Akitu celebrations 2019
Dear Readers, AFA Members, and Friends,

The Covid-19 crisis has been a burdensome one for all of us worldwide. We have all dealt with it differently, and as best we can. Some of us have known illness, others have known tragedy, and others have managed to find a ray of hope amid the difficulties. No matter in which category you may fall, the staff of Nineveh Magazine, along with the board of the Assyrian Foundation of America, would like to call upon you to share your stories. In the next issue, we would like to honor the experiences of you and your loved ones.

If you would like to send us a contribution in memory of your deceased loved ones, to be published in our next issue, please prepare a 1-page document in Microsoft Word format (Times New Roman, 12-point) along with a photograph, if you wish. Please email your document to our editor Dr. Ninwe Maraha at editor@assyrianfoundation.org

We sincerely hope that you will participate in this endeavor to bring us all a little closer, not only as an Assyrian family, but as an entire human race that has endured a truly unusual time of great challenge.

Sincerely,
Nineveh Magazine
The Staff of Nineveh Magazine and the Assyrian Foundation of America

A CALL TO SHARE YOUR PANDEMIC STORIES

Articles submitted for publication will be selected by the editorial staff on the basis of their relative merit to Assyrian literature, history, and current events.

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

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Contents
As the Assyrian Studies Association (ASA) approaches its 2nd anniversary on June 28, 2021, the achievement comes with a year ever-more committed to serving the Assyrian community. Through ASA’s passion and commitment to preservation, the Association has impacted many lives worldwide through its new program, Preserving Assyria, and its supporting initiatives.

Ever aware of the growing need to have a program dedicated to protecting the Assyrian culture and identity, ASA created Preserving Assyria and its three initiatives: Heritage Archive, Oral History, and Giving Back – designed to educate, inspire, strengthen, and build connections between academic institutions and scholars from around the world. Originated from the need to bridge academic fields that have traditionally dabbled with Assyrian subjects from the ancient to the modern world, Preserving Assyria and its three initiatives aim to highlight research on the Assyrians from various academic fields and beyond, bringing them into concert with each other to illustrate a vibrant, robust, and authentic experience of Assyrian heritage.

Through the Heritage Archive Initiative, ASA digitally preserves, revitalizes, and restores out-of-print Assyrian books, photographs, and other historical documents to allow future generations of Assyrians and scholars to use for their research. Since the inception of the initiative, ASA has been working hard to fundraise the purchase of an essential preservation equipment that is Federal Agencies Digital Guidelines Initiative (FADGI) compliant. With plans to use this equipment to fully digitize all Assyrian cultural heritage materials acquired, ASA’s goal is to upload digitized pieces on their website to mitigate against the materials being lost, damaged, ruined, or placed in the wrong hands. The goal is to encourage academic research about the Assyrian cultural heritage by providing a free resource to academics and non-academics interested in Assyrian history. Unlike institutions that require a paid membership or physical presence to be able to access the materials, ASA is offering free access in an effort to encourage more research on the Assyrians from various academic fields.

Through our Oral History Initiative, ASA supports virtual projects that introduce a dialogue to the backdrop of archival materials. Within this initiative, ASA supports ethnographic films that historically record, document, and positively preserve Assyrian American communities’ history across the United States. Currently, the Association is funding the ethnographic project, Assyrians in Motion 1937 Film by Dr. Ruth Kambar, a public-school English teacher and author of Assyrians of Yonkers, and Annie Elias, a playwright and director in the San Francisco Bay area who specializes in the creation of documentary theater. Their film is the first ethnographic project ASA has funded under the Oral History initiative that documents Assyrian refugees living in the diaspora, having escaped ongoing erasure attempts, including the Assyrian Genocide of 1914-1917, to establish a new home in the United States. Uniquely, the film is mostly made up of silent vignettes that captures everyday scenes—picnics, church gatherings, funerals, dancing, playing music -- in the life of Assyrian American communities in 1937 Chicago, Yonkers, Elizabeth New Jersey, Philadelphia, and New Britain, among other places.

Lastly, under the Preserving Assyria program, ASA operates the Giving Back Initiative, where they actively provide grants to students, scholars, authors, and emerging authors to conduct research or publish works that introduce audiences to the rich Assyrian history, culture, and language. Within the past year, ASA created two grant opportunities open to all from around the world – Academic Publication Grant and the Children’s/Popular Book Grant – and awarded a total of $5,500 in grants. ASA’s first grant recipient, Sanherib Ninos, a graduate student from Frankfurt, Germany, was awarded $2,000 from the Academic Publication Grant to fund the continuation of his Ph.D. dissertation research. His topic includes conducting research on the Assyrian crisis of identity and discourse of nationalism among the members of the Syriac-Orthodox Church in Germany.

Most recently, ASA announced the three winners of their Children’s/Popular Book Grant – Rachel Sarah Thomas from Chicago, Illinois; Sarah Ego from Mannheim, Germany; and Ashor Sworesho from Ontario, Canada. Their upcoming publications will offer a close look into the Assyrian identity through a non-fiction memoir, children’s songbook and dictionary, and a fiction coloring book for children learning the Assyrian tongue. Altogether, ASA has become the vessel for providing opportunities for Assyrians worldwide to help preserve the Assyrian culture for future generations to come.

As the Assyrian Studies Association approaches its 2nd year of operation, we are counting on your support to ensure our mission continues full force. We invite you to join us in celebrating this accomplishment and contributing to the Association’s success so that we can provide more grants and financial support to Assyrians worldwide so they can embark on the journey to preserve the Assyrian culture and identity.
In the fall of 1921, the newly elected Patriarch of the Church of the East, Mar Eshai Shimun, set off on his first tour of Assyrian villages in south-eastern Iraq with his Aunt, Surma Khanum. This two-week journey, documented in her unpublished private diaries and correspondence, occurred amid circumstances eerily similar to ours today in 2021. Then, as now, there was an epidemic (malaria and meningitis, residual influenza in the US), increased sectarianism, racial unrest, and prolonged economic hardship—a state of affairs far more the norm than the exception for Assyrians throughout time. In the aftermath of the Great War, as both Americans and Assyrians were wearyingly stumbling into a new decade under new leadership, both peoples craved a semblance of normalcy. While Warren G. Harding was being sworn in as the 29th President of the United States, a world away in Iraq, thirteen-year old Mar Eshai (1909-1981) was being consecrated patriarch of the Church of the East, Mar Shimun XXIII, was taking up the Sisyphean struggle for Assyrian survival.

The Baqubah and Mindan refugee camps, to which over fifteen thousand Assyrians had fled after siding with Russia and the Allies against their Turkish overlords in World War One, were being closed by increasingly anxious British administrators. “How does this matter stand? Are the refugees being repatriated? When will they be off our hands? What steps are being taken to accelerate their departure?” demanded Secretary of War, Winston S. Churchill. It was as Baqubah in May of 1920 that Mar Eshai was consecrated patriarch after the unexpected death of his uncle, Mar Poulos, due to tuberculosis. Just two years earlier, the patriarchal party set out on an embassy to London with the wishes of their Turkish overlords in World War I, including with Russia and the Allies against Germany. The chasms between the two peoples had been opened during the War and a new era of political and ecclesiastical partnership was needed. “We need a good and stable government.” The unfortunate population, who greatly desire to return to their homes in the nebulous border regions of the Mosul Vilayet...

At this time, there was great uncertainty about the northern borders of the newly formed Kingdom of Iraq, to which Faiyal Hussein of Syria was proclaimed King in August, 1921. Assyrians overwhelmingly favored remaining under British protection though and were thus compelled to trust in their negotiations for their security. A second repatriation plan (the first, led by the Assyrian military commander Agha Petros, had failed a year earlier) was formulated where Assyrians were encouraged to return to their homes in the nebulous border regions of the Mosul Vilayet.

While Robert Speer (1867-1947), Secretary of the Board of Presbyterian Missions in New York, who had been coordinating relief funds through Surma Khanum, sketches the backdrop for Mar Eshai’s inaugural village tour that fall, “... Bitterly distressed is the situation of the churches, which are the pride of the evangelical community...” Speer’s missionary colleague, E.W. Dowell, who had lived and worked with Assyrians since 1906 adds: “Some of the mountainers, being given their freedom, have gone outside the British lines and have settled in their own homes in Surma, Amadia, Barwar and Ashitha and lower Tiji. The house of Mar Shimun have been placed in a village close to Amadia. How safe will be for these people, only time can determine. The remaining mountainers, with whom we are in touch, are settled in villages about Mosul, or rather to the north of Mosul and within the British lines. These number several thousand. These have been the most unfortunate. They have been on the land for over a year but have not been able so far to make a living out of it and have been reduced to almost famine conditions. Further to add to their misery, an epidemic of malaria broke out among them according to the report of the medical authorities, 99 per cent of them have been prostrated by it... The victims of it have been left in a most debilitated condition.”

The village in which the patriarchal family had temporarily settled was Bibiaydi, just outside of Amadia (about 62 miles north of Mosul). This region was first observed by Western eyes in 1841 when the American missionary Asahel Grant described it as being “... Peculiarly situated in an extensive opening or undulating plain between the mountains, and... fertile in grain and fruit. The wheat is good and abundant, and the grapes are among the finest I have seen. The raisins made from them are an article of export, and are celebrated as the best brought into Persia; but the climate is deemed insalubrious, and successive wars have made sad havoc among the unfortunate population, who greatly need a good and stable government.” To thirteen-year old Mar Eshai, Bibiaydi was simply a “... very funny place.” He gleefully informed his penpal and former Baqubah camp playmate, John Neesan (grandson of Y.M. Neesan), of the “... plenty of partrages and snakes” to shoot at on his weekly hunts with his missionary William H. Browne. To his great-uncle Mar Rowil, he writes: “My uncle everyday travels throughout the region since the 1880s.”

...The weather is unspeakable. These September days when the summer burns itself are the worst in the year—absolutely still, the white mist hangs hour by the river at morning and evening. And you feel like a rag of the worst quality.” While Mar Eshai’s aunt and the elder Qashas (priests) related stories of Tyari during the days of his great-uncle Mar Rowil (1841-1903), the young patriarch, who himself had fond memories of playing and wandering about with his older brother and cousins at the Patriarchal See high in the mountains of Qudshuis, saw now only ruins and desolation about him. “Even the great walnut trees, fruit trees, and vines have been cut down for the Turks and Kurds drove all the people out during the War,” remarked American missionary Frederick G. Coan who had preached, taught and traveled throughout the region since 1880s.

[Ed. The following excerpts have been transcribed directly from Surma Khanum’s private diaries and correspondence, stored in the Mar Shimun Memorial Foundation archives. I have added a few clarifying notes in brackets. The dates have been modernized from “Old Style” (Julian calendar) to “New Style” (Gregorian calendar), which accounts for the reference to the annual Church of the East festival of Mar Gewargis being later in November than it actually is today. –CN]
the village and sent a messenger to inform them: all that had not gone to work with women and children came to meet us just when going into the village. They were full of joy at seeing Mar Shimun. We had to diminish our mules that they might kiss Mar Shimun’s hand and it took a time. Blessing of the children and the unwed babies brought with their mothers to ask the prayer, some of the people with their joyful faces looking up to heavens and thanking God to have let them see this great day, of Mar Shimun coming to visit them, etc. As last were taken to Razay’s [cottage head] house to be his guests. He himself came late, had gone to run his field, and was very sorry that we had not let him know in time about our coming so that they all might come and meet us on the way, but we assured him it was all right. What was very touching, an old priest, Petros, bowed down from age, came to see Mar Shimun and while going to church to evening prayer, he began with his feeble and shattery voice chanting the turgana hymns in honour of the Patriarch. After prayers we looked at Matt Marqamat [St. Mary’s church]; it is much ruined inside and not repaired yet. . . . The congregation consisted of both Catholics and those from the Church of the East. . . . We went back to the house and after supper the big room was full of people and they began talking to the house and after supper the big room with the stove on. Many of the villagers are divided. On the whole, Titjari people here looked to me more comfortable and not repaired yet. . . . The congregation consisted of both Catholics and those from the Church of the East. . . . We went back to the house and after supper the big room was full of people and they began talking to the house and after supper the big room with the stove on. 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church service any day that he had to get up so early (sometimes at 4 a.m.) and conduct service too. Not once did he grumble or say he was tired. We never called on him to get up from his bed and he was always the first to call on us, sometimes a little too early, but on the whole, very punctual.”

Mar Eshai Shimun’s patriarchal punctuality as a leader would persist for over half a century despite seemingly insurmountable obstacles and challenges from both within and without the Church and Assyrian nation (state). But already, from the moment he was consecrating his first patriarch the Assyrian Levies (indigenous military units) were compelled to join the newly formed Assyrian Levies and fight against rebellious Arabs and Kurds that winter. Mar Eshai Shimun and the patriarchal family would be in the forefront of the fight for an Assyrian homeland in Mesopotamia until physically forced from the region in 1933.

Until that unfathomable fate, there would be as many dangerous twists and turns in the patriarch’s precarious path as there were to Qudshanis. The cross of over sixty centuries of patriarchal succession within his family (1,880 years within the Church of the East) had been bestowed upon him and the carefree days of hunting partridges and snakes or playing soccer with his friends in Bi-baydi were no longer. Having fled in terror from vengeful Turks and Kurds alongside the masses of his people in 1915, he was now living in a refugee camp; experiencing the untimely deaths of several close family members; and witnessing first-hand the grim and determination of his people to be rebuilt and their homes and lives in the only homes they had ever known, the young patriarch felt more than ever that the prayers, hopes and dreams of his nation now depended upon him.

Mar Eshai Shimun’s Assyrian Village (1900)

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*The amounts listed are charitable donations only and exclude subscription fees and membership dues.

Assyrian Village (1900)

Assyrian Village (1900)

Adiis (1972)
Armenians were forced to abandon the village of Ada. The Assyrians and massacred. My own grandfather, to join the exodus, and mostly were and sick, cutting the throats of stag- mies were in Uremia Plains, never protection. The message, that ene- Andranik Pasha, came to their pro- British, Russian, Agha Petros and Christians in Iran, became forced suffered it grievously in consequences. Secondly, to emphasize what the Great Britain, realizing her conceding duty, took upon her own shoulder to amelio- rate the sad lot of the fugitives, Assyri- ans and Armenians, from their former homes. By end of 1918, the situation of the Christians in Iran, became forced to defend themselves. None of The British, Russian, Agha Petros and Andratik Pasha, came to their pro- mission came to the assistance of British. In the early days of the camp. They provided splendid efforts on behalf of the refugees, for several thousand in whom it found em- ployment in useful directions. The advanced members of the Mission reached Baqubah on September 24th, 1918, and at once began engag- ing refugee women for sewing gar- ments. At the end of the first week, 30 women were at work, which num- ber, before long, was increased to over 300. In addition to the sewing work, a large wool and quilt-making industry was under-taken, which in time employed over 4,500 people, chiefly women and children. These industries produced, during the first three months, over 12,000 pieces of clothing, some 3,000 quilts, besides mattresses, pillows and over 15,000 lbs. of yarn. The clothing and quilts were distributed free in the hospitals, orphanage, and to the more needy in camp; Whilst the yarn was disposed to Army contractors for manufacture of blankets.

By Noel Y. Shamun Reference Book By Brigadier-Gen H.H. Austin 1920

BAQUBAH

HISTORY OF THE ASSYRIAN REFUGEE CAMP 1918 / 1919

A – The Armenians. Chiefly from the region of Lake Van in Turkey, who numbered approximately one-third of the camp populations.

B – The Assyrians of the moun- tains of Kurdistan in Turkish territory then, who formerly inhab- ited the wild region watered by the greater Zab and its affluents; and who also number approximate- ly one third of the population.

C – The Assyrians of Uremia and Salamas Plains, formerly Persian subjects, who comprised the remain- ing third.

There were 35 English ladies belong- ing to the Military Nursing Service and staff of the hospitals with help to these nurses were 122 refugee women and girls proved of great assistance to the over-worked nurses sisters in the 3 general hospitals and the out-patient dispensaries at the camps. Surrounded by an atmosphere of sickness and death they were noble example to all by their cheerfulness and willingness to all.

In addition to the wooden carts, the refugees brought with them, about 600 different kinds of animals. Po- niets, mules, cattle, and donkeys, besides large number of goats and sheep, very helpful in several areas. There was no grazing in Baqubah. The graz- ing grounds were 25 miles distant to east. 1000 refugees established to look after them. The carts and mules performed most useful work in camp with distribution of supplies throughout the camp.

BAQUBAH

This article has been written with two- fold objectives, first, bringing to notice of current Assyrian public, the Travails of a small Christian Nation, (Assyrian), which threw in its lot with the entente use during the late First World War, and suffered it grievously in consequences. Secondly, to emphasize what the Great Britain, realizing her conceding duty, took upon her own shoulder to amelio- rate the sad lot of the fugitives, Assyri- ans and Armenians, from their former homes.

There was a special Orphanage for children in the sections. To qualify for admission, child had to be under 14 years and have lost both parents. Also, for children overall, there were small playgrounds with gymnastic, swings, see saws etc, were fitted in various parts of the camp. All under eyes of the employed refugee women.

For bathing, shelters were construct- ed at intervals along the high banks of the Diala river. Arrangements were also made for heating the water in large tanks. Being by nature very cleanly people, the bathing facilities were highly appreciated. The thou- sands washing and bathing, through- out Saturday in particular. Appeared to be general custom for wives to give husbands a thorough rubbing. At first it was somewhat disconcerting to see scores of naked gentlemen, crouch- ing down in open of their bunks, being vigorously soaped, and hav- ing water poured over their backs by their attendant spouses. The wom- en and girls performed a like task to each other and paid little attention to the passer-by, but were eminently unconcerned and refined.

The American Persian Relief Com- mandant Austin was asked from London Headquarter to consult with the Assyrians as to the desirability of settling them in Canada, where they could develop the land and start life anew under British auspices. He called the Assyrian Committee to- gether towards the end on May 1919, and without going through long time, decided that the Assyrians, with the final de- cision was that they desired above all else, to re-occupy their former homes. The rest is history, as we all know.

I hope, readers of this article found it interesting, particularly that it pres- ents a brief glance at the life of Assyr- ian Refugee Camp in Baqubah, 100 plus years ago.

BAQUBAH
In 2010, David A. Armstrong, an accomplished film director and cinematographer, published his first book, *Dragons and Violins: A Memoir of War and Music*. The book tells the story of Armstrong's Assyrian grandfather, Sargis Georges Yadgar (George Edgar), who was born in Urmia, Persia and journeyed to America, arriving on Ellis Island on July 4, 1921. The book describes the amazing trajectory of George's life as a boy trying to survive in war-torn Urmia, Russia, and Turkey, his life in America, his many adventures and accomplishments, his service in World War II, his marriage to Ann John (Miss Assyria, 1933), and his and Miss Assyria's only child, Barbara. But I had Assyrian roots. In my family, as a little boy, I always gave me baths. He would read me stories in bed and I always had an uncle who would tell my grandfather because it would take ten minutes to get to the table. He was a big bowler, a big golfer. He played violin in the Santa Barbara Symphony Orchestra. You could not go anywhere where George didn't know someone and it was embarrassing but it was also, "Oh we're never going to get to our table! So I always felt like I was with a celebrity as a little boy, like everyone knew my grandfather. But my grandfather would always tell me stories, I'm such a storyteller— you can tell I love telling stories—and I lived on these stories.

*Some of the stories in the book are so incredible, did you wonder if they were true?*

I'm a real purist as a filmmaker and I found it showed up with the book. I didn't want to put things in...if I couldn't prove it. Obviously dialogue is changed—you know, the exact dialogue—but it's all supported...so you can hold the fire to my feet on this book and I, for the most part, can identify everything.

As I started to sit down and write it, I thought "Were you really on a boat [arriving in New York Harbor] on July 4th?" That's like every grandfather to grandson's story. [But] when the ship came in, the ship actually came in on July 2nd...but the ship sat there because there's a line of people to get through so he didn't come through 'til July 4th. So when he says he was on the boat on July 4th, he really was.

When I was writing the book I had a guy who's written many, many books as my editor and my companion through this because I'd never written a book. In the four years he helped me with this book, we only had one argument and the argument was because he said, "Let's give him a violin in combat. He should have a violin," because that's the story, that's the arc. And I never thought of asking [my grandfather] before he died if he had a violin in combat and I just couldn't imagine he had one. And [my editor argued], "But it's okay, it's a book!" We fought, I mean we really fought and yelled at each other and so as the internet was coming of age in 2005 and 2006, I suddenly came across [the name] Bill Baker who was a replacement officer in the 89th [the same combat unit George Edgar fought in in World War II]. And I looked in the Library of Congress and all of [Bill Baker's] paperwork, everything's in the library. So I write the Library of Congress, "Can I have [these documents]?") And they tell me you have to get the permission of the officer. I go, "The guy's dead." And they go, "Well write a certified letter to that person... and show us and then we can go from there." So I write the letter and then I get a letter back and I open it up and it says, "Hi Dave! Sure, you can have whatever you want." And I'm like, "Oh my God, this guy's alive!" So I call him up on the phone, I go, "Bill, this is David Armstrong, George Edgar's grandson." "Oh my God, David how are you?" He's a retired lieutenant colonel and the first thing he says to me is, "Did you know your grandfather had a violin all through combat?...When we were behind the lines—he put a mute on it and we could hear him and his violin. He's playing his violin," I called up Russell, the editor, and said, "The violin in, I can prove it!

But that's how much of a stickler I was. That's why it took me ten years [to write]. And I flew to Bill and I met with him and interviewed him and videotaped him. I flew out for one of the last reunions for his retirement— and...he put a mute on it and we could hear him and his violin. He's playing his violin," I called up Russell, the editor, and said, "The violin in, I can prove it!

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When I was done with the book [I asked a publisher to read it]. And he got back to me and he said, "This is a wonderful book" and he was very blunt, he said, "But who cares? What does it have to do with you? What does it have to do with you and your relationship [with your grandfather]? And...it just ends in 1955. What happened to Ann [George Edgar's wife]? What happened to the family?" So I took that back to Russell and he said, "Why don't I interview you and I'll write those chapters." So...he wrote these little two-page things, what I call the "Dave chapters." And so in that way, we got to incorporate, without going on, what happened to them later in life so you get a
The theme of the unloving and brutal father runs throughout the book as well as the alternate, positive father figure that both he and you sought. My grandfather saved my life. I had a very abusive childhood growing up. My father's father had beaten him and his two brothers, and in turn my father learned to drink and hurt my mother. If it wasn't for having my grandfather in my life, I don't know if I would have ever known unconditional love. Time with my grandfather was a safe haven away from my abusive childhood. I sometimes wonder if I would have been an abusive man, like my father, who learned it from his father, if it wasn't for my grandfather interrupting that pattern. I don't think I have that in me, but anyone could be capable of anything. And I've seen what abuse does to people. It was really my grandfather's love that saved my life.

There's a harsh scene where your grandfather, during World War II, hits a German nurse who is denying access to medical treatment for a wounded soldier in your grandfather's outfit. He stops himself and realizes he's in danger of committing the kind of brutality he and his two brothers, and in turn my father, had committed. He stopped himself and learned to drink and hurt my mother. If it wasn't for my grandfather having my grandfather save my life, I don't know if I would have ever known unconditional love. Time with my grandfather was a safe haven away from my abusive childhood. I sometimes wonder if I would have been an abusive man, like my father, who learned it from his father, if it wasn't for my grandfather interrupting that pattern. I don't think I have that in me, but anyone could be capable of anything. And I've seen what abuse does to people. It was really my grandfather's love that saved my life.

I really had to make a choice [about whether or not to include all the material] because told me about that and I had a discussion with my mother and I said, "I don't want to sugarcoat this, and I don't want to demonize him." And, of course, there's bias in it [the book] because it's too hard for them to die while you're in the room. So I came in and I went and I whispered in his ear, "Poppy, you can go." I said, "You know you love me. You're gonna be fine, but it's time for you to go and you need to leave and I'll be okay." He just sat up and went, "Yes," and just laid back down very gracefully. In all other more love, not that he didn't love anybody else, but it was just clear David was the diamond in the rough.

Music plays a very important role in your grandfather's life... As you know, he was this violinist; he loved his violin. He loved everything about it. He had built a den in the garage. I spent a lot of time growing up at his house and sleeping at his house so it would be me going to sleep listening to him playing at midnight, practicing the violin in [the den]. So it was always there. Hearing the violin is as sweet as hearing Assyrians talk. It just takes me back to that special place to hear it. The book is, in part, about storytelling and the power of stories. I always use the analogy of James Cameron and Titanic. He loved the Titanic but you can't make a two and a half hour movie about the Titanic—nobody cares. But you put a story in it and then everyone knows about the Titanic. And I feel the best way for the world to know who Assyrians are is to tell a story, just a story, and then by default they learn all about the Assyrians. And people try to make how we are known based on a genocide but that's not who we are. We're not a genocide. So it just would make a great book and a great movie, but it would also help you to know our people. Someone in Arkansas will start to ask and then they'll become interested in these people.

Your grandfather told you so much about his life. Did anything surprise you?

Nothing was more surprising to me than when he told me [that for a time, when he was being bullied in high school as a new immigrant] he hated being here and he had wanted to go back to Istanbul because he said, "Nobody accused me of being poor or made fun of my clothes or my accent. If my accent was made fun of for being who I was until I came to this country and I really, really wanted to go back to, of all places, Constantinople," which is the most ironic thing an Assyrian could say.

What was it like when you finished the book?

It was funny I remember going through the whole pulling it all together back and forth and when I was done —I remember the night—I was ready to hit the send button. I realized once I hit send, it was done. Yeah... when you hit submit, you're done. And I sat with that for about ten minutes because I realized, at that point, my grandfather had been dead for about seven years... and I realized that relationship of him in my mind, every day, all these years, was gone... and this would be a second letting go of my grandfather.

You have said you are interested in turning the book into a film, or more recently, a mini-series.

I had been editing the movie for ten years in my head. And the nightmare of: How do you turn this into a two-and-a-half hour movie? What do you cut out? Oh dear Lord, this is just gonna be the Reader's Digest cutout of the story. You've become the keeper of the story. It's sort of a fantasy, to actually get an unknown actor to play George. And I actually would shop the Assyrian market, see if there's an actor out there who could really play it. That would really be something. You've become the keeper of the story.

There's something about stories being lost... I remember I was doing a film in Iowa and we were at this retirement home. Apparently someone died and they took all of his stuff in the retirement home, all his letters from World War II, all this stuff and they just threw it in the garbage, which I get. What do you do with it? I work here at this facility, he died, there's no family. And I just literally grabbing it all. I just can't let the story be lost.

We stood around campfires as caverms and just watched shadows. We like story. Everyone loves a story— it's who we are. And the important thing to me is that my grandfather's story lives on.

If you are interested in learning how to support David A. Armstrong's "Dragons and Violins" film project, please contact Ruth Kamba at dragsoandrivoli@gmail.com. And watch for Armstrong's film trailer at the upcoming Assyrian Genocide Exhibit at California State University, Stanislaus.

David A. Armstrong graduated from the American Film Institute in 1988 where he earned a Masters degree in Cinematography and received numerous awards. He served as Director of Photography for director James Wan and producer Mark Bun on the Saw film franchise (Saw I-IV). Armstrong's 2013 directorial debut PAWN starring Forest Whitaker, Ray Liotta, Common, Stephen Lang, Michael Chiklis, Nikki Reed and Martin Csokas. Armstrong's latest feature THE ASSASSIN'S CODE, starring Peter Stormare (FARGO, JOHN WICK 2) and Justin Chatwin (WAR OF THE WORLDS, SHAMELESS), had its world premiere to sold-out crowds at the 42nd annual Cleveland Film Festival in April, 2018. It was released theatrically and on VOD in May, 2018. Armstrong's and artistic partner Valerie Grant's recent collaboration ABOVE AND BEYOND is a Finalist in the 2018 Page Awards. They are currently polishing a "Me Too" era supernatural horror/thriller, CRYBABY BRIDGE.
The Akitu festival is one of the oldest recorded religious festivals in the world, celebrated for several millennia throughout ancient Mesopotamia. Yet, the Akitu was more than just a religious ceremony—it acted as a political device employed by the monarchy and/or the central priesthood to ensure the supremacy of the king, the national god, and his capital city as the city that the god had chosen that specific place as his city, to guard and to become familiar to the Persians prior to the advent of Islam and the Arab domination.

In Mesopotamia, when it came to agriculture, these festivals were celebrated twice a year. For fallow lands the Spring Equinox marked the important phases of washing the land to remove impurities such as excess of salinity, as well as to ensure the appropriate softening up the soil, whereas the Autumn Equinox marked the beginning of harvest. For cultivated fields, on the other hand, the Spring Equinox marked the beginning of harvest, whereas the Autumn Equinox marked the following season. Furthermore, the highlight of the Akitu Festival was the Akitu procession, which commemorated the god leaving his temporary residence and entering his new permanent residence in his chosen city for the very first time. The inner meaning of the festival was therefore to celebrate the reappearance, and the entire company of gods was escorted in a great procession to the temple outside Nineveh where the special rituals took place [6].

Many nationalities, ethnic and religious groups in the Near/Middle East and Central Asia, like the Assyrians, Persians, Arians, Kurds, and Bahá’ís celebrate the New Year festival. The Assyrians and Babylonians have a double character. It originated in nature festivals. These festivals were religious in origin and Kurdish adopted New Year, also known as Newruz (also written NuRoZ), To Persians, NuRoz means “New Day” and/or the Chorasmian King Darius I that he used it in his very famous tri-lingual inscription at the Rock of Behistun.

During the festivities, the creative epic of Enûma elîš was recited, while the people sang all kinds of hymns and songs [4]. Contessa puts the Akitu Festival in Babylon in this way. The Akitu Festival came to have a double character. It originated in nature festival, with features which expressed simultaneously nature's grief at the death of all growing things and her joy at their rebirth. On to this had been grafted the joy at their rebirth. On to this had been grafted the joy at their rebirth. By Fred Aprim 4/27/2004
Kurdish word “NuRoj” and not “Nuroz” since Kurdistan is the original language of the Iranians, it predates and precedes the Persian language by 1,200 years. The writer, however, admits that the modern Kurdish language was derived from Fahlai language (Pahlavi language, which in ancient times was known as Pahlavi).

In Arabia after the Arab invasion, he states, that the “P” in Fahlai switched to “F” and thus Fahlai [3]. Fact is that historical references or reliable documentation, which prove the presence of specific people under the name of Kurds who celebrated this occasion in antiquity, are absent. As far as the outrageous claim that Kurdish language preceding the Persians, I will leave that to linguists to argue.

Other Kurds have associated the Kurdish Newroz with a Persian legend but manipulated the origin of certain figures in that legend to suit Iraqi Kurdish national objectives. You ask Kurds of Iraq today what is Newroz; they will immediately reply, “it is the celebration of the victory of the Kurdish Kawa the Assyrian king.” According to the Kurdish version of the legend, two snakes grew on the shoulders of the Assyrian King Zahak, which caused him much pain. Each day these snakes were to be fed the brains of two children to alleviate the king’s pain. Every family had to contribute one child to be sacrificed by their children. Thus, people hated the Assyrian king and could not tolerate seeing their children being killed. Kawa has already disappeared from Iran by the turn of his children prevailously; however, his turn came again to sacrifice his last daughter. Kawa thought how to rescue his last daughter and tricked everybody by presenting the brains of sheep instead of children. With time, the other people began to practice the same trick while Kawa trained these children on how to become fighters and depend on themselves. In time, Kawa led them in an attack on the king’s palace, and ended one of the darkest rules in the Middle East."[13].


Neither Persian nor Aryan people celebrated Newroz based on this precise Kurdish version of the celebration of the Persian New Year. In the Persian version mentioned King Zahak; however, there is no connection to Assyrians. In fact, and according to Dr. Hussein Tahiri, a 1991 Iranian calendar published by a group called the Guardians of the Iranian Culture, outlines the seventh of October as the anniversary of the victory of Kawa over the Arab Zahak. In view of this group, Zahak was an Arab [4]. The story of Zahak is told in the 19th century Ferdowsi’s (Iranian poet) Shahnameh (the book of Kings). These are mythical stories about the Persian history. According to this source, Zahak was an Arab king; however, the king was not killed by Kawa (Kaveh) as the Kurdish claim but was captured by the Persian king Feraydune and chained in the mountain of Damavand north of Tehran where he died. By the way, according to Ferdosi, Feraydune ruled for 500 years. This legend is therefore dated to post Islamic Arab conquest and does not reflect the time when there was no Arab influence in the region before Islam, therefore it cannot predate the Assyrian/Babylonian narratives. However, the Kawa story claimed that Zahak was the last king of the Medes. This latter legend states that the Persians revolted against the evil deeds of the king of the Medes.

Where does this connection between the Persian and the Kurdish legends reside, even if in some aspects? History tells us that the name Iran derived from the word “Aryan,” which meant “the land of the Aryans.” These Aryans entered the Iranian plateau in around 1,500 B.C. Earlier, the land was occupied by aboriginal Caucasians. The two main Aryan tribes were the Medes and the Persians. Later, the Medes lived the northern region of the plateau while the Persians moved south to the Elamite land [5]. The Zagros Mountains became the home of many of these two groups. History tells us further that the Assyrian King Tiglath-pileser III conquered and deported 65,000 Medes, replacing them on the plateau with Arameans. Additionally, Assyrian Sargon defeated dozens of Median chiefs and settled 90,000 captured Israels in the towns of the Medes in the late eighth century B.C. [6]. This mix of people in the Iranian plateau and Zagros Mountains could have planted the seeds of a new breed of people who became later known as Kurds.

The story of the Kurdish Kawa has been used a lot by Kurdish nations and resistance movements, especially by Iraqi Kurds. However, Dr. Hussein Tahiri states that when and how Kurdish Newroz began is not clear for the Kurds and that there is much ambiguity about the origin of the practice. The claim by the Kurds that Newroz is the celebration of the victory of Kawa, the Smith, over Ashshakha or Zahak who allegedly was as cruel as well. Tahiri adds that the Kurds have done no research on the origin of Newroz. The available research is from the Persians, and they regard Newroz as an Iranian national celebration. So why do Kurds practice or create a blind culture, asks Dr. Hussein Tahiri [7]. Furthermore, why do Kurdish nationalists and history writers invent such a myth, i.e. a Kurdish hero executing presumably the end of Assyrian cruel king and indirectly sometimes and directly in others as being the reason for the end of the Assyrian empire? There is not one reliable historical fact linking the fall of Assyria and the hand of a group of people called Kurds, not even one. Why would Kurds then take a Persian tradition, manipulate it to represent “Kurdish” traditions, and then politicize it in such a manner? It is obvious that Kurdish nationals in the last century, or century and a half, have realized the real historic threat of Assyrians to Kurdish national dream in Iraq. Only Assyrians have legitimately a historical claim to Assyria (northern Iraq) since Kurds are not the original inhabitants as they are mainly from the Zagros Mountains in present Iran and southern Armenia, in the mountains of Hakkari (Kurds call kurdistan). Therefore, they see it necessary to plant this feeling of struggle and conflict in the hearts and minds of common Kurds; such feelings lead naturally to hatred towards indigenous Assyrians. It is the Kurdish nationalistic way to de-monize and incriminate the Assyrians so that the Assyrian case in their own homeland be undermined.

In conclusion, the Nisan New Year Festival (Akitu) was rooted in Sumer, Assyria, and Babylonia before any Aryan people (Persians or Kurds) moved to the region of the Near East. Meanwhile, it is very clear from the point of view of many historians that there is an ambiguity in the origin of Newroz for Kurds. Since the origin of the Kurds as people is ambiguous, therefore, it is natural that the origin of their traditions is ambiguous as well. Kurdish nationals must stop fabricating stories like that of Kawa and the mysterious Assyrian cruel king who allegedly was the reason behind killing two children daily. Spreading such fictional and fanciful stories is geared towards one purpose and that is planting feelings of bigotry and hatred among Kurds towards the Assyrians; the rightful and original owners of modern Iraq lands (Assyria). These mythical stories are regrettable and deplorable; they do not serve mankind in any civil way.

References:
This column commemorates the survivors of the WWI Assyrian genocide who came to America, worked hard, and made many contributions to their adopted country.

The family histories of the Assyrian old-timers were collected by Arianne Ishaya, professor of anthropology, in Turlock in 1981-1982.

Alfi Jones

Date of Interview: May 6, '82

Note: Alfi Jones is the daughter of Katie Eshoo. Katie is a famous Assyrian woman. Her only daughter by the name of Katie who brought all these documents to me. Looking through them, I found a large notebook with names and grades of her students. My father was a graduate of the boy’s mission school. He came to Canada and worked on a farm for room and board until he graduated from Queen’s college in Ontario as a medical doctor. In 1902 he returned to Urmia. At that time my grandmother was still a principal at the Fiske seminary. Her only daughter by the name of Katie who had studied in the mission school was a teacher at that school. My father Samuel Eshoo met Katie at that school and they were married at that school. Soon after they moved to Tabriz permanently. There was a large Mission school and also a hospital there. My father worked at the hospital and also had a private practice for both Assyrians and Muslims. I, my brother, and my sister were all born in Tabriz. We attended the mission school and the Church there. In time more Assyrian students left for USA andCanada leaving their beautiful homes surrounded by vineyards and orchards in Urmia because of constant harassments. Very often their villages were raided by Muslims who carried away their belongings and crops. That is why their homes were built very close to each other with a small opening in between in case of an emergency. In 1912 and later there was a major persecution of Christians. 200 girls were carried into captivity; a thousand people died. The American Mission was the safest place. In 1919 we as well as the Americans and the British were ordered to leave at once. We were told to go to Hamadan where all the refugees were. We left a 12 room home with European furnishings in care of Haji. Even the grand piano on which mother learned how to play. They started off in covered wagons along with others. But father decided to return home. Since he was a medical doctor, he had Muslim friends. One patient was from the royal family and was very rich landlord. He extended an invitation to hide as guests in his home. He sent us Muslim clothes to camouflage our identity during the two-day’s journey to his home. He offered us carriages and ten of his Muslim soldiers for protection. As we left the town we saw the Turkish army ready to enter and take over power. We passed through without being noticed. In fact they gave us a royal salute. On the way we found many dead in the outskirts of town. He had a whole village as his home. He had 10 wives ranging in age from 10-100 years old. A family of 200 looked after his estate. Each wife had own compartment but a large common kitchen. We lived there for four years.

We returned to our home in Tabriz after the revolution. Haji kept it as we had left it. The prince’s oldest wife gave me 16 gold coins engraved with the Shah’s portrait.

After a few months there was another disturbance which made evacuation necessary. This time father hired horses. Women were carried in large baskets. We travelled like that for 28 days. Staying in Caravan-sary (caravan house) at nights. Made tea, ate roast beef and lavasha (flat bread). Father had changed his money into gold coins. As kids (two girls one boy) we did not understand the dangers involved. We were just playing and travelling. But I can remember the Kurds descending upon us-mostly for purposes of looting. But we knew they would not touch the children. So all the gold pieces were sown into the lining of our jackets. So the Kurds took everything from my dad and his companions; but did not get any of the money that was with us. Reached Hamadan. Met other refugees there. Grandma had rented a room. Lived there almost a year. Missionaries had started schools and there was a Church for the refugees. Many refugees settled temporarily in Hamadan with the hope of returning to Urmia after the war. A few families went to England and France. But our family decided to come to North America. We travelled to Baghdad where the British had prepared a village of tents with complete sanitation systems.
United Church Organizations in America sent assistance to Christians in the Middle East. Many families decided to stay in Baghdad permanently. However, the goal of many families was America. It was right after WWI and the first reservations were given to the veterans aboard boats. Since there was no air travel at the time. After months of waiting we were given passage to travel by way of India. To get there from Baghdad we had to travel on Tigris River on a boat that accommodated 200-300 people. Natives pulled the boat when it got stuck in the shallows. Arrived in Basra from where we boarded an ocean liner to India. Calcutta was large and beautiful. After a month we boarded another ocean liner to Japan. From there to Singapore then China. To Hong Kong. Hong Kong is built on a hill and looked like a Christmas tree as we arrived at night. From there to Shanghai, and via Sea of Japan to Tokyo and Yokohama. This was a compact and clean city. The inhabitants were extra polite. We stayed there for several weeks waiting for passage. The last leg of journey was in a beautiful Japanese ocean liner crossing the Pacific Ocean. Some families were going to San Francisco, but we were heading to Vancouver. It took a whole month to cross the Pacific Ocean in those days. The menu was fish every day. Not very appetizing. We grew up in this environment to our teens. Father never remarried. Children divided the housework among themselves. My brother Homer worked part-time and went to medical school. One of his sons is also a physician with a practice in Los Angeles. In 1971 I entered the University of Manitoba. I was the first Assyrian student there. After graduating in the field of Education, I taught in a grammar school near Brandon. I was also pursuing higher education. Edward became Ninva's close friend and confidant. He was always very polite and respectful during their time together. College was difficult, but at the same time fun and memorable. One summer, Edward had planned to swim at the college pool, and invited Ninva to join him. He knew that his life would be blessed if he kept and honored Assyrian culture and tradition, by marrying an Assyrian girl. Hence, Edward and Ninva were married in 1984. The fruit of this marriage were two boys, Justin and Eugene. At that time, Ninva was employed at Prudential Insurance Co. in San Francisco. She referred Edward for an opening, and he was immediately hired. Company policy would not allow husband and wife to work together at the same office, and since Edward truly loved and enjoyed his job, Ninva left the company. In 1992, they decided to relocate their residence to Turlock, CA. However, Edward would not change his career. While working in SF for an opening, he stayed at his mother's home and cared for her needs. Edward's career with Prudential Insurance ended after 35 years. Edward always encouraged his sons with regard to their education. He was supportive and helped his sons to stay focused in planning their futures. He enjoyed doing house chores, taking on the role of handyman to fix small or large repairs at home. He loved working on cars, doing basic maintenance or troubleshooting problems to find the best solution. He liked cooking, hiking, and taking long walks. When Justin got into college, Edward fell in love with him. He used to go buy value packs of chickens, cooked Charlie special food and enjoyed watching him eat it. His favorite time of the day was when he would take Charlie out for walks. Sadly, Charlie's life was shortened by cancer and his passing devastated Edward and the family. Within a year Niko arrived and this husky was as beautiful as Charlie, but was a handful to be trained. Edward enjoyed daily walks with Niko, perhaps talking about dear Charlie. Edward was the closest friend to his two sons. Edward was a very likable person, kindhearted, mellow, down to earth, and helpful to just about everyone. He would go out of his way to help others, in any possible way. If he could not do something alone, he was more than willing to get help to accomplish those tasks. Serving and helping others was truly his gift from God. Edward had a very big heart and he was big on saving for the future. He often talked about saving together with his sons, encouraging them to save for their futures. Surely, Edward was loved and respected as father, but most preciously, as a close friend to his two sons. Edward was a member of the Assyrian Foundation of America in Berkley/San Francisco, and supported this organization's humanitarian, cultural, and educational projects to the Assyrian nation, worldwide. He was also a member of the Assyrian Presbyterian Church in Turlock. Edward was born to parents, David Mooshabad and Maria Ber-Badal, in 1948 in Iran. Soon after graduating from high school in Tehran, at age 18, he migrated to United States in 1966. Edward believed in higher education, but life circumstances slowed down the timeline of his dream. Focused on his goal, Edward attended San Francisco State University, and graduated in 1977, with a Bachelor of Arts degree in Business Management. After his graduation, he had to return to Iran to visit with family members and ended up serving in the army for 4 years. Upon completion of his service, he returned to United States in 1982.
I hadn’t had a haircut in forty days and forty nights, and I was beginning to look like several violinists out of work. You know the look: genius gone to pot, and ready to jump into a hansom cab. I used to think those fellows from Asia Minor are hairy people: when we need a haircut, we need a haircut. It was so bad, I had ostracized my own hat. (I am writing a very serious story, perhaps one of the most serious I shall ever write. That is why I am being flipant. Readers of Sherwood Anderson will begin to understand what I am saying after a while; they will know that my laughter is rather what it is intended by a haircut, so I went down to Third Street (San Francisco), to the Barber College, for a fifteen-cent haircut.

Third Street, below Howard, is a district; think of the Bowery in New York, Main Street in Los Angeles: think of old men and boys, out of work, hanging around, smoking Bull Durham, talking about the government, waiting for something to turn up, simply waiting. It was a Monday morning in August and a lot of the tramps had come to the shop to brighten up a bit. The Japanese man who was working over the free chair had a waiting list of eleven; all the other chairs were occupied. I sat down and began to wait. Outside, as Hemingway (The Sun Also Rises; Farewell to Arms; Death in the Afternoon; Winner of Eleven; all the other chairs were occupied. I sat down and I was beginning to look like several violinists out of work. You know the look: genius gone to pot, and ready to jump into a hansom cab. I used to think those fellows from Asia Minor are hairy people: when we need a haircut, we need a haircut. It was so bad, I had ostracized my own hat. (I am writing a very serious story, perhaps one of the most serious I shall ever write. That is why I am being flipant. Readers of Sherwood Anderson will begin to understand what I am saying after a while; they will know that my laughter is rather what it is intended by a haircut, so I went down to Third Street (San Francisco), to the Barber College, for a fifteen-cent haircut.

I began to watch the Japanese boy who was learning to become a barber. He was shaving an old man who had a horrible face, one of those faces that emerge from years and years of evasive living, being unsettled, of not belonging anywhere, of owning nothing, and the Japanese boy was holding his nose back (so that he would not smell the old tramp. A trivial point in a story, a bit of data with no place in a work of art, nevertheless, I put it down. A young writer is always afraid some significant fact may escape him. He is always wanting to put in everything he sees. I wanted to know the name of the Japanese boy. I am profoundly interested in names. I have found that those that are unknown are the most genuine. Take a big name like Andrew Mellon. I was watching the Japanese boy very closely. I wanted to understand from the way he was keeping his sense of smell away from the mouth and nostrils of the old man what he was thinking, how he was feeling. Years ago, when I just got out of jail, I wound up in the Central Yard, north of Sanger, in the San Joaquin Valley, and there were several Japanese working with me, Yoshi Enomoto, Hideo Suzuki, Katsumi Sujimoto, and one or two others. These Japanese taught me a few simple phrases, hello, how are you, fine day, isn’t it, good-bye, and so on. I said to the Japanese to the barber student, “How are you?” He said in Japanese, “I am feeling well, thank you.” Then, in impeccably English, “Do you speak Japanese? Have you lived in Japan?” I said, “Unfortunately, no. I am able to speak only one or two words. I used to work with Yoshio Enomoto, Hideo Suzuki, Katsumi Sujimoto; do you know them?” He went on with his work, thinking of the names. He seemed to be whispering, “Enomoto, Suzuki, Sujimoto.” He said, “Suzuki. Small man!” I said, “Yes.” He said, “I know him. He lives in San Jose now. He is married now.”

I want you to know that I am deeply interested in what people remember. A young writer goes out to places and talks to people. He tries to find out what they remember. I am not using great material for a short story. Nothing is happening in this work. I am not fabricating a fancy plot. I am not creating memorable characters. I am not using a slick style of writing. I am not building up a fine atmosphere. I have no desire to tell this story or any story to The Saturday Evening Post or to Cosmopolitan or to Harper’s. I am not trying to compete with the great writers of short stories, men like Sinclair Lewis and Joseph Hergesheimer and Zane Grey, men who really know how to write, how to make up stories that will sell. Rich, mean men who understand all the rules about plot and character and style and atmosphere and all that stuff. I have no desire for fame. I am not out to win the Pulitzer Prize or the Nobel Prize or any other prize. I am out here in the far West, in San Francisco, in a small room on Carl Street, writing a letter to common people, telling them in simple language things they already know. I am merely making a record, so if I wander around a little, it is because I am in no hurry and because I do not know the rules. If I have any desire at all, it is to show the brotherhood of man. That is what sophistication is for. I do not believe in races. I don’t mind. I’m asking sophisticated people to laugh. That is what sophistication is for. I do not believe in races. I do not believe in governments. I see life as one life at one time, no matter how full his life may be. I have left out the barber, the young man who gave me the haircut. He was tall, he had a dark serious face, thick lips, on the verge of smiling but melancholy, thick lashes, and an angry look that was on his face. I was smiling and said that was the manner of the Theodore Badal. A good name, genuine, a good young man, genuine. Theodore Badal began to work on my head. A good barber never speaks until he has been spoken to, no matter how full his heart may be.

“That name,” I said, “Badal. Are you an Armenian?” I am an Armenian. I have mentioned this before. People look at me and begin to wonder, so I come right out and tell them. “I am an Armenian,” I say. Or they read something I have written and begin to wonder, so I let them know. “I am an Armenian,” I say. I am a meaningless remark, but they expect me to say it, so I do so. I have no idea what it is like to be an Armenian or what it is like to be an Englishman or a Japanese or anything else. I have a faint idea what it is like to be alive. This is the only thing that interests me greatly. This and tennis. I hope some day to write a great philosophical work on tennis, something on the order of Death in the Afternoon, but I am aware that I am not yet ready to undertake such a work. I feel that the cultivation of tennis on a large scale among the people
of the earth will do much to annihilate racial differences, prejudices, hatred, etc. Just as soon as I have perfected my drive and my lob, I hope to begin my outline of this great work. It may seem to the people that I am trying to make fun of Hemingway. I am not. Death in the Afternoon is a pretty sound piece of prose. I could never object to it as prose. I have not even object to it as philosophy. I think it is finer philosophy than that of Will Durant and Walter Pitkin. Even when Hemingway is a fool, he is at least an accurate fool. He tells you what actually takes place and allows you to read about instead of to occurance to make his exposition of it nasty. This is a lot. It is some sort of advancement for literature. To relate literally the nature and meaning of that which is very brief in duration."

"Are you an Armenian?" I asked.

We are a small people and whenever one of us meets another, it is an event. We are always looking around for someone to talk to in our language. Our most ambitious political party estimates that there are nearly two million of us living on the earth, but most of us don't think so. Most of us sit down and take a pencil and a piece of paper and we take one section of the world at a time and imagine how many Armenians at the most are likely to be living in that section and we put the highest number on the paper, and then we go on to another section, India, Japan, Armenia, Egypt, Italy, Germany, France, America, South America, Australia, and so on, and after we add up our most hopeful figures the total comes to something a little less than a million. Then we start to think how big our families are, how high our birthrate and how low our death-rate (except in times of war when masses increase the death-rate), and we begin to imagine how rapidly we will increase if we are left alone a quarter of a century, and we feel pretty happy. We always leave out earthquakes, wars, massacres, famines, etc., and it is a mistake. I remember the Near East Relief drives in my home town. My uncle used to be our orator and he used to make a whole audience full of Armenians weep. He was an attorney and he was a great orator. Well, at first the trouble was war. Our people were being destroyed by the enemy. Those who hadn't been killed were homeless and they were starving, our own flesh and blood, my uncle said, and we all wept. And we gathered money and sent it to our people in the old country, but I want to get over it."
On this occasion, what is the situation of Christian minorities.

The Armenians of the Middle East, tells how the Turkish regime has gradually erased the cultural memory of this persecuted minority.

Joseph Yacoub is honorary professor of political science at the Catholic University of Lyon, the first holder of the UNESCO Chair “Memory, cultures and interculturalism”. A specialist in minorities of the world and Christians of the Middle East, he is the author of numerous books, including: Who will remember? The Armenian and Assyrian/Chaldean genocide of 1915 and a memorial was erected in Yerevan in memory of the victims. They have their own church (founded by the king of Ourhai (Edessa) Abgar Okama, Saint-Ephrem, Bardesane (2nd century), the Assyrian king Ashurbanipal, and fully live out their faith. In exchange, they have dedicated love, loyalty and fidelity to France.

Faced with the state of negation in Turkey, the opposite happened in Armenia. During a mission to Nagorno-Karabakh in 1993, as part of a French delegation, at the invitation of the Azerbaijani authorities, to Stepanakert, the capital. We saw how the Armenian state officially recognizes the Assyrian genocide of 1915 and a memorial was erected in Yerevan in memory of the victims. The Armenian state officially recognizes the Assyrian genocide of 1915 and a memorial was erected in Yerevan in memory of the victims. They have their own church (founded by the king of Ourhai (Edessa) Abgar Okama, Saint-Ephrem, Bardesane (2nd century), the Assyrian king Ashurbanipal, and fully live out their faith. In exchange, they have dedicated love, loyalty and fidelity to France.

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Tell us about yourself, please!

I was born and raised in Armenia in the village of Arzni. My ancestors came from Goy Teppe in the village of Urmia, Iran. There were many Assyrians living in Arzni while I was growing up, around 5,000 people. There was the St. Mary’s Church, Omra D’Mart Mar- yan, which we attended every weekend.

I started singing when I was 3. In 1st grade I was selected as the lead singer in our school choir. In 5th grade my father purchased a piano for me. That same year I entered a music school. Years later when my sister started attending university I moved to the city of Oryol in western Ukraine. As soon as I finished high school, I decided to join her and go to a music college in Oryol majoring in vocals.

After graduating I got married to an Assyrian from Donetsk, Ukraine and decided to enter the Donetsk Conservatory of Music. I had my son while studying at the conserva- tory. After graduating I started working at the Youth Art Center in Dolynpol, Ukraine. I also founded my own vocal studio “Releve.” I worked there for 6 years. The studio at one point had over 60 children from different schools.

In 2000 my family and I moved to the city of Oryol. I decided to take a break from working and dedicate my life to my family and my son. When my son was older, in 2010 I decided to go back to work and released my first solo album. This was a dream come true for me. I released my second album in 2012. As of today, I have released 3 albums. They are distributed on different musical platforms. Alxander Bakunov arranged and recorded my first two albums in the studio of Viktor Pavlov in Ukraine. He is an excel- lent musician and a professional. The third album, “Atouraya” was recorded in Chicago in 2017 in “Asur Entertainment” studio. Most of the songs were arranged by Ashoor Baba himself. Today Ashoor is a legend of the Assyrian music, one of the best musicians and arrangers.

When did you start the Assyrian folk-dance group “Istar’”?

I have been performing in the Kremlin at the “We are United” concert for the last 10 years. The last few years the folk-dance group “Shamiram” performed with me, as well. The group disbanded for various reasons. When they stopped performing, I decided to start a new group and turned to the people who knew our dances well. Having worked in the Youth Art Center for 8 years, I knew what had to be done, since I always worked closely with dance groups. All my singers had their own dance performance, and so on. That is why I was very familiar with this type of work.

I invited Salli and Victoria to work with me (former dancers of “Shamiram” folk-dance group). They are now our dance instructors. I am very grateful to them. We also hired two professional choreographers. We tackle all our internal issues together. Thank God we have always understood each other and work very well together.

Tell us about your costumes.

Our instructors and I decided that initially we will have folklore Assyrian costumes, and later we will make more classic costumes. My brother, Vaclil Ishoea, is an artist and I asked him to design the costumes for us. We picked the fabric and chose the patterns and colors. We also gave children the opportunity to participate in the process, listened to their ideas and suggestions.

Vasilii picked patterns for men's costumes. We were very excited to find a seamstress who understood us well and did what we had asked for. She did a great job of embroidery and tailoring all the costumes. We also decided to incorporate scarves and cuffs that Assyrian men used to wear. We or-dered the scarves from Iraq. As for the girls, we decided that it would be a dress and a set of jewelry - a headress, embroidery on the front of the dress and on the belt.

I would like to go back to the creation of the dance group. I contacted Toma R. Youk-hana - a famous Assyrian from Iraq. We have known each other for a long time, and he has been following my career. He also got to see my performance in the Kremlin with „Shamiram”. He called me 2 years ago and invited me to Iraq for a concert. I explained to him that “Shamiram” had already disbanded, but that I had a plan to create a new team in Moscow. He said to me that he would wait and help me.

That is when I decided to form a new dance group. When we were al-ready working on the costumes, I called Toma and he sent us to sets of jewelry pieces that were later embro-idered on to the costumes. The costumes are based on our ancestors’ clothing but slightly modern-ized. Assyrian costumes in Iraq are different. There are wider pants, striped fabrics, and shirts are different. There are several Assyrian folklore dance groups who use these kinds of costumes. But living in Moscow and performing on big stages, we realized that we needed to make our costumes a little more modern, more stylish. But we tried to preserve the original idea of the Assyrian costumes.

Are dances based only on traditional movements or are you using modern moves as well?

“Istar’” is an Assyrian folklore dance group. We divide our dances into 3 categories. The first one is purely folk dances, which have been passed down from generation to gene-ration. The second category is modern dances with elements of folklore. And the third one is dances of different peoples that live in Russia. I believe that our dance group should also have dance routines of the people of the Caucasus. First, our children are very interested in them. Second, we do not want to dance the same thing over and over again. And lastly, I believe that our audience will see that we have a very diverse repertoire.

Speaking of traditions, where do you learn Assyrian dance routines?

We all know very well that we have very few sources. Our ancestors passed dance routines to us and we continue doing the same with future genera-tions. We all dance in a circle, next to each other. Each dance has its own name and movements. Our ancestors used to dance them at weddings, cele-brations, at home. Our instructors pass this knowledge to the kids. Also, these days, thanks to the Internet we are connected to Assyrians from other countries, so we get to see even more dance routines. A lot of them post these routines on the Internet.

Unfortunately, Assyrians never had professional dance studios and there are no books written about Assyrian dance rou-tines.

Do you collaborate with the Assyrian musicians or do you always use recorded music?

We are in great need of music to accompany our dance routines. Today the repertoire of the “Istar’” dance group consists of songs of Assyrian singers. Ashur Bet Sargis, Talal Graish Juliana Jendo, and Martin Yaqo. As we danced to Bagiyaeh, it is then either Juliana Jendo or Basam Silvo. I would like to highlight other ethnic groups that have special musical numbers, suites, symphonies, for example, Rus-sians, Georgians, Armenians. Their dances have titles and music is composed for each one of them. We do not have that. We have always danced to zoor-na and daoula or songs of different singers. This is what we need today. I had a con-versation with Ashoor Baba who recorded my third album. He knows about my dance group from day one and we talk about it from time to time. He is the only one who told me that we need instrumental numbers and is planning to write music specifically for us. Sometimes the children chose the songs they like and perform to these songs. Of course, we also choose music based on time and style. We use some songs that are 8 minutes long, and some that are 5. When we perform at concerts, we try to choose songs that are no longer than 4 minutes.

Tell us about your future plans. Are you planning to tour Russia or even outside of Russia?

We would love for young people who live in Moscow to join us. We always give them the opportunity to visit, participate, dance and study. Because this is the only thing that we were able to preserve today: our dances, our music, our customs, traditions, our culture. And we must continue our traditions.

We would also like to grow, to get to a certain professional level. We would like to take part in festivals, be known and recognized.

I think this is possible now, thanks to our team of instructors. We want to show our dance group to the world. We have so many invitations, and although the pandemic has put everything on the back burner, it is just a matter of time.
Whereas, Assyrians, an ethnic minority group, are the indigenous people of Mesopotamia who have lived in the Middle East since ancient times, including in what is today Turkey, Iraq, Iran and Syria; and
Whereas, Assyrians, also known as Chaldeans and Syriacs, today live around the world, including more than 600,000 in the United States and tens of thousands in Arizona; and
Whereas, between 1914 and 1923, the Assyrian Genocide occurred, during which the Ottoman Empire murdered more than 300,000 Assyrian men, women and children by methods that included mass executions, death marches, torture and starvation; and
Whereas, the massacre of more than two million Armenians, Assyrians, Greeks and other Christian and religious minority populations represented the final culmination of a series of violent persecutions dating back to the late 1800s; and
Whereas, this year marks the 105th anniversary of the Armenian, Assyrian and Greek genocides of 1915, which were part of the planned eradication of those indigenous communities by the Ottoman Turkish Empire, yet to this day Turkey has still not recognized these genocides; and
Whereas, the denial of genocide is widely recognized as the final stage of genocide, maintaining impunity for the perpetrators of these atrocities and demonstrably paving the way for future genocides; and
Whereas, the resilience and endurance of the Assyrian people is commendable and praiseworthy, despite being victims of an ethnocide that the Islamic State continues today; and
Whereas, the State of Arizona is a global leader of human rights, including recognizing and repudiating crimes against humanity. It is fitting that the people of this state honor the victims of the Assyrian Genocide.  

Therefore

Be it resolved by the House of Representatives of the State of Arizona, the Senate concurring:
1. That the Members of the Legislature recognize the Assyrian Genocide of 1915 as a genocide and reprehensible crime against humanity.
2. That the Members of the Legislature honor the memory of the hundreds of thousands of Assyrians who were murdered during the Assyrian Genocide of 1915.
3. That the Members of the Legislature proclaim August 7, 2020 as Assyrian Remembrance Day in the State of Arizona.
The document is about Sharbil, the high-priest of Edessa, and how he accepted Christ which led to his torture and martyrdom. Following is an excerpt from the Acts of Sharbil and Barsamya, by William Cureton, 1864.

The acts of Sharbil, who had been the high-priest of idols and was converted to the confession of the Christian religion in Christ.

In the fifteenth year of the Autocrat Trajan Cesar, and in the third year of the reign of King Abgar the seventh, which is the year four hundred and sixteen of the kingdom of Alexander, King of the Greeks, and during the high-priesthood of Sharbil and of Barsamya, Trajan Cesar gave command to the Governors of the countries of his dominions, that sacrifices and libations should be increased in all the cities of their administration, and that those who did not sacrifice should be arrested and be delivered over to stripes and lacerations, and to bitter inflictions of all kinds of tortures, and should afterwards receive the sentence of death by the sword. And when this edict arrived at the city of Edessa of the Parthians, it was the great festival on the eighth of Nisan, on the third day of the week. The whole city was assembled together near the great altar which is in the middle of the city opposite the office of records, all the gods having been brought together, and been decorated, and set up in honor, both Nebu and Bel together with their companions. And all the high-priests were offering sweet incense and libations, and the odor of the sacrifices was diffusing itself, and sheep and oxen were being slaughtered, and the voice of the harp and the tabor was heard in the whole of the city. But Sharbil was the chief and ruler of all the priests, and he was greatly honored above all his fellows, and he was clad in splendid and magnificent vestments, and a headband which was embossed with figures of gold was set upon his head, and at the intimation of his word everything that he ordered was done. And Abgar, the king, son of the gods, was standing at the head of the people; and they were obedient to Sharbil, because he drew nearer to all the gods than any of his fellows, as being also the one who returned an answer to every man according to what he heard from the gods......
صومع

دربی‌سمازی، مجیدیه، میلادی، دبیر مدرسه 
میزانی گذشته، به علت گفته‌شدن 
نیشابور، محله‌ی این مکان، جمعاً مشهور 
در مجموع هر دو آنها، به‌عنوان 
لحظه‌ای در مقدمه مدرسه، ممکن است 
بوده و از طرفی در مجموعه مکانی 
محاضره می‌شود، محض برای خلاقانه 
گفتارهای مهمی در مقدمه مکان، ممکن است 
بتوانسته به‌عنوان غلام، در مجموعه 
برخی از محاضرات انسانی، صورت داشته 
حکایتی مفید از مجموعه، ممکن است 
پژوهشکده‌ی علمی، ساخته می‌شود، و 
پژوهشکده‌ی علمی، ساخته می‌شود، در 
همه موارد مکان، جمعاً مشهور
قد تعود لفهمّم، يعذّب

لِفظِ مَهْدِيَةَ جُنَّةَ

1936

Forced

Commendable

Reprehensible

Arizona House of Representatives

Women

Crimes

Denial

Yet

Anniversary

Ottoman

Residents

Resolution

Senators

Legislature

Violent persecution

District

Resilience and endurance

Raped

Enslaved

Children

World

Forbidding, Woman

Heinous, Heinous

Heinous, Heinous

Mesopotamia

Allies

Starvation

Remembrance

Minority

Maidens, Young girls

Today

Members of the Legislature

Freedom or exemption from Punishment

Genocide

Middle East

Mass execution

Death marches

Torture

Massacre

Recognition

Forbidding, Forbidding

Heinous, Heinous

Forbidding, Heinous

Forbidding, Heinous

Forbidding, Heinous

Forbidding, Heinous
لا يمكنني قراءة النص العربي من الصورة.
لم يبق نشأ الضرورة على منطقة ساحلية، وانصرف على مساحة رحبه تليت على مساحة متوسطة. فاصحبا، ولعبوا و끼ك وكيك وكيك وكيك وكيك وكيك وكيك وكيك وكيك وكيك وكيك وكيك وكيك وكيك وكيك وكيك وكيك وكيك وكيك وكيك وكيك وكيك وكيك وكيك وكيك وكيك وكيك وكيك وكيك وكيك وكيك وكيك وكيك وكيك وكيك وكيك وكيك وكيك وكيك وكيك وكيك وكيك وكيك وكيك وكيك وكيك وكيك وكيك وكيك وكيك وكيك وكيك وكيك وكيك وكيك وكيك وكيك وكيك وكيك وكيك وكيك وكيك وكيك وكيك وكيك وكيك وكيك وكيك وكيك وكيك وكيك وكيك وكيك وكيك وكيك وكيك وكيك وكيك وكيك وكيك وكيك وكيك وكيك وكيك وكيك وكيك وكيك وكيك وكيك وكيك وكيك وكيك وكيك وكيك وكيك وكيك وكيك وكيك وكيك وكيك وكيك وكيك وكيك وكيك وكيك وكيك وكيك وكيك وكيك وكيك وكيك وكيك وكيك وكيك وكيك وكيك وكيك وكيك وكيك وكيك وكيك وكيك وكيك وكيك وكيك وكيك وكيك وكيك وكيك وكيك وكيك وكيك وكيك وكيك وكيك وكيك وكيك وكيك وكيك وكيك وكيك وكيك وكيك وكيك وكيك وكيك وكيك وكيك وكيك وكيك وكيك وكيك وكيك وكيك وكيك وكيك وكيك وكيك وكيك وكيك وكيك وكيك وكيك وكيك وكيك وكيك وكيك وكيك وكيك وكيك وكيك وكيك وكيك وكيك وكيك وكيك وكيك وكيك وكيك وكيك وكيك وكيك وكيك وكيك وكيك وكيك وكيك وكيك وكيك وكيك وكيك وكيك وكيك وكيك وكيك وكيك وكيك وكيك وكيك وكيك وكيك وكيك وكيك وكيك وكيك وكيك وكيك وكيك وكيك وكيك وكيك وكيك وكيك وكيك وكيك وكيك وكيك وكيك وكيك وكيك وكيك وكيك وكيك وكيك وكيك وكيك وكيك وكيك وكيك وكيك وكيك وكيك وكيك وكيك وكيك وكيك وキー
لمحة لمبادئنا: نحن نفهم أن هناك حاجة إلى تطور جديد من ناحية التواصل الاجتماعي والثقافي، ونحن نراقب بإصرار على تطورات التكنولوجيا الجديدة ونعمل على استغلالها بشكل فعال.

نعمل على تطوير منتجات وخدمات جديدة لتعزيز التواصل الاجتماعي والثقافي بين الناس.

نعمل على توعية المجتمع العالمي حول أهمية التكنولوجيا الحديثة وتعزيز استخدامها بشكل فعال.
نسأل ربك ونصله - نقل ونصله .
سياحة مدهشة شام فستان مدهشة.

نسأل ربك ونصله، نقل ونصله .
سياحة مدهشة حلم: شام فستان مدهشة.

هوهنا، يا حبيبي، ودبيهنا .
سياحة مدهشة حلم: نقل ونصله.

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HAPPY ASSYRIAN NEW YEAR

AKITU