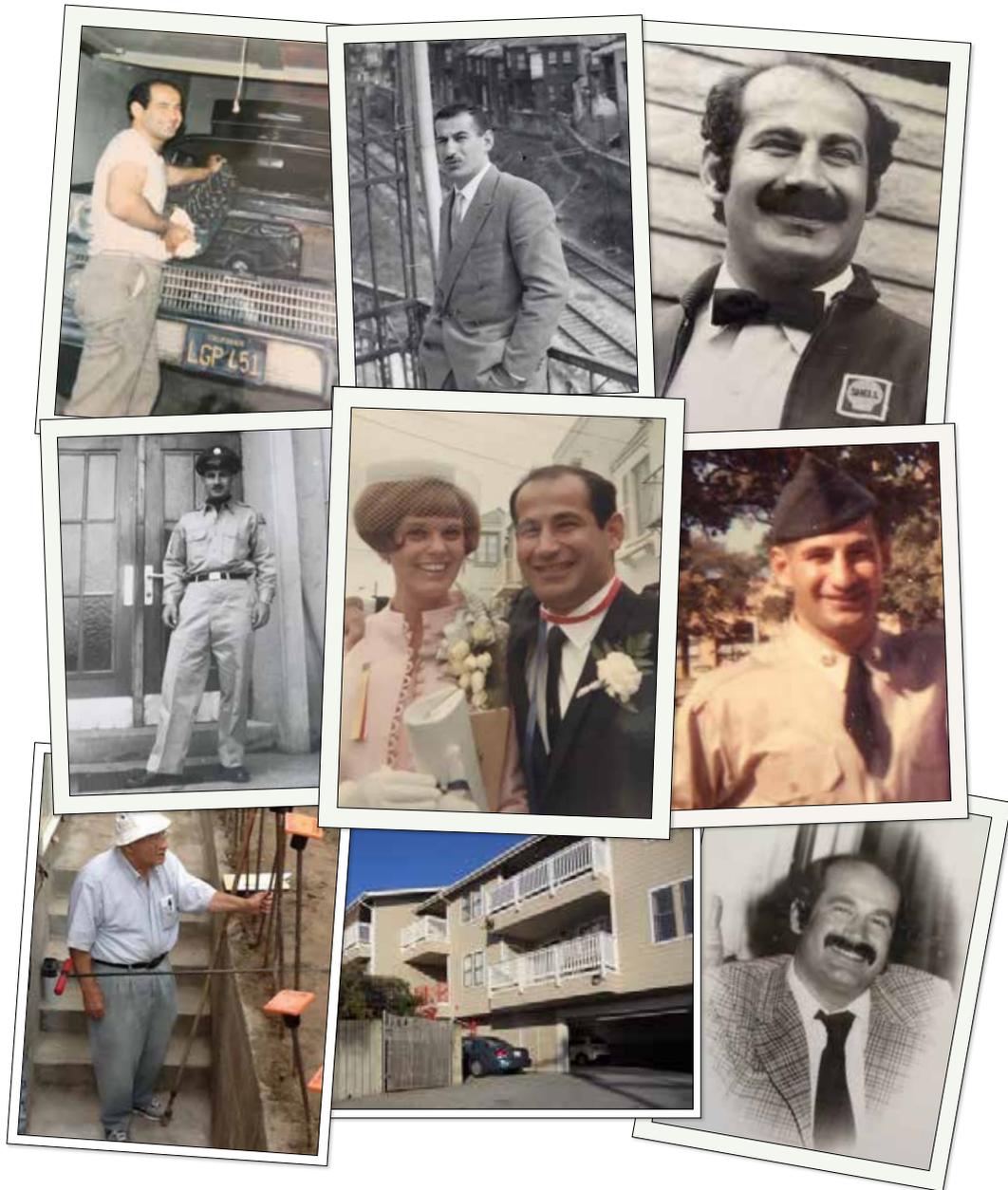




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A Living Tribute to
Daniel DeKelaita

Publication of the Assyrian Foundation of America
Volume 45, Number 3, 2020



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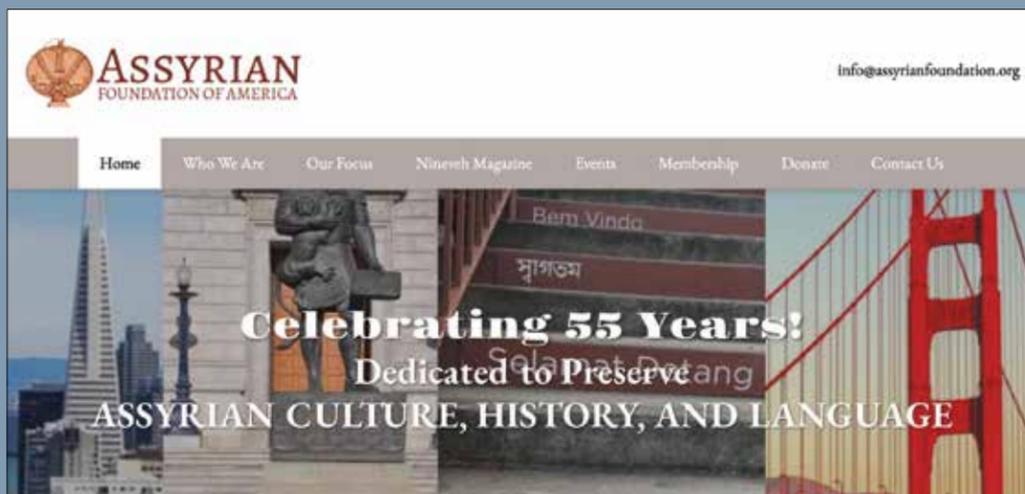
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Opinions expressed in NINEVEH are those of the respective authors and not necessarily those of NINEVEH or the Assyrian Foundation of America.

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A Living Tribute to Daniel DeKelaita

by Elizabeth Mickaily-Huber, Ph.D.

The Assyrian Foundation of America (AFA) wishes to thank a very special person for his many years of hard work and service. It is with this intent of sincere gratitude that I write this Living Tribute to Daniel DeKelaita on behalf of all the members of the AFA who have worked beside him over the years.

Daniel DeKelaita has been a member of the Assyrian Foundation of America (AFA) for over 35 years. It is thanks to Daniel that the AFA was able to purchase a property in Pacifica, California that has been a steady source of income to the AFA, helping to fund a variety of projects mentioned in Nineveh Magazine over the years. These projects have always been charitable in nature, serving to benefit Assyrian culture, language, education and welfare, as has been the ultimate goal of the AFA since its inception.

Daniel was born on November 9, 1936 in Mosul, Iraq. When he was one year old, Daniel's family moved to Habbaniyah where he spent his

childhood. He came to the United States in September of 1956 where he lived with relatives in San Francisco. In early 1960, Daniel served our country as a soldier in the United States Army. He began his service in Texas, later attaching to the Second Armored Cavalry Regiment in Germany where he served for 18 months and received an honorable discharge in 1962. After returning to the States from his service in Germany, Daniel obtained a Bachelor's and Master's degree in Math and Physics from San Francisco State University.

Over the years, Daniel held many different jobs, working as a busboy at the Fairmont Hotel in San Francisco, a butcher in a meat company, a taxi driver, as well as a math, physics and chemistry teacher at a Justin-Siena Lasallian Catholic High School in Napa. For a time, he also worked at Stanislaus State University with the head of the Physics department at the time, who was also Assyrian, Professor Vladimir Tuman. Together, they worked on the „Earth Pulsation” project funded by the US Navy.



Daniel met his lovely wife Ineke Brom in 1965 on the campus of the University of California at Berkeley where he was studying in the department of Physics. Daniel and Ineke are blessed with three daughters Ingrid, Christina and Daniella, all raised in the city of San Francisco. Daniel and Ineke are also the proud grandparents of Johanna, Sierra, Daniel and Kole.

Daniel opened his own upholstery business in 1976 and also worked as a real estate agent. It is thanks to his real estate skills that he was able to help the AFA purchase a mixed-use building in Pacifica. Daniel searched for many years until he found the perfect investment building for the AFA. Over the past 11 years, Daniel and his wife Ineke have graciously donated significant amounts of time and energy on maintaining the building that would finance multiple projects for the AFA.

Regarding her dad, Daniel's oldest daughter Ingrid Hanson lovingly writes, „Ever since I was a

young child, I remember that my dad was very active in the Assyrian community. I remember many summers when we would drive to Turlock and attend Assyrian picnics. Our father wanted us to experience his Assyrian culture. We would eat kebabs, listen to Assyrian music and dance Assyrian folk dances. He has always been so proud to bring his daughters along with him to various Assyrian functions over the years. It has always been important to him that we experience Assyrian traditions first hand. In his later years, he has devoted himself to helping the AFA further itself financially, in order to assist Assyrians still in the homeland. With this in mind, my dad facilitated the purchase of a mixed-use property in Pacifica. Since that time he has offered his services to manage and take care of the finances of that property. He does this as a labor of love and to help his Assyrian community. Anyone who knows my parents knows what loving, kind and giving people they are. My sisters and I feel so lucky to have him as our father, mentor and friend. His recent cardiac event was tragic and miraculous at the same time. This amazing man has shown such

Daniel & Ineke DeKelaita





determination and is fully recovering from a near death experience. He is so loved and we are all so lucky to have him in our lives.”

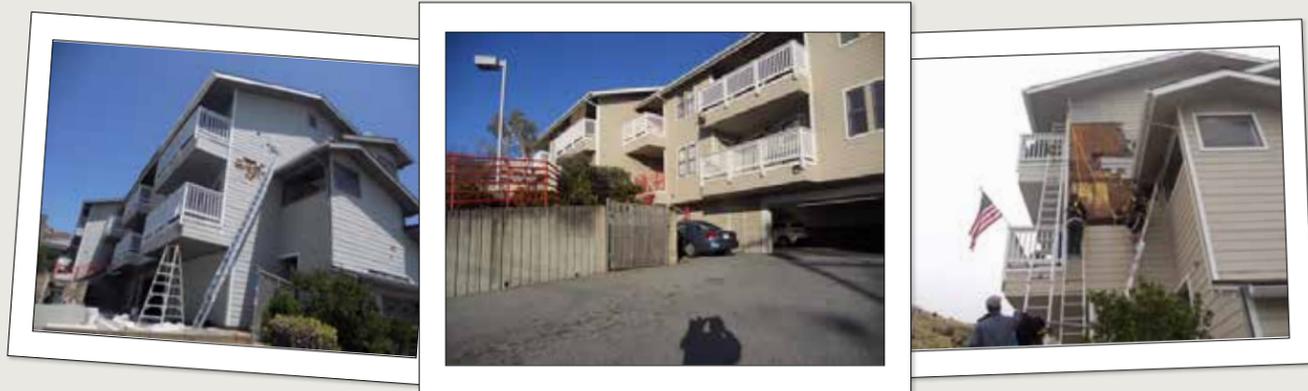
Long time AFA member, Chris Hamzaeff acknowledges, “Without a doubt, Daniel’s competency as the Building Committee Chairman contributed to the financial stability of the AFA, helping us to support projects that meet the needs of less fortunate Assyrians. Daniel is an intelligent, diligent, sensitive man.”

AFA board member Martin Jacob recalls, “I met Daniel at SFSC in 1963. Our friendship has lasted over 55 years. We have been a great support for each other. Our children have grown up together. He is a very wise and intelligent and caring person. I will always cherish his friendship. Daniel has sacrificed his time and energy over the years. Through the purchase of the property in Pacifica, Daniel and his wife Ineke have made possible a tremendous gift that will keep on giving to the Assyrian Foundation of America, and Assyrian causes everywhere. All of

this has been made possible because of his wisdom, vision, and love for the Foundation. I am truly grateful for all he has done to benefit our Foundation.”

As an aside, I feel particularly privileged to write this article, as Daniel is a cousin of my late mother and relation to recently canonized Mar Abimalek Thimotheus of blessed memory (born DeKelaita), Assyrian Church of the East Metropolitan of Malabar and All India. I have always admired Daniel’s unique combination of keen intelligence and gentle good nature. He is an interesting man who can discuss most any subject in a knowledgeable way. However, after seeing how Daniel rebounded from his recent illness, I believe that he should serve as a role model of strength, faith and determination to each and every one of us.

Thank you Daniel for the many years of service that you have given to the Assyrian Foundation of America! We all wish you good health and long life! You are very appreciated!



My Personal Tribute to Daniel DeKelaita

by Fredy Tamraz

I met Daniel at one of the Assyrian Foundation’s meetings over twenty years ago, after I joined the AFA (Assyrian Foundation of America) in 1996. Following a few words of welcoming and encouragement, Daniel told me that he was so happy to see a younger generation of Assyrians interested in joining the AFA and helping to maintain and move this great organization forward. Daniel’s biggest concern has always been for all Assyrian organizations to succeed and become financially strong in order to help our persecuted Assyrian people in the homeland and around the world. I was very impressed with Daniel’s personality, general knowledge, and financial intelligence right away. After the first few minutes one spends in discussion and conversation with him, one realizes that Daniel is a sophisticated yet down to earth man who is not eager to show it off. From the first day I met him, I was intrigued by his humbleness, humorous personality, and love for his people. Since that day I realized that we would be close friends for many years to come.

In 2005, I attended one of the Assyrian Foundation’s meeting that happened to be an election meeting. I was kindly nominated and elected by the members to be president of the board for three terms. After the first few days and following many conversations with Daniel and other great foundation members, I concluded that the AFA must become financially secure. This could be achieved through invest in a real estate property that would produce a steady, healthy income that will help our Assyrian brothers and sisters all over the world.

After receiving approval from the AFA board and general membership to move forward with the project, I decided to seek Daniel’s help and expertise to lead the Building Project Committee. Daniel agreed to take on this important task with determination and willingness to do his best in identifying an ideal property. After a few months, and after going through many buildings and properties, Daniel was successful in finding the right property that the AFA owns to this day in Pacifica, California. He led the negotiations and worked very hard to reduce the price with the sellers so that we could save more money to our needy Assyrian brethren and refugees. Fearing losing the deal, I asked Daniel to accept the reduced purchase price agreed upon by sellers, but he reminded me that any money that we saved would help our many stranded Assyrian families in Jordan, Syria, and Lebanon. In July of 2007, the AFA purchased the building and Daniel has successfully managed the building since then.

Another noble action that Daniel took happened when we met with the bank to obtain a mortgage loan for the property. The bank would not approve our loan application because the AFA was a non-profit organization with insufficient income to qualify. The bank required a collateral or guarantor to secure the loan. Without hesitation, we both offered to be guarantors for the loan, but Daniel offered to do it himself because he did not want to risk my future creditworthiness. This is how much Daniel loves the AFA and his people. Daniel will not hold back anything if he can to help ease the suffering of our needy Assyrians. He gave us a promise to pay off the entire loan for the building in five years if allowed to manage the building and not be distracted by others. I was happy to agree to Daniel’s request because I knew how capable and honorable a man he is.



Daniel worked extremely hard trying to get the right tenants and negotiate the best leases in order to maximize income. Furthermore, on many occasions, Daniel would perform the repairs and maintenance himself to save money for the Foundation. He would tell me, “Our people are suffering all over the world and anything we can save will help Assyrian families to survive.” This is the kind of man Daniel DeKelaita is. Despite his physical disabilities, he remained undeterred. He would climb the stairs to the roof to inspect, supervise the workers and

make sure that the work was being done properly. Along with the building management and maintenance projects came mountain of paperwork and accounting. Daniel refused to pay a bookkeeper or anyone else to do the accounting and paperwork such that the AFA would be able to provide more funds to needy Assyrians. As you see the amount of work and responsibilities that Daniel had to fulfill were tremendous and tiring for a man of his age. Daniel was and still is able to do all this work with the help of his amazing wife and life partner, Ineke, who has also worked tirelessly since the first day that we purchased the building. She has assisted with the bookkeeping and accounting for the building in order to save the AFA money. Without Ineke’s help, Daniel’s job would have been much harder and even more challenging. She did and continues to do all of this out of her love for Daniel, knowing how important and dear to his heart the AFA and the Assyrian people are to him.

It is a true honor and privilege to have Daniel DeKelaita as a friend. He is a man of integrity, with a great sense of humor and a big heart full of love for the AFA and his Nation.

SHILUH AND THE ASSYRIAN WINE TRADITION

By Andrea Lemieux

Taking its name from the Syriac word for “peace,” Shiluh is Turkey’s largest commercial Assyrian-style winery. Based in Midyat about 100 km from Mardin in the extreme southeast of Turkey, Shiluh (which also goes by Süryani Şarabı) carries on the winemaking tradition of Christian Assyrians. But in a modernized way.



Until recently, Assyrian wine remained largely a family by family project. People sourced grapes from home gardens and made traditional wines at home to share with friends and family. Then in 2008, wishing to share this part of their culture outside the community, members of three Assyrian families: Gabriel, Aktaş, and Aslan, created a commercial winery to produce such wine.

Shiluh sources grapes from its own vineyards as well as from local growers to create its wines. The winery uses only indigenous Turkish grapes: Boğazkere, Öküzgözü, Mazrona, and Kerküş. Some of the grapes come from vines that are more than 50 years old. Despite the popularity it has gained both locally and across Turkey, the winery keeps production relatively small, less than 100,000 bottles annually.

ASSYRIAN WINE TRADITION

Assyrians, also known by the self-designations: Chaldean, Syriac, and Aramean, hail from parts of present-day northern Iraq, southeastern Turkey, northwestern Iran and, northeastern Syria. Amongst the early Christian converts (first to third centuries) the majority still belong to various eastern-rite Christian denominations, including: Chaldean and Syriac Catholic, Syriac Orthodox, Assyrian Church of the East, and more.

Only about 10,000 to 15,000 Assyrians now make Turkey home. They live mostly in Midyat-Mardin, an area of Turkey home to some of the oldest monasteries. As Christians, especially living in close proximity to monasteries, wine holds a



special place in Assyrian culture. The traditional style of winemaking calls for grapes to dry under the sun before manual stomping in burlap sacks. Juice ferments in clay or other inert containers and never ages in oak.



On a recent visit to Midyat and Mardin, Istanbulites and I were treated to Shiluh’s hospitality. After picking us up at the airport, they took us first to Mor Gabriel, the oldest surviving Syriac Orthodox monastery in the world. Then it was back to the winery for lunch and wine. Wine, incidentally, pressed with modern machinery, not feet!

Shiluh Kustan 2018 Tasting Notes

For its only white wine, Shiluh blends two grapes native to Mardin-Midyat: Kerküş and Mazrona. Little known outside the region, the grapes grow on old bush vines, many of which are at least 50 years old. Found in old vineyards and home gardens, Shiluh sources grapes from its own vineyards but also buys in as many as possible.

Fermented individually before blending, the Kustan presents a deep gold wine edging toward sunset orange due to a bit of skin contact during fermentation. Fruity and floral with hints of over ripe pear and banana, the nose is surprisingly



faint given the intensity of color. On the palate the wine is soft and round with flavors that reflect the nose.

Shiluh Turabdin Tasting Notes

The Midyat-Mardin region collectively goes by ‘Turabdin’ from which this wine takes its name. A blend of 70% Boğazkere and 30% Öküzgözü, the Shiluh Turabdin is a really pretty purple-tinged

ruby in the glass. Aromas of sweet spices and dusty earth join vanilla-kissed purple fruits, like blackberry and plum on the nose. Even if I didn't know there was Boğazkere in the blend it would not be difficult to guess the way the tannins filled my mouth and held on. And on, and on.

Like the Kustan, the palate largely reflected aromas from the nose complimented by a medium plus body and medium acidity.



Shiluh Monastır Tasting Notes

The Monastır, its name a nod to the ancient monasteries in the region, is a 100% Boğazkere. Purple flowers, black fruits, and sweet spices lingered after some vigorous swirling. This one really wants a bit of time to open properly. Boğazkere often wants some breathing, particularly when it's not been softened by any oak ageing.

Full-bodied with big tannins and flavors of black mulberry, black cherry, pepper, licorice, leather,

and smooth chocolate on the finish, this was classic Boğazkere.

Shiluh Dara Tasting Notes

Like the other wines, the Dara's name nods at the region's history, in this case to ruins of an ancient city about 20 minutes outside of Mardin. More than its name pays homage to the region. The Dara blends together not only Boğazkere and Öküzgözü, but also mahlep. A spice used in a variety of Turkish foods, especially in this region, mahlep is the ground seed from (St. Lucie) cherries with flavors similar to bitter almonds and cherries.

When blended with Boğazkere and Öküzgözü to make the Dara, mahlep adds an overwhelming



sense of Christmas to the wine. The nose practically gushed Christmas pudding aromas of brown sugar, dates and dried cherries, cinnamon, nutmeg, and almond. Even knowing that the wine contained no residual sugar, the dryness on the palate was disconcerting. Silky tannins carried flavors of cherries that were both tart and dried, rich baking spices, and molasses coated almonds. Not my personal favorite wine ever but it makes a great base for Glühwein!



It took me a while to pen this down, each time I tried, I realized that I cannot find the right words to thank the **"Assyrian Foundation of America"** enough for their nobility. Ever since I interacted with them in San Francisco, they have helped **"Gilgamesh Art & Culture Foundation"** with a generous funding and ever timely support. Especially their Board of Directors have assisted me in implementing my vision as an Assyrian artist. Our collaboration has resulted in three concerts in the cities of - London, Malibu and San Francisco - at the esteemed locations of British Museum, Pepperdine University and Marines Memorial Theater respectively.

Not just that, we have also recorded 71 high quality videos and made them available on our YouTube Channel for free, so that music lovers around the globe can cherish them. We are glad that we could do our bit to create as well as renew interest of countless people in the Assyrian Culture.

It is important for cultures to be saved, so that we can continue to cherish the diversity. We wish to continue doing this as a non-profit, and need your support for the same. Please lend us a helping hand. Let us give back to the society.

Sincerely Yours
Honiball Joseph

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Who Was Kisir-Ashur?

History of Medicine in Mesopotamia

Compiled By: Andrew Bet-Shlimon

Mesopotamia, the region known as the cradle of civilization, is the birth of the Assyrian Empire, what some historians consider to be the first real empire in the history of civilization. Before the Greeks were excelling in science and philosophy, culture was blooming in Mesopotamia. Twentieth-century archaeological excavations uncovered clay tablets identifying a man called Kisir-Ashur as a medical practitioner. The tablets document his education and practices, where he combined medical treatments with magical rituals.

He lived in the city of Ashur with his own personal library, found beneath his house where many of these texts were discovered. Of all the houses with private libraries in Ashur, Kisir-Ashur's had the largest collection of tablets and a rare writing tablet made of ivory. Archaeologists believe that information about some illnesses described by Kisir-Ashur and other Mesopotamian texts was perhaps passed down to the Greeks.

Ancient Assyrian Medical Practitioner

The clay tablets were largely written by Kisir-Ashur at the end of the seventh century B.C. Kisir-Ashur is regarded as one of the earliest examples of a doctor, in terms of his level of training and practice. The tablets turned out to be some of the most detailed accounts of ancient medical education and practice ever recorded and give a unique insight into how an Assyrian doctor

was trained in the art of diagnosing and treating illnesses, as well as studying their causes.

Treatment of Illnesses in Mesopotamia

Treatment typically started by identifying an illness based upon the origin of its cause. Then, medical agents were applied as necessary to heal the disease and its symptoms, alongside rituals to appease the gods.

Some of the texts that were uncovered describe ritualistic practices while there are others that researchers call "medical" texts. They consist of descriptions of symptoms, diagnoses, and prescriptions as well as incantations, prayers, and rituals where healers focused a great deal on communicating with the patients about their problems.

New Insights into the Doctor's Training

It was very rare for ancient documents to be "signed" or to give credit to one person. However, Kisir-Ashur's name is on his texts, which validates his power and importance. He recorded the treatments that he learned and used during and after his medical training, which illustrates the chronological progression of his training and practice. He learned his skills by first practicing on non-human animals and then progressed to treating people.

Obverse & reverse of an Assyrian Medical tablet dating back to the Seventh century B.C found at the site of Kaleh-Shergat in the capital city of Ashur.



FIG. 10a.



FIG. 10b.

Photograph of obverse and reverse of an Assyrian medical tablet dating from about the seventh century B.C., in the possession of the College of Physicians of Philadelphia, by whose kind permission the tablet is here reproduced. The tablet, which was purchased for the College of Physicians, is said to have been found at Kaleh-Shergat, the site of Ashur, the ancient capital of Assyria.

Kisir-Ashur's texts reveal that he did not work simply with religious rituals, but with plant-based medical treatments, as well. Also, he observed snake bites and scorpion stings to determine the effects of the toxins and to understand the venoms' functions.

Mesopotamian Science Reached Europe

The ancient Mesopotamians believed that some diseases and liquids were connected, which appears to have contributed to the Greek physician Hippocrates' theory of the imbalance of four fluids in the body that could be the cause of illness. Hippocrates lived some 200 years after Kisir-Ashur.

Kisir-Ashur's clay tablets, one of the most important collections of written sources from the Neo-Assyrian Empire, were well preserved for 2,700 years before his library burned down during the fall of the Neo-Assyrian Empire in 612 BC. The collection was first excavated by archaeologists at the beginning of the twentieth century. It allowed for a better understanding of how medicine was practiced in ancient Mesopotamia and how medical knowledge was later transmitted to Europe and beyond.

Continuity of Assyrians in Medicine

Centuries after the fall of the Assyrian Empire, mainly during the Christian era, emerged the revival of medicine in Mesopotamia while under foreign rule. Assyrian physicians excelled during the period of the fifth to late ninth century A.D.

One of the most renowned physicians during that period was Sargis of Rish-Aina (d. 536 AD). He was an excellent physician and a revered scholar and translator of books of medicine. Sargis was well versed in the Greek language and philosophy of Aristotle. His manuscript,

Book of Medicine, was preserved with the Church of the East in Mosul until 1889.

Another Assyrian who gained prominence in medicine was Yosip, Catholicos of the Church of the East (551-567 AD) and renowned physician. There was also Gabriel of Sinjar (seventh century), who became a court physician and was well respected by the Sassanid rulers. However, the Assyrian family of physicians that gained the most prominence was the Bakht-Yishu Dynasty. This family served as physicians throughout the seventh, eighth, and ninth centuries, spanning six generations and 250 years.

Yuhannan Bar Masuya (777-857 AD) also came from a prominent family of physicians and pharmacists from Gundishapur. He was well versed in the Assyrian, Arabic, and Greek languages and composed a considerable number of medical papers. Hunayn Bar Ishaq (809-873 AD) and his son Ishaq Bar Hunayn were masters of the translation craft and scholars in the medical field. Their work in medicine was immensely influential over many centuries in the Islamic world and Europe. Yuhannan Bar Adai of Tikrit (893 - 974 AD) translated numerous works of Greek philosophy into Arabic, mostly from existing versions in Assyrian. Sargon the Assyrian (late eighth and early ninth centuries) was the personal physician of the Caliph Al-Ma'mun (reigned 813-833 AD) and was well respected in the Caliphate courts because of his broad knowledge in medicine. Bar Hebraeus aka Gewaris Bar Harun Bar Touma Malataya (1226-1286 AD) was a physician, philosopher, astronomer, historian, theologian. He is known as "The Library of the 13th Century".

Spices & Herbal medicine were part of ancient healing practices alongside snakes & scorpion poisons.



Assyrians were the first to extract the main ingredient for Aspirin from the willie tree to cure inflammation, fever & pain. It was not until the 19th century that the Bayer Pharmaceutical company began marketing aspirin.



Turkey: Erdogan's "Leftovers of the Sword"

<https://www.gatestoneinstitute.org/16002/turkey-leftovers-of-the-sword>
Uzay Bulut, a Turkish journalist, is a Distinguished Senior Fellow at the Gatestone Institute.



Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan's public use of the insult "the leftovers of the sword" in referring to survivors of the massacres of Christians in his country is alarming on many levels. The phrase not only insults the victims and the survivors of the massacres but also endangers the safety of Turkey's dwindling Christian community, who are often exposed to pressures that include physical attacks.

(Photo by Chris McGrath/Getty Images)

- "Leftover of the sword" (kılıç artığı in Turkish) is a commonly used insult in Turkey that often refers to the survivors of the Christian massacres that mainly targeted Armenians, Greeks and Assyrians in the Ottoman Empire and its successor, Turkey.
- The use of "leftovers of the sword," therefore, does not represent a denial of massacres or genocides. On the contrary, it declares the pride of the perpetrators. It means: "Yes, we slaughtered Christians and other non-Muslims because they deserved it!"

During a coronavirus briefing on May 4, Turkey's President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan used a most derogatory phrase "the leftovers of the sword".

"We do not allow terrorist leftovers of the sword in our country," he said, "to attempt to carry out [terrorist] activities. Their number has decreased a lot but they still exist."

"Leftover of the sword" (kılıç artığı in Turkish) is a commonly used insult in Turkey that often refers to the survivors of the Christian massacres that mainly targeted Armenians, Greeks and Assyrians in the Ottoman Empire and its successor, Turkey.

As the head of state, Erdoğan using the phrase publicly is alarming on many levels. The phrase not only insults the victims and the survivors of the massacres but also endangers the safety of Turkey's dwindling Christian community, who are often exposed to pressures that include physical attacks.

In protest, Garo Paylan, an Armenian MP in Turkey's parliament, wrote on Facebook:

"In his hateful speech last night, Erdoğan once again used the phrase, leftover of the sword."

"Leftover of the sword' was invented to refer to orphans like my grandmother who survived the [1915] Armenian genocide. Every time we hear that phrase, it makes our wounds bleed."

Other Armenian activists and writers on social media also criticized Erdoğan. Journalist Aline Ozinian wrote:

"For those who don't know, terrorist leftover of the sword' means Armenian, terrorists' who survived the genocide and could not be butchered via the sword. What does, terrorist' mean? Well, it changes daily: It could be a journalist, a civil society representative, a writer, a doctor or a mother of a beautiful child."

"They do not want those who held the swords," she continued, "but the grandchildren of the survivors of a people and culture that were slaughtered by the sword to be ashamed."

The columnist Ohannes Kılıçdağı wrote:

"Think about a country that actively uses a phrase like 'leftover of the sword' in the political culture and language. It is used by the highest authorities. But the same authorities of the same country claim that 'there is no massacre in our history'. If there is not, then where does this phrase come from? Who does it refer to?"

The crimes that Turkey attempts to hide by blaming the victims are actually well documented historical facts. In 2019, for instance, historians Professor Benny Morris and Dror Ze'evi published a book, *The Thirty-Year Genocide: Turkey's Destruction of Its Christian Minorities, 1894–1924*, describing "the giant massacres perpetrated by the Ottoman Empire, and then the Turkish Republic, against their Christian minorities." According to their research:

"Between 1894 and 1924, three waves of violence swept across Anatolia, targeting the region's Christian minorities, who had previously accounted for 20 percent of the population. By 1924, the Armenians, Assyrians, and Greeks had been reduced to 2 percent"

During the genocide, the perpetrators' annihilationist policies included "premeditated mass killing, homicidal deportation, forced conversion, mass rape, and brutal abduction. And one thing more was a constant: the rallying cry of jihad."

Like the Christians, the Alevi community too is targeted in Turkey for being "leftovers of the sword". Erdoğan's ally, Devlet Bahçeli, the head of the Nationalist Movement Party (MHP), for instance, called the journalist Abdülkadir Selvi "a leftover of the sword" in 2017 to refer to his alleged Alevi roots. Pro-government journalist Ahmet Taşgetiren then described the phrase as follows:

"You wipe out an entity (a society, a religious community, an army) that you view as 'the enemy'. What is left is a group of people who have survived the swords and surrendered to you. Those are the leftovers. This website uses cookies to provide you with better services. of the sword."

Selvi then tried to explain why he is not a "leftover of the sword":

"I would like to remind Bahçeli: My grandfather, Osman, was a son of the homeland that ran from one frontline to the other and was taken prisoner in the Ottoman-Russian war. I'm a grandchild of Oghuz Turks; my ancestors, Hasan and Hüseyin, became martyrs in Yemen. This honor is enough for me."

Selvi's explanation once again demonstrates that having Christian, Alevi or any other non-Muslim roots is seen as an insult or a disgraceful offense by many in Turkey. Instead of explaining why calling someone "a leftover of the sword" is unacceptable, Selvi tried to prove his "purebred" Turkish origins and Sunni Muslim faith.

"Today, less than half a percent of Turkey's population is Christian -- the result of a history throughout which Turks persecuted the region's indigenous Christians," wrote historian Dr. Vasileios Meichanetsidis.

"Many Turks still proudly endorse this history, with no attempt to face it honestly, or secure respect for the victims. In fact, they falsely label the victims as perpetrators, praise the criminals and insult the memory of the victims and their descendants."

The use of "leftovers of the sword," therefore, does not represent a denial of massacres or genocides. On the contrary, it declares the pride of the perpetrators. It means: "Yes, we slaughtered Christians and other non-Muslims because they deserved it!"

First Assyrian Congressman in U.S. History: Adam Benjamin Jr.

Elizabeth Mickaily-Huber, Ph.D.

Adam Benjamin Jr. (b. August 6, 1935 – d. September 7, 1982) was the first Assyrian-American to be elected to the U.S. House of Representatives in American History. Benjamin represented the 1st Congressional district of Indiana, serving in the House from 1967 to 1971 and in the Senate from 1971 to 1977. He returned to the House, serving from 1977 until his untimely death in 1982. Benjamin was a member of the Democratic Party.

He was born to Adam Benjamin and Margaret Marjanian of Gary, Indiana, graduating from Kemper Military School in Missouri in 1952. After that, Benjamin joined the Marine Corps, serving as a Corporal in the Korean War until he was honorably discharged in 1958. Following his time with the Marines, he was accepted to the U.S. Military Academy at West Point where he earned a Bachelor's degree in Engineering, thereafter joining the U.S. Army where he achieved the rank of First Lieutenant.

Following his military service in 1961, Adam returned to Gary, Indiana and began teaching Math and Physics at Edison High School. He entered public service, acting as Gary's zoning administrator from 1963 to 1965, and further gaining local government experience serving as executive secretary for Mayor Martin Katz from 1965 to 1966. At the same time, Benjamin Jr. obtained his law degree from Valparaiso University, passing the Indiana state Bar in 1966. Shortly thereafter, he ran for a seat in the Indiana House of Representatives, winning two consecutive terms. He then won a seat in the Senate where he served from 1971 to 1977. During that time, Benjamin Jr. was named "Outstanding State Senator" by

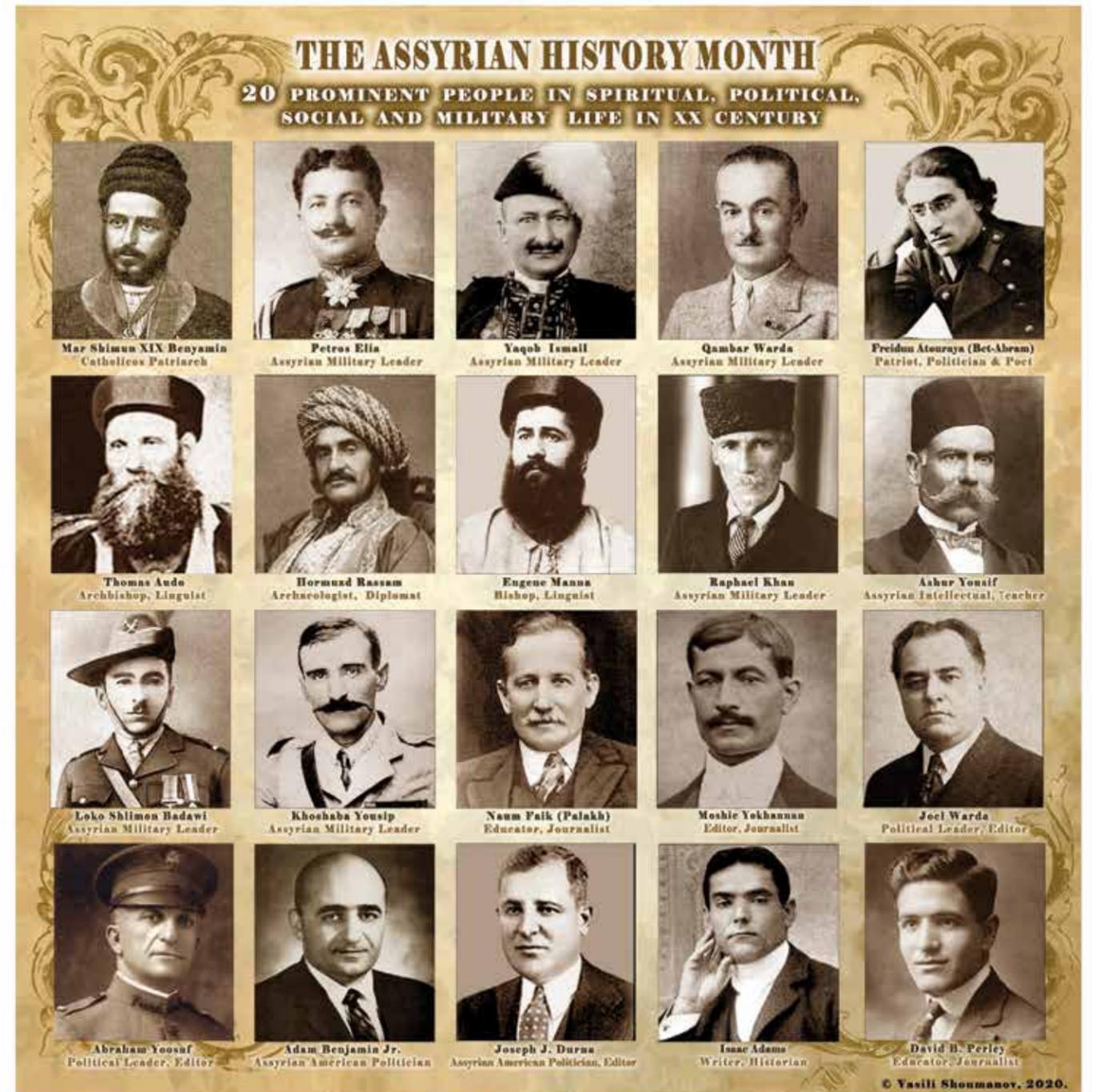
the newsmen of the Indiana General Assembly. Working as a state legislator, Mr. Benjamin developed a new code of ethics for legislators, worked on a new state medical malpractice act, and facilitated court reform for the Lake County Superior Court system.

Benjamin served in the 95th, 96th, and 97th Congresses from 1977 until his death in 1982. He sat on the House Appropriations Committee and served as the chairman of the Subcommittee on Transportation, working on projects that improved Amtrak facilities and train commuter cars, in addition to obtaining funding for an I-94 Interchange. He is also credited with improving the bus system and municipal airport of Gary, Indiana. Benjamin chaired the executive committee of the Congressional Steel Caucus, promoting the health and stability of the domestic steel industry. In an effort to aid economic recovery, Benjamin worked to establish the Calumet Forum, in which representatives from labor, industry, banking, publishing, education, politics, transportation, and the religious community all worked together to promote the economic renaissance and development of the region.

Benjamin gained a reputation for hard work, dedication, effectiveness, and loyalty, retaining his seat during the 1978 and 1980 elections. Sadly, Adam died suddenly at 47 years of age from a heart attack in September 1982 and is buried in Indiana's Calumet Park Cemetery. The Veterans Affairs Clinic, located in Crown Point, Indiana is named after him, in addition to Road 51 in the city of Hobart, Indiana.

In a rare video recording circa 1980, entitled *The Assyrian Destiny* in

the Middle East, Adam Benjamin Jr. reported on the "systematic extermination of the Assyrian minorities as well as other Christian minorities in the Middle East." Congressman Benjamin also described refugee programs as short-term solutions and outlined the need for the creation of an Assyrian homeland.



The Assyrian History in Images:

20 prominent people in Spiritual, Political, Social and Military life in 20th century

Left to Right:

- 1 - Mar Shimun XIX Benyamin, Catholicos Patriarch of the Church of the East, Assyria.
- 2 - Petros Elia, Assyrian Military Leader, Turkey-Iran-France
- 3 - Yaqob Ismail, Assyrian Military Leader, Turkey
- 4 - Qambar Warda, Assyrian Military Leader, Turkey-Lebanon
- 5 - Freidun Atouraya (Bet-Abram), Patriot, Politician & Poet, Iran-Georgia (USSR)
- 6 - Thomas Audo, Archbishop of the Chaldean Catholic Church, Linguist, Iran
- 7 - Hormuzd Rassam, Archaeologist, Diplomat, Iraq-England
- 8 - Eugene Manna, Bishop of the Chaldean Church, Linguist, Iraq
- 9 - Raphael Khan, Assyrian Military Leader, Iran
- 10 - Ashur Yousif, Assyrian Intellectual, Teacher, Turkey
- 11 - Loko Shlimon Badawi, Assyrian Military Leader, Turkey
- 12 - Khoshaba Yousip, Assyrian Military Leader, Turkey
- 13 - Naum Faik (Palakh), Educator, Journalist, Turkey-USA
- 14 - Moshie Yokhannan, Editor, Journalist, Iran
- 15 - Joel Warda, Political Leader, Editor, Iran-USA
- 16 - Abraham Yoosuf Political Leader, Editor, Turkey-USA
- 17 - Adam Benjamin Jr., Assyrian American Politician, USA
- 18 - Joseph J. Durna, Assyrian American Politician, Editor, USA, Turkey-USA
- 19 - Isaac Adams, Writer, Historian, Iran-USA
- 20 - David B. Perley, Educator, Journalist, Turkey-USA

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M. Margaret Kashish

August 25, 1923 - March 12, 2020

M. Margaret (Jano) Kashish, 96, of North Falmouth and Milton, MA, passed away peacefully on Thursday, March 12, 2020, at the Maples Rehabilitation and Nursing Center, in Wrentham, MA. She was the beloved wife of the late Barsom J. Kashish, whom she married on January 16, 1960, and who went to rest with God in December of 2006.

Margaret was born on August 25, 1923, to the late Shaker Jano and the late Victoria (Massabni) Jano, of Damascus, Syria. Her mother, Victoria, was the niece of the legendary Badia Massabni, pioneer of belly

dance, innovator of traditional belly dance costume, owner of the famed Casino nightclub of Cairo, Egypt, where notorious belly dancers were showcased, and cinematic actress. Her father, Shaker, was an ethnic Assyrian, of Mardin, Turkey, who had fled the Genocide of Christians from his native homeland with his surviving brother.

At approximately the age of five years, Margaret immigrated to the United States with her parents. She was initially raised in Boston's South End, at 101 Union Park Street, then, as a young woman, resided in Dorchester and Roslindale, MA. As an immigrant who had grown up during the Great Depression, Margaret harbored very fond memories of, and deep gratitude for, the Morgan Memorial Methodist Church and Organization of the South End of Boston, both of which were great supports to her family during those difficult times. She enjoyed the Morgan Memorial Summer camps, where she learned to play the piano by ear, delighted in learning to swim and sail, and later went on to be a summer camp counselor. Margaret also reminisced her appreciation for her very first job as a typist and switchboard operator for this organization.

As a child, Margaret attended the Franklin School, then graduated from Girls High School in Boston. She later went on to graduate from the Burdett School of Business in Boston, where she learned to be an exceptional professional secretary, whether it be for the Director of Nurses at Brigham and Women's Hospital in her earliest years, or as the Secretary to the Principal of Milton High School, just prior to her retirement.

Margaret met her husband, Barsom, when he asked her to dance at Mosely's Nightclub in Boston. They married at The Assyrian Church of the East, in New Britain, CT, and raised their two daughters in Milton, MA. Margaret and Barsom would forge a life together as two solid and grounded parents, raising their daughters with a sense of duty, responsibility, protectiveness, and an ever-present faith in God, that will be forever remembered and appreciated. In their leisure time, Margaret and Barsom enjoyed hosting large dinner parties for their friends, complete with Middle Eastern music, and couples' penny poker gatherings, chatting and laughing 'til the wee hours of the morning, antiquing throughout the Boston area, taking long neighborhood strolls, swimming and basking in the sun at Old Silver Beach, in Falmouth, their most beloved beach, where they would eventually build their dream home and live out the very happiest of years, from 1985 onward.



Margaret was a talented and passionate Middle Eastern cook who created the most savory of dishes with ease and joy in her heart. She came alive at the sound of Middle Eastern music and was a natural dance partner for her husband of forty-six years. She displayed a notable "green thumb", nurturing her every plant and flower with unfailing dedication and care. Margaret displayed a very fine taste in aesthetics, whether they be of the home, antiques, or fashion. She was forever a stylish woman, with a youthful and tasteful wardrobe until the very end. She was passionate about exercise and was dedicated to keeping fit. She and Barsom were members of the Sea Crest Resort Health Club, of Falmouth, for twenty years, where they would swim and exercise daily. Right through to the age of eighty-seven years, Margaret could be seen by her grandchildren exercising on a stationary bicycle for forty-five minute stints.

Margaret will forever be remembered for her glistening smile, her warm, social nature with friends and neighbors, her practical wisdom and sense of duty, her love for travel, with Rome being her favorite destination, her pride in creating a welcoming and beautiful home in which she could create culinary delights and share them with family and friends, her love for feeling the sunshine on her face, her enjoyment of escaping into a great novel, savoring maple walnut ice cream, making blueberry muffins and pancakes for her grandsons, and wearing her signature color, dusty pink.

Margaret is survived by her daughter, Cynthia "Cindy" Marie Hazerjian, her former husband, George G. Hazerjian, and their sons, Jeremy Hazerjian and Joshua Hazerjian, all of Plainville, MA, and her daughter, Lisa A. Kashish, her husband, Brian Assadourian, and their son, Aram Barsom Assadourian, all of Hoboken, NJ. She is also survived by her sister, Alice Naticchioni of Londonderry, NH, and was predeceased by her late sister, Julia Lamb, of Virginia Beach, Virginia. Margaret leaves behind her two dearest friends, for over fifty years, Janice Weisburg, of Waltham, MA, and Janet Nore, of Dover, MA.

Friends and family are cordially invited to honor and remember Margaret by gathering for a Visitation on Monday, March 16, 2020 from 4:00 p.m. until 6:00 p.m. in the "Memorial Chapel" of the Dyer-Lake Funeral Home, 161 Commonwealth Avenue, Village of Attleboro Falls, North Attleboro, MA, and, on Tuesday, March 17, 2020 from 9:00 a.m. until 10:00 a.m. in the "Memorial Chapel" of the Dyer-Lake Funeral Home.

Relatives and friends are cordially invited to attend a Funeral Service on Tuesday, March 17, 2020 at 10:00 a.m. in the "Memorial Chapel" of the Dyer-Lake Funeral Home, 161 Commonwealth Avenue, Village of Attleboro Falls, North Attleboro, MA.

Graveside services will follow the funeral service on Tuesday, March 17, 2020 in Milton Town Cemetery, 211 Centre Street, Milton, MA, at which time Margaret will be laid to rest alongside her dear late husband, Barsom.

In lieu of flowers, donations may be made in memory of Margaret to Morgan Memorial Goodwill Industries, 1010 Harrison Avenue, Boston, MA 02119

For additional information or to send the family a written expression of sympathy, please visit an online guest book at www.dyer-lakefuneralhome.com.

Virtual Assyria: How Assyrian Cooking is Bonding Our Community Online

Interview by Tamara Odisho Benjamin

As a mom and wife of a young family, working and living in Turlock, California, Katrin Shahbaz never imagined that an idea to create an Assyrian Cooking community page on Facebook would turn into a virtual world bonding her Assyrian community together through food.

One evening in April, while sheltering in place with her family because of the Covid-19 pandemic, Katrin, like so many of us, turned to the web for some recipe ideas. While searching for Assyrian cooking pages on Facebook, none turned up. An idea was born, why not create one? The next day she pitched her idea to some friends and with their support, so began the Assyrian Cooking Facebook page. In the short weeks since its creation, she has gained 12,000 followers worldwide; who are sharing recipes, posting pictures, comments, suggestions, asking questions and organically building a cooking army. Katrin says cooking is more of a hobby and doesn't consider herself the "greatest" cook. But having a family inspired her to want to incorporate Assyrian dishes into her family's cooked meals. Creating this page gives her and others interested in Assyrian recipes a home-base to start that journey. All are welcomed, experienced and inexperienced cooks are sharing recipes and encouraging each other.

Katrin's idea is like an Assyrian mom's meal, you set out

to cook for a few, but you end up being able to feed the masses. She's recently added another feature to the page called Daily Discussions. "Every day I ask a question to the group and members share their advice or opinion. One of the more popular ones was when I asked the group what one food they would choose if they could only eat that for the rest of their lives. We got a lot of dolma and booshala answers." One surprising tip Katrin didn't expect was when someone shared using an instant pot, a lot of the Assyrian dishes that traditionally take hours to make can now be made in a fairly short amount of time in an instant pot. I've never used one of these, but I am now in the market for one."

When asked what surprised her most about her followers, Katrin said, "... how open and generous people are with sharing their recipes and being supportive of one another especially when someone has shared a picture of something they made for the very first time using a recipe they got from the group. It's a beautiful thing to see happen within our little virtual community, or Virtual Assyria as some members have referred to it as."

As a young child, Katrin watched and helped her mother cook in the kitchen, her fondest memory is standing on a stool stirring the booshala pot until her arm would get tired and her mother would say it was done. She remembers not only the flavors but the hard work of her



mother preparing holiday meals for her family. Now with her own family, she enjoys inviting her 3 year old daughter Olivia into the kitchen to help her prepare weekend breakfast. "She'll run and grab her stool, put it in front of the stove to stir something which makes me really nervous, but we do just fine. She follows great instructions. While our food is cooking, she'll help me set the table then run and tell her daddy that he needs to come inside because breakfast is ready." When asked how she handles a messy kitchen, Katrin says, "more important than keeping a neat kitchen is the memories that are created while we chop, dice, slice and cook. When Olivia, wants to help mommy cook it would be easier and cleaner to do it without her but the pure joy I see in her face when she cracks open an egg, is worth everything. In the end it isn't the mess we made that will be remembered, it's the wonderful memories we created while we spent quality time together cooking. Although Assyrian food isn't on the menu every day, "it is special to me because it's what I grew up eating and know so well. It takes me back in time as I remember my childhood with my own family, my grandparents and even my cousins. It's also special because I know my ancestors long ago made these same dishes and it feels great to know that a part of them is still alive in us through the foods we share."

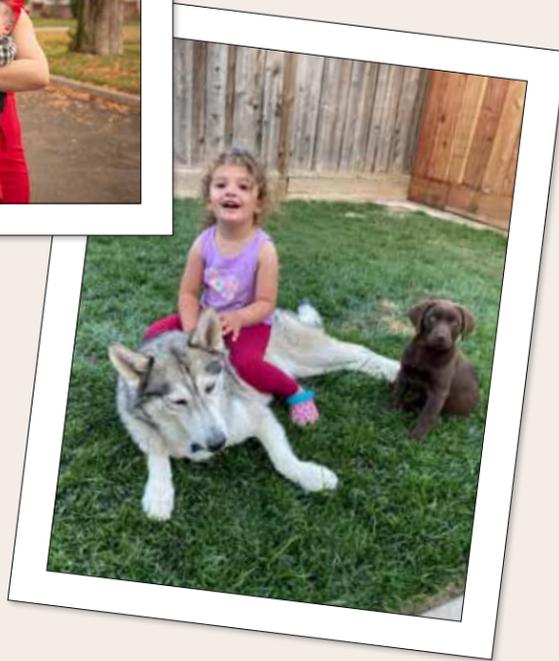
To date the site offers more than 1000 recipes submitted by its members, it has a search index making it easier to search for a recipe. The focus is Assyrian food but recipes from all cuisines are welcomed and encouraged especially as our recipes have been influenced by the local cultures of the region where our people have lived.

Her vision for Assyrian Cooking is for people to come

to the page, search and share recipes. She hopes her members stay engaged, learn from one another for generations to come. Besides the Daily Discussions forum she is also featuring talented Assyrian cooks, chefs, food bloggers and food authors to her site. So far she has featured two members and says others will be highlighted in the coming weeks. Another new segment on her page includes a childhood friend who is a pharmacist, she shares the health benefits of foods, spices, and oils. Members have been very receptive to this new addition, requesting more topics.

Although the page is food related, Katrin began receiving requests from the community to post non-food topics on her page. She was reluctant at first, hoping to keep with the theme of the page. But after some thought, she agreed to open the page. "Our first post was from a young lady in Sydney, Australia who was looking for relatives related to her on her grandmother's side, she had basic information to go off but felt that with such a large audience she could possibly find someone related





taught her family to make was dolma. Shabnam's story won so many of our hearts and soon became one of the most popular posts. I later found out that Shabnam had actually found four people from the group who live in Turlock, CA who are related to her through her grandmother."

Katrin has put a lot of time into the page and wants to set it up so it runs efficiently. She takes so much pride in it, "... I can see it blossoming into something truly beautiful and the positive feedback gives me that much more inspiration to make it a great place for people to feel welcome."

When Katrin is not working on the site or cooking she and her family are caring for their "little petting zoo". They have a 6-year old Siberian Husky named Jax, an 11 week old Chocolate Lab named Bella, two Silkie chickens named Betty and Ellie that lay fresh eggs every day, a rabbit named Pollie and four Gouldian Finches. Her husband is an animal lover and that in passion is growing in Olivia as well. She envisions that her 7month old Noah will be out there chasing after the pets too.

"If you really want to make a friend, go to someone's house and eat with him... The people who give you their food give you their heart."
 – Cesar Chavez

to her in the United States. Another post was from an individual who runs a store in Chicago and who was looking to hire someone to work for them making qemar. They preferred to hire someone Assyrian and felt that with such a large population of members from Chicago they would be successful in filling the position accordingly. The most fascinating story thus far has been of a woman named Shabnam Samuel whose story started with a simple picture and a recipe of cabbage dolma. Shabnam's post explained that she was Indian but had recently learned that her grandmother who they always believed was Russian was actually Assyrian. In 1922, her grandmother met and married her Indian grandfather at the age of 16 at the Red Cross Refugee Camp in Baghdad. She also shared that her grandmother forgot her language and most of her foods but the one dish she always made and

List of Assyrian Foundation of America Donors

The below list includes donations received from 1/01/2020 to 5/31/2020 only!
 Any donations received after 6/31/2020 will be included in the next issue of the Nineveh Magazine.

Thank you for your generosity and support.

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The Love That Understands

In life, truth and reality often collide with each other, because internal frames of reference do not always fit external reference points. Since every person has a distinct level of knowledge, each person's capacity for perception and evaluation is different. A person can only ascribe meaning to the information suited to his own capacity. Perceptions that come from a high level of comprehension are formed, not according to truth, but according to reality. Intentions, and instincts -degenerative or healthy- just as much as complex psychological influences and previously fixed perceptions determine how a new perception is formed. The two expressions: "We see things not according to what they are, but according to what we are," and, the saying "People see what they want to see," express this process of formation beautifully. In this way, two factors create social imbalance and even social alienation: Being misunderstood, or not being understood at all.

As much as these two factors produce stress and spiritual tension in the human organism, there are other factors too: loveness and hatred, which is a version of it, and the negative conditioning which anger imposes. The person however, whose heart beats with love, who understands through love, and has attained love, can save himself in a short time from the power of negative thinking and the effects of these imbalances.

Yusuf Beğtaş
Syriac Language-Culture and Literary Association - Mardin

True Power: the Power of Positive Thinking

The power of positive thinking, which is nourished by the power of love is the true power which makes human beings human, keeps them standing, makes them happy and successful, and secures their development. The love of power can never do these things. According to Syriac culture, love can never go bankrupt in the bank of grace. Love means giving value both to one's self, and to others. It means not doing damage, or hurting, one's self or others. It means developing and growing what is, in every area of life. When true love sets out on a journey, surely respect and sincerity will accompany her.

The famous American writer Gary Zukav explained love as the main ingredient of true power, saying:

"Love is an entity. It is not an emotion or a reaction. You cannot create love, but you can experience it, and when you experience it, it takes you in. You cannot love one person or object more than you do another. Love makes everything, including yourself, precious. It removes all pressures. Love has no borders, conditions, judgements, or hidden agendas. You can turn a flash-light (torch) on or off. You cannot put out the sun. To confuse love with my felt needs, is like confusing my flash-light with the sun. When you love, you and love become inseparable. The love you feel for others and for yourself, become inseparable from each other."

The Lebanese Maronite author Mikahil Naimy (1889-1988), in his work called *The Book of Mirdad*, where he explains *"The Limit of Knowledge and Wisdom"*, describes love with these words:

"Love is not a virtue. Love is a need; like bread and water; like light and air. Let no one feel pride in himself because he loves. But just as you inhale and exhale air, in the same manner, draw love into yourself. No one needs to ascend to the heavens. Love will bring those up to the heavens in whose hearts its values reside. The reward for love is love, and that is enough, just as hatred is the sufficient reward for hatred. Do not reckon the account of love. Love gives no account other than itself. Love is a loan that does not receive repayment nor hold anyone under debt. It does not purchase nor does it sell. But when it gives, it gives all that it has. When it takes, it takes all. In fact, its taking is itself its giving, and its giving, is its taking. So the two are the same today, yesterday, and in the future. Just as the wild river flows into the sea, and is filled with the sea, so you too must flow into love, and be filled by love. The river that does not partake in the richness of the sea is a pool- a stagnant pool."

When the ego, under the influence of internal negotiations, expects a reward, whether material, psychological, or spiritual, for everything it does, the place we thought was a castle can be transformed into sand. And this is a big reason for disappointment, especially in times when traditional approaches to life are worn down, or even when life is sep-

arated into parts. That's why the only possible way to be able to get out of skids, collisions, and traumas through growing, developing and evolving, is to be open to learn from life.

The judgments of the heart trigger disappointments

Traditional or carnal approaches to life are not the most common source of disappointments and problems. More common is rather the generalizing attitude that nurtures stereotypes -that is judgments according to patterns- in the mind. It is a system of definition and evaluation depending upon narrow thought patterns. It is a lack of evaluations deriving from spiritual standards and true knowledge. It is missing compassionate awareness and active altruism.

Traditional approaches motivated by judgments according to patterns in the mind, will flow much easier in all areas (family, education, society, politics, work, management, etc), when they are synthesized with active altruism, spiritual (that is moral and conscientious) values, and new knowledge. Road blocks and difficulties will be overcome with greater ease. Because, when stereotypes (judgments according to patterns in the mind) nurture fixed perceptions in a negative direction, inflame prejudices and solidify negative conditioning, the downside of traditional approaches or attitudes involuntarily increases.

This is why Abraham Maslow (1908-1970), one of the forerunners of humanistic psychology, says, *"To understand is the indispensable rule of love."*

And Albert Einstein (1879-1955) says, *"Everyone loved me, but no one understood me."*

It is true, before loving, we must understand. If loving without understanding is like a building made upon the sand, then loving by understanding is like a building upon bedrock.

Love that understands is like a building erected upon the rocky shore, washed by the current of life, amid the tides flowing between hate and love. Love that understands, knows that victory can only be attained through the divine values of the spirit. In its evaluations love observes this foundational criterion formulated by the evangelist Mark, *"That which defiles a man is not what goes into him, but what comes out from within him"* (Mark 7:18-20); it is not the external appearance, but the inner world that matters.

Just as the Turkish psychologist and author Doğan Cüceloğlu, a master in his field, wrote:

"A mature person who accepts and understands himself does not feel a need to make others accept him; people can be themselves around him and say what they think with ease. A conceited and immature person is always trying to obtain the favor of others and is eager to make others accept his own thoughts and expectations."

If there is vision, then there is guidance

The love that understands fills the inner potholes and smooths out the external bumps in the road of the life of the person who has it. That is why he finds his personhood or identity not in owning, but in being. He moves along according to the conditions of the road. He always behaves carefully, taking precautions. He transforms knowledge into wisdom. He has a vision. And if there is vision, there is guidance, and signs along the road.

In order to catch the love that understands, one must be saved from the effects of the ego and from the pressures of the flesh, while coming under the guidance of spiritual values. Because spirit, which is the opposite of ego, is like a multifaceted crystal, whose substance is love. This crystal is covered in the mud called "ego" or "I". The meaning of life is to clean the mud off of this crystal and to bring the crystal itself, with all of its facets and beautiful shine. As long as it does not shine, it is not possible for love, which is the brilliance of its essence and the high energy of its life, to become visible. Those who can discover their spiritual self, who succeed in cleaning off the mud and shining the essence, are mature human beings. They, by truly being, find their true self. Those who cannot find their spiritual self are those who cannot clean off the mud of the ego. Although they may be adults, they have not grown spiritually. They are childish human beings. This kind of person finds their self by owning things. His evaluations tend to be according to external appearances. He sees originality, freedom, distinctions, and unique qualities as instruments for exploiting and taking advantage of others. To him, this is a form of success. The person who has caught the love that understands, is the human being who knows and understands himself. Even if others are not aware of him, he is aware of himself. Even if he is not known, he knows himself. And though he is not discovered, he has discovered himself. Because he has arrived at his true self, he has been saved from various kinds of ugliness and roughness. Because he has found self-love, self-respect, self-esteem, self-discipline, self-control, and selfconfidence in his inner world, and is a person who is richly equipped within. When he has been misunderstood, or there has been a misunderstanding between persons, in spite of the pressures of the ego and the desires of the flesh, he does not look through the lens of who is right and who is wrong, but rather with an empathetic stance, he eyes developments with the measure of fairness, and continually, earnestly, tries to do what is right and just.

The best trick is to have no trick

In this regard, the winner of a Nobel Peace Prize in Literature, Alexander Solzhenitsyn (1918-2008), writes thus:

"If we do not limit our desires and demands in a definite way, and learn to subject our interests to moral criteria, we, while showing the teeth of the most evil sides of human nature -of humanity- will ourselves be torn in pieces and die."

Here I want to emphasize the sensitivity and vitality of the subject with a quote I will borrow from our respected Turkish author Kemal Sayar:

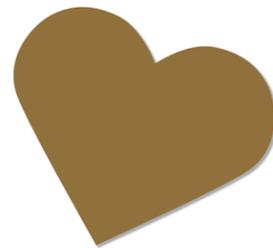
"Only the jewels we carry in our spirits distinguish us from other human beings. Not by acquiring, but by refusing to acquire, we are(or we become) able to attain spiritual satisfaction."

According to this and in the conditions of our day, the best trick is to have no tricks. The best policy is sincerity and honesty. Because sincerity is freedom of the spirit; honesty is the natural condition of authenticity. This awareness is a light that has vital importance in all of the areas of life. This light secures the balance between authenticity and freedom.

People who catch the love that understands should be sure that they will never become bankrupt in the bank of divine grace. The income from their investments at that bank are big. And they, in worldly life -and in a conditions of need- have eternal earnings and advantages that come to their aid in emergencies.

As it is said, *"A human being comes into existence from human beings. Some of them become the object of our hearts and our enthusiasm. And some of them are OUR LOVE THAT UNDERSTANDS. Some are our instructors and teachers. And some are our grief and trouble..."*

Yusuf Beğtaş
Syriac Language-Culture and Literary Association -
Mardin



Great Mystic of the Church of the East: Isaac of Nineveh (7th century)

by Professor Joseph Yacoub

Among the many illustrious mystics that the Church of the East has given, there is one who stands out among the scholars: He is Isaac of Nineveh (a.k.a. Isaac the Syrian).

Who is Isaac of Nineveh?

Born in Bet Qataryé (today's Qatar), on the west coast of the Persian Gulf, in the first half of the 7th century, Isaac was noticed by Patriarch Gewargis I (658-680), during a pastoral visit to Qatar. He became a monk at the monastery of Bet 'Abé, then bishop of Nineveh around 663, the city to which he owes part of his name. Averse to the administration, he quickly withdrew, leading a hermit's life at Mount Matout in Beth Houzayé. He authored numerous speeches and letters which are distinguished by their depth of thought, richness of vocabulary, and stylistic elegance in the Syriac language. From the start, his writings were commented and translated into Arabic, Ethiopian, Greek and Latin, and later into French, German, Italian, English and Russian. His reputation was universal and his works influenced the Greeks, the Orthodox Slavs and the Latins. The great Syriacist Father Jean-Baptiste Chabot devoted his thesis to him in Latin in 1892 and mentioned Isaac in his works which dealt with Aramaic-Syriac literature. The Assyro-Chaldean Lazarist scholar Paul Bedjan published in the Syriac language an 82 chapter book entitled *Ascetic Life* (to which we refer here). Among other things, his book was based on a manuscript on parchment, found in the Hakkari mountains in 1235 (written in Waltou and completed in Tiari) from where he came, because he considered this work to be "the most complete and the most authentic". P. Bedjan had in fact brought in several manuscripts for this reason (from Séert, Alqosh, Mardin, Mosul...). Concerned with rectifying historical errors, Badjan writes, in French, in his foreword: "Much has been said about Isaac of Nineveh; many mistakes have been made about him."

What are his contributions?

Isaac of Nineveh wrote and meditated on the love of knowledge, the mercy of God's love, the passions, the corruption of the world and the need to withdraw from it, human weakness, the importance of prayer, self-knowledge, sorrow of the body, death, power,

call to life asceticism and the apology of silence. The theme of contemplation of the mystery of the cross and its cult is also present in his works.

On the need to withdraw from the world, here is what he wrote: "Remove yourself from the world, then you will know its foul odor. Because if you do not get away, you will not learn anything. Rather, you will put on its infection like a perfume, and you will mistake the nakedness of your shame for a veil of glory. Humility is not of this world."

Regarding human frailty, he writes: "Blessed is the man who knows his own weakness. For this knowledge is his foundation, the root, the principle of all goodness. It is therefore important for him to know himself, because 'To he who knows himself is given the knowledge of everything'". As for the penalty of the body, he wrote: "Consider that every virtue accomplished without the punishment of the body is like a soulless abortion". "Remember your death," he repeats, "Fear of God is the pinnacle of virtue".

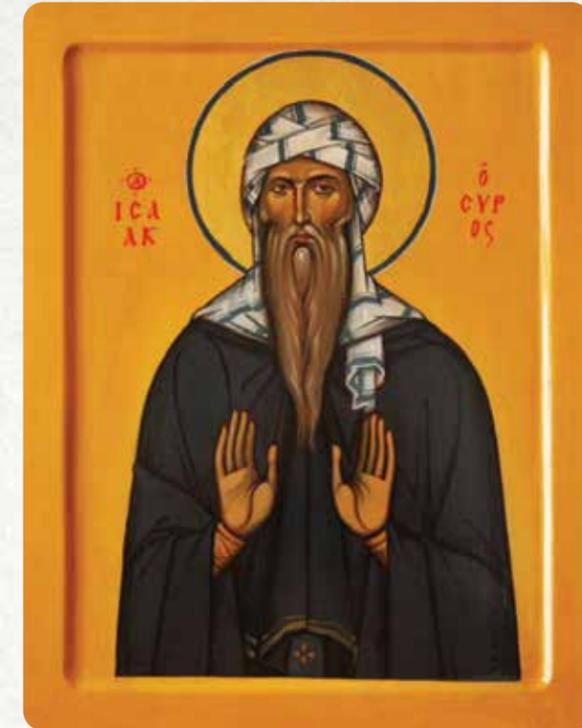
Be attentive to power and its temptations, it calls for obedience, but while keeping its distance: "Submit to Princes and those who rule, but avoid mixing with them. Therein is a trap that leads to perdition for those who are not attentive to it."

On the necessity of silence (shitqa in Syriac), he writes: "Love silence more than all things: it will bring you close to the fruit of which the

tongue is incapable of speaking. At the beginning, we force our souls to be silent; then it is from silence itself that is born something that attracts us to this silence. May God allow us to feel that which is born of silence".

What is purity, according to him? "A compassionate heart that burns for all creatures and all that exists," he replies. And on perfection: "It is the depth of humility and the abandonment of all that is visible and invisible."

Compassion, humility, love of the human race, purity and perfection are key concepts in the philosophy of this mystic known and renowned around the world.



St Isaac of Nineveh
(Also known as St Isaac the Syrian)



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Translated from French by
Elizabeth Mickailly-Huber, Ph.D.

The Kurdish Role in the Armenian and Assyrian Genocide

By Abdulmesih BarAbraham

To address the historically still debated issue, the extent of the participation and responsibility of the Kurds in the genocide of the Armenian [and Assyrians], Fırat Aydınkaya, lawyer and writer, published on April 18, 2020 an article under the title “The Armenian Genocide and the Kurds in Eight Questions”. [1]

Originally published on nuptal.net, the article triggered a discussion among Kurds on social media with support and criticism. The conservative circles blame Aydınkaya for portraying the “innocent” Kurds as the prime perpetrators of the massacre, ignoring the role of the Young Turks İttihat ve Terakki Cemiyeti (Committee of Union and Progress - CUP) as truly responsible for the genocide. Liberal and leftist Kurds seem to support the view that the Kurds had also participated in the genocide under the orders of local political and religious authorities and should face history.

Of course, Aydınkaya is not the first Kurdish intellectual to openly acknowledge that the Kurds participated in the genocide. And it is not clear to what extent Kurdish political parties endorse this view and include it into their political actions, be it in Turkey, northern Iraq or in northern Syria.

Assyrian media critically discussed Aydınkaya’s initial article in a short interview by AssyriaTV with the political analyst Ibrahim Seven. Pointing to the fact that Aydınkaya failed to mention Assyrians, his article has been seen as tactically and politically motivated. As the recognition of the Armenian, Greek and Assyrian genocide was accepted last year by the US House of Representatives, Kurds cannot hide behind the Turkish denial any more.[2] It has been further argued that Aydınkaya too often refers to Kurdistan, where he should have said Armenistan or northern Mesopotamia.

As a follow-up and reply to the Web-based discussions, a two-part interview of Aydınkaya by Ferda Balancat appeared in the Armenian newspaper Agos, on May 10, 2020 [3] and May 17, 2020 [4].

Indeed, what is striking at first glance, is, that Aydınkaya does not mention Assyrians at all as co-victims along with the Armenians in the genocide, even though as one of the former lawyers of Abdullah Öcalan he is certainly aware that Öcalan has mentioned Assyrians in various statements related to the genocide of 1915. For instance, in 2014 in a letter from the prison he stated, that the events of World War One, resulted “in a large physical and cultural elimination of Armenians and Assyrians, heirs to millennial cultures” in the region. As a person educated in Kurdish politics, Aydınkaya also knows that in April 1995, the Kurdish Parliament in Exile recognized the genocide against Armenians and Assyrians while stating that

“on April 24, 1915, the Ottoman administrators began a policy of annihilating the Armenians and the Assyrians. This was a plan long in the making, meticulously carried out with the aid of some tribal Kurds who were organized into an auxiliary force, the ‘Hamidiye Alaylari’ or Hamidiye Brigades, of the Istanbul government...In that singular act of brutality at the turn of the century, millions of Armenians, Assyrians,” were murdered.[5]

At the latest, when Aydınkaya mentions the ‘Nestorians’ as the victim of the Bedir Khan massacres, it should have become clear to him that hundreds of thousands of Assyrians were also killed by Kurds during the genocide as well. In the spirit of promoting good neighborhood, and honestly facing history, the inclusion of the Assyrians would have been important because today more Assyrians live as neighbors of the Kurds in the south-east region of Anatolia than Armenians.

Independently, the argumentation set forth by Aydınkaya relates very much to the Assyrians as well, who prior to 1915 lived in regions partially dominated by Kurds. Yet, regardless his silence about the Assyrian fate, Aydınkaya’s article deserves some attention, as he convincingly counters some usual apology statements many Kurdish intellectuals put forward when it comes to genocide.

Aydınkaya makes use of concepts such as “plunder militarism,” “booty economy,” and “genocide bureaucracy,” that help understand the role and motivation of the Kurds. He lists several well known Kurdish notables among the provincial organizers of the killings, or as he describes it, “the machine that made the genocide possible.” In an article discussing Aydınkaya statements and reaction to them, the Journalist Feyzi Çelik elaborates further on Aydınkaya’s concept of “genocide bureaucracy”[6]:

“Bureaucracy means an organization created by the political decision of the official Turkish state. This has been studied and made into a state decision. As it is known, at the beginning of the 19th century, a centralized administrative structure based on provinces was established to protect the multinational empire from nationalist influences. The main body of the holocaust genocide bureaucracy was created within the framework of this administrative system. The governors in the cities and provincial districts were the natural leaders of this bureaucracy. They also had local feet. According to the time, and unlike other nations within the empire, the Kurds saw themselves as part of the Islamic community of the Ottoman state. They were attached to the caliph.”

Çelik concludes that very often Kurds refer to Kurdish-Turkish relations, Turkish-Kurdish brotherhood, Turkish-Kurdish destiny on context of Malazgirt (1071) and the Liberation Wars

of 1920. He argues, that this fraternity should not be limited to good things, and implies that this tradition of historical unity requires “an acknowledgment that bad things were done together” as well.

Aydınkaya’s Questions and Answers

At the core of his statements and related to Question 1, Fırat Aydınkaya affirms that “while the genocide or deportation decisions were taken [by the CUP], the opinion and approval of the Kurds were not taken. In other words, Kurds have no involvement in the decision of genocide. However, while the decision was taken in the field, a significant portion of the Kurds were involved in this shameful crime.”

Assyrians like Armenians lived mostly in the countryside and in remote areas such as Tur Abdin, and in the Bohtan-Region stretching out to the Hakkari mountains. If there was no Kurdish participation in the region, “probably only the people of the city centers and locations close to city center would have been killed,” continues Aydınkaya. According to him, “the mobilization of a significant part of the population” determined the fate of the Armenians - and that of the Assyrians too. “For this reason, and as of 1918, we cannot only explain the absence of a single Armenian in the Kurdish-Armenian hinterland only with the huge crime of the state authorities. The central authority did not have the opportunity and ability to massacre the Armenians who took refuge in the mountains of Kurdistan,” he adds.

Answering Question 2 Aydınkaya turns to the argument often put forward, whether a “Kurdish will” existed that decided on behalf of them to participate, while in Question 3 the author lists key motivators that sent the Kurds to participate in the massacres. Among them he mentions the class-related resentments, Muslim-nationism, Kurdishness and the Dhimmi issue.

The attitude of the Kurdish press and Kurdish intellectuals is critically discussed in Question 4. And in answer to Question 5 Aydınkaya counters the claim that the massacres were the natural result of the war. In relation to Question 6 the author elaborates on the phenomenon of ignorance frequently put forward by leaders of Kurdish public opinion when the topic of genocide comes to the agenda, saying “Kurds have been deceived by the state”. In answering Question 7 he counters essentialist interpretations that by saying “the Kurds participated in the Armenian genocide,” puts the blame of the genocide on the Kurds before the state. Answer 8 deals with the attitude of Kurdish politics and its actors towards the genocide and apologies to the victims. Here too, Aydınkaya misses to provide “some good-intentioned gestures at a symbolic level” to the Assyrians as well.

As mentioned, being a lawyer, Aydınkaya argues almost in legal manner for the Kurdish case. He pleads guilty for his accused “client” participating in the crime of the genocide. However, due to lack of formalized central institutional structures, as he argues, he advocates mitigating circumstances for his client. Such argument is certainly not sufficient to morally absolve the Kurds from their criminal participation in the

genocide, which he describes as “an extraordinary action, a procedural event, and totalitarian.” Aydınkaya also provides a number of arguments that support the fact of religiously promoted lower/base motives, such as “plunder militarism,” or “the rightful booty” which further underline the idea of deliberate complicity in mass murder. Also cited as motivation is the “ideology of Islam” and “booty economy” coupled with historically founded nationalistic motivation of the takeover of a geographic region after the annihilation of its owners. With respect to the latter, Aydınkaya criticizes the attitude of Kurdish intellectuals in the early phases of emergence of Kurdish nationalism.

In this short review it is not possible to elaborate on the role of the various Kurdish notables Aydınkaya mentioned in his article. Scholarly research has to deal with that. But his article is also remarkable for its omissions of the description of the role of Ziya Gökalp, for instance, who was the nephew of Arif Piriñçizade and the cousin of Feyzi Bey. According to Professor Joost Jongerden, expert on Kurdish issues, they “played a significant role in both local and state politics, not only in the province of Diyarbakir. Ziya Gökalp became a leading figure in the local branch and the central committee of the Committee of Union and Progress.” Gökalp became later recognized as the most influential Turkish nationalist thinker and writer. Feyzi Piriñçizade would become later Minister of Public Works in three different governments of Turkey.

Aydınkaya’s Questions have been translated below, along with those portions of his original answers pertinent to an Assyrian analysis. For the original Turkish version see here [1]:

Question- 1: Did the Kurds participate in the Armenian genocide, who participated, and how did the Kurds take a stand apart from some known Tribes?

Today, we have sufficient information and evidence that a significant part of the Kurds, which should not be underestimated, participated in the genocide. Particularly, it is evident that in many places where there was a deadly tension between Armenians and Kurds, in locations close to the war, the Kurds, who resided in the tribal regions dominated the relocation routes, and participated in this... Of course Kurds’ opinion and approval were not sought while genocide or deportation decisions were taken. In other words, Kurds have no involvement in the formulation of the genocide. But, while the decision was taken in the field, a significant portion of the Kurds were involved in this shameful crime.

However, we also need to talk about the “genocide bureaucracy” as a machine that made the genocide possible. The question of where the Kurds were located in this bureaucratic chain is important. It is clear that the scale of the presence of Kurds in the upper and middle ranks of the chain in the countryside is an undisputed reality.

Sabit Bey, the governor Harput, Feyzi Piriñçizade, the provincial organizer of Diyarbakir-Mardin genocides, Mustafa Cemilpaşazade, the organizer of Muş, and Hodja İlyas Sami should be mentioned here. In other words, while implementing of the genocide decisions from decision into action, important people of the provincial organizers of the genocide bureaucracy were drawn from the Kurds.

In short, the Kurds were not present at the central decision meetings on which the genocide decision was taken against Armenians. However, while the genocide was being carried out in Kurdistan, there were quite many in the Investigation Commission, which was established in the cities and carried out the planning, transport, and the management of the genocide. We know that the Investigation Commission were established in all the major centers and this institution worked very effectively.

In summary, and through the Investigation Commission, the Kurds have formed the local bureaucracy part of the genocide in most places. This tells us at least two things. First, if no collaboration would have existed in Kurdistan, the decision would not have been so flawless. Secondly, the presence of these collaborators in the provincial centers easily manipulated the public's attitude and stance on this issue. For example, Feyzi Bey managed to do this in the Diyarbakır-Mardin country, Hacı Bedir Ağa along the Malatya-Adıyaman route, Gulo Ağa along the Erzincan-Dersim-Sivas line, Hoca İlyas Sami in the Muş-Bitlis region, and Sabit Bey in the Harput-Dersim-Erzincan provinces while using their local connections....

As of 1918, the total absence of Armenians in the Kurdish-Armenian hinterland cannot be explained with the huge crime of the central [state] authorities only. [without the support of the Kurds] The central authority did not have the opportunity and ability to massacre the Armenians who took refuge in the mountains of Kurdistan.

Therefore, if there was no Kurdish participation in Kurdistan, probably only the people of the city centers and locations close to city center would have been killed. The main Armenian population lived in the country-side and the majority of those in the country could not be harmed. That is why the mobilization of a significant part of the population in Kurdistan has determined the fate of the Armenians

Question -2: In context of the genocide there are also important objections. For example, according to some people who interpret what you say, "the thesis that the Kurds participated in the genocide as a people is baseless and excessive, because during the mentioned period it cannot be said that a 'Kurdish will' existed which decided on behalf of them."

Yes, this counter claim is often voiced. Considering those who developed this counter-argument, there was no central will that represented the Kurds at the time; in other words: if there is no decision-making will, the action should be ignored by itself, meaning they voice an apology. Clearly, this pattern of reasoning seems to me very problematic....

Secondly, of course, I am not saying that the Kurds all came together and decided that "let's kill the Armenians".

Finally, genocide is already an extraordinary action, the event is procedural, totalitarian, fragmented and anonymous. Hence, this huge death machine cannot be explained by just mentioning the names of several tribes. If we talk in the context of actor tradition and in order for the tribes to massacre the most people in Kurdistan, conduct a genocide, more than tribe a is required.

Question -3: Who were the agents that sent the Kurds to this massacre, can you list them in order of importance?

Of course, class issue is the most important reason for me. A class-like resentment was at work, which Fanon described, saying that "in colonies the economic infrastructure is also superstructure". I believe that the culture of plundering among the Kurds was the main actor that motivated this business....

In the second place, the Muslim nationalism, which the state and sheikhs considered as a doctrine, was the most important theological-political instrument. The Kurdish provinces and places that the sheikhs were ruling had both the idea of ensuring that by killing the Armenians they would go to heaven in the other world, while they 'deserved' to loot Armenian property from within the religious tradition.

In other words, when we dig a bit into Muslim nationalism, we will see "booty economic" pure and simple. Thirdly, popular Kurdish sentiments had been asking for the punishment of the Armenians somehow since some time.

For a long time common sentiment was the Armenians "were getting richer, modern, claiming positive rights." According to this view, this new situation was canceling the implied contract between Kurds and Armenians in the provinces. The verbal norm of the Kurdish-Armenian hinterland was shaped on the basis of an unequal hierarchy through the patronage of the Kurds and the nature of the Armenians in need of protection...Islam called it the law of Dhimmi. While Kurdish aristocrats certainly did not want to be equalized with Armenians whom they saw as Dhimmi, Kurdish sheikhs also saw the demand for Muslim-Christian equality as a violation of the law of immorality. For this reason, according to them, punishment was mandatory.

The fourth reason was to some extent related to Kurdishness. The idea of establishing a Russian-backed Armenia in the region, which was considered as the old Kurdistan, had prompted Kurdish intellectuals to vigilance.

Question- 4: What was the attitude of the Kurdish press and Kurdish intellectuals, or more precisely, those who represented Kurdishness during the genocide?

Let's start with the Kurdish intellectuals. ... We do not know exactly what the Kurdish intellectuals thought of the Kurdish participation in the genocide. Because, as if a common decision was taken, almost nobody talked about it in detail...

To be more specific, they thought that Armenians deserved a lesson that they could not forget. Let me just give two examples. Salih Bedirhan, one of the authors of the publishing of Rojî Kurd at that time, used the term "internal enemy" for Armenians by resorting to the cruel discourse of the Unionists at that time....

Kurdish intellectuals were very pleased with the De-Armenianisation of the Kurdish-Armenian hinterland. Even those like Nuri Dersimi were going so far as to say that the Armenians were massacring the Kurds.

Question -5: There are many who claim that the massacres you mention are the natural result of the war. What do say?

No, absolutely not. For one thing, this was not a war between Kurds and Armenians, namely the two peoples, on the war front. In addition, those who were murdered were not killed on the battlefield, but in the barn, the plain, the village, and their houses without weapons. Villages were burned, women and children were burned in stables, old and vulnerable men were thrown from the rocks.

In other words, the vast majority of those who were murdered had no relation with the war anyway, and a significant number of them were already killed far away from the war front. Let's not count the city of Van, which experienced an inner-city war. While the genocide was taking place, what had Muş, Bitlis, Siirt, Diyarbakır, Mardin, Urfa, Harput, Erzincan, Adıyaman to do with the war front?...

Question - 6: The leaders of the Kurdish public opinion frequently draw attention to the phenomenon of ignorance, by saying "Kurds are deceived by the state" when these issues come to the agenda.

When it comes to Kurdish-Armenian massacres, the editorial of the Kurdistan Newspaper first introduced the discourse of ignorance. Later, Kurdish intellectuals like Cegerxwîn and finally politicians like Ahmet Türk reproduced this "useful" rational. ...

It is necessary here to ask the question of what it is what they did not know. Is killing a person, burning a people in stables, and destroying a people, something related to consciousness? Besides that, only the ignorant kills? Therefore, "literature of ignorance" is a kind of empathy doctrine, a kind of laundering document that says "understand the Kurds involved in the incidents." However, for the vast majority of Kurds who participated in pogrom and genocide, especially the Hamidiye Kurds, it is more correct to say that "they knew, and precisely therefore they did it." Those who did this work were fond of the thought that killing Armenians would bring them prestige in the community, power before other tribes, acceptance before the state, seizure to the land and surplus value, to share ownership relations and finally have the means of production.

Question – 7: On a historical scale in which the state persistently denies genocide, there are those who claim that your findings that "Kurds participated in the Armenian genocide" imposes the preponderant weight of the genocide on the Kurds rather than on the state; how do you respond to such a comment?

Yes, this is a common assertion. But this is essentially a sterile denial, a way of obfuscating the subject. Many also think that discussing this issue in this way "stigmatizes" the Kurdishness. No, it is not so, it should not be perceived as such. ... If Kurdishness (some of our friends call it feudal Kurdish nationalism) has made a fatal mistake in the early phase of its formation, if a wrong has been committed, it is best to face it sincerely instead of covering it up...Let's face it, not only the state but also the Kurds and Kurdishness had an "Armenian problem"....Since the reign of Sheikh Ubeydullah, "the Armenian state will be established" has been provoking the Kurdish political public. This is reality, we can't ignore it.

Moreover, the only sin of the Kurdishness during the early phase of its formation was not only the participation in the Armenian massacres. We have to admit that a cycle of massacre, which began with

the Bedirxan Bey killing tens of thousands of Nestorian [Assyrians], accompanied the political period of the emergence of Kurdishness.

Most of us think that "the victim will not have a victim" or "the oppressed will not have the oppressed". In other words, throughout history "who suffered injustice, murdered; doesn't do injustice, does not kill." I can understand the innocent and moral nature of this thought, but this healing thought is both unhistorical and highly essentialist....

For Example: Some of the Cemilpaşazades, who had moved Kurdishness to a certain extent, among them Feyzi Pirinçizade, Xoytili Musa Bey, Kör Huseyin Pasha played active roles in the genocide. Let's not forget that just before the genocide, we know that the Kurdish Support and Progress Association (Kürt Teavün Terakki Cemiyeti), under the leadership of Seyyid Abdülkadir, acted as bondsman to the Pirinçizades in the Diyarbakır elections, attended a meeting of Hevi, the first youth organization of Feyzi Pirinçizade, and made a speech there.

Let's face it, anti-Armenianism was evident in the founding of Kurdishness. It is time to come to terms with this.

Question - 8: Kurdish political actors have made statements about the victims of genocide and made apologies. How do you see the attitude of Kurdish politics towards genocide?

To make a comparison: it is certain that we are far ahead of the state and the Turkish people. Kurds can empathize with the Armenians because we have gone through the massacre that Armenians have gone through.

This empathy, however, often pays off in a technical and pragmatist context. As long as this happens, there are often problems in the language of empathy. The Kurdish right, for example, thinks that the Armenians killed the Kurds and that the Kurds responded in the context of protecting themselves.

Kurdish conservatives consider what was done to the Armenians as an inevitable consequence of the war, but see the act partially inhuman. Kurdish leftists accept the genocide discourse, but they think that Kurdish feudalism, not the Kurds, is the sinner. The mainstream Kurdish policy admits that it is not genocide....However, what needs to be done is simple, sincere acceptance of genocide and at least some well-intentioned gestures at a symbolic level.

- [1] <https://nupel.net/firat-aydinkaya-8-soruda-kurtler-ve-ermeni-soykirimi-85131h.html>
- [2] <http://www.aina.org/news/20191029181758.htm>, and <http://www.aina.org/news/20191212151200.htm>
- [3] <http://www.agos.com.tr/tr/yazi/24009/kurtler-arasindaki-sessizlik-suikasti-onemli-olcude-kirildi>
- [4] <http://www.agos.com.tr/tr/yazi/24038/kurt-sagi-turk-saginin-ideolojik-refakatcisi-gorunumu-veriyor>
- [5] <http://www.aina.org/releases/parexile.htm>
- [6] <https://www.gazeteduvar.com.tr/forum/2020/04/25/firat-aydinkayanin-kurtler-ve-ermeni-soykirimi-yazisi-uzerine/>

HOT OFF THE PRESS!!!

API Publishes Report on Future Security of the Nineveh Plain

by Elizabeth Mickaily-Huber, Ph.D.

On June 4, 2020, the Assyrian Policy Institute (API) hosted a webinar to discuss the current state of protection of the Nineveh Plain in Iraq following the destruction and havoc wreaked by ISIS. The discussion panel was comprised of Reine Hanna, co-founder and director of the API, Dr. Michael Youash, Board Member of the Nineveh Plain Defense Fund and expert on security of the Nineveh Plain, and Dr. Greg Kruzak, Assistant Professor of Political Science and International Affairs at Penn State University. Many topics were discussed during the webinar, including details of a recently published report. The essential conclusion of the report is that the highest rate of return of Assyrians and other local minority groups to the Nineveh Plain region post-ISIS is in territories protected by the Nineveh Plain Protection Units, also known under the acronym NPU.

Physical and political violence against Assyrians in Iraq has fostered mistrust in the Iraqi Central Government and the Kurdistan Regional Government. However, NPU-protected zones have seen the highest rates of return among Christian Assyrians in the Nineveh Plain region. Although the NPU has limited means, its soldiers' cultural connections to the local communities provide a strong sense of reassurance. Contrarily, towns controlled by Kurdish Peshmerga have seen comparably low rates of return. By the same token, Iranian-backed PMF forces, accused of human rights abuses as well as intimidation tactics and criminal activities, have precluded the return of Assyrians to their homes. According to the report, there is an estimated 3.5 million ethnic Assyrians worldwide with only 200,000 remaining in Iraq. All individuals interested in the future of Assyrians in their native homeland and their security are urged to read the entire report that can be found by following this link:

<https://www.assyrianpolicy.org/contested-control>



An NPU soldier in Alqosh. (May 2020)
Image Courtesy of Faris L. Jamma

REFLECTIONS ON KHABUR AND TELL-GORAN, SYRIA: By Dr. Nicholas Al-Jeloo

I found this video clip quite by chance, and it brought me to tears when I realized that, for the most part, it shows drone footage of my family's village – Tell-Goran – on the Khabur River in Syria's al-Hasakah province.

Like the other Assyrian villages on the Khabur, Tell-Goran was founded in 1935 by refugees who fled the Simmel Massacre perpetrated by the Iraqi government in August 1933, and in which their villages there had been razed to the ground.

Those who built and settled the village originally hailed from the Jilu district of the Hakkari highlands, where they had lived before 1915. Most of these came from the village of Nahra, but there were also families living there who came from Alsan, Telana and Mata d-Mar Zaya.

My paternal grandfather's family was thus separated. While he, his siblings and three of their first cousins, remained in Iraq, the rest of the clan – Be-Gulawi – all departed for Syria, starting new lives in Tell-Goran.

The pride of the village was the church of St. Zaya, which was the focus of the village feast every year on September 13, and a site of local pilgrimage for all Assyrians from the Khabur villages. The traditional mud-brick structure originally built in 1935 was kept as a shrine after a larger, new church was built to replace its function between 2005 and 2010. The village also had a tiny primary school and possessed an archaeological mound after which it was named.

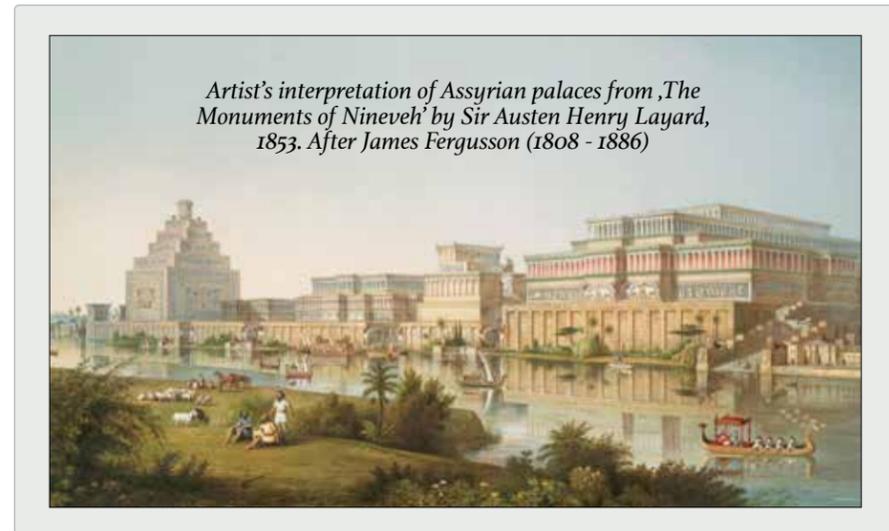
In 1940, Tell-Goran had a population of 184, and this diminished by 1994 to 168 inhabitants, as many of them had left to seek work in other parts of the country, or had emigrated to Europe and the United States. In 2002, when I first visited my relatives there in order to complete our family tree, it had a population of between 130 and 150 people (15-20 households). I fell in love with the place and with my extended family members, and returned again in 2006, 2007, 2009 and 2010.

I have very fond memories from this place, and from the mud-brick houses of my cousins in which I slept, and on the wooden summer beds outside in a "gallabiyah," taking in the fresh, cool air. I especially loved it when I would surprise my cousins by arriving by taxi straight from the al-Hasakah bus station, especially for the village feast. I miss having everyone there, spending time with each other, during the happy times and even the sad. It breaks my heart that this will probably never happen again.

On 23 February 2015, this was one of the villages which was attacked and whose remaining 21 inhabitants were taken hostage by ISIS. Their captivity luckily wasn't to last for long and on March 1 and 3 they were the first batch to be released by the terrorists, on the condition that they didn't return to the village. This effectively ended 80 years of Assyrian settlement there.

For a long time, only a couple of people dared defy their order, but they were again prevented, this time by the Kurdish terrorists of the YPG, who were using the village for a long time as a military training ground. Currently, the village, once full of life, lies abandoned with its brand-new church of St. Zaya, which was only opened in 2010, an empty shell.

Within the space of 100 years, the Assyrians of this, and all the other Khabur villages, became refugees for a fourth time – from 1915 to 1918, then 1933, and finally in 2015 – and with each displacement, more separation, dispersal and loss. **May God have mercy on this poor nation, that's all I will say.**



Artist's interpretation of Assyrian palaces from 'The Monuments of Nineveh' by Sir Austen Henry Layard, 1853. After James Fergusson (1808 - 1886)

Historical city travel guide: Nineveh, 7th century BC

Journey back over 2,600 years with curator Gareth Brereton as we visit the Assyrian capital city of Nineveh. Discover the sights, shopping destinations, entertainment and local delicacies not to be missed (and the areas to steer clear of).

Location

The city of Nineveh has recently undergone extensive development to become the new capital of the mighty Assyrian empire. It is now a vast metropolis surrounded by massive walls some 12 kilometres in length that encompass an area of 750 hectares (7.5km²) in size. While official statistics on the population of Nineveh are not available, it reportedly takes three days to cross the city.

This cosmopolitan city is located on the eastern bank of the River Tigris at the intersection of the road which connects the highlands of the north with the prosperous lands of Babylonia and Chaldea in the south.

A veritable paradise on earth, the fertile lands surrounding Nineveh are perfect for growing the huge volumes of staple crops such as wheat and barley needed to feed the population of this colossal city. Benefitting from plentiful rainfall, the city is also situated where the River Khosr meets the River Tigris, which guarantees an abundant supply of water. A monumental aqueduct brings water over a vast distance to feed the city's network of canals. Upstream from the city you will find orchards planted with vines, fruit trees and olive groves.



Relief showing orchards and gardens watered by an aqueduct and how the reliefs would have been originally coloured.

When to Visit

The summer months in Assyria are ferociously hot and are best avoided. Winters are often very wet and the city is transformed into a quagmire. The best times to visit are autumn and spring, when the city has warm days with cool mornings and evenings.

Getting There

By River

Travelling from the north, the city can be easily reached via the River Tigris using the quppu ferry service, a local round-boat woven from bundles of reeds and waterproofed with bitumen. If travelling by river from the south expect a longer journey as you sail against the flow of the river. Most quppus dock in the city quay.

Overland

Thanks to the Assyria royal road network, travelling to the city on donkey or mule is quick and convenient. Major routes include the north-south road from the foothills of the Taurus Mountains down to Babylonia, and the east-west road from the Zagros Mountains to the Levantine coast. Accommodation and food stalls are plentiful along the major routes. Government officials with an appropriate authorisation will be able to stay at the posting stations which can be found every 20-30 km along all major routes.



Relief showing a mule carrying equipment for a hunt. Assyrian, 645-640 BC

Getting Around

While Nineveh is huge, it is still possible to reach most destinations on foot. Should you wish to travel by donkey or mule, there are numerous rental places throughout the city. Nineveh and its surrounding area is famous for its network of canals so make sure you take a ride in a quppu boat or one of the local gondolas.

Things To See And Do

The City Walls And Gates

On reaching the city you will be amazed by its massive walls and the 18 city gates, which are flanked with colossal human-headed bulls carved from blocks of gypsum alabaster. They are known locally as lamassu and are believed to prevent evil forces from entering the city.

The 'Palace Without Rival'

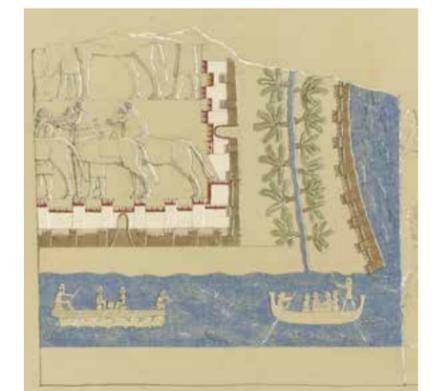
This fabulous palace was built by King Sennacherib at the turn of the century to be a wonder for all people and is not to be missed. Its name, the 'Palace Without Rival', is well deserved, as it covers around 500m x 250m and is situated on a high terrace overlooking the city. The exterior facades of the palace are made from tens of thousands of baked bricks erected on a foundation of limestone blocks which are faced with polished white plaster and capped with blue-glazed bricks. Huge doors of cedar wood are adorned with decorated shiny copper bands while the arches and copings are adorned with colourful glazed tiles.

The palace is formed of several large paved courtyards surrounded by suites of rooms and corridors. Be sure to look out for some of the cast bronze columns with bases in the form of fierce lions. A technological marvel! Visit the in-vogue bit-hilani room, said to be a perfect replica of a Hittite palace.

Should you be lucky enough to visit the throne room you will be greeted by a towered facade with three entrances flanked by colossal human-headed winged bulls. Beyond the throne room you will find the administrative, ceremonial and domestic quarters of the palace, but these are definitely off limits to visitors.



Sculpture of a winged bull (lamassu) from the Assyrian city of Nimrud. 865-860 BC.



Drawing of a relief showing city walls. Assyrian, 645-640 BC.

Grander rooms in the palace are decorated with stone wall panels carved with narrative scenes and protective magical figures, all of which are brilliantly coloured. It is said that if the reliefs were all placed together, they would extend for a length of 3km!

The Botanical Gardens

The famous gardens of Nineveh are a must for any plant and animal lover. The terraced palace gardens are said to be a replica of Mount Amanus (Ed. in modern-day Turkey) and feature all kinds of aromatic plants and fruit trees. Just outside of the city are botanical gardens with a unique collection of aromatic trees from the land of Hatti (Ed. in modern-day Turkey), fruit trees, and trees from the mountains and the lands of Chaldea (Ed. in the south of modern-day Iraq). The gardens are watered by an intricate network of canals. In the game reserves you will find wild boar, roe deer, and if you're lucky, you might even spot a lion! The garden shop is well stocked with flowers from across the empire, as well as a wide variety of cooking herbs and medicinal plants.

The Ziggurat

This massive temple tower stands proudly on the citadel mound and can be seen from all corners of the city. The tower features successive receding stories accessible by a series of steep stairways. It is built from a core of sun-baked bricks faced with fired bricks that are glazed in different colours. Sadly, the ziggurat is closed to general visitors and only accessible to the priesthood, so you will need to admire its grandeur from afar.

Temple Of Ishtar

Dedicated to Ishtar of Nineveh, the goddess of warfare and passion, this temple complex has stood in the same place for over a thousand years. The nearby temple of Nabu is dedicated to the god of literature, scribes and wisdom. Both sanctuaries are notable for their facades of colourful glazed tiles and bricks, interior rooms lined with carved stone wall panels and numerous rich embellishments of gold and silver.

Entertainment

Festivals

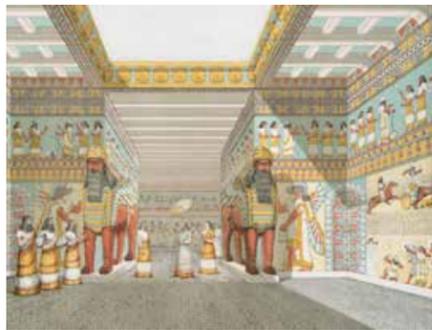
Nineveh's busy cultic calendar sees citywide festivals take place throughout the year. A must for any visitor, these colourful events are a time when the city's devout populace take to the streets to enjoy the festivities and to receive fresh bread, beer, and honey cakes (delicious!).

Lion Hunts

Nineveh is famous for the spectacular and brutal lion hunts that take place in the game parks located outside the city. By combining sport, ritual and theatre, the Assyrian kings publicly display their valour and military skill as they slay ferocious lions from their battle chariots. The best spot to view the action is the hill beside the hunting grounds – get there early to beat the crowds.

Recitals

Don't miss the weekly shows of the Epic of Gilgamesh, performed by dancers and acrobats acting out the hero's adventures, and the monthly recitals of the Epic of Creation, with the Assyrian state god Ashur as the lead role.



Artist's impression of a hall in an Assyrian palace from *The Monuments of Nineveh* by Sir Austen Henry Layard, 1853.



Carved panel depicting a lion and lioness relaxing in a lush garden setting. Assyrian, 645–640 BC.



Musicians and priests take part in a religious procession. Assyrian, 705–681 BC

Sports and Exercise

Daily exercise is important. The citizens of Nineveh love to take a stroll along the Tigris in the early evening and children can always be seen running around and playing tag (though note that ball games are not played). Renting a horse can be expensive, but well worth it on public holidays, when racing is permitted in the parade ground below the Arsenal. Fishing is also popular.

Games

The most popular board game is the Game of Twenty Squares (also known as the Royal Game of Ur), over a thousand years old but still going strong! Luxury sets made of gold, ivory and precious stones are available at high-end outlets, but you can just as easily make your own version by scratching the outline on a brick and using pebbles as pieces. It is rumoured that a few years ago some soldiers scratched the board into one of the king's winged bull sculptures. They were punished by being sent to work in the quarries.

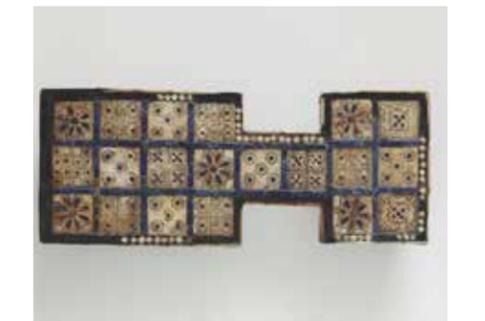
Find out how to play the Game of Twenty Squares here; <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WZskjLq040I&v=en-GB>.

Victory Parades

Some say that the Assyrian war machine is unstoppable, crushing all that stands before it. If you're lucky, you may get to witness an Assyrian victory triumph, as prisoners and war booty are paraded through the city streets. But beware, they aren't for the faint hearted – often the grisly spectacles end in the severed heads of enemies being displayed on the city's ramparts!



Relief depicting king Ashurbanipal hunting a lion. Assyrian, 645–640 BC.



The Game of Twenty Squares board. Wood and shell. Ur, 2600–2400 BC.

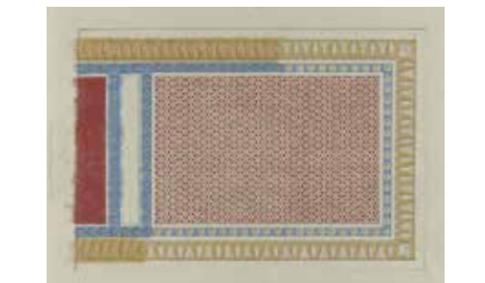
Shopping

Nineveh is a major center of trade and there are plenty of shopping opportunities to be had throughout the city's markets. Payment is generally in silver or copper, most larger retailers will also accept grain or dates. Many outlets will accept credit if backed up by a personal seal.

Local crafts can be purchased in the artisanal quarter, located in the north west of the city, best accessed by the Sin Gate or Nergal Gate. Nineveh's bronze workers are renowned for their skill and technological innovations, while Assyrian woven carpets and hemmed garments are highly sought after.

Markets and stalls selling fresh mountain produce and livestock from the highlands can be found in the north eastern quarter of the city, especially along the road that runs from the Halahhu Gate. Exotic merchandise and bulk bargains can be found in the city quzay and the surrounding merchants' quarter. Look out for goods such as purple cloth and ivory from Phoenicia (Ed. modern-day Lebanon), spices and incense from Arabia, textiles and woods from Turkey and Iran and wine from Syria.

Assyrian literature is famous and includes a wide range of stories, prayers and historical and other texts. While the famous state Library of Ashurbanipal can only be visited by appointment (restricted to established scholars), the city has numerous bookshops.



Drawing of an Assyrian door sill in the form of a carpet. Assyrian, 645–640 BC.



Phoenician ivory of a winged sphinx. 9th–8th century BC.

העולם הזה והעולם הבא. אדם חכם הוא שיש לו חכמה
לדעת מה טוב ומה רע. חכמה היא לא רק ידע, אלא גם
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Nusardil

Seventh Sunday after Pentecost (June)

Assyrian Christians celebrate Nusardil to commemorate the church's baptism ceremony. But the origins of the ceremony are said to date to pre-Christian times. Assyrian pagans worshipped gods of fire, air, and water. Sprinkling water on the path of a pagan religious procession was a common practice meant to show respect. When St. Thomas converted the Assyrians to Christianity in the first century c.e., he resorted to a mass baptism because of the many people involved. His splashing of water on a crowd of people, combined with the earlier pagan tradition, led to the current practice.

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