



# NINEVEH

CULTURAL

EDUCATIONAL

SOCIAL



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## PIERRE TOULAKANY

It is with deep regret and sadness that I inform our readers of the recent passing of Mr. Pierre Toulakany. Pierre was an active member of the Assyrian community and cofounder of the Assyrian American Association of Southern California. Over the years, Pierre also served as President of the Assyrian American National Federation, President of Assyrian Aid Society of America/ Los Angeles chapter and served on the board of directors of the Assyrian Aid Society of America (AASA). Pierre's devotion and commitment to the Assyrian cause will be remembered and cherished always.

On behalf of the Assyrian Foundation of America, I would like to extend our sincere condolences to Pierre's wife, children, extended family, and friends from around the world. Our thoughts and prayers are with you.

With deepest sympathy,

*Sargon Shabbas*  
President, Assyrian Foundation of America

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**Atoria's Family Bakery Celebrates  
30 Years of Clean Label Baking**  
*The Next Generation Keeps Their Family's Dream Alive*

*From the Assyrian Aid Society*

GILROY, CA (November 2022) – Since 1992, Atoria's Family Bakery has baked flatbreads like Lavash, Naan, Pita and Pizza Crusts with a handful of simple, pronounceable, non-GMO ingredients and never any artificial colors, flavors or preservatives. And this year, they are celebrating their family bakery's 30th anniversary -- a dream that began in the family garage with Atoria's cherished Lavash recipe.

"My parents worked hard to make Atoria's dream a reality and now, thirty years later, it's the next generation – Atoria's grandchildren – who are working to share her bread with a broader audience," said Lilea Eshoo, COO, Atoria's Family Bakery. "Not only is the real bread we bake today based on the family recipe from Atoria's childhood, but her timeless wisdom also guides everything we do."

**Real Bread, Simple Ingredients is a Must**  
Baking with no artificial preservatives to be sold at grocery stores has its challenges because real bread has a short shelf life. Two ways Atoria's extends shelf life are by adding oxygen absorbers to their packaging to double the shelf life and freshness on shelf, and by reminding shoppers to refrigerate or freeze the bread to extend its shelf life naturally at home.

"More than ever, consumers are turning over the bag to see what they're putting in their bodies and how it fits into their diets," said Rick Eshoo, Head of R&D (and also Atoria's grandchild). "Baking bread with simple, pronounceable ingredients is what we do. Like Atoria says, take your time, pay attention to the details. Work hard. Don't make something you're not proud of."



*Atoria Tata*



*Atoria at kitchen table*



*Atoria seated with Grankids  
Lilea Inanna and Rick*

The bakery is continually innovating to ensure clean bread is available to as many people as possible by getting into as many stores as possible, sharing recipes and fun, and creating engaging content to help families make Atoria's Family Bakery flatbreads part of their healthy lifestyles.

**Whole Grains Served With Whole Hearts**  
Atoria's Family Bakery's 30th anniversary is also an opportunity for the family to give back to the community of Atoria's youth, the Assyrian villages near Mesopotamia, where Atoria first learned how to bake traditional flatbreads.

"Our grandmother Atoria is the heart and face of our family bakery. As a child she watched and learned how to bake traditional flatbreads from her mother and grandmother," said Inanna Eshoo, head of sales (and, yes, also Atoria's grandchild). "Family and sharing food with others are so important to Atoria. We are proud to keep that tradition alive, too."

To celebrate our 30th anniversary and to honor Atoria, Atoria's Family Bakery is partnering with the Assyrian Aid Society of America to donate 100% of profits from sales of their Traditional Lavash -- as well as sales of our limited time 30th Anniversary sweatshirts -- directly to the Assyrian Aid Society education initiative, which serves more than 2,600 schoolchildren in Iraq. This donation will run through December 31, 2022.

Your purchase of Traditional Lavash or an Atoria's Family Bakery hoodie will provide underserved schoolchildren with the gift of education. All proceeds will go towards providing these students with adequate supplies, facilities, educators and

transportation - empowering the next generation of dreamers like Atoria.

Visit [bonfire.com/celebrating-30-years/](https://bonfire.com/celebrating-30-years/) for more information and to order a sweatshirt.

**About Atoria's Family Bakery**  
Atoria's Family Bakery is a family-owned and operated bakery based in Gilroy, California. The company bakes authentic and delicious flatbreads in several varieties and flavors. Consumers can find Atoria's Family Bakery products in over 1,700 grocery stores in the US, including Safeway, Whole Foods, Sprouts, H-E-B, Fresh Thyme and more. Log on to [flatbreadfinder.com](https://flatbreadfinder.com) to find a store near you. Learn more at [atorias.com](https://atorias.com) or buy online at [shopatoriasfamilybakery.com](https://shopatoriasfamilybakery.com).

**About The Assyrian Aid Society**  
The Assyrian Aid Society of America is a charitable 501(c)(3) and leading humanitarian organization dedicated for over a quarter century to helping Assyrians in need and focusing American and international attention on the needs and humanitarian concerns of the Assyrian people.





# GREEN.ART.GALLERY

## MICHAEL RAKOWITZ

### The invisible enemy should not exist

*"The act was a crime against Assyria, against Iraq, and against humanity.  
 Destroy the past, and you control the future."  
 —Tom Holland*

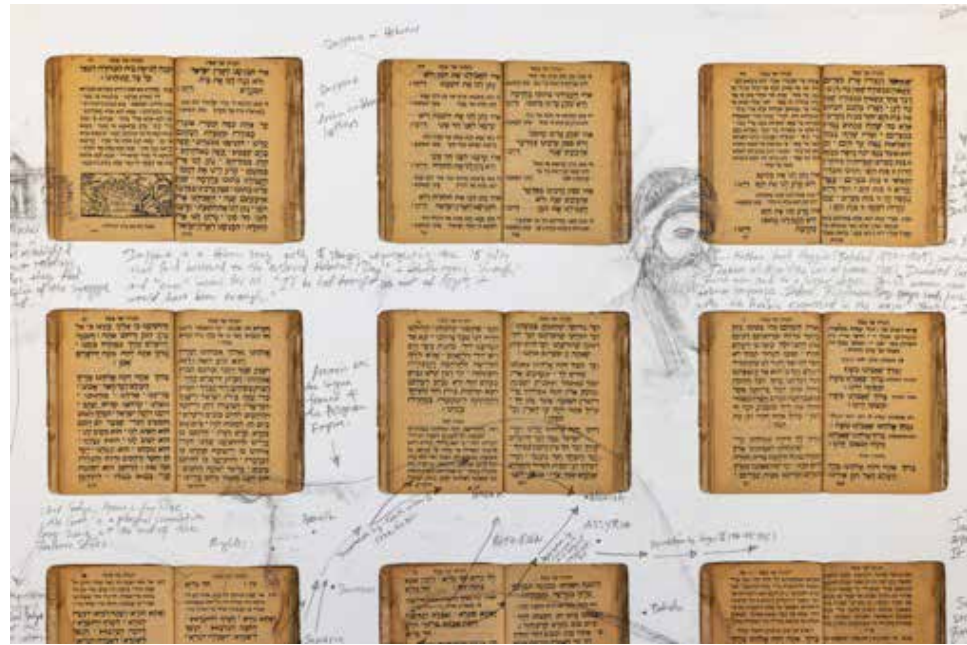
Green Art Gallery is pleased to present Michael Rakowitz's first solo exhibition at the Gallery, following his large-scale institutional exhibition at the Jameel Arts Centre in Dubai in 2020. He has shown regularly at Sharjah Art Foundation including mostly recently in Sharjah Biennial 14: Leaving the Echo Chamber (2019) and Unsettled Objects (2021) at the Flying Saucer. His work will be included in the upcoming Sharjah Biennial 15: Thinking Historically in the Present, opening February 2023.

*The invisible enemy should not exist* is an ongoing project centering on threatened, destroyed, and missing cultural heritage. Michael Rakowitz began this work in 2007, reappearing artifacts looted from the National Museum of Iraq in the aftermath of the US-led invasion in 2003. Drawing from a database of reference images and information, the sculptures are constructed using papier-mâché made of Arabic-English newspapers and West Asian food packaging found in diasporic grocery stores in Chicago. The invisible enemy should not exist is a translation of "Aj ibur shapu," the name of the Processional Way that ran through Nebuchadnezzar's Ishtar Gate in Babylon.

Included in this exhibition is a series of cylinder seals. Existing on an intimate scale, cylinder seals were small stone objects that were rolled out onto wet clay to create an impression. They are linked to the invention of cuneiform writing on clay and were used as signatures, worn around the neck as jewelry, and served as amulets. Before the Iraq Museum's looting, the collection of seals was over 15,000.

In 2018, Rakowitz began a new branch of the project. Since the mid-1800s, Western institutions like the Louvre, the British Museum, and the Metropolitan Museum of Art have participated in the systematic extraction of works from the Assyrian Northwest Palace of Kalhu, (Nimrud), near present day Mosul, Iraq. The sculptural relief panels that remained after these waves of excavations were destroyed by ISIS in 2015. Using the same logic of the first iteration of *The invisible enemy should not exist*, Rakowitz and his studio have been reappearing the 200 remaining panels of the palace that were in situ until their destruction in 2015. Each room of *The invisible enemy should not exist* (Northwest Palace of Kalhu) is installed true to its original architectural footprint. As an integral part of each room's installation, empty spaces with museum labels indicate where the panels that still exist are held, mostly in private collections or museums in the West. These empty spaces of imperialist extraction, alongside the reappeared panels that remained in the palace until their destruction in 2015, provide a view of what the palace would have looked like the day before its destruction by ISIS, and make present the human lives that perished alongside the destroyed archaeological sites. It is a project that acknowledges the continued history of displacement in Iraq, creating a palimpsest of different moments of removal.

Premiering at Green Art Gallery is a section of Room S from the Northwest Palace of Kalhu. This room was a reception hall containing one of the most carefully constructed and well preserved reliefs depicting King Ashurnasirpal II, which was excavated by Austen Henry Layard in 1847 and sent immediately to the British Museum. The exhibition features the first group of reliefs in this ongoing series to include within the papier-mâché collage fragments from old issues of *Nineveh Magazine*, quarterly publication in Modern Assyrian and English generously donated to Michael Rakowitz's studio by the Assyrian Foundation of America.



Michael Rakowitz, *Charita Baghdad (detail)*, 2020 Graphite on archival digital print

The exhibition also includes Rakowitz's *Charita Baghdad*, a site-specific intervention in dialogue with Rigas Feraios' *Charta of = Greece*. This ongoing work consists of an annotated 1936 Passover Haggadah belonging to the Baghdadi Jewish community in what is now modern day Iraq, from where the artist's maternal family is from. Conceived in continuing conversation with Dr. Ella Habiba Shohat, a cultural theorist descended from a Baghdadi Jewish family, *Charita Baghdad* interrogates the linguistic confusion around the existence of "Judeo-Arabic." While there exists a dialect one can say is specific to the departed Iraqi Jewish community, what emerges from the page-by-page reading of this prayer book is more complex, shedding the simplistic view that Judeo-Arabic was like a West Asian version of Yiddish, partitioned from Arabic. In fact, the book is written with liturgical Hebrew prayers, but with instructions and translation in Arabic-in- Hebrew letters. This illustrates how literacy (reading and writing Arabic) was not accessible to all at this time, and thus education came through the community hub that was the synagogue during this era. Arabic-in-Hebrew letters functioned simply as a transliteration of the lingua-franca of Baghdadi Arabic. At stake in this study is the contested identity of the Arab-Jew which is rejected by Jewish nationalist ideology. As Shohat writes in *The Invention of Judeo-Arabic*, "the inclusion of Judeo-Arabic in the 'family of Jewish languages', standing always already apart from its (non-Jewish) Arab neighbors, thus reveals another facet of the question, i.e. a Jewish national allegory in which for Jewishness to exist Arabness has to vanish, and then be resuscitated as essentially Jewish."

*Acknowledgments: Dedicated to the memory of Dr. Selma Al-Radi, Dr. Sam Paley, and Dr. Donny George Youkhanna*

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*Raxo Studios Head of Research and Projects: Annie Raccuglia*

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(Northwest Palace of Kalhu, Room S, Western Entrance)  
19 September - 23 November 2022

#### About the Artist

Michael Rakowitz (b. 1973, New York) is the recipient of the 2020 Nasher Prize, the 2018 Herb Alpert Award in the Arts (Visual Arts category), a 2012 Tiffany Foundation Award; a 2008 Creative Capital Grant; a Sharjah Biennial Jury Award; a 2006 New York Foundation for the Arts Fellowship Grant in Architecture and Environmental Structures; the 2003 Dena Foundation Award, and the 2002 Design 21 Grand Prix from UNESCO. He was awarded the Fourth Plinth commission (2018-2020) in London's Trafalgar Square. From 2019 - 2020, a survey of Rakowitz's work traveled from Whitechapel Gallery in London, to Castello di Rivoli Museo d'Arte Contemporanea in Torino, to the Jameel Arts Centre in Dubai, marking his first major museum retrospective in the region.

Recent solo exhibitions include *Reappearitions*, Frac Lorraine, Metz, France (2022); *The invisible enemy should not exist* (Room C, section 1, Northwest Palace of Nimrud), Pi Artworks, Istanbul, Turkey (2021); *April is the cruellest month*, England's Creative Coast: Turner Contemporary, Margate, UK (2021); *Michael Rakowitz: Nimrud* —*The invisible enemy should not exist* (Room H, Northwest Palace of Nimrud), Wellin Museum of Art, New York (2020); *Beneath the Date Palms*, CURRENT: LA Public Art Triennial, Los Angeles, CA (2019); *Dispute Between the Tamarisk and the Date Palm*, REDCAT, Los Angeles, CA (2019); *The invisible enemy should not exist*, Trafalgar Square, London, UK (2018); and *Backstroke of the West*, Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago, IL (2017) among others.

Rakowitz's work has appeared in various museums and biennials including Air, Utah Museum of Fine Art, Salt Lake City, Utah (2022); *Mardin Biennial*, Mardin, Turkey (2022); *Beyond Codex: Living Archives*, Center for Book Arts, New York, NY (2022); *ARS22*, Museum of Contemporary Art, Kiasma, Helsinki, Finland (2022); *Visual Nature: The Politics and Culture of Environmentalism in the 20th and 21st Centuries*, Museum of Art, Architecture, and Technology (MAAT), Lisbon, Portugal (2022); *Portals*, NEON, Athens, Greece (2021); *Les Flammes*, Musée d'Art moderne de Paris, France (2021); *A Boundless Drop to A Boundless Ocean*, Orlando Museum of Art, Orlando, Florida (2021); *Our world is burning*, Palais de Tokyo, Paris, France (2020); *Assyria to America*, Bowdoin College Museum of Art, Brunswick, Maine (2019); *I Am Ashurbanipal King Of The World*, King Of Assyria, The British Museum, London (2019); *For Us the Living*, The Museum of Modern Art, New York, NY (2018); *A Color Removed*, SPACES, FRONT Triennial, Cleveland, OH (2018); and *Bagdad mon amour*, Institut des Cultures d'Islam, Paris, France (2018) among others.

His works are featured in major private and public collections including the Museum of Modern Art, New York; Neue Galerie, Kassel, Germany; Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago; Smart Museum of Art, Chicago; Van Abbemuseum, Endhoven, Netherlands; The British Museum; The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York; Kabul National Museum, Afghanistan; UNESCO, Paris; Sharjah Art Foundation, Sharjah, UAE; Art Jameel Collection, Dubai, UAE and Tate, London, UK.

He lives and works in Chicago.

# We are all “Us”

By Dr. Julia Hallisy

Until recently, my ties to my Assyrian heritage were tenuous and intermittent. I believe that people, information, and understanding often come into your life when you most need them, and when you're ready to receive them. Answers about my family history were thrust into my life before I even had an awareness of the life-changing questions they raised. These insights provided a sense of clarity I had long been searching for.

When I met Dr. Robert Karoukian, I was unaware of his expertise as an Assyrian history expert. After asking a few pointed questions, he astutely concluded that my grandparents were genocide refugees fleeing religious persecution.

I was stunned because I had always assumed that my family's immigration story followed the common narrative of coming to America for greater opportunities. I had never heard even a whisper of anything different. But the reality I discovered is that my grandparents weren't relocating – they were escaping the atrocities of the Assyrian Genocide known as Seyfo (or Year of the Sword). They were initially internally displaced in their own country and then international refugees when they left Persia for the United States.

My grandparents lived in a village along Lake Urmia called Abdullakand or Atlakande, and my father (their third child) was born in Baghdad, most likely in a refugee camp. Since I had no first-hand details about their experience, I felt compelled to learn all I could about their journey. What started as less than a whisper quickly became a roar. My research confirmed that their village was sacked, and any surviving inhabitants fled for their lives via a gauntlet walk to Baghdad. Immigration and ship records chronicle their sea voyage to Yokohama, Japan for quarantine and their eventual arrival in San Francisco through Angel Island.

While I don't have many details about my grandparents' lives in Atlakande, there is one thing I am sure of. Their journey didn't originate from hopeful anticipation of a better future. The reality was that their home, their country, and their entire way of life had been forcibly taken from them. They had little time to mourn what was left behind – including loved ones and the land where their ancestors lived and were buried. They were far removed from the physical places that were intertwined with the rituals that helped them express joy and cope with grief. Their very survival necessitated learning to navigate their way through an unknown landscape in a world they no longer recognized. Leaving life in the mountains of Mesopotamia to come to a bustling city like San Francisco must have been akin to stepping foot on the moon.

They had no choice but to forge a new identity in response to their trauma and displacement. An identity that was now American—urban, fast-paced, and likely filled with the fear of losing control of their destiny. My grandparents had grown their own food, raised livestock, and lived in a close-knit community with their church and their faith at the center of their lives. My grandfather, who spoke a variation of the language of Christ, found work as a janitor in downtown San Francisco. I feel sad that his new life took him away from the land and into high-rise office buildings, but I also find solace that this work connected



Bajone Family

him to Christ in its simplicity and humility.

Finances were always a struggle when my father was young. Knowing scarcity from his earliest memory would certainly explain his hard-working, scrappy nature, and his propensity for storing vast amounts of canned goods. As a child who grew up during the Depression, he never complained. He was always moving forward toward new opportunities. His first job, shining shoes at age nine, helped him earn money for his family and provided a few extra cents for chocolates to satisfy his infamous sweet tooth.

Old newspaper articles I read online detailing the dangers and destruction in homeland must have dashed any hopes my grandparents had of returning to Urmia. I envision them with heavy hearts, sitting in the small kitchen of their rented flat, having their sons read to them these same newspaper articles. Each account must have made their dream of returning home slip further away. While there was an eventual resignation to the inevitable, there were no life-long lamentations or oppressive sadness in my grandparents' house. Like so many other immigrants, my father's family didn't want to dwell on the past and felt a strong allegiance to their new country. Their success at adapting and assimilating as Americans had naturally insulated their children and grandchildren from the tragic realities surrounding their journey to the United States.

The promises of the British to the Assyrians – perhaps initially made in good faith – were never honored. The assurances that their "smallest ally" and valuable military asset would again know an independent homeland went unfulfilled. Terms like relocation and liberation imply at least a semblance of safety and freedom, but they often come at an incalculable cost. For Assyrians, redemption led to the formation of a worldwide diaspora and an eternal longing for a homeland that will likely never be realized.

Land has always been the foundation of any nation. It's especially challenging for a nation with hundreds of villages, different dialects, and several religions to hold together and survive without the physical land that binds them. Assyrians were victimized physically by their oppressors, and then emotionally and geographically by the protectors they trusted. The tenets of enlightened life, including trust, honor, independence, and justice must have seemed meaningless.

This betrayal is still a gaping wound carried by the grandchildren and great-grandchildren of genocide refugees who still struggle with the unresolved trauma of the loss of the Assyrian homeland and the erosion of their national and cultural roots. I now understand how family members of Seyfo refugees experience



Julius and Julia Bajone

multi-generational grief that seems destined to remain suspended in time. We mourn our own family members and an entire country that we never had the chance to know. And we live with the reality of never being reunited with our surviving relatives living in other parts of the world. Modern-day conflicts continue to trigger deep emotional reactions as a constant reminder that genocide remains an ongoing threat to humanity.

Many displaced Assyrians were never able to safely visit their ancestral homeland – and many of their descendants likely never will either. Those who could remember the homeland must have struggled to share intangible memories– the smell of grapes warming in the sun as they dried in the vineyards, the way the stars lit up the night sky, the salty and therapeutic water of Lake Urmia, or the way the mountains looked covered in snow. These precious details lived only in memory, since my grandparents never returned to Urmia. Salvation had come with great sacrifice.

I often wonder if they experienced survivor's guilt – which at the time had no name and received no acknowledgment. Did they struggle with the precarious balance of living with paradoxical feelings of intense grief and extreme gratitude? Did they ever second-guess their decisions and question if they had abandoned their homeland too soon, if they had given up too easily, or if they could have fought harder? The burden perpetual grief places on people leaves them at risk for feelings of isolation, depression, and post-traumatic stress. What refugees may not have realized at the time is that those who survived the Seyfo genocide became even more precious to their nation. Their memories, stories, language, food, and religious beliefs would help sustain not only them, but future generations of Assyrians spread across the globe.

At first, learning of the circumstances of my grandparent's immigration left me completely overwhelmed and filled with anguish. My grandparents and countless others had struggled to redefine their concept of home and a safe and secure future. One hundred years later, I'm trying to piece together their past.

I regularly study faces in photos from a century ago searching for anyone who closely resembles my father or his family. So many faces look similar and seem familiar. The remarkable thing is that I immediately feel a connection to them, and I have found photos of people who closely resemble both me and my older son. We have the same features and expressions, and we share the eternal bond of our common heritage and history. I'm not alone because I discovered that I share these emotions with others who have recently started to explore their Assyrian heritage. We all draw strength from the realization that we come from a long line of



Assyrian Refugees

people who suffered greatly but also possessed an inordinate amount of inner strength. It's literally in our DNA to be survivors. It's always been a part of us and will always remain. It's a trait as unalterable as our fingerprints or blood type.

I didn't start my learning process with ancient Assyrian history; my research has been non-linear because I needed to understand the circumstances surrounding the genocide that forced my grandparents from their village. My search for specific information about my family has been equally confusing and frustrating. There are no written records or photos available from their life in Urmia. Our surname was misinterpreted by immigration workers into several iterations, and the sacred places that are often the repositories of historical documents that could provide answers lay in ruins. Our history has been permanently altered, and often deleted, as collateral damage of unending conflict.

Dr. Karoukian shared books with me including Joel E. Werda's *The Flickering Light of Asia*, which shed light on the Seyfo tragedy, and Dr. Arianne Ishaya's *Familiar Faces in Unfamiliar Places: ASSYRIANS in the California Heartland 1911-2010*, which details the history of Assyrians in Turlock, California. I take great comfort in the fact that my grandparents retired to Turlock in the late 1940s. It's easy to envision what a sanctuary it must have been, an Assyrian hamlet where they once again knew peace, prosperity, and permanence. I imagine their happiness in returning to the land, farming for themselves, and nourishing others with their produce. What a joy to again live with people who shared your past, and who built a vibrant Assyrian community through language, social events, and places of worship. People who fought to simply survive when they initially arrived in the United States had not only persevered, but ultimately thrived.

In Turlock, there was no need for my grandparents to explain their accents, background, or culture, as I watched my father do for decades. My father modeled a kind, accepting way of educating those who asked about our ethnicity. "Yes, Assyrians do still exist and no, we're not Syrian" or "No, we're not the same as Arabs, Armenians, or Palestinians." I can still hear his calm voice explaining "My family was Christian, and we have our own language, foods, and customs that are part of the ancient Assyrian history that you may have read about in books or studied in school." He never sounded irritated, and he never judged those asking the question. He consistently gave brief, but gentle and accurate history lessons. Avoiding even small erasures of his heritage was important to him and I naturally followed his example.



Julius Bajone



*Baqubah*



*Seiyo Maru Ship*



*Elisha Bajone*



*Angel Island Immigration Station, National Archives*



*Turlock Colorized crop*

Dr. Karoukian continues to be kind enough to tolerate my inquiries – as do other Assyrian experts including Dr. Sargon Donabed and Dr. Ruth Kamar. It was after reading the following quote by Dr. Donabed that I could finally allow myself to stop feeling like an imposter because I didn't speak the language.

“Language is an important and wonderful element of human culture. It is also a tool. It is not a necessity that one speaks Assyrian to be Assyrian in my mind.”

My lack of Assyrian language skills has almost always prompted reactions of disappointment and shock. And yet, here was an Assyrian expert validating my place in this worldwide community despite my absence of linguistic skills. Dr. Donabed's words are proof that the smallest bit of openness and inclusivity can inspire long-lasting feelings of belonging and commitment—especially among those who are just finding their place in the Assyrian community.

I can't remember my father speaking another language until I heard him talking with new-found Assyrian friends who had immigrated from Iran. Hearing my father speak Assyrian evoked the same feeling as seeing his wound from WWII. My father had a scar on his bicep from a bullet hole, which was both fascinating and puzzling. Because my father never wanted to speak about what he endured during the war, I was left with many unanswered questions. His standard response was that he had served his country as was asked of him and that he was one of the fortunate ones who made it home. The mysterious origins of his Assyrian language skills seemed to somehow reside in the same category. My siblings and I never pressed for explanations that we sensed had a deep connection to painful memories.

I am trying to learn the Assyrian language through online lessons and immediately remembered hearing words like Yimmi, Baba, and Brata from my dad saying them to me. A relative remembers my grandmother trying to teach him the Lord's Prayer in Assyrian. My dad's pride in his Assyrian culture and the retention of his language skills came from his parents. It mattered to them because my grandparents had tried to keep a small bit of language alive in their grandchildren. And they succeeded because their children all retained their ability to speak Assyrian and so many decades later their grandchildren remember these simple, endearing words.

At first, all I felt was grief for the memories I never had the chance to make with my grandparents. My grandfather died before I was born, and my grandmother passed when I was seven. I will always regret that I didn't realize the importance of

asking my father and his siblings about their flight from home. But these feelings are tempered by the gratitude I have for their truly miraculous survival and the details that I can remember. My grandmother's house in Turlock always had a pot simmering on the large black stove and bread warming in the oven. Her backyard garden overflowed with the earthy, sweet smells of grapes, lemons, figs, and vegetables. With my small hands, I helped my grandmother pick whatever was ripe that day. I am told that she spoke to me in Assyrian, likely with the hope that I would retain the sounds, words, and their meaning. I like to think that she saw her grandchildren as living proof of her will to survive.

Assyrian history is important to me and my family personally but the suffering and the survival of Seyfo refugees also has meaning for all people. Each of our stories is a reminder of what can happen when the world looks away from the pain and persecution of others and chooses complacency over intervention. We are a portent to the world about how easily a nation can be erased and the need to make heroic choices to ensure the safety and survival of threatened races. A century later our world still struggles with racial inequality and religious persecution.

We will always live with the reprehensible oxymoron of the term Holy War. We think and say, “never again” and “never forget,” but words alone cannot prevent future atrocities or genocide. Even being several generations removed from Seyfo, the Assyrian diaspora bears witness to the fact that a society can never become apathetic about crimes against humanity and their impact on the human condition. Those who know persecution in any form innately recognize the suffering of others and feel a greater responsibility to speak out and to act.

It was clear to me from the beginning that a large part of the diaspora's strength is in our diversity. Over a hundred years of attempted destruction and erasure of our race in the homeland make unity in the diaspora an important part of our future. Our definition of a homeland has had to change and evolve as a nation spread across the world. We naturally hold our unique traditions dear but forced displacement to other countries has naturally resulted in assimilation with those cultures. When we forge deep connections with others in the diaspora, even if their customs now seem unfamiliar to us, we create strong and enduring bonds. Ensuring the future of our Assyrian nation will always begin with the way we see and treat each other.

I'm finding that Assyrians are thrilled to meet other Assyrians and have been incredibly welcoming to me. One of the strengths of second and third-generation Assyrians is that being a step

removed from first-hand memories of the homeland allows us to see everyone as equally Assyrian. Perhaps I have an advantage being raised in a diverse place like the Bay Area because I have always known people of different cultures and beliefs. This may make it easier for me to feel connected to all Assyrians irrespective of dialects, villages, and places of worship. I'm interested in all Assyrian people and culture – it doesn't matter to me if you're “Iraqi-Assyrian,” what religion you practice, your cooking style, or how you dance at weddings. Every face, dialect, and custom is beautiful, thrilling, and representative of my people. Because to me, we are all “Us.”

I continually ask myself the question, “What can, and should, be done to preserve our history and ensure the ongoing survival of our Assyrian nation?” The Internet has helped with unity, but it's a relatively recent technology. I marvel at the typed and mailed newsletters, the home movies, and the numerous social events, groups, and clubs that were the sustaining foundation of our culture for decades. With the advent of YouTube videos, webinars, social media, and energetic and enlightening online communities we have new ways to establish connections. Our tragic Assyrian history is at the heart of a collective need to chronicle, mourn and remember. This quest helps ensure our survival, but also requires dedicated and ongoing efforts to preserve our precious history. We must find ways both individually and as a people, to continue to share our stories with Assyrians from different backgrounds, countries, and generations.

Our stories are both incredibly powerful and extremely fragile because they can be easily lost without historians willing to commit to listening, recording, and sharing them with accuracy and respect. Efforts are currently underway by the Assyrian Studies Association, led by Dr. Ruth Kamar, to establish an online, publicly accessible archive to protect and preserve our precious oral histories and cultural artifacts. Previously unseen documents and objects will be readily accessible via the association website and Assyrians from all over the world will be able to contribute to this invaluable repository.

Stories shine a light on the dark recesses to honor those who lived through them, but also ensure the preservation of our history. They record memories, hold traditions and bear witness. We treasure these personal accounts, and they remain a powerful voice for the ideals of tolerance, peaceful co-existence, and cultural and religious freedom. Our stories are not just those of struggle, but of success and triumph. Every business started, every church restored or built, every service in those places of worship, every book published, and every Ph.D. thesis completed brings us together as a nation in triumphant celebration.

Some theologians say that those who suffer are the chosen ones. That God is on the side of the oppressed, the forsaken, and the persecuted. The fact that our ancestors never abandoned their Christian faith, were able to create and sustain a worldwide diaspora, and have always made room in their lives for community, celebration, and gratitude validates that belief. Generations of their descendants remain eternally grateful that their legacy is not only one of profound loss.

I was fortunate to be taught at a young age what it means to be a person of faith, in part due to my grandparent's unwavering commitment to their religion. Learning about my grandparent's history has reinforced what it means to be a Christian, and the risk and responsibility this identity carries. My studies at the University of San Francisco, a Jesuit institution, placed utmost value on living with a servant's heart in selfless sacrifice to others. Christianity is seeing and seeking God in all things as a citizen of our community and the world. We hold on even tighter to our faith in the absence of hope. We seek to live a life with meaning and purpose that balances thoughtful analysis with compassion. We see the differences in each other as a challenge to turn away from judgment and embrace tolerance. Being Christian asks that every action we take further a unified, peaceful world.

We honor our ancestors by remembering their resilience and ensuring that the stories of their history, both painful and triumphant, will never be silenced or forgotten. We must share every untold story of our families by participating in activities that support archives, libraries, documentaries, photojournalism, music, and language preservation. This is where I focus my efforts because it's where I turned when I started this journey and where I hope others will follow. The outcome of these endeavors will assist each new generation in taking their place as the stewards of our history.

I see all Assyrians as branches of the same tree, with our intertwined roots providing the stability and strength that keeps us upright during the harshest of storms. We are united in oppression and injustice, but we don't have to be defined by it. We may be rooted in shared grief and sorrow, but our community continues to grow and flourish because of our enduring, continuous identity. Even with the simultaneous heartbreak and miracle of being so spread across the globe, we have survived.

Our painful history will always hold deep within it the promise of a connected and collaborative future.

The past was unkind and unjust. Our future need not be.

## HOT OFF THE PRESS!

### **Election of Mar Gewargis Younan as head of the Ancient Church of the East**

The Holy Synod of the Ancient Church of the East met on November 12, 2022 in Chicago to elect its new patriarch following the withdrawal of Mar Yaqo Daniel who had been chosen as successor to Mar Addai II. The prelates of the Church gathered in the Church of Saint Odisho in Chicago and elected Mar Gewargis Younan, Bishop of the Eastern United States and of all Europe, 110th Catholicos-Patriarch of the Ancient Church of East under the ecclesiastical name of Gewargis III Younan.



### **Mar Aprim Nathanaël elevated to the rank of Metropolitan by Mar Awa III**

On Sunday, November 27, 2022, His Holiness Mar Awa III Royel, Catholicos-Patriarch of the Assyrian Church of the East, elevated Mar Aprim Nathanaël, Bishop of Syria, to the rank of Metropolitan during a mass of consecration celebrated in the presence of many bishops of this Church in the patriarchal cathedral of Mar Youkhanna - Saint John the Baptist in Erbil, Iraq.



## Books in Review

### **A new edition of Abdisho Bar Brikha's book Paradise of Eden**

The Paradise of Eden is the poetic title that Mar Abdisho Bar Brikha gave to his famous collection of 50 poems on religious subjects composed in the style known as Maqamat. The purpose of these poems was to demonstrate the beauty, subtlety and superiority of the Syriac language as a means of expression in comparison to similar claims made for the Arabic language. Mar Abdisho clearly demonstrates his profound knowledge of the Syriac language in these highly complex poems.



The Paradise displays all of the resources of the Syriac language with which the author is acquainted, such as its various metres, its striking expressions, its words of double meaning, and in particular such constructions as will illustrate its flexibility. Homily 3 is composed of lines in which the letters of each are the same whether read from the beginning or the end. Homily 6 may be read in either of three metres, depending on whether certain particles and endings are retained. In homily 21 each line contains the twenty-two letters of the alphabet, neither more nor less. All the verses begin with the letters of the alphabet in order, and this letter is frequently repeated at the end of every line, or at the end of the first three lines, or before Olaph at the end of the line. Where the fourth line of the verse has a different ending from the other three, this ending is usually the same throughout the poem. The second volume of the book is an extremely artificial production. In the first three homilies all the words contain an Olaph, in the 29th they have a Beth, in the 30th a Gomal, in the 31st a Dolath, and so on to the end of the alphabet, completing the number of fifty poems, the last two both containing Taw. There is the further peculiarity that some of poems omit certain letters.

We do also find that different forms of metre are employed in the Paradise. The prevailing one is the septasyllabic. The next most common is the twelve syllable. Eight syllable lines are found in only two poems. The twelfth homily has an irregular construction, the first three lines being of six syllables and the fourth, which is a refrain, of seven syllables. The sixth homily may be read either as a seven or six or five syllable composition, that is, either in the metre of St. Ephrem, Narsai, or Balai.

This new edition is a design edition based on the second edition published by the late Rev. Yosip De Kelaita at the Assyrian Press in Mosul, 1921. In this new edition, I have used graphic design to give it a new shape by thinking in new and modern ways and giving it a contemporary visual style.

*Many thanks are due to the Assyrian Foundation of America for their generous support towards the preparation and publishing this new edition. So also, big thanks to professor Efrem Yildiz for writing the introduction to this new edition. This new edition is planned to be released by 2023 by Nineveh Press.*

**Tomas Beth-Avdalla**  
**Nineveh Press**  
[www.ninevehpress.com](http://www.ninevehpress.com)



## Iraq faces an ongoing crisis of sovereignty 90 years after independence

*Said Bay, emir of the Yazidis (center), in Sinjar, northern Iraq, 1932. Alamy*



Arbella Bet-Shlimon | Published in History Today Volume 72 Issue 10 October 2022

On 3 October 1932 Iraq joined the League of Nations. Symbolically, the assembly's vote to admit Iraq, which terminated Britain's mandate over the country, marked its independence. But true sovereignty remained elusive. For Iraq's monarchy, installed by British officials in 1921, independence brought a sense of anxiety, not triumph.

The end of the mandate came with a condition: the Anglo-Iraqi Treaty of 1930 allowed Britain to maintain military bases in Iraq and kept the country dependent on British aid and advisers. The Iraqi monarchy and government officials worried about the country's vulnerability to foreign meddling. In response, they turned inward. Iraq mainly used its army and air force to police its domestic populations, including Kurdish nationalist rebels, Shia Arab tribes and, most devastatingly, the small Assyrian and Yazidi communities.

In 1933 the Iraqi government ordered its newly expanded army to suppress a potential Assyrian uprising in northern Iraq. The Assyrians were a mainly Christian indigenous community who, within Iraq's borders, were largely refugees. The Ottomans had killed hundreds of thousands of Assyrians alongside Armenians in genocidal operations during the First World War. Throughout the mandate many Assyrian men had been armed by the British; they now aspired to form an independent enclave in the mostly Arab and Kurdish region. The state's reaction was merciless. The Iraqi army pursued and killed Assyrians, the air force bombarded Assyrian villages and irregular local forces joined to loot and destroy Assyrian homes and property, killing and displacing thousands. In August 1933 the army cornered hundreds who had fled the violence and taken refuge in the village of Simele where it slaughtered them. The commonly accepted Iraqi claim that only a few hundred male combatants died is, according to survivor testimonies, a lie.

When troops returned from the massacres, crowds greeted them with enthusiasm in Mosul and Baghdad; as far as most Iraqis were concerned, the Assyrians were imperial collaborators and the army had eliminated a threat to the nascent state. More Iraqis than ever enlisted but, under the provisions of the 1930 treaty, the military they joined was armed and advised by Britain.

In 1935 the Iraqi state used some of the practices it had established while crushing the Assyrians to face down revolts by rebels in Kurdistan and among Shia tribes in the mid-Euphrates region. A commentary in an Iraqi newspaper in May of that year lauded the use of their British-made warplanes, which it called 'Iraqi airplanes bolder than eagles', to quell the Shia uprisings 'without shedding a drop of blood from the sons of our dear nation'.

But worse violence was to come in the autumn when armed Yazidis attacked representatives of the Iraqi state in their homeland of Sinjar, an act of resistance against mandatory conscription. The government responded with the same brutality it had unleashed on the Assyrians. Iraqi forces killed 200 Yazidis, destroyed 11 villages and placed Sinjar under martial law. It then transported Yazidi prisoners of war to Mosul, where they paraded the captured men. As military officers and police looked on, a jeering crowd of locals rushed to stab and throw stones at the captives, killing at least one. The Yazidi prisoners were subjected to rapid military tribunals; on thin evidence nine were sentenced to death and hundreds to long prison terms. Non-Muslim minorities were sometimes indistinguishable in the eyes of the state. Some Assyrians in Mosul were also arrested and charged with complicity in the Sinjar uprising.

The Iraqis who celebrated their military and eagerly lined up to enlist in the 1930s believed they were building a free Iraq. Yet,

90 years after its independence day, Iraq is still dependent. It has suffered multiple invasions by Britain and, more recently, by the United States. Its larger neighbour to the north, Turkey, maintains military bases in Iraqi territory and bombards Iraqi villages in its war against Kurdish militants. Iran, its other neighbour to the east, funds and trains a coalition of militias, which now constitute a substantial portion of Iraq's security forces. Ancient artefacts now enrich foreign museums. For more than a century Iraq's ostensible partners and liberators have dominated it and extracted from it: not only its oil but land, water, heritage and talent.

Iraq's youth still struggle for a sovereignty that is endlessly deferred. In 2019 thousands staged demonstrations and sit-ins against corruption, failed governance and foreign interference, rallying behind the slogan: 'We want a country.' Some 500 of those protesters were murdered, largely by the security forces backed by Iran. In Iraq's north, Turkey's confrontations with Kurdish militants have also had terrible consequences. In July 2022 Turkish artillery struck a tourist resort near the city of Zakho, killing and maiming Iraqi families. One month earlier a Turkish drone killed a 12-year-old Yazidi boy. This atrocity met with a muted response from Baghdad. Meanwhile the tentacles of the US – its special forces and covert agents, the neoliberal restructuring of institutions, the scars of its invasions and airstrikes – are everywhere.

Iraq is not doomed; through every blow, its dissident tradition has endured. But generation after generation has paid a heavy price.

**Arbella Bet-Shlimon** is Associate Professor of History at the University of Washington and author of *City of Black Gold: Oil, Ethnicity, and the Making of Modern Kirkuk* (Stanford University Press, 2019).

## IN LOVING MEMORY OF CLARIS SAVRA

SEPTEMBER 1933 – OCTOBER 2022



Claris Savra was born in Abadan, Iran on September 23, 1933. She was the daughter of Nathneal and Nanajan Amrinkhas, along with brothers Denis, Meles, and Morris. She completed the 6th grade elementary school at Hamadan, then the family decided to move to Tehran.

At Tehran, she completed 11th grade at the Noor school, where predominately teaching was in English. Then she attended a technical school, where she took music lessons and learned to play Accordion.

She took cooking, baking, sewing, stitching classes, and learned how to make artificial flowers. On one occasion, she was elected to make a bouquet of artificial flowers for the Empress Soraya, the Queen of Iran, to present to her at a special gathering.

Claris met Mr. Yossip Savra, a teacher at a high school in Oormie, at a friend's wedding. Two years later, they were married on July 12, 1962, and she moved to live in Oormie for the next 20 years, raising her only daughter, Jasmine. She attended Assyrian Presbyterian Church in Oormie, and was an active member of ladies group, contributing to many noble activities such as sewing clothes for children, cooking, and baking to sell and raise money for needy families and charities.

By the late 1960s all her brothers migrated to the United States, and lived in San Jose, California. In 1970 her brother invited Claris and her family to visit them in U.S. They came to San Jose and stayed with Denis for 45 days. Claris, really loved United State, especially San Jose and wanted to be close to her brothers and their families. In 1989, for the last time she moved permanently to U.S. She resided in San Jose and for a couple of years where she stayed with her brothers, until her daughter Jasmine and her grandson migrated to U.S., and they all united.

She became a member of San Jose Assyrian Presbyterian Church and attended there regularly. She loved Bible studies, where she gathered with her friends and read Bible and loved singing hymns. She believed in the power of prayers, and always prayed for her church, pastor, members, her friends, and finally her family. Her prayers would go on and on, until she got tired or interrupted by a phone call. Her faith in Christ was very important to her, and she would defend it at any cost. When in public with strangers, she would introduce herself as a Christian Assyrian from Iran. She was a generous donor to needy Assyrian elderly in Iran.

She is survived by her daughter Jasmine, her husband, Jack Chaharbakhshi, and her grandson, Anobel.

*May God rest her soul.*





The Historic Morgan Estate in Los Altos Hills, CA. with the Founder and President of Assyrian Arts Institute Nora Betyousef Lacey

6th century Assyrian Chant Lead by Dr. Eve Sada

Eve Sada with Nora Betyousef Lacey

Our program featured a range of musical styles. We began our Christmas concert with Brikh Khannana, a wonderful, sweet-sounding sixth-century monophonic chant, followed by two beautiful a cappella pieces. "At the Palace of Ashurbanipal," a solo piano composition by Hya Demutsky, was masterfully performed by Lolita Emmanuel, an Assyrian pianist and doctoral candidate from Australia. Choir and soloists then performed a variety of beautiful Christmas songs, accompanied by pianist Lolita Emmanuel, flutist Ourhay Shamoon, guitarist Shamina Isaac, and a number of string and percussion instruments performed by a guest musician Michael Nejad.

Our concluding piece was a well-known energetic choral piece, Gloria, by Ola Gjeilo, a fabulous arrangement for SSAA chorus with the 4-hand piano accompaniment played by Lolita Emmanuel and Sweeney Betsargis. The complete concert is available to view at: [Assyrian Women "Joy of Christmas Concert" 2022](#)

Organizing rehearsals and following up with each choir member was a challenging task, but it was all made possible by an exceptional choral coordinator, Leah Sayad, who worked diligently to ensure that our rehearsals ran smoothly and productively.

### Final Thoughts

I am looking forward to the future of the Assyrian Women Choir. Next year, I hope to see more talented musicians join the choir. I believe that our entire community could join in supporting all types of arts and celebrating the accomplishments of our Assyrian artists. Fine arts programs are highly competitive, and our

students require both individual and organizational support. It is difficult to create such ensembles without the people's support in order to ensure continuation in local and worldwide representation.

We have just recently began to see talented Assyrians majoring in Fine and Performing Arts. Our Assyrian nation suffered enormous challenges. As a result, Assyrian families did not encourage their children to pursue Fine Arts degrees for professional careers.

The lack of vocal and instrumental music scores is perhaps one of the greatest obstacles we face in preserving Assyrian music. This makes it very difficult to promote and even share our Assyrian music with professional choirs and orchestras. That being so, providing musical notations and various arrangements is one of our foremost needs.

I hope an Assyrian orchestra can also be founded in the future. Although music is widely practiced and appreciated among our Assyrian communities, few people pursue it academically. Our young generations need our encouragement and support when they choose to study performance art programs as their future careers. Many people around the world learned about our homeland, Ashur-Assyria, through its fascinating arts. Today, we can learn about our history from different types of arts, which are spread all over the museums of the world.

The Joy of Christmas 2022 concerts were truly a remarkable experience due to the precise planning and organizing by the Assyrian Arts Institute as well as the support of the community and several volunteers. We share our history, convey our stories, and bring joy to the listeners' hearts through our music.

## Assyrian Language and Culture Course to be Offered at Illinois Public High School District

On November 1, Niles Township High Schools District 219 Board of Education voted unanimously to add an Assyrian Language and Culture program to its course offerings, becoming the first public high school district in the United States to offer Assyrian as an accredited World Language option. The course passed in large part due to the strong advocacy of Assyrian students, their families, and dedicated District 219 Assyrian staff members.

The decision follows the addition of 13 Assyrian language courses to the Illinois State Course Catalog. The Illinois State Course Catalog includes all state-approved courses for K-12 education that are eligible for state funding and assigns course codes. Public high school districts across Illinois can now choose to offer accredited Assyrian language instruction based on an identified need through a district vetting process. This need will represent student or public interest in a particular study.

District 219 serves more than 4,600 students from the villages of Lincolnwood, Skokie, and parts of Morton Grove and Niles—which are home to one of the largest Assyrian-American communities in the United States.

In conjunction with District 219 administrators, faculty, and staff, the Assyrian Policy Institute (API) strongly for the addition of Assyrian language courses to the Illinois State Course Catalog and mobilized community members to help advance this initiative. The API welcomes the Board's historic decision and commends its leadership in recognizing the needs of the local Assyrian-American community.





HH Mar Poulos

## How Christianity Saved the Assyrian Nation

by Elizabeth Mickaily-Huber, Ph.D.

People often wonder how on earth one could believe that Christianity saved the Assyrian Nation, in view of it being perceived as the source of countless persecutions of Assyrians over the centuries. Herein, I will venture to respond to this difficult, yet important question.

On March 3, 1918, H.H. Mar Poulos of blessed memory gave a speech to his beleaguered flock who had only recently learned of the martyrdom of his beloved brother, Mar Benyamin Shimun. Therein, he stated, "Our history of sixteen centuries should be a lesson to us. During the long ages that are past we have suffered afflictions, persecutions, and massacres, which are beyond the power of human pen to describe, and yet we have not been consumed"[1].

These few words, "... yet we have not been consumed," are powerful because the Assyrian nation truly defied all odds, maintaining its uniquely precious identity to this day. While some may argue that it was the hand of God that helped us to survive (and I wholly agree!), others would argue that it was due to Christianity that we were persecuted in the first place. Although this would appear logical at face value, it's important to consider history on a deeper level.

Going back to ancient times, one can see that religion played an important role in Assyrian life even before the Christian era. Although our ancient ancestors were initially polytheistic, they converted to the belief in one God, following the arrival of the Prophet Jonah on the shores of Nineveh, based on the Biblical account. While some may argue that there is no proof of Jonah's existence or arrival to Nineveh, nor of a sudden historical conversion of the Assyrian people to monotheism, other scholars point to some historical evidence related to the potential conversion of the king of Nineveh during the time of Jonah. Ashur-Dan III [2] ruled Assyria from 773-755 BC. His reign was marked by famine, a solar eclipse, and a formidable earthquake, all of which would have been viewed as omens of divine disfavor to individuals living at that time [3]. Under the circumstances, it follows that he would have believed Jonah's message to repent and to seek God's mercy. As the king of a great empire, his citizens would more than likely have followed suit.

Since shortly after the crucifixion of Christ, there is undisputed evidence that the majority of the Assyrian people converted to Christianity, following the preaching of Saints Thaddeus, Mari, Bartholomew and Thomas in Mesopotamia. This fact is based not only on information provided in the New Testament Book of Acts but is also supported by the writings of the Greek historian Eusebius of Caesarea and by the Syriac text commonly referred to as *The Doctrine of*

*The contents of this article reflect the opinions of the author and are not necessarily those of Nineveh Magazine and/or of the Assyrian Foundation of America.*



An Assyrian-style cross and Chinese lotus adorn the top of the Nestorian Stele of Xi'an, China

*Addai*. Furthermore, all known historical evidence points to the fact that this conversion occurred voluntarily and without coercion [4].

In fact, Christianity became such an important part of Assyrian existence that the Church of the East became one of the most important messengers and missionary churches of all time, spreading the Word throughout the Middle East, as far as China, and perhaps even further. Again, this Christian mission occurred without violence and with respect to the existing cultures and traditions of the countries to which the message was shared. The so-called Nestorian Stele of Xi'an shows both Chinese and Syriac inscriptions along with images of Assyrian-style crosses and Chinese lotus flowers [5], emblematic of the peaceful spread of Christianity accomplished by Assyrian church missionaries, such as the Monk Alopen in China (referenced on the stele).

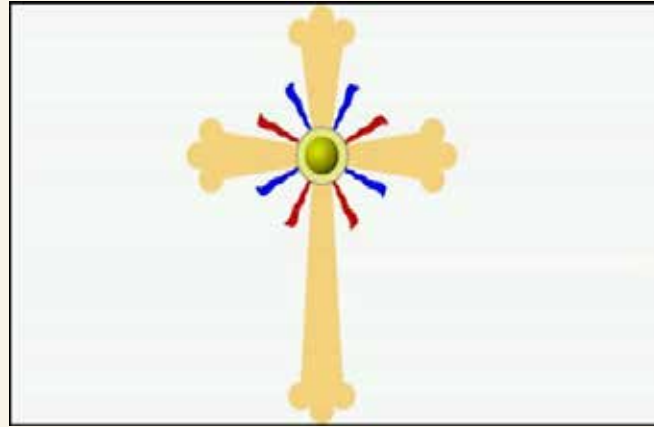
As a result of the onslaught of the Mongols throughout the Near East and Asia, the Assyrians took refuge in the mountains of Turkey where they remained cloistered, yet protected, for hundreds of years [7]. Sadly, many who were living in the foothills were unable to escape and were forced to abjure their Christian Assyrian identity and conform under threat of sword. Logically, one can deduce that without Christianity, and without the refuge that Assyrians were able to find in remote regions, our identity would never have survived the fierce Islamic expansion.

Not only did Christianity become a fundamental part of Assyrian identity, it was in large part responsible for maintaining the uniqueness of the Assyrians through the centuries. Interestingly, Assyrian DNA indicates some surprising facts regarding our existence and origins. A genetic study conducted by the late Dr. Joel Elias, one of the founding members of the Assyrian Foundation of America, showed that Assyrians have a genetic profile distinct from any other

population in the Middle East. Luigi Luca Cavalli-Sforza, considered to be one of the founding fathers of modern genetics, writes, "The Assyrians are a fairly homogeneous group of people, believed to originate from the land of old Assyria in northern Iraq... They are Christians and are possibly *bona fide* descendants of their namesakes" [8]. An important genetic study performed by Akbari et al. supports the fact that, "due to [Assyrian] religious and cultural traditions, there has been little inter-mixture with other populations" [9]. Elias concluded, "The genetic data are compatible with historical data that religion played a major role in maintaining the Assyrian population's separate identity during the Christian era" [10].

There is also sociological evidence that religious identity contributes to the survival of peoples, particularly to those who have endured repeated persecution. The best example of this fact relates to the Jews. Prior to the establishment of the State of Israel, the Jewish people lived in exile under conditions of severe persecution. Their religious identity, linked with cultural elements such as language and the longing for the Promised Land, contributed to their survival over the centuries. Surely, every Assyrian can relate to the longing for the Assyrian homeland, not to mention to the cultural pride felt by Assyrians, knowing that they speak the language of Christ. Indeed, the Assyrians are in very large part responsible for having kept the Aramaic language alive through their liturgy, writings, poetry, and song for over two millennia. Examples of both religious and secular writers include Tatian of Adiabene, Bardaisan of Edessa, Saint Isaac of Nineveh, Mar Aprim and Mar Narsai, Bar Hebraeus, not to mention William D.S. Daniel and Misha Ashurian in more recent history, in addition to many others.

If modern-day Assyrians had an autonomous state or country, then everyone living there would maintain their Assyrian identity naturally through nationality or citizenship.



However, for a stateless people, there is a dire need for strong institutions that fulfill the function of the state. Currently, there is no stronger institution among the Assyrians than the Church. The Church of the East, the Ancient Church of the East, the Syriac Orthodox, as well as the Chaldean churches all propagate the Aramaic (precursor to modern Assyrian) language through liturgy. Indeed, as alluded to above, language is a key carrier of identity because it acts not only as a means of communication, but also as a societal bond. If modern Assyrians wish to preserve their identity, they should recognize the importance of propagating their language to future generations. Currently, the place where importance is given to this matter is within the Church. In fact, many Assyrian churches throughout the world provide free classes to children and adults alike in hope of preserving this unique linguistic heritage.

Through the centuries, Christianity has been the glue that has held the Assyrian nation together. For over two-thousand years, well beyond the fall of ancient Assyria, Christianity has been a major factor helping to maintain the Assyrian identity. The Assyrian (Aramaic / Syriac) language, literature, and intellectual traditions provide an undeniable rich living history. Indeed, the celebrations, fasts, sacred rites, and symbolism that are an integral part of Assyrian Christianity all serve as a portal that links our ancient and modern Assyrian heritage through the sands of time. Just as the great kings of ancient Assyria are part of the Assyrian identity and history, so are the missionaries who traveled from Mesopotamia to Asia with nothing other than the sandals on their feet, a staff in hand, a cross and the Holy Bible, spreading the Good News.

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## Eviction for Christian Refugees in Baghdad: The building where they live must become a shopping center

*Agenzia Fides, Saturday, 15 October 2022*

**Baghdad** - In 2014 they had to flee Mosul and the cities of the Nineveh Plains in northern Iraq. They had abandoned their homes and all their belongings in the face of the advance of so-called Islamic State (IS) militias, they finally found refuge in Baghdad in and around a building in the Zayouna district, now known as the "Virgin Mary" Refugee Camp. Now they have to give way to the commercial interests of entrepreneurs and the Iraqi capital's urban development plans and leave their already precarious living quarters. Over the past few days, more than 120 Christian families have been asked to move out of the building complex in which they are housed. A corresponding order was previously issued by the Directorate of Investments in Baghdad. A new shopping center is to be built in the area.

In recent days, Chaldean Patriarch Louis Raphael Sako (in the photo) had visited the complex, which was named after the "Virgin Mary", to express his solidarity with the people staying in the refugee shelters on land owned by the state to express and speak to displaced families about their concerns. With the new school year that has just begun and winter approaching, the Iraqi Cardinal turned to the political authorities, according to the Chaldean Patriarchate, "to postpone the evacuation for at least a year or to find a reasonable alternative to house these families".

On October 13, a year after the last general election, the Iraqi parliament elected 78-year-old Kurd Abdel Latif Rashid as president. Rashid received 162 votes against 99 that went to outgoing Barham Saleh. Immediately after his election, the newly elected president commissioned Mohammed Shia' Soudany to form a government. Rashid, candidate of the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan, was born in Sulaymaniyah. Previously he was Minister for Water Supply. The prime minister appointed by him is a representative of the pro-Iranian wing of Iraq's Shiite parties. In the long post-election political stalemate, tensions between supporters of the Shiite Imam Mouqtada Sadr - at the head of the coalition that won the most seats in parliament - and militiamen from the pro-Iranian parties had brought Iraq to the brink of civil war.

## Two Assyrians in Sydney named in the list of Best Scientists in the World for 2022. Only two percent of the world's scientists are included in this list, published by Stanford University.

Dr Rami Khoshaba and Professor Albert Zomaya, have been listed as the most referenced scientists in 2022. An extensive data research published by Stanford University, on the Elsevier BV database, outlines the world's most referenced scientists. Only two percent of the world's scientists are listed and named in this publication, including the top 100,000 scientists in the world.

The database collates information from various sources. The Elsevier BV report published by Stanford University, outlines a report of work from 2021 of the most-cited scientists, published 2022. Dr Rami and Professor Albert also made the top list for 2020 and 2021.

We learn about the amazing work which has brought both Professor Albert and Dr Rami to this accomplishment, along with the many various accomplishments they have achieved in the past.

Professor Albert is an academic in the Faculty of Engineering at the University of Sydney and currently supervises PhD computing science students and has been an academic at the University since 2002. Professor Albert was recently **Elected Fellow, Australian Academy of Science for 2022.**

Dr Rami Khoshaba's extensive experience in the field of electrical engineering and computer science includes the use of technology to support people with mobility needs, with the use of the brain's signals for movement of robotic arms, this study is known as Myoelectric Control. He currently works for the NSW Government.

Both Dr Rami and Professor Albert have actively published reports in journals and articles, partnering up with other scientists in various fields to achieve great outcomes in computer science and technology.

Dr Rami and Professor Albert welcome aspiring students in Australia and abroad to reach out to them about commencing in the field of computer science.

A	B	C
Palm, Wilhelm	German Cancer Research	deu
Abbott, Robert D.	University of Virginia	usa
Somers, Emily C.	University of Michigan	usa
Leblond, Jean Baptiste	Sorbonne Universite	fra
Talatahari, Stamak	University of Tabriz	irn
Chiappini, Cristina	Leibniz Institute for Astr	deu
Hammers, Hans	UT Southwestern Medic	usa
Grunwald, Sabine	University of Florida	usa
Huh, Jun Ho	Korea Maritime and Ocea	kor
Ky, Bonnie	University of Pennsylvan	usa
So, Kevin Kam Fung	Spears School of Busines	usa
Zhang, Jia Jie	Hangzhou Medical Colle	chn
Moffat, Alistair	University of Melbourne	aus
Prem, Kiesha	London School of Hygiene	gb
Chen, Fa Ming	The Fourth Military Medic	chn
Huse, Sue	Leidos Inc.	usa
Owens, Philip N.	University of Northern B	can
Halberstadt, Adam L.	VA San Diego Healthcare	usa
Pan, Huilin	Department of Chemistr	chn
Kim, H. H.	National Institute of Adv	jpn
<b>Khoshaba, Rami</b>	<b>The University of Sydney</b>	<b>aus</b>
Bedon, Chiara	Università degli Studi di	ita
Gugliucci, Alejandro	Touro University Califor	usa
Hughes, Christopher C.W.	University of California,	usa
Simon, Melissa A.	Northwestern University	usa
Singh, Baljeet	Post Graduate Governme	ind
Goldfried, Marvin R.	Stony Brook University	usa
Hagquist, Curt	Göteborgs Universitet	swe
Cassano, Alfredo	Università della Calabria	ita
Sparks, T. H.	Uniwersytet Przyrodnicz	pol
Sur, Mriganka	Massachusetts Institute	usa
Torp-Pedersen, Christian	Nordsjællands Hospital	dnk
Schnittger, Susanne	M.I. Münchner Leukämie	deu
Jaturapitakkul, Chai	King Mongkut's Universit	tha
Robertson, Susan L.	The Faculty of Education	gbr
Dong, Weisheng	Xidian University	chn
Vilar, Vitor J.P.	Universidade do Porto	prt

A	B	C	
33947	Bali, Gunmar	Universität Regensburg	deu
33948	Li, Lin	The University of Manch	gb
33949	Liu, Jinsong	University of Texas MD	usa
33950	Cartier, Dennis	Stanford University	usa
33951	Zeldin, Darryl C.	National Institute of Env	usa
33952	Yang, Huanghao	Fuzhou University	chn
33953	Shoemaker, Robert H.	National Cancer Institute	usa
33954	Hu, Y.	University of Science and	chn
33955	Mi, Huaiyu	Keck School of Medicine	usa
33956	Calinon, Sylvain	Institut Dalle Molle D'int	che
33957	Eichhorn, Astrid	Syddansk Universitet	dnk
33958	Glynn, P. W.	Rosenstiel School of Mar	usa
33959	Mintun, Mark A.	Washington University in	usa
33960	Krein, Philip T.	University of Illinois Urb	usa
33961	Han, Fudong	Rensselaer Polytechnic I	usa
33962	Solomon, Sean C.	Lamont-Doherty Earth O	usa
33963	Lewis, Dyani		
33964	King, M. C.	University of Washington	usa
<b>33965</b>	<b>Zomaya, Albert Y.</b>	<b>The University of Sydney</b>	<b>aus</b>
33966	Duboule, Denis	Université de Genève	che
33967	Droit-Volet, S.	Université Clermont Au	fra
33968	Mohler, Emile	University of Pennsylvan	usa
33969	Sohal, Vikaas S.	University of California,	usa
33970	Schwitzgebel, Eric	University of California,	usa
33971	Locati, Massimo	Humanitas Research Hos	ita
33972	Flammer, Josef	Universität Basel	che
33973	Aboelmagd, Mohamed	University of Shajjah	are
33974	Kuran, Timur	Department of Economics	
33975	Zheng, Lei	Johns Hopkins School of	usa
33976	Liu, Zhaoping	Ningbo Institute of Indu	chn
33977	Fazio, Francesco	Università degli Studi di	ita
33978	Farag, Mohamed A.	Cairo University	egy
33979	Gill, Sarvajeet Singh	Maharshi Dayanand Univ	ind
33980	Trebicka, Jonel	Universitätsklinikum Fra	deu
33981	Brun-Bulsion, Christian	Institut Pasteur, Paris	fra
33982	Maslin, Mark	University College Lond	gbr
33983	Sánchez, Carmen	Universidad Autónoma	mex

The Elsevier BV report published by Stanford University showing the names of the scientists.

<https://www.sbs.com.au/language/assyrian/en/podcast-episode/assyrian-scientist-from-sydney-in-the-top-200-scientist-list-in-the/56hg8rdow>



## William lived it, I tell it:

By Frieda Warda

Late William Warda was born on June 15, 1941 in Village of Mooshabad to devoted parents Babajan Warda and Lida Pireh Ayvaz. He was 9 years old when family moved to Tehran Permanently. During his education, he was exceptional student and received medals. William finished his high school and then past Konkur test, which from 100,000 applicant only 3000 were accepted. That gave him an option to go to Tehran University or could go abroad for education without going to 2 years of mandatory Military.

William came to US with student visa from Wyoming university and graduated college with degree in economics. But communicating with Assyrians through teaching Assyrian, website, writing articles in his own magazine or other publications for Assyrians or behalf of betrayed Assyrian community was his way of life.

Later he moved to Chicago to be part of hotblooded Assyrians. He married in Chicago and has 2 daughters by the name Ramina and Tammy. 2 sons, by the name Raman, Sargon. He was offered an excellent position, thus, family moved to Los Angeles. William ran one of the three shifts of the company, with all employees including upper management were under him. He received substantial compensation as well. Family settled in Long Beach, CA.

William joint Shooshata a nonpolitical organization in Tehran, Iran, with many female and male members, when he was just a teen. In 50's when political meetings were forbidden by the government, since Shooshata was not considered a political group they still gathered in Assyrian club. They refused to leave, even when they were asked to! When police were on their way, per Dr. Paulisian, then a medical student, another member would take William out of there, Because of him being a minor.

Shooshata's members taught Assyrian language, established a library, gathered old books in Assyrian or about Assyrians all the way back to Atour's time, which the country was known as a power of force and knowledge globally

Members by repairing and replacing the cover, made the books look presentable and new. Since Assyrian community was not equipped to print and publish, the word setting was done manually. Dr. Ashour Moradkhan, Late Mr. Albert Khorshid and Dr. William Peroyan were in charge of manual word setting. Subsequently William was taught word setting by Dr. William Peroyan. Therefore, William Warda did Word setting, for RIP, Author, composer William Daniel's first book. That made it possible for the book to be printed and published.

During high school, he was a member of RIP Maestro Nebu Issabey Coir also. They had a magnificent performance in presence of the king and Shahbanou in Ruddaky Talar.

At age 17 he became President of Shooshata. One of his best ideas which still continues in US, or may be worldwide, was to start Celebrating 1st Nissan. He had even drawn the Shooshata logo on the wall.

While in Chicago, together with RIP William Daniel, started Mhadiana magazine. They wrote articles, poetry and Assyrian news from around the world, especially Iraq.

In early 1970s, William as well as other Assyrians joint hands, donated their work tirelessly and money, bought the current Assyrian American Association of Southern Calif. In short CLUB. That was proved to be an awesome investment in people. Because instead of gathering in other places, they gathered in their own club. In 70s and 80s, since there was no church in Southern California, it was used as a church also.

2006-2010, William became President of Assyrian American Association of Southern California. His real vision for Assyrian was to have our own country. If that was not possible, goal was to replace the Club with a bigger, more functional building, more parking space and obviously better area. I listed the club. In no time, there was a full price offer plus commission on the said property. I had managed to find the perfect replacement building

as well. Yet as time went by, after a year or so, other board members that ran with William and were in full agreement to replace the Club, changed their mind. Consequently, deal folded altogether and that was a big disappointment for all of us. Emotional William, didn't like people to be disrespected for any reason. He admitted, has respected Dr. Paulisian as a father majority of his life and he asked us to leave. Unfortunately, nowadays we rent other places for our gatherings. Moreover, while he was president, he was praised for noticeably saving more money year to year for the Club. There was also a Scholarship day once a year. He had never candidate anyone from family members. He believed, the money belonged to students, other than Board of Director's family member. Furthermore, he published another magazine by the name of Shotapouta with help of Mr. Norey Bet Baba and Mr. Robert Baba.

During financial meltdown, a lot of people had problem with B of A which had taken over Countrywide's portfolio. Thus, I wrote a complaint letter to congress banking committee in 2011. A month later, I called for the statues, in my surprise, CEO of the banks and I end up being on the telephone, with President of that time and Vice president Biden. During my conversation with the President, in order to clarify my background, and Nationality as an Assyrian Christian woman, the conversation got extended to lack of security and safety of Assyrians particularly and Christians in general in Iraq. As we are aware, William was founder of few magazines and wrote countless articles about Assyrians or on behalf of betrayed, and abused Assyrians. Sometimes the articles would attract a Politician's attention too. William's article regarding "354 churches burned in Iraq. Christians being treated in cruel way and they were feeling unsafe in their own homeland." Had attracted Vice president's attention. Subsequently, Vice president Biden verified to me and The President, that the writer of that article was a fellow by the name of William Warda. I did verify the writer was my brother.

Obviously after killing 58 people and 200 injured kids and adult in Sunday sermon, many Christians worldwide had sent letters to the Whitehouse. President admitted, two rooms adjoining oval office, from floor to ceiling, were full of complaint letters from individuals and churches, against Christians being slaughtered and abused in Iraq. President's stand was as clear as possible. He said "I have researched a lot, have asked and had long conversation with knowledgeable people about Iraq whose, homeland might be! That country belongs to whoever is running it. Now, Mr. Biden and you are saying, Christians or Assyrians do not feel safe in Iraq. In that case, I suggest they leave to a safer destination, not to stay under other's cruel treatments and abuse." Thus, I was desperately looking for a messenger or a way to convey US government's decision

to Assyrian in Iraq particularly, or Christians in general. Therefore, I approached people actively working in and for Assyrian's community. I was given no idea or suggestion what so ever.

William always talked the talk and walked the walk. He owned a Website called "Christians of Iraq." He had access to over 1000 e-mails. He said "They will share the news with leaders of the communities and others." Statistics show, many Christians left Iraq between 2011 and the time of rising ISIS. I am sure, Since, information was solid and believable William's efforts to contact and inform people had a lot to do with it.

One of William's positive characteristics was, whenever people negatively spoke about someone, he would say: "Who am I, to judge so and so?" That obviously would close the conversation altogether. No matter where he was, he followed instruction and obeyed the law also. Once, William and I went to St. Mary Assyrian Church, which is required for females to wear scarf in the church. He was aware, I am not fond of that. When I parked the car, I saw him standing in front of the church holding a scarf. I laughed, he handed the scarf to me and said "Is required." Another time, we went to our bank. We entered in a large branch in Turlock. I was Shocked all employees one by one knew him by his first name and asking him how was he doing?

He has published a book by the name of "Assyrian Beyond Fall of Nineveh." Even though was published several years ago, Amazon still sells it for original price. He was writing another book. Unfortunately, January 2020, he had Shingles and his eyes were not co-operating. I was wondering who could put together 500 handwriting pages? Who would have the same vision and knowledge to finish it? Apparently, he had done a lot of research about the subject also.

At this moment, is appropriate to praise my friend and William's best friend author, well known poet Yousip bit Yousip. Who has been William's friend for over 60 years. A true and loving human being. He helped William when decided to move to Turlock also. Even the last day just before William past away, he visited him as well.

William leaves behind 2 daughters and 2 sons. Ten William leaves behind 2 daughters and 2 sons. Ten grandkids by the name of Monte, Latasha, Joshua, Hanna, Anthony, Jerad, Sanora, Briella, Regan and Kenyan and two great grandkids. He also leaves behind Frieda his sister, her kids Samuel and Lydia. His Brother Victor, his sons, Dante and Patrick. He leaves behind many old and young friends in US and around the globe as well.



## The Life of Timothy M. Soleiman: An Autobiography (Part III) From 1942 onward

### Asudan Road Construction Company

In 1942, while World War II was in full force, the Germans began approaching our country (Iran) through Russia. They were near the crossing between Lebanon, Iraq, and Syria, while the Japanese were near India's frontiers. Therefore, the allies had to keep away from the German army when trying to provide Russia with materials and food. The Russians were interested in Iran, including Rasht and Jahlour on the Caspian Sea, as well as occupied Azerbaijan.

The allies started to rebuild all the Arabian and Iranian roads since they were in poor condition and could not accommodate millions of tons of supplies which were going to be shipped to Russia for the army occupation in Iran. For some time before the war, a Norwegian company was engaged by the Iranian government to build railroads and modern highways. The allies gave them contracts to build roads for Iranian companies. There were now many road construction companies, and they were given a substantial amount of work at that time. Many businesses were joining together to form construction companies to get contracts. During that time, I had a military acquaintance named Cyrus Davajan, a lawyer who had obtained his degree from a U.S. college. He came to me and asked if I would be interested in forming such a company, saying that the opportunities were good to make money. He informed me that he already had an engineer on hand named Fred Tamimi, an Assyrian. At first, I was not interested, as I had my own auto parts business, and it was hard to take care of two quite diverse types of businesses. Also, the road building projects would be far away, and I would have to leave my two stores for extended periods of time. However, after thinking it over, I came to realize that it would be worthwhile for me to go into this business, although I also

knew it would be dangerous for us. Clearly, I did not want to stay in Iran if the Germans or the Japanese invaded the country.

After some consideration, I consented to establish a company with Cyrus Davajan, and we asked Mr. Avazadeh if he would be interested to become our partner which he accepted. As it turned out, Davajan did not have enough capital so he asked me if I could loan him his share of the partnership saying that his sister in America would later send the funds. Therefore, I invested 50,000 Rials into the company for Cyrus Davajan's share. After we completed our company's registration, we received several small jobs, but we were unsuccessful in getting a big contract. At last, a big construction job came along to build a road between Basrah and Zahedan.

None of us three partners had any knowledge of road construction. Our engineer, Fred Tamimi, left our company and took a small contract for himself. Thus, we hired another engineer whose name was Shidrok Radeh. He was educated in Russia and was a graduate of a Russian college of engineering. He was about 30 years of age but had no practical experience.

In April 1942, as soon as we signed the contract, we arranged a convoy of three cars to investigate the area where construction would begin. It took us three days to reach Bam, the city from which our project would begin. It was an extremely dangerous journey because there were many bandits on these rough roads for about seven hundred miles. The weather was warm and dry. We went through the cities of Qom, Esfahan, Yazd, Kerman, and Bam.



Timothy M. Soleiman  
1898 – 1990



Pictured above are Mr. & Mrs. Timothy Soleiman and their family celebrating their 50th golden wedding anniversary at a party given by their children.

Nearly all this road was in the desert and in some places a big convoy of trucks to cross that road and much time was needed as it was on the junction between the Middle East and India. The British had spotted Japanese submarines in the Persian Gulf, so our section of road was critical for trucks and cars to bring supplies. Our job was exceedingly difficult. There were neither stones nor gravel, so we needed to use only sand to build the road. Around this time, the Japanese arrived on the frontiers of India, making our job even more urgent. Our road would need to be completed as soon as possible, as sea ways were dominated by Japanese submarines, making ours the only safe route to India. We had to hire Assyrians to bring materials, as many of them were engaged in the trucking business at the time. Because the job was excessively big, the allies decided to give half the work to us and half to another company.

At that time, there was also a great famine going on in this part of the country. There was no wheat to make bread, a staple food in the Iranian diet. People were eating dates for food and wheat had to be brought in from Tehran or Esfahan. We arrived in Bam where we stayed one night and then set off to see the area where construction was to begin. Cars could easily cross parts of the road, but more than half of the road went through desert sand. As soon as the car would stop, the wheels would sink into the sand, and we had to drive fast to avoid sinking further. Because of these issues, our return to Bam was quite difficult. During the summer months, sandstorms would become a problem.

At the start of construction, the engineers told us that we would need to make a composite mixture six inches thick to cover the road. At our location, we had only sand but we had no water, dirt, nor lime so we had to transport

everything in over long distances. Water would have to be transported using big tanks on trucks from 40 to 70 miles away and we did not know from how far away the lime would have to be brought in. We also needed experienced workers to operate large kilns necessary to bake rock to be used in the mixture.

After signing our contracts, we rented an office in Tehran. We also bought a Chevrolet truck and a Buick car. Additionally, we needed to borrow one million Rials from the bank using Avazadeh's garage and residential house as collateral. As our employees had no money, we had to pay all their expenses and pay to support their families in Tehran. Cyrus Davajan was appointed as manager. We realized that it would not be feasible to bring all the material necessary to make the composite mixture. We would have to transport pre-made rock blocks, but we had no idea were to purchase these.

Our engineers and Davajan spent many days working to find the necessary materials. They were fortunate enough to find a rock mine not far away, however we would still need to transport the rock seven hundred miles east of Tehran. It took about one week for each truck to arrive to its destination. Many times, the trucks would break and had to be sent in for repairs in Esfahan or Tehran. The rough roads were still dangerous and many times our trucks were held up by robbers. Also, there were sandstorms in the region that began in the springtime. Sand was blown about and created hills that were dangerous and difficult to drive over.

In Tehran we started hiring subcontractors, stone masons, mechanics, cooks, electricians, carpenters, bakers, truck drivers and clerks. We hired about three hundred people, most of whom were Assyrians. Truck owners became subcontractors. We gave each one of them a portion of the road to construct according to their ability. Each of them had two or three foremen and hundreds of local people as





*Commemorative monument at cemetery  
donated by Timothy Soleiman*

labor along with their families. We needed to supply each contractor with food, water, tools, and other necessities to work in the desert. Water, which was transported in big tanks on trucks from 50 to 60 miles away, was poured in empty barrels of oil which every subcontractor had. Every day we had to supply all these people with all the necessities on the road. Our office would bring stores of food, gasoline, oil, all kinds of tools and machinery. We also had a large bakery to bake bread. We needed to bring the wheat from Esfahan about 300 or 400 miles away.

We had a big camp called Stoneline where we had hundreds of people working along with their families. We had big compressors to drill holes in rocks and we had to use dynamite, drills, and hammers to break some of them into smaller pieces. These pieces were then loaded onto trucks and taken on the road to be paved, making the road construction project more economical. In some areas, the road would need to be narrow while wider in other areas.

Drinking water was scarce because only one place had a sweet water spring. Other places had underground water that was salty and not fit for drinking so we built a small basin into which the salty water would continuously flow. Altogether there would only be enough to fill four or five large tanks mounted on 5-ton trucks. To fill tanks with water from the pool by hand it would take many hours so we dug near the pool a road deep enough such that the top of the tank was lower than the bottom of the pool and water would flow into the tank.

Unfortunately, this is where Mr. Soleiman's journal ends. The highway was successfully completed in 1943.

#### **Life Summary of Timothy Soleiman**

Mr. Soleiman (Rabi Tima) was a graduate of the

Presbyterian School class of 1914. During the tragic flight from Urmia (Rezaeiah), he lost all his family. In the city of Bijar, he became extremely sick with cholera. Nobody believed he could survive. Thank God he arrived at Hamadan safely but very weak. In 1917, he was inducted into the Assyrian army. In the winter of 1918, he went by horse wagon to Zanzan. He walked from there with other Assyrians up to Tabriz. In 1919, he taught at the Assyrian Refugee School. In 1920, he went to Baghdad and was employed for seven years as a canteen manager for the Navy-Army-Air Force Institute of the British Army. Mr. Soleiman wed the former Miss Suria Shlemon in Baghdad in 1924 and then in 1928 they moved to Teheran, Iran. There he developed an auto spare parts business. In 1942, in partnership with Mr. Avazadeh and Cyrus Davajan, the Asudan Construction Company was established. They constructed roads about one hundred miles from Bam toward Zahedan on the Pakistan Frontier and a landing ground for the British Air Force at Kerman, Iran.

In 1944, during World War II, the family left for the U.S. via India where they had to wait seven months to obtain passage to America. Mr. Soleiman was able to board a military vessel but could not take his family with him because the ship was unable to accommodate women and children. The trip took one month. To evade the Japanese submarines, the ship crisscrossed the equators twice. Mr. Soleiman's arrival in Hawaii coincided with the death of President Franklin D. Roosevelt, and on the day the war with Germany ended, Mr. Soleiman reached Los Angeles.

Meanwhile, his wife and five children, Phillip, Andrew, Shirley, Mary, and Fred, had been able to obtain passage on a neutral Scandinavian ship, the Gripsholm. The family was reunited in New York City on the day the war with Japan ended.

Since Mr. Soleiman came to the U.S., he was highly active in the Assyrian societies. For 25 years, he was the treasurer of the Assyrian Presbyterian Church of Yonkers. He was also the treasurer of the Assyrian American Association of Yonkers and a member of the Assyrian American Federation's Educational Committee.

Mr. Soleiman followed the same humanitarian tradition of helping his fellow Assyrians that he developed as a young man in Urmia. While in Iran, he felt it was his duty as a Christian to help his Assyrian brothers any way he could. He bought land, prepared it to be fit for a cemetery in Teheran, and donated it as a non-sectarian cemetery for Assyrians of all denominations. He worked to set up a scholarship program through the United Presbyterian Foundation to promote Assyrian students in their study of the ministry.

Dr. Fraidoun Atouraya (1891-1925)

### **YA NISHRA D'TKHUMEE**

O' Eagle of Tkhumeeruler of the sky  
Spread out your wings to Tyaryee fly  
From Urmi to Mosul and both of Barvaree  
To help Assyria our ancient nation  
Let's land in Mosul offer our prayer  
For our people and their salvation  
O! mighty traveler wayward away  
Glide forth no waiver nor delay  
Visit the burials of past martyrs  
Those who to Atour devoted their life  
Let's salute their ways and great deeds  
Swear devotion to their creed  
When we arrive at the given spot  
O! eagle of Assyria and the greater Zab  
Drop me on the cliffs, merciless rocks  
To Atour my nation sacrifice my life  
On the shores of Zab old as Ashure, let me fall  
Bury my remains as one who sacrificed all

Dr. Freidoun Atouraya -1917

*Translation from Assyrian by William Mooshabad Warda*



Members of Syria's Syriac Christian minority attend a ceremony to mark the mass killing of the Assyrian civilian population more than a century ago.

## Christians Say Sayfo Martyrs Should Get Genocide Status

*Syriac-Aramean Christians, fewer in number than similarly suffering Armenians, assert their Ottoman-era plight deserves separate recognition.*

In the waning days of the Ottoman Empire, evangelicals laid down their lives for their Lord. Living in Nusaybin, once home to the ancient theological school of Nisibis, they were among the firstfruits of the Sayfo (“sword”) martyrs. Overall, modern estimates posit half a million deaths of Syriac-Aramean Christians at the hands of Turkish and Kurdish soldiers, concurrent with the Armenian genocide that claimed 1.5 million lives. Today this Christian community, still speaking the language of Jesus, seeks its own recognition.

In June 1915, the Muslim-majority city—now located on Turkey’s southeastern border with Syria—had about 100 Syrian Orthodox families, and an equal number belonging to other Christian sects. The Protestants were rounded up with Armenians and Chaldeans, marched to the front of town, and shot dead. The Orthodox families were promised peace by the local leader, but 30 men fled and sought refuge in the rugged mountains. A monk, trusting authorities, led soldiers to their hideout seeking to reassure the frightened band. According to reports, along the way they turned on the monk, demanding he convert to Islam. Upon his refusal, they cut off his hands, then feet, then head. Returning to Nusaybin, the soldiers assembled the remaining Christians, leading them out of town. In joyful procession the believers sang hymns of encouragement: *Soon we will be with our Lord Jesus Christ*. Refusing conversion, one by one they were shot, and then dumped in a well.

In 1919, then-Syrian Orthodox Archbishop Aphrem Barsaum filed a report to the prime minister of Britain, after the Allied powers displaced the Ottomans. Similar massacres had been repeated in 335 other villages in the archbishop’s jurisdiction, killing 90,313 Christians and destroying 162 churches. Collecting other reports, delegates to the Paris Peace

Conference following World War II tallied 250,000 deaths. “It is unjust when they speak only of the Armenian Genocide,” said Archbishop Joseph Bali, secretary to Syriac Orthodox patriarch Mor Ignatius Aphrem II. “We also need to be vocal about our people.”

Fueled by a substantial diaspora, the Armenian tragedy has been recognized as a genocide by 33 nations. The US resolution, passed by Congress in 2019, listed additionally Greek, Assyrian, Chaldean, Syriac, Aramean, Maronite, and other Christian victims. Greeks are also among those seeking individual recognition. The situation with the others is complicated by name. Divided into three sects—Syriac Orthodox, Chaldean Catholic, and the Assyrian Church of the East—portions of the community prioritize different terminology.

Chaldean patriarch Louis Sako has stated the theological differences are not substantial, but each body represents a distinct tradition. His church, based in Baghdad, is aligned with the Vatican, while the Syriacs, based in Damascus and most populous in India, are within the non-Chalcedonian Oriental Orthodox family. The independent Assyrians are heir to the ancient Nestorian church. “I see nothing to prevent [our] union,” said Sako last month. “What unites us is much greater than what divides us.” This would include the genocide—but advocacy was slow to develop. Scattered across remote mountain villages, Syriac-Aramaic farmers were less cosmopolitan than the integrated Armenians. Violence began in the 1840s, killing thousands. Another massacre followed in 1895, and the Young Turk revolution of 1908 led to further displacement.

As the Ottomans lost territory in the Balkans in 1913, Muslim

refugees streamed to the empire, which resettled them in Christian areas. And following the empire’s dissolution after the Great War, the 1923 Lausanne Conference established the current borders of Turkey and Greece, leading to further transfer of Muslim and Christian populations. But by then, local Christians, indigenous for centuries, had been subjected to death marches, with survivors fleeing to Syria. The Armenians were awarded a nation-state in the Caucasus, but the Syriac-Aramaic people had no country of their own. Both communities integrated into the religious diversity of the Levant. But Habib Ephrem, president of the Syriac League in Lebanon, said that the traumatized families hardly wanted to speak of Sayfo among themselves, let alone to the outside world. “Our people were late to begin a political effort to recognize what happened to them,” he said. “We had no PR or international relations.”

Ephrem’s grandfather came to Lebanon in 1917, but eventually many compatriots relocated to Europe, particularly to Sweden. He has been advocating for genocide recognition the past 15 years, rewarded in 2007 when the International Association of Genocide Scholar (IAGS) judged that both the Assyrians and Greeks deserved separate status. It called on the Turkish government to issue a formal apology. As with the Armenian Genocide, Ankara denies any formal policy to exterminate a people. Seeking an audience, Ephrem traveled to Istanbul University in 2006 and quoted a Turkish poet: *Separating a person from his land is like ripping his heart out of his chest*. “My grandfather did not come for tourism,” he said. “We were uprooted, just because we were there.” Despite failures in Turkey, since the IAGS decision genocide advocacy has gained steam. Sweden (2010), Armenia (2013), the Netherlands (2015), Germany (2016), and Syria (2020) have all officially recognized the Syriac-Aramaic plight.

Ephrem has lobbied in the US as a regular attendee of the National Prayer Breakfast. But his primary concern lies elsewhere—in the stability of Middle East Christian communities. In 2015, ISIS overran 33 villages in Syria’s Khabour River valley, and today less than 400 people remain, he said. The economic crisis is driving emigration from Lebanon, and he fears his people will eventually dissolve into the European mosaic. It is right to recognize the genocide, but the stakes are greater than memory. “Is it better to forget and live as a citizen in Sweden, or to weep and cry?” Ephrem asked. “If you don’t have a future in your homeland, who are you?” That question, said Theodora Issa, must be answered by faith and forgiveness.

“The responsibility falls to the church and the faithful,” said the Australian academic and daughter of an archpriest in the Syriac Orthodox Church of Antioch, originally from Iraq’s Nineveh Plains region. “Speaking about Sayfo will help our people cling to their identity.” Issa bears a double burden—her mother’s family fled the Turks; a century later, her father’s family fled from ISIS. Her activism includes publishing books, participating in conferences, and representing her denomination in the central committee of the World Council of Churches (WCC).

Last month, the general assembly voted to not only recognize the Syriac-Aramaic genocide as “distinct and separate” from the Armenian tragedy—recognized by the WCC nine years earlier—but also to work for its greater awareness among all member churches. “We acknowledge that these tragic events occurred,” read the official WCC resolution, “and that they must be named by their right name.” If it was simply called the “Christian Genocide” from the beginning, said Issa, things might have been different. As it is, the standard designation has overshadowed the suffering of Sayfo’s diverse Syriac-speaking communities. This religious label, said Craig Simonian, fits the history. “Turkic-Ottoman leadership was not concerned whether a Christian was of Armenian, Greek, or Assyrian descent,” said the regional director for the World Evangelical Alliance’s Peace and Reconciliation Network, an ethnic Armenian. “And in the face of outright genocide denial on the part of the Turkish government today, it is vital that the atrocities perpetrated against the Syriac-Aramaic people be recognized in its own right, rather than a footnote in the broader Armenian Genocide.”

Without denying the massacres, other Armenians say that Sayfo lacked the clear political agenda that marked the eradication of Armenians. As such, it does not meet the standard of official “genocide.” Armenians commemorate April 24 as the beginning of the 1915 genocide. To distinguish, Bali stated that his church’s Holy Synod designated June 15 instead. It marks the approximate date two bishops were killed in the monastery-laden region of Tur Abdin, which translates to “mountain of the servants of God.” And since their capture in Syria in 2013, two Syrian-born Orthodox bishops remain missing today. Sayfo, its denial, and continued atrocities against the community can lead many to animosity. “For me, as a Christian, it is an outrage to hear how members of my community, especially the elder among them, indiscriminately curse Kurds and Turks as people that one just cannot trust,” wrote Amill Gorgis, publisher of *The Persecution and Extermination in Tur Abdin, 1915*, which relates the evangelical story from Nusaybin above. “Why are we like this? Are we not used to learning and hearing the texts from the gospel where it says: Love your enemies, and pray for those that persecute you?” The compendium, he wrote, is an effort to understand the source of this pain.

Many sources emphasized that Sayfo is not about revenge. Tens of thousands of Syriac-Aramaic people live in Turkey today in relative peace, while the Assyrian Church of the East is returning its patriarchal headquarters to Iraqi Kurdistan. Sayfo can never bring our ancestors back, said Bali. And it is not about reconciliation, for the original killers cannot be identified. At stake is the truth, and a gaping wound. Jesus healed the bleeding woman, he said. But before the miracle, he asked for her story, and let her speak about her pain. The same is necessary for Syriac-Aramaic peoples today—in recognition of their genocide. “We as Christians have to forgive, for the sake of our healing,” said Bali. “It is not true forgiveness, if we just keep it inside.”

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Any donations received after 12/31/2022 will be included in the next issue of the Nineveh Magazine.

*Thank you for your generosity and support.*

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Hilda Papion	\$150	\$150				Sargon Yalda	\$50	\$50			
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Jack & Louise Mishel	\$100	\$100				Tom Shahbaz	\$100	\$100			
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John & Julia Hallisy	\$250			\$250	<i>Lily Jacob Fund</i>	William & Marianne Miner	\$100	\$100			
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Joseph & Sabrina Danipour	\$200				<i>\$200 Memory of Claris Savra</i>	Yousef Malekzadeh	\$200	\$100		\$100	
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Joshua Neuman	\$25			\$25							

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

**መጽሐፍ:**

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<sup>2</sup> ቀደምት ወይም ማለፊያ፡ ለዚህ ዓይነት ጥያቄ የሚያስፈልገው ምንጭ ነው።  
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كَلْبَتَا دَوْدِيسَا: لَبِي دِيكَلِيهَتِي خَد صَنَصَسَا كَب سِنَكْتَا  
مِوَاكَلِيكْتَا: هَكْتَا سَوَا مَوَهَكْتَا لِكْفَت مَزَوَا لَه جَدَمَا تَا سَد لُزَا  
سَدَا لَبِي كَبَلَا (دَوَاوَا).

حَمَاكْتَا سَمَايِي سَمَايِي خَد كِي لِي مَكَلِيكْتَا سَدَا دِكَبَلَا:  
دَكْدَد كَقَدَبَدَا مَدَا لَبِي كَمَلَا (1908 - 1975) مِ كَمَاوَا دَلِيه  
مَدَمَا سَا دَلِيه: مَسَبَا لِيه مِ يَهَتِي دِيكَلِي. مَكَلِي دَلِيه مَمَاكْتَا:  
سَوَا لِي خَدَا دَقَدَبَدَا مَجَت سَوَا مِ لُزَا دِكَبَلَا: مَوَهَا  
مَوَكَلِي دَلِيه دِيه مَوَا حَبِيكْتَا لَه مَدَبَتَا دِيهِي مَوَهَا دَمَدَا  
مَتَا. لَبِي كَبَلَا مَمَاكْتَا مَوَهَا دَمَلِيكْتَا: مَوَهَا دَمَدَا دَدَا  
سَكَا مَمَدَا لَبِي دِيه: مَمَا مَمَمَا مَمَمَا كَلَسَا هِي  
مَجَاكْتَا مَكَلِي مَوَهَا مَمَمَاكْتَا سَوَا مَمَمَا دَمَدَا  
مَمَمَا: مَمَمَا مَمَمَا. لَبِي مَمَمَا مَمَمَا مَمَمَا مَمَمَا  
مَمَمَا مَمَمَا دَلِيه لَبِي لَبِي (لَبِي مَمَمَا): مَمَمَا دَلِيه  
مَمَمَا مَمَمَا مَمَمَا مَمَمَا مَمَمَا (مَمَمَا) مَمَمَا مَمَمَا:  
مَمَمَا (threat) مَمَمَا لِي كَلَسَا مَمَمَا دَلِيه: مَمَمَا مَمَمَا -  
مَمَمَا مَمَمَا مَمَمَا لَبِي مَمَمَا مَمَمَا مَمَمَا مَمَمَا  
مَمَمَا مَمَمَا.

مَمَمَا دَلِيه: مَمَمَا مَمَمَا مَمَمَا: مَمَمَا دَلِيه  
مَمَمَا (growing): مَمَمَا مَمَمَا مَمَمَا مَمَمَا: مَمَمَا  
مَمَمَا لَه لَبِي مَمَمَا مَمَمَا مَمَمَا مَمَمَا مَمَمَا (7)  
مَمَمَا: لَبِي مَمَمَا مَمَمَا: مَمَمَا مَمَمَا مَمَمَا مَمَمَا  
مَمَمَا: دَلِيه مَمَمَا مَمَمَا مَمَمَا دَلِيه مَمَمَا مَمَمَا.  
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كَلْبَتَا دَوْدِيسَا (their interests)! لَبِي دَلِيه مَدَبَتَا دِيهِي دِيهِي  
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مَمَمَا مَمَمَا: مَمَمَا مَمَمَا مَمَمَا (vestiges) مَمَمَا مَمَمَا:  
مَمَمَا مَمَمَا مَمَمَا مَمَمَا!

دَلِيه مَمَمَا: مَمَمَا مَمَمَا مَمَمَا مَمَمَا مَمَمَا:  
مَمَمَا مَمَمَا: مَمَمَا مَمَمَا مَمَمَا مَمَمَا مَمَمَا:  
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مَمَمَا مَمَمَا مَمَمَا مَمَمَا مَمَمَا (مَمَمَا:  
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مَمَمَا مَمَمَا مَمَمَا مَمَمَا مَمَمَا مَمَمَا:  
مَمَمَا مَمَمَا (the wining losing people) مَمَمَا:  
مَمَمَا مَمَمَا: مَمَمَا مَمَمَا مَمَمَا مَمَمَا مَمَمَا:  
مَمَمَا مَمَمَا مَمَمَا مَمَمَا مَمَمَا مَمَمَا:  
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مَمَمَا مَمَمَا مَمَمَا مَمَمَا مَمَمَا مَمَمَا مَمَمَا).

مَمَمَا لَبِي مَمَمَا مَمَمَا: مَمَمَا مَمَمَا مَمَمَا مَمَمَا  
مَمَمَا مَمَمَا: مَمَمَا مَمَمَا مَمَمَا مَمَمَا مَمَمَا:  
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مَمَمَا مَمَمَا مَمَمَا مَمَمَا مَمَمَا مَمَمَا:  
مَمَمَا مَمَمَا مَمَمَا مَمَمَا مَمَمَا مَمَمَا:







מה'שָׁא: כִּי נֶחֱךְ.

עֵי: מֵהַבְּיָא נֶחֱךְ חֶמֶר בְּדִכָּא לְחֵי פִינֵי קָא  
לְחֵי! תְּסַבְּחָא כִּי חֲבַבְלָא.

מה'שָׁא: מִן יָא כִּי נֶחֱךְ.

עֵי: מֵהַבְּיָא כִּי עֲבָד פִּינֵי זָהָד בְּדִכָּא.

מה'שָׁא: כִּי נֶחֱךְ.

עֵי: חֵד פִּינֵי חֵינֵשׁ לֵי, חֵינֵשׁ מִן חֵי  
חֲבַבְלָא הַ סֵּא כִּבְּא כִּילָא כִּי מַחְבֵּד  
כִּיפִלָּא רַחֵל סֵּא חֵינֵשׁ. מַחְבֵּד עֲבָד מִן  
פִּרְסִינֵשׁ, כִּי מִינֵי לְחֵינֵשׁ.

מה'שָׁא: כִּי נֶחֱךְ.

עֵי: אֲדָבָא חֵינֵשׁ לֵי חֵינֵשׁ רִזְלָא חֵי  
סֵּהֲזָא.

מה'שָׁא: כִּי נֶחֱךְ.

עֵי: בְּדִכָּא חֵינֵשׁ פִּינֵי פִּלְסָא חֵי  
מִלְּבָלָא חֵינֵשׁ הַ כִּי מִינֵי לְחֵינֵשׁ.

מה'שָׁא: כִּי נֶחֱךְ.

עֵי: אֲדָבָא נֵזָא מְחִיזְלָא מִן רִזְלָא פִּינֵי אֲסַבְּר  
סְחָלָא מִינֵי.

מה'שָׁא: אֲדָבָא מִן כִּי נֶחֱךְ. אֲדָבָא חֵינֵשׁ אֲדָבָא  
מֵהַר מִינֵי בְּדִכָּא מֵהַלְּבָלָא?

עֵי: בְּדִכָּא אֲדָבָא, לֵי חֵינֵשׁ מִן נֶחֱךְ,  
לֵי.

מה'שָׁא: מֵהַר לֵי?

עֵי: אֲדָבָא נֵזָא מְחִיזְלָא, נֵזָא, הַ פִּינֵי סְחָלָא  
חֵינֵשׁ לֵי, הַ חֵינֵשׁ מִמִּינֵי נֵזָא חֵינֵשׁ,  
רִזְלָא, חֵינֵשׁ לֵי מַחְבֵּד חֵינֵשׁ דִּסְהִיזָא: מִן  
חֵינֵשׁ חֵי מַחְבֵּד סֵּא פִּלְסָא סְלִיבָא.

מה'שָׁא: מִן לֵי מִן בְּדִכָּא בְּדִכָּא. אֲדָבָא  
מִמִּינֵי חֵינֵשׁ<sup>1</sup> כִּי מַחְבֵּד סֵּהֲזָא.

מִמִּינֵי סֵּא חֵינֵשׁ

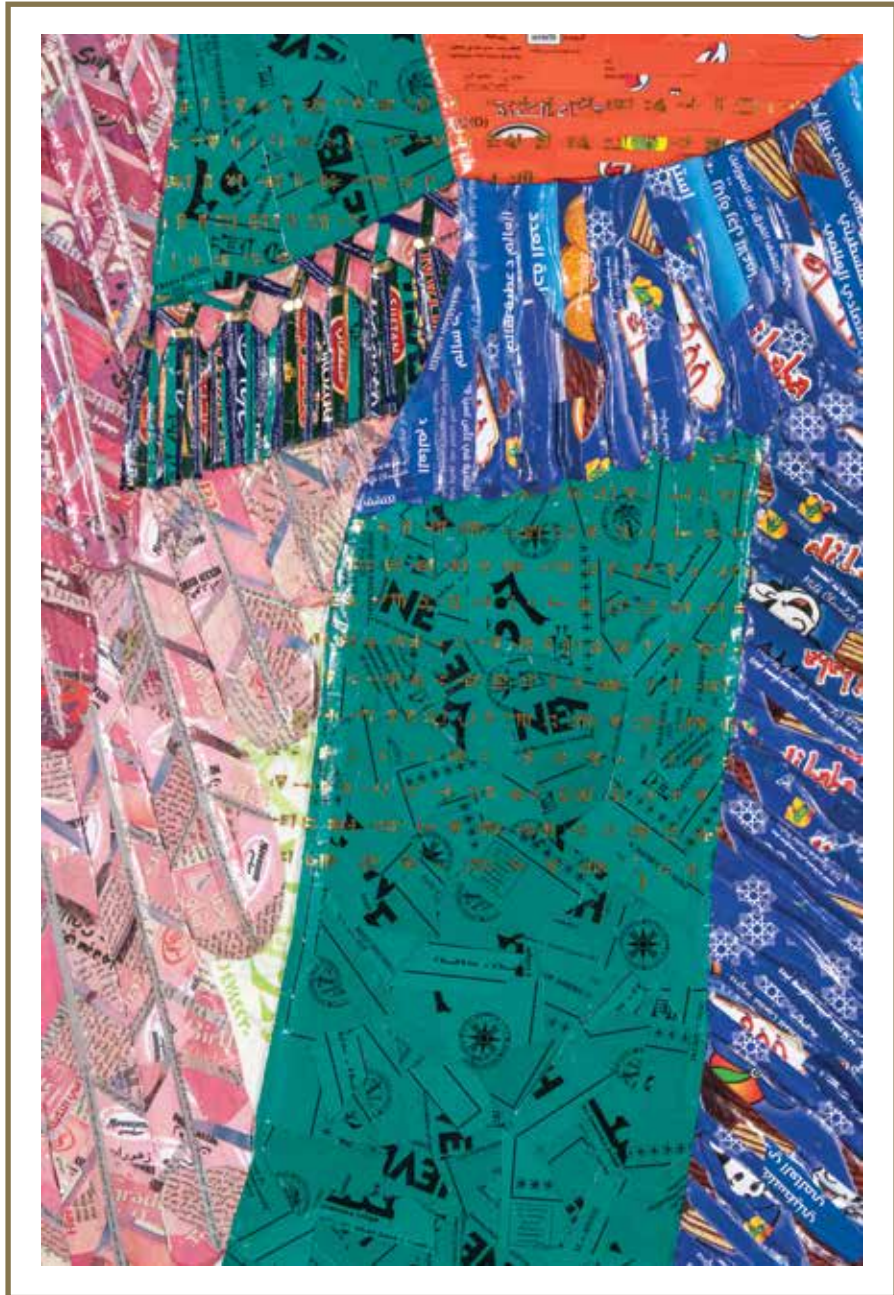
<sup>1</sup> פִּלְסָא מִן חֵינֵשׁ לֵי. כִּי מִינֵי אֲדָבָא  
יִפְדָּא.





# ܣܢܐܟܐ

ܒܢܐܝܬܐ ܕܥܘܪܝܢܐ | ܒܢܐܝܬܐ ܕܥܘܪܝܢܐ | ܒܢܐܝܬܐ ܕܥܘܪܝܢܐ



ܡܠܟܐ ܕܥܘܪܝܢܐ ܕܥܘܪܝܢܐ ܕܥܘܪܝܢܐ