



NINEVEH

CULTURAL | EDUCATIONAL | SOCIAL



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**The Komani Irrigation Project :
Transforming Agriculture for the Assyrian Community**

The Komani Irrigation Project, a vital initiative in Komani, Iraq, has successfully completed its first and second phases, resulting in the construction of a crucial 700-meter-long canal. The initial phase, completed last year, involved the construction of 470 meters, addressing various needs such as rock excavation, building sections, and concrete installation. The second phase, undertaken this year, covered an additional 230 meters, focusing on rehabilitation, strengthening, and coverings.

Notably, the Shlama Foundation and the Assyrian Foundation of America played a crucial role by providing financial support for this commendable project. The completion of the irrigation canal is expected to have a significant impact on the local community, particularly benefiting farmers in the Komani region. Without this essential water source, crops in the area were at risk of perishing.

The speed of irrigation has drastically improved, reducing the time from 2 hours to just 10 minutes for water to reach the Komani area. This enhanced efficiency enables the cultivation of a variety of crops such as garlic, onions, and beans. The successful realization of the Komani Irrigation Project has been a collaborative effort, with special thanks to the Assyrian Foundation of America and the generous contributions from organizations like Golden Key Group and Keystone Commercial Real Estate during the 2022 fundraising campaign. The increased water supply promises not only more abundant agricultural yields but also a more stable life for the 180 people residing in the region.



Thanks to donors like you, the Shlama Foundation was finally able to complete a much-needed water infrastructure project in the beautiful village of Komani! The people of Komani are crop growers and farmers who depend on the accessibility of reliable water sources to work their land and support their families. For three years, the 54 families have requested we fund an irrigation canal to improve their livelihoods.

Thanks to you, the Assyrian Foundation of America, the last 230 meters of the second phase of the canal construction were completed. Prior to the construction of the irrigation canal, it would take an hour for the water to reach the people. Now, it only takes 5 minutes! More water means more fruits and vegetables, and thus a more stable life for the villagers.

To uphold our promise of financial transparency and ensure 100% of your donation is spent on the project, we post all of our project expenses on our website. Check out the project listing here [Project 261] of your donation with your name here. You can find pictures here, a video here, and a list of purchased items along with all the receipts here.

These projects would not have been possible without your charitable gift. As we continue to assist the indigenous people thrive in their villages, we will face great financial challenges throughout the process. However, with your continuous support, we can help families prosper in their ancestral homeland. Again, thank you for giving back to the Assyrian Chaldean Syriac community in Iraq!

Sincerely, Shlama Foundation

www.shlama.org

Shlama ilokhoon Assyrian Foundation of America!

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Unveiling the Tapestry of Assyria: Exploring Jonah's Tale through Archaeology and Culture

by
Elizabeth Mickaily-Huber, Ph.D.

In the intricate tapestry of ancient narratives that weaves through the fabric of human history, the story of Jonah and the whale emerges as a captivating thread. Beyond its moral and religious teachings, this tale beckons us to embark on a quest to uncover its historical roots. As we delve into the annals of time, we find ourselves standing in the heart of the Assyrian Empire, exploring the remnants of Nineveh—the majestic capital where the echoes of Jonah's reluctant odyssey still reverberate.

The Book of Jonah, nestled in the Hebrew Bible and the Christian Old Testament, unfolds a saga of divine calling, reluctant obedience, and a miraculous encounter with a great fish. Its richness in moral lessons and spiritual allegory has made the historical veracity of this tale a subject of debate and inquiry.

During the mid-19th century, a period marked by archaeological fervor, remnants of Nineveh were unearthed, affirming its existence as a powerful and wicked city. Palaces,

temples, and formidable walls emerged, providing tangible evidence of a flourishing civilization in alignment with its biblical description. Amid these archaeological treasures, the Palace of Sennacherib took center stage, revealing intricate reliefs of Assyrian conquests and triumphs—a vivid backdrop to the military and cultural achievements during Jonah's epoch.

A seal impression found in the vicinity of Nineveh depicted King Esarhaddon, the son of the famed Sennacherib. Furthermore, artifacts discovered from the Neo-Assyrian period, coinciding with Jonah's time, have bolstered the credibility of the Jonah narrative by providing evidence of the existence of many of the Assyrian kings mentioned in the Bible. Inscribed in Assyrian cuneiform tablets, daily life, commerce, and religious practices found their voice, offering a vivid portrait of the cultural and social tapestry of the Assyrian Empire during Jonah's time.

Contemplating these archaeological revelations, the elusive details of Jonah's story persist in casting a veil of mystery. Yet, the tangible evidence of Nineveh's existence, the depictions of Assyrian kings, and glimpses into daily life contribute to a richer understanding of the historical setting. For Assyrians, these discoveries form a unique connection to the biblical narrative, intertwining their historical roots with the echoes of Jonah's journey.

In the theological realm, parallels emerge between Jonah and Jesus—witnessing divine power in calming the sea and the explicit link to Jonah's three days in the fish's belly foretelling the resurrection of Christ. The Book of Jonah encapsulates a theology of hope, expressed by individuals appealing to God's mercy and acknowledging divine freedom to judge or show compassion.

The story of Jonah holds particular importance for Assyrians, intertwined with their cultural, historical, and religious identity. This is evident in the Rogation of the Ninevites—an annual religious fast observed by Assyrian Christians, deeply connected to the Jonah narrative. Lasting three days, this fast involves prayer, repentance, and spiritual reflection, aligning with the core themes of Jonah's narrative.

The Rogation of the Ninevites and the celebration of the Jonah narrative contribute to the continuity of Assyrian culture and traditions across generations. These observances serve as a cultural anchor, reinforcing a sense of identity and shared history. The Assyrian community's faith and cultural heritage are deeply intertwined. The story of Jonah, with its Assyrian backdrop, becomes a bridge between religious beliefs and cultural practices, fostering a holistic understanding of their identity.

In summary, the story of Jonah is particularly important to Assyrians due to its biblical connection, cultural significance, and its role in shaping religious observances like the Rogation of the Ninevites. This narrative serves as a unifying thread that weaves together their past, present, and future, fostering a sense of cultural continuity and spiritual reflection.

This journey through the remnants of Nineveh transcends the boundaries of religious narratives. For the significance of Jonah's tale extends beyond the theological realm, touching upon universal themes of redemption, forgiveness, and the consequences of one's actions. Its influence stretches across cultures, inspiring literature, art, and music throughout history, contributing to the broader cultural heritage we share in humanity.





In memoriam: **Nouri Iskandar**

Deir ez-Zor, Syria, 1938— December 25, 2023, Örebro, Sweden

Assyrian composer, musician and mu-sicologist;
and one of the founders of modern (West-)
Assyrian popular mu-sic.

“Do you know who I am,” he asked in a humble and genuine way. He didn’t think I knew who the great Nouri Iskandar was. I replied: “you are me and I am you”. He laughed and asked what I meant. He was my childhood, a big part of it, my youth, my sadness and joy to his songs. Composer, Nouri Iskandar.

When I was a little child in Germany, we had colored single records. You know, those records you played on the turntables. There were songs, popular music, that had been written in Jesus’ tongue. It was a language that was banned in large parts of the area in which it was spoken; and if it was not banned, it was threatened to the point of extinction. It would not be taught in schools and would not be spoken in everyday life. You definitely wouldn’t be allowed to write songs in it. But, then they came: those young women and men who decided to risk their lives. And, songs like *Kukwo d’safro* ܟܘܟܘܘܬܝܬܐ (morning star) or *Habibo* ܚܒܝܒܐ (beloved), songs by Nouri Iskandar, came to life. The songs were printed on small discs, in happy colors, and sent around. To some countries you had to smuggle them, and then hide them to bring out and play – in secret. Every word in them, every punctuation they were written with, was brilliant.

They were also in cassette tapes that were treated as the most precious thing you had. It became a tradition to gather around the record player. It was sung for a happy life, in my native language.

Thank you for everything you have done for us, you great champion; for the words, for the songs, for the hymns, for the love and, perhaps most of all, for the fight.

Aloho mhaselokh
Nuri Seyhan Kino,
Sweden

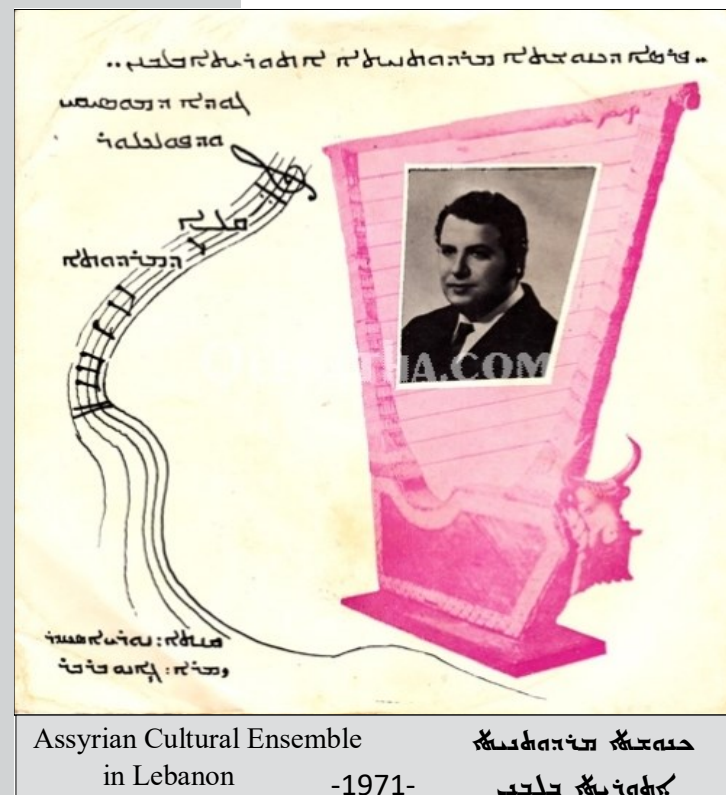


Nouri Iskandar was born in *Dayro Zcuro (Deir ez-Zor)* in Syria, to an Assyrian family from *Urhoy* (Turkey), in 1938. His family was displaced from *Urhoy* to the Syrian cities of *Ayn al-Arab* and *Tel Abyad*, then to *Dayro Zcuro (Deir ez-Zor)*, where he lived for 4 years. He settled with his family in *Holeb* (Aleppo) in 1941, where he joined the local Syriac Orthodox scout band and took his first music lessons. He studied at the higher institute of music at the University of Cairo between 1959 and 1964 and graduated with a B.A in music.

He started composing Assyrian folk music in the early 1970s; popular songs like ܫܚܝܒܐ *O habibo*, ܠܝܩܐ ܦܪܝܬܐ *Zliqe frisi*, ܠܐ ܬܗܦܘܟܬܐ *Lo tehfukh* and others.

Among his most important works in the field of music are the formation and training of many choirs, including the establishment of the first choir of Mor Jirjis (St. George) Syriac Orthodox Church in Al-Surian neighborhood of *Holeb* (Aleppo) in 1965, the establishment of a second choir of Mor Aphrem Syriac Orthodox Church in the Sulay-maniyah neighborhood of *Holeb* (Aleppo) and the establishment of a choir in Sweden.

In 1972, Nouri Iskandar, Aho Gabriel, and Amanuel Sala-mon founded the *Shamiram Folklore and Musical Group*. This group performed annually at the UNESCO Palace in Beirut, Lebanon from 1972 until the Lebanese Civil War began in 1975. What made these folkloric performances unique is that they were the first known instance in which singers performed in both the Eastern and Western Assyrian dialects during the same concert.



Iskandar is known for his work on oriental music and his search for its roots. He collected the oriental music and trans-ferred it from oral to written heritage, especially the Assyrian music.

He presented many studies, musical works and research on Syriac melodies, which he wrote down in musical notation for the first time in 2 books, using modern musical notation. He presented a number of Operettas in Syriac and Arabic the most notable of them was *Furqono*.

Over the past 40 years, he studied this ancient music. He worked on archiving and preserving the Syriac church songs and contributed to the creation of original contemporary Assyrian folk songs, within the native templates. Iskandar was director of the *Arab Music Institute in Holeb* (Aleppo) between 1996 and 2002.

The Syrian National Symphony Orchestra is constantly work-ing on presenting his works in its various evening programs. His compositions are academic material that is taught to stu-dents of the *Higher Institute of Music in Damascus*.

Iskandar was part of the Syriac Orthodox Church; he compiled and notated over 700 church chants into a book called *Beth Gazo*, published in 1992.

Iskandar had to flee Aleppo in 2014 because of the Syrian Civil War. He moved to Sweden and lived there until his death on December 25, 2023, in Örebro, Sweden.



I am shattered and heartbroken by the loss of an important pillar in our community, Malfono Nouri Iskandar, Assyrian composer-musicologist, a founding pioneer of contemporary Syrian classical music, ormer director of the Aleppo Conservatory and dedicated keeper, creator and educator of our culture.

I will forever be grateful for the brief but special time I got to know him. I finally had the chance to meet him 3 months ago in Sweden, where we sat together with his beautiful family over chai and sweets and spoke about his innovative compositions, the difficulties of documenting our endangered culture, and his future visions for Assyrian classical mu-sic.

He had a deep understanding of the challenges I faced as an Assyrian pianist - the complexities of expressing Assyrian-ness through my instrument and doing so whilst navigating statelessness, loss of culture, and misrepresentation. Yet at the same time, he showed me a path forward, that it was possible to find the cultural and artistic expression I yearned for as a musician. This was one of the most important and deeply touching experiences of my life to date.

Full of questions and ideas, I knew I had so much to learn from Malfono. My thoughts now extend to his family, his incredible daughter Sousan and his mentees who have worked alongside him for many years. I am reminded of how precious life is and the responsibility we all bear to learn from our elders and to support those who work tirelessly for our communities.

Malfono worked tirelessly to document our culture and to celebrate the continuity of ancient Assyrian heritage. Im-portantly, he showed the world the historically rooted contributions of indigenous Assyrians to the Middle Eastern mu-sical landscape.

As we witness multiple genocides in our world today, I see how music plays an important role in the catharsis, re-sistance and healing of communities whose existence and connection to their homelands is threatened. Malfono Nouri devoted his musical career to ensuring that our people, though stateless and displaced, could maintain that connection.

Tawdi Sagi Malfono, thank you for your music, guidance, and for inspiring me to see a path forward.

Lolita Emmanuel, Australia



Legacy of Malfono Nuri Iskandar

(1938-2023)

A biography compiled by Abboud Zeitoune

In the 20th century, there were few West-Assyrian composers. Undoubtedly, Nuri Iskandar is considered one of the influential composers in the field of Assyrian folk music. He particularly delved into the roots of folk music within Church music, believing that the Church had preserved old folk music in its hymns for centuries.

Iskandar was born in Dayr ez-Zor, Syria, in 1938, into a musically inclined family. His father and all three uncles were proficient in playing musical instruments. After relocating to Aleppo, Syria, he studied music under the guidance of Russian music teacher Michel Borazenko. His passion for music led him to pursue further studies at the University of Cairo between 1959 and 1964. Upon graduation, he returned to his hometown of Aleppo, where he lived until 2007. Following his return from Egypt, he became involved in church music and established his first church choir around 1966.

The first modern West-Assyrian folk songs were introduced in 1968 by a youth group in Qamishly, Syria. Habib Mousa sang songs like "Shamo mar" and "Kmi Sawri lquli." This youth group was directed by the Assyrian Democratic Organization (ADO), with one of its leaders and prominent figures being Dr. Abrohom Lahdo. It was Dr. Abrohom who, upon starting his studies at the University of Aleppo, met Nuri Iskandar and convinced him to compose Assyrian folk songs. The first compositions by Nuri Iskandar in the field of folk songs were released as a vinyl record with two songs performed by Jan Barbar in 1971. The songs were "Habibat Haye" (lyrics by Abrohom Lahdo) and "Talakh ya Khleti" (lyrics by Emanuel Salamon). Iskandar composed the songs in a modern Western pop style, accompanied by guitar, bass guitar, drums, and keyboard. Subsequently, he collaborated with Habib Mousa in Beirut, where they recorded two singles in 1971. The following year, in 1972, Nuri and Habib recorded two other singles with the Syriac Orthodox Church's language teaching committee as the producer and the Maronite Singer Samia Khoury as the singer of one of the songs.

Song	Lyrics	Year	Singer
Lo Tehfokh	Joseph Tarzi	1971	Habib Mousa
O Habibo	Abdelmasih Bisseh	1971	Habib Mousa
'Laymoutho w-Hubo	Amanouel Salamon	1972	Habib Mousa
Lebi Kriho-Yo	Danho Daho	1972	Habib Mousa
Zabno Tloumo (feat. Nineweh Aho)	Shabo Bahe	1972	Habib Mousa
Shlome Shlome	Shabo Bahe	1972	Habib Mousa
Krohmono O Habibaydi	Abdelmasih Bisseh	1972	Samia Khoury

The Unesco concerts in Beirut

In 1973 and 1974, Nuri Iskandar was one of the individuals responsible for organizing the first professional and legendary Assyrian musical festival at the Auditorium of the UNESCO Palace in Beirut. This festival featured a group of new singers, dancers, choirs, and more. The organizer of these concerts was the Assyrian Lebanese Association (Hudro Suryoyo d'Lebnon). During these events, Assyrian music was presented in a modern and culturally rich production. Two concerts were held during those years. In addition to folklore dances, folk songs were performed in both Syriac dialects. Apart from Iskandar, other significant contributors to this successful event included Aho Gabriel and Emanuel Salamon. It marked the first stage appearance of modern folklore dancers from both western and eastern Assyrians. Among the singers were Semaan Zakaria, Shamiram Salamon, Yousif Afram, and others. Many of the songs presented were performed on stage for the first time.

The following songs composed by Nuri Iskandar were among those performed on stage:

Song	Lyrics	Year	Singer
Iman ya Zawna	Amanouel Salamon	1973	Wadi al-Safi
Ana u Khleti	Folk	1973	Samaan Zakaria
Moth Lebnon	Abrohom Nouro	1974	Choir
Klao Abnotho	Aho Gabriel	1974	Choir
Ashkon Doto	Abdelmassih Yousif	1974	Robert Behnan
Kone ai Yawme	Aho Gabriel	1974	Robert Behnan
'Endo Rhimo	Aho Gabriel	1974	Bassem Aho
Tekh Lsidy	Aho Gabriel	1974	Choir

After the first concert, a vinyl record featuring songs by Wadi al-Safi ("Iman ya zawna" and "Greshla idi") was officially released.

Upon returning to Aleppo, Nuri continued his work in organizing church choirs and composing songs. One major project was the release of the album "Yaldo d Hubo" with several artists in 1977. This album was a collaboration with the Shamiram Band and various writers such as Shabo Bahe, Nuhman Haydari, Abrohom Lahdo, and Yakdan Nissan.

Song	Lyrics	Singer
Hate Rhamli	Shabo Bahe	Juliana Eyub
Kul 'Asriye qmu Tar'aydan	Abrohom Lahdo	Juliana Eyub
Qoyem U Hago	Shabo Bahe	Juliana Eyub
Hate Rhamli	Shabo Bahe	Juliana Eyub
Ko-Nutralleh	Numan Haydari	Juliana Eyub
Shafira	Yakdan Nissan	Helen Shahin
Marulah Marulah	Shabo Bahe	Ghandi Hanna
Heno	Abrohom Lahdo	Ghandi Hanna
Lilja lilja	Yakdan Nissan	Ghandi Hanna
Helkon alloho	Shabo Bahe	Ghandi Hanna
Libbi	Yalda Nissan	Ghandi Hanna

Nuri Iskandar was also active as a composer of film music. In 1979, he composed the soundtrack for the movie "The Fifth Fortress" (القلعة الخامسة), which won second place at the Damascus International Film Festival.

From 1964 to 1989, Nuri Iskandar taught music in preparatory schools and teacher institutes in Aleppo. During this time, he conducted various musical instrumental experiments, utilizing Oriental-Arabic scales "maqāms," polyphony, harmony, and the blending of genres, as well as the integration of musical dimensions with quarter tones. Some of these experiments included "the trio for string trio; 2 violins & 1 viola," a Lute Concerto with a chamber orchestra, and a Cello Concerto with a chamber orchestra. These musical compositions were released as a CD titled "Vision- Ru'ya."

In 1989, he was invited by the Assyrian Ha-Nison Association in Södertälje for a series of concerts. Nuri conducted five concerts including church hymns, folk, and national songs. The concerts were organized in these Swedish cities:

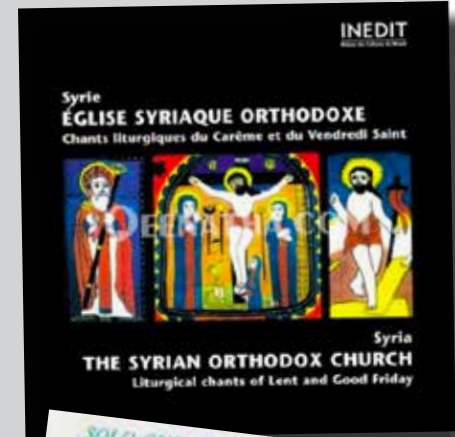
03.06.1989 Södertälje 11.06.1989 Norrköping
04.06.1989 Norsborg 25.06.1989 Stockholm
10.06.1989 Gothenburg

As a result of this project, a cassette with 10 church hymns and several new folk songs were recorded:

Song	Lyrics	Singer
In Lemaset	Gewargis Beth Benyamin	Ninib A Lahdo
Gani O Yawmo	Shabo Bahe	Ninib A. Lahdo
Athra Hliitho	Ninib A. Lahdo	Izla Issa
Furqono	Yuhanon Qashisho	Ha- Nisan Choir
Halutho Halutho	Shabo Bahe	Ha- Nisan Choir
Hes Hes	Shabo Bahe	Ha- Nisan Choir

1. Huyada, Vol. 12, No. 7-8, July-August 1989





Following this project, a collaboration with the Nineveh Group in Gothenburg began, resulting in numerous works released until 1994. One significant project with the Nineveh Group involved the video and audio recording of church hymns and folk songs in 1991:

Song	Lyrics	Song
Nafiqo i Shemsho	George Shamoun	Habib Mousa
Atouno	Abrohom Lahdo	Habib Mousa
Bu Zabnao dketwa Krobo	George Shamoun	Habib Mousa
Athy u Qaito	George Shamoun	Ghandi Hanna
Goresto	George Shamoun	Ghandi Hanna
Tay Shotina	George Shamoun	Ghandi Hanna
Men Kebaath me Hubo	George Shamoun	Shikri Johanen
Hey Baban	George Shamoun	Shikri Johanen

From 1993 to 1994, Nuri Iskandar composed and arranged the music for several albums:

- 1993 Shamiram Malke (eight songs written by Said Lahdo)
- 1994 Nineveh Group (Nahrin Garis and Shikri Johanen). This album included nine lyrics by Tuma Nahroyo, Gabriel Afram, Abrohom Lahdo, Nabil Maroge and Nuhman Haydari.
- 1994 Alexandra (album with eight songs and lyrics by Gabriel Lahdo, Abboud Shamoun and others)
- 1994 Nineveh Children Songs (12 songs written by George Shamoun and Tuma Nahroyo)

He dedicated around twenty years to researching Syriac spiritual musical heritage, unearthing hundreds of tunes regarded as the pinnacle of Syrian music. He experimented with contemporary forms to revive these "ajnas of maqamat," using instruments such as the oud, cello, and violin, ultimately producing two records: "Oud Concerto" and "String Trio."

From 1996 to 2002, he served as the Director of the Arab Institute of Music in Aleppo. In 2002, Nuri Iskandar composed the music for an ancient Greek theatrical play titled "Bacches" (The Believers of Bacchus), written by the Greek author Euripides around 400 BC. This play was performed with the Dutch band Z.T. Hollandia at the Summer Festivals in 2002 in Brussels, Vienna, Cologne, Athens, and Amsterdam.

Nuri Iskandar's unique talent lies in his ability to immerse listeners in a world that seamlessly blends church hymns, ritual Islamic eulogies, and songs with rare brilliance, all while preserving popular folkloric elements.

He produced "Dialogue of Love – Hiwar al-mahaba," featuring Islamic religious chants and unique Syriac Christian hymns. This collection represents a dialogue between Islamic and Syriac cultural music, demonstrating their interactivity and forming an integrated combination. This dialogue premiered in 1995 as part of the closing ceremony of the Syrian Song Festival at Aleppo Citadel. In 2007, Nuri received sponsorship from Yasser Hamood, Owner and General Manager of Al-Aous Publishers, to release two CDs the following year. The main project was a piece by Hamood titled "Ya Wahib al-Hubbi – Granter of Love." This piece, along with a new version of "Hiwar al-mahaba," was performed with a large choir and orchestra at the Damascus Opera House in 2008, attended by dignitaries including Syrian President Bashar al-Assad and his wife.

Iskandar established several choirs, notably "Qowqweyo – Al-Fakharoon," which performed Syriac tunes typical of the Syriac Orthodox Church in Syria and various European capitals. As a music teacher and conductor, Nuri Iskandar imparted his musical knowledge to numerous students, including his nephew George Hayrabedian, his daughter Susan, Musa Elias, Ibrahim Kevo, and Malek Kourie, all of whom applied their musical talents in various ways.

In 2014, due to the Syrian civil war, Malfono (teacher in Assyrian) Nuri was compelled to flee Syria. He subsequently immigrated to Sweden with his family, where he resided until his passing on Christmas Day, December 25th, 2023. May he rest in peace, and may his memory be eternal.

Releases:

Books

One of the main accomplishments of Nuri Iskandar in the field of church music is his notation of many hymns. The melodies of the Syriac Orthodox Church were orally passed down from generation to generation. Over the centuries, due to persecution and flight, many of these melodies were lost. Iskandar began transcribing known hymns and melodies into musical notation. He succeeded in this project through the publication of three books. The musical notation is primarily based on recordings by Patriarch Yacoub III in New Jersey in 1960.

In 1992, "Bethgazo: Notes by Nuri Iskandar" was prepared and published by Bishop Yohanna Ibrahim of Aleppo. It underwent a second printing in 1996. This book contains over 300 notated hymns according to the tradition of TurAbdin. The 1992 edition spans 596 pages, while the 1996 edition has 692 pages.

In 2003, "Bethgazo according to the School of Edessa (Urhoy)" was also printed by Bishop Yohanna Ibrahim. It includes an extensive introduction and over 350 notated hymns, spanning 920 pages.

In 2023, "Bethgazo – Ghnize and Takhsfotho" was published. This book contains 51 notated melodies and was released shortly before Nuri Iskandar's passing in Sweden. Through these books, Malfono (teacher in Assyrian) Nuri Iskandar was able to preserve all these melodies and hymns from extinction.

Choir recordings:

- 1983 Christmas Carols of the Syrian-Orthodox Church in Aleppo
- 1985 Easter Hymns
- 1986 Christmas Hymns
- 1989 Church Hymns with Ha-Nisan choir in Sweden
- 1996 The Syrian Orthodox Church Of Antioch: Liturgical Chants Of Lent And Good Friday Choir Members Of Churches St. George And St. Ephraim, Aleppo

Music arrangements/compositions (official records):

- 1971 Jan Barbar – vinyl record (2 songs)
- 1971 Habib Mousa – vinyl record (2 songs)
- 1972 Habib Mousa – two vinyl records (4 songs)
- 1972 Samia Khoury - vinyl record (one song)
- 1973 Seman Zakaria – vinyl record (two song)
- 1977 Yaldo d Hubo – various artists in Aleppo
- 1989 Ha-Nisan Choir – Folk Songs
- 1991 Nineveh Group – Modern Songs and Church Hymns
- 1993 Alexandra
- 1993 Shamiram Malke
- 1994 Nineveh Group (Nahrin Garis – Shikri Yawse) – Haymoutho
- 1994 Nineveh Children Songs

Instrumental:

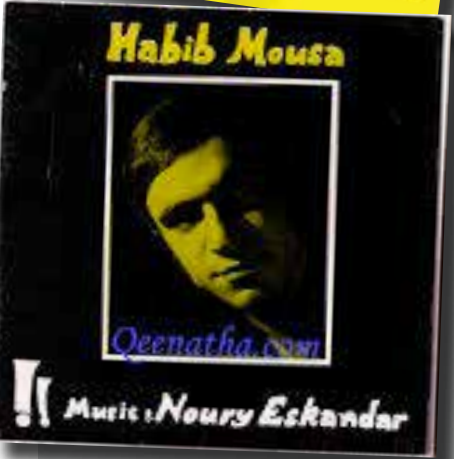
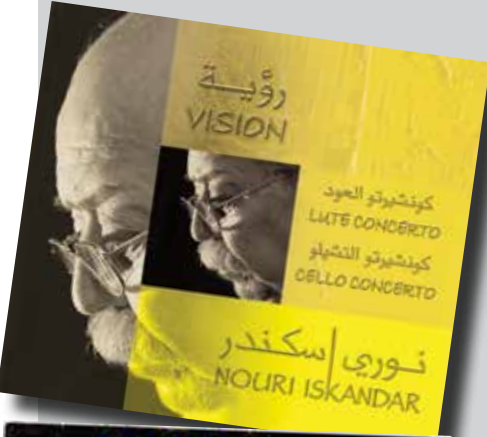
- 1989 Solo Oud with string trio and Solo violin with string quintet
- 2008 Revelations (Hiwar al-Mahabba – Al-Ahat – Ya wahib al-hubi)
- 2008 Vision (Lute Concerto – Cello Concerto)
- 2021 Savage hymn (ترنيلة هجبة) lyrics: Ounsi el-Hajj

Film music:

- 1979 The Fifth Fortress (Al Qalaa Al Khamesa - القلعة الخامسة) - Movie
- 1997 Traveling (El-Terhal - الترحال) Movie
- 1997 Iron door (Bab Al- Hadid – باب الحديد) Series
- 1998 Two songs performed in the series The Chandelier (Al-Thuraya - الثريا).
- 1999 Those days (Telka al-ayam - تلك الأيام) Series
- 2001 Pillars of light (Aamidat Al-Nour- أعمدة النور) a documentary series
- 2001 Mar Maroon (Lebanese movie)
- 2002 The roots stay green (Al-Juzzur tapqa kahdraa - (الجزور تبقى خضراء) Series
- 2002 Short distance train (Qetar al-masafat al-qasira - قطار المسافات القصيرة) Series
- 2005 Public Relations (Calaqat Cama - علاقات عامة) Movie
- 2009 Guardians of silence (Hurraas Al-Samt- حراس الصمت) Movie

Choral music:

- 1995 Khattamma- خَطَّامَة (for choir and chamber orchestra)





All food photos by Annabella Hoge

Bela's Baklava: A Taste of Home for the Assyrian Diaspora

By Annabella Hoge

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The most hotly contested topic in my household is not current events or the greatest band of all time. It's the cultural heritage of baklava, the layered pastry dish whose earliest ancient origins are unknown. If you ask my Assyrian mother and my half-Greek father, they'll tell you their respective ancestral empires created baklava, and that any other notion is outlandish. It even comes down to how we say it: my younger brother, siding with my father, pronounces it as BAK-lah-va, and I, siding with my mother, say bak-LAH-va.

In moments like these, I'm obligated to choose my Assyrian heritage; I'm named after my Assyrian grandmother—my *nani*—whose American name was Bela. In Assyrian, an Aramaic language like Hebrew, *ana* quite literally means "I."

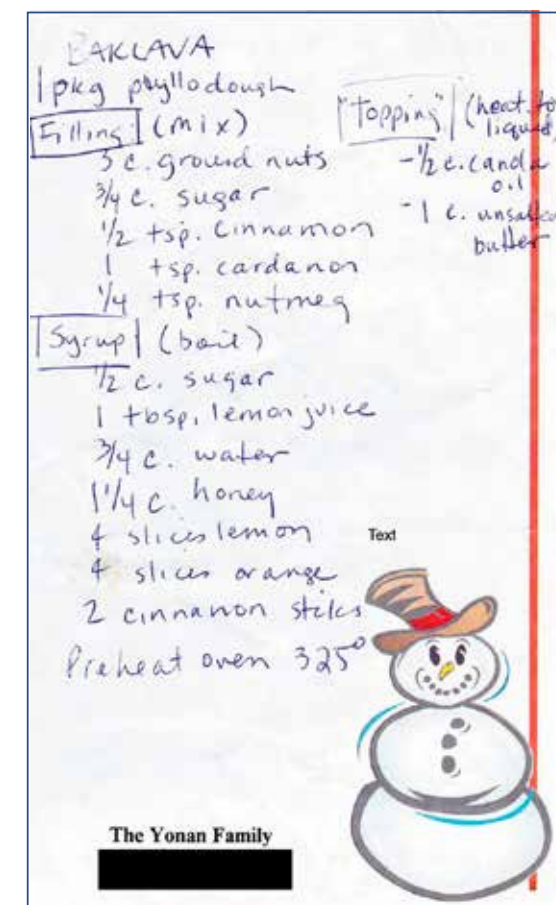
For me, growing up as part of an immigrant diaspora has meant finding ways to connect to my culture beyond a physical space. Assyrians—the same Assyrians of ancient Mesopotamia and the hanging gardens of Babylon, as I once proudly told my fourth-grade history class—don't have a country and today exist largely in villages across the Middle East and centralized hubs in the United States and Europe. My *nani* was from a village outside of Tehran, Iran, called Mushawa, and her husband grew up in Baghdad, Iraq. Both left under conditions they could not return to, and so in the absence of a safe ancestral homeland to explore, I turn to food to remind myself where I come from.

My grandmother passed away last October at the age of eighty-nine. She was a remarkable woman, and the service was full of Assyrians from all over Northern California, because in a diasporic community so far displaced from our homeland, we always show up for our own. At the reception, tables of Assyrians laughed and cried over *dolma*, *kibbe*, *ghormeh sabzi*, *kabab*, rice, and, of course, baklava.

I believe baklava is a food for all seasons, but when the holidays come around and we remember our loved ones, there's nothing quite like a cup of black tea brewed in a samovar and a sweet, flaky bite of baklava.



A portrait of Bela Yonan while she was still living in Mushawa, Iran



My nani's baklava recipe, straight from her kitchen



Nani and me when I was very small and still had her curls



Me, my mother, and my Assyrian aunt at my college graduation this May. I'm wearing the dress my grandmother wore when she immigrated to the States and also the Assyrian flag. Photos courtesy of the Yonan Family



Bela's Baklava

Ingredients

1 package of phyllo (filo) dough

Filling

3 cups nuts, ground
(walnut, pistachio, or a mix)

3/4 cup sugar

1/2 teaspoon cinnamon

1 teaspoon cardamom

1/4 teaspoon nutmeg

Syrup

1/2 cup sugar

1 tablespoon lemon juice

3/4 cup water

1 1/4 cup honey

4 slices lemon

4 slices orange

2 cinnamon sticks

Topping

1/2 cup canola oil

1 cup unsalted butter

Annabella Hoge is a marketing intern at Smithsonian Folkways Recordings and an intern alum from the 2022 Folklife Festival. She is, in no particular order, a Dodgers fan, Georgetown grad, Goodreads fiend, and disco enthusiast.

Preparation

First, prepare each of the components. Mix the filling ingredients together and set aside. In a pot, bring the syrup ingredients to a boil and let rest. In another pot, heat the topping ingredients until liquified.

To make the baklava, you will need a large baking pan at least a 1/2 inch deep. Preheat oven to 325 degrees Fahrenheit.



Lay a third of the phyllo dough flat in the pan. Most packages come with 18 sheets of phyllo, so each layer will have 6 sheets. Then, spread half of the filling mixture on top.



Lay another third of the phyllo dough on top of the filling. Lay the other half of the filling mixture on top. Cover with the final third of the phyllo dough.



Cut the layered phyllo into diagonal shapes. Pieces should be 1 to 2 inches in size.



Pour the heated topping over all the pieces. Don't drench the phyllo—it should just cover it lightly, and there may be extra topping leftover.

Bake for 30 minutes until golden brown. Remove from the oven and pour the syrup into sliced areas. There can be some syrup "sitting" on the bottom as it soaks up as the baklava cools. For the best flavor, let the baklava sit overnight, loosely covered, before eating with a warm cup of (unsweetened) black tea!

My Brother Is But One:
The Brief Life of Hormizd d'Mar Shimun
(1889-1915)

(Part II of III)

by Christopher R. Nelson, Mar Shimun Memorial Foundation



Constantiople (1910-1915)



Rue de Pera (1910-15)



Rue de Pera (1912)



Pera (1912)



Pera (1910-15)

PART II

Hormizd’s college years in the Turkish capital coincided with four wars, fires, and a cholera epidemic. From the archival sources we learn that he resided in the Beyoglu district, a predominantly Christian quarter in the European part of the city known to old-timers as Pera (Greek for “Beyond”). French writer and teacher Bertrand Bareilles fondly recalled the district Hormizd would grow acquainted with between 1911 and 1915: “Pera participated in all the races with which it is populated. If it was Greek in its cafes and its bakals (grocers), it was no less French in its fashions and its signs, English in its overcoats, German in its brasseries, Italian or Spanish in its serenades and its dolce farniente (sweet idleness); Turkish by its red fez, its bekdjis (watchmen), its hamals (porters), its guardhouses. At Pera, one could see the same play performed in several languages; peddlers shout out newspapers in different languages, clocks strike the hour with the turca and the franca (east & west); the week count two or three public holidays. It was at the ‘Perfect Macedonia’ brewery, run by a Greek from Karpenissi, but selling beer from Munich and Pilsen, that you could see Levantines whet their appetites with a glass of raki, with three olives served in a saucer, continue with Russian caviar, an English steak, all drizzled with the foamy spatenbrau. The good Turkish coffee completed this international menu.”¹

“Stambul,” as Constantinople was called by locals, was a short stroll across the Golden Horn (Bosphorus) over the busy Galata Bridge, which led into the main business district. Here were the Sublime Porte and ministry buildings, the Imperial University, custom house,

warehouses, railway station, mosques and most Turks. On walks to and from school and around the city (lit by over 8,000 gas lanterns)² Hormizd would have intermingled with some of the hundreds of merchants who, “. . . After running around the city, basket on their back and scales in hand, line up in the evening on the sidewalks of shopping streets. Inside each basket a candle is stuck, and everyone does their shopping for fruit and vegetables before going home.”³

Hormizd was enrolled at a French school upon arrival in late 1910 or early 1911, and then (possibly) by 1912 or 1913 at an American school. As the only American college for boys at that time was Robert College it’s plausible that being an older student studying Turkish he was a “day-student”, in which case his name might not appear on official student registers.⁴ Who he lived with or where precisely is unknown, though English missionary support is referred to. But perhaps more intriguing and informative than these enticing clues, are their sources; namely, a Kurdish member of the Meclis-i-A’yan (Ottoman Senate), and a Russian Vice-Consul stationed in the Persian border town of Urmia.

In a letter dated October 5, 1912, Sheikh Abdul-Kadir addresses Grand Vizier Ahmed Pasha at the Sublime Porte (seat of government): “In the Hakkari district, which is subordinate to the province of Van, the hereditary spiritual leader of the entire Nestorian community, which numbers over a hundred thousand, is Mar Shimun Efendi. His brother, Hormizd Efendi, was sent to Istanbul last year for the completion of his education. In this regard, not only did they [the Patriarch/Assyrians] send a letter

to their representatives, but the governor also separately conveyed this matter to the Ministry of Education. Since their representatives were not present in the city at that time, and the gentleman in question couldn't be accepted upon the appeal to the former Minister of Education, he was unfortunately enrolled in a French school here. It is well known to your esteemed understanding that such a significant community, numbering over a hundred thousand, has shown loyalty and affection to the Great Ottoman State up until now and has never deviated from this stance. Therefore, it is needless to say and clarify that having a member of their respected family in foreign schools would pave the way for foreign intrigues in this regard. Given this, the representatives strongly recommend, for the government's interests, that the aforementioned gentleman be educated in an Ottoman manner, and to admit and incorporate him into the Mekteb-i Sultani (Imperial School). If deemed appropriate by your esteemed self, considering today is the last day for school admissions, it is anticipated that the Ministry of Education will receive the necessary imperial order in this regard. The command and directive in this matter are at the discretion of my master. -- Abdülkadir son of Abdullah el-Hüseyni.”⁵ Ahmed Pasha acknowledged the wisdom of this request and passed it on to the Minister of Education, suggesting that action

be taken, however a later reference to his being in an American school implies enrollment at Robert College.

Who was this Abdul-Kadir, and could he have been the same Kurdish “chief” referred to in Wigram’s letter of four years prior in which Hormizd assisted his brother in some earlier diplomacy? Possibly, as he (Seyyid Abdul-Kadir) had by then returned to his home-village of Nehri in the Hakkari in the fall of 1908 after twelve years of exile in Medina (he had partaken in a putsch against Abdul Hamid II in 1896).⁶ In fact, Hormizd’s uncle Mar Rowil and a significant section of mountain Assyrians had lent support to the Sheikh’s highly regarded father, Sheikh Ubeydullah⁷ in his bold bid for Kurdish independence (against Turk and Persian alike) in late 1880. Despite supplies of Russian weapons this rebellion fell apart, and father and sons were exiled to Constantinople (where they could be more closely watched apparently). It is said that in his communications with the Sultan, Sheikh Ubeydullah praised Mar Shimun and boasted that the Assyrians of his district were his “best subjects.”⁸

Further light is shed upon these multifaceted relationships by Russian Vice-Consul Pavel Vvedensky who telegraphs his superior in St. Petersburg from Urmia: “Mar-Shimun’s brother Hormuzd, a young man without



Abdulkadir

1. Bertrand Bareilles, *Constantinople: Ses Cites Franques Et Levantines (Pera--Galata--Banlieue)*. (Paris: Editions Bossard, 1918), 52.
2. Vahdettin Engin and Gulsoy Ufuk, “Istanbul in the Era of Electric Lighting,” vol. 8, *History of Istanbul*: n44.
3. Bareilles: 82.
4. “We have offered to receive, free of tuition, five students whom the Minister of Public Instruction shall nominate; three of these are to be boarding scholars and two of them day scholars. The desire of the Minister is to have these students trained so that they may become teachers in Turkish schools.” Robert College, Report of President (1910/11): 13 & 12.

5. Osmanli Arsivi (Ottoman State Archives), Istanbul: 4092.306894 (Trans. Dr. Ramazan Turgut).
6. Metin Atmaca (University of Ankara), “The Road to Sevres: Kurdish Elites and Question of Self-Determination After the First World War,” *International Journal of Conflict and Violence*, 16 (2022): 6.
7. He held an exalted rank amongst Sunni Muslim communities in Turkey, Arabia, and even Africa.
8. CochranDiary: 187.



Pera 2 (1910-15)



Pera (1910-15)



Galata Bridge 2 (1910-15)



Constantinople (1908)



Constantinople (1914-15)



Pera 1 (1910-15)

means, continues his education in Constantinople at the expense of English missionaries. Sheikh Abdul-Kadir chose him as an obedient tool for his insidious actions against the mountain Syrians in favor of the Turks and to protect his name. The districts connected with Mar-Shimun were to be destroyed in the event of a Syrian uprising. Sheikh Abdul-Kadir is undoubtedly on the orders of Constantinople to fight the Russians and raise an uprising throughout Kurdistan. I believe that he will continue to play a double game until the outcome of the Turkish struggle is clear and at that time make a move to our side so that he can continue to assure us of his loyalty. We know that his sons are fighting for us under his direct orders.”⁹

Like father, like son, Abdul-Kadir knew the necessity of hedging his bets when it came to contemplating any risky resistance to Ottoman authority and forging favorable alliances with the Assyrians. Mar Shimun was no less politically prudent, for as Vvedensky’s British counterpart in Mosul, H.C. Hony speculated: “. . . I think that Mar Shimun is playing a double-game, so as to get money from both English and Russians, and to get protection from the latter, as they cannot get it from the former.”¹⁰

Hormizd’s life in the capital got off to an apocalyptic start. Not long after his arrival, in July of 1911, a massive fire (probably started by celebratory fireworks) fanned by heavy winds destroyed several thousand wood-built houses and left many thousands homeless. This was contemporaneous with a raging cholera epidemic which caused almost 1,500 deaths across the city.¹¹ As a day-

student Hormizd could have been temporarily prohibited from attending classes by government decree. Another major fire struck in October, and when that subsided, an outbreak of smallpox became widespread enough that vaccinations were ordered. On top of all this, Italy declared war on Turkey over its possession of Libya. Hormizd might be forgiven for expecting earthquakes and floods to follow.

Turkish Studies at Robert College was comprised of courses in reading, writing, penmanship, and conversation at increasing levels. Also included were courses on civics, history, social economy, geography, and biographies of celebrated men in the Ottoman Empire -- about four to six hours a week.¹² One of the teachers in the Turkish Department was Tevfik Fikret Bey, the founder of modern Turkish poetry (and critic of Islamic conservatism and nationalism). Hormizd may very well have read and appreciated his poetry.

The following fall on October 17th, 1912, Greece, Bulgaria, and Serbia formed the Balkan Alliance. War was once more declared against Turkey, this time over its possession of Macedonia, which was claimed by each of those countries for ethnic and cultural reasons. The war was essentially an effort to expel the Ottoman State from the Balkans, not just politically, but also demographically, and as such, a war of nationalism and ethnic homogeneity.¹³ Hormizd would have witnessed pro-war demonstrations and a general mobilization of soldiers throughout Turkey, followed not long after by streams of wounded flooding into the city --“20,000 and counting”

according to the Sisters of Charity at the French Lazarist mission on November 5, 1912.¹⁴ “The skies were grey and the air was damp, and the streets looked more than usually squalid and dishevelled,” observed travel writer Maurice Baring. “But besides all this there was in the air a feeling of great gloom, which was intensified by the chattering crowds in Pera, laughing and making fun of the Turkish reverses, by the chirping women at the balconies, watching the stragglers and the wounded returning from the front, and listening, in case they might hear the enemy sullenly firing.”¹⁵ Hormizd wrote home of hearing the cannon fire along with the rest of the city.¹⁶ “One Sunday [November 17], during the attack that the Bulgarians were making upon the Chatalaja fortifications only nineteen miles away, the booming cannon could be heard all day long, and we were waiting in suspense for the issue of battle,” recalled Caleb Gates, President of Robert College (which was temporarily being guarded by U.S. Marines).¹⁷ Another captive listener was Pere Lobry of the French mission: “For several days, we have heard the cannonade of the battle engaged 20-30 kilometers from our home. Sunday especially, it lasted

all day.”¹⁸ Concurrent with the ebb and flow of soldiers in and out of the city of over a million people came the dreaded return of disease. “Another enemy that alarms us,” wrote Lobry, “is cholera which caused a huge number of victims in Istanbul and among the Turkish soldiers. Many mosques are filled with the sick and in Istanbul, there are more than 150,000 refugees. It is a lamentable situation. The battle continues and we hope it will be over, so that, for their part, the sisters can, alongside the wounded, also treat the cholera patients.”¹⁹ The octogenarian English barrister Sir Edwin Pears remembered: “We in Constantinople watched the progress of the struggle from day to day. We saw thousands of wounded being brought into San Stefano [a historical village to the west of the city], an absolute breakdown in Turkish military and sanitary organisation, and the general belief was that the Bulgarians would soon enter the city triumphantly.”²⁰



In these agonizing days, the atmosphere at Robert College, which had a diverse student-body of Bulgarians, Greeks, Armenians, Albanians and Turks --in addition to possibly one Assyrian-- remained civil and collegial, such

9. Rossiiski gosudarstvennyi voenno-istoricheskii arkhiv (Russian State Military Historical Archive): F.133, 470, 42, 208. 23 November, 1914.
10. British Foreign Office Records: 424/238, 90 (28 March, 1913).
11. Robert College Report of President: 1911-12, 44.
12. Robert College Catalog: 1912-1914, 47-8.
13. Engin Kilic, “The Balkan War (1912-13) and Visions of the Future in Ottoman Turkish Literature,” PhD diss., (Universiteit Leiden, 2015): 36.
14. Annales de la Congregation de la Mission (French Lazarist Mission/St. Vincent de Paul journal): vol. 78, 57.

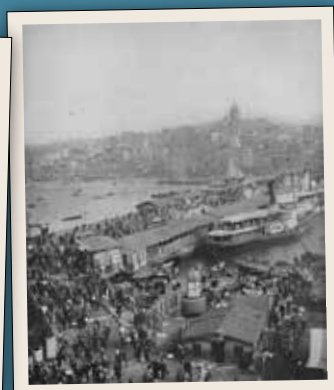
15. Maurice Baring, *Letters from the Near East 1909 & 1912*. (London: Smith, Elder & Co., 1913): 144-5. 21 November, 1912.
16. SurmaDiary: 20 December, 1912.
17. Caleb F. Gates, *Not To Me Only*. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1940): 203-4
18. Annales (78): 59.
19. Annales (78): 59; Gates: 203.
20. Sir Edwin Pears, *Forty Years In Constantinople: The Recollections of Sir Edwin Pears 1873-1915*. (London: Herbert Jenkins Ltd., 1916): 327.
21. Gates: 204.
22. “The earth is my homeland, my nation all humankind . . .”; “Blood nourishes violence and violence blood; this enmity is a flame in the blood that blood never quenches, so do I believe . . . Surely this graveyard-existence will be followed by refulgent resurrection . . .”. Tevfik Fikret Bey, “Haluk’un Inanci (Haluk’s Credo), Haluk’un Defteri.” 1911.



Constantinople (1910-15)



Constantinople (1910-15)



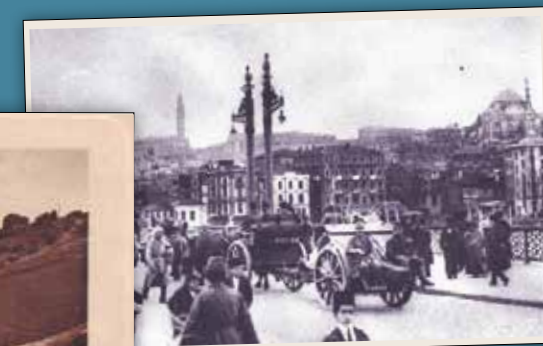
Constantinople (1910-15)



Mar Benyamin's medals, the Osmanli Hamidiya and the Majidiya.



Robert College (1912)



Mobilization

that, “Students frequently told each other that when they graduated they would do their best to prevent such wars.”²¹ On campus or in the cafes along the Cadde-i Kebir (Grand Avenue) of Beyoglu, Hormizd would have certainly been among this good-will group, perhaps practicing his Turkish while discussing Professor Fikret’s new poem “Haluk’s Credo” with friends over coffee and a pipe: “Yeryüzü vatanım, insansoyu milletimdir benim . . . Kan şiddeti besler, şiddet kanı; bu düşmanlık kan ateşidir, sönmeyecek kanla, inandım. . . . Elbet şu mezar hayatı zifiri karanlığın ardından aydınlık bir kıyamet günü gelecek. . . .”²²

On January 22, 1913, a coup d’etat led by Enver Pasha and Talaat Pasha of the Committee of Union and Progress (CUP) Party led to the assassination of the Minister of War and the forced resignation of the Grand Vizier. This solidified the power of the main Young Turk movement, and in turn, their repressive, pan-Islamic policies which encouraged crackdowns on the Christian millets. Still, just eleven days after the coup Tahsin Bey, the Vali of Van wrote to Talaat Pasha informing him that he did not currently believe Mar Shimun and the Assyrians were “inclined to Russian propaganda,” though he suspected they might still be influenced by the Orthodox Church. A Turkish military officer stationed in or near Qudshanis at this time reported that Mar Benyamin had “made a good impression” on him, lamenting that if the Government

could only free itself of the wars in the west, more attention could then be paid to properly collecting taxes and governing in the east. He warned that if not, then the Assyrians would continue to be susceptible to outside influences.²³

Word reached Qudshanis of the war between Turkey and Bulgaria in March, by which time the first Balkan War was almost ended, and a second war, to win back lost territory from Bulgaria, initiated a few months later. That fall, the Sultan conferred the Order of Osmanli on Mar Benyamin (the medal is sent

to him by a *qaimaqam* (local governor) from nearby Julamerk). In addition to an increase in annual salary, medals and honors were the Sublime Porte’s age-old method of attempting to keep the remote millets “loyal”. This was followed by a visit in the summer of 1914 by Tahsin Bey (bearing further gifts)

who sought both to convince Mar Benyamin of the State’s support for them, as well as demanding further assurances of his people’s loyalty to the State.²⁴ The ever-present fear of internal instability and the pro-Russian orientation of the Assyrians (and Armenians), coupled with missionary influences and a history of supporting Kurdish liberation had the Porte perpetually on edge. “. . . The Nestorians have always remained suspect to the government [due to] their predisposition to be influenced

by foreigners and become a channel and instrument [for them],” explained Talaat Pasha to Tahsin Bey in Van. “Because of the operation and efforts in Persia, the concern of the government over Nestorians has increased, particularly about those who are found along our border with Iran. The government’s lack of trust of them results in their chastisement - their deportation and expulsion from their locations to suitable provinces such as Ankara and Konya. They are to be transferred and dispersed so that they henceforth will not live together in a mass, but will live exclusively among Muslim people, and in no location are they to exceed twenty dwellings. . . .”²⁵ Ottoman-era coercion through more diplomatic means had been replaced by a policy of ethnic cleansing under the guise of military necessity and war.

On September 10th, 1914, the sanctuary of schools from the swirling geo-political storms outside was breached when the Sultan made good on earlier years’ threats and issued a decree abolishing extraterritorial rights of foreigners. Up until this time, the European resident had “. . . Escaped Turkish law, tax officials and the hassle of an arbitrary regime. At Pera he had his schools, his churches, his newspapers, his post offices where he entrusted his letters, a consulate where he carried his complaints, an embassy which supported him with his authority.”²⁶ Henceforth, all were ostensibly equal under Ottoman law.

By October there could be no mistaking that Turkey was on the brink of yet another war, and this one

much greater in scope. From the Ortakoy neighborhood French writer and resident Emile Edwards observed on October 30th: “In the streets the ordinary crowd, but a silent and gloomy crowd; Christians and Muslims are appalled. It’s the war; although, none of the parades, the tumult, the clamors which preceded and accompanied the Balkan campaign. Everyone, on the contrary, from whatever background, whatever race they belong to, looks discouraged and desperate. The people stopped at the edge of the sidewalks speak in suppressed voices, so low that their lips barely move. It’s a day of mourning: people speak quietly in the room of the dead! Groups of curious people park in front of the embassies of the Triple Entente, where there is a continual coming and going of cars and vehicles.”²⁷

Wherever Hormizd happened to be at this pivotal moment the panicky chatter of the foreign residents over the coming catastrophe was surely unnerving. He envied those who had somewhere to flee, sensing along with Edwards, “The horror of feeling like prisoners, separated from the rest of the world; the horror of being deprived of news;” or letters from home. “The anguish of those who remain is exaggerated,” wrote Edwards, while he, Hormizd and thousands of others anxiously wondered, “What do they know, those who flee, to flee like this, and what terrible things are being prepared in the shadows for those who remain?”²⁸

To be continued.....

23. Tarik Ziya Arvas. “Osmanli Belgelerinde Nasturi-Kurt Asiret Anlasmazliklari (Nestorian-Kurdish Dispute in Ottoman Records (1856-1914),” Journal of Karatekin Faculty of Literature, 5, no.5 (2015): 80. OA: DH. İD, 116/no.57.

24. OA: DH. ŞFR. 42/44; DH. EUM. 4Sb. 23/113 (16 June, 1914).

25. Gaunt: 128; OA: DH.ŞFR, 46.78 (26 Oct, 1914).

26. Bareilles: 53.

27. Emile Edwards, *Journal d’un Habitant de Constantinople (1914-1915)*. (Paris: Plon-Nourrit, 1915): 64.

28. Ibid: 73-4.

The Magnificence of Assyrian Jewelry: A Study of Ancient Craftsmanship and Expression

By
Elizabeth Mickaily-Huber, Ph.D.

The ancient Assyrian civilization, thriving in the Near East from the 25th century B.C. to the 7th century B.C., remains a captivating subject of study for historians and archaeologists alike. Revered for their military prowess and administrative innovations, the Assyrians also left an indelible mark on history through their rich tradition of craftsmanship, particularly evident in their exquisite jewelry. Herein the artistic and cultural significance of Assyrian jewelry will be explored, shedding light on the materials, techniques, symbolic motifs, and broader cultural implications embedded within these ancient artifacts.

Assyrian jewelry is a testament to the mastery of ancient craftsmanship and was crafted using a wide array of materials. Gold, revered for its representation of wealth and power, took center stage in the creation of intricate necklaces, bracelets, earrings, and crowns. Silver, equally prized, adorned with elaborate designs, also reflected social status. The more affordable bronze found its way into various ornaments, making Assyrian jewelry accessible across different social classes. Assyrian jewelry served dual purposes—practical adornment and profound symbolism. Wearing jewelry, particularly among the elite, was a visible display of wealth and social status. Personalized pieces served as forms of identification, while amulets and pendants with religious symbols were believed to offer protection, even in the afterlife.

Gemstones, ranging from *lapis lazuli* to carnelian, agate, onyx, and turquoise, were meticulously carved, polished, and set into metalwork, adding vibrant hues to extraordinary pieces. Ivory, occasionally was integrated for inlay work, contributing an additional touch of luxury. Additionally, the Assyrians' adeptness with glass workmanship was showcased through colorful and intricately shaped glass beads, often strung together to create necklaces or bracelets. The technique known as *cloisonné*, involving the setting of glass into metal compartments, added decorative patterns to these ancient masterpieces.

Assyrian jewelry featured a plethora of intricate designs and symbolic motifs that provided a window into the spiritual and cultural beliefs of ancient Assyrians. Animal motifs, such as lions and bulls, symbolized strength and protection, while winged bulls (*lamassu*) served as protective deities. The representation of mythological creatures like winged genies, with a fusion of human and animal features, reflected a belief in supernatural protection. Moreover, symbols associated with deities, including the winged disc of the god *Ashur* and the tree of life, were recurrent themes. Geometric designs, cuneiform inscriptions, and floral motifs, such as palmettes and rosettes, adorned these pieces, creating visually appealing and symmetrical compositions.

A unique form of Assyrian jewelry, known as cylinder seals, played a crucial role in administrative and economic activities. Crafted from stones like hematite and chalcedony, these



Necklace from the treasures of Nimrud

seals featured intricate designs and cuneiform inscriptions. Their primary function involved pressing cuneiform inscriptions onto clay tablets, acting as a kind of signature or official authentication. These cylinder seals were often worn as pendants, demonstrating the interconnectedness of ancient societies through trade and administrative practices.

The craftsmanship of Assyrian jewelers was exemplified through a variety of intricate techniques. Metalworking methods such as casting, forging, hammering, granulation, filigree, *cloisonné*, engraving, casting, inlay, wire-work, stone carving, and texturing allowed artisans to shape and manipulate metals into stunning forms, showcasing their technical prowess.

The use of specific motifs, designs, and materials in Assyrian jewelry contributed to the expression of cultural identity. Regional variations and influences from neighboring cultures were evident, providing a sense of connection to the spiritual realm. Symbols associated with the divine, celestial bodies, and religious rituals were seamlessly integrated into jewelry designs, reinforcing cultural and spiritual bonds.

Members of the Assyrian royal family were particularly known for their extravagant jewelry. Crowns, highly symbolic, represented the divine legitimacy and authority of Assyrian kings. Elaborate necklaces, earrings, bracelets, and rings adorned royalty and emphasized their status and authority.

Numerous Assyrian jewelry pieces have been unearthed through archaeological excavations, housed in prestigious institutions such as the British Museum, the Louvre, and the Iraq Museum. Studying these artifacts provides insights not only into the aesthetics and craftsmanship of the time but also into the social, religious, and economic aspects of the ancient Assyrian civilization.

In conclusion, ancient Assyrian jewelry stands as a remarkable testament to the artistic prowess, cultural richness, and societal intricacies of this ancient civilization. Through the meticulous craftsmanship, incorporation of symbolic motifs, and utilization of diverse materials and techniques, Assyrian jewelers created pieces that not only adorned their wearers but also conveyed profound meanings about identity, status, and spiritual beliefs. The study of Assyrian jewelry continues to provide valuable insights into the aesthetic and cultural dimensions of this fascinating civilization.



Assyrian chalcedony cylinder seal



8th Century B.C. Assyrian bracelets



Crown of Queen Yaba, Wife Of Tiglath-Pileser III



Found amidst the ruins of a palace in modern-day Iraq, this brick dates back to the era of the Neo-Assyrian king, Ashurnasirpal II (CREDIT: Creative Commons)

Ancient tablet provides a biblical snapshot of life nearly 3,000 years ago

Courtesy of www.thebrighterside.news
Joseph Shavit

In a groundbreaking discovery, archaeologists have unearthed an ancient relic that offers a vivid snapshot of life nearly 3,000 years ago. However, it wasn't a precious gem, intricate artifact, or a hidden scripture, but rather a seemingly mundane brick.

The story behind this find isn't just about its age but the biological treasure trove it held within.
The Discovery

Found amidst the ruins of a palace in modern-day Iraq, this brick dates back to the era of the Neo-Assyrian king, Ashurnasirpal II. Researchers swiftly dated the artifact thanks to inscriptions etched on its surface, revealing its creation between 879 - 869 BCE. Intriguingly, these dates coincide with what is believed to be the construction period of the palace where it was discovered.

What's intriguing is the context. Historical writings, including hieroglyphics, suggest that such bricks were

molded using mud from the Tigris River. Taking a cue from ancient descriptions, even from as far afield as Egypt in the Bible, they were often made by mixing river mud with straw and other organic matter.

The Biological Time Capsule

Upon closer examination, it was discerned that the brick contained remnants of plants and traces of animal dung. This ancient composite offered researchers a unique window into the past, enabling them to reconstruct the vegetative and floral life of that period. It was like holding a piece of the Neo-Assyrian epoch in one's hands.

This pioneering study saw collaboration from renowned institutions: the University of Oxford, the University of Copenhagen, and the National Museum of Denmark. Together, these researchers identified an astonishing 34 different plant species embedded within the brick.

Sophie Lund Rasmussen, the lead researcher from

the University of Oxford, expressed her amazement, commenting, "It's truly remarkable how a simple brick could act as a time capsule, preserving ecological artifacts from millennia ago."

The key to this preservation, she explains, lies in the very methods of brick-making. Modern bricks, baked in high-temperature kilns, obliterate any biological content. In contrast, ancient bricks, often left to dry naturally under the sun, preserved the genetic imprints of organisms within them.

A Snapshot of Ancient Biodiversity

Troels Arbøll, an Assyriologist from the University of Copenhagen, concurred with Rasmussen, emphasizing the immense value of the find. "The DNA analysis of this ancient brick offers us an unparalleled glimpse into the biodiversity of a typical ancient Assyrian community," he noted.

Within the matrix of the brick, researchers identified an array of plants, including cabbage, birch, mustard, laurels, and monocotyledonous grasses, suggesting the likely presence of wheat. The fact that animal DNA, particularly from dung, was better preserved became another exciting avenue for exploration.

The Power of Collaboration

The achievements of this study underscore the incredible outcomes that can emerge from interdisciplinary collaboration. Had it not been for the unique fusion of expertise from archaeologists, biologists, and historians across various institutions, the intricate details and

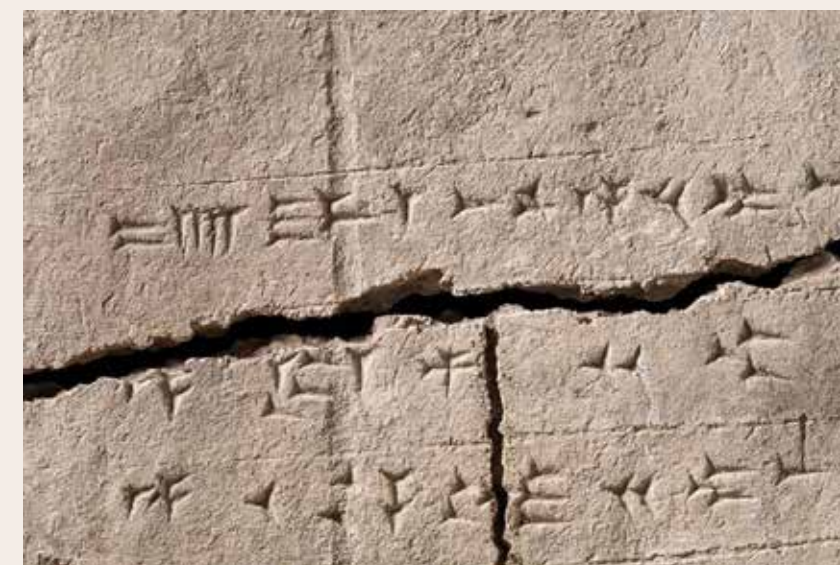
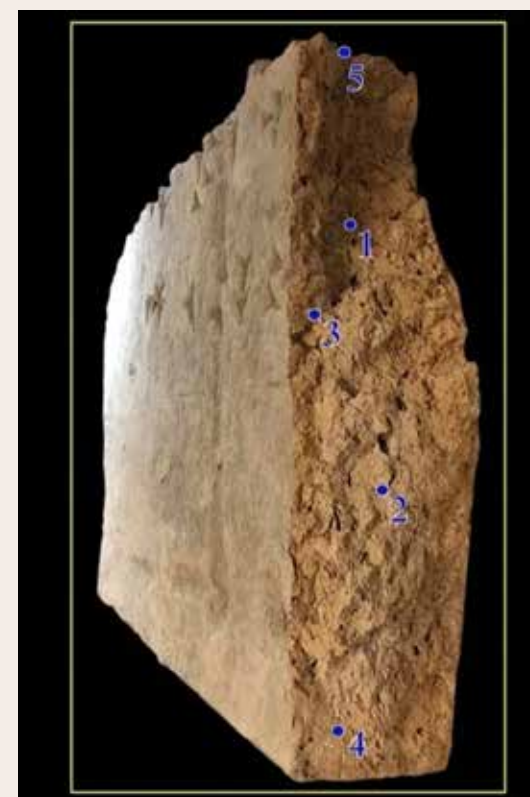


The clay brick from which the samples derived. Pictures of the clay brick from the National Museum of Denmark (museum number 13854) and the five sampling points on the surface of the break. The yellow square in the upper part of the figure represents the piece of the brick illustrated below.

CREDIT: Nature

insights gleaned from this brick might have remained undiscovered.

In essence, this ancient brick, a seemingly ordinary object, has bridged the gap between the present and a time 2,900 years ago. Its discovery and the subsequent revelations stand as a testament to the ever-evolving, ever-surprising field of archaeology, reminding us that sometimes, profound secrets are hidden in the most unexpected places.



Archaeologists have recently recovered an ancient brick that turned out to be about 2900 years old.

CREDIT: Creative Commons

The clay brick from which the samples derived. Pictures of the clay brick from the National Museum of Denmark (museum number 13854) and the five sampling points on the surface of the break. The yellow square in the upper part of the figure represents the piece of the brick illustrated below.

CREDIT: Nature


Journey to the Land of Ancestors

Givargiz Slivus

-Amateur researcher, musician

An interview by Pavel Bukreev

Translated from Russian by Nina Georgizova



Givargiz:

The journey to Turkey, to the land of the ancestors, began with the trip to Urmia village in the Krasnodar region of Russia in 2014. I came to Urmia as a counselor in the Assyrian youth camp “*Zinda*” (annual summer camp organized and run by Mrs. Alla Georgizova, the chairperson of the Assyrian Association of the Krasnodar region “*Khaydta*”). The day before I left, my aunt Nina introduced me to Nicholas Al-Jeloo, an Assyrian from Australia. We started talking, and it turned out that we both play the dowla. But the most important thing is that in the course of our conversation we discovered that we both love compiling topographic maps of the Assyrian villages in Hakkari. Nicholas and I started figuring out what we had done so far and I realized that he was 10 to 20 steps ahead of me. But I was in Russia, and he was in Australia. He had been to Syria, Iraq, Turkey, Iran, and visited all places where Assyrians lived. Naturally, he had a lot more information. He told me that evening: “*You know you can go there, right?*” I asked: “*Where?*” He said: “*Hakkari*”.



Until that moment I had always thought that it was impossible, because there were no Assyrians left there and, in general, nobody visited that area. But that day Nicholas and I agreed to visit Hakkari in May of the following year. So we met in Urmia (Russia) in July of 2014, and again in May of 2015 in Hakkari. Exactly 100 years after the exodus of our ancestors. Nicholas organized a group of us: a film director from USA, Sargon Saadi, professor Carel Bertram from San Francisco State University, Eliya Bet Kallu from Canada, a married couple from Sweden Dr Sargon Thomeh Shirabad and Rabbela Bet Hatami, and a documentary filmmaker from Istanbul Bedri Diril. There were 8 of us in total, but from time to time we were joined by local residents. So there was always someone with us who could be our guide or some sort of a bridge between us and the locals, who were not very used to seeing strangers in such remote places. By the way, when I was traveling to Hakkari, I had a 15-hour layover in Istanbul. I went to the city and met with local Assyrians. They invited me to visit the local church community. I was introduced to the Assyrians there; they are all my peers. It was so easy to talk to them. They would ask me something about Russia, I would answer them, but it turned out that they knew everything, they had seen all the videos on YouTube, they knew how Assyrians live in Russia. They even spotted me in one of the videos, and we had many mutual friends. I instantly felt like we had been lifelong friends. Then I flew to Van. My itinerary from Moscow was: Moscow - Istanbul, Istanbul - Van, Van - Hakkari. And then from Van I traveled to Hakkari on a minibus.

In the 18th century, Assyrians began to move from the mountainous regions of Hakkari closer to the lake and the city of Van. To the east of the city of Van was the region of Timar, where several Assyrian villages were located. *Khavshesur* was founded by the *Jilu* residents, and *Satibek* by people from *Tkhuma*, etc. Further east was the town of *Sara Mamudia*. three Assyrian villages, *Kharab-Sork*, *Ryashan* and *Akhjacha*, are located nearby. Assyrians also live in *Sara*. When I visited Van, I didn’t experience any emotions, it was more anticipation. Then we drove up to *Bashkala*, a city next to the region of *Albaka*. There were Armenian, Kurdish and Assyrian villages. And this was when I started feeling emotional, because I knew that refugees came here in 1915. When they left *Hakkari*, they went to *Bashkala*, because Russians troops were stationed there. I realized that when I go south of *Bashkala*, I will essentially take the same route that refugees did when they left their homes. The closer we got to *Hakkari*, the more emotional I got. I saw the hills that they had to go up, a very dry, desert-like area, because there was not a single living creature or a plant. Maybe it's still like this, I don't know. The lay of the land indicated that people were walking with their children, their livestock, everything they could take with them. It was an unimaginably hard march. I was watching the GPS and realized that we were getting closer and closer to *Hakkari*. About half an hour before arrival, I saw huge mountains around us. I realized that we were approaching the area of *Diz* where my great-grandfather was from. My grandmother sparked my interest in all of this, because since I was a little child, she used to tell me stories that her dad, my great-grandfather, used to tell her. She told me some stories, legends, that did not sound real, but they were so exciting for a child and painted amazing images that I



grew up with. When I got older and with the emergence of modern technologies, I realized that everything is open access. All you need to do is just reach for it. That is when I got very serious about my research. Google has very detailed maps, so you can find a village or a valley, zoom in as much as possible and see the houses in detail or examine the ruins. First I found *Kochanis* on the map (the place where the throne of the patriarch of the Church of the East was located, and the *Marchita* Church - probably the most beautiful church in the region), then I found the *Mar Zaya* church of *Jilu*. Some time later I found topographic maps made by the British Intelligence in the early 20th century. And gradually my map grew. When I returned to Moscow from my trip to *Hakkari*, I compared the GPS map with the map

that I had made earlier. I realized where I had to make corrections to my map. In addition, Nicholas shared his work with me, where he included the modern Turkish names and the Assyrian names of places. I was correct in some parts and where I hadn’t been, I made changes. So it was almost like a symbiosis of topographic maps, including Russian ones.

When I got back to Moscow, my friend Yura Shimko and I continued to work on the maps together. We used different book sources, various travelers, missionaries, vice-consuls, etc. Made a summary of a table of the villages to understand what villages there were, what were the population numbers, what the churches were. We had a table for each region. Each area has its own color and Assyrian villages are marked red. The tables include names of villages, modern name, names of churches, a number of houses in 1850, in 1877 and in 1889.

Pavel: Do you speak Assyrian?

Givargiz: Not very well, although I can read and write. Speaking doesn’t come easy to me. Yura helped me a lot with the map. As a result, within a year the map was ready at about 99%. Going back to my trip to *Hakkari*, I want to note that *Kochanis* itself is an amazing place, a very picturesque valley. When we were there, we all agreed that this is probably the most beautiful thing that we saw throughout the trip.



Map of Assyrian villages

Pavel: Are there Assyrians there?

Givargiz: Practically none left. If you specifically take the *Hakkari* region, then none left. But nearby, within a 3-4 hour car drive, there is a village of *Gyaznakh*, and a little further a village of *Hassan* where you can still find a few dozen Assyrians. The younger generation left: some went to France, some to Belgium, so the villages are mainly inhabited by an older generation, 50+. There are no Assyrians left in *Hakkari*, although we met some Kurds who said that their grandfathers were Assyrian. There are only Kurds left there, not even Turks. This is the reality in which we found ourselves. So the situation is quite serious: we came across Turkish military checkpoints, but they were all friendly and polite to us because we were foreigners. Our colorful passports were our passes.

There was a dangerous situation when we met the PKK in the *Tkhooma* mountains. We had no guides with us, as we decided to split up, which rarely happened. Part of the group went to a distant village to take pictures, and the guide had stayed with them, and the four of us were brought to the foot of the mountain. We wanted to see the monastery that was at the top of the mountain. None of us knew exactly how to go up and what is the best spot to climb. We started climb-

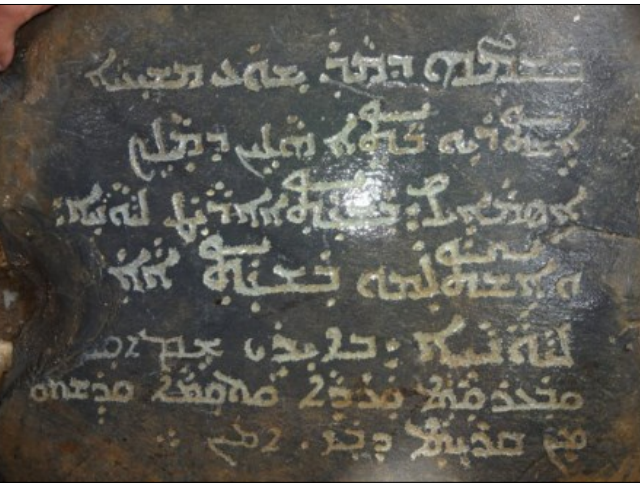
ing. We were going up and joking about the well-known story that when people did not know how to climb uphill, they would send a donkey up the hill and follow it. Which one of us would be the donkey? We were laughing, joking and soon we heard a whistle. We turned, and there were two guys in camouflage clothes, with machine guns and grenades in the bushes. They signaled us to come over. They didn't speak English. Bedri was with us and he told them in Turkish that we were tourists from different countries, and that we were on our way to the Assyrian monastery. Surprisingly, they let us go pretty fast and even showed us the way. Literally a minute later one of them followed us and asked us to share a smoke with him. We sat down and started smoking. 2 minutes passed, 5 minutes, 10 minutes. We realized that he wasn't interested in sharing a cigarette with us, that we were waiting for something. All of a sudden two other guys and a girl showed up. And they led us up the hill. I had my Go-pro camera with me and I filmed our conversation with them. Of course, I immediately realized that this was the content that they wouldn't want me to have. I pulled out the memory card and hid it in a pack of cigarettes. Then I thought, what if they start searching us and they would find a card. As we walked up the hill, I inserted the card back into the camera and deleted the video. We didn't know what would happen to us, but anything could happen. We all had cameras, GPS, all these gadgets. They could easily take us for spies. We were all very anxious and tense while going up the hill, we didn't know what might happen next. In the end they took us to the monastery, and allowed us to film and take pictures. They asked us not to film them. So it all went well.



But the adventures did not end there and the cherry on top was meeting ISIS supporters. It happened near the town of *Yuksekov*. *Yuksekov* was formerly called *Dyzyt Gavar*. Around *Dyzyt Gavar* was the valley of *Gavar*, where *Gavarnaya* are from. My paternal great great great grandfather was supposed to become the next Bishop of *Gavar*. In our family this role was passed from an uncle to a nephew. So my great great great grandfather's uncle was *Mar Sliva*, the bishop of *Gavar*. I wanted to visit the village where my ancestors used to live. It's called *Gagoron*. This area was not in the middle of nowhere. In fact, Erdogan built an airport there sometime in 2013. However, it no longer operates for security reasons after a few attacks. Right next to this airport was the village of *Gagoron*. We decided to go there. On the way to the village, we stopped at a traffic light and the driver asked people in a nearby parked car for directions. Listening to their conversation I figured out that they were not talking about directions. These people wanted to know why we were going there. So we arrived in the village, and found the *Mukhtar* - the elder of the village. We explained to him what we came for. He got in the car with us and took us to the center of the village. While we were driving, he learned that we are Assyrians, Christians, and that this was the village where my ancestors were from. We reached the center of the village, and we got out of the car. He told us that no photography or video was allowed. And at some point we realized that we were getting surrounded by the residents of that village, mostly by young men. It looked like a scene from a movie. In other villages residents greeted us, offered us tea, but here they were



walking around us and watching us. Somehow Ilya, my friend from Canada, and I found ourselves outside of the crowd. We took this opportunity to walk around the village. We were not particularly welcome here, so we had very little time and needed to move fast to collect some material, which was the goal of our trip. Suddenly we came across a large stone, called *Khashulta*. It was used to crush grain and bake bread for *Qurbana*, Sunday communion. *Khashulta* was often found in villages, they were everywhere, which was a clear sign that there was once a church there. I started moving the stone when a young man came to us. He started speaking English to us. We were surprised that someone in this region could speak English. We told him that we were looking for a church, and asked if there was anything left. He told us to follow him. He took us to a stone fence, and showed us a stone with a cross at the base of the fence. It turned out that the church was destroyed and they built a fence out of it. He also told us that the fence and the ruined church were around his house. We talked a little with his father but he didn't really know anything. At some point, our driver showed up and left again. About 5 minutes later, our car flew out in front of us, the door opened and our friends were shouting at us to quickly get in the car! Everyone was emotional



and asking us where we had been. We started exchanging stories and our friends told us that while we were gone, they were all photographed and their names were recorded. *Mukhtar*, the elder of the village asked our driver if they should cut our throats. Our driver explained that we were just tourists, that he had been driving us around for a week, that we just came to see what was left of the village as one of us used to have relatives there. *Mukhtar* called someone saying that we were infidels, and asked what needed to be done. We found out that this village was full of ultra religious and radical people. These were Kurds, but unlike other Kurds, these were radicals. That is, many residents of this village sent their children to fight for ISIS in Syria. We were within an inch of getting killed. But my gut feeling was telling me that because we came here with pure intentions, nothing would happen to us. A week after we left, the fighting and terrorist attacks started again. Our Kurdish contacts told us that we were very lucky because we arrived exactly at the time when, after 3 years of hostilities, there was a period of truce and as soon as we left it ended.

Now I have 70 hours of video and I want to go back there soon to do some more filming. I am planning to make a feature film, but, of course, I will need funding. And I haven't decided on the format yet. I am still thinking about it.





Andre David Tamraz

ܐܢܕܪܝܐ ܕܐܕܪܝܐ ܬܡܪܐܝܝܐ

December 10th, 1958 - January 12th, 2024

By: Onita M. Narso

It is with heavy hearts that we announce the passing of our beloved uncle, Andre David Tamraz, who peacefully departed from this world on January 12th, 2024, in Denmark. Born on December 10th, 1958, in Kirkuk, Iraq, Andre was the cherished son of Shamasha David Tamraz and Sofiya Paulus Oraham. He was one of eight siblings, growing up surrounded by love and the warmth of his family.

From a young age, Andre displayed remarkable intelligence and a deep love for his Assyrian heritage. He was a devout member of the Assyrian community, dedicating himself to advocating for Assyrians in Iraq and beyond. Andre's passion for his people was evident in his political activism, educational efforts, and his commitment to preserving the Assyrian language. He tirelessly worked to educate others about Assyrian culture and heritage, touching the lives of many through his teachings.

Andre leaves behind a legacy of love and compassion. He is survived by his five brothers, Roben, Shlimon, Breemo, Filimon, and Fredy Tamraz, as well as his two sisters, Leeda and Shamiran Tamraz. Additionally, he leaves behind twelve nieces and nephews who adored him dearly. Andre was not only a pillar in the Assyrian community but also a mentor to his family, guiding them with wisdom and kindness.

After escaping the tumultuous conditions in Iraq, Andre found solace in Denmark, where he made his home. His passing leaves a profound void in our hearts, but we take comfort in knowing that his memory and passion for the Assyrian nation will forever live on within us. Andre's legacy of dedication to his community and family will continue to inspire us all. As we mourn the loss of our dear uncle, let us remember the love, wisdom, and strength that he shared with us. Andre's spirit will forever remain a guiding light in our lives, and his presence will be deeply missed by all who knew and loved him. May he rest in peace, knowing that his legacy will endure through the generations.

PHOTO
COMING
SOON!

Nardine Varda Mansoor

January 1943 – May 2023

Nardine Varda Mansoor was born on January 30, 1943, in Abadan, Iran. She was born into a proud Assyrian and Christian family. She was an amazing daughter, wife of almost 59 years, loving mother, grandmother, sister, and all-around incredible human being in our life. She was a devout Christian, a tireless volunteer in the Assyrian community, a teacher for over 53 years, and the Matriarch of the Mansoor family. She completed her high school education with a concentration in Mathematics. As a young adult, she enjoyed painting and playing volleyball in her spare time. She pursued her passion by playing on a volleyball team in Abadan, Tehran where she was a member of a team that won multiple championships. Upon graduating high school, Nardine pursued her teaching degree. She received her credentials, forever earning her the name, “Rabee Nardine.” Based on her achievements and accomplishments, she was nominated by the Abadan Education Council to become a teacher in Tehran, Iran.

In 1964, she married her lifelong partner, Walter Mansoor, and together they moved to Abadan, Tehran to build their happy and loving home. She continued pursuing her career while welcoming her first daughter, Arbella. Soon after, she welcomed a second girl, Edessa. Eventually, the family of four migrated to Tehran, Iran where they completed their family with their third daughter, Belona. After many years of hard work and dedication to their jobs and community, the family decided to migrate and move to the United States, arriving in Chicago, Illinois in 1979. Upon settling in Chicago, Nardine continued her education and teaching career, while helping the family navigate a period of transition.

In 1980, the family once again moved, this time to Turlock, California, where they found their community and a suitable environment to raise their three daughters. Nardine devoted her life to the family home but also began her teaching career in earnest, working for the Turlock School

District where for 33 years she held various teaching positions. During this time, Nardine was instrumental in teaching and helping immigrant students, especially Assyrians, who had recently moved to the United States. She was truly loved and appreciated by all who knew her and those whose lives she touched.

While living in Turlock, Nardine, along with her family, was very active in the community and involved in her church. From a very young age, Nardine had always been very strong in her religious beliefs and a follower of God while maintaining her passion and interest in the Assyrian heritage. In fact, her desire to help the Assyrian community began in high school where she was the Assyrian secretary, paving the way for her to eventually hold the same position at the Assyrian American Civic Club of Turlock. She continued serving her community by taking on various positions as President of St. John’s Assyrian Presbyterian Church Woman’s Association for four years, Chairperson of the Assyrian American National Federation Welfare Committee, and Assyrian Secretary of the Assyrian American National Federation. In addition to her passion and involvement in the various Assyrian organizations, she was also a member of multiple Choir groups both in Iran and in Turlock, California including the Nabouram Choir under the direction of the late Rabee Shoora Michaelian.

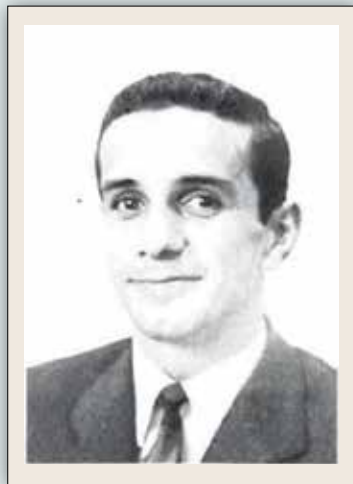
In 2005, Nardine was nominated by the Assyrian American Civic Club of Turlock as the *Mother of the Year* in recognition of all her accomplishments, including her love for learning, teaching, and helping others. Truly, she always had the passion to learn and educate herself. In 2010, she reached another milestone in her life at the age of 67 which made her very proud to receive her degree in General Education. The whole family, including her beloved grandchildren, came to watch her walk across the stage.

After 33 years of dedication, education, and pursuing her dream, Nardine decided to retire from the Turlock School District. Although she was not working, she was always actively learning, volunteering, spending time with her family and friends. She also enjoyed traveling all over the world. Some of her favorite trips included the Great Wall of China, Brazil, Alaska, the Panama Canal, and Jerusalem. She truly loved going on cruises with her husband and friends. As fate would have it, she passed away while on a cruise to Alaska on May 15, 2023. The day before, which was Mother’s Day, she managed to speak to her daughters, sons-in-law, and grandchildren, telling them how much she was enjoying her time there and how dearly she loved them.

She leaves behind her beloved and loving husband, Walter; three daughters, Arbella, Edessa, and Belona; three sons-in-law, Hannibal, Ramill, and Wilbert; the loves of her life, her grandchildren, Briteel, Beneel, Dalton, Dorina, Julia, and Jacob; and the new addition to their family, her great-granddaughter, Tibelia.

She was blessed with a life well lived, loving unconditionally. She leaves a legacy of amazing children, grandchildren (and one great-grandchild!), and students. Nardine was very loved by all. She was caring, loving, nurturing, and respected by her family, friends, relatives, and the community.

As we approach the one-year memorial of our beloved mother, we want to celebrate the life that she lived and the legacy she left behind – we miss our beloved angel dearly. May God continue to rest her soul in peace. A mother’s love is never truly gone; it lives on forever in the memories and the hearts of her children. She will forever be in our hearts!



Mr. SENHARIB SHABBAS
Secretary
Al Hikma University

Sanharib 'Sankho' William Shabbas

Sanharib 'Sankho' William Shabbas, aka 'Bill' was born on September 6, 1942, in Habbaniya, Iraq (53 miles west of Baghdad) to William and Olga Shabbas (of Urmia, Iran).

Sankho passed away Friday January 12, 2024, age 81, of natural causes, while asleep. He was laid to rest at Rolling Hills Memorial Park, Richmond, CA on Feb 5th, 2024. Next to his sister 'Shalim'.

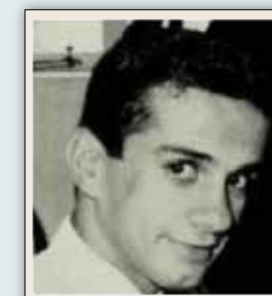
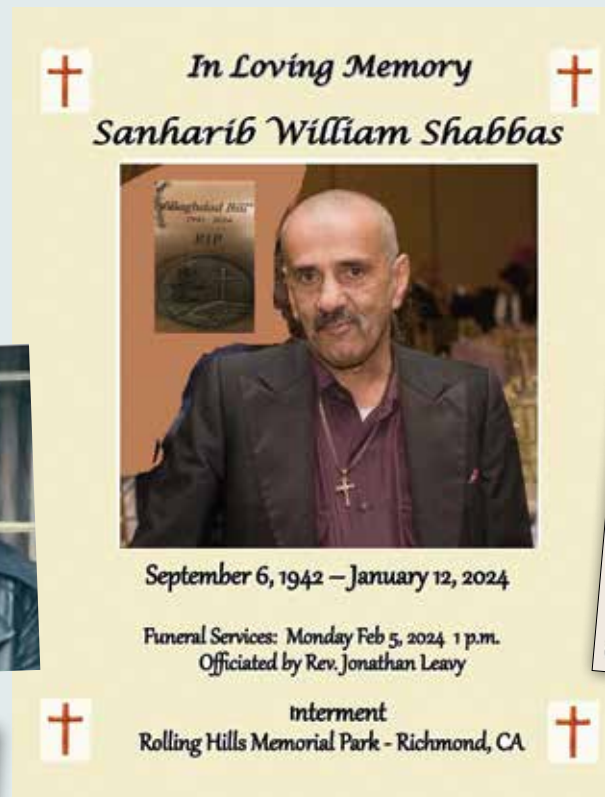
His siblings include Ashur Shabbas (1935-1954), Shamiran 'Sammy' Huwe (88 of Athen, OH), Shalim Shabbas-Tatar (1938-2022), Danial Shabbas (78 of El Cerrito, CA), Sargon Shabbas (75 of Concord, CA), Mariana Shabbas Samo (72 of Turlock, CA).

In 1950, at age eight, Sankho's family relocated to Baghdad. There, he continued his elementary education, then on to 'Baghdad College' high school. BC was founded by four American Jesuits from Boston, MA in 1932. They built and administered it with the aid of Iraqis until expelled in 1968.

Early to mid 1950s, tragedies struck the family- first with the loss of Cousin Elia, then his brother Ashur (both victims of drowning within a few years of each other). Not long after, Olga (his mother) passed away.

Sankho, grief stricken and understandably so, made some poor decisions during that time. But Eventually, he got back on the right path. However, in lieu of furthering his education, he opted to work. Fluent in all aspects of the English language, he was hired at Al Hikma University as Secretary of Admissions. Al Hikma was a four-year college with schools of Engineering, Business Administration and Fine Arts. This educational institute, as well, was run by the same American Jesuits of Boston.

After his father's death, William, in 1967, Sankho worked hard for the next four years to see his family through a very difficult period. Not only did he lend support financially, but with the aid of his two older sisters (Shammo, living in the USA and Shalim in Kuwait), he helped in whatever way he could to facilitate in the immigration process of everyone to the USA; from his baby sister, Mariana to brothers Sargon, Danny, his wife Fatheala and their little daughter Olga.



Sankho, we will refer to as 'Bill' herein after, had a natural knack for games. At a very young age, he learned to play billiards, chess, backgammon, dominoes, all the board and card games. But his favorite was shooting pool. Funny, his pool buddies nick named him 'Baghdad Bill'.

Bill was sweet and friendly with a great sense of humor. He enjoyed telling stories. Most impressive was his remarkable memory. He'd recall, in detail, events, names, things that happened 60, 70 years ago.

More importantly, Bill took pride in his Assyrian heritage. He loved the Assyrian Foundation, respected its accomplishments, including Nineveh magazine. He kept track of his family tree and would sign his name, "Sankho William Shabbas Enwiya Eshoo Daniel Badal 'BNE QALLA'".

In closing, Bill lived a simple and content life. He was kind, compassionate and a giving person. He was loved by all, not to mention his friends in Oakland, where he resided for over thirty years.

Rest In Peace 'Bill'. You Will Always Be Remembered!



Hammurabi Barhy

Seyfo Center at a Glance

Ramina Jajoo-Frindrich, M.D., F.A.C.P., F.A.C.R.
President and Strategic Consultant
Seyfo Center, AZ Chapter

State of NSW recognition of the Assyrian Genocide of 1915



Sabro Bengaro at the first Photo
Exhibit- GAW 2022



Leah Rose Fisher at GAW 2023



Maryam Ishaya

Seyfo Center, also known as the Assyrian Genocide Research Center, began in Europe in 2004-with the aim to advocate, research, and educate both politicians and the general public about the genocides perpetrated against Assyrians. This was done through the publication and distribution of books, pamphlets, and lobbying efforts.

As hostilities toward minoritized indigenous nations of the Middle East increased, so did the collaborative efforts of Assyrians and non-Assyrians. Assyrians have been persecuted for their cultural identity and their predominantly Christian faith. The chief founder of the Seyfo Center, Sabro Bengaro (known as Sabri Atman) experienced persecution by Turkish authorities for speaking against an oppressive and racist government that has not to this day acknowledged the Genocide of 1915, Seyfo, perpetrated by Ottoman Turkey.

Since its inception, Seyfo Center has participated in or spearheaded several projects and events such as the recognition of the Assyrian Genocide by The International Association of Genocide Scholars (2007), the recognition of the genocide by the Swedish Parliament (2009), the erection of monuments to honor genocide victims in Sydney, Yerevan, Athens and France (2014-2020), the recognition of the genocide by the California State Assembly (2019) and the French Senate (2023).

Additionally, hundreds of eyewitness accounts of these genocides have been recorded, books and articles have been published, and presentations have been made on multiple platforms in various countries.

The Arizona Chapter

In 2011, Seyfo Center USA and its Arizona Chapter were founded. Arizona Chapter has since participated annually in Scottsdale Community College Genocide Awareness Week (GAW) in Phoenix.



*With Arizona State Representative
Nancy Barto - HCR 2006*



*With Arizona State Representative Judy
Schwiebert- HCR 2037*



Pierre Younan



Enlil Youkhana



Tiamet Lazar

This week-long conference in April has become the largest genocide symposium in North America. Since 2020, it's been hosted by Arizona State University (ASU).

The Arizona Chapter, together with the Assyrian American Cultural Organization (AACO) and the Assyrian Student Association (ASA) of Arizona, have successfully sponsored expert academics and artists at this symposium. The first-ever Assyrian Genocide Photo Exhibit was curated with the Assyrian Institute of Belgium. It was featured at ASU's West and Main campuses as well as Martyr's Day events locally and in San Diego.

Some notable presenters at GAW include Dr. Nicholas Al-Jeloo, Dr. Fadi Dawood, Dr. Nadia Yonan, Dr. Alda Benjamin, Dr. Joseph Hermiz, Professor Hannibal Travis, Professor Anahit Khosroeva, Professor Sargon Donabed, PhD-Candidate Sabro Bengaro, and Opera Singer Leah Rose Fisher. GAW 2024 will feature two discussion panels and two concurrent exhibits at ASU and the University of Arizona in Tucson.

In 2016, the Arizona Chapter and AACO lobbied for a monument at Wesley Bolin Plaza to honor the Assyrian Martyrs. The bill was passed by both the House and the Senate but vetoed by Governor Ducey. In March 2020, the Arizona chapter introduced the first-ever proclamation recognizing the Assyrian Genocide, HCR 2006, by the House of Representatives.

The Chapter received its non-profit status from the IRS in 2018 and registered with the Arizona Corporations Commission. Since then, it has expanded its scope of work to encompass educational, research, advocacy, and community services. The Chapter has also conducted several surveys to better understand the needs of Assyrians in Arizona. These are available by directly contacting the Chapter.

In 2023, the Chapter worked with the AACO to have the Assyrian New Year, Kha-B-

Nissan (April 1), formally recognized in Arizona. HCR 2037 was adopted unanimously by the House of Representatives and the Senate.

2022 marked the launch of the Chapter's annual financial award for Assyrians in the US studying Political Science or History with a focus on genocide studies. The first recipient was Maryam Ishaya, who has since graduated with a master's degree in political science from Columbia University. The 2023 recipient was Pierre Younan, who is currently studying Political Science at ASU and hopes to further his education with a law degree.

In the same year, the Chapter launched its annual nationwide essay competition to introduce the concept of genocide to younger people. The winners were Enlil Youkhanna in the elementary school category and Tiamet Lazar in the high school category. This project is now expanded to a book report competition in 2024.

Another initiative by the Chapter, "A book a year" project, will sponsor authors that write on the Assyrian Genocide, in part or in its entirety. Two Children's books have been commissioned and are set to be completed in 2024.

The Chapter is also developing a genocide curriculum for high school students to be taught in multiple states. This labor-intensive task is still in its early stages, with the ultimate goal of gaining approval by boards of education. Seyfo Center is an organization by the people and for the people. Direct engagement and grassroots efforts have been at the forefront of its work and will continue to be so, particularly when it comes to advocacy work. It provides a platform for volunteer work, particularly for students, and is a rich resource for researchers on the topic of Assyrian Genocide. For further information, visit the website at: www.seyfocenter.com or write to info@seyfocenter.com or resolution@seyfocenteraz.com.

Akitu

Celebrating Renewal and Rebirth in the Assyrian New Year 6774

Assyrian New Year, known as *Akitu*, is deeply rooted in ancient Mesopotamian culture. Its celebration holds profound significance, symbolizing renewal, rebirth, and the eternal cycle of life. *Akitu* traces its origins back over 4,000 years to ancient Mesopotamian society, specifically to the Assyrian and Babylonian civilizations. The word 'Akitu' itself means 'barley,' symbolizing the agricultural roots of the festival. It typically lasted for 12 days, starting with the vernal equinox, around late March to early April in the Gregorian calendar.

In ancient times, *Akitu* served both religious and political purposes. It was a time to honor the gods, seek their blessings for a prosperous harvest, and reaffirm the divine mandate of kingship. The festival was presided over by the chief god of Babylon, Marduk, and the chief god of Assyria, Ashur. *Akitu* was a grand affair, involving elaborate rituals, processions, and ceremonies. The festivities began with the purification of temples and sacred spaces to welcome the divine presence of the gods. Participants would engage in prayers, sacrifices, and offerings, seeking favor and protection for the year ahead.

One of the central rituals performed was the "Sacred Marriage," a symbolic union between the king and the high priestess, representing the marriage of Marduk and his consort, Ishtar. This ritual symbolized the renewal of fertility and the perpetuation of life. Another significant aspect of *Akitu* was the "Enuma Elish," the Babylonian creation myth, which was recited during the festival. This epic narrative recounted the victory of Marduk over the chaos dragon Tiamat, establishing Marduk as the supreme deity and solidifying his role in the pantheon.

Feasting, music, and dance were also integral parts of *Akitu*, with communities coming together to celebrate abundance and joy. People adorned themselves in colorful attire, exchanged gifts, and indulged in lavish meals as a testament to the blessings of the gods. At its core, *Akitu* symbolizes the cyclical nature of existence, the eternal cycle of birth, death, and rebirth. It reflects humanity's profound connection to the rhythms of nature, the changing seasons, and the agricultural cycles that sustain life. *Akitu* also carries a message of hope and renewal, reminding people that even in the face of adversity, there is always the possibility of new beginnings, underscoring the resilience of the human spirit and the enduring power of faith and community.

"Kha B'Nissa" is an important celebration within the Assyrian community, marking the beginning of *Akitu*. It falls on April 1st in the Gregorian calendar, coinciding with the first day of the month of Nisan in the Assyrian calendar. The term "Kha B'Nissan" translates to "The First of April" in Assyrian. This celebration is deeply rooted in ancient Mesopotamian culture and has been observed for thousands of years. It is a time of great significance, symbolizing renewal, hope, and the arrival of spring. Like many traditional Assyrian festivals, Kha B'Nissan blends religious and cultural elements, reflecting the rich tapestry of Assyrian heritage. During Kha B'Nissan, Assyrians come together to commemorate their history and traditions. The celebration typically includes various rituals, customs, and festivities.

Cultural performances, including traditional music, dance, and theatrical presentations, are integral to the Kha B'Nissan festivities. These performances serve to preserve and showcase Assyrian artistic heritage, fostering a sense of pride and unity within the community. Food also plays a central role in Kha B'Nissan celebrations. Families and communities come together to enjoy elaborate feasts featuring traditional Assyrian dishes. Hospitality is a cherished value in Assyrian culture, and guests are warmly welcomed into homes to share in the joyous occasion. Various symbolic customs are observed during Kha B'Nissan, such as the lighting of bonfires or the decoration of homes with flowers and greenery. These rituals are believed to ward off evil spirits and usher in blessings for the new year.

As Assyrians and people around the world come together to commemorate *Akitu* and Kha B'Nissan, they honor not only their past but also their shared humanity and the timeless quest for meaning and connection in the world. Through its rituals and symbols, *Akitu* celebrates the eternal cycle of life, the triumph of order over chaos, and the enduring power of renewal. Kha B'Nissan serves as a vibrant expression of Assyrian identity and heritage, bringing together individuals and communities to celebrate their shared history, culture, and faith while embracing hope and optimism for the new year ahead.



List of Assyrian Foundation of America Donors

The below list includes donations received from November 1, 2023 - December 31, 2023 only!
Any donations received after 12/31/2023 will be included in the next issue of the Nineveh Magazine.
Thank you for your generosity and support.

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Yousef & Jorunn Malekzadeh				\$150.00	Assyrian Students in Armenia
Yulius & Ann Marie Yadegar		\$20.00			

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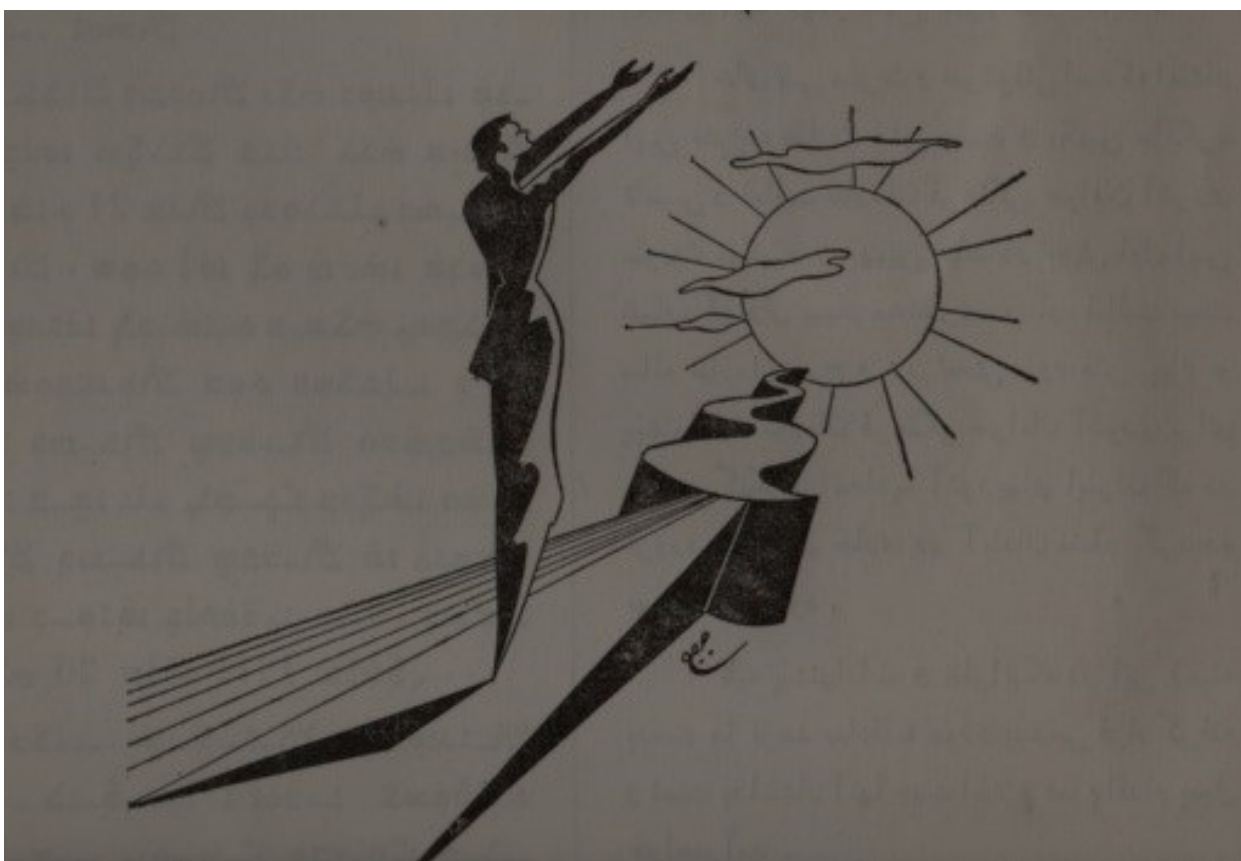
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١. ٢. ٣. ٤. ٥. ٦. ٧. ٨. ٩. ١٠. ١١. ١٢. ١٣. ١٤. ١٥. ١٦. ١٧. ١٨. ١٩. ٢٠. ٢١. ٢٢. ٢٣. ٢٤. ٢٥. ٢٦. ٢٧. ٢٨. ٢٩. ٣٠. ٣١. ٣٢. ٣٣. ٣٤. ٣٥. ٣٦. ٣٧. ٣٨. ٣٩. ٤٠. ٤١. ٤٢. ٤٣. ٤٤. ٤٥. ٤٦. ٤٧. ٤٨. ٤٩. ٥٠. ٥١. ٥٢. ٥٣. ٥٤. ٥٥. ٥٦. ٥٧. ٥٨. ٥٩. ٦٠. ٦١. ٦٢. ٦٣. ٦٤. ٦٥. ٦٦. ٦٧. ٦٨. ٦٩. ٧٠. ٧١. ٧٢. ٧٣. ٧٤. ٧٥. ٧٦. ٧٧. ٧٨. ٧٩. ٨٠. ٨١. ٨٢. ٨٣. ٨٤. ٨٥. ٨٦. ٨٧. ٨٨. ٨٩. ٩٠. ٩١. ٩٢. ٩٣. ٩٤. ٩٥. ٩٦. ٩٧. ٩٨. ٩٩. ١٠٠.

2. دُتَخَس يَكْنَبُه مَس حَكْس خَجَوْدَه دَهْبَكْ حِيَلْ دَفْهَه لِي مَس حَكْنِي. لِي حَقْلَس
يَسَه مَس كَسَدْ، مِيَحْتَمَل مَس دَبَه مَل حَت مَس، دَلَم يَجَدِي دَبَه مَقْدَب مِيَلْ م
وَجَه.

هَبْلًا يَفْعَلُهَا تَحْلُمُ بِهِ لِي تَكُنْ مِنْ فَعْلَتِهِ: لَيْسَ لَهُ حَكْمٌ يَكْتَلُ مِنْ حَكْمِهِ حَتَّى
يَمُوتَ يَلْقَى دَعْدَبَ لَهُ بَعْدَ فَعْلَتِهِ تَنْقُضُ حَتَّى يَمُوتَ: لَيْسَ لَهُ دَعْدَبٌ دَعْدَبًا دَعْدَبًا. حَتَّى
يَمُوتَ دَعْدَبًا دَعْدَبًا دَعْدَبًا.



[illegible]

2. **مَجْرُومٌ** مَجْرُومٌ مَجْرُومٌ

ج. بِحَقِّ كَيْتَنْ قُلْ سَجْدَ ۚ ۝۶۵

١. مَجْرَبَتِي قَدْ سَجَدَ لَهَا

ج. مَجَّ ذُنُوبَهُمْ ثُمَّ سَجَّ ۝۱۵۸

٥. بِمَجْدِ مُحَمَّدٍ وَآلِهِ مُحَمَّدٌ وَآلُهُ مُحَمَّدٌ

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لَبِيتُ بِرَبِّي لَيْلًا دَخَلْتُ فِيهِ حَتَّى أَتَى بِأَمْرٍ لَمْ يَكُنْ يَحْتَسِبُ
مِنْ تَحْتِ أَكْفَانِي فَجِئْتُ مَوْجِعًا مَخْمُومًا دُجْتُ لِي لَيْلٌ حَسْبُ لَيْلٍ يَكُونُ

[illegible][illegible][illegible][illegible]

بَصْنِ بِنِ دَازِی حَاجَرِو سَوَقِی: حِیْمَوِی فِکِی سَکِی بِنِ حِیْمَوِی حَکِی
 (بِصَمَوِی) لَبِی سَمِی دَازِی حَاجَرِو سَوَقِی حِیْمَوِی حَکِی بِنِ حِیْمَوِی حَکِی
 دَازِی حَکِی سَمِی سَمِی. دَازِی حَکِی سَمِی حِیْمَوِی حَکِی حِیْمَوِی حَکِی
 حِیْمَوِی حَکِی حِیْمَوِی حَکِی حِیْمَوِی حَکِی حِیْمَوِی حَکِی حِیْمَوِی حَکِی
 حِیْمَوِی حَکِی حِیْمَوِی حَکِی حِیْمَوِی حَکِی حِیْمَوِی حَکِی حِیْمَوِی حَکِی

[illegible]

[illegible]

A black and white portrait of a middle-aged man with a mustache, wearing a dark suit, white shirt, and patterned tie. He is looking directly at the camera with a neutral expression. The background is dark and slightly mottled.

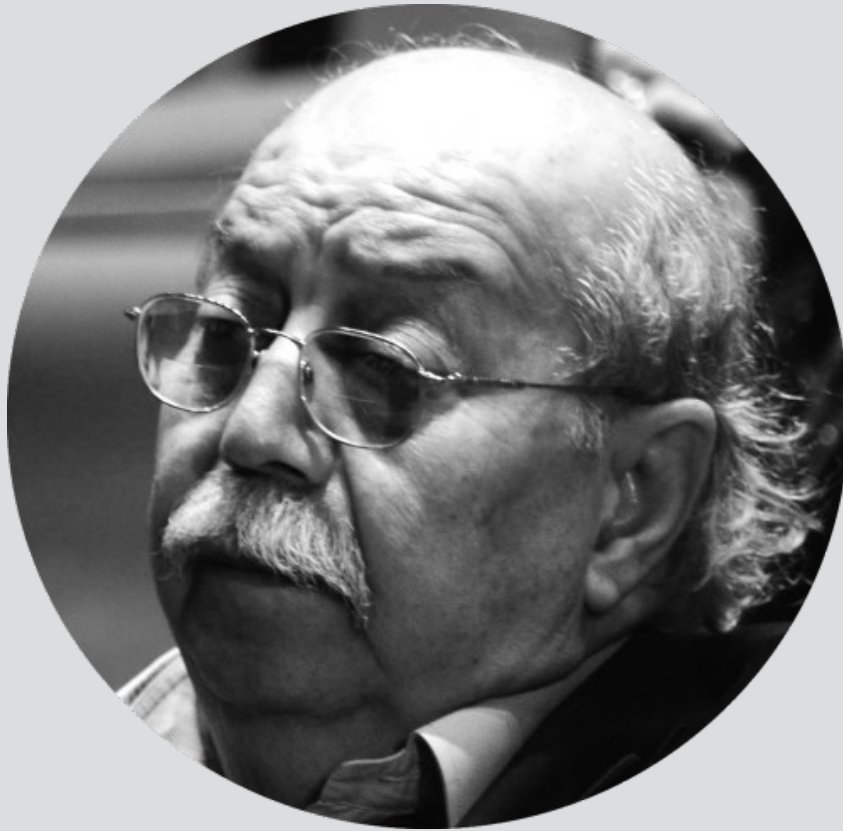
1868 _ 1930

لا حُلَّ، لَمْ يَلْزَمْهُمَا.



سلسلہ

ہندوستان کی تاریخ | ہندوستان کی ثقافت | ہندوستان کی سائنس



سید کھجور

1938ء - 2023ء

پیشہ ورانہ تعلیم و تربیت