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Cultural - Educational - Social

# NINEVEH

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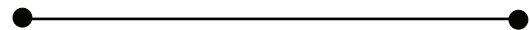
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# From the President:

I am writing to you as I end my term as President of the Assyrian Foundation of America (AFA), a position that I have been honored to hold for three years. I remember how excited I was three years ago when I first shared with you some of my fondest memories growing up with the AFA and I expressed my pride in this wonderful organization. Now having had the privilege to serve on the board and getting to know the organization and its members on an entirely different level, my pride and respect has escalated to even greater heights. I am humbled by all that the AFA represents and by everything that it encompasses. The AFA is not just an organization; it is a family. It is the guardian of our history and culture, a voice that gives direction and shape to our future, and a global resource for anyone with passion and commitment for Assyria.

The future of the AFA is very bright. Yes, challenges await us. As leaders in the community, we have anticipated and begun to address a number of these issues. We are making the necessary changes that will help the AFA become a more modern and responsive organization. Yet we are determined to maintain the mission and the high standards of integrity that have always defined the AFA. By remaining faithful to this idea, we can be as excited about our future as we are proud of our past.

I have turned over the reins to the very capable Sue Odah and I would like to take this opportunity to wish Sue every success in her new role as President. I am confident that Sue will relish the challenge and take the AFA to new heights. It goes without saying that running the AFA would not be possible without the hard work and dedication of its members and friends. So I know all of you will join me in giving Sue our support and assistance.

I would like to thank my Board who fully supported me in carrying out our vision for the future of the AFA. Special thanks to the Nineveh magazine team who continues to tirelessly deliver an outstanding magazine that has become a global voice for the Foundation. I am sincerely grateful to Dr. Joel Elias for being such a great friend, mentor, and role model during my tenure as President. Also, I would like to thank my family for their love and support and instilling in me the pride and love for Assyria.

Most importantly, my thanks go out to you, the members and friends, for all your support over the years. Without you, the AFA would not exist.



My own love for the AFA runs deep. I hope that with the last three years, I have given something back. I have always tried to support and protect our wonderful organization, as I hope you will too. I encourage you to seek out opportunities to get involved. When we devote our time and energy to a cause we care about deeply, we are not only helping others, but we are also enriching our own lives. "Service is the rent we pay for the privilege of living on this earth"— Shirley Chisholm.

Thank you for giving me the privilege of leading such a phenomenal organization for three very meaningful years.

Jackline Yelda



# The First University: The School of Nisibis

By Persi J. Mishel

There are several books written about the School of Nisibis (the School). However, my purpose in writing this article is not just to reiterate the information contained in these books.

## *The following are my purposes:*

1. To provide simple, concise, and reliable information about the School.
2. To link the establishment and administration of the School to our Assyrian ancestors by analyzing the existing records.
3. To instill pride in our young generation by informing them of the achievements of our ancestors in the field of education.
4. To encourage our young generation to pursue higher education.

## *The Origin of the Word "Nisibis."*

Arammean kingdom of "Našibīna" is mentioned for the first time in an Assyrian source that can be dated to 901 BC. "Našibīna" is an Akkadian word. The name "Nisibis" drives from the word "Našibīna," which sometimes is spelled "Nusaybin." Nisibis was captured by the Assyrian king Adad-Nirari II in 896 BC. It became part of the Assyrian Empire, paid tributes to the Assyrian Kings, and it remained loyal to Assyria even after the fall

of Nineveh in 612 BC and the continuation of the Assyrian dynasty in Harran. Some sources state that "Nisibis" is a Greek word, others state that it is a Persian word. However, these sources do not show the evidence they have relied for their claim.



Map of the Sassanid Empire - showing the 5 provinces back in Persian hands - Nisibis is in the upper left hand corner between the upper Tigris and Euphrates - when Rome USED to have its eastern border on the Tigris (after Galerius in 303) you can see HOW MUCH of north-eastern Persia used to be in Roman hands

## *The Location of the School*

Nisibis is a city of approximately 85000 people located in the Southeastern Turkey in the province of Mardin. It is today populated by the Kurds.

## *The Year its Establish-*

*ment*

It was established around 350 AD while Nisibis was under the Roman control. It was moved to Edessa (Orhai), modern-day Urfa, Turkey, and merged with the School of Edessa in 363 AD when the Persians gained the control of Nisibis. In the year 489 AD, the Byzantine emperor Zeno ordered the School of Edessa closed for its "Nestorian" tendencies, and around that year the School returned to Nisibis.

## *The Year its Closure*

There are no reliable records showing the exact year of its closure. The Arabs took Nisibis from the Per-

sians in 640 A.D. It is reasonable to assume that the School existed by the time they took Nisibis from the Persians. One of the sources I have relied for such assumption is a book titled “The Clash of Ideologies” by David Jonsson. Referring to the School of Edessa and the School, at page 182, he states: “When Arabs and Islam swept through the Middle East in 630 CE, they encountered 600 years of Assyrian Christian with a rich heritage, a highly developed culture, and advanced learning institutions, this civilization became the foundation of Arab civilization.” Another

source states: “it [the School] did not really begin to decline until after the foundation of the School of Bagdad (832).” However, Efrem Yildiz, Ph.D., in his article titled “The Aramaic Language and Its Classification”

states: “Both centers [the School of Edessa and the

School] were burnt during the Muslim [Arab] Invasion, for which reason little was saved.” In my opinion, Dr. Yildiz’s opinion is not supported by evidence because as I noted above, the School of Edessa was closed in the year 489 AD, by the order of the Byzantine emperor Zeno because of its “Nestorian” tendencies. The Arabs did not attack Edessa and Nisibis until approximately 150 years later.

### ***The Name its Founder***

Mar (St.) Jacob of Nisibis who was the second bishop of Nisibis. He also built a church there, which is named after him. The photos of the remains of the School and the church can be seen on the Internet.

### **The Subjects Taught at the School**

Theology, law, medicine, philosophy, and liberal arts.

### **The Number of its Students**

There are no records showing the number of the students for each year; however, the records show approximately “800 to 1000 students” attended the School.

### ***The Ethnicity of its Teachers, Administrators, and Students***

In his above-referred book, David Jonsson states: “One of the greatest Assyrian achievements of the fourth century was the founding of the first university in the world. The School of Nisibis had three departments ...” pages 181-182.



More Ruins in Nisibis - St Elia

There are some sources that state the School was “Iranian Syriac” or “Persian.” There are no reliable records to support such titles for the School.

Certainly the school had Persians and other ethnicities as teachers and students. For example, one of the well-known ones was Paulus, an Iranian of Nisibis, who was a scholar of Logic. He may be the same “Paulus” that was also known as “Paul the Persian” “who was educated at the Syrian (sic) School in the city of Nisibis,...

There are no reliable data showing the exact ethnicities of the teachers and students. However, considering the following facts: (1) mass deportations of the Arameans that the Assyrian kings engaged in Nisibis and populating Nisibis with the Assyrians; (2) no evidence of

Arameans re-settling in Nisibis; (3) no evidence of substantial presence of Persians in Nisibis; (4) the predominant language in Nisibis was Assyrian Aramaic, it is reasonable to conclude that the majority of the students, the administrators, and the teachers were Assyrian.

### *The Language Used to Teach its Courses*

Assyrian Aramaic.

Although this article is about the School, I find it necessary to explain briefly the reasons I have used words “Assyrian Aramaic” as the name for the language that the Assyrians use.

Most nations are consistent regarding the name of their language. For example, in the USA, it is “English,” in Iran, it is “Persian,” in Armenia, it is “Armenian,” in Turkey, it is “Turkish.” For the Assyrians, there are several confusing-some are inaccurate as well- names for their language. Most Assyrians and non-Assyrians continue to add to this confusion by their inconsistent use of these names. The Bible translators added to this confusion by use of these names and it was not until recently that they arrived at more accurate name, which shows the following:

“Then Eliakim, Shebna, and Joah said to the Assyrian chief of staff, “Please speak to us in Aramaic, for we understand it well. Don't speak in Hebrew, for the people on the wall will hear.”

In my opinion, we must strive for simplicity, consistency, accuracy, and uniformity regarding the name of our nation and its language.

Aramaic is a Semitic language, which has been in existence for approximately 3000 years. It began in Aram (the present-day Syria) and it expanded and became the official language of the Assyrian Empire as well as *lingue franca* of the entire Near East. The spread of the Aramaic language coincided with the expansion of the Assyrian Empire, which resulted in mixture of the political term “Assyrian” and linguistic term “Aramaic speaker.” Currently, the overwhelming majority of the speakers of this language are the Assyrians. There are some Jews and

Mandaeans who do speak this language, but their numbers are insignificant.

As I noted above, the Assyrian Kings made the Aramean tribes and their lands part of the Assyrian Empire by engaging

in mass deportation of the Arameans and by exacting tributes from the Aramean kings. The Aramean royalty assimilated into the Assyrian empire and their kings “became subservient to the Assyrian imperial system.” Deportation was a feature of Assyrian imperial policy, which began during the reign of the Assyrian king Shalmaneser I (1274-1245 B.C.) and continued by successive Assyrian kings.

The Aramaic language gradually replaced the Assyrian language because of large number of Arammeans due the mass deportations from Aram and Aramaic is a simpler language “compared with almost 700 syllabus or so used in Assyrian and Babylonian” languages.

It was not until the conversion of the Assyrians to Christianity in approximately 33 A.D., that the Greeks and later the Romans called “Aramaic” language “Syriac.” As Professor Yildiz aptly noted: “The term ‘Syriac,’ which drives its origin from Syria, as well as being artificial lacks a historical basis.” He further states: “It should be remembered that the Syriac people, as such, does not exist, nor does the language of that name.”

As I noted, this subject deserves a separate article. However, in my opinion, based on the above, the word “Assyrian” alone for our language is not accurate because “Assyrian” language was supplanted by “Aramaic” language. “Syriac” is not an accurate word for our language nor for our nation, because it lacks any historical basis. The use of the words “Aramaic” alone is not accurate because there are many dialects (i.e., Jewish Aramaic, Palestinian Aramaic, and etc.) of “Aramaic.” Therefore the most accurate name for our language is “Assyrian Aramaic.”



Nisibis, church of Mar Jacob, right nave; in front, remains of one of the school buildings

## *The Most Famous Teachers of the School*

Mar (St.) Ephrem the “Syrian” who is called “the greatest poet of the patristic era” who composed the Hymns on paradise in his native Nisibis around 363 A.D.

Mar Narsai who is considered as “the most important writer of the Church of the East” who was a student for 10 years in the School of Edessa and after the closure of the School of Edessa, he re-established the School of Nisibis. He died sometime in the sixth century and is buried in Nisibis in a church named after him. “Narsai is also hailed as his Church's foremost poet, acclaimed in fact as ‘the harp of the Spirit.’”

## *Its remaining Manuscripts*

Efrem Yildiz, Ph.D., in his article titled “The Aramaic Language and Its Classification” states that many manuscripts from the School of Edessa and the School of Nisibis “were taken to the United States for cataloguing and publication.” However, my research shows that the only remaining manuscript from Nisibis is dated approximately 614-615 A.D. Its English translation reads:

“This book was completed in the twenty fifth year of Khusrau, son of Hormis, the King of the Persians, in the holy city of Nisibis, during the office (qawma) of eager Shepherd, Mar Basha the maqryana, and Mar Bar Sade the mhaggyana. The insignificant sinner Gabreil Qatraya acquired it himself, and collated it with great care in the presence of the true teacher Mar Maranzhka, from the fathers. For his own benefit and that of all the people of his region. Let everyone who looks at it and reads it pray, for our Lord's sake, that out of grace he (the scribe) may receive mercy; and let him not erase any mark or letter except after great investigation. Praise to the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, one Nature and three Qnome (persons), one power, one unattainable will, for ever, Amen.”

## *Its Contribution to the World's Educational System*

“The statutes of the School of Nisibis, which have been preserved, later became the model upon which the first Italian university, the university of Bologna, begun as a law school, in the Middle Ages (1088); it recently cele-

brated its ninth centennial.” It is the oldest academic institution of the Western world.

## **References:**

<sup>1</sup> It should be noted that there were other schools, such as the School of Edessa (Orhai), that predate the School of Nisibis. However, due to its curriculum and the quality of its instructors and administration, the School of Nisibis is considered the first university in the world. See below.

<sup>2</sup> “History of the School of Nisibis.” Secrétariat du CorpusSCO, 1965. By Arthur Vööbus. “The Statutes of the School of Nisibis.” 1961. By Arthur Vööbus. “Fear of God and the Beginning of Wisdom: The School of Nisibis and the Development of Scholastic Culture in Late Antique Mesopotamia” (Divinations: Rereading Late Ancient Religion). By Adam H. Becker. “Sources for the Study of the School of Nisibis”. By Adam H. Becker. (Liverpool University Press - Translated Texts for Historians).

<sup>3</sup> <http://www.livius.org/ne-nn/nisibis/nisibis.html>

<sup>4</sup> <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nusaybin>

<sup>5</sup> Id.

<sup>6</sup> He is considered as the first King of Assyria in the neo-Assyrian period who reigned 911-891 BC. He conquered and deported to Assyria the Aramean people in cities such as Kadmuḥ and Nisibis. [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Adad-Nirari\\_II](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Adad-Nirari_II).

<sup>7</sup> <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nusaybin>.

<sup>8</sup> <http://www.livius.org/ne-nn/nisibis/nisibis.html>

<sup>9</sup> <http://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/nisibis-city-in-northern-mesopotamia>.

<sup>10</sup> [http://www.iranchamber.com/history/articles/persian\\_affinities\\_licchavis\\_review.php](http://www.iranchamber.com/history/articles/persian_affinities_licchavis_review.php)

<sup>11</sup> <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nusaybin>.

<sup>12</sup> Id.

<sup>13</sup> [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/School\\_of\\_Nisibis](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/School_of_Nisibis)

<sup>14</sup> Id.

<sup>15</sup> The Church of East.

<sup>16</sup> [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/School\\_of\\_Nisibis](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/School_of_Nisibis)

<sup>17</sup> <http://www.livius.org/ne-nn/nisibis/nisibis.html>

<sup>18</sup> <http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/11084c.htm>

<sup>19</sup> Efrem Yildiz, Ph.D., ““The Aramaic Language and Its Classification” Journal of the Assyrian Academic Society. V. XIV, No. 1, 2000.

<sup>20</sup> Id.

<sup>21</sup> <http://www.livius.org/ne-nn/nisibis/nisibis.html>

<sup>22</sup> Id.

<sup>23</sup> <http://www.livius.org/ne-nn/nisibis/nisibis.html>. Also see, “The Clash of Ideologies.” By David J. Jonsson. P.182.

<sup>24</sup> <http://www.livius.org/ne-nn/nisibis/nisibis.html>

<sup>25</sup> Dr. Parviz Azkaii. In Farsi, published in Mashhad/Iran. The Islamic Research Foundation, Astan Quds Razavi, 1996, 279 pages with no index, 2000 copies, only.

<sup>26</sup> George V. Yana (Bebila) “Christian Churches, Monasteries and Patriarchs in Assyria.” Journal of the Assyrian Academic Society. V. 21, No. 1, 2007. It is not clear from the article at page 47 whether it was Jean-Maurice, William Dalrymple, or Christoph Baumer used the words “the School of Persians at Nisibis (Church of the East.)”

<sup>27</sup> Dr. Parviz Azkaii. In Farsi, published in Mashhad/Iran. The Islamic Research Foundation, Astan Quds Razavi, 1996, 279 pages with no index, 2000 copies, only.

<sup>28</sup> “Fear of God and the Beginning of Wisdom: The School of Nisibis and Christian Scholastic Culture in Late Antique Mesopotamia.” By Adam H. Becker. P.90.

<sup>29</sup> <http://www.livius.org/ne-nn/nisibis/nisibis.html>

<sup>30</sup> These are just few of the names for our language: Assyrian, Modern Assyrian, Syriac, Aramaic, neo-Aramaic, Classical Syriac, modern Syriac, Vernacular Syriac, Eastern Syriac, Western Syriac, and etc.



# HOW TO SAVE A DYING LANGUAGE

Courtesy of Smithsonian Magazine

## **Professor Geoffrey Khan is racing to document Aramaic, the language of Jesus, before its native speakers vanish**

It was a sunny morning in May, and I was in a car with a linguist and a tax preparer trolling the suburbs of Chicago for native speakers of Aramaic, the 3,000-year-old

driven from their Middle Eastern homelands by persecution and war. The Windy City is a heady place for one of the world's foremost scholars of modern Aramaic, a man bent on documenting all of its dialects before the language—once the tongue of empires—follows its last speakers to the grave.

The tax preparer, Elias Bet-Shmuel, a thickset man with a shiny pate, was a local Assyrian who had offered to be



Professor Geoffrey Khan, left, conducts field research with Aramaic speaker Asher Hanna.

language of Jesus.

The linguist, Geoffrey Khan of the University of Cambridge, was nominally in town to give a speech at Northwestern University, in Evanston. But he had another agenda: Chicago's northern suburbs are home to tens of thousands of Assyrians, Aramaic-speaking Christians

our sherpa. When he burst into the lobby of Khan's hotel that morning, he announced the stops on our two-day trek in the confidential tone of a smuggler inventorying the contents of a shipment.

"I got Shaqlanaye, I have Bebednaye." He was listing immigrant families by the names of the northern Iraqi



villages whose dialects they spoke. Several of the families, it turned out, were Bet-shmuel's clients.

As Bet-Shmuel threaded his Infiniti sedan toward the nearby town of Niles, Illinois, Khan, a rangy 55-year-old, said he was on safari for speakers of "pure" dialects: Aramaic as preserved in villages, before speakers left for big, polyglot cities or, worse, new countries. This usually meant elderly folk who had lived the better part of their lives in mountain enclaves in Iraq, Syria, Iran or Turkey. "The less education the better," Khan said. "When people come together in towns, even in Chicago, the dialects get mixed. When people get married, the husband's and wife's dialects converge."

We turned onto a grid of neighborhood streets, and Bet-shmuel announced the day's first stop: a 70-year-old widow from Bebede who had come to Chicago just a decade earlier. "She is a housewife with an elementary education. No English."

Khan beamed. "I fall in love with these old ladies," he said.

Aramaic, a Semitic language related to Hebrew and Arabic, was the common tongue of the entire Middle East when the Middle East was the crossroads of the world. People used it for commerce and government across territory stretching from Egypt and the Holy Land to India and China. Parts of the Bible and the Jewish Talmud were written in it; the original "writing on the wall," presaging the fall of the Babylonians, was composed in it. As Jesus died on the cross, he cried in Aramaic, "*Elahi, Elahi, lema shabaqtani?*" ("My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?")

But Aramaic is down now to its last generation or two of speakers, most of them scattered over the past century from homelands where their language once flourished. In their new lands, few children and even fewer grandchildren learn it. (My father, a Jew born in Kurdish Iraq, is a native speaker and scholar of Aramaic; I grew up in Los Angeles and know just a few words.) This generational rupture marks a language's last days. For field linguists like Khan, recording native speakers—"informants," in the lingo—is both an act of cultural preservation and an investigation into how ancient languages shift and splinter

over time.

In a highly connected global age, languages are in die-off. Fifty to 90 percent of the roughly 7,000 languages spoken today are expected to go silent by century's end. We live under an oligarchy of English and Mandarin and Spanish, in which 94 percent of the world's population speaks 6 percent of its languages. Yet among threatened languages, Aramaic stands out. Arguably no other still-spoken language has fallen farther.

Its first speakers, the Arameans, were desert nomads. (The Bible describes the mythic forebear of the Hebrews as "a wandering Aramean.") Spreading out from ancient Syria, they so blanketed Mesopotamia that when the Assyrians conquered the Middle East in the eighth century B.C., they adopted Aramaic—not their own tongue, Akkadian—as a language of empire. So did the Babylonians when they vanquished the Assyrians, and the Persians when they toppled the Babylonians. The language crossed the lips of Christians, Jews, Mandeans, Manicheans, Muslims, Samaritans, Zoroastrians and pagans.

The writing on the wall (the proverbial sort) came for Aramaic in the seventh century A.D., when Muslim armies from Arabia conquered the Middle East, and Arabic routed Aramaic as the region's lingua franca. Aramaic survived only in the Kurdish mountains of Turkey, Iraq, Iran and Syria, places so remote they never got the memo. Jews and Christians there (though not Muslims, who spoke Kurdish) kept up Aramaic as an everyday tongue for another 1,300 years. In the seventh century A.D., when Muslim armies from Arabia conquered the Middle East, and Arabic routed Aramaic as the region's lingua franca. Aramaic survived only in the Kurdish mountains of Turkey, Iraq, Iran and Syria, places so remote they never got the memo. Jews and Christians there (though not Muslims, who spoke Kurdish) kept up Aramaic as an everyday tongue for another 1,300 years.

The number of Aramaic speakers alive today is difficult to calculate. Though some estimates set the figure as high as a half-million, that number is misleading. Because of its ancient lineage, lack of standardization and the isolation of speakers from one another, the modern tongue, known as Neo-Aramaic, has more than 100 dialects, most with no written analogue. Many dialects are already extinct, and

others are down to their last one or two speakers.

As an everyday language, linguists told me, Aramaic is safe now in only one place: the Christian village of Maaloula, in the hills outside Damascus, where, with Syrian state support, elders still teach it to children.

Like many Neo-Aramaic experts, Khan, whose accent bears traces of his working-class childhood in northeast England, stumbled on the field almost by accident. In his early years at Cambridge, he worked on a trove of ancient Jewish manuscripts—in Hebrew, Arabic and Aramaic—known as the Cairo Geniza. But the long hours squinting at microfilm were a downer. Eager for change after a dispiriting day in a Jerusalem microfiche lab in the early 1990s, he asked a local organization of Kurdish Jews for referrals to actual native speakers of Aramaic.

No sooner had Khan sat down with a Jew from Erbil, a northern Iraqi city whose Aramaic dialect was undescribed, than he felt he had found his calling. “It completely blew my mind,” he told me. “To discover a living language through the lips of a living person, it was just incredibly exhilarating.”

The traditional aim of fieldwork is to produce for undocumented languages what linguists sometimes call “the holy trinity”: a grammar, which is a road map to sounds, syntax and structure; texts, which are chunks of unedited speech that reveal a language’s texture; and a dictionary. Over the past two decades, Khan has published highly regarded grammars on the previously undocumented dialects of Barwar, Qaraqosh, Erbil, Sulemaniyya and Halabja, all areas in Iraq, and Urmi and Sanandaj, in Iran. He is also at work on a web-based database of text and audio recordings that allows word-by-word comparisons across dozens of Aramaic dialects.

Aramaic speakers tend to greet microphone-toting linguists with traditional Middle Eastern hospitality. The widow we visited in Niles, Agnes Nissan Esho, would not let us leave before serving an elaborate lunch of *kubba hamuth* (sour dumplings), *masta* (yogurt), chicken with rice, and *kadeh* (spiced-walnut pastry).

“I’m getting very excited about some vowels here,” Khan said as Esho carried in the steaming plates of food.

“And I’m getting excited about the kadeh,” Bet-Shmuel deadpanned.

The half-dozen Neo-Aramaic linguists I spoke with said informants often served feasts, confided family gossip and plied them with take-home boxes of fruit. But some are puzzled by the outside interest in their language, and others suspicious that their interlocutors are spies.

And bum steers abound. On our drive to one informant’s house, Khan told a story about his multiyear search for a Chicago man from Iraq’s Barwar region who had been described to him as a font of Assyrian folklore. “When we finally met, I said, ‘I heard you know lots of stories.’”

The man’s response: “I’ve forgotten them all.”



Aramaic is still spoken by immigrants in Chicago suburbs such as Skokie (home of Nemo Toma, pictured).

When we arrived at homes around Chicago, Khan, in dress shirt and blazer, explained his research, then drew from his backpack a digital voice recorder, a microphone and a sprawling loose-leaf questionnaire. Each session lasted two or three hours, as Khan worked, like an archaeologist with a soil sifter, to tease out nuances, among dialects, in pronunciation, vocabulary and grammar.

How would you say, “There they are”? he asked. How

about, “Here I am”? How about, “He wants to come”? And on it went: “You want to come. I want to come. Come!”

To make sure he heard words correctly, Khan

repeated them slowly. He held his mouth open an extra second to verify a vowel or ran a finger over his Adam’s apple to confirm a guttural.

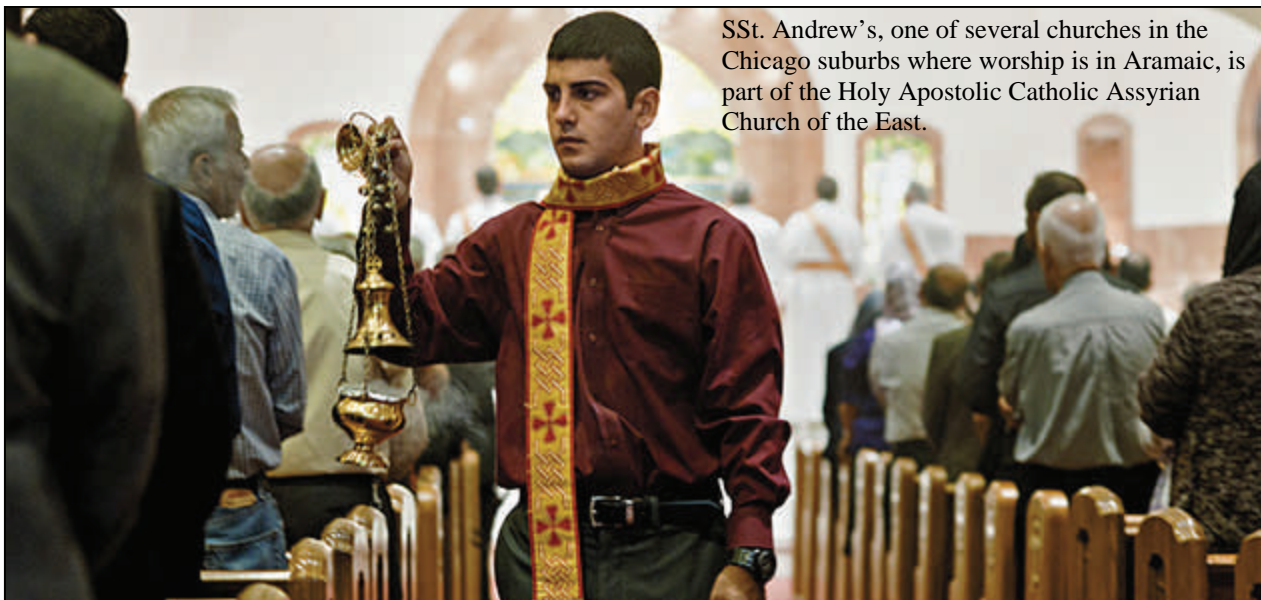
At a public housing tower, we spent more than an hour with a 97-year-old Assyrian from Turkey and his 90-year-old wife. When we stopped for coffee afterward, I asked Khan whether he’d found the meeting productive. “Some pronunciations of one of the consonants in the word for ‘hen’ are not according to what I predicted,” he said.

Advances in field linguistics, I saw, come in dribs and drabs, not eureka.

The work has its exhilarating days, though, and few moved Khan more than his 2008 trip to the former Soviet republic of Georgia. He was in the capital of Tbilisi in search of Aramaic speakers from Salamas, a city in north-western Iran. One wave of Assyrians fled Salamas after a Kurdish chieftain murdered a Church of the East patriarch there in 1918; another, after an earthquake a dozen years later.

In Tbilisi, people told Khan that all but three of the dialect’s “pure” speakers had died. At the first house, the man’s daughter apologized: Her father had recently suffered a stroke and was mute. At the second, an older woman lived with a quartet of energetic Rottweilers. “I took out my microphone and they just started howling and barking,” Khan recalled. “It was impossible.”

Finally, a local Assyrian escorted Khan one night into an imposing Soviet-era apartment block. At the top of a dark



SSt. Andrew’s, one of several churches in the Chicago suburbs where worship is in Aramaic, is part of the Holy Apostolic Catholic Assyrian Church of the East.

flight of stairs was a one-room apartment. A frail woman in her mid-90s answered the door.

Khan looked at her brittle physique and wondered how much she could handle. He told himself he would stay for just a few minutes. But when he got up to leave, the woman stretched a bony hand across the table and clasped his wrist.

“*Biqir, Biqir*,” she pleaded, in a small voice. (“Ask, ask.”)

“She literally grabbed onto me,” he said. “It was as if this was her last breath and she wanted to tell me everything.”

For two hours she hung on his wrist as his recorder filled with the sounds of a language in twilight.

## A Special Thank You!

In our last issue under “Thank You!” we inadvertently omitted two names that need to be mentioned for their support and dedication. Mr. Ashur Mansour for taking all the beautiful photos of the AFA appreciation event and Mr. Freidoun Gologhlan, who has been the AFA’s official videographer, photographer and member for many years and who never, says no to the AFA. Please accept our sincere apology for our oversight and thank you for your continuous hard work, support and dedication towards the AFA and Assyria.



# NEW FLAVORS FOR THE OLDEST RECIPES

Courtesy of Saudi Aramco World

Take a journey back in time more than 2700 years to a royal banquet in the palace at Nineveh, capital of the Assyrian Empire. As you arrive, the scent of lilies and roses fills the air. Musicians play harps and pipes, sing songs and recite poems. You snack on fresh pistachios and walnuts as you wait for the entrance of the king. The woman next to you stirs, and her red linen tunic crinkles slightly against her fine cotton shawl. Her gold earrings softly jingle as she moves.

With her, you discuss your admiration for King Ashurbanipal, a learned man and, as you see him, a benevolent ruler. He is a generous patron of artists, astronomers and mathematicians in his court. On military and diplomatic missions, he has directed that his envoys collect plants, seeds, animals or anything unusual from the foreign lands they pass through; when they return, their finds have been placed in palace gardens, zoos and rooms filled with curiosities.



*Yale Babylonian Collection*

He has rebuilt and restored temples and buildings weak-

ened by war or the simple ravages of time. But his greatest achievement by far is the systematic gathering and cataloging of knowledge. The library is a royal archive, but it also contains treatises on medicine, science and divination, collections of folktales—and even some favorite recipes.



Today, a few cuneiform tablets are the principal source of Mesopotamian recipes: the Yale Babylonian recipe tablets, which predate Ashurbanipal's imaginary banquet by a little more than 1000 years. Tablet YBC 4644 has 25 recipes and two others, YBC 8958 and YBC 4648, contain 10 more. In addition to these sources, scholars generally acknowledge that there are two earlier recipes, one from Mari, Syria for a confection known as mersu, and the other probably from Uruk, also in Syria, for what has been interpreted as "court bouillon."

These ancient recipes are a fascinating challenge for modern cooks—not only because they are a window into the food culture of ancient Mesopotamia, but also because they are actually little more than lists of ingredients, usually with scant information on the amounts of ingredients to use, their form, or even how to prepare the



dishes. Although difficult for some to navigate, the recipes allow for a great deal of creativity in using what is on hand or in reinterpreting dishes with favorite local and personal flavors. (In medieval Europe, recipes were typically written like this, and outside the industrialized world they still are.)



Werner Forman/Art Resource

*The 25 recipes inscribed in cuneiform on both sides of the tablet known as YBC 4644, top, were already 1000 years old when this bas-relief, lower, was carved to depict a banquet in the palace of Assyrian king Ashurbanipal.*



*YBC 4644, recipe 20, can be successfully interpreted as a stew made with lamb, licorice, vegetables and juniper.*

kingdoms on earth apparently had such dull food. Why, I wondered, when they had contact with civilizations all around western Asia, the Levant and North Africa, possibly even southern Asia, would they eat so many onions? Bottéro himself pronounced the food fit only for his worst enemies. My curiosity was piqued, and I started digging for answers.

Well-known sources, such as the Sumerian and Akkadian lexicon found on the Urra=Hubullu tablets, as well as Assyrian bas-relief wall panels, show a rich culinary culture. Fruits named or shown range from pomegranates and dates to apri-

The Yale recipes were first translated by French historian Jean Bottéro and published in 1995 in *Textes Culinaires Mésopotamiens*. (Another book by Bottéro, *The Oldest Cuisine in the World*, was published in French in 2002, in English in 2004 and as a paperback in 2011.) In Bottéro's view, the dishes that can be discerned from the tablets are rich in meat and onions—particularly onions, which he calls the characteristic ingredient of the cuisine. He translated the recipes of YBC 4644 into 25 broths or porridges: 21 were meat- or fowl-based, and four were vegetable-based. All featured onions, garlic and leeks.

When I first read *Textes Culinaires Mésopotamiens*, I remember being disappointed that one of the greatest



*This bas-relief of a harvest scene hints at the energy and deliberate care associated with food harvesting.*





*Lamb with carob is Recipe 19 on the YBC 4644 tablet.*

cots, apples and pears; vegetables include radishes, beets and lettuce. Sheep and goats were both milked and eaten for meat, while other meat came from cattle, bison and oxen as well as from wild game. Wild and domesticated fowl, fish and shellfish of many varieties were enjoyed, as were milk products ranging from butter and cheese to yogurt and sour cream.

## The writers of the Mesopotamian recipes omitted quantities from their lists of ingredients, assuming sufficient skill on the part of the cooks.



*A flute player from a stone bas-relief at the palace in Nineveh.*

These sources depict bountiful harvests at home; vibrant foreign trade and the flow of people in and out of the empire brought additional ingredients and culinary knowledge.

Although a pioneer in the interpretation of Mesopotamian cuisine, Bottéro did not claim certainty in many of his culinary translations, and some ingredients he left untranslated altogether. This makes reconstruction of actual recipes extraordinarily challenging.

For example, one of the untranslated ingredients used in almost every recipe is samidu. Bottéro assumed that it was in the allium family, which includes onions, garlic, chives and leeks. Looking to modern languages, however, I found that in Hebrew and Syrian, semida means “fine meal” and, in Greek, semidalis is used to denote “the finest flour.” According to the University of Chicago’s Assyrian Dictionary, semidu is also defined as semolina. One ingredient identified; many more to go.

Similarly, several of the recipes feature an ingredient



*Meat with licorice and citron is a recipe from Uruk, Syria, that dates to 400 BCE.*

called kasû, which was interpreted as dodder, a parasitic weed of the genus *Cuscuta*. Puzzled by the use of a bitter weed in these dishes, I found an alternate meaning in a paper by Near Eastern scholar Piotr Steinkeller, who argued that kasû was probably wild licorice (*Glycyrrhiza glabra*), and that it was used by the Mesopotamians both in cooking and in making beer.

Also, mersu was interpreted as a cake because of the similarity between that word and marâsu, which means “to mix,” and because mersu was described as comprised



of nuts and dates. Yet there is nothing to imply that mersu was a cake, let alone any instructions on how to make it.

Could mersu be something else? A look at modern western Asian and Levantine cuisines hints that mersu could easily have been a date-nut roll, or a beautiful date “candy,” as well. Both sweets are based on pounded dates and chopped nuts or other fruit or nut toppings.



*Mersu, first interpreted as “cake,” seems more likely to have been a type of date-and-nut ball.*

Or, adding only some type of flour, mersu could resemble the modern Iranian dessert ranginak, which consists of dates stuffed with pistachios enclosed in a thin crust of dough. Or it could be like the modern Lebanese ma‘moul, which has a pounded-date center covered in a layer of semolina that is then covered in a layer of chopped pistachios. Looking to non-European cuisines shows us the many possible, culturally plausible variations for mersu other than “cake.”

My current research, and kitchen experimentation by myself and others, is providing some revised interpretations of the Yale tablet recipes. In fact, I don’t think that any of the recipes on YBC 4644 represent either broths or porridges; rather, they are general guidelines for the flavors of dishes that range from stew-like koreshes, curries and soups to braised meats and dry pilafs. It all depends on the relative proportions of liquid and solid ingredients.

As noted earlier, amounts of ingredients are almost always absent from these recipes, so the exact dish prepared is left up to the cook—who is assumed to have

sufficient training to understand and use the recipes in this form.

For example, Recipe 19 on YBC 4644 is for halazzu, which is untranslated. I believe it to be a recipe for lamb or beef with carob: Halazzu was proposed as carob by several previous Assyriologists, and substituting “carob” for it in the recipe makes for a delicious stew or sauce.

Recipe 20, called “salted broth,” I interpret as mutton with wild licorice and juniper; Recipe 23, for kanasu—another term left untranslated—I think is lamb with grain and mint. Lastly, I have found a delicious grain and herb pilaf in Recipe 25 by using the alternative definition of laptu, which Bottéro translated as “turnip” without mentioning that “barley” is an equally accepted translation among scholars.

In addition to new interpretations for recipes, I also found a rich source for other recipes in translations of texts about foods prepared as offerings for gods. According to Vanderbilt University scholar Jack M. Sasson, the intimate connection between the Mesopotamians and their deities makes it reasonable to assume a connection between foods offered to the gods and those enjoyed on home tables—or at least those served to the elite, for the

elite also ate from the divine table, thus providing an added incentive to delight the palate.

For instance, Marcel Sigrist's translations of offerings at the Mesopotamian city of Nippur give several more ingredients for mersu, such as figs, raisins, minced apples, minced garlic, oil or butter, soft or hard cheese, and wine must or syrup. This widens the field of variation for the dish and allows cooks to mix and match combinations of ingredients. Also from the same paper is a recipe for a bread called ninda-gal that lists sumac, saffron and onion seeds as ingredients. In addition to being new sources for recipes, these offerings may also provide insight into some of the foods eaten by Mesopotamian people.

Assisted by a small group of chefs and cooks from three continents, I recently explored these and other Mesopotamian recipes. I cooked a lamb and carob stew, lamb chops with carob sauce, hen with herbs (from YBC 8958), barley and herb pilaf and several mersu variations. Others cooked lamb with grain and mint (substituting barley for couscous or wheatberries, the most likely forms of emmer grain used in the recipe), several variations of lamb with licorice and juniper, and pork tenderloin with licorice and citron.

So how did these reinterpreted dishes taste? In a word—delicious. The flavors are unusual and complex, but enjoyable, tasting as if they could have been created by a skilled modern chef. Far from being suited to an enemy, these dishes are best shared with a dear friend.

In addition to experiencing new flavors in these Mesopotamian dishes, cooking some of the oldest recipes in the world transports you far, far back in time and opens a window on a wider world. From it, you might glimpse Babylon, Nippur or the palace banquet at Nineveh.

## FROM NINEVEH TO YOUR KITCHEN

### Hen with Herbs (Yale Babylonian Collection 8958, Recipe 2)

Ingredients from the tablet: pigeon, salt, water, fat, vinegar, semolina, leek, garlic, shallots, tulip bulb, yogurt or sour cream, and “greens.” As with all Mesopotamian recipes, how these are put together, and in what quantities, is up to you. For this, I substitute Cornish game hen for pigeon.

*2 Cornish game hens, cleaned and salted inside and out*  
*4 c. water*  
*2 c. chicken stock*  
*1 c. pomegranate vinegar*  
*3 Tbs. butter*  
*¼ tsp. asafetida*  
*2 tsps. dried mint*  
*2 Tbs. coriander seed*  
*1 tsp. cumin seeds*  
*1 large Sri Lankan cinnamon stick*  
*1 handful baby arugula, chopped*  
*½ yellow onion*  
*1 leek, white and green parts, well cleaned*  
*10-11 garlic cloves, peeled*  
*½ c. lightly drained yogurt*  
*3 handfuls of fresh mint leaves*  
*1 handful of fresh sage*  
*Water to moisten herbs*  
*More pomegranate vinegar to rinse hens*  
*1-3 tsps. semolina to thicken sauce*



Clean and dry fowl and salt liberally, inside and out. Set aside. Prepare water, stock and vinegar in a large stockpot or kettle large enough to hold the hens. Add butter, asafetida, mint and arugula, and heat over a high flame, stirring occasionally. When the water has come to a boil,

add the hens and return to a boil. Reduce heat a bit and cook uncovered over medium heat for 5 minutes. Then reduce heat till liquid just bubbles. Cover and cook for 5 minutes.

In a food processor, pulse together the onion, leek, 6 to 7 cloves of garlic and lightly drained yogurt until it is a small dice or mince. Add it to the water and chickens, and continue to cook for another 5 to 10 minutes; do not over-cook. Total cooking time for hens in the pot is 15 to 20 minutes. When done, remove birds from the pot and set aside until cool enough to handle.

Preheat broiler to high. While cooling the hens, take the stock you used to cook the hens and pour it into a clean saucepan. If you are using a cup or two of stock to make couscous, barley or some other grain, do so now and pour off about one-third to one-half of the stock that remains. Heat to a steady low boil, stirring constantly, and cook uncovered to reduce, stirring occasionally.

Pulse the mint and sage (or other herbs you choose) with the remaining garlic in the food processor a few times until nicely minced and add a teaspoon or so of water to moisten them. Divide hens in two, down the spine, by slicing with a large, sharp knife or cleaver. Pour pomegranate vinegar over the hens, inside and out, to wash away herbs from cooking and set aside.

Rub both sides of the hens with the mint and sage herb mixture until an even coating is achieved and set aside. Continue to cook stock until it starts to thicken. Add semolina to facilitate this process; stir until dissolved. Place hens rib side down on a lightly sprayed baking sheet. Cook under the preheated broiler flame 4 to 5 minutes per side. Watch constantly and be careful not to burn the hens.

Turn baking sheet as necessary to ensure even cooking. When done, remove from heat and let rest 5 to 10 minutes while finishing the sauce.

If desired, strain the sauce. (I did not, preferring a more rustic presentation.) I served the dish in a shallow bowl, adding a layer of roasted barley and herb pilaf and sauce beneath the hen and a bit of sauce on the fowl.

## Roasted Barley and Herb Pilaf (Yale Babylonian Collection 4644, Recipe 25)

Ingredients from the tablet: water, fat, roasted barley, mix of chopped shallots, arugula, and coriander, semolina, blood, mashed leeks and garlic.

*1 c. whole barley, cleaned*  
*2 c. water*  
*1 c. prepared stock*  
*2 tsps. of butter*  
*1 tsp. salt*  
*¼ tsp. asafetida*  
*1 tsp. ground coriander*  
*3 shallots, peeled*  
*1 handful of baby arugula*  
*2 tsps. semolina*  
*2 tsps. blood (optional, if available)*  
*1 leek, white and green parts, well cleaned*  
*4-5 garlic cloves, peeled*

Preheat broiler to the highest setting. Spread the cleaned barley on a baking sheet to form a single layer of grain. Place barley under broiler flame and leave for a few minutes until it starts to smoke and color. Stir lightly and turn pan if necessary until most barley is tan in color. Be careful not to burn the grain. Properly roasted barley will taste nutty. When done, remove from flame and let cool.

Add water and prepared stock to a medium saucepan. You may season the stock any way you wish, or use the cooking stock from another recipe. (I used the stock from the hen recipe above.) Add butter, salt, asafetida and ground coriander, and continue to heat.

In a food processor, pulse shallots and arugula once or twice. Then add the semolina and blood, and pulse one or two more times. Add this mixture to the heating, water and stir. When just short of a boil, add the barley and stir well. Bring back to a boil. Then reduce heat, cover and cook over a medium-low flame until about three-quarters done—20 to 30 minutes.

As the barley is cooking, pulse leeks and garlic two to four times until minced but not mushy. Add this to the barley and stir once or twice—not too much or barley will be soggy. Partially re-cover saucepan and continue to cook, checking frequently. It should be done or nearly done within 10 minutes.



# Christians in Syria live under horrible conditions

Courtesy of AINA

## *Attacks around Hasaka-region*

A number of bishops from the al-Hasaka district in eastern Syria have put forward a plea for the survival of 25,000 Christians, including Syriac Orthodox, Syriac Catholics, Chaldeans and Armenians, in this city, within which a number of evacuees have sought refuge from neighboring areas, as reported by the Vatican's Fides news agency on Thursday.

According to the agency, the testimonies cited by the bishops indicate "a number of roadblocks" on the roads, set up by armed groups, especially militiamen from the al-Nasrah Front. Add to that, they said, gangs are deliberately conducting robberies, kidnappings and attacks even within the city.

The agency additionally quoted one of the priests from al-Hasaka saying, "That every day around 3pm a type of curfew is applied, since armed groups are roaming the streets."

He also stressed that, "kidnapping operations are being conducted, accompanied at times by requests for the payment of ransoms, and in recent days, two brothers from the Bishr family and two youths from the Afram family were murdered in the street, and Christian youths are being threatened and are intimidated by terrorist acts." On their part, several humanitarian organizations have announced that, "It is impossible to deliver aid to al-Hasaka, because it is very dangerous and also the minimum security requirements are unavailable."

## *Attacks in and around Aleppo*

A bomb exploded near a Syriac Orthodox Church in Aleppo at 6 PM on Friday, November 16, 2012. Scores of people were injured and many were killed, the exact number is not known. The bomb damaged the Al Kalima

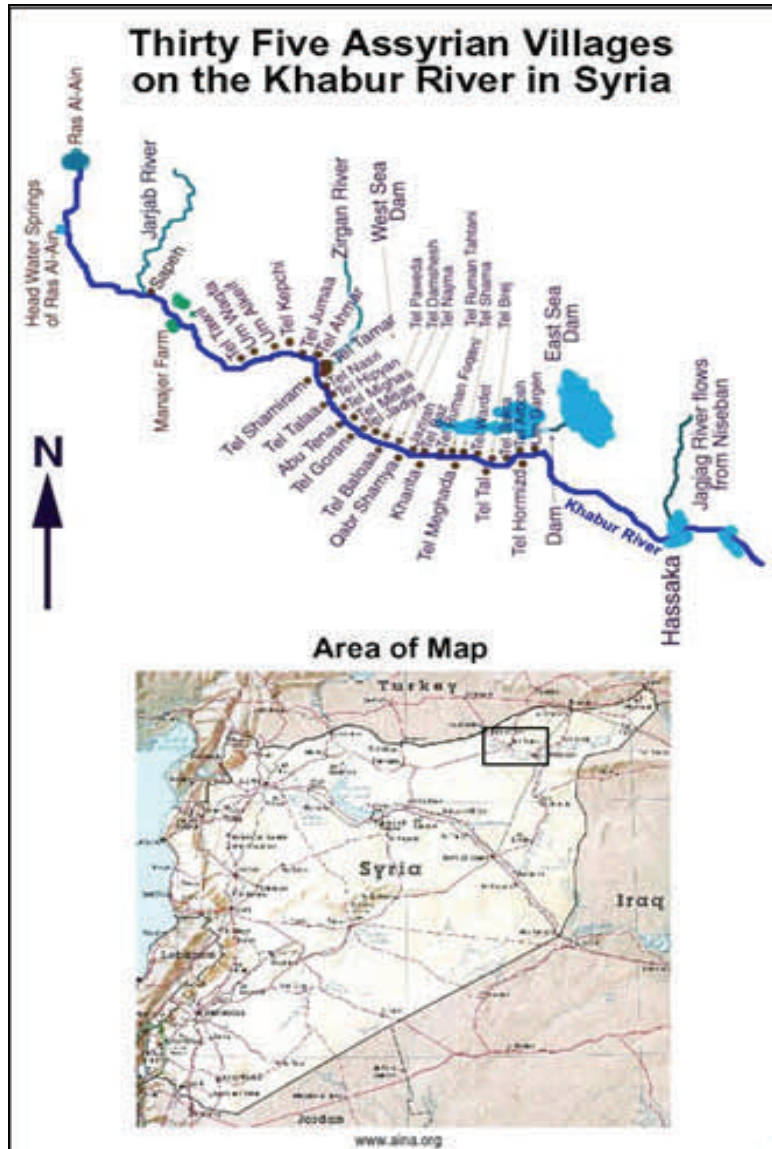


school and the Syrian

French Hospital, as well as a nursing home. This is the third attack in four weeks in the New Assyrian Quarter in Aleppo. The first occurred on October 21 (AINA 10-24-2012), the second on October 26 (AINA 10-26-2012).

## *Attacks on Assyrian village*

Four missiles struck the Assyrian village of Tel Nasri in Khabour, Syria. The church was destroyed and every house was damaged, according to the residents. A 14 year old child was killed and many were wounded. It is not known who launched the missiles, though it appears that they originated from government forces.





## ***Attack on Ezla bus***

A bus owned by the Ezla Bus Company, an Assyrian owned business, was attacked in January 2013 with gunfire near the Syrian capital of Damascus. Several persons were killed.



Nina Oshana

Qamishli is the largest city in the province of Hasakah. The bus was on route from Qamishli to Beirut when it was attacked on the Alnabuk Yabroud Road in Damascus.

Among the persons killed was an Assyrian woman in her early twenties, named Nina Jamil Oshana.

## ***International Report on Assyrian Refugees from Syria***

Nuri Kino, award winning Swedish-Assyrian author and investigative journalist, has met and interviewed nearly one hundred Christian Syrian refugees. In his personal report he gives voice to this otherwise silent minority. He is told harrowing tales of systematic rape and kidnappings. Many, perhaps most of the refugees interviewed express a desire to leave the Middle East for good and have contacted human smugglers. A multi-million enterprise has sprung up around the refugee crisis. Kino has also spoken to several of these smugglers and investigated the trade. His first-hand report includes an interview with a young man who reached Sweden after a hellish journey from Syria. "Jacob" was forced into a sealed container and almost died of suffocation. Only a few days after leaving the container he and some seventy other men were forced onto a ship, where only half of them survived the journey. Nuri Kino says this about his report:

We meet every day by news reports from Syria that

evokes strong emotions. But what do we really know about what is going on there? One element can get a sense of a TV channel and another in another TV channel. It is therefore important that the Syrians themselves, witnesses of atrocities, can be heard. I could write short articles but these are forgotten after just one day, that's why I decided to write a longer report. I waited for the right time and when a Syriac Orthodox youth organization would go to Beirut, it felt right to go with.

The war in Syria is growing increasingly worse every day, and it is affecting every Syrian citizen, regardless of ethnicity or religion. But the situation for minorities is even more horrifying. The Christian minority in Syria has no militia and is targeted by everyone. Christian Assyrians (also called Chaldeans and Syriacs) and others have become the number one target for criminals and terrorists. Between The Barbed Wire gives a voice to this people and is a must-read for anyone who is involved or interested in issues of migration and international politics.

The personal report compares the exodus of the Christians from Syria with that from Iraq after the fall of Saddam Hussein. The current similarities with the situation in Iraq are alarming. At the peak of the sectarian conflict in Iraq, Christians were killed, some beheaded in front of video cameras by extremists and driven from their homes and businesses, targeted by religious intolerance and the prospect of economic gain. Meanwhile more than half of the Iraqi Christians have been forced to leave the country.

This is now being repeated in Syria.

Even though Christians make up more than 10 percent of Syria's population, this amount is not reflected in the UNCHR registered refugees numbers who fled to Turkey, Jordan and Lebanon. The mostly ignored tragedy of the Christians in Iraq has convinced Christians of Syria that international authorities will not step up to protect them. While their plight is well known to the western media outlets they still are forgotten by international aid organizations. They are fleeing massively.

Nuri Kino's comprehensive 40-page report is available here: <http://minorityvoices.org>.

## ***Here are excerpts from the report written by Nuri Kino***

The name of the report is "Between the Barbed Wire"

The Archbishop of S:t Jacob of Sarugi in Mount Lebanon, says: 'I want to help as many as I can, but it is not sus-



tainable. We have hundreds of Syrian refugees who arrive every week. I don't know what to do...

'A rich man from Sweden sends St Jacob of Sarugi in Mount Lebanon money and asks the monastery's managers to distribute food stamps so no one has to go hungry. There are so many good people. We appreciate all the help we get.'

The family fled from Rasel-Eyn, a city that lost its Christian population more-or-less overnight. 'The so-called Free Syrian Army, or rebels, or whatever you choose to call them in the west, emptied the city of its Christians, and soon there won't be a single Christian in the whole country.' Elias father is very angry.

An old woman, a teenaged girl and a couple in their thirties enter the room, all dressed in black. It's the murdered man's family. There is disorder in the room when we offer

For a moment I lose my cool head. There's too much of a déjà vu. Everything seems to be a replay of interviews with Iraq's Christians. It has started again, I say to myself, and this is just the beginning. Her son and husband were killed right before her eyes.

One of the new arrivals around the table, a Syrian refugee, claims that smuggling to Europe at the beginning of the war cost 7,000 dollars but that the price is now 20,000 dollars. "Yes, but what's the alternative? There is no future for Christians in Syria, at least not in all parts of the country. The only thing we want is protection of our children. We want them to grow up safely, and that will never happen in Syria now, not anymore." One other man says he is going to an African country the next morning, from there the smuggler will bring him to Germany.

One, as Christians we have no protection, no military of our own, and as you have heard many times today we are very easy targets. Two, the war isn't just about politics. It's about the need for money and power. and now we have turned into a piece of trade for cynical smugglers. But I'd rather have that than like my nephew who was kidnapped and disappeared just a few weeks ago."

An immigrant family living in Lebanon., Christians from north Syria. We really want to see how the apartments look. There are four adults and four children there to start with. One of the men has a job. He works sixteen hours a day, six days a week for 650 dollars a month. The rent is 800 dollars. The apartment is 50 square meters. We ask them if they will leave for Europe. The man that works in Beirut says he has been offered a job in Sweden and he's hoping for his work permit to be arranged soon so that him and his family - wife and four children - can travel. The other man says that he and his sister, the other two of the four adults living there, are trying to find reliable smugglers. To go back to Syria is unthinkable, at least in the near future. There are three other adults living in the apartment but they don't want to join us.



The widow cannot hold her tears when she tells us about the brutal murder of her husband and son. She goes quiet, breathes, cries and continues her story.

them our chairs. They are all crying and interrupt each other all the time.

'My son and my husband were both viciously killed, shot in the head by terrorists, Islamists.' I ask her if they had a quarrel with anyone in their hometown Hassake. 'Our only crime is being Christians', she answers.

# Akitu Parade 2012 Dohuk, North Iraq

By Robert Leutheuser



gion, have intersecting histories and chapters of social alliances. It seemed only natural that I need to understand the Assyrians too, and so I embark on yet another path. And it was in 2007 when I first observed the Akitu parade in Dohuk. In spite of the light drizzle that day, the celebrations was large and elaborate with organized groups of children and teens, women in a wide variety of traditional dress, music and pure excitement all around.

Since it had been several years from my last visit to the region in March and April, in making my plans for this year I wanted to capitalize on the opportunity to attend the many celebrations in the region: three New Years and two Easters (Orthodox and Roman.) In addition to the Assyrian New Year, I celebrated Navroz in Diyarbakir, Turkey on March 18th, and then was at the Yezidian holy site, Lalish, for their New Year's Eve on April 17th.

I first visited the "greater Middle East" in 1997, and since 2001 have returned annually to get to better know the people of this part of the world, first primarily through my photography and gradually to be more multi-dimensional. As my experiences broadened and friendships deepened, I found myself following paths of inquiry that often end in unexpected places.

Through the years I have sought out the Christian minorities in Turkey, Armenia, and Syria, trying to understand their muted fate, this tangential to my enduring interest in the Kurds. In 2004 I became aware of the Yezidi Kurds in Armenia, which led me to visit Iraqi Kurdistan for the first time in 2007, and annually since. Both the Assyrians (and all Christians) and Yezidis, all being non-Muslim in a Muslim dominated re-

This year's Akitu festivities were not as large and elaborate as I remembered them in 2007 but still it was exciting to be part of it all. How could it not be? Watching the joy





on the Assyrian faces of all ages as they gathered in the street, the flags waving, the private conversations in the midst of it all – it was marvelous.



dominated, followed by the strikingly white Assyrian national flag with its bold radiating rivers of blue and white. Others flags competed for attention, but only succeeded in



Over the period of two hours, the assembling crowds of Assyrians - young and old and everything in between - slowly built to a symphonic crescendo in the Zerkā area of Dohuk, in Northern Iraq. Whether it was critical mass, or the appointed hour I don't know, but the shoulder-to-shoulder clutches of celebrants started to move en masse down the wide boulevard towards the sports stadium 5 kilometers away, the flags waving and faces beaming as far as the eye could see.

Flags waved under the hazy mid-morning sky, the Assyrian Democratic Movement's purple-and-white banner



adding accent to the sea of purple and white. The excitement only grew as the day continued, culminating in Dohuk's sport stadium where there was an infectious air of pride. It was clearly the day for the Assyrians in the region.

*It was April 1st, Akitu, the Assyrian New Year, the Assyrians' day to celebrate their ethnicity in a part of the world where such celebrations*

*are often fraught with apprehension.*

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# Brief Notes on Tkhuma Assyrians

By Solomon (Sawa) Solomon  
Lebanon, Tennessee

The Great/Upper Zab River flows from northern Hakkari to the south, dividing the Assyrian ancestral lands into two. It finally enters the present Iraqi border east of Barwari Bala. To the west of Zab lies the land of lower Tiari, and to the east of Zab lived Tkhuma and Diza, and still further east were the lands of Baz and Jeelu. Across the river from Tkhuma is still the Turkish administrative center of Julamirk and the patriarchal residence of Qochanis until 1915.

The tribe of Tkhuma was made up of the following five villages: Gissa,

BeArijal, Tkhuma Gawaya, Mezraa and Gondikta. All together, there were over five hundred families at the time of Badr Khan Beg's invasion in 1846, or about five thousand people.

In 1843, the Mira of Butan, a certain Badr Khan, invaded Hakkari, along with Noorallah Beg of Hakkari, and destroyed the country of Tiari and Dizen. Three years later the same Kurds, at the head of a large army,

invaded Tkhuma and destroyed its tribal land, killing no less than seven hundred men.

The period from 1846-1915 was a time of recovery from the Kurdish invasion. Badr Khan had destroyed all the fruit trees, so the Tkhuma had to grow new ones.

Also, they had to rebuild their livestock herds that had been decimated by the Kurds. They had recovered just in time for the start of the Great War.

When the war came to Tkhuma in 1915, a certain Giwargis D'Malik Babu was the Malik. He was the cousin of Malik Lawco. The Malik was wounded in battle and died on September 3,

1915. A certain Oshana was given temporary leadership of Tkhuma until 1918. Here, I would like to mention that the Maliks of Tkhuma were chosen by general consensus and it was not strictly hereditary.

During the war years, Malik Lawco participated in all the military campaigns against the Turks, Kurds and Persians. His father, Shlemon, was killed at the start of the war.



Greater Zab River

Once in Baquba, the British named him a supervisor of the Tkhuma camp. The ranks of the tribe had been decimated during the war years, but especially those of Mazirnai after the great massacre of Khoi, north of Urmia,



Malik Lawco of Tkhuma

where Simco and an army of Persians killed over two thousand seven hundred men, women and children.

The British took a census of Assyrian tribesmen in the Baquba refugee camp and they estimated the Tkhuma to number no more than one thousand two hundred individuals.

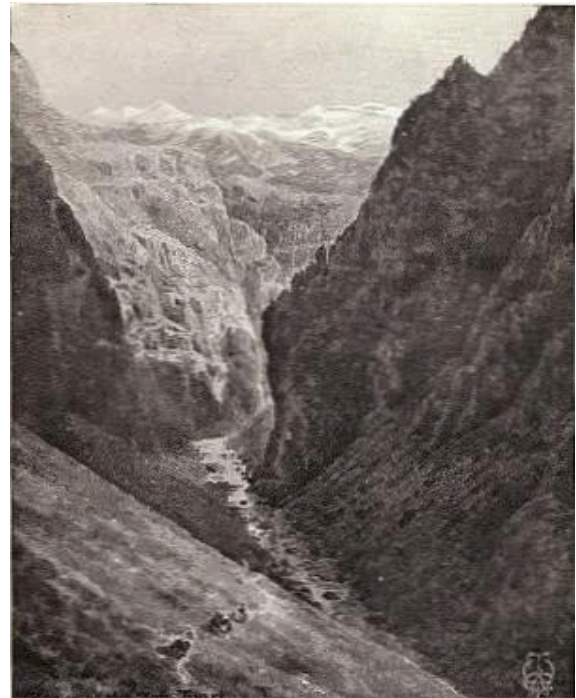
After Baquba, the Assyrian refugees moved to the Mandan temporary camp in 1920, and then the mountain tribes were parceled out to the many villages in northern Mesopotamia. The Tkhuma took up residence in the two villages of Pirozan and Baraiker in Barwar; others in the four villages of Hamzan, Segrina, Barbanki, and Dohik in Amadia. Still others moved into the four villages of Bosirian, Dosteka, Tel Khishaf, and Salah in Dohuk. Finally, others settled near Aqra.

Following the military clashes between the Assyrian tribesmen and the army of Bakr Sidqi in August 1933, wholesale massacres were conducted against civilian Assyrians for a number of days. Here, thousands of Tiari and Tkhuma tribesmen, accompanied by other Assyrians, left Iraq to settle on the banks of the Khabur river in French-mandated Syria, eventually establishing thirty-five villages there.

The Tkhuma tribe, now under the de-facto malik,

Malik Lawco Badawi, were settled in the following eleven villages in the southern part of the Khabur settlement: Tal Shameh (Gundikta Layta), Tal Wardiyat (Mazirnai Khtaya), Tal Sakra (Gundikta Khtayta), Tal Barbeeche, Tal Arboosh (Arbooshnai), Umm Ghargan (Tkhuma Gawai), Tal Kharita (Gissa), Tal Makhatha (Birijnai), Tal Taal (Talnai), and Tal Hermiz (Tkhuma Gawai).

As we have seen, the Tkhuma tribe was devastated no less than four times: in the Badr Khan Beg's invasion of 1846; during the Great War of 1915; in Khoi, Iran, in 1918; and finally in the massacre of 1933. However, the Assyrians of Khabur escaped massacre at the hands of Arab tribes in 1941, when French colonial forces vacated the area, while retreating under the weight of British attacks. Here, the French governor ordered that trucks, loaded with rifles and ammunition, be delivered to all the Assyrians of Khabur, and this saved the settlements from a certain destruction.



**THE RIVER OF EDEN** (The Zab entering the Tyari Gorges)

The view downstream from the mouth of the Ori valley, a little above Tal. The distant snow peak is Qara Dagh on the southern side of Tkhuma.

# DONATIONS

Your donations are not only crucial but vital for generating continual support to helping the many Assyrians in need suffering worldwide, support and promote education for Assyrians and preserve the Assyrian history. The Assyrian Foundation of America is dedicated to helping Assyrians and every cent you send goes directly for the cause that you designate. Please continue with your help our people living in diaspora need you more today than ever before.

## CORPORATE MATCHING GIFTS

Over 450 US Companies and Foundations match employee gifts to Non-Profit Organizations.

Maximize the impact of your support – Make your matching gift Today!

If your company is one of them, you could be doubling or even tripling your contribution to the Assyrian Foundation of America – all at no cost to you! Contact your human resources department for details. In most cases, all you have to do is complete a matching gift form and send it to Assyrian Foundation and we'll take care of the rest. If you own a company please consider AFA as a recipient of your company's "Matching Gift Program." The AFA extends its deepest appreciation to the following organizations that have made contributions through their matching gifts program.

AT&T Employee Giving Campaign, \$285.00 (*via Nathan Elias*)  
Levi Strauss Foundation; \$9,200.00 (*via Jing-Hui B. Hsiao, Valerie J Lopez, Dina K. Papp and Jackline*

*Yelda)*

Macys Foundation, \$5,000.00 (*via Nanajan Yelda*)

## GENERAL DONATIONS

Your donations are vital for generating continual support to help Assyrians in need and support education for Assyrians. AFA expresses its sincere appreciation to the donors who have made generous donations and would like to remind you that every cent you send to AFA goes directly for the cause that you designate

Lucy Abraham, \$15.00

Reya Ali-Hemati, \$30.00

Randy & Alvina Antar, \$165.00

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Henry Chamaki, \$25.00

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David Sinaiko & Anne Elias, \$100.00

Pauls & Juliet Gewargis, \$50.00 (*In memory of Lucy Baba Khoshib -10 years memorial anniversary on 2/23/13*)

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Fred Shalita, \$200.00 Bailis & Sylvia Shamun, \$100.00

Norma Solomon, \$100.00 (*In memory of beloved*



*sister Ellen)*

Belles & Linda Yelda, \$50.00 (*In Memory of Ellen Solomon*)

Jackie Yelda, \$100.00 (*In memory of Fred Hermes*)

Jackie Yelda, \$100.00 (*In memory of Beka Hanina , Remouz Malikzadeh's mother*)

Jouzafin Younan, \$10.00

## **EDUCATION**

Your gift is crucial in providing support for Assyrian Foundation to achieve its goal to provide significant scholarships to bright young Assyrian students who are working toward advanced degrees in Assyriology and related Assyrian studies. AFA gratefully acknowledges your generosity and foresight to the importance of building a strong Assyrian academic foundation that will keep the flame of Assyrian history and identity burning bright for generations to come.

Ferdinand & Barbara Badal, \$50.00

Jane Badal, \$100.00 (*In memory of Alfred E. Badal (1931-2000)*)

Alexander and Violet Badali, \$1,000.00

Dr. Vallo Benjamin, \$500.00

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Dr. Eden Naby Frye, \$1,000.00 (*for Cambridge Assyrian Conference*)

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Maryam Pirayou, \$150.00 (*In memory of Nikolia & Youlia Pirayou*)

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Fred Shalita, \$75.00

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## **NEEDY**

Your extraordinary generosity is the primary source of Assyrian Foundation's financial assistance to needy Assyrian families throughout the world. AFA is honored to recognize your generosity and is extremely grateful for all your donations that enable AFA to continue with its dedication to help Assyrians.

Assyrian American Civic Club of Turlock, \$100.00  
Seyfo Center USA , \$200.00 (*for Needy Assyrians in Syria or Jordan*)

Danees Abdypoor, \$100.00 (*for the Needy Assyrians in the Matta Bikhtmy*)

Aprim K Abraham, \$40.00

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Jackie Alexander, \$100.00 (*in recognition of: Rachel Alexander*)

Roya Alihemati, \$20.00

San Antonio & Marlene Andrious, \$100.00 (*for Needy Assyrians in Syria, Armenia & Iraq (via ACRF of U/K: Secretary Andrious Mama Jotyar MBE)*)

Fredrick & Elfriede Ashouri, \$150.00 Assyrian Charity & Relief Fund of UK, \$200.00 (*for Needy Assyrians in Syria, Armenia & Iraq (via ACRF of U/K: Secretary Andrious Mama Jotyar MBE)*)

Assyrians for Education, \$900.00 (*for the Needy Assyrians in the Matta Bikhtmy*)

Samuel & Jenny Ayoubkhani, \$100.00

Ferdinand & Barbara Badal, \$150.00	Nathan & Helen Nasser, \$60.00
Beneta Baitoo, \$500.00 <i>in memory of my beloved dad, William Baitoo</i>	George & Regina Nissan, \$80.00
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Juliet & Andrew Bet Shlimon, \$100.00	Maryam Pirayou, \$150.00 <i>(In memory of Nikolia &amp; Youlia Pirayou)</i>
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Youmaran & Stella Karamian, \$100.00 <i>(for Needy Assyrians in Syria)</i>	George Yana, \$50.00
Aram Moshi Khoshaba (Assruian Evangelist), \$100.00 <i>(for Needy Assyrians in Syria, Armenia &amp; Iraq (via ACRF of U/K: Secretary Andrious Mama Jotyar MBE))</i>	Belles Yelda, \$50.00
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Elizabeth Koshaba, \$25.00	Lawrence Youhanaian, \$90.00
Lily Langley, \$100.00	Almas Youkhana, \$150.00
Pari Lazar, \$100.00 <i>(for the Needy Assyrians in the Matta Bikhtmy)</i>	Janet Younani, \$100.00 <i>(for the Needy Assyrians in the Matta Bikhtmy)</i>
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William & Marianne Miner, \$500.00	
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## **NINEVEH MAGAZINE**

Nineveh Magazine is the global voice of not only the Assyrian Foundation of America but Assyrians worldwide. The magazine is distributed to thousands of readers around the world, including major universities (i.e., Harvard, UC Berkeley, UCLA, etc). Nineveh Magazine extends its deepest appreciation to

all the individual contributors who helped fund publication of Nineveh. Without your support Nineveh could not continue to spread your voice. Please consider sponsoring the publication of the next issue Nineveh Magazine. For more information visit our website at [www.assyrianfoundation.org](http://www.assyrianfoundation.org) or email us at [editor@assyrianfoundation.org](mailto:editor@assyrianfoundation.org)

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Toma & Joann Yousif, \$20.00

*Please note that we have made every effort to ensure that our lists of supports are up-to-date. It is possible that a name may have been misspelled or omitted. If so, please accept our sincere apology and kindly notify us at [editor@assyrianfoundation.org](mailto:editor@assyrianfoundation.org), so that we may make the appropriate change to our records. Thank you.*

POA  
Thank You



# CORPORATE MATCHING GIFTS

*Increase your support with corporate matching gifts.*

Thousands of companies nationwide, representing more than 15 million employees, offer employee matching gift programs. The Matching Gift Program is a way for companies and corporations to acknowledge and support the donations and/or volunteer time made by their employees to eligible 501(c) non-profit organizations like the Assyrian Foundation of America. Through this program, companies “match” the employee contributions which often double and sometimes triple the donated gift to the organization. The matching gift process is easy, but the impact is significant. Even if you have already made your annual gift, a match is still possible!

## **Here's how to get started:**

Check with your company's Human Resources office to see if they offer a matching gift program. (If they don't, you may want to ask your company to start one.)

The participating employer's Human Resources department will provide you with matching gift program guidelines and a matching gift form.

Complete the form and send to the non-profit organization of your choice for verification of your contribution.

If you are eligible for an employer matching gift, we hope that you will request an application from your human resources office and make your donation to the Assyrian Foundation of America. Your company's matching contribution will significantly help the AFA, especially in these challenging economic times to continue its commitment to helping needy Assyrians around the world, support bright young Assyrian students who are working toward advanced degrees in Assyriology and related Assyrian studies and preserve and promote the Assyrian language and culture.

For donations made to the AFA, please complete and send the gift matching form either by email to [Treasurer@assyrianfoundation.org](mailto:Treasurer@assyrianfoundation.org) or mail to the Treasurer of Assyrian Foundation of America, P.O. Box 2660, Berkeley, CA 94702.

Please contact us at [info@assyrianfoundation.org](mailto:info@assyrianfoundation.org) with any questions.

Sincerely,  
Assyrian Foundation of America

## ORGANIC LEMONADE MADE FRESH, \$1.00 PER CUP 100% OF THE PRO- CEEDS DONATED FOR NEEDY ASSYRIANS

By Donatella Yelda



On July 29, 2012 at the AFA annual picnic, while most everyone were busy enjoying themselves, playing backgammon or volleyball, dancing, or just sitting around chatting and enjoying a cup of tea, 10 year old Lily Daniel, Olga Shabbas' daughter and long standing members of the AFA, Danial and Fatheala Shabbas' Granddaughter, was busy raising money for Needy Assyrians.

One summer day, while visiting her uncle Sargon and Jermaine, Lily saw all the beautiful lemons on the tree in her uncle's backyard and immediately saw an opportunity and thought to herself “hmmm.... I can use those lemons” without explaining her reasons, Lily asked her uncle for some lemons from the tree, and with a little help she managed to get herself a juice jar and small ice box. Lily squeezed the juice out of all the lemons, made her delicious secret recipe Lemonade, drew a poster and was ready for business. On picnic day, Lily set up her Lemon-



ade Stand on a small corner of a picnic table, put up her sign and started selling her refreshing “Organic Lemonade.” Within just a couple of hours all the lemonade was gone and Lily had made \$55. Lily donated 100% of her proceeds to the AFA for Needy Assyrians.

Thank you Lily for your love of the Assyrian Nation, your initiation, dedication and generosity. You have taught us that “I am only one, but I am one. I cannot do everything, but I can do something. And I will not let what I cannot do interfere with what I can do.” ~Edward Everett Hale

# Appeal

Dear friends of Assyrian Foundation of America:

Thank you for helping the Assyrian Foundation of America (AFA) make a difference in the lives of our people in 2012. We need your help again to make an even bigger difference in 2013. As we look ahead to the New Year, with the current state of world economy and the crisis in the Middle East escalating, we expect an increasing need to help our Assyrian brothers and sisters. Thousands of internally displaced refugees and those stranded in other countries are living under very difficult conditions. Many are not welcome and receive no assistance from the local government or the international community. Especially for those living in the epicenter of turmoil or who have fled for their safety, these Assyrians are now living as refugees in dire conditions. Please take another moment to make your generous, fully tax-deductible donation to the AFA. **REMEMBER YOU ARE THE LIGHT IN THE DARKNESS FOR ASSYRIA!**

AFA's commitment to help the needy is unwavering. Every day since its inception, the AFA has been determined to help where our people's needs have been the greatest. Early on in 2012, we received an appeal for aid from the Assyrian organization in Greece, who was faced with providing relief to 800 to 1000 Assyrian families. These families have taken refuge there and are in desperate need of basic necessities. To tell you how fast this crisis grew, by the time our funds reached Greece, over 350 additional Assyrian families from Syria had taken refuge in Greece. The AFA also stepped in with support when in July 2012, flash floods caused by torrential rain destroyed the southern Krasnodar territory in Russia, a region where large concentrations of Assyrians live. These Assyrians lost everything in the flood. Thanks to you, we were able to immediately respond to that emergency. The AFA also sent financial assistance to the Assyrians in Baktmy, Iraq.

Education is central to our mandate to preserve, promote and propagate Assyrian history, culture and heritage. Thus we stand behind our commitment by offering scholarship to students who are engaged in graduate level studies in fields where we are under-represented such as Assyriology (Assyrian studies of all periods and fields), International Relations/Law, Political Science, etc. This year we provided scholarship to six dynamic

Assyrian students who are committed to work for our community both locally and as our representatives abroad, in academia as well as other arenas. For example Michael Youash is director of Iraq Sustainable Democracy Project (ISDP) and a PhD candidate in Political Science (Comparative Politics and Development Politics); Soner Onder is working on his PhD degree focusing on Turkish Foreign policy discourses towards the Middle East; Shamiran Mako is working on her PhD degree in Politics and International Relations; Shana Zaia is a PhD candidate in Assyriology; Zack Cherry is working on his PhD degree in Assyriology; Sabri Atman is working on the Assyrian Genocide in the Ottoman Empire during 1915, in fellowship at the Strassler Center for Holocaust and Genocide Studies at Clark University.

AFA is also proud to support MARA (Modern Assyrian Research Archive) a foundation created to ensure the preservation of the Assyrian language and culture and to promote and facilitate academic research by electronically archiving all published material and recordings, including audio records of oral culture such as folktales, poetry and songs in the various Assyrian dialects.

The goal of this Swedish based non-profit organization is to create the world's largest digital and physical archive focusing on Assyrians in modern times.

Despite the bad economy, in 2012 alone over \$13,500 was sent in direct aid to needy Assyrians around the world, over \$21,000 was provided for scholarships and \$10,000 (raised specifically and separately through corporate funding) for a gift to the Joseph Strauss Legacy Circle. Through this gift the Assyrian Foundation of America's name will be placed on a plaque in both English and Assyrian at the base of the Strauss statue at the iconic Golden Gate Bridge plaza, where millions of people visit each year, a lasting recognition that will promote and preserve the Assyrian name.

Amazing isn't it? How a small organization like AFA can provide so much help? It is because you care about those lives. It is because you know that but for a few fateful events, it could have been any one of us living under those conditions. It is because you care about Assyria and know that education is the first step to protecting and promoting our history and culture **AND because you know that every cent you send to the AFA goes directly toward the cause you designate.**

Thank you for caring, now and always.  
Assyrian Foundation of America



# Dina Matti Yousif: First Assyrian woman London marathon runner

By: Robert Ewan, London



London marathon is one of the top five international marathons in the world which is run over a distance of 26.2 miles. The marathon is also a large, celebratory sporting event and holds the Guinness world record as the largest annual fund raising event in the world. The 32nd London marathon took place on 22 April 2012 and it featured Kenyan world record holder Patrick Makau and women's world champion Edna Kiplagat. This year 35,000 people of all shapes and sizes hauled themselves through the streets of London, each with their own ambition but many aimed to finish the race with their limbs still attached to their torsos.



While marathon running is a sport historically dominated by men, today the number of female marathon runners continues to grow exponentially. For some the challenge is almost unimaginably greater – and completing the marathon will mark a far greater achievement than simply the pride of picking up a medal.

Amidst this flow of human traffic, Dina Yousif from the University town of Loughborough, 110 miles north of London, made Assyrians proud as she became the first Assyrian woman to compete and finish the grueling London marathon.

Born in Kirkuk, northern Iraq, Dina settled in United Kingdom in 1990. She is a devoted wife and mother with two children and an architect by profession.

Over the last three years she ran several races all dedicated to the memory of her late mum, who imbued Dina with a source of inspiration, until she was finally ready to unleash her energy to run the big one. So how did she do it? Dina recalled; *“for 13 weeks prior to marathon day I adhered rigidly to the Virgin London Marathon training programme. I was very disciplined in getting up at 6am every day to run between 45 minutes to 2 hours and to be at the office by 9am. During the week-ends I usually ran between 13 to 20 miles, I practiced yoga for 20 minutes following the run every day. This helped me*

*tremendously in keeping my muscles stretched”.*

This strict routine helped Dina to avoid injuries during her training and run. Often such long distant runs involves discomfort or even pain, a sense of alienation from our normal comfort zone and daily routines, The marathon is so isolated in its training yet it is designed to prepare the runner for an ultimate test of stamina and endurance.

Dina ardently embraced the mission of completing the marathon and was determined that nothing would invert her busy life schedule. She had an incessant support from her husband Waad. He was by her side during her training and on the day of marathon. When the big day arrived with incredible determination Dina's spirit and truculence were ready.

About her run Dina said: *“After settling into my pace, the run was great, my body huffed, puffed and kept running, the distant appeared interminable, fatigue and exertion was my biggest enemy. The amount of carbohydrates I took boosted my energy levels and eased the onerous run. As the finishing line looked closed I was suffused with fission of excitement.”*

Dina completed her race triumphantly in 6 hours and 40 minutes. She recalled: *“There are a lot of things to keep in mind during the run and you must have a great deal of control over how positive your race will be. Running a marathon is an experience that's difficult to put into words”.*

Glancing back incredulously she reminisced: *“despite my determination and belief that I can complete this gargantuan task, sometimes I still wander how I did it, the conviviality of it all still lives in my imagination”.*

Her next ambition is to run the Sydney marathon, and who said female runners can't handle the strain.





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# CONGRATULATIONS !

## 45th Wedding Anniversary

By Anthony Shabbas



Fatheala and Danny Shabbas (cousin of Julius N. Shabbas, co-founder of Nineveh magazine) were married on February 2, 1968 in Baghdad Iraq, the same day as my mother Fatheala's birthday. They then had their first daughter Olga while living in Baghdad. Soon after they then came to the United States of America on once again February 2, 1971 another big event on my mother's birthday. While living in the El Cerrito they had my other sister Tania and myself. They soon received their citizenship papers on what date? February 2nd again, so with this being said February 2nd is a day of celebration for the Shabbas family and my sisters and I are truly blessed to have parents like we do. They have always done their best to provide for us and make sure we had everything we needed. Our love is so strong for them words cannot describe. So from Olga, Tania and I, we love you and thank you both for loving each other and showing us what real love and sacrifice is.



*The Assyrian Foundation of America Congratulates Fatheala and Danny Shabbas on their 45<sup>th</sup> Wedding Anniversary and wishes them many more happy years together with their family!*





# CONGRATULATIONS !

## Turlock native speaks at Berkeley graduation

Courtesy of Turlock Journal

While a sense of pride and accomplishment were felt throughout the assembly of graduates at UC Berkeley, the bonds of the Davoodian family were particularly meaningful during the Dec. 16 commencement ceremony. Bianca Davoodian, an alumna of Turlock Christian High, was honored by her peers and professors as the commencement student speaker.

Over 4,500 had the opportunity to hear Davoodian's words of inspiration, the thanks she offered to her family, especially her brother Andrew Davoodian, and the influence he made in her life.

"I would jump if he jumped, cry if he cried, and do whatever he liked to do," said Bianca during her speech. "From collecting football cards to playing basketball and video games, I was like his shadow. I even managed to follow his way into UC Berkeley."



Turlock Christian High alumna Bianca Davoodian speaks at the December 16 UC Berkeley commencement ceremony.

To say that Bianca Davoodian is impressive might be putting it a bit lightly. She graduated with honors in

Psychology and was recently accepted to work in a social psychology lab at Harvard University under Dr. Ellen Langer, a top researcher in the work of mindfulness.

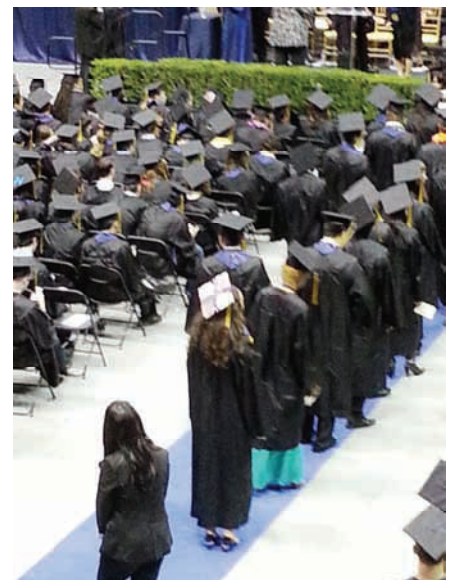
"I truly feel blessed, it's kind of surreal," said Davoodian. "Being a first generation college student I have come to learn and have a strong belief that higher education is so important in the lives of young people. None of this could be attainable without a strong support system. I have my family to thank for that. I would not be here today if it wasn't for their encouragement and constant support. They are my pillars."

Bianca will continue her education with the hopes of obtaining a doctorate in social psychology.

"I want to do it all," she said. "I want to do research, teach on a university level and also open my own practice someday. I'll follow my education wherever it leads me, but close enough to where my family is." For now, Bianca is looking forward to the next chapter of her life. She hopes to inspire others in pursuing their education.

"I hope that I can inspire young people of Turlock to live their dreams and empower them to believe in themselves," she said.

"I hope to continue forward with my education so I can have a bigger voice of influence and inspiration to the youngsters in the future."

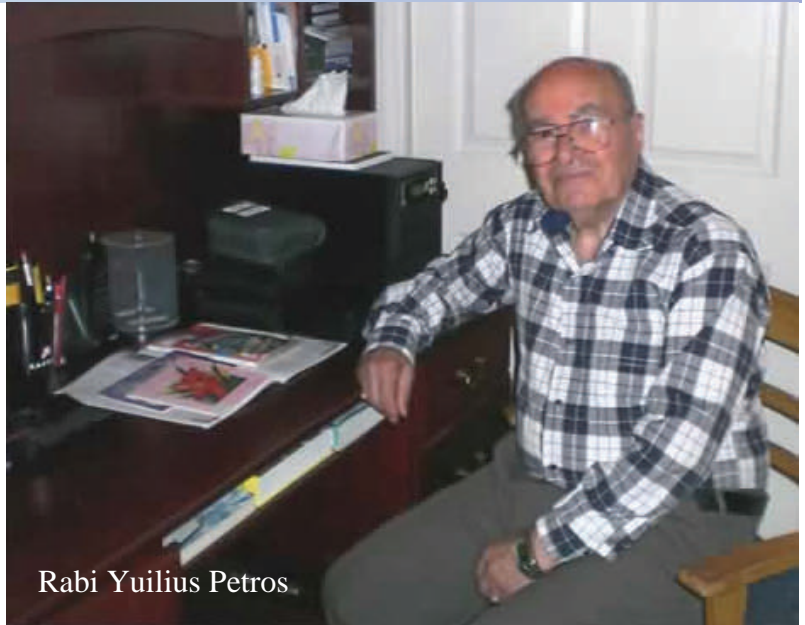


# New Book

## Rabi Yulius Petros Golpasheen's New DVD (Learn and Teach)

Rabi Yulius Petros Golpasheen's has a set of 28 DVD's where he teaches the Assyrian language starting with the first book of Baba Lachin and going through books 1 to 3 of Rabi Kouroush Benyamin. He also covers the grammar book of Rabi Nimrod Simono and Rabi Kouroush Benyamin. The lessons are extremely easy to follow and are taught at the beginners and basic levels.

Those who are interested in learning this precious language, but cannot find time to attend classes, will find these DVDs extremely useful because they can watch them when it is convenient for them in the comfort and privacy of their homes. They can repeat the same lessons over



Rabi Yuilius Petros

These DVDs may be obtained directly from Rabi



and over again until they have fully learned and understood them. They can also invite friends and relatives to join them in learning if they prefer to discuss the lessons with fellow students.

Yulius by calling the following number: 1-209-632-8801.



# New Book Fills in Gaps in Assyrian Story

A new book in CRS's publication series: "Studies in Religion and Society" shows the first complete picture of the Assyrian identity. The book addresses different eras and issues that have not previously been highlighted: -- There has been a void in the Assyrian people's story which my co-authors and I wanted to fill, says Önvér Cetrez, Senior Lecturer in Psychology of Religion at Uppsala University.

The book "The Assyrian Heritage: Threads of Continuity and Influence" consists of 13 chapters in total which have been written by researchers from educational institutions in the UK, USA, Austria and Spain amongst others, is being published by the publishing house Acta Universitatis Upsaliensis. Önvér Cetrez is the editor of the book together with Sargon Donabed, Assistant Professor of History at Roger Williams University of Bristol, Rhode Island and Aryo Makko, Post-Doctoral Researcher and Adjunct Lecturer at the Department of History, Stockholm University. Önvér Cetrez has led several research projects on Assyrians and other immigrant populations in Sweden and is a member of the Impact Programme at the Religion and Society Research Centre (CRS).

-- **The idea of publishing** such a book came after various meetings with Assyrian young people where I lectured on identity issues and after conversations with fellow researchers. It was clear that there was a lot of interest in finding out more about the Assyrian identity, says Önvér Cetrez.

A complete work which highlights the Assyrian identity both during the historical so called pre-Christian period and during the post-Christian period has previously been lacking according to Önvér Cetrez. Many people know the Assyrian people's history as it was before Christ in Mesopotamia, Anatolia (the central uplands of Minor Asia, Turkey) and Persia; fewer people know what happened to the Assyrian people after the dissolution of the Assyrian Empire:

-- There have been gaps in the Assyrian people's story and an important goal has therefore been to fill in these

gaps", says Önvér Cetrez.

**The book covers** religious and cultural Assyrian issues that have been important to the creation of identity for the Assyrian people. A chapter on the Neo-Assyrian Empire during the Assyrian Empire's glory days describes how the national and ethnical identity evolved until the period after the fall of the empire. Other parts of the book highlights the Assyrian identity before the nation

state and facts surrounding the Assyrian people's language, symbols and religious faith until the post-Christian era. It also describes periods that have previously not been highlighted:

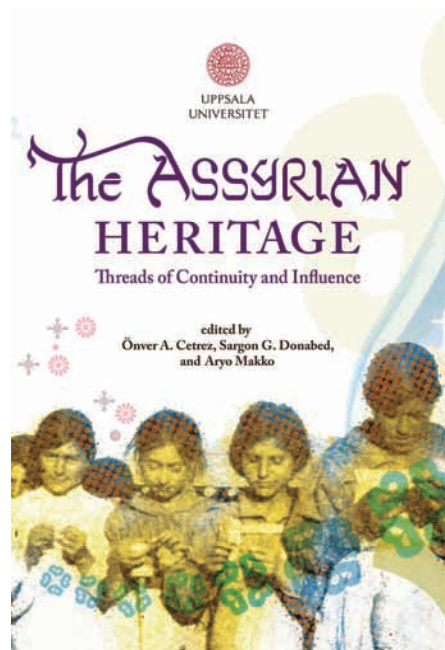
-- In particular, the early pre-Christian period until 500 AD has contained gaps which we are now beginning to fill in. In addition the period up to the great Assyrian migration during the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century has been poorly described, says Önvér Cetrez. An important factor for filling in some of the gaps has been various archaeological findings and studies of both older and modern phenomenon. Multidisciplinary research about the Assyrian identity has also provided new knowledge.

**The anthology shows** that there are several elements of the Assyrian identity which live on, from pre-Christian times into modern times. Examples are given of various religious rites and symbols that originate from the Iron Age. Findings also show that Assyrian forms of government existed also after the fall of the Empire as well as a modern political identity.

-- I hope that we through this may weave together the picture of the Assyrian story", he says.

The next step is to publish a paperback, aimed at young people, their parents and others who wish to learn more. The book's contents will be adapted to a wider target group and will be translated into Swedish.

-- In particular in a secular country it is important to build a sustainable identity that is not solely based on religious affiliation. If you, like the Assyrian people, do not have your own country, these issues become complicated", says Önvér Cetrez.



# In Memoriam

## Betty Jane Kingsbury, 1934 - 2012

By Lisa Kingsbury



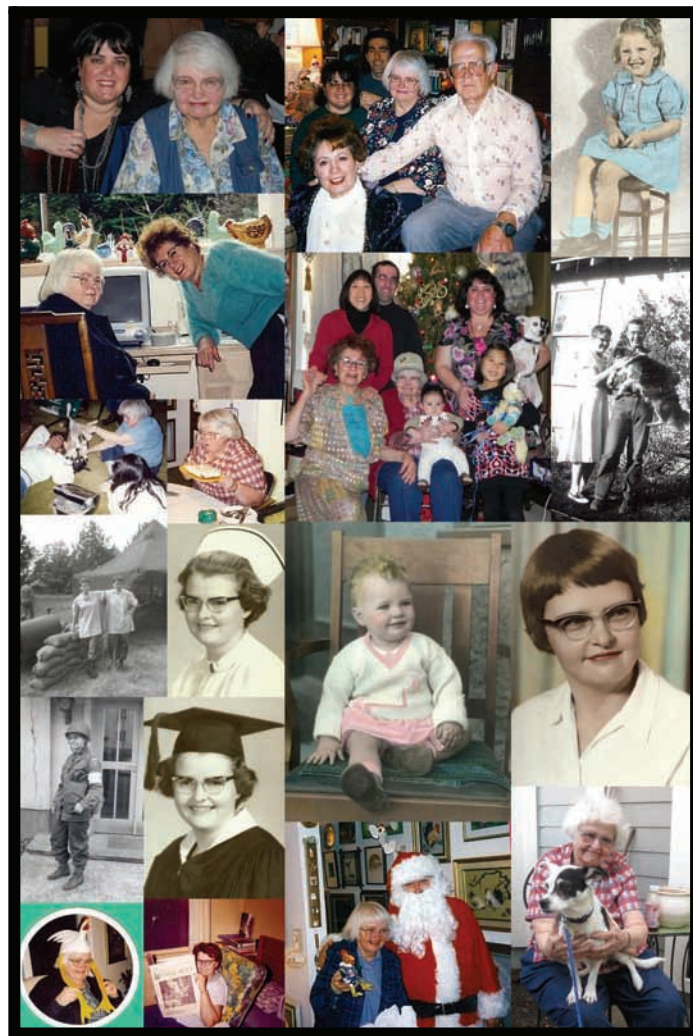
Betty Jane Kingsbury was born December 26, 1934, in Laguna Beach, CA to Benjamin Millard and Vesta May Kingsbury. At age 7, her family moved to Pleasant Hill, Oregon, where she grew up on a family farm and attended school. She graduated from the University of Oregon with a BS in Nursing and received her Nursing License in 1957.

To see the world, she

joined the United States Army and spent the next two decades fulfilling that dream.

In the Army, Betty was assigned to the operating room, from staff nurse to supervisor, at a number of hospitals. First assigned to Forts (Sam Houston, Benning, Bragg, and Eustis) and then Medical Centers (William Beaumont, Walter Reed, Letterman, Madigan and Tripler), Lieutenant Colonel Betty Kingsbury also found herself stationed in Germany, Japan, Korea and Vietnam. In her 20 years of military service, LTC Kingsbury was awarded the National Defense Service Medal, the Vietnam Service Medal, the Republic of Vietnam Campaign Medal, 2 Oversea Service Bars, the Armed Forces Reserve Medal, the Armed Forces Expeditionary Medal and the Vietnamese Cross of Gallantry with Palm Meritorious Unit Commendation. She retired back to Oregon and was an active member of her local VFW, proudly serving 14 years as Quartermaster.

In 1968, upon first meeting her soon-to-be sister-in-law, Betty impressed Flora by knowing that Ur and Arbil are considered two of the oldest cities in the world. Betty showed an immediate appreciation for the Middle East and Assyrian history. Brother and sister, Bob and Betty, embraced the food, culture and language (although they only knew a few words) and often impressed Assyrians by knowing more about their history than they knew themselves. In 1974, Betty joined Bob, Flora, Lisa May and Ben Ashur for a month long driving trip in Iran, Afghanistan and Pakistan. She continued to follow Assyrians



ians by purchasing all the books she could find on Assyrian, Mesopotamia and the history of the near east. For 25 years, she was a subscriber of Ninveh magazine and a frequent donator to the Assyrian Foundation of America.

In July 2010, Betty moved to California to become housemates with her sister-in-law, Flora. She became a fixture at Assyrian Foundation meetings, greeting guests and selling tickets. Her favorite treats were her cups of afternoon tea and treats from Flora's "Café Le'Mushawa" – and her response was always "Thank you, Mushawa!"

As the child of a school teacher, and the aunt to two educators, Betty was very concerned with the education of young people. The Kingsbury family would like to offer a donation in the amount of \$2,000 to the Assyrian Foundation of America for the education of future Assyrian children.



## **Sankhiro Khofri, 1934 - 2012**

By Dorida Khofri-Yaghoub

Ladies and Gentlemen, honorary guests, I want to thank each and every one of you for being here with us during this difficult time. My name is Dorida and I am Sano's niece and am honored to read his eulogy.

My uncle Sankhiro Khofri was born July 27, 1934 in the city of Kirmansha, Iran to belated Shamasha Gabriel and Victoria Khofri. When he was 10yrs old with his family they moved to Tehran, Iran where he continued his education at the Don-Bosco Salisian school. Sano enjoyed acting in theater, playing music (drums were his specialty) and especially watching Indian films and mimicking the words to the song later to entertain his family and friends. In 1960 uncle Sano met my lovely belated aunt Shamiram Sano and after two years they were blessed with a daughter named Adoreen whom he adored. In 1968 Sano and his family migrated to the U.S. and in 1969 began working as a journeyman machinist for service engineering in San Francisco, CA.

In 1971 once again my aunt and uncle were blessed with a son named Gabriel whom my uncle named after his beloved father. Sano retired in 1998 and used to enjoy traveling with his camper and his wife next to him. In 2009 my lovely uncle suffered a brain stroke and his health slowly deteriorated and losing my aunt Shamiram two years later with cancer did not help the situation since she was his sole caretaker and the love of his life. On September 9th at 4:30 p.m. my dearest uncle Sano accepted our Lord Jesus Christ's invitation to eternal life.

I will miss his lovely voice, his kind spirit and heart, his singing, his jokes but I know deep in my heart he is in a better place, beside his beloved wife Shamiram.

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### **Ellen Solomon's Eulogy**

We would like to pay tribute to and celebrate the life of our beloved Ellen Solomon, a long-time resident of South San Francisco having resided there for the past twenty five years. Prior to that, she lived in Daly City for about nine years.

Ellen was born in Mosul, Iraq. Her parents were Awimalk Solomon and Liza Sargis, Liza being my grandmother, Nana Maria's sister. Ellen, along with her sister Norma, her mother Liza and brother Youbird emigrated to the United States arriving in Gary, Indiana on September 7, 1970 where they spent some time with her Maternal Aunt, Aunite Almas. In October 1970 Ellen along with her family moved to the Windy City, Chicago where they lived until they moved to California in 1978. Ellen passed away on Thursday, May 24, 2012. She has been battling cancer courageously for more than three years. Yet, she succumbed suddenly to a massive heart attack while

visiting her dentist in her sister's presence Norma. Her passing was a total shock to everybody including us as we were talking to her the previous evening and she seemed to be in perfect spirit. Even her doctor was totally shocked as she seemed to be coming along very nicely and her medical tests seemed perfect. That goes to show you how important it is to always let your family and loved ones know how much you love them and appreciate them while we are still in a vertical position.

During the early years when Ellen was in Mosul, she attended Elementary School. After completing her Primary School studies, she along with her family moved to Baghdad in 1948. While Ellen was in Baghdad, she joined her Aunt Clara in Dress Making Apprenticeship. Subsequently, the whole family moved to Kirkuk in 1959. In Kirkuk, she attended the School of Fine Arts for a period of five years. She graduated with a teaching degree in fine arts. After arriving in the States, she was notified that she had a teaching position assignment waiting for her in Iraq. By then, it was a moot point. There was no going back.

While living in Chicago between 1970 and 1978, she worked there for eight years as a Computer Operator. After moving to the Golden State with the rest of her family, she joined Bank of America's data processing department and continued to work there for a period of 24 years. The family's joyful life was short lived with the passing of her brother which was like a dark cloud hanging over them. With time, they started to cherish each other's company. Both, Ellen and Norma, truly held their mother in high esteem and prized her above everything else. As such, when Auntie Liza fell ill in 2002, they both took very good care of her. Auntie Liza's illness lasted for about 6 years and she became seriously ill for the final 2 ½ years of her life. Ellen quit her job to dedicate her attention and time to exclusively take care of her ailing mother. After their mother's passing away in 2008, they both continued to mourn her for a very long time. By 2009, Ellen was diagnosed with stage 3 of the dreadful disease, cancer. It was evident she had suffered a lot.

During the happy and healthy years and even after being stricken with the debilitating disease, Ellen loved good quality food and she was well known for her delicious recipes. She enjoyed outings with her lifelong best friend, companion, and sister Norma. Especially after the passing of their brother in 1992, a licensed pharmacist and their mother's passing away in 2008. Ellen

also relished in visiting her cousins, relatives and friends and took delight in going to church and the Assyrian Foundation of America's gatherings and socializing with her friends. Ellen in sur-



vived by her sister Norma. They were very close almost like twins. Ellen is also survived by her cousins in California: Florence, Virginia, Ferdinand, Eddy, Ronny, Rhonda, Johny, Jones, Amor, Raymond, and in Canada by: Lydia, Laura and Amira and in Australia by: Shawki and in Iraq by: Diana as well as all their families. Additionally, Ellen is survived by her aunts, Auntie Clara in San Jose and Auntie Mabel in Hamilton, Ontario, Canada.

We are all mortals. The only thing that we can carry is our legacy. The memory of Ellen's love for her sister, family and friends will endure. All else is fleeting, only our legacy is not transient. Ellen was beloved by all who were fortunate enough to have known her.

Ellen will be missed by all of us. We all love you Ellen. We know she is in a better place where illness can no longer touch her. She is in heaven now with her mother and brother.

## New Book on Assyrians Beyond the Fall of Nineveh

Christian Assyrians are often confronted with doubt about their Assyrian identity, but such doubts are entirely based on false assumptions. For example John Joseph, in his "Nestorians and their Muslim neighbors," claims that this people are Nestorian and not Assyrian. He contends that, until the mid 19<sup>th</sup> century they had not called themselves by that name.

A new book by William M Warda, titled: "Assyrians beyond the Fall of Nineveh," provides irrefutable historical and archaeological evidences attesting to the survival of the ancient Assyrians, and the progression of their descendants into the Christian era.

Lack of information about the ancient Assyrians, in the contemporary history books is primarily because Greek writers who wrote about them referred to them by names such as: Surios, Surioi, Surie, and Suros, which were wrongly interpreted, to mean Syrians, by the later historians. However, Herodotus, in the following statement attests to the presence of the Assyrian troops in the Persian Army. He writes:

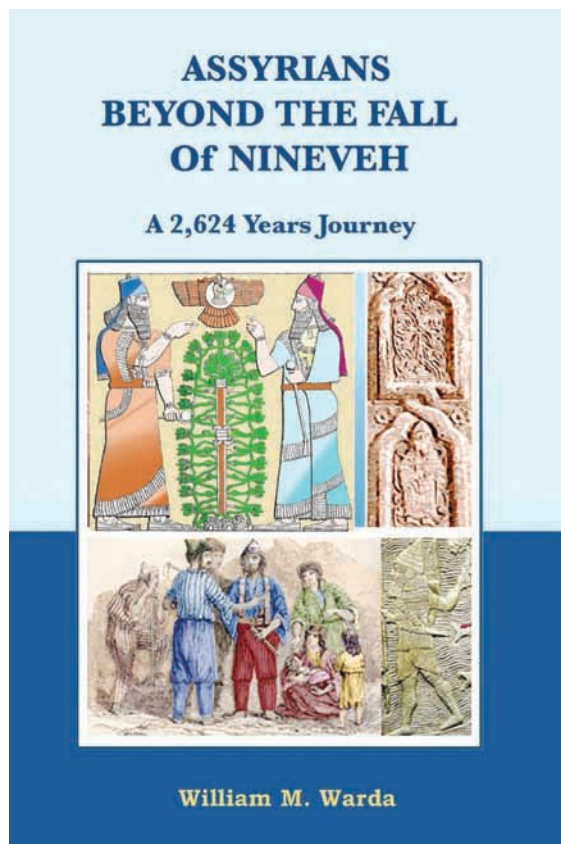
"This people, whom the Hellenes called Syrians, are called Assyrians by the barbarians." He even gives the name and the lineage of the Persian commander who led them into war: "They had for commander Otaspes, the son of Artachaeus." By Barbarians, Herodotus meant ancient Persians, who in their inscriptions mention Assyria, and Assyrians as part of their empire.

Other Assyrians such as the fifth century poet Narsai, Church of the East patriarchs such as the 7<sup>th</sup> century Ishoyahab III, the ninth century Timothy, the 12<sup>th</sup> century poet Ghiwargis Warda Arbilaya, and others identified their people as Assyrians during different centuries.

Existence of the Assyrian communities in the cities of Ashur, Hatra, Nineveh, Edessa/Urhay, and other places where the ancient Assyrian religion was worshiped, during the early centuries of Christianity, provides compelling evidences about the transition of the ancient Assyrians into Christianity.

The 2nd part of the book deals with the history of the Christian Assyrians after the fall of Nineveh. It includes: information about their encounters with the people of other nationalities that ruled their homeland, including: the Persians, Greeks, Parthians, Sassanians, Arabs, Mongols, and Turks. The book also describes the Christian Assyrians' extreme suffering, heroism, and achievements.

Assyrians Beyond the Fall of Nineveh is a historical non-fiction, but reads like an amazing novel, because, it tells the story of a pacifist people struggling to survive in a world dominated by warlike conquerors who were committed to destroying them. As the saying goes: truth is often stranger than fiction. [This book is now available at www.amazon.com](http://www.amazon.com)





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# حکیم کی کسبِ احتساب؟

صمیمیت و صداقت کی بنیاد پر



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فَصَدَّقْهُ دِينَ كَمَدَّقْهُ

مَحَبَّتِي دَلِيلِ مَحَبَّتِي مَحَبَّتِي  
 فَتَكْمِلِي مَعِيَ مَحَبَّتِي دَلِيلِي، دَلِيلِي مَعِيَ  
 مَحَبَّتِي مَحَبَّتِي مَحَبَّتِي مَحَبَّتِي مَحَبَّتِي مَحَبَّتِي  
 دَلِيلِي مَحَبَّتِي دَلِيلِي مَحَبَّتِي مَحَبَّتِي مَحَبَّتِي  
 مَحَبَّتِي مَحَبَّتِي مَحَبَّتِي مَحَبَّتِي مَحَبَّتِي مَحَبَّتِي  
 دَلِيلِي مَحَبَّتِي دَلِيلِي مَحَبَّتِي مَحَبَّتِي مَحَبَّتِي  
 مَحَبَّتِي مَحَبَّتِي مَحَبَّتِي مَحَبَّتِي مَحَبَّتِي مَحَبَّتِي  
 دَلِيلِي مَحَبَّتِي دَلِيلِي مَحَبَّتِي مَحَبَّتِي مَحَبَّتِي

يُمَكِّنُ دِفْءَ دُبِّهِ مَهْمَ يَتَمَبَّ:

1. مَذَى دِيَش دَجَبَت، قَلْبَدَق دِيَدَت  
دَمَدِيَش دَلْهَدَت.

2. مَدَدُ الْوَحْيِ، فَلْيَقْبِذْ دِيَارَهُ  
خَمْسًا وَمِائَتًا دَلَّةً.

3. مَذْمُوعٌ بِمَعْنَى ذَلِيلٍ، فَهَذَا جَدِيدٌ  
خَلَقَهُ دُؤْلَبٌ.

4. مَذْمُومٌ يَجْتَلِيهِ وَخَلْبَةٌ، مَجْمَعٌ،  
فَلْيَنْتَظِرْ دِيَارَهُ دِيَارَهُمْ دِيَارَهُمْ.

5 - مَذْمُومَةٌ مُبَرَّجَةٌ، قَلْبُهَا فِي دِيَارِهَا  
مُتَوَلِّدَةٌ دَائِمًا.

6. مَدَن بِيْدْكَسْ فِلْدَهْ، فِلْدَبْذَنْ دِيْدَهْ.  
مَدَهْتَهْ دِيْدَهْتَهْ.



ۛ. ۛۛۛۛۛ ۛۛۛۛۛۛ ۛۛۛۛۛۛ ۛۛۛۛۛۛ ۛۛۛۛۛۛ  
 ۛۛۛۛۛۛ ۛۛۛۛۛۛ، ۛۛۛ ۛۛۛۛۛۛ  
 ۛۛۛۛۛۛ ۛۛۛۛۛۛ، ۛۛۛۛۛ ۛۛۛۛۛۛ  
 ۛۛۛۛۛۛ ۛۛۛۛۛۛ ۛۛۛۛۛۛ ۛۛۛۛۛۛ ۛۛۛۛۛۛ  
 ۛۛۛۛۛۛ ۛۛۛۛۛۛ ۛۛۛۛۛۛ ۛۛۛۛۛۛ ۛۛۛۛۛۛ  
 ۛۛۛۛۛۛ ۛۛۛۛۛۛ ۛۛۛۛۛۛ ۛۛۛۛۛۛ ۛۛۛۛۛۛ

[illegible]

حَيْثَ 1842 م. تَجَدَّدَ ، ذِي دَسَمَوْدِيَّةِ  
 بَحْثِ بِنَكَّةِ دَلِيلِ مَسْئَلَةِ  
 تَحْلِيلِ دَعْوَةِ مَسْئَلَةِ بَدَلِ تَحْقِيقِ  
 دَعْوَةِ دَعْوَةِ مَسْئَلَةِ دَعْوَةِ دَعْوَةِ  
 مَسْئَلَةِ مَسْئَلَةِ مَسْئَلَةِ مَسْئَلَةِ  
 دَعْوَةِ دَعْوَةِ مَسْئَلَةِ مَسْئَلَةِ  
 مَسْئَلَةِ مَسْئَلَةِ مَسْئَلَةِ مَسْئَلَةِ

جِيئَن 1860 د. م. ۱۲۸۵ هـ. مَحَبَّتِ  
 دِلِجَتِ اَبَلَسَهْ مَهِيْزِ حَقْدَتِ  
 مَدَحُوْهْ وُتِيْ مَسْمُوْدَتِ ۱۲۸۵ هـ. م.

حَيْثَ 1895 م. حُلِقَ ١٥٨٢ هـ  
 فَبَدَأَ مَهْلِكُهُ ١٥٨٢ هـ (١٩٠٢ م)  
 وَحَتَّى ١٥٨٥ هـ مَكَثَ فِي دِمَشْقَ ١٥٨٥ هـ.

**حَيْتُكَ ۱915 ق . م . 70 مُؤَافِئَةُ دُوْهُفِ**

**كَم دُرْدِي وَ دِلْمَذْمَبَن جِسْتَن فَاكُمَه**

حَيْثُ 448 ج. هـ. حَذَقَ حَذَقًا



مَدِينَةُ يَسْمَعِي

يَذْكُرُ مَا كَانَ مِنْ قَبْلُ .. سُبْحَانَ حَمْدِ دُؤْمَانِ ۞ ۞ ۞

لَمَّا رَأَى الْكَلْبُ أَنَّ الْغَنِيَّاءَ لَا يَخْشَوْنَهُ لَمْ يَلْمِزْهُنَّ لَكِنَّهُنَّ لَمْ يَلْمِزْنَهُ

زُجِبَ مِنْهُ بِمِثْلِ كَيْدِهِ.. فَتَمَّ كَيْدُهُ ذَاكَ

كَلِمَاتُكَ تَهْدِي إِلَى سُبُلِكَ ۖ وَنَجِّنَا مِنْ كُلِّ ذَلِيلٍ

مَا مَعْجَبِي بِمَعْدَنِي.. زَيْتِي لِيَمُوتِي مَعِي

تَحِيَّاتُ الْمُسْلِمِينَ كَيْفَ فِي سُبُحَاتِ يَدُفِي

فَسَقَمَ مِنْ جَهْلٍ فِي تِلْكَ الْبَلَدِ

حَيْتُ رَجُلًا مَوَدًّا .. وَلَيْسَ مَوَدًّا مَوَدًّا

سیدجگد دیو... گویا ہے

خیمہ دہی گنجد.. یتیم و یتیمہ

کے لیے جلد ہی جنگ... اور ہندو فسطونے

هَيْدَرُ... كَيْسٌ... يُسَجِّدُ دِهْدَهَةً

میں جنت دہلیڈۛۛ جیپ سمونڈ

**۵۸۱۔ پیغمبرؐ کا دُعا.. کہتا ہے کہ**

مَعَكُمْ كُنْتُمْ هَٰؤُلَاءِ يَلْعَنُونَ.. مِنْكُمْ هَٰؤُلَاءِ

تَاذ مَهْدَىٰ ۖ كَلْبِي ۖ مَهْدَىٰ.. تَاذ دَهْ ۖ مَهْدَىٰ ۖ مَهْدَىٰ ۖ

تَجَسَّسُوا فِي دِيَارِهِمْ.. دَبَّاهُمْ كَمَا كَانُوا يَكْبَهُ

**جَنَ مَكَجَهْ ڳَمِهْدَه سَمَه... چَلَقِ دُخْتَرِي**





1964 ܐܡܝܢܐ



# ܐܡܝܢܐ

ܡܠܝܟܐ ܕܐܡܝܢܐ ܕܐܡܝܢܐ ܕܐܡܝܢܐ

ܕܥܡܝܢܐ ܕܥܡܝܢܐ ܕܥܡܝܢܐ ܕܥܡܝܢܐ



Church in Assyrian Village, Tel Nassri, Khabour, Syria;  
hit by missiles in 2013.

ܐܡܝܢܐ - ܐܡܝܢܐ - ܐܡܝܢܐ