



Established 1955
 Dedicated to the
 Advancement of Education
 of Assyrians



NINEVEH

THIRD QUARTER 1980

VOLUME 11 (NO. 3)



Prof. Lilli Oraham Teymourazi

Author — Educator — Mother of Assyrian Folk Dancing

دُحِبَ لِلَّيْلِ فِي جَدِّهِمْ لَمْ يَمُوتُوا (أَمْحُو دُحِب)
 يَمُوتُ دِقَّةً فِي دِقَّةِ دِقَّةِ

CULTURAL — EDUCATIONAL — SOCIAL

NINEVEH

THIRD QUARTER 1991

VOLUME 14 NO. 3

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ARTICLES SUBMITTED FOR PUBLICATION WILL BE SELECTED BY THE EDITORIAL STAFF ON THE BASIS OF THEIR RELATIVE MERIT TO THE ASSYRIAN LITERATURE, HISTORY, AND CURRENT EVENTS.

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We urge our readers to read and support the Assyrian publications. The active participation of all Assyrians is the only guarantee of the success of Assyrian periodicals.

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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Dear Julius:

I refer to our recent phone discussion and enclose herewith the C.C. and L.C. blueprint I've been able to produce. I'm also sending you some amendments to the manuscript of part five of my relevant article about Habbaniya.

I can't guarantee that my work is perfect, but I can assure you that a lot of time — and sweat and tears! — have gone into this seemingly simple job! Writing comes to me relatively easier, especially when I'm all fired up by a subject, but I'm afraid drawing hasn't been one of my natural inclinations!

I'd like to take this opportunity also to express my thanks to the unsung benefactors whose informational assistance and collaboration helped me in producing this blueprint — and the relevant article. I'm indebted primarily to Fraidoun Abraham Is'hak and to Flintin Karam Cheeri and Awishalim David Kiryakous, as well as to Shimshoun Gewargis Daniel, Atniel Youkhanna Narsai, Ludiya (nee Cheeri) Sessler, Souriya (nee Shaul) Isaac, Benyamin Warda, Mariam Shmaiel Lazar, Yoos-hia Kakku Poloss, Wiska K. Pius, Simon J. Peter, Benyamin Esho Yalda, Youliya (nee Shaul) Faulkner, and Melina Oshana. And my special thanks to Enviya Warda of England, for bringing me, on his July visit to Modesto, the aerial photograph of Habbaniya — a rare treasure indeed! — appearing in this issue. He also gave me a number of good vintage Habbaniya photos.

And last, but not least, my thanks (and apologies!) to my maternal cousin Bernadette Fraidoun Abraham! Based on a rough draft blueprint I'd drawn from my fuzzy memory and those of a few ex-Habbaniyan friends I consulted, Bernadette produced — with assistance from her sharp-minded father, no doubt! — a beautiful finished copy on the computer of her brother Zaia. But when I received it from Canada (by express mail, too!) after I'd obtained Enviya's aerial photograph, I discovered, much to my distress, that I not only had botched up a couple of things on my draft plan but that I'd also garbled my Poles, thus making Bernadette's finished handiwork topsy-turvy and therefore unsuitable for publication! I was literally heartsick with guilt and disappointment! And to make things worse, Fraidoun told me on the phone that Bernadette couldn't redo the blueprint because, unfortunately, her brother had already sold his computer!

Since you and I agreed that Bernadette's finished copy couldn't be redeemed, the end result is my humble handwork!

Mikhael K. Pius
Modesto, CA

Dear Julius:

Thank you very much for the introductory free copy of *Nineveh* you had sent me a couple of months ago which was requested by my cousin Michael K. Pius back in March.

I enjoyed tremendously the articles written by various Assyrians and wish to subscribe to the magazine. Enclosed is my check for \$20.00 (Canadian).

Just a short introduction of myself. I was born as Sargon Fraidoun in Habbaniya. My father was the goalkeeper of many soccer teams there — you probably knew him — and he is now living with the rest of the family . . . my mother, 2 brothers and sister in Calgary, Alberta. I have been in Canada since 1974 and I am living now with my wife near Toronto, Ontario.

If I come up with any interesting news, I will certainly take the liberty of sending it to you.

Again, I appreciated the sample copy and am looking forward to receiving future issues of your fine magazine.

Keep up the good work and God bless!

Serkes F. Ibrahim
Bramalea, Ontario, Canada

Dear Mr. Shabbas:

Thank you very much indeed for sending me the past issues of *Nineveh* magazine. I am delighted to have them and I am very grateful to you.

Please accept the enclosed contribution to your Foundation, along with my best wishes.

Barbara Chiari
Burlingame, CA

Dear Mr. Shabbas:

I am so proud to receive *Nineveh* magazine regularly, and I thank you for your great work toward the Assyrian nation all over the world. I am enclosing a check in the amount of \$50.00 to cover my subscription.

Please note the change of my address.

Sargon David
Horsley Park, Australia

Dear Mr. Shabbas:

Enclosed please find a check for \$15.00 for my subscription to *Nineveh* for the year 1991-92.

Rev. Samuel Eshagh
Turlock, CA

Dear Mr. Shabbas:

Enclosed please find a check for \$15.00 for my subscription to *Nineveh* for the year 1991-92.

Dr. Samuel Ayoubkhani
Turlock, CA

Dear Mr. Shabbas:

I was very pleased to receive the last issue of your great magazine *Nineveh*. Thank you very much. I am an Assyro-Chaldean from the north of Iraq (Mesopotamia). I was a history student at the University of Paris-Sorbonne. I do research about the history of our nation in the 19th and 20th centuries. I like to read articles about this period of our history, and I was very happy to read in the last issue of *Nineveh* Mikhael K. Pius' article "From Hakkiri to Habbaniya," and the other article by Ilia Vartanov.

I am enclosing a copy of the last issue of a French History Review entitled *Notre Histoire, la mémoire religieuse de l'humanité* (in English: *Our History, the religious memory of the humanity*), No. 80, July-August 1991. It is a special issue about the Gulf and the five thousand years of history of this region.

This issue covers writings by the most important French specialists of Mesopotamia, as Prof. J. C. Margueron, Prof. J. F. Salles, etc. I have written in this review, page 67, a small article about our community in the gulf region in the first centuries. My article, "The Gospel in the Gulf," is about the Christians of the Church of the East who lived in the Gulf between the regions of Beith-Aramaye and Beith-Qatraye. I give references about the works of Prof. Ghirshman and Prof. Salles, who discovered respectively in 1960 and 1989, in the Kharg Island (Iran) and in Failaka Island (Kuwait), the vestiges of two "Nestorian" Churches, from the 4th and the 6th centuries. When I publish another article, I'll send it to you.

I look forward to your next issue of *Nineveh*, and thank you very much for sending it to me. Regards and best wishes.

Joseph Alichoran
Sarcelles, France

Congratulations

A Boy, Kyle Andrew, was born on July 19, 1991 to Laith and Liz Neesan of Southern California. Laith is the son of Sami and Lily Neesan of Hercules, California.

Thank You For Your Contributions

Nineveh

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Of Kings and Children

ARTIST BRINGS ASSYRIAN HISTORY TO CHILDREN'S VIDEO



Hanna Hajjar and one of his star puppets

In a small oak paneled room in Schiller Park, Illinois, there is much commotion. A computer sits on an old desk, its screen lit up with bright colored Assyrian letters. The dark oak walls are full of old Assyrian insignias; some from the East, others from the West. Pictures of ancient costumes and ones in formation lay scattered about, waiting to be consulted. Hanna Hajjar is busy working on his video for children.

Artist Hanna Hajjar, a Lebanese born Assyrian, is anxious to release his video, which is a collection of educational and entertaining snippets revolving around a clown named Gawneh. Gawneh, living somewhere in the West, gets hold of a map of his native Bet Nahrain and decides to fly there. The video thus begins with an animated scene of Gawneh looking for Bet Nahrain. Upon his arrival in an ancient Assyrian castle, the clown is taken on various journeys by the Assyrian king Sennacherib and his guards. Passing through different colored doors, Gawneh is educated about his language, culture and people. During the course of the video, various aspects of Assyrian culture and traditions, as well as language, are explored through colorful dramatizations and animation.

The video was born out of Hanna Hajjar's deep concern for the cultural and linguistic state of Assyrian children in the United States. Having a two year old son of his own gives him an extra incentive. From simple computers he creates fascinating animation, from shoes and old cloths strange new puppets.

Hajjar possesses such energy and creativity that one immediately senses he is driven by something.

"Our problem is that we neglect our children, and think that they will grow up to be linguistically and culturally Assyrians by some magical way. It never happens like that. You have to work hard to teach them. And the sooner you start, the better."

Hanna Hajjar



Seven year old Shimun Odishu proudly stands next to the statue of an ancient Assyrian deity at the Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago. Assyrian children like Shimun are the prime audience for Hajjar's video.



Hanna Hajjar, as an Assyrian king, talks to his Rab-Shaq before a gigantic Lamasu. The costumes of the king and soldiers were also made by Hajjar.

"Our problem is that we neglect our children," he said, "and think that they will grow up to be linguistically and culturally Assyrians by some magical way. It never happens like that. You have to work hard to teach them. And the sooner you start, the better."

Although an engineer by profession, Hanna Hajjar has been an artist at heart. In his video we have a chance to see his creativity come to light on the computer screen, teaching children to read, write and count in Assyrian.

The video, *Tar'eh weh Gawneh*, will be available for sale in September of 1991. It is an E&H production, an Assyrian video production company, managed and owned by Edward and Hermiz Hasso. The Hasso brothers are also the producers of *Assyrians Around the World*, an Assyrian television program shown weekly in Chicago.

Assyrian children learn their history at the Oriental Institute from an Assyrian guide. The children, participants in a history class sponsored by the Ashurbanipal Library, were informed of the great contributions of Assyrian civilization. "Now I am really proud to be an Assyrian," one child told his mother, "You have no idea how much I have learned."



A Clown and his friends

Gawneh, the star clown in Hajjar's video, is among his friends in an Assyrian castle. The background is a replica of the gate of Ishtar of Babylon, at the Oriental Institute of Chicago



by Robert DeKelaita

ASSYRIAN RELIEF COMMITTEE FORMED IN CHICAGO

ASSYRIAN ORGANIZATIONS AND CHURCHES COME TOGETHER TO HELP



Chicago- Since the beginning of the war between the United States and its allies against Iraq, Assyrians in Chicago have feared the worst. In order to alleviate some of the tragedies being faced by the Assyrians in Iraq, Assyrian organizations, churches and political groups gathered to discuss the plight of their people in the Middle East. Meetings between the various social, political and religious Assyrian groups take place in the Ashurbanipal Library at the Assyrian Universal Alliance Foundation on a weekly basis.

"These meetings will continue as long as there are Assyrians suffering in the East," said Dr. Allen Sadah, chairman of the Public Relations Committee and the current President of the Assyrian Academic Society of Chicago.

Asked about aid to the Assyrians in Iraq Dr. Sadah could say nothing definite. "This is a very difficult question," he replied, "we are looking into this. You must keep in mind that political matters come into play here. We just have to take it a step at a time." Iraq's

Assyrians, like most Iraqis, are said to be suffering from lack of necessities such as medicine, food and clean water.

Regarding the various fund raising activities sponsored by Americans and Europeans on behalf of Kurds, Dr. Sadah was unequivocal.

"If they want suffering to end, then they should mention the suffering endured by our people. Human suffering is the same. We are sympathetic to the human plight of the Kurds, but let us not, in the process, forget the Assyrians, whose very identity is today threatened."

Dr. Sadah is hopeful that the Assyrian Relief Committee will make a difference to the lives of suffering Assyrians in their native land of Iraq, as well as those in refugee camps.

"We have come together to help our people," said Dr. Sadah, "and we will do our best. Just coming together, however, is a great symbolic action."

by Robert DeKelaita

HOW HISTORY REPEATS ITSELF

Geogtapa, one of the largest villages of Urmia, Iran, was besieged by the Kurds in 1916. Seven hundred Assyrian residents of this town together with some three hundred inhabitants of other villages who had reached Geogtapa on their way to the city, defended themselves for days. They were finally driven to their last stand in the two churches situated on a high hill formed of ashes of Zoroastrian fires. One of these churches was named the "Red Church" of Geogtapa.



Red Church of Geogtapa

Women and children were crowded like sheep in the churches. Dr. Packard, an American missionary physician, intervened valiantly at the risk of his life. Holding an American flag, initially, he warned the Kurds and Turks who were milling around the churches trying to kill the Assyrians, that if they touched a single Assyrian, he would bring in the American army. Also through his long and intimate relationship with many of the Kurdish chiefs whom he had treated in his hospital, it was agreed to let them go with him, provided the Assyrians would give up their guns and ammunition. They did, and in the middle of the night, over a thousand men, women and children followed him to the city. Had it not been through his mediation, the Assyrians would have been massacred.

It is likely that the Red Church of Geogtapa along with other churches, will again become a house of refuge for Assyrian refugees who fled the Gulf War and have settled in Urmia and its surrounding villages in camps, churches and houses.

ASSYRIAN CHURCHES RAISE FUNDS IN CALIFORNIA

San Jose — In an effort to raise funds for the Assyrian refugees in Iraq, three churches in San Jose, the Assyrian Church of the East, the Assyrian-Chaldean Catholic Church and the Assyrian Evangelical Church, united to form the Assyrian/Chaldean Christian Relief Fund of the Bay Area.

According to a letter from the Relief Fund, the church organization was formed mainly to support "an estimated number of over 20,000 Assyrian-homeless refugees in the mountains of Turkey and over 5000 in Iran" who have been victims of not only the allied coalition war against Iraq, but of the Kurdish revolt that followed. The letter further states that the organization was primarily established to address this calamity by requesting assistance from various Christian churches and relief organizations.

Over 2000 letters were sent to various Christian and non-Christian relief groups, to the President of the United States, the Secretary of State, key U.S. Senators and Congressmen as well as the Governor of California; various local mayors and legislators have also been contacted.

Letters have also been sent to the Immigration officials of the United States, Canada and Australia, requesting refugee status be granted to these Assyrians.

The Assyrian Foundation of America, publisher of *Nineveh* magazine, has donated \$1000 toward this cause for our people.

Those interested in supporting this humanitarian effort should write or call:

Assyrian/Chaldean Christian Relief Fund
of the Bay Area
680 Minnesota Avenue
San Jose, California 95129
Telephone: (408) 446-3313
FAX: (408) 286-7377

CHICAGO ASSYRIANS RESPOND TO PLIGHT OF ASSYRIANS IN IRAQ

Chicago — Requests on Assyrian radio programs for donations to relief efforts initiated by Assyrian churches and organizations in the United States resulted in more than \$25,000 on one weekend alone. More donations are expected to arrive from a variety of sources.

ASSYRIAN UNION SCHOOL, CIVIL CANTONMENT, R.A.F., HABBANIYA, IRAQ

by Abigail P. Isaac

In 1944, the Assyrian Union School, which was run by the late Raabi Yacoub Bet Yacoub, was nationalized and administered by the Iraqi government.

In order not to cause disruption by the sudden change, it was agreed by the authorities that students who wished could continue with the same subjects, but attendance would be in the evenings. Those students who chose to follow the government curriculum of studies were reclassified and attended

daytime classes. Many pursued evening classes from 1945 to 1946, solely to obtain the school certificate.

Most of the teachers were Britishers, who also taught in the R.A.F. Station School. The final examination was set to be in 1946, and on passing the students were awarded the Union School Certificate, which was signed by the principal, Lovett-Campbell, Officer in Charge of Civil Cantonment, and the new Headmaster, A. K. Kasir.



1946: Secondary C Form Class, R.A.F. Union School, CC, Habbaniya

Back row (l to r): Unknown, Yerjanik Babaian, Wilson David, Varastad Markarian, unknown, Awiya Nimrod Khammo, son of Kapriel the milk-and-Gaimar seller, Wilson, Francis Shawel David, Rehana Baiju, Yosip Gewargis.

Second Row (l to r): George Youkhanna Yonan, Havel Yosip, unknown, Pola Skharia, Emmanuel Yosip, Albert Avikam, Yerjanik's (Armenian) friend, Yosip Kakku, William Skharia, Istaphanous, Moushey Shindu, unknown.

Third Row (l to r): Baba Francis, John Fraidoun, unknown, Leena Yonathan, Minania Ewan, Shameran William Shabbas, Odette Youav Jacob, Nina Alec, Youav Giliana Tamraz, Benyamin Youkhanna Khoshaba, Hubert Aghasi, Odisho Adam.

Front Row (l to r): Awigle Polous (Abigail Isaac), Sarro Benyamin, Awigle David, Rapqa Gibrail, Wardiya Youna, LAC Ward (teacher), Istaad Antwan (principal), Raabi Youkhanna Shimshun (teacher), Violet Youav Jacob, Julia Yacoub Aboona, Elizabeth Odisho, Awigle Shmouel, Anno Skharia.

*Picture, text and names submitted by
Abigail Isaac, Skokie, IL*

FOCUS ON FENCED CAMPS OF HABBANIYA

by Mikhael K. Pius

Location and Intention

Habbaniya was a Royal Air Force base of iron-fenced cantonments! It nestled on a flat lowland between the southern bank of the Euphrates River just before it curved off to the east and the east-to-west run of the imposing Habbaniya Plateau lying atop the range of hills only a mile away to the south. The air base also lay between two major towns in the area, Ramadi 15 miles to the west and Falluja 18 miles to the east.

Situated 55 miles west of Iraq's capital city of Baghdad, Habbaniya was established and occupied by the R.A.F. in the mid-1930's after the former air base of Hinaidi, adjoining Baghdad, was vacated and handed over to the Iraqi Government. The air base was, mainly, an imperialistic watchdog guarding the British oil interests in Iraq and Iran. It was also a British lifeline straddling the crossroads between the Mediterranean ports and North Africa and, more important, the Persian Gulf, which was vital as a fueling area to the British fleet protecting the Empire's routes to Pakistan, India and beyond!



Signpost at the Habbaniya-Falluja-Ramadi crossroads, indicating London to Baghdad 3,287 miles and Baghdad-Habbaniya 55 miles.

Camp Compartments

Habbaniya's four square miles of land were surrounded by a protective seven foot high iron fence of an eight mile circuit controlled by four gates, namely Abu Flais, London, Falluja and Humphriya. London Gate was the main thoroughfare and Humphriya was the thoroughfare for Humphriya (or "Coolie") Camp, located outside the north-eastern corner of the fence by the river, where some Habbaniya laborers lived. Local residents had to show the gate sentry their ID card when going out or coming in, and were

required to obtain a special pass for their guests visiting from outside the air base.

The air base land was leased from the Iraqi Government under a treaty agreement and was divided into two major sections. The lion's share of the real estate was the British cantonment called Station, which occupied almost 85% of the total area. The remainder, about three-fourths of a square mile, was the local allotment, fenced off into two separate camps, the Civil Cantonment (C.C.) and the Levy Camp (L.C.).

Master Facilities

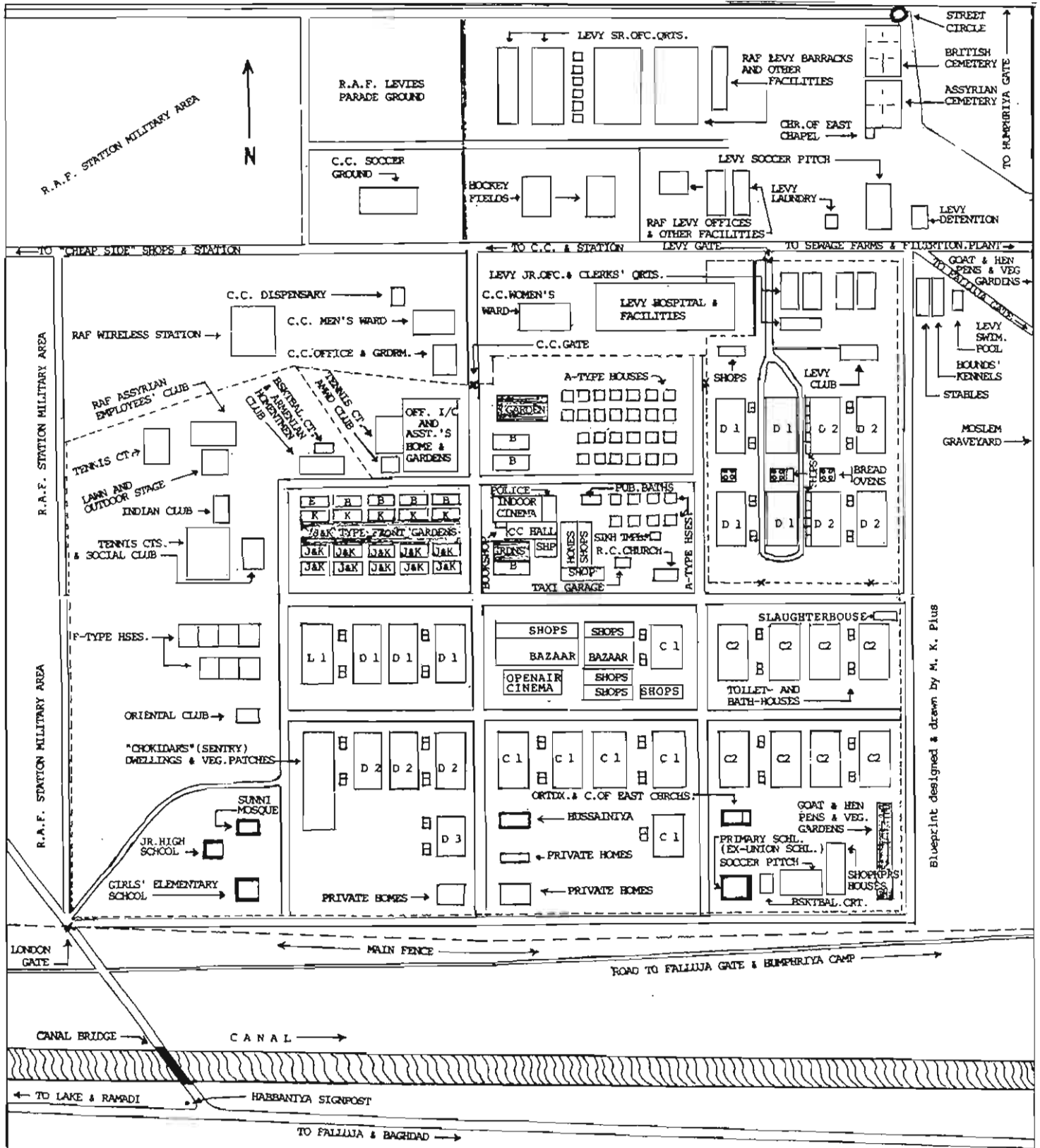
Station was both a military and a British residential area. It held all the R.A.F. installations and facilities, such as the airplanes, their hangars and the runway; the military vehicles and their compounds; the munition magazine, the stores and the supply depots; the water-supply tank tower, the powerhouse and the wireless station; the ice-making and the carbonated-drinks plants; the sewerage and the filtration plants; the workshops and offices; the R.A.F. personnel billets, quarters and their messes and clubs; the British family homes, and so on. It was also the work place for several thousand local civilian and Levy and British personnel, and home to some 12 or 15 hundred British airmen, NCOs, officers and civil servants and their families.

All the military, work and residential buildings in Station were built with baked brick, reinforced concrete and steel. They were fitted with the modern comforts of that day, such as electric lighting, fans and ventilation system; showers and flush toilets; plumbing, sewerage and steam-heating systems; radio, telephone and other amenities of comfort and convenience.

Station's Scenic Sights

The Station part of Habbaniya was beautiful! Well planned, the area was criss-crossed by a neat network of metalled wide roads with such typically English names as Oxford and Oxbridge. The streets were lined on both sides by oleander and eucalyptus and fruit-bearing trees such as mulberry, blackberry and silver willow, all nourished by running brooks of raw water pumped up from the river. Most of the office and residential buildings were surrounded by trees and greenery, and the officers' quarters and messes in particular were landscaped with lush gardens of green and color and encircled by shade trees and by grape-vine and apple, apricot and other fruit trees.

Civil Cantonment and Levy Camp of Habbaniya





A Pilot's Eye View of the Fenced Camps of Habbaniya, Iraq

Note: This aerial photograph was taken probably in the early 1940s, before the Habbaniya Canal was dug and a few other facilities, both in the Station and the local camps, were developed. 1. Civil Cantonment; 2. Levy Camp; 3. C.C. soccer pitch; 4. hockey fields; 5. Levy offices and other facilities; 6. Levy parade ground; 7. Levy Senior Officers' quarters; 8. Levy soldiers' barracks and relating facilities; 9. British cemetery; 10. Assyrian cemetery; 11. Sewage Farm fields and vegetable patches; 12. Filtra-



tion Plant; 13. Falluja Gate; 14. Road to Habbaniya Plateau and Lake; 15. Aerodrome runway; 16. Airplane hangars; 17. NAAFI Compound; 18. "Cheap Side" shops; 19. Race Course; 20. "Piccadilly Circus"; 21. Command Gardens; 22. Air Headquarters; 23. Euphrates River; 24. British Hospital facilities; 25. Humphriya ("Coolie") Camp. Other unidentified compounds and buildings are various RAF military installations and British residential areas.

In the springtime, the oleander bushes would blossom into fragrance of white, pink and scarlet and the lawns and gardens would burst into a delightful conglomeration of colors! And in the summer heat, the towering eucalyptus and other tall trees, swishing in the breeze, provided shade for the roads, while the never-harvested but forbidden ripe fruit of the street berry trees presented a temptation to the local youngsters — youngsters such as my cousin Aviya and I, who were once “jailed” by the R.A.F. police when spotted up in the trees munching juicy mulberries off the branches like hungry monkeys!

The Privileged People

The British community worshipped in three splendid churches, Church of England, Catholic and Presbyterian, and had a Free Masons Lodge. They splashed and cooled themselves in summertime in two big clean and clear swimming pools — one for officers and families and the other for airmen and NCOs — in which annual swimming competitions were also held.

In addition to boxing tournaments, gym training, athletic meets and various sports games, the British also indulged in the aristocratic games of golf, cricket and pony polo and held periodic horseracing meets. Sometimes the C.C. and L.C. teams were allowed to compete against R.A.F. teams, particularly in soccer, hockey and tennis, but at the other times they could take part only as sideline spectators!

Station had a sanitized and well-equipped hospital staffed by R.A.F. physicians and nurses, and had a well-tended recreational and botanical garden called Command Gardens as big as a small park and chokeful of a variety of flowers, plants and trees. Among its facilities were also an outdoor and an indoor cinema; a bakery, a butchery and a laundry; a station school and a library; a number of stores and canteens run by a British commercial concern called NAAFI (Navy, Army and Air Force Institutes), and a string of various civilian shops named The Cheap Side.

At the NAAFI stores the British personnel could buy all their personal needs of imported goods, tax-free, at prices well below those on the open market. And the NAAFI canteens provided them, also at low cost, with cigarettes and tobacco, drinks, refreshments, sandwiches and special meals other than the regular mess meals. But these privileges were denied to the local employees, a few of whom were in fact “sacked” or black-listed and evicted from the air base because they were caught in unlawful possession of such benefits or of committing other minor offenses!

Secluded Sail, Sun and Splash

Less than five miles from the air base, across the plateau, was Lake Habbaniya. The lake was used by the British flying boats coming from and going to the Persian Gulf and beyond, and the British Overseas Airways Corporation had facilities there. The lake

was also used as a safety valve to receive and dispose of the excess waters of the bloated Euphrates River during the flood season. Beginning at the northeastern part of the lake, a regulated canal was dug in 1948 around Habbaniya, going all around its western, southern and eastern boundaries and flowing into the downflow of the river at its eastern curve on the far side of Humphriya Camp.

During the summer months, the sluggish clear



THE STATION OPEN-AIR CINEMA

Photo contributed by Enviya Warda



Church of England's St. George's Church, one of the churches serving the British community of Habbaniya.

Photo contributed by Enviya Warda



Picture shows almost all of the frontage of the AHQ building — the “Pentagon” of Habbaniya! — with its front garden and (at the far end) the officers' cars (and bicycle) roofed garages.

Photo contributed by Enviya Warda



1947: AIR HEADQUARTERS
(UNIT), R.A.F. STATION,

The western frontage side of the A.H.Q. building. The tower in the middle was the staircase entrance to the upper square of rows of offices. The two-story structure was designed as two sets of adjoining twin squares, each one upon the other, of attached numerous office suites built around two large open garden-courtyards. The structure had wide tiled verandas all around both stories overlooking the courtyard as well as all around the outside part of the building. (Posing in the foreground is the F.A. & C.A.'s typist Benyamin Menashi and his bicycle.)



1939: THE "LOCALS" BEACH AT LAKE HABBANIYA.

A part of the lake shore allotted for swimming by the C.C. and L.C. residents of Habbaniya. Posing in the foreground is Para Pius, a skillful long-distance swimmer and renowned soccer player. The British "turf" was just by Para's right shoulder.

and placid waterway was a popular "pool" for the local swimmers, diving off its bridge and holding occasional long-distance swimming contests in it. But unfortunately the canal also caused the untimely death by drowning of a few youngsters!

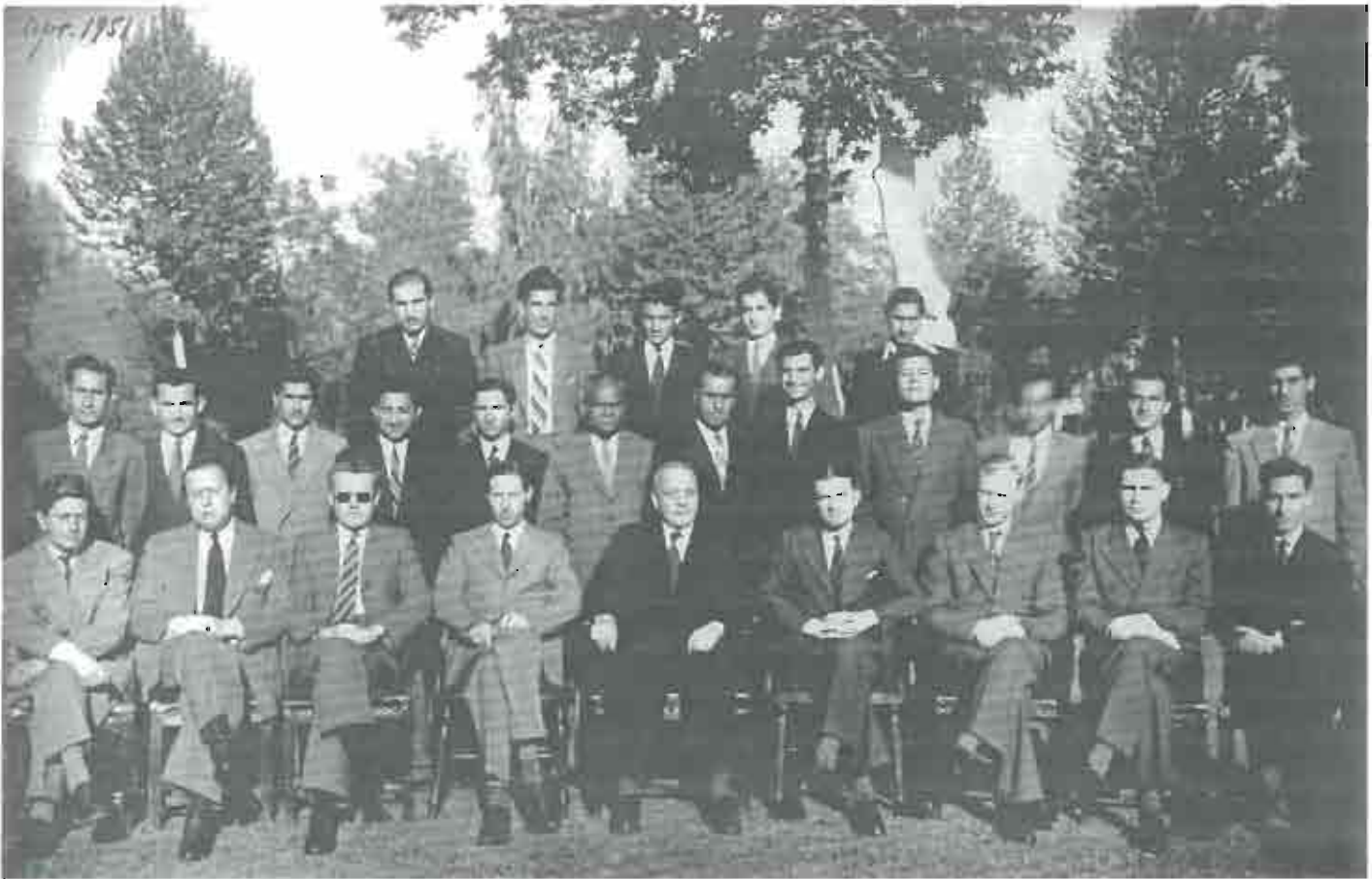
The lake was also a recreational spot for the air base. Upon a mound at the beach was the R.A.F. Boat Club. Some officers had private boats they sailed on the lake, sometimes even during the cold season! And at a choice rocky spot down below, the British swimmers splashed and sunned themselves, while the local residents of Habbaniya were confined to a lower sandy portion of the beach a mile away.

On the mound, NAAFI had a canteen that catered to the British personnel. The canteen was managed by my father from 1937 up to the British-Iraqi hostilities of May 1941 when, along with other facilities at the lake, it was sacked and looted by the Iraqi soldiers! As a teenager, I accompanied my father on several occasions to help him as well as to enjoy the luxury of a "splash" — diving off the rocks — at the British swimming spot!



1947: MULBERRY TREED ROAD
IN R.A.F. STATION, HABBANIYA.

Frisky local young man seen striding down a metalled Station road leading to the cemeteries.



1951: THE LUSH RICHNESS OF THE BRITISH ENVIRONMENT IN HABBANIYA.

Staff of the Office of the Financial Adviser and Chief Auditor, Air Headquarters, posing in a lush British garden in the Station part of Habbaniya. Local clerical staff are: back row (l to r) Fraidoun Abraham Is'hak, Vahan Sultanian, Aprim Khammo Pius, Zaia Rab-Emma Eshu, and (peon) Benyamin Goriel Alexander; middle row (l to r) Youkhanna Patros Youkhanna, Minashi (Mikhael) Khammo Pius, Souren Joseph, Eshaya Hormis Isaac, Sargis Michael, D. J. Pole, Shmouel Abraham, Avshalim Gewargis Daniel, Eshu Hassan, John ("Abracadabra") Avakian, Youkhanna Yacoub and Wartkes Setrakian; sitting (center) Mr. Ramsay, the F.A. & C.A., flanked by his eight British civilian lieutenants.

Photo contributed by Fraidoun A. Is'hak

Mail and Money Matters

Habbaniya had no Iraqi police station or bank, but there was a small Iraqi post office in Station. The British had a postal facility of their own, too, using British stamps, and an armored mobile British Bank of the Middle East rolled into the Station periodically to bring in payroll money and to provide the British administrators and personnel the necessary banking facilities. All local minor offenses and misdemeanors were handled by the S.I.B. (Special Investigations Bureau) of A.P.M. (Air Provost Marshall) and felonies were turned over to the Iraqi civil authorities in Ramadi. But shortly after the May 1941 Iraqi-British hostilities simmered down, an Iraqi police station — requested by the R.A.F. authorities — was set up behind the indoor cinema in C.C.

Levy "Lines" and Special Quarters

As regards the Civil Cantonment and the Levy Camp — which in fact are the focus of our attention here — both were residential areas only. Of the total area allotted to the two camps, C.C. had more than six-sevenths of the division while the L.C. occupied one corner only.

Levy Camp, which contained some 650 dwellings, was populated by the lower ranks, some junior officers, and a handful of the civilian clerks of the R.A.F. Levies and all their families. The few British commanders of the Force lived in superior quarters of the R.A.F. officers' level, and **Rab Khaila**, the local commander, and a score of his senior officers and their families were also quartered in Station, outside the Levy Camp. Adjoining them, on the western side,

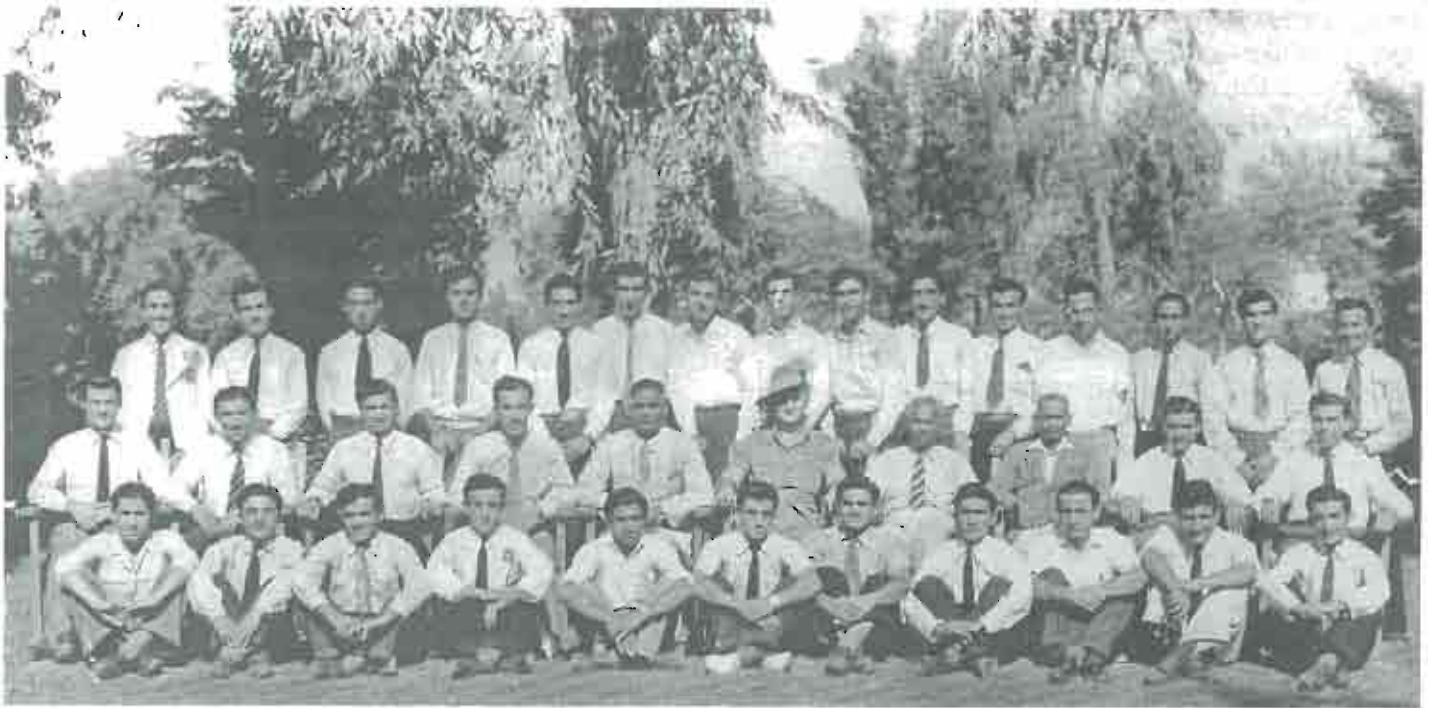
were the Levy parade ground and on the other side were the barracks and other facilities of the unmarried Levy soldiers. The bulk of the Levy Force was made up of Assyrians and the rest were Kurds, Arabs and Yezidis. The whole Levy Force plus their families totalled several thousand heads.

The special houses in which the Assyrian senior Levy Officers and their families lived were of a superior standard. They were constructed with baked brick and concrete. They had two sizable rooms, a veranda and a courtyard, with electricity and private kitchen, bathroom and toilet. And the nearby barracks of the bachelor soldiers were also of baked brick and concrete and had basic electric necessities. The billets were long bungalows that had common baths and toilets, cookhouses, messes and other facilities.

The main Levy Camp was situated at the north-eastern corner of the local area allotment. It was surrounded by an iron fence to separate it from the Civil Cantonment and the Station. Its only gate (sentry) was in the middle of its northern fence on the

main road leading to C.C. gate and to Station. But the residents had opened three more "gates" in the fence to give them easier access to C.C., with which they had constant social and shopping intercourse. One of the openings was in the north-western corner and the other two were at the southern fence separating the camp from C2 blocks.

Levy Camp contained the bulk of the Levy Force personnel and their families. They were housed in eight blocks of small attached dwellings built of mudbrick and mudplaster roofed with corrugated iron sheets covered with mudplaster. Each block consisted of six bungalows or "lines," 20 feet apart, and each line comprised 12 units. Each house had a single room, eight feet square, with a same-size open courtyard. The room had a hole of a wooden window at its back, and the dwelling had no electricity or private water supply, bathing, toilet or cooking facilities. Between the sides of each two blocks, however, there were two buildings, about 80 feet apart, which



1948: R.A.F. LEVIES ASSYRIAN CIVILIAN CLERKS.

Posing in A.O.C. C.O.'s gardens are R.A.F. Levies Major E. C. Day (center) with his team of civilian clerks. Front row (l to r) are: Ezaria Choocha, Enviya Warda, William Qambar, Benyamin Eshu Yalda, Avisha David, Arminak Shaul Youkhanna, Aghajan Jammu, Youkhanna Sarmu, Gamliel Zaia, Awiya Nimrod Khammo, Zaia Eshu Yalda. Middle row (l to r): Eshu Hassan, Aram Karam, Raabi Youkhanna Shimshoun Barkho, Menashi Baadu, Mr. Malaram, Maj. Day, Mr. Gorga Singh, Mr. J. V. Peters, Toma Rouhan, Raabi Espania Shimshoun Barkho. Back row (l to r): Andrious Mama Jotyar, Edward Nimrod Khammo, Nistouris Tamraz, Baaba Benyamin, Shidrakh Skopila, Shmouel Darmu, Nikola Hassan, Youel Gewargis, Baaba Yosef, Shmouel Mirza, Daniel Iskhaq, Tattar David, David Shlimoun, Shlimoun Youav, and George "Kanna" (Youkhanna).

Photo and list of names contributed by Enviya Warda

served as common toilet- and bath-houses. One building was for males and the other for females, each building divided into a four-unit bath-house and a six-unit toilet-house. And on each side of the building from the outside was a common water-supply tap.

The block or cluster of special houses built for the Levy junior officers and clerks and their families were situated at the camp's northern fence. These houses were superior to the camp's common dwellings. They had two bedrooms and a courtyard with electricity and private water supply, bathroom, toilet and kitchen and a small garden.

In front of these special quarters, at the north-eastern corner of the camp, the Levies had a club hall and an adjoining vacant lot which were also used for social functions such as dance parties, wedding celebrations, funeral memorials, etc. And east of the officers' and clerks' houses, just outside the fence, the British had stables and hound kennels, and beyond those was the Levies' swimming pool. On the far side of those facilities, some Levy families kept milk animals and hatching hens and grew vegetables and fruit trees.

Roads, Shops and Ovens

On the other side of the officers' and clerks' quarters, close to the north-western corner of the fence, where **Rab Emma** Eshu's arakshop, Neeku's tailoring shop and a butcher shop in a row. And behind these shops and A-Type blocks in C.C., just outside the iron fence, were the Levy sentry post and the Levy Hospital with all its necessary facilities.

The camp had 13 other shops of various kinds, and the bread-baking women had built for themselves three sets of four *tannoureh* (clay ovens) below ground level for baking Assyrian bread. The camp also had a bitumen-paved road — only wide enough for a single car to pass through! — that originated at the main camp gate and ran around the two D1 blocks. The road basically served the cars and trucks making deliveries to the camp shops.

Levy Camp was controlled and administered by the Levy Headquarters. The residents were charged a nominal rent, deducted from their monthly paychecks.

People's Privileges

Civil Cantonment contained some fourteen hundred dwellings, provided by the R.A.F for their civilian employees and their families. The majority of the population, which numbered more than ten thousand, was Assyrian, with minorities of Armenian, Kurdish, Arab, Indian and a few other races.

The C.C.'s major facilities were six clubs, three schools, two churches, two mosques, two cinemas, a Sikh temple, a civic hall and reading room, a tiny bookshop, a taxi garage, a dispensary, a men's ward, a women's ward, a bazaar and a few strings of additional shops, a slaughterhouse and . . . dozens of Assyrian *tannoureh* built among the lines. In a vacant space by the eastern Civil Cantonment fence some families, as those in Levy Camp, kept sheep,



1946: ST. GEORGE'S DAY PARADE AT LEVY PARADE GROUND.

Picture shows the skillful and sharp-smart RAF Assyrian Levy Band leading the Habbaniya Boy Scout march past a group of British officers and Scouting officials at Habbaniya's Levy soccer and parade ground.

Photo contributed by Enviya Warda

goats, and chickens and grew vegetables. A soccer pitch and two field hockey grounds were situated just outside the C.C. gate, but other sports such as tennis, basketball, volleyball, etc. were played on fields within club compounds.

Administration and Assignment

Civil Cantonment was controlled by the Station Commander and was administered by a British official and his assistant through a local office run by a staff of several local clerks and supervisors and a team of skilled and semi-skilled workers. The office collected rent fixed at an ascending scale of rates for the several types of houses, with a small extra charge levied for live-in dependents, such as close relatives or adult children. The houses were designed and built in uniform quarters of several types classified in order of their superiority, and allotted according to the various classes of employees.

Rungs of Residence

“The best homes in town” were those provided for the C.C. Superintendent (or Officer In-Charge as he was called) and his assistant. These were built by the C.C. gate close to their administration’s offices. They were twin luxury residences that had ample and spacious rooms with all the creature comforts, surrounded by large and lush gardens.

But the top rung of the local C.C. homes were the F-Type, followed down the ladder by J, K, A, B, C, D, E, and L-Type. The F-Type houses, which were allotted to local British civilians, and a few Assyrian white-collar employees holding prominent positions, were built with mud brick and burnt-sand mortar called juss. They were just a handful of units. Each house consisted of three bedrooms, a living room, with private kitchen, bathroom and flush toilet and a front garden. The houses also had electricity.

Next down the ladder were the J, K, and A-Type houses. These were constructed with mudbrick and mudplaster and roofed with corrugated iron sheets covered with mudplaster. Although on a slightly lower scale, like the F-Type these were also “superior” types. J-Type houses had three rooms, but K- and A-Types had only two. But they all had sizeable open courtyards with electricity and private kitchen, bathroom and outhouse and — except for a few K-Types that had their courtyard frontage on the main street — a front garden. Each four attached J- and K-Type houses formed one line and every two A-Types were a duplex.

The lowest type of superior quarters were the B-Types. There were only seven lines of these houses, two of six units each and five of five each. They were similar to K-Types, but had a smaller courtyard and only a few trees and flower bushes haphazardly planted in front of their courtyard.

All these so-called superior types of houses were,

as a rule, allotted to white collar employees of a clerical or supervisory nature.

Humbler Habitations

More than 80% of the houses in C.C. were of the inferior standard and were mostly inhabited by the blue collar workers (both skilled and menial) and their families. These were the C, D, E, and L-Type houses. The better of these, the C-Types, had two eight-square-foot rooms with a regular glass window at the back of each, and a front open courtyard of the combined size of both rooms. The other three types, like those of the Levy Camp, each had only one room and a same-size open courtyard, with a window at the back of the room. None of these types had electricity or kitchens, private water supply, bathing nor toilet facilities. In the early years, however, a general sewage system was installed for the communal water taps, and in the late 1940’s a section of the C-Type blocks (C1) were electrified.

All these types of dwellings were “bungalows.” Normally, every six attached C-Type houses formed one bungalow or “line,” with every six lines (36 houses) making one block. The blocks of the smaller units (D- and L-Types) were also six lines, but each line of these contained 12 units instead of six. Lines were 20 feet apart and there was a distance of 50 or 60 feet between blocks.

All Roads Lead to C.C. Gate

Civil Cantonment had five main roads, three of them running north to south and two east to west. The middle north-south road, which started at the C.C. Gate — the guarded thoroughfare between C.C. and Station and through which the whole civilian labor force passed at least twice a day — was the main artery of the “town.” A third east-west road, only sparsely paved during latter years, was sometimes used by cyclists and taxis as a short cut to London Gate. There were other roads in C.C. criss-crossing between the blocks and neighborhoods, but those were only dirt footpaths.

The roads in both C.C. and L.C. were nameless and almost bare of trees and plants. During the first few years they were just dirt roads that turned slushy during the rainy season and dusty in summertime. But soon after they were laid with a thin layer of bitumen that made them more passable and less messy and dusty, even though bicycles were their heaviest traffic, except perhaps for an occasional taxi or truck — or the S.I.B. clerk Sam Eshaya’s and Mukhtar Haidu Patros’ motorcycles revving and racing on them!

Resourceful Renovations

Almost all the buildings in C.C. and L.C. were built of mudbrick and mudplaster, with corrugated iron sheet roofing covered by mudplaster. The dwellings must have cost the British Government a paltry investment, which they probably recovered, with interest, through rent over the years! The original work done and the material used — especially on the lower classes of houses — were inferior and crude! The houses had dirt floors and the walls were covered crudely with mudplaster even from the inside. There were cracks in the walls big enough to serve as nests for scorpions — which creatures did in fact sometimes emerge from some! But the Assyrians are resourceful people. Every tenant soon bought (or scrounged!) cement sand, gravel and laid their floors with concrete and plastered their walls from the inside white, and smooth as marble. A few even managed to tile the floor and to paint the “jussed” walls with distemper and oil-base paint. Some even planted a few scrawny trees or plants just outside their courtyards for landscaping!

Most of the families living in the inferior quarters roofed over their courtyards to create extra living and sleeping space. And no wonder! There were many families of six or more members sleeping in two small rooms, with no marital privacy for the parents! And sleeping in a row on bedding laid on the floor was often the only way they could squeeze into such tight space! I remember our household of eight was such a family living in a C-Type house for many years before we were “privileged” to obtain a K-Type home.

Some people improvised a teeny-weeny “kitchen” and a cubbyhole of a “bathroom” in their roofed-over courtyard, digging up a cesspit outside for the sewage water. Oil lamps were used for lighting at night and Kerosene Primus stoves for cooking and for heating water for the weekly or twice-weekly wash and bath. Some even used an “ojakhta” (coal stove). But they still had to draw their daily domestic water needs in pails from the neighborhood water supply tap and had to use the communal toilet house!

Although the roofs were arched and well covered with strawed mudplaster, most of the houses leaked in heavy rains in the earlier years. This happened because the roofing iron sheets were laid with the corrugation horizontal. So the R.A.F. authorities had the roofing redone by removing and relaying the corrugated iron sheets perpendicularly, and recovering them with mudplaster. At the same time, the walls of the houses were underpinned by knocking out several layers of the mudbricks in the bottom of the walls — because they were crumbling with dampness — and replacing them with baked bricks laid on concrete plaster.

Communal Conveniences

As in the Levy Camp, between the sides of each

A clip from the local history of Habbaniya

two blocks of houses there were two buildings to serve as common toilet and bath houses for the resident families. One building was for men and the other for women, each divided into a bath house and a toilet house.

The toilet house consisted of six open toilet “booths,” each three facing each other but separated by a fixed wooden screen. Each unit, in turn, was separated from the one beside it by a wall partition, shoulder high. The toilet booths had two concrete pads, one foot high, on which one squatted, with halved four-gallon petrol cans between the pads to hold the disposals!

Although the toilet houses had overhead oblong glassless openings in the walls to serve as windows, they had no lighting of any kind at night. So it wasn't very strange to hear an occasional story of a bladder-pressured “blind” male commencing his interrupted relief over an imperceptible and unaware squatting figure before the outrageously messy and embarrassing situation was discovered! And although the emptied disposal receptacles and the concrete floors were disinfected with Cresol daily, sometimes the stink from the overflowing urine and feces and the swarms of flitting flies, especially during the summer heat, were a real problem!

Like the toilet house, the bath house half of the building also had individual booths, but only four (two-a-side). They were made of wooden frames and metal-sheet screens instead of brick walls. The bath house, too, had overhead glassless openings in the walls for windows, but they had no lights, showers or water taps. However, there was a common water tap on each side of the building from the outside from which the bath house users and the neighborhood residents drew their water needs in pails. The communal water taps were also meeting spots for the housewives to exchange the gossip of the day!

Most people used the bath houses during the warm season, but only the stout of heart and thick of skin could venture into them during wintertime! Most people took their once- or twice-a-week winter bath in their improvised bathroom or in their warm roofed-over courtyard squatting in a metal wash tub while their spouse (or mother in case of children) scrubbed their back and poured cupfuls of warm rinsing water over their head!

Cool Nights and Sweaty Siestas

Despite the extreme daytime summer heat, nights were usually cool in Habbaniya, as they normally are in Central Iraq. But of course sleeping indoors at night in summertime was out of the question! People in Iraq normally slept up on the cool rooftops during the summer months. But because the Habbaniya rooftops were small and arched, all local residents

—except those having open courtyards — had to sleep between the lines, just outside their houses. And on clear, cool nights, I recall the tinglingly delicious experience of lying between clean and cool sheets in shimmering moonlight or falling asleep gazing at the stars twinkling up in the dark heavens! And even with some of the beds only a few paces off the main street, incidents resulting from that nightly exposure of slumbering bodies to possible nocturnal whims and fancies of twisted minds were few and far between!

In the early years, very few people had proper heating devices against the winter cold, but some people were able to buy heating stoves from Baghdad later on. The heat generated by the cooking stove and by the overpopulation of the small rooms, however, made the cold bearable. But the heat in summertime was something to reckon with! Most people depended on straw handfans to cool themselves with. It was probably easier on the “privileged” ones who had electricity and could afford an electric fan, even though the warm breeze it blew was of little relief! I still shudder when I recall our summer days in a C-Type house, especially during the sweltering days of July and August when the breeze was low and the humidity high and the temperature soaring higher (past 120° F in the shade!) and the flies buzzing around like tiny demons, stinging me crazy while I took my fitful afternoon siesta soaked with sweat! There simply was no respite!

Rest and Recreation

For recreation and entertainment, the local population had a number of choices: there was the cinema, the reading room, the lake, the river, the canal, the sports grounds, the community clubs, the houses of worship, the “chaikhaana” (Teahouse) and, of course, the home.

Some people passed their evenings watching a movie, a few were bookworms, some refreshed themselves — in summertime — swimming, some indulged in fishing or picnicking. Sportsmen participated in games while their fans coiled and uncoiled with the excitement of watching them play. Some took solace in prayer services or involved themselves in church affairs. Others spent their evenings at their club, while still others used their leisure time relaxing at home or visiting friends or relations. A few whiled away a few hours at the “chaikhaana” chatting with cronies or puzzling out or bickering over backgammon, checkers, or domino games. Some of the younger people, who were members of the Habbaniya Boy Scout and Girl Guide Troops, undertook occasional hiking and camping trips. To enjoy a social and to kick up one’s heels, there were the community weddings and dance parties, the feasts, the festivals and the holiday celebrations. And a lucky few who had time off and “an extra something,” slipped out of the Habbaniya fence in one of

the multi-passenger taxis headed for the “City of One Thousand and One Nights,” or travelled farther away to the north or south of the country.

In the first couple of years of the air base, C.C. had only a makeshift open air cinema for summertime. But this was torn down and in its place they built an indoor cinema house, in which we youngsters thrilled to many a Flash Gordon, Lone Ranger, and other chaptered serials and adventure features for a 10-fils admission fee! And a few years later, in the mid-1940’s, a permanent outdoor cinema was also set up, behind the Bazaar.

Adjoining the indoor cinema was a billiards hall they called “casino,” where Sando “Kutta,” a “regular,” beat the best of the local pool players. Besides billiard games, the casino also featured backgammon, dominos and checkers games along with tea and Turkish coffee. It also sold pop and ice cream, of which we youngsters guzzled many a bottle and devoured many a cone for a five-fils bit during the movie “half-time!” The hall was also occasionally rented for community weddings or other social functions. But in a few years the casino closed down and the hall was converted into a civic hall and reading room which, in turn, was taken over by the Iraqi Police Directorate in the mid-1950’s.

Medical Facility

Although there were more than ten thousand people living in C.C., the cantonment did not have sufficient or efficient doctors. Its dispensary and men’s and women’s wards were cared for, during the first decade, by a Dr. Gulak Pasha, an Indian. It also had a couple of Assyrian dressers and a few local nurses headed by “Katrina Nurse.” But in the last decade or so an R.A.F. physician was assigned to make periodic visits to the wards to check on patients and to refer serious cases to the Levy or the British Hospitals for specialized exams and tests.

Sports and Social Swirl

Clubs were undoubtedly the hub of the community’s social life, for that was where most of the action took place! They held indoor and outdoor games and competitions; solemnized death memorials; held dance parties and hosted wedding celebrations, religious and ethnic feasts and festivals to the tune of the local band; organized local bazaars and arts and crafts exhibitions, cycling trips and picnics; and staged concerts and dramatical productions. And leading the pack was the R.A.F. Assyrian Employees’ Club. The club, which had the widest membership (500) had a large hall for winter and a big square lawn surrounded by rose bushes and small trees, with an elevated stage in the center, for summer evening functions. New Year and regular dance parties at the

club were so popular that they attracted guests from Baghdad and even from as far away as Kirkuk and Basra!

As clubs were the center of the social life so sports were also the most popular activity and the major recreation and entertainment outlet for much of the male population, both as participants and as spectators. Most young men were involved in sports of one kind or another, and throngs of people of various ages flocked to the sports grounds to watch the games, especially soccer matches, some of which aroused not

only great excitement but also high emotions! And although Britannia ruled the waves, the Assyrians absolutely ruled the sports fields of Habbaniya, particularly of soccer, field hockey and tennis! Assyrian teams not only lorded it over the British at Habbaniya but Assyrian sportsmen such as Aram Karam, Ammo Baba, Youra Eshaya, Ammo Samson, Edison Eshay David, William Daniel, Andrew Simon and a score of others also made headlines in Iraqi national and international games!



1947: **KAALU SULAQA FESTIVAL AT CIVIL CANTONMENT OF HABBANIYA**

Posing for the picture on the occasion of **Kaalu Sulaqa** festival celebration at the R.A.F. Assyrian Employees' Club is a cross-section of Habbaniya's pretty maidens, all Assyrians except for a few. Front row (l to r): Haikanoush Apkar, Mabel Baba Mirza, Mariam Dawood Issa, Unknown, Panna Yacoub, Almas Iskhaq, Battu Mammu, Khanna Emmanuel Shimun. Second row (l to r): Tina Mishael Warda, Jarman Benyamin, Margaret Gewargis, Lilly Enviya (John Enviya's sister), Souriya Yalda David, Gouleezar Shairu, Battu Nimrod Benyamin, Ampolia Yonan Orahim, Unknown, Doris Israel, Bismath Yosip, Anjail Markarian, Mary Sharma, Mary Goriel, Maria Dawid. Third row (l to r) standing: Violet Benyamin, Sophia Yosip, Beatrice Avraham; sitting: Shameran Mansour Nimrod, Sandra Mansour Nimrod, Arpen Thomas, Unknown, Na'eema Ishmaiel (bride), Unknown (bride), Youliya Shawel (bridegroom), Squadron Leader H. Quittenden (Officer In-Charge C.C.), Anna Skharia (bridegroom), Agnis Eshu, Agho Thomas, Victoria Dawid, Unknown, Youniya Zaia, Awigle Polous Rasho, Batishwa Youkhanna. Fourth row (l to r): Unknown, Nina Baba Mirza, Naano Sargis, Victoria Polous, Shushan Oshana, Unknown, Unknown, Shalim Dawood Issa, Agnis Baaba, Unknown, Elishwa Skharia, Maral Hormis Dawid. Fifth row (l to r): Nally Avraham, Christina Khammo Pius, Simeenar Babayan, Shameran Skharia, Youliya Far'on, Panna Shawool, Shameran Shlimoun Yacob, Mary Akhku, Arjeneek, Triziya Hormis Dawid, Youliya Awshalim, Unknown, Camelia Salim Abood, Unknown, Lujiya Kakku Poloss, Surto Babajan. Back row (l to r): Peeda Eshaya Pera, Batishwa Lazar Issa, Lilly Shlimoun, Jane Avraham, Unknown, Mary Skharia, Joan Elisha, Katrina Aziz, Julia Warda, Christina Aziz, Kaety Mikhail, Agnis Rev. Israel, Arshalous Thomas. Note: Would appreciate hearing from readers who could identify any of the missing names.

Photo and list of names contributed by Fraidoun A. Is'hak



1952: NEW YEAR'S EVE DANCE PARTY AT C.C. HABBANIYA.

Sunny familiar faces of the bygone days in a section of a dancing crowd at the R.A.F. Assyrian Employees' Club. A few of the known (and renowned) are the famous soccer player Aram Karam (center foreground) and (behind him on the right) Albert Phillip Rasho who passed away in Chicago recently, and above Albert's head (in black neck-tie) the late Benyamin Eshu, one of C.C.'s top soccer players.



1953: "SIGHT FOR SORE EYES" IN C.C. HABBANIYA.

A private car was a rare sight in C.C.! Youkhanna Shmaiel Lazar (left) with two friends posing proudly by a private car parked across from the Orthodox and the Church of the East churches building on the road separating the C1 and C2 blocks of houses.

Photo contributed by Mariam Shamiel Lazar



1941: AT ASSYRIAN UNION SCHOOL YARD

Students rehearsing for a play. Counterclockwise from the top: Rosa Aziz, William Kaplano, Regina Giwargis, Davis Eshay David, Doris Eshay David, William David, Khava Yacoub Aboona, John Baijan Rehana.



The Editor, Julius N. Shabbas, in traditional Assyrian costume at a New Years eve party in Habbaniya in 1942.

Houses of Worship

Across from the Union School building which was situated at the southern side of the C.C. fence behind the middle of C1 and C2 neighborhoods, was a large building partitioned into two churches. The larger half was that of the Assyrian Church of the East and the smaller half was used by both the Assyrian and the Armenian denominations of the Orthodox Church.

In the early years the Assyrian Chaldean Catholics celebrated Sunday Mass and held evening prayers in the school's kindergarten hall. But when the school was taken over by the Iraqi education authorities in the mid-1940's, the parish had a church built on a vacant corner between the A-Type and the C-Type blocks.

The churches, of course, served essential Christian needs of the community, that is Sunday and

Holiday Masses, evening prayers, baptisms, funerals and Sunday School teaching.

Behind the Catholic church, on one side, the small Sikh community had a temple. And the Moslem Kurdish and Arab communities also had two mosques, one each for Sunni and Shiia sects, and a burial ground. The Shiia Hussainiya was located behind the C-Type blocks near the corner close to the D-Type neighborhood, and the Sunni mosque was south of Oriental Club and close to the bend of the road leading to London Gate. The Moslems buried their dead in a vacant lot outside the C.C. and L.C. eastern fence.

The Assyrian Cemetery — which also included a few Armenian graves — and the British Cemetery were both located in Station, outside the local cantonments east of the Levy senior officers' quarters and the soldiers' barracks. While the British and the Assyrians in Habbaniya lived miles apart, both in distance and in standard of living, their dead, strangely enough, lay close together, side by side! But the proximity ended there, for there was a visible environmental difference between the two! The British remains rested in a neat and tidy graveyard with well-tended lawns, flowerbushes and trees and symmetrically installed uniform markers, while the Assy-



1947: R.A.F. STATION, HABBANIYA.

A part of the Assyrian Cemetery in Habbaniya. Posing at the side of the grave of his older sister, Lois, who died in 1945 at the age of 18, is Elisha Gibrael Bakus.

Photo contributed by Elisha G. Bakus

rian dead lay in a hodge-podge of unsymmetrical graves of various construction design, bearing headstones of all sizes, shapes and colors, landscaped by a few haphazard trees. Adjoining the cemetery was a small Assyrian Church of the East chapel which basically served the Levy Camp spiritual needs.

The British Cemetery had — and still has! — a graves commission to take care of it, but other than a few devoted mourners who tidied up the graves of their own dead there was no arrangement to look after the Assyrian Cemetery.

Educational and Cultural Contribution

Another very important aspect of the community life was, naturally, the school. The former Union School building was square in shape. Three sides of the square were classrooms built around a large open courtyard, and the fourth side was the courtyard wall and gate. There was an expansive vacant lot behind the school building, a part of which was soccer field and basketball court. In later years, some residential houses were built on part of the lot and were occupied by shopkeepers, businessmen and others not directly employed by the R.A.F.

The Iraqi education authorities took over the school and ran it as a primary school and also built, later, a junior high school and a girls' school southwest of the cantonment.

For two decades beginning in Hinaidi in 1924, the R.A.F. Union School, headed by Raabi Yacoub Bet-Yacoub, served the Assyrian and the Armenian communities, teaching elementary Assyrian, Armenian, and Arabic languages as well as regular classes in English up to the junior high school level. The annual graduation exercises were the pride of both pupil and parent and hundreds of graduates obtained clerical work with the R.A.F., while some more fortunate ones went on to higher education in Baghdad and elsewhere.

The school was also the training cradle for some of Habbaniya's finest future sportsmen and the lullaby that instilled in its student-body the basic Christian family values. And Raabi Yacoub's administrative excellence, general literary knowledge and theatrical expertise gave birth to both school and community drama and, through the leadership of his son Raabi Emmanuel, he introduced in the local cantonments the Boy Scouts and Girl Guides, which movements continued and flourished independently for over a decade following the Iraqi take-over of the school.

NOTE: The next issue of *Nineveh* will feature the story of the Habbaniya Boy Scout and Girl Guide Troops in a full-blown article, liberally illustrated with vintage pictures.

Appreciation

Tobia I. Gewargis was the honored speaker at the Assyrian Foundation meeting of April 21, 1991. As author, educator and journalist, Tobia's contribution to Assyrian literature and cultural heritage has been monumental. He has taught Assyrian to high school students, college graduates, and to Assyrian priests and conducted classes in different Assyrian churches.

On the literary side, Tobia was the Assyrian editor for the Atour newspaper which was produced in Iran; chief editor of Voice of the East, a monthly pamphlet; and collaborated in the publication of Shvila magazine, also of Iran. He has translated into Assyrian and published W. A. Wigram's book, Our Smallest Ally, and has also written and published a book on Assyrian proverbs. In the United States, he was the Assyrian editor for the Assyrian Star. Now he writes for Atur and Nineveh magazines.



Tobia I. Gewargis

As guest speaker, Tobia spoke on the subject of "Our Duty to our People and Nation." He began with the fall of the Assyrian Empire in 612 B.C. after which the Assyrian population in and around Assyria proper, the Hakkari mountains and part of Iran were ruled by minor kingdoms in Harran and Edessa. They accepted Christianity in their kingdom of Edessa during the reign of Abgar V, who ruled from 13 B.C. to 50 A.D. Abgar V made Edessa prominent in history by his correspondence with Jesus and accepting Christianity. After the Lord's Passion and Ascension, His promise was fulfilled by the Apostles when Mar Toma (St. Thomas) sent Mar Addai, one of the seventy-two elite, on a missionary assignment to Edessa.

This was the beginning of Christianity among the Assyrians in Bet-Nahrain and then Iran. With the advent of this new faith, the Assyrians found themselves surrounded by enemies who were living in the general areas and who opposed Christianity.

Over the next several centuries, strenuous attempts were made by the heathens, and the moslems in later years, to wipe out the Assyrian Christianity. This faith in Christian principles was so strong that these attempts were not successful.

Since the first century, through the fall of our little Assyrian Kingdom at Edessa in 243 A.D. when Abgar IX Bar Manu was killed by the Romans, and through the mid-20th century, we have sacrificed thousands at the altar of Martyrdom for our Christian faith. No nation or any Christian people have experienced martyrdom as much as we have, not only for our Christian faith but also as a nation or national entity. It is sad to say that we Assyrians have not accomplished our most important duty towards our nation, that is the maintenance of our language which is the root of our national existence. Our national entity and our Christian faith

are merged together like soul and body. Should we fail to rejuvenate our language and national entity, for sure our Christian faith will eventually regress.

It is imperative that we pass on to our children what our ancestors passed on to us if we are to have any hope of maintaining our identity. In order to do this we must first feel committed ourselves to the importance and preservation of our heritage. Without our own efforts we will never achieve our national goals, nor should we expect others to fight for our rights.

In concluding, Tobia emphasized strongly that we must rid ourselves of those things that divide us rather than unite us. We should think of ourselves as one people rather than what country we grew up in, what religious denomination we belong to, what village we are from, etc. It is imperative that we work together for the benefit of our own Assyrian people.



Archdeacon Nenos Michael, of Mar Narsai of the Assyrian Church of the East, flanked by Tobia Gewargis on the left, and Nathan Nasseri on the right.

In the center is Aturina Gevargisov who was on a recent visit to the United States from Moscow, Russian Republic. She is the granddaughter of Raabi Nwyia Gevargis of Urmia, Russian Republic, whose article and picture appear in the Assyrian section. She is flanked by her cousins Sargon and Nana-jan Yelda on the left, cousin Belles Yelda on the immediate right, and the Editor Julius N. Shabbas on the far right.





Aturina Gevargisov on the left with her cousin Nanajan Yalda.

At the Assyrian Foundation Meeting





At the Assyrian Foundation Meeting





At the Assyrian Foundation Meeting





At the Assyrian Foundation Meeting

CHICAGO- The Assyrian National Council of Illinois is again preparing for elections, currently set for the summer of 1991.

According to Sunkhiro Khirzo, a member of the Council, screening committees are being created to watch over the voting process.

The Council, whose most ambitious project is the creation of an Assyrian school (to be initiated as a day care center in the beginning), now enjoys more support from Assyrian organizations affiliated with the Assyrian American National Federation, many of which opposed the creation of the Council at the outset.

"We, along with other Assyrian organizations and churches are now extremely busy with the current dire situation of our people in Iraq and the refuge countries," said Khirzu, "This is our priority."

CONGRATULATIONS

Nameer Tatar graduated from Saint Mary's College High School in Berkeley in June 1991. He will be attending the University of California at Davis in the fall, and plans to major in a Medical Science field. Nameer is the son of Foundation members Akram and Shalim Tatar.



TOGETHER AGAIN

Chicago- After abandoning their partnership, the Assyrian Universal Alliance Foundation and the Assyrian National Council of Illinois put their heads and pockets together. On the radio program of the ANCI, Oraham Oraham, a member of the ANCI, noted that working together to establish a day care center for Assyrians was a first step in national progress.

The AUAF and the ANCI has earlier given up working with each other as a result of disputes arising over administration and financing of the school.

CONGRATULATIONS

Semiramis Arbella Shabbas graduated from Saint Mary's College of California on June 15, 1991. She was conferred with M.S. degree in Health Services Administration. For the last seven years she has been working for the American Cancer Society. Semiramis is the daughter of Julius and Violet Shabbas.



Nahrain Babilla, of South San Francisco, graduated from Skyline College on June 14, 1991 receiving her Associate in Arts degree in Business Administration with honors. Nahrain is the daughter of Charles and Maryam Babilla, and sister of Assyrian Foundation member, Dijla Babilla.

Paul Sami Neesan graduated from the University of California at Davis on June 15, 1991. He was conferred with B.S. degree in Biochemistry. Paul is the son of Assyrian Foundation members Sami and Lily Neesan.



THE RAILWAY CAMP OF JEELU

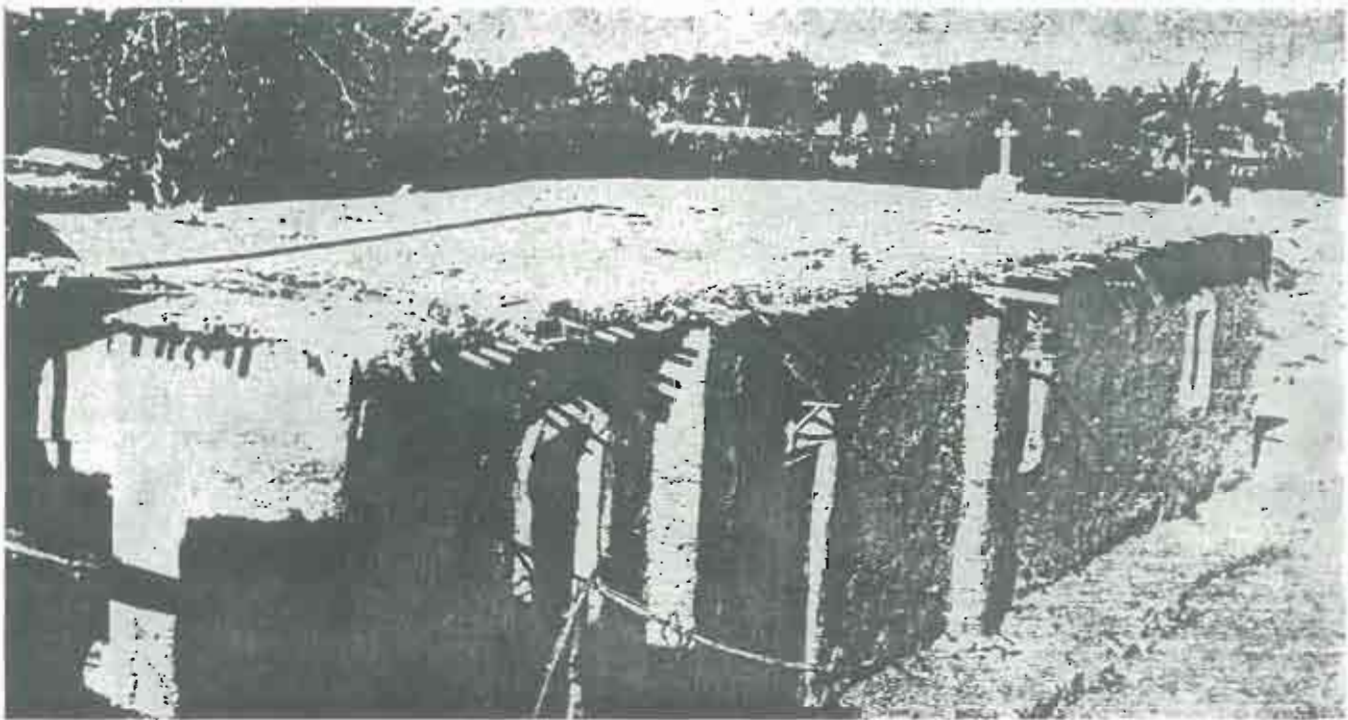
by Solomon (Sawa) Solomon

It is said that when the Baquba Refugee Camp folded in 1920 the Assyrian population of that camp moved to Northern Iraq to be settled there. However, a small group of Jeelu Assyrians stayed behind to form the future Assyrian railway camp at Baghdad West, named by the Assyrians as the Jeelu Camp, and, by the Arabs, Camp Al Sikak. Much credit for the establishment of this camp goes to a very distinguished but little known American Assyrian by the name of Reverend Dr. Marcus Gilliana Daniel of Jeelu. The following information about the camp was given to the author by the nephew of Reverend Marcus, Shlimon Gilliana of Mata De Mar Ziya, who now resides in greater Chicago.

When the Assyrians started moving north in 1920, Reverend Dr. Marcus told the people of Mata De Mar Ziya and others to stay behind in Gailani Camp in Baghdad. Then, using this authority as head of a British Military Department, and his influence with the British Military Department, the British and American Consulates, and the Chaldean Patriarch, he managed to get the British railway authorities to accept those Assyrians who could read and write English to be employed in the various railway departments; and in the summer of 1920 the railway camp was opened with 50 tents. Next, came the men

who were taken in groups to railway departments and were gradually employed. Those who could not read and write were assigned to other suitable jobs. Some young boys were employed as apprentice telegraphists for eventual promotion as assistant station masters and station masters. There were guards, train clerks, ticket collectors, travel ticket examiners, and goods clerks. Many Assyrians were promoted to the positions of station superintendents, and permanent way inspectors. At a later date many other Assyrians came and joined the railways and lived in the camp. The tents were replaced by mud brick houses and at one time 200 families lived in the Assyrian railway camp, which came under the supervision of the camp commandant, who was appointed by the Director General of Railways. It is worthy to note that prior to 1930 the Assyrians in the camp built the Church of Mar Ziya,¹ under the supervision of Deacon Ziya Gilliana and Reverend Arch Deacon Joseph Simon of Mata De Mar Ziya, and with materials supplied by the railway administration. Finally, it is worthy to note again that the Jeelu Camp and the Gailani Camp became the centers of life for the Assyrian community in Baghdad.

I wish here to thank Mr. Shlimon Gilliana who rose through the ranks of the railway to become the highest ranking Assyrian in the Iraqi Railways, retiring in May 1959.



Mar Ziya Assyrian Church of the East at the Railway Camp of Jeelu — built prior to the year 1930.



Rev. Dr. Marcus Gilliana Daniel

¹Editor's Note:

This Church is the namesake of subsequent churches built in Baghdad and Dora, Iraq. The Church which I would like to cover here is the famous Church of Mar Ziya in Jeelu. This Cathedral of antiquity was under the supervision of Mar Sargis, the Bishop of Jeelu and Baz of the Assyrian Church of the East (wrongly called Nestorian). Mar Sargis was a brave and fighting Bishop.

Without going through the history of the Assyrian involvement and their role in World War I, in August 1915, the Kurds attacked the Assyrian villages of Tkhoma, Tiari, Jeelu and Baz and ravaged them mercilessly. Atrocities were committed, houses burned, water-channels were broken down, churches by the score were desecrated and plundered. Some forty churches in Jellu alone met this fate, among them the Church of Mar Ziya.

It was the first time in its history when we see it plundered. The church was like a museum containing a large collection of votive curios, the rarest treasures were the porcelain jars brought back from China by the missionaries of the Church of the East of the seventh and

eighth centuries. For centuries it was protected by an Arabic firman written on a piece of linen by the Prophet himself which had been sufficient shield for the Church even in the days of the despot Bedr Khan Beg and his great ravagings in 1863.

The Cathedral in its majestic stature did not stand unavenged. The eldest son of Simco Agha, a fanatical man like his father, was the leader of the plunderers. He did not long survive this brutal, inhumane, and malicious destruction. W. A. Wigram, in his book Our Smallest Ally says, "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."

GUESS WHO WAS IN "MY KIND OF TOWN" CHICAGO?

Guess who was in "My Kind of Town" Chicago? One ex-Habbaniya veteran, Enwia "Enno" Warda, all the way from Kent, England. Enno spent two weeks in Modesto, California, staying with his brother Anwar, and meeting a good number of acquaintances from the old "Habb" days.

On July 10th he landed in Chicago, staying with his other brother, Odisho Warda, who lives in the same neighborhood of Des Plaines within walking distance from Ben Esho Yalda.

Ben and Odisho, without any second thought and not to miss such a pleasant excuse to meet each other, rushed and contacted some sixty "Habb" friends and planned a wonderfully surprising evening.

Enno absolutely had no idea of this and when he was ushered into the reception hall, the lights went on and all present, with their wives and other family members, shouted in unison "Surprise, Surprise." Enno went dazed and pale and nearly choked with emotion.

After reception and cocktails and patting and kissing each other, the group sat for an excellent dinner in the beautiful embassy Room of the Diplomat Banquet Hall. Speeches of welcome were made by Ben Esho Yalda who, very innocently, asked Raabi Jane (David) Rizk to take the floor, thinking that she will have some good words and praises for him and Enno on their behavior when young. Raabi Jane, with a gleam in her eyes and a deceiving smile on her face, jumped to this occasion and wasted no time making a distinct point of exposing Enno and Ben's bravery in considering themselves "The



Left to right: Ampolia, wife of Odisho Warda; Leena, wife of Ben Yalda; Enwia Warda and Ben Yalda.

Seated (l to r): Adaina (wife of Youel Babilla), Simon Peters, Zacharia Odisho Zacharia, Soriya (wife of Zacharia), Jane (wife of Simon Peters), Helen (wife of Wilson Isaac), Nina and husband Khona Elia. Standing (l to r): Youel Babilla, Odisho Warda, Enwia Warda, and Ben Yalda.



Seated (l to r): William David and his wife Victoria, Raabi Jane (David) Rizk, Nenna and her husband Pius Joseph, Joan and her husband Tooma Yousif, Agnes and her husband Alfred Daniel. Standing (l to r): Ben Yalda, Enwia Warda, Odisho Warda, Sargon Odisho, Alice Madhi and Dorothy Yousif.



Seated (l to r): John Baijo Rehana and wife Palo, Mable William, Juliet and husband Emmanuel Eprem, Joab (Ooka) Baijo Rehana, Rehana Baijo Rehana and wife Arpine. Standing: Rehana's two sons.

Seated (l to r): Juliet and husband Emmanuel Sheeno, Enwia Warda, Lousania (wife of Danis Mirza), Shlemon Youkhana, John Parhad and wife Shameram. Stand (l to r): Odisho Warda, Danis Mirza, Ben Yalda and Sargon Warda.



Left to right: Sargon Yacoub Aboona, Agge (wife of David Antar), Joan Philips, Almas (wife of Sargon Aboona), Julia (wife of Rowil Aboona), Rowil Aboona, Khanna (wife of Aram Youkhana), Aram Youkhana, David Antar. Standing (l to r): Odisho Warda, Enwia Warda, Ben Yalda.

Romeos of Levy Lines,” chasing the girls from C.C. and at times luring them into Tanoora where they would brag about their calf-love prowess and courage. Khona Elia, all this time enjoying what he was hearing, was restless in his chair, suddenly jumped and voluntarily allied with and took over from Raabi Jane. He literally shredded both Enno and Ben to pieces, amongst hilarious laughter and acknowledgement of all. Enno and Ben tried a new tactic to divert attention from them by dragging Odisho Warda in the scene, alas without success. To this day Odisho — poor Odie! — doesn’t know what conspiracy Ben and Enno had got into to make those C.C. girls so effectively shy away from him.

Zacharia Odisho, “The Man with the Golden Sax,” had brought his saxophone with him, and William David “Balalaika” accompanied him in singing “Roosh Jwanqa” and, for a while, all those “still young at heart” joined in unison, singing the same patriotic song, unconsciously betraying their emotions from the looks on their faces and somber wet eyes.

Because of the great success of the evening, a picnic was arranged a few days later by a beautiful lake near Venetian Village, on Sunday, July 28, 1991, from 8 am. The weather was glorious and Samawars and aromas of grilling and sumptuous dishes of Dolma, Rizza Smooqa, Kebbabs, you name it, it was a feast.

Ben Esho Yalda, with his enthusiasm and energy, kept the young and the not-so-young and mummies and daddies active in competitive games of Volleyball, Tug-O-War, Simon Says, Sack-Racing and other activities. All in all an excellent climax to the short but beautiful and fun-filled days of Enwia’s vacation who flew back to his home in England on Tuesday, July 30, with an album of the pictures and a video tape recording the occasions and memories of those whose love, kindness and understanding added zest and a refreshing breeze of new meaning in his life.

We thank the good Lord for the health and opportunity we all have. We pray that the same be bestowed upon all our people throughout the world.

The pictures complement the evening and the picnic and should, in a nostalgic way, bring back memories and give the readers a chance to see how much the boys and girls have grown up and are still having fun.

The other picture you see of Odisho on the left, Ben in the middle and Enno on the right, in Scout uniform, was taken in 1944 in Abu-Flais, Habbaniya. Compare it with the pictures of the same three guys taken at the O’Hare Airport in Chicago and at the picnic in July, 1991. Now, now, stop murmuring and be kind in what you are saying. Let us face it. It is nearly half a century (some 47 years) in between, and yet you see how handsome and vigorous they

now look. Forget the beautiful silver hair, that is the toll time is entitled to claim.

Text and pictures submitted by Ben Esho Yalda.



Ben Esho Yalda welcoming the guests.



Enwia Warda (right), in his talk which was jovial as well as emotional, thanked his good old friends for having him with them. He reminisced on the days when all were young. Looking at him are Ben Yalda (left) and Odisho Warda (middle).



Habbaniya, Iraq 1944. In Boy Scout uniform. Left to right: Odisho Warda, Benyamin Esho Yalda and Enwia Warda.



At the picnic, Chicago, July 1991. Same three fellows 47 years later in casual clothes and caps (l to r) Odisho, Ben and Enwia.

WHAT ARE THE EX-HABBANIYA GUYS IN CHICAGO UP TO NOW?

We parents and children of the past Baquba, Hinaidi and Habbaniya tragically — dramatic — era remember and know the number of patriot Assyrians who, under some very archaic and absolutely unstructured basis, took the burden on their shoulders to pioneer and plunge into forming a nucleus of opening schools and teaching Assyrian, English and, as time went by, Arabic to our people. Some of those giants that are no longer with us were Qasha Youseph DeKelaita in Mosul, Raabi Yacoub Bet Yacoub in Marata Line/Hinaidi/Habbaniya, Qasha Khando in Baghdad and lately Raabi Jebrail in Kirkuk.

We had some terrific response and very encouraging feedback from all those who participated in the get-together evening held in February of 1989 in appreciation and recognition of the late Raabi Yacoub, one such giant.

Our ex-Habbaniya Organizing Committee is thinking of having a similar recognition evening, in Chicago, sometime in the last week of October, 1991, to honor the teachers involved in that era. We have Raabi Jane (David) Rizk and Raabi Virgin Sargon in Chicago, Raabi Regina Michael, Raabi Nano (Shabbas) Jacob and Raabi Nanajan (Yaedgar) Badal in California, Raabi Dinkha George in Colorado.

If the reader is interested to participate in any way please call Ben Esho Yalda at (708) 296-7587, or write to him at his home address: 9350 North Parkside Drive, Des Plaines, Illinois 60016. It is worthy to be noted that Ben is one of those stalwart supporters and has the drive and stamina to make such occasions happen.



At O'Hare Airport, Chicago, July 1991. The three fellows 47 years later in the same order (l to r) Odisho Warda, Ben Esho Yalda and Enwia "Enno" Warda.

SOVIET ASSYRIANS ESTABLISH CONGRESS

Background:

Assyrian settlements in the Soviet Union began in 1819 in Dwine (Dujin — present Soviet Armenia) when 26 families from Urmia, Iran, were brought and established there as a result of the Russian-Turkish war. Nine years later (1828) Kuilasar (Kalla d'Assurai — "Fortress of the Assyrians"), adjacent to Dwine, was another site of settlement for 100 families. 1878 was the year when three more Assyrian villages, namely, Samavat, Bagra-Khatun, and Urmia, Russia, were sites of settlement.

Then in December 1914 came the mass exodus of Assyrians towards the Russian border precipitated by World War I, when several thousands followed the Russian withdrawal and retreat from Iran. Many settled in Moscow, in Tbilisi, Georgia, while others settled among the inhabitants. A few thousand returned to their homeland in Urmia, Iran, when the Russians returned and re-occupied the northwest of Iran. Those who remained in Russia were accommodated by the government in cooperation with the Assyrian center in Moscow with help of Sarkisov, an Assyrian who was a deputy to the Moscow City Soviet.

Later, the first Assyrian association was established in Moscow under the name *Khayadta* (Unity) to cater to the general needs of the masses, including the need for education and knowledge. Thus, in 1925, an ambitious project was launched. They opened Assyrian centers of education in cities and villages where Assyrians lived. Children learned to read and write their mother tongue as well as Russian. Grandparents and parents spoke Assyrian to their children. This helped with the perpetual maintenance of the spoken language, which we witness today in villages and cities. In Tbilisi, an Assyrian newspaper was established for the consumption of the Assyrian public where textbooks and literary works were published.

This literary and happy state of affairs was too good to last. Stalin's brutal crackdown in 1938 on foreigners including Assyrians was a fatal blow to their efforts. All Assyrian classes, newspaper and the Association were closed down. Several hundreds were imprisoned, shot or sent to Siberia. The second crackdown came in 1949.

Today:

Thanks to President Mikhail Gorbachev's glasnost (openness) and perestroika (restructuring), the Assyrian community as well initiated their own restructuring. The old Assyrian Unity Association "*Khayadta*" is now rejuvenated under the name of Independent Assyrian Association of Moscow. Its first conference was held on November 23-24, 1990

under the leadership of Vladimir Kalamanov, a well-known and popular Assyrian political scientist. The many delegates in attendance approved the formation of "The Assyrian Congress of the U.S.S.R." Its main objective is the revival and development of the Assyrians in the Soviet Union as a nationally free people, and with a view of fulfilling their cultural, social, spiritual and other needs.

The officers of the Congress were elected. The executive Council, consisting of 37 members representing Assyrian communities throughout the Soviet Union, has, during the last few months, held three sessions, two in Moscow and one in Rostov city. The many committees formed have been active in different fields, such as folkloric songs and dances, football teams, circles for studying Assyrian and English.

According to Ilia Vartanov, an Assyrian journalist, there may be as many as 70,000 Assyrians living in the Soviet Union, yet the State official figures put it at 25,000.

The Assyrians of the Soviet Union deserve our acclaim and admiration for their efforts and perseverance in maintaining the Assyrian heritage and identity.

25 YEARS OF SERVICE

Recently, Bechtel Corporation gave a dinner party at the World Trade Club in San Francisco in honor of the employees who have completed 25 years of service. Among the honored guests were Youel and Alice Baaba.

In recognition of his service, Youel was presented with a Rolex gold watch and Alice, for her support, a Tiffany clock. Mr. William Friend, president of Bechtel National, Inc., was the guest speaker and presenter at this memorable event. The recipients were accepted as members of the Bechtel Quarter Century Club.

Youel joined Bechtel in July 1962 as an engineer. Over the years he advanced to project engineer, engineering manager and project manager. During this period he has managed a variety of projects in the United States, Canada, United Kingdom, Australia, Japan, Abu Dhabi and Saudi Arabia. His engineering and construction management assignments included refineries, chemical plants, LNG, shale oil, nuclear and environmental projects. Presently, he is managing a grass-roots Waste Management Facility in Alaska.

In 1988 Youel was asked by Bechtel to become the director of their technical center in Baghdad, Iraq. After a week's visit to his country of origin, he declined the assignment and remained in San Francisco. Considering the recent developments in the area, Youel is very pleased with that decision.



President William Friend congratulating Youel Baaba for his 25 years of service to Bechtel Corporation.



The Bechtel organizers of the evening affair surprised the honored guests with a poster of how they looked when they joined Bechtel. (Youel and Alice Baaba)

REFUGEES IN URMIA

Tehran- Over 600 Assyrians, from the north of Iraq, have been set up in 40 tents in the village of Zomala in Urmia. According to a member of the Assyrian Democratic Movement living in Urmia, known as Sargon, most of them are from north Iraq, from such villages as Diana and Ankawa, and from the cities of Kirkuk and Arbil. With the exception of a few, almost none of them are from Baghdad's Assyrian community.

Many of the Assyrians have left other members of their families behind in Iraq, according to Sargon. This is particularly the case with the Assyrians from the village of Diana.

"There is a struggle here between [the interests of] man and of the nation...our hope is disappearing day by day..."

Sargon

A number of the refugees escaped when conditions seemed uncertain in the battle between rebellious Kurds and the Iraqi army.

"You will see a brother and a sister without the father and mother," stated Sargon of the Assyrians from Diana. "Almost all of them have come to emigrate to the West. They have crossed the border and are too afraid to go back."

Since the Assyrian community of Iran has provided their brethren with food and clothing, the condition of the refugees is satisfactory, "much better than before."

However, the refugees are still in need of support, emphasized Sargon. He noted that since the government of Saddam Hussein did not fall, little hope remained for anyone to return.

"There is a struggle here," said Sargon, "between man and nation. We would like our people to stay, to go back to our land. But our hope for a future is disappearing day by day."

"These refugees need to know that others care about them. It strengthens their Assyrianism when the Assyrians in the West send aid to them. Perhaps this will do something."

Various Assyrian relief organizations have sent funds to the Assyrians refugees in Urmia, among them the Assyrian Relief committee formed in Chicago. In addition, His Holiness Mar Dinkha IV, an honorary member of the Assyrian Relief Committee, is currently in Iran and is likely to visit the refugees in Urmia.



Again in camps..

Assyrian refugee camps in the Urmia area of Iran. Some estimate over a thousand Assyrians are refugees in Iran. Although without necessities they have gotten used to in city life in Iraq, Assyrians camped in Urmia live in better conditions than their brethren in Turkey, where the harsh geography has led to thousands of deaths among Assyrian and Kurdish refugees.



ASSYRIANS

In The Siberian Exile — 1949-1956 — Memories

by Iliya L. Vartanov
(Translated from the Russian by the author)

Abridged version especially for Nineveh Magazine.

This book is dedicated to my sisters Marta, 18, and Elza, 16, and to hundreds of innocent Assyrians who died in Siberia of cold, hunger and other tortures.

CHAPTER V

Between Russian Revolution of 1917 and the Siberian Exile

Readers could learn from previous chapters about the circumstances under which hundreds of Assyrian families living in Soviet Azerbaijan, Georgia and the Northern Caucasia were captured in the deep night by special troops of KGB and deported to the wild forests and swamps of Siberia and to the lifeless valleys of Kazakhstan (a vast area of the Soviet Asia near Afganistan) for a "life-long term exile"; their subsequent first experience in Siberia after a harsh and tedious journey of 10,000 miles. We also read about the living conditions of our forefathers in the mountains of Hakkari (area of Turkey), massacres during World War I and the flight of Assyrians to Russia. Now, I wish to relate the unknown story of the Assyrian people prior to the Siberian exile.

In that unforgettable year of 1915 several thousand Assyrians endured sufferings in and around Hakkari mountains and Urmia, Iran. During this year twice the Russian contingents retreated towards the Russo-Perisian frontier as the Turkish army was reported to be moving for the invasion of Caucasia at Sarikamish and Batum.

During the first retreat on January 2, 1915, 10,000 Assyrians followed the tracks of the retreating Russians fearing for their lives at the hands of Turks and Kurds. In early July 1915, Turkish reinforcements forced a second Russian retreat. This time the whole Christian (Assyrian and Armenian) population started en masse towards Russia. The Turkish advance was halted within a month, so was the flight of the people. Most of the population returned, except for a few more thousands that made it to Armenia.

Refugees in both of these instances were cared for by the Russian Red Cross and eventually settled in various cities of Russia, such as Moscow, Petersburg (now Leningrad), Kiev, Penza, Nizhny Novgorod (now Gorky), Saratov, Voronezh, Rostov-na-Donu, Smolensk, Novocherkask, Vladikavkas, Sverdlovsk, Armavir, Krasnodar, Tiflis, Erevan, Kursk, and in many others. Overall, in more than 45 cities the Assyrians were settled, where large and small communities still live today. The majority of them preferred to settle in areas of Armenia, Georgia, Azerbaijan and the Northern Caucasia, near the Black Sea, for the local weather and climate were similar to the ones in the country they had left.

People of our region, Bohtan, were settled as a compact

mass in a few villages of Azerbaijan near Akstafa town which is located some 300 miles to the north of Baku, capital of Azerbaijan. Our family and other former mountain people started their new lives in the village of Grinfeld, that had been resided by mixed German and Azerbaijani populations. The village name, originally germane, translates into English as "green field." It was set up a very long time ago by Germans who came to Russia under Katherine II the Great in the first half of the 18th century. When the refugees arrived, descendants of those Germans were landlords, grew mostly grapes and produced excellent wines. They sold various sorts of champagnes, brandy, raisins, and successfully exported their products abroad. The German population of Grinfeld treated the Assyrian refugees with great sympathy. They were given field jobs, and thus was born a good relationship between employers and employees.

By that time (1916-1917), according to my father, Lenin's underground party propagandists worked intensively in Grinfeld as well as in many other villages and cities of the Russian empire. At twilight, my father remembers, Lenin's people (Bolsheviks) gathered the field workers, then they started general talks about living conditions, and yet, they joked much and seemed to be pretty simple and kind men. Then propaganda barages from Marxist agitators would raise important issues and ask aggressively, "Who are you working for?! Why do you allow landlords and factory owners to exploit you?! Isn't it crazy?!" Peasants and illiterate workers listened to them dumb-foundedly, struck by those unusual and fiery speeches. They felt awkward, and the whole world seemed to be falling apart. And the Marxist party propagandists went on, trying to convince their audience by hurling among the masses magic words and statements, such as "You yourselves might become owners of all that property! Peasants, all this land will be yours! Workers, these factories will be yours, you can own all that is available in the country! Down with landlords and other exploiters! We'll win, we'll set up a new world order; our own order! Now, who is for the Soviets, for the power of workers and peasants? Raise your hands. Vote!"

Of course everybody wanted to own land, and everybody wanted to be an owner of a factory or a plant, everyone wished to be rich and "free of exploitation." This was why everywhere people decidedly voted for the authority of the Soviets.

On the eve of the 1917 Revolution my father and many other Assyrian fellows worked at a big cement factory in

Tahuz town (Azerbaijan). My father vividly remembered that day in 1917 as masses of workers refrained from work but stayed outside in front of the factory's main facilities. While Marxist propagandists were delivering revolutionary speeches, the crowds would aggressively shout "Hurrah!" More inflammatory speeches were made that aroused the masses to the point that the workers pulled down from the front wall of the factory the life-size portrait of blue-eyed handsome king of Russia, Nicholas II. The portrait of the Russian Emperor was shattered into small pieces, as did the Russian Empire itself a short time later, comments my father. Crowds filled with great joy and enthusiasm went to street rallies and demonstrations carrying with them revolutionary slogans and mottos, and they believed that from now on they really had become "the top people" of an entirely changed society . . .

With the outbreak of revolution in Russia which brought operation practically to a standstill, Turkish forces found it an opportune time to move their troops from the south in the direction of Baku, to the oil resources of that area. Assyrians, fearful of Turkish troops and renewed massacres, were the most terrorized. Later the British forces occupied Baku, Batum, and the oil fields of Transcaucasia. But in the meantime panic spread among Assyrian refugees. Their "gray-bearded" (Assyrian, "khwar-dikne"), leaders decided to take their people to the neighboring Christian Georgia. They paid the railroad officers, and the latter agreed to provide freight cars to take the refugees to where they wished. At the same time Assyrians had been warned not to open the freight car doors enroute and to keep strict silence when staying about ten minutes at the main station of Akstafa, because it was crowded by Azerbaijani pro-Turkish moslem nationals, who hated the Assyrian Christians to death. There the freight train, full of Assyrian refugees, arrived in the station of Akstafa. My father, with great caution, took a look through a crack in the car's wall. What he saw was like a gigantic ant-hill that got disturbed . . . The station was crowded with a large number of armed moslems. The refugees kept a deadly silence, until suddenly a young Assyrian idiot in the car shouted as loud as he could, "I want to go to the washroom! I want to go to-o!" This wild cry attracted the attention of one moslem. He came close to the car, and he guessed there were people hidden in the freight cars. My father, using signs and gestures, tried to silence the armed moslem by offering him money. He wanted five gold coins from every single refugee. The Russian czar's five gold coins were a lot of money.

As soon as the ransom was given, the ungrateful moslem loudly summoned his friends, "Hey, come over here! Armenians are hiding themselves in these cars!" (At that time Azerbaijanis considered Armenians as enemy No. 1, and cruel nationalist battles between these two peoples were still going on). Immediately, the freight train got surrounded by armed moslems who forced all the Assyrians out of their cars. After stripping them of all their possessions, their leader commanded them to "Shoot all these dirty dogs!" The chief of the freight train, who was a Georgian by nationality, yelled "Stop doing crazy things!" He rushed to carry an official paper, saying "See, these are Assyrian refugees and the Red Cross Committee is protecting them; you're going to be responsible for anything that might happen to them . . ." But

the moslems seemed to ignore the warning. Then the Georgian chief threatened to get to Tiflis, capital of Georgia, by the team railroad locomotive, and come back with a battalion of soldiers . . . The moslems checked with each other and eventually decided to release them. This was how the poor Assyrian people avoided, one more time, a deadly danger and finally managed to get to Tiflis.

Their stay in Tiflis was very short, no more than overnight. The following morning an unexpected thing had happened . . . Just imagine a week day morning in a large city like Tiflis; streetcars and carts going to and fro, wagons harnessed with horses, and phaetons running down streets making a terrible crash and thunder. Streets full of crowds and everyone rushing somewhere in different directions and some exchanging remarks with each other very loudly; yet one could hear somewhere at a long distance donkeys bellowing, and the space around was full with intense noise, hubbub and din. Streetcars crowded with people hanging like grapes on the open doors, women with baskets in their hands hurrying somewhere and boys with morning newspapers in their hands jogging and waving papers in the air, shouting something . . . Watching and hearing all that made the Assyrian refugees feel awkward and restless. They merely couldn't realize what was happening and they got extremely frustrated. The common panic was worsened further by a fellow Assyrian, named Amran, from the village of Shvata who ran into the barracks the refugees were staying in and shouted, "Why the hell are you staying here? Look out! Everyone is escaping and running out of the city! Come on, let's go before it is too late!" Assyrians immediately picked up their numerous children and rushed out of the city. They managed to deal with local Georgians who owned wagons and horses, and agreed to take them to a town named Vladikavkaz (now Ordjonikidze), some 150 miles from Tiflis. Vladikavkaz was located on Russia's territory that seemed to be a safer place. The mountainous road, named the Military-Georgian Road, connected both cities.

In Tiflis, as it turned out, nothing unusual was occurring that day as Assyrians fled. It was a very normal morning and everyone in the city was doing just what they usually did: men rushed to their jobs, housewives were going shopping and boys were selling newspapers. These Assyrians, who had never lived in a city before, thought that the morning rush was the residents escaping from the city, and they fled too. Of course, it sounds like an anecdote, but it is not funny. These poor Assyrians in this and other simple situations seem to react like some helpless and frightened small birds that fly from one tree to another at every blow of the wind . . .

Assyrian refugees, who hoped to seek safety at Vladikavkaz, soon found themselves caught between two fires. In those days the Soviet Red Army fought deadly battles with the so-called "White Army" (i.e., pro-czar, pro-old Russian army) soldiers for important strategic roads, like the Military-Georgian Road, and the city of Vladikavkaz was the entree to this road. The refugees managed to get shelter in a two-story vacant military barrack. In the daytime they were not able to go out because of battles. One could hear bombs bursting out-

side in the streets, rifles shooting loudly and machine guns making noise. Sometimes stray bullets reached the barracks, and in those moments the refugees had to lay down on the floor for safety. On numerous occasions the control of the city changed hands between the "Reds" and the "Whites." Eventually, the "Reds" won, and the refugees found themselves surrounded by the Red Army soldiers. They rushed into the barracks and, having no idea who they were talking to, first demanded, "Hey, S.O.B.'s, who of you has got horses? We need horses, many horses!" The Russian word for "horse" is "loshad," and this is very close in pronunciation to another Russian word "loshkah," that means "spoon." There was one Hannoo Odisho among the refugees who frequently got involved in various funny and sad events. Such was his fate. Like other Assyrians, he could barely speak Russian, and yet made his living by making wooden soup spoons and selling them in the local market. So, having heard the word "loshad," he guessed the Reds were going to buy a great deal of "loshkah." And poor Hannoo rejoiced a lot, and he stepped forward and said proudly, "I do have 'loshad'." "And do you have many?" the Reds asked, feeling happy at the good news. "Yes, I've got lots, I've got a great many . . ." replied Hannoo with a serious face. "Come on, go and get all that you have over here!" ordered the Reds impatiently. "Just wait a little," said Hannoo and went out.

He came back in a short time carrying on his back a large bag full of wooden spoons, i.e., "Loshkah" in Russian. "Here they are!" said Hannoo, and threw out a whole "mountain" of spoons at the feet of his unsuspecting customers. "You got it, pick up loshkah" said the friendly Assyrian. The chief of the Reds became annoyed and terribly angry. "You jerk!" he yelled. "You pro-bourgeois scoundrel! You're joking with us! Men, come on, give him a good two dozen strokes with the ramrods!" Poor Hannoo, his crime consisted of just not knowing the difference between "loshad" and "loshkah," and he has been struck so severely one would think he was the most notorious enemy of the Soviets.

Struggle for the area went on, and Assyrians still stayed in their shelter. There was one priest, Father Isaak, 70 years of age, among them. He would read excerpts from the Gospel for the refugees. He would also read the Apocalypse and, having put the Holy Testament aside, stated his own comments. "This new power is the last one on the Earth," he said. "This power is going to win over all the entire globe and will destroy itself in the end . . . the teachings of this power are like a sheep in appearance and a real wolf inside. Just praise our Lord, my beloved sons and daughters, and count on Him in whatever happens to us . . ."

The civil war was nearing its end. The Soviets won in the Caucasia. Assyrian refugees, along with the villagers of Bohtan, lived in Vladikavkaz for over three years (1918-1921). They made their living in various ways: men collected brushwood in surrounding forests and sold it to the locals; they worked in the streets with leather-made pouches in their hands full of mountain well water, fresh and cold, and loudly advertizing their goods: "Who wishes water! Fresh water! Cold water! Not expensive! Just try, men are going to get younger, women are going to get prettier! Wonderful water!" And Assyrian women bought wool, spun yarn and sold it at the

local market. Since the refugees didn't get Red Cross financial aid any longer, they were left to fend for themselves. Just at that time, i.e., in 1921, my parents, then young fellow Lazar and 17-year-old Meske, met and soon got married.

Although the Assyrian refugees liked the town of Vladikavkaz very much, they wanted to return to the Southern Caucasia as the situation got less dangerous. And so the people of Bohtan did. To move legally back to Azerbaijan, they had to obtain special permission. These were signed by Freydoon Atoraya, a great Assyrian nationalist and poet, who was Chairman of the Assyrian Refugee Committee and the Red Cross representative. And the Assyrians of Bohtan together with others returned to the same villages they had been forced to leave three years earlier.

During this period, little changed in the villages, at least in their outer appearance. As it was earlier, the Germans in 1922 still owned land, but weren't as active as landlords any longer. They were still able to employ workers in field jobs, but the so-called "Workers' Committees" put the landlords' income as well as salaries they paid to employees under their control. The very basis of the former life had been destroyed. Starting from 1925, the Soviets put into process public "collective farms" in the Southern Caucasia, and the Assyrians heard for the first time a new Russian word, "kolkhoz," that meant "collective farm" property. This all meant that an individual couldn't possess any property any more and the State became the only owner of all the resources. Many peasants became aware of the disadvantages of the new structure of property. This was why they weren't too quick to enter the "kolkhoz." To speed up the process the ruling Marxist-Leninist party sent its most aggressive representatives to all the villages. The general meeting for all peasants was also held in Grinfeld. After the Communist Party's representative gave a long pro-kolkhoz speech, the crowd paused for a while, and then Hannoo Odisho went up to the stage. "May I have a word?" he asked. "Of course, speak out and tell the audience your thoughts," the chairman of the session said, and he rejoiced that there was someone to support the unpopular idea of "kolkhoz."

Hannoo was wearing a cavalryman greatcoat; this "trophy" of the civil war had in its back a long cut from beneath and up to the waist, and this was the only clothing that covered Hannoo from the waist up. Up on the stage, Hannoo Odisho suddenly took a big step aside and pulled his cavalry greatcoat's train in the same direction, saying "Moscow authorities do push us in this direction!" At that moment the flaps of the coat moved in different directions, and Hannoo's white underwear appeared broadly to the audience. People burst into laughter. "And Baku (capital of Azerbaijan) does push us in the opposite direction!"* he said, and made another turn in the opposite direction, showing how Baku's authorities do, and his underwear appeared again, and

*Baku, capital of Azerbaijan, where the fraction of the Russian Socialist party, i.e., local nationalists, ruled at that time, tried to realize the opposite agrarian program.

the crowd burst into laughter again. "What I say is," Hannoo went on, "let Moscow and let Baku's authorities eat their own s___, but just don't push us into your 'kolkhoz'!"

A Homeric thunder-like laughter of the crowd made the last words of the speaker unheard. "What was that? What did the man say?" the regional Communist party committee's representative asked anxiously. He was Russian by nationality, and Hannoo spoke Azerbaijani. "Never mind," said the chairman of the meeting, a local Azerbaijani. "This is a stupid man, a known idiot in the village, and he always says silly things . . ."

Eventually, the "kolkhoz" system was set up and the German landlords were deprived of their lands. This became the beginning of their misfortune. Having registered themselves in kolkhoz and, on the other hand, lost their basis, i.e., their lands, the German former landlords found themselves out of the new life and even on the other side of the law! At night time black cars of NKVD (today's KGB) would drive in quietly to this or that house, and arrest the German landlords and no one ever saw them after that. In the morning Assyrian residents of the village could hear loud screams of German women in different homes. It was then that the people would realize the previous night's visits by uninvited guests.

In those years a German, named Lutsy Zimmer, lived in Grinfeld, and he was a deeply devoted communist. Zimmer had worked hard for the victory of the Revolution in 1917. He was the village high school principal. Unfortunately, one of the arrested landlords happened to be his relative. Zimmer somehow learned that he was under suspicion too. One day (that will be remembered forever by the villagers), Mr. Zimmer came into the school, well dressed and quiet as usual, gave the children classwork, and having said that he had a headache, he went back home to take some medicine. His house was very close to the school. The principal didn't return . . . After a while, the students went to his house to check what was going on. They looked through the window and saw their principal lying on the floor, motionless. The children began to cry. Adults soon broke into the house and found three more bodies on the beds and these were Mr. Zimmer's wife, son and daughter. As it turned out, the head of the household had shot them the night before as they were sleeping. He had used a small-calibre gun that made little noise. In the morning, when he returned home from school, Lutsy Zimmer turned the gun on himself . . . He didn't want to be arrested and be charged as a betrayer of the "Revolutionary Ideal," and he couldn't bear the thought of his entire family being sent to Siberia to face terrible suffering. The note that had been found in his pocket said he wished to be buried with music of his favorite local orchestra. His last wish was fulfilled, and all the shaken residents of Grinfeld village attended the funeral.

The last and most severe blow fell onto the German population of Grinfeld in 1940. By that time there were no German landlords any more; the majority, fortunately, avoided arrest and exile and did different field jobs in kolkhoz and unquestioningly obeyed all Soviet laws. They were, after all, simple peasants. Nevertheless, one day many trucks with soldiers arrived in our village, and all Germans, with no exception, were taken away to unknown destinations.

As to the houses which were left by the Germans, they were soon occupied by Azerbaijanis. Assyrians went on living under "kolkhoz" regime. They lived in a compact mass as a large tribe, and it is surprising that all changes that took place since the Russian Revolution did not influence the Assyrian people much, neither changed their character or the national style of life. In the situation of total aggressive atheism, Assyrians kept their Christian belief. Thus, in the early 1930's the so-called "fighting unbelievers" campaign which was initiated all over the country and supported by the State, was aimed at questioning all the population "for or against God." New Soviet authorities and leaders of the campaign wanted to delete God as a "contestant." In every factory and every kolkhoz people were given questionnaires in which they had to indicate if they were "for" or "against" God. I must say that in such an abnormal "revolutionary" atmosphere one needed a lot of courage to indicate his belief in God. So, atheist agitators with their questionnaires came over to the place where my father and his close friend Sliva Denkha worked. "Show me which column is 'against' God" my father said to the atheists. At that time he couldn't yet write or read in Russian. "Here, on the left," they indicated. "And which column is 'for' God?" asked my father. "Here, on the right" they said. Then my father crossed himself and placed in the right column the symbol of the Cross (in Russia they used the symbol of the Cross as a substitute for a signature, if illiterate). Sliva Denkha did likewise, and so did the absolute majority of the Assyrian people. They decidedly were "for God."

Assyrians remained good Christians. They had no opportunity to pray to God except in the confines of their homes, as there was not one Christian church in the area of their settlement. The only Christian church was located in Baku, some 350 miles away, and another one in the Georgian capital of Tiflis, as far as 150 miles. Assyrians never possessed the right to build their own churches in the Soviet Union. Another problem for them was lack of priests. There were over 150 priests among Assyrians who fled from Turkey and Iran to Russia in 1915. But only a few were still alive and left in the late 1930's, because if the Soviet punitive bodies started a new campaign of repression the first to be arrested were always the clergymen. In spite of this there were some surprisingly courageous priests among our people. My father told me the story of a priest named Jacob who used to serve in the Catholic Church in Tiflis. The Assyrians of Bohtan, of Catholic Chaldean rite, attended that church almost every other Sunday, traveling 150 miles to baptize children or bless weddings or just to pray. One day as a worship was going on, two officers in military uniforms of the Ministry of Internal Affairs entered the church. They didn't even take off their hats, and they started watching icons and frescoes as if they were in an art museum. As the priest saw the two officers, he went down from the pulpit, stood between the two, took them by their arms and walked them to the exit. The entire audience could hear the priest's words as he told the officers, "You do your service and we do our service for our God. Please, leave us alone!" The priest, Jacob, was short and thin with graying hair, and yet possessed a

powerful presence. The two officers, like guilty little schoolboys, silently obeyed the priest's demand, and they left. People became upset and scared that the priest would be arrested. Fortunately, nothing happened to him. To my knowledge, this brave priest died in his bed in 1953, when we were in Siberia.

As I mentioned above the surprising fact that in principal, the new living conditions in Russia did not change Assyrian communities, and they remained faithful to their ethnic customs and norms. However, the environment did make an impact on Assyrians, especially on young people who moved to cities and then returned to their village communities. Sometimes collisions of the new and the old materialized into funny forms. A young Assyrian fellow named Melko once saw in Tiflis (now Tbilisi) citymen walking in streets together with women, mostly young ladies, and supporting the latter under their elbows, and he got excited with this manner. Melko, when returning to the village, wanted to show this "modern style" of walking to the Assyrian "conservative" population of Grinfeld where he lived himself. The first appearance of tall and bodily strong Melko in the village street with a young lady who, as it seemed, led the man down the street, supporting him with her hand, shook the country people, especially the old ones. Hannoo Odisho, who was sitting in a chair in front of his house, stood up and stepped closer to the "exotic" pair, his face expressing feelings of extreme astonishment. In those years, all tribal customs and rules dictated that senior citizens had the natural right to "educate" all young regardless of whether they were relatives to them or not. So, Hannoo having walked closer to that young fellow Melko, suddenly struck him hard on his forehead with his tobacco pipe, saying loudly, "Hey, what's the matter with you? Have you become blind and now need the support of this young lady who leads you by your hand? What's going on? I just saw you yesterday, and your sight was just fine!" Such was the reaction of older Assyrians to any novelty carried into their traditional life.

Then the Soviet authorities decided to issue passports to all Assyrians. Under the Soviet regime this was not optional but mandatory. The Soviet passport is completely different from Western ones. It contains not only all data (including nationality or ethnic background) to identify a person, but it mainly serves as a control mechanism over citizens in the fact that it also states the exact address where a citizen must reside. Another regulation requires that a citizen should report to local authorities immediately when moving anywhere for more than three days. Failure to obey these rules meant investigation and punishment. Officers in charge of issuing passports to Assyrians didn't have an easy job. The full name in Russian consists of the first name, middle name, i.e., patronymic, and last name. Assyrian structure of names was completely different and sounded very strange. Then the state officers took the last names and suffixed them with an ending that was characteristic of a Russian last name (if in the Russian Republic), or Georgian ending (in Georgia Soviet Republic) or Armenian ending (in Armenia) and so on. Thus, normal Khoshaba became "Khoshabov" in Russia, and "Khoshaba-dze" in Georgia, and "Khoshab-yan" in Armenia; normal Oshana had been transformed correspondingly into "Oshan-ov" "Oshan-

idze," and "Oshan-yan" and so on. My family name "Vartanov" has been compounded in the same manner. After I grew up I tried many times to correct it legally but I failed because in our country it is extremely hard to change one's name, once given by the state. At the same time and during the 1930's many Assyrians managed to keep in passports their original names such as Bet Kasha, Varda, Mar Yookhanna, Sliva, Bet Odihsho, Bakhtishoo, Bar Denkha, etc. The benefit was that obtaining the Soviet passport resulted in automatically becoming a Soviet citizen . . . All Assyrians did not accept this, although they wished to live in the Soviet Union. Assyrians faced a tough situation. They either had to accept new regulations along with the Soviet passport or to leave immediately for another country. Fortunately, the latter still was possible at that time; thus, a number of Assyrians took that opportunity and returned (1936-1938) to Iran, and from there emigrated later to the USA, having preserved in their hearts forever the love of Russia and an ability to speak Russian. In early 1939 the borders of the Soviet Union were sealed, and people had absolutely no chance to leave the USSR. Very few Assyrians managed not to accept Soviet citizenship. They kept their foreign (mostly Iranian) citizenship up to the present time. These Assyrians, however, are restricted by some civil rights.

Part of the Assyrian population lived in the countryside and worked for the Soviet state in "kolkhoz," i.e., in collective farms with no rights to ownership of land. Most Assyrians lived in big cities all over the Soviet Union. A number of them made their living by polishing shoes in streets or repairing shoes. That unattractive occupation turned out to be a very profitable one, financially much better than engineering, medicine, teaching, or working in any factory. This favorite occupation "mara d'zooze" (Assyrian for "gaining a good income") had been passed from generation to generation, thus a number of Assyrians in Moscow, Leningrad, Rostov-na-Donu, Tbilisi, Erevan and in many other cities still possess this gainful occupation. Most Assyrians worked in various factories and state offices; besides, Assyrian young people could enter any college or university to get education and any profession. Elementary and high schools were open to all children of "the class of workers and peasants." With the availability of free education, many had and have entered colleges and universities in pursuit of higher degrees.

Various events both important and unimportant occurred in generally monotonous life of "Soviet" Assyrians. My father said the greatest Assyrian nationalist and the most famous writer, 37-year-old Dr. Freidoon Ato-roya, had been suddenly arrested and soon shot in a special jail of the NKVD (KGB). Since the authorities kept and are still keeping strictly secret all their punitive actions, no one has any idea — up to now — of what exactly happened to him. At any rate, my father said, things were good for Assyrians from 1920 to 1937. During this period the Assyrian people enjoyed their cultural clubs and Assyrian language classes wherever their large communities were settled. Yet my father remembers the Assyrian weekly newspaper, "Star of the East," being printed in Tbilisi, Georgia, by Kasha (Priest) Odi-

sho Givargis, for several years. All this was prohibited in 1938-1939 when Stalin's regime started a new campaign of repressions against intellectuals of different ethnic backgrounds. Thus, just in Leningrad over 200 of the best educated Assyrians were arrested and put in concentration camps, and the same was done in other cities and towns, as the aged Assyrians told me. With the loss of their leadership and the best educated people, the Assyrian communities suffered considerably.

Then World War II started, and as the German troops invaded the Soviet Union, Assyrians along with other Soviets aged 18 to 55, were drafted. I happened to read in an old Soviet journal that some thousands of Assyrians were taken in the Red Army, and fought bravely against Germans to defend their new homeland. Many were killed in the battlefields. My father recalled that Assyrians were really courageous soldiers in the Soviet-German war of 1941-1945. Several fellows from our village of Grinfeld such as Nissan, Oraham, Zaya, Gevargis, Yosip, Sarguis, Daniel, Isho, Benyamin, Melko and others were drafted. Just a few returned alive but wounded. My two uncles Aram and Barkhoo fought, too. Uncle Aram became a prisoner of war and found himself in a German concentration camp located in distant Africa. My father, Lazar, didn't have to go to war because in 1941 he was 47 years old and had 7 children under 18. Instead, he was sent to Baku to work in a military plant. His work, as others, was extremely hard, putting in some sixteen hours a day. He was later awarded a "Medal for Labor Valour" by the state. On one side of the medal was the portrait of Joseph Stalin and on the reverse an inscription, "*Our Cause Is Right — So We Will Win!*" My father still has this award.

Two Assyrians, Lado Davidov (Bet David) and Sargon Sarkhoshev (Sarkhosh), were awarded the highest battle medal "*Hero of the Soviet Union*," for their exceptional bravery, and many others received citations of distinction and other medals. For a minority in the Soviet Union, it should be noted that three Assyrians were promoted to generals in the Red Army.

After the war, life was not easy, and people suffered from hunger and diseases. But, step by step, things were getting better. Children in our family were growing up. There were a lot of jobs in "kolkhoz" fields, and though strenuous they paid well. In the villages, Assyrians built good and large houses for themselves and planted vegetable and fruit gardens, as well as raised chickens and hogs. Life was peaceful.

Assyrians believed that the worst was over and no evil might enter their peaceful life. . . This was not to be. For in the summer of 1949 and early 1950, masses of Assyrians with their families, regardless of their age, sex or state of health, were captured in the territory of the Southern Caucasia up to the Northern Caucasia and deported to the far and wildest lifeless areas of the Soviet Empire.

One may ask, "How come this monstrous crime be committed against a simple, struggling and loyal people?" It happens sometimes that an innocent man is held behind doors for some unfortunate reasons but how on earth could this happen to several hundreds if not thou-

sands of people? Simple people have become the object of the most cruel punishment, with no trial and no investigation. Impossible to understand! It seems as if the special troops of the KGB fulfilled the decision that had been made by a ruthless ruler. . . . But the case wasn't as simple as it seemed to be.

BISHOP MAR ASHUR BAWAI VISITS ASSYRIAN REFUGEES IN TURKEY

Ankara-The Assyrian Apostolic and Catholic Church of the East announced on Saturday, May 4, that Bishop Mar Bawai, currently residing in the state of California, will be visiting Assyrian refugees in Turkey. On the Church radio program in Chicago, listeners were asked to donate money for refugees set up in the various camps.

After meeting with heads of Assyrian political and social organizations, Mar Bawai departed Chicago early on May 7. He carries with him donations of money from Assyrians in Chicago and California, as well as a sum of money donated by the Assyrian Relief Fund and from the Church of the East and the Chaldean Catholic Church in America.

Dr. Allen Sadah, chairman of the Communications and Public Relations Committee of the Assyrian Relief Committee, described the meeting with Mar Bawai as productive. "He is in effect a member of the relief effort," said Sadah, "and will go not only to aid monetarily but spiritually. He will lift the hopes of our people there."

"Mar Bawai will not personally distribute money, but will give it to designated persons in the various camps," said Sadah. "Assyrians in Turkey have persons designated to be in charge of the camp's administration." Mar Bawai has met with other church dignitaries in Turkey, where they will conduct relief efforts.

In a telephone conversation with the radio program of the Assyrian Church of the East in Chicago, Mar Bawai reported that conditions are worse than many believe. This came in the wake of visiting a camp that was considered to be in relatively good condition. He expressed his gratitude to the Assyrian organizations engaged in relief efforts and noted how grateful the Assyrian refugees were.

The Assyrian camps that were visited by Mar Bawai were decorated with signs in Assyrian, welcoming the bishop's visit. It is reported that most of those visited by Mar Bawai did not want to return to their homeland, but wanted to emigrate to the West.

by Robert DeKelaita

A CELEBRATION OF BOOKS

The Ashurbanipal Library celebrates 5 years of success

Under the title of "A Celebration of Books," the Ashurbanipal Library of Chicago celebrated its fifth anniversary for two days, Saturday and Sunday, July 13 and 14 of this year.

On Saturday, July 13, His Beatitude Mar Aprem Khamis, Bishop of the Apostolic Catholic Assyrian Church of the East, prayed for the success of the Library and delivered a speech there, in which he asked Assyrians to realize the importance of reading and writing their own history.

"Why should I wait for an American, and Englishman, or a German," said Mar Aprem, "to write my history for me? This is our task...We are the inheritors of our history and culture."

Mar Aprem was accompanied by the Reverend Athnasius Yosip, a frequent visitor to the Library.

On Sunday, members of the Library hosted a dinner, in which Dr. Arian Ishaya, the noted Assyrian anthropologist, was the main speaker.

Dr. Ishaya noted that although the state of politics

changes often, culture, history and language are the foundations of a people. These, she emphasized, should always be cultivated and strengthened. Dr. Ishaya asked Assyrians to support the Library to prosper and grow, so that "it can one day truly resemble its [glorious] name."

The famous calligrapher Essa Benyamin, who had created the new Ashurbanipal Library insignia, also attended the function, and was awarded a small plaque of appreciation for his beautiful and precious work.

Robert DeKelaita, chairman of the Ashurbanipal Library, concluded the ceremonies with his speech by asking that all Assyrian political parties, organizations and churches observe "A Celebration of Books" each year in honor of Assyrian literary history and authors. DeKelaita dedicated this year's observance, which is the first, to the memory of the Assyrians killed during the gulf war, and all of those who today endure suffering as a result of it.



His Beatitude Mar Gewargis Sliwa, Metropolitan of the Apostolic and Catholic Assyrian Church of the East in Iraq, visited the Ashurbanipal Library in the middle of June this year. Mar Gewargis stated that the Library is one of the most important Assyrian achievements in Chicago, and that seeing it gave him a special joy to take back home.

His Beatitude has collected over a hundred old Assyrian manuscripts from Assyrian villages in north Iraq, and plans to publish many of them. Left to right: Dr. Maureen Lazar, Robert DeKelaita, Mar Gewargis, Peter Jasim, David Malick, Sargis Sangari (kneeling), Raymond David, and Raymond Melko. Before them are Assyrian manuscripts hundreds of years old, treasures of the Ashurbanipal Library.

by Robert DeKelaita



Left to right: David Malick, Robert DeKelaita, His Beatitude Mar Gewargis Sliwa examining a rare and old Assyrian book.

IN SEARCH OF FAMILY

Ben Samuel, an Assyrian from Cupertino, California, upon learning that his family was among the thousands of Assyrians who were uprooted during the Kurdish uprising against the Iraqi regime, left for Turkey on May 1 loaded with eight suitcases of clothing and medicine, in search of his mother and the rest of the family. They had fled their home in Dohuk in northern Iraq together with several thousand Assyrians from other villages and towns when the Iraqi forces bombed the Kurdish strongholds in Dohuk and nearby Zakho.

At a recent talk and video film showing in the social hall of the Assyrian Church of the East, San Francisco, Ben related in detail his experiences in Turkey and Iraq, the miserable and harsh conditions and the suffering the Assyrians had to endure. This was not their war, he says, rather they were caught between two fires.

A week later, after a strenuous trip across Turkey by car and bus, Ben was eventually able to find his brother's family in a dirty and poverty stricken refugee camp in southern Turkey. It was an emotional reunion. He was saddened to learn that two weeks earlier a 7-month niece had died of dehydration in the camp. He also learned that his mother, Guli, was still in Dohuk. She had refused to abandon her home even as fighting raged around her. His brother, Adnan, had gone to the house to check on her.

After a week's stay in the camp and visiting other camps, Ben, posing as a journalist for an Assyrian television show, was able to get through the Turkey-Iraq checkpoint. Dohuk, at this time, was still con-



Ben Samuel (right) greets his cousin, Abraham Gewargis at a refugee camp in Isikveren, Turkey.

trolled by the Iraqis, and they were not allowing journalists in, but Ben was able to sneak through the Dohuk checkpoint in a car driven by an Assyrian. On their way towards Dohuk they noticed an unmarked vehicle following them. This caused some concern, but they were finally relieved when the vehicle turned in another direction.

The video scene of mother and son meeting and embracing was quite emotional. She was very surprised and elated to see her son after an absence of 21 years. Ben stayed with his mother for several days and talked about the ravages of war, the family plight and the hopes of reuniting in California. These hopes did not materialize even though he made every effort with the Turkish authorities and the U.S. Embassy

Corrections and Clarifications

In the last issue of *Nineveh*, First/Second Quarter, 1991, the cover article about Mr. Milton Malek and his development of converted rice, erroneously referred to it as "Uncle Ben's Rice." Mr. Malek has informed us that his process has nothing to do with Uncle Ben's Rice. The processed rice he developed was known as Malekized Rice. In many countries different names were used. It was manufactured by the California Rice Growers Association in Sacramento under the name of Golden Pearl. We thank Mr. Malek for the correction.



February 1991. Milton Y. Malek with his wife, Inge, at their home in Carmel, California.



Mid 1940's, Milton Y. Malek

in Ankara. Ben continues with these efforts here.

Ben Samuel has been actively lecturing and showing his video film to other churches and organizations to demonstrate the plight of his Assyrian people, the harsh conditions under which they were living, and that little attention has been given to their fate and the fate of many thousands who had fled to Iran besides Turkey.



Ben Samuel with a family picture taken 21 years ago.



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Lectures at the Ashurbanipal Library

ASSYRIANS AND THE MELTING POT IN AMERICA

University of Chicago Anthropologist Daniel Wolk, whose specialization is the Assyrian community in the United States, lectured at the Ashurbanipal Library on May 18, about *Assyrians and the Melting Pot in America*. Wolk argued that the concept of assimilation, often thought of in terms of "Old World values versus New World values," is being understood now from different perspectives.

"One has one's community," said Wolk, "and that community is not like the old one, it is not a part of the larger society either...it is the attachments to this community that are to be analyzed [to understand assimilation]."

"The more Assyrians see how different their culture is, the more likely it is that they will preserve their ethnicity."

Daniel Wolk, Anthropologist

Wolk alluded to incidents taking place in everyday life of Assyrians in America that cause them to have a heightened sense of their own cultural and ethnic uniqueness.

"For [Assyrian] ethnicity to survive," Wolk stated, "it must have exclusive community. The more Assyrians see how different their culture is, the more likely it is that they will preserve their ethnicity." The Amish, he pointed out, could be seen as an extreme example. They are well aware of their cultural distinctness and so do not venture into the larger society, because it seems alien.

"If you are not aware of your differences," said Wolk, "then you are lost."

IRAQ: LAND OF DEVASTATION

At the Ashurbanipal Library, Jefferson Gray had no nice words to say about the bombardment of Iraq by the allies.

"This 'clear war' is something Americans don't want to think about," he said during his May 12 lecture.

Gray pointed out that Iraq was a nation with 70 billion dollars in debt, and an 11 billion dollar net income prior to its invasion of Kuwait. Gray postulated that Iraq's invasion of Kuwait was a sign of Iraq's economic weakness and not military power, an S.O.S. signal to the West. After the war, Iraq's debts have climbed to over 400 billion, a debt that Iraq may never be able to pay. "This is the quantitative damage that we can assess...we can't talk about cost to all of the families who will not be seeing their husbands, sons and brothers." Iraq lost more lives in the first 8 weeks

of the war with the United States, stated Gray, than in the 8 years with Iran. An estimated 200,000 Iraqis have been killed, among them many Assyrians. With the immensity of damage caused to Iraq's entire infrastructure, many experts point out that it may take over 10 years to return to its prewar state. Progress, however, will only come about if Iraq is left without the burden of having to pay other nations. The United States has proposed that 50% of the oil revenue of Iraq should be used to pay for war reparations.

"We must ask about reciprocity here," said Gray, about the way in which economic and military pressure is still brought to bear on Iraq. "You don't kill a man for stealing a loaf of bread. We talk about how just this war was. How much should the Iraqi people be punished."

At the end of Gray's presentation, Robert DeKelaita, chairman of the Ashurbanipal Library, pointed out that Iraq's economic, social, political and psychological condition should be a concern for all Assyrians regardless of their citizenship. "This is where the majority of our people reside," said DeKelaita, "Assyrians, particularly those in the West, have a humanitarian obligation to their people and to the welfare of their native land Iraq."



Pointing out the wrongs of an unjust war
Jefferson Gray, a graduate student at the University of Chicago, lectures on the social and economic state of Iraq to an Assyrian audience at the Ashurbanipal Library.

by Robert DeKelaita

THE FATE OF KASHA (PRIEST) ODISHO GEVARGIS

Founder and Editor of "Kokhva d'Madinkha"
— "The Star of the East" newspaper

About four months ago the editor received a letter in English from Raisa, the daughter of Kasha Odisho Gevargis. She now resides in Tbilisi, Georgia, U.S.S.R. Her parents fled from the village of Gulpashan, Urmia, Iran, during the first wave of Assyrian exodus in late December, 1914. They were among the thousands who flocked to the Russian Transcaucasia.¹

Kasha Odisho with his family settled in Tbilisi. He was the Assyrian priest in this city, taught Assyrian language classes, and was the founder and editor of the Assyrian newspaper, "Kokhva d'Madinkha" — "The Star of the East." On February 5, 1938, during Stalin's campaign of repression against intellectuals of different ethnic groups, Kasha Odisho together with the rest of the editorial staff were arrested and the newspaper closed. He was exiled to Siberia where he died in 1945.

Among his family was a sister named Anna with whom he corresponded till 1936. In 1918 Anna married Isaak Yacoubov (Isaac Jacob) in the city of Rostov and that same year they emigrated to the United States and settled in Chicago, where they raised a family of four children: Mary, Nelly, Telly and Yoseph.

Raisa's husband, Shakhbazov (Shabbas) Nimrud of the village of Patauri, Iran, died in 1984. She has two daughters, the elder an English teacher. They came across *Nineveh* magazine in Tbilisi, and found it very interesting to learn about Assyrian history, of which a great deal was unknown to them.

Should any of our readers know the whereabouts of Anna's family, please write to the editor.

¹**Editor's note and comments:**

On the night preceding December 20, 1914, the Russian forces stationed in Urmia withdrew and retreated to the Russian-Persian frontier to defend Caucasia as the Turkish forces were contemplating to launch an attack. Turkey entered the war in November, 1914. While this danger was averted by the defeat of Turkish forces at Sara Kamish, the fact is that this did not benefit the Assyrians of Urmia. The Russians were to give the American missionaries and Assyrian leaders ample warning before evacuating.

This was not to materialize. The Russian forces retreated on this same day, leaving the people they had just rescued to the mercy of their enemies. Heated battles continued between the Assyrian soldiers and the Kurds, but not for long. Regular daily supply of ammunition from the Russian headquarters failed to arrive. So with the shortage of ammunition, the threats (vengeance, massacre, etc.) of the local population, created panic and fear. The various mission yards, especially the American, were crowded with refugees.

About 20,000 men, women and children whose villages lay in the track of the retreating Russians left their homes and possessions, many even left their supply of food for winter, to follow their protectors. They ran for their lives. It was a courageous and inevitable step. To stay meant massacre. They felt that it would be of greater consolation to die on the road than at the hands of the brutal enemy.

The seven-day journey, through snow-covered grounds, to the Russian border was an ordeal. It took its toll on the Assyrian population, especially the old and the children. About one-third lost their lives from cold, hunger and exhaustion. Most of those who fled were from the Nazloo River district and the country beyond. The majority living in the city of Urmia, Baranduz, Margavar and Targavan districts, had no chance of escape. They faced the gruesome and horrible consequences of the war at the hands of the Turks and Kurds.

Kasha Odisho Gevargis and his family escaped the horrors that ensued. For the next twenty-three years he lived a good and happy life and raised a family. The unexpected in early 1938 was not foreseen. This was his fate.

On March 24, 1915 at Gulpashan, the village of Kasha Odisho, the most prosperous village in Urmia, fifty men were taken out into the cemetery by the Turkish soldiers and shot while seated. Those who were found breathing were shot a second time. Gruesome! Instances of this sort occurred in many other villages and places.



In the village of Gulpashan, Urmia, Iran, 1914.

Back row (l to r): Mariam (wife of Aprim Khinnu), Aprim Khinnu, Kasha Youkhanna, and Raabi Peera Mirza. 2nd row (l to r): Kasha Iskhaq (Malik of Gougta), British consul visiting the village, Shamasha Shmouel Millat Bashey. 3rd row (l to r): Shamasha Elisha Eshu (grandfather of namesake Shamasha Elisha Eshu of Turlock, Calif.), the consul's Indian bodyguard, Yoel Khinnu (grandfather of Sargon Sulaimanbeck of Modesto, Calif.), Khan Odisho, Mirza David Khinnu (grandfather of Davis Eshay David of Modesto), Eliya Shamasha, Tattu Mama, and Indian bodyguard. 4th row (l to r): Kasha Benyamin (uncle of Liza David's mother of Modesto), Kasha Yosip (grandfather to Norman and William "Fox" Isaac of Modesto), Kasha Eshu (great-grandfather of Shamasha Elisha Eshu of Turlock), Raabi Zaiya (grandfather of Julia and Paul Baaba of Turlock), and Nana Sanam (mother of Aprim Khinnu).

Photo and information submitted by Davis E. David



Group of villagers of Gulpashan. Assyrians posing at the memorial statue of Hakim S. Oshana Khan Badal, M.D., a Gulpashan leader. Taken in Urmia, Iran, in 1912, the picture was given to Eshay Daoud in 1929 by Timotheos A. Badal. On the back of the picture it says that the picture should be well preserved as it brings back many good memories. In addition to his practice as a medical doctor, Dr. Oshana was for several years active in the Assyrian Church of the East, and as late as August 17, 1909.

Picture submitted by Davis Eshay David

ASHURBANIPAL LIBRARIES FORMED IN SWEDEN, AUSTRALIA AND ENGLAND

The Ashurbanipal Library, established in Chicago by a few Assyrian students in July of 1986, has been supporting the establishment of a number of Assyrian libraries outside of the United States. The libraries will receive books and a computer system to catalogue books and periodicals.

Each Ashurbanipal Library is to function as an affiliate or part of a larger organization. The Assyrian House in London, for example, is serving as the host of the infant Ashurbanipal Library there. This is also the case with the libraries in Sweden and Australia. Syria and Canada are also potential hosts to Assyrian libraries.

"We here are a part of the Assyrian Universal Alliance Foundation," stated Peter Jasim, the Vice Chairman of the Ashurbanipal Library in Chicago, "and this serves us well. Libraries are not profit making bodies, this is especially so in the case of the Assyrians, simply because we don't have the numbers to sustain us financially. We need larger organizations to sponsor us."

Jasim hopes one day the Ashurbanipal Library will be established in Nineveh, near the site of the original Library.

"Toward this end," he said, "we will devote all of our energy when the time is right...I am hopeful it will not be too distant in the future."

IN MEMORIAM

The Assyrian Foundation extends its profound sorrow and deepest sympathy to the families of the following:

Katherine Avroo



Katherine, known as Katya, passed away on April 28, 1991 in Turlock, CA. She was born in Russia in 1906 to Raabi Paulus and Maria Yalda of Supurghan (Assyrian town in Urmia, Iran). In 1912 with the company of her parents and younger brother, Victor, they left for Iran. At age 12, during the tragic Assyrian exodus of 1918 from Urmia, Katya witnessed the horrors and sufferings that befell her people along the road leading to Hamadan. Their family eventually settled in Baghdad, Iraq. She met her future husband, Alexander (Sando) Avroo, also of Supurghan, in 1930. A daughter, Nina, and two sons, Ninif and Inif, were born into the family. They returned to Iran in 1938. Then in 1965 Katya and her husband emigrated to the United States and resided in San Francisco for several years and eventually settled in Turlock, CA.

Katya had been a member of the Assyrian Foundation of America for many years, along with her husband Alexander. She was one of the nicest people we have ever known, and her kind and gentle nature endeared her to everyone. She was always helping out in the Assyrian Foundation's functions in a completely unselfish way. It was always pleasant to be with her because of her great warmth and cheerfulness and positive outlook in life. She was a devoted wife and caring mother, dearly loved and respected by her family and relatives. We have all lost a friend.

The funeral service, officiated by Rev. George Shahbaz, was held at St. John's Assyrian Presbyterian Church in Turlock. Katya is survived by her husband of 61 years, Alexander; one daughter: Nina Charbakhshi (San Francisco, CA); two sons: Ninif (San Pedro, CA) and Inif (San Francisco, CA); six grandchildren; one great grandson; and many first cousins.

CERES WOMAN, POSSIBLY OLDEST IN THE WORLD, DIES AT 118

Modesto — A Ceres woman believed to be the oldest person in the United States, and possibly the world, died Friday in her home. She was 118.

The Stanislaus County coroner's office reported that Sherin Youseph Kuloo, who was 45 days short of her 119th birthday, died of pneumonia.

Immigration and Naturalization Service officials said in 1988 she was the oldest person in the United States to apply for the amnesty program available under the immigration law. They said that if the papers Kuloo submitted with her application were authentic, she was also probably the oldest living person in the nation. She was 115 at the time.

Family members have a "Witness Certificate of Birth and Baptism" — written in English and signed by a priest of the Holy Apostolic Assyrian Church of the East — that indicates Kuloo was born July 15, 1872, in Jilo, Turkey.

McClatchy News Service

THE PASSING OF A GREAT AUTHOR

Samuel Younan, the author of *Guliana*, a 1000 page history of the Assyrian people, and a deacon in the Chaldean Church, passed away in Chicago on June 3, 1991. He had been hospitalized for heart ailments and other complications at Saint Francis Hospital in Chicago.

Although Samuel Younan worked over 20 years researching and writing his massive Assyrian history (in Assyrian), including typing it under candle light in a village in Syria, it is known by but a few people. Samuel Younan was very knowledgeable in the Assyrian language.

"It is sad," said Robert DeKelaita, chairman of the Ashurbanipal Library, "to see Assyrian authors, who work so hard at their craft, and who have witnessed and suffered many of the tragedies they describe with such passion in their books, live unappreciated and little noticed among their people. Such was the life of Samuel Younan. One only hopes that his book will be read by future generations."

David Petros Elloff

David Petros Elloff, 74, the second son of General Agha Petros and Zaripha Elloff passed away on August 1, 1991 in St. Jory, France.

Book for Sale — In Assyrian
History of Succession of the Mar Shimun
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Reference is made to Mar Benyamin's assassination
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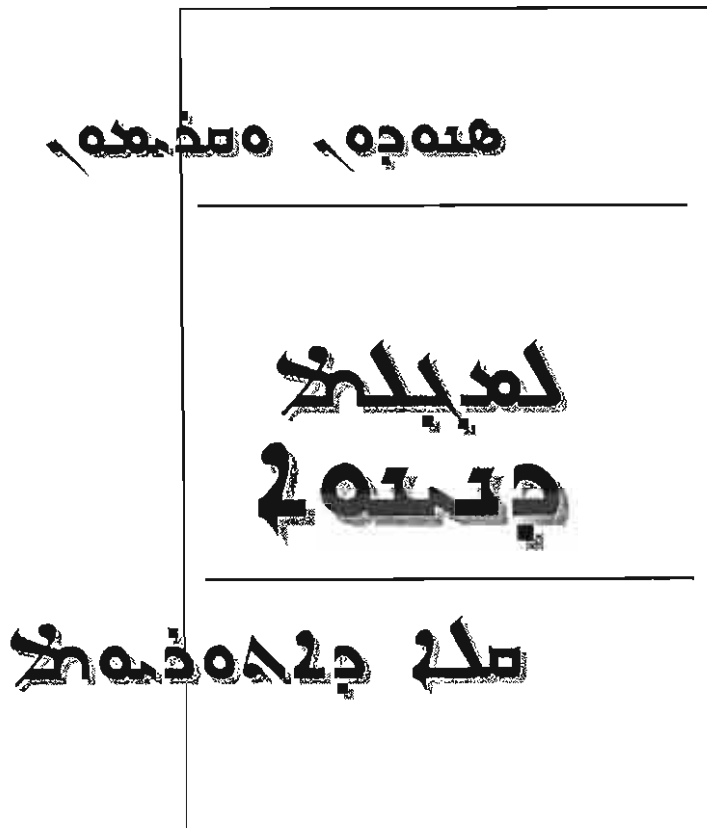
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Acad. Prof. Dr. Lilie Oraham Teymourazi
 Vice Président au Congrès

יצא לאור בשנת 1984. שנת ה'תשמ"ד (168) יצא. שנת ה'תשמ"ד (1901) עד 2068.
 מ. ס. מודיעין ומבטח בידי ש. הודוהר ליבוביץ. תלמוד אשכנזי. שנת ה'תשמ"ד.

השנים והתקופות של השו"ת והפוסקים

- א. שנת ה'תשמ"ד (1984) עד שנת ה'תשמ"ד (1984) - שנת ה'תשמ"ד (1984) עד שנת ה'תשמ"ד (1984).
- ב. שנת ה'תשמ"ד (1984) עד שנת ה'תשמ"ד (1984) - שנת ה'תשמ"ד (1984) עד שנת ה'תשמ"ד (1984).
- ג. שנת ה'תשמ"ד (1984) עד שנת ה'תשמ"ד (1984) - שנת ה'תשמ"ד (1984) עד שנת ה'תשמ"ד (1984).
- ד. שנת ה'תשמ"ד (1984) עד שנת ה'תשמ"ד (1984) - שנת ה'תשמ"ד (1984) עד שנת ה'תשמ"ד (1984).
- ה. שנת ה'תשמ"ד (1984) עד שנת ה'תשמ"ד (1984) - שנת ה'תשמ"ד (1984) עד שנת ה'תשמ"ד (1984).



On the left, Tobia Gewargis with his wife, Ashurina in the center, and his cousin Shalim Shabbas Tatar on the right.



संस्कृत



द्वितीय विद्यार्थी संघ
द्वितीय विद्यार्थी संघ

Raabi Nwyia Gevargis
Educator — Author