



NINEVEH

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**La France et les Assyro-Chaldéens
Qu'en dit la presse?**

**France and the Assyro-Chaldeans
What does the press say?**

By Claire Weibel Yacoub



Comprendre le Moyen-Orient
GÉOPOLITIQUE, RELATIONS INTERNATIONALES, DIPLOMATIE RELIGIONS

Parmi les Chrétiens d'Orient, les Arméniens sont devenus familiers aux médias et à l'opinion publique française. Mais qu'en est-il des Assyro-Chaldéens ? Les connaît-on vraiment ? Sont-ils les oubliés de la grande histoire ? Dès le XIXe siècle, la presse française répercute abondamment les récits des explorateurs et les événements, souvent tragiques, qui touchent les Assyro-Chaldéens aux confins des empires ottoman et persan. La France les reçoit à sa table. Leur nom apparaît dans un traité international, celui de Sèvres, signé le 10 août 1920. D'autochtones avérés, ils deviennent pourtant des réfugiés dispersés dans plusieurs pays.

Sensible à la question des chrétiens d'Orient, proche des Assyro-Chaldéens, Claire Weibel Yacoub, laborantine, diplômée en droits de l'Homme et auteure notamment de *Surma l'Assyro-Chaldéenne (1883-1975)*. Dans la tourmente de Mésopotamie (L'Harmattan 2007) s'est penchée sur la presse française pour en extraire les éléments liés à la question assyro-chaldéenne, sujet toujours d'actualité.

Paris, L'Harmattan, 2019
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Other books by Claire Weibel Yacoub:

- *Surma l'Assyro-Chaldéenne (1883-1975)*. Dans la tourmente de Mésopotamie, Paris, L'Harmattan, 2007.
- *Le Rêve brisé des Assyro-Chaldéens. L'introuvable Autonomie*, Paris, Les Editions du Cerf, 2011.
- *With Joseph Yacoub, Oubliés de tous, Les Assyro-Chaldéens du Caucase*, Paris, Les Editions du Cerf, 2015.

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by Abdulmesih BarAbraham, MSc. (*)



Assyrian refugees in front of the Russian consulate in Urmia. Source: MARA

The Lazarists and Daughters of Charity among the Assyro-Chaldeans

Much is known about the protestant missionary activities of the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions and of the Archbishop of Canterbury's Assyrian Mission in Turkey and Persia, which were established in the 19th century. The American mission opened the first school in 1836 under the direction of Rev. Justin Perkins. The Canterbury's Assyrian Mission was established by British Archbishop Edward White Benson in 1886 and carried on its work of supporting the Church of the East in Turkey and Persia until the outbreak of World War One.

Less well known, however, are the missionary activities of the Catholics, including the Lazarists from France.

A recent research article by Joseph Yacoub and his wife Claire Yacoub in the Ninway Magazine (LINK: <http://ninway.fr>), a quarterly publication of the Assyro-Chaldean Association in Paris (Issue #16 of March 2019), sheds new light on the work of the Lazarists and Daughters of Charity along certain historical phases of their engagement among the Assyro-Chaldean in Turkey and Persia. The authors rely heavily on the rich correspondence amounting to hundred volumes of Annals of the Lazarist Missionaries and the Daughters of Charity Archives, which illuminate their work as well as the difficult life conditions of the Assyro-Chaldeans in Persia, often described as heavenly but of great poverty.

Joseph Yacoub is honorary Professor of political science at the Catholic University of Lyon, and his wife Claire Yacoub a French historian and author of four books on Assyrians (LINK: <http://aina.org/news/20190703192913.htm>).

Professor Yacoub is the first holder of the UNESCO Chair "Memory, Cultures and Interculturality" and author of dozens of books.

The Lazarists trace their origin to the Roman Catholic society of apostolic life of priests and brothers founded by Saint Vincent de Paul. They are associated with the Vincentian Family, a loose federation of organizations who claim Vincent de Paul as their founder or Patron. Hence, they are popularly known as Vincentians, Paules, or Lazarists. The Daughters of Charity (Les Filles de la Charité) is a women's organization also known also Sisters of Charity of Saint Vincent de Paul and associated with the Lazarists.

The research article discusses historical phases since the first ministry of Catholics in the Ottoman Empire and in Persia. Starting with the traces of establishment of the Lazarists in Turkey and Persia, the article handles some Lazarist publications for the Assyro-Chaldeans, namely Qala d'Shrara (The Voice of Truth), a monthly magazine in modern Assyrian launched in 1897 which even had subscribers in the United States. It stopped appearing in 1915 due to the war. Bishop Thomas Audo was one of key people involved in its publication.

A further section of the research elaborates on the Lazarists as eyewitnesses to the dramatic events of 1915, the Russian retreat from Urmia and the Turkish occupation of the city. The research concludes with reports on the aftermath of the Bolshevik Revolution, when the Russians definitively left the Urmia / Salamas region at the end of 1917.

Lazarists and Daughters of Charity in Istanbul

According to the Yacoub, the Lazarists were entrusted with the missions in the Ottoman Empire by Pope Pius VI. In the summer of 1783, they landed in Istanbul and established the Saint-Benoît High School, one of the oldest educational institutions in Ottoman Turkey. They benefited from the protection of the King of France. Obviously, the school was not allowed to accept "Ottoman subjects" initially. "When the permission was given to accept other than Levantines or foreigners, the Daughters of Charity entered the scene in 1839, established a mission and opened a school for girls in the same college by separating the main courtyard by a wall," write the authors. From the middle of the 19th century, the Lazarists and the Daughters of Charity managed to found numerous charity institutions, among them hospitals, orphanages, schools, primary schools, a pharmacy, clinics and associations.

The First World War shattered these institutions resulting in the closure of schools and colleges. Some churches were desecrated and converted into mosques; the authors cite testimonies and accounts of Rev. François-Xavier Lobry, a visitor from Turkey, and Sister Reiselhel, a visitor from Constantinople.

In September 1919 the College Saint-Benoît reopened its doors even though the Lazarist presence diminished over the years. Today, the congregation no longer maintains lead of the private high school Saint-Benoît. The presence of some Daughters of Charity in Istanbul, as volunteers in the Peace Hospital,

which they have been running for more than 150 years, testifies to their past work. "During this long period, a number of Assyro-Chaldeans benefited from their generosity, care and benevolence in Istanbul and elsewhere", state the authors.

Lazarists in Persia

In the second section of their research, the authors continue with the introduction of Eugène Boré (1809-1877), a remarkable Orientalist who joined the Lazarists Mission in 1849 in Constantinople and was ordained a priest the following year. He founded a school in Tabriz, Persia, in 1838, open to both Muslims and Christians, and managed to convince the Congregation of Lazarists to establish a mission, followed by opening a French Embassy in the country.

Eugene Boré himself founded five schools with his own funds, including one in the Assyro-Chaldean village of Khosrava, in the district of Salamas. With the support of the Daughters of Charity they opened a school for girls in Khosrava in 1856 attended by about sixty students.

Citing Bishop Augustin-Pierre Cluzel, the Apostolic Delegate to Persia, the educational agenda in 1860 is motivated as follows: "For me, I think that the greatest good done in Khosrava comes from the great external school of girls held by our Sisters. (...) Because the mother has a big part in the education of the family, and it is a great point that she is educated and good Christian."

Joseph and Claire Yacoub document that until early 19th century five Lazarist houses were founded in Urmia (1842), Khosrava (1845), Tehran (1862), Tabriz (1900), and Julfa-Isfahan (1903). They trace the mentioning of the missions in Persia in the Annals through numerous letters, notices, historical insights, and studies. They also reveal that among the missionary authors several Assyro-Chaldean priests existed, among them Abel Zayia, Nathanael Dinkha, François Miraziz, Désiré Salomon, and the famous scholar Paul Bedjan (1838-1920).

Eyewitnesses to the drama of 1915

Joseph and Claire Yacoub write that after the Russian retreat Urmia was occupied by the Turks from January 2 to May 24, 1915. During that terrible time the Lazarist mission provided incomparable humanitarian and moral support to the people stranded there. A large number of Assyro-Chaldeans took refuge in the mission centers surrounded by Turkish troops and Kurdish irregulars who were in the service of the Turkish army.

According to the sources, the Lazarist Mission harbored about 3,500 refugees. A detailed account the authors cite from the Journal of the Troubles of Urmia, written by the Sisters of Charity, reveals the magnitude of the mass-

acre that took place there until a detachment of Russian Cossacks entered Urmia again on May 24, 1915.

On the other hand, the sources report about the evacuation of Russian troops that was accompanied by a massive flight Christians. About 30,000 of them follow the Russians retreat. Among others, the authors cite Georges Decroo, superior of the Lazarist Mission of Khosrava-Salamas who accompanied them, writing from Tiflis, March 12, 1915: "In the valley of Salamas, the Armenians and the Assyro-Chaldeans who had been warned in time, were able to flee through the snow-covered mountains and vast mudflats that separate Salamas from the Russian frontier. But what a terrible exodus!"

The tragedy continues in Persia in 1919

The research article concludes with a section dealing with the aftermath of the World War One. The authors write that following the Bolshevik Revolution, the Russians definitively left the Urmia / Salamas region at the end of 1917: "Despite fierce resistance from the Assyrians in the city of Urmia, from January to June 1918, the Ottoman troops led by Ihsan Pasha, committed a real carnage. Atrocities were perpetuated in Khosrava as well, to which no one escaped."

The sources reveal that the Lazarist Fathers François Lhotellier and François Miraziz fell as martyrs. According to Aristide Châtelet, the "whole plain of Urmia shook (...) The immense number of people, sixty to eighty thousand [60,000 – 80,000] souls, were moving without order towards the south (...) Food was scarce, water became rare in these arid mountains...Along the defiles, corpses multiplied more and more every day, victim of hunger, fatigue, dysentery, typhus and cholera who had joined the ranks of the fugitives."

The authors confirm other reports on the events that, unprecedented violence poured out on the 14,000 Christians who remained in Urmia. The people were massacred without mercy. Joseph and Claire Yacoub cite Aristide Chatelet who reported that "In July 1918, the disastrous terror of a last invasion sow everywhere death and fire. Our leader, Mgr. Sontag, falls gloriously on the field of honor of charity; a Chaldean bishop, 3 of our confreres, 14 priests, hundreds of Christians, massacred without mercy, blushing our missions of Khosrava and Urmia with their blood." That resulted in the complete ruin of the two missions conclude the authors.

(*) Abdulmesih BarAbraham holds a Master of Science degree from the University of Erlangen/Nuernberg. He has published numerous articles on the situation of the Assyrians in the Middle East. Currently he is Chairman of the board of trustees of the Yoken-bar-Yoken Foundation and of the Mor Afrem Foundation in Germany.

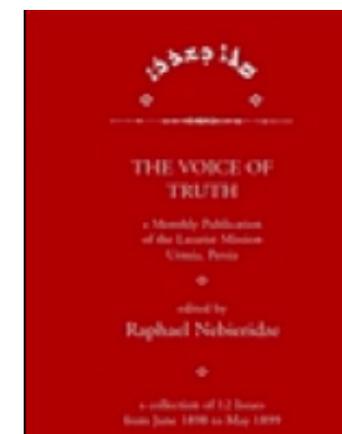


Figure 1. Qala d-Srara, issue of June, 1898, page 1. (Courtesy of Atour Publications)



Eugène Boré (Wikipedia)



“History seeped through the cracks despite their best efforts,” acrylic on canvas, 2018, by Esther Eli (Courtesy of Esther Elia)

Diaspora in Bloom: Assyrian-American Art on View in San Jose

Courtesy of KQED.org

How much do you know about Assyrians? For many Americans, it's news we have members of the ancient Middle Eastern ethnic group living here in the U.S. today.

Members of the Assyrian diaspora are spread out all over world, most in Iraq, Syria, Turkey and Iran. But conflicts modern, ancient and in between forced hundreds of thousands of predominantly Christian Assyrians to move further afield, and the most recent figures from the U.S. Census Bureau estimate roughly 100,000 live in the United States.

Nardin Sarkis works in government relations at the Silicon Valley Leadership Group. He estimates 10,000 Assyrians live in this region alone. So it was he got to chatting with fellow Assyrian-American Akadina Yadegar, who works at Plug and Play Tech Center, about the dearth of modern Assyrian art in museums and galleries.

Ancient art there's plenty of. The Assyrian Empire of Mesopotamia flourished some 4,000 years ago. At its peak, the empire stretched from Cyprus to Iran, from present-day Armenia and Azerbaijan to the Arabian Peninsula, Egypt and eastern Libya.

Assyrian kings spent some of their fabulous wealth on palaces full of art, including iconic, muscular stonework. Archeologists continue to pour over the details of of the empire's sophisticated bureaucracy, detailed in durable clay cuneiform tablets.

All of that said, Assyrians didn't stop making art after that empire collapsed.

Neither Sarkis nor Yadegar is a professional art curator. But they wanted to show their own community and the wider Bay Area community that Assyrians have “more to offer” the world of visual arts than their admittedly



Tablet Series by artist Atra Givarkes (Courtesy of Megan White)

impressive heritage from ancient times.

“The goal for the exhibit itself is to elevate the modern over the ancient, celebrate present Assyrian artists who are looking at contemporary issues,” explains Yadegar.

These two Millennials went looking — where else? — on Instagram, and found artists like Atra Givarkes of Orange County, who gives neo-Aramaic calligraphy a

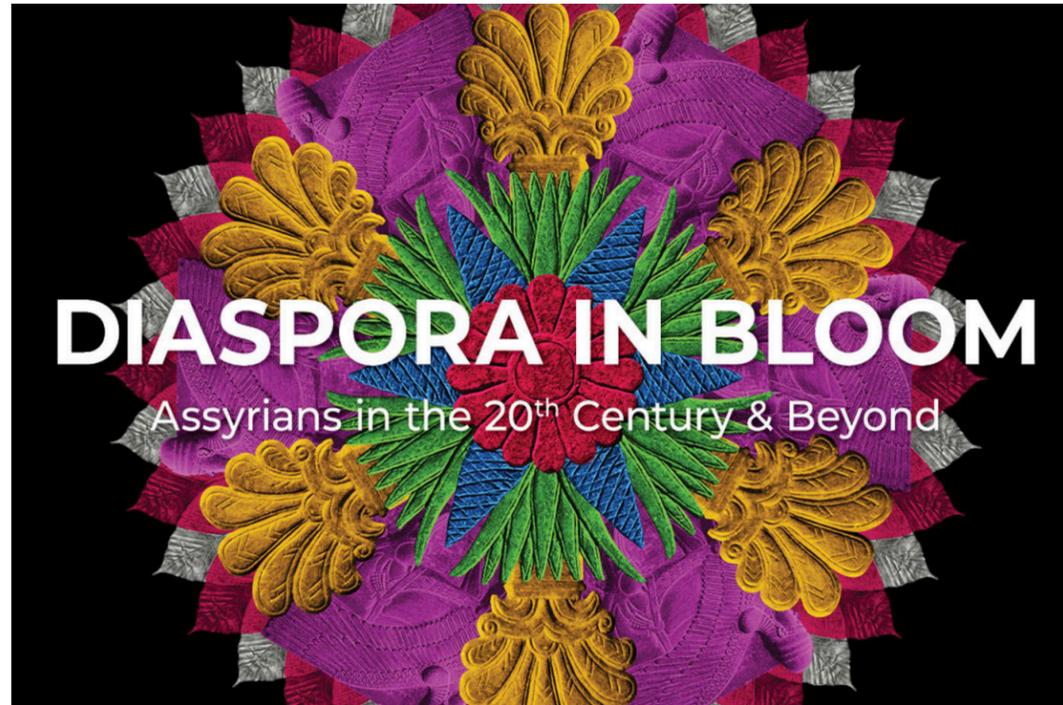
bright, pop art face lift.

Then there's Esther Elia of San Francisco, who works in multiple mediums. Some of her most striking contributions to this show include paintings she based on her family's photographs from the early 20th century.

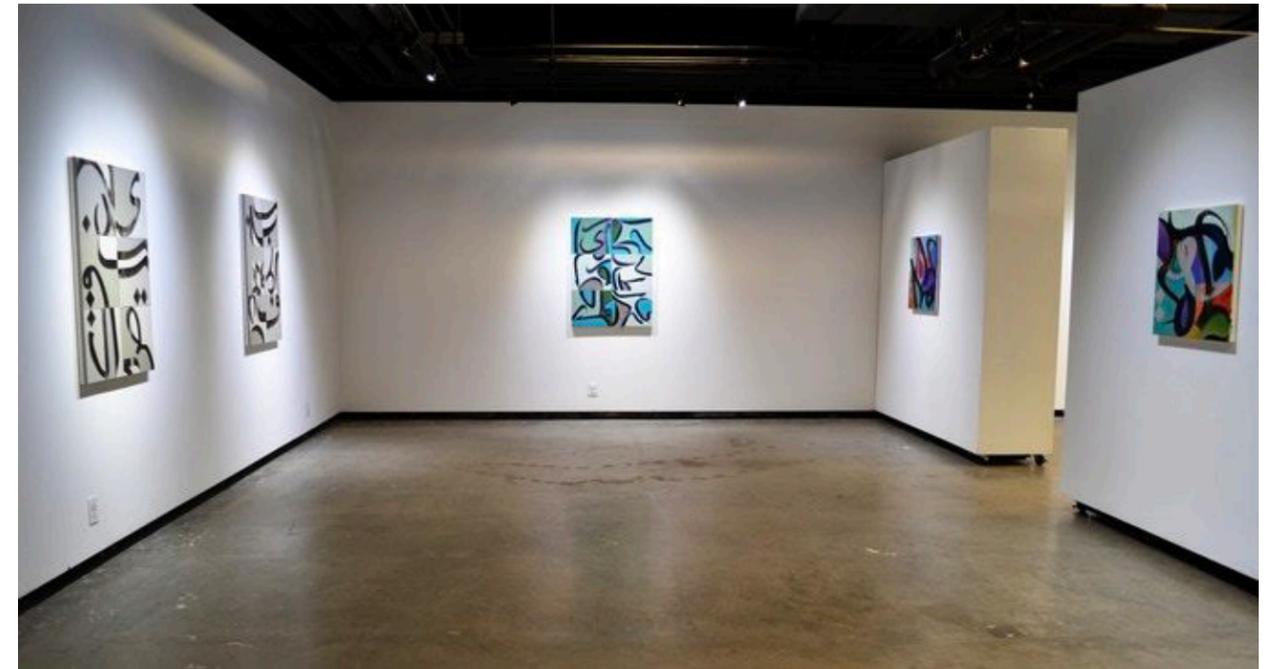
Elia explores the refugee experience both as a psychological journey for generations of Assyrian-Americans,



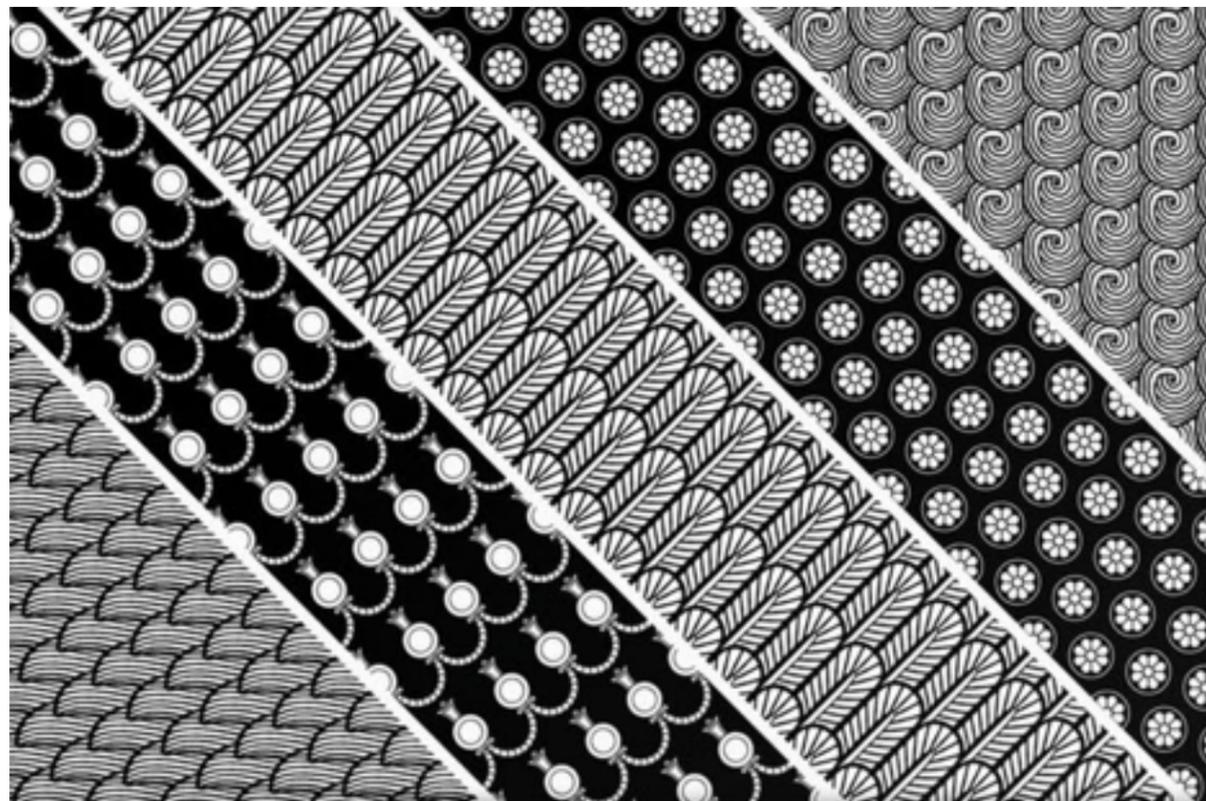
Acrylic on canvas, 2018 (Rachael Myrow/KQED)



Diaspora in Bloom by Nardin Sarkis



Where is My home by Atra Givarkes



Ancient Assyrian Patterns by Rabel Betshmucl

and as an emotionally laden lens through which to view the current state of anti-immigration sentiment in the United States and Western Europe.

“Assyrians that were forced out of their lands and came to America for a new life as so many do; came as refugees and look what we’ve created. We’ve created art. We’ve created culture to give back to our community,” Sarkis said.

Artist Esther Elia writes, “The picture shows my great-grandfather side by side with his brothers, all refugees fresh from Iran. While in Denmark recently, a taxi driver helpfully informed us that ‘the refugees ruined Sweden.’ What he said as pragmatic fact struck me as a personal rejection of my own people. It ultimately led me to ask, ‘At what cost does the happiest place in the world maintain itself?’”

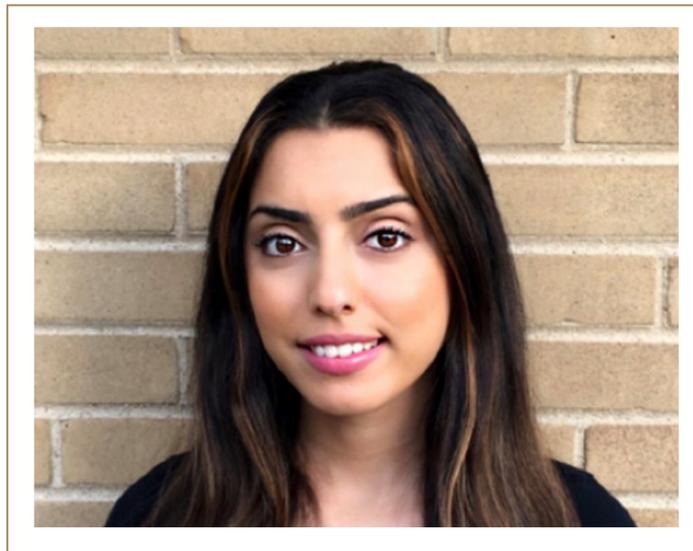
It’s hard to argue, observing more than 30 works of painting, photography, pottery, graphic design and video in this exhibition. It took the two amateur curators a year to put Diaspora in Bloom together. Naturally, I ask if they’re game to do something like this again. Yadegar pauses for a moment, smiling.

“It’s possible,” she replies.



Atra Givarkes

Diaspora in Bloom:
Assyrians in the 20th Century & Beyond
June 1, 7, 8 & 14: 6pm-9pm and June 2, 9 & 15
noon-4pm at Art Ark Gallery in San Jose



Ramina Samuel becomes first Assyrian counselor at Chicago's District 219

Courtesy of The Assyrian Journal.com

Chicago, IL – Ramina Samuel's heart was racing as she walked toward her new office at Niles North High School earlier this August. For years, the Assyrian Iraqi native had grown accustomed to filling part-time and temporary counseling positions in the Chicagoland area. Now, she is a full-time counselor at Niles North High School, a public school within Chicago's largely Assyrian populated District 219. She is the first Assyrian to hold the position in the district's history.

It is a position she has dreamed of since arriving with her family to Chicago from Dohuk, Iraq in 2004. In her first year in the Chicago public school system, Samuel was held back a year into eighth grade. That experience would encourage her to help students who were also struggling with their transition into the American education system.

"Growing up in Chicago, it was difficult for me to go through the whole school system," Samuel said. "In Iraq, your grade point average decides what field you are going to. All of a sudden in the US, I had so many opportunities. I could choose so many different colleges in so many different fields. I was not ready for that. I think my parents were not ready for that."

After completing her undergraduate degree from the University of Illinois at Chicago in 2012, Samuel worked a year as a pre-kindergarten through middle school substitute teacher before starting her masters degree at National Louis University. Samuel wanted to tackle education disparity in Chicago's immigrant communities with a focus on students with limited English proficiency and also those who came from vulnerable backgrounds.

"When students come here, a lot of these schools are not aware of what kind of background they've had," she said. "A lot of these kids have missed months or even years of schooling, especially those that went to areas where there was persecution or war. When those children come here, they are placed into grades matching their age. I wanted to give high school students what was not always available to me as a first-generation immigrant."

Through her graduate program, she was set up with a number of temporary opportunities including a position at Maine East High School as well as Madison Elementary in Skokie. During her one year practicum, she worked at Glenbrook North High School. It was during this time that she was assigned her first Assyrian student.

"An Assyrian student needed help with FAFSA and the parents were assigned to me," Samuel said. "The mom was very surprised when she found out I was Assyrian. She was glad that there was someone who was speaking to her in her own language and who was willing to help. It made me more sure that helping Assyrians is what I wanted to do."

After graduating, Samuel worked at two non-profit organizations, West 40 and Mosaic Therapy. The positions taught her about strategies in alternative learning and allowed her to help students with Arabic and Assyrian as their first languages.

At the end of June 2018, Ramina heard about an opening as a school counselor at Niles North High School. At the time, she wasn't even looking for a new position, focusing instead on planning her upcoming wedding. After heavy encouragement, however, she finally did apply. It was the only school she would apply for this summer and she admitted not ex-



Ramina (right) with a friend in Dohuk, Iraq.

pecting a call back.

Ramina did receive a call back, though. The week of her wedding. It was also the week her close childhood friend was hospitalized and would later pass away from cancer. Despite a hectic week including two rounds of interviews, she was selected for the role.

"Receiving the position was very overwhelming," she said. "This was one of my biggest goals but I didn't expect it to happen for a few more years. For this to happen and for me to be able to work in a community where I can share my experience as an immigrant and my skills in culture and language, it was very exciting."

Niles North High School is part of District 219. The district has made significant strides in recent years to address a growing Assyrian community, including the addition of Assyrian Naema Abraham on the school board and the formation of an Assyrian parent group. Samuel hopes to get more Assyrian parents more involved through the new parent group.

"A lot of the lack of Assyrian parent involvement within the schools comes from our culture," Samuel said. "We entirely entrust schools with our kids. Assyrian parents might show up to the school once or twice versus other parents we work with that are involved in every step of the way, including scheduling classes and special activities and career planning." In her new role, Samuel will provide guidance to students from ninth through twelfth grades. She is one of only a few counselors at Niles North that has English Language Learning (ELL) students in her caseload.

As a former ELL student herself, Samuel hopes to make these students feel more comfortable by relating to their situations.

"Students can finally see someone in a counselor position where they can see themselves," Samuel said. "This doesn't just apply to Assyrians. Working with immigrant students, it's important for them to relate. I think it's really nice for them to see that they can get to that higher education level."





World's first Assyrian Parachute Squadron. In action in 1944.

A SPECIAL TRIBUTE TO HONOR THE WORLD'S FIRST ASSYRIAN PARACHUTE SQUADRON — BASED ON A HISTORICAL EPISODE

by *Andrious Mama Jotyar MBE*
Coutersy of *The Assyrian Observer*

The World's First Assyrian Parachute Squadron was fully trained and established by the British at the beginning of the Second World War, when Britain declared war on Germany on 8th Sept. 1939. When the Squadron was ready for deployment, it was maintained as an emergency reserve force. Prior to deployment, it was attached to the RAF Regiment, the most sophisticated fighting force in the entire British Army.

While Britain was unsuspecting of the Mediterranean strategy set out by the Axis Forces (coalition of enemy forces), the Axis managed to penetrate into Iraq and succeeded in establishing two military bases, one at Mosul and the other at Basrah. At this point the Axis Forces were desperate for oil and managed to capture Kirkuk, the main oil producing depot in Iraq. The first thing the Axis forces did was to arrest all British Personnel and keep them under detention and heavy guards. Then the Axis began exporting crude oil by heavy tankers via Syria to the German Armies in North Africa.

At the same time, they started using air power, bombarding the British bases in Iraq including the RAF Station Habbaniya, the biggest RAF Station in the Middle East. This was a calculated surprise attack against the British, who were caught off guard. The British aim was to prevent war equipment from getting into the hands of the Axis, and at the same time, to attack the Axis garrisons in the Mediterranean.

The hour had come for the Assyrian Parachute Squadron to be put into action. The Squadron was to attack the Island of Crete using amphibious crafts at night surrounding the Axis forces compound. When Crete was captured, there

were many prisoners of war (POWs). The Assyrian Parachute Squadron continued the invasion at Athens, Albania and Italy, all under the occupation of the Axis forces.

At this critical juncture the Assyrian Parachute Squadron's campaign unexpectedly changed the German strategy and the facet of the War, curtailing the Axis plans in the Mediterranean as well as in the Middle East. The Nazi influence in Egypt, Jordan, Syria, Levant, Iraq and Persia completely collapsed. The other secret Axis forces gains at Mosul, Kirkuk and Basra, including Syria, were dealt with similarly by the King's own Regiment, that was posted from India.

Note: For unexplained reasons, the British have failed thus far to acknowledge the military potential and achievements of the Assyrian Parachute Squadron that was in continuous action at Crete, Athens, Albania and Italy. When the siege was broken in the above mentioned countries and the residents freed, some of these people said that the soldiers who freed them were not the British, but rather their Assyrian ancestors from the old country. Moreover, the Assyrian Parachute Squadron, during the above operations, lost a dozen brave fighting soldiers, all killed in action and buried at the British cemetery in Athens.

About the author: Andrious Mama Jotyar MBE, was employed with the Aircraft Depot RAF (8 Sep. 1939) and with the Assyrian RAF Levies Records Office (1942) and back with RAF 115 MU (1950). During RAF Habbaniya Siege and campaign in 1941 Andrious was in the middle of it all the way.

Interview with Pamela M. Sayad, Attorney at Law

by *Tamara Odisho Benjamin*

According to Wikipedia, "the history of law links closely to the development of civilization. Ancient Egyptian law, dating as far back as 3000 BC, contained a civil code that was probably broken into twelve books. By the 22nd century BC, the ancient Sumerian ruler Ur-Nammu had formulated the first law code, which consisted of casuistic statements. Around 1760 BC, King Hammurabi further developed Babylonian law, by codifying and inscribing it in stone. Hammurabi placed several copies of his law code throughout the kingdom of Babylon as stela, for the entire public to see; this became known as the Codex Hammurabi. The most intact copy of these stela was discovered in the 19th century by British Assyriologists, and has since been fully transliterated and translated into various languages, including English, Italian, German, and French."

Pamela Sayad, maybe didn't realize that law was part of her Assyrian heritage but she had the grit, courage and the endurance to become a lawyer. Her mom was born in Lake Urmia and her father in Chicago, Illinois, his parents were from Geotapa, Iran. They married after meeting in Chicago and settled in San Francisco after World War II. Growing up in San Francisco, with her parents, brother, sister and grandmother, Pam was set on a path of opportunity, made to take risks, push boundaries and get things done. Today she continues to practice law in San Francisco at her law firm Sayad and Biren specializing in employment and discrimination law.

Was there a large Assyrian community where you grew up?

Not really, most Assyrians were living in Modesto/Turlock.

Who influenced you the most in your family circle?

My parents and my maternal grandmother.

How did you choose law as a path for your career?

I majored in political science at UC Berkeley and was on the debate team. My Dad encouraged me to consider law because he felt I was good at arguing and making my points.

Growing up was there anyone in your family that worked in law?

My cousin, Jerry Mirza on my mother's side. He lived in Chicago and was a successful personal injury attorney. He was Assyrian and the son of my grandmother's sister.

How long have you been practicing law?

I have been practicing law since I graduated from Notre Dame Law school in 1973, in one of the first classes of women. At the time, there were no women undergraduates and just a few women in the graduate and law school. That was a difficult transition from Cal to Notre Dame particularly because it wasn't a hospitable environment for women, who

were viewed as taking the place of men who would have careers in law versus women who would marry and leave the profession. My first year the only living quarters for us was a dorm where nuns lived who taught at the women's school across the road. We insisted that the school make off campus housing available which they eventually did. In addition, during my first semester the law school did not have a women's restroom which they rectified after complaints. After graduating from law school, I started practicing law in Washington, D.C. My first job was with the federal government in its Honors Program for young lawyers in the US Department of Health, Education and Welfare and then in the US Department of Interior, Solicitor's Office for Indian Affairs. I was then appointed by the US Attorney General (a political appointment) as an Assistant United States Attorney for the District of Columbia. I returned to SF in 1980 and shortly thereafter started my law firm.

How did you choose to open your own firm?

I was very independent minded and thought it would be more interesting, which proved to be true. It was difficult getting started and developing a reputation in SF. What helped and solidified my reputation was a case I tried in SF Superior Court representing a woman who was wrongfully terminated from her employment with Charles Schwab & Co. The case was featured in the media not only locally but nationally and at that time I recovered the largest single jury verdict in SF Superior Court. That case set me on the road to specializing in employment law.

Besides being your own boss what are the perks of owning your own firm?

Being responsible for all you do with the highs and lows that come with that.

What would you say was a case you are most proud of?

That is a hard question to answer because there have been so many. I would say the following: the case I tried and referred to above, one of the first pedophile cases against the Catholic Church (i.e., the Archdiocese in SF), two sexual harassment cases on behalf of blue collar women against two large food distributors, an egregious sexual harassment case last year against a public entity and its top manager, three cases in which I was able to save the jobs of men who had false claims of sexual harassment brought against them, and of course, The Olympic Club case where I was the individual who had been denied membership based on my gender and helped the City prevail in its discrimination case against the Club.

I've heard that one of your cases, was where you were the plaintiff suing the Olympic Club to allow women become members, can you share the details of that case?

That was a hard fought case in which we prevailed. I had applied for membership at a time when the Club proudly boasted its discrimi-

natory treatment of women and was hosting the US Open. My membership was supported by two Superior Court Judges and other distinguished members of the community. When my membership was denied based on my gender, which the Club believed was a legitimate reason, I joined forces with the City Attorney's Office to bring an action against the Club. I appeared on tv and in the press arguing my legal and personal position (my father was a member of the Club and I had grown up at the Club playing tennis and participating in other sports). I was vilified by many male members of the Club and told to marry a member and then I could have auxiliary privileges. When I said that I wasn't interested in marrying a member of the Club and certainly not interested in auxiliary rather than full membership benefits the fight got nastier. Eventually the Club capitulated because they knew their legal position was indefensible and after they had incurred significant legal fees. The case was settled and I became a member.

What do you love about your profession?

Helping people and solving problems. The diversity of the issues, both factually and legally, is unique about this area of the law. It is always changing and evolving with California on the cutting edge of law, particularly with regard employment issues.

Tell me something about yourself that you would like to share with our readers.

I am passionate about what I do and how I live my life. I am close to my family and have a strong set of friends from childhood to the present which is what is great about living in the city where you grew up.

As an American-Assyrian, where do you see our community in 10 years?

The Assyrian community in the Bay Area is larger than I originally thought. In December I was invited to a dinner at an Assyrian home in San Jose and met a large group of interesting Assyrians who live in the area. I was surprised and learned more about my culture. I love cooking Assyrian food, which I learned from my grandmother who was a great cook, who never wrote anything down so I had to learn by watching her. Most of my relatives live in and around Chicago.

Would you consider yourself an active member in our community? If so can you share how and if not, what incentives or opportunities would be more enticing for you to be more involved?

I am not an active member in the community but your reaching out to me in this way may be the impetus to action. I have many Assyrian relatives in the Chicago area where I try to visit at least once a year. My aunt, Norma Sayad George, on my father's side (his sister) will be turning 100 in September and I will take my niece with me to celebrate her birthday "Assyrian" style birthday.

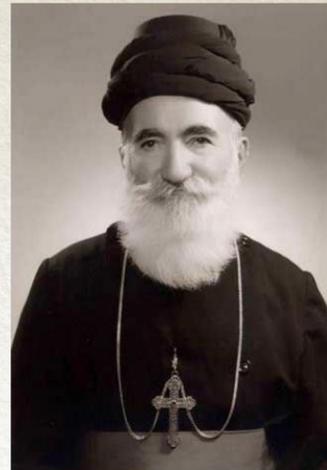
The Assyrian Church of the East Canonizes Two New Saints

Following the process established by the Holy Synod of the Assyrian Church of the East, two new Saints have been canonized: Mar Abimalek Timotheus and Mar Yosip Khnanisho

by Elizabeth Mickaily-Huber, Ph.D.

Mar Yosip Khnanisho

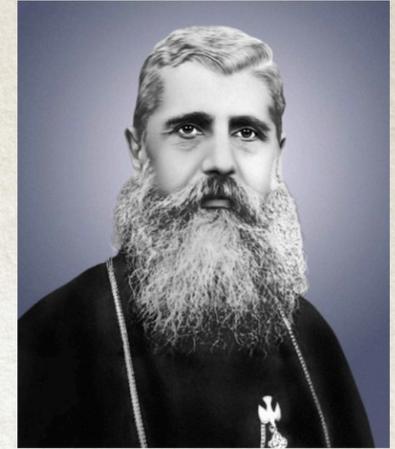
By decree of the Holy Synod, the commemoration of Mar Yosip of hallowed memory shall occur on the second Sunday of July of every year.



In 1893, Mar Yosip was born in the village of Mar Esho, district of Shamizdin (Hakkari mountains of Turkey) into the Mar Khnanisho family from which twelve Metropolitans had descended, by the nazarite practice descending from uncle to nephew. He was tutored by his father's uncle, the Archdeacon Rehana who was the head of the seminary attached to the ancient monastery of Mar Esho in that village. He was ordained as a deacon at the tender age of 12, then as a priest at the age of 16. On August 10, 1914, Mar Yosip was consecrated as Bishop at the age of 22 in Quchanis, Turkey by the ethno-martyr Catholicos-Patriarch Mar Benyamin Shimun XIX. In 1918, following the horrors of the genocide, he led a large number of faithful Assyrians to the safe-haven city of Baquba in Iraq. Also in 1918, he was appointed as assistant to the Patriarch Mar Paulos Shimun XX and was elevated subsequently to the rank of Metropolitan in Baghdad, Iraq by Mar Paulos who died shortly thereafter. When the late Catholicos-Patriarch Mar Eshai Shimun XXIII was exiled to Cyprus in 1933, Mar Yosip was given all the administrative responsibilities of the Church in the Middle East until the Patriarch was able to retake his full function in safety. Mar Yosip died on July 3, 1977 at Baghdad. Many miracles have been attributed to him. The Assyrian Churches in San Jose, California and in Gilbert, Arizona were both named in his blessed memory.

Mar Abimalek Timotheus

By decree of the Holy Synod, the commemoration of Mar Timotheus of blessed memory, the metropolitan of Malabar and All India, will be observed on May 1st of every year.*



Mar Abimalek Timotheus was born on August 28, 1878 in Bar Bisho (Turkey). He was the son of a priest, Eshai of the Kelaita Family and was educated by the Anglicans at their school, the 'Archbishop of Canterbury's Mission to the Assyrians,' in Urmia, Iran. He was ordained as a deacon in 1903, then priest and then elevated as archdeacon in 1904, while also working as a teacher at the Anglican school in Van. In December of 1907, under the auspices of the beloved ethno-martyr Catholicos-Patriarch Mar Benjamin Shimun XXI in Quchanis (Turkey), he was consecrated as the Metropolitan of Malabar and All India in December of 1907. He arrived in Trichur (Kerala, India), took charge of the archdiocese on February 27, 1908 and quickly learned the Malayalam tongue so well that he wrote several books in this language. Being a peace-loving man, he developed friendships with Hindus and Muslims alike. He supported the freedom struggle of India from British colonial rule and even met with the great Mahatma Gandhi. Mar Timotheus was instrumental in the creation of a school, orphanage, and hospital to help the local community, a testament to his life of dedication and service. He passed away on April 30, 1945, but his name is remembered to this day by the people of Kerala who continue to build schools and hospitals in his memory. His tomb lies in the burial chapel of the bishops, next to Marth Mariam Cathedral, the oldest church in Trichur, and is visited by people of all faiths, including the late President Indira Gandhi in 1954 who placed a wreath on his tomb. Miracles have been attributed to Mar Timotheus by both the local Christian and non-Christian population.

** Mar Timotheus is the great great uncle of the author of this article. His canonization is a source of great honor and joy to her.*

Fires On Assyrian Land Raise Arson Alarm

Courtesy of Ahvalnews.com

Several fires broke out in a short space of time in late July on properties belonging to Turkey's ancient Assyrian minority in the Idil district of the southeast province of Şırnak, raising suspicions of arson.

The first fires broke out in vineyards belonging to Assyrians, then another struck the olive groves of the Syriac Orthodox Mor Hananyo Monastery. Later fires surrounded several Assyrian villages in the foothills of Bagok mountain in nearby Mardin province.

The Assyrian community has faced attempts by the Turkish state to seize its properties for decades, and the fires have raised fears of a fresh attempt at a land grab.

The Assyrians community is among the oldest in the region, but their numbers have dwindled to the extent that they are now one of the smallest minorities in Turkey.

Around 5,000 of Turkey's 25,000 Assyrians live in the southeastern provinces of Batman, Şırnak and Mardin. The majority now live in Istanbul, and many more have left the country entirely to settle in European countries.

The Christian minority has faced pressures and discrimination from the government, which has taken over Assyrian churches, monasteries and cemeteries and other significant properties over the last two decades. In the community's ancestral homeland in southeast Turkey, Assyrians have also been affected by decades of conflict between the state and Kurdish insurgents fighting for autonomy.

An early episode leading to losses of land took place when the state began reorganizing real estate boundaries in 2007. This led to thousands of acres of land belonging to the ancient Mor Gabriel Monastery near Midyat in Mardin province being taken over by the state. Some of these were turned over to local villagers, others to the Treasury. Further plots were registered as woodland. The foundation that runs the monastery has been involved in a legal battle since then to reclaim its lost lands, but it has so far only managed to regain 12 out of 30 plots of land.

After the loss of lands that had belonged to Mor Gabriel, the oldest Syriac Orthodox monastery in the world, the reorganization of Mardin province into a metropolitan municipality caused further losses when it went into effect in 2014. This resulted in the Assyrian community losing churches, monasteries, cemeteries and other properties when the state seized 110 real estate plots.

Some of these were turned over to Turkey's exclusively Sunni Muslim state religious organization, the Directorate of Religious Affairs (Diyanet). This caused an outcry, which resulted in the land being turned over to the Treasury instead. A reform before the national elections in 2018 promised the return of legal ownership of 55 plots of land to the Assyrians, but the reform has still not produced results, and they still face attempts to seize their land at a local level.

This is what happened to several acres of land in İdil district belonging to Ferit Külen, an Assyrian living outside Turkey. Locals illegally constructed buildings on Külen's land, and Diyanet even built a mosque there, before later demolishing it and beginning work on an even larger one. The construction work, which began without receiving permission from the local municipality, is still ongoing.

"The Assyrians are being stripped of their properties – tens of thousands of their houses, fields, orchards and other properties have been seized or stolen from them. The lands snatched from Külen are just one example of that," said Tuma Çelik, a deputy for the pro-minorities Peoples' Democratic Party (HDP).

While still facing these local land grabs, Assyrians are now facing a series of fires on their properties.

Both vineyards belonging to Assyrians in İdil and the olive groves of Mor Hananyo Monastery have been engulfed in flames. Fires on dozens of acres of Assyrian land across Mardin and Şırnak have turned hundreds of olive and almond trees to ash. Around 700 olive trees were lost in the fields belonging to the fifth century monastery alone.

The still unexplained fires have deprived the monastery of an important source of income, and destroyed the irrigation systems set up for new seedling olive trees.

The fires in Assyrian villages near Nusaybin have raged on despite efforts to extinguish the flames, and social media reports from the time of writing said villagers were still battling fires near six Syrian villages in the foothills of Bagok mountain near Nusaybin.

"It's interesting that the fire broke out on abandoned land away from the path to the village. I don't think it started by natural causes," said Çelik. "That all these fires broke out one after another shows they were set intentionally."

Kuryakos Ergun, the head of the Mor Gabriel Monastery Foundation, said whatever the story behind the fires, they had shaken the Assyrian community.

"We don't know if they were intentional or not, but these fires have shaken us to the core ... For the fires to come right when the fruit was ready to pick has been devastating for us," Ergun said.

Promises made before last year's elections had raised hopes that members of the Assyrian diaspora would return home and contribute to their communities' economies, he said. But the lands have still not been returned, and the Assyrians living abroad have so far decided against coming back. The fires have only deepened the community's disappointment, he said.

The opinions expressed in this column are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect those of Ahval.

List of Donors for 2019

The below list includes donations received from 6/5/2019 to 8/20/2019 only! Any donations received after 8/20/2019 will be included in the next issue of the Nineveh Magazine.

Thank you for your generosity and support.

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UC Berkeley adds Assyrian studies program through startup fund

By Annie Cheng | Staff
Coutesy of The Daily Californian

A startup fund will enable UC Berkeley to integrate an Assyrian studies program into the campus department of Near Eastern studies' curriculum by sponsoring visiting faculty, new courses, digital projects and conferences, according to a press release from the department.

According to the press release, the fund was made possible by a gift of \$675,000 from biotechnologist and philanthropist Nora Betyousef Lacey. The department of Near Eastern studies, located in Barrows Hall, will use the funds to attract a visiting professor, who will fulfill an initial three-year position and play an integral role in developing the Assyrian studies program, said UC Berkeley professor of Assyriology Niek Veldhuis.

"During those three years, we will evaluate how things are going, whether or not (Assyrian studies) is really adding something to our curriculum, and whether or not it is doing what the donor had in mind," Veldhuis said. "If we are successful in that, then we will hopefully establish a more permanent position in Assyrian studies."

Given the breadth of Assyrian history and culture — which dates back to the Assyrian Empire in the seventh century B.C. — the specific areas and disciplines encompassed by the Assyrian studies curriculum will depend on which visiting professor takes up the post, Veldhuis said.

Unlike traditional Assyriology, which focuses primarily on the study of ancient Assyrians, Assyrian studies will cover ancient history in conjunction with the experiences of modern Assyrians, an area that has rarely been the focus of academic study, Veldhuis said.

"Assyrian studies, at this point, really doesn't exist anywhere at any university in the world," Veldhuis said. "It will be a big chal-

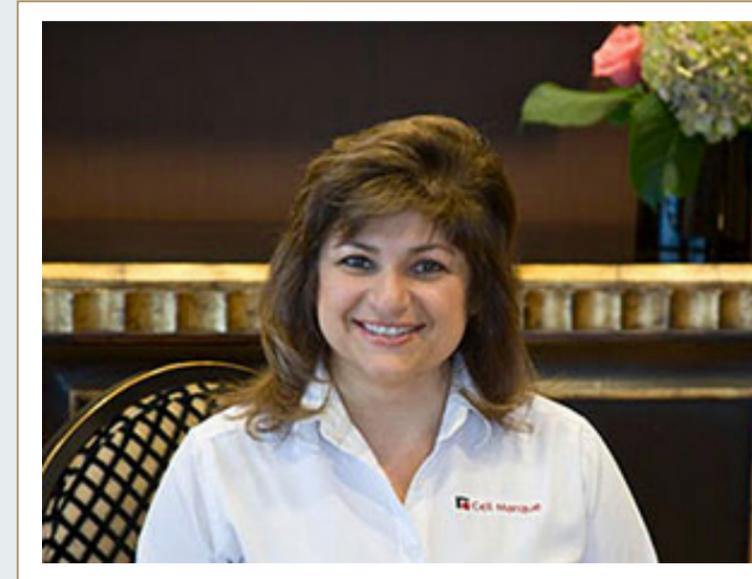
lenge to actually make it happen and make it successful ... but I think it is important that we create a place where the Assyrians are recognized and where their history, way of life and language is studied."

The majority of Assyrians living in the United States and Europe are either refugees or the descendants of refugees who were displaced or persecuted during a variety of wars, Veldhuis said. These Assyrian refugees have brought their culture, language and history with them. At a critical point for dispersed ethnic populations, Assyrian studies at UC Berkeley will draw Assyrian literature, religion, language and history into a cohesive and continuous narrative, shedding light on an important culture, said Near Eastern studies department chair Francesca Rochberg in an official statement.

"The process of preserving your culture while also adapting to a new situation is very interesting," Veldhuis said. "We have large groups of Assyrians who live here (in California) and send their kids to local schools. Many of these kids will experience that once they go out of their home to college or to some other place, no one has really heard of the Assyrians."

Veldhuis hopes that the Assyrian studies program at UC Berkeley will become a focal point for Assyrian students to see themselves, their history and their people reflected in teaching and research. To strengthen the connection between the Assyrian studies program and the local Assyrian communities, the new visiting professor position will include community outreach in addition to teaching and research, Veldhuis said.

"There are large numbers of Assyrians in San Jose and in Turlock," Veldhuis said. "(The new visiting professor) will talk to the Assyrian communities there to make known that this position is here, but also to see what is needed in the Assyrian communities. They will establish that point of contact between the university and the Assyrian community."



Assyrian biotechnologist and philanthropist
Nora Betyousef Lacey

UC Berkeley establishes Visiting Faculty Start-Up Fund for Assyrian Studies

José L. Rodríguez | University Development and Alumni Relations
Courtesy of UC Berkeley, NES

Berkeley — A new start-up fund will allow the University of California, Berkeley to bring Assyrian studies into the curriculum by supporting visiting faculty, courses, digital projects, and conferences, the campus announced. The efforts, made possible by a \$675,000 gift from Nora Betyousef Lacey, will include support for a visiting faculty member in the Department of Near Eastern Studies in the College of Letters and Science. At the discretion of the dean of the Division of Arts and Humanities, the fund may be shared jointly with the Department of History. A search for a visiting faculty member will begin in the fall and a selection by spring 2020, with the goal of having someone in place in fall 2020.

"Nora Lacey's gift is unique in its open-minded approach and broad-based thinking about Assyrian Studies," said Francesca Rochberg, chair of Near Eastern Studies. "As a designated field, Assyrian Studies does not have the kind of footing in the American academy that it deserves."

The gift will advance this diverse field of study at a critical time, according to Rochberg.

"Diaspora Studies is a relatively recent development of the late 20th century," she said. "The field of Assyriology, that is the study of ancient Assyria, exists in relative isolation from the fields that focus on later periods in the Assyrian collective experience, from the Christian period onward. Ultimately all these areas can be brought into relation with one another just as any field with a continuity of language, literature, and history brings its disparate parts together into a single recognized field of study."

Lacey is a scientist and founder and president of Cell Marque Corp. Her father, Avimalek Betyousef, was an international attorney who lived in Abadan, Iran before moving to the United States in 1985. He died in 2015. Betyousef was a scholar, poet, and author of a text titled History of Assyrian Law. He was passionate about Assyrian heritage and studies, establishing a legacy as a philanthropist.

Full statement from Francesca Rochberg, chair of Near Eastern Studies:

"The Near Eastern Studies Department is proud to be the recipient of a new gift for the development of studies in Assyrian culture, language, and history. We are grateful to our donor, Nora Betyousef Lacey, who has generously committed funds for an initial three-year visiting faculty position in order to develop such a new program. We are eager to see this program take shape around the new faculty member, who will teach, conduct research in his or her own field, and engage actively with the Bay Area Assyrian community."

Nora Betyousef Lacey, daughter of the late Avimalek Betyousef of Iran, is a scientist in the field of biotechnology, and is founder and president of Cell Marque Corporation. She, like her father, is a philanthropist and advocate for Assyrian culture, heritage, and history."

The Assyrians of northern Iraq are perhaps best known as the first empire-builders of the ancient world. Less well known is the history of the Assyrian people after the fall of the imperial Assyrian state in 612 BC. This means more than 2500 years of continuous tradition of language and culture from antiquity into modernity, which includes important developments during the Roman/Parthian period, the Early Christian Period, as well as during the periods of Ummayyad, Abbasid, and Ottoman Rule. The study of Assyrian history, as well as the language, arts, and cultures of Assyria and the Assyrians has found its way into various academic fields, but surely deserves a dedicated area of study unto its own."

The history of the modern Assyrian Diaspora begins in the 19th century. Most recently, following the wars in Iraq and Syria, another large part of the Assyrian community was displaced, and there are sizeable Assyrian populations across the United States, among them in the Bay Area and Central Valley. The history of the Assyrian people is, therefore, also an important subject area for Diaspora Studies, which analyzes and focuses much needed attention on the phenomenon of dispersed ethnic populations around the world."



A Successful 32nd National Youth Conference

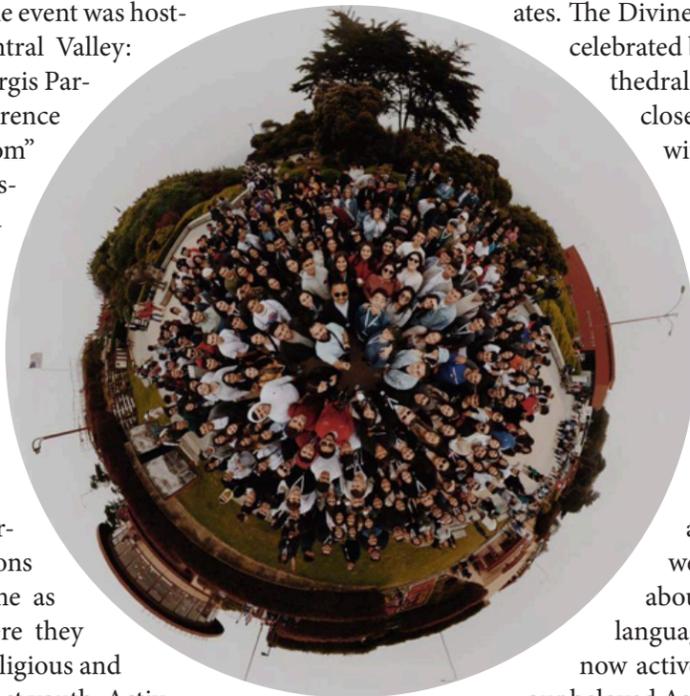
by Elizabeth Mickailj-Huber, Ph.D.

The 32nd National Youth Conference of the Assyrian Church of the East Youth Association (ACEYA) of America took place at the Double Tree Hotel in Modesto, California from July 10 to July 15, 2019. The event was hosted by the parishes of the Central Valley: Mar Zaia Cathedral, Mar Gewargis Parish, and Mar Addai. The conference theme was “Keys to the Kingdom” (Matthew 13:11). Over 450 Assyrian youth participated and came from all over the United States, including from some of the oldest national Assyrian congregations from New Britain, Connecticut and Yonkers, New York to name but a few.

Besides daily prayer/vesper services, the youth participated in religious presentations focusing on the primary theme as well as panel discussions where they were free to ask questions on religious and non-religious concerns that affect youth. Activities included a fun fair with games, a picnic with sports and Assyrian dancing, and an outing to San Francisco that

included a city bay cruise. Highlights included a formal dinner with His Holiness Mar Gewargis III, Catholicos-Patriarch of the Assyrian Church of the East and Church Prelates. The Divine Liturgy of Holy Qurbana was celebrated by His Holiness at Mar Zia Cathedral in Modesto. The conference closed with a formal dinner party with Assyrian folklore dancing.

On a personal note, my two sons ages 20 and 22 participated in the conference and told me how much they enjoyed it, not only from the point of view of well-organized and enjoyable activities, but also, and more importantly, from the religious and cultural point of view. As a result of this conference, they were encouraged to learn more about our church, our culture, our language and our dances, and are now actively doing so. If we are to save our beloved Assyrian culture from extinction, conferences such as this one go a long way to reaching our youth and helping to bring them together.



A Son’s Loving Tribute to his Parents on their 50th Wedding Anniversary

by Jonathon Malek



Fifty years of marriage is a long time. It’s one half of a century. It is special enough to bring people across oceans and as far away as Norway to join this special celebration. Some have flown across the entire United States to share in the festivities.

This love story is about the eldest son of an Assyrian village family marrying the eldest daughter of a Pastor’s family. A Pastor’s eldest daughter from Norway marries the village Chief’s eldest son from Patavour, Iran. A village family that would dig a hole in the earth to refrigerate food so that when winter came, when food and vegetables were scarce, they could dig it up and have food to eat through the cold winters.

Joseph, my dad, would use his sling shot to knock a bird out of a tree so that his family could have meat for dinner. They relied on God’s blessings, such as animals and the land, to survive. No need to get eggs from the store, no need to get milk from the store, no need to get vegetables from the store..... really there was no need for a store at all! God provided everything they needed.

Although my mom, Joane, did not grow up in quite so primitive conditions, her family was certainly not rich. Both of my parents grew up poor but never realized it until they were older. Their blessed upbringings made them who they are today. Their tough parents formed the strong characters that they have today. I’m sure that when they met at an International Christian bible study class in San Francisco they could relate to many things, for they had much in common. Unfortunately communication was not always the sweet part of their relationship, yet fortunately for them, their love and actions spoke more clearly than their words.

Growing up, our parents owned and ran a small pizza shop. I remember how Far (Norwegian for father) would always call home, to see if Mor (Norwegian for mother) needed food from the restaurant. He was so kind and caring and an amazing example of a loving husband. I am so glad that I was also able to see their relationship first hand because it serves as a wonderful example.

Joseph is and was the rock and the foundation of our family and of their marriage. He was not really an overtly caring type to me but worked his tail off and made the critical family decisions. There was an order to things, an inexplicable and beautiful order to things. Joseph was the leader and had the final say on all big decisions, although Joanne was usually louder than him. They would fight, argue and disagree at times, but in the morning there were no flowers, there were no hard feelings and everything was back to normal. We never worried, they never worried, it was a disagreement. So what?! They thought the world of each other and never complained that one was doing more or less than the other. They were not keeping score. They were just doing what was needed to ensure for the well being of their family.

As a child I used to think how unfair it was that my mom did everything around the house, but as I grew up, I learned how much my dad does that is less obvious, but equally important. He has been an amazing husband, father, family member and friend to so many across the world.

My mom is equally amazing. As a child, I felt like she never sat down unless she was counting the money. I remember waking up to the smell of cigarette smoke. I would come downstairs and see a bunch of money on the floor that my mom was counting up from their pizza shop business. Getting it ready for a deposit. Whistling while she worked. Always whistling. She worked like a slave for our family. She was a multi-tasking machine that never stopped. The “Energizer Bunny” with endless God-given energy. She cleaned our rooms, cleaned the house, washed the clothes, prepared our meals, dealt with all the school requirements, put a band-aid on our cuts and scrapes, and most importantly, gave us much needed love and care during tough times.

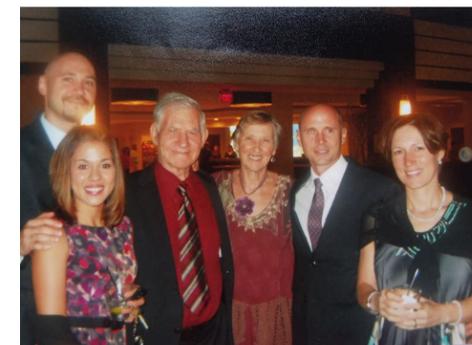
I remember hearing my dad’s slow and heavy footsteps when he would wake up in the morning. That was my mom’s signal to rush to the the stove and turn on the hot water so that she could have his coffee ready the second he came down the stairs and sat down. This coffee race continues 50 years later. Now my dad needs to take care of my mom in a whole different way. He’s helping out with the bills, cooking more, grocery shopping and the list goes on. It’s his turn to be strong for her in both sickness and in health.

Many years have gone by now, but they are still at it. They’re feeling a bit older and are a bit more forgetful, but what they have done for so many people will never be forgotten. Their 50 years of marriage and their example has been an inspiration to more people than they can imagine. May God continue to bless you as you have blessed so many of us through your love, kindness and generosity.

Happy Anniversary Mor and Far!



On a date and sharing a soda



Celebrating 50th Anniversary with family



Moving in to their first home

Note: The author Jonathon Malek is the nephew of long-time Assyrian Foundation of America member Jacob Malek-Zadeh



To
Assyrian Foundation of America
P.O. Box 2660
Berkeley, CA 94702
U.S.A.
Egaleo, July 9th, 2019

Dear Fellow Assyrians,

First of all, we would like to wholeheartedly thank you for your generous donation to the members of our Union and to congratulate you on your patriotic work; we learn all about it by reading Nineveh Magazine which you mail to us, and we also thank you for that.

We would like to inform you that there was a delay with the bank procedures due to the capital controls that still exist in our country, hence the delay in our response. In this letter, we have the opportunity to present our work which we continue to do of course, since we consider a holy duty to offer to our brothers and sisters, the Assyrian refugees. They are the reason why we have been asking for your help and support.

The first Assyrians arrived in Greece in 1922 after the 1915 genocide. They founded this Union and they have been integrated in the Greek society for 5 generations now. They are the ones who financially support our Union, but they have now been exhausted after offering from their meager income for so many years. And moreover, since the bankruptcy of our country, many of those who supported the Assyrian patriots now have to live on state allowances themselves.

The support offered by the Assyrians in Greece goes back many decades. During the 1970's we supported refugees from the war in Lebanon; during the 1980's we supported refugees from Iran due to the Iraq-Iran war; during the 1990's and during the 2000's refugees from Iraq and since 2010 refugees from Syria. Also, after the breakdown of the Soviet Union, we received refugees from Russia, Georgia and Armenia.

In Greece, the Assyrians are less than 10.000 people and this number is variable since people come and go; only a few wish to remain in Greece permanently. In order to better understand the situation, I would like to report this: since the year 2000, more than 16.000 people have come to our Union, and they now live abroad. All these people have been supported by us in the following: payments of rent, electricity and water bills, super market goods, home appliances and equipment, medication, doctors and lawyer payments, tickets, and many other similar costs. When they arrive here, they carry nothing but the clothes they are wearing.



We offer all of the above free of charge of course, without any financial contribution, not even the membership cost which is 2€ per month. Our expenses also include the funeral costs (with all the Assyrian traditions), and the expenses for the Assyrian priest and church services.

For the Assyrian refugees, Greece is not the final destination. Their goal is to reach Europe, USA, Canada, Australia and New Zealand. This is the reason why we have a major problem, since they come, accepting what is offered to them according to their needs, and they leave without any compensation. Our Union seems to function like a hotel where people are accommodated free of charge. As you may understand, in a bankrupt country, it is impossible to continue like this; therefore, we ask associations and foundations like yours for assistance.

Greece has got 3,000 islands which refugees reach. The biggest ones like Lesbos, Chios, Samos, and Kos are the ones used by authorities to gather and record the refugees. We believe that the biggest people trading is unrecorded. It is impossible for us to know how many Assyrians arrive because they only state their origin, Syria or Iraq, and not their ethnicity. Nevertheless, when we hear of Assyrian arrivals, we go straight away; we have been to the islands and Evros (borders with Turkey) many times.

As for other funding means, we participated in various EU programs during the years 2003-2016, from which about 1.000 people were benefited. European Union now funds NGOs specialized in refugee rescue, in which we cannot participate since we do not have lifeguards, doctors or nurses. As mentioned before, our Union supported more than 16.000 people during all these years. The financial condition of the Assyrian refugees is not good at all, due to the general financial crisis. The remaining newcomers who wish to leave Greece, they do not apply for a green card that would provide them with some benefits, because when they reach their final destination with papers stating Greece as the origin country, they believe that they will be sent back. All these people must be supported by us in housing, feeding, and all the necessities.

I believe we replied to all your questions; we are always at your disposal for any additional information. I would also like to inform you that, with a unanimous decision of the Board, the Assyrian Foundation of America has been included in the honorary members of our Union and will be written with gold letters on the benefactors marble plaque.

Once more, we sincerely thank you for your donation and we send our warmest patriotic regards. God bless you.

For the Board

.\ULDNRV %DWVDUDV
Chairman



Material glory' of Yale Babylonian Collection comes alive in new exhibit

Courtesy of <https://news.yale.edu>

The Yale Babylonian Collection houses four tablets with recipes for various types of stews, soups, and pies. Three of these tablets date back to the early second millennium and are the earliest written recipes in history.

The many facets of the world of ancient Mesopotamia — a culture in some respects distant and alien but in others strangely similar to ours today — will be on display in a new exhibition at the Yale Peabody Museum of Natural History.

“Ancient Mesopotamia Speaks: Highlights from the Yale Babylonian Collection (<http://peabody.yale.edu/exhibits/ancient-mesopotamia-speaks>)” — featuring 150 artifacts including original pieces, images, and translations dating from the mid-4th millennium BC to the 1st century AD — opens on Saturday, April 6 at the Peabody Museum, 170 Whitney Ave. The exhibit was curated by Agnete W. Lassen, associate curator of the Yale Babylonian Collection; Eckart Frahm, professor of Assyriology at Yale; and Klaus Wagensonner, postdoctoral researcher at Yale.

“There are many ways in which the people who produced the objects on display in this exhibit resemble us. Falling in love, eating good food, and getting an education were concerns 4,000 years ago just as they are today,” says Lassen.

Ancient Mesopotamia, known as the “Land Between the Rivers” and located in what is now Iraq and Syria, was the birthplace of writing, urban culture, the state, and many other concepts and institutions that shape our world to this day. It produced intriguing works of art, myths and epics celebrating gods and heroes, and treatises on mathematics, medicine, and astronomy.

Among the items on view are an early account of the heroic king Gilgamesh campaigning to the Cedar Forest to slay the monster Humbaba; tablets with poems by the first named author in human history, the princess Enheduanna; the world’s oldest cookbooks with 4,000-year-old recipes; and astronomy tablets with the earliest prose descriptions of the celestial constellations. Most of the items are from the Yale Babylonian Collection, which was founded in 1911 and is today considered to be one of the major repositories of Mesopotamian artifacts outside of Iraq.



In ancient Mesopotamia, dogs were faithful companions, guardians, and hunters. The dog was also associated with the goddess of healing, Gula. This terracotta plaque depicts a snarling mastiff wearing a collar.

“Curating this exhibition has been an exciting experience,” says Frahm. “Making a long-dead civilization speak again, through selected artifacts, is a challenging task, especially when many of these artifacts are small inscribed clay tablets and tiny cylinder seals. The exhibition designers and other staff at the Peabody have done a great job to display the exhibits in all their material glory, and I hope that we as curators have created a show that sheds light on the complex world of ancient Mesopotamia — on gods and kings, but also on merchants, students, priestesses, slaves, and rebels.”

“Ancient Mesopotamia Speaks” is supported by Connecticut Humanities, Victoria K. DePalma, the Viscusi Fund of the Department of the Near Eastern Languages & Civilizations, and the Hawkinson Conservation and Exhibition Fund.

It will be on view through June 30, 2020.

The Yale Peabody Museum is open to the public Tuesday-Saturday 10 a.m.-5 p.m.; Sundays, noon-5 p.m.

Visit the museum admission page for more information <http://peabody.yale.edu/visit/admission-hours>



Zaya Younan, Chairman and CEO of the Younan Group

YOUNAN LUXURY IN PORTUGAL

by Elizabeth Mickaily-Huber, Ph.D.

Los Angeles based Assyrian real estate mogul, Zaya S. Younan is the Chairman and CEO of the prominent Younan Group, specializing in the acquisition and management of various assets and companies in the luxury consumer space. Portuguese publication PME Magazine recently published a feature article about the group’s intended 50 million euro investment for future acquisitions in Portugal. The Younan Group has been considering potential sites in Lisbon, Porto, Braga and other key locations in Portugal. Because of its excellent location, mild climate and relative safety on the European continent, Portugal has become a fashionable global tourist destination.

La Grande Maison Younan Collection, a subsidiary of the Younan Group, owns and operates several luxury hotels, impressively transformed Châteaux throughout France. According to the PME article, the group recently purchased hotel property in Portugal, dubbing it Malibu Foz. The new hotel boasts 94 sophisticated rooms, a quality Italian restaurant, a cigar lounge, a top-notch selection of wines, a fitness center, wedding reception and conference venues, business services, as well as an in-house screening room and library.

For the CEO, Figueira da Foz is an ideal location because of its unique charm, attractive beaches and high quality restaurants. With this new luxury hotel, Younan hopes to reignite the historical dynamism of Figueira, a choice location for Portuguese and foreign vacationers.

For more information go to:
<https://pmemagazine.sapo.pt/younan-uma-aposta-de-luxo-em-portugal/>
www.younancollection.com/en/page/luxury-group.1911.html

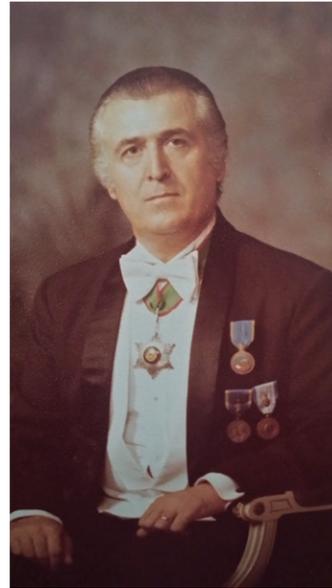


Malibu Foz in Figueira da Foz, Portugal

Dr. Wilson Y. Bet-Mansour
September 18, 1927 - May 24, 2019

Dr. Wilson Younatan Bet-Mansour, 91, an Assyrian-Iranian physician and politician who championed the cause of the Assyrian Christian community in the Middle East, passed away peacefully at home on Friday May 24, 2019 in Manhattan.

Dr. Bet-Mansour was a staunch Assyrian nationalist who worked to unite Assyrians living in Iraq, Iran, Syria, Turkey and across the world, with the ultimate objective of creating an Assyrian homeland in present-day northern Iraq, from where the great Assyrian empire of 5,000 to 600 BC arose. Dr. Bet-Mansour was a founder of the Assyrian Universal Alliance (the AUA), created in Pau France in 1968, and upon the adoption of its constitution



in 1970 in Cologne, Germany, Dr. Bet-Mansour was elected as the AUA's first Secretary General. He served as a member of its board of advisors until very recently. Under his leadership, the AUA led the Assyrian cause throughout world, focusing on the one-Assyrian nation objective and the need for a homeland to avoid future genocides like those in 1914-1918 by the Ottomans, the 1933 massacre at Simele (present-day Iraq) and the recent ethnic cleansing by ISIS.

Dr. Bet-Mansour was elected to be Member of Parliament in Iran, representing Assyrians in the Iranian Parliament from 1967-1975. He was the founder and publisher of Ashur newspaper, a monthly trilingual (Assyrian, Farsi and English) publication dedicated to issues and events pertaining to Assyrians worldwide. Dr. Bet-Mansour was the recipient of the prestigious Homayoun Medal, the Healthcare Services Medal, the Cultural Services Medal and the Social Services Medal from the late Shah of Iran, Mohammad Reza Pahlavi. Dr. Bet-Mansour was also the recipient of a medal from Marshoumoun the late 23rd Patriarch of the Assyrian Church of the East thanking him for his services to the church and the Assyrian community.

Dr. Bet-Mansour was among the first wave of Iranian-educated doctors who went the United States for their training and residency in the 1950's, and brought the latest in medical techniques to Iran. He was one of the pioneers in the creation of a modern medical system in Iran at a crucial time in the country's development in the 1960's and 1970's. Dr. Bet-Mansour was one of the founding partners of the Jam Hospital in Tehran, which to this day is one of the largest state-of-the-art medical facilities in the Middle East. Throughout his career, he was recognised as a preeminent surgeon of obstetrics and gynaecology, and in the 1990's introduced the latest reconstructive surgery procedures to Iran. Dr. Bet-mansour maintained a vibrant medical and surgical practice into his mid-80's.

Dr. Bet-Mansour was born on September 18, 1927 in Urumia, in northwestern Iran. His father, Younatan, died when he was three years old and he and his four brothers and two sisters were raised by their mother, Anna. After graduating from the prestigious Alborz Boys School in Tehran, he attended the Tehran University School of Medicine and subsequently did his internship and residency at Bellevue Hospital in New York City. While a medical resident in the United States, he married Dr. Rebecca Bet-Alkhas, a fellow Assyrian-Iranian physician who was doing her residency in paediatrics in New York City. They returned to Iran in 1960 after completing their residency; they had two children, Eunice and Raman.

Dr. Bet-Mansour took up the cause of the Assyrian community upon his return to Iran. He helped organise the Assyrian community in Iran by reviving and strengthening the previously-dormant Assyrian Association of Iran, and was elected as their representative to the Parliament in 1967, and served in that capacity until 1975. In addition to founding Ashur newspaper, he founded the SOUSSAN school (now St. Mary's School) in Tehran to provide a tri-lingual (Assyrian, Farsi and English) education from kindergarten through 12th grade, as well as



Dr. Wilson Bet-Mansour, First AUA Secretary General, Cologne, Germany, 1970



Dr. Wilson Bet-Mansour, Member of Parliament of Iran, Assyrian Representative, in a meeting with the Shah of Iran, 1973

the Assyrian Youth Center, both of which continue to remain vibrant in Iran. The property that Dr. Bet-Mansour appropriated from the government of Iran while he was a Member of Parliament, now also houses an Assyrian Sports Center, and the Assyrian cultural and social center as well as the school, youth center and several businesses and administrative offices. He also translated several Assyrian (Aramaic) and English language historical and literary books into Farsi and received The Assurbanipal Award of Literature as the Assyrian Writer of the Year in 1981.

The importance of an Assyrian homeland has become ever more urgent following the fall of the Saddam Hussein regime in 2003, and the pressures on its Assyrian/Christian community since then, including persecution and genocide by ISIS, resulting in a diaspora of the Christian community from Iraq and Syria. Dr. Bet-Mansour in his 80's continued to personally champion the Assyrian cause. As Chairman of AUA's Committee on International Relations, he used his personal relations with various governments throughout the world to have the Assyrian community be recognized by United Nations and have the AUA be admitted as their representative to the UNPO – the United Nations Congress of Unrepresented People.

In addition to Eunice and Raman, his daughter and son, Dr. Bet-Mansour is survived by Nora, his wife of 60 years, his daughter-in-law Laurence, and his grandchildren Sabrina and Ayrton Sargon.



Dr. Wilson Bet-Mansour with AUA Executive Officers 3rd AUA World Conference, Cologne, Germany 1970



Dr. Wilson Bet-Mansour with His Holiness Mar Dinkha, Patriarch of the Assyrian Church of the East

Benyamin Eshu Yalda
 January 8, 1932 - April 22, 2019

Ben was born in Sulaymania, Iraq on January 8, 1932 to his parents Sgt. Eshu Yalda and Asyat Badal; the third eldest of seven Brothers and three Sisters. In 1936, his family moved to the Royal Air Force (R.A.F.) Station in Habbaniya Iraq, where he grew up and soon exhibited leadership qualities at an early age, becoming one of the few R.A.F. Boy Scout Leaders at the base. He later started working to help support his large family.



In 1952, he joined the Iraqi Petroleum Company (I.P.C.) in Kirkuk, Iraq, where he met and later married his Wife Leena Yonatan Michael on September 21, 1953. Their children Dorothy, Sargon, and Johnny were all born in Kirkuk.

In 1964, Ben was one of the seven founding members of the Assyrian Sports Club in Kirkuk, and he became one of the Club's most active members, well known for his Emcee skills. In 1966, Ben was transferred to the I.P.C. Baghdad Office where as he was assigned as the Chief Clark in the Office Management Team. The family started a new life in Baghdad. Ben's love for his Assyrian heritage continued as he remained very active in the Assyrian community in Baghdad, and later became a co-founder of Sanharib Social Club.

In 1978, Ben and his family immigrated to the United States, and settled in Des Plaines, IL. Ben started working at Old Republic Insurance Company in Chicago, and remained very active in the Assyrian Community and the Assyrian Church, where he served as Motwa President for four terms.

Ben later founded the Habbaniya School Reunion Organization, where he brought together Ex-Habbaniya Assyrians in social events, and organized several International trips for the group.

Ben also served as an Administrative Manager for the Assyrian Academic Society magazine, and he was the Chief Editor for the Assyrian Observer for the few years when it was produced in Chicago.

Ben struggled with Dementia starting in 2015, and he passed peacefully in his home in Des Plaines at 6 PM on Monday, April 22nd, leaving behind his wife Lena, daughter Dorothy, sons Sargon and Johnny and their respective families. He also leaves behind a large extended family in the United States and Australia. While the family mourns, we praise the Lord for Ben's Christian faith and the assurance that he is with our Lord today.

Special Presentation of
Assyrian Studies Association
 by Dr. Sargon Donabed



by Alexandra Lazar

Dr. Sargon Donabed, an associate professor of history at Roger Williams University in Rhode Island and board member of the non-profit charitable organization Assyrian Studies Association (ASA), co-hosted a special presentation with the Assyrian Foundation of America (AFA) about the history and ethnography of Assyrians.

Held in San Francisco, the presentation focused on ways in which every person in the Assyrian community can be a significant participant for collecting, safeguarding, and producing narratives of history and contemporary life for future generations to be proud of, confront, and learn from.

In his presentation, Dr. Donabed focused on the particular issue the Assyrian Studies Association is passionate about endorsing – the collecting, preserving and maintaining of the first of its kind Assyrian Heritage Archive, an online digital database that collects and preserves Assyrian-related works such as manuscripts, newsletters, biography's, photography's, poetry, art, and literature from around the world.

"Everyone and everything has a history. It all matters. It would be a monumental loss and failure on the part of cultural institutions if they were to let the stories of our Assyrian ancestors become footnotes. If we are to be prepared for the future and thankful for the present, we are to appreciate and learn from our past", said Dr. Sargon Donabed.

Working exclusively with Roger Williams University to digitally scan Assyrian materials into the Assyrian Studies Association database, Dr. Donabed discussed the ways in which Assyrians in the Northern California region (and those across the United States) can help build the archive. By sending personal materials of Assyrian poetry, literature, art, photographs, manuscripts, and biographies to the Assyrian Studies Association executive

director, Alexandra Lazar's email alazar@assyrianstudiesassociation.org, fellow Assyrians can help preserve the Assyrian heritage and culture.

Keeping with the discussion of preserving Assyrian heritage and culture, Dr. Donabed brought attention to how the Assyrian Studies Association functions as an instrument to advance studies on the Assyrians by being able to award grants to students and academic professionals researching about the understudied areas of Assyrian culture.

Starting in 2020, the Assyrian Studies Foundation is set to award up to two grants of up to \$2,000 to Assyrian authors in various disciplines working on books directly related to Assyrians and Assyrian studies; two grants of up to \$2,000 for authors producing children's books in Assyrian; and lastly, two grants of up to \$1,500 to academics researching understudied areas of Assyrian culture. Those who are interested in applying, and are working in a discipline directly related to Assyrian studies should visit www.AssyrianStudiesAssociation.com for more information.

"The grants are an incentive for scholars to blaze new paths in Assyrian Studies, finally a field that covers the Assyrian heritage over the *longue durée*," said Dr. Sargon Donabed.

Since the Assyrian Studies Association began this year, they have helped fund Assyrian graduate students and academics who have researched the Assyrians to attend the Middle Eastern Studies Association Conference in New Orleans this autumn, and is currently planning host their first symposium that would provide Assyrian students and academics actively researching about Assyrian-related issues to gather and collaborate on further research about the Assyrians.



Annual San Jose Festival Celebrates Assyrian Culture

Organizers hope to pass down traditions to the next generation, educate the community

Courtesy of Mercurynews.com by Linda Zavoral

This weekend's 27th annual Assyrian Food Festival showcases the food and traditions from the part of the world known as "the cradle of civilization." The San Jose event's purpose is twofold: Organizers hope to both pass along traditions to the next generation while also educating the community about Assyrian heritage.

The free festival, held at the Mar Yosip Parish of the Assyrian Church of the East, features live entertainment, international vendors and Samovar Alley, offering pastries, teas and coffee. Events run through 9 p.m. Sunday at 680 Minnesota Ave.

According to the parish, the Holy Apostolic Catholic Assyrian Church of the East is one of the oldest Christian churches. More than 300,000 Assyrians live around the world.





Shape your future START HERE >

United States Census 2020

2020 Census and the Assyrian Community

Carmen Morad, Census Outreach Coordinator
Assemblyman Heath Flora, California State Legislature, Assembly District 12



What is a census and why is it important?

Once a decade, America comes together to count every resident in the United States, creating national awareness of the importance of the census and its valuable statistics. The decennial census was first taken in 1790, as mandated by the Constitution. It counts our population and households, providing the basis for reapportioning congressional seats, redistricting, and distributing more than \$675 billion in federal funds annually to support states, counties and communities' vital programs — impacting housing, education, transportation, employment, health care and public policy.

HOW THE CENSUS BENEFITS YOUR COMMUNITY

Federal funds, grants and support to states, counties and communities are based on population totals and breakdowns by sex, age, race and other factors. Your community benefits the most when the census counts everyone. People in your community use census data in all kinds of ways, such as these:

- Residents** use the census to support community initiatives involving legislation, quality-of-life and consumer advocacy.
- Businesses** use Census Bureau data to decide where to build factories, offices and stores, and these create jobs.
- Local government** officials use the census to ensure public safety and plan new schools and hospitals.
- Real estate developers** and city planners use the census to plan new homes and improve neighborhoods.

The next census is coming in 2020. Counting an increasingly diverse and growing population is a massive undertaking. It requires years of planning and the support of thousands of people.

Ultimately, the success of the census depends on everyone's participation. The Census Bureau depends on cross-sector collaborations with organizations and individuals to get people to participate.

The Assyrian American Civic Club of Turlock has collaborated with the Stanislaus County 2020 Census Complete Count Committee. The AACCT has accepted this responsibility to be engaged and effectively inform and educate the members of the Assyrian community. By utilizing resources such as Television and Radio programming, multiple community platforms and social media, we are able to reach members of our community and expand the conversation to a national dialogue.

Shape your future START HERE >

United States Census 2020



Why should Assyrian participate in the 2020 Census?

The Assyrian Nation has endured Genocide, force-migration and an ongoing mass-exodus from our ancestral home land. It is a well known fact that more Assyrians in Diaspora than ever before. As an extremely resilient nation, we acculturate rapidly and become productive members of society in any country we resettle in. The Assyrian settlement in the United States goes back to the 1800s; however, the last decades of war and conflict have contributed to an alarming increase of refugees and asylum seekers in the west particularly in the U.S, Canada, Australia and Europe.

The 2020 Census is one way we can track the resettlement of the Assyrian population in the United States. By completing the Census questionnaires and answering the RACE and ETHNICITY, LANGUAGE SPOKEN by a consistent manner, we are able to create a category to be counted as ASSYRIANS.

The Census recognizes RACE by self definition.

“The American Community Survey (ACS) helps local officials, community leaders, and businesses understand the changes taking place in their communities. It is the premier source for detailed population and housing information about our nation. American Community Survey (ACS)

Why We Ask: Race

We ask about a person's race to create statistics about these race groups and to present other estimates by race group. Race statistics are used in planning and evaluating government programs and policies to ensure they fairly serve the needs of each community and to monitor against discrimination in these programs and in society. Though, a question about race has been included on the Decennial Census since 1790, the categories have changed over time. The Census Bureau collects racial data in accordance with the 1997 Office of Management and Budget (OMB) standards on race and ethnicity. **The racial categories are based on self-identification** and generally reflect a social definition of race and not an attempt to define race biologically, anthropologically, or genetically. In addition, people may choose to report more than one race to indicate their racial identity.”

I encourage every Assyrian to be informed on the Census and effectively contribute to completing this task. An accurate count will contribute to where majority of Assyrians reside determining the Congressional representation and locally with County agencies we can anticipate more funding for programs benefiting our seniors, students, employment opportunities, cultural and educational programs in our communities.

For more information you may contact me at Carmen.Morad@asm.ca.gov

Assyrian American Civic Club of Turlock @ 209-668-4668



The Assyrian Youth Federation of America (AYFA)

All around the world, beautiful and vibrant Assyrian communities can be found. Whether it's in our Homeland or in the Diaspora, Assyrians everywhere are working hard to maintain our rich culture and identity.

If you were to walk into an Assyrian wedding or festival in Arizona, you might catch the amazing “Akitu Dance Crew” during one of their elite traditional dancing performances. The Akitu Dance Crew is comprised of young Assyrians from the Assyrian Student Association (ASA) of Arizona. They consistently showcase Assyrian dances while dressed in traditional garb to help bring a blast-from-the-past to modern day Assyrian gatherings. It's these types of next-generation organizations that bring hope to Assyrians because they provide a platform for young Assyrians to gather, learn, connect, and embrace their Assyrian roots. Although there exist several organizations around the USA comprised of and serving young Assyrians, there has never been a centralized effort to connect and unite them towards any particular mission – until now.

The Assyrian Youth Federation of America (AYFA) was established in 2018 and consists of six founding member organizations across the United States: ASA of Arizona, ASA of Los Angeles, ASA of Chicago, Central California Assyrian Student and Youth Association (CCASYA), Qooyama of San Jose, and Eroottha of Detroit. Its inaugural elections yielded a seven-person Board of Directors:

Gabrial Babella, President
 Anthony Narsi, Vice President
 Christopher Zomaya, Secretary
 Mary Isaac, Treasurer
 Bretiel Danipour, Marketing
 Ur Gabriel, Eastern Regional Director
 David Hanna, Western Regional Director

AYFA was created with the goal of connecting Assyrian youth and student organizations across the country, to unite our efforts towards a thriving Assyria. “There isn't one way to accomplish this,” said Babella, “Every organization has its own strengths and contributions to preserving our culture and customs – we wanted to provide a platform for those groups to come together and share ideas with each other, and build each other up.”

This was the exact focus of AYFA's first annual “AYFA Assembly”. AYFA held this event in May 2019 at a retreat center in the mountains of the Los Angeles area in California. “It was important to us that this was a content-driven event. We wanted each attendee and organization to come away stronger – with something to work on when they got home” said Ur Gabriel, Eastern Regional Director. In its initial sessions, the event focused on each organization sharing their strengths, weaknesses, and opportunities for improvement. There were also workshops on fundraising, marketing, recruiting, and a special guest presentation by members of the Armenian Youth Federation. “It was nice to see the Armenian Youth Federation send its delegates there to speak to us” said Odesho Mirza. “We have so much in common and they are a great model for us to draw inspiration from as we look to build and strengthen AYFA.” AYFA hopes to hold an annual Assembly moving forward, and the content will vary from year to year. In its inaugural year, it was clear that the emphasis was on establishing the organization, soliciting feedback and expectations from the member organizations, and laying the groundwork for what AYFA hoped to accomplish moving forward. “Who knows what it will be in five years” says Babella, “as our organization grows and as we gain more support, there is no limit to what we'll



try to bring to our communities. The most important thing right now is that we create a sense of belonging for all young Assyrians and show them that AYFA was established with them in mind.”

In the immediate future, AYFA plans to hold its second General Body meeting and Elections. From there, the focus will again shift to its next Assembly and continuing to engage and connect young Assyrians. “We saw a small glimpse of what AYFA can do at our event in May,” said Anthony Narsi, Vice President, “While building out our plan, it was amazing to see attendees who were otherwise not engaged in Assyrian initiatives volunteering to join standing committees. This is precisely the reason we do what we do.”

AYFA hopes to inspire young Assyrians from all over the United States to get involved and contribute however they can – and the first annual AYFA Assembly was an encouraging step forward in that progression.





Established 1964



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