

# Tell Our Stories: Artifacts from the Assyrian Genocide



# Director's Foreword

*Tell Our Stories: Artifacts from the Assyrian Genocide* - represents a unique opportunity to examine personal narratives and historical artifacts that explore the Assyrian Genocide era - roughly 1895 through 1924 in the Ottoman Empire and Persia. As time goes on we must not forget the countless people that have been claimed by genocide. In many cases, entire families have been erased from the face of the earth. This exhibit gives us the opportunity to remember the victims and ensure that they will not be forgotten.

Stanislaus State is fortunate to have exceptional faculty and departments that further the study of historical events. Understanding the successes and failures of the past help guide, and hopefully improve, our future. Our exhibitions generate meaningful discussions and lifelong learning and also support the faculty's ability to provide more meaningful education to our students.

It is an honor to be able to exhibit these artifacts for others to experience. I would like to thank the many colleagues that have been instrumental in presenting this exhibition. Kathy Sayad Zadari, Ruth Kamar, Hannibal Travis, and Erin Hughes for the curation of the exhibition, with the support of Nora Lacey of the Assyrian Arts Institute, Brad Peatross of the School of the Arts, California State University, Stanislaus for the catalog design and Parks Printing for the printing this catalog. This project was made possible with support from California Humanities, a non-profit partner of the National Endowment for the Humanities. Our gratitude is also extended to the Instructionally Related Activities Program of California State University, Stanislaus, as well as anonymous donors for the funding of the exhibition and catalogue. Their support is greatly appreciated.



Dean De Cocker,  
Gallery Director  
California State University, Stanislaus



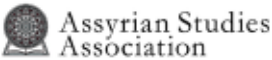
Paul Batou, *Diaspora 1915*

This project was made possible with support from California Humanities, a non-profit partner of the National Endowment for the Humanities. Visit [calhum.org](http://calhum.org).

Any views, findings, conclusions, or recommendations expressed in this exhibition and catalog do not necessarily represent those of California Humanities or the National Endowment for the Humanities.

This project is also made possible with the support of California State University Stanislaus and the Sarguis Modern Assyrian Heritage Project, the Assyrian Arts Institute, and the Assyrian Studies Association.

Our sincerest appreciation to those who shared family stories, photographs, cherished memorabilia, and other items that helped make this exhibition possible and help to further document this crucial history.



# Tell Our Stories: Artifacts from the Assyrian Genocide

In conceiving this exhibition, *Tell Our Stories: Artifacts from the Assyrian Genocide*, our aim was to use personal narratives and historical artifacts to explore the Assyrian Genocide era - roughly 1895 through 1924 in the Ottoman Empire and Persia - and the subsequent experience of resettlement in the US. Our hope was that it could provide members of the Assyrian diaspora the ability to participate in its creation through sharing personal histories and artifacts, and that this might help to build a collective narrative of genocide and survival.

The Assyrian Genocide is one of the lesser-known chapters of genocide. An estimated 250,000 Assyrians were killed in what is now Turkey and northwest Iran by Ottoman Turks and allied Kurds.<sup>1</sup> The aftermath of any genocide is of course traumatic, and in addition to the loss of family and community, these horrors permanently forced survivors from their homes, tens of thousands of whom were never able to return. For Assyrians everywhere, the imprint of the Assyrian genocide has been devastating. It has informed many of the cultural and political experiences in the Assyrian community for more than a century.

Those who remained in the Middle East have continued to suffer to the present day. Several thousand Assyrians perished in a wave of ethnic cleansing in Iraq in 1933. Throughout the latter half of the 20th century, Assyrians endured and often fled state repression, persecution, and violence. Less than a decade ago, Assyrians were once again subject to ethnic cleansing in Iraq and Syria by the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS). The WWI-era genocide can, and should, be seen in the larger historical context of the ethnic cleansing of an indigenous population in the Middle East.

Today, more than 400,000 Assyrians live in the U.S., almost one-fourth of whom are settled throughout California. The Assyrian community has deep roots in the Turlock area in particular as the first farming settlement of Assyrians in the U.S., established by a group of families from northwest Iran in the early 20th century.<sup>2</sup> After WWI, California also became home to Assyrian genocide survivors and refugees. Other Assyrian communities are found in Arizona, Connecticut, Florida, Illinois, Indiana, Michigan, New York, New Jersey, and elsewhere.

The oral histories of these dispersed families are central to this exhibition. The exhibition tells the stories of the survivors whose photos we see – survivors who lost countless family members to the genocide, who endured unspeakable hardship, and who built a future for their families. We hope this showcase will acquaint the larger Stanislaus community with these experiences and further an understanding of this important part of our region's heritage.

Kathy Sayad Zatari

Ruth Kambar

Hannibal Travis

Erin Hughes

1 Hannibal Travis (2006) "Native Christians Massacred": The Ottoman Genocide of the Assyrians during World War I, *Genocide Studies and Prevention*, 1 (3), <http://www.aina.org/reports/togotadww1.pdf>.

2 Arianne Ishaya (2010) *Familiar Faces in Unfamiliar Places: Assyrians in the California Heartland 1911-1920*. Xlibris Corporation.

# Before the First World War (WWI)

Assyrians are amongst the indigenous people of the Middle East, descending from one of the region's earliest cultures, and for millennia have been an ethnic, cultural, religious and linguistic minority in the region. The indigenous Assyrian homeland spans what was, prior to WWI, Persia and the Ottoman Empire - today, the modern states of Iran, Iraq, Syria, and Turkey.

Image: Assyrian women in Midyad, Turabdin (southeast Turkey), beginning of the 1900s. (Image courtesy of the Mesopotamian Library/Jan Bet-Sawoce)



Image: Assyrian teachers at the Fiske Seminary in Urmia, Persia, circa 1900. (Shedd Family Archives, Presbyterian Historical Society)



Image: Assyrian family making butter, Mawana, Persia (northwest Iran). (Library of Congress, undated)



# Early Emigration

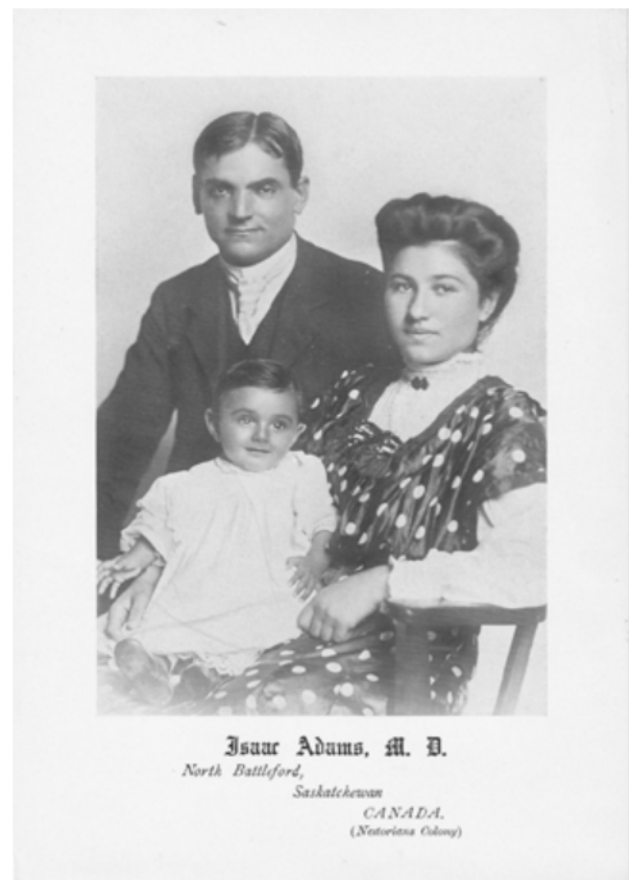
Assyrian migration between the Middle East and North America began long before WWI. As one example, at the age of 17, Isaac Adams journeyed almost 6,000 miles from Persia to America to study both medicine and ministry. While he could have remained in America, he was determined to help his people and returned to Persia time and again. However, because of increasing persecution, in 1903, Dr. Adams brought a group of Assyrian families to start a new life in Canada. While California was his first choice because of its similar climate, sufficient land was not affordable at the time, and thus the decision was made to settle in Canada where land was more readily available.

Image: Isaac Adams, his wife Sarah, and son John in North Battleford, Canada.

The family dressed in traditional clothing while lecturing to raise funds to bring Assyrians to North America.

Image: Isaac, Sarah, and John Adams in North Battleford, Canada.

(Images courtesy of the Isaac Adams/ Bennett/ Peterson Family Photos)



# Genocide

In 1914, the Ottoman Empire entered the First World War alongside Germany and Austria-Hungary. That same year, the Ottoman Empire began a campaign of genocide against Assyrians, as well as Armenians and Pontic Greeks. An estimated 250,000 Assyrians were killed, and witnesses to the genocide noted that an estimated half of the Assyrian nation died during this period, the result of murder, disease, starvation, and exposure.

Image: "Assyria Desolate," *Fresno Morning Republican*, 3 May 1915.

This article notes an attack on Urmia while also demonstrating how the fog of war can lead to not fully-accurate contexts, as seen in the last paragraph.

Image: Assyrian refugees from Hakkari

An Assyrian mother and children, refugees from the Hakkari region of Anatolia (Ottoman Empire), photographed in Urmia, Persia, during the fall of 1915.

Image: *The Treatment of Armenians*

The infamous 'Blue Book' (officially titled *The Treatment of Armenians in the Ottoman Empire, 1915-16: Documents Presented to Viscount Grey of Fallodon, Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs*, By Viscount Bryce) was a report commissioned by the British government in 1916 on the atrocities committed against Armenians and Assyrians by the Ottoman Empire. The report presented extensive eyewitness testimonies, letters, news reports, and other accounts documenting what would later be called genocide.

Image: Testimony from Paul Shimmon

An early account of the genocide by Paul Shimmon that was initially published in *Arat* in 1915. Excerpt from *The Treatment of Armenians in the Ottoman Empire* (HMSO 1916).

Image: Urmia Schoolchildren

A class of Assyrian (Assyro-Chaldean) students with their teacher in Urmia, Persia. The caption notes that fifteen of the students were massacred, along with their parents, in 1918.

THE FRESNO MORNING REPUBLICAN, MONDAY, MAY 3, 1915.

## Assyria Desolate

TIFLIS, Trans-Caucasia, Saturday, March 27.—(Correspondence of the Associated Press)—Many thousands of Assyrian inhabitants of the country west of Lake Noumiah have had to flee before the coming of the raiding Kurds. Some 45,000 or 50,000 of these people a few months ago occupied the Smiling Gardens on the lake shores. Now 12,000 are refugees in Russia and some 15,000 or 17,000 took refuge under the protection of Dr. Harry P. Packard of the American Presbyterian Mission at Urumiah. His successful efforts in their behalf already have been told by cable. His name will survive in Assyrian traditions.

The members of the central committee of the Assyrian or Chaldean Christians are awaiting only one thing, the return of the Russians, to endeavor to reconstruct into a safe community this remnant of ancient empire of Nineveh. The committeemen fled with their families. They can only hope today that some of their relatives will be returned to them from Kurdish enslavement. Those who did not escape or were made slaves, perished.

The committeemen speak English fluently and were at one time prosperous merchants. This was before their little tribe was gripped by the cogs of the great war.

The Assyrians took sides with the Russians in the war, while the Mohammedans turned to the Turks and Germany. Organized and drilled by Russian officers, the Assyrians rendered valuable services by fortifying some of their villages and guarding the caravan roads to Urumiah.



# TREATMENT OF ARMENIANS

in the Ottoman Empire  
1915-16

Documents presented to  
**VISCOUNT GREY OF FALLODON**  
*Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs*  
By *Viscount Bryce*  
With a preface by  
**VISCOUNT BRYCE**



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About two-thirds of the people who stayed behind at Urmi had the cruellest of fates. No sooner had the Russian forces withdrawn than the roads were closely guarded, and no one was permitted to come in or go out of Urmi for over four months. The Kurds poured in from every quarter, and the Persian Moslems joined hands with them. They engulfed the Christian villages; plunder, pillage, massacre and rape were the order of the day. Every village paid its share. First they killed the men, then they took the women—those who had not escaped—and carried them away for themselves or forced them to become Moslems, and finally they plundered and burned the villages. In one village 80 were killed, in another 50, in a third 30, and so the thing went on in varying degrees among the 70 odd villages in Urmi. About one thousand people were disposed of in this way. In the meantime all that were able escaped to the city to the American mission quarters, whose premises were soon filled to suffocation, and altogether some 20,000 people or more found shelter in the American and French mission quarters, while some hid themselves among Moslem friends and landlords. These refugees, in their flight, were repeatedly robbed on the way by soldiers and officers sent for their protection, and by civilians as well. Many a woman came terror-stricken, shrieking, and bleeding, and almost naked; and many were forced to become Moslems. Some 150 cases or more of these unfortunate women came under the notice of the American missionaries, who tried to restore them to their own folk. One woman had two sons, four and six years of age, who were thrown into a brook to freeze, while the brute of a mullah set to work to force their mother. She at last escaped and took away the children alive, but they died of exposure the next morning.

[36]



UNE CLASSE D'UNE ÉCOLE CHRÉTIENNE DE LA NATION ASSYRO-CHALDÉENNE, AVEC LEUR MAITRE, à OURMIAH (Perse).

15 des élèves ont été massacrés, ainsi que leurs parents, par les Turco-Persans en 1918.



# Mar Benyamin Shimun XXI

Mar Benyamin Shimun XXI was the 117th Patriarch of the Church of the East, serving as both a spiritual and temporal head of the Assyrian nation. He also served as a leader of the Assyrian armies during the First World War as Assyrians fought against Ottoman and Kurdish onslaught. He was murdered during treaty negotiations with a Kurdish chieftain in 1918.

Image: Mar Benyamin Shimun XXI (photograph estimated to be taken between 1915 to 1918) (Library of Congress)

Image: Shemasha (Deacon) Ishai d'Mar Shimun (father of Mar Benyamin Shimun), seated with attendants, likely sometime between 1890-1895. (Library of Congress)

Image: Obituary for Mar Benyamin Shimun XXI published in the *New York Times*, 15 April 1918.



## MURDER OF MAR SHIMUN. Syrian Catholics First Head of a Nationality to Perish in the War.

The American Committee for Armenian and Syrian Relief last night gave out the following concerning Mar Shimun, head of the Assyrian Church, who was killed recently, according to a cablegram received by the State Department at Washington on Saturday.

Mar Shimun is the first political head of a nationality who has paid the supreme sacrifice of this war. To his people he was both King Albert and Cardinal Mercier. In 1903, when a boy of 16, Mar Shimun was selected to become Catholicos or Patriarch, to succeed his uncle, Ruwel Reuben, who was on the point of death. He was consecrated Catholicos on April 12 of that year. He was educated by native teachers and by members of the mission established by Archbishop Benson of Canterbury at the Patriarchal seat, Qudshants, (Kochannes,) in Kurdistan.

His elder sister, Surma, who ranked next to him in influence over his people, also was educated at the mission and later became a recognized authority on canon law and Church history.

Attacked by the Turks in June, 1915, Mar Shimun and his 125,000 Assyrian highlanders defended the narrow valley of their mountain home, which might be termed a Switzerland in Asia. After Turkish mountain guns had battered down ancient castles and churches, the Assyrians were forced to abandon their valley and retreat to mountain fastnesses.

When their supplies ran out, Mar Shimun, with a handful of warriors, risked grave perils to reach the Russian lines at Salmas, Persia, but the Russians, weakened by the loss of Warsaw, could give no assistance. Then Mar Shimun, returning to his people, was forced to lead them down to the plateaus of Northwestern Persia, where they scattered over the plains of Salmas and Urumiah. There 15 per cent. of them died from cold and hunger.

As 138th Catholicos of the east he maintained the ancient traditions and his people almost worshipped him.

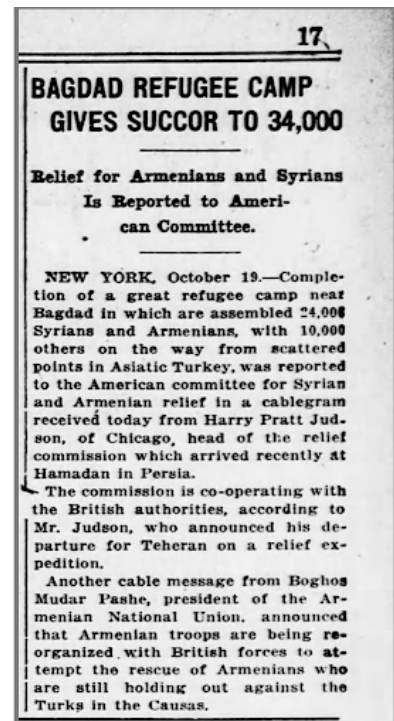
# Baquba Refugee Camp

Thousands fled Anatolia and Urmia for refuge in southern Iraq, which was by then under British control. A camp was set up in Baquba, near Baghdad, to provide shelter and humanitarian aid to up to 40,000 Assyrian and Armenian refugees and survivors.

Image: Article from the Washington, DC, *Evening Star*, 'Bagdad Refugee Camp Gives Succor to 34,000', describes the opening of the Baquba refugee camp near Baghdad, Iraq, in October 1918.

Image: Map showing the mountainous trek made by Assyrians fleeing violence in Anatolia and Urmia to arrive in the Baquba refugee camp. (Image from Norman Solhkhah, & Sam Darmo *Assyrians and Armenians in the Ba"Quba Refugee Camp*, published by Dr. Edison Ishaya & AUA Foundation)

Image: Assyrian refugees who fled North Persia were photographed waiting beside a railroad in a Mesopotamian desert for a train to transport them to refuge. (Photograph by Underwood & Underwood, N.Y., Library of Congress)



# Arsanis Family

Image: 1904 Church in Urmia

Deacon Eshu Serghis Arsanis (the priest to the right) and Sophia Perokian Arsanis are pictured with members of the Syru Chaldean Catholic Church built in 1904 in Supurghan, Urmia, Persia. The family states this is the only known photograph taken before the massacres of 1915 and 1918.

Image: Assyrians of San Francisco

Assyrians of San Francisco in 1915, including members of the Arsanis family.

Image: "Refugees Tell of Turk Drive"

News article from the *San Francisco Examiner* on 28 August 1920, which details the rescue of several children who were later brought to San Francisco and Turlock to be reunited with family members.

(Photographs courtesy of Michael Arsanis)



## REFUGEES TELL OF TURK DRIVE

Bringing a graphic story of the wholesale massacre of their people at the hands of the Turks following the withdrawal of the Russian troops from Mesopotamia, several Assyrian refugees, including women, young girls and boys, arrived here yesterday aboard the Toyo Kisen Kaisha liner *Siberia Maru*.

They were rescued from the Turks by allied aid and were brought to this country by the Y. M. C. A. They will be sent to homes of relatives in this country.

According to the story told by the refugees more than 400 young women were taken from their homes in the town of Urumiah, the main scene of the massacre, to be placed in Turkish harems.

While the Turks were butchering more than 40,000 along the line, killing aged men, and women who fell behind, and hurling bombs into the rear ranks, more than 100,000 men, women and children at once began a hasty retreat from the scene of the massacre.

The relief expedition which escorted the refugees to this country, was organized by the Rev. L. K. Nweeya of the Mizpah Presbyterian Church of this city, who went to the rescue of his four daughters who were left motherless in Bagdad. The girls with their mother were among the 100,000 who attempted to flee the wrath of the Turks, but the mother died from starvation and exposure while trying to escape.

Nweeya brought back his four children ranging from 8 to 16 years. Among others in the party of refugees were Jodht Arsanis, 13, and her 7 year old sister, Jerrossa, children of Eshu Serghis Arsanis, an employee of the California State Immigration and Housing Commission.

The mother is dead and the younger girl was born after her father had come to America. He had never seen her until today. Louise Lazar, 16, and Joseph Isaacs, 16, were in the party. Their fathers live near Turlock and the boys are the lone survivors of their families, the other members of the family having perished in the massacre of Mesopotamia.



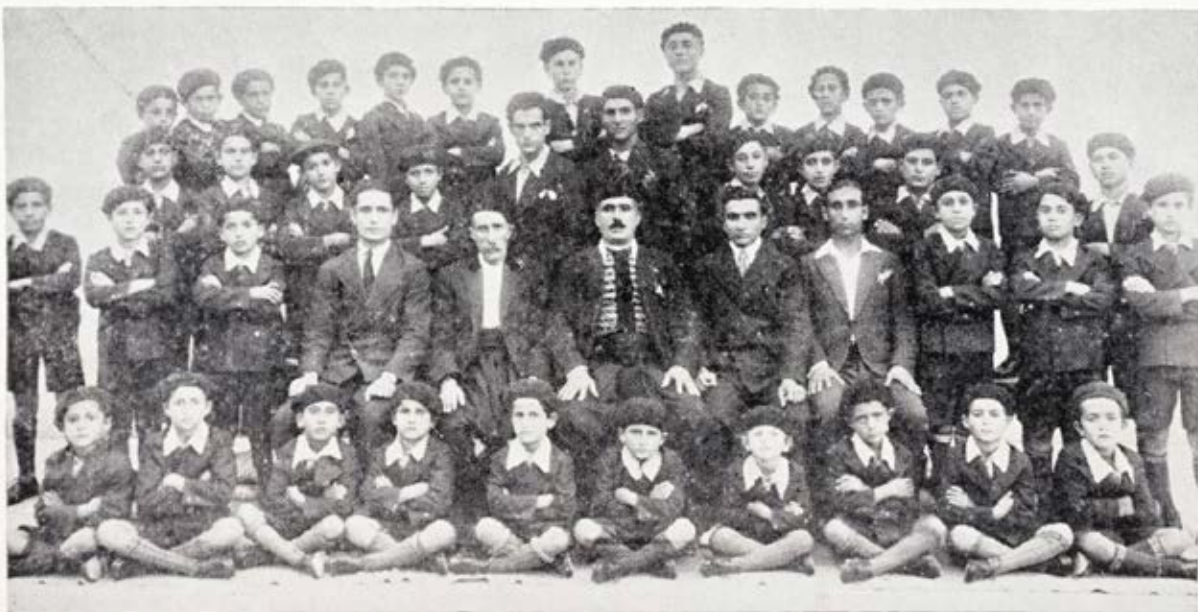
# Orphaned by Genocide

The genocide left thousands of children orphaned. Orphanages were established, often with the support of the diaspora. In 1920, an urgent plea was sent to the Assyrians of New Jersey and New York by Paul Jean, who had been a Colonel in the French Army during WWI, that immediate financial help was needed to provide 35 Assyrian orphans in Adana (then under French Mandate) with food, shelter and clothing. A group of patriotic Assyrian women formed an association called the Assyrian National Relief to aid these orphans and others in need. However, within a few years, the League of Nations returned Adana to Turkey and, in 1923, the children of the Orphanage were moved to Beyrouth (Beirut), Lebanon, for greater safety.

Image: The Assyrian National Orphanage after relocating to Beirut, Lebanon.

Image: Teachers and Orphans at the Orphanage in Beirut, Lebanon. The image is from a memorial dinner booklet hosted by the Assyrian National School Association in 1937.

(Images courtesy of the Assyrian Studies Association Archive)



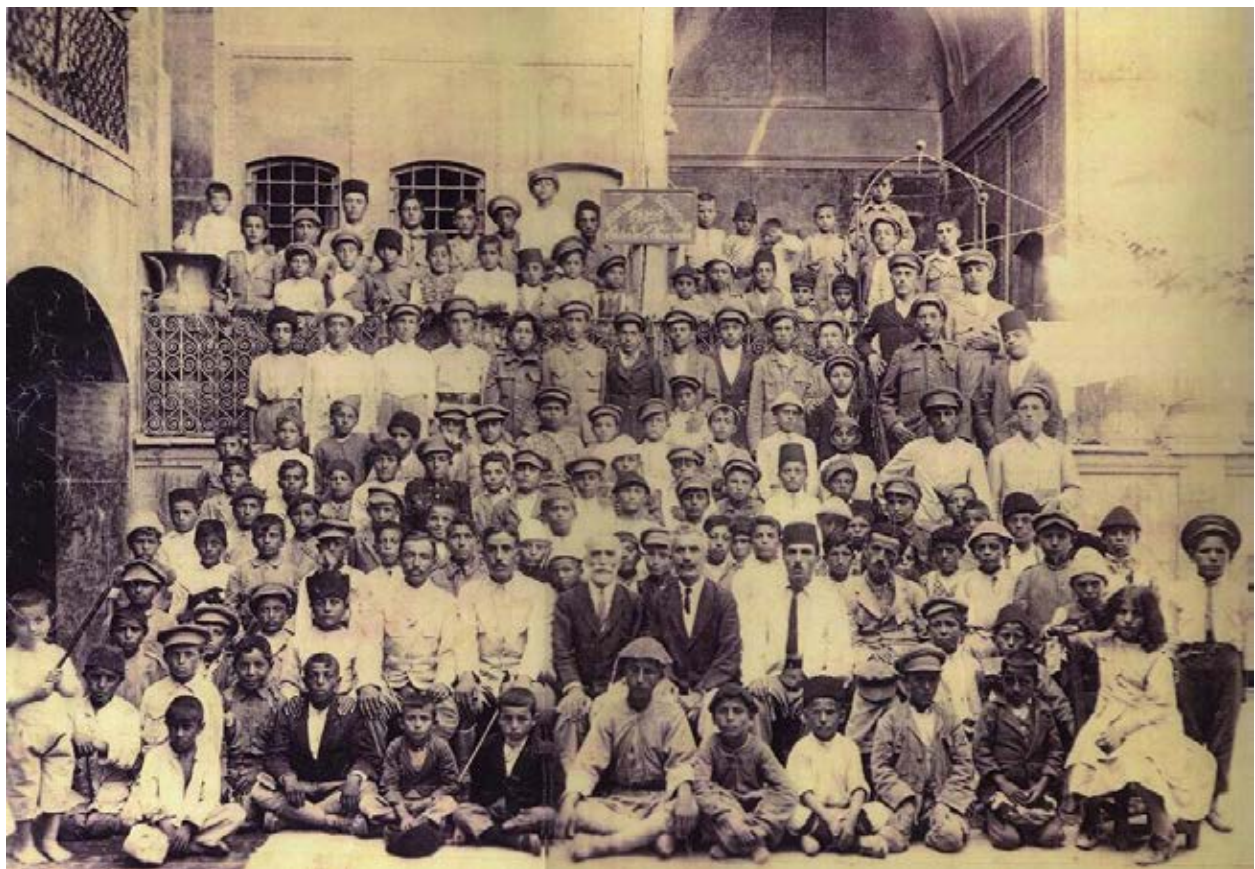
TEACHERS AND ORPHANS

# Schoolchildren after the Genocide

Image: Assyrians in 1925 Mosul

Assyrian schoolchildren in post-war Mosul in 1925. The school was established by Yosip Qelaita in 1921.

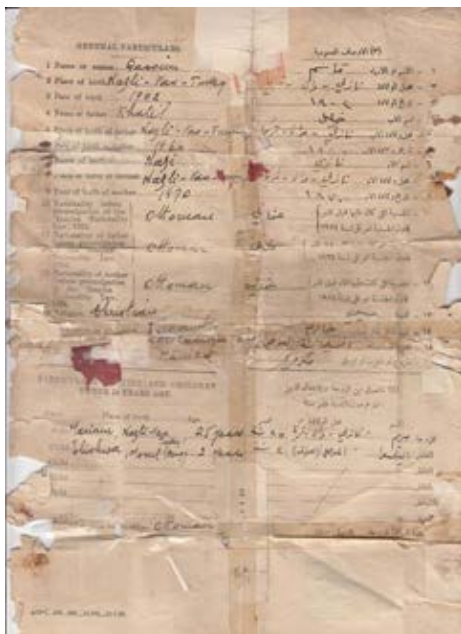
(Image belonging to Shemasha Yosip Zia from the Assyrian International News Agency/AINA)



# Qasim Khalil Khamo

Pictured here are identity documents for Qasim Khalil Khamo from 1932 provided by his granddaughter, Shahen Kasem. Mr. Khamo fled Turkey sometime during the genocide and arrived in Iraq, where his family lost track of him. Like tens of thousands of Assyrians who lost track of family members from the genocide, his family would still like to know what became of him or the rest of his family.

(Images courtesy of Shahen Kasem)



# Love after the War

Sometime in 1914, during WWI, a young Indian British soldier headed to Iraq from India to fight for the British and Allied Forces. A year or two later, an Assyrian teenage girl made her way to the Red Cross Refugee camp in Baquba, Iraq. The soldier was also a member of the YMCA, which held prayer meetings at the refugee camp, where he saw this red-haired Assyrian girl and knew he had to marry her. Their names were Edward Benjamin Samuel and Susember Rasho, and they married in 1922 at the Red Cross Camp.

Image: The couple on their wedding day.

Image: A copy of their marriage certificate from the British Mandate of Mesopotamia.

(Images courtesy of Shabnam Samuel)



BOOK OF REGISTER OF MARRIAGES (UNDER THE BRITISH SUBJECTS' REGISTRATION OF BIRTHS, DEATHS) AND MARRIAGES PROCLAMATION, 1919) IN THE OCCUPIED TERRITORIES OF MESOPOTAMIA.

أبواب تسجيل طرود الزواج طبقاً لشروط تسجيل طرود الزواج البريطانية لسنة ١٩١٩ في إقليم المنطقة العراقية

1919-1922-1924-1925-1926-1927-1928-1929-1930-1931-1932-1933-1934-1935-1936-1937-1938-1939-1940-1941-1942-1943-1944-1945-1946-1947-1948-1949-1950-1951-1952-1953-1954-1955-1956-1957-1958-1959-1960-1961-1962-1963-1964-1965-1966-1967-1968-1969-1970-1971-1972-1973-1974-1975-1976-1977-1978-1979-1980-1981-1982-1983-1984-1985-1986-1987-1988-1989-1990-1991-1992-1993-1994-1995-1996-1997-1998-1999-2000-2001-2002-2003-2004-2005-2006-2007-2008-2009-2010-2011-2012-2013-2014-2015-2016-2017-2018-2019-2020-2021-2022-2023-2024-2025-2026-2027-2028-2029-2030-2031-2032-2033-2034-2035-2036-2037-2038-2039-2040-2041-2042-2043-2044-2045-2046-2047-2048-2049-2050-2051-2052-2053-2054-2055-2056-2057-2058-2059-2060-2061-2062-2063-2064-2065-2066-2067-2068-2069-2070-2071-2072-2073-2074-2075-2076-2077-2078-2079-2080-2081-2082-2083-2084-2085-2086-2087-2088-2089-2090-2091-2092-2093-2094-2095-2096-2097-2098-2099-2100-2101-2102-2103-2104-2105-2106-2107-2108-2109-2110-2111-2112-2113-2114-2115-2116-2117-2118-2119-2120-2121-2122-2123-2124-2125-2126-2127-2128-2129-2130-2131-2132-2133-2134-2135-2136-2137-2138-2139-2140-2141-2142-2143-2144-2145-2146-2147-2148-2149-2150-2151-2152-2153-2154-2155-2156-2157-2158-2159-2160-2161-2162-2163-2164-2165-2166-2167-2168-2169-2170-2171-2172-2173-2174-2175-2176-2177-2178-2179-2180-2181-2182-2183-2184-2185-2186-2187-2188-2189-2190-2191-2192-2193-2194-2195-2196-2197-2198-2199-2200-2201-2202-2203-2204-2205-2206-2207-2208-2209-2210-2211-2212-2213-2214-2215-2216-2217-2218-2219-2220-2221-2222-2223-2224-2225-2226-2227-2228-2229-2230-2231-2232-2233-2234-2235-2236-2237-2238-2239-2240-2241-2242-2243-2244-2245-2246-2247-2248-2249-2250-2251-2252-2253-2254-2255-2256-2257-2258-2259-2260-2261-2262-2263-2264-2265-2266-2267-2268-2269-2270-2271-2272-2273-2274-2275-2276-2277-2278-2279-2280-2281-2282-2283-2284-2285-2286-2287-2288-2289-2290-2291-2292-2293-2294-2295-2296-2297-2298-2299-2300-2301-2302-2303-2304-2305-2306-2307-2308-2309-2310-2311-2312-2313-2314-2315-2316-2317-2318-2319-2320-2321-2322-2323-2324-2325-2326-2327-2328-2329-2330-2331-2332-2333-2334-2335-2336-2337-2338-2339-2340-2341-2342-2343-2344-2345-2346-2347-2348-2349-2350-2351-2352-2353-2354-2355-2356-2357-2358-2359-2360-2361-2362-2363-2364-2365-2366-2367-2368-2369-2370-2371-2372-2373-2374-2375-2376-2377-2378-2379-2380-2381-2382-2383-2384-2385-2386-2387-2388-2389-2390-2391-2392-2393-2394-2395-2396-2397-2398-2399-2400-2401-2402-2403-2404-2405-2406-2407-2408-2409-2410-2411-2412-2413-2414-2415-2416-2417-2418-2419-2420-2421-2422-2423-2424-2425-2426-2427-2428-2429-2430-2431-2432-2433-2434-2435-2436-2437-2438-2439-2440-2441-2442-2443-2444-2445-2446-2447-2448-2449-2450-2451-2452-2453-2454-2455-2456-2457-2458-2459-2460-2461-2462-2463-2464-2465-2466-2467-2468-2469-2470-2471-2472-2473-2474-2475-2476-2477-2478-2479-2480-2481-2482-2483-2484-2485-2486-2487-2488-2489-2490-2491-2492-2493-2494-2495-2496-2497-2498-2499-2500-2501-2502-2503-2504-2505-2506-2507-2508-2509-2510-2511-2512-2513-2514-2515-2516-2517-2518-2519-2520-2521-2522-2523-2524-2525-2526-2527-2528-2529-2530-2531-2532-2533-2534-2535-2536-2537-2538-2539-2540-2541-2542-2543-2544-2545-2546-2547-2548-2549-2550-2551-2552-2553-2554-2555-2556-2557-2558-2559-2560-2561-2562-2563-2564-2565-2566-2567-2568-2569-2570-2571-2572-2573-2574-2575-2576-2577-2578-2579-2580-2581-2582-2583-2584-2585-2586-2587-2588-2589-2590-2591-2592-2593-2594-2595-2596-2597-2598-2599-2600-2601-2602-2603-2604-2605-2606-2607-2608-2609-2610-2611-2612-2613-2614-2615-2616-2617-2618-2619-2620-2621-2622-2623-2624-2625-2626-2627-2628-2629-2630-2631-2632-2633-2634-2635-2636-2637-2638-2639-2640-2641-2642-2643-2644-2645-2646-2647-2648-2649-2650-2651-2652-2653-2654-2655-2656-2657-2658-2659-2660-2661-2662-2663-2664-2665-2666-2667-2668-2669-2670-2671-2672-2673-2674-2675-2676-2677-2678-2679-2680-2681-2682-2683-2684-2685-2686-2687-2688-2689-2690-2691-2692-2693-2694-2695-2696-2697-2698-2699-2700-2701-2702-2703-2704-2705-2706-2707-2708-2709-2710-2711-2712-2713-2714-2715-2716-2717-2718-2719-2720-2721-2722-2723-2724-2725-2726-2727-2728-2729-2730-2731-2732-2733-2734-2735-2736-2737-2738-2739-2740-2741-2742-2743-2744-2745-2746-2747-2748-2749-2750-2751-2752-2753-2754-2755-2756-2757-2758-2759-2760-2761-2762-2763-2764-2765-2766-2767-2768-2769-2770-2771-2772-2773-2774-2775-2776-2777-2778-2779-2780-2781-2782-2783-2784-2785-2786-2787-2788-2789-2790-2791-2792-2793-2794-2795-2796-2797-2798-2799-2800-2801-2802-2803-2804-2805-2806-2807-2808-2809-2810-2811-2812-2813-2814-2815-2816-2817-2818-2819-2820-2821-2822-2823-2824-2825-2826-2827-2828-2829-2830-2831-2832-2833-2834-2835-2836-2837-2838-2839-2840-2841-2842-2843-2844-2845-2846-2847-2848-2849-2850-2851-2852-2853-2854-2855-2856-2857-2858-2859-2860-2861-2862-2863-2864-2865-2866-2867-2868-2869-2870-2871-2872-2873-2874-2875-2876-2877-2878-2879-2880-2881-2882-2883-2884-2885-2886-2887-2888-2889-2890-2891-2892-2893-2894-2895-2896-2897-2898-2899-2900-2901-2902-2903-2904-2905-2906-2907-2908-2909-2910-2911-2912-2913-2914-2915-2916-2917-2918-2919-2920-2921-2922-2923-2924-2925-2926-2927-2928-2929-2930-2931-2932-2933-2934-2935-2936-2937-2938-2939-2940-2941-2942-2943-2944-2945-2946-2947-2948-2949-2950-2951-2952-2953-2954-2955-2956-2957-2958-2959-2960-2961-2962-2963-2964-2965-2966-2967-2968-2969-2970-2971-2972-2973-2974-2975-2976-2977-2978-2979-2980-2981-2982-2983-2984-2985-2986-2987-2988-2989-2990-2991-2992-2993-2994-2995-2996-2997-2998-2999-3000-3001-3002-3003-3004-3005-3006-3007-3008-3009-3010-3011-3012-3013-3014-3015-3016-3017-3018-3019-3020-3021-3022-3023-3024-3025-3026-3027-3028-3029-3030-3031-3032-3033-3034-3035-3036-3037-3038-3039-3040-3041-3042-3043-3044-3045-3046-3047-3048-3049-3050-3051-3052-3053-3054-3055-3056-3057-3058-3059-3060-3061-3062-3063-3064-3065-3066-3067-3068-3069-3070-3071-3072-3073-3074-3075-3076-3077-3078-3079-3080-3081-3082-3083-3084-3085-3086-3087-3088-3089-3090-3091-3092-3093-3094-3095-3096-3097-3098-3099-3100-3101-3102-3103-3104-3105-3106-3107-3108-3109-3110-3111-3112-3113-3114-3115-3116-3117-3118-3119-3120-3121-3122-3123-3124-3125-3126-3127-3128-3129-3130-3131-3132-3133-3134-3135-3136-3137-3138-3139-3140-3141-3142-3143-3144-3145-3146-3147-3148-3149-3150-3151-3152-3153-3154-3155-3156-3157-3158-3159-3160-3161-3162-3163-3164-3165-3166-3167-3168-3169-3170-3171-3172-3173-3174-3175-3176-3177-3178-3179-3180-3181-3182-3183-3184-3185-3186-3187-3188-3189-3190-3191-3192-3193-3194-3195-3196-3197-3198-3199-3200-3201-3202-3203-3204-3205-3206-3207-3208-3209-3210-3211-3212-3213-3214-3215-3216-3217-3218-3219-3220-3221-3222-3223-3224-3225-3226-3227-3228-3229-3230-3231-3232-3233-3234-3235-3236-3237-3238-3239-3240-3241-3242-3243-3244-3245-3246-3247-3248-3249-3250-3251-3252-3253-3254-3255-3256-3257-3258-3259-3260-3261-3262-3263-3264-3265-3266-3267-3268-3269-3270-3271-3272-3273-3274-3275-3276-3277-3278-3279-3280-3281-3282-3283-3284-3285-3286-3287-3288-3289-3290-3291-3292-3293-3294-3295-3296-3297-3298-3299-3300-3301-3302-3303-3304-3305-3306-3307-3308-3309-3310-3311-3312-3313-3314-3315-3316-3317-3318-3319-3320-3321-3322-3323-3324-3325-3326-3327-3328-3329-3330-3331-3332-3333-3334-3335-3336-3337-3338-3339-3340-3341-3342-3343-3344-3345-3346-3347-3348-3349-3350-3351-3352-3353-3354-3355-3356-3357-3358-3359-3360-3361-3362-3363-3364-3365-3366-3367-3368-3369-3370-3371-3372-3373-3374-3375-3376-3377-3378-3379-3380-3381-3382-3383-3384-3385-3386-3387-3388-3389-3390-3391-3392-3393-3394-3395-3396-3397-3398-3399-3400-3401-3402-3403-3404-3405-3406-3407-3408-3409-3410-3411-3412-3413-3414-3415-3416-3417-3418-3419-3420-3421-3422-3423-3424-3425-3426-3427-3428-3429-3430-3431-3432-3433-3434-3435-3436-3437-3438-3439-3440-3441-3442-3443-3444-3445-3446-3447-3448-3449-3450-3451-3452-3453-3454-3455-3456-3457-3458-3459-3460-3461-3462-3463-3464-3465-3466-3467-3468-3469-3470-3471-3472-3473-3474-3475-3476-3477-3478-3479-3480-3481-3482-3483-3484-3485-3486-3487-3488-3489-3490-3491-3492-3493-3494-3495-3496-3497-3498-3499-3500-3501-3502-3503-3504-3505-3506-3507-3508-3509-3510-3511-3512-3513-3514-3515-3516-3517-3518-3519-3520-3521-3522-3523-3524-3525-3526-3527-3528-3529-3530-3531-3532-3533-3534-3535-3536-3537-3538-3539-3540-3541-3542-3543-3544-3545-3546-3547-3548-3549-3550-3551-3552-3553-3554-3555-3556-3557-3558-3559-3560-3561-3562-3563-3564-3565-3566-3567-3568-3569-3570-3571-3572-3573-3574-3575-3576-3577-3578-3579-3580-3581-3582-3583-3584-3585-3586-3587-3588-3589-3590-3591-3592-3593-3594-3595-3596-3597-3598-3599-3600-3601-3602-3603-3604-3605-3606-3607-3608-3609-3610-3611-3612-3613-3614-3615-3616-3617-3618-3619-3620-3621-3622-3623-3624-3625-3626-3627-3628-3629-3630-3631-3632-3633-3634-3635-3636-3637-3638-3639-3640-3641-3642-3643-3644-3645-3646-3647-3648-3649-3650-3651-3652-3653-3654-3655-3656-3657-3658-3659-3660-3661-3662-3663-3664-3665-3666-3667-3668-3669-3670-3671-3672-3673-3674-3675-3676-3677-3678-3679-3680-3681-3682-3683-3684-3685-3686-3687-3688-3689-3690-3691-3692-3693-3694-3695-3696-3697-3698-3699-3700-3701-3702-3703-3704-3705-3706-3707-3708-3709-3710-3711-3712-3713-3714-3715-3716-3717-3718-3719-3720-3721-3722-3723-3724-3725-3726-3727-3728-3729-3730-3731-3732-3733-3734-3735-3736-3737-3738-3739-3740-3741-3742-3743-3744-3745-3746-3747-3748-3749-3750-3751-3752-3753-3754-3755-3756-3757-3758-3759-3760-3761-3762-3763-3764-3765-3766-3767-3768-3769-3770-3771-3772-3773-3774-3775-3776-3777-3778-3779-3780-3781-3782-3783-3784-3785-3786-3787-3788-3789-3790-3791-3792-3793-3794-3795-3796-3797-3798-3799-3800-3801-3802-3803-3804-3805-3806-3807-3808-3809-3810-3811-3812-3813-3814-3815-3816-3817-3818-3819-3820-3821-3822-3823-3824-3825-3826-3827-3828-3829-3830-3831-3832-3833-3834-3835-3836-3837-3838-3839-3840-3841-3842-3843-3844-3845-3846-3847-3848-3849-3850-3851-3852-3853-3854-3855-3856-3857-3858-3859-3860-3861-3862-3863-3864-3865-3866-3867-3868-3869-3870-3871-3872-3873-3874-3875-3876-3877-3878-3879-3880-3881-3882-3883-3884-3885-3886-3887-3888-3889-3890-3891-3892-3893-3894-3895-3896-3897-3898-3899-3900-3901-3902-3903-3904-3905-3906-3907-3908-3909-3910-3911-3912-3913-3914-3915-3916-3917-3918-3919-3920-3921-3922-3923-3924-3925-3926-3927-3928-3929-3930-3931-3932-3933-3934-3935-3936-3937-3938-3939-3940-3941-3942-3943-3944-3945-3946-3947-3948-3949-3950-3951-3952-3953-3954-3955-3956-3957-3958-3959-3960-3961-3962-3963-3964-3965-3966-3967-3968-3969-3970-3971-3972-3973-3974-3975-3976-3977-3978-3979-3980-3981-3982-3983-3984-3985-3986-3987-3988-3989-3990-3991-3992-3993-3994-3995-3996-3997-3998-3999-4000-4001-4002-4003-4004-4005-4006-4007-4008-4009-4010-4011-4012-4013-4014-4015-4016-4017-4018-4019-4020-4021-4022-4023-4024-4025-4026-4027-4028-4029-4030-4031-4032-4033-4034-4035-4036-4037-4038-4039-4040-4041-4042-4043-4044-4045-4046-4047-4048-4049-4050-4051-4052-4053-4054-4055-4056-4057-4058-4059-4060-4061-4062-4063-4064-4065-4066-4067-4068-4069-4070-4071-4072-4073-4074-4075-4076-4077-4078-4079-4080-4081-4082-4083-4084-4085-4086-4087-4088-4089-4090-4091-4092-4093-4094-4095-4096-4097-4098-4099-4100-4101-4102-4103-4104-4105-4106-4107-4108-4109-4110-4111-4112-4113-4114-4115-4116-4117-4118-4119-4120-4121-4122-4123-4124-4125-4126-4127-4128-4129-4130-4131-4132-4133-4134-4135-4136-4137-4138-4139-4140-4141-4142-4143-4144-4145-4146-4147-4148-4149-4150-4151-4152-4153-4154-4155-4156-4157-4158-4159-4160-4161-4162-4163-4164-4165-4166-4167-4168-4169-4170-4171-4172-4173-4174-4175-4176-4177-4178-4179-4180-4181-4182-4183-4184-4185-4186-4187-4188-4189-4190-4191-4192-4193-4194-4195-4196-4197-4198-4199-4200-4201-4202-4203-4204-4205-4206-4207-4208-4209-4210-4211-4212-4213-4214-4215-4216-4217-4218-4219-4220-4221-4222-4223-4224-4225-4226-4227-4228-4229-4230-4231-4232-4233-4234-4235-4236-4237-4238-4239-4240-4241-4242-4243-4244-4245-4246-4247-4248-4249-4250-4251-4252-4253-4254-4255-4256-4257-4258-4259-4260-4261-4262-4263

Pictured here are items belonging to Asmar, a young Assyrian woman who fled the Urmia region during the genocide. She was born in Persia in 1904, fled the genocide in 1915, and received identity papers from the Persian Consulate in Marseille, France, in 1927. She wore the earrings pictured here as she fled, and is shown wearing them again on her wedding day. She and her husband married in Cuba in 1929 while waiting for immigration restrictions to lift so they could settle in the United States.

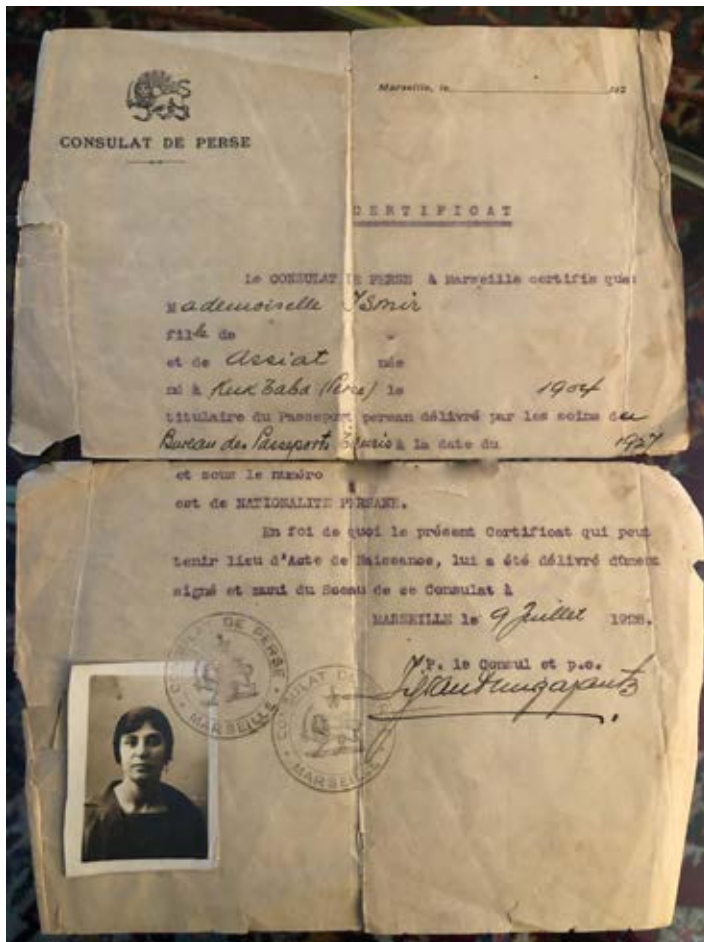
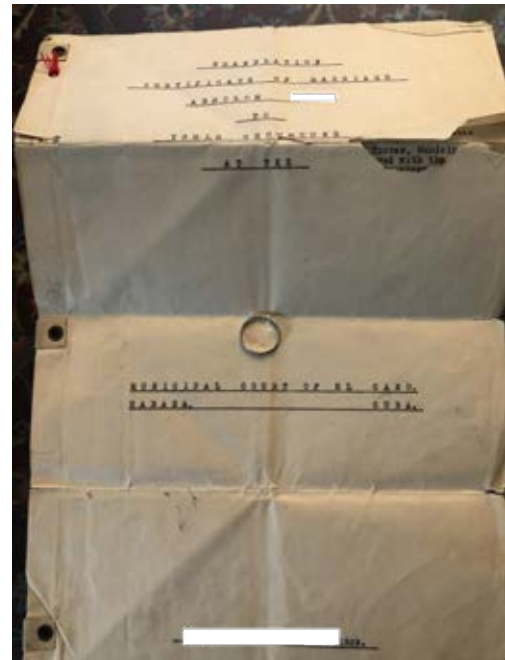
Image: Identity Certificate

Image: Earrings

Image: Marriage Certificate and Wedding Ring

Image: Wedding Photo

(Images courtesy of Anonymous Lender)





# Assyrian Levies in Iraq

After WWI, the League of Nations placed Iraq under British Mandate. The British created the Assyrian Levy Battalion to serve as a professional military force within Iraq. The Levies provided vital assistance in protecting the Habbaniya Royal Air Force Base during WWII, and some members fought in Europe in support of the Allied effort.

Pictured are items belonging to Werda Jajju, a genocide survivor who arrived at the Baquba refugee camp and later served in the Levies from 1922 until 1928.

Image: Mr. Jajju's military medallion

Image: Discharge certificate

Image: Mr. Jajju's Levy unit

(Images courtesy of Ramina Jajoo)



L. 2. 18

**'IRAQ LEVIES.**  
**Discharge Certificate.**

(Para 1)  
TO ALL WHOM IT MAY CONCERN,  
This is to certify that the bearer hereof, **ASST. SERG. Maj. Werda Jajju**,  
is discharged from the **4th Battalion, Levies** on the **27. 12. 22** and is in possession of the  
P.S.D. being issued at the rate of **100/-** from **2. 2. 22** to **27. 12. 22**.

**DESCRIPTIVE ROLL.**

No.	Rank.	Name.	Village.	Time & Date.	Remarks.
ASST. SERG.	Egt.	Werda Jajju.	Baquba	Tikrit, 27. 12. 22	He was with the 4th Battalion, Levies, and was discharged on the 27th Dec 1922.

The bearer's signature and Operator while with the **4th Battalion, Levies**, has been  
verified and he is in possession of the following Descriptive Roll and  
has the **1922 Kurdistan Medal**.

\* This entry is open for challenge.      † Challenge to be made to the Secretary of C. O. or  
Staff Captain in Command.

Commanding Officer  
Staff Captain in Command

(Para 2)  
In the case of men discharged from the 'Iraq Levies at their own request the C. O. will make the  
following entry:-  
Discharge in all respects for further Military service.  
Continued regularly for Military Service on receipt of  
I acknowledge to have received from the 'Iraq Levies a full and true account of my rank, service and  
other details from the said 'Iraq Levies from the time of my first enlistment into the Levies to the  
date of the discharge of **27. 12. 22** and **100/-** P.S.D.

**PROVISIONAL FOR PROMOTION AND DISCHARGE.**

I have received the sum of **100/-** P.S.D.      Date **27. 12. 22**  
The signature of the representative of **Werda Jajju**.  
Name and Rank  
Staff Captain in Command      Lt. Col. Jajju



# Local News Coverage of 1933 Simele Massacres

Assyrians in Iraq again experienced a rash of violence in 1933, when the newly-independent Iraqi state carried out massacres against Assyrians in northern Iraq. Roughly 3,000 Assyrians were killed and over 60 Assyrian villages looted and destroyed in what became known as the Simele Massacres. This article from the Fresno Bee demonstrates that news of these atrocities reached as far as California.

Image: Cover of the Fresno Bee, 18 August 1933

**LARGEST NEWSPAPER IN THE SAN JOAQUIN VALLEY**

# THE FRESNO BEE

THE FRESNO BEE

FRIDAY EVENING, AUGUST 18, 1933—EIGHT PAGES (TWO SECTIONS)

THE WEATHER: Partly cloudy and breezy; maximum temperature 80; minimum 55; light breeze, freshening at times.

### ROOSEVELT WILL HEAD CODE GROUP FOR OIL INDUSTRY

President Expected To Receive Favorable Report In Face Of Protests

OPERATORS OPPOSE PRICE AND PRODUCTION CONTROL

Government Will Retain Full Power To Curt Oil Output, Administrator Warns

### Threat Of Jail, Fine Against Ford If He Rejects Code Hinted

WASHINGTON, Aug. 18.—(AP)—The Justice department today threatened to sue Henry Ford if he refused to accept the oil code proposed by the federal government.

### KING IS HELD IN BAGDAD AS CHIEF ASSYRIAN FLEEES

Britain Provides Cyprus As Refuge For Mar Shikhan, And Relatives

MORE THAN 600 BODIES FOUND IN COUNTER-RAID

### Amundsen Plane Wreckage Is Reported Found

SEARCHERS BELIEVE THEY HAVE FOUND THE REMAINS OF THE AIRCRAFT WHICH WAS CRASHED IN THE ARCTIC IN 1926

### SLAYER OF L. A. POLICE OFFICER DIES ON GALLOWES

Joseph Francis Regan Pays Penalty For Theater Robbery Killing

ROLPH REFUSES LAST MINUTE PLEA BY PHONE

Governor Indicates Jack Green, Exceeded Mar's Pal, Sent Hang In September

### Diamond Queen, Flier In Courts Across The Sea

### STRIKE SPREADS TO PARLIER FARMS AS 300 QUIT JOBS

Tagus Ranch Strike Continues; Merced Workers Seek NRA Advice

PART OF TULARE CROP IS PICKED BY NEW CREWS

Labor Official Still Trying To Bring Peace; Fresno County Strike Starts

### His Poison Put Parents, Two Tots To Death

WASHINGTON, Aug. 18.—(AP)—A doctor today announced that a man who had been arrested for the murder of his wife and two children had confessed to the crime.

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MARIE, 30-1/2, Court Hero In Through

### COUZENS DEMANDS CRIMINAL QUIZ OF DETROIT DEAL

Senator Asks Bank Methods, 'Peer Judgment' Of U. S. Examiners

DETROIT, Aug. 18.—(AP)—Sen. Couzens today demanded a criminal quiz of the Detroit deal, asking the U. S. examiners to look into the bank's methods of handling the deal.

### Mediator Sets 25-27 1/2 Cents Wage On Coast

SAN FRANCISCO, Aug. 18.—(AP)—The San Francisco labor mediator today set a 25 to 27 1/2 cent wage scale for the coast.

### ONE NEST IN WOOD

# Lady Surma

Lady Surma D'Bait Mar Shimun emerged as a leader and caretaker of the Assyrian nation during one of its most difficult periods in modernity. Her two brothers died during their successive roles as Patriarchs of the Church of the East: Mar Benyamin Shimun XXI was killed in 1918, and Mar Paulos Shimun XX died of illness two years later in Baquba. Her nephew Mar Eshai Shimun XXIII was only twelve years old when he was installed as Patriarch, and Lady Surma served as an ambassador of Assyrian interests as he prepared for his role.

In the aftermath of WWI and the remaking of state borders, there was an expectation amongst many Assyrians that the British would provide Assyrians some measure of autonomy. Newspapers eagerly profiled the woman who was to become the leader of an independent Assyria. However, Assyrian self-rule never materialized and Lady Surma, Mar Eshai Shimun, and their family were ultimately forced to leave Iraq, resettling in the U.S. She is buried in Turlock, California.

Image: Surma D'Bait Mar Shimun (Library of Congress)

Image: "Lady Surma On Visit To Aid Countrymen," *New York Times*, 17 March 1926

Image: "Lady Surma is Likely to be President..," *Sunday Oregonian*, Oregon, 21 August 1921

Image: "Woman First President of Assyria," *Springfield Leader and Press*, Missouri, 7 August 1921

Image: "Assyrian Regent to Speak at High School in Turlock", *Modesto News Herald*, California, 6 June 1926



## LADY SURMA ON VISIT TO AID COUNTRYMEN

**Princess Regent of the Assyrian  
Nation Arrives Today on  
the Aquitania.**

Lady Surma Mar Shimun, Princess Regent of the ancient Assyrian nation, sister of the late Mar Shimun, who was slain by the Kurds, and aunt of the present boy Patriarch, is among the passengers of the Cunard liner Aquitania, arriving here today from Southampton and Cherbourg. Lady Surma recently pleaded the cause of her people before the Council of the League of Nations.

Lord Grey described Lady Surma as one of the cleverest diplomats at the Paris Peace Conference, and it was in part due to her recent visit to Geneva that the final decision was made regarding the boundary between Turkey and Iraq. Her visit here is in the interests of the Assyrian and Iraq Christian Relief Committee, which is working to repatriate the Assyrians in that part of their mountainous homeland ceded to them when the new boundary was fixed.

The American committee sponsoring the visit of Lady Surma is headed by the Rev. Dr. S. Parkes Cadman, and includes the Right Rev. J. DeWitte Perry and the Revs. Arthur J. Brown, W. C. Emhardt and William L. Chamberlain, Dr. John H. Finley, Dr. Albert Shaw and Samuel S. Houston.



# Woman First President of Assyria

Lady Surma Selected to Rule Ancient Race Now Independent Under British Protection—  
Capital Is Near Ancient Ninevah.

## WOMAN FIRST PRESIDENT OF ASSYRIA

(Continued from Page Nine)

rius might have composed in praise of a subtly defined trinity—but one far more in the mood of this day. "The land of Assyria," he related, "is vastly rich in buried wealth, not alone in the grand ruins of Ninevah and Babylon, but also in coal, iron and other minerals, and oil.

"German enthusiasm for the subterranean riches of upper Mesopotamia was a large factor in the causation of the world war, and you will remember the recent American note to Great Britain over the upper Mesopotamian oil question.

"We will build on the foundation of modern metallurgy and commerce, and the old empire that sent its spearmen from the Persian mountains to the delta of the Nile, and the early church that set up a hierarchy across the width of central Asia will re-establish themselves in unison with a structure of modern industry."

## ASSYRIAN REGENT TO SPEAK AT HIGH SCHOOL IN TURLOCK

TURLOCK, June 5.—Lady Surma would heartily respond to her cause. She was also received, by the King and Queen of England, during her recent stay there, and entertained by royalty.

Lady Surma will be met upon her arrival here Sunday, by Mayor Pierson, representatives of the American Legion, Chamber of Commerce, Woman's Relief Corps, and a committee of her countrymen. Sunday evening she will be entertained at a banquet at the home of Walter Malick, on 5th street, by the Assyrian people.

Thursday, June 3, Lady Surma gave an audience in Fresno. Friday and Saturday she will appear in San Francisco and on Monday night she will be in Turlock. From here she will go to Sacramento, thence to Portland, to Minneapolis and to New York, where she is due June 16. From New York she sails for England.

The Assyrian people have worked hard to bring this peerless woman here, and the people of Turlock are very fortunate in having the opportunity of hearing an authoritative account of conditions in the far East. There will be no admission charge, and the public is cordially invited. Dr. I. Adams has charge of arrangements assisted by the following: Mr. and Mrs. Paul Shimmon, K. Shimmon, R. V. J. Bitfors, Rev. E. David and Mrs. Mary Benjamin.

Bishop Sanford of the Episcopal Diocese is expected to be here also and the Philharmonic orchestra will furnish music.

Lady Surma, the English-educated Mesopotamian, has been formally declared president of the Assyrian (distinguished from Syrian by geographical and racial lines) nation, one of the new group of self-governing countries come out of the war.

The capital of the new nation is Mosul, near the walls of old Ninevah, named after the imperial husband of Semiramis. It is, of course, a British protectorate, and the new ruler will have competent guides to assist her in promoting the destinies of her ancient race.

Confirmation of the report of her appointment to the highest office was made in a telegram to Joel E. Werda, publisher of an Assyrian newspaper in New York, and one of the leaders of his countrymen in North America. It was signed by the head of the Assyrian association.

"I am officially informed from Washington that Lady Surma has been appointed president of modern Assyria. Great Britain has allotted us 80,000 square miles of Mesopotamia, including Mosul and north Armenia and Persian frontier. Inform boys this is assured. Will write in detail.

"J. Y. KAMBAR,

"Assyrian National Association."

Lady Surma can claim, her adherents believe, she is the first woman to have the title of president of any country in recent history. Her country people are jubilant over the honor and the fact that it brings with it a re-establishment of Assyrian nationhood. Mr. Werda was a leader of his people at the peace conference.

Kept Christian Church Alive.

Lady Surma is the sister of a Nestorian patriarch, Mar Simoon, killed by the Kurds in Persia during the war, who was the ruler of the Assyrians and had thrown in his lot with the allies.

The elder bishop was succeeded by his brother, who died, his place being taken by the son of another brother, a very young man.

Lady Surma, his aunt, became the regent, and eventually, as announced yesterday, the president. She was educated in England and represented her people in London during the war.

In the remote days before the triumph of Islam, the progeny of the Assyrians and Babylonians of heroic antiquity had accepted the doctrines of the Bishop Nestorius, and the Nestorian church had spread, a great Christian hierarchy, from Asia Minor to the confines of China.

It had fallen in ruins before the empire of the Tartars, surviving only in isolated communities, notably among the Assyrians of Mesopotamia. Then these Nestorians preserved their Christianity through the evil millennium and a quarter that followed, much as the Armenians preserved theirs, save that the Assyrians, by retiring into the mountains for defense, kept a semblance of national freedom.

Communities of them, two centuries ago, evaded Turkish pressure by migrating into Persia, but the body of the people maintained themselves in the hills about the

its furies, they under the leadership of their Nestorian patriarch Mar Simoon, declared for the allies, were attacked overpowered and had to fight their way out on a bitter odyssey to Persia, where their co-religionists of Urmia, had been conquered by the British.

There the Kurdish tribes took them. When the rise of the Bolsheviks cut away what help Russia had been giving them, the Assyrians were compelled to make another battle march, now together with their co-religionists of Urmia, back to Mesopotamia, which by this time had been conquered by the British. "We thought then," says Mr. Werda, who is a graduate of the University of Pennsylvania, that the rebirth of Assyria, after the 25 centuries since Cyrus the Persian, had finally been won. We did not know that another very different, but also very difficult, fight lay before us.

"We Assyrian Nestorians appealed to the west with large hope. When the Kurds in Persia killed our Mar Simoon (all the Nestorian patriarchs take the name of Mar Simoon, after a great bishop of the old days) he was succeeded by his brother, a young man who soon grew ill and died.

And now the youthful son of a brother of the two dead bishops was made the new Mar Simoon. In his minority the rulership devolved on his father and aunt, she the sister of the father and the dead bishop. Thus we come to Lady Surma, a brilliant and heroic woman, who leads the Assyrians like a Semiramis returned to the world. "Americans may recall London dispatches in the metropolitan newspapers telling of the colorful impressions made in the British capital by the new Semiramis. Her beauty and her high culture excited admiration.

Missionary Opposition.

"We met resistance before the allied council. We met resistance from an unexpected quarter—from American missionary interests. Their motives were interesting.

"There is a great missionary establishment in Persia, centering at Urmia. It has found its entire strength among the Assyrians. Without them the mission would never be able to make much impression upon the Moslems, find their propaganda in Persia in a state of collapse.

"But if an Assyrian nation were established in the lands of old Assyria it would mean a unification of the Assyrian race. It would mean that the Assyrians who migrated to the Urmia district 200 years ago would remain with us in upper Mesopotamia as part of the nation.

"They opposed us with their influence among the allied governments. They incited their followers among us to demand Urmia from Persia, when Urmia is as Persian as Ispahan. Their reasonings were the more persuasive for their holding the American relief funds."

Mr. Werda concluded with a canticle of triumph—not such a canticle as Shalmaneser might have addressed to the ever-victorious

# The Assyrian American National Federation

The Assyrian diaspora in the US has long been active in organizing to assist Assyrians in both the US and the Middle East. One example is the Assyrian National Federation, which formed as an emergency response to the 1933 Simele Massacres. Known later as the Assyrian American Federation and today as the Assyrian American National Federation, the Federation works to bring together domestic Assyrian organizations throughout the U.S.

Image: Ronald (Izzy) Yonan, David Jacobs, Joseph Durna, Sam Aslan, and David Perley.

Pictured are four of the founders of the Assyrian National Federation in 1933 conferring over the creation of the Federation Papers.

Image: 2014 Proclamation

This photo was taken at Yonkers City Hall, New York, on 10 September 2014, at the presentation of an adopted resolution supporting Assyrian Christians and condemning the inhumane crimes perpetrated by ISIS against the Assyrian community in Iraq and Syria, including the executions of priests, women and children.

Image: Assyrian National Association Yonkers

Assyrian National Association Members, Yonkers (Image belonged to the late David Odishoo).

Image: "Yonkers Assyrians Protest"

News article from the *Herald Statesman*, Yonkers, New York, 19 August 1933, describing a session held by the Assyrian National Association to protest the massacres against Assyrians in northern Iraq.

Image: Assyrian American Federation Advocacy Letter

This letter to the Iranian Parliament advocates for Assyrians originally from Iran to be able to return to visit their homes.

Image: Assyrian American Federation Affiliated Organizations

A listing of organizations across the U.S. affiliated with the AAF.

(Images courtesy of the Assyrian Studies Association and Ruth Kamar)





# Assyrian Christian Aid Society

Another diasporic organization that raised humanitarian relief for Assyrians was the Assyrian Christian Aid Society of Philadelphia. The organization joined with others to form the aforementioned Assyrian National Federation in response to the 1933 massacres. The photographs here come from John (Aghajan) Baba's 1937 film, now called *Assyrians in Motion*. Amongst the men pictured are Joseph Durna, Alex Gabriel, VP of the Assyrian Federation, and David Jacobs, Treasurer of the Federation.

Image: "Assyrians Organize"

From the *Philadelphia Inquirer*, Pennsylvania, 2 January 1934

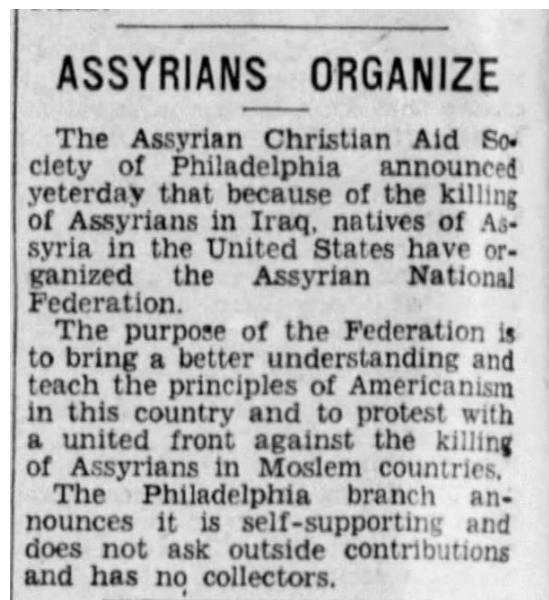


Image: "Help For Refugees"

From the *Elk City News-Democrat*, Oklahoma, 1918

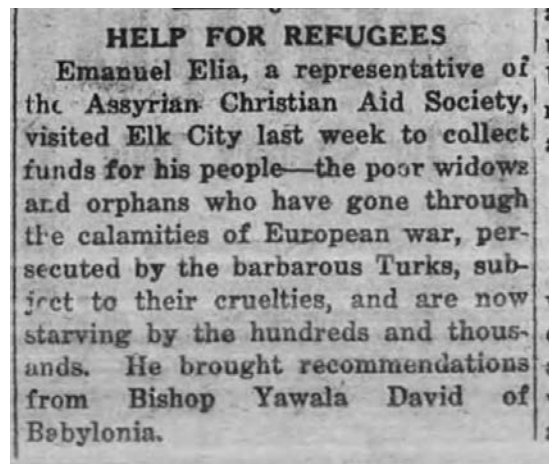


Image: Alex Gabriel and Joseph Durna with friends in 1937

Image: David Jacobs outside Assyrian Christian Aid Society in 1937

(Images courtesy of Ruth Kambar and Annie Elias)



# Sargis Georges Yadgar (George Edgar)

Escaping Urmia during the Sayfo, enduring the Russian Revolution, and serving in WWII as an American soldier, George Edgar (Sargis Georges Yadgar) found solace in playing the violin, a skill he learned from a Jewish Rabbi on a ship to the United States. He played from 1955 until 1985 in the Chicago Symphony Orchestra and later the Santa Barbara Symphony Orchestra. His grandson David A. Armstrong wrote *Dragons & Violins: A Memoir of War and Music*, in which he tells his grandfather's story.

Image: Young George Edgar with his violin



Image: George in his workshop with his violin

Image: George playing in the Chicago Symphony Orchestra, 1956

Image: George with his grandson David

Image: George's visa from 1921

(Images courtesy of David A. Armstrong)





# Badal Elias's Ledger

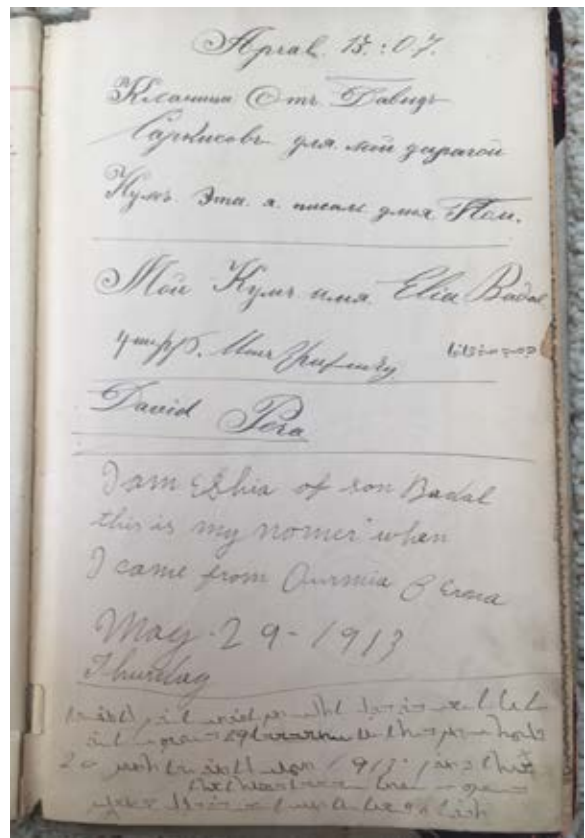
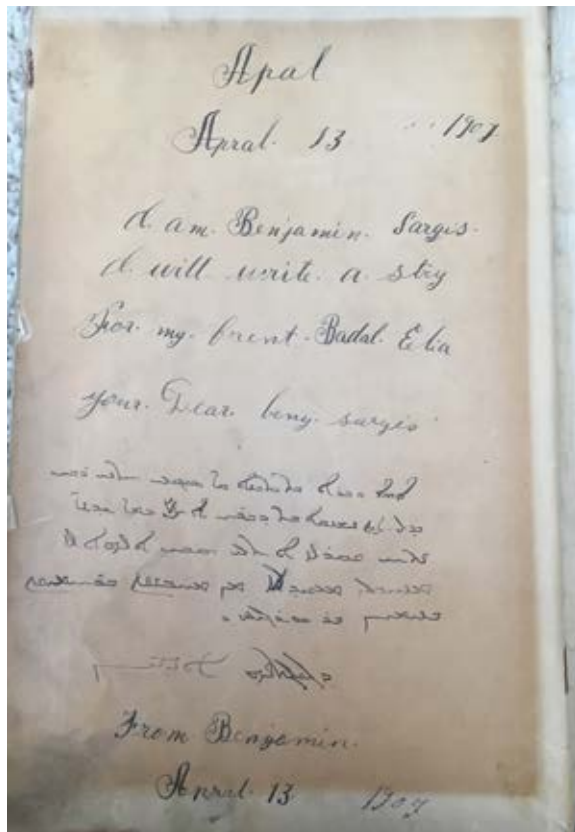
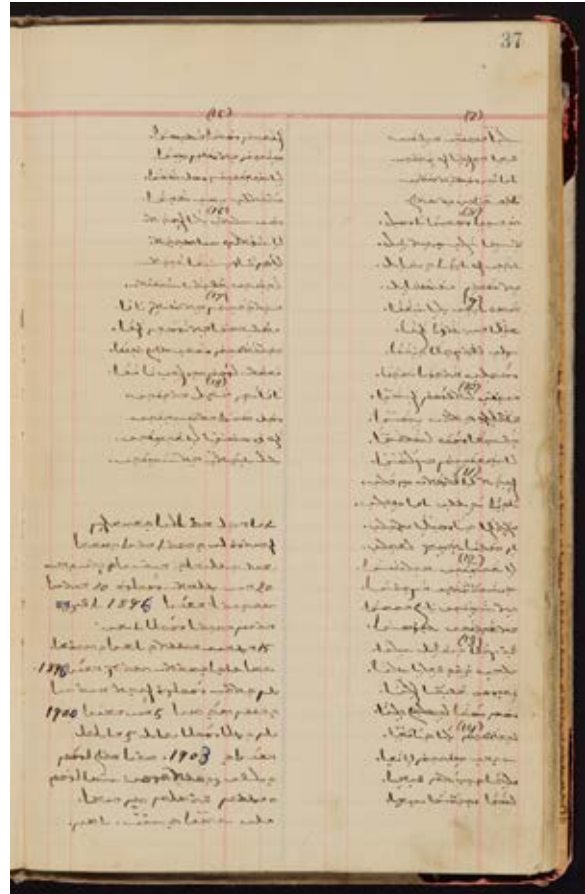
Badal Elias's ledger explains the origins of the family in Persia and where they initially settled in the United States. The pages also include poems about the family, a letter from Binyamin Bar-Sargis of Gouytapa, and a note from Eshai Bar Badal of Shamshajian, with entries dating back to 1907. Eventually, the Elias family made its way to California.

Image: Badal Elias outside of the Carter Memorial Presbyterian Church in Chicago.



Images: Pages from the ledger.

(Images courtesy of Annie Elias and translated by Arianne Ishaya)



# Sermon of His Holiness Mar Eshai Shimun XXIII

After being forced from Iraq following the 1933 Simele Massacres, Mar Eshai Shimun XXIII, Catholicos Patriarch of the Church of the East, ultimately settled in the United States, continuing to lead the Church from Chicago and California. The sermon pictured here was given in Turlock, California, on 3 December 1967. It was preached on the reception into the Church of the East of approximately seventy Americans and the ordination of six men to serve the same congregation. Printed at the Patriarch Press, California.

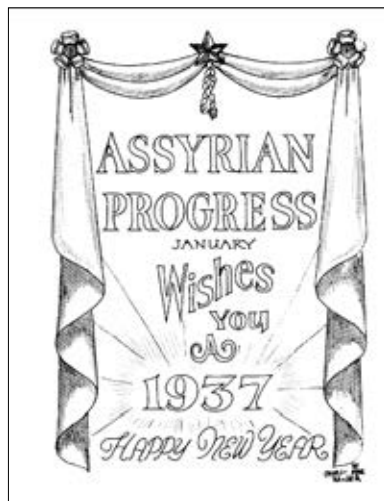
(Image courtesy of the Assyrian Studies Association Archive)



# Assyrian Progress

A 1937 New Year's message from *Assyrian Progress*, published by the Assyrian American Benevolent Association in California.

(Images courtesy of the Assyrian Studies Association Archive)



ASSYRIAN PROGRESS  
January 1, 1937 Number 61..

CONTENTS

Editorial-----	1
Answer to Truth Teller-----	Charles S. Dartley 2-3-
A message-----	Pres. J.J. Durna 3-4-
Childhood memories-----	Jalman 5-6-
The Reaches of Soul-----	Elise Chavoor 31 7
Editorial-----	Story 8-9-10-
Who's Who-----	11-12-
Home Attraction-----	Ashoor Jousuf 13-14-
Notes of Betrayal-----	D. Barsun Ferley 15-16-
Torchester News-----	Samson G. Hovan 17-18-19-
Man From Worcester says-----	John T. Ovanas 19-20-
New York News-----	Mrs. Charles S. Dartley 21
Assyrians in Iraq-----	National Federation 22-23
George Barson Passes Away--	24-25
Youth-----	S. A. Safer 26-28
Local News Flash-----	Maljan Chavoor 27-28-29-30-
Sport Flash-----	Maljan Chavoor 31-32-33-

\*\*\*\*\*

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\*\*\*\*\*

Because of the Christmas and the New Year holidays this paper has been delayed. I am sure that this will not happen again in the future.

I thank you.  
Maljan Chavoor.

# The Shalitta Family

This 1928 photo was gifted to Nicholas Benjamin from his cousin Joseph "José" Shalitta, who performed with Janett Hackett, his vaudeville partner, for President Hoover and played in New York night clubs and at the Orpheum in Los Angeles. José also taught tangoes and ballroom dances at Roy Randolph studios in Santa Monica, California. His sister, Victoria Shalitta, was crowned Miss Assyria in 1921. The family lost one brother, Simon Shalitta, in WWI.

Image: Joseph Shalitta and Janette Hackett, Vaudeville Dancers

Image: Victoria Shalitta, photographed in Philadelphia

(Images courtesy of Ruth Kambar)



# Assyrians in Chicago

In 1937, John Baba filmed images of Assyrians at a park in Chicago for his film, later called *Assyrians in Motion*. Baba filmed East Coast settlements in Yonkers, New Britain, Philadelphia, Worcester, and Chicago to promote his business, the Assyrian Press. He operated the Assyrian Press from his basement space in Chicago, editing and publishing a monthly magazine *Ktawuna* (Assyrian Chronicle), in Assyrian, from 1932-1937. His studio was next to the Carter Memorial Assyrian-Persian Presbyterian Church, with the Carter Memorial Assyrian Church's Sunday School classroom upstairs from his studio. Baba sponsored the Assyrian Press baseball team, which can be seen playing in the film footage at Chicago's Lincoln Park.

Image: Jesse Elias, George Georges, Mary Jacobs

Image: Assyrian Press Baseball Team sponsored by John Baba

Image: Musicians in the Park

Image: Isha Abraham and Qasha

(Images courtesy of Ruth Kambar and Annie Elias)



# Margaret Yonan's Photo Album

Margaret Yonan of New Britain and her spouse Clarence Jacobs of Yonkers traveled across the U.S. visiting Assyrians.

Image: Sam Joseph of Detroit, Michigan, with Clarence Jacobs, 1949

Image: Joe Eshoo (Yankee Baseball Player and Artist) with Irene Babian (Chicago)

Image: Elaine Sulliman (New Britain) and Vicky Aslan at "Ardashai"  
Lake Oscawana, New York

Image: David Jacobs of Yonkers with his first grandchild, David Samuel Jacobs

Image: Ruth Ardasher (Gary, Indiana),  
Blandina Benjamin, Almas Benjamin,  
and Louisa Benjamin (Yonkers) on  
Mother's Day, 1950

(Images courtesy of Kenneth Jacobs.)





# Assyrians in Yonkers

The legacy of advocacy and activism from the WWI and Simele massacre era has continued throughout the decades. The next generations have brought attention to this early work while continuing to build community in the diaspora.

Image: Assyrian Women's Association

The Women's Association was an affiliate of the Yonkers Association, which was founded in 1914. Its members are photographed below in 1954.

Image: Assyrians in Yonkers Exhibit Opening Day

In 2017, Kathy Yacoe and Ruth Kamar co-curated a gallery exhibit that featured Assyrians in Yonkers and Assyrian-inspired artwork. Valeh Sarkiso and Mayor Mike Spano join Ruth Kamar, Kathy Yacoe, and Fred Sarkiso, president of the Assyrian American Association in Yonkers, at the opening ceremony.

Image: Assyrians in Yonkers Opening Day at the Blue Door Gallery

Pictured are: Daisy Tatari, Rosa, Ana David, Josephine Eshoo, Janeet Yousif Francis, Valentine Shamoon, Samara Brakhia, Jacque Babayikunka, Reverend Francis Adday, and Ana Constantine.

(Images courtesy of Ruth Kamar and Dr. Kamar's *Assyrians of Yonkers*)

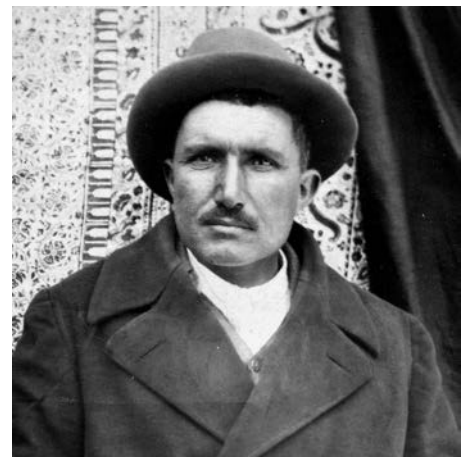


# Elishwa and Lazar Issa

Elishwa and Lazar Issa's story of survival is shared in the forthcoming *The Story of Elishwa's Heroic Journey*. It is written by their son Shmouel Issa of England with their great-granddaughter Adrenna Alkhas of Turlock, California:

"Some 80,000 men, women and children from Urmia, and mountaineers from northern Iraq joined the exodus led by Dr. William A. Shedd, and a group of Assyrian leaders over 500 miles from Urmia to Hamadan in Iran, and then to Bequbah in Iraq. Lazar joined the resistance at the rear of this exodus, Elishwa, and baby son Michael separated from Lazar, and marched with her sisters, parents, and Lazar's family members. Elishwa had one thing in mind and that was saving Michael... Many died on route. Elishwa's father, and brother were some of many. The route taken by the exodus was marked by dead bodies... The British set up a refugee camp for all 40,000 surviving Assyrians, and few thousand Armenians. Elishwa, her baby, and her surviving members of her family as well as Lazar's family members settled in Bequbah Camp... She had no idea what her husband's fate was. She kept nursing baby Michael in the hope that Lazar will turn up."

(Images and excerpt courtesy of Adrenna Alkhas)





# Acknowledgements

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Dr. Ellen Junn, President

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Jessica Gomula-Kruzic, Professor

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Kory Twaddle, Gallery Assistant

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---

### ***Tell Our Stories: Artifacts from the Assyrian Genocide***

June 30–August 12, 2022 | Stanislaus State University Art Gallery, California State University, Stanislaus

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