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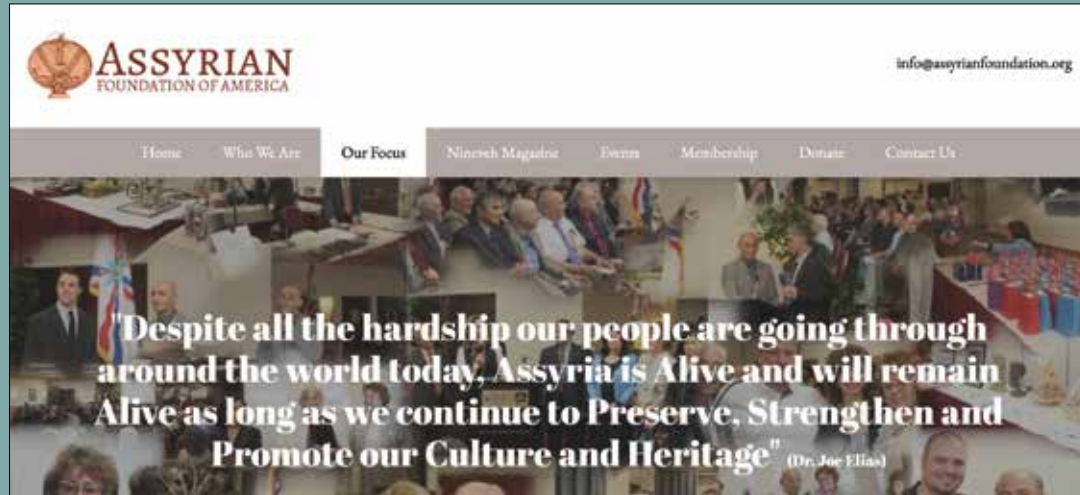


Sculpture by artist Moussa Malki

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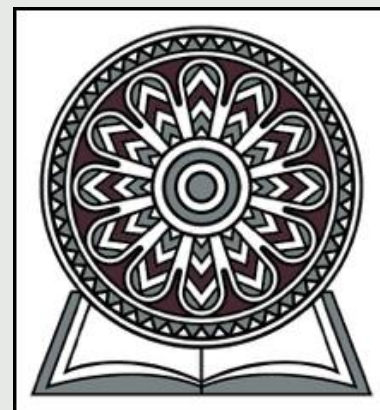
AFA Directed Funding of Projects: Supported through Ottoman Era Assyrian Life Insurance Policies

by Elizabeth Mickaily-Huber, Ph.D.

New York Life Insurance Co. began selling insurance policies in the Ottoman Empire in 1882 and halted sales there in 1914 as a result of the impending war that came to be known as WWI. During those years, a number of life insurance policies had been sold to persons of Assyrian origin. Although N.Y. Life paid benefits to the families of some of the policyholders who perished, other policies remained dormant for years with no claims made. In an effort to find descendants of the Assyrian policyholders, N.Y. Life established the Assyrian Life Insurance Policy Program and advertised heavily in areas where Assyrians live. Although some claimants were eventually found, others remained unclaimed. Desiring to do justice to the Assyrian lives that were lost and to pay respect to their origins, N.Y. Life contacted the Assyrian Foundation of America (AFA) in 2017. N.Y. Life wished to donate the remaining \$300,000 to an Assyrian non-profit organization, deciding on the AFA because of its dedication to the support and propagation of education, culture, and history of “all things Assyrian”. Since that fateful year, the AFA has made every effort to use those monies wisely, with the utmost respect to the memory of those who perished. In particular, four major projects were funded.

Firstly, the Assyrian Studies Association (ASA) was established and supported financially using a portion of those funds. The ASA was created to promote Assyrian heritage in its entirety. The ASA works to facilitate academic publication, collaboration, and study of the past, present, and future of our unique and illustrious Assyrian origins. Currently, the ASA is at the forefront of the push to obtain the independent investigation, excavation, and surveying of mass graves in Simele, Iraq. The sites in question are believed to hold the remains of victims of the Simele Massacre of 1933. To learn more about ASA and its various projects, please visit:

Visit: www.assyrianstudiesassociation.org



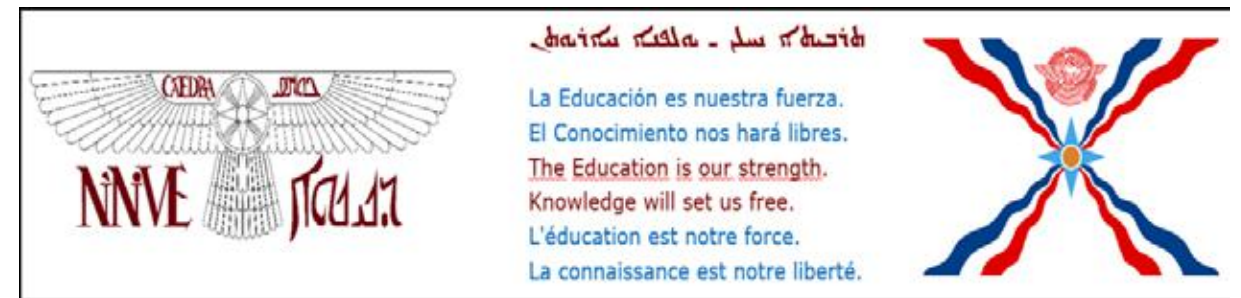
Logo of the Assyrian Studies Association

Secondly, Assyrian policy money was used to support the production of a film called “Journey of Eternity” made by Assyrian Director Frank Gilbert. The film was selected as a finalist to represent Iraq at the Oscars and has been shown at various international film festivals. It tells the story of Esho, a young teacher, who finds himself unjustly incarcerated in an Iraqi prison. Therein, he witnesses the unwarranted execution of 3 Assyrian activists. Indeed, Youbert Benjamin Shlimon, Youkhana Esho Jajo, and Yousip Toma Hermis were imprisoned in 1983 and hanged without trial on February 3, 1983 by the Iraqi regime in real life. These men became martyrs defending the human rights of the indigenous Assyrian people. To honor the memory of these heroes, Esho vows to recognize their sacrifice by beginning a journey that ultimately leads him to defend the Assyrian cause in the international arena. The official movie trailer can be seen here:

<https://youtu.be/TEJLM1-Jkl4>



Movie Poster of “Journey of Eternity”



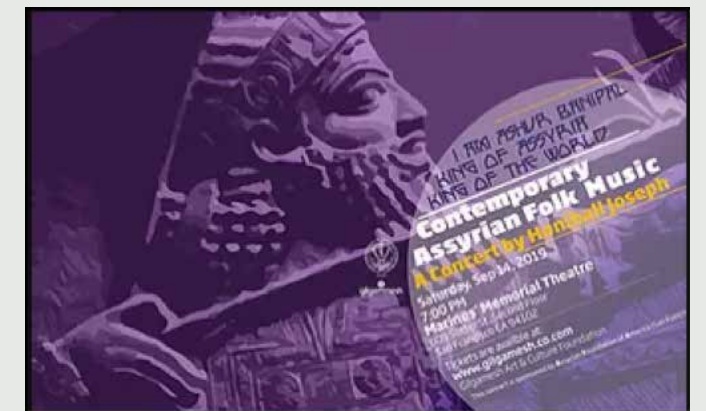
Logo of “Catèdra Ninive” - Nineveh Academic Chair of the University of Salamanca, Spain

The third project, financed in part with the Assyrian policy money, is “The Nineveh Academic Chair” at the University of Salamanca in Spain, one of the oldest universities in the world, established in the year 1134. The institute is headed by Assyrian Professor Efrim Yildiz. As a respected scholar of philosophy, theology, and Semitic languages, Dr. Yildiz writes and presents extensively, in Spain and throughout Europe, on Assyrian heritage and identity. The Nineveh Chair works to promote knowledge of Assyria in its various socio-cultural and linguistic forms, dealing with historical as well as current matters. By promoting joint research on Assyrian issues, the University of Salamanca and the Nineveh Chair will become a world-wide reference in the commitment to Assyrian Studies, working to clear the slate of past inaccuracies propagated throughout the western world about the Assyrian language, history, and culture. For more information on the Nineveh Academic Chair of the University of Salamanca, please visit:

<http://catedranineveh.com/en/home/>

A fourth project that has already been discussed previously in Nineveh Magazine was the sponsorship of the extraordinary concert organized by Assyrian musician and conductor Honiball Joseph in September of 2019. The event took place at the Marine’s Memorial Theater in San Francisco with an audience of over 400 individuals. Entitled “Contemporary Assyrian Folk Music”, the production was a recreation of the concert performed at the “I am Ashurbanipal, King of Assyria, King of the World” exhibit that took place at the British Museum in London from November 2019 to February 2019. Honiball is the founder of the Gilgamesh Art and Culture Foundation that is devoted to the promotion of Assyrian music, art, and culture. The foundation organizes concerts, events, exhibitions, and competitions to encourage creativity in the arts. For more information, please see:

<https://www.gilgamesh.co.com/events>



Concert Poster

As evidenced through these four major projects, the AFA has remained faithful to its mission of promoting the Assyrian identity. The AFA took on its responsibility wholeheartedly to use the N.Y. Life Assyrian Policy money in ways that pay tribute to the lives of those who perished in vain. Although these lost Assyrian souls had no living progeny to claim their policies, it is the sincere hope of the AFA that these projects can be among those that will carry the torch of the Assyrian Nation into the future. The words of the Greek poet Dinos Christianopoulos seem particularly appropriate at this time:

“They tried to bury us. They did not know we were seeds.”

THE GENOCIDE CHRONICLES

By Professor Arianne Ishaya

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

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

Jesse (Youkhana) Elias (Age: 75)

Date of Interview: 2/8/1982

Date of Birth: 1907

Note: Jesse Elias is the father of Dr. Joe Elias one of the founders, and long-time board member of the Assyrian American Foundation at Berkley, California.

I left Iran in 1913. I was barely sixteen. We were a large youth group. There were four or five from my village Shamsha Jiyān. More were added to the group from other villages as we went along until there were 78 of us. Among us there were some "picture brides" too. So many young men were leaving because we wanted to live in comfort and security. In the old country when the Turks noticed the better dressed and better fed Christians and their well-furnished homes, they began to raid our villages looting and carrying away the cattle. Willing or not we had to emigrate in order to support our families. There were not enough jobs. Just like you see today in Poland and elsewhere. There are no jobs. People are starving. They flee to other countries. So that was our condition.

During WWI the Kurds united with the Turks. At that time my grand-

mother had gone to Degala to visit my uncle (her brother) who had moved there. She had taken my brother who was 14-15 years of age, along with her. When the Kurds invaded the region, about 5,000 Assyrians fled the villages and hid themselves in the Catholic mission yards in Urmi. There the monseigneurs and the nuns sheltered them (sobbing). But the Kurds butchered them. They butchered them all....

My brother was among them. My sister had gone to Judat Khanim, wife of Kasha Yaccu and was staying with them. So she was spared. If there is one good thing done in all the world, it was done by that family.

My father had left the country back in 1903. He had left in a group too. They wouldn't travel alone. There was a Rabi Eshaq who came to USA once and returned back to the old country. When he was coming a second time, he took my father along and brought him to Yonkers. My father died in 1946 in Chicago. He was a painter. He had learnt the skill in Tiflis. I learned the craft from him. He took many Assyrian boys in his care and taught them the craft. In Chicago he had a hotel in his care. He was a foreman.

My uncle had come to the United States earlier. He was a bricklayer. He had returned to the old country, and in 1913 he was leaving to USA for a second time. He took me with him. Our group was traveling under his care because he knew a few words of English. My father had sent me pas-

sage money for the Journey. When I left, I heard that Assyrians had come under attack. So in our group people were wondering who was dead and who was alive. So I wrote to my relatives and asked to be told the truth about my family. The news came that my mother had gone to the village to see about our farm. When the Turks had attacked, she had fled together with other Assyrians. But after two days she had died on the trail of the tears. Regarding my brother, in the Catholic Mission yard so many people were killed. Among those I knew was Babajan the son of Shamasha Baboo, Tooti's husband, and, of course my brother. But my sister was alive because Judat Khanim, wife of Kasha Yaccu had sheltered her. So we sent money to bring her over. But the rest were all lost (sobbing).

In Chicago I was with my father. He was a foreman. He used to take care of other painters. He taught more than 15 people the craft. There was Youel Gilyana, George Dudanoo, Guidoon, Youav son of Kasha supurghan, yokhana, Shmoel son of Kasha David, David of Dizataka, among others. That was in 1920.

At that time I used to work for an Assyrian journal. Its name was "the Messenger" *ܡܫܝܚܐ*. Three years issues are bound and are at Joe's. Kasha Polus Envia of Titrash was the publisher. His son was a well-known lawyer-Paul Newy-. He had tried the Mafia case and revealed their secrets. I worked for him from the age of 18-23. After that I started apprenticeship in the painting craft. In 1913 I used

to work for \$1.00 a day. It was not enough to make a living. At that time a pair of shoes cost \$2.50. So you had to work two days and a half for a pair of shoes.

In Chicago the Assyrians worked as bricklayers, carpenters, painters, and tailors. Most worked in gas stations washing cars, worked in restaurants as dishwashers, or in hotels as janitors. There were also doctors, priests, and teachers. We had a number of Doctors and lawyers. There were four brothers: two were physicians, one a dentist, and one a priest. Eshaq David was a dentist; Ropus David was a surgeon. For jokes people used to say: "one of you should have been an undertaker. This way you could take care of people from birth to death!" There was also Professor Elia Gawar, Dentist Khidroo, and Peera M.D. All Assyrians were their patients because they could communicate with them in Assyrian. They did not speak English well.

The Assyrians lived close to where they worked in the downtown area. Clark was the best known street for Assyrians. We used to gather in Lincoln Park. We had restaurants, pool-rooms, dry goods stores, and tailors. There are pictures in the Foundation library. Kasha Hedou's Church in Chicago was the main post office. That's where all the mail came because we were working people and changed our address frequently. All letters came to 56, West Huron St. On Wednesday nights there was a sermon. After the sermon Kasha Hedou would ask me to call out the names of those who had received mail. There were about 50-60 letters at any one time. Some letters stayed there for months. The Church had more than 200 members. It was a lively Church because Kasha (Rev.) Hedou was a true Christian. In 1920's I used to help in the printing of the Assyrian periodical "Mhadiana" (The Guide). Once we took the census of the Assyrian population in Chicago. We

counted them by village. People from every village knew how many people from their village lived in the city. That is how we counted them. There were close to 3000 Assyrians from Urmia in Chicago in 1921.

I met Bato at the Presbyterian Church. I was the Church secretary (sapra), and she was the Sunday school teacher. I liked her the first time I met her. A friend from her village suggested the matchmaking. I said alright. He said: "I told her and she agreed. Write to her". So I wrote her a few words. When I gave her the envelope for dues, I slipped the card in the envelope. She got mad so to speak. A relative of her father had his eye on Bato and had threatened that if Bato was not given to his son, he would cut all relations with the family. She had protested and said even in the old country daughters could not be forced into marriage; how can this be done in this country. So she was on my side. We got married in 1923. She was 20 years old.

Jesse Elias recalled that it became a custom when a boy asked for the hand of a girl, her parents asked him to reimburse them for the expenses of her trip to America. People disapproved and said "They are selling their daughters; it's shameful". So the practice was abandoned. Accordingly, when Jesse got married he did not pay for Bato's passage money; neither did he get paid for his sister's when she married.

Bato had come to USA from the Baqubah refugee camp in 1921. Her group could not take the Pacific route and had to come by the Atlantic Ocean. All ships were booked up because the British soldiers were given priority to return home.

Most Assyrians voted for democrats. But there were also republicans.

During the elections party agents used to pay the needy \$10.00 to vote

for them. Of course this was not made public.

During the depression times were hard; but our people did not go on relief. Two three families used to live in one house. They helped one another. You see, they were all related. Florence Yaccu's father had a pool-room. In that place he had a restaurant. He used to sell food vouchers for \$2.30 with 30 cents discount. Those two dollars lasted for a whole week of food: masta, boushala, small meatballs, and kabobs which costed 15 cents a skewer. Some people would eat on credit until they got their pay check. These were mostly bachelors. A family used to rent a house with 7-8 bedrooms, and place two twin beds in each room and turn it into a rooming house. The renters paid \$5.00 a month for lodging. Some of these bachelors married Americans; others got picture brides. At one point many families came and brought a number of girls along. In our group there were some bride pictures.

During the depression there was a bridge in Chicago that came to be called "Hoover Hotel". Then the president was Hoover. People used to sleep under it because many had lost their homes. When Hoover left, Roosevelt became the president and he put everyone to work. He built roads, planted trees in deserts, built bridges and beautified the city. So he provided people with a living.

We have two sons. Joe is a professor and has been doing research on cancer for 26-27 years. The younger son Wilber lives in Stockton. He is an electrical engineer, a traffic engineer, and a civil engineer. He is the first in all California with three licenses. The traffic light you see red, green, yellow are all his designs.

xxx

“The drama of the Assyro-Chaldeans did not begin today”

by Professor Joseph Yacoub

*Courtesy of FIGAROVOX/TRIBUNE
Translated from French to English by
Elizabeth Mickaily-Huber, Ph.D.*

*Published on July 20, 2020 at 8:33 a.m., updated on
July 20, 2020 at 8:33 a.m.*



ANWAR AMRO / AFP

It is sad to note that the drama befalling the Christians of the Middle East does not begin today. There was the genocide of 1915-1918 under the Ottoman Empire. Yet, lesser-known massacres took place in August of 1933 in Iraq, where tragedy once again marked the fate of the mountain Assyrians. This event, which is at the origin of their exodus to Syria, then under French mandate, aroused many echoes of horror in Europe and was widely covered by the press at the time. French and British diplomatic and military archives contain reports placing responsibility for these massacres upon the Iraqi authorities and their army.

We must also point out an unprecedented fact: The British Royal Air Force (RAF) at the time took aerial photos of the burned and demolished villages. However, for the benefit of interests of state, the authorities chose not to disclose them. Considered as “Top secret”, they would be available fifty years later, beginning in 1984.

So what truly happened? First of all, some historical facts deserve to be recalled.

In September 1929, the British government, having had a League of Nations (League of Nations) mandate over Iraq since 1920, announced its intention to end its status prematurely in 1932. This

rapid development gave rise to strong concerns among Assyrians who sent several petitions to the League of Nations, fearing for their safety and worrying over equality of treatment and loss of individual freedoms.

The Assyrian mountain survivors within Iraq, refugees from Hakkari (Turkey), under the protection of the English, encountered many difficulties, especially when it came to maintaining their traditional status to which they owed the perenity of their very existence. Moreover, all of these enormous difficulties gave rise to misunderstandings. Baghdad refused to grant them any autonomy as a minority (despite the declaration signed in front of the the League of Nations on May 30, 1932), opposed their reuniting as a homogeneous group and sought to dilute their national identity by dispersing them and limiting the temporal power of their patriarchal institution. In fact, these Assyrians were perceived as foreigners, and the new Iraq wrongly saw this minority as a danger to its national cohesion and its own stability.

From then on, the situation became critical. In May 1933, Patriarch Mar Eshai Shimoun was summoned to Baghdad by the Minister of the Interior, under the pretext of discussing the future of his community. He would be placed under house arrest for three months, with Baghdad refusing to recognize his temporal authority.

Feeling a loss of safety and seeing the situation become untenable, three months later, some Assyrian tribal leaders decided to leave Iraq in mid-July and entered Syria. On the night of August 4-5, returning to Iraq to seek their families, they found the road blocked by the Iraqi army at Faishkhabour. Shootings broke out. The fighting was followed by massacres from August 7 to 15 by the troops of Colonel Bekir Sidqi. In the Assyrian villages north of Mosul, appalling killings took place. The European press expressed outrage regarding these persecutions against “a small defenseless people”.

The patriarch was deported, along with his family to Cyprus on August 18, after the British agreed to welcome him to the island.

It was in the town of Simele that the massacres were the most heinous. On this subject, the London correspondent of the newspaper *Le Temps*, Robert Cru, wrote on August 8, 1933:

“Grim revelations have just been added to what we already knew about the atrocities which took place in the north of Iraq. A British official on tour found 315 Assyrians slaughtered. They would be peasants in no way involved in the recent disturbances on the Syrian border.” The government of King Faisal I, claimed to deplore these incidents and “gave its word of honor that such acts of savagery would not be repeated” (*Le Temps*, August 18). Yet, all the officers who had taken part in these operations were given one year of advancement, in addition to the rank of general given to their leader, Colonel Bekir Sidqi

The Assyrian leadership reported more than 2,000 killed. Several villages were looted, destroyed and burned. British Colonel R.S.H. Stafford, then administrative inspector of Mosul, published in English a work on this Assyrian tragedy which strongly marked him. For his part, Professor J.T. Thomas Delos (1891-1974) who had reproduced accounts testifying to the massacres in Simele, adds: “The testimonies are multiple: but for what purpose? They are but repeating a horror.”

There were numerous articles in the British and Swiss press (*Daily Mail*, *Daily Telegraph*, *Times*, *Manchester Guardian* ..., *Le Journal de Genève*). In France, echos of these sad events was significant (*Le Figaro*, *Le Temps*, *Le Progrès*, *La France (Bordeaux)*. *Le Progrès (Lyon)* headlined August 20, 1933: “Massacre of the Assyrians in Iraq”. “British opinion is outraged by the allegations of the government of Iraq and the deportation of the Assyrian Patriarch.”

We point to two articles by the correspondent of *Le Figaro* in London, published on August 20 and 22, 1933. In that of August 20, entitled “The massacres of Assyrians in Iraq”, we read an interesting analysis on the post-independence of Iraq :

“England abandoned its mandate over Iraq, recognized as an independent nation and welcomed into the League of Nations. The result did not take long. The Muslims of Mesopotamia attacked

the small minorities in their territory. Recently Assyrian tribes have been slaughtered.

According to the most optimistic information, there were over a thousand killed on the Assyrian side. Reports in the British capital prove the participation of King Faisal’s regular troops against minorities in northern Iraq.

Iraq supported the Muslim Kurds against the Christian Assyrians. This is the truth. The unfortunate fate of the latter is worthy of pity. They fought alongside the allies during the war, but following hostilities, Turkey was given the county of Hakkari and the Assyrians were dispersed and placed at the mercy of their enemies, the Kurds and the Arabs.

It decided (the government of Baghdad) to deport the leader of the Assyrian tribes, [Patriarch] Mar Shimun. England immediately offered him asylum on the island of Cyprus. This fact caused great indignation in London. And it is written there (...) that such an action is not compatible with the commitments made by Iraq to the League of Nations on the subject of ethnic and religious minorities; one must regret having recognized the independence of Iraq.

Sir Francis Humphrys, British Ambassador to Baghdad, left London yesterday afternoon by plane for Baghdad to meet with King Faisal.”

And the journalist concludes: “Let us hope, while waiting for the League of Nations to take care of giving a definitive home to the Assyrians, that the British representative will be able to impose on the sovereign nation of Baghdad the measures necessary to prevent further massacres.”

Under the title “Patriarch Mar Shimun accuses King Faisal”, we read on August 22:

“Serious charges against King Faisal have been made by Patriarch Mar Shimun who arrived in Cyprus today, deported from Baghdad.

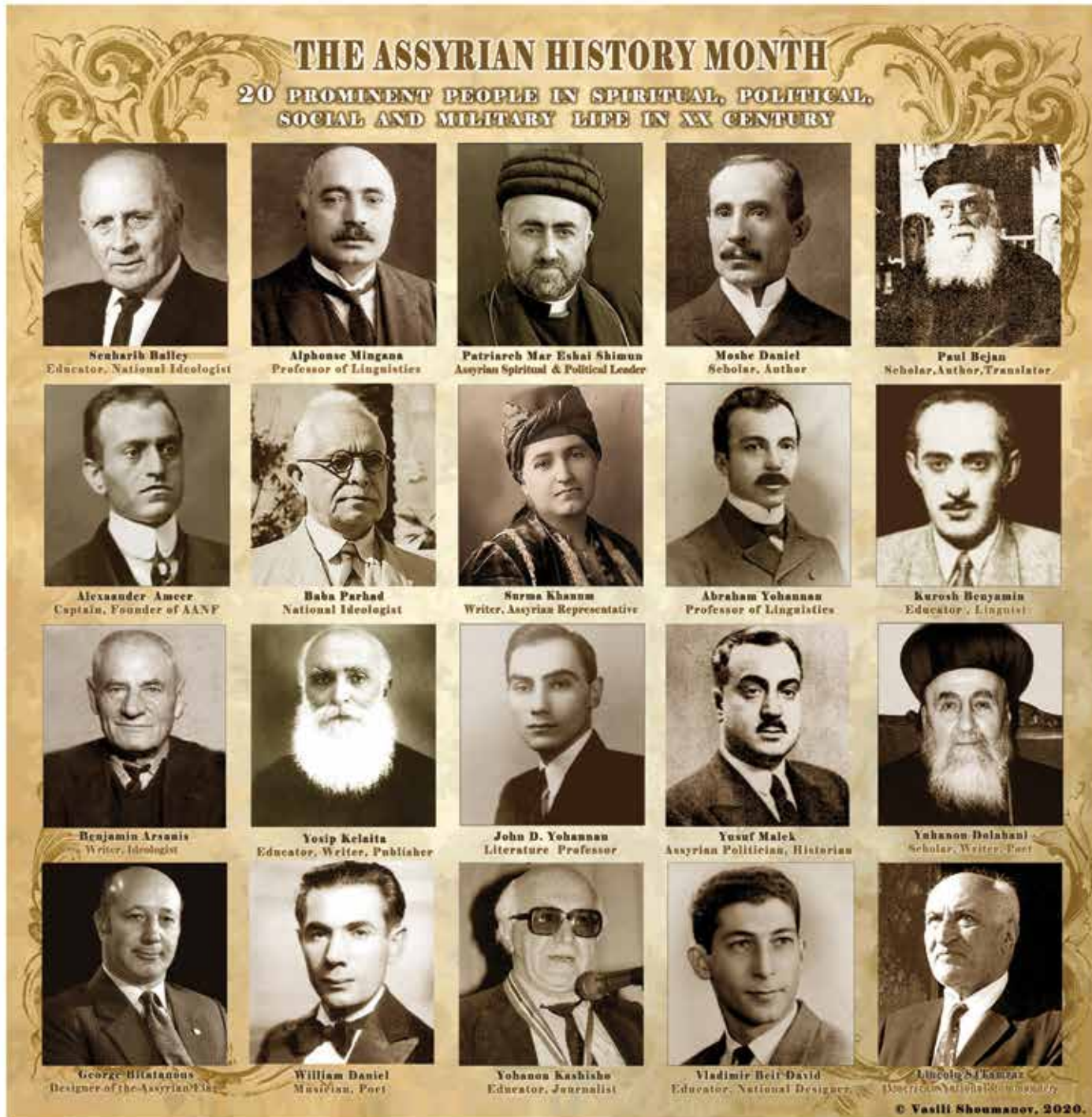
The hereditary leader of the Assyrians said the king of Iraq had a great deal of responsibility for the massacres in which hundreds of his subjects perished, because it was at his instigation that two rebel Kurdish leaders would have taken the lead in the movement against the Assyrians.

In Semele, 325 Assyrians, women, children or old people, were murdered and more than 500 other Assyrians were massacred in the other villages. Far from calming down, he added, the movement against my co-religionists continues, threatening to decimate the whole tribe.”

Between yesterday and today, I beg to question, what has really changed for the Assyro-Chaldeans?



*Joseph Yacoub is Honorary Professor of Political Science at the Catholic University of Lyon. He was the first UNESCO Chairman of “Memory, Cultures and Interculturality”. A specialist in world minorities and Christians of the Middle East, he has published the book *The Syriac Middle East: The Little Known Face of Eastern Christians (Salvator, 2019)*.*



THE ASSYRIAN HISTORY MONTH
20 PROMINENT PEOPLE IN SPIRITUAL, POLITICAL, SOCIAL AND MILITARY LIFE IN XX CENTURY



Senharib Balley
Educator, National Ideologist



Alphonse Mingana
Professor of Linguistics



Patriarch Mar Eshai Shimun
Assyrian Spiritual & Political Leader



Moshe Daniel
Scholar, Author



Paul Bejan
Scholar, Author, Translator



Alexander Ameer
Captain, Founder of AANF



Baba Parhad
National Ideologist



Surma Khanum
Writer, Assyrian Representative



Abraham Yohannan
Professor of Linguistics



Kurosh Benyamin
Educator, Linguist



Benjamin Arsanis
Writer, Ideologist



Yosip Kelaita
Educator, Writer, Publisher



John D. Yohannan
Literature Professor



Yusuf Malek
Assyrian Politician, Historian



Yohanon Dolaban
Scholar, Writer, Poet



George Bitatanous
Designer of the Assyrian Flag



William Daniel
Musician, Poet



Yohanon Kashisho
Educator, Journalist



Vladimir Beit David
Educator, National Designer



Albcgolg & Lamsa
Biblical Scholar, Translator

© Vassili Shoumanov, 2020.

The Assyrian History in Images:

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

Left to Right:

- 1 - Senharib Balley, Educator, National Ideologist, Turkey-USA
- 2 - Alphonse Mingana, Professor of Linguistics, Iraq
- 3 - Ishai Mar Shimun, Patriarch of the church of the East, Turkey-USA
- 4 - Moshe Daniel, Scholar, Author, Iran-USA
- 5 - Paul Bejan Scholar, Author, Translator, Iran -Germany
- 6 - Alexaaender Ameer, Captain, Founder and 1st President of AANF, Iran-USA
- 7 - Baba Parhad Doctor, National Ideologist, Iraq
- 8 - Surma Khanum, Writer, Assyrian Representative
- 9 - Abraham Yohannan, Professor of Linguistics, Iran-USA
- 10 - Kurosh Benyamin, Educator, Grammarist, Iran

- 11 - Benjamin Arsanis, Writer, National Ideologist, Iran
- 12 - Yosip Dekelaita, Educator, Teacher, Publisher, Iraq
- 13 - John D. Yohannan, Literature Professor, Iran-USA
- 14 - Yusuf Malek, Assyrian Politician, Historian, Iraq
- 15 - Philoxenos Yuhanon Dolabani, the Syriac Orthodox Metropolitan of Mardin, Turkey
- 16 - George Bitatanous, Designer of the Assyrian Flag, Russia- Iran
- 17 - William Daniel, Musician, Poet, Iran-USA
- 18 - Yohanon Kashisho, Educator, Journalist, Turkey-Sweden
- 19 - Vladimir Beit David, Educator, National Designer, Iran-USA
- 20 - George Lamsa, Biblical Scholar, Translator, Turkey-USA

In Memory of Dr. Howard Schwat



Dr. Howard E. Schwat of Berkeley, passed away at the age of 74 in Mexico City on May 12, 2017. We were on our way home from a cruise in Chile, heading back to San Francisco. Tragically, he never made it back home as he had a heart attack on the ship and was air transferred to a hospital in Mexico City where he passed away. His remains were scattered in the Bay close to Treasure Island under Bay Bridge in the company of family and close friends.

Howard is survived by his wife of 36 years and his sister Edelle Tracy along with two nieces and their children.

Dr. Schwat was a board-certified dermatologist in private practice in San Francisco for 42 years. He got his Medical Degree at Case Western Reserve in Cleveland. He only applied to one school: Case Western Medical School, as he knew he would be accepted due to his credentials. His determination always shined through even at a young age. He then attended Tufts University for his Dermatology Residency which during the seventies was part of Harvard University. He was also awarded two fellowships in Dermatology, in London and at Cape Town at The Dermatology Institute at Groote Schuur Hospital where Dr. Christian Bernard performed the first transplant heart surgery. While in South Africa, he pursued his passion for filming wildlife at Kruger & Serengeti National Parks. During the Vietnam War, he joined the Navy as a physician for three years. The Navy sent him on a ship to Iceland for a long time. Serving in the Navy and spending time in Iceland was a real treat for someone with passion for traveling and discovering remote parts of the world.

It was during a Christmas party at the World Affairs Council in San Francisco in 1980 when we first met. I was so impressed and very surprised that he knew so much about Assyrians & Iraq. This was at a time when Assyrians or Iraq were not known by many, even in the Bay Area. I was immediately attracted to his intellect and international travels. I knew this is the man that I will hopefully marry.

In addition to his professional medical associations, i.e.: American Medical Association, Pan American Medical Society, etc., he also had eclectic interests in history, politics, plants, birds, animals, stars, etc. as he supported the Audubon & the San Francisco Zoological Society among others. As a diehard baseball fan, we attended as many games at Ball Park as we could. He did not engage in small talk: that was foreign to him. However, once a subject came up in any field, his deep intellect would flourish instantly. He was also an avid philatelist where we attended stamps shows at a time when many physicians also attended.

On our very first New Zealand trip for a dermatology conference, he was invited to join the New Zealand Society of Dermatology which was very exclusive at the time. There were only 35 dermatologists in the whole country. Thereafter, we went to many of their meetings that were often held in different South Pacific Islands before the onset of mass tourism.

Howard left this world before he retired but he will remain in my heart forever.
Linda Schwat



Before the start of the program, from left: Rabi Yulius Petros, Ron Rodriguez, Dr. Kimberley Greer, Ishtar Saiyady, Carmen Morad (standing), Cooper Condit, Grace Ourmie

A Precious Donation

by Rabi Yulius Petros

Compiled by: Dr. Madeleine Davis Moradkhan

Rabi Yulius Petros has created his own teaching method of the Assyrian language, which he has baptized "Learn and Teach the Assyrian Language", and has been immortalized in a DVD box set. The box set consists of 64 DVDs, which comprise a complete class course of instructions on learning the Assyrian language. He has been filmed and the DVDs illustrate language learning and they also feature his particular point of emphasis in the instructions which is focusing on the Assyrian alphabet and the corresponding sound. This is a hallmark of his particular style of teaching. He has offered this precious gift to the Library of the California State University (CSU) in Turlock, Stanislaus. On Dec 6, 2019, the university faculty members together with the board members of the Assyrian American Civic Club of Turlock organized a program in recognition of Rabi Yulius for his generous offering.

The Civic Club, established in 1946, has always been devoted to preserving and teaching the Assyrian language, which is the oldest living language in the world. They have diligently organized Assyrian language classes, and have a radio and TV programs in Assyrian. Their dedicated members have devoted their time and love to this organization

and have always tried to excel in all their activities to preserve and promote the Assyrian heritage in Turlock.

Carmen Morad, in charge of the public relations of the Civic Club opened the program by welcoming the guests: Dr. Kimberley Greer Provost & Vice President of Academic Affairs, CSU Stanislaus, Ron Rodriguez Dean of Library Services, CSU Stanislaus, Jason Geiken Associate Vice President for Development from CSU Stanislaus, Prof. Jim Tuedio, Dean of the College of the Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences, Ishtar Saiyady from Congressman Josh Harder Office, and Cooper Condit from Assemblyman Heath Flora Office.

On behalf of the Civic Club of Turlock the following board members were also present: Sam David: President, and Grace Ourmie: Secretary.

Carmen Morad continued: "I am so excited that we have special guests tonight, as we honor the life-time work and legacy of one of our own: Rabi Yulius Petros for his commitment and dedication to the teaching of the Assyrian language" She then read the brief biography of Rabi Yulius,

which is printed on page ...

Then Dr. Kimberley Greer Provost & Vice President of Academic Affairs, CSU Stanislaus in Turlock, thanked Rabi Yulius personally for his gift. She also thanked the members of the Civic club for their partnership with the university and their support. She emphasized that it is an honor to receive this type of gift, such a generous gift from a life-long educator to an institution of higher education, especially as it is aligned with the mission and vision around education at CSU, Stanislaus.

Then Ron Rodriguez spoke about the project for these DVDs: "The DVDs have become a project at the University Library and we're going to have them digitalized and we'll have them placed on the university website and then from there anybody can access the lessons from the DVDs. So not only are they going to be made available to the local community, to California, but also basically, the world. Anybody can access the website, so that's our goal. The time frame for this work is actually a work in progress, as the university Library is currently undergoing a renovation right now. So it's going to be ready in the summer of 2021, but we are still going to begin to work to initially get it to the point where we can have it digitalized and put on the web. And it's Carmen Morad who spear headed the effort to bring this collection of the DVDs and the instructions to the attention of Miss Annie Horn, the Stanislaus Librarian and myself. So I would like to thank Carmen for bringing this work forward and letting us know and actually introducing us to Rabi. I have to make some comments about Rabi as well. First of all he is an excellent gentleman, but he is a professor, he is a teacher. And he cares passionately about the Assyrian language, and he cares passionately about the students he teaches. I think the world needs a hundred more Rabi Yulius, because that is the kind of individual he is. And I know that he is a very modest man, but really his work is outstanding and it stands on its own. So we are really happy that we are able to essentially immortalize it by its digitalization. We are honored that he has chosen to give this collection to the university and let us work with it, and let it be made available to the entire world. I pledge to keep the Assyrian community informed about the progress that we make so that you'll know when it's actually up on the web and people can, everyone can access it and enjoy it."

Then after a short speech, Sam David, president of the Civic Club, presented to Rabi Yulius a plaque, on behalf of the Assyrian American Civic Club, in appreciation of his continuous teaching and preservation of the Assyrian language and supporting the education program of CSU Stanislaus.

Ishtar Saiyady on behalf of Congressman Josh Harder presented Rabi Yulius a certificate of recognition of his contribution to the gifting program of CSU Stanislaus and involvement in teaching the Assyrian language and his continued desire to give to the community in a positive spirit, which is inspiring. She emphasized that since her parents have taught her to read and write in Assyrian, she can better appreciate the value of Rabi Yulius's work.

Cooper Condit spoke on behalf of assemblyman Heath Flora, who represents Turlock and said: "It's an honor to meet



Dr. Kimberley Greer Provost & Vice President of Academic Affairs, CSU Stanislaus in Turlock



Ishtar Saiyady



Cooper Condit giving his speech and then presenting two recognitions to Rabi Yulius



Carmen Morad, in charge of public relations, welcoming the guests



Sam David President of the Assyrian American Civic Club of Turlock



Ron Rodriguez Dean of Library Services, CSU Stanislaus



Grace Ourmie, Assyrian Secretary of the Club



Rabi Yulius Petros

this great man Mr. Petros and the great things you have contributed to our community and the world, to preserve the Assyrian language. And if you see me in an Assyrian event you know I try to say one new word each time I speak in front of an Assyrian audience. I need to! And that's why I'm so excited about these DVDs. So tonight's word, as I was listening to everyone speak is Hora! Is that the right pronunciation? For partner? Khora: friend, partner. That's what Mr. Petros is. He has contributed; he has been a friend to the community, to UCS Stanislaus in Turlock, great friend of the Assyrian community. He's proven that by doing this. So with that being said, I have two recognitions: a plaque, a nice plaque from the Assemblyman Heath Flora's office and I also have a certificate from the board of supervisors. All want to thank you."

Grace Ourmie, secretary of the civic club, addressed the audience not only as a member of the committee but also as one of the students of Rabi Yulius' adult class, and said: "Rabi Yulius has been teaching the Assyrian language class in Civic Club of Turlock for more than ten years. He has helped his students learn to read, write and speak the Assyrian language. Personally, I have benefited greatly in that I've been able to serve as the Assyrian secretary at the Assyrian Civic Club of Turlock. Hereby on behalf of our language class students, I would like to offer our deepest gratitude and appreciation to Rabi Yulius Petros for devoting much of his time and energy in teaching and in-



Friends, family and guests



The students of the Assyrian adult class taught by Rabi Yulius presented him with a plaque with God Ashur depicted on it.

spiring us. We thank you earnestly. You have enriched our lives more than you know. We can only hope that perhaps we can follow in your footsteps." She then asked Freidou Eyyaz to read the poem he had composed in Assyrian in praise of Rabi Yulius.

Then Rabi Yulius spoke to the assembly, thus: "They have told you all the secrets about me, so I don't know where to start! Anyhow, ladies and gentlemen welcome to this presentation. Thank God I am blessed to stand here and speak about our mother tongue: the Assyrian language. What a special night: a night of dedication, teamwork and saying goodbye to my album that contains 34 DVDs of teaching Assyrian language, and 30 DVDs on Assyrian literature, narrated by Rabi Youaf Yonan, who I miss very much, and myself. To say goodbye to my album I will say a few words in Assyrian.

*"My beauty, my heart and soul are with you,
All my secrets, all my schemes are with you,
I don't know whence this illness,
All I know is that the remedy is with you."*

I'm not a linguist, but I know that the Assyrian language is the oldest language in the world. It is a divine language because Jesus Christ spoke it. This language with its phonetic alphabet, verb system and grammar is very remarkable and complete. The method I have created is based on



Rabi Yulius with his son, Ernest, and some of the students of his class.

letters and sounds: vowels. My method is short, practical and musical. Customarily, the vowels are taught with pronouncing the name of the letters as well. For example, Alap Sqapa A. But I teach simply A without the name of the letter Alap.

Assyrian alphabet is phonetic and has many of the sounds in nature. Our wise ancestors used dots and curves: symbols, on or under some letters from the same alphabet to produce the additional sounds they needed. For example in English we use two letters ch for the desired sound, but in Assyrian only one letter is used for this sound. Or, the two letters zh are used in English to produce the required sound, while only one letter is used in Assyrian. So you see, when I say it is phonetic it's true.

I have baptized my method and named it: "Learn and Teach". Our language is not hard to learn. No excuses, please!

I'm grateful to the following persons:

- Sam David, the president, for his support. Sam visits us in class and we offer him a candy!
- My lovely advisor: Carmen Morad: You introduced me to Mr. Ron Rodriguez, the dean of the library services and his staff. Dear Carmen you said: "This is your legacy", but I say it is also your legacy, and it is the legacy of all Assyrians. Thank you for all you did as you did your best.
- My special thanks to Mr. Ron for accepting the dedication and thank you for your hospitality.
- My friend Belous Nissan, who is a scholar in Assyrian language. Mr. Ron said that the highlights in Assyrian on DVDs should be in English. So I translated them and Belous did the typing. Thank you Belous very much.
- Emil Marogolof, who is the TV technician and recorded all the interviews and the biography and set all the pictures in that biography in the right place. Thank you Emil.
- At the same time I have to thank Zaya sarguis in Radio
- Janet Shoumoun from Assyrian TV SAT, She writes: "Dear Mr. Petros, Please be advised that Bet Nahrain Inc. releases all of your recordings produced at KBSV TV 15, Assyrian SAT, for you to use in any way you see necessary. We thank you for all of your years of hard work and teaching the Assyrian language on this television." Dear Janet, I appreciate your cooperation.
- Rabi Yosep Bet Yosep, poet, writer and editor: God bless you for your support Rabi.
- My son Ernest Petros, to whom the album should go, but he willingly said: "Dad, the University Library is the safest place for your DVDs."

Now, fellow Assyrians, let's remember what the Mayor of Yonkers said: "Don't forget you are Assyrians. Don't forget your language. Don't forget your customs." This is my old age gift. I hope it will blossom and bear fruit for my Assyrian children and whoever wants to learn the language. My students: "Don't stop the activity in class, please. I'll be with you to the last moment." Mr. Ron Rodriguez: I asked about my album and you said: "it is in the library." Thank you very much. It is my baby. Take good care of it, please.

My mission is accomplished. God bless America. God bless the Assyrians. Thank you for your time. Merry Christmas and Happy New Year 2020. Thank you so much. God bless you."



Freidou Eyyaz reading his poem in Assyrian



Rabi Yulius and Mr. Ron Rodriguez



Rabi Yosep Bet Yosep and Rabi Yulius

Rabi Yulius Petros

A Short Biography by Carmen Morad

Rabi Yulius Petros was born on April 26, 1932, in the village of Goulpashan in Urmia, Iran.

His father Givarguis Sarguis was a farmer, and his mother Nanajan Youkhana was a graduate of the American Presbyterian Missionary School. His brother Jacob is a civil engineer and his sister Yulia is a registered nurse.

Rabi Yulius completed his primary education in Urmia and went to pursue higher education in English literature and obtained a bachelor's art degree from the University of Tabriz in 1952. He started teaching English at the Ebne Sina and Ferdowsi Highschools in Urmia.

In 1959 he was nominated to participate in a national registry and was granted a scholarship by Point Four, an educational endowment, which took him to the American University in Beirut, Lebanon. This one-year program was to enrich his teaching skills. The University of Tabriz in conjunction with the Department of Education granted Rabi Yulius an exceptional opportunity to come to the United States and study at the University of Nebraska in 1962. He returned to his native country of Iran and continued to teach in his hometown of Urmia until 1984.

In 1984, Rabi Yulius and his family immigrated to the United States and settled in New Britain, Connecticut. He taught the Assyrian language at the Assyrian Church of the East, until he moved to Turlock in 1996. He established and coordinated classes at the Assyrian American Civic Club of Turlock, Turlock High school, Turlock Adult School, and the Assyrian Church of the East. Rabi Yulius is currently teaching Assyrian language at the Assyrian American Civic Club of Turlock and hosts a radio program teaching Assyrian literature and history.

Rabi Yulius grew up speaking and learning to read and write Assyrian language at home, his mother being his first teacher. His love for learning and teaching grew as he attended the Assyrian Language Classes offered at his church.



Young Yulius



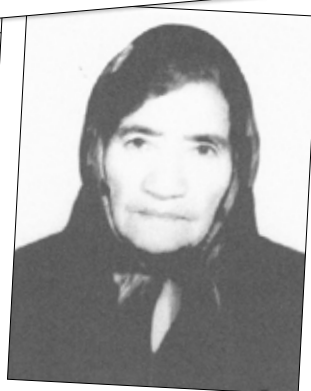
Yulius with his parents, grandfather in the middle, sister and brother



Jacob, Yulia, Yulius



Yulia



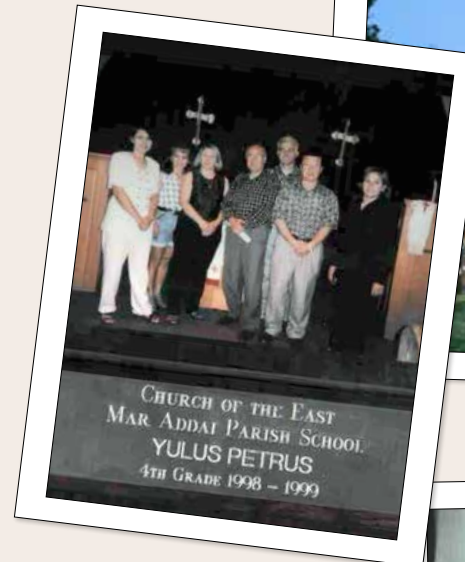
Nanajan Youkhana, Rabi Yulius' mother



University of Tabriz



University of Beirut, Lebanon



Rabi Yulius teacher at the Assyrian Church of the East Assyrian language school



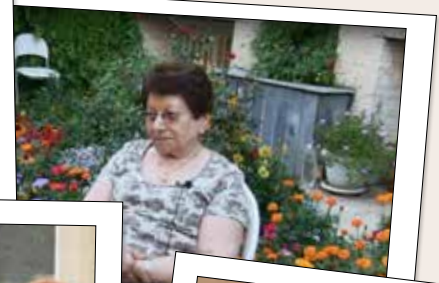
University of Nebraska, USA



Rabi Yulius, first row right at the language class in church



Rabi Yulius when he was at university



Yulia, Rabi Yulius' sister in her garden in Urmia



A tower in the villaxage of Goulpashan, Urmia, Iran



Ferdowsi High School



Ebne Sina High School



Rabi Yulius at the Assyrian language class of the Assyrian American Civic Club of Turlock

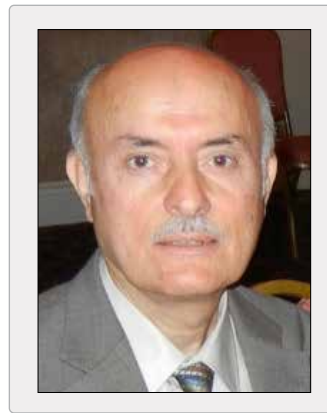


Rabi Yulius with his wife: Marlin and his son: Ernest



The Assyrian language class at the Assyrian Civic Club of Turlock

Ambiguity for naming the word “Syriac” in place of the authentic word “Ashur and Assyrian”



May 31, 2020
By Michael A. Younan

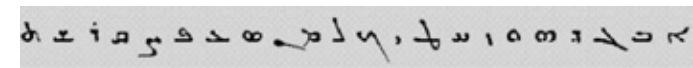
I focus in my article only on how the error began for naming and using the word ‘Syriac’ in place of the authentic, historical and native word “Ashur” (Assyria/Assyrian).

With due respect to all esteemed writers and intellectuals, I write in brief, to shorten the topic, my article is to enlighten and to set the truth as it should be, taking into account the simplicity of expression. I do not want to quote and repeat what was written and published in addition to the lectures, nor enter into argument, nor mention sources that contradict each other. I follow the chronology in the narration of events and developments. Many esteemed scholars and writers quote what the preceding writers wrote, others, unfortunately write unethical and disrespectful methods against the Assyrians, based on their religion and political tendencies, and the generations became familiar with the word “Syriac”. (Mistake always produces mistake)

It is well known, that in the Greek alphabet, there is no letter equivalent to “sheen” (for writing and pronunciation). So the Greek historians (B.C.) wrote about the country of “Ashur” with letter ‘S’ such as Assur, Assuri, Assurian (from which the Greeks derived the word “Assyria” (translation, spelling and pronunciation). The Greeks also used the term “Athur (with th letters) according to the rules of the Greek language, thereafter the word “Assyria” was used in the Latin languages to present day. (1).

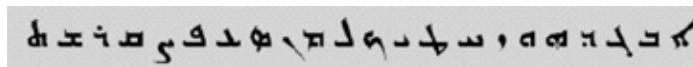
Note: the Greeks did not change the spelling of the word Sumer/ Sumerian but rather kept the letter ‘S’ and they called the country Mesopotamia (Greek word meaning the land between two rivers Euphrates and Tigris, in what is modern Iraq and East of modern Syria) and some Greek scholars (B.C.) call it “Mare – Mat Assur” (meaning the people of Assur/Assyria) (1). Although the first name of some Assyrian Empire kings starts with “Ashur” such as: Ashur Nirari, Ashur Nasirpal, Ashur Banipal, Ashur Ubalit, etc.

The Assyrian language is descended from the olden Akkadian language (2) And after the gradual decline of the Cuneiform writings, the Assyrians living in the “Urhai” region (Edessa in Greek), invented the first Assyrian alphabet called “Estrangelo script “ (handwritten) circa, between the first century B.C. and first decade C.E. Initially this was the only Assyrian alphabet, and the writing was confined only to clergymen in the Eastern Church (Eita d’Madinkha, in Assyrian language) and all the manuscripts were painstakingly handwritten with the following alphabet of 22 letters and is still used today, this is how it looks: (3 - 5)

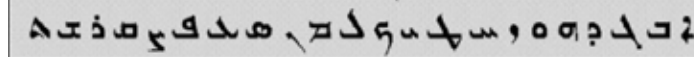


Note: So far, there is no evidence yet of an Assyrian alphabet (manuscript) discovered whether on clay tablet, inscribed on stone, on papyrus, on parchment and on Artifacts before the first century B.C.

The development of the above alphabet:



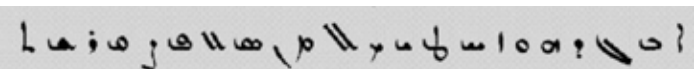
This is the Assyrian alphabet “Estrangelo script” also known as the Eastern alphabet. It evolved from the first alphabet above, then improved and enhanced in shape and size in the mid-1700’s, so that it would fit the style of the movable-type printing press, invented by the German inventor Johannes Gutenberg (circa 1400-1468)



This is the Assyrian alphabet called “Nusaybin/Nisibis” alphabet (known as eastern Neo-Assyrian) was handwritten, circa 6th. century A.D. It evolved from the first handwritten alphabet above, then improved and enhanced in shape and size in the mid-1700’s, so that it would fit the style of the movable-type printing press, invented by the German inventor Johannes Gutenberg (circa 1400-1468).

It is worth mentioning that the word “Syriac” did not exist nor written (B.C.) even once in the book of The Old Testament, the Torah and Talmud, while there are more than tens of words of Ashur/Assyria/Assyrian, Chaldean/Chaldean, Babel/Babylonian. Even the Jewish people used the word “Ashur, Ashuri “ in Hebrew language. Also, between the period from the 1st. century C.E. to the 6th. century C.E. , that is, before the introduction of the Arabic alphabet, the word “Syriac” (in Arabic language) (see 7) did not exist, even in the geographical region east of the Euphrates river in the north of modern Syria and south of modern Turkey, which extend from the city of Urhai to the east to Nusaybin/Nisibis, Tur-Abdin, Mardin and Amid which was called “Padam-Aram and Aram-Naharain” including a small Aramean kingdom (Malkuta) of Urhai and a neighboring small Assyrian kingdom (Malkuta) by the name “Osroene” (the tenth).

But after the first Christological controversies/disagreement over the divinity and humanity of Christ occurred in the Chalcedonian Ecumenical Council (451 A.D.), the first schism occurred when the Monk, Mar Yaaqoub Bar’ Addai of Urhai (circa, 505 – 578) splits the Church of the East (the mother Church, Eita d’Madenkha) He established a Church under the name “The Jacobite Church”. Thereafter (circa, 7th. century, a group of Assyrians from the Church of the East joined The Jacobite Church (4). It expanded in country of Syria (Syria also is derived from the word Assyria). Then the Jacobite Church adopted the name “Syriac Church” as people, language, and culture in order to be unique (distinguish itself) from the Arab country of Syria. Thus, it created confusion in the designation between “Syria and Syriac” (they dropped letter “A , S”) Thereafter, and in mid- of 8th. century, some clergymen of the Syriac Church, created a new alphabet called “Serto” of 22 letters (5) derived and resembled to the first Assyrian alphabet above with a slight modification in shape and in pronunciation, and this is how it looks: (5)



This is the reason why the mother Assyrian language has Two closely related dialects and alphabets: First,

the eastern Assyrian mother language (eastern of the Euphrates river) and second, a dialect, called “Syriac” (western of Euphrates river, modern- day Syria). The word “Syriac” in our history, is not a name of a nation nor a country, but a dialect. The word Syriac, and its derived words (vocabulary) without letters “A , S” such as: Syrian, Syriani, Suraya, Suroyo, Suryoyo, etc. caused ambiguity and division among the indigenous people of one race, language, culture and history, this is the truth and real history.

Therefore, I say again, that everything written and published, in addition to the lectures on history by designating ‘Syriac’, is only “Assyrian” in every sense, as people, language and culture. And in another word: *had there been at the beginning a letter and pronunciation equivalent to “sheen” in the Greek language, the Greek would have called the country, people, language and history “Ashur, Ashuri, Ashurian”, the world would have avoided all this confusion.*

I would like to add this clarification: Some of our esteemed scholars and writers say: “naming of the word “Syriac” and the vocabulary mentioned above means the name “Ashur” because it is synonymous with the word “Assyria”. And I, with due respect say, why do you not directly use the authentic and historical word “Ashur/Assyria” instead of these designations? Thus, we avoid all this confusion and distinction between one people?. It is worth mentioning , the majority of our esteemed brothers and sisters of our communities and Churches admit with pride that they are of Assyrian race and nation despite the Assyrian language has several dialects (each region has its own variety of colloquial spoken Assyrian).

Here I mention the section pertaining to the Assyrian language only. Some of our esteemed scholars and writers may have heard or read about the manuscripts discovered in the library of the Monastery of Saint Catherine in the Sinai desert in 1844 and some in the beginning of 1900’s. Some of manuscripts are on parchment and some on animal skin. These manuscripts were transferred for examination to Germany, Geneva, Britain and finally to the U.S. to the Sate of California in 2018, to Stanford University where the scientists conducted research and experiments to decipher the symbols, language and time of these manuscripts. They used special modern technical devices (X-rays, Ultraviolet rays and chemicals. And this is what the scientists reached: These manuscripts and volumes date back from the beginning of the 3rd. century A.D. to 13th. century. They were able to distinguish the alphabet of the Assyrian letters of the first innovative Assyrian language of the first century B.C. with amazing and clear photos (readable).

Some of the manuscripts are translations of the Greek physician Galen of Pergamon (circa mid-3rd. century A.D.) from the Greek language into the Assyrian language. Other manuscript was an Assyrian version of Christian hymns and the Holy Book, Gospels of Mat-

thew, Mark, Luke and John, dating to the 3rd. century. It was the oldest manuscript ever discovered, known as the Assyrian Sinaiticus. Quote “Having the Assyrian version of the Gospels, was a major boost to understanding the history of the Bible” (6). Scientists are still experimenting to decipher other manuscripts, and they said, “The subsequent results will be even more amazing”.

Note: Unfortunately, some scientists still use the familiar word “Syriac” for the reasons that I mentioned above (Mistakes always produce mistake). For more information, read the References at the end of this article to check for yourselves the alphabet of these manuscripts.

Based on all the information mentioned above, and with humility and respect, I would like to add the following to justify the use of the term “Assyrian”. I hope that all sincere believers of Assyrian nationalism will be exhorted by all the unfairness and misrepresentation of the Assyrian nationalism, we have a national duty, to begin a cultural renaissance with sincerity and honesty and to exert all our efforts by writing, publishing and lecturing in more than one language in the media, to highlight once again the whole word the richness of our history, culture and civilization, and our forgotten Assyrian national existence. We must constantly focus on the use of the original, historical, and native word “Ashur” etc. and translate it into the familiar Latin language “Assyria/As-

syrians” and this is possible, for there are several examples. First, the Arab peoples and some other countries use the words “Ashur/Ashurioun”, (Assyria) etc. as people, homeland, nation and civilization. These words are not new to them.

Second, after the world war I and II, almost 100 years ago, the victorious countries established several new countries, especially in the Middle East, with new names, countries that have neither history nor civilization, but with time, the world became familiar to them easily. Therefore, why we, the indigenous inhabitants of the Land of Ashur (Assyria) the cradle of civilization, have no right to turn away prejudices, misrepresentations and injustices that falsely befall us? And with time, the world will become familiar to hear and use the word “Ashur”/ Assyria instead of “Syriac” as long as the righteous Assyrians use it.

In conclusion, I would like to say, with all due respect to all the faithful of all our Assyrian Churches and denominations, in whatever name they have, their right to remain in their respective Churches. But we are all “Assyrians” of one historical native race, land, language, culture. We all face same future and destiny .

Respectfully,
Michaeil A. Younan, California

References:

Please note, even in these references, the term ‘Syriac’ is mostly used in place of ‘Assyria’.

1. Greek historians: Herodotus (circa, 5th. century B.C.) and Gaius Plinius Secundus (circa, 23 C.E. – 79 A.D.) quote “The whole Mesopotamia once belonged to the Assyrian Empire”. And some Greeks call it “Mare – Mat Assur” the people of Assyria. The Greeks also used the term “Syria” for the Levant (West of Euphrates river) and “Assyria” for all Mesopotamia.

Joseph Ernest Renan (1823 – 1892) Professor, French Orientalist, expert of Semitic languages and civilization and Biblical scholar on the origin of early Christianity. Quote: “Term Syria” is derived from the word “Assyria” after the Assyrian Empire occupied the country of Syria, at that time (B.C.) also known “Al-Sham”.

Individual Research at The Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago.

2. Ignace J. Gelb: Editor-in- Charge, Introduction of Chicago Assyrian Dictionary project. Quote: “The term Assyrian” has been used in the official designation of the “Chicago Assyrian Dictionary” project since its inception in 1921.

Dr. Simo Parpola, Ph.D. , Professor at University of Helsinki. Collated several hundred Assyrian legal documents in the British Museum, Article on “Assyrian Library Records , the Neo-Assyrian texts, Assyrians after Assyria” also served as Editor-in-Chief of “the archives of Assyrian Series”.

3. Kurt Weitzmann, Princeton University. Author of “Late Antique and Early Christian Book Illumination” (introduction and commentaries on the folios from major manuscripts drawn from the first golden age of Christianity, Published in 1977. Pages 18 - 22, and manuscripts Plates, pages 34 – 40. (manuscripts of the Assyrian Monk Rabbula Gospel book, which was written in Mesopotamia /Assyria (circa 586 A.D.) of the four Gospels and Canon Table on Ascension of Christ, Christ Enthroned, Pentecost, Job and Moses before Pharaoh.

4. Geoffrey Khan, Professor of Asian and Middle Eastern Studies, University of Cambridge.

Article; “Remarks on the historical background of the modern Assyrian language” and Publication “The Journal of Assyrian Academic Studies 21/2, 2007, pp. 4-11”

5. ancientscripts.com (illustration of all three Assyrian Alphabets)

6. The Bible Hunters, “Recovering Hidden Texts”. Visit: archaeology.org (magazine of March/April 2016, pages 42,43) and www.newsweek.com/ancient-translation-historic-greek-medical-text-rediscovered

7. Encyclopedia Britannica “Theories of the Origin of the Alphabets, Syriac Alphabet (Assyrian) and Arabic Alphabet , etc.

عاشور حنا التراثية والخيرية
ELIAS HANNA FOUNDATION
مؤسسة الياس حنا التراثية والخيرية



The Elias Hanna Foundation and School

by Elizabeth Mickaily-Huber, Ph.D.

The Elias Hanna Foundation was established in 2018. As a sustainable philanthropic entity, its focus is cultural, social and educational, benefiting Assyrian* immigrants worldwide. The foundation also helps local communities within the remaining Assyrian towns of Syria. It is governed by a Board of Trustees with expertise in both private and public sectors. Its founder, Elias Hanna, his two sons, Ninos and Sargon, as well as leaders in the American Assyrian community form the Board of Directors.

Elias Hanna is a self-made man, holding Bachelor's Degrees in both Mechanical Engineering and Business Administration, in addition to a Master's in Business Administration. As founder and chairman of the Elias Hanna Foundation, he has been improving the lives of Assyrians in the diaspora throughout the USA, Middle East, and Europe. He is also the President and CEO of Hanna Holdings-LLC, the parent company of eleven diversified businesses that are making formidable contributions to the states of Massachusetts and Arizona. As a proud Assyrian and man of distinction, his successful enterprises have generated millions of dollars, receiving multiple awards for his various civic contributions.

The Elias Hanna Foundation was inspired by the vision and aspirations of its founder who donated five million dollars to fund the foundation's mission, goals and operations. Mr. Hanna deeply values learning and the prospects that it offers. He is concerned for the ambitions of motivated youth who grow up with few choices and opportunities, but who want to improve their lives. Thus, education is a top priority for the foundation which aims to equip its scholars with the tools and knowledge necessary to excel, creating a positive impact on their socio-economic well-being, enhancing their employment opportunities, and providing a career path leading to a promising future.

The foundation's vision is to preserve the Assyrian language, culture, and heritage, in addition to helping build a positive future for our youth. Its mission is to assist young people in completing their academic education or vocational training, developing life

and technical skills, enhancing their employ-ability to pursue their career aspirations, playing a pivotal role in the development of their communities, while maintaining their unique culture and folklore. Moreover, the foundation helps widows in need, as well as families with special needs children.

In addition to the foundation, the Elias Hanna School is a free after-school tutoring institution, founded in 2020 in Qamishli, Syria. It provides support to students in grades 1-12 in mathematics, physics, chemistry, English and Arabic. Tutoring is offered free of charge for needy children who have fallen behind in their studies due to economic hardship and instability. Transportation to and from the school is also provided for free, serving Qamishli and neighboring towns in Syria.

The foundation has developed a strong network of partners and collaborators who promote our unique history and heritage through various innovative tools and events worldwide. In addition to its other worthy roles, the foundation is committed to producing collaborative content focused on the preservation of all types of Assyrian music, songs, art, dance, literature and digital apps that engage past, present and future Assyrians*. It has also established a book endowment fund at Harvard University, as well as the Ninos Aho Assyrian Poetry Book Fund for the preservation of poetry and materials representing artistic achievements of the Assyrian Community. The foundation has sponsored dozens of publications, books and songs by Assyrian writers, composers and singers, aiming to expand sponsorship to hundreds more, including future radio shows, podcasts and TV channels.

Additional worthy causes include providing grants and scholarships to university students in financial distress, assisting newlyweds living in Aljazeera with their marriage expenses, in addition to allocating a monthly income for couples in Aljazeera with newborns to support raising their child until s/he is three years old. In this way, the foundation supports and promotes the Assyrian family unit.



For more information:
info@eliashannafoundation.org
www.eliashannaschool.org



*Assyrians of all religious denominations, including Chaldean, Aramaic, Syriac, Maronite & Roman Catholic

Humility and Exploitation

Humility is a great human virtue.

Syriac culture has a logic to it: the one who serves human beings/humanity, with humility, is the one who is closest to God.

A thought which has not found its essence, among various social sectors in our geography -ever always a fertile source of civilization- which despises humility, negatively evaluates it, and uses it as a tool for exploitation, from time to time, appears

Saint Afrem of Nisibis (303-373), both an exemplar of humility and at the same time a universal authority in Syriac culture and literature, tested by his life-experience the fact that in places and communities where people take on the mentality of the milk cow, they have wrong ideas about humility.

And so he warns us: “ܘܢܝܢܘܢܐ ܘܢܝܢܘܢܐ ܘܢܝܢܘܢܐ ܘܢܝܢܘܢܐ ܘܢܝܢܘܢܐ enu dethmakkakht, **haşbukh dlo havro / when you behave humbly, they think you are imprudent.**”

The fourteenth century thinker Ibn Khaldun (1332-1406) also warns against the exploitation of humility in this manner: “**The outcome of too much humility is that you end up listening to the counsel of some mediocre individual.**”

But actually humility is fundamental for a true life. Humility opens up the world to us.

The most appropriate saying we need to remember about humility is: “**If man, who was made from the dust of the ground is not humble like the dust, he has actually departed from his origin -from his humanity.**”

To behave with the logic of humility, excluding abuse and exploitation, fleeing from damage and things that do damage, is truly an act of love. It is love we feel toward ourselves.

Humility is the power that balances our personality with our spirit. We can call this genuine power. Humility is a form of perception. “**To hear you, is to silence the ‘I’ in me. It is to keep the ‘I’ within limits.**”

Humility is not to reduce our own value, it is to give value to others. Humility is to open the doors of our heart to all existence, by taking our ego out of the way. It is not to pretend to be superior, but rather to know the counter-poise between self and other people, and even between self and other creatures. It is the quality of a person who puts the self in just the right place. It is to not pursuing the case for the self. It is to listen to the incomparable divine whisper that embraces the universe and to pull the self back. As a wise man said: “Just as the darkness makes the light to stand out, so too makes humility the lights of paradise within the person clear.”

The humble person receives inspiration from life, from other people, from all the universe, and when he/she is enabled, inspires others. The humble spirit transposes itself into the eyes of good manners and mercy. For this reason to serve human beings is a matter of honor (for him).

Yusuf Beğtaş

In Memoriam of Dr. Ashour Moradkhan

Dear AFA members and friends,

It is with great sadness that the Assyrian Foundation of America (AFA) announces the passing of Dr. Ashur Moradkhan on September 24, 2020 in Pleasanton, California. Dr. Moradkhan was an Assyrian patriot, visionary, and world-renowned Assyrian nationalist leader.

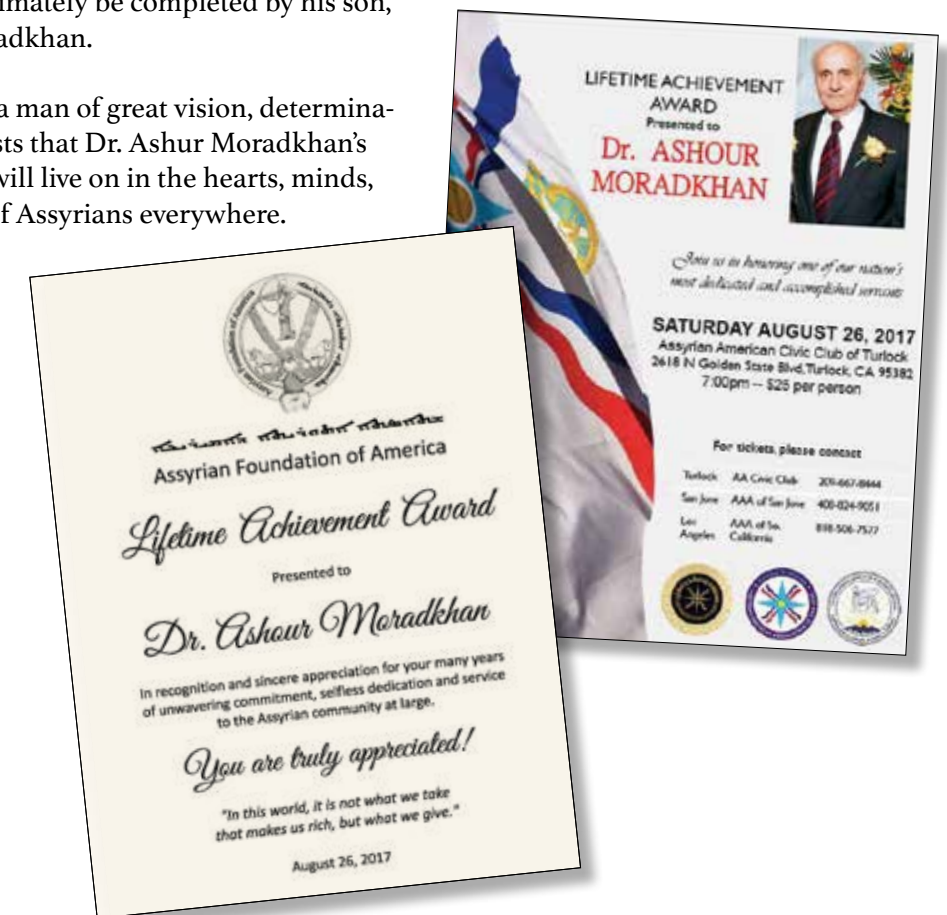
He was a member of the AFA and taught Assyrian language classes for other members for a number of years. Indeed, he was a wealth of knowledge on all things Assyrian and consequently received a “Lifetime Achievement Award” in 2017 from the AFA.

Dr. Moradkhan’s achievements are many. To name but a few, he co-founded the Assyrian Literary Society (Seeta Sapreta) and helped to establish the Assyrian press in Tehran, Iran. His profound work, entitled “The Assyrian Manifesto”, lays out a practical and political path for the future of the Assyrian nation. He was instrumental in establishing the Assyrian National Relief Organization, in addition to the Assyrian Universal Alliance that created the legendary Assyrian motto: “One name, one language, and one country for one nation”.

Furthermore, he helped to found the Assyrian American Association of San Jose and worked with IBM software to develop the first-ever set of Assyrian fonts for computers, a huge breakthrough for the Assyrian nation and for the propagation of our language through the written word. His final masterpiece was the “Assyrian dictionary” that will ultimately be completed by his son, AFA member, Dr. Ashur-Bel Moradkhan.

As our nation mourns the loss of a man of great vision, determination, and dedication, the AFA trusts that Dr. Ashur Moradkhan’s legacy and the fruits of his labor will live on in the hearts, minds, and works of future generations of Assyrians everywhere.

May he rest in peace in the arms of our Lord and Savior.
Assyrian Foundation of America



The East Indian Connection

As many of you saw in the last issue of Nineveh Magazine the article featuring the FaceBook page on Assyrian Cooking/Recipes and how one of the members happens to be of East Indian decent with an Assyrian grandmother! When I mentioned that Shabnam Samuel is a relative of mine, Dr. Ninwe Maraha, the magazine's Editor, asked me if I would write an article on how we are related and found each other, so here we are.

Born in Baghdad, Iraq, immigrating in 1969 to America and settling in Chicago, I took great pride when our mom made Biryani and invited non-Assyrians for dinner at our house on Pratt in Chicago. As the guests enjoyed the beautiful presentation of this famous dish that is a staple in many Assyrian households to this day and how delicious it was, I always believed it was an authentic Assyrian dish. To my horror one day in discussing the origins of this dish with my mother I stared in disbelief when she said "no, it's an East Indian dish"! On a trip to Basra, south of Baghdad, my grandmother learned this dish from her brother-in-law Youel Rasho, who had an Indian friend/neighbor. She came back and said "I learned a new dish!"

We never imagined that one day we will meet a blood relative all the way from India! My memories of early 60s in Baghdad at around six years old after watching an Indian movie (they used to show a lot of Indian movies on Arabic TV), my grandfather would jokingly say to the family "look we might catch a glimpse of my cousin", not knowing that actually one of the daughters, Dora Samuel, became an actress under the name of Rani Chanda, only to play in 2 movies because she met a German citizen, married and moved to Berlin, Germany.

Shabnam, is the granddaughter of Susember Azis (Rasho). Susember and my grandfather from my father's side are first cousins (their mothers were sisters). On March 10, 1922 Susember married Edward Benjamin Samuel, who was serving in the British Army. They met at a camp and Susember was encouraged to marry since she had no family left and would have someone to take care of her. They married and sailed to India. Through the years Susember found and lost contact with family members in Baghdad a few times until in 1970s Nora Samu-

el, their eldest daughter, connected with Nicola Rasho through the Red Cross. By this time, we were all in Chicago. After we met Nora on a work related visit to United Nations in NY, she stopped in Chicago and met as many family members as she could. Later Dora came to visit from Germany and again in the 90s after we had moved to Northern California. With Nora's passing and eventually Dora also, the families lost touch again. That's where Shabnam comes in. She started conducting her own search and began with FaceBook (FB is good for some things), and came across Laura Rasho. She messaged Laura and asked are you related to Nicola Azis (Rasho)? She replied yes, I'm his granddaughter! And so it began again. Shabnam is a writer and came to California on a book tour of her memoir, A Fractured Life. We met for the first time on October 11, 2018 at Books Inc. in San Francisco. She conducted a reading from her book to a small audience that I, my sister Mona Malik and our mother, Margaret were a part of. As she read, she captured our hearts and we left that evening wishing we could have more time together. I know that Shabnam's cousin, Daniel Rasho, who resides in Turlock, CA and his sister

Shamiram visited India a few years ago and connected with other family members there, however, some of us only have Shabnam and we are sure never to lose touch as long as we are on this earth.

I have kept a lot of detail on how Nora and Dora found, lost and found family again in the US for one, this article is more about Shabnam and how we are related and eventually met, second, it would be too long, and third, I hope I have created curiosity and enough interest to someday have AFA invite Shabnam to speak at an annual Member's Appreciation Event to speak more about her life in India, and provide more detail.

I would like to thank Assyrian Foundation of America for all the good work they do all over the world to help our people and for giving me this opportunity.

*You sister,
Linda Nineveh Rasho*



1996 Phil's 40th Birthday



1977



1977 House on Pratt





Diaspora In Bloom: Transcending Borders Through Assyrian Art

gets the inspiration for its title from the famous Assyrian folk song by Dr. Freydu Atturaya, "Nishra d'Tkhume" "Eagle of Borders"

Written during World War I, the opening lyrics read:

*Oh eagle of borders, king of birds
Spread your wings so that I may fly to Tyare
From Urmi to Mosul, between two Barwars
I will save my nation, ancient Assyria*

The lyrics of the song have been cherished by Assyrians for an entire century. As a stateless people, Assyrians have been bound by borders others placed upon them and continue to control. From being split among four countries in their homeland, to being dispersed into a global diaspora today as a result of politics & persecution, Assyrians long for the wings of an eagle that will help them fly past the borders that continue to separate them from their friends, families, homelands & history. While the volatile dotted lines on a map have increasingly become points of conflict and tension in today's world, borders become wholly irrelevant from a bird's eye view.

In the latest exhibition by **Diaspora In Bloom**, and the first ever virtual gallery of contemporary Assyrian art, artists from around the world serve as our eagle's wings. By gathering their unique perspectives on a complex and diverse identity, we are able to transcend borders that seek to divide us and gain a bird's eye view on what it means to be human.

The virtual nature of this gallery is the final element that proves Marshall McLuhan's famed mantra "*the medium is the message*". In a world on lock down many are just discovering the harshness of borders that Assyrians have always known. Yet digital spaces designed for computerized community help us blur the reality of man-made boundaries. The blurring of reality and subsequent imposing of a virtual reality suggests the futility of borders. We invite you to immerse yourself in each artist's expression, and through it, soar over walls and frontiers, with wings like eagles.

Categories: Traditional art
Link: www.diasporainbloom.co

For Assyrian artists in virtual show, forced distance came long before coronavirus

By Yasmine Mosimann
Courtesy of Rudaw.net

With the curtains on most cultural events and performances worldwide drawn by the coronavirus, artists, curators, critics, and fans alike have had to radically reimagine how they produce, exhibit and support art.

Curators Akadina Yadegar and Nardin Sarkis have taken on this challenge by organizing the first virtual exhibition of contemporary Assyrian art, entitled 'Diaspora in Bloom'. Rather than showing the works of the six featured artists on a still website, they have used an online simulation to recreate the experience of walking through a gallery.

Stepping over the gallery threshold, visitors use their mouse to guide themselves beneath the exhibit's bright lights. While the emptiness of the virtual space is characteristic of this very particular time, the upbeat soundtrack by Eden Danilo and a wider celebration of Assyrian life and culture breathe life back into the room.

This virtual meditation on the art of a globally dispersed Assyrian community comes at a time when many people are exceptionally wary of physical proximity and need new ways to connect with others.

"In a world on lockdown many are just discovering the harshness of borders that Assyrians have always known. Yet digital spaces designed for computerised community help us blur the reality of man-made boundaries," reads a message from the curators on a wall at the gallery's entrance.

Rudaw English spoke to San Francisco-based visual artist Esther Elia, whose work features prominently in the exhibit. In an interview conducted by email, the Assyrian-Irish-American illustrator explains how she uses Assyrian histories both broad and intimate to understand not only her identity, but her place in the world.

Rudaw English: In a way, quarantine might be the perfect circumstance for an art show on a diaspora, which is dispersed by nature. I know you recently took part in a physical exhibit — how do you feel a virtual exhibition will change the way people engage with your work?

Esther Elia: The biggest change for me is starting to rethink my art for a virtual audience — my pieces created in the past were huge paintings meant to engulf the viewer, overwhelm them with colour and scale just as I am overwhelmed when attempting to tell the stories of my people, of my family. The oral histories of our people are complicated, colourful, pain-



"Chai" by Esther Elia.

ful, large. The question I'm asking myself is, how do I create a sense of largeness online? When someone is viewing my pieces potentially from a screen as small as a phone? How do I communicate a 3D sculpture effectively on a 2D screen? A big part of me just wants to wait until things return to "normal" so I can continue in the path I've been on, but another big part of me is excited at the restrictions and new rules — forcing me to find a way to thrive artistically in an online setting.

Ultimately I don't have a concrete answer, other than to say that some of my favorite artistic work came from post-war Poland at a time when as a country, they had little access to supplies, current art technology, or freedom of expression, yet managed to create some of the most innovative art posters, writing, music, and surrealist animations. Though we don't want limitations, they ultimately force us to rethink and grow in ways we wouldn't be able to if things are functioning normally.

You, like many other Assyrian artists, use symbolism from antiquity in your work. What do they mean to you?

The history of the Middle East is muddled at best, and at worst told from the wrong perspectives. As a region, it's been really difficult for me to find concrete, unbiased histories, which is why I have been relying on oral histories to be the foundational research for my work on being Assyrian. As a minority group within the Middle East, finding any sort of history becomes even more of a challenge, which I think is why so many Assyrian artists use ancient works as a jumping off point to talk about being Assyrian — the antiquities can be found in museums and are identified explicitly as Assyrian — some of the only objects in our world that we can grasp onto and say with confidence, "This is ours!!"



Assyrian-Irish-American artist Esther Elia's works feature in 'Diaspora in Bloom', a virtual exhibition of Assyrian diaspora art. Photo artist

Our struggle is identifying in this day and age similar things that we can claim as "ours." With no recognised country, with a huge number of our population living in diaspora, it is comforting to look to antiquity as something that is ours — not only because we say so, but because institutions and academia corroborate that specific history. A huge part of being Assyrian for me has been a lifetime of saying, "we exist." Antiquities verify that just as we exist now, we existed historically as well. Ancient symbolism is kept alive because it has been necessary for our survival, for evidence to maintain the connection to our indigenous land.

What is Assyrian art to you? How do you see your work within its trajectory?

Assyrian art is any creative expression by an Assyrian person.

I see my work as a sort of diasporic prophecy for immigrated Assyrians. My family fled Persia in the early 1920s, and were in America by the mid-1930s, which makes me a third-generation American. I grew up in a mixed household that no longer spoke Assyrian. Though I was born in America, raised to speak English, and was a mix of two ethnicities — effectively the American dream incarnate, completely assimilated — there was something I felt that was still missing.

My work addresses Assyrians in diaspora — kids who were born outside of the Middle East and feel the ache of a culture they belong to but don't know intimately. Who feel like there is something missing inside of them that they either run to or run away from. My work is the new reality of being Assyrian — that it's not something that will continue to be handed to you by the place you live in, instead that it's a choice. There is a lot of fear from immigrant communities that their cultures will be lost, that their kids won't care about the traditions associated with ethnicity. My work explores the reality of that and transforms fearful speculation to relaying stories of an

actual lived experience, that talks about my pursuit of being Assyrian in America.

Among your larger body of work, I've noticed two strands — one depicts moments based off family photographs and stories, with more muted and cold colours, and the other has less specific narratives, utilises symbols in brighter colours, largely on objects or of objects. What prompted these two different series?

The series based on family photos is supposed to have a certain coldness, other-worldliness. This series is based on the struggle of trying to get to know who my ancestors were through black and white photos. The search is not rewarding, I only get snippets of information about them from my family members that knew them. I'm trying to see where I fit in with our history, and feel a block, an inaccessibility. I think this block comes from my ancestors not talking about what they went through, instead shutting themselves down when it came to the genocides. It created a river between them and their offspring, fueling decisions out of trauma, choosing assimilation out of fear. I ask them my questions on top of the paintings, and they stare, not answering me. In a lot of ways, it is conveying the relationship to Assyrian history — there are so many questions and very few gratifying answers. The most poignant question is, "who am I, and how did I end up here, the way that I am?"

The brighter, more folksy paintings draw inspiration from the colour and design of Persian carpets. These works address the pieces that still feel accessible to me — the food being a big one! Growing up with Persian carpets covering the house is an accessible memory for me, a tradition that I continue in my own life. The food is also something that wasn't assimilated out, a piece of the homeland that I feel intimately connected to. The colours are brighter and happier because it is conveying places of comfort for me.

List of Assyrian Foundation of America Donors

The below list includes donations received from 6/01/2020 to 9/1/2020 only! Any donations received after 8/31/2020 will be included in the next issue of the Nineveh Magazine.

Thank you for your generosity and support.

Janet Jacob	\$150.00	Linda Schwat	\$3,000.00
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		Shamoon Ourshano-Olghi	\$40.00
		Leo Bahribeck	\$40.00

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

Iraq's Indigenous Peoples Can't Face Another Conflict

Despite the Islamic State's retreat, Assyrians fear for their security in the Nineveh Plains. They need stronger support from Washington and Baghdad.

by R.S. Zaya
Courtesy of foreignpolicy.com

Elishwa never thought she would return to Bartella. She fled the village in northern Iraq four hours before an Islamic State attack in August 2014, and she never thought she would see its sand-washed masonry again. But after three and a half years in exile, she returned in January 2018 from Duhok in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq. She does not regret coming back but considers the future of her community to be precarious. “We fear a conflict is coming,” Elishwa, who requested the use of a pseudonym out of safety concerns, told Foreign Policy in May, referring to the presence of Iran-backed militias.

Elishwa, like most of Bartella's population before the 2014

Islamic State offensive, is Assyrian—part of an ethnic community indigenous to northern Iraq that is predominantly Christian and the last Aramaic-speaking group in the world. Over the last two decades, punctuated by the Iraq War and rise of the Islamic State, the population of Assyrians in Iraq has declined by a staggering 90 percent: from an estimated 1.5 million in 2003 to just over 150,000 today.

The U.S. government's current focus on the coronavi-

rus pandemic and reports of troop withdrawals could augur an era of disengagement with Iraq. Yet this drawdown could not come at a more critical juncture for Assyrians, who face increasing persecution from both Iran-backed militias and Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP) security forces seeking control of the last region in Iraq where Assyrians are a plurality: the Nineveh Plains.



A boy herds sheep in the Nineveh Plains of northern Iraq on Nov. 11, 2016. MARTYN AIM/CORBIS VIA GETTY IMAGES

The Nineveh Plains in northern Iraq have been the linchpin of Assyrian life for centuries. While it has always been a diverse area—many Yazidis live in the region—it was the last major concentration of Assyrians in Iraq before 2014. In the period immediately following the defeat of the Islamic State, Iraq's central gov-

ernment could have prioritized the return of its Indigenous peoples. Instead, it returned to the same security arrangement that led to an Assyrian exodus from the plains in 2014: a U.S.-supported balance of Arab and Kurdish forces claiming the plains as their own.

Iran's territorial influence extends to part of the western and southern Nineveh Plains.

Two Iran-backed paramilitaries are actively obstruct-

ing the return of Assyrians: the 30th Brigade, a militia comprising primarily members of the Shabak ethnoreligious group, and the 50th Brigade, a nominally Christian but predominantly Shiite Arab militia. Both are closely associated with the Badr Organization, an Iran-backed Shiite faction, and Iran. The brigades' leaders were sanctioned by the United States last year for corruption and human rights violations.

Iran's militias have adopted a strategy utilized by the Iraqi state since the 1930s: forced demographic change through the settlement of Shabaks from outside villages, leading to a surge in their population in the Nineveh Plains. “All we know is that they are building housing complexes in which they bring in people from outside the region,” Elishwa said. This policy appears to be enshrined in law. On June 3, the Iraqi Popular Mobilization Forces Commission—which oversees Iran-backed militias—issued a statement containing a purposefully ambiguous yet dangerous provision that would possibly lead to housing militia members in combat areas where they served, potentially exacerbating the demographic shift in the plains.

Over the last year, Assyrians living under these militias in the Nineveh Plains have experienced significant intimidation and violence, from a priest having a pistol pointed to his head to two elderly women being stabbed by Shabaks with unknown affiliations in May 2019. Last fall, the Iran-backed militias even imposed a curfew on Christians on a Shiite holiday.

Admond, an Assyrian from Bartella, which is primar-



ily controlled by the 30th Brigade, said the Assyrian community feels increasingly threatened and he thinks the curfews will become more frequent. “You feel [the fear] through their behavior,” he said of the 30th Brigade. “They force you to feel that they are the masters of the area now, or they remind you that they are the ones that liberated the region, when, in fact, the anti-terrorism forces liberated it,” he added, referring to a division of the Iraqi Army. (Admond also requested the use of a pseudonym out of safety concerns.)

Iran's territorial influence extends to part of the western and southern Nineveh Plains.

While Iran seeks to carve out a Shiite buffer zone and facilitate arms exports to Syria, the KDP's presence in the plains serves as pretext for its eventual annexation of the territory into the Kurdistan Region. The role the KDP has played in destabilizing the Nineveh Plains has largely evaded censure from its Western allies. It can be traced to 2006, when, in its draft constitution, the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) suddenly claimed the plains as one of many “disputed territories,” meaning it should be administered by Erbil. From the KRG's perspective, the status of the plains as part of the Kurdistan Region was a fait accompli. In the decade leading up to the Islamic State invasion, the KRG created the appearance of security in the plains through the harassment of locals and a system of political and financial patronage.

Throughout 2017 and 2018, the mayor of Alqosh, Faiz Jahwareh, was detained, beaten, and harassed by Kurdish security forces in politically motivated attacks. He was removed from office on spurious cor-



ruption charges twice dismissed by an Iraqi federal court and was barred from returning to office by the KDP. Kurdish officials replaced him with an Assyrian member of the KDP, Lara Yousif Zara. Alqosh residents who protested Zara's installation were threatened with their lives by Kurdish security forces. Last year, Zara was dispatched as an emissary to Washington to burnish the KRG's reputation, meeting with State Department officials, including Sam Brownback, the U.S. ambassador-at-large for international religious freedom, to discuss religious freedom in Iraq.

Meanwhile, Kurdish security forces have stifled opposition to KDP rule in towns such as Alqosh, detaining and torturing protesters and creating an environment where even social media is monitored, said Athra

Kado, an Assyrian advocate from Alqosh. Kado said there has been a gradual reduction in anyone speaking out against the mayor or Kurdish forces. Kado is familiar with the intimidation: He says he has been threatened by Kurdish forces on three occasions over the last six years and was beaten by Zara's husband's relatives last year for opposing her appointment as mayor.

That U.S. officials continue to legitimize Zara and the KDP's rule in the Nineveh Plains despite popular opposition has undermined the idea of a democratic Iraq. "In Saddam's time we'd say, 'Don't speak. The walls have ears!' It's the same now," Kado said. "Maybe they're not killing, but it's bad—not just for Assyrians but also for Kurds who stand against [the KDP]. There's no future for us if the KDP isn't removed from Alqosh. They want everybody to be controlled by them, either by force or money."

If Washington and Baghdad want to ensure the continued existence of Iraq's Indigenous peoples, they must give immediate support to the only force proven to promote the return of Assyrians to their villages: the Nineveh Plain Protection Units (NPU), an Assyrian-led force. Reporting to Iraq's National Security Council, the NPU was formed in response to the disarmament and abandonment of the Assyrians of the plains by the Kurdish Peshmerga when the Islamic State invaded in 2014. The force received training from U.S.-led coalition forces and fought alongside

them. Today, it controls a sizable portion of the southern Nineveh Plains.

Internally displaced Assyrians cite mistrust of security forces as the primary impediment to their return, so it is no surprise that the NPU—the only force made up of locals from the plains—has return rates in areas it controls significantly higher than in areas secured by Kurdish forces or Iran-backed militias alone and higher return rates than all areas controlled by other forces in the plains combined, according to a June assessment by the Assyrian Policy Institute (API).

Washington and Baghdad should make their support for the NPU explicit.

The NPU is not backed by the United States and currently receives only tepid support from the Iraqi central government. Washington and Baghdad should make their support for the NPU explicit.

It would address mistrust held by minority communities due to the Peshmerga's 2014 retreat, shift a burden from Baghdad to a trustworthy force without a record of human rights abuses, and could alleviate the region's refugee crisis.

Tens of thousands of Assyrians from the plains remain displaced in Jordan and Lebanon, and the API's fieldwork suggests that a significant proportion would consider returning home under security conditions like those facilitated by the NPU. Finally, Baghdad should work toward implementing federalism by revisiting the Iraqi Council of Ministers' January 2014 decision to establish a Nineveh Plains province for minorities like Assyrians and Yazidis.

Iraq's Assyrians cannot endure another conflict. If Iraq's Indigenous peoples are to have a future, there must be a reckoning with both Iran-backed militias and the KDP's role in undermining the only option that has yielded results: empowering local Assyrians to defend themselves within proper legal authority, providing them a chance at survival in a land devoid of equality for generations.

R.S. Zaya is a writer whose work has been featured in the *Telegraph* and *Hyperallergic*, among other publications. He is a researcher at the Assyrian Policy Institute.

A SHORT BIOGRAPHY OF Lieutenant General Dr. Rouel Georgis, M.d.



December 3rd, 1936 --- July 14th, 2020

By Vasili Shoumanov, Chicago, IL

Dr. Rouel Georgis was born in Duhok, Iraq to Shawel & Gorgia Georgis.

Sept. 1955 – May 1962 Student in Royal Iraqi Military College, Baghdad, Iraq.

1961 Graduated from medical school. He was specializing in epidemics, pandemics, and public health.

June 1962 Graduated as Lieutenant from the Iraqi Army College

Dec. 1963 Graduated as Lieutenant Army Medical Officer

May 1963 – April 1968 Director of Army, Iraqi Hospital in Aqra, North of Iraq

May 1968 – Sept. 1971 Director of Iraqi Army Hospital in Amman, Jordan (as Major)

Oct. 1971 – Dec. 1971 Student in British Army School in Aldershot Training Center South of London, UK (as Major)

Jan. 1972 – Jan. 1973 Student in Baghdad University and graduated as Public Health Specialist in Iraqi Army

Feb. 1973 – Sept. 1989 Director of Iraqi Army Public Health in Ministry of Defense, Baghdad, Iraq

Oct. 1989 – Aug. 1991 General Director of Iraqi Medical Army in Iraqi Army 5th Corp. North of Iraq (as Lt. General)

1992

Dr. Rouel retired from the Iraqi military, as a highly decorated and respected General Major, having earned and awarded tens of medals.

He has lectured at many world health conferences and forums, and was a lecturer at Baghdad medical school for 20 years.

He immigrated to the United States, and settled in Skokie, IL.

The same time, he enrolled in Malcolm X College to stay current in his practice area, and completed a Nutrition program.

1992-2011

He was director of the clinical laboratory at St. Joseph hospital.

2011

He became a director of the Assyrian American Pharmacy, Skokie, IL

Dr. Ruel was a very compassionate person organizing picnics for his community, raising funds for his fellow tribesmen in Iraq, Syria and Russia.

He worked with the Assyrian Aid Society for over 20 years and served as President and Board Member from 2008 to 2020.

For 20 years, Dr. Rouel gave many lectures, seminars, exhibitions sharing his knowledge with his Assyrian community through various TV and radio programs focused on health and wellness.

He is survived by his wife of 53 years, Welhelmina Mirza, his three sons, Raymond, Hani, & Allen and seven grandchildren, Brandon, Britney, Isabella, Sebastian, Gabriella, Alex, & Natalie.

The Inspirational Life of Benyamin Esho Yalda

by Solomon (Sawa) Solomon



Benyamin Yalda's greatest contribution to his people was practicing his deep conviction that all Assyrians should serve in whichever way they can without expecting any material reward in return. To him the Assyrian people, with all their divisions, are truly members of one family. Early on, Ben, as he was known to his friends, believed and practiced the age old adage, "Sound Mind in Sound Body". Indeed, he was an intelligent man who also excelled in sports. Moreover, he believed in responsibility, joining the Boy Scouts and excelling therein as well. This provided a solid foundation on which he could build a sound future. Ben went on to become a prominent civic and church leader, sports advocate, writer, respected planner and organizer. The following is a short biography of this dedicated Assyrian whose life, I hope, will become an inspiration to our youth in the new world. This article is also written to recognize the many achievements of Benyamin Esho Yalda.

Ben was born on January 9, 1932 in Sulaimaniya, northern Iraq, to Esho Yalda of Geramon and Asyat Badal of Quchanis. His family moved to Habbaniya in 1936. During his school years up to 1952, he was actively involved in scouting activities, obtaining his Air Officer Commanding Scout Badge (equivalent to the Queen's Scout Badge of England and Eagle Scout Badge of America). He also obtained thirteen proficiency badges in various scouting activities. At the age of sixteen, he became a Scoutmaster for the Senior Scouts. Ben was nicknamed "Skipper" by his scouts in recognition of his excellent leadership skills.

It is worth mentioning that Ben was an all-round sportsman until he fractured his leg playing soccer in Habbaniya in 1951. However, this did not prevent him from cycling with a team from Habbaniya to Baghdad and back (55 miles each way), only six months after his fracture. While in Kirkuk, he won the swim diving championship of Kirkuk for two consecutive years.

Moving to Kirkuk in 1952, he was employed by the Iraq Petroleum Company as a clerk. Six months later, he joined the one and only Assyrian music band in Kirkuk and played drums for a period of three years. In September 1953, he married Leena, daughter of Usta Younathan Mekhail of Sherabad and Raabi Regina Mekhail of Sangar.

In 1964, he was one of the founders, and later Executive Committee member, of the Assyrian Sports Club of Kirkuk. Although a sports club by name, its main purpose was to bring together, under the social and family roof, all the Assyrians in Kirkuk. The club was able to put up a first class soccer team, volleyball team for boys and girls, tennis teams and a basketball team that, during the first year of existence, won Kirkuk's basketball championship. The social activities were numerous. Almost every night, there were family gatherings and Bingo games. To this day, the Assyrians of Kirkuk remember those happy days with great fondness.

In 1967, Ben moved to Baghdad with his family, transferring to the head office of the Iraq Petroleum Company. While in Baghdad, he joined the Assyrian Sports Club and became an active member, participating mainly in the social functions and activities. In 1969, he was elected as Vice President of the St Mary's Church Executive Committee of New Baghdad (Niariya Giyara), where they completed the construction of St. Mary's Church.

Ben came to the United States with his family in 1977 as an immigrant and took up permanent residence in Des Plaines, Illinois. In 1983, he was elected as Vice President of the Assyrian-American Welfare Council of the Chicago Metropolitan area. In 1984, he was approached to join the Assyrian Star Magazine Editorial Board, which he did. Within the first year, he was able to increase the number of members to 450 in twenty foreign countries and thirty states. In 1985, he became a member of the Nomination Committee of the Assyrian National Council of Illinois and Chairman of its Registrar's Committee. In the same year he was approached by the Assyrian Nissan Organization and also the Assyrian Athletic Club to become their advisor, which he willingly accepted.

In January 1988, Ben was elected as President of the Executive Committee of the Assyrian Church of the East, Chicago Metropolitan Parish, for a two-year term. Even before taking this position, Ben never ceased giving constructive ideas and help for the betterment of the Church, to the clergy and to the previous parish presidents. During his presidency, he was also entrusted with the position of Secretary of the Eastern USA and Canada Dioceses. Later, he was nominated as a member of the North America Diocese Committee, under the chairmanship of His Holiness the Patriarch. Additionally at this time, he was an honorary member of the Assyrian Academic Society and a member of its Journal Editorial Board.

Ben has three children, the oldest a daughter named Dorothy, two sons, Sargon and John. Dorothy lives with her parents, Sargon and his wife Janine and their two sons live in Morton Grove, Illinois, while John and his wife Nadia and their two boys and a girl live in Las Vegas, Nevada.

Ben was a well-known planner and organizer, a fact that was to figure greatly in the years that followed. On June 4, 1989, Ben organized, along with Sargon Aboona, Odisho Warda, Eshaya Isaac, Shlimoon Youkhana and Alfred Daniel, a remembrance gathering in the basement of the Church of Mar Gewargis in Chicago, Illinois, to honor the memory of the late Raabi Yacoub bet Yacoub, a scholar, poet, writer, and dramatist. Two-hundred guests attended the event. By this time, articles about the Assyrian community of Habbaniya began appearing in Nineveh Magazine of Berkeley, California, many of them written by Mikhael K. Pius. Other articles about the Assyrian Levies were written by myself along with rare photos. Additionally, articles about the good old days in Habbaniya began appearing in the Assyrian Observer of Britain. All of this set the stage for the first of many reunions of the Assyrians of Habbaniya.

The first Habbaniya Reunion was held in the McCormick Center Hotel in Downtown Chicago, Illinois, on September 4, 1991. The event was a dinner and dance party attended by over 350 guests, many of whom were former school students and teachers. Participants came from various Assyrian communities in the world. In an article written in Nineveh Magazine, Mickael Pius put it beautifully when he said, "The reunion was the product of the imagination and hard work of a four-member organizing committee composed of Ben Yalda, Sargon Aboona, Odisho Warda and Zacharia Zacharia". The reunion was such a smashing success that it was decided to repeat it in the future.

The next gathering took place on October 14, 1994. The occasion was to honor the Habbaniya Union School Teachers. John Baijo Rehana joined the original organizing committee. This diner/dance party took place in the Radisson Hotel in Lincolnwood, Illinois. Although eight teachers were invited, only four were able to attend. Ben, looking fit and trim, wore a smart bow-tie suit in the middle of it all. Reveling in the festivities, he asked me to write about the event. I agreed and the article appeared in the pages of Nineveh Magazine along with many photos. However, all eyes were now set on the second Habbaniya reunion. With much experience gained, Ben Yalda and the same organizing committee began making plans.

1995 became the occasion for the 40th anniversary of the disbandment of the Assyrian Levies in Habbaniya. The Levies were thus selected as the theme for the Habbaniya reunion of that year. Present for this gathering was Metropolitan Mar Gewargis Sliwa of Iraq. This dinner/dance took place at the Radisson Hotel on September 1, 1995, with 431 guests in attendance. During the ceremonies, veterans of the Levies, including a British Captain, were recognized and honored, and trophies were presented to them. It was truly a memorable and enjoyable night. At the suggestion of Julius Shabbaz, Editor of Nineveh Magazine at the time, a good sum of money was collected for the needy Assyrians of Iraq and was donated in connection with this event.

Ben Yalda, son of Habbaniya, moved to the Oil Center of Kirkuk in 1952, and lived there for the better part of two decades. This period of his life gave Ben the idea for a Kirkuk Assyrians Reunion with Awisha Lazar and Romeo Mirza. The gathering was to be modeled on the pattern of the Union School Reunion; the theme for the event was to be the "Reunion of the Assyrian School of Kirkuk". The event took place at the Double Tree Hotel (formerly North Shore Hilton) in Skokie, Illinois on October 24, 1997. By all accounts, it was hailed as a highly successful night. Assyrians like the late Atto Paris, the late Jibriel Babilla, Akhtiyar Moshe and Shmouel Baba were remembered and honored.

The following is a brief summary of the next three Habbaniya Union School Reunions that took place in Canada, Australia and England; Ben was in the thick of it throughout. He took the lead in organizing and attending all of these events:

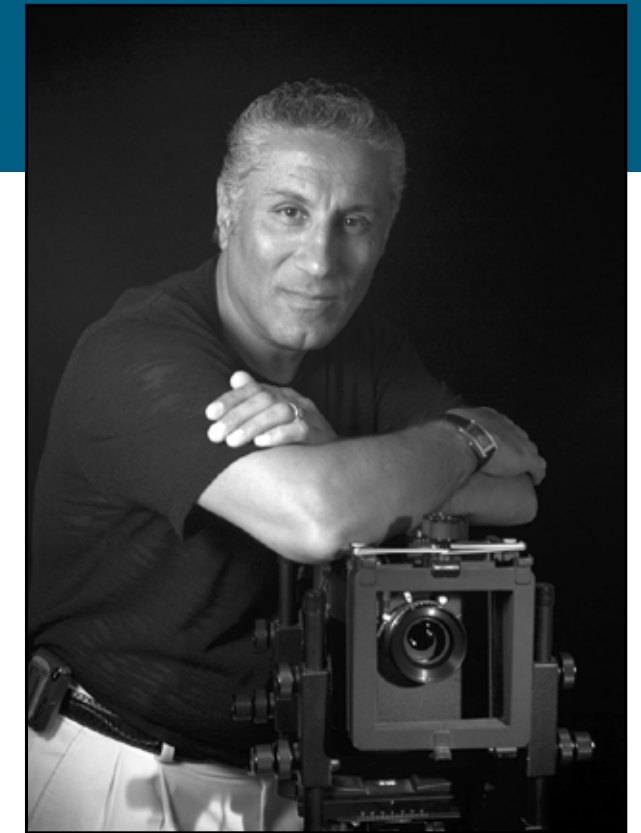
- *The Third Habbaniya Union School Reunion took place in Toronto, Canada, on August 22, 1997. The main event was held in the Semiramis Hall of the Assyrians Society of Canada and was attended by 268 guests from the USA, Canada, England, and Australia.*

- *The Fourth Habbaniya Union School Reunion took place in Sydney, Australia from October 20 to 30, 2000. The main event was held in the Assyrian-Australian Association Nineveh Club and was attended by 800 guests from the USA, Canada, England, and Australia.*

- *The Fifth Habbaniya Union School Reunion was held in London, England, from August 1-14, 2002. The main event took place in the Aviation Banquet Hall, Heathrow Park Hotel, London, and was attended by 500 guests from USA, Canada, England, and Australia. A total of 120 persons arrived to London from overseas for this occasion. Various events took place in London from August 2-5. They were complemented by a guided 6-day package tour of Lourdes, France, Switzerland, Holland, and Belgium.*

by Solomon (Sawa) Solomon

In Memoriam of Afram Nwia



The following is part of Ben Yalda's "Assyrian Resume" of the past decade alone:

February 1992

Honorary member of the Assyrian Academic Society and a member of its Organizing Committee that staged a Poetry Evening at the Anderson Pavilion Auditorium of the Swedish Covenant Hospital in Chicago, Illinois. Six Assyrian poets participated. There were 150 guests in the auditorium.

December 1993

Chairman, Public Relations of the Central Organizing Committee, Chicago, Illinois, for the Assyrian Olympic 1994 Games. A large number of participants came from overseas.

August to September 1995

Chairman, Ways and Means Committee of the Assyrian National Foundation, hosting the 62nd National Convention of the Assyrian-American National Federation in Chicago, Illinois.

July 1996

Immediately after his retirement, he established his own import and export company called American Global Trading Company, Inc. Working from home, in Des Plaines, Illinois, he was a member of the National US-Arab Chamber of Commerce and also a member of the International Who's Who of Entrepreneurs.

October 1998

He was appointed by His Holiness Mar Dinkha IV, Catholicos Patriarch, adn President of the Motwa, executive committee of the Holy Apostolic Catholic Assyrian Church of the East. This Motwa consisted of 23 selected members of our church. The Motwa was responsible for the administration of our four churches, namely Mar Gewargis, Mar Sargis, St John's in Chicago, Illinois and St Mary's in Roselle, Illinois. His term was completed in December 2000.

August 2001

He compiled and printed a Global Church Directory of names, addresses, and telephone/fax numbers of all our clergy and churches worldwide. This important task took him roughly one year to complete.

August 2002

Ben and Mickael K. Pius established the Habbaniya Union Association. This was registered with the Illinois Secretary of the State as a not-for-profit group. A newsletter was produced with Mike as the Editor, Ben Yalda as the Administration Manager and Basil K. Pius as its Contributing Editor. Today we have almost 150 members and the number continues to increase.

People who are fortunate enough to have known Ben Yalda found him to be a warm person, soft spoken and friendly. He possessed a great store of energy, and in the middle of it all, he was cool and collected, always on top of things, yet never overbearing, never discourteous, and always professional.

Ben gave us many memorable moments. He spent much time and effort in organizing these events, yet never received any material reward. If anything, there were times when he even spent his own money to cover expenses.

When John Wayne died, the U.S. Congress decided to strike a gold medal to honor him. However, even they had trouble describing him until someone came up with a simple yet perfect description. Engraved under his effigy are the words, "John Wayne - American". So when the time comes to issue a gold medal in honor of Ben, I propose that it reads, "Ben Yalda - Assyrian".

Ben Yalda died in April of 2019. He was buried in the Chicago area. May he rest in peace and may his memory be an inspiration to Assyrians everywhere.

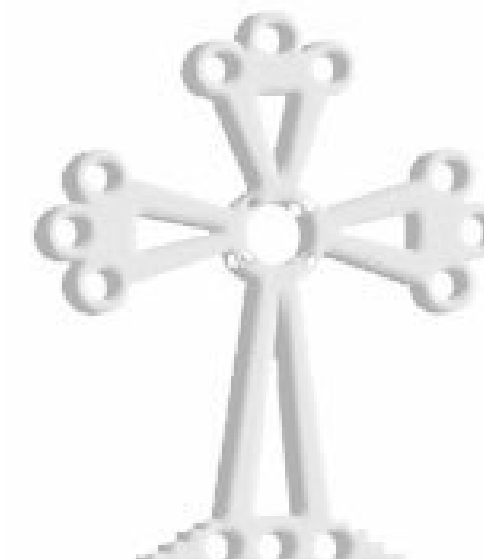
On Thursday March 5th, 2020, Afram Nwia passed away at the age of 62. He was a beloved son, father, brother and friend.

Afram was born in Qamishli, Syria on December 3rd, 1957 to Gina and Youash Nwia. At the age of 12, his family moved to Aleppo. He was a diligent student, at the top of his class, and continued his studies at Claude Bernard University in Lyon, France, where he pursued a degree in civil engineering. In 1980, Afram moved to the United States where he turned his passion for photography into a lifelong career.

From 2006 to 2010, he proudly served as a translator to the US Special Forces in Iraq. Afram had a magnetic, positive energy that was apparent in his always smiling face. He valued time with family and friends above all and brought light and happiness into everyone's lives. As a skilled photographer and artist, Afram captured life's most meaningful moments to evoke emotions from tears to laughter.

Afram was preceded in death by his father, Youash. He is survived by his mother, Gina, his two children, Christina and Robert, the mother of his children, Linda, his sisters Clara, Jackie, and Plarem, in addition to his brother George and many cousins, nieces and nephews. Afram leaves behind his girlfriend of 8 years, Mari, and will be remembered for his unforgettable roaring laughter, his kind, compassionate spirit and zest for life.

Afram was the second cousin of Assyrian Foundation of America's President, Sargon Shabbas. May he rest in peace.

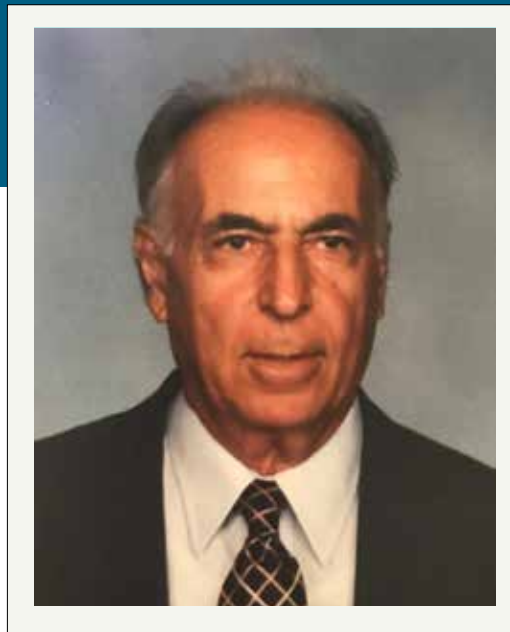


In Memoriam of
Clarence Raman Bit-Shamoon
 1924-2020

Clarence (Calo) – literary name, Raman Bit-Shamoon, passed away on July 7, 2020, at 96 years of age in Modesto, California.

Calo was born June 27, 1924 in Urmia, Iran to parents Rabi Benyamin Bit-Shamoon from the village of Digala, and Khanna Peera, from the village of Mar Nukha (adjacent to Mushava). According to Shamasha (Deacon) Giwargis Dawid Malik from Sporghan memoirs, Rabi Benyamin was hailed as a hero for having saved several villages from the planned massacres by the Ottomans. He did so by intercepting the telephone communications between the Turk leaders of the plan to attack the Assyrian villages. He then notified Agha Petrus on time to evacuate entire villages before the Turks arrived. Calo's mother, Khanna, was the granddaughter of Giwargis Peera Bak, who was appointed as "Millat-Bashi" or head of the Assyrian community.

Calo was the 3rd of 5 siblings: Meelis, Lily, Nelly, and Helen. In high school, his math teacher nicknamed him the "god of mathematics." He graduated from the University of Tehran in Chemical Engineering, with honors, and was employed by the oil company in Tehran for 35 years. In 1959, he married Lily Malek from Salamas a descendent of Abona Paul Bejan, and had two children: Sharokina and Atour. In 1990, Calo moved to the United States and resided in San Jose and Modesto, California.



<https://www.lulu.com/search...>

Because of the love and passion for his nation, Rabi Benyamin Arsanis who was a distant cousin of Calo nick named him Raman, which he chose to use as his pen name. Throughout his life, Calo was heavily involved and was a member of several Assyrian organizations in Abadan and Tehran. He was a member of "Seeta Sapreta" and was one of the few who helped build the St. Mary's Assyrian Church of the East in Tehran. He taught the Assyrian language to his children and many students. He also authored 4 books in Assyrian under Raman Bit-Shamoon: "One Thousand Assyrian Names" (of which he is directly credited for thousands of Assyrian parents naming their children Assyrian names), "The Three Mighty Assyrian Men", co-authored the book of "Assyrian Proverbs & Idioms", and "The History of the Assyrian Church of the East" in printing.

He was laid to rest on July 13, 2020, in the Turlock cemetery. He was a man of integrity, honor, and humility. He leaves behind his wife, Lily, his daughter, Sharokina and her husband Dr. Deacon Peter Koryakos, and 3 grandchildren and one great granddaughter. His son, Atour, and his sister Helen, and her husband and two sons. His nephew, Jason Yohannan and his family, as well as many families and friends.

It is my promise to continue to walk in his footsteps and to preserve his legacy of dedication to our faith and preserving and promoting the Assyrian heritage and cause. He will be greatly missed!!

By: Sharokina B. Koryakos



Calo sitting right next to his parents and siblings



Calo with his wife Lily 1959



At his Daughter's wedding



Family gathering during Christmas

Justice For Assyrians: A Kurdish Perspective

Time to right the historical wrongs against these persecuted Middle East Christians.

By Recep Maraşlı

Courtesy of theamericanconservative.com



Two young Assyrians sit next to the fence of a huge statue of the Holy Virgin Mary in Koysinjaq, Iraqi Kurdistan, in 2015. Christiaan Triebert/Shutterstock

August 7th marks Assyrian Martyrs Day, a time when we Kurds should focus on how we can help secure justice for the victims of the crimes committed against this persecuted community.

Assyrians, also known as Syriacs and Chaldeans, are an indigenous people of the Middle East, and heirs of the oldest civilization of the region. They are the first converts to Christianity. Their society has nurtured the Christian faith with its own cultural roots, and created original denominations.

However, Assyrians are also the nation that has lost the most territory in the Middle East. Throughout history, they have experienced the most dreadful massacres and genocides. They have severely suffered from persecution as a result of Islam's expansion by the sword.

For 300 years, Assyrian kings ruled the largest empire the world had yet known. After their empire fell, Arab, Persian, Mongolian, Turkish and Kurdish conquests turned Assyrians into a "dhimmi" community. They became second-class subjects of Islamic states, forced to pay a high jizya tax in order to survive. While the invaders dominated Assyrians, they also found it beneficial for them to turn

Assyrians into a dependent society. Assyrians were masters in craftsmanship, creativity, and agriculture. They had a knowledgeable and gifted middle class. The bounty taxes collected from them were critical for the conquerors. They placed Assyrians, a cultured and resourceful society, under their rule while systematically confiscating their property and lands.

The reasons why Assyrians have become an oppressed nation in the face of Islamic expansionism are also worth analysis. A significant reason for this phenomenon is that they are stateless. They were caught unorganized and unprepared in the face of Islam's violent expansionism. They lacked armies, state structures, central organization, and alliances. Thus, there is a problem of multifaceted internal fragmentation which still continues today.

Historically, the reason for the major decline of the Assyrian population in the region is not only the actions of the Arab, Persian, and Turkish invaders. It includes the severe persecution that Kurds have put Assyrians through for centuries. It was the Kurdish principalities that most heavily imposed the Islamic sovereignty and status of dhimmitude on the Christian communities.

This situation was most visible during the Ottoman Empire, which left Assyrians to the control of Kurdish principalities after an agreement was reached in 1513. In this agreement, Kurds were recognized by the Ottoman rulers as the sovereigns of their own regions. This began the collapse of indigenous Christian communities, including Assyrians.

In villages, Assyrian family life and faith depended on the Church and clergy. Yet economically and politically, Assyrians were under the control of Kurdish principalities and Ottoman administrators. In the cities and towns, the situation was different. Assyrian culture, knowledge and craftsmanship sustained the life of regional cities. Their many skills were seen as a "service" to the empire. This relationship has been falsely idealized by many historians, who often say that Kurds and Assyrians are "peoples who have lived together peacefully for many years."

As long as the oppressed peoples obeyed this status of dhimmitude, no problems occurred. Official historians in Turkey argue that the so-called provocation of "external forces and especially Western missionaries" led Christian minorities to rebel. They say that the 1839 Tanzimat Edict recognized Christian and Muslim subjects as "equals." According to official historiography in Turkey, this "caused a deterioration" of the Christian-Muslim relations, for the ruling classes thought that if equality was achieved between Muslims and Christians, they would no longer be able to abuse and oppress Christians or collect the jizya tax from them.

As a result of the national awakening of indigenous Christian peoples, they no longer wanted to pay high taxes and tribute to the oppressors. They opposed the arbitrariness of the rulers. But their demands were met with violence. Their national awakening was unwelcomed not only by the Ottoman-Turkish ruling classes, but also by the Kurdish rulers and landlords.

For centuries, this situation forced the Assyrian people to decrease in number, to assimilate, and to become a dependent national-cultural community within their own ancient homeland. More importantly, they have been subjected to extensive genocidal campaigns.

For example, they were hit hard by the Kurdish Principalities in the region of Bohtan (eastern Anatolia). Over 20,000 Assyrians were massacred between the years 1843-1846. Thousands of women and children were captured. Their property was plundered during deadly attacks which were committed by Kurdish Bedir Khan Beg. Kurds targeted Assyrians who did not want to pay the jizya tax or tribute. In 1918, the Kurdish tribal chief, Ismail Simko, killed Assyrian Patriarch Mar Shimun XIX Benyamin and his entourage. The Assyrians were massacred by Kurds in many subsequent attacks, as well.

The worst genocide committed against Assyrians occurred between 1914-1925 in Ottoman Turkey. It is remembered as "Seyfo" or the "Sword." The Assyrians resisted and repelled attacks as much as they could. But central Ottoman and local Kurdish authorities did not recognize the Assyrian right to life.

During this and other genocides, it was mostly the Kurds who took the sword and used it against Assyrians. Kurdish

society has largely participated in the process of Assyrian annihilation, and benefited from its consequences.

This genocide is not only a "historical injustice" that happened in the past; it is an ongoing crime, a political-social injustice that is still affecting hundreds of thousands of the descendants of the survivors.

Assyrian Christians also suffered as a result of the discriminatory anti-Christian state policies beginning from the early years of the Republic of Turkey. However, the source of persecution against Assyrians was not only the government. Their own Kurdish neighbors perpetually seized their lands and property. For decades after the founding of the republic, Kurdish citizens violated the rights of their Assyrian peers.

The PKK (Kurdistan Workers' Party) started its armed struggle in 1984 and Turkey formed its own Kurdish "village guard" in response. The Assyrian community was stuck in a triple fire between the Turkish army, the PKK, and the Kurdish village guards. Each party wanted to see the Assyrians on their side. As a result, the Assyrian people, who were unarmed and completely defenseless amid this war, were forced to leave their homes. In the 1990s, Assyrians were again the victims of such violence. Villages in the region were burned, destroyed and evacuated, and political murders abounded.

The armed struggle slowed down in the 2000s and Turkey's efforts to harmonize with the European Union paved the way for Assyrians to return to Tur Abdin. But this road was filled with challenges. Kurds did not intend to leave Assyrian lands, including those Church properties that they had seized and settled in. And this interim period was short-lived. Once again, the policy of violence reigned in the region as the war escalated between the PKK and the Turkish army. All these things contributed to the collapse of the Assyrian population in the region.

Hence, the Kurds and their political movements have a vital responsibility to right the wrongs of the past and help create a better future for Assyrians.

In order to secure justice for the victims, the Christian genocide that targeted Assyrians, Armenians and Greeks must be acknowledged by the perpetrator communities as well as by relevant political and cultural representatives. This is more than saying that "our ancestors have committed such a crime in the past, we are embarrassed, and we apologize." Justice requires these individuals and organizations have a serious campaign policy which removes those political gains and societal privileges obtained during the genocide. Such a campaign would relieve the wounds of the victims and their descendants. It would make actual amends.

Social-political relations between Kurds and Assyrians, as well as other victims of genocide, must be restructured in a spirit of equality and justice. Kurdish intellectuals must raise awareness about these issues within the Kurdish and other perpetrator communities. We must initiate a genuine dialogue between Kurds, Turks, Assyrians, and other peoples of the region.

Likewise, the international community (including univer-

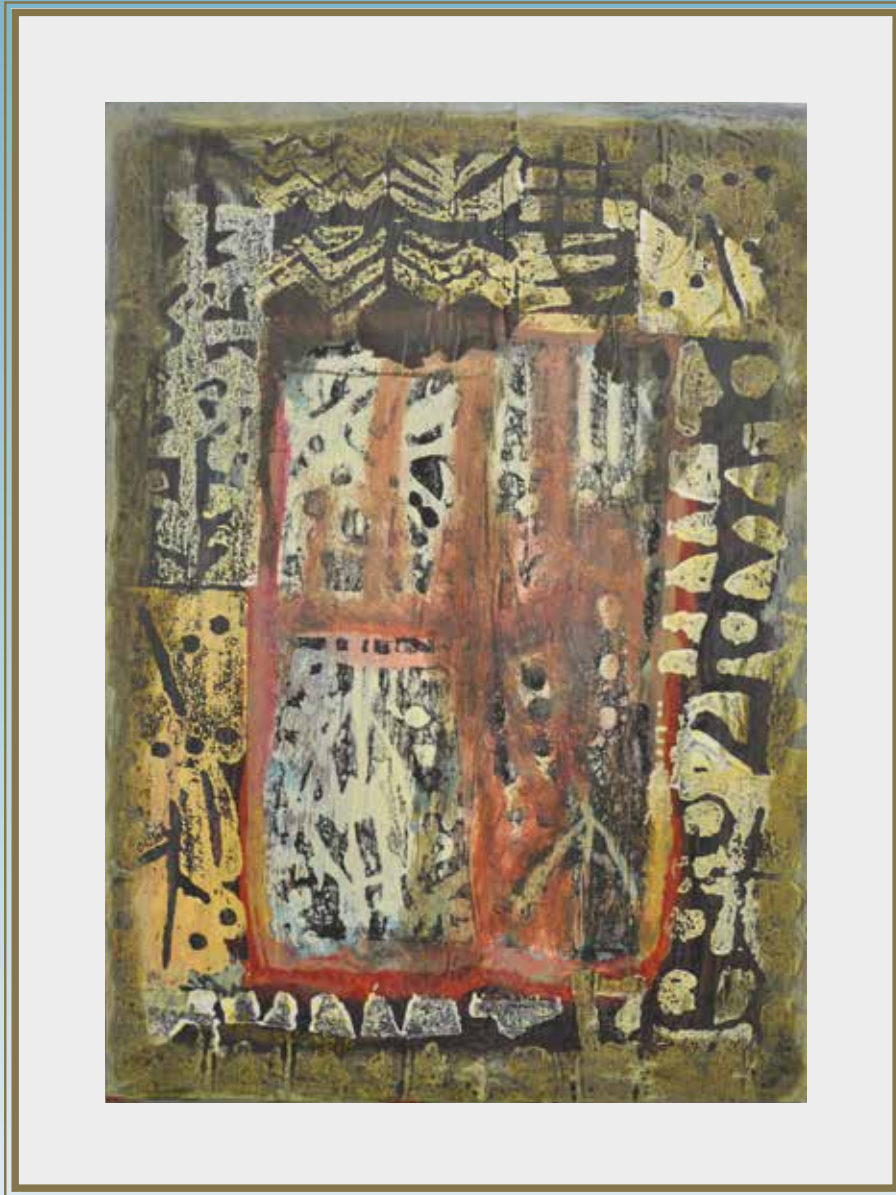


Established 1964



સુલક

ન કુલકોત્તર | ન કુલકોત્તર | ન કુલકોત્તર



Painting by artist Moussa Malki

સુલકોત્તર કુલકોત્તર કુલકોત્તર કુલકોત્તર