



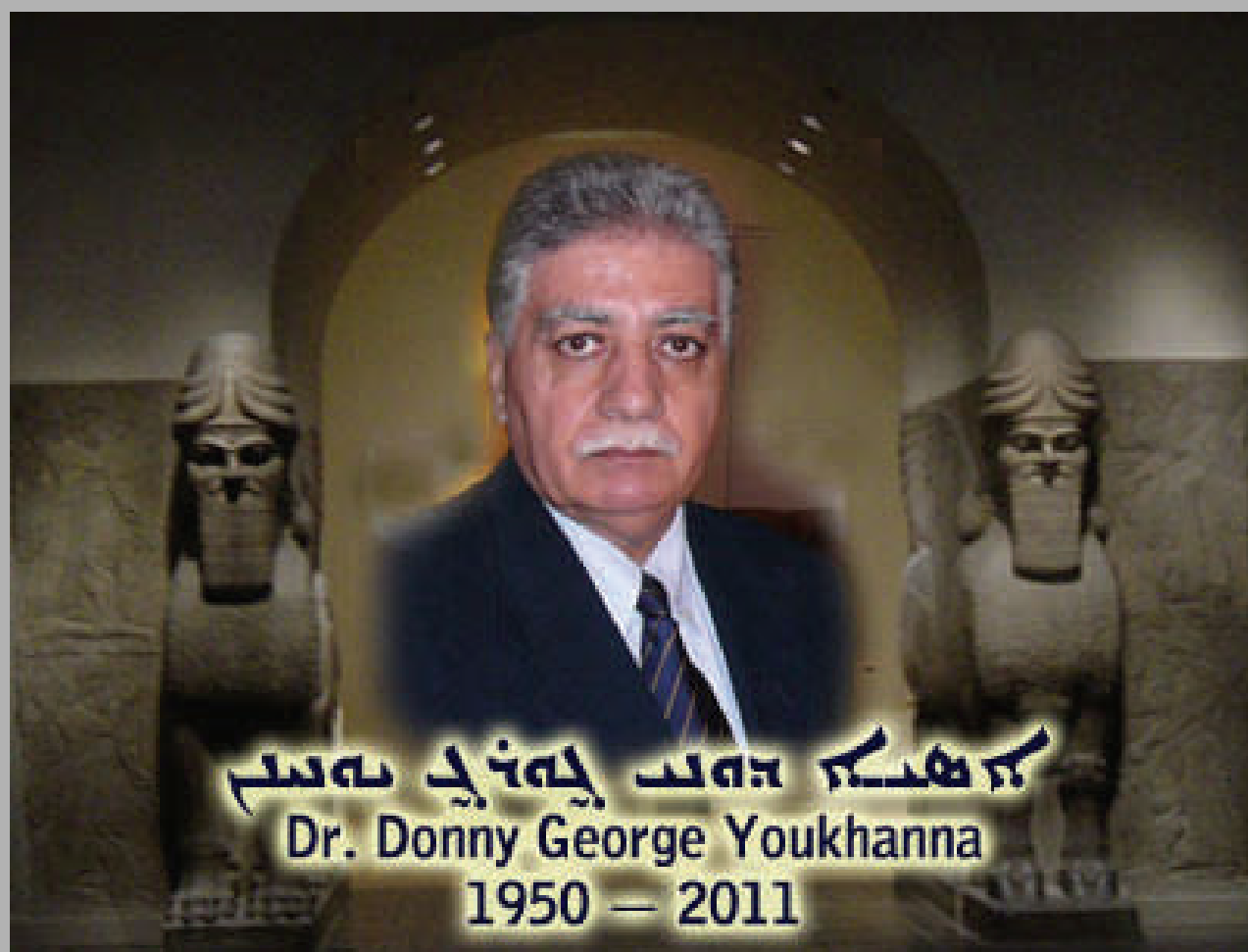
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Dr. Donny George Youkhanna  
1950 — 2011

Cultural - Educational - Social



# NINEVEH

Second Quarter 2011  
Volume 35, Number 2

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## In this issue:

ܡܚܠܩܐ ܕܡܚܠܩܐ:

From the Editor.....	3
Dr. Donny George.....	4
ܕܡܚܠܩܐ ܕܡܚܠܩܐ.....	6
ܕܡܚܠܩܐ ܕܡܚܠܩܐ.....	7
Lina Yakubova.....	8
ܕܡܚܠܩܐ ܕܡܚܠܩܐ.....	11
Recent Developments in the recognition of the Assyrian Genocide by Governments and Scholars.....	12
Hannibal Alkhas.....	16
New books.....	20
ܕܡܚܠܩܐ ܕܡܚܠܩܐ.....	21
Allele Frequencies of 9 STR CODIS Loci in the Assyrian Population of the United States.....	22
Assyrian Dictionary.....	24
Donations.....	26
Assyrian Genocide — Then and Now.....	28
AFA members' Appreciation Event.....	30
The Story of Fidelia Fiske and her School.....	34
AFA's trip to Reno.....	35
When the past is always present — the eradication of a community .....	36
Congratulations.....	38
An Assyrian Australian Soccer Talent - Leena Khamis.....	40
ܕܡܚܠܩܐ ܕܡܚܠܩܐ.....	41
Defying Deletion: The Fight over Iraq's Nineveh Plain.....	42
In Memoriam.....	44
ܕܡܚܠܩܐ ܕܡܚܠܩܐ.....	47
ܕܡܚܠܩܐ ܕܡܚܠܩܐ.....	49
ܕܡܚܠܩܐ ܕܡܚܠܩܐ.....	51



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# From the Editor:



It's the year 6760/2011 and we will again celebrate Assyrian Martyr's day on August 7th. This date has become the *Assyrian Memorial Day*. It was established to commemorate the Assyrians killed during *Seyfo*, the Assyrian Genocide in the Ottoman Empire (1914-1918), and the *Simele* massacre, in the newly established Iraq (1933); acts of ethnic cleansing of the indigenous Assyrian communities.

Although this observance is of a comparatively recent date, it has gained widespread acceptance among the Assyrian people, and justly so. Every nation needs to have a day set aside for the remembrance of those who gave their lives for the preservation of their cultural and ethnic identity.

Sadly, this event which we remember every year, is not only for those Assyrians who were killed 50 or 100 years ago, but for the on-going murder/ethnic cleansing of each and every Assyrian in the Middle East.

The question is, for how long will the killing of innocent Assyrians continue? We are the indigenous people of the Middle East even though we are a minority there today. We are not a threat to anyone yet we continue to be persecuted because of our ethnicity and religious beliefs as Christians.

When we remember the martyrs and retell their stories, it is often to mourn them and the events of their lives. We are saddened and overcome with grief, bitterness, and despair at their sufferings. This type of commemoration is one of passive mourning. While it fulfills an important human need, it also brings with it the danger of adopting a passive and defeatist attitude. But our martyrs were rarely passive or indifferent! It is necessary for us to turn away from a passive commemoration of our dead to an active celebration of their triumphs, it is the only fitting way to commemorate and honor them. In the light of their sacrifices, we must make a firm commitment to understanding, developing, and preserving the cultural and national values for which they gave their lives.

Many believe that the greatest threat to the preservation of our nation and culture is the loss of our lives and our property. The lesson of our martyrs is that this is not true. The swords and guns of our oppressors cannot kill our culture, our language, or our love of our nation. Rather, persecutions tend to strengthen our attachment. Killing, raping, and plundering can weaken them, but they can never completely destroy them. However, there is one thing that can destroy our cultural and national existence, an attitude of apathy and neglect on our part. Our own people's indifference toward our national and cultural heritage will surely be the cause of its demise.

In this issue of *Nineveh Magazine* we specifically remember several individuals who passed away recently: Dr. Donny George, Assyriologist, and former director of Iraq Antiquities Department, and the man who is credited with saving the Baghdad museum from total devastation; Lina Yakobva, documentary film-maker, who traveled to many Assyrian communities in the Near East as well as the Caucasus, documenting their present situation as well as their histories; Hannibal Alkhas, renowned artist and poet; and Kurush Hurmuz Nazlu, archaeologist, who studied and documented Assyrian sites in-and-around Urmi, Iran, and was a teacher of our language. They were champions of preserving and promoting our culture. Every Assyrian that dies young is a great loss to our community, especially those who have worked hard and made a difference to our people by preserving and promoting our culture and heritage both within our community and in general.

In this issue of our magazine, we also remember the *Assyrian Martyr's Day*, August 7th, or, as we say in Assyrian, "*Shawwa B'Tabakh*". Many of the articles are in Assyrian. We also have featured articles, in English, by Dr. Hannibal Travis and Dr. Svante Lundgren about the Assyrian Genocide and its consequences on our existence today.



# Dr. Donny George

## Protector of Iraq's Ancient Riches, Dies at 60

Courtesy of The New York Times

Donny George, an esteemed Iraqi archaeologist who tried to stop the looters ransacking the Iraq National Museum after the invasion of 2003, then led in recovering thousands of stolen artifacts in the ensuing years, died on Friday in Toronto. He was 60.

His friend Gwendolen Cates, a documentary filmmaker and photographer, said he had a heart attack in the Toronto airport. Dr. George was in Toronto to deliver a lecture on Mesopotamian artifacts and those that were looted from the museum following the war in 2003.



Donny George with Assyrian reliefs at the museum in Baghdad. He fled Iraq in 2006 because of threats to his family.

Dr. George fled Iraq in 2006 because of threats to his family. He was also angry that Iraq's post-invasion politicians seemed interested mainly in archaeology pertaining to the Islamic conquest in the seventh century and its aftermath.

His passions were the older civilizations of the Sumerians, the Babylonians, the Assyrians. He directed a major excavation of Babylon.

"I can no longer work with these people who have come in with the new ministry," he said in an interview with The Guardian in Britain. "They have no knowledge of archae-

ology, no knowledge of antiquities."

Dr. George was director of research for the State Board of Antiquities and Heritage when United States troops and their allies invaded Iraq. He fought through blocked bridges, explosions and troops to report to the museum in the chaotic days afterward, finding he could not persuade American troops to protect it because no order had been issued to do so.

An estimated 15,000 artifacts were stolen, less than a tenth the initial guesses. Working with Col. Matthew Bogdanos of the Marines to investigate the thefts, they recovered half the stolen artifacts, partly by granting looters amnesty.

Dr. George soon became head of the museum, then chairman of the antiquities board, replacing a cousin of Saddam Hussein. He slowly put the museum back together, rebuilding damaged walls, fixing the plumbing, installing guard houses and much else. He obtained aid from Italy to build a new Assyrian hall and started a conservation training program.

He also moved to protect Iraq's many archaeological sites, establishing an archaeological police force with vehicles and weapons. Elizabeth Stone, an anthropology professor



at Stony Brook University on Long Island, said the force was effective at first, then sputtered.



Professor Stone said Dr. George's success in rising to the top of Iraq's archaeological establishment was remarkable because he was Christian — the first of that faith to achieve that stature. But being a Christian was also what ultimately prompted him to flee the country. He left after receiving an envelope containing a Kalashnikov bullet and a letter accusing his younger son of disrespecting Islam and threatening his life.

Dr. George first went to Syria, then to the United States, where he became a professor of anthropology, then of Asian studies, at Stony Brook.

Donny George Youkhanna was born in Habania, Iraq, on Oct. 23, 1950. His father worked at the British Consulate. An Assyrian Christian, Dr. George dropped his last name for professional purposes.

He grew up fishing with his father, hunting with his grandfather and leading scout expeditions. He was sent to study English literature at Baghdad University but was steered toward a French literature class that held no interest for him. He went to see the assistant dean, who told him the only other opening was in archaeology.

"I asked if that meant living in tents and excavating sites, and when he said yes, I jumped at the opportunity," he said in an interview with *The New York Times* in 2006. He earned undergraduate, masters and doctoral degrees in archaeology from Baghdad University, then went to work for the government antiquities board. Fluent in English, he



was sent to many international conferences, where he developed a web of contacts.

He became a member of Saddam's Baath Party, which meant praising the dictator in public. Professor Stone said it would have been impossible for him to hold the high positions he did without participating in the party in at least minor ways. He would often joke that he worked at faraway digs to avoid party meetings.

But Dr. George believed that even this degree of loyalty was enough to make him a target for revenge by the conservative Shiites, who came to dominate Iraqi politics after the invasion.

Dr. George, who was a drummer in a rock band in his spare time, is survived by his wife, Najat Sarkees; his daughter, Mariam George; and his sons Steven and Martin.

Iraqi government officials dismissed Dr. George's criticism that they had not done enough to safeguard the country's ancient relics. They called his complaints a ruse to flee to the United States. He shrugged this off, saying archaeologists take a longer view.

"There are stages such as these, and then there are stages of calm," he told *The Times*. "Each can last 100 years, but it passes. A famous Sumerian writer described the scene here in 2000 B.C., saying that people are looting and killing and nobody knows who the king is. So you see, nothing is new."





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**دُمُوتَسَ مَلَكُوتِ جَدَّتِ هَذِي دَهَبِ يَهَذِي  
تَنِد: بَسَب كَمَه.**

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*Nineveh*, Volume 35, Number 2



سورہ ، ۱۱۱ : سورہ ۳۵ ، سورہ ۲



Courtesy of AINA

A woman with dark hair, wearing a bright pink button-down shirt and a yellow and red patterned necktie, stands in a classroom. She is positioned in front of a round wooden table. Behind her is a large flag with a blue field, white cross, and red saltire. To the right, a wooden chair and a small table with a blue box are visible. On the wall to the right is a poster titled 'ՀԱՅԿԱՅԻՆ ԱՆՔԱՆՔ' (Armenian Alphabet) showing the letters and their corresponding numbers.

Gates of the East.



A forgotten page of one Nation

*The following films are Lina's latest productions:*

### **Paths of Fate**

Historical documentary

In the period between 1914-1918, the Assyrian nation was on the verge of extinction. A number of diseased refugees, suffering from hunger, lost their homes, families, and homeland. They scattered throughout the East and West.

Many refugees found shelter in Armenia, Georgia, and Azerbaijan. Some of them joined their compatriots in Tbilisi, another part was afforded shelter in cities and villages of Georgia. Thousands of Assyrian refugees from Hakkari region of southeast Turkey headed for various cities of Russia, Europe and America, by way of Tiflis.

Produced & written by Lina Yakubova

Directed by Artak Avdalyan

Original music by Vahan Artsruni

Director of Photography: Karen Stepanyan

Sponsored by the Assyrian Universal Alliance Foundation (Chicago IL)

### **Assyrian Way**

Historical documentary

Part I: To Survive Through...

Part II: Revival

Part III: To itemize the portrait "If Aysors lived in the Volga and suffered from hunger, they would have left that place and reached India. Because Aysors are a great nation" -- Shklovski

The Assyrians, uprooted from their historic home, took shelter in the territory of Russia. There they built their new life and shared all the misfortunes of the local people, and more. Today, at the dawn of the 21st century, after two world wars, the socialist revolution and the collapse of the Soviet Union, there is a large Assyrian Community living in the different cities and regions of this large country.

Produced & written by Lina Yakubova

Directed by Artak Avdalyan

Original music by Vahan Artsruni

Director of Photography: Karen Stepanyan

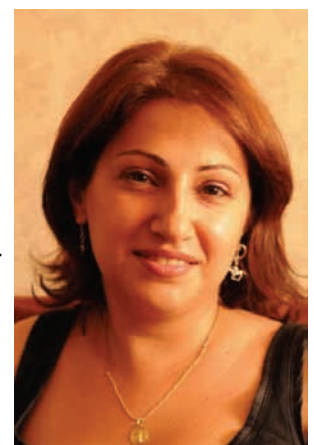
Sponsored by the Assyrian Universal Alliance Foundation (Chicago IL)



### **Chants from the East: The Liturgical Music of the Assyrian Church of the East**

The present collection of liturgical chants and hymns of the Assyrian Church of the East is of interest not only to the modern enthusiast of ecclesiastical musicology but also to the laymen as well. It is an introduction to the liturgical style of chants and ecclesiastical rites of one of the most ancient and venerable Churches of Christendom--the Holy Apostolic Catholic Assyrian Church of the East. The most ancient Eucharistic anaphora still in use today by Christendom, the anaphora of the Blessed Apostles of Mar Addai and Mar Mari, is the primary Eucharistic prayer of the Assyrian Church of the East. The collection consists of 3 CDs and a booklet.

The first CD is a collection of liturgical chants of the Assyrian Church of the East and hymns sung a capella. The second CD, "Sacred Episodes," consists of selections from the divine liturgy taken from the Mar Addai and Mar Mari, presented with musical accompaniment by Vahan Artsruni. The third CD, "Sacred Rituals," consists of episodes from several rites and also includes musical accompaniment by Vahan Artsruni. The Booklet includes a blessing by Mar Dinkha IV, the Patriarch Catholicos of the Church of the East, a historical introduction by Bishop Mar Awa, a brief written by the composer, Vahan Artsruni, and a letter from the sponsor, Assyrian Universal Alliance Foundation. Documentary recording of Father (Qasha Daryavush) Azizian and deacon (Shamasha) Charles Catholic. Produced by Lina Yakubova















# Recent Developments in Recognition of The Assyrian Genocide by Governments and Scholars

By Dr. Hannibal Travis

Since the publication of, Gabriele Yonan's *Ein vergessener Holocaust* in 1989 and Thea Halo's *Not Even My Name* in 2000, a consensus has been building on recognition of the Assyrian genocide. On several occasions in the past decade, governors of the State of New York have declared that: it was "alongside their Greek and Assyrian imperial co-subjects" that the Ottoman Armenians "met their end in mass killings, organized death marches, starvation tactics and other brutal methods employed against civilians." In 2006, the European Parliament urged Turkey to recognize the Assyrian and Greek genocides along with the Armenian genocide. In a statement in 2009, Turkish Prime Minister Tayyip Erdogan stated that past regimes in Turkey had "ethnically cleansed" non-Turkish minorities, using a term linked by the United Nations to genocide. In 2010, the Parliament of Sweden recognized the Assyrian genocide with those of the Armenians and Pontic Greeks.

Scholars have provided the documentary and analytical foundation for recognition of the Assyrian genocide. We now know that estimates of a death toll of about 250,000 were circulated internationally in the 1910s and 1920s. We know that fewer Assyrians survived inside the Ottoman Empire or Turkey than did Armenians. We know that unlike Armenians or Greeks, the Assyrians were not numerous or prosperous enough to claim their own state in the post-World War I process of transitioning Middle Eastern peoples to self-determination. Armenian and Armenian-American scholars have admitted that there are so few Assyrians left that their very existence was nearly forgotten.

As a result of careful work in many archives and libraries, we know a great deal about the processes on the ground that led to such a thorough eradication of the Assyrian presence in Anatolia and the Anatolian-Persian border. We know that nearly a third of those slain were lost in the massacres in Persia that followed the fall of the czarist regime in Russia, and in the flight of the Assyrian remnant to British-controlled territory in Mesopotamia. We know that up to 20,000 Assyrians perished or went missing dur-

ing the massacres in Persia in late 1914 and early 1915. We know the location of other large losses of life due to violence against Assyrian civilians in 1915, including the Qudshanis region of the Hakkari mountains, Bitlis, Diyarbakir, Seert, Mardin, Midyat, Jezire, Faysh Khabour, Nisibis, Edessa or Urfa, Adana, Brahimie, Harput, Urmia, Salamas, and Gulpashan. German officials used terms like "exterminated" and "massacred" for the anti-Assyrian campaigns of Turkish troops and allied militia.

Recent events have reminded us that the smaller Assyrian genocides also deserve careful study. Court rulings in Brazil, Ethiopia, Iraq, and other places have confirmed that the crime of genocide as defined in the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of 1948 is not limited to a complete extermination of a people. These courts have convicted defendants for smaller massacres, including of bands of indigenous Brazilians, political opponents of the Ethiopian communist regime of the 1980s, and the Barzani tribe in rebellion to Ba'athist Iraq.

The improved access to old newspapers and diplomatic records that we enjoy due to the World Wide Web helps confirm that Turkey has admitted repeatedly that genocide may occur by killing a group's political leaders, or engaging in local atrocities that do not kill a substantial percentage of the group, but that cause many refugees to flee. During several key historical moments, Turkey has reiterated this understanding of the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of 1948. For example, it condemned genocide in Bosnia and Herzegovina in 1992, when a small percentage of the Bosnian Muslim population had been killed by the Yugoslav government because some of its political and military leaders were engaging in terrorism and committing crimes against Serbs.

The U.N. General Assembly agreed with this condemnation in resolutions issued in 1992 through 1996. Turkey also excoriated Greece and Greek Cypriots on numerous occasions in the 1960s and 1970s for committing genocide against the Turkish minority in Cyprus, even though the



death toll was relatively modest. More recently, Turkey accused several large non-Muslim countries of practicing genocide in suppressing a rebellion by Muslim political and military leaders, including Yugoslavia in Kosovo, and China in East Turkestan.

My book *Genocide in the Middle East: The Ottoman Empire, Iraq, and Sudan* (Carolina Academic Press, 2010), is the first to include an academically-grounded account of the genocides of the Assyrians in the 1840s and 1980s along with the one more generally written about, which occurred in the 1910s and 1920s. The British press reported that the Assyrian tribes of the Hakkari mountains were hunted down and exterminated. American missionaries sent a dispatch to the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions stating that Kurds had gone from village to village killing the Assyrians and burning down the churches and homes. Other missionaries reported that from upper Mesopotamia east to northern Persia, the Assyrians were put to the sword and villages plundered.

In fact, the lawyer and adviser to the United Nations who became known as the “father” of the genocide treaty, Raphael Lemkin, used the Assyrian massacres of the 1840s as an example of genocide. In a narrative of the Armenian genocide published in 2008, he wrote that 10,000 Nestorian and Armenian Christians were massacred, and about as many women and children enslaved by the Kurds under Bedr Khan Bey. He quotes the British press as reporting that by the 1870s, villages were desolated and deserted throughout “Kurdistan,” with the Ottoman Empire’s “most peaceable inhabitants” murdered, including their children. He wrote of the genocide in 1915, that the richest Assyrian village in the Urmia region was destroyed, the men killed and the women violated. He noted that “the commanding officer had put a price on every Christian head.” He quoted another report of an “awful holocaust” of Christians at the hands of the Kurds, a report actually written by an Assyrian, Jean [or Joseph] Naayem.

In 1925, another series of deportations affected the Assyrians, this time near the frontier between Iraq and Turkey. The official report of the League of Nations estimated that the number of Assyrians killed was “very high,” due to massacres, mass rapes, starvation, fatigue, and torture. During the deportations, children and elderly were massacred because they could not keep up with the columns of deportees led by Turkish soldiers. A total of 8,000 Assyro-Chaldeans were affected, although not all of those died, many arriving in Zakho across the border. Dr. Racho Donef has published a very helpful anthology of documentation of these events, with a Swedish press.

Then, of course, there is the Simele massacre of Assyrians in Iraq. The Assyrians of Iraq were frequently used in the official promotional flyers for the Genocide Convention as an example of an event that would be covered by it. In the late 1940s and early 1950s, Professor Lemkin was preparing a book on genocide which he never published, but which he planned to describe the Simele massacre in under the title “Genocide in Simmel 1933.” His draft of the chapter on Simele described how 320 Assyrians were killed, including six priests and the chief of the Baz tribe. He also noted that the Assyrians themselves estimated that 2,000 perished, and that 60 villages were looted. It is amazing that in light of these events, some scholars have argued that Iraq had been unfairly criticized over the events of 1933.

Scholars who are ethnically Kurdish or who are close politically to the Kurdish leadership often describe the Kurdish genocide of the 1980s in Iraq as if there were no other victims and Kurds suffered the most proportionately. They often fail to point out that the Kurdish population in Iraq doubled from two million in 1970 to four million in 2002, and that Kurds claim today that there are five to six million of them in Iraq, which is why they have claimed an entire region of the country as their own and even refuse to fly the flag of Arab Iraq there. Of course, many Kurds lost their lives in Iraq during the 1980s and 1990s due to genocide and torture, no one would dispute that. But the Kurdish people were rarely at risk of being removed completely from Iraq’s mosaic of peoples.

The Anfal campaign resulted in genocide convictions for several Iraqi officials in 2007. There was a Kurdish governor of Dohuk under Saddam Hussein. There was an article published in the international press where that governor defended village destructions. There was even a governor of Suleimaniyah named Barzani. There was also a pro-government Kurdish militia known officially as the National Defense Battalions, but known by its enemies as the *jahsh*. The main report on the Anfal campaign documented that in Dohuk governorate, where most Assyrians lived, “they were in fact dealt with by the regime even more severely than their Kurdish neighbors.” At each stage of the Anfal campaign, “ground troops and *jahsh* enveloped the target area from all sides, destroying all human habitation in their path, looting household possessions and farm animals and setting fire to homes, before calling in demolition crews to finish the job.” As the army took villagers away to be killed or deported, the *jahsh* “combed the hillsides to track down anyone who had escaped.” Just like in the 1840s or 1910s, the *jahsh* were responsible for “burning and looting villages,” and the “demolition of security-prohibited villages.” In that way, they resemble the *janjaweed* of Sudan, or the Ottoman Special Organization.



Finally, there are the many massacres of Assyrians in Iraq since 2003. Iraq's Christian population has been cut by about half since 2003, from over a million down to 600,000 or even 300,000. The organization Genocide Watch, the U.N. Secretary-General's special adviser on genocide prevention, and Samantha Power of Harvard, who is now a key national security adviser to President Obama, confirmed in 2006-2007 that religious targeting by Iraqi terrorists and militias constituted genocide. The massacres of Assyrians in churches, buses, and in their homes have each been part of a widespread and systematic attack on the Assyrian Christian community in Baghdad, Basra, Mosul, and Kirkuk in particular since 2003. Entire neighborhoods of Assyrians in Baghdad and Basra have been evacuated. Similar campaigns have affected the Yazidis of the Mosul region, a hotbed of al Qaeda activity, and the Mandaean of the Basra region. The prime minister and president of Iraq have each confirmed that the religious and sectarian massacres by al Qaeda in Iraq amount to the crime of genocide. But the financiers of these bombers in Saudi Arabia and other countries in Iraq's neighborhood have eluded justice.

Assyrian organizations need to do a better job of organizing events focused on the history of the Assyrians and their relations with other populations. On many occasions in past years, I have heard Assyrian-Americans complain about the quality of the academic and cultural programming at Assyrian-American events such as conferences. Some have argued that the Assyrian Youth Federation in Sweden and the Assyrian Chaldean Syriac Student Union of Canada put on workshops and talks of a consistently higher quality than Assyrian-American organizations.

Assyrians should also be careful not to exaggerate the impact of real events. For example, it has become common to claim on Web sites that 750,000 Assyrians died in 1915, or in World War I, or some similar time frame. Yet no sources are provided for this figure, and it appears to contradict most of what is known about the relative size of Assyrian populations in Persia and the Ottoman Empire in the first part of the twentieth century.

It makes Assyrian genocide recognition look ridiculous to say that 750,000 Assyrians died when it is well-known and easy to find sources stating that the number of Nestorians in the 19th century Ottoman Empire was 70,000 to 100,000, Joseph T'finkjdi estimated that there were 100,000 Chaldeans, and the Assyro-Chaldean delegation to Paris Peace conference put the entire Assyro-Chaldean population in 1914 at less than 600,000. Regardless of what some ambassador or even dozens of Turkish books say they do less damage than totally implausible statistics. Perhaps if one includes all the children that would have been born to those who died during this period, the number might reach 750,000, but that needs to be clarified so

readers do not dismiss wild claims as the result of biased analysis.

Assyrians must also contend with the power of large populations. Larger populations contribute more scholars to universities, and also exercise more influence on scholars of other nationalities or ethnicities. It is no accident that people with Assyrian names include Assyrians in the Ottoman Christian genocide, while those of Greek origin include Greeks, but Armenians just include Armenians, and Turks and Kurds often deny the entire event. Kurdish scholars and scholars with close ties to Kurdish politicians have an obvious incentive to downplay the extent to which Kurdistan's ethnic makeup is based on genocide.

Larger populations also have more money to spend on scholarship. Until recently, Assyrian organizations offered less funding for scholarship and travel than did Armenian, Kurdish, or Turkish organizations. Notably, Armenians, Greeks, Kurds, and Turks control governments with large cultural budgets, not to mention United Nations agencies. Turks have a lot of money to spend to discredit even those who write about "consensus" Armenian genocide, let alone other Christian groups. Scholars at some of the best universities get funded by Armenians or Turks to write.

Even as Assyrians begin to make up these gaps by entering academia and funding research, the phenomenon of path-dependence guarantees some inertia in the field of genocide studies. Scholars tend to rely on traditional terminology and narratives of Armenian Genocide, because they can find many sources and feel comfortable. There is a fear of going out on a limb and being embarrassed. For example, some genocide scholars expressed unease at being proven wrong if they voted for the IAGS resolution on the Assyrian and Greek genocides. Other scholars doubt that there ever were Assyrians or place the word "Assyrian" in quotation marks, because John Joseph and others poisoned the well for Assyrian identity leaving confusion about whether these are Aramean or Turkish Christians. Part of the task of Assyrian scholars is, therefore, establishing their people's existence to the ignorant. In this respect, efforts like *Nineveh Magazine* and the *Modern Assyrian Research Archive* play an essential role.

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# Hannibal Alkhas (1930-2010)

## A prominent Assyrian painter and poet

By Marcel Josephson, San Jose, CA

Hannibal Alkhas was born on June 15, 1930 in the city of Kermanshah, Iran. He was the son of the well-known Assyrian writer Rabi Addai Alkhas (1897-1959). Hannibal spent his childhood and teenage years in Kermanshah, Ahwaz, and Tehran. In 1951 he moved to the United States in pursuit of his education and studied philosophy for three years at Loyola University of Chicago. From 1953 to 1958 he attended the Art Institute of Chicago where he earned his Bachelor and Master of Fine Arts degrees. In 1959, after the passing of his father, Hannibal returned to Iran and taught painting, drawing, and art history at the Tehran School of Fine Arts for four years.

During this time he established

the Gilgamesh gallery, the first modern art gallery in Iran. In 1963 he returned to the United States and taught at Monticello College in Illinois where he became the chairman of the art department. In 1969 Hannibal again returned to Iran and spent 11 years teaching at Tehran University. In 1980 Hannibal returned to the United States. He held many exhibitions, poetry nights, and art appreciation sessions throughout the United State for both Assyrian and non-Assyrian audiences. He also taught art at the Assyrian American Civic Club of Turlock, private col-

leges, and at the University of California at Berkeley and Los Angeles.

Hannibal's paintings are deeply inspired by the bas-reliefs and stone sculptures of Ancient Mesopotamia. He developed and mastered a unique style of painting that seeks to vitalize the historic processes within the passing moment. Human emotions and thoughts such as love and hate, the

exotic and the mundane, victory and defeat, hope and despair, pride and weakness are the subjects he constantly chose. He intermingled with the universal notions such as birth, death, hunger, the historical heritage of humanity, mythology, and above all war and peace.

Hannibal had been encouraged and

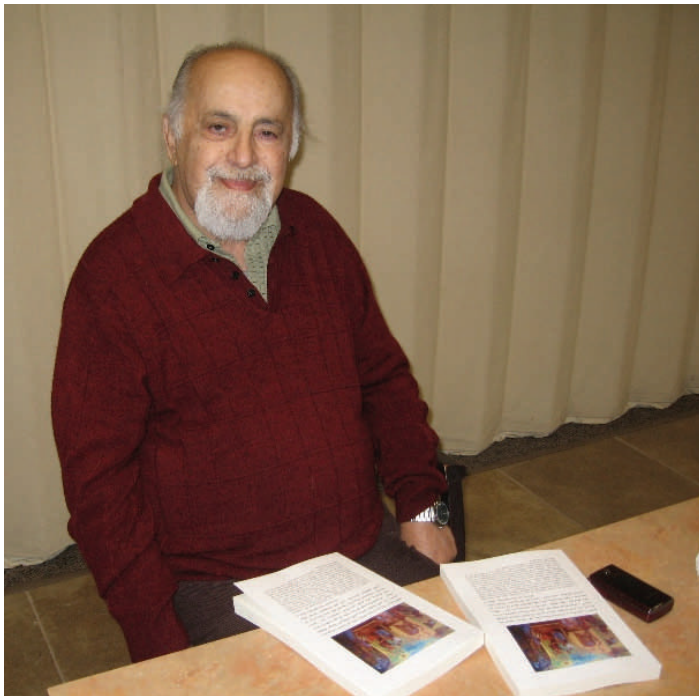
challenged by his father to write poetry in Assyrian since he was 15 years old but he did not start writing in Assyrian until he was 40. His first work in Assyrian was a translation of one of his own poems from Farsi, "White Friend, Black Friend". This was mostly because of the late Rabi Nimrod Simono's (1908-2004) support and encouragement.

Hannibal's poetry works in Assyrian language consist of some 700 hand-written pages and cover a wide variety of





styles; quatrains, triplets, ghazals, tribute to friends and prominent individuals, and children poetry to name a few. In early 2010, I published a selection of Hannibal's poetry



which greatly pleased him. This selection contains only one-third of his works. His poetry works are masterpieces in modern Assyrian that in addition to superb writing techniques also possess very pleasing artistry elements. His eloquent writing style was influenced by the breadth of his intellectual capability and imaginative talent. He used simple Assyrian vernacular vocabulary to craft remarkably appealing and thought provoking poetry. He always credited our beloved mother language for its richness for

adaptability to different styles of poetry.

My first encounter with Hannibal was in Tehran in 1971 at Sharif (formerly known as Arya-Mehr) University of Technology, the school I attended for my undergraduate studies. In a poetry night that he held for his father's commemoration at this school, without visual aid and merely from memory Hannibal drew a portrait of Nima Yushij (1897-1960), Iran's founding father of contemporary poetry. As a young Assyrian I felt extremely proud of my Assyrian community for having within it such a talented and skillful artist. Having known Hannibal through his works for many years and in person for the last few years of his life, today I would say that Hannibal belonged to humanity and the Assyrian community should be proud that he was an Assyrian. Hannibal passed away on September 14, 2010 in Turlock, CA. He will always be remembered by his friends and those who knew him through his works. I will always cherish his friendship.

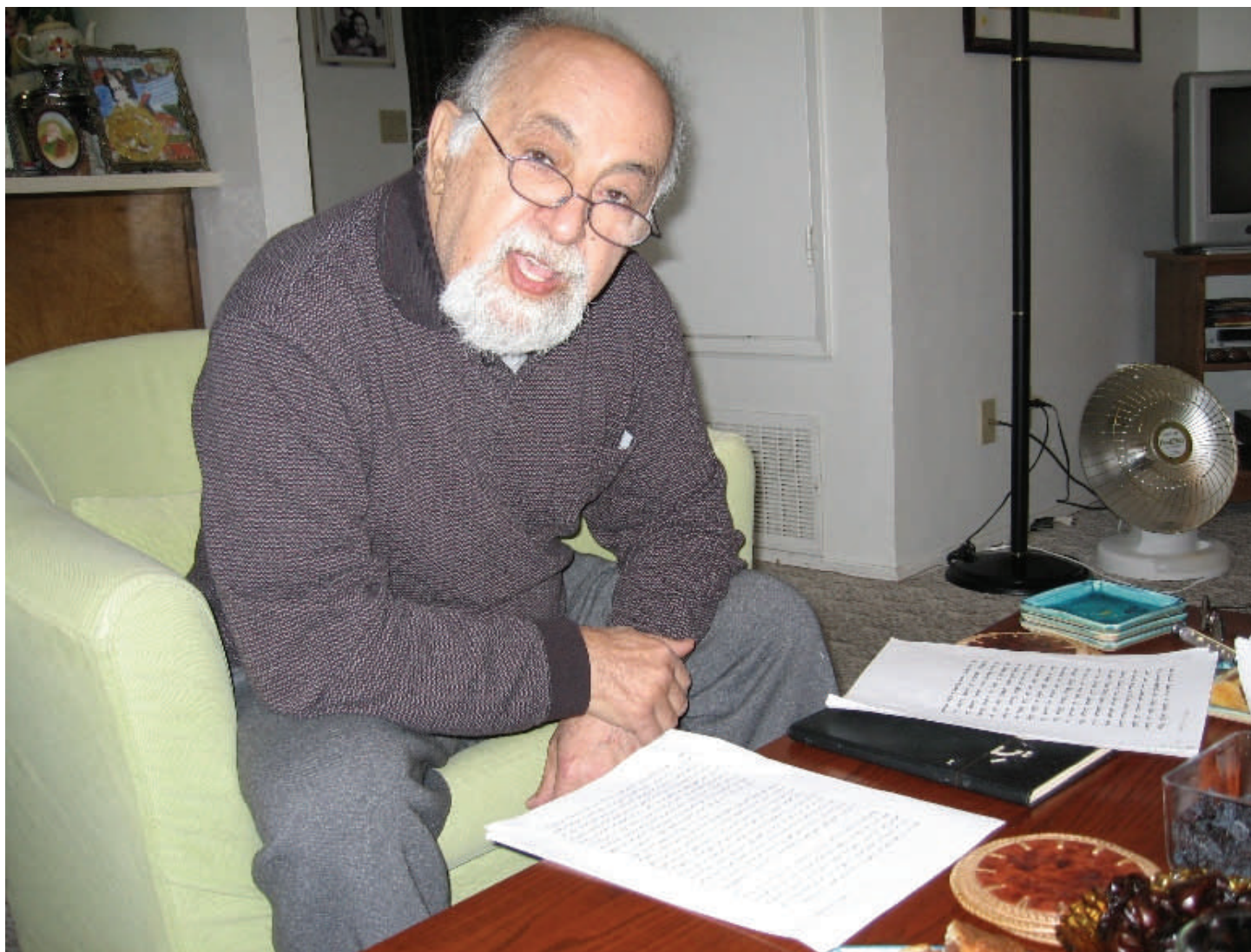
In this article I am including a few samples of Hannibal's Triplets. Triplets, called Raviye in Assyrian, are believed to be an original Assyrian folkloric poetic style. Raviye are three-line verses where each line has seven syllables. The ends of the three lines rhyme. A Ravi by itself communicates a complete concept. Raviye can be compared and contrasted with Japanese haikus. A haiku has 17 syllables in three unrhymed lines of five, seven and five syllables. Hannibal was fascinated by this poetic style and, having studied haikus, he concluded that the extraordinary



richness of our mother tongue is capable of producing pleasing poetry that is far superior compared to haikus. He used vocabulary from the Urmie dialect of modern Assyrian in his Raviye. The reader will conveniently notice Hannibal's skillful usage of very simple words to produce these captivating verses. In addition to conventional (single-versed) Raviye, Hannibal has also written multiple-verse poems using this style. Below are some examples of Hannibal's Raviye.

Hannibal Alkhas, Selected Works of Poetry (<http://www.lulu.com/content/8015829>)





A smile on her lips and her forgetfulness of anger recognized by Hannibal as a sign for a passionate love.

ܠܗܝܬ ܫܕܝܟܬܐ ܕܝܫܬܐ ܕܝܬܐ  
ܕܝܬܐ ܕܝܬܐ ܕܝܬܐ ܕܝܬܐ  
ܕܝܬܐ ܕܝܬܐ ܕܝܬܐ ܕܝܬܐ

Serenity of nature, a dialog between mountain and sky.

ܕܝܬܐ ܕܝܬܐ ܕܝܬܐ ܕܝܬܐ  
ܕܝܬܐ ܕܝܬܐ ܕܝܬܐ ܕܝܬܐ  
ܕܝܬܐ ܕܝܬܐ ܕܝܬܐ ܕܝܬܐ

This Ravi is Hannibal's resume. I created new poems. I infused beauty in paintings. I flowed out from a fountain like water.

ܕܝܬܐ ܕܝܬܐ ܕܝܬܐ ܕܝܬܐ  
ܕܝܬܐ ܕܝܬܐ ܕܝܬܐ ܕܝܬܐ

ܕܝܬܐ ܕܝܬܐ ܕܝܬܐ ܕܝܬܐ

A proverb, every bird flies with its own flock.

ܕܝܬܐ ܕܝܬܐ ܕܝܬܐ ܕܝܬܐ  
ܕܝܬܐ ܕܝܬܐ ܕܝܬܐ ܕܝܬܐ  
ܕܝܬܐ ܕܝܬܐ ܕܝܬܐ ܕܝܬܐ

This is perhaps Hannibal's saddest triplet, describing his mother's burial site.

ܕܝܬܐ ܕܝܬܐ ܕܝܬܐ ܕܝܬܐ  
ܕܝܬܐ ܕܝܬܐ ܕܝܬܐ ܕܝܬܐ  
ܕܝܬܐ ܕܝܬܐ ܕܝܬܐ ܕܝܬܐ

Waited for her love, disappointedly facing a mute close door (implies no reply to knocking at her door).

ܕܝܬܐ ܕܝܬܐ ܕܝܬܐ ܕܝܬܐ



ܠܟܝܢ ܥܡ ܕܥܝܢܐ ܐܝܬܝܗ  
 ܕܟܝܢ ܥܡ ܕܥܝܢܐ ܐܝܬܝܗ

A tribute to his father for planting in his heart at early age the seed of pursuing freedom.

ܕܕܕܐ ܕܕܕܐ ܕܕܕܐ  
 ܕܕܕܐ ܕܕܕܐ ܕܕܕܐ  
 ܕܕܕܐ ܕܕܕܐ ܕܕܕܐ

A plea to a friend to convey his love message to her.

ܕܕܕܐ ܕܕܕܐ ܕܕܕܐ  
 ܕܕܕܐ ܕܕܕܐ ܕܕܕܐ  
 ܕܕܕܐ ܕܕܕܐ ܕܕܕܐ

Comparing a Ravi to a haiku and establishing that Ravi is superior.

ܕܕܕܐ ܕܕܕܐ ܕܕܕܐ  
 ܕܕܕܐ ܕܕܕܐ ܕܕܕܐ  
 ܕܕܕܐ ܕܕܕܐ ܕܕܕܐ

Describing the technique of Raviye and their positive influence.

ܕܕܕܐ ܕܕܕܐ ܕܕܕܐ  
 ܕܕܕܐ ܕܕܕܐ ܕܕܕܐ  
 ܕܕܕܐ ܕܕܕܐ ܕܕܕܐ

Stating that Raviye are ours (Assyrians').

ܕܕܕܐ ܕܕܕܐ ܕܕܕܐ  
 ܕܕܕܐ ܕܕܕܐ ܕܕܕܐ  
 ܕܕܕܐ ܕܕܕܐ ܕܕܕܐ

Serenity of nature, the peak of a mountain greeting the sea.

ܕܕܕܐ ܕܕܕܐ ܕܕܕܐ  
 ܕܕܕܐ ܕܕܕܐ ܕܕܕܐ  
 ܕܕܕܐ ܕܕܕܐ ܕܕܕܐ

In advocacy for women. Why women are considered queens but after they get married they are only a workhorse?

ܕܕܕܐ ܕܕܕܐ ܕܕܕܐ

ܕܕܕܐ ܕܕܕܐ ܕܕܕܐ  
 ܕܕܕܐ ܕܕܕܐ ܕܕܕܐ

Hannibal is fascinated by the style of triplets and acknowledges that once he got to know this style, he felt he had previously composed in wrong styles!

ܕܕܕܐ ܕܕܕܐ ܕܕܕܐ  
 ܕܕܕܐ ܕܕܕܐ ܕܕܕܐ  
 ܕܕܕܐ ܕܕܕܐ ܕܕܕܐ

Another praise for triplets (Raviye) to the extent that they contribute to the survival of our language.

ܕܕܕܐ ܕܕܕܐ ܕܕܕܐ  
 ܕܕܕܐ ܕܕܕܐ ܕܕܕܐ  
 ܕܕܕܐ ܕܕܕܐ ܕܕܕܐ

An invitation to calmness and wisdom as fruits of maturity to help our nation stand tall.

ܕܕܕܐ ܕܕܕܐ ܕܕܕܐ  
 ܕܕܕܐ ܕܕܕܐ ܕܕܕܐ  
 ܕܕܕܐ ܕܕܕܐ ܕܕܕܐ

For the love of Assyrians; both of the mountains and the plain, I have sculpted in boulders.

ܕܕܕܐ ܕܕܕܐ ܕܕܕܐ  
 ܕܕܕܐ ܕܕܕܐ ܕܕܕܐ  
 ܕܕܕܐ ܕܕܕܐ ܕܕܕܐ

This is a call on the nation to love and respect its artists.

ܕܕܕܐ ܕܕܕܐ ܕܕܕܐ  
 ܕܕܕܐ ܕܕܕܐ ܕܕܕܐ  
 ܕܕܕܐ ܕܕܕܐ ܕܕܕܐ

Pearls before swine or eyeglasses for blind are like Psalms for a mute/deaf person. This is a very fine triplet.

ܕܕܕܐ ܕܕܕܐ ܕܕܕܐ  
 ܕܕܕܐ ܕܕܕܐ ܕܕܕܐ  
 ܕܕܕܐ ܕܕܕܐ ܕܕܕܐ







ذبح اسبند (2010-1930)

**ቅዱስ ስጋውን ይጠብቁ**

تَبَّ، تَذَنْبُكَ إِفْتَدِيهِمْ . ۱۵۸۸ ذَلِكُمْ ذَنْبُكَ

[illegible][illegible][illegible]

مەھكىمىلەر دىخۇەنسەھىلە دىشەپتەك جەننەتتە ۈۋەتۈۋاتقان  
 چىشەنەن مەن 700 مەھكىمىلە چەمبەرلەردە بولغان  
 بىر قەۋەتتە دەۋەتلىرىمىز ھەمىشە قەتئىيەت بىلەن؛  
 مەھكىمىلەردە بولغاندا، ئىش، كەس، ئىش، بىلەن،

[illegible][illegible]





# ALLELE FREQUENCIES OF 9 STR CODIS LOCI IN THE ASSYRIAN POPULATION OF THE UNITED STATES

By PhD Candidate Rebecca Arjovik Ray

## The Importance of Population Studies

The frequency of any given STR profile in a population is calculated on the basis of Hardy-Weinberg Equilibrium (HWE) population genetics equations that relate allele frequencies to genotype frequencies in populations. Therefore, to calculate the probability that a particular STR genotype might occur at random in a population (i.e. to assign an inclusion number to a “match”), data must be gathered from that population to make an estimate of the frequency of each allele. An allele frequency study typically requires that 100-200 individuals from the target population be genotyped.

Obviously, since HWE statistics are also used, validating the database also requires tests for (HWE) at all loci under consideration, to ensure that genotype frequencies can be accurately calculated from allele frequencies. For example, in the U.S. there are at least five genetically distinct sub-populations with respect to the Profiler Plus™ loci: African-Americans, Caucasians, Hispanics, Asians, and Native Americans, and the allele frequencies for all of these loci have been determined with precision in these groups.

Moreover, the distribution of alleles at these loci have been tested for HWE for all these subpopulations and

HWE has been confirmed, allowing HWE equations to be used to calculate the frequency of any particular profile from the allele frequencies. Numerous new STR population databases are published every year by the *Journal of Forensic Sciences* and *Forensic Sciences International*, and all these new databases face the same challenge of validation by testing the allelic distributions at each locus under study for conformance to HWE.

There are still some ethnic sub-populations in the United States that are likely to be genetically distinct at the CODIS loci, but for whom there is no STR allele frequency database. One example is the Assyrians, who have been reproductively isolated from other groups, due to their unique religious and cultural beliefs, for hundreds of years.

It is interesting to note that in a study conducted at the University of California’s School of Medicine in San Francisco, Dr. Elias found that Assyrians have a distinct distribution of the ABO blood group alleles, and that it differs from all other groups in the Middle East. In fact, Assyrians from the two regions in Iran, Tehran, and especially Urmia, were found to have high levels of homozygosity for ABO alleles, suggesting that there has been a lack of intercultural mixing that can still be detected at the genetic level today.

In this study, allele frequencies for the 9 ABI Profiler Plus™ CODIS STR human DNA identification loci



(D8S1179, D21S11, D7S820, D3S1358, D18S51, D5S818, and FGA) were determined in the Assyrian population of the United States. Saliva samples were collected from 206 U.S. Assyrian volunteers who were not closely related and who were representative of the U.S. Assyrian population.

The DNA was extracted from the samples using Qiagen's DNA mini kit spin column purification method, quantified with ABI's primate-specific colorimetric ("quantiblot") assay, and amplified by PCR using the AMPF/STR Profiler Plus™ system. The fluorescently-labeled PCR products were separated by capillary gel electrophoresis on an ABI 310 Genetic Analyzer, and the raw data was detected and sorted using ABI Gene Collection® and ABI Gene Scan® software. Alleles were then assigned using ABI Genotyper® software, successfully providing complete genotypes of 199 of the original 206 samples.

All statistical analyses of the data were performed using online GenePop© software. Allele frequencies were determined by the gene count method, and conformity of the allelic distribution at each locus to Hardy-Weinberg Equilibrium (HWE) was tested using an exact test with 2000 shufflings ( $p = 0.05$ ).

Distribution of the alleles at 8 of the 9 loci (D8S1179,  $p=0.88$ ; D21S11,  $p=0.37$ ; D7S820,  $p=0.72$ ; D3S1358,  $p=0.078$ ; D5S818,  $p=0.7936$ ; FGA,  $p=0.12$ ) were found to conform to HWE expectations. However, the distribution of alleles at D18S51 showed an unexpectedly high level of homozygosity ( $p = 0.0039$ ; expected homozygosity = 0.12, observed homozygosity = 0.19), and even applying a Bonferroni Correction (which would adjust  $p$  from 0.05 to 0.005 for each locus across a nine locus data set) still did not bring the D18S51 allelic distribution within the required range.

Assyrians was then compared to that of U.S. Caucasians using Chi-Square analysis ( $p = 0.05$ ), and the distribution was found to be significantly different from that of the U.S. Caucasian database at 5 (D3S1358,  $p=0.0377$ ; D8S1179,  $p=0.0004$ ; D21S11,  $p=0.0221$ ; D13S317,  $p=0.0455$ ; D7S820,  $p=0.0026$ ) of the 9 loci.

Thus, this study concludes that the U.S. Assyrian Profiler Plus™ loci allele frequency database generated by this study should be used in lieu of the U.S. Caucasian Profiler Plus™ loci allele frequency database in the performance of human identification testing among U.S. Assyrians.

However, the study also cautions that there is an anomaly at the D18S51 locus among U.S. Assyrians that requires further study before this locus can be included in statistical calculations of genotype frequencies generated from the database. Given the results of this study, if an Assyrian is accused of a crime or of the paternity of a child, the inclusion number of his profile should be calculated using the Assyrian population database allele frequencies, not those for U.S. Caucasians (which is the database that would have been used by default prior to this study).





# Assyrian Ancient world dictionary finished — after 90 year

Courtesy of Sharon Cohen, AP National Writer

CHICAGO – It was a monumental project with modest beginnings: a small group of scholars and some index cards. The plan was to explore a long-dead language that would reveal an ancient world of chariots and concubines, royal decrees and diaries — and omens that came from the heavens and sheep livers.

The year: 1921. The place: The University of Chicago. The project: Assembling an Assyrian dictionary based on words recorded on clay

or stone tablets unearthed from ruins in Iraq, Iran, Syria and Turkey, written in a language that hadn't been uttered for more than 2,000 years. The scholars knew the project would take a long time. No one quite expected how very long. Decades passed. The team grew. Scholars arrived from Vienna, Paris, Copenhagen, Jerusalem, Berlin, Helsinki, Baghdad and London, joining others from the U.S. and Canada. One generation gave way to the next, one century faded into the next. Some signed on early in their careers; they were still toiling away at retirement. The work was slow, sometimes frustrating and decidedly low-tech: Typewriters. Mimeograph machines. And index cards. Eventually, nearly 2 million of them.

And now, 90 years later, a finale. The Chicago Assyrian Dictionary is now officially complete — 21 volumes of Akkadian, a Semitic language (with several dialects, including Assyrian) that endured for 2,500 years. The project is more encyclopedia than glossary, offering a window into the ancient society of Mesopotamia, now modern-day Iraq, through every conceivable form of writing: love letters, recipes, tax records, medical prescriptions, astronomical observations, religious texts, contracts, epics, poems and more. Why is there a need for a dictionary of a language last written around A.D. 100 that only a small number of scholars worldwide know of? Gil Stein, director of the university's Oriental Institute (the dictionary's home), has a ready answer:

"The Assyrian Dictionary gives us the key into the world's first urban civilization," he says. "Virtually everything that we take for granted ... has its origins in Mesopotamia, whether it's the origins of cities, of state societies, the invention of the wheel, the way we measure time, and most important the invention of writing. "If we ever want to understand our roots," Stein adds, "we have to understand this first great civilization." The translated cuneiform texts — originally written with wedged-shaped characters — reveal a culture where people expressed joy, anxiety and disappointment about the same events they do today: a child's birth, bad harvests, money troubles, boastful leaders.

"A lot of what you see is absolutely recognizable — people expressing fear and anger, expressing love, asking for love," says Matthew Stolper, a University of Chicago professor who worked on the project on and off over three decades. "There are inscriptions from kings that tell you how great they are, and inscriptions from others who tell you those guys weren't so great. ... There's also lot of ancient versions of 'your check is in the mail.' And there's a common phrase in old Babylonian letters that literally means 'don't worry about a thing.'" There were omens, too — ways of divining the future by reading smoke patterns, the stars, the moon and sheep livers.

"Like all people at all times, they wanted to try to find some way of controlling their world," says Martha Roth, the dictionary's editor-in-charge and dean of humanities. "It's very difficult to draw the line between actually believing



Researchers working on the Assyrian Dictionary project 1932 at the Oriental Institute, Chicago University.





and being superstitious."

Robert Biggs, professor emeritus at the university, devoted nearly a half century to the dictionary, sometimes uncovering tablets on digs in the Iraq desert, sometimes poring over texts in museums in London and Baghdad. His specialty is Babylonian medicine. For almost an entire year, he studied thousands of references to sheep livers. For example: If a sheep's gallbladder — part of the liver — was long and pointed, it meant the defeat of the enemy king. If there was a certain kind of crease on the liver, it could mean the king was going on a journey. A lunar eclipse could mean danger for a king. But the tablets reached far beyond royalty. Biggs says they included everything from a disputed paternity case to agricultural loans to famine, where desperate people sold their children for cash. "Life was very fragile ... it was much more risky that it is now," he says.

Making sense of it all was painstaking work. Some of the wedge-shaped characters changed over the thousands of years, and the tablets excavated from ancient temples, palaces and cities were frequently crumbling. Often there was no punctuation, so it was hard to know where one word ended and the other began. "You'd sit in a room with a good light and turn the tablet in various directions to see as much as possible," Biggs explains. "Quite often the tablets were broken so you might see part of a sign. And different people looking at the same thing would see something different because of the way you'd hold it."

"Sometimes it got to be very tedious," he adds. "Other times there was a sense of exhilaration if you could solve some problem or figure out what a rare word means." Regardless, the work continued. "You always saw the light at the end of the tunnel," Biggs says. "But the end of the tunnel kept getting further and further away."

An early 10-year completion deadline was soon deemed unrealistic. "Scholars always underestimated how difficult it would be," Roth says. "People always expected the project would end in their lifetime. What can I tell you? That's not always the way it goes." There was much to research, much to record. By 1935, scholars already had 1 million index cards. It would take more than 30 years before the first of the 21 volumes was published. Most cover a single letter. The entire collection spans about 10,000 pages and 28,000 words. The definitions are more fitting for an encyclopedia; they provide cultural and historical context, similar to those in the Oxford English Dictionary.

"It's not such a word means king," Roth says. "It's a matter of understanding the thousands and thousands of references to the word king in every document in every period." Roth notes that after arriving at the university in 1979, she asked to work on the word witness or witness



Martha Roth, dean of humanities at the University of Chicago, browses through the final volume of the university's Assyrian Dictionary at the school's Oriental Institute in Chicago. Ninety years after research began to assemble an Assyrian dictionary, based on words recorded on tablets unearthed in Iraq, Iran, Syria, and Turkey, and written in a language that hadn't been uttered for more than 2,000 years, the massive 21-volume collection is now complete.

ing. That took four to five years. On the other hand, there might be just a dozen references to a jar holding grain and that research could be complete in an afternoon. Now that the dictionary is finished, Roth says there's a feeling of tremendous accomplishment and "a little bit of a sense of loss.... This has occupied my waking and sleeping moments for 32 years. You dream this stuff." The end also brings a realization as more tablets are unearthed, more discoveries will be made. "It's like driving a Porsche off the lot and looking in the Blue Book (listing a car's worth) and seeing how much value it's lost," Stolper says. "The moment it's done, it's out of date."

Biggs says the scholars are satisfied with the final version, but there is that lingering temptation. "It might be nice to start over," he says, "but no one has the courage to do it anymore."

*The Assyrian Dictionary of the Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago (CAD) can now be downloaded free of charge as PDF files.*

**Go to:** <http://oi.uchicago.edu/research/pubs/catalog/cad/>, then identify the volume you want to download. Then go to the far right, to the little vertical rectangles with the dollar-signs and the down-arrows. Click on the down-arrow to download the volume that you want.



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Thank You





# The Assyrian Genocide – then and now

By Svante Lundgren, Dr. of Theology,

author of a book about the Ottoman genocide of Christians (in Swedish)

With the exception of the Assyrian community and the small flock of genocide scholars, the Assyrian genocide is almost completely unknown. The fact, that hundreds of thousands of Ottoman Assyrians were slaughtered during the First World War, has not, unlike the Holocaust and to a certain degree the Armenian genocide, entered our collective memory. In this article I am going to write about what happened, why it happened, and why it is so little known.

## *Seyfo*

The Assyrians call the genocide *Seyfo*, which means sword. The year 1915 was the year of the sword in Assyrian history. The genocide was not restricted to, but had its peak, that year. The main Assyrian communities in the Ottoman Empire were all hit by destruction.

The region of Urmia, which was in Persia outside the Ottoman Empire, was under occupation by Ottoman forces in spring 1915. The Christian population, both Armenians and Assyrians, were massacred in the thousands. Those who survived did so by founding shelter in the American or French missionary compound in the town of Urmia.

The “mountain Nestorians” in the Hakkari mountains had a long tradition of de facto autonomy. They were also armed and able to resist when they in the autumn of 1914 were attacked by Ottoman forces. Despite a brave resistance they could not withstand the military superiority, and they were forced to withdraw to Urmia in the autumn of 1915. Their villages were destroyed, thousands of their people were killed, and those who had survived were now refugees.

The Assyrians in Tur Abdin had lived in the region for ages and were peaceful with no revolutionary or subver-

sive tendencies. It did not help them. They were massacred and deported in huge numbers. In a few places – most famous is the case of Aynwardo – they were able to defend themselves with some success.

How many Assyrians were killed in the genocide? Nobody knows the exact number, but we can reach a reliable estimate. The Chaldo-Assyrian delegation to the peace negotiations after the war stated that 250,000 Assyrians were killed. Professor David Gaunt, the most distinguished *Seyfo*-scholar, thinks that this number is too low. He calculates with a little more than 300,000 victims. Higher numbers are often given, a result of the unhappy tendency to exaggerate the dimension of a tragedy, which is so enormous in itself that there is no need for exaggerations.

## *Why genocide?*

The murderers were Ottoman forces, armed Kurdish tribes and ordinary Muslims. Responsible for the tragedy was the Ottoman government, which was lead by the Young Turk party. Why did it decide to eliminate the Christian population in the Empire? And why was this decision carried out by so many people on the local level?

## **There are three reasons for the genocide:**

- i) The Young Turk party was motivated by Turkish nationalism. In their opinion the Empire was threatened and the best, maybe the only, way to save it was to make it religiously and ethnically homogenous. The non-Muslim minorities had to be eliminated – either by killing them or expelling them (both methods were used). The Muslim minorities had to be assimilated.
- ii) To be able to win acceptance and cooperation for the elimination of the Christians among the Muslims in the



regions with Christian population, the government used the old suspicion which existed between Muslims and Christians. When the World War broke out it was declared a *jihad* against the unbelievers. This was the reason why so many Muslims – Turks and Kurds – accepted and participated in the massacres of Christians.

iii) Every genocide leads to a massive transmission of wealth from victims to perpetrators. Many Turks and Kurds enriched themselves by usurping the fields, homes or businesses of their Christian neighbors. Thousands of Christian girls and young women ended up as wives, concubines or servants of rich Muslims. Greed is a common motive for crime, sometimes even for massive crimes.

### Why the silence?

In the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the world was not as interested in genocides and mass killings as it is today. The Great War had been terrible and what happened to the Christian minorities in the Ottoman Empire was considered a mere detail. The mentality among those Christians in the Ottoman genocide who survived was to forget the horrific past and look to the future. Even among the Armenians – a Christian minority which was bigger and better educated than the Assyrians – it took fifty years before a systematic documentation, teaching and lobbying about the genocide started.

It took even longer among the Assyrians. They were smaller, less educated and more divided. They lived in different countries and belonged to different churches. Only with the emergence of a modern Assyrian movement did the work for more knowledge about and recognition of the genocide start. The Assyrian Universal Alliance decided in 1970 that a special day would commemorate the Assyrian martyrs. The day that was chosen, the 7<sup>th</sup> of August, was not connected to *Seyfo*, but to the Simele massacre of 1933.



It is also a fact – a sad although not surprising fact – that there has been resistance among the Armenians to include the other victim groups, Assyrians and Greeks, in the story about the Ottoman genocide. The phenomenon, well-known from the history of genocides, is called the don't-steal-our-genocide-syndrome.

*Today*

The Armenians have again a state of their own. The Greeks who were driven out of the Ottoman Empire settled in Greece. There is, however, no independent Assyria today. Of the victims of the Ottoman genocide of Christians, it is therefore the Assyrians who are in the most difficult situation. You can even argue that in a certain sense the genocide has not yet ended. The Assyrians still suffer the consequences. There has been no recognition from Turkey, no restitution, and the people still suffer to a certain extent of post-genocide trauma.

[illegible]

What we need is a strong lobbying for recognition of the genocide and in support of the Assyrians in their homelands, especially Iraq. But the Assyrians are still divided – to a high degree as a result of the genocide. They live in different countries, belong to different churches, are split between those who call themselves Assyrians and those who call themselves something else, between those who opt for assimilation and those who still harbor a dream of returning to Bethnahrin.

The Young Turks are long dead, but tragically enough it seems like they were successful in their project.





# AFA's Members' Appreciation Event

## A HUGE Success!

By Donatella Yelda

On the afternoon of April 3, 2011, the Assyrian Foundation of America ("AFA") hosted its first Members' Appreciation Event dedicated



Mr. Nathan Nasseri.

to the pioneers who had the foresight and vision to establish the AFA. These founders recognized the need to help the many Assyrians worldwide, promote education for Assyrians and preserve the Assyrian culture and history. The

event also honored all the devoted members and contributors who throughout the years have made certain the AFA stayed true to its purpose, accomplished its sacred mission and continued to grow into one of the most respected Assyrian organizations in the world. The afternoon kicked

off with wine and hors d'oeuvres enjoyed by over 150 members and friends of the AFA, followed by a presentation on the history of AFA from inception to present day on its contributions and achievements.

Mr. Nathan Nasseri, one of the remaining founders of the AFA, took the audience back though time to 1964. He spoke of the inspiration that so many years ago planted the seed that germinated into the AFA. In his speech, Mr. Nasseri reflected on some of the sweet memories along with the early challenges, including locating and gathering the bay area Assyrians. He recalled having to go through the white pages and pulling out any name that sounded Assyrian and either calling or going to the individual's house to let him or her know about the new organization. In one particular instance, they found a name that sounded Assyrian and after traveling some distance to the person's house they found out that he was not Assyrian. In his











Award of Appreciation presented to Mr. George Zaia for his huge support of Nineveh Magazine.

tional Grant. Mr. Lamassu is a graduate of the University of London in Assyriology, the Co-Founder and Director of Modern Assyrian Research Archive (“MARA”) at Cambridge University and the Co-Director of Upper-Khabour Archaeological Project and Assistant Researcher with the Zivaret Tepe Archaeological Team at McDonald Institute Cambridge University.

With his charismatic personality, Assyrian archeological knowledge and love of Assyrian history, Mr. Lamassu captivated the audience from the moment he took the podium. His presentation was based on his travel for archeological research to the Assyrian region in the Hak-kari Mountains in Turkey. In his slideshow, Mr. Lamassu showed photos of different abandoned Assyrian villages and churches he visited and explained his findings in each area. To locate and map out where these Assyrian villages were and what happened to them, he interviewed local Kurdish villagers currently living in the area. In one particular church in the Qodshanes regions, Mr. Lamassu found bones in Assyrian graves that had been violated by looters looking for treasure. It is believed that the bones belonged to one of the Assyrian Patriarchs but without DNA testing it would be impossible to confirm.

Mr. Lamassu noted that throughout his research, he marked and documented each finding and its location. This is particularly important, he stated, because the information gathered will be documented and recorded as an official part of the Assyrian history, preserving the region's rich Assyrian heritage that might otherwise be lost.

In conclusion, Mr. Lamassu described MARA (The Modern Assyrian Research Archive). MARA is a digital archive based at the Faculty of Asian and Middle Eastern Studies, University of Cambridge. It was initiated in 2008 by doctoral students and academic professionals interested in Assyrian Studies. The aim of MARA is to locate, collect, and preserve source material and literature on the history, culture, and language of the Assyrian community from the 19th century onwards. The purpose of founding this archive is to ensure the preservation of the Assyrian language and culture and to promote and facilitate academic research on these. It will contain digital images and audio recordings.

The digital images will include copies of published material, such as books and newspapers, and unpublished documents and manuscripts. The recordings will include audio records of oral culture such as folktales, poetry and songs in the various Assyrian dialects. It is hoped that this project will

have a wide outreach to the Assyrian communities around the world and that these communities will collaborate in the creation of images and recordings that will be deposited in the archive. For

more information on MARA please visit <http://assyrianarchive.org/mara-team/>.

In addition to digitalizing the collected material Mr. Lamassu stated that he hopes to compile all his research materials and publish a book in the near future. To Mr. Lamassu's great surprise at the end of his presentation Mr. George Zia offered to sponsor the publication of his book.

The event came to conclusion with presentation of the



Award of Appreciation presented to Mr. Nas-  
seri for helping establishing the AFA.







# The Story of Fidelia Fiske and her School

By Solomon S Solomon

This protestant missionary and educator worked for fifteen years in Urmia, Persia, and in the process transformed a tiny day girls school into a large boarding school for girls. When she died at the age of 48 it was said that many people grieved her, but that no where was the grief felt more than among the Assyrians to whom she labored so faithfully and with such success from 1843-1858.



Fidelia Fiske 1816-1846.

Fidelia Fiske was born on May 1<sup>st</sup>, 1816 in Shelburne, Mass, to Rufus and Hannah (Woodward) Fiske, being one of their six daughters, and second to survive. Her father, a farmer and a copper, was a descendant of William Fiske who had come to Salem in 1637. After attending school in the area, she began teaching locally, then in 1839 she entered Mount Holyoke Seminary thus beginning a

life-long association with that fine institution. It was there that she met many missionaries, a year later she came down with typhoid fever and while she recovered slowly that fever killed her father and a younger sister.

In 1842 Fidelia graduated and at once she became a teacher, here her missionary interest was stimulated by the visit to Mount Holyoke of Rev. Justin Perkins who founded in 1834 a mission in Urmia to “revitalize and educate” the Assyrians. Rev. Perkins was finally ready to leave Urmia in 1869 and return to America where he died that same year. In his visit, he was accompanied by an Assyrian bishop by the name of Mar Youkhanna (1804-1874) whose seat was in Gavilan, Persia. This bishop had supported the American mission in Urmia since 1834 and accompanied Perkins to America in 1841-43. This bishop got married in 1859 but could not bring himself to leave the church of the East when the Assyrian Presbyterian Church was constituted. Bishop Mar Youkhanna gave an address in Mt. Holyoke in which he urged missionaries to go to Persia and help improve the situation of the Assyrians.

Fidelia Fiske sailed from Boston March 1<sup>st</sup>, 1843 following Perkins and the bishop Mar Youkhanna., they reached Urmia in June that same year.

Working for the next 15 years under arduous conditions, Fiske quickly learned the Assyrian language and despite troubles from Kurdish raiders, the Persian authorities, and the different Assyrian fractions she managed to take a small day school started by Mrs. Asahel Grant in 1838 and turned it to a large boarding school. Here Assyrian girls not only received modern education but were also given instructions in matters of behavior, health, recreation, clothing, among others. Engrossed as she was with her work at the school, she found time daily to go out and visit Assyrian women in and around Urmia to preach.

In 1858, after 15 years of unremitting toil her health was in such a bad state that it was thought best for her to return home and get some well deserved rest and convalescence. On July 15<sup>th</sup>, 1858 Fiske left Urmia in company with several other missionaries, and they all reached Boston on Dec 17<sup>th</sup>. Soon she was in her mother’s arms. There she was offered the position of the principal and instead she became the chaplain of that school. She was very effective in her job, however her heart was ever in Urmia and she entertained the hope of returning to her beloved Assyrians. She passed away on July 26<sup>th</sup>, 1864 after a prolonged and painful sickness. An obituary that appeared in an unknown newspaper, describes her: “In her character was a very rare combination of calm judgment and glowing zeal, great executive powers and gentile loveliness; Strangers were attracted to her at once, and the more they knew her, the stronger was the attraction”.

I wish to acknowledge all the help I received from Mount Holyoke College, and especially Patricia Albright. Also I would like to acknowledge all the help I got from our own Dr. John Joseph so graciously.



Fiske School for Girls in Urmia.



# AFA'S TRIP TO RENO May 2011

Reported by: Jean Karamian

It was a typical overcast Bay-Area morning when we left the house early Saturday May 14, 2011 on our way to meet the tour bus in Hercules for our journey to Reno, Nevada for a weekend of games, music, good food and the camaraderie of warm and fun-loving, fellow Assyrians.

Sunday and time to leave. We boarded the bus for a return ride that was just as much fun as the previous day. Flora brought out her videos and music, and Sargon drew from his never-ending supply of stories to keep us laughing non-stop. It wasn't long before we arrived safe and sound



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The bus arrived promptly at 9:00am already half-filled with the San Francisco boarders and It didn't take long to get the baggage, food and drinks loaded, and to get settled in. Once on the road, Flora Kingsberry and her team made sure everyone had donuts, hot coffee, yummy, hand-made cheese sandwiches and snacks. It wasn't long before everyone was trading stories and singing Assyrian folk songs. Such talented singers! Sargon Shabbas brought along his extensive file of stories and jokes and had everyone in stitches with his story telling.

We arrived at Circus Circus in Reno, checked in and It wasn't long before our members started trickling down to the casino and midway. As we wandered the casino, we would run into members of our group and trade tips on which slot machines were paying off.



Ask Stella Karamian how much she won on the "Wheel of Fortune" machine with one of those tips! All too soon it was

back at Hercules and with warm goodbyes and promises to see each other again soon, we parted Hercules with fond memories looking forward to the next time we could get together again with our Assyrian friends.

Our heartfelt thanks go to Flora Kingsberry and her team for organizing this year's trip. They did a great job planning a wonderful, fun-filled event that all enjoyed immensely. We especially appreciated the services of Super Sightseeing Tours and their driver, Gary. The bus was clean and well-kept and we appreciated Gary's optimism and expert driving through the snow storm coming home.

The Assyrian Foundation of America would like to express its gratitude to Mr. Raman Sargoni and Super Sightseeing Tours, Inc. for their generous donation of \$2,436.00. Super Sightseeing Tours is AFA's number one choice tour company. They are professional, friendly and above all provide the best service possible.





# When the Past is Always Present - The eradication of a community

Courtesy of The Majalla by A. Lilith

Examined here are the circumstances of the underreported ethnic cleansing of religious minorities under Ottoman rule. When genocide goes unrecognized, it creates a mentality that these acts bear no consequences, and society does not progress.

Recent attacks on churches in Egypt and Iraq show that indigenous Christians face an uncertain future in the Middle East. In a region where religion is a fundamental component of life, religious violence is an issue that appears to have been sidelined in news covering the Arab Spring. Yet these attacks are profoundly significant. They lead us to question whether the issue of religious conflict has undermined any democratic intentions in its aftermath. Where there is no religious tolerance, there is no hope for democracy, only conflicts of self-interests. Good relationships between religions and creeds are crucial to building a healthy, democratic and stable society, providing equality before the law, and protection from arbitrary violence. More importantly, every society needs a moral conscience. Wherever there is religious intolerance, it is the minority communities that suffer the most. Sadly, these indigenous minorities of the Middle East are dwindling, and becoming even more vulnerable.

Illustrative of this is the case of the Saint Gabriel Monastery in Turkey, founded in 397 AD. The monastery is the oldest and most significant cultural and religious hub of the ancient Assyrians, but its future is under threat. In 2004, when a new “property land registry work law” was introduced by the Turkish government, the three surrounding Kurdish villages were enabled and subsequently encouraged to take the monastery to court. In 2008, the village leaders accused the monastery of proselytization for accepting students to whom they could pass down the Christian faith. They also claimed that there was previously a mosque at the site of the monastery, despite the monastery having been built over two hundred years before the advent of Islam, and requested that its land be divided among the villagers. In its 2006 resolution, the European parliament considers this issue a matter of human rights law. What is felt to be the latest “campaign of intimidation” against the Assyrian community also serves to remind them of their painful past.

The Assyrians and other indigenous Christians of the Middle East constitute a rapidly declining population in the region. The Assyrians, a once strong and vast nation of

around one million members in Turkey, pioneers from the year 2400 BC in the fields of medicine, education, law and astronomy, have been reduced and indeed, all but erased by endless persecution. They now number a mere 5,000. Before the First World War, Christians comprised 33 percent of the population in Turkey. Presently they make up 0.1 percent—a result of massacres, forced emigration and later migration. Today, the Assyrians are not even recognized by Turkey as a minority group. Many in this community feel they have been victims of a cycle that seems destined to wipe out not only their existence but also the memory of their existence. To be sure, this, along with the deprivation of land rights, has been cited by genocide scholars such as Raphael Lemkin as the final step in the act of genocide.

On 14 November 1914, at the onset of the First World War, Sheikh Al-Islam declared a holy war against all Christians of the Ottoman Empire. The ensuing Armenian genocide, of 1915, is well known and documented, but few are aware of the massacres of Assyrians, Chaldeans and Syriacs that also occurred. Professor Richard Hovannisian asserts in his volume of essays on the Armenian genocide, *Anahit Khosroeva of the National Academy of Sciences of Armenia*, that between the years 1895-1922 in Turkey, when 802,947 Armenians were slaughtered, two thirds of the entire Assyrian population also lost their lives. This “missing chapter” in history can be explained by its being overshadowed by the Armenian plight and also by legally sanctioned censorship in Turkey, as well as the government’s active funding of alternative historical literature in the US and Britain, praising the Ottomans and portraying their victims as rebels deserving of their punishment.

Turkey has attributed the events to “civil war and unrest,” not to genocide, and this is their reason for the absence of an official apology. Yet eyewitness accounts and testimonies from diplomats and missionaries left in telegrams, letters and reports to their superiors tell a different story. In April 1916, the German imperial chancellor was informed by a report that the Assyrians of the east Ottoman Empire had been exterminated. While an initial 1922 Assyrian assessment set the number at 250,000, recent revisions have brought the number of Assyrians killed to 750,000. Can this really be accounted for by the ravages of a civil war?



It is widely known that the Turks mobilized local minority Kurdish tribes by using anti-Christian propaganda, as well as bribery and the provisions of arms, thus employing a divide and rule strategy. In 1995, the parliament of Kurdistan in exile issued this acknowledgement: "Ottoman administrators began a policy of annihilating the Armenians and Assyrians...with the aid of some tribal Kurds," with the result that "millions of Armenians and Assyrians were murdered."

In January 1915, in just the one district of Urmeia, 70 villages were attacked and plundered. Turks and Kurds massacred the Assyrians of Amadia in May 1915 before turning their attention to the Chaldeans in the district of Siirt. The Assyrians of the Gawar district, Harput, Husankeyf and Urfa were also decimated in June. All those who were not killed were forced to flee their destroyed and burning villages, and make the long journey to Syria, Lebanon and Jordan by horse-drawn carts and caravans, or on foot, leaving behind their homes and possessions. Many died during the long and arduous journey.

Reasons for the genocide may have been to cleanse the Turkish heartland, for fear of Christian collaboration with minority Kurds or with Russia in the impending world war. Some argue it was a Turkish response to the Armenian uprising against them for occupying some of their land, although the massacres extended far beyond armed resistance and do not justify the killing of the Assyrians, Syrians and Chaldeans, who were not involved. Social historian David Gaunt found that, although wholly unfounded, Turkish fear of a Christian revolt seems to be central to the massacres. Whatever the reason, no argument could ever excuse the destruction of villages, the butchering of thousands of innocent victims, young and old, and the rape, slaughter and kidnap of women and children, documented in detail by eyewitnesses as being some of the most relentless and inhumane acts.

The violent events of 1915 have come to be known as *Seyfo*, or the Year of the Sword, to the Assyrian community but were by no means isolated. Rather, they were a climax to the continual massacres that had occurred during the reign of the Ottoman Empire. In just two years from 1843-1845, according to British representatives and western missionary sources, 10,000 Assyrians were slaughtered. Since then there have been many more massacres of this community, but 1915 was by far the most brutal in terms of numbers. The Assyrian genocide has been recognized by the European Parliament (EU) the International Association of Genocide Scholars (IAGS) and the Armenian American Association (AAA). Turkey continues to deny the genocide, though it has officially and rightly recognized genocides elsewhere, involving smaller numbers of victims and smaller target groups, such as Bosnia and Kosovo in the former Yugoslavia.

In 2009, Turkey's prime minister, Tayyip Erdogan, made the bold statement that the incidents of ethnic cleansing by past Turkish governments were acts of fascism, saying that, "for years those of different identities have been kicked out of our country." It was a move criticized and contested by his parliament, yet welcomed by the minority communities. However, reservations have been cast on his sincerity, and the much requested official apology has yet to come.

In order to find a solution to current conflicts we need to revisit recent history, study what happened, acknowledge positive aspects and condemn negative ones. Otherwise, fundamentalist and racist behavior is implicitly condoned with silence. When genocide goes unrecognized, it creates a mentality in the community that these acts bear no consequences, and society does not progress. The persistence of the denial of Ottoman crimes also contributes to the mistrust and continuous persecution of their victims today. According to Sabri Atman, founder of the Assyrian Seyfo Centre in Europe, "The denial... has perpetuated the current condition seen since 1915 to that currently being perpetrated against the Assyrians in modern day Turkey, Iraq and Iran." The pressure is now on Turkey to take this opportunity to set a good example to other states. Before this can happen, Atman asks: "Should they leave behind the same mentality today that was in existence when the genocide took place?"

Hannibal Travis, author of *Genocide in the Middle East: The Ottoman Empire, Iraq and Sudan*, argues that "implementation of international law would solve the problem," adding "International law prohibits denial of genocide or crimes against humanity, requires the payment of reparations and ensures equality for members of cultural, religious, ethnic and political minorities as well as indigenous people."

Almost every member of the Assyrian, Syriac and Chaldean communities have had a family member killed or kidnapped and forced into marriage during the events of 1915. But justice can come in many forms, and while some might fear that the Assyrian community would demand reparations—as in the case of Nazi Germany—families of the victims simply want an official Turkish apology—an admission that this was genocide, and a one sided attack against their own, innocent people. Many feel that, until this happens, the souls of millions so unjustly killed cannot rest in peace. The community needs closure, because for all those who lost an aunt, uncle and grandparent, as well as their homeland, the gruesome tale of an attempted systematic destruction of their people is still felt today, and still very much alive.

**A. Lilith** - London based writer specializing in the culture and arts of the Middle East



# CONGRATULATIONS

## SARAH AGHASSI

By Nora Betyousef Lacey

I am proud to announce that my daughter, Sarah Aghassi, has graduated from UC Hastings, College of the Law in San Francisco, California on May 15, 2011. Sarah's accomplishment has been a dream come true for her entire family. Since she was young, we knew that Sarah was to become a lawyer, an enlightened mover, leader, and trendsetter - a daughter of today's Assyrian nation.

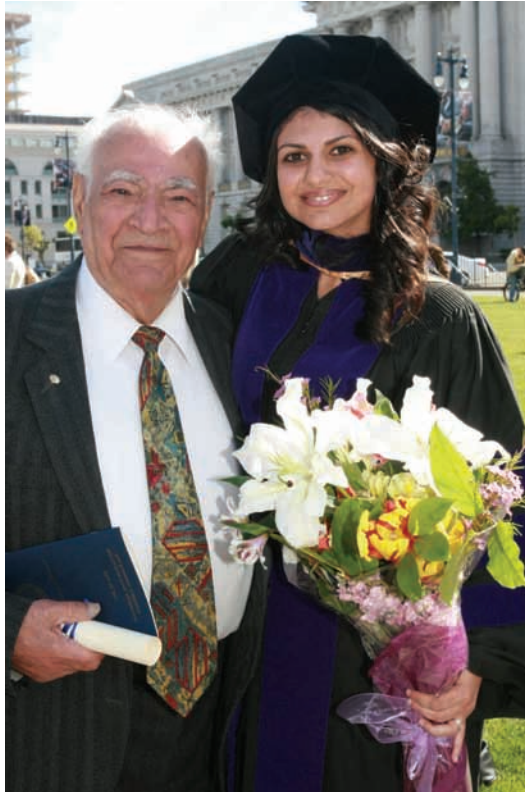
Sarah's long determination to be a lawyer is best communicated in an essay written by her in July 2009 to the admissions committee at UC Hastings for entrance to the law school. In the essay Sarah writes, "I have a scar. This scar is much more powerful and deeply ingrained in me. It is the scar of my heritage and culture - the Assyrians, a Christian sect from ancient Mesopotamia and Babylonia. As I age, I come to see this 'scar' as a battle wound, for which it is something I am truly proud and which I display for all to see. The Assyrians were a fierce culture - noble and passionate in everything they did. I feel like I inherited my drive for success from my ancestors.

Much like my Assyrian ancestors before me, I am instilled with passion and drive towards my dreams. With a Hastings Law education, I have every confidence I can pursue my dream of becoming a lawyer, and to one day work alongside my grandfather, helping him fight for the preservation of the Assyrian culture."

Sarah's passionate pursuit of a profession in law has stemmed from long conversations with her grandfather, Avimalek Betyousef. Sarah's grandfather, my father, is a prominent attorney in Iran, and he educated Sarah from the early age of 5 by telling her "stories" about our ancestors, their remarkable inventions, their grandeur and glory thousands of years ago and especially about the Assyrian king, Hammurabi, the first author of code of law and human rights. In her essay to UC Hastings, Sarah continues, "Although I am a first generation American, I have learned of the persecution of my heritage through stories from my grandfather and my parents, and each story they

weave is as distinct."

At Sarah's graduation party at the San Francisco City Hall on May 22nd 2011, which was attended by 150 friends and family, her grandfather, Avimalek Betyousef, reminded her of what law is, and how it was originated by Hammurabi. He further enriched her by stating how it has benefited humankind for centuries up to the present.



Sarah mentioned the impact her grandfather's education has had on her in her essay when she said, "I have wanted to be an attorney from a young age, primarily because my mentor and hero, my grandfather, instilled in me a drive towards my future goals and a passion for what I believe in. He always used to tell me that if I became a lawyer, he would be proud to work alongside me one day. I wanted nothing more than for my grandfather's dreams to be realized; for him and me to stand side by side one day on cases not only deeply important to us, but to the Assyrian community as a whole."

At the end of his speech at Sarah's graduation party, Avimalek Betyousef remembered and shared with us that when he was being sworn in as an attorney in Iran, the Patriarch, Mar Dinkha swore him in and asked

him to make the same commitment he asked Sarah to make in front of her family and friends; to use her education and knowledge for the betterment of the Assyrian nation, and never to represent a case against any Assyrian brother and sister. In the presence of all who witnessed, Sarah agreed and made her commitment.

Sarah born on October 7th, 1983 in San Jose, California to Assyrian mother Nora Betyousef Lacey and Assyrian father Joseph Aghassi has one younger sister, Roshel Aghassi. Sarah's maternal grandparents are Avimalek and Sara Betyousef, born in Urmia, Iran and her paternal grandparents are Baba and Loudieh Aghassi from Hamadan, Iran.

*Nineveh Magazine and the Assyrian Foundation congratulates Sarah on her achievement and wishes her the very best.*



# CONGRATULATIONS

## DR. BANI TAMRAZ, Pharm.D., Ph.D.



Dr. Bani Tamraz, son of Ator Tamraz and Flourins Yalda, received his Doctorate of Philosophy in Pharmaceutical Sciences and Pharmacogenetics (Ph.D.) (the study of personalized medicine) from the University of California, San Francisco (UCSF) on June 17, 2011. Bani received his Bachelor of Science in Chemistry from UC Davis in 1999 and his Doctorate of

Pharmacy (Pharm.D.) from UCSF in 2003.

Dr. Bani Tamraz was born in Tabriz and grew up in Urmia, Iran. Bani Left Iran and moved to the U.S. when he was 15 years old. Bani has one sibling, Abi Tamraz. In August 2008 Bani married Vittoria d'Aste-Surcouf and the couple currently lives in San Francisco, CA.



*Nineveh Magazine and the Assyrian Foundation congratulates Dr. Bani Tamraz on his achievement and wishes him the very best.*



**Edward Karem Benjamin, born on 2.17.2011 to Paul and Tamara Benjamin.**



*Nineveh Magazine and the Assyrian Foundation of America* join the Benjamin family in congratulating the happy and proud parents Tamara and Paul Benjamin for the baptism of their son Edward on April 17, 2011.



# An Assyrian Australian Soccer Talent

## Leena Khamis

Leena Khamis, born 19 June 1986, is an Australian football (soccer) player who currently plays for Sydney FC in the Australian W-League.

She represented Australia at the 2004 FIFA World Under 19 Women's Championship in Thailand. She finished the inaugural W-League season as top scorer with 7 goals; winning the Golden Boot award. She played for the Australian National Soccer team, as forward, in the FIFA Women's World Cup of this year, 2011.

*Leena Khamis is of Assyrian heritage, with both parents belonging to the Assyrian community.*



Khamis's form this season has also been a shining light for Sydney in what is shaping as a three-horse race for the W-League title along with Central Coast Mariners and Brisbane Roar. Khamis, 23, makes intelligent runs, can receive the ball well and lay it off and link with fellow striker Sarah Walsh and attacking midfielder Heather Garriock. And she can finish.

Her third goal of the season was worthy of a much bigger stage than 400 or so fans at Miranda. "That was the best goal I've scored in my career," an exhausted Khamis told [au.fourfourtwo.com](http://au.fourfourtwo.com) after the game.



Lena Khamis #19 of Australia celebrates her goal during the FIFA Women's World Cup 2011 Group D match between Australia and Equatorial Guinea at the FIFA Women's World Cup Stadium Bochum on July 3, 2011 in Bochum, Germany.

"We could've had more today but we just need a bit more composure in front of goals."

With trademark white sunscreen daubed across her face, the Camden-born Khamis with the Assyrian heritage says her hero is Tim Cahill.



"I try to play like him, I even try to celebrate like him," she said of her own corner flag celebration.









# Defying Deletion: The Fight over Iraq's Nineveh Plain

Short Documentary Seeks to Raise Awareness on Relatively Unknown Age-Old Genocide, Wins Award

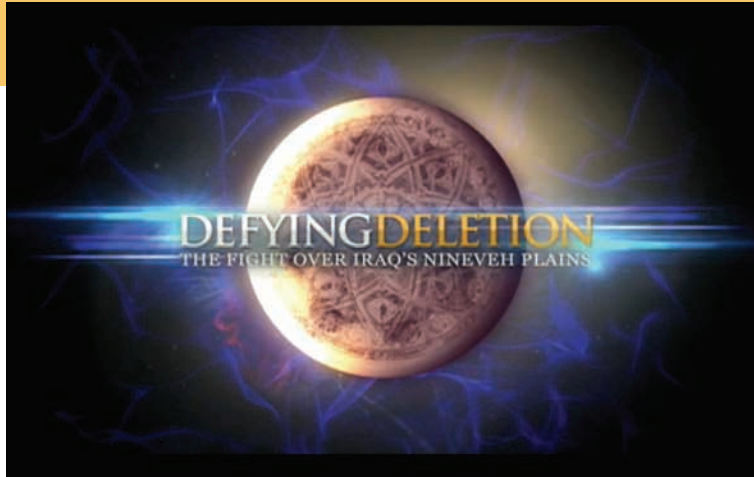
Christopher Salem  
Contributing Writer

Imagine being victimized by your neighbors because, according to your oppressors, you happen to share your religion with the invader of your country. Now think about losing all the rights you had to liberty, the pursuit of happiness, and even life. Also imagine being forced to pledge allegiance to one of two political parties, or imagine the consequences of refusing this allegiance and, as a result, facing intimidation. Your life is cheap, your place of worship always bombed, your family murdered, and your cries are forever unheard. Worse yet, all of this happens in your homeland. Finally, try to make sense of this and the fact that your forefathers survived 33 genocides that have gone unnoticed over the course of 1,400 years.

This is the story of many of Iraq's Christians that André Anton, director and writer of "Defying Deletion: The Fight over Iraq's Nineveh Plain," told in the form of his short film.

Anton, who founded Lamassu Productions and graduated from Wayne State University in 2007, said most of the Christians make up a nation of many names that consist of Assyrian, Chaldean, or Syriac. He said the differences in these names depend on the Catholic identity of the Chaldeans versus the Orthodox Christianity of the other two and perhaps a few minor variations in Aramaic dialect, the language of the Iraqi Christians. Some Syriacs are also Catholic. Ethnically, however, they are all Assyrians, Anton said.

"The Assyrians are an ancient people," he added, as he went on to note that they are the indigenous people of Iraq, and the instigators of civilization itself. In highlighting the importance of this fact, he said "On 13 September 2007 UN General Assembly adopted the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples." Anton added that "This is truly why we must continue to push ourselves into the hearts and minds of the world as indigenous Assyrians."



Photos courtesy  
Lamassu Productions

This film focuses specifically on the indigenous Assyrian population, he said in an e-mail. "I find it highly dangerous to group us all as Iraqi Christians, since it undermines our right to be in Iraq and because it neglects our indigeneity." He explains this by noting that "Christianity can exist anywhere in the world, (but) the

Assyrian identity can only continue to exist in their homelands. Elsewhere, it will cease to exist because of unavoidable assimilation factors."

"You can't dig a few inches into the ground without finding something Assyrian," said Waleeta Canon in the short film.

Since roughly 600 A.D., according to the film, the Assyrians in the region endured one assault after another from agents of an extremist ethnic cleansing movement who often forced the Assyrians to choose between religious conversion and death. In less difficult times, they were forced to culturally assimilate within dominant groups of their region. They have somehow maintained their distinct identity through the years. Assyrians of today face these same exact problems, and more, according to Anton. "(Saddam Hussein) set up orders that newborn Christian babies should not be named Christian or Assyrian names, but Arab Muslim names,"

he said as he spoke of the forced assimilations of the Assyrians in Iraq. "Our names are an important part of our identity," he said.

The documentary outlines how the oppression of the Assyrians got worse after the fall of Hussein's regime. Assyrians were often kidnapped for an average ransom of \$40,000. In one account, a woman's husband was kidnapped and, behind her tears of tragic dismay, even a fluent speaker of Aramaic could barely understand her cry that her husband was murdered in cold blood. In another account, the father of a young priest at Babylon University told the story of his son that was forced "to leave the

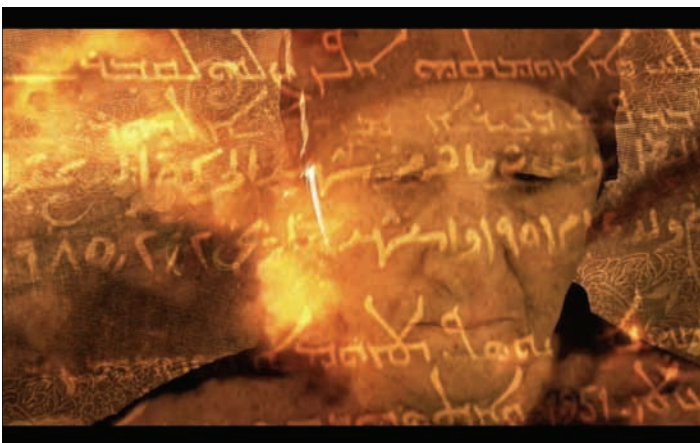




Church or die,” which prompted the family to move to Jordan.

When the day came that required his son to renew his Visa, the father explained that his son was told he had to fly to Syria for a day, and only a day. He has not seen his son for the last three years. Several hundred thousand Assyrians have fled the region or have been murdered in the post-Saddam era, but it is often the case that the Christian refugees “lose everything” in this flee, only to gain “a little bit of security” while they “just wait for better times,” according to several natives in the movie. But even with the slight increase in security, one refugee in Jordan said he feels like a prisoner of his own home. “We are not allowed to work and I am afraid to go outside,” he said in the movie. “We are stripped of our dignity.”

His family shares a home with another family, in which at least eight people cram to sleep inside one small room. Those that have moved to a different part of the country, instead of fleeing face a different form of oppression that comes in the form of electoral fraud, political disenfran-



chisement, economic deprivation and unwarranted arrests. “This is factually known and documented by the US State Department,” said Anton. The culprits: Kurdish nationalists. The reason: Kurdistan. In a period of severe political turmoil, the Kurdish population of Iraq has seized this mess as an opportunity to fortify the interests of a Kurdish State within the Iraqi region, often at the expense of the Assyrians. The boundary of Kurdistan, which is the name of the unofficial Kurdish State, extends to Iran, Syria, and Turkey. The problem with this claim is that Kurdish territory overlaps into the northern Iraqi region where Assyrians have historically been based. The region is oil-rich,



which has been a factor in the reasons for Kurdish opposition to Assyrian interests. With regards to the extremists within the region, however, the justification for Assyrian opposition is different, according to the movie.

“In February, you had an archbishop kidnapped, in March, you had his body found, in April, another priest (was) killed,” said Michael Youash of the Iraq Sustainable Democracy Project, before he went on to explain the significance of this pattern. “This is a sequence that is a message to the community,” he said in the movie. “Even if Iraq is moderately turning around, (the Assyrians) will still be targeted.”

“We were considered second class citizens, simply because we were Christians and Assyrians,” said Dr. Donny George Youkhanna in a different interview, who is widely seen as the savior of the Iraqi International Museum in Baghdad, Iraq. “Saddam went through large efforts to omit our identity as Christians and as Assyrians,” he said. “He started calling ancient Assyrians as Arabs, no more Assyrians.”

At the end of the movie, Youkhanna marked the end of the screening with these last words: “That’s my country. I was born there. My father was born there. My grandfather was born there. I am an Assyrian. That’s my homeland. I hope the time will come, a good peaceful time, that I can go and see my homeland,” he said.

He passed just hours before the short film debuted on March 11<sup>th</sup>, one day before it won the award for Best Short Film Documentary at the Detroit Independent Film Festival.

This documentary has already won several awards, and will screened in front of the United States Congress on 14 July, 2011.

**-Best Documentary Short Subject - 2011 Michigan Film Award**

**-Best Documentary - Tupelo Film Festival**

**-'Best of the Fest' - 53rd Rochester International Film Festival**





# In Memoriam

Within seven months apart, both Emmanuel & Daleh were called and united in to their eternal life.

Emmanuel was born in Kirkouk/Iraq to his parents Paulus & Seranoush Odah. Daleh was born in Duhok/Iraq to her parents Chaba & Rabqa. In 1970 their wedding bells rang in Baghdad/Iraq and started a new chapter of their life. They were then blessed with four children (Pauline, Raman, Ramson & Urnina).

In 2003 the family started migrating to the US, one member at a time, in 2009 Daleh & Urnina arrived to the Bay Area and not too much longer she suffered a long illness and passed away in November 2010, while Emmanuel was awaiting his migration from Amman/Jordan. Shortly thereafter Emmanuel was also suffering from an illness then departed in June 2011.



**Emmanuel Odah**

**02-12-1943**  
**06-02-2011**

Emmanuel was characterized by many as intelligent, independent and persistent. Daleh was described as patient, loving & caring woman. Emmanuel is survived by his mother Seranoush, sisters Marlyne & Dolphie), brothers (Wilson, Martin & Paul) Odah.

Daleh is survived by her mother Rabqa, sisters (Sara, Janet & Mona), brothers (Oraha Jacob, Issac & Ben). They were blessed and survived by their four children, family members & friends.



**Daleh Yokhana**

**01-13-1950**  
**11-10-2010**

husband Kamal Thomas and children: Freddy, Emile, Lynne, Peter. Grandson: Daymion – all of Ripon, California. Sister Christina of Sweden. Brother Basil (Wiska), wife Babs. Brother Kooya – all of Miles City, Montana. Sister Nina, husband Rani, and sons Raman and Mark of Denair, California.

Mikhael was preceded in death by his dear wife Blandina, his parents, Khamoo and Sooyria, brothers Aprim and Rafael and Sister Melina.

In his book titled *An Assyrian Youth Journal* published in 2002 brother Minashi wrote this, when he was a teenager:

Habbaniya, November 2, 1941

Last night was a burning point in my life! The meaning of the word 'America' hit me with a sudden impact, giving me the dream to cherish, the dream that one day I was going to America. Dejected I left home to stroll on the deserted school ground playing on the way 'Oh Suzanne' on my harmonica. I stopped and leaned on a football post for a long time. I started to think about America...I realized that America stands for a permanent home for the uprooted homeless people like us Assyrians: freedom from political and persecution by the Iraqi government, relieve from our lowly life with the British and the opportunity for a better quality of life.

It was a beautiful night...clear, quiet and cloudless. The vast sky shimmered with countless twinkling stars, creating in me an awesome feeling, an acute longing for the promise of a good life America seemed to hold. I determined then and there that I was going to reach someday the far away land of promise...the home for homeless.

\*I did that only after 40 years.\*

Recently brother Minashi said this: "I have done OK. I don't have regrets" Thank you for celebrating Minashi's life today and for your time, we pray...

## In Loving Memory of Younathan Youash

Dr. Younathan Youash, 76, passed away on Saturday, June 12<sup>th</sup>, 2010 at his home in Houston, Texas. Dr. Youash was born on January 9, 1934 in Baghdad, Iraq to Kathy & Youash Youash. He graduated from high school in 1953 and began furthering his education at the University of Baghdad. In 1958, he received his Bachelor of Science in Geology from the University of Baghdad with High Honors. Due to his academic excellence, Younathan received a full scholarship to attend the University of Texas in Austin, Texas. Dr. Youash studied at UT from 1958-1964 and earned his Master in Petroleum Engineer-



By Basil K. Pius and Family

Born: Around late 1925  
Died: January 9, 2011 in Modesto, California

Survivors include: Son, Yosip of Modesto. Daughter Lilly,



**Mikhael Khamoo Pius**





ing and Ph.D. in Geology in 1964. From 1964-1970, he was a Professor of Geology and Hydrology at the University of Baghdad and Al-Hikma Jesuit University. In 1969, he married Fiona Ewan Warda and they moved to Tripoli, Libya shortly thereafter. In 1970, Younathan became Professor and Head of the Geology Department at the University of Tripoli. They re-

turned to the United States in 1974 where he began his professional career in the oil business at Standard Oil of Ohio. In 1977, he accepted a position at the Kuwait Institute of Scientific Research (KISR), where he served as Senior Petroleum Engineer. Although he thrived in his professional career while in Kuwait, Dr. Youash was eager to return to the United States. In 1985, he moved back to the city he always loved, Houston, Texas. With an unquenchable thirst for knowledge and expertise in his fields of interest, Dr. Youash continued to further his education. In 1988, he earned a Master of Science in Petroleum Engineering from the University of Houston as well as a Master of Science in Civil Engineering in 1992. He then took a position with the Texas Department of Transportation (TXDOT) as a Professional Engineer in the State Highway Department in 1998-2010.

In his personal life, Younathan was an active member of the Presbyterian Church and was an incredibly dedicated family man. He loved to read, travel and spend time with his wife, children and grandchildren. He also enjoyed sports such as basketball and soccer and his favorite teams were the Houston Rockets Basketball & Brazil Soccer teams. His dedication to his heritage was unwavering and this was exemplified by his founding membership to the Assyrian Association of Houston. His ongoing involvement was based on his desire to further the development and advancement of all Assyrians.

Younathan Youash was a scholar who was loved and respected by many because of his intellect, wit, sarcastic humor and faithful commitment to family and friends. He is survived by his wife Fiona Ewan Youash and their three children Elda Youash Peters, Ashur Younathan Youash and Alvina Youash Antar and seven grandchildren, three brothers, one sister and many nieces and nephews. He is our hero and inspiration and it is through his example that his children are who they are today. He instilled in them the importance of education and his vast knowledge of everything from Sciences to Politics to Mathematics was extraordinary. His humor lit up a room and family and friends would ask him to repeat jokes over and over again that he shared just because of his sarcastic and charismatic

delivery. His modesty made him even more beautiful of a man.

As we continue to mourn the loss of a man who is irreplaceable, Dr. Younathan Youash, we are comforted knowing he is seated with our Lord Jesus Christ in the Heavens above.

*An understanding heart,  
An intelligent mind,  
We miss you Dad,  
You were one of a kind.*

## Wilson Shaul Warda By Sargon Warda



Wilson Warda was the 2nd eldest of 6 children, born to Shaul and Sophia Warda on June 25, 1923 in Mousel Iraq. He passed away on May 12, 2011 at age of 87 praying the Lord's Prayer with his hands in May's and Daisy's hands. Wilson is survived by his wife Daisy, Son Laith of Turlock, Daughters Sonia & May of Millbrae and Nadia of Kirkuk Iraq, 6 grandchildren and 7 great grandchildren. Sister Lily of Toronto Canada, brother William of Florida, as well as many cousins, nieces and nephews.

When Wilson was 11 years of age his father past away leaving him the task of supporting his family. He worked during the day and attended school at night. Years later he moved to Habaniya and lived with his Uncle the late Ewan Warda and worked as a draftsman in Habaniya at the British Air Force base. He moved back to Kirkuk in 1948 and started working at the Iraqi Oil Company (IPC) as a draftsman, then he moved up to head the Electrical drafting department until his retirement in 1976.

Wilson immigrated to U.S. in 1991 to reunite with his family. On October 12, 1999 he suffered a massive stroke that rendered him handicapped for the remainder of his life.

My Cousin Wilson was a man of principles. He lived his life with dignity & pride. He was a loving and generous man that put nothing above the health, happiness, and well being of his family. Wilson raised his children to love, be humble, help people, but most of all to live their lives devoted to God. May God rest you in peace free from all sufferings.







## 7. פדיון

سَبَّحْهُ بِمَدْحِهِ سُبْحَانَكَ كَلِمَةً دُرِّيَّةً دُرِّيَّةً

✠ **سِدِّ مَحْتَمَلْ بَمَحْتَمَلْ فَيُذَوِّهْ سَلَوْدْ**

[illegible]



# Assyrian National Memorial Day

## August 7th

August 7<sup>th</sup> is 'Assyrian Memorial day', a day when the Assyrian community worldwide remembers its martyrs. Reflecting the Assyrian Diaspora, events are planned for San Jose, Los Angeles, Phoenix, Chicago, Detroit, New York, London, Paris, Stockholm, Amsterdam, North Iraq, Syria, Iran and other locations.

August 7<sup>th</sup> was chosen to commemorate *Martyrs Day* because in 1933, between August 8 and 11, the Iraqi army, led by Bakir Sidqi, entered the Assyrian town of Simmele and its surroundings, in north Iraq, and massacred 3,000 men, women and children, after they had been promised safety if the men surrendered their weapons. According to Colonel Stafford of the British Army:

A cold blooded and methodical massacre of all the men in the village then followed, a massacre which for the black treachery in which it was conceived and the callousness with which it was carried out, was as foul a crime as any in the blood stained annals of the Middle East. The Assyrians had no fight left in them, partly because of the state of mind to which the events of the past week had reduced them, largely because they were disarmed. Had they been armed it seems certain that Ismail Abawi Tohalla and his bravos would have hesitated to take them on in fair fight. Having disarmed them, they proceeded with the massacre according to plan. This took some time. Not that there was any hurry, for the troops had the whole day ahead of them. Their opponents were helpless and there was no chance of any interference from any quarter whatsoever. Machine gunners set up their

guns outside the windows of the houses in which the Assyrians had taken refuge, and having trained them on the terror stricken wretches in the crowded rooms, fired among them until not a man was left standing in the shambles. In some other instance the blood lust of the troops took a slightly more active form, and men were dragged out and shot or bludgeoned to death and their bodies thrown on a pile of dead.

Though inspired by the Simmele massacre, August 7<sup>th</sup> has become a day to remember all Assyrian mar-



An Assyrian family in Midyat (Tur-Abdin), South East of Turkey at the beginning of the 20th Century. The whole family was killed during Seyfo, Assyrian Genocide 1914-1918.

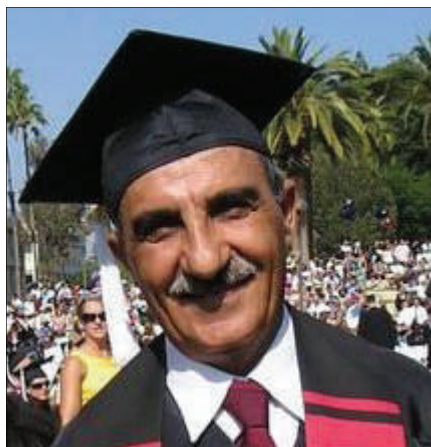
tyrs. Assyrians also commemorate April 24<sup>th</sup> (called *Seyfo*, "sword"), but that is specific to the Turkish genocide of Assyrians in World War One, in which 750,000 Assyrians were killed (75% of the total population!), as well as

400,000 Pontic Greeks and 1.5 million Armenians.

Martyrs Day was originally meant to commemorate the massacres of Assyrians in Iraq in 1933. Gradually, we Assyrians have realized that there have been many instances in our history of massacres and persecutions, which equaled or surpassed Simmele in magnitude. Consequently, August 7<sup>th</sup> has become a day to commemorate Assyrian martyrs throughout history. The development of the 7<sup>th</sup> of August into a *Memorial Day* for all Assyrian martyrs is important and beneficial as it will lead to greater unity within our nation.



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1964 ՆԱԾԱՅԻՐ



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Ջուլի 35, 2011 թվական: 2-րդ համար: 6761



LINA YAKUBOVA 1976-2011

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