher wanted to know whether the women of the present study had similar views and whether it
could be brought out only by eliciting their views on the legal aspects of the Act. On the basis of their knowledge they had regarding the inheritance right, they could develop an attitude towards the inheritance right which entitled them an equal share in the property. The attitude could be favourable towards daughters having equal rights as that of sons in the intestate parental property or might be non-favourable. To know the attitudes of the women towards equal inheritance rights, they were asked to express their opinion and the responses are given in Table 7.5

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Attitude towards Equal Inheritance Right</th>
<th>Orthodox Syrian (N = 136)</th>
<th>Reformed Syrian (N = 164)</th>
<th>Total (N = 300)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Favour</td>
<td>67.6 (92)</td>
<td>53.7 (88)</td>
<td>60.0 (180)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do not favour</td>
<td>32.4 (44)</td>
<td>46.3 (76)</td>
<td>40.0 (120)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Chi-Square = 6.062  df = 1  p = 0.014

A sizable proportion (60.0 %) of the respondents were favourable towards the practice of equal division of intestate property among both sons and daughters. The denomination wise distribution showed a higher percentage, i.e., (67.6%) among the Orthodox Syrians having favourable attitudes, while among the Reformed Syrians it was found to be 53.7 per cent. This indicates that, in spite of higher education and exposure to media, with higher knowledge on inheritable property, Reformed Syrian women did not come out strongly to express their favourable opinion towards equal inheritance rights. Belonging to a higher class (with special reference to CSI women residing at Kollam), greater independence due to higher employment participation and being more analytical and logical towards legal implications of inheritance rights perhaps influenced Reformed Syrian women not to defend strongly for equal inheritance rights. Quite a few women expressed that the equality remained only in paper and many times did not get translated into reality. So having a favourable attitude did not make any sense.
Those who were in favour of equal inheritance rights, their opinion stemmed from the ideology that both sons and daughters were children to their parents, that gender should not become the deciding factor and that equality should be maintained. This reasoning supported the ideology of equality in inheritance based on ‘motherhood’ and images of the ‘womb’ as symbol of equal entitlement. Their gender positive perception that women should have equal entitlement like men influenced them strongly.

Among those who were not in favour of equal inheritance rights for women, 40.0 per cent felt that parents normally would want to give their daughters whatever they could as dowry at the time of marriage according to their financial capacity, sometimes more as compared to the landed property. In this regard, a good proportion of women in both denominations expressed that their parents had treated them on par with their brothers. Their parents did not show any gender differentiation and provided whatever they could as per their means. Among those who were financially backward, some of the respondents were of the view that, though parents could not provide good education because of economic constraints, when they got married they had tried their best to give dowry or sometimes a share as dowry. Later on to put a claim for an equal share in the property after the death of the parents was not fair. A few of the respondents felt that whatever the women wanted from the parental house, should be settled when the parents were alive. If the brothers were not financially in a sound position, then one should not ask for a share in the parental property.

There were instances in the field, where among the economically backward families, the brothers had gone out to places like the Middle East and with their hard work they raised money to give dowry to the sisters. Later on, if these sisters came to claim a share as inheritance right then it was only greed and not ‘right’ commented some of the respondents. The women also opined that claim for a share could lead to rift and hatred among the siblings. Elaborating on this point, women echoed the importance of family ties or bond more than one’s right to inheritance. ‘Wealth may come and go but what lasts is the relation with families’ some voiced. A harmonious and loving relation should not be lost in the name
of rights. Basing their responses on Christian principles and beliefs, they felt that one should follow the path of love, affection, care and compromise rather than a path of conflict and hatred.

Even though some percentage of the respondents were not keen to opt for equal inheritance rights on personal and familiar grounds, some of these women had come up with the views that women should get their right to inheritance on certain circumstances. For instance, if there were cases where the women were deprived of getting any wealth from their parents during marriage, women were given very little wealth compared to the vast parental assets, or the brothers had committed injustice or cheated the sisters, then the women stand justified in their claim for share. Other opinions were, if the women were married with dowry and had financial difficulties and later there were assets at natal family, then their claim was legitimate but that share need not be equal. They also brought out the point that women who were deserted by husbands, separated or divorced and were having a financial crisis should get their share in the parental property.

One important aspect that many respondents pointed out was that equal rights depended on the family’s landed property. If there were many children and very limited property then it becomes difficult to divide equally among all the children. When the family size is small with two children, a boy and a girl then parents could think of giving equal shares.

A common feeling that was noted among many of these respondents who favoured and those who did not favour equal inheritance rights was that acquiring a share (if not equal) in the parental property was something every woman longed for, which gave them a sense of economic security and belongingness to one’s own native house, but it should not be done through any coercion or demand.

The association between the denominations and the attitude towards equal inheritance among the women was found to be significant at (0. 05 level)
It is evident that, those who were in favour of equal inheritance was more among the Orthodox Syrians than the Reformed Syrians indicating more eagerness among the Orthodox Syrians to have economic security through inheritance. However, there were no overwhelming responses towards equal inheritance rights as per the Indian Succession Act (1925). Many factors were highlighted to consolidate the non-favourable attitudes towards the inheritance rights. Nevertheless, there was a clear indication shown by respondents for acquiring a share in the parental property.
7.2.2  Attitude towards Inheritance Right in the Testamentary Property

The Syrian Christian women’s attitude towards equal inheritance rights in the intestate property as per the Indian Succession Act (1925) was not overwhelming. Dowry has been an integral part of marriages among Syrian Christians and the trend has set an in-built pattern that women’s wealth mostly in connection with marriages has been the dowry while the property went to the men folk. So even the legal entitlement in parental property in the absence of a Will did not evoke very good response among the respondents of the study.

Daughters inheriting parental property was normally a practice among the Syrian Christians, where there were only daughters in the families. However, daughters inheriting a share in the parental property through Will (testamentary property) has been a rare phenomenon. Documenting a Will by parents including daughters as heirs in the parental property has great significance since such a practice will enable them to have access as well as ownership over property and thereby contribute towards their empowerment. This practice holds special importance to those who are widowed and have financial problems, those who are separated from their husbands and divorced women. Respondents were asked about their perceptions regarding parents’ writing a Will.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Inheritance Right on Testamentary Property</th>
<th>Orthodox Syrian  ( N = 136)</th>
<th>Reformed Syrian  ( N = 164)</th>
<th>Total  ( N =300)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Favour</td>
<td>58.8 (80)</td>
<td>79.3 (130)</td>
<td>70.0 (210)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do not Favour</td>
<td>41.2 (56)</td>
<td>20.7 (34)</td>
<td>30.0 (90)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Chi-Square = 14.798  df. = 1  p = 0.000
Respondents’ opinion regarding documenting a Will by the parents including daughters as heirs to property or inheritance rights in testamentary property has been favourable, represented by 70.0 per cent from both denominations. As per denominational differences, more than three-fourths (79.3 %) of respondents from the Reformed Syrian were in favour, while the Orthodox Syrian was represented by 58.8 per cent. Respondents who did not favour the practice were constituted by 30.0 per cent. In this category, a higher percentage (41.2%) was from the Orthodox Syrian while 20.7 per cent was from the Reformed Syrian.

Respondents who were in favour of the idea of writing a Will including daughters as heirs pointed out that, a practice like this could rule out many familial conflicts, sibling rivalries after the demise of the parents, ensure that married daughters got a share in the parental property, promote and retain a sense of ‘attachment’ and ‘belongingness’ to the natal family, who, in normal circumstances seem to sever their ties with natal families once they were married. Even if the daughters were given dowry at the time of marriage, allocating some share of the assets of the family while writing a Will would mean a great deal to many women, most importantly for those women, who were divorced, separated or for those whose dowry has been confiscated by in-laws or husbands and those who were in a financial crisis. In these situations they could fall back on their natal property instead of being at the mercy of other siblings, especially the brothers. If the hapless women have children to take care, then having a piece of land could be a source of income generation. This could contribute to the welfare aspect of the family. Some of these women opined that access as well as control over productive resources like land would provide economic security and also enhance the empowerment of women. Control over resources exercised by some of the women, a positive approach towards women’s control over resources, and decision making roles seemed to have contributed towards their positive outlook.

There were voices that expressed that division of property need not necessarily be equal among all the children but it could be ‘situational’ or ‘need based’. Accordingly, many felt that a bigger share should be given to those who were comparatively in a low economic background and to those children who would be taking care of the parents. There were other opinions like if the practice of writing a Will by parents including daughters as heirs was
brought into force through a legal framework or actively followed up by the Syrian Christian community, then this move in the long run could deflect the practice of dowry which would be a great boon.

As far as those who were not in favour of this practice, many felt such a move again could result in an unpleasant situation where the brothers may not be in favour of it, and in the process, sisters may lose out on their good will. Moreover, this practice may also have a repercussion on the parents, where the male siblings could even abandon the responsibility of care giving in their old age as according to custom, it has been the sons who take care of parents in their old age except in those cases where there were only daughters.

The responses of Syrian Christian women strongly support daughter inclusive Will. Though there was considerable support from both denominations, more support was observed from the Reformed Syrian. Positive attitude towards women’s access as well as control over resources, has been evident through their outlook. A gender inclusive Will was seen as an effective means which could eventually eliminate dowry.
7.3. Sources of Information Regarding Change in Inheritance Law

*Media and People*

Sources of information like media and people do play an important role in the promotion of awareness and knowledge. Printed media like newspapers, magazines and electronic media such as television are sources of acquiring information regarding legal changes in inheritance rights among Christians in Kerala. Besides, personal interaction and dialogue could also promote information relating to the legal changes. Attending meetings and discussions relating to women’s rights also contribute to these women’s understanding of inheritance rights and allied issues. Exposure to print media like newspapers and other socially informative magazines of the respondents have imparted awareness regarding change in inheritance law and other related aspects.

To get an understanding of the kind of sources of information, which could have imparted awareness and knowledge regarding the change in law and other legal aspects of inheritance as per the Indian Succession Act (1925), and related issues, women were asked to name the sources of information and the findings are presented in Table 7.7.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sources of Information about Change in Inheritance Law and other Legal Aspects</th>
<th>Orthodox Syrian (N = 136)</th>
<th>Reformed Syrian (N = 164)</th>
<th>Total (N = 300)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Media</td>
<td>67.6 (92)</td>
<td>74.4 (122)</td>
<td>71.3 (214)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Persons</td>
<td>15.4 (21)</td>
<td>15.9 (26)</td>
<td>15.7 (47)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>None</td>
<td>16.9 (23)</td>
<td>9.8 (16)</td>
<td>13.0 (39)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

$\chi^2 = 3.410 \quad df = 2 \quad p = 0.182$
Media was reported to be the main source of information on inheritance rights which was expressed by a majority of the women (71.3%). There seemed to be a similar trend among both the denominations as media was found to be the important source of information for almost three-fourths (74.4%) of the Reformed Syrian and 67.6 per cent of the Orthodox Syrian. Media included mainly the print (newspapers), magazines and to some extent electronic namely television. About 15.7 per cent replied saying that they came to know about the change in law regarding the inheritance rights through some persons like family members, friends or relatives or listening to resource persons at discussions on women’s issues.

Many respondents of the Orthodox Syrian and Marthoma of the Reformed Syrian had expressed that besides the information they gained from the media, their participation in kudumbashree has helped them to know about the change of law in inheritance right for Christians. During their meetings those who knew about the change in inheritance rights shared it with other members in the group. Similarly, the respondents of CSI of Reformed Syrian denomination who were associated with YWCA also mentioned that they had gained a lot of information regarding the inheritance rights of Christian women through meetings and discussions which were organized to promote awareness on women’s rights. The representation was found to be almost same in the case of Reformed Syrian women (15.9%) and Orthodox Syrian women (15.4%). For the rest 13.0 per cent, the inquiry relating to the source of information was not applicable as they were not aware of the inheritance rights of women or the implementation of the Indian Succession Act (1925) for Christians in Kerala. A higher representation was from the Orthodox Syrian (16.9%) while Reformed Syrian it was 9.8 per cent.

The media, especially the print media such as newspapers were reported to be the main source of information regarding the change of inheritance rights and related issues. People as source of information were reported to be secondary. Women’s programmes like kudumbashree and organization such as YWCA were also found to be contributing to the awareness and knowledge of the women regarding inheritance right.
7.4. ECONOMIC TRANSACTIONS IN MARRIAGES: PERCEPTIONS AND ASSESSMENTS

7.4.1. Perceptions regarding the Kind of Economic Transactions in Connection with Marriages

Customary practices of economic transactions in connection with marriages included the moveable wealth such as dowry in cash, jewellery, or immovable form such as land or house or flat. As stated in the introduction, inheritance and dowry are two prominent ways for both men and women to acquire land, however, women acquiring land through these two means were very remote as the societal norms of inheritance have been patrilineal in nature. Women had to settle with whatever they got as dowry in connection with marriages which were mostly moveable wealth. The Syrian Christian community has a strong patrilineal custom, and for women of this community inherit land was quite unusual. In order to know what kind of wealth should be given to women in connection with marriages, respondents' were asked to express their options.

Table (7.8)
Percentage Distribution of Respondents According to Perceptions about Economic Transactions in Connection with Marriage by Denominations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Perceptions on Economic Transactions in Connection with Marriage</th>
<th>Orthodox Syrian (N = 136)</th>
<th>Reformed Syrian (N = 164)</th>
<th>Total (N = 300)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Share in the parental property</td>
<td>30.9 (42)</td>
<td>62.2 (102)</td>
<td>48.0 (144)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dowry</td>
<td>27.9 (38)</td>
<td>13.4 (22)</td>
<td>20.0 (60)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In any kind</td>
<td>41.2 (56)</td>
<td>24.4 (40)</td>
<td>32.0 (96)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Chi-Square = 29.578  df = 2  p = 0.000
Perceptions regarding the kind of economic transactions in connection with marriage have brought out that 48.0 per cent of the respondents preferred a share in parental property. Between the two denominations, a higher proportion (62.2%) was from the Reformed Syrians while for the Orthodox Syrians it was (30.9%).

Those who opted for dowry (in the form of moveable wealth) was found to be 20.0 per cent. A comparatively higher percentage (27.9 %) opted for dowry among the Orthodox Syrian while among the Reformed Syrian, it was 13.4 per cent. Women who responded that economic transaction could be in any form i.e., either a share or dowry constituted 32.0 per cent. Again, the Orthodox Syrians had a higher representation with 41.2 per cent, while among Reformed Syrians it was 24.4 per cent.

Women who expressed that a share be given had also clearly indicated that their desire had to match with familial context depending upon the property that their parents owned. The residential status of women after marriage also influenced the viewpoint of some with regard to their share in the property. Though there was greater consensus for a share in the parental property, the residential status of women after marriage (patrilocality) posed some practical difficulties in terms of managing the property. Sometimes there would be pressure from the husband and in-laws to dispose the property and convert it in the form of moveable wealth.

Those who opted for dowry had their own rationale. Many of them felt that dowry has been the tradition and in that context there were remote chances of receiving a share. If one could only hope for dowry as the wealth in connection with marriages, then one might as well accept it. This response was similar to that of Kishwar (2005), who commented that given a choice between having a piece of land in one’s name vs saris or furniture, a few women would choose the latter. But to expect a woman to refuse the latter when the former was not going to come by is a foolish thing. There were also some responses that referred to getting property from the husbands’ side which would compensate for the women’s loss of
share in parental property. Those who opined for any kind, expressed that economic transaction in the form of share or dowry should be based on the family set up at the time of marriage. The association between the variables was found to be highly significant.

From the above data, Reformed Syrian women were found to be more in favour of getting a share in parental property in connection with marriage compared to Orthodox Syrian women, which reflected on their higher empowerment level. Preference for a share in connection with marriage was comparatively more than dowry or in any kind which was evident in both the denominations.
7.4.2. Views on Practice of Dowry

Dowry has been the common form of economic transaction in our society and has been an agent for the subjugation of women and the chief factor for the disinheritance of women. The findings of review of studies have exposed the ill-effects of dowry among different sections of society. As the Syrian Christian women had earlier demonstrated positive approaches to various issues concerning women’s empowerment, the researcher wanted to find out the women’s perceptions on the practice of dowry, whether they considered it was an evil practice and needed to be challenged. In order to understand the respondents’ perceptions towards the practice of dowry, they were asked to come out with their opinions.

Table (7.9)

Percentage Distribution of Respondents according to Perceptions on Dowry Practice by Denominations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Perception on Dowry Practice</th>
<th>Orthodox Syrian (N = 136)</th>
<th>Reformed Syrian (N = 164)</th>
<th>Total (N = 300)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dowry has been the traditional form of economic transaction so it may continue</td>
<td>4.4 (6)</td>
<td>4.9 (8)</td>
<td>4.7 (14)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dowry has become a prestige issue and increased people’ greed for money so it should be stopped</td>
<td>4.4 (6)</td>
<td>6.7 (11)</td>
<td>5.7 (17)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>There has been severe economic burden and harassments on girls so it should be stopped</td>
<td>19.1 (26)</td>
<td>17.1 (28)</td>
<td>18.0 (54)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dowry should be a voluntary practice</td>
<td>72.1 (98)</td>
<td>71.3 (117)</td>
<td>71.7 (215)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Chi-Square = 0.904  df = 3  p = 0.824

With regard to the perception on dowry, those who mentioned that dowry should be voluntary, was found to be the highest (71.7%). Findings across the two denominations show
almost equal representation from both the Orthodox Syrian (72.1 %) and the Reformed Syrian (71.3 %). Respondents were of the view that whatever wealth has to be given, it should be as per the wish of the girls’ parents and there should not be any demand from the groom’s party. Dowry should be seen as ‘woman’s wealth’ or streedhan and hence whether it is given as moveable or immoveable form, that should not be the concern of the groom or his family.

Those who mentioned that dowry should be stopped because there has been a severe economic burden on girls’ parents was found to be 18.0 per cent. A marginal difference in percentage was observed between the denominations - 19.1 per cent and 17.1 per cent of Orthodox Syrians and Reformed Syrians respectively. Many women from families which were economically backward found it extremely difficult to meet the dowry need, and the burden was more if there was more than one girl. Many families have been pushed to an economic crisis, almost running into debt and abject poverty.

Around 5.7 per cent wanted to do away with dowry, as it has become a prestige issue and reflects the increased greed for money. They felt that the practice of dowry has become highly commercialised. Girls’ parents seeking a suitable alliance for their daughters have to give into the expectations of groom and his family. As everybody knows dowry is illegal, the transaction is done underhand, where the knowledge about the deal remains within the family circle or among close associates.

Those who mentioned that dowry has been a tradition and it cannot be done away with it was represented by 4.7 per cent. Although women in this category believed that dowry is not a healthy practice and illegal, they conveyed that they were compelled to do so, as unless dowry was given, it could pose problems in marital front and girls would remain at home, and parents would not want that to happen. Moreover, if the dowry was not given, the women would face humiliation and ill-treatment at the matrimonial houses. Some of them even remarked that even after paying the dowry, women were subjected to harassment, so one could imagine the situation if dowry was not given. They had cited cases where women were even sent back home in the name of dowry and there have been incidents of separation.
and divorce.

The study revealed that respondents strongly supported the voluntary transaction of wealth in connection with marriage which could be dowry in the form of moveable or immoveable wealth. The economic burden on girls’ families and dowry related problems were highlighted. There were women who felt that the practice of dowry be continued as they thought it was difficult to root out the practice.

7.4.3. Perceptions regarding Trends in the Practice of Dowry among the Syrian Christians

Dowry among the Syrian Christians was formerly quite a moderate amount which was supplemented by jewels. But today, large sums of cash amounting to a few lakhs of rupees as well as costly clothing and jewellery are transacted. Unfortunately, the deciding factors like education and employment of women ceased to have any value and very often the amount of dowry is the deciding factor in marriages. Fearing the legal consequences of dowry practice, transaction of dowry has become a private affair, between the families involved. Respondents of the study were asked about the trends in dowry practice prevailing among the Syrian Christian community.

Table (7.10)
Percentage Distribution of Respondents According to Perceptions regarding the Trends in Practice of Dowry among the Syrian Christians by Denominations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Perception regarding the Trends in Practice of Dowry among the Syrian Christians</th>
<th>Orthodox Syrian (N = 136)</th>
<th>Reformed Syrian (N = 164)</th>
<th>Total (N = 300)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Practice of dowry has increased</td>
<td>88.2 (120)</td>
<td>90.2 (148)</td>
<td>89.3 (268)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not sure</td>
<td>11.8 (16)</td>
<td>9.8 (16)</td>
<td>10.7 (32)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Chi-Square = 0.315   df = 1   p = 0.575
An overwhelming proportion (89.3%) of the respondents was of the view that the practice of dowry has only increased over the years among the Syrian Christians. Among the denominations, this opinion was expressed by 90.2 per cent of the Reformed Syrians while the same feeling was expressed by 88.2 per cent of Orthodox Syrians. The remaining 10.7 was of the opinion that they were not sure whether dowry has increased or not.

The practice of dowry has only escalated indicating the growing consumer greed of the Syrian Christian community in Kerala.

7.4.4. Economic Transactions in Connection with Respondents’ Marriages

Considerable proportion of the respondents from the Orthodox Syrian and Marthoma of Reformed Syrian had middle class or lower middle class background and the parental landed property of a good percentage of respondents was also reported to be less within the range of 50 cents and 2 acres. Women of CSI background were in a better economic class. Respondents also comprised different age groups like young, middle, and old. Considering all these aspects, the economic transactions could also vary as per the familial assets, attitudes and other socio-economic factors.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Kind of Wealth Transacted in Connection with Marriage</th>
<th>Orthodox Syrian (N = 136)</th>
<th>Reformed Syrian (N = 164)</th>
<th>Total (N = 300)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dowry</td>
<td>76.5 (104)</td>
<td>71.3 (117)</td>
<td>73.7 (221)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A share in the parental property and dowry</td>
<td>8.1 (11)</td>
<td>6.7 (11)</td>
<td>7.3 (22)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A share</td>
<td>11.0 (15)</td>
<td>11.6 (19)</td>
<td>11.3 (34)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Any other</td>
<td>4.4 (6)</td>
<td>10.4 (17)</td>
<td>7.7 (23)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Chi-Square = 3.917    df = 3    p = 0.271
When the respondents were asked about the kind of wealth they got in connection with their marriages, almost three-fourths (73.7%) of the respondents replied that they received dowry in the form of moveable wealth like cash or gold at the time of marriage. Among both the denominations, the trend was similar with marginal differences. It was observed that 76.5 per cent of Orthodox Syrians got dowry while those who received dowry among the Reformed Syrians was 71.3 per cent. Those who got a share in the parental property was found to be 11.3 per cent. Almost an equal representation from both the denominations were observed -11.6 per cent of Reformed Syrians and 11.0 per cent of Orthodox Syrians. Those who replied that they got some share and dowry were found to be 7.3 per cent. Among those who got share and dowry in each denomination, 8.1 per cent of Orthodox Syrian women got both dowry and a share while it was found to be 6.7 per cent among Reformed Syrian women. The rest 7.7 per cent belonged to the category of any other.

It was observed that among respondents who got dowry, there were cases where the parents had sold some landed property to raise the cash for dowry since the grooms and their families preferred wealth in the form of movable property. In a few cases, wealth which the brothers received as dowry was in turn transacted to these respondents. There were also some kind of adjustments worked out among a few families where a portion of the property was legally documented in the name of the respondents at the time of their marriages. This was done with an understanding that when the brothers got married, the dowry which their wives brought were in return transferred to sisters as their wealth and the same property was rewritten in the name of brothers and their wives. There were also very few instances where the respondents’ fathers- in- law took the dowry and in return transferred a portion in the property to them.

Those who got a share it was noted that landed property they received was between five cents to one acre. Those women who got dowry and share, dowry consisted some amount, gold and a portion of landed property.

In the category of any other, there were instances where transaction of wealth had not taken place when this study was underway and only oral promises were given to the
bridegroom’s party that whatever the wealth either dowry or share will be transacted within a period mentioned at the time of settling the marriage. In a few cases, the respondents’ parents (those who were financially backward) could only afford to meet the marriage expenses at the time of marriages and promised to transact the wealth agreed upon in due course of time. This was possible only after the marriage of their sons, whereby the dowry of daughters-in-law would be utilised to clear the deal. There were also cases where the parents had given part of the wealth promised during marriage settlement and part of the amount agreed was still pending to be transacted. This kind of practice was reported from those who were married within the last five years. There were couple of cases where the respondents did not receive anything at all from natal family on account of inter-caste marriages. It was also brought out by one or two respondents during the interviews that they raised their own dowry by working in the Middle East, as their parents were poor and other sisters were there to be settled and these women never got anything from the natal family.

It was evident that dowry was the chief economic transaction among the respondents of the study and those who received share in property was reported to be very dismal. The trend was similar in both denominations. Those who received dowry and share was comparatively very negligible. Various responses were brought out with regard to those who belonged to the category of any other.

7.4.5 . Assessment Regarding the Wealth received by Respondents

Findings regarding the kind of wealth women obtained in connection with their marriages show variations though almost majority of women had received dowry in moveable form as their wealth. In order to find out whether women could make any assessment regarding the wealth they received they were asked to come out with their opinion and the findings are presented in Table 7.12.
When the respondents were asked to make an assessment regarding the wealth they received (dowry or share in the property) in connection with marriage, 27.3 per cent replied that they received less in comparison with the value of equal share in the property. Denominationally, 30.1 per cent was of Orthodox Syrian women felt that they received less while it was found to be 25.0 per cent of the Reformed Syrian women. Those who did not comment on this question were 25.7 per cent. Denomination wise those who did not comment was more from the Reformed Syrian (29.9%) while from the Orthodox Syrian it was 20.6 per cent. Around 19.3 per cent replied that they did not know the worth of the wealth they received from the natal family. In this category, the Reformed Syrian women were slightly on the higher side with 21.3 per cent while Orthodox Syrian women constituted 16.9 per cent.

Women who felt that they received more than an equal share in the property was found to be 17.0 per cent. In this category, a higher percentage (22.8 %) belonged to the Orthodox Syrian while that of the Reformed Syrian 12.2 per cent. The point to be noted here was that among those who got more than the equal share in the property from both denominations, except those from a CSI background (of Reformed Syrian), all the four Syrian Christian
denominations were from the Adichanalloor village. Their parents had negligible landed property and belonged to the lower middle class and had more number of siblings. In many such families their brothers had gone to the Middle East to raise money to settle them in marriage. So the dowry they received was comparatively more than their share.

Those who stated that they were given wealth equal to the value of equal share in the property was found to be 10.7 per cent. In this category there was close representation from the Reformed Syrian (11.6%) and Orthodox Syrian (9.6%). Among those who did not comment regarding the wealth they received, a few of the respondents conveyed that the transactions had not been taken place so they were not in a position to comment about this. There were other responses - nothing has been given either because of inter-caste marriages, or very few of the respondents had raised their own dowry and had not received any wealth in connection with marriage. There were also responses that since they had not thought about it, it was difficult to make any statement.

Respondents who did not know the worth of the wealth they received, maintained that as the partition had not been done, they could not make any statement in this regard. A few of them even responded that they could get more from parents in the future. Among those who received equal wealth, the practice was found to be more common among those who had only sisters and hence the parents could allocate equal shares to all the girls.

The respondents’ assessment on wealth received indicated a higher feeling of receiving less wealth from the natal family irrespective of the denomination. Those who received more wealth as dowry were Orthodox Syrian women.

7.4.6. Attitude of Respondents towards Claiming their Share in Intestate Parental Property

Wealth received in connection with marriage was found to be varied in nature. Those who got less compared to the worth of landed property were more in number. Perhaps some of the women who received less wealth could place a suggestion before their surviving parent
and other siblings especially brothers, for an equal share in the intestate property. In case there was resistance from parent/brothers towards such a proposal, it was possible that some of the respondents wanted to invoke the provisions of the law to claim their share. It was also possible that some of the women might forgo their share in the property for various reasons. It could also be the case that those who got equal or more wealth as dowry or share at the time of marriage might want to get a share since they were entitled to do so. So in order to understand the attitude of the respondents regarding claiming their share in the intestate property, they were asked to express their opinions and it has brought out the following responses.

Table (7.13)
Percentage Distribution of Respondents According to Attitude towards Claiming Equal Share in Intestate Property by Denominations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Attitude towards Claiming Equal Share in Intestate Property</th>
<th>Orthodox Syrian (N = 136)</th>
<th>Reformed Syrian (N = 164)</th>
<th>Total (N = 300)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Interested</td>
<td>2.2 (3)</td>
<td>0.0 (0)</td>
<td>1.0 (3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not Interested</td>
<td>5.1 (7)</td>
<td>1.8 (3)</td>
<td>3.3 (10)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not Applicable</td>
<td>92.6 (126)</td>
<td>98.2 (161)</td>
<td>95.7 (287)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Chi-Square = 6.310   df = 2   p = 0.043

When the respondents were asked about their intention to claim a share in inheritance, a large percentage (95.7 %) was found to be in the category of non applicable. In this category, Reformed Syrian was found to be closer to hundred (98.2 %) and that of Orthodox Syrian was 92.6 per cent. Those women who were not interested in their share were reported to be 3.3 per cent and only (1.0 %) was found to be interested in follow up. Those who were interested were Orthodox Syrian women while there were no Reformed Syrian women who were interested in a share in inheritance.

Non applicability was found to be because of various factors. Those who received dowry some of them considered dowry as their share in parental property. There were a few
who got a share in addition to the dowry during the partition when the parents were alive, though it was not equal. There have been instances where the respondents had given away their rights at the behest of their brothers’ request and very few were reciprocated in doing so by getting some compensation. Very few brothers had compensated their share willingly by giving some wealth in moveable form though it was not on equal terms. It was observed that the partition had been carried out among some of the families and the property had been passed on to brothers when the parents were alive. For those families where there were only girls, the practice of equal share was done in a manner where normally the parental house and the property surrounding the house was given to that daughter who lived with the parents. There were respondents who had already received their equal share along with their other sisters. Quite a few respondents said that parents had divided the property equally among the sons and daughters. Mothers of some of the respondents were surviving and mothers were willing to give both their daughters and sons a share in the property. There were also instances where the parents had willed a share for the respondents along with their brothers.

For many of the respondents who were in the young and middle aged category, their parents were still surviving and division of property had not taken place and hence they were not in a position to respond. There were two cases where the respondents were the only children and the entire wealth after their parents’ lifetime was to be inherited by them. There was one case where the respondent informed that her husband was totally against dowry and that even if she got a share, she would have to forgo it. A few respondents mentioned that their husbands were against the idea of claiming a share. There were cases where there was no property and the parents with their limited resources married these respondents by giving dowry. It was also brought to the notice that among some families, the partition had already taken place even before the implementation of Indian Succession Act (1925) came into effect in Kerala in 1986.

Those who showed an interest in getting a share were those who felt that they received less wealth compared to their siblings, especially the brothers. These women expressed that they would like a share but not through any legal tussle but only if the brothers were
willingly or voluntarily giving it to them. In this context, one respondent openly mentioned that more than her it was her husband who had been very adamant to get a share, if not at least Rs. 50000 to be given, by her mother or brothers. One of the respondents mentioned that her mother was alive and that she would like to convey her desire to her mother that she would like to get a share if not equal in the property while she is alive, but she was hesitant to go ahead with it thinking that her action would irk her brothers.

For those who were not interested, many responded felt that they got more wealth in comparison with their siblings. Some of them opined that they were economically in a sound position and hence they were not interested in the natal property. In two to three incidents, respondents had mentioned that their fathers had offered to give a share at the time of partition in addition to dowry but they declined to accept it since they felt they did not require it. A few of respondents had to be contended with the wealth they got either in the form of dowry or share at the time of marriage even though they were not financially in a good position now. For those who belonged to low economic background, where the parents who did not have much landed property to divide among all the children, the respondents were not interested to claim a share. This feeling was strongly evident among those respondents who had many siblings (5 or more). Respondents who were attached to the brothers were not interested to press for a share and to lose out on their goodwill. This was felt more by those respondents whose brothers had raised the money for their dowry and also whose brothers who were taking care of the parents. Some of them informed that their husbands would get their share from their side so they were not keen to have a share from parental property.

It was also reported that couple of the respondents wanted to put a claim in getting a share earlier but later on due to the financial crisis at home they withdrew their plans. There were responses that even after giving dowry at the time of marriage they have been helped by the parents and brothers in whatever way they could as they were financially not sound. This included those whose husbands were out of jobs and respondents themselves were housewives or those who received help for education of children, marrying their daughters, and so on. In quite a few cases it was noted that, the respondents themselves had
relinquished their inheritance rights voluntarily. It was also observed that there were a couple of cases where the respondents lost their parents and were brought up by step-fathers/step mothers, and therefore they felt not to take up the issue. The association between the two variables was found to be significant at 0.05.

The data regarding respondents’ interest in the share has brought out that an overwhelming proportion of women were in the category of non applicable on account of personal, legal or familial grounds without any distinct differences among the two denominations. Those who were interested in getting a share were just one per cent constituted by Orthodox Syrian women.

**Summary**

Awareness and knowledge of Syrian Christian women regarding the change in the inheritance law, and the provisions of the law for Christians, was found to be high across both denominations, with moderate increase among the Reformed Syrian. The respondents irrespective of denominations, were fairly knowledge about the share that the children were entitled to get in the intestate property of parents. The level of awareness and knowledge were indicative of their higher exposure to media and participation in women’s programmes and organisations. The higher educational status of the Reformed Syrian women gave them an edge over their counter-parts from the Orthodox Syrian with regard to knowledge on inheritance. However, the women of both denominations lacked knowledge regarding the Retrospective Effect of the law. Because of their lack of awareness regarding the Retrospective Effect of the Law, many of the respondents in the older age category thought that they were not entitled for share in inheritance and hence could lose out in invoking the law if required.

A considerable proportion of women expressed their support for equal inheritance rights in the intestate property of parents. However, the favourable response was not overwhelming due to various factors. Dowry received, insufficient parental property, protection of family relationship, continued support from parents and siblings and promotion of love and peace based on Christian principles were found to be some pertinent binding
factors. Justification for claim for equal rights was more circumstantial or contextual, where women deserved it more than exercising one’s right.

Syrian Christian women were strongly supportive of the idea of parents writing a Will including women as heir, or testamentary succession. The mode of transaction of property through Will, they felt could avoid family conflicts, induce a sense of belongingness among women to natal families after marriage, an economic security for those women who were divorced and separated and widowed. Most importantly, gender inclusive practice of inheritance was seen as a means to curtail the practice of dowry. Though there was no clear cut mandate for a share in the parental property, responses were more directed towards getting a share than dowry which had come out more from Reformed Syrian women.

As far as the practice of dowry was concerned, there was greater consensus for dowry to be practiced on voluntary basis due to the heavy burden the practice has been placing on girls’ parents. It was evident that dowry was still ruling the roost in the Syrian Christian community, even after implementation of law on equal inheritance rights. As far as the Syrian Christian women of the study were concerned, majority of women got dowry as the wealth from their parents, and only a marginal proportion of the respondents got share in the parental property. The trend was similar among both the denominations. The findings were indicative of the unceasing dowry transactions among the Syrian Christian community in the study area. The findings also illustrated various inter and intra familial negotiations and adjustments carried out in marriage settlements in terms of economic transactions.

Respondents who felt they received less wealth compared to what they could have got as equal share were more in both denominations. However, among those who opined that they received more wealth as dowry compared to the equal share in property a greater percentage was from Orthodox Syrians. The reason being, the dowry raised by their brothers by working in the Gulf countries was more in comparison with the parental property and the worth of the share. Equal share was observed to be a practice among families comprising only daughters. An overwhelming proportion of women were non-assertive towards equal share in the intestate property on various grounds. Those who were interested to place a claim for share was just one percent, constituted by the Orthodox Syrian.