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Cultural - Educational - Social

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From the Editor:

With the start of the year 6755, as the future of Iraq is being decided, our place, if any, in that country seems less than certain.

Whereas Saddam Hussein seemed to hate everyone equally, in the new Iraq, if it in fact remains one country, power is being divided among several groups, all of whom have historically been unfriendly toward us.

In the north, the Kurds are in the process of establishing an autonomous state on our ancestral lands. In that state there seems to be no room for other ethnic groups; especially ones that may challenge their claim to that region. In fact, the process of ethnic cleansing of not only Assyrians, but also of Arabs, is well on the way in northern Iraq. Assyrian lands are being confiscated outright, or the owners are being intimidated or threatened and forced to leave. Indeed, in order to legalize the process of marginalization and exclusion, Assyrians were not allowed to participate in the elections: they were denied ballots!

And, in the rest of the country, the power division is based on religious affiliation: Sunnis vs. Shi'ites. Here, too, we are excluded, not only because of our ethnicity, but because of our religion as well. We are accused of being collaborators with the West simply because we are Christian. The church bombings and destruction of homes and businesses are more examples of intimidation to force us to leave.

While in the early days of the present war, there was occasional mention of Christians, and, at times, even of Assyrians, by the media and politicians, there is no more talk of Christians, let alone Assyrians. One only hears of Kurds, Sunnis, and Shi'ites, which is a very strange classification; the first is an ethnic group, while the other two are religious denominations. There is no mention of Iraq or Iraqis, never mind Assyrians or other ethnic or religious groups that are part of the diverse peoples of Iraq.

To further marginalize us, these other groups, especially in the north, have created several "political parties", primarily based on religious affiliation, dividing us into smaller and even more insignificant groups, that are busy competing against one another instead of working together for our human and cultural rights.

Of course, the motives of our neighbors are clear –and understandable: the old, and still very effective, policy of *dividing and conquering* renders us insignificant, if not irrelevant, when it comes to asking for our rights and power-sharing. But the motives of some of our own people in promoting division within our community are not so clear. Even more disturbing is hearing some of our clerics preach division. To the old system which divided us into three parts –Church of the East, Catholic, and Orthodox– they now add country of origin. They propose

to further divide us into Iraqis, Iranians, Syrians, and, to continue with the logic, we must add Swedes, French, Americans, Japanese, and any other country where we have refugees, which, thanks to their efforts as well as those of our neighbors, will no doubt be increasing in the future as our people are forced out of Mesopotamia.

So, while all the other groups are consolidating and presenting a unified stance in asking for their rights and for political power for their group, we are busy splitting up into smaller pseudopolitical groups, each of which not only claims to represent us as one community, but, some, through a curious logic, like to divide us into separate "ethnic" groups, based on denominational affiliation. So, whereas the Kurds, the Sunnis and the Shi'ites have each succeeded to present a more-or-less unified and united front, we seem to have reached such degree of schizophrenia that we are simply called *Christians*; a non-descript term which would include Christian Arabs, Armenians, etc, with no ethnic or cultural rights or political representation.

But, not only is the future history of Iraq –and of our people– being written, the past is being re-written as well.

At first, we were the *blood-thirsty barbarians* of the Old Testament. Then, in the post-Christian period, we became *Suraye*, a term which is based on Assyria, but with no independent meaning. A term that the church agreed with, especially as it wished to distance us from our *pagan* forefathers. With the advent of Orientalism and the Orientalists that came to study and describe us, we were further divided into various groups, based on denominational affiliation. So, we became Nestorians (Church of the East), Chaldeans (Catholic), and Jacobites (Orthodox). And, in the most recent rendition of the history of Mesopotamia, Assyria and Babylonia became *Ancient Iraq*, and (ancient) Assyrians and Babylonians became *Ancient Iraqis* (sort of similar to calling the native peoples of North America *ancient Americans!* –*American* being a political appellation). Of course, this was a political move by the previous regime to legitimize itself, and its leader, who referred to himself as the descendent of Ashurbanipal and Hammurabi. As part of the same scheme, we were considered *Syriac-speaking Christian Arabs*; again, separating us from our forefathers. Now, we are starting to see the newest version of the history of northern Mesopotamia, according to Kurds. There is an increasing number of Kurds getting degrees in history, especially Assyriology, from western institutions. These *scholars* have started to re-write the history of the region, calling some of the ancient peoples of the region *ancient Kurds*, and creating myths to show how they are the descendents of the original inhabitants of northern Mesopotamia and, therefore, heirs to that land –see article by Mr. William Warda in this issue. And, of course, as part of the same process, we are becoming *Syriac-speaking Christian Kurds!*

Letters from you:

Dear editorial staff:

I am writing this letter with my heart full of sorrow and grief for the man whose death is an irremediable pain and tragedy not only for his nearest and dearest, but also for his friends and for the whole Assyrian nation.

I learned of Mr. Julius Shabbas's death by way of an e-mail from Mr. Sargon Michael. At that moment I could hardly restrain myself and bear this terrible news.

We've lost not only the kindhearted person of ready sympathy, an intellectual and a diligent member of our society, but also a man of infinite compassion and complete readiness to lend a helping hand to needy people, to promote education among Assyrian youth and to contribute to the unity and consolidation of our nation.

For me Mr. Julius Shabbas was the best example of self-sacrifice in the name of art of peace.

Inspired with his faith in me and thanks to his support I've created many of my poems and achieved great progress in my postgraduate medical education at the University Clinic in Munich, Germany.

He left fond memories of himself in the hearts of many Assyrian people.

I'll always hold him in my remembrance as a pure-soul, remarkable friend, good-natured father and praiseworthy Assyrian.

With this letter, please let me present my deepest condolences to his dear family-members and friends on behalf of me, my family and all Assyrians who knew this brilliant person.

With the whole of my heart and soul I am sympathizing with Mr. Shabbas's relatives in their sorrow.

Let Almighty God bless his family abundantly, heal this deep wound in their souls and strengthen their confidence in the future.

God bless you.

Faithfully yours,

Viktorija Aivazova, MD

Tbilisi, Georgia.



Dear Editor:

I am enclosing the photograph of our long-lost relative, which was taken in Tbilisi, Georgia, in 1912. His name was Putrus (nickname Pushu) bne Shakira d'Ardishai. In the photograph, he is standing on the right. He left Tbilisi for Baghdad and we have not heard from him since.

He was the youngest brother of my grandfather, Daniel, son of Mooshi, sitting second from the left, with his family and relatives.

Would you please publish this photo in *Nineveh* so that, hopefully, one of his descendents may respond or, perhaps, one of your readers might have some information.

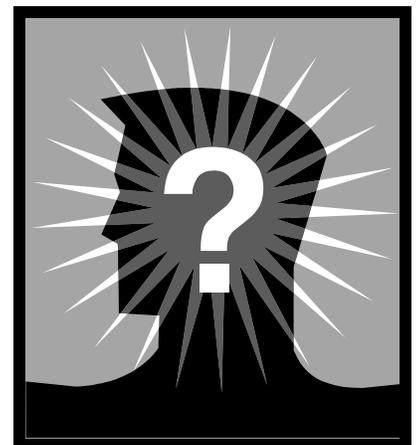
Sincerely,

Daniel Savkisov

Tbilisi, Republic of Georgia

The editorial staff of *Nineveh Magazine* welcomes your comments and suggestions. We would like to know what you think of *Nineveh Magazine*. Please share your thoughts with us and the readers. Our contact information is:

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New Book

ASSYRIANS:

THE CONTINUOUS SAGA



FREDERICK A. APRIM

Soft Cover \$20 ISBN: 1-4134-3856-3 (Trade Paperback)
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Fred A. Aprim, an Assyrian Christian, was born Frederick Aprim Minasheh in 1953 in the city of Kirkuk, northern Iraq. He is a graduate of Mosul University, College of Engineering, with a B.Sc. in Mechanical Engineering. He left Iraq in September 1980 and entered the United States as an immigrant in December 1981. He worked for fifteen years in the disk drive industry in California's Silicon Valley.



Fred's family, like many Assyrian families, experienced its own share of oppression and persecution. While in Iraq, both his father and teenage brother were imprisoned unfairly and tortured.

Fred describes himself as an Assyrian activist; his many articles are posted on various Assyrian web-sites, including:

www.aina.org
www.atour.com
www.nineveh.com
www.zindamagazine.com

This is a very important and much needed book that should have been written long ago.

The author traces the history of the Assyrians from the fall of their Empire to the present day and convincingly demonstrates the unbroken continuity of Assyrian identity through the millennia in the middle of endless persecutions. This dispassionate yet captivating book corrects many misconceptions about the Assyrians, both ancient and modern. It is a must for every modern Assyrian and Assyriologist, and of considerable interest to the general public as well.



I personally started reading it from Chapter 10, "The so-called Assyrian cruelty," and couldn't stop reading.

Simo Parpola
Professor of Assyriology
University of Helsinki, Finland



The Assyrian Genocide, Late-Nineteenth and Early-Twentieth Century

Prof. Anahit Khosroyeva,
Institute of History, Yerevan, Armenia

During World War I, along with the Armenians, the Assyrians, one of the most ancient nations of the Middle East, underwent cruel massacres under the influence and direction of the *Young Turks'* government. A nation whose ancestors stood at the cradle of human civilization and made great contributions to the development of world culture.

After the fall of the Assyrian empire, Assyrians, continuing to live on their ancestral lands in ancient Bet-Nahrain, which included the territory between the Persian Gulf, the Mediterranean Sea, Lake Urmia in northwestern Iran, and northern Mesopotamia, have been continuously oppressed by the Persians, Arabs, Mongols, Ottoman Turks and Kurds. Now, this long-suffering nation has found refuge on the boundaries of Iraq, Iran, Turkey, and Syria: on a small territory in Upper Mesopotamia.

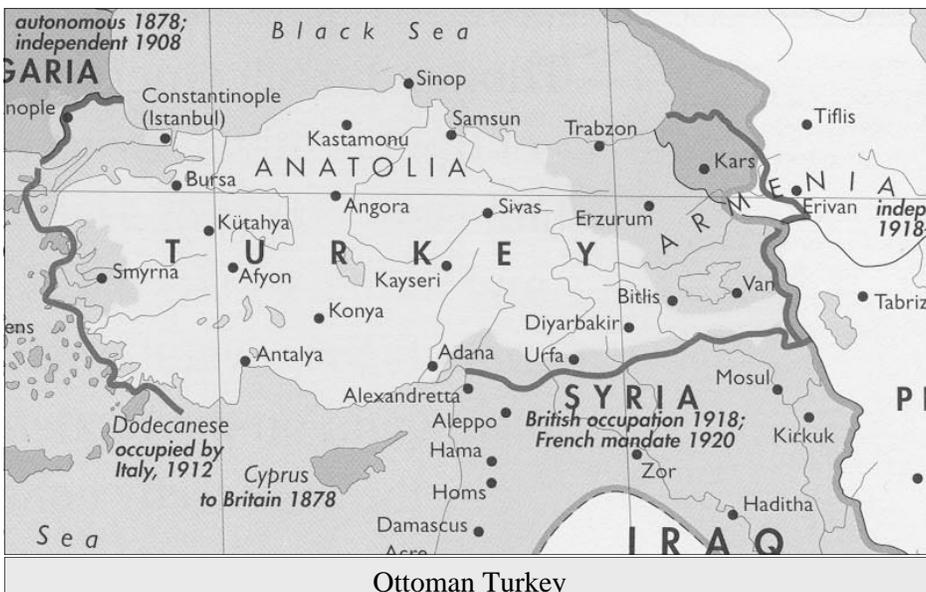
Histories of the Assyrian and Armenian people are closely related. During their millennia-old history these two Christian nations have suffered greatly, struggled for their existence, and have gone through a great number of fateful periods. As recently as in the last decade of the 19th century the Armenians and Assyrians were exposed to the oppressions carried out by Abdul Hamid's regime, and fought together against the Ottoman dictatorship. But the terrible ordeals that they underwent during World War I, during which time the destructive Turkish policy reached its extreme, were unprecedented throughout the history of mankind.

Nowadays the problem of recognition of the Armenian Genocide by world community has become one of the most crucial issues of the Armenian historical science. In this context it is becoming increasingly important to shed light on the history of other nations subjected to massacres in the Ottoman Turkey. The Assyrians, who fell victim to the brutal Turkish policy like the Arme-

nians, are also notable for their tragic fate. I think that studying and shedding light on the Assyrian Genocide is not only the problem of Assyrians and Assyrian studies or a matter of proving the existence of the Armenian-Assyrian relationship. This issue has quite a different implication. Today another theory has been brought to light – the theory of the “murderous state”- and a new field of study has been formed – *Genocide Science*- which was for a long time based only on the Armenian Genocide and the Jewish Holocaust. In this respect the research and study of the problem mentioned above is quite important in that it can provide crucial evidence and powerful arguments in the process of recognition of the Armenian Genocide of 1915 by many countries including Turkey. In fact, the study of this problem is not only of scientific interest, but also of significant political importance, especially when today's Turkish officials, following the example of their not so Great Powers, distort the historical truth and try to hide the events of genocide, presenting the historical facts in a false mirror.

The main purpose of this report is to make an attempt at presenting the consistent policy of slaughters and massacres carried out by the Turkish authorities against the Assyrian nation, which was identical to and a repeat of the policy carried out against the Armenian nation. I think, the inferences and conclusions made here will contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of the murderous policy of the Young Turks' government which was carried out against the Christian nations: in this instance, against

the Assyrians, in the Ottoman Turkey during World War I. They will uncover certain details concerning the Assyrian slaughters and massacres, which will complete the picture of the inhuman essence of the policy the Turkish authorities adhered to. The scientific interpretation of the historical events regarding this prob-



lem will be a strong argument against the official Turkish propaganda, which tries to hide and deny the mass murder of Christians in the Ottoman Turkey.

At the end of the 19th and at the beginning of the 20th centuries the Assyrians mainly resided in the eastern parts of the Ottoman Turkey: in Hakkari sanjak of vilayet of Van in Western Armenia, in the vilayets of Erzurum, Diyarbakir, Bitlis, Kharberd, Sebastia, as well as on the territory of Urmia in Iran, Mosul in Iraq and in the northwestern regions of Syria. In order to obtain the exact number of Assyrians in these regions I have used dozens of Armenian and foreign sources and studies. The analysis of information and statistical data shows that in that period in the Ottoman Empire and the adjacent territories lived about one million Assyrians with a common language, culture and national customs, who in the political, military and religious matters obeyed their spiritual leader: Mar Benyamin Shimoun . As Christians, the Assyrians were subjected to the same oppressive policy that Turkish authorities carried out towards the Armenians and the other

Christian nations under the control of the Ottoman Turkey. Many Assyrians studied in Turkish educational institutions,

but, even after earning the necessary degrees and certificates, they could not hold public positions. They did not even have an opportunity to economically develop their regions. Turkish authorities divided the Assyrians and relocated them among other nations in order to deprive them of the possibility of joining and forming a united front. Eventually, as the subsequent historical events show, the Assyrians suffered the same cruel fate as the Armenians and other nations living under the control of the Ottoman Turkey.

Sultan Abdul Hamid II, who came to the throne in 1876, started the plan to massacre Christians. It is known that the pivotal idea of Abdul Hamid's external and internal policies was Pan-Islamism, which aimed at joining together around Turkey all the countries and territories populated with Mohammedans, by no means excepting the oppression of non-Turkish nations and repression of national liberation movements. Along with hundreds of thousands of Armenians, tens of thousands of Assyrians also fell victim to the mass slaughters, which were organized based upon these very political intentions. The massacres of Assyrians started in October 1895 in Diyarbakir and, afterwards, spread everywhere. The Assyrian slaughters reached unprecedented levels: horrible events happened in many places, during which a great number of people emigrated, were forcedly converted to Mohammedanism or mur-

dered. About 100 thousand people from 245 villages were Islamized. Thousands of Assyrian women were forced into Turkish harems.

On October 20, 1895, in Amid (Diyarbakir) slaughters of Christians were perpetrated by Turkish and Kurdish thugs. The Assyrian Church of The Blessed Virgin gave refuge to many Christians: Assyrians, Armenians and Greeks. Fortunately, this church was not exposed to aggressions which can hardly be said about the Assyrian villages most of which were scorched and plundered by Kurds. During those dire days several Assyrians went to their religious leader suggesting that the Armenians be asked to leave The Blessed Virgin Church in order to not bring upon them the Turks' anger. In response to this request, the Assyrian pastor said to his people: *"The people who cross themselves will stay in church to the end. Should we be killed, we will be killed together."* One-hundred and nineteen villages in Diyarbakir sanjak were scorched and looted. Six thousand Christian families, about 30 thousand people, including many Assyrians were killed.

“ ... at the end of the 19th century, as a result of the massacres organized by Sultan Abdul Hamid in the Ottoman Empire, along with 300 thousand Armenians, 55 thousand Assyrians also fell victim to the Turkish yataghan.

In October 1895, the Turkish army and Hamidian troops entered Urfa (Urhai) and killed 13 thousand Assyrians.

ians.

A well-known member of the Armenian National Liberation Movement and the Armenakan Party, Armenak Yekarian recounted about the slaughters that took place in early September 1896 in southern Hakkari – in the provinces populated by Assyrians: *"Taking the opportunity, the government wanted to get rid of that undesirable element (i.e. the Assyrians), therefore it sent a large number of soldiers and hoodlums there, who killed hundreds of Assyrians."*

Without going into further details of a number of similar facts, I will summarize that at the end of the 19th century, as a result of the massacres organized by Sultan Abdul Hamid in the Ottoman Empire, along with 300 thousand Armenians, 55 thousand Assyrians also fell victim to the Turkish yataghan. During the Armenian slaughters these brutalities perpetrated towards the Assyrians added new pages to the bloody history of the Ottoman Empire. In fact, the 19th century and especially the dreadful events of its last decade had baneful consequences for the Assyrians in the Ottoman Empire paving the way for even greater disasters.

As soon as World War I started, the Young Turks' government decided to enter the war. They thought that participation in the war would considerably increase Turkey's prestige and influence and satisfy their vanity and dignity. In fact, this war was a good opportunity for the Young Turks to test the viability of the all-Turkish ideas in practice, to realize their aggressive and wild plans, which had



Sultan Abdul Hamid

(Continued from page 7)

support among the military-feudal, the bourgeoisie, and ittitahic-chauvinistic elite. The minister of Internal Affairs of Turkey, Taleat pasha, during a talk with doctor Mortman, an employee of the German Embassy, said that taking advantage of martial law, the Turkish government would eventually get rid of its internal enemies, the Christians, without even being afraid of the diplomatic intervention of foreign countries. The subsequent events showed that Turks really were not afraid of the Great Powers' intervention and perpetrated massacres of a number of nations in the Ottoman territory. The Assyrians also did not escape the mass slaughters and forced emigration.

It was stated in the Young Turks' party program: "Sooner or later all the nations under Turkish control will be turned into Turks. It is clear that they will not convert voluntarily and we will have to use force." During one of their secret meetings, a Young Turkish ideologist, doctor Nazeem, said: "The massacre is necessary. All the non-Turkish elements, whatever nation they belong to, should be exterminated".

R. Stafford, an Englishman who was the former administrative inspector of Iraq's Ministry of Foreign Affairs, observed: "It would be great progress for Turks if they could show that regardless of what happened to the Armenians, another Christian community in Turkey (i.e. the Assyrians), is quite satisfied with its fortune". And what was their fortune?



Rev. J. Naayem, in Bedouin disguise

The strategy of the slaughters, the way they were organized and carried out, served as irrefutable evidence of the murderers' decision to totally exterminate a nation whose striving for unity, the desire to be loyal to its national identity and the Christian religion was impossible to destroy or shatter for a long time. Doomed to total extermination, this outcast nation could rely only on its desperate bravery. The Assyrians did not let that villainous crime be committed in

obscurity. Even though unarmed, they fought to the very end without the slightest hope of victory.

The extermination of the Christians in Diyarbekir was controlled by the vilayet's vali, Reshid bey. The Assyrians of Mardin, Midyat and Jezire regions were especially badly hit by the Turkish massacres. The local priest of the Chaldean Assyrians, Joseph Naayem, reported that since April 8, 1915, horrible massacres had taken place: "they gathered men above 16, beat, tortured, killed them, and afterwards put turbans on their heads and photographed them in order to prove to the world that Christians oppressed Mohammedans." In September 1916, the periodi-

cal *Martyred Armenia* translated from the Original Arabic an article by an Arab eyewitness of the massacres, Fayeze El Ghosein, where the author attested to the slaughters of the Assyrians in Diyarbekir: "In Midyat and Mardin, an order was issued to murder only Armenians, and not to disturb the members of all the other communities. Learning about the misfortune of their brothers (i.e. the Armenians) the Assyrians immediately took position in three vilages close to Midyat and rebuffed the Turkish army exhibiting examples of valor. ...The Assyrians fully recognized that they were dealing with a deceitful state, which will tomorrow withdraw the promise of not disturbing them and will strike more badly those whom it had granted a pardon to yesterday."

Djeveded Bey, the governor of Van, a person with a number of negative characteristics, who was a master of misdeeds, conspiratorial plans and, was specialized in lying and shamming, had a "butchers" regiment of 8,000 men, that did its "job". Djeveded organized massacres never seen

"Turks have found another way of exterminating the Christians – forced emigration."

- American consul in Kharberd, Lesly Davis

before. One striking example was the terrible slaughter organized in Hakkari region in spring 1915, where Turks murdered

about 60 thousand Assyrians. Then, during the following years, about 70 thousand Assyrians were annihilated: some of them were murdered, others starved to death or were killed in the battles against Mohammedans.

In early June 1915, mass slaughters of Assyrians took place also in the northern part of Van, in Timar and Tuhum. Kochanis, which was the residence of the Assyrians' religious leader, Mar Shimoun, was totally destroyed. The patriarchate building was scorched. At the same time Turks and Kurds attacked the Assyrian village of Mar Zaya in Jelu, plundered it and murdered its population. The enemy entered and looted the church as well. About seven thousand Assyrians were slaughtered there during this period.

On June 30, 1915, the American consul in Kharberd, Lesly Davis, wrote to the American ambassador in Constantinople, H. Morgentown: "Turks have found another way of exterminating the Christians – forced emigration. On June 18 it was publicly announced that all the Armenians and Assyrians must leave Kharberd within five days." This is how the slaughter of Assyrian in Kharberd, which the German archival documents provide evidence for, started. The Assyrian slaughters continued in Bitlis and Sebastia as well, and the only way to escape was emigration, which was, of course, accompanied by severe human losses.



Mar Shimoun

The Assyrians of the mountainous



Urmia with surrounding Assyrian villages

ian villages were scorched. In the same year, in October, the Russian Vice-Consul in Urmia, Vedenski, along with the local governor visited Sangar, Alvach and other Assyrian villages ruined by Kurds, Turks and Persian thugs. He wrote: *“The consequences of jihad are everywhere”*.

The unexpected and unjustified retreat of Russian army from Urmia region in January 1915 had tragic consequences for the Assyrians living in Iran. Turkish troops along with Kurdish detachments organized mass slaughters of the Assyrian population and only 25 thousand people managed to escape excruciating death and take refuge in Trans-caucasia. Ninety-eight Assyrian villages were scorched and turned into ruins.

In January 1915, a platoon headed by Kachali-khan encircled the largest and the richest Assyrian village in Urmia, Gulpashan, where 300 Assyrian families (about 2500 Assyrians) lived, and completely destroyed it. All but a couple of hundred Assyrians were murdered. In addition to Gulpashan, massacres took place in Goygtape, Ada, Khosrava, Haftvan and many other Assyrian villages; all the local schools and churches were destroyed. For example, in Khosrova the Assyrian population including the refugees who came there from the neighboring villages (about 7 thousand people) were gathered together and slaughtered. Seven-hundred fifty people were beheaded in the Assyrian village of Haftvan, and afterwards 5 thousand Assyrian women were taken to Kurdish harems. Two-hundred people were burnt alive in the village of Kanachar.

Turks, furious about the occupation of Dilman by Russians on April 20, 1915, murdered the population of the 20 neighboring Assyrian villages. The painful exodus from Urmia to the deserts of Mesopotamia, accompanied with severe human losses, began. An English eyewitness wrote: *“I saw the picture of the tragic flight of an outcast nation. I speak about the Assyrians.”* And one of the refugees,

American periodical, the newspaper *Atlantic Monthly* wrote:

“Within six months the Young Turks managed to do what the “Old Turks” were not able to do during six centuries.”

Isaac Yonan, who had been saved by a miracle, speaking about the suffering, losses and the desperate situation they went through,

said that the situation was so unbearable that it seemed that the living envied the dead. Even R. Stafford, who never lost the opportunity to justify all the actions of the English, had to admit that *“the Assyrians’ exodus is one of the most tragic pages of the military history. Only during this period they lost one third of their nation. More than 17000 Assyrians died on that way.”* As it can be seen, the Assyrians, being a national and religious minority, were in a vulnerable position in the society they lived. This means that in the existing Ottoman regime, this nation suffered oppression and different forms of deprivation of rights. The antichristian oppressions became more acute especially because of the existing religious hostility towards

regions of Hakkari, near the boundary with Iran, more or less eluded the massacres. At the end of the 19th and at the beginning of the 20th centuries some 300 thousand people lived there, of which 100 thousand were Assyrian. Turks were trying to convince the world that they did not disturb the obedient people in spite of their Christianity. But in reality those mountain-dwelling Assyrians were rather militant and aroused fear in Turks. But despite all this, some of them also fell victim to massacres in the end.

Unfortunately, during World War I, Assyrian massacres were carried out also on the territory of Iran, which had proclaimed itself a neutral country on November 2, 1914. The point was that in the plans worked out by the German and Turkish commands, military operations were to be carried out in Iran, too. Germany and Turkey wanted to use Iran’s territory as a corridor to the oil-rich regions of Baku and thereafter to invade Central Asia. Thus, Iran also turned into a battle-ground of the two hostile peoples, where mass violence acts were carried out. At that time, the Assyrians of Urmia region suffered most of all. Their villages were entirely looted and burnt to ashes by Kurds.

In September 1914, more than 30 Armenian and Assyrian

(Continued from page 9)

this nation.

Thus, as we can see, during World War I in Ottoman Turkey and in the adjacent territories, where more than one million Assyrians lived, a real genocide was implemented according to the criteria of international law. Ottoman Turkey and the Great Powers are guilty of the bloody massacres of both Armenians and Assyrians. With the criminal connivance of the Great Powers and taking the opportunity presented by martial law, Turkey committed the gravest crime against mankind – genocide. But the tragedy of the Assyrians did not come to an end with this. Both during World War I and after, the Assyrian nation bled both from Europe's incitements and from the slaughters and oppressions organized by Turkish, Kurdish and Iranian tyrants.

In November 1916, the *New York Times* published Dr. V. Rockwell's article named "*The Number of Armenian and Assyrian Victims*", where speaking about the Armenian massacres in Turkey the author added: "*Not only the Armenians are unfortunate; the Assyrians were also wiped out and each tenth was murdered. ... A lot of Assyrians perished but no one knows how many exactly ...*". As regards this, another American periodical, the newspaper *Atlantic Monthly* wrote: "*Within six months the Young Turks managed to do what the 'Old Turks' were not able to do during six centuries. ... Thousands of Assyrians vanished from the face of the earth*". In November 1919, the periodical *French Asia* wrote, "*the Assyrian massacres resembled the Armenian slaughters. And as about this nation, which had 250 thousand victims, has been spoken much less, it is necessary to inform the world about it.*" And, as it was pointed by the Assyrian National Council secretary, C. Korek d'Kerporani, according to the calculations done in 1922, the losses of his people were more

than 270 thousand.

Later on, when people started to investigate the massacres perpetrated during World War I and the suffering and loss of life that occurred on the way during the forced emigration, the number of Assyrian victims reached 500 thousand and even 750 thousand. Among the Assyrians there still exists an belief that during that period they lost 2/3 of their people.

Thus, the Assyrian nation, dispersed all over the world, needs to have its autonomous state as it continues its centuries-old struggle for respect of its human rights, justice, recognition of national identity and cultural development. This nation demands the condemnation of Turkey by international authorities. The Assyrian problem, which has been out of the World community's limelight so far, requires an international solution, reminding that the deadly disease of genocide represents a danger for the future of all mankind.

In people's mind two completely different notions of "war" and "genocide" are continuously being confused in terms of their psychological and historical essence. In any war the murder of a person "of another nationality or religion", regardless of how tragic it is, is committed in order to achieve some political, economical, religious or territorial-invasive goals. However "genocide's" essence is quite different. The definite or indefinite purpose of genocide is to exterminate the person because of his ethnic and religious characteristics. To say it more succinctly, "genocide" is the legalized, in peoples mind, permission to murder a "different" person. But genocide cannot be perpetrated against one, several or a group of people; it is always against the whole human race. Therefore, in this instance, what happened to the Assyrian nation was a serious crime against the whole human race.

Recommended Reading

Remnants of Heroes, The Assyrian Experience

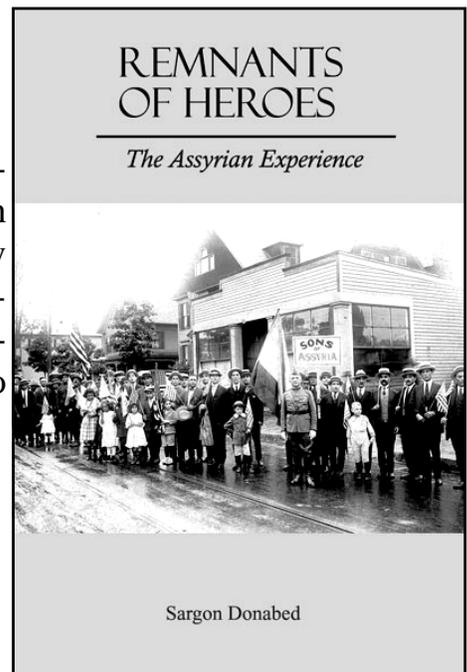
This book charts the life, dispersion, and arrival to New England, of a small but extremely important segment of the Assyrian People; The Assyrians of the town of Kharput, in modern-day Turkey. How these Syriac-speaking people escaped the Assyrian/Armenian/Greek Genocide of WWI, integrated into American society, and yet managed to retain their identity is central to understanding their plight and perseverance.

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Prof. Erika Schluntz, Stonehill College

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invites everyone to this year's

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In Urmia, Iran



Young Assyrian men and women are expected from all over Iran as well as from Iraq, Georgia, Armenia, Syria and Tur^cabdīn to compete in this sports event.

<http://www.zarira.com/index.htm>

700 Assyrians in Egypt

Attiya Gamri Beth Arsan
The Netherlands

Everyone knows that the words Assyria and Egypt have a connection with each other. Some of us know this from the Bible and others from history books; one has to do with the future of the Assyrians, the other with their past.

The Bible gives many Assyrians hope and, for some of us, evidence that one day Assyria will rise again, and that there will be a *road between Aššur and Egypt*. From the history books, many Assyrians feel pride when they learn that Aššur-ḥaddun (690 BC) ruled Egypt for 12 years, and that Egypt was part of the Assyrian Empire.

But what about the time between Aššur-ḥaddun and the *road between Assyria and Egypt*? Has there been any contact between the Assyrians and Egypt since the fall of the Empire? For some of us, this is the question to research and answer.

In January of this year, I decided to travel to Egypt and try to find some of my forefathers' work in that country.

From the information I had, I started in Cairo, and, from there, traveled west to Natrun Valley.

The trip was safe and impressive. On both sides of the road there were large billboards, advertising mobile network and ICT; for me, those were signs of development for the future. Cars were driving more carefully and respected the traffic rules than other countries where I have visited. On the roadsides, men in *Galabiyas* and big moustaches were waiting for *Dolmush* (taxi). The mountains were barren and, of course, everywhere desert. The wind was gentle and warm for January.

It was Sunday morning and the driver, who was Muslim, turned the radio on and I could recognize Christian prayers. My Christian guide told me that every Sunday there is a live program on the radio, a Coptic church mass. The mass sounded different from that of the Orthodox

Church or Church of the East. Unfortunately, the prayers were not in the Coptic language, but in Arabic.

After 1.5 hours, we drove onto a road with tall trees on both sides and very clean and green surroundings. I turned my camera on because I knew that we had entered the place of my forefathers. The high walls and the smell of fresh tomatoes and other vegetables was familiar and reminded me of other Assyrian places I had visited, like Urmia. On the wall was written: "*Dayr Al Sourian* ." I stood for a few seconds and watched the sign and almost cried. In the middle of nowhere, desert all around, the Assyrians from Ṭūr ʿAbdīn had come to this place by foot. Why and for what, I asked myself. My guide didn't understand my emotions because he thought I was just a tourist from the Netherlands.

When I entered, I felt the peaceful atmosphere; the



monks were walking and there were many students there. My guide went and asked for a monk to come and give me some information about the monastery. When Father Jacob came and saw me, he probably thought to himself: "what is she doing here?" He took me to the oldest part of the monastery and started to tell me about the Assyrians who came from Ṭūr ʿAbdīn during the 7th century and built this monastery. 700 young Assyrian men (monks) walked from Bethnarhin to the Natrum Valley; this touched my soul. And, again, I asked myself why and for what? The monk looked into my eyes and asked me: "where are you from?" "I'm Assyrian and come from the place where the 700 monks came from, and I speak the language they spoke." He couldn't believe it, and almost hugged me; he took my hand and brought me to the altar of the church and started to open the several layers of cur-



tains. And, while he was opening the curtains, he said: “ you may see this because it is your forefathers’ work; you are allowed, but no other women is allowed to see this .”

Father Jacob was so happy to meet an Assyrian who had come from the Netherlands specially to see the beautiful *Dayr Al Sourian*.

While my Guide and the driver were sitting outside, Father Jacob and I were looking at all the paintings and inscriptions on the walls and ceilings. Many were in Assyrian and one could read them clearly; but, some of the paintings were damaged.

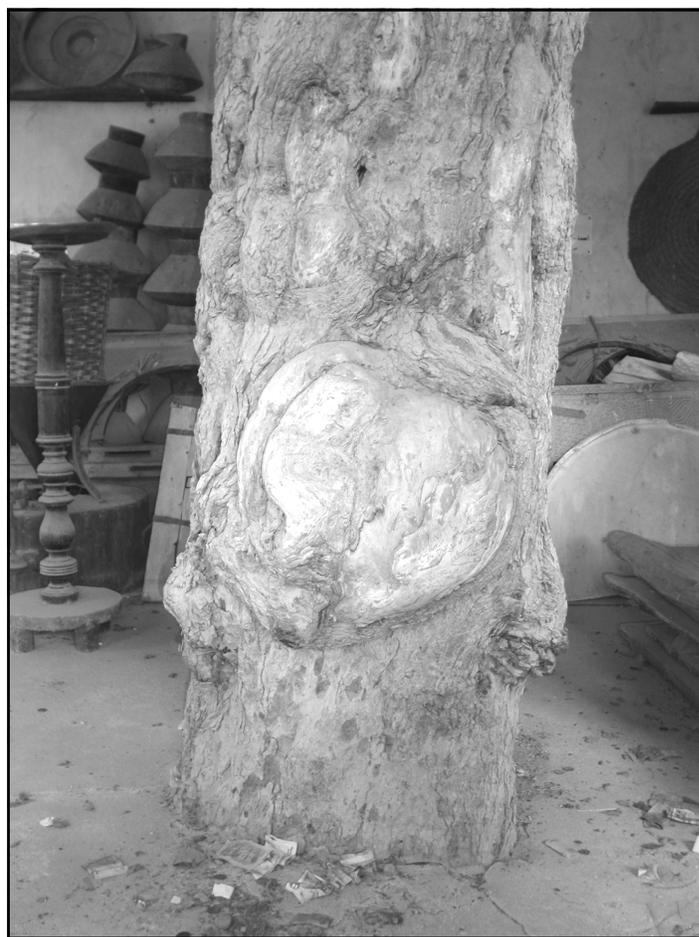
In the Natrun Valley, there are five old monasteries.



Some of the monasteries are named after people who had established them. There is one named for the Armenians, one for the Ethiopians, and *Dayr Al Sourian* is named after the Assyrians. The last evidence of a considerable Assyrian presence is contained in a manuscript stating that in 1516 A.D. there were 43 monks in *Dary Al Sourian*; 18 Assyrian and 25 Coptic. This means that from the fourth century until at least 1516, there were Assyrians living in the monastery of *Dayr Al Sourian*.



Father Jacob brought me to a very large and old Tamarind tree. “ Look at this tree and tell me what you have in common with this tree?”, he asked me.



St. Ephraem’s tree stands to the east of the church, enclosed within a room built around it with an opening in its ceiling.

Of course, no one would ever know the answer. Then, Father Jacob told me the story of the *Tamarind Tree*. This story touched my Assyrian roots, again. I didn’t know that I could be so proud of a tree; but, of course, not every tree is as special as *St. Ephraem’s tree*. The story of *St. Ephraem’s tree* is known throughout Egypt and, every year, thousands of people come to visit the tree. It is believed that the prayers and wishes of the visitors always come true.

When St. Ephraem (308- 373 AD) came to Natrum Valley, his physical weakness caused him to use a staff. Some monks, however, thought that he carried it to appear distinct. When he perceived their thought, he planted his staff in the ground. It is said that the staff grew buds and became the famous tamarind tree of St. Ephraem, the Assyrian. *St. Ephraem’s tree* is one of the oldest trees in Egypt. Fr. Jacob went up to the roof of the room built around the tree and brought me a branch, and told me that he has never given a piece of the tree to anyone; but, he felt that an Assyrian who came all the way from the Neth-

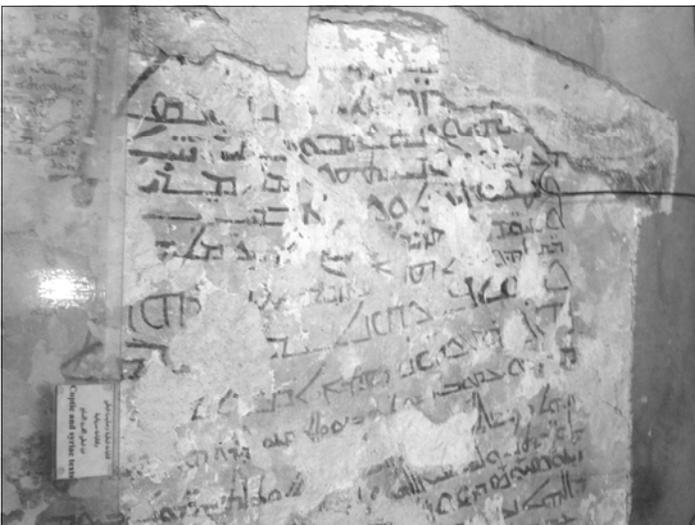


he felt that an Assyrian who came all the way from the Netherlands to visit the monastery, deserved to have a piece: "It is your tree."

erlands to visit the monastery, deserved to have a piece: "It is your tree."

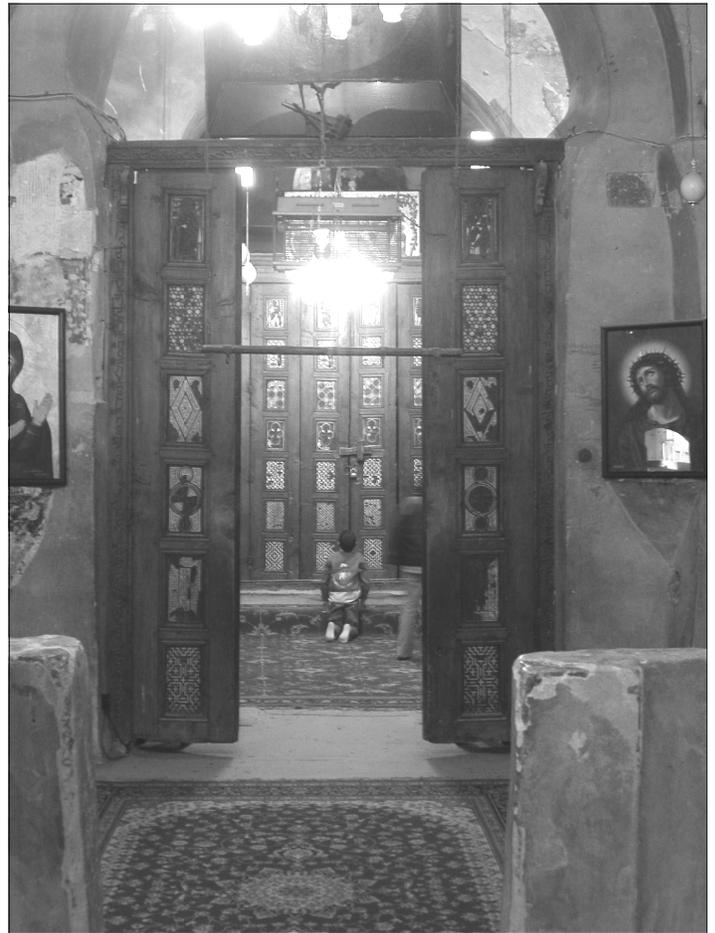
When the Assyrian monks left Egypt and returned to Ṭūr ʿAbdīn, they placed their books and manuscripts in a hidden room in the church. And, the wall paintings and inscriptions were covered with plaster on which the Coptic monks painted new scenes and inscriptions. There was a fire in the church in the early 1990's as a result of which some of the plaster from the walls and ceilings fell. It was then that the paintings and inscriptions from the time of the Assyrian occupation of the church were discovered under the newer layer of plaster. The books and manuscripts are kept in the monastery's library. *Dayr Al Sourian* remains a Coptic monastery. Today there are 150 Coptic monks in the Monastery.

So, every now-and-then, some Assyrians go and visit their forefathers' work at the Natrun Valley. Unfortunately, we couldn't enter the library where the Assyrian



books manuscripts are kept. Fr. Jacob asked us to translate

some of the inscriptions on the walls and the doors. The inscriptions were in a form of Estrangelo script, and majority were quotations from the Bible; but, the inscription carved on the door-frame was historical: *"I have been pre-*



sent here... I, Yuhannon, son of... in the month of Nisan, the year 450 of the Arabs. I beg from God mercy and forgiveness for my sins.... Give me a good..."
Yuhannon came from the city of Nsībīn...."

The other interesting inscription was one whose wording is very similar to an inscription in the Monastery of Mar Moses in Kfarze (Ṭūr ʿAbdīn, Turkey).

Fr. Jacob finally brought me to a very old figure and asked me "who is this?" And, again, I didn't dare say a word. "This is Nebuchadnezzar the king of Assyria", he said. There were three standing men in the painting, and Fr. Jacob told me nobody knows who they are; maybe the servants or three robbers before their judgement. The Assyrian king, Nebuchadnezzar, in a Syriac Orthodox church, in *Dayr Al Sourian!*

Next time, I hope we can see the books the Assyrian monks have left to us. It is important to read them and to see what they have created and left for the future generations. The passion and belief they had in God and Christ is like the passion and belief many Assyrians today have in the struggle for a autonomous home in the North of Iraq. 700 young men left their homes and families for their belief and passion. If we had 700 young men today, believ-

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Assyrian American Christian School

What is the purpose of Assyrian American Christian School?

1. Survival of the Language Spoken by Jesus Christ: Aramaic.
2. Survival of the Assyrian Culture and Heritage.

The objective of the project is to establish an Assyrian American Christian School in Tarzana, California whose main goals are to improve the academic achievement of Assyrian students, to teach the Aramaic (Assyrian) language, and to foster cultural awareness by providing culture, history, and religion classes in addition to the foundational courses of math, science, history, and English. This school will be the first Assyrian school in the United States.

Most Assyrians living in California are recent immigrants from Iran, Iraq, Turkey, Syria and other countries. For most, English is their second or third language. In order to ensure that the Assyrian children receive proper attention, excellent education, and adequate assistance in becoming fully integrated in this country, establishment of a private Assyrian American School is essential.

The Aramaic language, the 'lingua franca' of the ancient world, is spoken by a few million Assyrians throughout the world. As Christians, we are responsible for protecting and ensuring the survival of the language spoken by Jesus Christ. Therefore, Aramaic language will be taught in the Assyrian American School.

The Assyrian nation is scattered throughout the world. As we have learned from our ancestors, in order to preserve the culture and allow it to flourish, Assyrian schools must be established throughout the world. In almost all the countries where there are large populations of Assyrians, there exists Assyrian schools. There are approximately 6

to 9,000 Assyrians living in the greater Stanislaus County, California. There are approximately 80,000 Assyrians living in Chicago area. There are 5,000 Assyrians living in Los Angeles and 3,000 living in San Jose. There are no Assyrian schools in the United States. Therefore, the Assyrian American school of Tarzana will be the first Assyrian school established in the United States. We Americans spend millions of dollars trying to preserve endangered species. Well, Assyrians are an endangered nation in desperate need of preservation.

Surveys and studies conducted in October 2004 have identified approximately 100 students who are interested in attending the school. Approximately 10 Assyrian teachers certified in the State of California and over 10 teacher's aids are interested in teaching in the school. For its first year, approximately \$300,000 is necessary to run the school.

The Assyrians for Education, a California 501 (C) (3) non-profit organization, is asking for your financial assistance. All donations will be forwarded to the school's treasury. To show our gratitude, names of all the individual donors will be identified on a placard or sign and affixed to the school facility.

Thank you for considering this proposal. Should you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact us. We will be happy to meet with you at your convenience.

Please make your checks payable to:

**Assyrians for Education
1350 Arnold Drive, Suite 202,
Martinez, CA 94553**

Sincerely,
Assyrians for Education

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The only solution is education.

Help us tell our/your story.

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Assyrian Foundation of America \$10,000.

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We must raise \$300,000 by July of 2005.

Help us start!
The Assyrian American Christian School

FACT SHEET

An Establishment of the Assyrian Church of the East - St. Mary's Parish

5955 Lindley Avenue, Tarzana, CA 91356 Telephone: (818) 996-5173

Name: Assyrian American Christian School
Location: 5955 Lindley Avenue, Tarzana, CA 91356
Grade Level: Junior High and High School
Capacity: 100 Students
Registration Starts: April 1, 2005
Start Date: August 2005

MISSION: The purpose of the founding fathers of this institution is to promote education for our young. The curriculum will include those areas of study which will help our younger generations to understand and to appreciate their rich heritage and roots.

The student will be exposed to areas of learning in language skills with a major emphasis on the ability to read, write and speak conversationally the Assyrian language, with serious study in the root language: Aramaic.

They will be given a thorough understanding, through instruction, of the glorious and great history of the ancients from their homeland of origin; the Assyrians and Assyrian Nation.

The Holy Bible and the roots of our Apostolic Faith from the time of the Apostles will be presented to help students learn of the richness of their Holy Christian Faith.

The American Assyrian Christian School will provide your student with the proper classroom environment, with dedicated teachers whose purpose is to present nothing but the best for their students within a Christian environment. The Assyrian American Christian School will meet the academic accreditation required in the State of California. When students have completed their education in our school, they will have the knowledge skills essential for success in life, either to add to their education by entering a college or university, or the work field of their choice or interest.

This is the commitment from the Assyrian American Christian School of Los Angeles.



Nestorian Church in Cyprus

Lucrece De Matran
Turlock, California

Some mistakes can be blissful, like the one my husband and I made when we visited Famagusta city in Cyprus (Turkish Region). But perhaps it was not a mistake but simply God's guidance. When we arrived it was already late afternoon. We had driven all the way from Kerena (also Turkish Region), and wanted to get to the shore and the port. Somehow we got lost. We were getting anxious.



It was getting dark and we had planned to get back to Nicosia, where one has to go through a check point, which meant driving another hour and a half to two hours. Not knowing where we were going, we turned into a narrow residential street. It was quiet. There was no one on the street. We were beginning to panic. I decided we had to stop and look up the map again. My husband pulled over and as he turned around he said with great excitement: "O look". I looked and I saw a yellow signboard on the other side of the street. I read aloud: "Nestorian Church." We both opened our doors at once and got out of the car.

We had heard that there were Nestorian churches in Cyprus, at least two, but we had no information whatsoever about them. The church in front of us was quite big but not huge. The architecture, to my mind, portrayed it as a 12th or 13th century church. The walls seemed thick and enduring. The doors were wooden and studded. It was surrounded with some barren land. Some traces of a brick wall that might have surrounded it were visible.

After taking some photos I decided to peep through the holes in the doors. Inside, the cobwebs covered what seemed to me as chandeliers, candelabras and furniture. What amazed me was how the church had survived all those years and how it was not desecrated by the Muslims as was a nearby Orthodox church. A big and beautiful church of which the bell tower was decapitated and the top

of a *mannara* installed thereon. As we were going out we noticed a writing on the wall in big letters. It read: *Eastern Mediterranean University and cultural center*. This university is in the Turkish part of the island, which means that the authorities are preserving this building. As we were wandering we met some people. We asked them if they knew who looked after this church? They said that there was a family that did (i.e. a Turkish family).

According to a reliable source who has seen the church from inside about 45 years ago, there is a plaque inside the church in Syriac (or in Aramaic) that says that the church was built in the fourteenth century. The date is given in letters, as is usual when writing Aramaic or Syriac, but my source had forgotten the exact letters. The plaque also told of two Assyrian brothers, devout Nestorians, who had built the church. They were well-off, being traders of spices. The plaque, sadly, had been at one time covered with gypsum. As for this, I don't think we can blame the Muslims for they were not in the area at that time. At any rate, a friend of mine checked Google for me for more information, and confirmed that my source was right. As for the date of the church, the internet site gives the year 1354.

The Cypriots were converted to Christianity probably since La'azar (of the New Testament), who went there fleeing from the opponents of Jesus who raised him from the dead. La'azar's tomb is in Larnaca (Cypriot side). But, officially speaking, they were converted by the teachings of St. Peter and St. Barnabas. Although the majority were Orthodox, it seems there was a big community of Nestori-



ans living in Cyprus during the early centuries. Their archbishopric was in Nicosia/Cyprus, Soon, Rome had

developed an interest in this community and, in 1263, Pope Aurianos 4th sent his ambassador to give them a visit and investigate their status. Then, in 1326, another such visit was made and, after 14 years of trying, finally, in 1340, archbishop Ilia of Nicosia declared that he was converting to Catholicism. Then, in 1445, archbishop Timotheos was converted too. Now the conversion was complete and the Pope of the time, Eugene 4th, named the newly created church 'Chaldean', thus putting an end to the Nestorian Church in Cyprus. When the Nestorians of Mosul/Iraq were converted to Catholicism they were put under the auspice of the archbishop of Nicosia, hence calling them Chaldeans too.

I was delighted to see this Nestorian Church in Cyprus, and I wanted to share this experience with others. I hope the readers of your magazine will find it interesting too.

For further reading see,

- 1- J. Hackett, 'A history of the Orthodox Church of Cyprus from the coming of the Apostle Paul and Barnabas to the Commencing of the British Occupation..' London, 1901 PP 529, 532, 533.
- 2- E. Tisserant Nestorienne (L'Glise), in 'Dictionnaire de Theologie Catholique XI col. 156-323, Paris 1931.

Younia realizes dream with children's book

Fairfield Advance

Publishing her Assyrian-language children's book was the culmination of a dream for Younia Zaya.

The Smithfield resident, 72, who said she was "born to teach", began to write and illustrate the book 20 years ago as a voluntary teacher at the Saturday Assyrian Language School in Fairfield.

She saved \$4000 over 10 years to self-publish the book.

"I saved it by not going to the hairdresser, not buying make-up and by making my own clothes," she said.

Ms. Zaya feels it is important that Assyrian children in Australia learn their own language but until now there have not been books aimed specifically at children.

This is the first one to be published in Australia.

She has had requests for her book, titled *Assyrian Language Book One for Ages 4-10*, from the Assyrian communities in the United States, Russia and Iran.

Ms. Zaya was born in Iraq but grew up in Iran. She taught English and art in schools from the age of 19.

After receiving a scholarship from the Empress Farah Pahlavi to study for a masters degree in early childhood education—one of only four non-Muslims permitted to take the course—she established a kindergarten called *Naghme* (melody) in Tehran.

But in 1969, afraid of the political situation in Iran, she sold the kindergarten and came with her parents and siblings to Australia.

"Iran was going to change. We had had a lot of freedom but it was going to be tense for women," Ms. Zaya said.

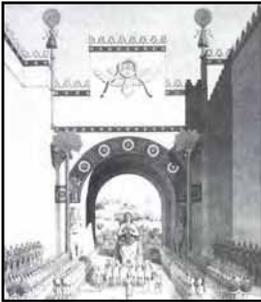
"We thought it was better if we go before things happen."

Once in Australia, Ms. Zaya and her sister Miriam worked in factories to pay for their Smithfield home, because the proceeds from the sale of the kindergarten were not enough.

She retired 13 years ago.



Ms. Younia Zaya with her new book: *Assyrian Language Book One for Ages 4-10*



Kurdish and Persian New Years and their relation to the Assyro-Babylonian Akītū festival

by William Warda

Some Kurdish writers in recent times have invented mythical origin for the Newroz or Noruz (New Year) their people celebrate on March 21 which coincides with the spring equinox. They claim it is the celebration of Kawa's victory over the Assyrian king Zahak.

One website describes the origin of the Kurdish New Year as follows: *“On March 21st in the year 612 B.C., Kawa killed the Assyrian tyrant Dehak and liberated the Kurds and many other peoples in the Middle East. Dehak was an evil king who represented cruelty, abuse, and the enslavement of peoples. People used to pray every day for God to help them to get rid of Dehak. On Newroz day, Kawa led a popular uprising and surrounded Dehak's palace. Kawa then rushed passed the king's guards and grabbed Dehak by the neck. Kawa then struck the evil tyrant on the head with a hammer and dragged him off his throne. With this heroic deed, Kawa set the people free and proclaimed freedom throughout the land. A huge fire was lit on the mountaintop to send a message: firstly to thank God for helping them defeat Dehak, and secondly to the people to tell them they were free. This is where the tradition of the Newroz fire originates.”*¹

The above claim is clearly fictitious intended to serve Kurds' political agendas. The Kurdish nationalists, by using a convoluted version of the Persian myth of Zahak who was not an Assyrian, hope to inspire their people to rise against the cruelty of the ruling governments.² In doing so they portray the ancient Assyrians as cruel, the enemies of the Kurds and all other people thereby promoting hatred for the contemporary Assyrians.

To further add insult to the injury, they claim their celebration of this day began in 612 B.C. which is the year when ancient Assyrians were defeated by the combined forces of the Medes, Babylonians and the Scythians. However, as we shall see, Kurd's Newroz or Nowruz has nothing to do with the fall of Assyria or Zahak's myth. In fact the New Year they celebrate is in reality that of the ancient Assyrians and Babylonians, which originated in the third millennium B.C., long before there was any mention of Kurds in history. Furthermore, March 20-21, the first day of this event, is vernal equinox and has nothing to do with the fall of Nineveh which happened in August of 612

B.C.. It is unconscionable for the Kurds who are eager to portray themselves as an oppressed people to further their political agendas at the expense of the Assyrians especially because the latter have been subjected to repeated massacres by the former during the last few centuries.

Evidently, Kurds acquired their knowledge of Zahak's legend from the 11th century Persian poet Ferdosi's *Shahnameh* (the Book of Kings) who identifies the tyrant king as Arab and not Assyrian. Furthermore, according to Ferdosi, Zahak lived in Jerusalem and was killed by Feraidoun and not Kawa (Persian Kaveh).³

After crossing the river Tigris the forces of Feraidoun *“turned their faces towards the city which is now called Jerusalem, for here stood the glorious house that Zahak had built. And when they entered the city all the people rallied around Feraidoun, for they hated Zahak and looked to Feraidoun to deliver them.”*⁴ *“And Feraidoun did as he was bidden, and led forth Zahak to the Mount Demawend [north of today's Tehran]. And he bound him to the rock with mighty chains and nails driven into his hands, and left him to perish in agony. And the hot sun shone down upon the barren cliffs, and there was neither tree nor shrub to shelter him, and the chains entered into his flesh, and his tongue was consumed with thirst. Thus after a while the earth was delivered of Zahak the evil one, and Feraidoun reigned in his stead.”*⁵

The disparity between the real story of Zahak and the one advanced by the Kurds is either due to lack of specific knowledge of the myth or is a deliberate attempt to vilify the ancient Assyrians. It is clear that Zahak's ruling center was not in Mesopotamia and he did not die on March 21, 612 B.C. and his myth has nothing to do with the Kurds or Assyrians. There is always a danger in defining historical events based on myths rather than documented historical evidence because myths and legends can be easily perverted to satisfy the prejudices and political ambitions of the moment. The same legend can be told in different ways to indirectly vilify this or that people without regard to the truth as the Kurds have done in this case. While there is no documented historical evidence for when and why the Kurds began to observe their Newroz or Nowruz, there is no doubt that they learned to celebrate it from the

“Evidently, Kurds acquired their knowledge of Zahak's legend from the 11th century Persian poet Ferdosi's Shahnameh (the Book of Kings) who identifies the tyrant king as Arab and not Assyrian.”

Persians. The Persian new year, Nowruz, in addition to the Kurds is observed by the Afghans and the Persian-speaking people of Pakistan, India and Central Asia who were once part of that empire.

Although Persian writers have tried hard to credit the origin of their New Year to the Zoroastrian religious teachings, historical evidence indicate that it was borrowed from the ancient Assyrians and Babylonians. The Assyro-Babylonian new year originated during the Sumerian period, in mid third millennium B.C.. It was the most important religious ceremony which was observed on the day of the spring equinox (March 20-21) considered as the day of creation and also of the rebirth of the nature.

Although Persian writers have tried hard to credit the origin of their New Year to the Zoroastrian religious teachings, historical evidence indicate that it was borrowed from the ancient Assyrians and Babylonians.

Reports by the Greek historians about Alexander the Great indicate that the Persian new year celebrated in 330 B.C. shared common elements with that of the Assyro-Babylonians. When, on the spring equinox of that year, Alexander the Great participated in the Persian new year ceremonies, he was asked to go through a ritual ordeal which consisted of fighting a “monstrous death demon” and emerge victorious. His participation in this event renewed his office as Ahura Mazda's vice regent on earth.⁶

The fighting of the “monster of death” brings to mind the Mesopotamian creation story of “Enuma Elish” which was recited and reenacted during the Assyro-Babylonian new year.⁷



Assyrian depiction of battle between Aššur and Tiamat

The epic describes how Marduk in Babylon and Aššur in Assyria battled the monster Tiamat in the beginning of time and by splitting it in half they created the heaven, the earth, the mountains, rivers and, later, the plants and all the living creatures. The Assyrian king, Senneacherib, had the event engraved at the “Bet Akitu” at Assur on a pair of

copper doors. His inscription reads: “I engraved upon the gate the gods who marched in front and the gods who marched behind him [Assur], those who ride in chariots, and those who go on foot [against] Tiamat and the creatures [that were] in her.”

The Assyrian and Babylonian king was considered as the viceroy of god on earth and every new year he had to go through a ritual which led to his dethroning by the high priest in the presence of Marduk or Assur and after confessing he “*had not sinned against the land and had not neglected the divinity*”

his crown was returned to him by the high priest and his kingship was extended for another year.⁸ This concept seems to have survived among the Per-

sians as documented at the time of Alexander the Great; and even during the the Sassanian dynasty the Persian kings were considered as the regents of Ahura Mazda and were known as “*Bokh*” or “*Minu Chehre Az Eazadon*” i.e. “related to god”, also “*Farah Eizadi*” i.e. “guided by god”.⁹ Bas-reliefs left behind by some Sassanian kings show them receiving their crown from the *Mobed Mobedan* i.e. the Zoroastrian high priest.¹⁰ It is interesting to note that the Persian emblem of Aura Mazda seems to be almost a replica of the Assyrian god Assur.

Evidence suggest that the practice of the Sacred Marriage of the Assyro-Babylonian New Year, intended to insure the fertility of the land, became part of the Persian New Year celebrations also. “*..the [Achaemenian] king spent the first night of the New Year with a young woman. The offsprings of such union would be sent to a temple and they would normally end up as high-ranking religious officials.*”¹¹

Another aspect of the Persian Nowruz celebrations, not practiced since the medieval times, was called “*Kosa Rishin*” which seems to have had Mesopotamian origin. It was a play acted at the market place involving a temporary king or false Ameer who was mocked and made fun of and ultimately driven away. We know that during the Sumerian period one aspect of the Akitu festival involved the mocking of a substitute king for a day, usually a criminal dressed in royal regalia. In one instance, when the real king unexpectedly died, the false king, Enlil-Bani, inherited his throne.¹² Though there is no record showing that this was officially practiced during the Assyrian and Babylonian period undoubtedly it continued to be part of the people's celebration.

The New Year festival was usually canceled in Mesopotamia when the ruling King was not present in the city . Such was the case during the Nabunid (556-539) period in Babylon which led to the conquest of the country by the Persian king Cyrus in 539 B.C. Religious conflicts be-

(Continued from page 21)

tween Nabunid and the priests of Marduk had created great resentment of the population against his rule. In describing the Babylonians' disappointment at his failure to participate in the New Year festival, one inscription asserts: "*On the eleventh year [of the Nabunid rule] ... The King did not come to Babylon for the ceremonies of the month, Nissanu; Nabu did not come to Babylon, Bel [Marduk] did not go out in procession, the festival of the New Year was omitted.*"¹³

Another inscription after the invasion of Babylon by king Cyrus states: "*Nabunidus was heretical; he changed the details of worship. He was also an oppressor....But Bel-Marduk cast his eye over all countries, seeking for a righteous ruler.. Then he called by name Cyrus, King of Anshan, and pronounced him ruler of the lands.*"¹⁴

In another inscription Cyrus declares that: "*Marduk, the great lord, was pleased with his deeds and sent friendly blessings to 'the King who worships him' and his son Cambyses.*"¹⁵ Clearly, Cyrus and his son were eager to portray themselves as patrons of the Babylonian religion and way of life because the priests of Marduk had helped the Persians to conquer Babylon. Their goodwill would insure a peaceful rule in the future.

In 538, Cambyses, son of Cyrus, was installed as the king of Babylon and on the 4th day of Nissanu [March 24 of the western calendar] he went through the historic New Year ritual of paying homage to Bell [Marduk] and Nabu thereby he was officially appointed the viceroy of Marduk in Babylon with a headquarter in Sippar.¹⁶ This is the first mention of a Persian king participating in the celebration of the New Year festival which later came to be known as Nowruz. When Cyrus was killed on the battlefield in 530 B.C. Cambyses inherited the empire's throne. As king of Babylon he had presided for eight previous years over the Babylonian New year celebrations which by then had been gradually passed on to the Persians.

In Persepolis or Istakhar which was founded by Cambyses and developed by Dariush, along the side of the stair-cases leading to the Great King's palace, carvings show various nations of the empire bringing gifts to the King during the New Year's celebrations. There is no historical documentation to show that either the Medes or the Persians celebrated the Spring Equinox as New Year before the conquest of Babylon.

Above mentioned facts clearly show the process by which the Assyro-Babylonian New Year at the spring equinox was transferred to the Persians which the Achaemenid kings embraced. If the Persian Nowruz had a Zoroastrian origin, as some claim, elements which were not of the Persian religion would not have been incorporated into it. Ruling nations seldom adopt the traditions of their subjects but in the Persian's case, Cyrus and Cambyses were eager to please the Babylonians by showing they respected their religious practices. Since the New Year celebration was a very important event for the Baby-

lonians during which the legitimacy of the ruler was acknowledged, it was to the benefit of the early Persian kings to accept this tradition as their own.

Regardless of its origin, Nowruz during the last 2,500 years has evolved into a tradition which is uniquely Persian and no longer resembles its ancient version. The Kurds undoubtedly learned from the Persians to celebrate this event which explains the similarity of name by which it is known among both people and the lack of knowledge of its origin by the Kurds. While myths may have been enough for the primitive societies to explain important events in their life, in today's world nothing less than documented facts will do. The Kurds' attempt to explain their new year or so-called "National Day" based on a questionable myth is not only out of step with reality but also improper because it is meant to promote hatred against the Christian Assyrians who in the past have been persecuted by their neighbors including the Kurds primarily because of their faith. During the last few decades Kurds have changed their predatory practices against their Assyrian neighbors but falsely explaining their New Year celebration as an anti-Assyrian expression threatens to transform their relation with the Assyrians into a form of national hatred celebrated annually.

1- (Newroz @ <http://homepages.tig.com.au/~simko/newroz.html> May 2004)

2- (Tahiri, Hussein "Is Newroz the Kurdish national day?", @ <http://www.kurdmedia.com/reports.asp?id=133>)

3- (Ferdosi, "Shah-Nameh", Moasseseh Chaap was Entesharrat Ameir Kabeir, Tehran Iran, Chaape sevome 1344 pp.28-35.)

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5- (ibid)

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7- (Alexander Heidel, "The Babylonian Genesis, The Story of Creation", The University of Chicago Press 1951 pp. 16-17.)

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12 - ibid.

13- (Pritchard, James B. "The Ancient Near East, An Anthology of Texts and Pictures", Oxford University Press, London 1958 p.204)

14- (Burn, Andrew Robert "Persia and the Greeks, the Defense of the West 546-478 B.C.", Stm Marin's Press, Inc. 1968 p. 58.)

15- (Prichard p.207)

16- (Burn p58)

This article was taken from the following site, with the author's permission:
<http://www.christiansofiraq.com/Newruz.html>

Book Review

UNDERSTANDING IRAQ

By William R. Polk

Review by: *Peter Hannaford*

This book will be informative to two groups scarcely on speaking terms: the supporters of President Bush's invasion of Iraq and those implacably opposed to it. A student of Iraq since the 1950s and professor of Middle Eastern history for many years at the University of Chicago, William Polk presents the reader with the full sweep of Iraq's history, from the hunter-gatherers in the mountains of 12,000 years ago to his completion of this book late last summer.

In "Understanding Iraq," he gives us a comprehensive tour of what he identifies as the five major periods of Iraq's history. The first, "Ancient Iraq," saw the beginning of farming in mountain valleys and foothills, then along the Tigris and Euphrates Rivers, some 6,000 years ago. Around 3,000 B.C. the Sumerians came to dominate the land. For them, the strongest warriors were known as "lugal" ("Big Man"). According to the author, "The cult of the 'great man,' once firmly fixed, has endured in the minds of Iraqis ever since." In time, these "great men" promulgated codes of laws, Hammurabi's being the most famous.

Mr. Polk then describes the influence of the Assyrians, Akkadians, Persians, Alexander the Great and the Parthians in just enough detail to keep the reader moving to the next period, "Islamic Iraq." In his brief history of the life and times of Muhammad (570-632 A.D.) we learn that the year after Muhammad's death, groups of Arab Muslim clans took Baghdad from the Persians. Subsequently, in 680, Husain, a grandson of Muhammad, was invited to Kufa to replace the then-caliph who had no relationship to Muhammad. He was killed there by the caliph's forces. This date has been marked ever since as the most important on the Shi'a Muslim calendar.

A grandson of Genghis Khan captured and looted Baghdad in 1258, killing thousands of its citizens, but Islamic Iraq rose again despite deep divisions between Sunni and Shi'a. It lived under Ottoman rule until World War I, after which it came to be dominated by the British under a League of Nations mandate.

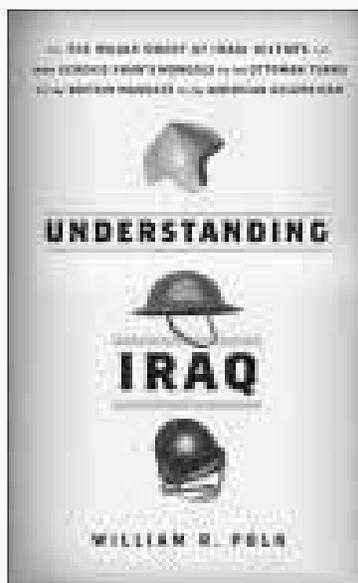
The author makes much of British errors in Iraq: high-handed administration; insensitivity to history and customs; imposition of laws; and a king virtually unknown to the Iraqis. (In his subsequent chapter, "American Iraq," he

tries doggedly to prove that mistakes made by U.S. administrators in 2003 and 2004 were replicas of British mistakes made decades earlier.)

In "Revolutionary Iraq," the author traces the antecedents of Saddam Hussein's rise to power and the role he says the United States played in this by abetting the overthrow of Abdul Karim Qassim in 1963. Mr. Qassim had led the coup in 1958 that ended British hegemony. A driving spirit of that coup was pan-Arabism, whereas Nuri Said, who had led the government from 1941 until the 1958 coup, had espoused nationalism. Soon after Mr. Qassim took office, he pursued a nationalistic "Iraq First" policy, angering many supporters, including the Ba'athists. In 1968, when one of his successors was deposed, the Ba'athists maneuvered themselves into a position of control. Saddam was then a protege of the new leader, but gradually gathered enough power to ease him out. As the author puts it, for Saddam, "power -- how to get it, how to keep it, how to use it. These were the driving forces of his life."

In "American Iraq," the author changes hats, from that of an informative historian, to a reciter of arguments against the war. He uses data from unidentified public opinion polls along with quoted assertions of various writers to buttress his argument that there was no justification for the United States and its coalition allies to invade Iraq. He seems to think we have done nothing right there since. While the Coalition Provisional Authority made mistakes (one being to use Saddam's Abu Ghuraib prison), Mr. Polk is skeptical that any good can come of the aftermath of our invasion.

It is perhaps inevitable that, as a historian, he sees current events through a rearview mirror. The possibility that the January elections could be the success they became eludes him. Thus he could not foresee their positive echo in Lebanon, Egypt, even Syria. He seems not to understand the power of satellite television to create instant impact.



Mr. Polk finished his book at a time when insurgent activities (which he saw as a national guerrilla war) were escalating. He assumed they would wind down only when we left. Yet, since the election they have contracted. While it may be too early to proclaim Iraqi democracy a full success, it seems very unlikely that the gloomy scenarios predicted by the "realist" school, of which the author seems to be a member, will come true.

Looking for the unexpected, *Buried in a Muslim stronghold is the oldest church in Iraq.* Nermin Al-Mufti visits the ruins

From: *Al-Ahram Weekly*: 20 - 26 June 2002; Issue No. 591

Karbala', 140 kilometres south of Baghdad, is one of the holiest cities in Islam. Pilgrims and interested tourists come here to pay their respects at the shrines of Hussein, the third Imam of Shi'ite Muslims, his half-brother Al-Abbas and the other martyrs who fell at the Battle of Karbala' in the seventh century.

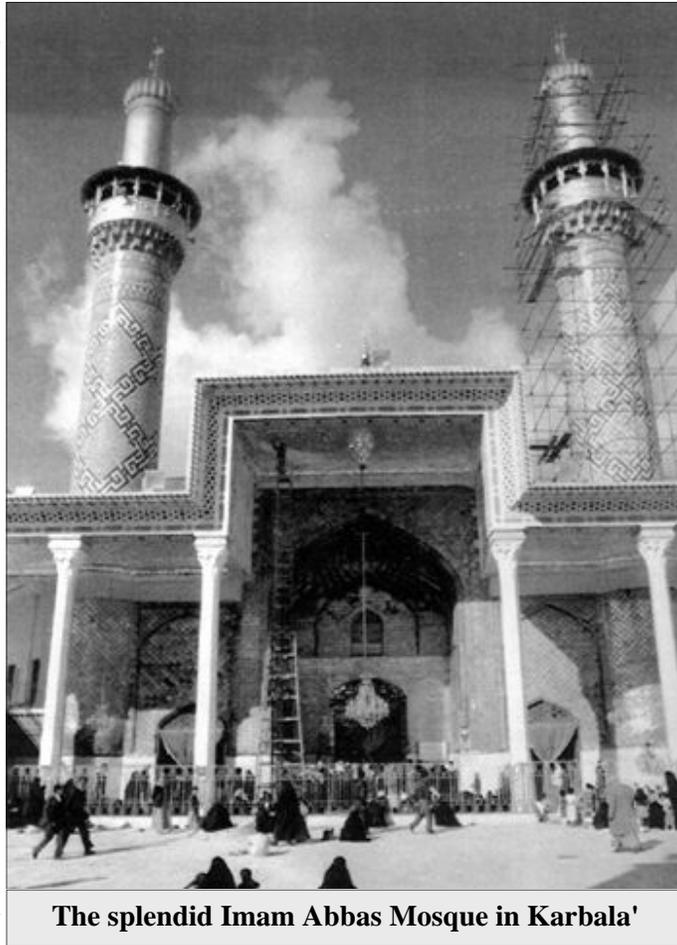
The battle took place on 10 October 680 (10 Muharram AH 61). The Imam Hussein ibn 'Ali, grandson of the Prophet Mohamed and pretender to the caliphate, together with 71 of his followers and members of his family -- including his sons and brothers -- were defeated and killed by an army sent by the Umayyad Caliph Yazid I. After the battle the women and children of Hussein's tribe were taken prisoner, shackled, loaded on camels and taken in a caravan from Karbala' to the seat of Yazid at Kufa. At the forefront

of the procession, mounted on spears, were the heads of Imam Hussein and his followers. Thus was the tragic downfall of the immediate family of the Prophet Mohamed.

The battle helped secure the position of the Umayyads, but the event was a great catastrophe for Shi'ite Muslims, the followers of Hussein, among whom 10 Muharram (or 'Ashura') became an annual holy day of public mourning.

But notwithstanding its place in Islamic history, Karbala', so holy to Muslims, is a holy place for Christians too. For here are the remains of the oldest church in Iraq, and this -- rather against the run of the mill -- was my destination.

The small town of Karbala' is dominated by the domes of the beautiful mosques of the two chief martyrs, much embellished over the centuries by Persian craftsmen. The gilded dome of Al-Abbas glints in the sun -- extremely hot in early summer. Everything in the town reminds one of the tragedy; even the water fountains are inscribed with



The splendid Imam Abbas Mosque in Karbala'

the words, "Drink, and remember the thirst of Hussein." The town revolves around the event, with souvenirs on sale on every corner.

As soon as I arrived I asked the first Karbala'i I met about the church. His astonishment was profound. He tried to explain that I was in Karbala', where between a mosque and a mosque there was another mosque and between one holy shrine and another there was a holy shrine. He left me shaking his head in bewilderment.

But I had read about the church in *Karbala' Through History*, written by historian Ribatt Al-Darweesh. Darweesh said the church, named Gasser, was located in Al-Ukhaider, an ancient settlement bordered on the south by Al-Razza Lake and about five kilometres from the north of Al-Ukhaider Castle. This is 20 kilometres south of Karbala'.

The book said the people of the whole area had converted to Christianity in the first century.

The origins of the Church of the East date back to the decades immediately following the death of Jesus Christ. While several of Christ's apostles preached in Mesopotamia, including St Thomas from 35-37 AD and St Peter in 54 AD, the Church of the East, of which the Chaldean Church is a daughter, credits its formal establishment to St Thaddeus, who preached in Mesopotamia from 37 to 65 AD. After the martyrdom of St Thaddeus his disciples continued the missionary work.

The Church of the East was the most vibrant Christian church in the world for several centuries, and to it goes the credit for spreading Christianity in India and China. (The Christians of India were under the direct jurisdiction of the Church of the East from the fourth until the 16th centuries, when the colonial Portuguese, under instruction from Rome, forcefully severed that relation.)

From the fourth century the territory of the Church of

the East became divided between the competing Roman and the Persian Empires (Mesopotamia fell under the Persians, while modern day Syria, Lebanon, Palestine, and Jordan remained under the Romans). The Persian rulers of Mesopotamia unleashed several massacres against their Christian subjects, who were suspected of sympathy with their Roman adversaries. To prevent such massacres, the Christians of Mesopotamia severed their relations with their brethren in the Roman-ruled territories and set up their own church.

A thousand years later, after the collapse of the Byzantine Empire, the Roman church decided to intervene in the affairs of the unprotected and politically weak Christians of Mesopotamia and

"cleanse" them of their "impure" doctrines. Its chance of establishing its own "Catholic" church among them came with a Catholic convert, Yohanna (John) Sulaqa, who was given the title of "Patriarch of Assur" by Pope Julius III in 1551 and became the first Chaldean Patriarch. His successors were later on given the title of "Patriarch of the Chaldeans of Babylon". Prior to that, all the patriarchs of the Church of the East were known by the title of "Patriarch of the Seat of St Thomas and St Thaddeus".

Nowadays the Chaldean people lay claim to being the descendants of all the native people of Mesopotamia -- Chaldeans/Babylonians, Assyrians, Arameans, Akkadians and Sumerians. They belong to a nation which has thrived for 7,000 years and made an enormous contribution to human civilisation. The homeland of this ancient Aramaic-speaking nation is spread between Arab and non-Arab countries. Besides Iraq (where they make up the third largest ethnic group after Arabs and Kurds), Chaldeans are found in Syria, Lebanon and Egypt, as well as in the non-Arab countries of Turkey, Iran, Georgia, and Armenia. Today, large concentrations of Chaldeans have emigrated to America, Australia, Canada and many European countries.

The Chaldean Church, a Catholic denomination, is the largest Christian church in Iraq with a membership of close to 80 per cent of all Iraqi Christians. Their liturgical language is Aramaic, the language of Christ, although as Arabic is now the common language, proficiency in Aramaic is dwindling even among priests.

The Chaldean Catholic Church of today has almost 1.5

million adherents worldwide. The Diocese of St Thomas the Apostle in the US can boast more than 150,000 members with close to 100,000 in the Detroit, Michigan, area alone.

Historically there has been little discrimination against Christians in Iraq either in law or practice. The lack of tension between Muslims and Christians is attributed to the responsible behaviour both of the Christians, as a small minority, and of the majority Muslim community.

So with this history in mind and history book in hand, I drove south to Al-Ukhaider, the most remarkable of the desert castles in Iraq. Al-Ukhaider was built in the second century of the Hejira and is itself well worth a visit.



The simple Gasser Church

The street was very quiet, so I waited for several long minutes for a passer-by. At last a car came along, and the driver said what I was looking for was an old monastery where the believers said the monks had hidden themselves in the desert. They had come from the Holy Land to escape the Romans, he said, perhaps a little inaccurately (Roman persecution of Christians per se came much later, although persecution of Christians as political activists is a possibility). Whether it's a church or a monastery, I told him, just show me the way.

Now I was on my way to Gasser Church. The book said it was a rectangular building, and the remains of its walls were about three to four metres high. The roof had fallen. The nave was about 40 square metres, and on the right side was an open room about five by six metres and a wall with arches where the altar was placed. The whole building was built of gypsum and rocks. There were small, arched doors and seven small windows on each side, and at the front there was a main gate. Around the church were the remains of a settlement.

I stopped the car on the side of the road, not wishing to drive over the fragile and as yet largely unexcavated archaeological site. I closed the book. Walking to the site over the smooth sand, I passed evidence of ongoing excavations. At last I stood in front of the oldest church in Iraq. Superficially, I have to say, it looked like any other ruined church. More will doubtless be added to our knowledge of the site when the archaeologists have finished their work. Gasser Church will have a long history to tell.

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In Memoriam:

Anwar Y. David

Nov. 29, 1937 - Nov. 17, 2004

By: Frederick Backman

What does one say about a man whose life touched all who knew him? A man who existed to come to the aid of those in need.

Anwar Y. David was born in Habania, Iraq to Yalda and Armounta David as the fourth of nine children. After a story-filled childhood he was hired to work at the American Embassy in Iraq where he excelled for ten years until the 1963 Baath coup that erupted and changed Iraq forever. After showing great bravery in actions that indeed saved American lives he was awarded a Medal of Honor by the United States State Department and was featured in Life Magazine as an Iraqi who bravely assisted Americans during a time of extreme need. When the Baath party overthrew the ruling Abdul Kharim Khassem they installed a curfew and all non-westerners were told they could go home to their families.

After all the Iraqis fled to their homes Anwar drove through each neighborhood that contained Americans and gathered them up to come to the Embassy for protection and there he stayed with them for three nights. As the bombings and chaos continued in the streets Anwar stayed behind to help with translation and to manage all of the children that were terrified for their lives.

Once things had settled down, Anwar returned to his wife Gladys and his two children who had been mourning him, thinking he had died in the fighting. After several weeks the embassy informed Anwar that his name had appeared on a list of Iraqis that were to be executed and hung publicly as someone who had helped the Americans. One of Anwar's supervisors at the Embassy helped to arrange to have Anwar, his wife and two children flee to America to avoid execution. They offered Anwar an Ambassadorship in Ghana; however, Anwar and Gladys choose to raise their family in Modesto, California.

After arriving in Modesto and struggling to create a livelihood Anwar became employed by Gallo Winery where he worked for 23 years as the supervisor of Gallo Shipping. For several years after his arrival in America Anwar dedicated himself to bringing his entire family to the land that had provided him with such great opportunity. Once his family had all arrived safely, Anwar began what could only be described as an Immigrant Action Center out of his home in which he filed papers and provided affidavits of support for a countless number of Assyrians seeking to share in the promise of a new life in America.

Once the people he had helped arrived in Modesto he as well as others worked to secure them a livelihood and residence so that they could begin to build the strong Assyrian community that thrives in Modesto today.

Anwar and his wife Gladys were always involved in all

aspects of the Assyrian community whether it be in the church or community and political organizations. His greatest wish was to see all Assyrians live in harmony with one another while recognizing the unique gifts and pride that our ancestry had instilled in us.

Anwar will be remembered fondly and missed terribly. He was a loving husband for 48 years and was the best father anyone could ask for to his three children, Romel David and wife Sharlet, Rita Yonan and husband David Yonan, and Anita David and husband Frederick Backman. Anwar passed away after a long battle with diabetes in the arms of his buddy Frederick who had cared tenderly for him for three years. His was an indomitable spirit that will live forever in the hearts of all who know him.

Services were held at St. George's Church of the East, on Monday, Nov. 22, 2004 at 10:00 AM, followed by a remembrance at the Assyrian American Civic Club.

Maghdelata Sarguis

(1906 – 2005)



Maghdelata Sarguis was born in Gavilan (Urmia), Iran, on March 14, 1906. She was the daughter of Youkhanna and Marian Dooman.

She was the youngest of six children, all of whom preceded her in death. Her brothers were Alexander (Sando), Ishak, and Nimrod. Her sisters were Victoria and Nanasi.

Maghdelata was just a child when her eldest brother, Sando, left for America in 1917. A dozen years later, when Maghdelata was 20 years of age, she left Urmia for France, with the intention of joining her brother in New York. While in Marseille, she met Elia Sarguis, who was from Charbakhsh (Urmia), Iran. They married in 1931. They had two children of their marriage – Francis and Flora.

Maghdelata's husband Elia died at a young age in October 1940, due to a kidney problem. This was at the outset of World War II, a difficult time to survive under military occupation. Maghdelata was obliged to take two jobs at the same time in order to provide her children with their basic needs.

Meanwhile, her brother Sando had moved from New York to Chicago. He had married, had three children, and then he passed away. Maghdelata kept in frequent touch with Sando's children, just as she always kept in frequent touch with her family in Urmia. In late 1947, her niece Ella sponsored the immigration of Francis and Flora to the U.S. Maghdelata followed them to Turlock, California, very soon after.

The hardships Maghdelata experienced along with her family and fellow Christians during the troubled times of

her early youth, particularly in the waning period of World War I, left an indelible mark. This appears to have been a factor in the unusually strong feeling of solidarity she had towards all of her relatives. Years later, while she was struggling to survive in wartime France, her two young children recall that she would burst out weeping when receiving news of the continued troubles back home in Urmia.

No doubt it was also this early experience which forged her tenacity. She was fiercely proud of her independence, she maintained a work ethic well into her retirement years, and she never relented in pursuit of her agenda. Without hesitation, she took on menial jobs (in fruit orchards, fruit canneries and meat packing plants) with a view to providing her family a home. But just as importantly, she always harbored the dream of helping the immigration of her relatives to the U.S. She never saw America as “easy street,” but as a land of freedom and opportunity. Unlike other places she had seen, for her this was a blessed country where hard work had its fair rewards.

Maghdelata lived 57 years in Turlock, a community she considered ideal. In Marseille, her friends consisted of a very small Assyro-Chaldean community. In Turlock, she discovered a more established group, with its own places of worship and its own social club. She reveled among her fellow countrymen, and from the outset she became an active member of St. John Assyrian Presbyterian Church. A few short years following her arrival, she set in motion her lifelong plan, by helping with the immigration of one relative, followed by many others, leading to a virtual relocation of all survivors of her Urmia clan. This included not only countless nephews, nieces, and their children; but also her two surviving siblings, sister Victoria and brother Nimrod, who would spend their final years in the tranquility of her community.

Following the early trials of her youth and the ordeal of the war years in France, and after a relentless effort to reunite with her loved ones, Maghdelata had achieved her goal. For the past many years, she lived happily among her many Urmia relatives, grateful to God and America for helping her realize this dream.

During the nearly six decades of her life in Turlock, Maghdelata was an active member of the Assyrian American Civic Club of Turlock. But more than any club, her strong religious faith was at the core of her being. She believed strongly in the power of prayer, and she sought to guide her actions according to the Christian values instilled in her from her childhood. While she was a devoted member of St. John’s Assyrian Presbyterian Church, she had equal respect for the other churches in her community.

Maghdelata suffered a broken hip on March 9, and she was taken to the hospital in Turlock for medical examination, where she died peacefully on March 11, 2005. She is survived by her two children – Francis Sarguis (wife Dumarina), and Flora Sarguis Jacob (husband Fred Jacob) –

and by three grandchildren: Tay Sarguis, Tod Sarguis, and Nina S. Walker.

An overflow crowd of relatives and friends attended a memorial service at St. John’s Assyrian Presbyterian Church on Tuesday, March 15, followed by a graveside service at Turlock Memorial Park. At a reception in her honor that same day at the Assyrian American Civic Club of Turlock, she was eulogized by relatives and friends.

Donations in her memory may be made to St. John’s Assyrian Presbyterian Church, 450 So. Palm Street, Turlock, CA 95380.

Major Awia Yacoub Yousif (1926-2005)

By Fred Aprim
California

Awia Yacoub Yousif was born in the Village of Bibaide, north of Iraq, in 1926. It was destined that he learn about responsibility and maturity from the very young age of five as his father passed away unexpectedly. Life was harsh for Assyrians in Iraq in those times. His family had to move to Sulaymaniya, to live with his uncle.



In 1941, at the age of 14, Awia moved to Habbaniya (west of Baghdad) after the passing of his mother, and joined the Assyrian Levy Force. In 1942, as World War II was at its height, he joined the British Paratroopers and participated in military actions in various war theaters, including Palestine, Albania, Italy, Yugoslavia and Greece. He fought bravely and returned to Iraq in 1945. Upon his return, he traveled to Syria and married Margaret Barjim.

In 1955, with the dismantling of the Assyrian Levy Force, he joined the Iraqi Military Reserve College and graduated as second lieutenant in 1956, and, at end of his career, he achieved four-star ranking.

In 1972, Awia retired from the Army after a long military carrier that spanned 31 years. However, in 1975, he returned to serve in civil capacity as the Qa'im Maqam (Administrative Officer) of Amadiya District and retired in 1976.

In 1997, he left Iraq to the United State and settled in Chicago.

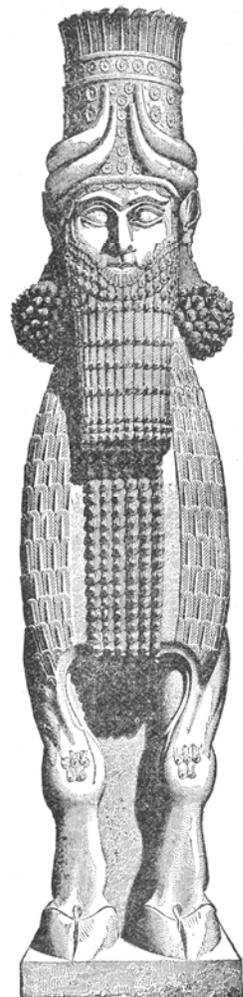
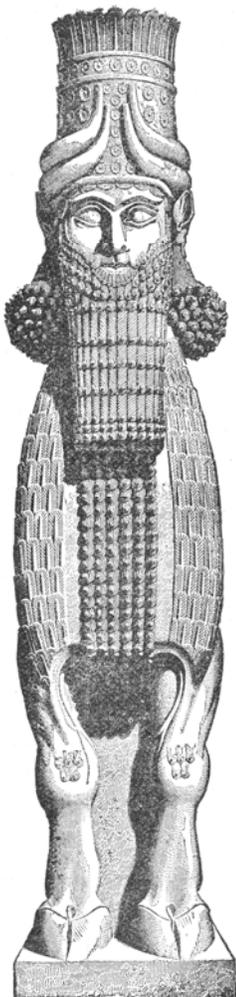
Awia was a decorated sharpshooter and enthusiastic sportsman, who played rugby, basketball, football, and track and field.

Major Awia passed to eternal life on Friday, Feb 25, 2005. He leaves behind his wife Margaret Barjim, daughter Virginia, Kardonia and family, and his sons Romel, Albert, Ashur, Alexander, Evan, and families.

May God bless Awia's soul, a courageous and noble Assyrian.

لعب كاشف

تجد : لغة دينا موهب ، فيه نسيتم (خدايم)
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Serving Assyrian Kids Worldwide

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"Syrian?"
 "No, Assyrian."
 How many times have you had this dialogue recently?

Odds are that most of us are asked this question umpteen times each month. Additionally, most of us have our own ten minute version of "Who are the Assyrians" history lesson which we've repeated over and over again. ... and there it lies the good news... indeed we respond "Assyrian" and for the most part, we can stumble through some history of who we are and where we come from.

The pertinent question remains... in five years, ten years, twenty years, will our children respond the same way? Will they know enough about our history and heritage to explain to a stranger who the Assyrians are? Will they have enough pride in being Assyrian to begin with?

What motivates two people to start an effort like AssyrianKid.com?

These are the questions that have inspired us to dedicate our time and energy to producing products that will help us instill Assyrian language and culture within our own children. Nothing would make us more proud than to see other Assyrian children benefiting as well!

Prior to each having our first child, we were both busy with our careers in the corporate world and our home life. Now each having had a daughter, our focus has shifted to the future of our children and their self-identity as they grow up. We hope that AssyrianKid.com will help them and other Assyrian children grow up with the spirit of Assyrianism instilled in them.

With that, we dedicate AssyrianKid.com to our daughters who continue to inspire us each and every day.

Belona & Yolanda,
 Moms to Our Kids
 Founders, AssyrianKid.com

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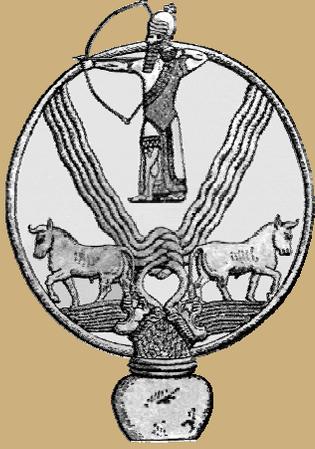
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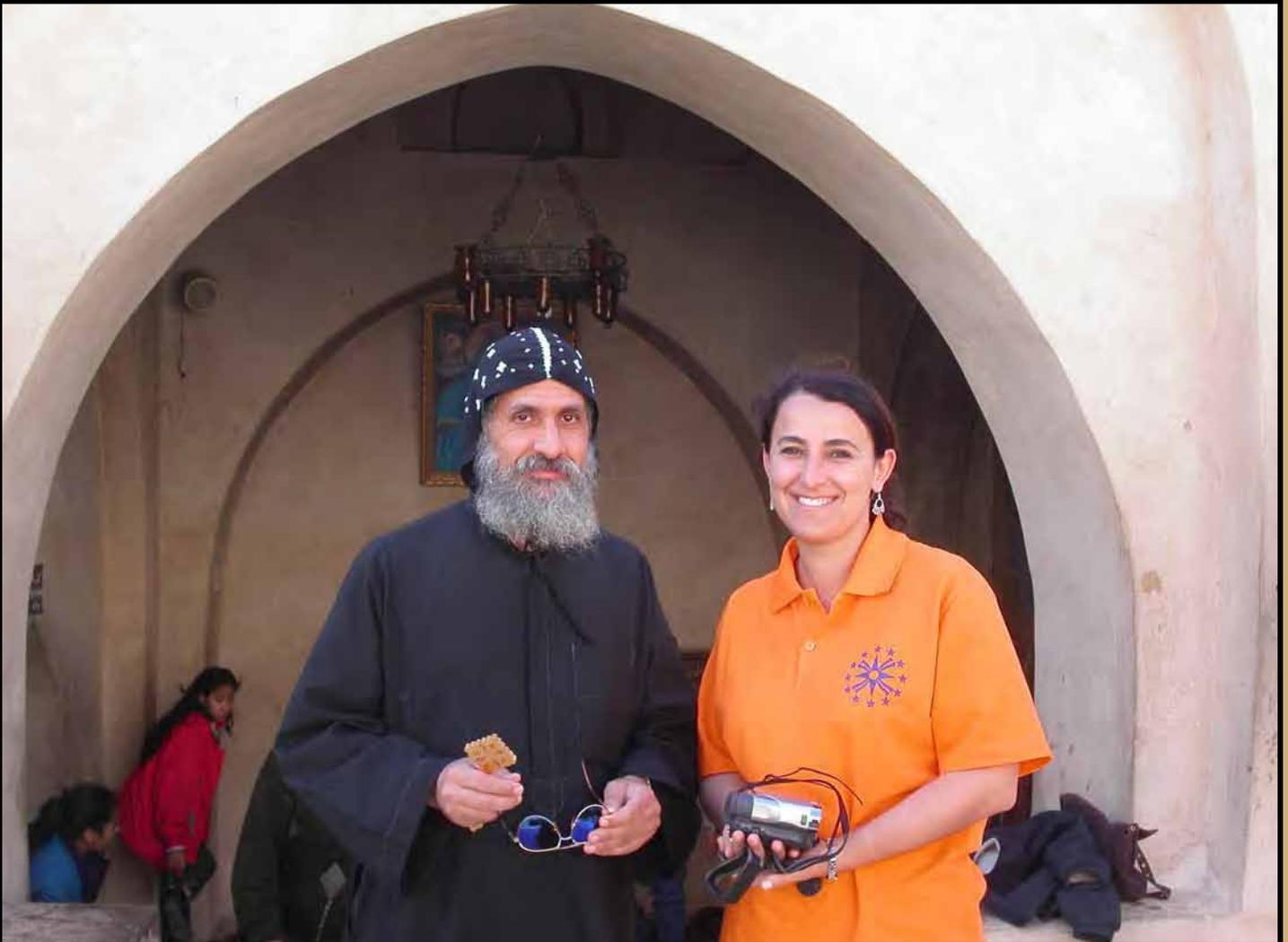
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