

Cerberus Slab of Hatra  
by Vladimir S. Tuman  
(see page 4)

# NINEVEH

*Voice of  
The Assyrian Foundation of America*

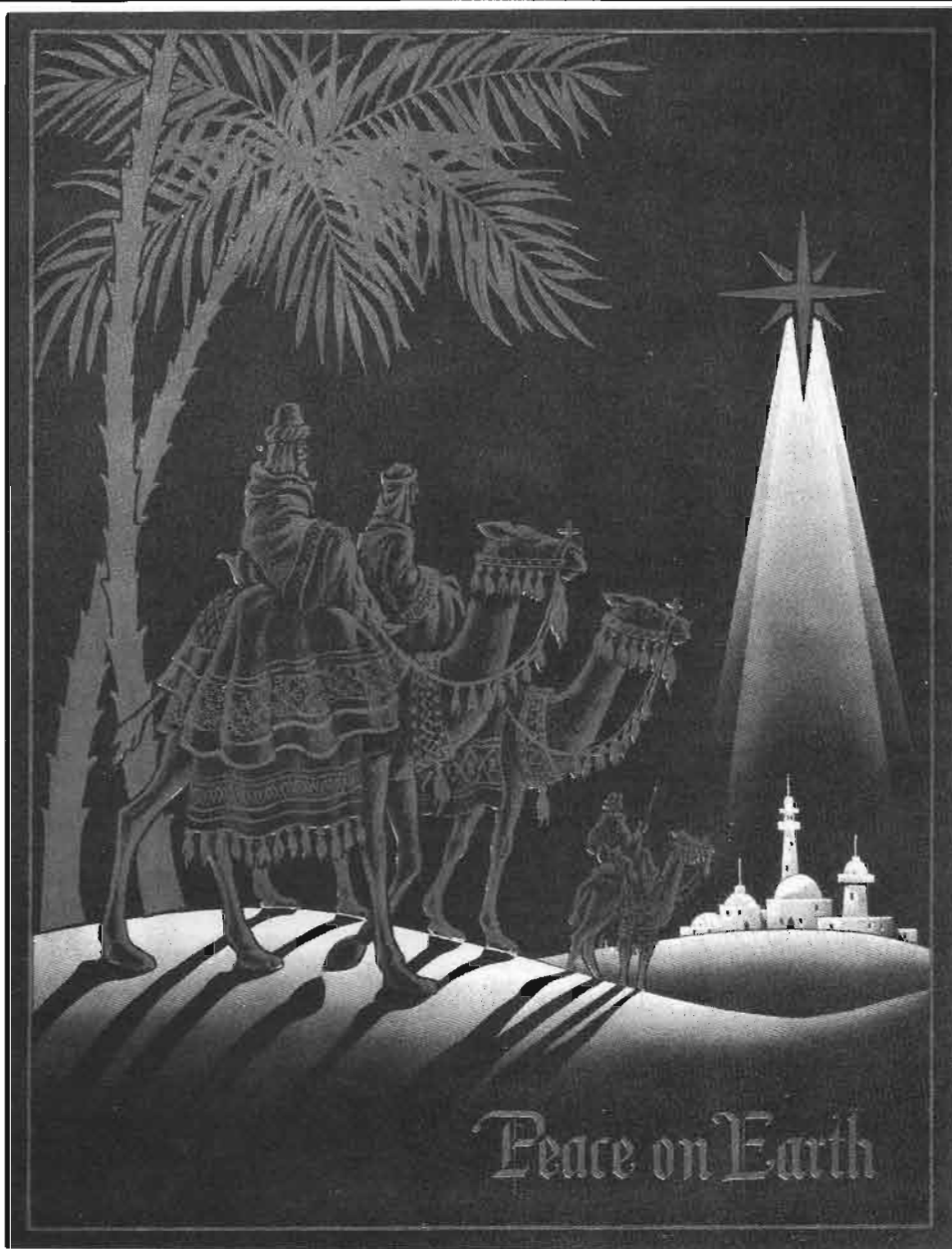


*Established 1964*

*Dedicated to the  
Advancement of Education  
of Assyrians*

FOURTH QUARTER 1981

VOLUME 4 NO. 4



**CULTURAL—EDUCATIONAL—SOCIAL**

# NINEVEH

FOURTH QUARTER 1981

VOLUME 4

NO. 4

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## Assyrian Periodicals

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# Extracts from Mar Eshai Shimun's XXIII Christmas Message 1966

## *Prayers and Blessings Receive*

When Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judah, in the days of Herod the king, there came Magi from the East to Jerusalem. And they were saying, where is the king of the Jews who has been born? For we have seen his star in the East, and we have come to worship him. (Matthew 2, 1-2.)

There are many references in both the Old and New Testaments concerning the birth of the Messiah. Some of these are awe inspiring, and yet others, such as the story of the Magi, are related in simple human language. But there is one common relationship with all these accounts, namely, the straightforward matter-of-fact narrative. There is no shadow of doubt in the minds of the narrators that God is speaking through them.

And so the Magi, following the star, have come all the way from Persia to Bethlehem in Palestine, in order to worship the "king of the Jews who had been born," and to offer unto him, their symbolic gift offerings of gold, mur and incense.

## *Prophecy Fulfilled*

Since this event has not been foretold in the Bible, men have often wondered how did these Magi come to know of this divine act? The only Christian Church that to the best of our knowledge, has given an explanation of this event, is the Holy Apostolic and Catholic Church of the East, which is the only Church which has preserved its Apostolic Semitic Christian faith, traditions and culture unchanged to this day, and which in addition to this, the fact of having been established and grown into a universal church within the Persian Empire, no doubt also gave it access to historical facts or traditions which were not known elsewhere.

The following hymn is translated from the Aramaic original as it appears in the book of "Khudra" of the Church of the East, which was started in the beginning of the fourth century and completed in its final form in the eighth century, says: "And the Magi, men of high rank and leaders, twelve princes in all, bringing with them offerings, gold, mur and incense, in honour of the king whose birth was wonderful from a virgin who knew no husband. They opened their treasure and offered their gifts as they had been commanded by their master Zaradosht who had prophesied this event."

Though Zaradosht is not held as a prophet by the Church, since no mention is made of him in the Old Testament but he was no doubt held as such by the adherents of his own faith, namely, the Zoroastrians, and there was apparently some kind of foretelling of this divine event in their religious books or in their tradition, and the fathers of the Church of the East — which is

often spoken of as the Church of Persia — were aware of this, and hence a logical explanation of the fact that the twelve holy Magi, the star gazers, had been forewarned by divine providence and thus followed the star which led them to the holy manger.

## *Cradle of Christianity*

Our purpose in taking for our text the story of the Magi for this our Christmas message, is not to dwell on its theological meaning but rather to remind you, Our Children in Christ, of the fact that the countries of the Middle East, especially Mesopotamia, together with Palestine, constitute the focal point of all the dispensations of both the Old and New Testaments, and wherefrom not only the message of this divine event was carried to the four corners of the earth, but also where the faith, as we have already stated, has been preserved in its purity to this day.

## *Urmia as Place of Worship*

Having taken for our text the story of the Magi, it is well known that the Magi who came back from their worship of the new born king, established their place of worship in the Assyrian community in Urmia (Rezieh), Iran, where a small church of Matmaryam (Our Lady Mary) was erected and where several of the Magi were buried.

Let us all therefore on this holy day, go in spirit with the Magi and offer with them our worship and thanksgiving for God's wonderful dispensation for our salvation and the salvation of all men, and with the angelic host raise our praise to Him who was born on this day, "Praise to God in the highest, on earth peace and good hope to all mankind." May His grace reign in all the world. Grace and mercy of our worshipful God be with us all, amen.

## *New Members*

*The Assyrian Foundation wishes to welcome the following as new members:*

*Mr. David George*

*Ms. Diana George*

*Rev. Fereidoun Es-Haq*

*Mr. & Mrs. Amjed Shamoon*



*Cerberus Slab of Hatra*



# Cerberus Slab of Hatra

## May Represent Important Astronomical Events

By Dr. Vladimir S. Tuman

*California State College, Stanislaus*

*Jet Propulsion Laboratory, California Institute of Technology*

*Continued from last issue.*

### *II. Re-examination of the Cerberus Slab of Hatra*

A. We note a lady sitting on a chair, with an eagle on her head. At the time of the Romans and Partians, the sign of an eagle signified the royalty or nobility. Thus one may speculate that the lady represents a queen sitting on her throne. To the astronomers the queen was known as the constellation of Cassiopeia. According to mythology, Cassiopeia<sup>23</sup> was the wife of Cepheus, King of Ethiopia, and mother of Andromeda. Fig. 2 shows a 17th century drawing of Cassiopeia by Johann Bayers, Uranometria, first published in 1603. The constellation of Cassiopeia is located in the Northern Hemisphere with right ascension (RA) about 1 hr. (it extends roughly some 30°), and at a declination (dec.) +60, only 30° from Polaris. This constellation which has the shape of a W, is visible every night of the year. The eagle on the head of the queen in the slab is not believed to represent the constellation of Aquila.

B. At the base of the throne a close inspection reveals two fish which one may speculate to represent the constellation of Pisces, at 1 hr. RA and +15°. This is an inconspicuous constellation, since none of its stars are brighter than fourth magnitude. It is the twelfth constellation of the zodiac. Pisces is an autumn constellation visible at midnight towards the end of September. At the time of the vernal equinox, the celestial equator and the ecliptic intersect in this constellation. This constellation was represented by two fish known as "Nuna" by the Babylonians and Assyrians<sup>24</sup> since early times. It must be realized that with reference to the vernal equinox the precession has moved all the stars and zodiac constellations some 30° westward over the last 2000 years.

C. The arms of the throne of the queen are resting on two animals, that we speculate to be Capricornus, the Sea Goat, on the right, and Aries, or the Ram, on the left-hand side. It is interesting to observe that the names "Emra," the Ram and "Gedia," Sea Goat, were assigned to these two constellations several millenia B.C. by the Babylonian and Assyrian Astronomers.<sup>25</sup> Note that Capricornus has a right ascension of 21 hrs. while Aries at 3 hrs. RA, is symmetrically situated about the vernal equinox. Capricornus has a declination of -20° while Aries has a declination of +20°, and they are symmetrically situated north and south of the ecliptic. Neither of the two constellations is very conspicuous.

D. A small model of Semeion is placed in the left hand of the queen slightly to the right side of the Capricornus' head. This Semeion had only six known planets of the time. A larger model of the Semeion, which represents (from the top) the crescent of the Moon, the Sun and the other five visible planets, is also placed at the extreme left of the slab. The significance of the Semeion is believed to be the main message on the tablet; we shall discuss this aspect in greater detail.

E. Next to the queen on the top is an object which looks like a Scorpion but with a slight stretch of imagination we speculate that it represents a crab, or the constellation of Cancer, at 9 hrs. RA and +20° dec. This is the fourth constellation of the zodiac. The Babylonians and Assyrians several centuries B.C. believed that "Sartana," Cancer, was the "Gate of Men" through which the soul descended to earth to inhabit the bodies of newborn babies.<sup>26</sup> According to Greek mythology, this is the crab which grasped the foot of Hercules while he was fighting the water snake monster known as Hydra.<sup>27</sup>

F. Between the queen and the giant man at the center are two snakes, one facing the queen while the second is facing the hunter. The man is wearing a two-headed snake on his belt and another two-headed snake is wrapped around his neck, while a fifth snake covers his feet. The hunter is holding an axe where it ends with a snake. Finally the hunter holds on a leash three dogs, the tails of which end as snakes. In all, in this portion of the slab there are nine heads of snakes with the same color. We speculate that these represent the constellation of Hydra which, according to the mythology, was a nine-headed sea serpent monster. Hydra was supposed to be the snake shown on a uranographic stone from the Euphrates of 1200 B.C. of the Babylonian and Assyrian era. It is identified with the source of the fountains of the great deep and one of the several sky symbols of the great dragon Tiamat.<sup>28</sup>

Later on, according to Greek mythology, Hydra was the water snake that inhabited the Lernean Marshes, whenever it ravaged the province of Argos. It had nine heads and as soon as one was cut off, another would sprout in its place. This made it difficult to kill. Hercules finally succeeded in exterminating the monster with the aid of Iolas, who branded each severed neck with a hot iron to prevent the new head from growing. The ninth head was said to be immortal. Thus, Hercules buried it beneath a rock. Juno, envious of Hercules' fame, sent a crab to distract his attention by nipping Hercules' foot. This plan, however, failed and the crab (Cancer) was quickly dispatched.<sup>29</sup>

Here we note that the content of the slab indicates the influence of Greek mythology along with Babylonian and Assyrian mythology as the sources of the constellations depicted on the tablet. Hydra is a very long constellation situated at approximately 10 hrs. RA and -20° dec.

G. At the left center of the tablet we have a giant man with the sign of an eagle signifying that he is royalty. In his right hand he is holding an axe with a snake's tail. His left hand, which is holding the leash of three dogs, is resting on his giant sword. The man has an awesome and terrorizing feature and penetrating eyes. He is probably wearing the mask of the Bull with two horns (representing the constellation of Taurus), yet the man has his own two horns indicating that he is the Baby-

Ionian and Assyrian god. We speculate that the man represents the constellation of Orion the Royalty Hunter and not Hercules associated with the mythology of Hydra.

Orion was known by the Babylonians and Assyrians as Tammus, the giant husband of Ishtar some 2000 years B.C. Since Ishtar was a Babylonian-Assyrian goddess, the horn of the queen, sitting in the chair indicates the association of Cassiopeia to Ishtar. The constellation of Orion the Hunter is one of the most brilliant and conspicuous constellations in the sky, and it is located at 5 hrs. RA and +5° dec. This constellation was in the domain of Ea, the god of the underworld.

H. The three dogs on the leash held by Orion the Hunter are speculated to be Canis Major (the Big Dog) and Canis Minor. Chaldeans, Assyrians, Greeks and Romans all called the constellation the "Dog." Sirius, the bright star in this constellation since the dawn of the Bet Nahrain civilization, has always been called the "Dog Star." Homer called the constellation the "Dog of Orion," while the Assyrians called it "Kalbu Shamash," the Dog of the Sun. The other dog is speculated to be Canis Minor.<sup>30</sup>

The constellation of Canis Major (Kalbu-Shamash) is at 7 hrs. RA and -20° dec. The Canes Venatici (the hounds of the hunter) are located at 13 hrs. RA and +40° dec. Canis Minor, also known to Romans as the constellation of the Puppy, along with Canis Major are known as the "hounds of Orion the Hunter." A close inspection of the tablet clearly shows three dogs, thus the slab of Hatra cannot represent Cerberus, one dog with three heads.

I. Below the three dogs a close observation reveals a lion which we may speculate to represent the constellation of Leo the Lion at 11 hrs. RA and +15° dec. This is a spring and summer constellation, culminating at midnight about March 1st. It is visible in the midnight sky from December to June. The constellation of Leo, known to the Assyrians as "Aryo," is the fifth sign of the zodiac. The star pattern in Leo actually bears a much closer resemblance to the name it bears than do most of the constellations. This constellation is associated with the Sun; the ancient Persians' crouched lion bore the Sun on its back. (However, since Canis Major was known as Kalbu-Shamash by the Assyrians and Babylonians, one may speculate that the association of Sun and lion goes back to the Assyrians and Babylonians.)

J. On the extreme left-hand side of the slab from Hatra is the Semeion, which next to Orion is the major feature of the slab relief. At the bottom we see a black scorpion which we speculate is the constellation of Scorpius. It has a right ascension of 17 hrs. and declination of -40°. The domain of Ea is almost entirely in the Southern Hemisphere. Scorpius is a summer constellation culminating at midnight early in June. It has several bright stars including Antares. We also note a dark brown snake which we speculate that it represents the constellation of the Serpent—17 hrs. RA and 0 dec.



There is a third object shaped . . . One possible speculation is that the object represents the constellation of Sagittarius.

### *III. What is the Significance of Semeion?*

We note that in Hatra the Semeion was suddenly introduced as a symbol or a sign of religion probably about the first century A.D. It is comprised of the Moon, Sun and four or five visible planets all stacked vertically. But we also note that in this slab one giant model is placed next to the scorpion, serpents and possibly Sagittarius, the other end facing Taurus and Orion, while the next model is placed in the hand of the Queen Cassiopeia. The latter is probably comprised of the Moon, Sun and four planets only. At the time of the Parthians as we noted earlier, the Babylonians and Assyrian astronomy had reached a climax; the astronomer priests had developed the science of predicting and calculating the position of the Moon, the Sun and the planet ephemerides to a large degree of accuracy.<sup>31</sup> Furthermore, they were able to predict the eclipses of the Moon and the Sun, and probably the conjunction of several planets. Is it reasonable to speculate that priests were also very much interested in the rare occurrence of all seven planets in alignment? Does this signify the sign of Semeion? This speculation was tested utilizing the tables of Babylonian ephemerides by Bryant Tuckerman which are based on earlier works.<sup>32</sup> After some encouraging results we decided to set a constraint of a maximum of  $\pm 10^\circ$  deviation, from a perfect planetary conjunction. Then a search was made on a computer to determine a minimum of six known planetary alignments of the Babylonian and Assyrian Era. We have obtained some very interesting results which will be discussed below.

### *IV. Some Preliminary Comments:*

In analyzing the variety of the features on the slab of Hatra we may summarize as follows:

A. We are reasonably convinced that the lady on the throne represents the constellation of Cassiopeia.

B. The two fish at the foot of the throne are convincing evidence of the constellation of Pisces.

C. We are not strongly convinced about Capricornus and Aries, even though they seem to fit the picture (see the computer results, Table I). However, this interpretation does not distract from the major interpretation of the slab.

D. We are reasonably convinced about the constellation of the crab, "Cancer," and it is believed that the artist was probably not very familiar with the exact form and shape of the crab.

E. The evidence for the constellation of Hydra, the nine-headed sea serpent is very convincing.

F. The three dogs on the leash held by the hunter are interpreted as two constellations of Canis Major and Canis Minor.

G. The evidence for the constellation of Leo the Lion is very convincing.

H. The evidence for the man with horns in the tablet to represent the constellation of Orion the Hunter with head of Taurus is very convincing. It is believed that the Hunter is given four horns. The two small horns, representing the Ahriman or the god of the underworld, reflect the foundation of the religion of the time, while the front two horns just reflect a man with bull's head. From the Astrolabe of Mulapin<sup>33</sup> we learn that the

Table 1. Planetary Alignment

	Years-Date	Mercury	Venus	Sun	Mars	Jupiter	Saturn	Moon
	-54 Feb 4	342	343	343	355*	341	156	154
(12 Noon)	-54 Feb 5.5	342	344	343	356*	341	156	160
	-54 Feb 5	343	344	344	356*	341	156	166

\*Note that in this case Mars is out of phase by 12°-13° from the line of sight.

Table 2. Planetary Alignment

	Years-Date	Mercury	Venus	Sun	Mars	Jupiter	Saturn	Moon
	44 May 30	87	89	93	100	90	269	266
(12 Noon)	44 May 30.5	88	89	93	100	90	268	273
	44 May 31	89	88	94	101	90	267	279

In this table it is evident that all the seven known planets were in conjunction or opposition.

The event happened once in 1500 years search from 750 B.C. to 750 A.D.

Data are calculated by Dr. Myles Standish of Jet Propulsion Laboratory.<sup>35</sup>

### References

Bet Nahrain astronomers had divided the celestial sphere into three regions. The northern region was the domain of the god Enlil, while the god Anu controlled the region of the zodiac constellations to be spread over  $\pm 17^\circ$  latitude around the ecliptic. It is speculated that the constellation of Orion, being entirely below the plane of the ecliptic, would be considered in the domain of Ea the god of the underworld, who controlled the observable stars and constellations in the region below the plane of ecliptic.

I. The evidence for the constellations of Scorpius and Serpens are quite convincing.

#### Editor's Note:

1. For ready reference, Fig. 1, Cerberus Slab of Hatra, has been inserted in this issue.
2. The next issue will incorporate Section V, A Possible Interpretation of Semeion, and VI, Concluding Remarks.

<sup>23</sup> *Introducing Astronomy* by J. B. Sidgwick. FRAS revised by R. C. Gamble. Fabens and Fabens Limited, 1973, pages 140-141.

<sup>24</sup> *Astronomy Now*, by J. M. Pasachoff. W. B. Saunders Company. Philadelphia J. London. Toronto, 1978, page 12.

<sup>25</sup> *Star Names, Their Lore and Meaning*, by Richard Hinkley Allen. Door Publications, 1963, pages 336-343. *Introducing Astronomy*, *ibid.*, page 135-136.

<sup>26</sup> *Introducing Astronomy*, *ibid.*, page 147. *Star Names*, *ibid.*, pages 75-83.

<sup>27</sup> *Introducing Astronomy*, *ibid.*, pages 176-177. *Star Names*, *ibid.*, pages 107-113.

<sup>28</sup> *Introducing Astronomy*, *ibid.*, pages 190-191. *Star Names*, *ibid.*, page 248.

<sup>29</sup> *Introducing Astronomy*, *ibid.*, pages 158-519.

<sup>30</sup> *Star Names*, *ibid.*, pages 306-307.

<sup>31</sup> O. Neugebauer, *op. cit.*

<sup>32</sup> Bryan Tuckerman (I.B.M.), "Planetary, Lunar and Solar Positions," *American Philosophia Society*, 1962. P.T.O. for 33 601 B.C. to A.D. -I.

<sup>33</sup> B. L. Van der Waerden, *op. cit.*, *Thirty Six Stars*, (1948).

<sup>34</sup> Dr. Myles Standish of Jet Propulsion Lab, Calif. Institute of Technology (NASA), personal communication, Nov. 1980.

<sup>35</sup> Charles M. Huffer, F. E. Trinklein, and Mark Bunge, *An Introduction to Astronomy*, Chapter 8, Constellations and Star Maps, pages 95-100.

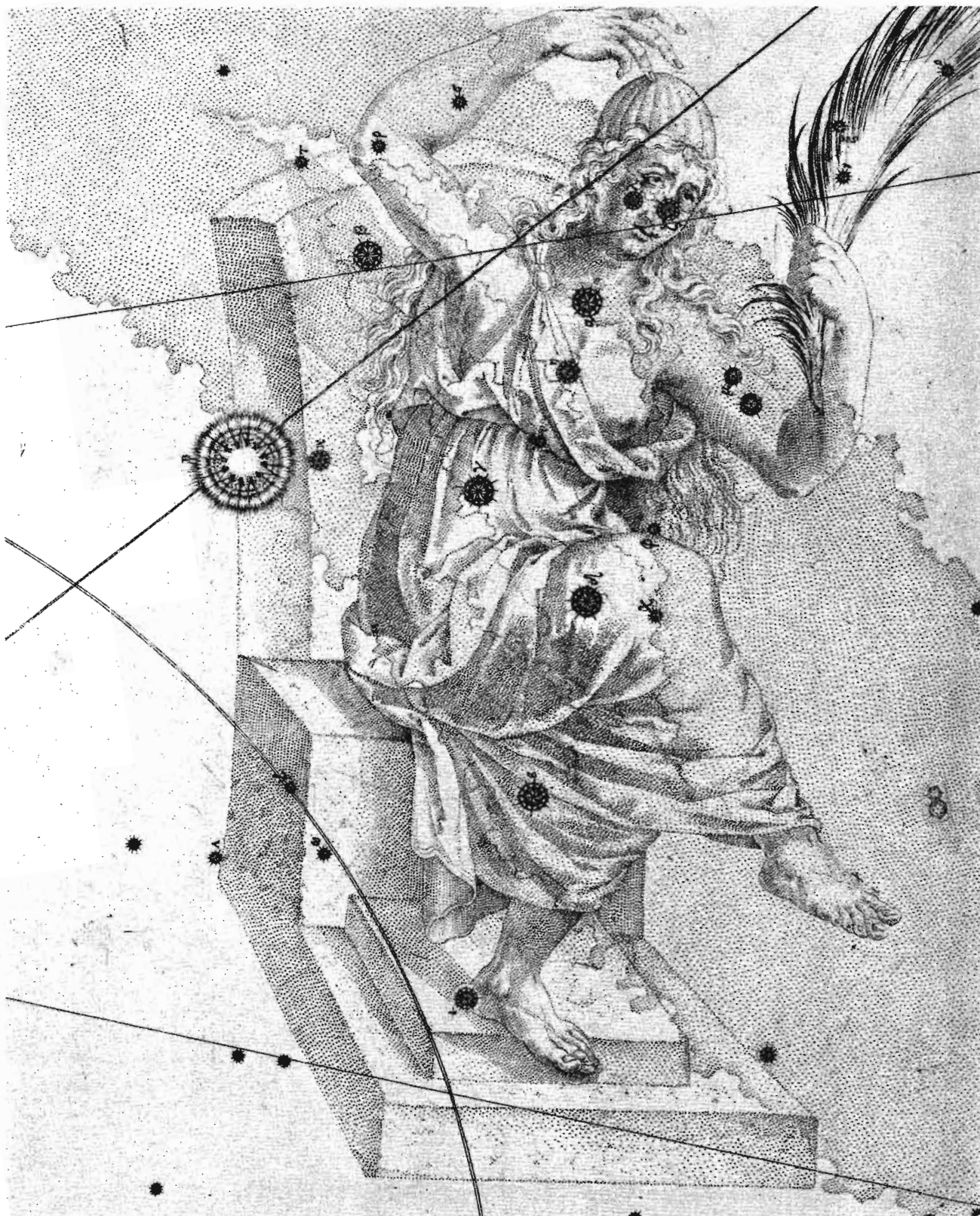
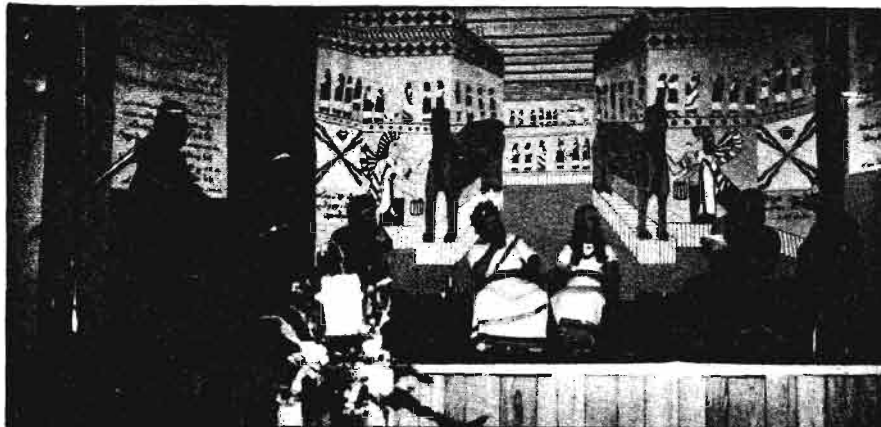


Figure 2. Cassiopeia, from Johann Bayer's Uranometria 1603



## Assyrian Drama Group in Sweden

The Assyrians in Sweden presented a drama on the life of Akhikar, who was an Assyrian philosopher, adviser and minister to King Sennacherib. The drama was written by Mr. Ibrahim Ozmen. The play was well attended. Congratulations to the Assyrians in Sweden for their efforts to maintain our culture.





## Rabi Katie Eshoo

1887 - 1914

*Composer of two renowned Assyrian songs:*

*"U'pelee l'arah b'sanjoo d'mota"*  
(I fell to earth in mortal pain)

*(See page 11)*

*"Psee la kama jwanka marda"*  
(Go forward brave youth)

*(See page 13)*

# Rabi Katie Eshoo

Rabi Katie Alamsha Eshoo was born in 1887 in the village of Deghala near the city of Urmia, Iran. While Katie was still a young girl, her father, Samuel Alamsha of Alyawa, came to the United States in pursuit of education. During her growing years, she lived in the Fisk Seminary, a mission school for girls in Urmia. Katie's mother, Rabi Esther, was a graduate of this school and at that time was given the position of a teacher. Later, she became the principal of that same school for many years. Consequently, Katie grew up in that atmosphere and after graduation was also given the position of a teacher.

In the meantime, Dr. Samuel Eshoo of Abajala returned to Urmia in 1902 from Port Dover, Ontario, Canada, where he had graduated from Queens University as a medical doctor. Here he met Rabi Katie and they were married in 1906 and moved to Tabriz, Iran where Dr. Eshoo practiced medicine both privately and also in connection with the American doctors in the Tabriz mission hospital. They acquired a piano, which was a rarity in Tabriz at that time. Rabi Katie learned to play the piano and composed the two songs which became well known among Assyrians throughout the world. Both are reproduced on the following pages.

To Dr. and Mrs. Samuel Eshoo three children were born, two daughters, Alfie and Mercy, and a son, Homer. In 1914 Rabi Katie went to visit with her mother in Urmia. While there, the influence of World War I spread into that part of Iran. Rabi Katie could not get passage to return home to her family in Tabriz. Consequently, she stayed with her mother in the school and waited for a safe passage home.

As the war in that part of the country intensified, thousands of Assyrian families left their homes in villages and took refuge in the mission school under the protection of the American flag, which was the safest place. It is said that 10,000 men, women, and children were crowded into that school, perhaps a block square, with no adequate sanitation of any kind. Many American missionaries stayed there to help.

Before long, typhoid fever broke out and many died daily. Rabi Katie, with other volunteers, offered her services in helping the sick and the dying. Eventually Rabi Katie herself fell sick with this fever and passed away there at the age of 27. Her family in Tabriz did not know of her death until one year later. One of the missionary doctors wrote about her dedicated service to her people, and about her death, to her husband, Dr. Samuel Eshoo, in 1915. That letter is still in the possession of her daughter, Alfie. Dr. Eshoo never remarried but took his three children to Canada to live and to further their education.

*Written by her daughter,  
Alfie Eshoo Johns  
1981*

*You give but little when you  
give of your possessions*

*It is when you give of yourself  
that you truly give.*

*- Kahlil Gibran*

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لعلب لادنا جملہ دمقہ  
حقیکہ حکمتا دقتہما  
لہو مشہد تجلیتا دہو آب  
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Melody by:  
Katie A. Eshoo  
1887-1914

# Wendy Wagon

Arr. by:  
Mary Ellen Niel  
1981

Handwritten musical score for "Wendy Wagon" in E-flat major, 4/4 time. The score consists of five systems of two staves each (treble and bass clef). The music features a melody in the treble staff and a bass line in the bass staff. The melody is characterized by frequent triplets, indicated by a '3' over a bracketed group of notes. The bass line provides a steady accompaniment with various chordal textures. The key signature has three flats (B-flat, E-flat, A-flat), and the time signature is 4/4. The notation is handwritten in black ink on white paper.

## تاریخ و محلہ

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**دعوت:** دعوت دین و دنیا میں ہے۔ اذکارِ اسلامیہ کی تعلیم!

**ذبح:** ذبح کا معنی قربان کرنا اور قربانی

# Birth of Christ Foretold by Astrologers of Assyria

Research done by the late Fred Tamimi

Astronomy and Astrology went hand in hand in ancient Assyria. Innumerable astronomical observations have been made by the KAKABI (astronomers) of Assyria. Their reports with astrological interpretations have come to us inscribed upon tablets of clay. The bulk of such report comes from the royal library of Aturbanipal, one of the last great emperors of Assyria, when over a century ago yielded its historical treasures of 30,000 tablets, to the spade of Hormuzd Rassam, an Assyrian archaeologist in the service of the British Museum.

From these reports we learn that the Assyrian astronomers kept a systematic observation and records of the movements of heavenly bodies. Even in the book in which they made their entries is called DAPTAR YUMANA ELIL, that is, "Book of daily recordings of heaven." And it is one of these reports made probably to ATUR-DAN III (772-775 B.C.), recorded in the Eponym Lists stating that an eclipse of the Sun took place in the month of SIVAN (June) in the Eponym of PAR-SAGALE, and which enabled modern astronomers to check and verify that an eclipse of the Sun did actually take place on June 15, 763 B.C., and fix a point from which to reckon all historical dates both forward and backward. Indeed the chronology of the Old Testament is also based on the Assyrian Eponym Cannon.

According to Prof. Frederich Delitzsch of the University of Berlin, and father of the American Assyriologists, repeated mention is made upon the destiny tablets of Assyria regarding the NEW BORN KING. One of these tablets is inscribed with the following words:

"WHEN SUCH AND SUCH A STAR APPEAR ON SUCH AND SUCH A DAY, THEN WILL A MIGHTY KING ARISE IN THE WEST LAND."

Indeed from such close observation of the skies, and records kept probably for millenniums, the savants of Assyria were able to foretell future events. Undeniably they must have been aware of the coming of a new star foretelling the coming of a Great King, and when it did approach they followed it; For it is stated (Math. 2; 2) "WE HAVE SEEN HIS STAR IN THE EAST, AND ARE COME TO WORSHIP HIM."

In the year 732 B.C. we learn Isaiah (9; 1-2) also prophesying the historical advent when he states "In Galiya d'Ami "Valley of peoples" (Galilee). The people that walked in darkness have seen a great light; They that dwell in the land of the shadow of death, upon them hath the light shined." Isaiah here refers to the Assyrians who had replaced the ten tribes of Israel, who were taken into captivity in 722 B.C. by Shalmanassar V.

According to the Assyrian history and tradition the "three" WISE MEN were named MALCOM, which means "King of people." RAB-SAQ, his "general," and BAGHT-ASSAR, his "astrologer." And probably ac-

companied by ambassadors, officers and a great host of body guards as was customary in those days. After their historical mission they returned to UR-MIA "land of water" a district of north east Assyria (now Rezaieh, Iran), and there they built a church — a replica of the manger in Bethlehem, wherein they had seen the New Born King. The Church still is used by the Assyrians and is named MART MARYAM "ST. MARY."

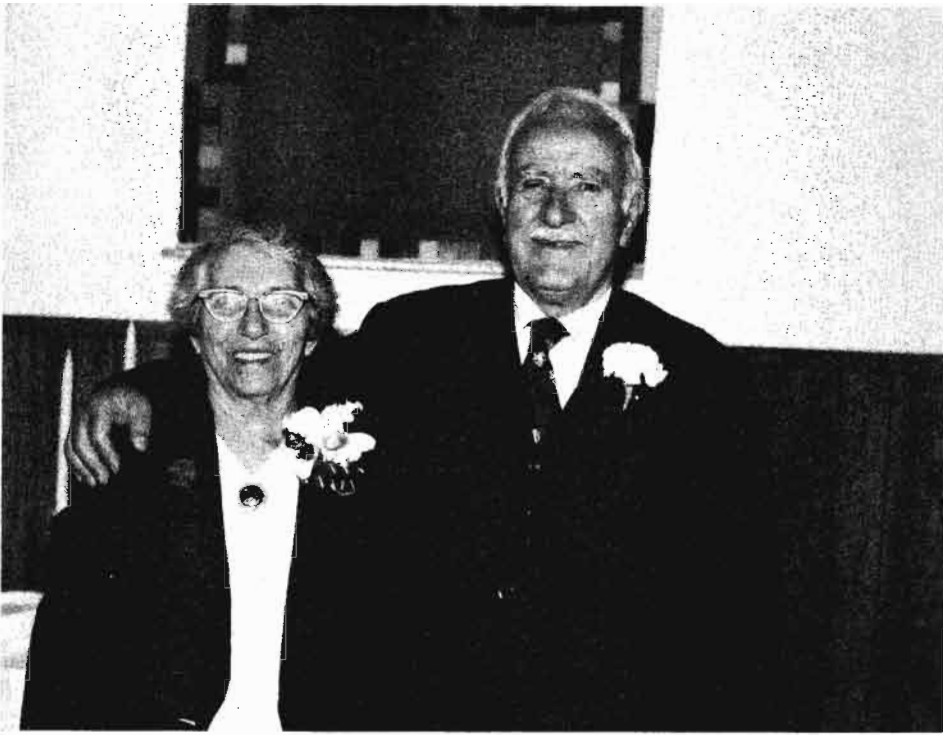
When we search for the truth in the inexhaustible written records of Assyria we see the leading spirits of that mighty nation of antiquity endeavoring with earnest zeal, even with fear and trembling to seek God, and the truth. Indeed we can joyously welcome the fact that the PRINCE OF PEACE granted to the Assyrian WISE MEN to be the first to offer their homage at the cradle of the Christian faith.



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OF ASSYRIANS

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# *In Celebration of Their 60th Wedding Anniversary*



*Shirin & Nwyia Shabbas*

*Mr. and Mrs. Nwyia Shabbas celebrated their 60th wedding anniversary at a dinner reception given in their honor by their family (children, grandchildren, nephews and neices) on Thanksgiving Day, November 26, 1981, at the Assyrian Cultural Center in Berkeley. About 70 members of the immediate family attended the celebration. Nwyia and Shirin have 6 children, 16 grandchildren and 4 great grandchildren.*



*Children (left to right): Hamlet, Alice, Baba, Nina, Julius, Lily (On the left is a "jumlana" which was part of the decoration for the occasion.)*



THE WHITE HOUSE  
WASHINGTON

November 20, 1981

Dear Mr. and Mrs. Shabbas:

Nancy and I are delighted to send our congratulations as you celebrate your 60th wedding anniversary.

We are proud to share in this very special occasion of yours. We know that you have had many joyous times over the years, and we wish your continued health and happiness.

With warm personal regards and, again, our congratulations.

Sincerely,

*Ronald Reagan*

Mr. and Mrs. Nwyia Shabbas  
534 38th Street  
Richmond, California 94805

***To Eshaya D'Mar Shimun***

*The cheeriest of wishes  
Are sent to you today  
To help you get much better  
And to hope you stay that way.*

***The Assyrian Foundation of America***

*Thinking of you  
and praying, too,  
That God is blessing  
and caring for you.*

*"The Lord bless thee, and keep thee:  
the Lord make his face shine upon thee,  
and be gracious unto thee."*

***Mar Narsai Parish of the  
Assyrian Church of the East***

# Earliest Aramaic Inscription Uncovered in Syria

STATUE OF NEWLY DISCOVERED KING  
BEARS 10TH CENTURY B.C. BILINGUAL INSCRIPTION

By Adam Mikaya

AN EXTREMELY IMPORTANT inscription recently surfaced in Syria and the few prominent scholars who know of it have been buzzing with excitement.

It is an Aramaic inscription dating from the tenth century B.C., consisting of 23 complete and well-preserved lines. Aramaic was the everyday language in Palestine during Jesus' time. Aramaic spread to Palestine from Babylonia in the fifth and fourth centuries B.C. and became the *lingua franca* of the ancient world.

Until now the earliest substantial Aramaic inscription was the so-called Sefire inscription from the mid-eighth-century B.C.<sup>1</sup> While a few small, fragmentary and incomplete lines of Aramaic may date to the ninth century B.C., it is clear that the new Aramaic inscription found in Syria is the earliest extensive Aramaic text ever discovered.

The inscription will provide scholars with valuable new evidence concerning the origins of Aramaic and will carry the story back at least 100 years before what was previously known.

The words in the inscription may also provide clues to the root meaning of puzzling Biblical and other Semitic words. One scholar thinks the new inscription may help unlock the root meaning of Eden. According to this scholar, the root meaning of Eden, as reflected in the new inscription, may be "freshness" or "dewiness."

The new inscription is especially important because it is bilingual; that is, the text is repeated in two languages, so important information about each can be gleaned from the other. In this case, the second language is Akkadian and is written in wedge-shaped cuneiform characters.

The two texts are contained on a life-size statue of a king. The statue is said to have been uncovered in 1979 by a bulldozer in a field near Tell Fakhariyah in eastern Syria, nearly 200 miles northeast of Hamah. From there it was taken to the Damascus Museum where several scholars have been able to see it.

The Akkadian text is on the front of the statue and the Aramaic text is on the back. The dialect of Akkadian

used in the inscription is Assyrian. It is a shock to discover that Assyrian royalty was using Aramaic in the tenth century B.C.

The name of the king is Haddayish'i, who was unknown prior to this time. The name means, "The God Hadad is my help or salvation." Hadad is a well-known Mesopotamian god associated with rain storms and fertility. Rain storms are usually regarded as a blessing in the Near East although they can also be destructive.

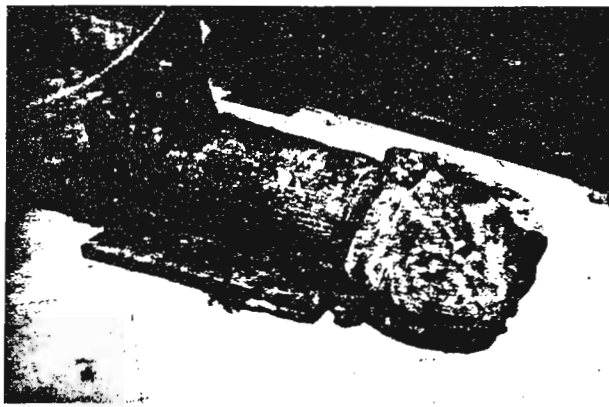
According to the new bilingual inscription, Haddayish'i is the king of Guzanu and Sikanu. These two Assyrian city-states had been known from other cuneiform inscriptions and Guzanu is referred to in the Bible as Gozan, a city to which the Assyrians deported the Israelites (see 2 Kings 17:6; 18:11). Guzanu has been identified with Tell Halaf, just across the Habor River from Tell Fakhariyah.

This immediately suggests that ancient Sikanu, over which our new king also ruled, lies buried in the ruins of Tell Fakhariyah. Soundings were taken at Tell Fakhariyah in 1939-40 by the Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago.<sup>2</sup> On the basis of these limited excavations as well as the geographical location of the site and references to Sikanu in other inscriptions, several scholars had speculated that Tell Fakhariyah was ancient Sikanu. The new bilingual inscription would seem to clinch this identification.

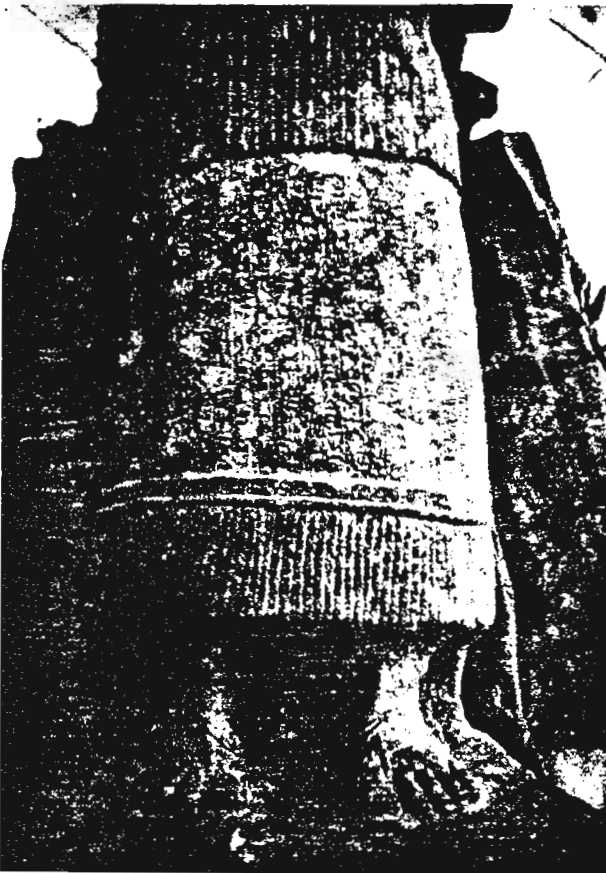
The new inscription states that the king's statue was placed before Hadad of Sikanu, who is described as a merciful god, who brings fertility and prosperity to the land. According to the inscription, King Haddayish'i placed his statue before the god Hadad to insure his own long life and well being, as well as that of his family and people. This takes up the first 16 lines of the inscription.

The last seven lines consist of curses against anyone who would remove King Haddayish'i's name from furnishings of the Temple of Hadad of Sikanu. The curses which the inscription threatens are drought, famine, blight, and disease. Hadad of Sikanu is also referred to in

*Editor's Note: This article appeared in the July-August 1981 issue of Biblical Archaeology Review. Mr. David Zia of San Jose subscribes to this magazine, and has been kind enough to forward it to us for reprint in Nineveh for its historic interest to our readers.*



Courtesy of Dewey Beegle



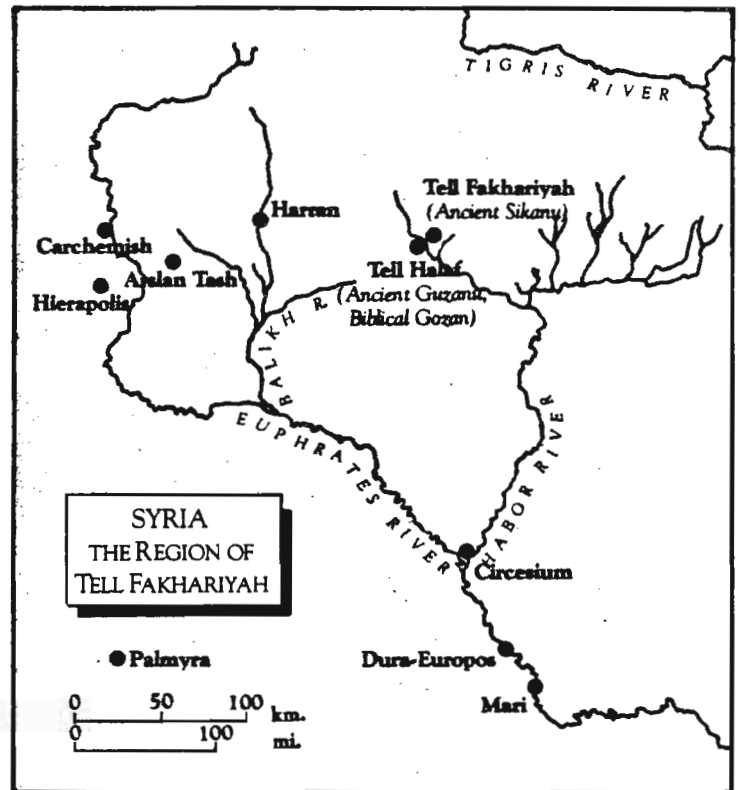
Courtesy of Dewey Beegle

The oldest known Aramaic inscription – dating to the 11th or 10th century B.C. – is incised in the back of this life-size statue of King Haddayish'i, pictured here in the storerooms of the Damascus Museum. The statue is made of black basalt. Although the head was broken off, it has since been recovered, the only damaged parts being the nose and ends of the beard. The cuneiform inscription on the king's skirt is in Assyrian.

the inscriptions as Land of the Habor. From another inscription<sup>3</sup>, we know that Sikanu was situated at the source of the Habor River, a branch of the Euphrates.

No other historical information is contained in the text of the inscription.

The tenth century B.C. date for the inscription is based on paleographic grounds. The shape of the letters is



clearly archaic and significantly earlier than other known Aramaic inscriptions. Moreover, the Aramaic dialect in which the inscription is written is also archaic. However, a debate is already shaping up as to the precise date of the inscription. Some scholars would put it in the ninth century B.C. But one especially prominent American paleographer, on the basis of a preliminary look, thinks it clearly dates to the end of the 11th century. "The orthography, the content, the treatment of sibilants as well as the paleography all point to a late 11th century date," he says. "The ayin with a dot inside (like this  $\odot$ ) cannot be found later than the 11th century."

The Syrians have reportedly assigned publication of the inscription to a Syrian scholar (for the Assyrian text) and to an English scholar (for the Aramaic text). There is no reason to believe that publication will be delayed beyond the normal sluggish, scholarly pace in such cases.

<sup>1</sup> See Gibson, *Textbook of Syrian Semitic Inscriptions*, Vol. II, p. 19 (Oxford University Press, 1975).

<sup>2</sup> C.W. McEwan et al., *Soundings at Tell Fakhariyah*, University of Chicago Oriental Institute Publications, Volume LXXIX (University of Chicago Press, 1958).

<sup>3</sup> An inscription of Adad-Nirari II describing his campaign in Syria in 894 B.C. refers to Sikanu as being situated at the source of the Habor River. (See Albert Kirk Grayson, *Assyrian Royal Inscriptions*, Part 2, Vol. II in *Records of the Ancient Near East* [Otto Harrassowitz, 1976] p. 90).

# Hear the Unique Epic Poem KATEENY THE GREAT

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## *Mediterranean Recipe* **BORANI**

*Cucumber Borani is a popular salad dish in the Middle East. It originated in Persia. It is a salad course to a complete meal. It is simply grated or diced cucumber mixed with yogurt and seasoned with minced onion, salt and pepper, and is particularly refreshing in hot weather. Here is a recipe for a more elaborate concoction.*

2 small cucumbers  
1½ cups yogurt (masta)  
¼ cup white raisins  
¼ cup chopped walnuts  
1 small onion, finely chopped  
Salt and pepper  
Powdered mint (or fresh mint leaves)

Peel and grate or dice the cucumbers. Mix well with yogurt and remaining ingredients. Serve cold.

Another version of this salad is to add fresh or dried marjoram, sweet basil and mint, a few chopped dates and 1 or 2 chopped hard cooked eggs to the cucumber-yogurt mixture.



# Selection from the EPIC POEM KATEENY GABBARA (The Great)

by William Daniel

The following seven verses are uttered by Kateeny in  
an outburst at sight of misery: —

*Commentary by Arian Ishaya*

KATEENY GABBARA is an epic poem composed of more than 4,000 verses. It comes in two volumes and reflects the history of our people embodying: their way of life, the cruelties to which they have been subjected, their struggles, and their hopes.

Besides its cultural value, KATEENY GABBARA is a great accomplishment not only in the Assyrian language, but also in the field of Assyrian poetry, where the latter has attained an unprecedented level of development and versatility. Throughout KATEENY the lucidity of the language and the variety and beauty of the verses is unparalleled.

All these qualities make the epic of KATEENY a masterpiece with which all Assyrians should be acquainted. KATEENY can be read and understood by anyone who speaks Assyrian and has an elementary knowledge of reading and writing it.

I must point out that to isolate passages from KATEENY detracts from its value as the entire story is closely interrelated. It therefore would be more meaningful to the reader if he were to know what had gone on previously. Similarly, an effort to translate the epic into any other language, like any other masterpiece, would lose much of its value and figurative meaning. However, this selection will enable the reader to catch a glimpse of the literary wealth which lies in this great work.

ܠܐ ܕܝܢ ܝܢܠܗܐ ܡܚܚܚܐ ܐܬܗ ܕܢܝܒܐ,  
 ܦܥܥܘܕ ܝܥܡܝܗ ܝܡܐ ܠܡܐ ܠܝܒܐ,  
 ܟܠ ܡܢ ܡܚܚܚܐ ܠܡܐ ܠܝܒܐ ܡܐ ܕܢܝܒܐ,  
 ܡܚܚܚܐ ܕܡܠܟܐ ܕܥܡܝܗ ܦܥܥܘܕ ܠܡܐ ܠܝܒܐ.

Tribunal of most high!  
 O source of all being!  
 Why did you turn away your face?  
 How long you will stand by,  
 And your eye be seeing,  
 Cruelties wiping out our race?

ܡܚܚܚܐ ܡܠܟܐ ܕܡܠܟܐ ܕܡܠܟܐ ܕܡܠܟܐ,  
 ܡܚܚܚܐ ܡܠܟܐ ܕܡܠܟܐ ܕܡܠܟܐ ܕܡܠܟܐ,  
 ܡܚܚܚܐ ܡܠܟܐ ܕܡܠܟܐ ܕܡܠܟܐ ܕܡܠܟܐ,  
 ܡܚܚܚܐ ܡܠܟܐ ܕܡܠܟܐ ܕܡܠܟܐ ܕܡܠܟܐ.

What could this infant tell,  
 What could be its sore sin,  
 That to flame could have fanned your passion?  
 Out of womb into hell,  
 You cast it and all kin,  
 You reveal your love in this fashion?

ܡܠܟܐ ܕܡܠܟܐ ܕܡܠܟܐ ܕܡܠܟܐ ܕܡܠܟܐ,  
 ܡܠܟܐ ܕܡܠܟܐ ܕܡܠܟܐ ܕܡܠܟܐ ܕܡܠܟܐ,  
 ܡܠܟܐ ܕܡܠܟܐ ܕܡܠܟܐ ܕܡܠܟܐ ܕܡܠܟܐ,  
 ܡܠܟܐ ܕܡܠܟܐ ܕܡܠܟܐ ܕܡܠܟܐ ܕܡܠܟܐ.

Lo! above this village,  
 Blood-thirsty eagles call,  
 As they soar all around every hour.  
 Waiting for the pillage,  
 Of bodies that should fall.  
 To pounce, to tear, to devour.

ܡܠܟܐ ܕܡܠܟܐ ܕܡܠܟܐ ܕܡܠܟܐ ܕܡܠܟܐ,  
 ܡܠܟܐ ܕܡܠܟܐ ܕܡܠܟܐ ܕܡܠܟܐ ܕܡܠܟܐ,  
 ܡܠܟܐ ܕܡܠܟܐ ܕܡܠܟܐ ܕܡܠܟܐ ܕܡܠܟܐ,  
 ܡܠܟܐ ܕܡܠܟܐ ܕܡܠܟܐ ܕܡܠܟܐ ܕܡܠܟܐ.

Enemies on the ground  
 Enemies in the sky  
 Hemmed in fast, all about, by the foes.  
 Friends that were all around,  
 Have left us and gone by,  
 To suffer all alone in death throes.

ܡܠܟܐ ܕܡܠܟܐ ܕܡܠܟܐ ܕܡܠܟܐ ܕܡܠܟܐ,  
 ܡܠܟܐ ܕܡܠܟܐ ܕܡܠܟܐ ܕܡܠܟܐ ܕܡܠܟܐ,  
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O Ashur Ninevite!  
 Mardouk of Babylon?  
 You have had many appellations.  
 Jehovah see our plight,  
 Do help me fall upon,  
 And destroy this foe of the nations.

ܡܠܟܐ ܕܡܠܟܐ ܕܡܠܟܐ ܕܡܠܟܐ ܕܡܠܟܐ,  
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My strong arm and my bow  
 Were your gifts, and sorrows  
 Of a heart so tortured night and day,  
 Do help me overthrow,  
 With my sword and arrows  
 This pest — or, my talents take away.

ܡܠܟܐ ܕܡܠܟܐ ܕܡܠܟܐ ܕܡܠܟܐ ܕܡܠܟܐ,  
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To rescue all my kind,  
 To fulfill a great dream,  
 I may lose my young life. Let it be.  
 I may die. I don't mind.  
 If only I redeem,  
 This small shoot, root of the holy tree.

*(Translated into English by the author —  
original in Assyrian)*

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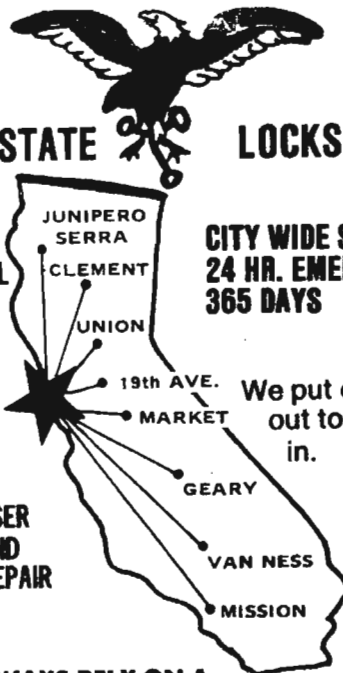
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- If a child lives with praise,  
He learns to appreciate.
- If a child lives with fairness,  
He learns justice.
- If a child lives with security,  
He learns to have faith.
- If a child lives with approval,  
He learns to like himself.
- If a child lives with acceptance &  
friendship,  
He learns to find love in the world.

# Mrs. Arian Ishaya

## Guest Speaker at the Foundation's Membership Meeting

November 14, 1981

Mrs. Arian Ishaya, an Assyrian, originally from Iran, received her Master's Degree in Cultural Anthropology from the University of Manitoba, Canada. At present she is enrolled at UCLA where she is working on her Ph.D. degree on the history of Assyrian immigration to California. She has written a book on "The Role of Minorities in the State: History of the Assyrian Experience." The book was published by the Department of Anthropology of the University of Manitoba, Canada, in 1977.

The topic of the lecture was the Assyrian Literary Revival in the Plain of Urmia around the turn of the 20th century, with specific focus on the features of a particular type of poem — the classical religious *sugita* — and how it reappeared in the vernacular of Urmia in a secular form around the turn of this century. Mrs. Ishaya concluded the lecture by reciting a *sugita* written around 1900, in the vernacular of Urmia which exemplifies the charm of the classical *sugita* in its folk context.

During the lecture Mrs. Ishaya briefly mentioned the presence of Western missionaries in the Plain of Urmia who, to reach their own purposes, studied our Assyriac language, wrote down the rules of grammar, opened up schools, and brought printing presses; and rival missions began to publish newspapers in the vernacular of Urmia. The lecture was eloquently delivered and highly informative.

During the question and answer period, a couple of comments were made from the floor to the effect that the real role of the missionaries was more political than religious or literary. Another comment from the floor was on the subject of the name "Nestorian," as this came up in Mrs. Ishaya's lecture to denote a religious sect. Mrs. Ishaya made brief comments on these matters, as they were outside the scope of the subject of poetry and *sugita*.

After the lecture, I talked to Mrs. Ishaya on these subjects. She indicated that the name "Nestorian" has been used incorrectly by a few Western writers to denote a religious sect, and by a few to denote nationality, while she says that the proper name of the church is the Church of the East. As to the Assyrian origin and identity, she strongly advocates that the present Assyrians are descendents of the old Assyrians, and that they are indigenous to the area which in ancient history constituted Assyria proper. After some lengthy discussion, she referred me to her book relative to these questions.

The following are excerpts from Mrs. Arian Ishaya's book, "The Role of Minorities in the State: History of the Assyrian Experience."

### *On the Political Role of Western Missionaries:*

From the 16th to the 19th century Persia was the scene of rivalry between Russia and England as these two powers, in their political and economic expansion, gradually dissected the Northern and Southern parts of the country into their respective spheres of influence. . . . In their imperialist endeavors, the Western powers themselves took advantage of the structure of Islamic society and mixed a good deal of politics with religion. . . . Christian "protégés" were often used as an excuse to interfere in the affairs of Muslim governments. . . . The political turmoil in which the Christian minorities in these two Islamic states found themselves was aggravated with the advent of Western Missionaries who arrived at the heels of the government and business agents seeking, in their turn, new conquests. To make matters worse for the Assyrians, "Nestorians" were made the focus of missionary attention. . . . Missionary enterprise among the Assyrian "Nestorians" had several adverse effects:

A. Internally, it undermined their religious unity and divided them into competitive sectarian camps.

B. Externally it aggravated the already strained relations between the Muslims and the Christian minority and rendered the position of the latter more precarious. Particularly with the Western powers there to protect them, or so they thought, the younger generation of Christians became emboldened to question their economic and political disadvantages, and voice their humiliation for being members of an inferior millet.

C. Ideologically it alienated the younger generation of Assyrians from their own traditions and people. Taking a Western point of view, the young scoffed at the traditions of their forefathers as "backward," and imitated the Western way of thought and behavior.

(Ishaya 1977: 24-26)

### *On the Name "Nestorian."*

The Assyrian Nestorians have never officially referred to themselves as "Nestorians." The title by which they describe themselves is "Church of the East." The "Nestorian" name was applied to them by the Christian orthodoxy to stigmatize them as "heretics."

(Ishaya 1977: 36)

### *On the Politics of Identity:*

In an age when old nations are torn down and new ones erected often on criteria other than racial or cultural unity, it seems anomalous to put the Assyrians

## Board of Directors

In its annual election dinner meeting held on December 5th at the Center, the membership of the Assyrian Foundation elected the following to the Board of Directors for 1982:

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### 1981 CONTRIBUTIONS BY THE ASSYRIAN FOUNDATION OF AMERICA

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| David B. Perley Memorial Assyrian Fund    | \$ 100.00 |
| Mar Shimun Memorial Fund                  | \$ 100.00 |
| Assyrian American Educational Association | \$ 50.00  |
| Mr. Robert Joseph (Scholarship)           | \$ 100.00 |
| Assyrian Students Society (Scholarship)   | \$ 500.00 |
| William Daniel Cultural Fund              | \$1300.00 |
| Assyrian School, Hasseka, Syria           | \$ 520.00 |

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### *Wedding Bells . . .*

. . . rang for Helen Beyat of San Jose when she became the bride of Edward Karoukian of San Francisco on November 28, 1981. They were wed by Rev. Fereidoun Es-Haq at St. Timothy's Lutheran Church in San Jose. The elegant dinner reception (catered by the Daniel Aghassi brothers, San Jose) was held at Oakwood Garden Recreation Hall in San Jose.

*Congratulations and Best Wishes.*

P.S. The dinner was catered by the Daniel Aghassi brothers who operate an elegant restaurant under the name "The Loft" located at 951 Town & Country, San Jose, Calif., (408) 246-6672. They serve lunch and dinner, have a cocktail lounge, live entertainment, party rooms, as well as full catering.



# Diggers Find 2,000-Year-Old Capital of Assyria

by Walter Sullivan

It was in 1964 that a scholar at Yale, while cataloguing thousands of cuneiform tablets, came across a crucial clue: an itinerary of an ancient journey from the southern part of Mesopotamia up the Tigris River to northern Syria.

That itinerary, plotted on a modern map, has now led archeologists to the discovery of a site in Syria they believe to be the long-sought capital of a great Assyrian empire, which 39 centuries ago may have stretched from the Mediterranean to southwest Iran.

"By the end of the 1979 field season," wrote Dr. Harvey Weiss of Yale in a report just published, "we had managed to expose portions of two large temples, each magnificently decorated with facades of mud-brick columns, and in one case columns intricately braided in a manner known from few previously excavated sites."

## *Walls 60 Feet Thick*

Beneath these ruins lay the remains of a city enclosed in more than two miles of mud-brick walls 50 feet high and at least 60 feet thick, walls so huge that an army of workers must have been needed to build them. Excavations to even greater depths have revealed layer on layer of remains of human occupation dating back 7,000 years.

Careful excavation is expected to fill in one of the largest gaps in the ancient history of the region. It should show changes in settlement patterns and daily life over 3,000 years. The findings should be "a powerful tool for understanding the origins of a civilization in northern Mesopotamia," according to Dr. Weiss, who headed the group.

The Assyrian empire whose capital was apparently built above this ancient city was ruled by a Semite named Shamshi-Adad. Archeologists, however, have suspected for some time that an earlier nation of uncertain ethnic roots dominated northern Mesopotamia, rivalling the kingdom of Sumer in the south.

The suspicion grew out of analysis of inscriptions on thousands of tablets from such ancient cities as Babylon and Ur. Names were found that are neither Sumerian nor Semitic. The region of origin is referred to as Subir or Subartu. It is suspected that the city of huge walls beneath the temples of Shamshi-Adad was the capital of that land.

## *Excavation Before World War II*

The first clues to Shamshi-Adad's imperial capital began to emerge on the eve of World War II, when French archaeologists excavated Mari, an ancient city on the Euphrates near what is now the border of Syria and Iraq. In a palace of more than 260 rooms they found

20,000 cuneiform tablets.

Deciphering the tablets has provided a picture of the diplomatic, social and economic life of the period, including conflicts of the Mari kings with Hammurabi, famous for his "eye-for-an-eye" code of laws, who ruled Babylon from 1792 to 1750 B.C.

The tablets revealed that 20 years before Hammurabi ascended the throne, Shamshi-Adad seized control of northern Mesopotamia, establishing his capital in a place he called Shubat Enlil. He conquered Mari, leaving his son as ruler there. The Mari tablets include letters from Shamshi-Adad to his son.

The most important clue to the site of Shubat Enlil was found in 1964 while William W. Hallo, professor of Assyriology and Babylonian Literature at Yale, was cataloguing cuneiform tablets in the university library. One of them spelled out an itinerary from southern Mesopotamia up the Tigris to northern Syria, giving distances between known, and unknown, communities, including Shubat Enlil. This information, plotted on a modern map, placed that capital near the present Tell Leilan, site of a massive mound in northeast Syria.

## *Syrian Digs Began in 1978*

In 1978, after approval by the Directorate General of Antiquities in Damascus, the Yale group began a systematic survey of the site, collecting 98,920 potsherds, many of which seemed to date from the Shamshi-Adad period.

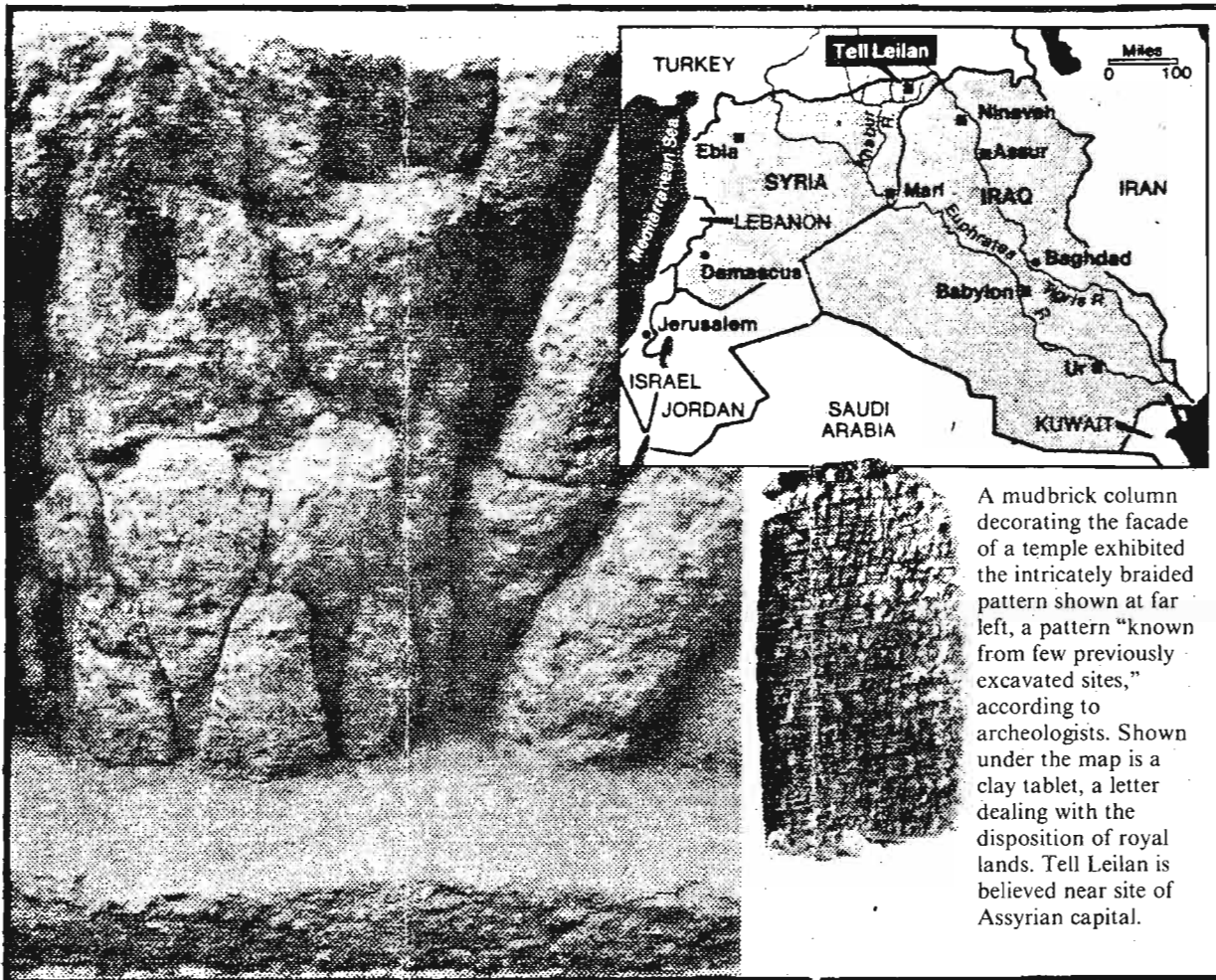
The next summer, with workers from other institutions, the group began excavating the central mound, or acropolis, and found what they believe to be the remains of Shamshi-Adad's temple. Twelve tablets and tablet fragments as well as four cylinder-seal impressions on clay were collected. None referred to Shubat Enlil, but one indicated it was written during the reign of Shamshi-Adad. This, combined with the fact that the location conformed to the ancient itinerary, was taken as confirmation that this was Shamshi-Adad's capital.

So far, excavation of the deeper layers has been only exploratory. It is hoped that full excavation will produce a harvest of artifacts and cuneiform records.

Below the level attributed to Shamshi-Adad is one of pottery in a previously unknown style. It is called Leilan ware for the present name of the site. It seems to have appeared in about 2400 B.C., when the walled city was built.

## *Back to Fabled Nineveh*

Further below is a layer of pottery associated with an early stage at the fabled city of Nineveh (known as Ninevite V) whose chronological position, until now,



A mudbrick column decorating the facade of a temple exhibited the intricately braided pattern shown at far left, a pattern "known from few previously excavated sites," according to archeologists. Shown under the map is a clay tablet, a letter dealing with the disposition of royal lands. Tell Leilan is believed near site of Assyrian capital.

had been uncertain. Artifacts from the so-called Uruk Period of 3500 B.C. have been identified as well as those, deeper, from the Ubaid Period of 5000 B.C. The earliest known cuneiform writing dates from 3000 B.C.

Dr. Weiss notes that succeeding levels can be distinguished "in much the same way that frequencies of certain soda bottle types might allow us to distinguish 1930's city dumps from 1980 city dumps."

Unlike southern Mesopotamia, where highly productive agriculture based on irrigation enabled Babylon to flourish, the northern region had to depend on rainfall to water its crops and, according to the records, also supported nomadic populations that herded livestock. It is hoped that future excavations will help explain the relationship between such a rural economy and the emphasis on city life exemplified by the newly discovered city.

In the October issue of the Yale Alumni Magazine, Dr. Weiss, an associate professor of Near Eastern archeology, notes that the Syrian government has allowed his group to bring back large numbers of potsherds for study. He hopes to resume excavations next summer.

Dear Mr. Shabbas:

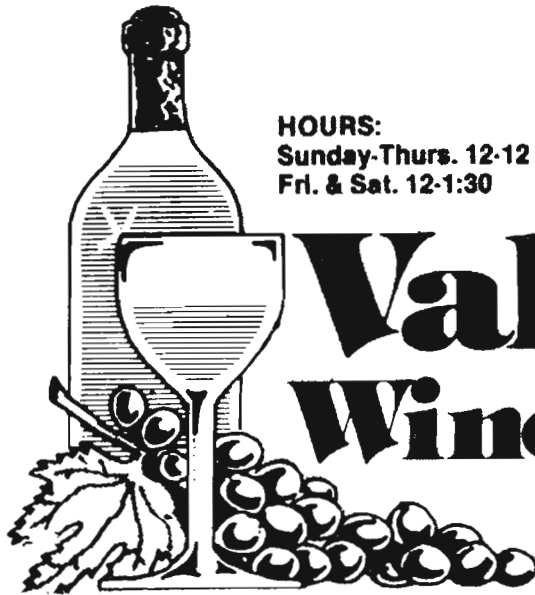
*The Imperial City of the Assyrians of 3,000 years B.C. or more is close to Kamishly, Syria where Assyrians reside and of course speak Assyrian. It is a short distance also to the Kars Amid Fortress built on an embankment high above the Tigris. Its walled city is now named Dyarbekr, Turkey where thousands of Assyrians have fled since the massacres of 1845, 1895, 1914 and are today mostly in New York, New Jersey and Florida.*

*We have had an impressive record the last 100 years of immigration to this country.*

Sincerely,  
Mrs. Rose B. Dartley  
North Bergen, N.J.

*Editor's Note: We wish to thank Mr. David Zia of San Jose, Calif. and Mrs. Rose B. Dartley of North Bergen, N.J. for submitting this article to us for our consideration. The article appeared in the San Jose Mercury News and the New York Times on October 18, 1981.*

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a Happy New Year  
Jacob Malek Zadeh*

# *The Discoveries of an Assyrian Archaeologist*

[His Quest for Assyrian Ethnic Identity]

**Ashur and the Land of Nimrod.**  
By Hormuzd Rassam.  
N.Y.: Eaton & Mains,  
432 p., 1897.

Reviewed by David B. Perley

In the language of the author, a native of Mosul, his book is first an account of his Assyriological finds in the ruins of ancient Nineveh, Nimrod, Ashur and Babylon; and second, it is the narrative of his journeys in the Semitic Orient and Anatolia, where he was employed by the British Government in 1877 to inquire into the condition of the Christian communities and sects in Asia Minor including Armenia and Kurdistan. In short, *ASHUR* is the book in which Mr. Rassam gives a detailed account of his observations in both fields. It must be noted that in his archaeological endeavors (1845-1882), the author was Layard's assistant throughout Layard's brilliant archaeological career in Assyria; and in 1852, at the direction of the Trustees of the British Museum, he became Layard's worthy successor in the field. Conscious of his ancestral connection, he wrote in the Preface: "My interest in Assyrian archaeology was great." This ethnic consciousness led him to a higher consecration. Correctly did Prof. Robert W. Rogers write in the Introduction to the book: "Among all the earlier excavators, Hormuzd Rassam stands forth as a man of distinguished service."

## **Assyriological Discoveries**

The historical tablets or documents unearthed by Mr. Rassam in Assyria and Babylonia exceed 100,000 in number. They contain—especially those from the archives of the Royal Library of Ashurbanipal and Sennacherib at Nineveh—historical records, astronomical reports, mathematical calculations, medical and legal records, letters of private and public character, military annals, prayers, incantations and psalms, and the Assyrian account of the Creation and Flood legends—admittedly one of the best known and most astonishing in the history of archaeology. Among the principal finds in the library was the Epic of Gilgamesh, said to be the wellspring of all epic poetry.

In 1853, the author commenced excavations at Ashur, where he found two clay prisms, inscribed with the annals of Tiglath-Pileser I. There are many other sites he excavated, but the one primarily associated with Rassam's name will forever be Nineveh, where his finds contributed most signally to the study of Assyrian antiquity.

I cannot refer to every discovery, but I can sum up the three epoch-making triumphs of the explorer, whose long life (1826-1910) came to its natural end on September 16, 1910:

1. The unearthing of the Northern Palace at Nineveh where disclosures were made of priceless relics of art and

literature, the prism of Ashurbanipal, inscriptions most astonishing, consisting in a 10-sided baked clay prism, which contain the annals of the Royal Scholar, and four barrel-shaped cylinders inscribed with an account of Sennacherib's various campaigns.

2. The discovery in 1877 of the Bronze gates at Balawat, a city built by Ashurnazirpal (15 mi. east of Nineveh, 9 mi. from Nimrod). The bronze gate-bands are by far the largest and most important monument of this brand of Assyrian metallurgy. This bronze gate is proof positive that engraving was not the only manner in which the Assyrians utilized metal for artistic and pictorial purposes. They also excelled in metal repousse work. The scenes portrayed upon the Gates represent incidents in the life and campaigns of Shalmaneser II (860-825 B.C.), the first Assyrian monarch to come into immediate contact with Israel.

3. The identification in 1879 of the long-forgotten site of Sippar, an ancient Babylonian City on the east bank of the Euphrates, and the "Babil" mound, which suggested the Hanging Gardens of Pliny. (This discovery attracted world-wide attention, and the several academies showered awards upon the Assyrian explorer.)

## **Journeys of Inquiry**

When we come to consider his travel-experiences, we detect at

once a common state of wretchedness, caused by "Kurdish and Turkish lawlessness". Here are but a few typical examples: Nisibin, once the opulent seat of Nestorian missions and learning, is now "a heap of ruins" (p. 233). It is revealed however that the majority of the villages in the province of Nisibin "are Jacobites of Assyrian origin" (p. 249). Aznaghoor, once a prosperous Jacobite village, is now in 1878 reduced to two dozens of huts; so is the city of Urfa, the ancient Edessa; so are the Chaldean Tel-Kaif and Tel-Iskiff.

During his journeys, Rassam paid a visit to the Nestorian Assyrians of Tiari in Kurdistan and their patriarch Mar Shimun with all of whom he conversed in the common language of Aramaic—he called it "Chaldean", using it synonymously with Aramaic. This appellation demands a definition, but first a few biographical notes become imperative.

The author was the eighth and youngest son of Anton Rassam, who called himself a "Nestorian or Chaldean Christian", claiming to be "of Chaldean race". Dr. T.G. Pinches, a great English Orientalist and a devotee of Assyriology, on the other hand, asserted that "he was probably of Assyrian descent". [*The Dictionary of National Biography*, Supp. 1901-1911, Oxford Univ. Press, 1958, p. 158]. Christian Rassam, the author's older brother, was the British Consul in Mosul Layard, in his wanderings in the East, chanced to be his house-guest, where he met Hormuzd, aged 19, whose intelligence and character attracted the attention of the guest, aged 23 and, whom he employed for assistance in the exploration and excavation of the ruins of Nineveh (and who frequently and

honorably mentions him in his *Nineveh and Its Remains*. Later on Layard, as his patron, was to lead Rassam to Oxford to study at Magdalen College).

#### On Assyrian Sects

In the realm of Sects, his journeys revealed that the chief Christian sects or millets (subject-nationalities) were Assyrian or Chaldean communities—Chaldean Nestorian, Chaldean Catholic, Syrian Jacobite and Syrian Catholic—all of whom are "of Assyrian origin" (p. 167). And of the four branches of the Monophysites (Jacobite, Armenian, Coptic, Abyssinian), he ascertained that all retained their national names save alas! the Jacobites, who "style themselves Syrians, which appellation has neither a legitimate meaning, nor an appropriate sectarianism" (p. 168). I agree most emphatically with his conclusions. Rassam has presented the Children of Ashur with an honorable challenge—strikingly intelligent. No matter how confused the situation may seem to appear, the Jacobites are Assyrians through and through. Rassam's sensible concept of this truth is a matter of record. Wrote he in extreme historic accuracy (p. 170):

It is worthy of remark that the so-called Syrian Jacobites and Syrian Catholics are not natives of what is known in Europe as Syria, and there are very few families of their sects in that country....The word Syrian, or Syriennee, as it is called in Arabic, is known in the East simply to denote a religious sect, and not natives of any country in particular; for, although some modern geographers have tried to define the limits of Syria, yet it is a known fact that neither the Hebrews nor the Greeks knew

exactly what constituted the boundary of Syria, or what is really meant by the Syriac language. In the English version of the Holy Bible, the words Aram and Aramaic are rendered Syria and Syriac,—words which have no similarity to them, either in sound or sense. It is conjectured by a number of authors that the word Syria is a corruption of Assyria, as it is mentioned by Herodotus that "this people, whom the Greeks call Syrians, are called Assyrians by the Barbarians."

No matter how you misconstrue the Assyrian malaise in the intolerable confusion of titles, as do most clerics who originated it, sustain, support, and cherish it now—the Chaldeans are Assyrians! Rassam's pronouncements are on record. Exclaimed he (p. 168): "What more natural, then, that they should have applied to them the title of Chaldean, to which they have some claim nationally, in virtue of their Assyrian descent?" All sects have a name for their nationalities but the poor Semitic Christians, no, not even "as much as the slaves who were imported from Circassia or Africa"! (Newman, below pp. 373-4.)

This pronouncement must be read and construed together, and in the light of his further assertion: "Whenever the word Chaldean is mentioned, it means an ancient Christian community in communion with the Roman Catholic Church" (p. 85 N.).

Rassam further eloquently insisted: "At one time, especially at the latter end of the Assyrian monarchy, Chaldean and Assyrian were synonymous words, and the nation was sometimes known by one name and sometimes by the other, the same as the words English and British are used" (p. 171). "Prior

to the 5th century schism, these Semitic Sects belonged to the same stock and held the same belief" (Newman, below, p. 367).

There is but one national name for the native Semitic Christian sects (without admitting the accuracy of the noun sect) in the Valley of the Euphrates—it is **Assyrian**. Such is Rassam's deep-seated conviction. If you need further assurance, read his Letter of Jan. 1875, in John P. Newman's **The Thrones and Palaces of Babylon and Nineveh**, (N.Y.: Harper, 1896, pp. 367-391).

### The Everlasting Quest

This interminable review-article must come to an end with these concluding remarks. Rassam, whether he realized it or not, succeeded in the quest for the persisting matter of Assyrian national identity, but he left it buried, as it had been for centuries, beneath acquired religious terminology and sectarianism; he failed to establish the collective unity and oneness of all Assyrians, regardless of their

religious beliefs. He unlocked the door to national identity but did not open it. Possibly the political and psychological atmosphere of the time was responsible for his lack of militancy in this quest, but the indisputable fact remains that he himself repeatedly used the term **Chaldean** where he should have used **Assyrian**. He faced, with heroic pride, the bronze gates of Balawat, but he failed to erect with even greater pride an invisible monument more lasting than that bronze by identifying modern Assyrians as the posterity of Shalmaneser II, the worthy successor of Ashurnazirpal. If Rassam himself had been consistent in calling members of the various Semitic Christian sects **Assyrians**, the task of later writers would have been simplified. This lack of militancy had unpleasant results. Only recently, foresooth, did Seton Lloyd in a book on Assyriology call Rassam "Layard's Chaldean assistant"!

Mr. Lloyd is not the only one who has arrested my sense of

restoration and security, created by the book under review. His own son Capt. Anthony H. Rassam (British Army) referred in 1931 to his "distinguished" father's devotion to "Chaldean habits and customs" [*Royal Central Asian Society Journal*, v.8, p. 564]!

And what is worse, the term "Coptic Christian", totally erroneous, was applied to Rassam in 1963, by Katherine B. Shippen in her **Portals to the Past**, a well-known book on Archaeology (Viking, p. 59)!

I would to God I could attribute to Dr. Hormuzd Rassam, the venerable apostle of Assyrian nationhood, what was said of Augustus Caesar in relation to his imperial city, that he had found her built of brick and left her constructed of marble!

*Editor's Note:* Reference Rassam's letter mentioned by D. B. Perley. Mr. Ninos David of Daly City has been kind enough to submit this letter to us for our consideration.

*Continued from page 22*

### Mrs. Arian Ishaya's Lecture

of today to the test of proving the extent to which they are "racially" and "culturally" "Assyrian." This appears to be yet another form of molesting a minority group. That the controversy over the Assyrian identity is purely a political matter is evident from the fact that the neighbors of Assyrians in the Middle East, such as Iranians, Armenians, Kurds, Russians, as well as numerous Western countries recognize the Assyrian minority by the name, while the government of Iraq refers to these same people as "Syriac speaking Christians." It seems that one way of doing away with ethnic minorities and their claim to internal autonomy and cultural rights is to deny their very existence.

(Ishaya 1977: 18)

Julius N. Shabbas  
President  
Assyrian Foundation of America



HORMUZD RASSAM  
(The Assyrian Archaeologist  
who worked with  
Sir Henry Layard).



## HERE & THERE

**SAN FRANCISCO** — On December 13, a Christmas party was given by Mar Narsai Parish of the Assyrian Church of the East. The noon dinner was followed by a beautiful enactment of the complete Nativity scene including the Magi bringing of gifts to the new born savior. Under the able direction of Mrs. Ninveh Michael, the Archdeacon's wife, over 15 girls and boys participated. The Church choir (15 in number) sang several Christmas carols. The words and tunes were provided by His Holiness Mar Dinkha IV, the Patriarch of the Assyrian Church of the East. The songs were written in the form of the music of the Church of the East and were very pleasing and beautiful to listen to. Two of the Christmas carols are incorporated in the Assyrian section of this issue. The music was provided by the able and promising young musician, Robert Karoukian. Mrs. Ninveh Michael spent several days with the choir group in teaching the songs and in the preparation of this program.

As a token of appreciation of their hard work and dedication, Archdeacon Ninos Michael presented each of the participants with a beautiful Cross. For her hard work, Ninveh Michael received a hug from her husband, the Archdeacon. The program was followed by the appearance of Santa Claus (role played very well by Eshaya D'Mar Shimun) who presented the children with gifts.

The choir group is newly formed and will continue to be part of the Church functions and services. They will be singing on Christmas Day during the Church service.

Anyone who is interested in joining the choir group of the Assyrian Church of the East, please call Mrs. Ninveh Michael at 564-9126.

**BERKELEY** — Narsai's Restaurant, located at 385 Colusa Avenue, Kensington (North Berkeley), Calif., recently opened its gleaming, elegant new operations at I. Magnin's new Edibles Floor on Union Square in San Francisco. The operations include a fabulous Market and a Cafe.

The restaurant has received a series of accolades. Their frequency and earnestness surprised even Narsai and Sam. Narsai's wine list is recognized as one of the 13 best in the United States. This, of course, was especially gratifying to Narsai himself because of his longtime interest in fine wines. Narsai is considered an outstanding wine connoisseur.

Their market, adjacent to the restaurant, has been expanded and continues to develop new product lines that have been very well received by the trade. Narsai's Private Label Mustards and Preserves have gotten a good reception nationwide and promise to become standard items in the American gourmet retail scene. Narsai continues to appear once a week

on the PBS Television Show "Over Easy" hosted by Mary Martin and Jim Hartz. He demonstrates how to cook inexpensive, imaginative dinners prepared easily for one or two.

Narsai's Catering aspect of the business is full of exciting events. Serving 500 people in the celebration of a 50th wedding anniversary with a sit-down dinner on the celebrant's large back lawn — Serving high tea for 2500 guests on the first tier of the new Davies Symphony Hall in San Francisco. The guests indulging themselves in grand style, enjoying both the spectacular view of the city outside and the tempting array of Narsai's elegant foods, sandwiches, salads, pates, fruits, tea, coffee, etc.

We wish to thank Narsai David and Sam David for their contribution of champagne and dinners which were raffled during the Foundation's dance parties, raising approximately \$1,000. In addition, Narsai has been generous in supplying the deliciously cooked rice for our picnics. The credit for the actual cooking of the rice goes to Jimmy David, Narsai's brother.

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Dear Mr. Shabbas:

Recently I came across the *Nineveh Magazine* and I was delighted to see an organized paper with so many enlightening articles in our community.

I would love to be a subscriber and here is my check for \$20.00. As you know, I am a Turlock resident, but can I be a member of the Assyrian Foundation of America?

I enclose another check for \$20.00 in case I can.

Sincerely,  
Rev. Fereidoun Es-Haq  
Turlock, Calif.

*Editor's Note:* Rev. Fereidoun: Your name has been entered in the membership list as an Associate member. Thank you.

# WE WISH TO THANK THE FOLLOWING FOR THEIR CONTRIBUTIONS

## Membership

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## Scholarship Contributions

|  |          |
|--|----------|
| Assyrian Church of the East,                         |          |
| Mar Narsai Parish, S.F. ....                         | \$390.00 |
| William Foster Scholarship Fund .....                | 1200.00  |
| <i>(Designated for William Daniel Cultural Fund)</i> |          |

## Building Pledge

|                                   |          |
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## Nineveh Magazine

|  |         |
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## IN MEMORIUM

### *Elia Bet-Badal*

The Assyrian Foundation extends its deepest sympathy and condolences to Mrs. Pare Bet-Badal of Tehran, Iran and her family on the recent loss of her husband, Elia Bet-Badal.

A memorial service, officiated by Archdeacon Ninos Michael, was held on December 20, 1981 at Mar Narsai Parish of the Assyrian Church of the East, San Francisco. The communion service was followed by a memorial breakfast, and eulogies by Mr. Babajan Ashouri and Mr. Youra Tamraz.

Elia Bet-Badal was born in 1911 in Urmia in the village of Mooshabad (Mooshavah). He is survived by his wife, Pare, one daughter, Wilma Geevargis of San Francisco, and two sons, William of Tehran and Victor of Modesto. Arrangements for the memorial service were made by his daughter Wilma and son Victor.

### *Arisa Ilushin*

Our deepest sympathy and condolences go to the family of Arisa Ilushin who passed away recently in Moscow, Russia.

A memorial service, officiated by Archdeacon Ninos Michael, was held on December 20, 1981 at Mar Narsai Parish of the Assyrian Church of the East, San Francisco. The mass was followed by a memorial breakfast, and eulogies by Mr. Bababjan Ashouri and Mr. Youra Tamraz.

Mrs. Arisa Ilushin was born in Russia. She is survived by two sisters, Manne of Russia, and Bismat of West Germany; two sons, Slava of Russia, and Anatoli of West Germany; and two daughters, Natasha and Tamara of Russia.

Arisa was the sister of the late Jane Geevargis and aunt (Khalta) to George Geevargis of San Francisco, who made the preparations for the memorial service.

### *David Hurmis*

We express our deepest sympathy and condolences to Mrs. Judith Hurmis of Turlock, California and her family on the recent loss of her husband, David Hurmis, in Turlock.

A memorial service officiated by Rev. Darius Yohanan was held on December 22, 1981 at the Assyrian Presbyterian Church in Turlock. The service was followed by a memorial dinner and eulogy by Dr. Joel Elias.

David Hurmis was born in 1896 in Jilu. He is survived by his wife, Judith, two sons, David Jr. and Arthur of Turlock; and one daughter, Myra David of Turlock. Mrs. Judith Hurmis is Dr. Joel Elias' aunt.

### *Professor Mikhael Lazerof (Matev)*

We express our deepest sympathy and condolences to the family of Professor Mikhael Lazerof (Matev), the internationally famous Assyrian historian, who passed away in Russia a few months ago.

Professor Lazerof, a lecturer at the University of Moscow and a member of Russia's Academy of Science, was well known throughout the country and the world for his many books about his people, the Assyrians.

*"Thou hast created us for Thyself, and our heart cannot be quieted till it may find repose in Thee."*

St. Augustine

# OUR SMALLEST ALLY

## *A Brief Account of the Assyrian Nation in the Great War*

by Rev. W. A. Wigram, D.D.

*Continued from last issue.*

May, 1915

A meeting of all the notables of the nation was held in Diz, and the matter was fully and anxiously debated; on the one side there could be urged the promises of the Turk, and the certainty of forgiveness by the English if the nation should elect to "play for safety." On the other there was undoubtedly the feeling that they were now being asked to play their part in the general quarrel of all Christendom, and the fact that it was very doubtful whether the Turk either could or would keep his promises, or defend them from the Kurd in the mean time. Ultimately, on receiving Russian promises of support, they decided for the nobler and more dangerous of the alternatives; they definitely threw in their lot with the Entente against Turkey, and the nation was called to arms on the 10th May, 1915. A definite and formal declaration of war was sent by the heads of the nation to the Vali of Var. They were committed; and as soon as they were thus definitely committed, the Russians withdrew to Van and left their mountain allies to fend for themselves in the peril that they had now called upon them to face on their behalf.

That peril became real at once. Qudshanis was attacked and burnt by the Kurds, the patriarchal library and the English mission house sharing the common lot. Even the church books which had been concealed in what was held a safe place, were found and destroyed. The Turkish authorities had not lost all hope of winning over the mountaineers, and the Kaimmakam of Julamerk, Rajib Raghav Bey, sent frequent messages to the Patriarch at Diz. These, however, were all fruitless, and the spirits of the mountaineers rose to meet the danger; Shamasha\* Ephraim's war song, written about this time, expresses their feelings, and it was chanted from village to village among the hills.

### ASSYRIAN WAR SONG

(By SHAMASHA EPHRAIM OF SERAI D'MAMIDAI, Van)

Brothers, up; arouse ye; shake off sloth and slumber!  
Take each man his rifle for the battle with the Turk.  
Now the day is dawning when we face our foemen.  
Forth we go to battle in thy name, O Mar Shimun.

Rouse ye chiefs and princes, Maliks God-appointed;  
Forward goes our army through the land we owned of yore.  
Hear the rifle rattle echo from our mountains.  
Forth we go to battle in thy name, O Mar Shimun.

Up, I say, ye captains; up, I say, ye Maliks!  
Kings we had in olden time right mighty men of war.  
Take we gun and powder; days of stress are on us.  
Forth we go to battle in thy name, O Mar Shimun.

Lady of the Holy House, Surma stands amongst us;  
Giver of high counsel to her brothers from a child.  
"Now the very babe must bear the bow and arrows."  
Forth we go to battle in thy name, O Mar Shimun.

Young men of the Nation, Clans renowned in story,  
Stand by one another now in brotherhood and zeal.  
Shall beloved Kochanes be a prey to foemen?  
Forth we go to battle in thy name, O Mar Shimun.

Young men of the Nation, bide a band of brothers,  
Tiari fast by Jilu and Tkhoma fast by Baz.  
Listen to the roll of battle drums ye warriors.  
Forth we go to battle in thy name, O Mar Shimun.

David is our leader, valiant in the combat;  
He shall be our captain and set us in array!  
He shall go before like sun and moon to guide us.  
Forth we go to battle in thy name, O Mar Shimun.

Forth we go to battle, raging o'er the mountains;  
Hearts all yearning forward to Mosul's fertile plains.  
Nineveh's fair city summons back her children.  
Forth we go to battle in thy name, O Mar Shimun.

On the Tigris' banks lies Nineveh the holy;  
Her old walls shall be to us a diadem and crown.  
There alone, Assyrians, can our race be stablished.  
Forth we go to battle in thy name, O Mar Shimun.

Hark, our Nation calls—our great Assyrian Mother;  
Hark, young men, she calls you—calls each one of you by name.  
Blest that youth for ever who will hear her calling.  
Forth we go to battle in thy name, O Mar Shimun.

June, 1915

Now began a period of fighting that was desultory, but for all that severe, in the mountain districts, where the Assyrians, who could get no help except a few rifles and cartridges from their Russian allies, stood at bay among their crags and gorges against largely superior forces of Kurds and of regular Turkish troops from Mosul. The decision had been taken at the middle of May, and before the end of June the Berwar Kurds, with the garrison of Mosul to back them, had begun an organised attack on the Lizan valley of lower Tiari, while the Artosh Kurds, led by the Kaimmakam of Julamerk, were threatening Chumba; and on the other side of the Zab the Agha of Chal had brought his forces against Salabekan and Tkhuma, and Sutu of Oramar, old enemy of the Assyrians, was taking the field against Jilu and Baz.

July, 1915

On the whole, this formidable series of attacks failed, or at least met with only partial success. The Lizan valley was occupied, with the village of Ashitha, but the attacks on Chumba d'Malik, Jilu and Salabekan were repulsed with heavy loss. When the onset was renewed some five days later, there was severe fighting at Mar Sawa, on the Zab. The bridge at that point was taken, retaken by the Christians, and finally taken and held by the Kurds; still they were never able to improve their success at this point and cross the Zab.

Broadly, the result of a week of severe fighting was, that the Assyrians lost the districts on the right or western bank

\*I.e., "Deacon." The priests are not supposed to fight, but the deacons do.

of the Zab, but were able to destroy the bridges and maintain their positions on the other bank. There was a pause after these first actions, and Mar Shimun employed it in a hurried visit to Diza in Gawar, where he could get into touch with the Russians in Van and Urmi, and ask urgently for help from both parties. This effort brought him plenty of congratulations and abundant promises, and a small but welcome supply of rifles and ammunition; but nothing more substantial than that.

### August, 1915

Foiled, on the whole, in the open fighting, Haidar Beg Vali of Mosul, now sought to bring about the Assyrian surrender in a singularly dastardly fashion. Hormizd, the brother of Mar Shimun, was a prisoner in his hands. This young man had been in Constantinople for his education for two years before the war, and had been arrested and imprisoned there as soon as Turkey entered the struggle, so that there could be no political charge against him personally. He was now sent to Mosul,\* and Haidar sent the following message to Mar Shimun: "Your brother is in my hands and unless you and your nation will lay down your arms, that brother shall die." It was a terrible choice to have to make, and those who know the relations which existed between those two young men can understand the feelings with which Mar Shimun sent an answer which approaches the heroic in its ring: "My people are my charge, and they are many. How can I give them up for the sake of one, even if that one be my own brother?" Hormizd was put to death, a martyr for the sake of his people; his death being as foul a judicial murder as any in the dark annals of the Turk.

### Aug.-Sept., 1915

Another appeal to the Russians in the month of August may have produced some small effect, if we can date there an episode which certainly occurred, though our informants were, in oriental fashion, clearer on details than on dates. A detachment of about 400 Cossacks seems to have been sent up from Urmi to the mountains, but its commander was either very rash, or very ignorant of the local conditions, for he allowed himself to become the guest of Sutu, the Agha of Oramar, and accepted guides from him, to conduct him through the mountain passes. Sutu, who entertained the detachment as his honoured guests, and kept some eighteen of them in his own house when the others departed, sent them off by the road to Neri, sending word at the same time to Sheikh Seyyid Mahommed (a relative of the Sheikh of Shamsdin), to the effect that the Russians were coming by the "Galia Balanda" (the "Deep Gorge"), and that if Mahommed would collect his men and attack them at that critical point, Sutu would have his own clansmen in their rear, to cut off all retreat.

This treacherous plan was executed, under the guidance of the two elder sons of Sutu, Osman and Tili, and the detachment cut off to the last man. The eighteen men left in the house of Sutu were also attacked and massacred, though one feels some satisfaction in recording that the crime was not completed without a fight, in which a son of Sutu was killed, and that arch-traitor himself wounded.

However, the Russian attempt to send help (if it was made at this time) thus failed completely, and the mountaineers were left to face the second attack of their enemies.

This was delivered in August 1915, and on this occasion the invaders had the formidable help of the Barzan Kurds, a clan whose members seemingly had forgotten how the Christian Ashirets helped their former chief, Sheikh Selim, in the days when he was a fugitive from the Turk, and had forgotten too the execution of that beloved chieftain of theirs by the Ottoman government in the early days of the war. Delivered from the south (the vulnerable line), this attack succeeded, and Tkhoma, Tiari, Jilu and Baz were ravaged pitilessly. As usual in a "Jihad," all the usual courtesies of tribal war were neglected, for it is understood that when you go to war in the name of Allah you may commit any atrocity that you please. Houses were burned, water-channels (which in these mountains have to be carried in poplar-trunks along precipitous rock faces), were broken down, churches by the score were desecrated and plundered. Some forty churches in Jilu alone met this fate, though it is to be hoped that the Kurds, with characteristic laziness, refrained from serious injury to their very solid fabrics. This point will have to be examined later, and it must be owned that the fact that the Turks had provided the Kurds with bombs for the mountain fighting opens a disquieting possibility.

### September, 1915

It was at this time that the famous church of Mar Zeia in Jilu was plundered for the first time in its history, and a collection of votive curios that was absolutely unique was scattered to the winds. Hitherto it had been guarded by its most precious possession, a firman of protection which was at least believed to be an autograph letter of the Prophet himself, written on linen; and which had been sufficient shield for the shrine even in the days of Bedr Khan Beg and his great ravagings. Now, however, even that failed; the letter was carried off as a sacred prize, and the Church itself was looted. The seventh-century jars, brought from China by Nestorian missionaries in old days, were smashed by savages who did not know that their German allies would gladly have bought them at their weight in gold; and the *ex voto* offerings of centuries, which had given that church the look of a wild museum, were wantonly destroyed. The church, however, was not quite unavenged in its ruin. A certain fanatical young Kurdish Agha, eldest son of Simco, Agha of the Shekak Kurds (whom we shall meet again in the course of this narrative), was the leader of the spoilers, proclaiming like "fanatic Brooke" at Lichfield that he hoped to see the downfall of every Christian church in the land. As he stood at the church door superintending the removal of the plunder, a shot fired at extreme range took him in the head, and he fell in front of the church that he was desecrating.

Though thus beaten from their valleys, the men of the nation had not lost hope as yet, and were still unbroken in spirit. They fell back upon the "yailas," the summer pastures whither the sheep are always driven in the heats; and though the Kurds attacked these refuges again and again, they were always beaten back, and sallying parties were even able to

\*Hormizd was arrested in Constantinople, and sent thence to Mosul, but it is not certain that he ever reached that place.

venture down into the villages and bring back some small stores of corn. The Christians had food for a while, for the flocks were with them still, and water was abundant in that land where the snowdrifts never melt together. The lack of salt, however, was severely felt, and brought positive illness, as well as that utter distaste for all food which, in an Oriental, often means a lack of interest in life and surrender to the coming of death.

The Patriarch shared all his people's privations, and indeed suffered more than they did, for by the custom of their fathers he was forbidden to eat meat, which was the only provision that was to be had in any abundance, and he and other "rabbans" seem to have lived for a long time on milk and parched corn.

### **October, 1915**

If, however, the position on the "yailas" could be defended against open attack, it was clear to all that it would soon become untenable for other reasons. It was now late in September of the year 1915, and with the first snows of winter (which often fall in October at the altitude of 10,000 feet at which the nation was encamped), human life would become impossible on the heights. It was resolved to make a last appeal for Russian help, and with that object Mar Shimun, accompanied by Khoshaba of Lizan and two other companions, started on the dangerous journey that was to take them through the leaguer of the Kurds and down to Persian territory. The Patriarch was at this time, with the mass of his people, on the table-land of Shina, at the headwaters of the Tal and Tkuma gorges; and the enemy held all the country between him and Urmi, particularly the district of Gawar, where Nuri Beg had just carried out a specially cruel massacre of the unarmed Christian population of the plain. Still, it was felt that the attempt had to be made, however slender its chance of success, and travelling by night with experienced guides, the little party accomplished their daring journey in safety and arrived in the district of Salmas. The local Russian officers, however, declared that they were in no position to do anything, and could only urge the Patriarch, now that he had himself escaped, to remain in the safety which he had attained, and not to sacrifice his own life. This (be it recorded to his honour) was a course that he would not hear of, and without waiting even one night in the camp of the Russians, he went back to the mountains to share the fate of his nation.

He and his advisers had now to face the fearful problem, by what possible means a crowd of some twenty-five thousand men, women and children, with a mass of flocks in addition, could be extricated from the plateau on which they were invested by the enemy, and marched down to safety. The country, as all know who have had to traverse it, is one of the most rugged in the world; the men were not soldiers, but undisciplined tribesmen, few of whom could ever rise to any conception of duty to a larger entity than their own clan. Still, if the attempt was probable destruction, to remain for the winter was certain death, and under this spur the plan was formed. The bulk of the Kurds were to the east of them, guarding the direct road to Persia, and drawing their food from the fertile plain of Gawar. It was determined to go in the opposite direction, marching with all possible speed down the two valleys of Diz and Tal, to cross the Zab by the two bridges at or near the foot of those gorges, and break them down as soon as the crossing was done. The two columns could then unite in the district of

Berwar, north of Qudshanis, one day's long march from the district of Albaq, where Russian support might be hoped for at last. The plan was attempted, and in the face of all military probability, was actually carried out with success. If the Christians were undisciplined clans, the Kurds were little better, and when they found the "yaila" of Shina had been abandoned, they stayed to quarrel over the flocks that had been left upon it, and the migrating nation of Christians were able to effect the crossing of the unfordable Zab and break the bridges behind them. Only small bands of Kurds persisted in the pursuit, though these were able to harass the march seriously.

Mar Shimun himself was with the party that marched by Tal, and the route necessarily took him by a pass where for the last time he and his could look down the slopes to where the village of Qudshanis lies upon its sloping "alp." It was then that he broke out with the one word of complaint that was known to fall from him in the war, and exclaimed, "When shall I ever drink the water of Qudshanis again?" The words prompted an incident which is none the less genuine for being an exact parallel to an episode in the life of David; for the circumstances were roughly parallel, and both leaders had, whatever their failings, that personal charm that made the wild men whom they ruled ready to risk life to gratify even the lightest wish of their chief. Some young men who had heard the words started out at once with a "talma," or water-jar, and breaking through the lines of the pursuing Kurds, reached the stream that flows down to Qudshanis, and brought the water to their chieftain. To make the parallel quite complete, he should have refused to drink of what had become the blood of heroes, and poured it out in sacrifice; this piece of ritual, however, was not in accord with Nestorian habits, and we believe that he merely drank it with warm thanks to those who brought the gift.

The junction with the Diz column of Assyrians was duly effected at Kotranis in Berwar, and the march on Albaq resumed; still, the retiring army were not clear of their enemies, for the Kurds had made their way across the Zab by a higher bridge — probably the curious natural bridge of Hezekian — and barred the retreat to safety. There was a last sharp action in the hills, in which Khoshaba of Lizan particularly distinguished himself, and the defeat of the Kurds opened the way to the comparative safety of the district of Albaq, whence the emigrants could gradually make their way over an easy pass to the Persian district of Salmas. It was not a routed force that arrived, nor had these men of the mountains any cause to be ashamed of their record.

### **October-November, 1915**

They had deliberately, and in the face of great temptation and danger, thrown in their lot with what they believed to be the right; they had seen themselves abandoned by those who had urged them to this course, and yet had stood by it, and defended themselves against tremendous odds in a very creditable way. Though beaten from their country at last, they were no more crushed than were the Serbs in like case, but conducted an orderly retreat in the face of immense difficulties, and brought them down with not only their women, but their flocks and herds as well. So, arrived in Persia, they remained there, ready for the next turn of fortune's wheel.



## CHAPTER II

### *In the Plains of Persia*

November, 1915

To say that the state of things in Urmi was anomalous, at the time that the mountain Assyrians poured down into the district, is to understate the case. In theory Persia was, of course, an independent and neutral power, whose territory all combatants were bound to respect. As a matter of fact, it was ruled by a government far too feeble in strength to enforce neutrality, and far too feeble in mind to take a side in the struggle. Further, both parties were so anxious to get a "Mussalman power" to declare openly for them, that they were extremely unwilling to declare open war upon her; while both found themselves quite unable to avoid treating her territory in the most cavalier fashion. Before the war, Urmi had been in fact the position of a small Russian garrison and arsenal; and the first act of the war had been a Turkish invasion of the district, that had been repelled by the Russians and by some Persian subjects, but emphatically not by the Persian Government. Now, it was still, in theory, an important provincial town in Persia, ruled by a governor nominated by the Prince of Azerbaijan — who is always the heir-apparent of Persia — and this governor was, as always, in the town, ruling and taking counsel with the Mussalman notables of the place. But there was also in the town a Russian consul, and a very considerable garrison which were under his orders; and this official took counsel, not with the Mussalmans, but with the "Mutwa" (council) of the Assyrians of the town, a body entirely unknown officially to the Persian Governor. Having thus taken counsel, the Russian would issue his directions to the Governor, who usually found it advisable to carry them out. Now this state of things was, to put it mildly, displeasing to a set of extremely fanatical Shiah Moslems, all of whom could look back to days when Christians were in a proper state of subjection, and had to get off their donkeys and stand at the salute when the Moslem rode past on his horse. Now it was the Christians who rode the horses, thanks to the wealth they had acquired by trade, and the backing of the "yellow dogs" from Russia; and to tell the truth some of them were swaggering as only the oriental who has the upper hand can swagger, and not at all disinclined to make the most of their advantage over those who had, most unreasonably, looked down upon them in the past. Equality is a thing that no oriental can comprehend. The rule of one man, or caste, over all others, is the natural thing, and why should you seek rule, if not for the rewards of ruling?

The situation then was already full enough of possibilities of trouble, when it was further complicated by the arrival of these 20,000 mountaineers, men who had lost their all, and were accustomed to look on raid and robbery as ordinary incidents of life, and whom the plainsmen were accustomed to think of as a sort of contemptible but yet formidable savage, not to say demon.

Yet at first these mountaineers — to quote an American missionary of great experience\* — "behaved very much better than might reasonably have been expected of them." It is true that they were a hard handful to control and plundered a good

deal; this was particularly the case round about Urmi itself — where it mattered most, of course — for there no authority was present to control them. Those who remained in the district of Salmas, or Salamast, which is about one day to the north of the city, were under the direct eye of their Patriarch, and there were no complaints made against them. On the other hand, it may be urged that many of the Urmi folk, both Moslem and Christian, if they found trouble, were asking for it rather emphatically. When twenty thousand hungry men are thrown upon you by the chances of war, if you do not help them they will most certainly help themselves, no matter what their race, colour or religion; in this case many of the men of the plain seemed disposed only to make as much as might be out of their visitors, and would only sell food at high prices, or even insist on the surrender of guns in exchange for it. When that line is taken with starving, armed, and undisciplined men in a land of plenty, the probable consequences are pretty plain to see.

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Further, the mountaineers had even more serious things to complain of. We said that there was always a Persian governor in Urmi, and the action taken by one of the holders of this office is worthy of record, as showing how mere fright will often urge an oriental into horrible acts of cruelty.

His Excellency, the Governor, who was a member of the Royal House of Persia, was proceeding from Tabriz to Urmi to take up his post, to which he had been newly appointed, with an escort of about three hundred cavalry. Passing round the northern end of Lake Urmi, he reached a point known as "Snatchbeard Corner," where the road turns so abruptly round a nose of rock that it is said that a highwayman can catch his victim by the beard before he can be seen. Here he found a party of two hundred mountaineers, peaceably sitting by the roadside, who saluted him as he drove past.

Without the least provocation, and simply from the general state of pure panic that made him see a murderer in every mountaineer, he turned his escort loose upon them, and allowed these soldiers to massacre, pillage, and outrage as they liked while he sat in the carriage and looked on.

We may add a word on the conclusion of this gentleman's career in the city or Urmi. When the Russians finally departed from that city there was an *emeute*, in the course of which the bazaar was burned. On this occasion his Highness the Governor left his post and fled for refuge to the American mission, where he begged for admittance and protection, literally with tears. He was not admitted, but the son of one of the missionaries, a lad of seventeen, agreed to go back with him to the Government Serai; and there the youth consented, at the Governor's prayer, to stay with him, and this scion of Persian royalty actually sat for hours holding the American boy's hand, like a frightened child in a thunderstorm, till the riot was over!

\*Dr. McDowell, whose work as relief administrator in these times of trouble was beyond praise.

*Continued in next issue.*

## مفہمات در جہاد و جنگ

و : و مکتب علم حیدرہ : مکتب احداث در صحرای کربلا :  
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12.8.81

ॐ नमो भगवते वासुदेवाय ॥  
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 नमो भगवते वासुदेवाय ॥

# מלך האש

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a Christmas Season

filled with joy and peace

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10- مہمندی، طبعی، لائقیت، ایمان

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يُحْيِيهِمْ ۚ لَيْسَ لَهُ سُلْطَانٌ فِي السَّمَوَاتِ وَالتَّارِيقِ ۚ

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॥ श्रीगणेशाय नमः ॥

حاجتہاں کے لئے دعا ہے کہ وہ اپنی زندگی میں

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فيلادلفيا ١٩٥٥

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செய்து கொடுத்திருக்கிறார்கள். அதற்கு நான் மிகவும்  
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၁၈၈၈ ခု၊ ဇူလိုင်လ ၁၀ ရက်နေ့၊

உயர்வு ம. சிவமயம், ச. சிவமயம்

مصدقہ فی مکتبہ اہل بیت

مجموعه ۵۰۲، ۲۲، ۲۱، ۲۰، ۱۹، ۱۸، ۱۷، ۱۶، ۱۵، ۱۴، ۱۳، ۱۲، ۱۱، ۱۰، ۹، ۸، ۷، ۶، ۵، ۴، ۳، ۲، ۱

موجودہ قریبی صاحب ، محلہ ، ضلع ،

နိဂုံးသို့ တက် ခဲ့၏။

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کے لیے کہ وہ اس کے ساتھ رہے

ॐ नमो भगवते वासुदेवाय ॥ १ ॥  
 श्रीकृष्णाय नमः ॥

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16 دسمبر 1981  
انڈیا - فلپائن

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An ungodly nation still remains like an un-  
broken rib in the giant body of the wild  
beast of Islam,,

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جہ تجزیہ احوال .

\* صَبَحْتُ لِبَقْدِيهِ بِأَسْمَةِ اللَّهِ فِي حُجَّةٍ دَنَتْ دَهْشَتُهَا. قَدْ خَمَّ دُجُومُهَا لَهَا حَيْثُ لَمْ يَكُنْ لَهَا  
لِبَقْدِيهِ دَقٌّ صَوْبِيهِ مِثْلِيهِ مِمَّ عَمَّ مَحْدَا دُجَّةٍ دُخْلَتْ دُجُومُهَا دُجُومًا قَدْ تَجَسَّسَتْ قَدْ  
لَجَّجَتْ رَدَّهَا دُجُومًا مِثْلِيهِ. عَمَّ تَجَسَّسَتْ مِثْلِيهِ تَجَسَّسَتْ دُجُومًا دُجُومًا قَدْ لَجَّجَتْ  
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## Christmas Hymn

(Tishbukhta d' Yalda)

of Mar Babai Rabba

One is Christ the Son of God,  
Worshiped by all in two natures;  
In His Godhead born of the Father  
Without beginning, before all time;  
In His humanity born of Mary  
In the fullness of time in a body united.

Neither is His Godhead of the nature of His  
mother  
Nor His humanity of the nature of His Father;  
The natures are preserved in their identities  
In one Person of one Sonship.  
And as the Godhead is three Identities,  
one Essence,  
So is the Sonship of the Son two Natures,  
one Person.

So the Holy Church has always taught  
To confess the Son who is Christ.  
We acknowledge, O My Lord, Thy divinity  
And Thy humanity without division.

One is the Power, one the Majesty,  
One the Will and One the Glory  
Of Father and Son and Holy Spirit  
To ages of ages, Amen and Amen.

(Sung every Sunday in Advent and on Christmas.)

## Christmas Hymn

of the

CHURCH OF THE EAST

This hymn, composed in the Aramaic language in which Christ and his apostles preached the Gospel, has formed part of the liturgy of the Holy Catholic and Apostolic Church of the East for more than fifteen hundred years.

The symbol at the top is the name of God, represented by the Aramaic characters for I and H. It is pronounced "YAH", and means "HE WHO IS". The three dots represent the Holy Trinity. The single dot below stands for Christ, in whose person God and man are united.

This symbol is found on every book and pamphlet issued by this original Church of Asia, which still prays and praises God in the language used by Christ as it has done since that language was the medium of the proclamation of the Good News: "Peace on earth, good hope to the sons of men!"

Published by The Church of the East