The History of the Patriarchal Succession of the d'Mar Shimun Family

Tasheeta d'Yubla det Pateryarchi d'beth Mar Shimun

By: Theodore d'Mar Shimun

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Acknowledgments

It is important that we thank and acknowledge a few key individuals, because without them, we would not have this translation. First, thanks to Mr. Alan Aldawood, who delivered the rough translation directly from my uncle's book which was written in the modern Syriac language. It was not until almost six months after our dear Theodore's passing that we discovered his original transcripts which he had recorded onto cassette tapes. Using these tapes helped authenticate Theodore's spoken word. Likewise, thanks to Mr. Fred Aprim, who validated the translated text against my uncle's spoken word. This crucial step was important as several key omissions were made in Theodore's Syriac version that had been missed during the editing process. Mr. Francis Sarguis also played an important role, chiefly his superior editorial abilities and keen eye for detail.

Most of all we wish to thank our cherished friends Jeanie Shaterian and Alan Antranig Shaterian. Their interest, unflagging love for the truth, and expert guidance finally put this work on the course for completion in a way in which we were not able to do. It is particularly fitting, in its symmetry and poignancy, for Dr. Shaterian, who learned the Assyrian language from Theodore would be the primary voice for much of this translation.

Our family is indebted to all of you for your help and support but, most importantly, your valued and trusted friendship.

Arbella d'Mar Shimun

Forward

In the 1980s, Theodore d'Mar Shimun (1906-2001), using family archives, diaries, other written sources, and his prodigious memory, undertook to record on tape his recollections and views of his family's more recent history, during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. The tape recordings were transcribed, edited, and published in his native Syriac in 1991 under the title:

Tasheeta D'Yubla det Pateryarchi d'Mar Shimun, The Patriarchal Succession of the d'Mar Shimun Family).[1]

After the death of Theodore d'Mar Shimun in 2001, efforts to translate the oral history into English began, relying mainly on the original tape recordings because they contained more information than the published version. The manuscript was further edited, and notes added to clarify concepts and passages that might be obscure to a modern reader not familiar with the events described, regarding the Church of the East, and the culture of the modern Assyrian people. The editorial recommendations are only superficial and do not distort the order in which Theodore d'Mar Shimun wished to present his history; nor do they distract from the spoken style in which it was first recorded.

Since the original publication of this translation in 2009, more data have become available, including further analysis by scholars as well as digitized and declassified documents. Therefore, this second edition includes updates and corrections to names, locations and dates (updating Julian calendar dates to Gregorian) as well as the addition of new graphics, like pictures and maps. These changes are not material but add more color to the oral history.

Conversely, one significant change will be found in the patriarchal tree. Christopher Nelson, through his own research and consultation with the published works of David Wilmshurst, Heleen Murre-Van den Berg, and J.F. Coakley, has created this amended, more historically accurate version. It includes corrections to dates, names and locations. This breakthrough in research, though complicated, illuminates contemporary knowledge to further understanding the nuances of the succession and what was happening at various points in time with the Church and Nation.

2025 marks the 50th anniversary of the assassination of His Holiness, Mar Eshai Shimun. As a tribute to the memory and the sacrifices of His Holiness, Mar Eshai Shimun, the Mar Shimun Memorial Foundation is making this second edition available as a free download.

[1] Theodore d'Mar Shimun, Tasheeta D'Yubla det Pateryarchi (Berkeley, CA: 1991).

Introduction

The media's current emphasis on the Middle East has given scant, if any, acknowledgment to the Assyrians, a nation that has been adversely affected by recent events. While physical boundaries do not define an Assyrian state, this small nation inhabited parts of the Middle East including Iraq, Iran, Syria, and Turkey, and comprised approximately three and a half to four million people.

Five distinct sects of Christianity make up the population: the Church of the East, the Chaldean, the Maronite, the Syriac Orthodox Church, and the Syrian Catholic Church. Less than one million people are associated with the Church of the East, the subject of this work.

More specifically related to the Assyrians, these ancestral lands were known as the Hakkari region which spanned the southeast corner of Turkey at the intersection of Iran and Iraq. Assyrians are the remaining population of the Syriac-speaking Christians. Persecution throughout the ages, most notably in the twentieth century, has been the common blight on the Assyrians' tragic history. (The most recent assault on the Assyrian identity was made by Saddam Hussein, who considered the Assyrians to be Christian Arabs rather than a national minority of Iraq, an erroneous perception in which Mar Eshai Shimun XXIII corrected him.) Geopolitical events of the twentieth century, including the genocide of the Assyrians, caused widespread emigrations from the ancestral territories to North America, the Caucasus, Australia and Europe, where Assyrians live today, integrated into the local ways of life, yet maintaining a part of their heritage, culture, language, and religion.

Assyrian history, both in antiquity and in modern times, is considerable in scope. Theodore d'Mar Shimun, at the request of family members and friends, created a narrative focused on the last part of the nineteenth and first part of the twentieth centuries, specifically focusing on the patriarchs of the Church of the East, their succession, activities, and their efforts on behalf of the Assyrian nation and the church. For almost seven centuries, the patriarch of the Church of the East, who is the religious and secular head of the Assyrian nation, was chosen from one family, as tradition dictated, typically passing from uncle to nephew in a succession that began in 1318 and ended in 1975.

Of significance is the fact that never before has a d'Mar Shimun family member spoken outside the family, discussed the details of their service, or disclosed any information. Even when rumors or falsehoods created barriers within the Assyrian community, the family chose not to speak. Theodore d'Mar Shimun's oral history breaks with this tradition.

Beginning in the late 1980s, Theodore began recording his deep and extensive knowledge of this time. His presence and participation in events, documentation (including Lady Surma's diaries), and his position in the family included knowing three patriarchs, the last of which was his brother, with whom he shared a very close bond. From his spoken word, the tapes were transcribed and published in the modern Syriac language in 1991. Theodore employed a simple Syriac vocabulary and avoided the more complex literary language. He did this deliberately so that he could address a broad and varied audience in a simple and straightforward manner in order to correct the countless falsehoods that the family had allowed to perpetuate unchallenged for many years. He felt that although his audience was familiar with many aspects of its church, history, and culture, it was not as conversant with the entire truth.

Overview of the Patriarchal Succession

The succession of the patriarchal line within the d'Mar Shimun family developed at a time when interference from Islamic neighbors was to be avoided and feared. In some cases, these unwelcome intrusions not only disrupted freedom of worship but also perverted the church's canonical laws. The *sunhadus* (synod) details a precise protocol for ordination and for the sacraments. When Islamic agents representing the government sought to infringe on the ecclesiastical protocol, the church's integrity was compromised.

Church elders were fearful of giving in to their Islamic neighbors but were more loath to violate the terms of the synod. A line of succession was installed to avoid disruption and interference. From 1318 the patriarchal succession was to stay in one family and typically passed from uncle to nephew.

The Assyrian homeland was not defined as a geographical space with clear borders, but rather as a Christian population existing within a larger Islamic one. The Assyrians' governance was overseen by the patriarch, in whom religious and secular duties intersected.

The patriarchs never employed a strategy of isolationism. Usually, they enjoyed a positive and productive relationship with the local Islamic government; however, events from the mid-nineteenth to the early twentieth century changed the Assyrians' relations with their neighbors. It became fraught with tension and led to their oppression. The last three patriarchs, most especially Mar Eshai Shimun, had to expand their associations with the west and subsequently, increase their leadership beyond their Islamic neighbors, to a more global presence, to the British government.

Overview of the Family

The oral history does not mention the role of key family members and other notable Assyrians. To help the reader understand their roles, it is appropriate to provide additional context.

The Lady Surma, who was the author's aunt, played a significant role. It may not be commonly known that her ecclesiastical rank was that of *brat qyama* (daughter/bride of the covenant). As Surma Khanum described it to an American reporter in 1926: *"It has been the tradition of our nation that the sister of the heir should take the vow of celibacy and act as her brother's helper during his reign, and would be known by a title which in English would be, 'The Bride of the Promise.'"* Early in her youth Lady Surma took a vow to devote her life to support the patriarch. Abstaining from various worldly pursuits including marriage and dietary restrictions she was educated in ways that were not common for women of her time. In addition to her religious training and education, she was fluent in English, having learned the language from her tutor, Dr. William Henry Browne. She traveled on behalf of the patriarch and was his trusted interpreter, often acting as regent (wakil/vekil) and providing counsel to three patriarchs. Her numerous achievements include travels throughout Europe and the United States, with receptions at Buckingham Palace and the White House. Her Ladyship was a courageous woman who conducted herself with the highest moral and ethical consciousness for the Assyrians and the Church she tirelessly and selflessly served, all the while eschewing worldly rewards beyond the basic necessities. It was approximately one month after her nephew's assassination that her Ladyship passed away on December 7th, 1975.

Likewise, Rab Khaila (Commander-in-Chief) Dawid, the author's father, also played a role. Rab Khaila Dawid performed the responsibilities not only required by his military rank but also as an advisor to the last three patriarchs. Oftentimes he would accompany them as a part of the entourage at important meetings. While it was mostly Mar Benyamin and Mar Poulus, Rab Khaila also took a similar role with his son, Mar Eshai Shimun. Rab Khaila Dawid was one of the few men who survived the vicious ambush that led to the assassination of Mar Benyamin Shimun. Commonly referred to as simply "the Rab Khaila" Dawid spent many years in service leading the Assyrian Levies starting just before World War I and formally ended his illustrious military career in 1933. Rab Khaila passed away on October 15th, 1974.

Mar Yosip Khnanishu, bishop of Rustaqa and later metropolitan (brother of Lady Esther, who was married to Rab Khaila Dawid), also took unimportant role given his rank, part of which included his critical work and Lady Esther, and eight of their surviving children; the Honorable Zaya and Lady Elishwa and their seven children. Lady Surma occupied a special and revered place in the household and lived with her brother Dawid and sister-in-law Lady Esther until her death in 1975. After the family's exile to Cyprus was lifted, Theodore was the last to leave, in 1955. The d'Mar Shimun family moved to Ealing, London, and later to the United States, in 1960, finally settling in San Francisco, California, to be reunited with the patriarch and other family members who had married and immigrated earlier.

His Holiness Mar Eshai Shimun continued his tireless work for the Assyrian cause, including his efforts with the United Nations, the World Council of Churches, and other distinguished organizations. Because of his practical nature, the patriarch also sought to serve the needs of the growing community of Assyrians who had begun immigrating to the United States since the First World War. He provided the initiative, guidance, and oversight in building numerous churches throughout the United States, England, and Australia. Ever mindful of the needs of his flock, his efforts included translating liturgical works into English so that the faithful could worship in the language of their adoptive country and, at the same time, understand the ancient liturgy of the church.

The patriarch's extensive travels included a landmark visit to Iran, where he was received by the shah. Most astounding was the invitation he received in 1969 from the Iraqi government. The landmark visits in 1970 and in 1971 to the Assyrians in Iraq served to reinforce the crucial need for his presence among his flock. Ever the innovator, Mar Eshai Shimun recognized the need to plan for a successor outside of the d'Mar Shimun lineage. This move was necessitated for a variety of reasons, most notably to change the practice from a successional one to an electoral process.

After fifty-three years of focused dedication, the patriarch retired from active responsibilities. In 1973 His Holiness announced his resignation from patriarchal duties and married. Many criticized him, and some erroneously attempted to defrock him, to which he responded by citing canonical law: a patriarch cannot be removed from his ecclesiastic rank. This disruption affected the patriarch's health; nevertheless, at the request of the bishops, he consented to return for a defined period, only agreeing to do so until a permanent solution could be found. It was not widely known at the time (early 1975) but the patriarch was preparing to return to the church in order to organize its affairs.

The patriarch's return was not to be realized. On November 6, 1975, in San Jose, California, an assassin ended his life. He was sixty-seven years old. Although it was never proven many believe a clandestine plot was conspired that ultimately carried out this heinous and damaging act of hate.

Mar Eshai Shimun XXIII, Catholicos-Patriarch, was an innovative leader of the Church of the East and of the Assyrian people, well schooled not only in the ecclesiastical aspects of his vocation, but adept in geopolitical aspects as well. Foremost in his mind, acts, and deeds were the needs of his flock and the Assyrian nation. He mindfully negotiated the treacherous geopolitical landscape with uncompromising honesty, integrity, and superior leadership, the very hallmarks of his character.

Mar Eshai Shimun XXIII, Catholicos-Patriarch of the Church of the East, dealt with a consistent onslaught of challenges throughout his fifty-five year tenure as patriarch. Never did he compromise anything less than nor did he settle for what he believed his church and people deserved, but instead fought tirelessly, selflessly, and courageously**.**

It is most ironic and tragic that after he finally declared his retirement, and subsequently acquiesced to return at the request of the bishops, who erroneously and in violation of the church canons attempted to defrock him, he was assassinated.

SKETCH MAP ACCOMPANYING "THE CRADLE OF MANKIND," BY W. A. WIGRAM, B.D., D.D., AND EDGAR T. A. WIGRAM. (A. & C. BLACK, LTD., LONDON.)

And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.
John 8:32

This history of the patriarchal succession of the d'Mar Shimun family is dedicated to the memory of my father, my aunt, and my brother for their untiring deeds and endeavors. Members of my family have devoted their lives to the Holy Apostolic Church of the East and the Assyrian nation. These family members have endured a great deal of suffering throughout the course of their lives for the nationalistic and religious services they have given to the Assyrian people.

Although the following will be brief by documented historical standards, it will provide the reader an overview and general understanding of the events. It is my hope and intention that the truth will finally be told and will illustrate the state of affairs we lived in and the consequences that led to our departure from our homeland during the twentieth century.

My deepest thanks to the Honorable Rabbi Sargis Mikhail and Rev. Fr. Iskhaq Rehana, who have assisted me.

Theodore d'Mar Shimun

Chapter One

The Assyrians and the Church of the East

Introduction

Synopsis. Although the following chapter of the original oral history was not included in Theodore d'Mar Shimun's text, the editor has added this passage, taken from the writings of Mar Eshai Shimun XXIII, Catholicos-Patriarch. This was first written and published for the Liturgy of the Church of the East (1949), commonly referred to as "the blue book"[2] which was used until the mid-1970s in churches throughout the United States. Mar Eshai Shimun, who wrote many ecclesiastical discourses in both modern Syriac as well as English, did so for all Assyrians in both languages so that there was always a common thread of education and understanding. The following sets the context for the reader who may have little knowledge of the Assyrian history and, particularly, the Church of the East. While brief, it covers the origin of the Church of the East and the Assyrians' role as early Christians.

In order that the reader may fully understand the purpose of this book, it is necessary to give a brief sketch of the history of the Church of the East and that of the Assyrians in the United States.[2]

Individual Assyrians started coming to the United States of America sometime during the middle of the eighteenth century, but it was only after the First World War that they began coming in as immigrants. The tragedies and untold suffering that took them out of their homes of origin in the Middle East, in Kurdistan and Iran, have already passed into history; it is neither necessary nor appropriate here to deal with these events and the causes lying behind them.

The fact is that many thousand Assyrians today live as happy and contented citizens of the United States of America, enjoying the full advantages of the greatest and most democratic form of government so far devised by man's genius. A considerable number of these Assyrians on their arrival in this country identified themselves with their respective coreligionists, and they are already on their way of being absorbed into these larger bodies. These Assyrians were the fruits of missions which, during the past four centuries, proselytized in India and the Middle East. The Roman Catholic, the Russian Orthodox, and the Presbyterians were the most prominent of these missions, the last two of which worked chiefly among the Assyrians of Iran.

The Church of the East, on the other hand, had no counterpart in this country. Assyrians, therefore, who were its members, had to depend completely upon such means as they themselves could provide in order to maintain their church in a country, amid circumstances totally alien to them. The insufficient number of priests and deacons available maintained the services of the Church of the East to the best of their ability. Services were conducted in private homes, basements, or churches hired for special occasions. In some instances, the Protestant Episcopal Church occasionally allowed them the use of its edifices, a gracious act which has been much appreciated. The situation in the United States was rendered more difficult because the Mother Church in the Middle East had been uprooted from its centuries-old home and made destitute as a result of the World War I, so that it was not possible to meet even the meager needs of this new and struggling branch of the Holy Church.

Except for a short visit by one of the bishops of the church and a second by the metropolitan of India, delegated by the patriarch to visit the Church of the East in the United States, the church existed without any episcopal supervision, and the seriousness of this fact for a church, whose foundation is based upon the apostolic succession and close episcopal supervision**,** cannot be overestimated.

[2] "The Liturgy of the Holy Apostolic Church of the East," 1949.

This was the situation on the patriarch's arrival in this country in the year 1940. Since then, several priests and deacons have been ordained, new churches built, properties purchased for the use of the various parishes, and a competent administration established.

But the greatest problem confronting the church was the fact that the Assyrians were becoming rapidly absorbed in the American melting pot. The needs of the rising generations had to be met without delay if the Church of the East in America was to survive. The greatest need was to give them the teachings and the liturgies of the church in a language which they could best understand, namely, English. This has already been done to a large extent, but this work, which is the first of its kind, constitutes the most important step in that direction.

History of the Church of the East

The history of the Church of the East, which, over many centuries, comprised the major portion of Christianity, remained, until recently, almost unknown to the West, except for occasional accounts, such as that of Marco Polo, who traversed Asia in search of adventure and wealth.

Primarily this was due to complete isolation between the two branches of Christianity, both of which originated in the same sources, namely, the Aramaic, a language of the Semitic group.

Inevitable historic and geographical reasons were partly to blame for this isolation. But the most important factor in the total ignorance of Western Christianity as to the history and accomplishment of this Church of Asia was the cruel and selfish policy adopted toward it by the Roman-Byzantine emperors and their successors, whose imperialist religion the Church of the East refused to follow, and who therefore branded it with the misnomer "Nestorian."

It is only during the last century or so, especially in this generation (through writings of the various Protestant missionaries, travelers, and secular historians), that the West has become finally aware of the existence of the Church of Asia. Arnold J. Toynbee, in his outstanding work *The History of Civilization*, has shed further light on the amazing achievements of the Church of the East, not only from the point of view of the missionary enterprise and its great contribution in the scientific field of knowledge, but especially as the bearer of the torch of the Syriac civilization, and as champion against the Hellenistic onslaught. That torch, which the oppressed and persecuted Church of the East was unable to bear any longer with the rise of Mohammed, was taken over by Islam and carried on to a victorious end with the final expulsion of the Hellenistic influence from the Middle East. Thus, in this special field, where the Church of the East failed because of its lack of political support, Islam had succeeded. Nevertheless, it is one of the mysteries of the divine providence that the descendants of the heathen Assyrians, from whom the Greeks largely borrowed their civilization and culture, now would, as Christians, stand in the gap against Hellenistic cultural encroachment.

Starting Point

Assyrian Christianity is coincident with the earthly ministry of our Lord. King Abgar, sovereign of the little state of Osrhoene, with its capital known as Orhai or Edessa, in the northwest of Mesopotamia, believed in Christ and His mission. The Assyrian people, therefore, speaking Aramaic (Syriac), the language spoken by Jesus and His apostles, in which the New Testament and parts of the Old Testament were written, can rightly claim the honor of being immediately next to the small band of Galileans as followers of our Lord in their conversion to the Haymanutha Mshihayta (the faith of the Anointed One).

This common bond and the exchange of ideas, traditions, and customs between the two peoples, namely, the ancient Assyrians and the Hebrews, enabled the Assyrians to accept and appreciate the Christian Faith, in a manner that was not possible to non-Aramaic-speaking people; hence, the unequaled zeal and missionary expansion of this Church of Asia, which to this day, had preserved in its purity the apostolic faith and the traditions of the early church.

The Church of the East, as this branch of Aramaic-speaking Christianity came to be known, was officially founded by the apostles, Mar Patros (St. Peter), Mar Thoma (St. Thomas), and Mar Addai (St. Thaddeus) and Mar Mari of the seventy disciples. St. Thaddeus, immediately after the resurrection, was sent by St. Thomas to the city of Edessa, thereby fulfilling the promise made to King Abgar by our Lord Himself.

The city of Arbil (Erbella) in Assyria also shares the glory with Edessa as the starting point of Eastern Christianity. Among its early patriarchs, three of them were related to Mart Maryam (the Lady Mary) the Holy Virgin and Mar Yosip (St. Joseph), her righteous spouse. It was the church within the Persian Empire and therefore remained unaffected by the many theological disputes, schisms, and heresies that, in later centuries, arose with the imperial Christianity of the Roman Empire, which for the most part, were dictated by personal ambitions and animosities among the various prelates and the unceasing struggle for power between the Latin and Greek churches.

However, the endless persecutions this ancient church suffered, first from the heathens, and later under various Islamic rulers, reduced greatly in numbers, and finally scattered its children into many lands. It must, however, be said, in fairness to both the Persian and the Islamic rules, that at various periods, the church enjoyed a great measure of tolerance, both under the rule of the Safavids and the Arab khalifs; perhaps more so than any of those religions could, in a reverse role, have enjoyed under the Byzantine emperors or the Western Christian rule of the Middle Ages.

The heads of the Christians of Najran in Arabia, led by their ruler Saeed, along with their bishop Eshoyab (given by Jesus), paid an official visit to Mohammed (whom they referred to as, the prophet of Tayaye, Tai, a leading Arab tribe), and on the occasion, Mohammed gave the Church of Arabia the following charter of protection: He commanded the Tayaye (Arab) that they must protect Mshikhaye (Christians) from all harm, and must not oblige them to go out with them to fight, nor must they try to change their customs and their laws. He, moreover, exhorted his followers to help the Christians repair their churches whenever such a need may arise. And if any of his followers had a Christian wife, he should not prevent her from fasting and prayer and all other obligations of her faith. These and many other similar rules of protection were commanded in the charter. Similar charters of protection were given from time to time by the khalifs to the Church of the East. These persecutions were in fact for the most part, caused by political ambitions of Constantine and his successors, and later by the various crusaders, who, in the name of the cross of Christ, carved out their ambitious territorial expansions and plundered the Middle East. At the same time, a covetous eye was constantly directed at the great Christian Church of the East, and no means were spared by these Roman emperors and their successors to agitate the heathens and the Islamic rulers against its followers.

The purity of the apostolic faith of this most ancient church can be seen throughout its liturgy, especially the prayers and praises that express the theological point of view of the church. Little is known of the fact that all the fathers of the Latin Church of the first and second centuries, such as Tatian Yostinos (Justin the Martyr), Organon (Origen), Melito, Irenaeus, and others who followed St. Poulus the Apostle to Rome, were all Assyrians or Syrians, Aramaic-speaking people, missionaries of the Catholic Church of the East.

As will be observed from various passages in the book, the faith of the Church of the East in relation to the doctrines of the Holy Trinity is that of the Council of Nicea at which it was represented.

As regards the Christological doctrine, it holds firmly to the teachings of the Bible. It professes in Christ, two natures and two Qnumai, namely, human and divine. It believes firmly in the Godhead and the humanity of Christ. Qnumai is an Aramaic word and very difficult to define in other languages. The nearest equivalent is the Greek hypostatis, in Latin substantia and in English substance. The Church of the East repudiates the nonscriptural title "Mother of God" given to the Virgin Mary, in that the term "God" implies God the Spirit, and spirit cannot be subject to birth or suffering. It calls the Virgin Mary Mother of Jesus, Mother of Christ, Mother of our Lord, Mother of our Redeemer; namely, mother of His humanity but not of His Godhead.

In the words of Mar Babai the Great, in the TISHBUKHTA, "Brikh Khannana," "In His Godhead, begotten of the Father without beginning before all time: In His manhood born of Mary, in the fullness of the time, in a united body." It holds strictly to the teaching of the Bible and will recognize no doctrine that is contrary to these Scriptures. In the words of St. Poulus: "But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any gospel to you than that which we have preached to you, let him 'Khrim' (anathema)", (Gal 1:8).

Chapter Two

The Beginning of the Succession

Synopsis. This chapter addresses the author's rationalization for writing the book and the genesis of the patriarchal succession within the d'Mar Shimun family. Further included are illustrations of their daily life among the Islamic world as Christian minorities, particularly throughout the fourteenth and nineteenth centuries as a high-level overview. The author intended to provide a context so that the reader could understand the impact of not only spiritual but secular decisions that were required of the patriarch based on religious, geopolitical, and demographic considerations, including why the patriarchal see was physically relocated over the centuries.

Numerous times it had been requested from me by members of my family to document the history of the d'Mar Shimun Patriarchs and other notables. This request, made especially by the younger generation, is done so because they do not know the family's history in its entirety. The events of history will be a long one, since it covers most of the works and activities of the patriarchs of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. A portion of this history is documented from the diaries of the Lady Surma d'Mar Shimun, a firsthand witness, and for illustrative purposes, details the day-to-day issues the family dealt with and encountered.

Additionally, there are Assyrians who have little familiarity with the details of the daily activities that occurred throughout the course of our lives before the year 1915. They have neither heard of nor are they familiar with the events, the lives, and the work performed on their behalf by the d'Mar Shimun family.

In 1845, Yonah (Jonah) had documented the history of succession of the d'Mar Shimun family during the massacre of the Assyrians by the Kurdish tribal leader Bedr Khan Beg, emir of the Bohtan district (northern Iraq) in 1843. During that awful event, it is believed that Yonah was most likely somewhere between the ages of eight to ten years old.

Yonah recorded accounts detailing the massacre committed against the Assyrians by the Kurds. Borrowing from a portion of this documentation, as well as other documents, for the purposes of research was the work of Yonah's grandfather, Rev. Marqos (Mark). Rev. Marqos further detailed the original manuscript that Shemasha (deacon) Hormizd d'Mar Shimun, the brother of patriarchs Mar Yoalaha Shimun XII (1656-1662) and Mar Dinkha Isho'yahb Shimun XIII (1662-1700), had written. In his work, Sh. Hormizd documented thoroughly the reasons that resulted in the patriarchal family leaving Alqosh, a village located in present-day northern Iraq. He added to it as well from a document written in 1458 in Alqosh. Sh. Hormizd noted the patriarchal see relocated to Arbel, another city located in northern Iraq because of the decline of Christianity in Baghdad. Unfortunately, this work was lost during World War I (1914-1918), as were numerous other books we had retained as a part of our library.

The Church of Mar Shalita, which was located in Qudshanis, the eastern mountainous region of Turkey, contained a cross in the reliquary that the congregants kissed when they entered, as is our custom. It was said that our family brought it from Baghdad when the patriarchal see relocated to this region in the late 17th century.

In 1928, when I was in the army in Baghdad, I met the late Yosip (Joseph) Ghanima, an Iraqi government official who was a cousin of a later patriarch by the same name of the Chaldean Catholic Church. He told me that both our families were related. According to Mr. Ghanima, when the patriarchal see relocated to the north of Iraq, part of the family stayed behind in Baghdad while we moved north; and since that time, one family separated into two. That information substantiates that our family had moved from Baghdad, although the specific dates remain unknown.

Rationale for the Order of Succession of the Patriarchate of the East

It is important to note that in the context of the Church of the East's hierarchy, the patriarch is the head of the church and, as such, the definitive officiant. Accordingly, great deference is afforded, by virtue of his Holy Order and Consecration. For Assyrians, a nation without a country, the patriarch is the recognized leader, both in managing secular and religious affairs.

The history of the succession of patriarchs of the d'Mar Shimun family began in 1318, commencing from the patriarch Mar Timatheus II in the city of Arbel, northern Iraq. There are several reasons for the establishment of the order of succession among a singular family.

1. During that time, the government's interference in the church's affairs was a common occurrence. Simply put, for a small Christian nation, living within a country that was ruled by Muslims presented a conflict of interest. All too often, the government would interfere in the affairs of the church and designate an individual of their selection to become patriarch. The selection process was a biased one with the individual typically, a government sympathizer or employee. Naturally, the person ordained was not qualified for such a position because the nominee lacked the correct training and was not of the Christian faith. Additionally, the individual selected by the government was neither elected nor approved by the elders and members of the church.

2. In certain instances, throughout our history, and because of such circumstances, the church was left without a patriarch. Because of the exposure the government's interference created, coupled with the desire to maintain the standards of the church's administration, the decision was made to keep the patriarchal succession in one family. By doing so, the electoral process the government used was eliminated and resulted in ceasing their interference in the church's affairs. The saliency of this practice led to some families of metropolitans and bishops adopting this system as well and omitted one area where we were oppressed by the Muslim rule.

For example, during the patriarchate of Mar Awraham (Abraham) (1820- 1860), a man named Mikhail (Michael) from another family (Yonah) attempted to be ordained as patriarch, violating the canons and the current practices required for such a role. This act was not accepted by the church elders and maliks. He requested the Kurdish emir Nuri Beg, a local government official, to override the church's decision and force the ordination of patriarch. It was common practice at that time for the emirs and sheikhs to be recognized as feudal authorities, since the Turkish government had not extended a formalized presence to the Hakkari region (see map). The Kurdish emir referred Mikhail to the sheikh of the Nochia district, located in northern Iraq, who then requested Metropolitan Mar Khnanishu to ordain this person as patriarch. Mar Khnanishu could not refuse the Kurdish sheikh's orders for fear of retaliation. The sheik had a reputation for cruelty and wielded a great deal of influence over the metropolitan as well as other Christians. Mikhail returned to Qudshanis claiming to be an ordained patriarch. Mar Awraham accepted Mikhail and invited him to serve alongside himself. Mar Awraham invited Mikhail to take up residence in the patriarchal see. Mar Awraham told him that they would serve together and allow the course of the patriarchy to be chosen by God. It was during Mikhail's first year that he passed away.

Often, the Assyrian tribal leaders, the maliks, would not pay homage to Mikhail, for instance, refusing to kiss his hand as they entered the patriarch's council, a custom when first encountering the patriarch's presence. They did not believe in the ordination of Mikhail and, therefore, did not recognize him as a church officiant. This created an extremely uncomfortable and embarrassing situation for Mar Awraham because his invitation to serve and live with him was a sincere one.

This illustrates the extent of influence and power a Kurdish sheikh in the nineteenth century possessed. Comparatively, one may imagine then the extent of power possessed by the kings and caliphs in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. Today, Mikhail is not accounted for within the patriarchal succession because his ordination occurred outside of the canons required by the church, and under duress by the local sheik who forced this action.

The Relocation of the Patriarchal See

During the administration of the patriarch Mar Shimun II (c.1385-c.1405), the patriarchal see was relocated from Arbel to Alqosh, northern Iraq. The decision to do so was made because the Christian community, declining in Arbel, was growing in the northern part of Mosul, Iraq. Alqosh, which is situated near the monastery of Rabban (Monk) Hormizd, is approximately forty miles north of Mosul. The see remained in Alqosh, Iraq, for nearly three hundred years.[3] There are twelve patriarchs who have been interred in the upper monastery of Rabban Hormizd.

During the patriarchate of Mar Isho'yahb Shimun VII (Bar Mama) (1538/9-1558), a monk named Sulaqa Bet Ballu, from the village of Aqra, took up residence in Mosul with the representative of the Roman Catholic Church, who had recently arrived in the region.

An anonymous writer documented that in 1538, when Mar Shimun VI died, his brother Mar Isho'yahb Shimun VII (Bar Mama) was ordained patriarch. However, a large part of the nation did not accept this patriarch. A group of bishops and priests gathered in Mosul at the Rabban Hormizd monastery to consecrate a patriarch by the name of Youkhana (John) Sulaqa. Because there was no metropolitan available to conduct the ceremony, they decided to send this individual to Rome to be consecrated by the pope. Accompanied by a large delegation of priests, the group purportedly set off for Rome. As was the practice hundreds of years before in our church, clerical candidates, such as bishops and metropolitans, would be sent to Antioch, which was closer for consecration, rather than the vast distance to Rome. This group never explained why they did not go to Antioch, particularly since the journey would be dramatically shorter and less arduous. Moreover, there was not a bishop or metropolitan among them. The monk Sulaqa was of questionable character. It was known at that time he went to Mosul and took up residence with the Catholic missionary because he had been told that those who converted to Catholicism received a stipend. It is important to note the vast amounts of money spent to encourage converts to the other denominations of Christianity introduced by the missions particularly in the regions where money was a very scarce commodity. The same practice was employed in northern Iraq. Rabban Sulaqa was not chosen by the church, but in fact had gone to Mosul for the purpose of money.

According to the writer, the story continued that in 1553, Sulaqa returned and consecrated two "metropolitans", Mar Abdisho (1555-70) and "Mar Isho'yahb Shimun VII (Bar Mama)", who later became our patriarch. How can it be that Sulaqa consecrated a metropolitan that was already a patriarch? This history is simply wrong and not correctly documented. It is a shame because this erroneous information is perceived as factual for those who have limited knowledge of our history.[4]

Another example of misinformation, which was perpetuated by the West, occurred during World War II, which minimized the contribution of the Assyrian levies to such a degree that it was barely acknowledged. In documented history by the British, very little credit is given to the Assyrian army that fought in Iraq. What was reported was the contribution of the Hindu levies. The misleading information disguised as factual data has (and perhaps will continue to create) a legacy of erroneous history of our people and those who are interested in the Assyrians.

Furthermore, this same anonymous author writes that in 1439, Mar Timatheus of the Church of the East in Cyprus united with the Roman Catholics. However, the important data point missing is this particular Mar Timatheus was a Maronite archbishop, not of the Church of the East. During this period, the Maronite community populated seventy villages in Cyprus. The Church of the East had only one bishop in Cyprus. In the town of Famagusta, a large church was built in 1560 with cut stones three feet deep and fifty to sixty feet tall, and two rows of pillars inside. It was built by two wealthy brothers who were merchants from Palestine who settled in

[3] According to recent scholarship the move to Alqosh and/or Rabban Hormizd may have first occurred under Mar Shimun IV (Basidi), sometime between 1437 and 1497. If one includes the several patriarchies (likely) located at Jezireh (abt. 150km north-west of Rabban Hormizd) throughout the 15th & early 16th centuries, then Theodore's "300 years" is reasonable. This Church of the East line of patriarchs which ended up in Qudshanis had temporarily relocated to or near Urmia, Iran by the early 17th century. Meanwhile, the Chaldean (Catholic) patriarchies after the 1553 split continued to reside at Rabban Hormizd well into the 19th century.

[4] The story of John Sulaqa and the schism of 1552 is explained in great detail by David Wilmshurst in *The Martyred Church: A History of the Church of the East,* (2011): p. 297-99.

Famagusta. This building represented only half of the proceeds of one of their ships, which paid for the construction of this amazing church. The anonymous writer claims that in 1439, the Church of the East united with Rome. If that is the case, why did the two brothers build this for the Church of the East 121 years after the union with Rome? This cannot have any merit or truth because these two brothers would not go to such an expense to build a separate church for a distinctly different denomination.

In 1288, Pope Nicholas of Rome sent missionaries to Baghdad to Mar Yahwala III. Mar Yahwala replied to the pope**,** stating the faith of the Church of the East is based on two Qnumai (substance or beings) and Kyaneh (natures), that Mary is the mother of Jesus the Savior, and that the pope's office is similar to the patriarch and no greater.

Further, the anonymous writer contended that in 1572, Mar Yahwala, bishop of Jilu, was consecrated patriarch, replacing Mar Odisho. According to the author, he was accepted by Pope Gregory XIII in Rome and moved the patriarchal see to Urmia. These assertions made by this author are simply not true. In the Hakkari mountains, there has never been a patriarch that was Catholic.[5]

It was from that time that the Roman Catholic influence began and spread among the Assyrian community for two reasons: money and political influence. They were successful because they provided money to priests and subsidized the parents of children who attended Catholic schools. The second reason accomplished their needs in the government and reduced or eliminated the hardships they faced in the surrounding towns and villages. The Western influence during that period was powerful. There was a common practice of bribing lower and higher-ranking officials in the government that led to the achievement of their objectives.

Patriarch Mar Dinkha Shimun IX (1580-1600) seems to have been the first to move from Alqosh to Iran.[6] The rationalization of this was twofold: the Catholic Church's presence had grown, and the government in what used to be an isolated region became a more formal body that subsequently had dangerous implications for the Assyrians. For a brief period, the patriarch lived in Maragha and later moved to Urmia for several years. The patriarchate again relocated to Khosrawa, Salmas, and finally settled in Dizza, the Hakkari region. The patriarch Mar Youalaha passed away there.

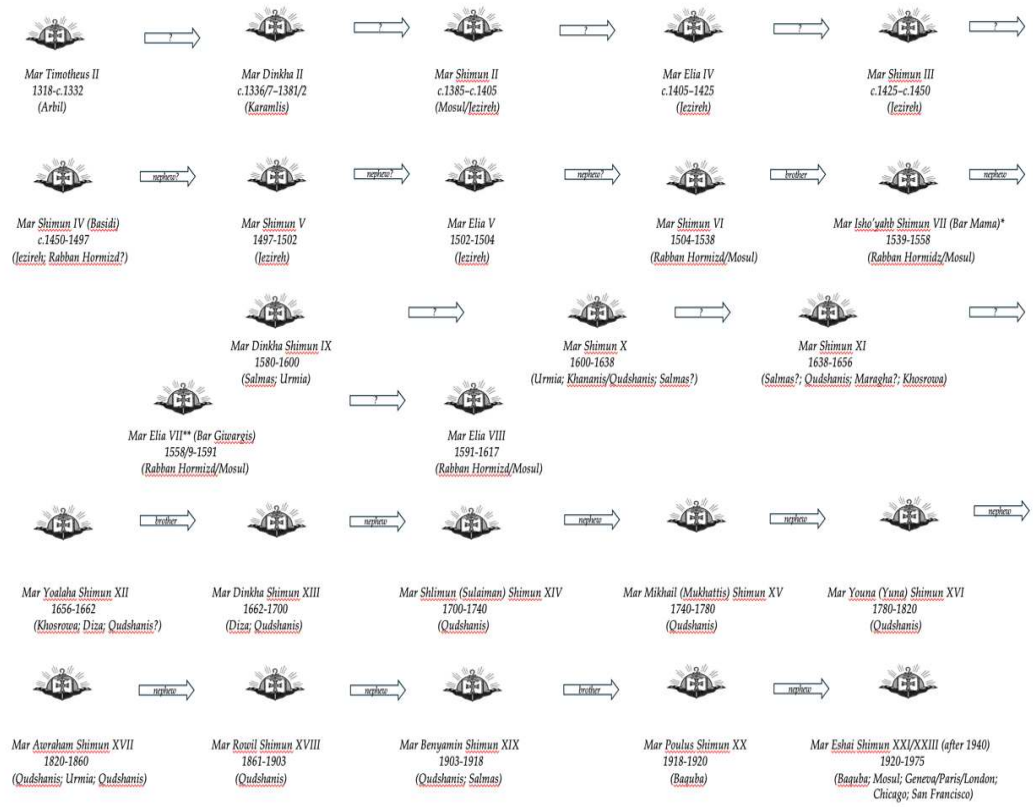
Mar Isho'yahb Shimun XII (1662-1700), the successor to Mar Youalaha, moved away from Dizza in Turkey. A year later, he determined that the region was not suitable for a patriarchal residence as it was situated in a valley, where its security was vulnerable. For this reason, he moved the patriarchal see to Qudshanis north of Dizza, behind a mountain. The area was spacious, secure, and ultimately, more suitable for the patriarchal residence.

[5] The earliest documented reference to a patriarchal see in the Hakkari mountains is between 1617-19. Although every patriarch of the Church of the East did in fact reach out to Rome throughout this period, Theodore is technically correct that there was never an established Chaldean/Catholic patriarchy in Qudshanis.

[6] Theodore originally references "Mar Eshuyow XIII (1653-1690)" using the older patriarchal tree of the Marganitha. It seems likely however that it was the patriarch Mar Dinkha Shimun IX (1580-1600), formerly bishop of Jilu, who in fact was the first to move the see to Urmia. Despite being the third in the line of Catholic patriarchs after Sulaqa, it was his successor, Mar Elia Shimun X (1600-1638) who is first known to have moved the see (briefly) to the Hakkari mountains, before returning to Urmia or Salamas.

The Patriarchal Residence, Qudshanis, Turkey

Apostolic Succession Of The Catholicos Patriarchs of the Church Of The East From the House of d'beth Mar Shimun
(Starting with Mar Timotheus II – 1318 Until Mar Eshai Shimun XXIII – 1975)



Prepared by Mar Shimun Memorial Foundation – Last Revised: September 2025

Sources: Marganitha; F.S. Kelaita; J.F. Coakley; H. Murre-van den Berg; D. Wilmshurst; C. Baumer

*"Mar Shimun VIII Dinkha" (1551/2-8) likely never existed. [Murre-van den Berg: p. 243; Wilmshurst: p. 319].
**Mar Elia "VI" also likely never existed. [Wilmshurst: p. 319].

Chapter Three

Exodus from Hakkari, Genocide by Kurdish Emirs, and the Western Missionaries

Synopsis. This chapter depicts the relationship or the understanding among the Turkish government, the local Kurds, and Assyrians. Although the obvious differences were religious for the most part, there was a tacit agreement of coexistence. While disputes were not an exception, a semblance of peace, albeit a fragile one, generally prevailed. The patriarchs, particularly Mar Rowil Shimun XVIII (1861–1903), enjoyed a mostly neutral to favorable relationship with the Turkish authority and were afforded the honor and respect due their ecclesiastical rank. Additionally included in this chapter are other notable data points such as the firman, gifted by the prophet Mohammed, and the disposition of the d'Mar Shimun family relative to turmoil and upheavals of the day.

Chiefly, we see the deterioration of the relationship of the Assyrians vis-à-vis the Kurds and the Turkish government begins to decline based on the introduction of the Western missionaries and the governments they represented, primarily Great Britain. Examples are used, which depict the missionaries instigating discord and eruptions of violence, when combatants squared off.

In Qudshanis the famous Church of Mar Shalita was built (1684-1689). It was not famous for its size, but rather for its structure. Although the region was a part of the Ottoman empire, the government authority had not yet extended that far into the eastern mountains of Turkey. However, governing Kurdish emirs, or local feudal lords, existed. The emir of Hakkari, called Nuri Beg, lived in Julamerk, which neighbored Qudshanis. Emir Nuri Beg governed during the Mar Awraham Shimun XVII Patriarchate (1820-1860) and was reputed to be very cruel to the Assyrians. He confiscated the properties of the churches and appointed lay rectors as keepers of the monastery. A Christian was prohibited from building a home without permission from the emir. The Assyrian communities were subjugated by these conditions and complained.

Mar Shalita Church, Qudshanis, Turkey, North East elevation

Mar Shalita Church, Qudshanis, Turkey, entrance

Despite this oppression, there was an understanding between the Kurds and Assyrians. In the absence of the emir of Julamerk, the patriarch would take the emir's responsibilities and would equally adjudicate Kurdish and Assyrian affairs. The patriarch did so without any discrimination and would maintain the emir's jurisdiction equitably to all, until he returned to reclaim his responsibilities.

During one such occasion, an American missionary, Dr. Asahel Grant, requested from Patriarch Mar Awraham permission to build a school in the town of Ashita in Tyari, eastern Turkey. The patriarch deferred and chose neither to grant nor reject permission, stating rather that the emir should render a decision given the request of this nature. The patriarch advised Grant to address this matter directly to the emir.

Upon his return, Grant approached the emir and was granted permission to build a school in Ashita. Later, some of the servants of the emir questioned the intention of Grant's request, alleging this was a ruse, and he would build a citadel, not a school, on a high hill. The emir sent his men to demolish the building. Had the patriarch given Asahel Grant the permission to build the school, the Kurds would have accused the patriarch of plotting to build a fortress, thereby creating an entry point that would allow a European army access into the country. This is an example of the suspicion and subsequent tension between the Assyrians and the Kurds. These tensions were further compounded by the Western missionaries who were perceived by the Kurds as manipulating the Assyrians for the purpose of the Western governments they represented.

Mar Awraham was extremely cautious which resulted from a variety of prior experiences including the Catholic influence, the presence in Urmia, Iran and a host of other events. He feared the Westerners did not intend to build amicable relations, but rather to create a foothold in the area on behalf of their respective governments. It was commonly believed that these individuals were political representatives of their governments and as such maintained the interest for their own political agendas, not the charitable intentions they claimed for the benefit of local citizens.

Sadly, we escaped from Alqosh, Iraq, in an attempt to flee from the power, the influence, and the oppression of Catholics only to enter into Qudshanis, Turkey, where the local Kurds persecuted us.

In 1842, Mar Awraham visited Tyari, as it was his practice to visit one of the dioceses of the large Assyrian communities annually. These visits were necessitated because of the lack of bishops within the church. The Assyrian community scattered throughout the Hakkari region was very large, and he could not cover such a vast territory within a one-year period thoroughly. It was during this particular visit the Kurds were preparing to attack the Assyrians.

The emir of Hakkari, Nuri Beg, was in Bohtan to meet with Badr Khan Beg to form a coalition with Emir Ismael Beg of the Lower Barwar to raise an army and attack our Christians.

The False Apostles

Grant, the missionary, had gone to visit Bedr Khan Beg**,** who had been taken ill with fever. Nuri Beg heard of the visit and quickly came out to meet Grant. He warned Grant that if his intention was to spoil the coalition that was raising an army to massacre the Christians, he should leave immediately. Grant replied he was not concerned about a Christian massacre, but rather he was only there to check on the condition of Bedr Khan.

The Evil of Our Enemy and Our Naivety

The Kurds had created a chasm among the Assyrians. While outwardly the Kurds maintained that we were on amicable terms, this assertion was contradicted by the oppression that resulted in the segregation of Assyrians into many groups. In truth, they murdered our men, abducted our women, looted our homes, and burned our villages. We allowed this to happen by our faith and trust in the words of our enemy. This residual hatred remains today, and as is evidenced in a scattered Assyrian community throughout the world.

The Kurdish Coalition against the Christians

Daily, the situation deteriorated. The Kurds were abusing and attacking the villagers, killing and plundering where they could. The emirs were preparing an army to massacre the Assyrians. The six brothers of Mar Awraham, Dinkha, Benyamin (Benjamin), Youkhanna (John), Iskhaq (Isaac), Nathan, and Rev. Zaduk, went to Dizan where the villagers were loyal to the patriarch. During that same period, we lived off and on in the village of Dizan for nearly forty years. The area was geographically advantageous as it provided protection against attack as well as being close to Qudshanis.

It was said that the three Kurdish warlords raised an army somewhere between ten to forty thousand men. The army rampaged through upper Barwar and Dizan. This army passed through Tyari and told the locals their fight was with the patriarch, whom they considered an enemy, not them.

A fierce and bitter battle took place in Dizan in which four hundred men, the villagers of Dizan, were killed. The remaining men of Dizan removed themselves to the Church of Mar Shalita. This was done so because the area was well protected from attack and thought to allow a least vulnerable position in order to attempt to defeat the enemy with fewer men.

Shamleh, the sister of the patriarch Mar Awraham, attempted to protect her nephew, Rowil (Reuben), who was two years old and her niece, Sulte, who was five or six. She saw an Assyrian named Barcham Gundignaya, who once resided with Emir Nuri Khan Beg of Hakkari. Shamleh begged Barcham to save the boy. Barcham had little sympathy and threatened that if Shamleh did not stop badgering him, he'd kill the boy himself. Rowil, trapped beneath the pile of bodies, had remained buried under the fallen men for three days. Later, when the fighting ceased, and as the village was preparing for the numerous burials, Rowil was found alive, hidden beneath the dead. Rowil later succeeded his uncle as the next patriarch.[7]

The Courage of the Patriarch Brothers and the Men of Dizan

The six brothers of the patriarch, along with seven men of Dizan, fought bravely for three days. The Kurdish attacks were repelled, and many of them killed. On the third day of the battle, Emir Bedr Khan Beg retreated, instructing his men that there was no advantage in attacking the Assyrians at Mar Shalita because there was only one road leading to the church.

The emir sent a messenger to convince them to come down and surrender. The messenger was a close acquaintance and secretly advised them that if the emir did not send his handkerchief, they should not surrender. However, if the emir sends his handkerchief, then it is a signal of trust and not subterfuge.

The Kurdish messenger returned to the emir and told him the Assyrians refuse to come down unless a symbol of trust is sent, such as the emir's handkerchief. The emir gave his handkerchief, which the messenger took to Dinkha.

Dinkha advised his brothers to load their rifles and undo the beads that tied their daggers' handles. If the emir's sign was a trick, then each should first use their rifles and then start fighting with daggers.

Dinkha wrapped his bandoleers on his shoulders and, with his rifle in his hand, proceeded down followed by his brothers and the rest of the men. As they were approaching the emir, a Kurdish agha drew his dagger aiming to attack Dinkha, which would avenge his brother's death. The agha did this because his brother was killed the day before when they were attacking the Mar Shalita Church. Emir Badr Khan Beg stopped him and accused the man of cowardice, questioning why he had not gone to the church and attacked them, instead of when they had surrendered.

Emir Bedr Khan Beg praised Dinkha and his men for their tenacious fighting and released them. Of the

[7] Shamleh was the oldest of two living sisters of Mar Awraham, the other being Heleneh (braq qyama). A third, deceased, may have been the first wife of Malik Ismail of Upper Tyari. In 1843 Rowil was about two years old. William Henry Browne relates a very similar story (AMQ: April 4, 1908) about Rowil's older sister Sulte (brat qyama), who was five or six years old at that time. An older brother (or cousin) named Ishai was also killed in this massacre. As Browne tells it, Sulte was held five years in captivity before being released (presumably, along with her aunt Shamleh).

patriarchal family, only Shamleh, the patriarch's Sister, was taken captive among other Assyrian women and children who were en route to Bohtan. As they were being marched to Bohtan, an Assyrian of Baz was returning from Mosul. He recognized Shamleh as the sister of Mar Awraham amidst the captives and offered to buy the woman from the emir. The emir agreed for the sum of "seven bags of money." The man completed the transaction and returned Shamleh to the patriarchal home in Qudshanis, where his money was restored and was bestowed a valuable gift for the safe return of the sister of the patriarch.

Barcham, the man who had refused to save Rowil at Shamleh's request, accompanied the emir Nuri Beg to Istanbul, where he lived for forty years. After that time, he returned to his home in Tkhuma and visited Qudshanis. In an audience with Mar Rowil, he reminded the patriarch that for forty years, he had fasted and observed the rule of abstaining from meat on Wednesdays and Fridays until sundown. The patriarch congratulated Barcham on his steadfast behavior. Barcham did not remind the patriarch of his words to Shamleh, when he refused to save him as a young boy. Instead, Barcham thought that fasting would be more favorably received by God than the mercy shown upon a child.

Decree of the Patriarchal House

The author illustrates the quality of the relationship of the Assyrians among their Muslim neighbors and the honor accorded to the patriarch of the Church of the East. Inserted for context is the following excerpt from the *Assyrian Church Customs and the Murder of Mar Shimun*,[8] by her ladyship, the Honorable Surma d'Mar Shimun that describes the decree.

The firman[9] of the prophet Mahommed, presented to the patriarchal house.

It is a thing of common knowledge among the Muslims of Hakkari that there was a special firman granted by the Prophet to our house, and therewith, as the universal belief went, a certain special knife of his giving that was preserved to the time of Bedr Khan Beg (1845).

Once each year, a selected Mullah of Julamerk used to come up and read that document in the public assembly. Further, the strictest Muslims, who will not as a rule eat anything that has been slaughtered by a Christian, will eat without hesitation any animal slaughtered by a member of the patriarchal family.

The firman was embossed in letters of gold, on parchment, and was written circle wise with the print of a hand in the middle. (This is an ancient type of Arab script. The print of the hand of the donor of the grant was impressed in the middle of the parchment, and the substance of the decree written round it, in one continuous spiral.) The knife had a shaft of silver, with a piece of red coral set in the pommel, and an inscription inlaid in gold on the blade.

When we went to Dizan, this decree, always in a satchel, was hung on a cottage post, during the midday meal. When the Kurds attacked, our men went to fight in Mar Shalita Church. Amidst the confusion caused by the attack, the satchel containing the dagger and decree was left behind and later stolen by the Kurds and taken to Bedr Khan Beg. We know this because it was later told to us that Bedr Khan had said if he had known that such a thing existed in our house, he would not have fought against us.

My uncle Hormizd, while at school in Istanbul, wrote to his sister, Lady Surma, saying that he had overheard the son of Bedr Khan Beg in a coffeehouse, saying, "Our family possesses something that is invaluable among the Muslim world". A similar statement was repeated by Bedr Khan Beg's great-grandson to an Armenian of Bohtan, who lived in Cyprus. The great-grandson lived in Damascus, Syria, and was vacationing on Cyprus during the summer holiday. There is no doubt that they were speaking about the firman stolen from Qudshanis.

[8] Surma d'bait Mar Shimun, *Assyrian Church Customs and the Murder of Mar Shimun*. Faith Press, London, 1920.
[9] A firman, an uncommon nomenclature, is an edict or administrative order by a Middle Eastern sovereign.

Mar Awraham's Attempt to Bring the Turkish Government to Hakkari and the British Promise

As mentioned earlier, when Patriarch Mar Awraham was visiting the congregation in Tyari, the Upper Barwar and Dizan villages were under siege. At this same time, the emir and his forces were marching through Tyari, where they attacked and destroyed the villagers.

Mar Awraham, accompanied by the men of the Ashita tribe, moved to Mosul after witnessing the unwarranted and vicious attacks on the Tyari people. The patriarch stayed in Mosul for almost six years, living with Rassam, who was vice-consul for the British.

Tirelessly, he attempted through the British to bring the Turkish government's administration to Hakkari, but the patriarch's efforts were in vain. The British consul misled the patriarch to believe his efforts were gaining ground and success; however, little resulted in a fruitful outcome. For six years, the patriarch waited and witnessed empty promises made by the consul.[10]

Mar Awraham, taking with him Rev. Iskhaq and his brother Shemasha Awraham Shapitnaya of Gargan, fled at night to Urmia. After a time, the patriarch later moved to Mar-Bishu in Turkey before returning to Qudshanis in the spring of 1849.

We had nearly fifteen thousand armed Assyrians before the massacre committed by the Kurds. Had it not been for divisions and internal strife among the Assyrians, an army of the emirs could not have defeated us. Their efforts would have met with a united, synchronized Assyrian army that would have repelled their attacks. Sadly, we brought this on ourselves, owing to our internal discord, selfish betrayals, and the naivety in our belief of the Kurds. When the British consul in Mosul learned that the patriarch had fled to Iran, the ambassador in Istanbul reported this to the government in London, advising that the patriarch may ask for help from the Russians to enter Hakkari. The ambassador further reported the patriarch had prepared an army of ten thousand men that could be of great help to the Russians.

The British wished to protect their empire in India, while expanding into Middle Eastern countries. By doing so, the British presence aimed to minimize Russian influence in the area. Ostensibly, it provided the British an opportunity to expand their control and subsequent influence in Iraq and other countries. A strong presence in Iraq meant control over the Persian Gulf, which in turn, provided an easier and safer passage to India. Therefore, the British and other Western powers pressed the Turkish government to send administrators to the Hakkari region.

Coincident to this period, the Presbyterian missionaries had begun its consolidation of their position within Iran. When Mar Awraham witnessed their deeds, in which they showed no mercy toward the Church of the East, he confronted the missionaries. The Presbyterians informed their ambassador in Tehran, which resulted in the American ambassador influencing the Iranian government to stop Mar Awraham and punish him. As I mentioned previously, the influence of Westerners throughout Asia was pervasive. Although the Iranian government acknowledged that the American influence was not appropriate, nor fair, it could not be refused. Therefore, Mar Awraham was forced to relent and moved temporarily to the village of Mar Bishu, where the Presbyterian influence was not as prevalent.

Had these events not occurred, Mar Awraham's intention was to move the patriarchal see from Qudshanis, Turkey, to Urmia, Iran, where the Persian government was more sympathetic to the plight of the Assyrians. Conversely, by continuing to live in the Hakkari region, it would place the patriarchate and Assyrians under the jurisdiction of the Kurdish emirs and sheiks that ruled in a traditionally feudal nature and to the disadvantage of the Assyrians.

While in Mar Bishu, the patriarch learned that the Turkish government had entered and settled in Hakkari. There, the three Kurdish emirs were arrested, and a governor had been assigned to Julamerk. It was at this time that the patriarch returned to Qudshanis and remained there all his life, loyal to the Turkish government.

[10] Mar Awraham and the patriarchal family arrived in Mosul on July 27, 1843 [Badger: p. 271]. Four years later, in June of 1847, he is in Urmia [MH 2 (53): p. 349-50], where he remains until returning to Qudshanis sometime in the early spring of 1849 [MH 2 (45): p. 311].

Mar Rowil

Mar Awraham passed away in late December of 1860, and Mar Rowil (Reuben) was ordained patriarch, replacing his uncle. Mar Rowil XVIII (1861-1903) served as the patriarch for forty-two years in Qudshanis. Throughout his life, Mar Rowil was loyal to the Turkish government. Mar Rowil, like his uncle, had not learned the lessons from the past. With the arrival of the missionaries came massacres committed by the Kurdish emirs. The Kurds assumed that we, as Christians, were aligned and supported the Western missionaries and the governments they represented. They further concluded, through this erroneous thought process, that we sought to control the Hakkari region by leveraging the help of the Western missionaries. It was during this time that hatred and animosity between the Kurds and the Assyrians escalated.

Mar Rowil Shimun, Catholicos-Patriarch, XX, June 1894.

Each time Mar Rowil traveled to the Van region to meet the Turkish governor, he was received with the highest symbol of respect, the guard of honor. The patriarch, his attendants, and those accompanying them were respected guests taken into the residence of the governor. The patriarch had the privilege to send a telegram directly to the Turkish sultan on any matter he considered important. Illustrative of the relationship and trust, the Turkish government honored the patriarch with two significant medals, the Osmanli Hamidiya and the Majidiya.

The Turkish government had proposed that Mar Rowil be a spiritual leader and his father, Benyamin, as political leader, separating the two offices due to the enormity required of both sets of responsibilities.

Mar Rowil was reluctant to commit to the request without having consulted the bishops and tribal leaders, although he promised a response to the government. After the meeting, the bishops and maliks were not pleased with this proposal. They advised the patriarch this was a trick planned by the government and felt that after the death of the patriarch's father, the Turkish government would usurp political responsibility and appoint a non-Assyrian in his place. The bishops and maliks rejected the proposal and insisted that both responsibilities continue to reside solely with the patriarch. The government accepted the decision, and Mar Rowil was afforded the respect and trust by the local government. In 1903, Mar Rowil Shimun passed away and was interred in the church of Mar Shalita, which was built under the auspices of Mar Dinkha Shimun XIII. Seven patriarchs[11] from the d'Mar Shimun family have been laid to rest in the church, the last of which was Mar Rowil.

[11] It could have been six. Several contemporary scholars have the patriarchy of Mar Yoalaha Shimun XII as ending in 1662, either in Khosrowa or perhaps Diza (not Qudshanis), whereas the older tree of apostolic succession printed in the Marganitha had his patriarchy as being from 1690-2. Since Theodore relied on the later to refresh his memory the count could be in error. Also, Mar Shalitha wasn't built until the late 1680s under Mar Yoalaha's successor brother, Mar Dinkha Shimun XIII (d. 1700). However, there is the possibility that Mar Yoalaha's remains were removed to Mar Shalitha some twenty-five years after his death, in which case seven would be accurate. To date no archaeological examination of the church ruins or remains has been undertaken.

Chapter Four

Selected Entries from the Journals of Lady Surma d'Mar Shimun: 1903 to 1909

Synopsis. This chapter contains passages from Lady Surma's diaries from 1903 to 1909. Selected for publication, the following two chapters will further detail the religious, secular, and governmental affairs of the day. The author chose to publish these passages after much deliberation and consideration to provide a firsthand-account perspective for the readers' understanding.

Her Ladyship, Surma d'Mar Shimun

The following passages were documented by her ladyship, the Honorable Surma d'Mar Shimun, from her private diaries, which depicts documented history in which she detailed daily events. The diaries are chronicled from before 1900 until 1970. However, for the purpose of providing a framework for the reader, I am only referencing pertinent selections from 1903 to 1915. Of relevance are the periods representing seven and one-half years in Turkey and two and one-half years in Iran. This information has been private to our nation until now, having never publicly disclosed our private family records. Some may speculate as to why this information had not been previously revealed. There are two reasons:

1. Certain verbal and written personal information, including events, speeches and so on were constrained to public disclosure by privacy laws. Any release of what may be construed as protected information was also limited to time restraints posthumously.

2. It was our family's wish to maintain the privacy of this data. We chose not to share this information for the purposes of personal glory or to place blame upon others. We did not wish to provide fodder for gossip. As a practice, we always gave the freedom to anyone to say anything. Although we had the authority to prohibit as well as punish them from the false accusations and suppositions, we chose never to wield that power.

As I mentioned, since the requisite time had passed, it is now necessary and appropriate to help others understand with factual data, supported by documentation that was unknown to those outside of our family. It is my wish to commemorate my aunt Surma's memory through her selfless good works for our Assyrian nation and our Holy Church of the East.

The Death of Mar Rowil and the Consecration of Mar Benyamin

March 15 (N.S.)[12], 1903, Benyamin, the son of Eshai, was ordained metropolitan by his uncle, the patriarch Mar Rowil.

On March 29, 1903, in this year Mar Rowil had passed away from temporary life to eternal life.

Sunday, April 12, 1903, after the arrival Metropolitan Mar Iskhaq Khnanishu to Qudshanis, sixteen-year-old Mar Benyamin the metropolitan was consecrated patriarch by Mar Iskhaq (Issac) Khnanishu, metropolitan, and Mar Estapanos (Stephen), bishop of Gawar.

In 1905, the Catholics began to assimilate within the Hakkari region. Other events, such as the looting of sheep belonging to Assyrians by the Kurds, as well as killing, occurred this year. Some of the minor events are

[12] N.S. = New Style (Western/Gregorian calendar). O.S. = Old Style (Eastern/Julian calendar). At this time N.S. dates are 13 days ahead. Surma Khanum used both in her later diaries, with O.S. dates generally applying to Church holidays. All known O.S. dates have been updated to N.S. unless otherwise indicated.

Consecration of Mar Benyamin to the Episcopate, March 15, 1903, Qudshanis. [Source: F.N. Heazell?]

noted so the reader is aware of the conditions during that time. It was in this year that Patriarch Mar Benyamin Shimun XIX declared that any Assyrian suspected of inclination toward Catholicism may not be appointed as a clergyman, sacristan, or tribal leader. This conflict of interest was decreed because such a person could be used to propagate Catholicism and their respective government's agenda. For example, on July 20, 1905, Benyamin of Greater Jilu requested to be appointed Malik. The patriarch told him that his appointment was contingent upon his oath, in writing that Benyamin would not convert to Catholicism, but he refused. On August 20, Benyamin returned and agreed to sign the document attesting his oath. Mar Benyamin appointed him Malik of Jilu the next day.

Later that same year, we received word that Malik Mammu of Nochia was killed by the Kurdish sheikh of Niri, and the sheep of Malik Ismael had been looted. The Kurds also stole quite a few sheep from Upper Tyari. The patriarch contacted the Turkish governor in Van concerning this matter via telegram. Two days later, the governor replied that he had sent a telegram to Haidar Beg requesting an investigation.

There were a number of unlawful acts committed against the people of Upper Barwar. For a time, they were successfully resolved by the patriarch.

The Consecration of Mar Timatheus the Metropolitan

December 24, 1907—Today, we received a letter from Mar Timatheus that he had safely reached Duré in Lower Barwar. The Church of the East in Malabar, southern India, requested His Holiness Mar Benyamin to assign the congregation a metropolitan as they had only one elderly bishop left. In response, Mar Benyamin ordained Mar Timatheus as metropolitan and dispatched him to India. Mar Emmanuel, the patriarch of the Chaldean Catholic Church, complained to the Turkish government that a passport should not be issued to Mar Timatheus for his passage to India. Mar Emmanuel's aim was that the Church of the East would remain without a bishop in India, thereby creating an opportunity for the local congregation to convert to Catholicism.

January 11, 1908—We received a telegram from Mar Timatheus informing us that he had reached Mosul, Iraq, safely. Mar Timatheus was kept hidden from the Turkish authorities in the home of Nimrod Rassam (British Consul). In order to escape the Turkish authorities that were looking for him, he was disguised in Arab dress.

Other Daily Diaries

January 10, 1908—Many men from the village of Tkuma came to Qudshanis to request the approval from the patriarch for the appointment of a malik. Because there was disagreement among these men, the patriarch told them that a malik would not be appointed until later that spring or summer. Contingent upon this decision, the patriarch also instructed them that a malik would be appointed only after they have reached a consensus on one person. Until a new malik is appointed, the current one will continue with his duties and responsibilities. The men acquiesced to the patriarch. On January 12, 1908, they returned to Tkhuma.

February 6, 1908—A telegram received from Mar Timatheus indicated that Mar Emmanuel has influenced the port director to confiscate his passport and prohibit his departure. The patriarch sent two telegrams, one to each of the governors of Mosul and Van asking for their intervention to overcome the difficulties that Mar Timatheus faced. The patriarch also wrote to Dr. Wigram to leave Bebeide for Mosul and look into the matter.

February 22, 1908—The men of the Tkhuma village returned concerning the appointment of a malik. Again, the patriarch reiterated they must reach an agreement among themselves first. Furthermore, once they determine a nomination, send ten men, one from each tribe and the person they had elected.

Only then the patriarch would evaluate and appoint a malik for the Tkhuma district, which would most likely be either one of two men, Oshana or Daniel.

February 24, 1908—Pattu Zabti, a policeman, brought a letter and a telegram from the Turkish district administrator, requesting the patriarch to seal it with his hallmark, indicating that he was responsible for Mar Timatheus. The quaimaqam would send this statement to the governor of Van.

February 29, 1908—A telegram was received from Mar Timatheus indicating his arrival in Baghdad.

March 8, 1908—The qaimaqam requested from the patriarch a collection of taxes for the government from the villages of Tyari and Tkhuma. Mar Benyamin answered that he would not go until the churches of Lower Barwar had been returned to Mar Yahwala from the Catholics. In response, the governor requested the patriarch provide witnesses who would validate the churches belonging to us.

March 25, 1908—Pattu Zabti arrived from Tarmel and reported that four men in the village had collapsed from hunger. This year they experienced famine, and the cost of food was too expensive. The patriarch ordered a portion of the stored harvest from Upper Barwar be immediately sent to Tarmel.

March 30, 1908—A telegram was received from Mar Timatheus who has now reached India. The school in Urmia was moved to Van because the influence of Western missionaries had increased in Urmia. We were hopeful that we would be able to better protect ourselves, our existence, and our churches from the foreigners in Hakkari than in Iran.

April 3, 1908—The people of Lower Tyari and the Kurdish emirs of Lower Barwar were in dispute. The government requested that the patriarch intervene to facilitate a reconciliation between the two groups. Both Tyari and Tkhuma had sent delegations to the patriarch. However, the patriarch said that he would not respond until he had received confirmation from the sheikh and the emir of their willingness.

April 7, 1908—A letter was received from the emir and the sheikh indicating their readiness to reconcile. The next day the patriarch conducted an audience with the quaimaqam regarding resolving the issues between the Tyari emir and the sheikh. Two days later the patriarch left Julamerk for Tyari.

May 7, 1908—Upon their return from Russia, three men from Tkhuma were arrested in Gawar and taken to Bashqala. The rifles they had purchased from Iran were confiscated. Mar Benyamin sent a telegram to the mutassarif in Bashqala requesting these men be sent to Qudshanis.

June 2, 1908—A letter received from Mar Sargis and the Jilu maliks requesting the patriarch to write to the vali, informing him that the taxes were too high and that they were having difficulty paying such a large sum. The letter also referred to the fighting between the villagers of Jilu and the Kurds as well as bribery taken by the local Turkish director.

June 8, 1908—Troubles between Persia and Turkey in Urmia. Our people living on the border villages traveled to Urmia to purchase arms in order to defend themselves.

June 16, 1908—Unrest in Van between the Turkish army and the Armenian freedom fighters.

July 9, 1908—A letter was received from the patriarch, indicating that the emir and the sheikh had not yet reached a conclusion on the matter of reconciliation. The emir was busy collecting taxes but promised he would come as soon as he finished.

July 12, 1908—Last year, the bishop of the Catholics in Qudshanis, Mar Awraham, promised the patriarch that he would not interfere in the affairs of the Church of the East, nor would he ordain a deacon or a priest. He had broken his promise and had ordained a priest, a Tkhuma Assyrian in Mar Shalita of Khanis.

July 21 to 22, 1908—Because the emir and the sheikh had not attended the meeting in Tyari, the patriarch returned from his trip unsuccessful in his attempt to reconcile the two groups. Over the course of the following two days, (July 21-22), two messengers from the emir arrived, again requesting that the patriarch return to mediate the two sides.

July 24, 1908—Two villages in Dizan were looted by Kurds, including their cattle.

July 26, 1908—We learned that the people of Tyari had attacked the emir and killed five Kurds. One of the Kurds killed was Mustafa Beg, brother of the emir who had looted many of their sheep. (This battle was led by Khoshaba, who was later called "malik," avenging the murder of his father. [*This last sentence was added by Theodore d'Mar Shimun and not part of the diary entry*].)

July 27, 1908—A letter received from Malik Ismael indicated the emir was preparing an army to destroy the villages of Tyari. Because of this, we anticipated a severe battle between the Kurds and the Assyrians. We were all very anxious.

July 28, 1908—The men of the villages of Jilu and Baz were preparing a contingent to fight against Sutu, the Kurdish warlord, in an act of revenge.

July 29, 1908—We learned the Kurdish emir was preparing an army of five thousand fighters to attack Tyari. The Turkish vali sent a telegram to the patriarch requesting his intervention with the Turkish quaimaqam to go to Tyari and resolve the problem.

July 31, 1908—The patriarch responded by telegram, indicating he could not travel due to the heat and suggested the Turkish government work directly with the vali of Mosul to influence the Kurdish emir to withdraw his forces. At the same time, the patriarch ordered the people of Tyari and Tkhuma and the agha of Chal to disperse. The quaimaqam of Julamerk also came to discuss the reconciliation, and the patriarch responded similarly. The quaimaqam agreed with the patriarch.

A priest from Ashita, Malik Ismael sent by the people of that village, and Khoshaba came to see the patriarch. The priest told the patriarch that the emir was raising an army to attack Ashita and reported that the villagers were fearful.

August 1, 1908—The quaimaqam sent a telegram to the vali, stating if the emir's forces do not withdraw all hopes for peace would be ruined.

Messengers from Malik Ismael and Malik Barkhu were requesting counsel from the patriarch regarding what they should do. The patriarch advised them to be prepared, but that they should not do anything unless the Kurds attack.

A letter arrived from the British consul, who was in direct contact with the vali concerning the issue of the churches of Lower Barwar, which had been taken by Catholics. The consul added that there was hope everything would be well.

The patriarch received a telegram from the mutassarif of Van, informing him that the next day, he would arrive in Qudshanis.

August 5, 1908—Word received from Malik Ismael that four villages of Lower Tyari were burned**,** including Lizen, the village of Khoshaba. Although prayer books were destroyed, the Church of Mar Gewargis was defended by fifty men of Upper Tyari, and there was no further damage. Malik Ismael was organizing all the men of Upper Tyari for battle.

August 6, 1908—The patriarch went to Barchalla to meet the mutassarif concerning the four Tyari villages that had been burned. The mutassarif was angered by what the patriarch reported and wrote to the vali about the evil deed by Rashid Beg, the emir of Barwar. The patriarch sent a letter to Tkhuma ordering the clan to immediately provide aid to their brothers of Tyari in order to avoid a repeat of the same massacre that Bedr Khan Beg waged.

August 8, 1908—Messengers arrived, informing the patriarch that the emir was withdrawing his men. The mutassarif also received a similar telegram from Mosul confirming this information.

August 9, 1908—The patriarch received a letter from Tkhuma concerning the evil deed perpetuated by Rashid Beg against the Tyari Assyrians. It was requested of the patriarch to contact the Turkish government in order to permit them to leave Tkhuma. Failing the granting of the request, the Turkish government should take measures against the Kurdish emirs or sanction an attack. The patriarch wrote to the tribal heads of Tkhuma, Tyari, and the agha of Chal, advising them to remain calm, and the Turkish government would do what was necessary.

August 10, 1908—Word was received that the men of Kurdish Sheikh Nuri looted the village of Duri because the emir had not allowed the sheikh to destroy the village of Ashita, whom he considered his enemy.

August 16, 1908—The patriarch sent telegrams to the valis of Van and Mosul, the Turkish minister of interior, the Turkish parliament in Istanbul, and to the British consul in Van and Mosul regarding the burning of four Tyari villages by the Kurdish emirs and the continued attacks against the Assyrians.

August 16, 1908—The Kurdish warlord Sutu attacked two Jilu villages, plundered their sheep in which two men were killed. The patriarch requested the Turkish quaimaqam to investigate this incident. The government officials located Sutu, but did not punish him.

August 26, 1908—The patriarch received a telegram informing him that the vali of Van has been replaced. The patriarch sent a telegram to Istanbul requesting the mutassarif of Bashqala be appointed vali because of his intelligence and integrity.

September 9, 1908—We received word that Emir Rashid Beg killed three more Assyrians in the village of Ashita.

September 11, 1908—Deacon Warda returned from Bohtan, indicating that the village was faithful to the Church of the East. However, the money and the influence of the Westerners on the Turkish government had allowed them to successfully establish themselves in the region.

September 14, 1908—The patriarch returned from Julamerk; while he was pleased with the new laws, we had not seen any positive outcomes. We feared that it was a meaningless decree.

September 16, 1908—The patriarch received a letter from the sheikh Barazan concerning the vicious deeds of the emir of Barwar. Another one, received from Lower Tyari, reported that attempts to raid the village sheep were deflected because the locals were watchful. Further aggressive acts committed by the emir had resulted in the villagers suffering from famine and lack of shelter because their homes had been looted and burned.

September 17, 1908—The Catholics in India instigated rumors among our church congregation, charging that Mar Timatheus had not been consecrated. The patriarch responded directly to the maharajah and raj of southern India confirming, in fact, that Mar Timatheus was ordained metropolitan by the patriarch himself and sent expressly for the bishopric see for the church in India.

January 12, 1909—The reply to the patriarch's letter to the British consul in Mosul arrived, promising the consul's commitment to do everything in his power with regard to the letter from Sheikh Barazan.

January 17, 1909—The patriarch sent two letters, one to Nimrod Rassam and the other to the people of Alqosh, advising them to be patient with regard to the request that Rev. Gewargis (George) be ordained bishop for Alqosh.

January 21, 1909—Many were talking about freedom, but so far, there is no evidence of these desired results.

January 28, 1909—We received word that officials from Julamerk went to Tyari to collect taxes before asking permission from the patriarch. Additional reports indicated that they intended to tax Qudshanis, excluding the patriarchal see.

February 14, 1909—While on his way to Qudshanis, Father Gewargis, the priest of Alqosh, was arrested in Julamerk due to a complaint by the patriarch of the Chaldean Catholic Church, Mar Emmanuel. Mar Emmanuel alleged that Father Gewargis's intention was to cause trouble amongst the people.

February 15, 1909—The patriarch wrote to the quaimaqam in response to rumors and indicated that Qudshanis would not pay any tax until official word was received from the government authorities in Istanbul. Further, the patriarch ordered that Father Gewargis be sent to Qudshanis. The patriarch sent an additional letter to the authority in Van, questioning the validity of the allegations made by Mar Emmanuel against Father Gewargis. He further questioned his apprehension and prohibition of allowing Father Gewargis coming to us, and then returning him to Mosul. Mar Emmanuel told the authorities that Father Gewargis was a troublemaker and asked them to prevent him from going to Qudshanis.

March 2, 1909—The patriarch received a telegram from the vali of Van, informing him that Father Gewargis had been released and was free to make his way to Qudshanis. The patriarch forwarded the telegram through Khanu to read to the quaimaqam. Another telegram arrived from the vali of Mosul informing the patriarch that Father Gewargis and the men accompanying him had been freed and were making their way to the patriarch in Qudshanis.

March 3, 1909—Father Gewargis arrived in Qudshanis.

March 17, 1909—The patriarch received a telegram from Mosul requesting him not to ordain Rev. Gewargis as bishop but wait until he received a letter from them.

March 25, 1909—The patriarch received a telegram from Alqosh denying the rumors of previous telegrams sent that requested the delay of the ordination of Rev. Gewargis. They indicated these telegrams were fabricated in the Chaldean patriarchate in Mosul. It was requested to ordain Rev. Gewargis immediately and noted the number of men supporting the Church of the East was increasing.

April 9, 1909—Word received that the men of emir of Barwar had killed four Ashita Assyrians while four hundred heads of sheep were looted.

April 25, 1909—Rev. Gewargis of Alqosh was ordained archdeacon.

May 2,1909—Rev. Gewargis of Alqosh was ordained bishop and given the title "Mar Elia" by the patriarch. The ordination ceremony was well organized. The bishop was taken to the patriarchate in a procession of priests and deacons led by a cross, music, and incense with customary celebratory shots fired.

May 9, 1909—Deacons Yosip and Daniel of Alqosh were ordained priests. We received word from Alqosh that one hundred families had reverted to the Church of the East.

May 11, 1909—The patriarch received a letter from Malik Ismael, advising caution when sending Mar Elia to Alqosh, as the Catholics had bribed the emir to have him killed before he reaches Alqosh.

May 16, 1909—A letter was received from Archdeacon Dawid indicating the Honorable Hormizd d'Mar Shimun arrived in Urmia and was received with honor by the shahbandar, the Turkish army, and the local Assyrians.

June 2, 1909—The leaders of Tkhuma were saying that Mar Elia and his father were inclined toward Catholicism.

June 17, 1909—Sheikh Hameed Pasha and the mutassarif of Bashqala were very friendly toward the patriarch.

June 27, 1909—Word received from Ashita that the representative of the pope was laying the foundations for a house and church. The people of Ashita were resigned to this eventuality for if they confront the emir, it was believed that he would support the Catholics since he had accepted bribes to build their house and church.

July 8, 1909—The Turkish quaimaqam requested of the patriarch to facilitate an in-person reconciliation between the villagers of Tyari and the Kurdish emir. The patriarch answered that due to the severe hot weather conditions, he could not travel now, but would address the matter in August.

July 13, 1909—We heard that an order from Istanbul concerning conscription into the army, from all Turkish citizens, would be forthcoming. But this order was still confidential and not made public.

July 16, 1909—The patriarch received a similar telegram from the vali of Van, requesting that the patriarch facilitate reconciliation between the Tyari villagers and the Kurdish emir.

July 17,1909—The patriarch visited Bashqala to discuss the quaimaqam reconciliation between Lower Tyari and the emir. The patriarch's plan proposed bringing together the Tyari chieftains to Lewon in the presence of the quaimaqam to discuss the reconciliation. If the Tyari chieftains agree to an understanding, then the emir may come to Maydani. If the Tyari chieftains do not agree, then time would be wasted.

July 18, 1909—The patriarch sent a letter to Tyari chieftains requesting them to meet in Sillaya.

July 19 and 20 1909—The patriarch received telegrams from the vali of Van and mutassarif of Bashqala requesting him to travel south in order to settle the differences between the people of Tyari and the emir. The patriarch said that he would send telegrams to the vali of Van and the mutassarif before traveling. The patriarch explained that he would not attend the meeting if neither the tribal leaders of Tyari nor the emir would agree to come together.

July 21, 1909—Men from the house of Mar Khnanishu brought a letter to the patriarch from the Kurdish sheikh of Niri. The sheikh requested that the patriarch appoint and send an Assyrian to accompany him to Istanbul because he felt the journey to be dangerous. Specifically, Alexander, also known as Popina Kelaita, was requested by the sheik as the patriarch's representative. The patriarch was not supportive of sending him, even though Mar Khnanishu was insistent. The patriarch spoke with Mar Iskhaq Khnanishu about this escort, and both determined that Archdeacon Dawid of Gawar be sent with the sheikh.

July 25, 1909—Upon the arrival of the archdeacon Dawid, the patriarch and Metropolitan Mar Khnanishu agreed that the patriarch would write a letter to the sheikh expressing his agreement. However, the archdeacon Dawid refused to go with the sheikh.

July 30, 1909—We learned the quaimaqam had said that he would not go to Lewon with the patriarch until he received word from the mutassarif.

A letter received by the patriarch from Malik Ismael expressed his sentiment concerning the current circumstances that it was more desirable "to be killed by the government than become slaves of the Kurdish emirs."

August 17, 1909—The Turkish government began the conscription of men into its army, resulting in many fleeing the country. The patriarch was asked to send a telegram to the Turkish authorities in Istanbul with a request to cease this action.

September 28, 1909—The government defeated Sheikh Barazan who had fled to Tkhuma.

October 3, 1909—Rev. Dawid of the village of Tkhuma was ordained as a bishop of the patriarchate and a representative in Urmia as well. He was given the title Mar Aprim (Effraim).

October 4, 1909—The Turkish mutassarif, accompanied by Sheikh Ahmad, son of Sheikh Hameed Pasha, visited Qudshanis. The mutassarif requested the patriarch to go to Tyari and collect taxes, while Dawid would go to Tkhuma for the same purpose.

October 14, 1909—We heard the wives of Sheikh Barazan of Zibar were detained by the mutassarif in Tkhuma. The government was requesting six thousand gold pieces from the villages of Tyari and two thousand from Tkhuma. Malik Barkhu begged the mutassarif for the wives of the sheikh. The mutassarif turned the wives over to the malik, who took them to his own house.

November 7, 1909—We heard that the mutassarif demanded thirty thousand gold pieces as compensation for burning four villages of Tyari from the emir. The emir claimed responsibility for ten homes, while the rest were burned by the other tribes.

November 21, 1909—Sheikh Barazan went to Tkhuma to receive his wives. He said that the Turkish government released him—thanks to intervention of the patriarch and the British consul.

November 24, 1909—Eighteen heads of sheep were offered in memory of my aunt and my grandmother. Today the Eucharist was celebrated for that occasion. Almost one thousand people from Qudshanis and other surrounding villages attended the service in which they received Holy Communion.

December 10, 1909—A written request by Mar Khnanishu to the patriarch was received with a plea to stop the Turkish government from conscripting Christians into its army.

December 11, 1909—A letter arrived from Mar Timatheus in India indicating that he was very sick and was distressed by his congregation's attitude, some of whom accused him of being Presbyterian.

December 12, 1909—We learned that Sheikh Barazan had again begun fighting against the Turkish government.

December 14, 1909—A letter, received from Nimrod Rassam to the patriarch, explained the importance of Mar Elia being sent to Alqosh so that the men would not lose hope.

Rev. Yosip (Joseph), who was ordained in Qudshanis, had converted to Catholicism. Names of the men who were with Mar Elia had not yet been registered with the government records office as members of the Church of the East, or "Nestorian," as the Catholics had named us.

December 15, 1909—Mar Benyamin provided a solution to the sheikh Qadir of Niri who had sought the patriarch's counsel on how to stop the conscription by the Turkish government of Assyrians and Kurds.

December 16, 1909—The Turkish government issued orders that Mar Elia was free to go.

December 20, 1909—Today, the patriarch left for Julamerk. A telegram arrived from the vali of Mosul complaining about the vali of Van because the people of Tkhuma were protecting Sheikh Barazan in their district, even though he was under the jurisdiction of the vali of Mosul.

Chapter Five

Selected Entries from the Journals of Lady Surma d'Mar Shimun: 1909 to 1915

Synopsis. Chapter five continues to reveal selected passages from Lady Surma's diaries. These passages have been selected to illustrate and provide firsthand testimony over the course of six years, from 1909 to 1915.

December 21, 1909—The army conscription had begun, with two battalions leaving from Mosul for Tkhuma. We hoped Sheikh Barazan would be safe. The sheikh had escaped to Tkhuma while the quaimaqam, accompanied by the mutassarif and an army, searched for him. The Tkhuma Assyrians disguised the sheikh in their traditional dress and brought him into the audience with the malik. The malik said to the quaimaqam, "As much as you see the sheikh, so do I."

December 24, 1909—The Hakkari Assyrians were distressed by the Turkish army conscription. People were now accusing the patriarch that while he could have influenced and stopped the conscription of the Assyrians by the Turkish government, he chose not to do so.

December 29, 1909—The patriarch received a telegram from the vali of Mosul indicating that Mar Elia should not go to Alqosh because a number of items must be investigated first.

December 31, 1909—A letter received from Mar Aprim indicated that he had returned from Tabriz because the Russian consul refused to issue him a visa.

January 1910—The patriarch sent a telegram to the vali of Mosul asking why Mar Elia was prohibited from returning to his home in Alqosh when the government had consented to his return.

January 9, 1910—The patriarch wanted to send two letters, one to the czar and the other to the Russian parliament, requesting that Mar Aprim be permitted to visit his congregation in Russia, similar to the practice of the Armenian bishops and other churches.

January 12, 1910—Mar Elia and Dr. Wigram stopped in Julamerk on their way to Alqosh and Mosul. Mar Elia carried with him letters from the patriarch to the Russian emperor and parliament. He would show them to quaimaqam, ensuring that the government did not have any objection before the letters were mailed.

January 13, 1910—The Turkish government showed no objection to the letters to the czar and parliament. One copy of each letter was requested for the government.

January 17, 1910—Today letters to the Russian emperor and parliament were sent by a messenger to Urmia.

January 20, 1910—The patriarch wrote to Mar Khnanishu honoring his request to send two telegrams to the Turkish government concerning military conscription.

January 28, 1910—Assyrian men from the village of Barwar came to the patriarch requesting his intervention with Turkish officials. This concerned an irregular and corrupt practice by the local Turks in Julamerk who were recording erroneous information in the official register. Typically, those who were of forty or more years old were exempt from military service, but Turkish officials in Julamerk were falsifying the ages of the registrants.

February 5, 1910—We heard today from the villagers of Tyari and Barwar that Mar Elia had reached Alqosh safely.

February 7, 1910—A letter was received from Mar Yahwala indicating that he would travel to Mosul in early May and lodge a complaint that the Catholics had usurped our churches by bribing Turkish officials.

February 12, 1910—The patriarch sent telegrams to the Turkish minister of religious affairs and to the valis of Mosul and Van regarding the expulsion of Mar Elia from Alqosh and return to Qudshanis.

February 17, 1910—The patriarch sent telegrams, concerning Mar Elia, to the Turkish minister of religious affairs and our representative in the Turkish parliament in Istanbul.

March 3, 1910—The patriarch sent a telegram from Julamerk concerning Mar Elia. He sent an additional letter to the British consul in Mosul requesting his help settling the case.

March 12, 1910—A telegram arrived from the vali to the patriarch indicating that he had sent a telegram to Istanbul regarding Mar Elia and was hopeful that a response had been returned to Mosul by now.

March 30, 1910—The Turkish government officials were sent to Dizan to collect two hundred gold pieces as taxation. Additionally, the government demanded from the patriarch that Qudshanis must pay taxes as well. The government had requested that the Tyari and Tkhuma leaders go to Julamerk. It was our belief that the government's request for the leaders' attendance in Julamerk concerned the payment of taxes, although this had not been confirmed to the patriarch.

April 1, 1910—A letter was received from Deacon Warda indicating that Mar Elia was in hiding. No word had been received from Istanbul.

April 7, 1910—Mar Elia and Deacon Warda arrived in Qudshanis. Mar Elia had secretly fled Mosul.

April 8, 1910—The patriarch wrote to the vali of Van and sent the letter with Khanu concerning Mar Elia's case. He would also write to England for the possibility of additional support.

April 12, 1910—A letter to the patriarch was received from Sheikh Taha, our representative in the Turkish parliament in Istanbul, indicating that permission had been granted and that the government identification cards would be changed for the members of the Church of the East and reissued in Mosul. This meant the men of Alqosh who were from the Church of the East would have their identification cards changed. Additionally, he advised that another bishop should be sent to Alqosh because according to the government official in Mosul, there were many in Alqosh who were angry with Mar Elia.

April 14, 1910—Deacon Warda was sent to Mosul to confirm that the identification cards of members of the Church of the East had been changed.

April 15, 1910—A man from Alqosh brought a letter to the patriarch requesting that if Mar Elia is delayed in going to Alqosh, then another bishop should be sent as their representative to the government.

May 28, 1910—The patriarch received a letter concerning the situation in the Lower Tyari region, stating that an agreement had been reached with the emirs. The chief method was coercion and pressure. Had they not agreed, they would be prohibited from grazing their sheep during the summer because the Kurds would kill the men and steal their flock.

June 2, 1910—We learned that a large number of Russian troops had entered Urmia. The patriarch requested through the quaimaqam that the government reduce their tax demand of two hundred gold pieces from the villagers of Dizan because they could not afford to pay that amount.

June 11, 1910—We received a telegram from Deacon Warda indicating that "the names of members of the Church of the East have not been entered in Mosul's government records."

June 13, 1910—A letter was received from the quaimaqam demanding one hundred fifty pieces of gold from Qudshanis as taxation.

June 14, 1910—The patriarch went to Julamerk concerning the taxation demanded from the tribes and from Qudshanis.

August 3, 1910—We learned that the government had taken eight flocks of sheep from Tyari in lieu of money. Additionally, two thousand head of sheep, money, arms, and other sundry items were looted from Tyari's grazing lands.

August 11, 1910—The patriarch received a telegram from the vali saying that he would send an official to investigate the incident in Tyari and would come to Qudshanis in a few days.

August 15, 1910—The Kurds looted Upper Tyari sheep.

August 16, 1910—A Turkish government inspector reported to the patriarch that the Tyari whose sheep were confiscated by the government must immediately pay three hundred gold pieces; otherwise, their sheep would be sold. The patriarch had intervened, requesting more time and a reduction in the amount as the Tyari villagers would have difficulty in paying the tax.

August 17, 1910—Orders were received that Qudshanis must pay seventy pieces of gold each year.

August 18, 1910—The patriarch sent telegrams to the vali requesting the stolen sheep be returned to Tyari and indicated that money was being collected to pay to the government.

August 20, 1910—We received word that the Kurds had looted seven hundred heads of sheep from Ashita.

August 24, 1910—The patriarch received a telegram from the vali, reporting that he had written to the mutassarif indicating that he would accept gold in lieu of the sheep, which were to be returned to Tyari. Now the government demanded six hundred pieces of gold from the sheep owners.

August 31, 1910—A letter was received from Mar Timatheus indicating that a few members of his congregation had raised charges against him with the Indian government. He complained about his congregation and indicated problems with his health.

September 6, 1910—The men from Tyari arrived in Bashqala and reported that milk-bearing sheep were returned by the government, while the ones too young to bear milk were sold by the government. The mutassarif of Bashqala indicated that this cruelty was not committed by the government but by the quaimaqam of Julamerk.

September 10, 1910—The Turkish government conscripted Assyrian men of Gawar into its army.

September 13, 1910—Mar Yahwalla was not able to go to Alqosh to replace Mar Elia. Mar Emmanuel, the Catholic patriarch, had brought charges against him in court concerning the churches in Lower Barwar, which had been officially returned to the Church of the East.

September 19, 1910—The Russian consul in Van wrote to the patriarch confirming that he had received orders from the Russian ambassador in Istanbul to grant a visa to Mar Aprim in order to visit Assyrian churches in Russia.

September 21, 1910—The Turkish government had not yet given permission to Episcopal missionaries to establish a school in Sar Amadia.

September 23, 1910—The government gave permission to the missionaries to teach in Bebeide as more suitable than Sar Amadia because a church already existed there.

September 27, 1910—Dr. William Ainger Wigram and Mr. Nisan brought forth the topic to the patriarch and Mar Elia about a decree concerning faith from England. The patriarch answered that before responding, there must be a council with our bishops and metropolitan.

October 1, 1910—A proposal was received requesting that half of the children from Bebeide attend school in Qudshanis as there was not enough available space to accommodate the students. Mar Aprim and Hormizd, the brother of the patriarch, went to Julamerk to obtain passports to travel to Russia.

October 10, 1910—Mar Aprim and Hormizd left for Russia. Mar Aprim was to visit our congregation in Russia, while Hormizd would go to Istanbul to attend university.

October 12, 1910—The vali of Mosul requested from the quaimaqam of Sar Amadia that the British not be granted rights to establish a school in Bebeide without the permission of the government. As a result, the school should remain in Qudshanis this year.

October 13, 1910—My brother Dawid returned from Gawar reporting that the Kurds had looted the villages and the government had placed guards throughout for their protection. The Kurds had threatened to burn the grasslands.

October 27, 1910—A letter from Mar Timatheus complained of his congregation. In a letter from the congregation, they requested a new metropolitan to be assigned by the patriarch.

October 28, 1910—Taher Pasha arrived in Mosul. He reprimanded the qaim- maqam of Sar Amadia and demanded that foreigners receive better treatment.

October 29, 1910—The patriarch wrote to Taher Pasha concerning the case of Mar Elia. Taher Pasha was one of our old friends from a relationship that was formed when he was the vali of Van.

November 1, 1910—The men of Khuzé village fled to Gangachen to escape the cruelty of the Kurds.

November 3, 1910—All books requested by Mar Timatheus were sent to him via England.

November 12, 1910—Three men from Alqosh came and reported that the Kurds looted the flocks from the village of Bebeide. It was suspected that the Catholics had influenced this to continue the unrest. We had received reports of disturbances in Urmia.

November 21, 1910—We learned that the Iranians and Turks had fought each other near Urmia.

November 23, 1910—The government representative wrote from Van to the patriarch that it had written to Mosul to change the names from "Nestorians" to members of the Church of the East.

November 30, 1910—Wigram again wrote to the patriarch stressing the topic of an arrangement with the Episcopalian Church to jointly receive communion from each other. He wanted to send a reply to the archbishop of Canterbury, but the patriarch responded that this could not be done without the bishops and metropolitan meeting first to evaluate the subject.

December 29, 1910—Mar Benyamin wrote to the Russian archimandrite in Urmia requesting information about the faith of the Orthodox Church. Likewise, we would write about our church.

December 30, 1910—Wigram again wrote to the patriarch with regard to the English Episcopal Church, concerning the reciprocation of Holy Communion by both congregations. The patriarch restated that the bishops and metropolitan must first meet to discuss this agreement.

January 1911—Wigram again wrote to the patriarch concerning the matter of Holy Communion.

January 9, 1911—A letter was received from Mar Timatheus complaining of his congregation who wanted to expel him. He also indicated that he was in ill health.

March 30, 1911—The patriarch wrote to Taher Pasha requesting his help in resolving the issue of Mar Elia.

March 31, 1911—A letter was received from Mar Aprim and my brother, Hormizd, from Urmia reporting the government ejected them from Russia.

April 4, 1911—The patriarch decreed that henceforth, it should be mandatory for all rectors to tutor at least ten students or pay thirty gold pieces to the school in Qudshanis. (This subject would be discussed in detail later. [*This last sentence was added by Theodore d'Mar Shimun and not part of the diary entry*].)

April 28, 1911—Sliwo was appointed to be a caretaker for the Mar Gewargis Church in Lower Tyari. He was the nephew of Yosip and the cousin of Khoshaba.

July 10, 1911—Looting continued in Ashita where seven thousand heads of sheep, one hundred fifty mules, eight men were killed, and a great many wounded.

August 30, 1911—The quaimaqam was threatening to take two thousand heads of sheep, and the men of Ashita had complained against this.

October 20 1911—A letter was received from Mar Timatheus indicating that one of the priests had attempted to kill him. Because of this, he was trying to leave India.

October 15, 1912—Unrest persisted in the country. The Kurds continued the killing and looting of villages. We learned today that war had begun between Turkey and Bulgaria. Two months ago, Italy and Turkey were at war in Libya, North Africa.

December 20, 1912—A letter was received from Hormizd reporting that gunfire was heard in Istanbul.

December 24, 1912—We learned that there might be peace between Turkey and Bulgaria.

January 23, 1913—A letter from Deacon Yosip Kelaita reported the people of Mawana and Korana districts were forced to convert to the Orthodox Church because our churches had been taken over.

March 1, 1913—We heard war had started between Turkey and Bulgaria.

May 1913—Kurds had begun ransacking, murdering, and looting the sheep in the village of Lewon. Billé was ransacked. Thousands of sheep of Ashita were robbed, and two men killed. Khoshaba was ransacked by Simko, the Kurdish tribal leader.

July 2, 1913—We heard the quaimaqam had sent seven guards to protect the patriarch, who was in Ashita.

July 29, 1913—The Turkish army was guarding the patriarch in Ashita.

January 14, 1914—Because of the continuing threat, travel was prohibited. We knew that the Russians had captured Bashqala, but today we heard that Jawdat

Pasha's troops had reclaimed it. This could not be confirmed, as rumors were rampant. The Kurds were afraid of the Russians, while we were afraid of Islam. The Turkish government supplied guns to the Kurds of Julamerk.

February 9, 1914—We heard that about three hundred men from Tkhuma came to the patriarch for the appointment of a malik and a lay rector. With them they brought the money that was owed for the village's taxes.

February 10, 1914—Sliwo was appointed the malik of Tkhuma and Dinkha as lay rector of Rabban Pethiun. The guests of Mar Benyamin in Julamerk had reached four hundred men.

May 3, 1914—We heard that His Grace Sergious, the Russia bishop in Urmia, had requested permission from the Turkish authority to travel to Qudshanis in order to meet with the patriarch.

May 27, 1914—The Turkish director of finance who had stolen sixty gold pieces from the allowance of Mar Benyamin Shimun came to the patriarchate, knelt before Mar Benyamin, and pleaded for forgiveness. The patriarch pardoned him.

July 1, 1914—The patriarch, accompanied by Mar Elia and Father Yosip (Joseph, later ordained metropolitan and given the title Mar Yosip Khnanishu), Zaya and Poulus (Paul) who were the twin brothers of the patriarch journeyed to Van to meet with the vali. The vali had requested a meeting with the patriarch because there was a matter he wished to discuss.

July 6, 1914—We heard that Turkey was organizing an army. We did not know with whom it would go to war. Our speculation was most probably Greece.

July 8, 1914—The patriarch returned from Van. The Turkish vali had received the patriarch with high honors, and a number of promises were given by the Turkish government.

August 7, 1914—European missionaries had received telegrams from the consul in Baghdad asking them to leave Turkey immediately.

August 8, 1914—In a letter Mar Elia told the patriarch that men were suffering due to the military conscription and were unable to afford the necessities. Most houses had been completely looted.

August 23, 1914—The patriarch, assisted by Bishops Mar Aprim, Mar Elia, and Mar Yahwalla, ordained Father Joseph to the order of bishop. The consecration was well organized. (This was the last consecration that was done in Qudshanis. [*This last sentence was added by Theodore d'Mar Shimun and not part of the diary entry*].)

August 28, 1914—Two men of Shamsdin reported several deserters from the Turkish army. They were robbed by Hakkari Kurds, and their sheep stolen.

September 1, 1914—My brother Zaya brought one hundred sheep from Dizan to pay the government, while the deacon Shlimon Shimunaya collected ninety sheep and six mules from Tal and the villages of Tkhuma. Assyrians were collecting sheep, all in response to the government's demand for aid.

September 16, 1914—Mar Yosip went to Tyari and Zaya to Tkhuma to collect aid for the government.

September 25, 1914—Bishop Mar Sargis of Jilu wrote to the patriarch informing him that the government was demanding six hundred men for military service.

September 26, 1914—The government was now demanding from the citizens socks and snowshoes for the army.

September 28, 1914—Zaya delivered to the government in Julamerk two hundred thirty sheep. An additional sixty more would be sent in an effort to pay the aid imposed by the government.

September 29, 1914—Mail delivery had ceased, and we had been cut off from any news. Similarly, our letters from Europe were not being delivered; therefore, we had no information how the war was progressing.

September 30, 1914—The bishop Mar Yosip Khnanishu came from Urmia but was unable to carry with him a letter. The missionaries had told him to inform us that England, France, and Russia were winning the war, and Turkey wanted to fight at the Iranian border. The Turkish government was confiscating everything. Shops were closed, which had created a scarcity of almost everything. That which was available was very expensive.

October 1, 1914—Deacon Yonathan (Jonathan) came from Van and said that Germany was doing well in the war.

October 5, 1914—We heard the Turkish government had sent ten loads of rifles to the son of Sheikh Qadir of Shamisdin. It was our speculation there would be fighting on the Iranian and Turkish border.

November 28, 1914—The Assyrians of Mar Bishu and Eel had escaped to Iran, as their property had been captured. The Assyrians of Nochiya had also escaped to Urmia, and their houses were given to Kurdish Begzadi, who had fled from the Russians. The Khnanishu family remained the lone Assyrians in Nochiya, but were living in extreme fear, the common condition among Assyrians.

Everything was very expensive. Little was available to buy, such as basic items like food or clothes. The Turkish government was confiscating everything that Christians and Muslims owned. Sixty loads of our wheat was confiscated in Gawar by the government. Mail was no longer delivered, and we received no news. All roads were closed. People were hungry and living in fear. Fighting on the Turkish and Iranian border continued between Russians and Turks. The government was arming the Kurds and disarming the Assyrians, even though we were loyal. May God have mercy upon us.

July 23, 1915—Deacon Gewargis reported that he had sent three messengers to Bebeide and had returned. They reported that the vali of Mosul had come with five thousand Turkish troops and ten thousand armed Kurds. They were prepared to attack Tyari, but the vali had received orders to go to Baghdad where fighting was heavy.

July 24, 1915—Mar Yosip Khnanishu and Shlimon came from Dizan to Mar Odishu. There was no news from Mar Benyamin who was in Iran to see the Russian general. We heard that the Kurds were forming an army.

July 25, 1915—Malik Barkhu wrote to me to call upon the men of Tkhuma and Upper Tyari to gather behind the Geemané Bridge because the Kurds were assembled there. I wrote to Malik Ismael and to the men of Tkhuma to help.

July 28, 1915—We heard that the men of Upper Tyari had attacked Sillayi and had looted their mules and cattle.

July 29, 1915—Daniel came from Dizan and said that there was no word from the patriarch.

July 30, 1915—We sent four men of Tkhuma through Dizan to look for the patriarch. We were not sure if they would reach him.

August 1, 1915—We heard that the Kurdish emir of Barwar was organizing an army.

August 2, 1915—We heard that the village of Arbush had been looted from the Tkhuma side.

August 3, 1915—We received a letter from my brother Dawid saying that four Assyrians of Tkhuma had been sent via Urmia to look for the patriarch.

August 4, 1915—The four men of Tkhuma had returned, but were unable to reach the patriarch.

August 5, 1915—The Assyrians were in distress due to the severe conditions of famine and fear. We still had not received any word from the patriarch.

August 6, 1915—A letter received from Malik Ismael indicated that they would build a bridge to reach the Russians because the Turkish army was preparing to attack Tyari. We sent Mar Yosip and Shlimon to stop Malik Ismael until such time that we had heard from Mar Benyamin.

Father Daniel, of Baz, wrote that three men of Tyari came and told us of great rejoicing in Dizan because the Tyari said they had heard the patriarch would arrive in Guranis with the Russian army.

August 7, 1915—I received a letter from the patriarch saying that he was waiting for Mar Yahwala and Khoshaba, whom he had sent to Tabriz to see the consul for the allies, but he had not heard from them yet. Because of the delay, he said, he may go himself to Tabriz.

August 8, 1915—My brothers, Zaya and Poulus, left for Qudshanis and took with them three hundred men because word was received that the Kurds had dug up the coffins of the patriarchs in Mar Shalita Church.

August 9, 1915—The Assyrian nation was suffering from famine. Abraham, of Aina d' Nuni, wrote to me indicating that the Turkish army had not increased as it had before; however, the country was full of refugees.

August 14, 1915—I received a letter from one of the villages of Baz complaining that the villagers were not sharing the responsibility of guard duty. I wrote to the tribal leaders of Baz for help. I received a letter from Dawid saying that the villagers of Jilu had left for Dizan

August 15, 1915—The Assyrians of Baz were requesting armaments. I wrote to Dawid asking him what to do with the remaining ammunition.

August 18, 1915—In a letter Dawid indicated that he had not heard from the patriarch. I received a letter from Malik Barkhu saying they had heard a bridge was being built at Bilbil.

August 20, 1915—Malik Barkhu wrote to me and enclosed a letter he had received, which said that armed forces again were gathering to attack Assyrians.

August 24, 1915—In a letter Father Daniel of Baz indicated they were ready to defend Julamerk because the Assyrians of Tkhuma had written to the reverend claiming that Sutu, the Kurdish warlord, was preparing to attack us. He also said the nation was in much distress as there was no word from the patriarch.

August 27, 1915—From Dawid's letter, we learned that the Kurds attacked the village of Dizan at night. They had killed forty of our people, while twenty of the Kurds were killed. The men of d'Mar Shimun family and Dizan fought bravely, but not so the men of Jilu. The patriarch had reached the church in Albaq, and we hoped he would arrive soon to respond to the distress of the Assyrian nation.

August 29, 1915—We heard that the leaders of Tkhuma and Baz, together with Malik Barkhu, had met in Khani. They had written to the vali and the German consul in Mosul.

September 2, 1915—The Kurds arrived complaining that the Assyrians of Baz killed two of their men. I wrote to the leaders of Baz to investigate this case. Kurds and Assyrians were attacking each other. Daily, people were killed and the country was in turmoil and disarray.

Here ends the passages of Lady Surma d'Mar Shimun's journal entries of which I selected daily accounts from my aunt's diaries. The purpose for this is so that each reader of this history could have a perspective of the daily life and struggles that our nation endured, both internally as Assyrians and externally among the Turks and Kurds. The European missionaries came to our homelands under the guise of Christianity, but most were representing their own government's political agendas.

Please refer to the appendix**,** which contains two letters written by the lady Surma d'Mar Shimun that further depict the conditions of the time.

The period of Patriarch Mar Benyamin Shimun was harsh for us because Europe was preparing for a World War, with Turkey being drawn into it. As Christians, we were left alone in Turkey, while the Turkish government was arming the Kurds against us. This struggle became a religious and an ethnic one from the moment the missionaries came to the region.

Chapter Six

The First World War and Our Exodus to Iran

Synopsis. This chapter deals with painful events that occurred during the patriarchate of Mar Benyamin Shimun, the first of the last three patriarchs of the d'Mar Shimun family, who was followed by his brother Mar Poulus and then by his nephew Mar Eshai (Jesse).

Mar Benyamin Shimun, the son of Eshai, was ordained metropolitan on March 15, 1903, by his uncle Mar Rowil. On March 29, 1903, Mar Rowil passed away from this earthly life into the eternal one. On April 12, 1903, Palm Sunday, in Qudshanis, Mar Benyamin was ordained into the Holy Order of Patriarch Catholicos by Metropolitan Mar Iskhaq (Issac) and Bishop Mar Istapanus (Stephen).

Mar Benyamin Shimun Catholicos-Patriarch, XXI

Mar Benyamin was only sixteen years old when he was ordained patriarch. His age belied his wisdom for his maturity and intelligence exceeded that of most adults. He was known to be handsome, brave, honest, and discerning; sincere in passing judgments and did not differentiate among Assyrians, Turks, or Kurds in his rulings. Justice always prevailed regardless of whether the individual was Christian or Muslim, Assyrian, Turkish, or Kurdish. The Kurds had faith in his legal decisions and respected his words. Twice he brought peace to two Kurdish tribes that had been fighting each other bitterly. His strength of character and powerful influence were felt by all who met him. He was a loyal subject of the Turkish government and a man of integrity who never curried favor, nor did he ever need to.

During his administration, a number of our Kurdish neighbors made false accusations to the Ottoman authorities against Assyrians in general and Patriarch Mar Benyamin in particular, with the intention of turning the government against us. These Kurds were not representative of the Kurdish people in general. There are both good and bad individuals amongst the world's ethnicities.

In 1914, as the First World War was about to erupt, the Turkish vali of Van invited Mar Benyamin to his city. The patriarch was accompanied by two of his brothers, the twins Zaya and Poulus. Included in the delegation were Bishop Mar Elia, Father Yosip, and a number of servants. The vali received the patriarch with great honor and respect according to the customs that prevailed for a patriarch.

The vali informed the patriarch that the Ottoman government was prepared to give him ten thousand gold pieces each year to establish schools in the Assyrian villages. This would make the schools that European and American missionaries had established less appealing. The vali further promised the patriarch that he could organize his own police force to protect his people from any acts of aggression or discrimination coming from Turks or Kurds. He presented gifts of silver to the men accompanying the patriarch with similar gifts of silver to be delivered to all of the maliks back in their villages. The situation was tense; it was obvious that a major war was at hand. The gifts could not be delivered to the maliks. The patriarch feared that if he invited them to Qudshanis to collect their gifts, the Kurds might misconstrue his summons, branding it a call to join in revolt against the government. Instead, the patriarch decided the gifts should be hidden until the end of the anticipated war, and would be given to the maliks upon restoration of peace. Alas, we had no idea we would never return to Qudshanis. We believed the Kurds probably found the maliks' gifts.

In the summer of 1914, as the Ottoman government was preparing for war, it requested the patriarch to provide material aid and support from the Assyrian tribes. The patriarch sent Bishop Mar Yosip to Tyari to investigate. Mar Yosip was newly ordained and had no experience in dealing with the tribes, so the patriarch had Emmanuel of Qudshanis, a learned scholar, and Archdeacon Thoma (Thomas) of Ashita, a man of influence in Tyari and highly experienced in dealing with the tribes, to accompany Mar Yosip. The patriarch also sent his brother the Honorable Zaya to Tkhuma for the same purpose.

When bishop Mar Yosip, Emmanuel of Qudshanis, and Archdeacon Thoma reached the villages of Tyari, they found that many refused to contribute their share of material aid, which was to have been in the form of sheep.

"You want us to give aid to the Turks to help them fight against the Russians?

Why should we do this? This has nothing to do with us."

Even when a village consented and twenty sheep were collected, by the time the patriarch's delegates reached the next village, the twenty sheep dwindled to no more than seven or eight. The rest had been stolen.

When confronted with villagers who refused to participate in the war effort, Archdeacon Thoma grew angry and suggested to Bishop Mar Yosip that he consider excommunicating those who would not contribute their assessment.

Overhearing this comment, a local man asked, "Rabbi, why would you excommunicate us for not giving sheep to the Turks?"

Emmanuel of Qudshanis turned to Mar Yosip. "My lord, try to act angry, otherwise they will continue to defy you."

"Emmanuel, I have no anger."

The learned man replied, "Glory to the Creator. If there were no need for anger, God would not have created it. Man must use anger only in time of need. Jesus, the Son of God, made a scourge of ropes and drove out all those who were buying and selling in the temple. Anger was necessary at that time. If you are not angry, it is not necessary to counter the people's defiance. Let us return to Qudshanis. Nothing will come of our task here."

In spite of such widespread resistance, the group did manage to collect several hundred sheep and deliver them to the government in Julamerk.

At the same time, the patriarch's brother the Honorable Zaya was busy collecting aid in the villages of Tkhuma. One morning, as he was washing his face in a stream, he saw a woman approaching with a bag on her back. She asked him if he was indeed the patriarch's brother. He replied that he was.

The woman flew into a rage. "Do you think I don't know why you're here?" "I have no idea what you're talking about, my good woman."

Continuing her outburst, the woman accused the patriarch of giving their sheep to the government in order to increase its disbursements for the patriarchal see. These examples illustrate the culture and conditions of the period and the mindset among our people. Because their entire experience lay within their village, they did not understand that their country, the Ottoman Empire, was at war and needed help. They did not recognize that we were Turkish subjects and had an obligation to the country which included performing military service. They thought the fact that Turkey was fighting Russia had nothing to do with us Assyrians. Many villagers from Upper Barwar immigrated to Russia, while many from Nochiya moved to Iran, in both cases to escape the draft. There was the belief in the villages that the Patriarch Mar Benyamin, could have simply revoked the Turkish demands had he wished to. It was no surprise that the woman at the stream held him responsible for matters outside his control.

After the promising meeting with the vali of Van, in which the government committed itself to providing funds for Assyrian schools and to respecting the Assyrian right to self-defense, a faction within the Assyrian nation objected to this rapprochement and did everything it could to sabotage the positive relationship between the patriarch and the government. Tragically, they were successful.

On one occasion, Agha Potros's men sought out three Turkish officials. They pretended they were servants of the patriarch and that they were going to force Turks out of the country. They instigated a brawl and attempted to grab the Turks' weapons and make off with them.

Similar falsehoods were fabricated, and incidents instigated to create rifts and distrust between the patriarchate and the government. The most serious incident arose from the action of Younatan Shawil (Jonathan Saul) Kelaita,[13] of Mar Bisho, who lived in Qudshanis. (This is the first time that any member of our family has spoken publicly about his story, and it saddens me to do so, however it has already appeared in Rab Trama Yakoub [Jacob] Malik Ismael's book and is a matter of public record. I am reluctantly compelled to mention his name and the reason for which he was killed.)

Younatan Shawil Kelaita was an intelligence agent for the Ottoman Empire, receiving a monthly salary of three gold pieces for his reports. He kept track of when and which tribal leaders were visiting the patriarch and forwarded his reports to the authorities. On this day, he traveled to Julamerk, seat of the quaimaqam, an Ottoman

[13] Younatan Shawil d'Kelaita was Nimrud's nephew (son of his sister Esther) and lived with the Nimrud family in the village of Khananis and/or Qudshanis.

official. There he duplicated the patriarchal seal and forged a letter from the patriarch to the Russian general then in Salamis or Khoi. The letter was a request for Russian military aid to help the Assyrians against the Turks. After writing and sealing this letter, he went to a small Armenian village of Pageh on the outskirts of Julamerk and entered a house where a woman was baking bread. He took a fresh loaf of bread, split it, and put the letter inside. Returning to Julamerk, he met a man from the village of Barwar and told him Patriarch Mar Benyamin wanted this letter delivered to the Russian general as soon as possible. He gave the man a gold coin and said that it was from the patriarch, to pay for his travel expenses. It was unheard of for anyone to refuse a patriarchal order. This man had no reason to doubt the request's authenticity and accepted his task in good faith. He took the gold coin and the loaf containing the letter and went to find the Russian general. A few hours later, Younatan Shawil informed the authorities that a servant of Patriarch Mar Benyamin Shimun was carrying a letter hidden in a loaf of bread, containing a request for Russian aid in deposing the Turks. The unsuspecting messenger was searched and the authorities did indeed uncover the letter. The innocent man, who was duped to begin with, was killed. The letter was sent to the vali of Van. When he saw that the patriarch had repaid his respect, cooperation, generosity, and trust with treachery, he was naturally beside himself with rage. Rather than doing anything rash, however, he sent for Bishop Mar Elia, who had met him along with others in the patriarch's delegation and who was living in Van himself, and showed him the letter. Mar Elia mistook the counterfeited patriarchal seal for the true one and told the vali that it was indeed the patriarchal seal, but he did not agree that Mar Benyamin would ever betray his word, that he could never have written such a letter.

As a result of Younatan Shawil's treachery, the Turks incited the Kurds to attack and kill Assyrians living in the villages of Gawar and Albaq. In addition, the villages of Upper Barwar were looted and burned. Hundreds of men and boys were killed; hundreds of women and girls were taken captive, and Assyrians and Turks embarked on a path of mutual destruction.

About ten thousand overwrought and distressed villagers who had survived these attacks, Assyrians of Upper Barwar and Armenians of Pagi and Bashqala, fled to Qudshanis. Their food supplies had almost completely run out, forcing them to dig for wild roots in order to survive.

The village of Jilu, home to a very large tribe, had also been attacked, and its people fled to Dizan. Famine prevailed there as well.

Our family had taken a thousand sheep, sixteen mules, two horses, and one mare with us to Barwar, and when we moved to Dizan, we took two hundred sheep. One hundred and thirty of them were given to the people of Jilu, but that was not enough for such a large tribe.

Our family had heard rumors about Younatan Shawil, but found it impossible to believe that he could have done such a terrible thing. Finally, after our escape to Salamis, where we were met by the Armenians and Mar Elia, we learned the whole story from the bishop, including how the enraged vali of Van had shown him the letter and confirming that he himself had read it. Only then did we believe that Younatan Shawil had betrayed his patriarch and his people. Up until that moment, we simply could not fathom an Assyrian could commit such an atrocious act and be responsible for the deaths of so many innocent men, women, and children, for the looting of their property, and the loss of our ancestral lands.

Several months after this incident, a number of tribal leaders and notables learned of Younatan Shawil's role as a Turkish spy, his duplication of the patriarchal seal, and his falsified letter resulting in his attempt to incite the Turkish authorities against us. They demanded his execution. Mar Benyamin opposed immediate retribution. The current situation, with both Turks and Kurds attacking us, demanded his full attention, and dealing with Younatan Shawil could wait until the crisis abated. Besides, Younatan Shawil's case needed further investigation before action could be taken. All the facts about it were not yet known.

The crisis was escalating moment by moment, the country in terrible upheaval and chaos. In the midst of all this, a large number of fighters from Upper and Lower Tyari, Tkhuma, Baz, and Dizan were granted a meeting with Patriarch Mar Benyamin in Dizan, where they suggested that, for its own safety, the patriarchal family travel

south and settle in Upper Tyari. The entire Assyrian population of Barwar, Jilu, and Dizan were dying of hunger, and the group proposed raiding sheep from the Kurdish Sharapnayi villages, three hours from the valley of Qudshanis. Because it was a matter of life and death, Mar Benyamin had no choice but to approve the raid.

Approximately three hundred men attacked the Sharapnayi villages and made off with almost three thousand sheep for the starving people of Dizan. As they neared Qudshanis, however, eight men separated from the group. They took a few sheep into that town (Khananis) and went to the home of Patriarch Mar Benyamin's uncle Nimrod, who had not been on speaking terms with the rest of the d'Mar Shimun family, including the patriarch, for some time. The eight men claimed to be representing Mar Benyamin, who wanted to reconcile him and our family, at which Nimrod invited them to dine with his household. After dinner the eight told him to bring his family to the patriarchal home to discuss the reconciliation. Accompanied by the eight, they all set off for the patriarchal see even though none of the d'Mar Shimuns were in residence there. As they approached, the eight surrounded them, tied their hands behind their backs, and shot all but two of them who escaped, thanks to our servant Warda, originally from the Salabank Valley, and our cook Layya, originally from Thkuma.

Warda rescued Deacon Shlimon's son Iskhaq by single-handedly taking on the entire eight men. Layya snatched Nimrod's third son Spania, who was about fourteen years old, from their hands, rushed him inside, and hid him in a breadbox. The killers searched for him in vain.

It wasn't until some time later --after our move to Tyari in February 1915-- that our family heard of the killing of Nimrod and his family, although naturally Patriarch Mar Benyamin had been informed of it almost immediately. My mother, Esther, and my aunt Romi were so devastated by this news that they were unable to eat for days. I was only a child of seven then, but I still remember watching my uncle Eshaya, a valiant young man of nineteen, pacing in the garden of Malik Ismael's house, mourning our loss and crying bitterly. Nimrod's children were cousins of Patriarch Mar Benyamin**,** and his brothers and sisters were all raised together as one family. Years later, when I was at school in Mosul, studying the Old Testament with Father Thoma, I recalled my uncle Eshaya's anguish over the deaths of Nimrod, Shalita, Yuow, and his other children as I read of King David's own grief at the deaths of King Showil, Younatan, and Absalom.

After killing Nimrod and his family, the eight men went to Dizan, and two of them went to pay their respects to Patriarch Mar Benyamin. The patriarch was furiously pacing the room, barely able to contain himself.

"How dare you come into my presence and face me after committing such a vicious crime? Who was behind you? Who put you up to this? You said you were getting sheep to save our people from starvation. Instead you went and murdered, murdered your own host and his family, set a trap for him, tricked him, killed him and his children. Is this right before God? What will you say to Him? How will you answer Him? Have you no thought of His Day of Wrath?"

In spite of Mar Benyamin's anger, he was unable to take any action, paralyzed as he was because of the terrible onslaught against his entire people and the need to preserve unity among them. If he had taken action against the eight, there would have been trouble from those tribes who approved of their attack. Mar Benyamin thought it best to postpone dealing with the eight men until after things had settled down.

There is more to say on this topic, but I cannot continue as it is a very sad subject.

It was decided our family would be sent to Malik Ismael's house in Upper Tyari, where we would be safer than in Qudshanis. The evening of Sunday, January 31, 1915, Patriarch Mar Benyamin told his family to prepare to leave for Tyari the next morning.

Early on the morning of Monday, February 1, 1915, we set off from Qudshanis for Upper Tyari, accompanied by approximately hundred and fifty men from Tyari and Dizan. At noon, halfway to Tyari, the Dizan fighters, Mar Benyamin, and his three brothers Dawid, Poulus, and Eshaya left us to return to Dizan. My uncle Eshaya, continued with us on our trek to Tyari and stayed with us there for three months before rejoining the others in

Dizan. The patriarch's brother Hormizd was then at school in Istanbul. The Ottoman government arrested him and brought him to Mosul as a hostage. The vali of Mosul, Haydar Beg, sent a message to Mar Benyamin, telling him that unless he surrendered, Hormizd would be killed.

Patriarch Mar Benyamin replied, "Hormizd is my brother. My people are all my sons and daughters in Christ. Better I sacrifice my own brother, dear though he is, than the entire nation, who are my many, many sons and daughters in Christ."

Hormizd was killed, hanged publicly in Mosul, with his body left in full view all day.[14]

At the same time that Haydar Beg and his Turkish army were organizing the Kurdish tribes to attack Tkhuma, Patriarch Mar Benyamin was raising an army of Assyrian tribesmen to defend it. He chose his younger brother Eshaya for this task, sending him first to Tal, where we were staying in the Mar Odishu Church, to tell us that he would soon be there and to give him a chance to rest for the night before proceeding to Tkhuma to organize the tribes for war. Eshaya left Dizan at sunset to avoid Kurdish roadblocks and arrived in Tal at four o'clock the next afternoon. We were overjoyed to see him a couple of hours later. He had taken time to bathe in the frigid river before presenting himself to us. Unfortunately, that very evening he began to run a high fever, showing symptoms of pneumonia. There were no doctors in the area and very little medical supplies, so my mother and my aunt Romi cared for him the best they could.

Twice during this same period, Patriarch Mar Benyamin met with the Russian general in Iran, but we were offered no hope of Russia's intervention on behalf of the Assyrians against the Turks and Kurds. The second visit, however, did yield some Russian military aid in the form of two hundred rifles. When the patriarch returned to Dizan, he saw Kurdish tribes attacking the village of Madiz. The Kurds had attacked at midnight, and by sunrise bullets were raining from the surrounding hills and mountains, which they successfully seized. Every man joined the fray, including Patriarch Mar Benyamin, his brothers Dawid, Poulus, Eshaya, and Zaya, as well as the other men in the party. One man, however, took his time to join in. That was Zaya, who refused to join the battle until he had found his missing sock. He did not go out until he had found the missing sock, as he was afraid that his brothers would joke and say that it was due to his fear that he had come with one sock. Even if he were to be killed, he could not fight alongside his brothers with a missing sock. Eighty-five years earlier, Mar Benyamin's grandfather and his brothers had fought the Kurdish emirs and their men. Now Mar Benyamin and his own brothers were carrying on their struggle, defending the Assyrian nation by force of arms. Though outnumbered, they defeated the Kurds at Madiz, killing nineteen of them, while sixty Assyrian men, women, and children were fatally wounded.

Patriarch Mar Benyamin and his brothers also managed to save a number of the region's villages and rescue the refugees from Jilu, who had been under attack.

Five years later, in 1920, a man from Julamerk was visiting my father and my uncle Zaya. He told them that he had been there on that night of the full moon. He had been in a group of villagers watching the battle.

"We saw you laughing at a heavyset man with a beard. He was going into the water, and you were splashing him. We had no idea who he was."He turned out to be Bishop Mar Zaya Sargis of Jilu.

[14] A series of articles detailing these events was published in Nineveh Magazine (v. 48, n. 4, 2023; v. 49, n. 1, 2024; v. 49, n. 2, 2024): *"My Brother is But One: The Brief Life of Hormizd d'Mar Shimun (1889-1915),"* by Christopher R. Nelson.

Sometime later, combined Turkish and Kurdish forces under the command of the vali of Mosul, Haidar Beg, attacked the Thkuma village. It was a fierce and bitter battle, with many lives lost. Eventually, they were defeated. It was that same day Eshaya, the brother of Patriarch Mar Benyamin's, succumbed to pneumonia. We Mar Shimun children had taken refuge in the monastery of Mar Odishu with Archdeacon Thoma, my mother, and my aunt Romi, the only adults with us at that time.

While we were mourning Eshaya's death, a messenger from Patriarch Mar Benyamin arrived, informing us that the patriarch and his brother Dawid had reached Tal, and that we were to leave immediately because most of the people of Tal and Tkhuma had already fled. We replied to the patriarch saying that we couldn't leave until we had given his brother Eshaya a proper burial according to the rites of our church. Mar Benyamin sent a second message ordering us to leave at once and assuring us that he and Dawid would come to the monastery and see Eshaya. If the patriarch had not insisted on our departure, we would have been captured by the Turks and Kurds when they took over the Church of Mar Odishu.

On June 20, 1915, Tyari was conquered by the Turkish and Kurdish forces, and we fled to Dadoosh, where we stayed approximately two weeks. Then we returned to the Mar Odishu Monastery in Tal. Apart from getting two hundred rifles from the Russian general in Iran, the Assyrian people were completely on their own against a much larger force of the Ottoman army and their Kurdish allies.

About that same time, the patriarch ordered the people of Tyari and Tkhuma, including the people of Dizan and the remaining members of other tribes, to leave their villages and head for Qutranis, where they would be relatively safe. The tribes of Upper Barwar, Gawar, Albaq, and Jilu had already escaped to Bashqala in Iran, where they were under the protection of the Russian army. Once all the people of Tyari and Tkhuma had gathered in Qutranis, both groups would proceed to Bashqala to join the Russian forces. The entire Assyrian nation would be together there. Getting there was a great challenge, for the Kurds held the mountains behind the town of Qutranis and opened fire on us as we made our way up the steep and narrow roads. After a brief battle, the Kurds were defeated, and the nation arrived successfully in Bashqala.

Our people reached Iran exhausted and hungry, ill clothed, and with no food supplies. No doctors were present, and scarlet fever broke out among the refugees, with dozens dying every day. Patriarch Mar Benyamin begged the Russian officials for a hospital and humanitarian aid. The Russian government proposed that the Assyrian nation be dispersed in Urmia, Khoi, and Salamis. Grand Duke Nicholas, the czar's uncle and commander-in-chief of the Russian forces on the Turkish border, invited the patriarch to his headquarters in Tiflis.

Chapter Seven

1916-1918, Events Leading up to and Following the Assassination of Patriarch Mar Benyamin Shimun in Iran

Synopsis. This chapter continues to provide an overview of Mar Benyamin's work and his efforts to secure a safe and peaceful outcome for the Assyrians, as well as his practical attempts at the formation of an Assyrian army. This chapter details the creation of a coalition with the Russian Empire and notes recognition of the Assyrians role as well as disastrous advice of the missionary that resulted in the assassination of Mar Benyamin.

Mar Benyamin arrived in Tiflis to meet Grand Duke Nicholas on January 4, 1916. He was greeted by a telegram from the czar himself expressing the hope that "both you and your nation will soon be restored to your homes in triumph."[15] Mar Benyamin asked that the Russian Empire provide funds for a hospital for the refugees in Khoi, Salamis, and Urmia. His appeal was answered by a telegram arriving on May 7, which provided a monthly allotment of six rubles to each Assyrian refugee in Iran, with the money distributed by three Assyrian representatives appointed by the patriarch, each representing one of the refugee centers.

In 1916, the Russians were contemplating a military campaign with the goal of capturing Mosul. That summer Russian engineers and officers accompanied Mar Benyamin as he raised a two-thousand-man army. They were checking how adequate the local roads would be for a full-scale Russian drive to Mosul. The patriarch's new army successfully attacked Uramar and Chal on the way to Tkhuma. The Russian engineers and officers were impressed with Assyrian fighting skills and bravery and recommended them for imperial medals. In June 1916, Agha Potros approached Mar Benyamin because he felt that he deserved a Russian medal for his participation in the Tkhuma campaign. Mar Benyamin had great affection for Agha Potros and promised that he would bring the matter up with General Chernozubov the next time they met. The general had been the Russian ambassador to Iran in the years before the war. A month later, the general invited the patriarch for lunch at his headquarters in Sharafkhana and asked him to bring along the maliks so that he could personally hand over two hundred rifles for them on behalf of the Russian Empire. After lunch, in a private session with the general, Mar Benyamin brought up the subject of Agha Potros's desire for a medal. The general had long been acquainted with Agha Potros's activities, for he had been informed of them by the Russian consul in Urmia and by Kurdish and Iranian leaders as well. He was surprised to hear of the request.

"You're requesting that the czar honor a common bandit?"

Mar Benyamin was equally surprised. He believed the general's informants had been feeding him false information.

Once before, in 1914, Patriarch Mar Benyamin had requested an honor for Agha Potros, that time nominating him as the Assyrian people's representative in the national parliament in Istanbul. The Turkish government rejected the nomination and declined to state a reason for their decision.

In the summer of 1916, the patriarch was once again disappointed in his efforts to grant Agha Potros proper recognition of his services to the Assyrian nation.

[15] Surma d'bait Mar Shimun, *Assyrian Church Customs and the Murder of Mar Shimun*.

Five months passed, and on January 3, 1917, Mar Benyamin left Salamis for Urmia in order to meet with General Simonyov and receive the Order of St. Anna, but more importantly, to raise an army of three thousand men. The Russians had urged him to establish a modern and disciplined army, for they were soon to pull out of the region, and we would be left to fend for ourselves. The Turks, Iranians, and Kurds were all threatening our survival. The patriarch agreed with his Russian advisors and set out to create an army with three units of a thousand men each (one unit of Assyrians from the mountains, one unit of Assyrians from Iran, and one unit of Armenians) in addition to the fifteen hundred well-trained men already under arms, a thousand in Khosrawa, Salamis, and five hundred men in Qalasar. Patriarch Mar Benyamin wanted to raise a similar force in Urmia. Once this four-thousand-five-hundred-strong army was in place, it could be deployed to conflict zones at a moment's notice. Although this would be an Assyrian and Armenian army, and the Russians would be withdrawing from the area, General Simonyov proposed that Colonel Kuzmin, a Russian count, be appointed commander in chief of the Salamis and Urmia forces. In spite of his best efforts and General Simonyov's approval and encouragement, the patriarch was unable to raise his army because of opposition both from American Presbyterian missionaries and from criminal elements within the Assyrian community.

The missionaries, namely, Dr. William Ambrose Shedd, were fearful that if such an organized army did exist, the influence and power of the patriarch would increase and therefore jeopardize the conversion to the Presbyterian faith. Others feared that if this proposed organized army was formed, the towns, villages, and roads would be controlled through the army, and smuggling, killing, and looting would cease. The threat to this faction's personal profit was great.

In her book, Lady Surma wrote of the family's perception that it "was a great relief when Capt. George Gracey, a staff member of the British military mission in the Caucasus led by Gen. Offley Shore, joined us in Urmia and delivered a speech in the presence of Patriarch Mar Benyamin, the American consul, the missionary Shedd, and representatives of the Persian Red Cross". In his speech, Britain came close to formally recognizing Assyria as an ally of Great Britain. The U.S. government, represented by Captain McDowell, supported Colonel Gracey's position and pressed for an Assyrian-Kurdish alliance in support of Anglo-American war efforts in the region. Mar Benyamin was reluctant to comply with their request as he had no confidence in Simko's integrity, but he felt compelled to support the Anglo-American alliance and hence went along with their scheme, though he did not go to meet with Simko until February of 1918. The d'Mar Shimun family was even more opposed to such a meeting, for they had well-justified fears for the patriarch's safety.

In the summer of 1917, Patriarch Mar Benyamin proposed to the three thousand Tkhuma Assyrians remaining in Khoi that they would do well to join the rest of their people now in Salamis. He told them that it would be easy to get to Salamis since the Russian troops were still controlling the roads. Once the Russians left Iran, however, travel would be difficult and possibly even dangerous, so they would do well to seize the moment and proceed to Salamis while they still could. The American Presbyterian missionary Dr. Hubert Packard was opposed to this consolidation of forces and sent Father Hanna to convince the Tkhuma Assyrians that the Iranian government was behind them and would protect them. The efforts of Packard and Father Hanna were successful, and the Assyrian decision to remain in Khoi proved disastrous for our people. Although he had fought valiantly against Turkish aggression and was planning to raise an army joining the Anglo-American alliance against the Turks, Patriarch Mar Benyamin was a friend of the Turkish government and had no agenda against it. He was also a friend of the Iranian government, grateful for Iran's hospitality, and vocal in its defense if any Assyrian complained against our host country.

"I am amazed to hear what you say. Don't you know that we're guests here, that the Iranians have opened their home to us? They've accepted us into their midst since we arrived two years ago. Where else could we have gone? Where could we go now? What would become of us deprived of their hospitality? I have no complaints, no complaints at all. The government of Iran is a friend. When the war is over, God willing, before too long, I will personally thank the Persian government for their hospitality.

If necessary, I'll go to Tehran myself to thank the shah for welcoming us and giving us a peaceful sanctuary during these long years of war."

In spite of Patriarch Mar Benyamin's assurances, fear gripped the Assyrian people and our family in particular, especially after the Russian army's departure from Urmia, Salamis, and Khoi. Mar Benyamin, however, was determined to show confidence in the Iranian government and people; so when the judge of Dileman, a town in Salamis, invited him for dinner, he accepted the invitation in spite of our misgivings. We urged him to decline the invitation because of the deterioration of the relationship between us and the Iranians. The relationship had come to such a point that we feared foul play on the part of his host. Mar Benyamin, however, was adamant on the importance of doing everything possible to maintain friendship with Iran and set off for the judge's home on foot, accompanied by only one servant. The family couldn't help waiting for him, and when he returned close to midnight, he was quite irritated at our fears for his safety, saying there was no reason to anticipate retribution from any Iranian.

Although the Russians had departed, they still wished to show their gratitude for the Assyrian ferocity in fighting the Kurdish-Turkish forces in Hakkari the year before; and on November 25, 1917, two hundred St. George medals, grade four, were delivered to Patriarch Mar Benyamin to distribute to fighters who had shown valor at that time. In addition, the patriarch was decorated with the Order of St. Anna and promised an additional order, one so important that only the czar himself could bestow it. Unfortunately, the October Revolution prevented his receiving the second decoration. We come now to a day-by-day account of the events preceding and following Patriarch Mar Benyamin's assassination on Saturday, March 16, 1918.

On February 15, Rev. Dr. Packard, bringing with him Rabbi Mishail, arrived from Khoi in Kuinashahr, about three miles west of Khosrawa. They met with the Kurdish leader Simko. As stated above, Captain Gracey of the British military mission in the Caucasus had earlier urged Patriarch Mar Benyamin to form an anti-Turkish alliance with the Kurds and to meet with Simko for this purpose. The very next morning, a letter from Simko requesting a meeting with Mar Benyamin in Kuinashahr to discuss the proposed alliance was delivered.

Patriarch Mar Benyamin accepted the invitation and prepared to set off at once in his carriage, accompanied by one hundred fifty armed horsemen. Many people pleaded with him to reconsider, among them Armenians, Assyrians, and his own brother Dawid, commander in chief of the Assyrian forces.

"If you're afraid, don't come with me," the patriarch told his brother. "I'm concerned about your safety, not mine," replied Dawid. "If you insist on going to this meeting, I will be with you."

According to Lady Surma d'Mar Shimun's account, it was about 4:00 p.m. when two mounted messengers broke the news of the patriarch's assassination. At first, we simply refused to believe it. It wasn't until one of the Russian officers, Major Kondriatov, told us about this dreadful crime. He recounted the horrific details as one of the few surviving witnesses of this vicious attack.

As Mar Shimun drove up to the house in Kuinashahr, where he was to meet with Simko, we saw that there were many men with rifles on the house roofs, but we considered that they had just gone up to see us. Simko came out to meet the patriarch, received him with all honour, and conducted him into the house, where they drank tea together. Mar Shimun spoke with the utmost frankness to the Agha with Simko about peace, saying, "I assure you in all honesty, that we have not the least intention of doing any harm in Persia, or of carving out a place for ourselves in it. We only wish to defend ourselves from the attacks of the Turks," and so on. Simko then replied,

asserting his complete agreement with the idea, and the patriarch rose to depart. Simko escorted him to the gate, and kissed his hand, and his horsemen were ready to conduct us on our way. Mar Shimun and I then took our seats in the carriage, when suddenly a shot was fired at him; this was followed by a volley from the roof, from the windows, and in fact, from all sides.[16]

Mar Benyamin Shimun Catholicos-Patriarch, XXI

It was not until ten o'clock the evening of the next day, Sunday, March 17 (NS), that Rab Trema Daniel Malik Ismael (in the Syriac language, Rab Trema means commander of two hundred) brought us the body of Patriarch Mar Benyamin.

At the same time, an Armenian handed over a letter from Rab Khaila Dawid: "I have taken shelter in the Armenian church along with five fighting men. Send help." The Kurds had surrounded them and lobbed seven hand grenades into the church to force them out. Fortunately, they neglected to pull the pin on the grenades so they caused no harm. Major Kondriatov immediately dispatched two groups of two hundred men, each to relieve the six held in the church, the first led by Rab Trema Malik Oshana of Thkuma and the second by Rab Trema Malik Shamizdin of Lower Tyari. They surrounded Kuinshahr while the major went to set up his artillery. Even before Major Kondriatov's forces arrived at Kuinshahr, however, word had spread about the assassination of Patriarch Mar Benyamin and the plight of Rab Khaila Dawid. Mirza, the brother of Father Hanna Mazranaya, gathered fourteen fighting men and rushed off for Kuinashahr, reaching the Armenian church before Major Kondiratov and his four hundred men arrived. The fifteen of them fought the Kurds surrounding the church until they were relieved. Both Mirza himself and seven of his men were killed. After a fierce and bloody battle, Rab Khaila Dawid and his men were rescued at four in the afternoon of Monday, February 18.

In the power vacuum caused by the patriarch's death, Packard was consulting with the Iranian governor and giving the Assyrian people conflicting instructions. On Wednesday, February 20, Lady Surma received a letter from him saying that he was planning to send the Assyrians from Khoi to Salamis, where she should expect them. This was what Patriarch Mar Benyamin had proposed in the summer of 1917. Two days later, however, on Friday, February 22, a second letter from Packard arrived, contending that it was unnecessary to leave Khoi because the Iranian government had our best interests at heart, and we were safe there. On Sunday, February 24, Father Hanna wrote to Zaya that Packard trusted the Iranian government and was against the removal of the three thousand Thkuma Assyrians from Khoi to Salamis.

[16] Surma d'bait Mar Shimun, pg. 81

During our early years in Iraq, a one-thousand-man Assyrian battalion was stationed in Rawanduz's base. Yaqu Malik Ismael was a Rab Trema there. The quaimaqam of Rawanduz was then Sheikh Said Taha of Shamisdin or Nochiya. This sheikh was Simko's brother-in-law, married to his sister. Pursued by Iranian troops, Simko and his men fled to Iraq, hid out in the mountains, and sent word asking the sheikh to grant them legal residency. Rab Trema Yaqu caught wind of this and chose forty of his best fighting men to avenge the patriarch's death. Every three to four days, they asked permission to go hunting in the mountains and with each request the sheik consented. The plan was to use one of these hunting trips as a cover for an ambush of Simko and his men. The British heard of this plot and warned Simko, who quickly headed back to Iran with all his men. When Rab Trema Yaqu Malik Ismael arrived at their hideout, the place was deserted.

Chapter Eight

Mar Poulus Shimun and the Assyrians' Flight to Iraq

Synopsis. Following the assassination of Mar Benyamin, Mar Poulus, his brother, was ordained patriarch of the Church of the East. Details in this chapter include the battles fought in Urmia, the loss of Assyrian life and most notably, the British government's refusal to help, resulting in their broken promise to the Assyrians. The author included several key passages from Dr. Joel Werda's book, The Flickering Light of Asia (1924)[17], to illustrate the conditions and upheavals during the two years from 1918 to 1920.

After this horrific tragedy, Poulus, the brother of Mar Benyamin Shimun, was elected patriarch by the Assyrian nation. He was ordained as archdeacon on March 24, 1918, in Khosrawa, Salamis, by Bishop Mar Elia.

On March 29, 1918, Kuinashar was captured and burned. Twenty-four Assyrian men were lost in battle, while five hundred Kurdish men were killed. On the same day, the Assyrian army went to Chara, Simko's fort.

On March 30, the Assyrian army from Salamis held the northern side of Chara; the army from Urmia held the southern side. A fierce battle ensued in the midst of the snow of the winter. Forty-eight Assyrians were killed along with hundreds of the enemy. Chara and the villages around it were taken, ransacked, and burned. Simko escaped with his men to Khoi. Aided by Iranians, Simko attacked Khoi, captured it, and then massacred about three thousand eight hundred men, women, and children. Packard caused the massacre by refusing to permit the Assyrians to leave Khoi. These tragic events, the assassination of Mar Benyamin Shimun, and the massacre in Khoi are inextricably linked.

To describe the situation during the time of Mar Benyamin as difficult is a mild statement. Further complications that induced a greater hardship were the traitors and enemies within our Assyrian community. The Turks encouraged the Kurds to create unrest among us, even if it meant our death. This came about for two reasons: religious fanaticism and politics. The Turks and Iranians did not want the Europeans to have any influence in the Hakkari region and Iran, and they blamed the Assyrians. It was the prevailing belief among the Turkish authorities that the Westerners had come to the area for the sake of the Christians. In actual fact, we never wanted the missionaries or the politics of the West. The Turkish and Persian governments were weak, resulting in their inability to discourage the missionaries' presence in the region. Because we are Christians, we were blamed. The Turks perceived the Assyrians as the cause of the Western infiltration of the region. These series of events led to the Assyrian genocide and loss of our ancestral lands.

After we had moved to Iran, our achievements and our fight along with the Allies, particularly the Russians, at that time earned us consideration as a small ally. At the 1916 conference held in Tehran, the Middle Eastern countries were divided among the French, the British, the Russians, and the Italians. The division of the various countries was as follows:

The Sykes-Picot Agreement called for Iraq, from Shirqat (south of Mosul) and southward all the way to Basra, to be parceled to the British, while Lebanon and Syria went to the French. Palestine was for the Italians, and the north of Iraq, including Mosul, Arbel, Kirkuk, and Suleimaniya, was given to the Russians. This division was made without the knowledge of the Arabs. England had promised King Hussein, sharif of Mecca, that a

[17] Joel E. Werda, published by author (n.p.), (1924).

government would be formed under him for Arabistan, on the agreement that the Arabs fight against Turkey.

At this time, the Imperial government of Russia had told Mar Benyamin, "For us, the north of Iraq is not needed. Because we are not in need of the land, we will give it to you." So sincere was this agreement that a map was drawn up detailing northern Iraq, including Urmia, Salamis, Hakkari, Bohtan, and Jazira, the intended homeland for the Assyrians. Coincident with the distribution of these lands, the Russian government was struggling with its own internal strife, resulting in the withdrawal of their support. We were left alone.

Patriarch Mar Poulus

Mar Poulus was six years younger than Mar Benyamin. The turmoil, exhaustion, and suffering during the period of our flight from Urmia to Iraq resulted in the deterioration of his health. He was physically weakened, especially after he assumed the mantle of responsibility for the church and the nation.

On April 17, 1918, Mar Zaya Sargis, the bishop of Jilu, and Awo, son of Shmoel Khan, as well as several tribal leaders accompanied by sixty horsemen from Urmia to Salamis, escorted Archdeacon Poulus back to Urmia, where he was to be ordained patriarch between April 27-29, replacing his brother, the late Mar Benyamin.

Mar Poulus Shimun, XXII Catholicos-Patriarch

On April 28, 1918, Palm Sunday, Mar Poulus was ordained patriarch of the Church of the East by Mar Iskhaq Khnanishu, metropolitan in the Church of St. Mary. The bishops Mar Zaya Sargis, Mar Elia, Mar Yosip Khnanishu, numerous priests and deacons were in attendance at the ordination as well as representatives of other churches, leaders of Assyrian tribes, and a large number of Assyrians. Assyrian armed men guarded both sides of the road leading to the church, with the congregants behind the guards waiting to view the ecclesiastical procession. It was a well-organized and impressive event, steeped in the ancient ritual.

On May 7, Commander in Chief Dawid sent a telegram to Mar Poulus, indicating that fighting had begun among the Assyrians and Turks. "The Turkish army is steadily increasing. There are more than two battalions, excluding the Iranian army and Kurds who have joined them. The latter are in the thousands. They have brought artillery guns. The front line is very wide. In Salamis we held our own against the enemy but we need help. Send us 1,000 fighters from Urmia."

His Holiness requested Palkawink Kuzmin, a military commander, who in turn urgently requested from Agha Potros and Malik Khoshaba one thousand fighters to be sent immediately to Salamis. Agha Potros promised the patriarch they would begin their journey to Salamis the next day.

On May 10, 1918, Mar Poulus left Urmia for Salamis, accompanied by Awo, the son of Shmoel Khan, as well as several guards atop horses. In Khan Takhti, Malik Khoshaba told the patriarch he was ready to meet the Turks, Iranians, and Kurds at the front they held with his own four hundred fighters.

Mar Poulus expressed his astonishment for they had been promised one thousand men, not four hundred. Malik Khoshaba answered, "I promised nothing. It was Potros who had made the commitment to you."

Agha Potros's agenda was to leave Salamis and relocate the people to Urmia, where we would have to hold our own against the Turks.

On June 14, 1918, at 6:00 a.m., the battle erupted on all fronts. This fierce struggle lasted six days. Malik Khoshaba and Agha Potros retreated from their front, returning to Urmia without informing their brothers in Salamis. When it became known that they had abandoned their positions, panic ensued among the people for fear that the Turks would cut off the road by which they could escape to safety in Urmia.

On the seventh day, Zaya, the patriarch's brother, at the Church of Mar Youkhanna, informed the patriarch that "a large Turkish force with new artillery guns just arrived from Bashqala and were heavily shelling us. Two hundred horsed Armenian fighters had abandoned the front and returned to their homes. We are left alone."

The patriarch ordered Rab Kahila Dawid's army to withdraw slowly, allowing the population to make their way safely toward Urmia. This was done so that the Turks could not take control and cut off the road, risking the escapees' possible captivity. At the same time, the patriarch sent word to all Assyrians to leave their villages immediately and move to Urmia.

The day people began arriving into Urmia from Salamis, we found the Turks had already surrounded the city from the west and south. A fierce battle ensued. Rab Khaila Dawid and his army had just arrived, having fought for seven days in Salamis, enduring a two-day march to Urmia with no rest. Rab Khaila's men were exhausted. However, the force of one thousand five hundred was immediately ordered to the front. On June 23, 1918, the Turks carried out an attack on Seereh Mountain. The first and second lines of the Assyrians were defeated by the artillery fire and machine guns.

Malik Khoshaba took with him ten fighters without informing Agha Potros and proceeded to the city. At the gate, he met Patriarch Mar Poulus, who was on his way to Charbash in his phaeton. The patriarch asked Khoshaba, "How is the battle going on?" Malik Khoshaba answered, "My Lord, the Turkish attacks are very fierce. It is probable that the American embassy has now been captured." Malik Khoshaba, with his son Dawid and ten fighters, deserted his post, fleeing to the Hakkari Mountains.

Amid desertion and disarray, an irregular "army" of volunteers formed on June 24. Under the leadership of Buku, the son of Rayis Oshana of Ashita; Tkhumnayi, under the leadership of Father Gewargis of Tkhuma; Rev. Fr. Zkharya Baznaya; Deacon Daryawush; Dawid Ewat of Lower Barwar; Assyrians of Gargagin; and some of Nochiya, with Agha Ezaria. Even Mar Yosip Khnanishu carried arms and went to war. In Siri these volunteers sacrificed their lives, raided the enemy trenches, using hand grenades without thought for their safety. Their intention was to save their people from the hands of the enemy. Siri was captured, and the Turkish and Kurdish forces were defeated. In this battle on Mount Siri, we lost sixty-three fighters with eighty-three injured, the majority of whom were from Ashita.

There was another battle against the Turks, Iranians, and Kurds, who had come from Salamis in which, with God's help, we were also victorious.

On July 8, 1918, a British airplane came. The pilot was Lieutenant Pennington. He was sent by the British military mission in order to organize a force to meet in Saen Qal'aa, with the intention of coming to our aid. Even Pennington confirmed the promise made to the Assyrians by the British Captain Gracey; that is, the Assyrians were recognized by the British government as Allies, "for their brave fighting, the loss of their lands, and their tremendous sacrifices, so they would not be forgotten by the British government. England is ready to establish an official government for you in Hakkari, to be independent from non-Assyrians and under your own leadership."

Zaya d'Mar Shimun; the bishops Mar Yosip Khnanishu and Mar Zaya Sargis; Agha Potros; Awo, the son of Shmoel Khan; a number of tribal leaders; and two thousand mounted fighters left Urmia to Saen Qal'aa to meet the British.

When the enemy saw two thousand Assyrian fighters descend from Urmia, the Turkish army increased its forces likewise. Two Turkish divisions had come from the north, Salamis and two others from the south, Mosul as well as an Iranian army and thousands of Kurdish irregulars. After several days of attack and fierce fighting, we were defeated and forced to flee to Saen Qal'aa, where we met the Assyrian force there.

At twelve o'clock, the Armenians began to flee to Saen Qal'aa, taking everything, they owned. Their flight was driven by the arrival of British troops, and their hope was to be saved. The Armenians truly believed this was their road to rescue. Later that day, approximately at 4:00 p.m., the Assyrians followed the Armenians. Mar Poulus desperately tried to dissuade them from their flight and even resorted to force by whipping some, but to no avail. If they relented, they would simply flee through another road. By 11:00 p.m., Mar Poulus returned to his residence in Charbash, hungry and tired. Because of the disastrous situation, he felt there was no other choice and ordered the family to pack up immediately. A servant brought Mar Poulus his dinner while we prepared for our departure. We left Charbash at 12:00 a.m.

In Saen Qal'aa, we saw English Officers and Assyrian fighters who were there awaiting the arrival of British reinforcements. There was something perplexing,which we could not understand: Since the British force had entered one hundred miles into Iran, why did they not march another one hundred miles in order to reach us and help us to safety? If the battalion of two thousand Assyrian men had not gone to meet the British, perhaps we may have been able to stand against the Turkish attack.

To this day, some speculate that this was premeditated by the British for three reasons:

1. They wanted to excuse themselves from their promises of an independent homeland that the British government had made to the Assyrians.

2. We were still useful for their achievements in Middle Eastern countries, especially Iraq.

3. They wanted to take the Hakkari district in the name of the Assyrians, and include it with Iraq under their administration.

Ultimately, their objective was irrelevant. The result was that we lost our country, our wealth, and thousands of men, women, and small children. Some were taken prisoner, while many died during their flight from disease, exhaustion, and hunger. Our escape from Urmia took nineteen days until we reached Hamadan.

Those nineteen days were filled with suffering, pain, and hunger. The hardship was unbearable to express. It took an additional twenty days to reach the camp of Baquba, where a hospital was prepared to receive the refugees.

On our arrival to Saen Qal'aa, Mar Poulus, Lady Surma d'Mar Shimun, who served as the patriarch's interpreter, as well as several horsemen, were greeted by the British colonel and the commander of the British military mission, who had come to help us in Urmia. We stood there behind them, listening. The colonel requested an audience with the patriarch. The patriarch spoke with the colonel concerning the perilous state of the nation. Suddenly Shedd, who was ill, emerged from his tent, interrupted the patriarch and the colonel. Addressing the colonel, he spoke very harshly against Mar Poulus, blaming the patriarch for the Assyrians' exodus from Urmia. These accusations were falsehoods, unprovoked, and without anything resembling fact.

Shedd misrepresented himself to the colonel. Shedd placed blame solely on Mar Poulus, while not acknowledging his culpability in the flight from our country. Shedd had vehemently opposed Mar Benyamin's desire to organize a disciplined army, which had been addressed earlier. If we had a disciplined army, this would not have happened. He realized that if the army was organized, the power of the patriarch would increase drastically, and that was anathema to the missionaries' objectives.It was during this time that Shedd remained in his tent having been taken sick and not to emerge. A short time later, he died and was buried in Saen Qal'aa.

The following paragraphs have been extracted from the book by Joel E. Werda, published in America in 1924, entitled *The Flickering Light of Asia*. Werda states on page 178**:**

More than the delay of Agha Patros, however, the treacherous conduct of the same Armenian soldiers, who had fled from Van, contributed to the cause of the panic. General Andranik with his splendid troops had advanced to the vicinity of Khoi, about ninety miles from Urmia. He had an understanding with the Assyrian army that, while the latter was to push the Turks back, when he arrived in Khoi, he would be in a position to strike the enemy most effectively in the rear. And surely it would have happened so had it not been for the concealment again, by these deserters from Van, of the real location or the nearness of their own general, whom they dreaded. And by this treacherous act, they placed in jeopardy also the bravest troops of Armenia, and the bravest commander the Armenians had. Jealousy is a terrible thing. It has afflicted, I regret to say, both the Armenians and the Persian Assyrians as well. So, as the south brought no tidings of the great Assyrian general's return; and as the veracity of the report from the north, concerning in the arrival in Khoi of an equally great Andranik was deliberately denied, fear fell upon the entire Christian population. The people could no longer be restrained by any means or threats.

On page 180 of his book, Father Werda writes,

The Moslems of Urmia, headed by a Persian general by the name of Majid-el-Saltana, had started on the pursuit. During the night, as the Assyrians were resting near Sayen Kala and as they fell asleep from fatigue and exhaustion, the pursuers stationed themselves over the hills that commanded the narrow road that followed the course of the river which runs zigzag through the valley. As morning broke and the weary pilgrims began to rub their eyes, a most murderous fire was opened into the dense crowd. Before Azaria Khan, the now famous Assyrian general, could scale the hills with a body of his men to drive the enemy away, some five thousand more Assyrians had fallen dead.

The crowds were so dense that the victims fell like leaves as from the autumn trees. The Persian general, after his heartless slaughter of women and children, sent a telegram to his superiors in Tabriz, the contents of which became known later. The telegram read: "I have sent a few more thousand dogs into hell." With their numbers daily thinning down, the Assyrian refugees, barefooted, half naked, hungry, emaciated and sick, arrived in the city of Hamadan, where Daniel of Shushan's fame had beheld these political convulsions in his prophetic vision.

Further, Rabbi Werda writes on page 182,

In order to make this massacre more meritorious, the great Mujtaheed (high priest) of Urmia issued a holy war proclamation; and in order to hasten the quick work of extermination, he set the period for the merciless slaughter of the Christians to extend not longer than forty-eight hours.

The bloodthirsty mob, headed by Arshad el Hemayoon, attacked the Roman Catholic Mission first. Into this residence Arshad el Hemayoon, at the head of a band of murderers, entered first. As a favored guest of the French bishop, he had become familiar with the entire layout of the interior of the house. He knew where the unsafe (sic) safe was. It contained not only the ever-plentiful funds of the Roman Catholic Mission, but also thousands upon thousands of Toomans (dollars) of the Assyrians' money, deposited there for safekeeping. The bishop's residence had been practically turned into a vast storehouse that resembled a gigantic wholesale rug store. The native Christians had brought all their costly goods and belongings, together with their jewelry, deeds of property, etc., and placed them under the protection of the French flag, just as a much larger majority of people had done with

the American Mission. The safe was broken open, and all the contents thereof taken by Arshad el Hemayoon. Then by the order of his former protégé and favored guest, Msgr. Sontag was beaten with the butts of the guns; and when fallen, he was kicked and beaten till he was bleeding profusely. While he was still conscious, he was dragged to the door of the Roman Catholic Church, and shot there. Their fanaticism still unappeased, they began to abuse the dead body of the bishop in an indescribably hideous manner.

The French mission buildings were now sheltering more than six-thousand refugees. The murderers entered with every conceivable weapon, from a long sword to a wooden mallet. They commenced with the little children and infants. The latter were held by their tiny feet while their heads were dashed against the walls and the stone pavements. The older ones were held up by the hair of the head, hanging, while their bodies were severed by one stroke of the sword. The little girls were publicly assaulted and then cut in twain. Of the entire number of Christians, estimated at more than six thousand, in the French mission buildings alone, not more than sixty souls remained, who escaped in a miraculous way. The rest were put to death in less than forty-eight hours, the official time for the application of the mandate of the "jihad."

This barbarous brutality was likewise practiced in the building of the American mission, which yielded much larger revenues in plunder than the Catholic mission . . . .

The number of Christians who were unable to escape with their brethren has been estimated at sixteen thousand to seventeen thousand souls. Of this entire number, some three hundred persons only managed to hide themselves from the wrath of Islam till they were finally rescued by the American consul and taken to the city of Tabriz.

Finally, Father Werda wrote that until we reached to Hamadan, fifteen thousand men, women, and children were killed or died from hunger and disease. Simko's faction killed three thousand men, women, and children in the massacre of Khoi. This number includes about thirty-six thousand men, women, and children killed in Iran. Of course, this does not include the first massacre committed when the Russian forces retreated from Urmia. If we add all killed and all who died of hunger and disease in Iran, the total would be about forty thousand, perhaps even more.

Aid came from European and American countries, helping the Assyrians and Armenians in the Baquba refugee camp. When we arrived in Hamadan, the British organized one thousand five hundred Assyrians and sent them to Baquba, where they were trained. Once their training was completed, they were sent to Sapna and Barwar on a punitive mission against the Kurdish rebels.

A memorandum from American Presbyterian missionaries at Urmia during the Great War to British minister Sir Percy Cox had this to say:

Capt. Gracey doubtless talked rather big in the hopes of putting heart into the Syrians and holding up this front against the Turks. [Consequently,] We have met all the orders issued by the late Dr. Shedd which have been presented to us and a very large number of Assyrian refugees are being maintained at Baquba, chiefly at H.M.G.'s expense. [18]

In 1920, the British decided to close the Baquba camps. Most Assyrians of the camp decided to go back to the Hakkari mountains while the rest were dispersed throughout Iraq. In 1933, a number of Assyrians were killed in

[18] "By mid-1918, the British army had convinced [sic] the Ottomans to let them have access to about 30,000 Assyrians from various parts of Persia. The British decided to deport all 30,000 from Persia to Baquba, Iraq. The transfer took just 25 days, but at least 7,000 of them had died during the trip." (Source: *http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Assyrian_Genocide*)

Iraq.

Mar Poulus's health, already precarious, was worsening. It was decided to send him to Daira Mar Mattai (St. Matthew Monastery) during the summer because the weather there was cooler than in Baquba. He was accompanied by Mr. Nissan and his wife, Shlimon Malik Ismael, and twelve armed men for protection.

On December 15, 1918, bishop Mar Yosip Khnanishu was ordained metropolitan of Rustaqa at the British St. George's Church in Baghdad. Later the religious leaders, maliks, and tribal leaders who were present during the ordination of Mar Yosip proposed that Lady Surma, sister of the two patriarchs, go to London to represent the Assyrian case there and to the League of Nations, which was meeting in Lausanne.

This proposal was accepted and justified by the high commissioner of the British government in Iraq. Lady Surma was sent as a vekil (representative) of the Assyrians at the expense of the British government. It was intended that she present the Assyrian Case at the Paris Peace Conference, however as she made her journey via England, the British blocked her attendance and detained her.[19]

During this same period, the British authorities wanted to break up the refugee camp in Baquba. Col. Cunliffe Owen, who was the camp commander, requested Metropolitan Mar Yosip and the Honorable Zaya, brother of the patriarch, to inform the Assyrians they were to leave and return to their homes. They answered, "If you, as the government can help us, we are ready, but without your help we cannot fight and defeat Turkey, Iran, and the Kurds." The colonel replied, "England is not able to help you. You must help yourselves." Mar Yosip and Zaya answered, "We are sorry. Alone we cannot return to our homes."

At the end of 1918, Agha Potros and his brother Mirza were expelled from Baquba camp and sent to Baghdad by the British government because of the disruption and unrest they created among the Assyrians. At the beginning of 1920, Agha Potros and his brother were returned to Baquba for the purpose of leading the Assyrians back to their homes. Agha Potros had assured Colonel Owen that he would be responsible to lead the Assyrians back to their homes. The British government was in support of only those who wanted to reclaim their homes. For those who did not or could not return, cruelty was used against them and their families. Aid was denied, and their tents dismantled.

Some priests were detained and, in one case, a priest's beard, as a sign of degradation, was shaved.

The aim of the British was to use the Assyrians to claim Hakkari. By doing so, they could maintain a controlling interest in the regions around northern Iraq. The leverage point was the Assyrians, who, as pawns in the hands of the British, could be used to gain entry into the region. In this way, the British would have a clear path into Turkey. Conversely, without the Assyrian occupation in Hakkari, the English, after the end of war, had no right to enter Turkey.

Based on a suggestion by the British, a petition was written against Lady Surma, stating that she was not the representative of the Assyrians. It was signed by some of the men who had signed the original document that supported her being sent.

In late April, early May of 1920, the first Assyrians who left the camp were the people of Ashita. Later others began to follow them, most commonly the Assyrians of Iran.

[19] Surma Khanum is not known to have complained or commented about this anywhere, so it seems she was "convinced" that her presence in London --where the real decision-making was going on anyhow-- was preferable. That said, there was the very real possibility of her uniting dissonant Assyrian voices in Paris which, in turn, would have created more problems for the British and League vis a vis returning Assyrians to their homes in Turkey, and/or autonomous settlement in Northern Iraq.

Chapter Nine

1920-1924, The Early Years of Mar Eshai Shimun's Patriarchate

Synopsis. The death of Mar Poulus Shimun created a gap in the leadership of the Assyrian people and the church's hierarchy at a crucial period. The family's wishes to alter the patriarchal succession went unheeded when pressure escalated and resulted in the consecration of Mar Eshai Shimun XXIII, Catholicos-Patriarch. At this same time, attempts to flee from and, in some cases, return to the Assyrian ancestral homeland were met with death and further deterioration of the Assyrian cause. Duplicity by the British and by certain Assyrians was evidenced through various acts. Finally, the obvious failure of the British government to fulfill its promise to the Assyrian people emerges from this historical account.

On May 9, 1920, the patriarch Mar Poulus died, having served for two years, which time was fraught with upheaval, suffering, and sickness, both in the Assyrian nation and in his own personal health. Lady Surma was in London, and the Rab Khaila Dawid was in Mosul. Only Zaya, the patriarch's twin brother, was there. The funeral service of His Holiness Patriarch Mar Poulus was officiated by Metropolitan Mar Yosip of Rustaqa, Mar Zaya Sargis, bishop of Jilu, and a large delegation of priests and deacons. The patriarch's body was taken by train to Baghdad and was buried in the courtyard of the church of our Armenian brothers. [20]

The nation demanded the appointment of another patriarch. However, we did not want one selected from our family again. Malik Khnanu of Tkhuma, who was attempting to return to our ancestral home, came to us one evening and demanded that a patriarch be ordained from our family. My mother refused, maintaining that it was enough that for more than six hundred years the patriarchs had been from this family. She reminded him that during the past two years our family mourned the loss of two patriarchs. She suggested that the church appoint a patriarch from another family. Malik Khnanu replied that they would not accept a patriarch outside of the family.

He told Lady Esther, "My men and I are to return home. If I do not see the patriarch ordained, we shall not go. Neither Colonel Owen nor his government can force us to leave. This is the nation's decision." At this time of great distress and vulnerability, Malik Khnanu coerced Lady Esther and the Honorable Zaya to accept the people's wishes.

On the day that Eshai was ordained with the Holy Order of the patriarchate, the Assyrians remaining in the camp gathered to celebrate his consecration. Owen rode his horse, whipping the crowd to disperse them. He said, "Ordination cannot be conducted without the consent of all the Assyrians." The erroneous information governing his behavior was influenced by people that were not of the Church of the East. Their efforts meant to destroy and deter the growth of our church. When he learned the canon laws that govern the church, the reply of Deacon Moshe (Moses) and the resolution of the remaining population gathered to witness the ordination, he retreated from the crowd and did not disrupt the ceremony again.

[20] As of 2025, Mar Poulus' grave has not been located.

Mar Eshai Shimun, XXIII, Catholicos-Patriarch, moments after his consecration with Mar Yosip Khnanishu, Bishop of Rustaqa (left) and Mar Zaya Sargis, Bishop of Jilu (right), Baquba, Iraq, 1920.

During this same time, Mar Timatheus was very angry that he was not a part of the ceremony. By tradition and from the time that the patriarchal see was in Alqosh, only the archbishop of Rustaqa (metropolitan from the house of Khnanishu) may perform the service in partnership with the bishop of Jilu. Historically, the bishop of India and Malabar had never joined the metropolitan in the consecration service. After being pacified, Mar Timatheus finally understood and went to Mosul, where he lived for approximately one year before he returned to India. It was later learned that he had been contacted by Agha Potros, with the full knowledge and support of Owen, who was a Catholic. This explained Owen's actions to disrupt the ordination of Mar Eshai Shimun. When Owen understood the steadfast support of the crowd and its refusal to disperse, he left. How could Mar Timatheus not know that the consecration was to be conducted by the bishops of Rustaqa and Jilu? Why did Mar Timatheus place such weight and faith in the opinions of others, outsiders, above our own church canon, customs, and practices?

Years later, in 1932, when the patriarch was in Europe presenting the Assyrian cause before the League of Nations, Owen met the patriarch and volunteered his services. Mar Shimun firmly declined his offer, indicating that his assistance was not needed.

There were few remaining Assyrians in Baquba. The majority had left for Mindan, near Mosul, where, at the same time, the Arabs were fighting for their independence. They attacked the small number of the Assyrians, who were not well armed, in the Baquba camp. Notwithstanding, the attacks by Arabs were all repelled. After a few days, the Arabs dispersed and left us in peace.

After that event the Assyrians remaining in Baquba were also moved to Mindan, and our family was taken to Mosul.

From Mindan, Assyrian mountaineers and those from Iran arrived at Zibar. They were supported by the British and were provided supplies such as mules and armament. However, they returned for the following reasons:

1. Winter had begun bitterly cold in Hakkari, resulting in an arduous passage through the snow and harsh conditions.

2. Controlling both the Kurds in the rough conditions of winter as well as reaching Iran safely was difficult.

3. There was a rumor that Malik Khoshaba and Agha Potros were fighting each other over the leadership.

Owen received a letter from his government that he would be court-martialed for his irresponsibility related to the damage he had done. He maintained that he was not culpable, and that Agha Potros had accepted the responsibility for leading the Assyrians toward Turkey. Owen authored a letter to the British military officials from Agha Potros, affirming his accountability for what happened. He sent for Agha Potros and told him to sign the letter. The letter stated that Agha Potros accepted responsibility for all the losses incurred in this campaign. Agha Potros refused to sign the letter for fear the government would have him killed. Colonel Owen reassured him that would not happen. One of the British captains present pulled his pistol and held it against Agha Potros's temple, advising him to sign the letter or face the consequences. Agha Potros relented and signed the document before him.

The next day, Agha Potros was expelled from Iraq, and the Assyrian leaders that had led the campaign were imprisoned. Captain Shimun (Simon), who was responsible for the mules, food, and rifles during the campaign, could not account for the loss of these supplies. Sadly, he committed suicide because he was afraid that if he returned to Mosul, he would be held accountable.

After the failure of this operation to claim Hakkari, the British again began to recruit Assyrians in Mindan. Over the course of three years, three battalions were organized. One four-gun mountain artillery, one machine-gun company, and a company of fifty signalers, and finally, a training depot to teach three hundred soldiers.

In the fall of 1921 thirteen year Mar Eshai Shimun, accompanied by his aunt Surma Khanum, set off on his first patriarch tour of Assyrian villages[21] and in the following year, Assyrians of Tyari and of Tkhuma began tentatively returning to their ancestral homes in Hakkari.

In 1923, Mar Eshai Shimun left for England to continue his formal education. He spent two years at St. Augustine College, which is noted for the training and education of the priesthood in Canterbury. After completing his studies at St. Augustine, he spent one and a half years at Westcott House, Cambridge, where he furthered his ecclesiastical studies in theology and statecraft.

In 1924, the vali of Hakkari sent a letter to the people of Tkhuma. Because the letter was written in Turkish, the agha of Chal delivered and read it for them. The message said that he and the quaimaqam would visit them, assuring the villagers they had nothing to fear. However, the agha of Chal confided to the villagers that the vali Pasha was bringing an army to avenge the tragedy of the quaimaqam and Turkish soldiers who were killed. The people of Tyari and Tkhuma were gripped in fear and expected the worst possible consequence.

During this period, Rab Khaila Dawid and Major Renton were visiting Tyari. Major Renton assured the Assyrians and reassured the Rab Khaila not to be afraid nor worry. If the Turks attacked, the British air force planes and army would provide aid and support the Assyrians in the region.

The agha of Chal's words were true for the Turks indeed brought an army and attacked the regions of Tyari and Tkhuma. The Turkish forces drove the defeated Assyrians back to Iraq. Through these desperate periods, the British air force provided no support.

Mar Eshai Shimun, XXIII, Catholicos-Patriarch, Mosul, Iraq, 1929

[21] *"Mar Eshai Shimun's First Village Tour—1921,"* by Christopher R. Nelson. Nineveh Magazine (v. 46, n. 2), 2021).

Chapter Ten

1927-1933, Intrigue and the Exodus under British Colonial Rule

Synopsis. Mar Eshai Shimun XXIII, Catholicos-Patriarch, was in England, but returned for a brief visit. However, his education was interrupted, and he chose to stay in Iraq instead of returning to England in which he now focused his efforts to address and correct the Assyrian condition. Councils were formed, and the patriarch traveled to Geneva to present the League of Nations an appeal for intervention on behalf of the Assyrians. As had been evidenced, deception and betrayal by the British and certain Assyrians continued while tensions increased and escalated among the Assyrian refugees and the Iraqi government. A portion of the Assyrian population settled in Syria.

On August 14th, 1927, after spending one and a half years in England, His Holiness Mar Eshai Shimun XXIII returned to Iraq for a brief visit. He intended to return to England to complete his education. He was greeted with the troubling conditions of the nation and the church in an extremely difficult situation, both internally and externally. Internally, disarray among Assyrians, and externally, the work of foreign churches. The political conditions resulted in the British preparation to concede complete independence to Iraq. In spite of our struggles, the Assyrians were ignored, and the promises made were not fulfilled by the British.

Because of the dire conditions of the nation, His Holiness chose not to return to England. Instead, he stayed in Iraq to finish his work for his people and his church.

In 1929, suddenly and without expectation, two British army captains came to Mosul from England. These two captains were retired military professionals from World War I. One of the two, Capt. Hormudz Rassam, a relative of the Nimrod Rassam family, was the grandson of the vice-consul of the British in Mosul. During the massacres committed by the Kurdish emirs in 1845, Patriarch Mar Awraham was a guest in the home of Rassam's grandfather. The other officer was Capt. Matthew Cope and his wife. These two began visiting a number of Assyrians and other Christians, inciting them to fight for their freedom.

Many Assyrians were misguided by their encouragement due to their lack of experience in political issues. Neither Mar Eshai Shimun nor Lady Surma took their counsel, nor were they involved in their activities because of the disastrous prior experience.

Rassam returned to England, while Cope and his wife remained in Mosul. After the departure of Rassam, Admiral Holt arrived. He had been the commander of naval intelligence but retired from duty to engage in civil affairs.

The Episcopal Church also had a share in the responsibility. The Church of England belongs to the government and is commonly referred to as "the national church" because of the subsidies it receives. As such, its obligation to the government is foremost since Henry VIII broke ties to the Roman Catholic Church and proclaimed his sovereignty over the church and state.

Many believed the British government was the organizer of these activities for its preparation in giving independence to Iraq. To free itself from the promises it had made to the Assyrians for their military service for eleven years, the British sought to create dissonance between the Iraqi government and the Assyrians.

Their first objective was to eradicate their obligation and the fulfillment of their promises by redirecting responsibility upon the Iraqi government and the Assyrians. All this was done in spite of eleven years of military service the Assyrians rendered, believing the British promises. The second reason was that Iraq would agree to all conditions pertaining to oil. Given Great Britain's world dominance at that time and her influence, it was feared they would withhold their support of Iraq in the League of Nations, claiming its unlawful activities, including the killing of people in villages. It was a widely held belief the British objectives were premeditated.

Day by day, the conditions deteriorated. The Iraqi authorities and their people hated us because they thought we worked as military forces for the British. What the Iraqi people did not recognize was the Assyrian force was prepared against those who opposed Iraq since it had no army to defend her borders. This unfortunate perception escalated bitterness between the Assyrians and their neighbors, both the Kurds and the government of Iraq. The Iraqi government accused the Assyrians of working for the British. It was at this same time the Kurds, who likewise believed we were British supporters, were fighting the Iraqi government.

The Assyrians were not working for the British out of love, but because of necessity and obligation. We were destitute and miserable**,** and this provided a means to survival. We lost our homes, our lands, we were without a country. We had even one of the basic needs revoked for we had lost our shelter. This compulsion forced us to work for the British because it was the only viable option given the times and conditions.

Rab Khaila Dawid had attempted to establish a friendship between the Iraqi military and the Assyrians. The foreign influence infiltrated both parties and created an unwillingness to form a relationship. This influence, so commonplace, was prevalent and pervasive.

Rab Khaila Dawid d' Mar Shimun, Hinaidi, Iraq, 1930

The British authority, observing the Iraqi army increasing day by day, well-armed and trained, informed the Assyrians that from now on only four Assyrian companies were needed by them, and the rest would be retired from the military service. This greatly saddened all the Assyrians, for their services and suffering after all these years were thoughtlessly dismissed. The Assyrians, in consensus, requested of the British that all battalions be disbanded at once. They rendered a one-month-notice period from when they would lay down their arms.

The British high commissioner, Sir Francis Humphreys, sent Brig. Gen. J. Gilbert Browne to Mar Eshai Shimun. The patriarch wrote to our army to continue performing their duties lawfully. Mar Shimun promised a discussion with both governments, the British and Iraqis, after which a conclusion would inform them about the next steps to be taken.

The patriarch strived in many ways to resolve this egregious situation while finding a permanent home for the Assyrians. Many alternatives were proposed by the patriarch: requesting the Turkish government that we return to our homes or be allowed to settle in one of the British colonies because, at that time, the British were ruling one quarter of the world. If none of these options were possible, then allowing a settlement in Iraq, in such villages as Duhok, Sar Amadia, Zakho, and Aqra was acceptable.

All of these proposals and requests were for naught. It became clear that the British's intention was to keep the Assyrians in Iraq dependent and poor. If we had properties of our own, then we would not be obliged for servitude. Rather, this destitute nation was advantageous to the British government. This policy of the British was judiciously applied throughout their claimed colonies.

The British policy was based on these three points:

1. To create disruption and chaos in a country, which leads to vulnerability so they can rule it easily.

2. To preserve the country in a disheveled poverty-like state, creating dependence for their trade and general inclusion.

3. To maintain the country without an educational system or structure, continuing the ignorance of its people.

These three methods created a British stronghold over one quarter of the world all with minimal military force.

In mid-June 1932, His Holiness Mar Eshai Shimun called the Assyrian leaders to meet in Upper Sar Amadia and form a council to identify and address solutions to the current conditions. During this meeting, a petition[22] was written that included several points: settling the Assyrians in government villages, opening schools, a hospital, and other proposals such as regular visits by physicians to the villages; additionally, creating a government subsidy like the model used when the Assyrians lived in Turkey. Some of these proposals were composed and prearranged by a minority of men, with questionable intent. These individuals deceived the honest members in a clandestine plan hatched the evening before the meeting. The patriarch did not know of this duplicity, and he was pleased to observe a unified and singular council suggesting these points and agreed to support their requests.

Concluding the meeting, the patriarch requested that all should give an oath sustaining their word. Bishop Mar Zaya Sargis held the Bible in his hand and stood at the head of the council. In an organized fashion, each held up his hand before God and swore not to withdraw from their words regarding these petitions. With the ink of the signature not dried, some men, such as Khoshaba, Mar

Yahwala of Barwar, Malik Khamu, Shaheen of Baz, and Khiyu of Ashita, betrayed their oath to God.

Sir Francis Humphreys replied, when presented with the petition, that our "demands" were difficult to meet. He suggested that His Holiness go to Geneva to present the petition before the League of Nations. There, Humphreys would support the patriarch's petition.

The patriarch informed the Assyrians, who were supportive of his presentation to the League of Nations, and he prepared to travel to Geneva in September.[23]

[22] LoN (R2318/6A/22528/655/Jacket6): Iraq - Situation of Assyrian Christians in Iraq - Various correspondence.

[23] Multiple accounts from this period show that it was the Maliks and other Assyrian leaders who desired personal representation at the League by Mar Shimun, and not some kind of self-interested motive, as implied by those with animus towards the patriarch and family. What seems obvious from events that follow shortly after Mar Eshai is away from his people in Iraq, is that British and Iraqi officials (viz. Sir Francis Humphrys) clearly took advantage of his convenient absence to sow and exacerbate pre-existing divisions amongst Assyrians.

Mar Eshai Shimun, XXIII, Catholicos-Patriarch, Historic Council at Sar Amadia, Iraq, 1932

It was during this period that Humphreys attempted Iraq's admission to the League of Nations as an independent "free" country, because Iraq was capable of self-rule under Britain's sponsorship.

The British restitution we were told to expect never materialized. The support promised by Humphreys to the patriarch never materialized.

We did not have any objection to the independence of Iraq. We did, however, want some sort of restitution for our loyalty and our years in service to the British as well as the fulfillment of the promise that was given to us before Iraq gained complete independence.

This incident that took place between the Iraqis and the Assyrians was the creation of the British political machine. The British wanted to disband the Assyrian army leaving only four battalions; conversely, the Assyrians wished to lay down their arms all together. The clash was directed against the British, not the Iraqi government. However, they turned Iraq against us, cleverly hiding their own culpability. Our disagreement was with the British only, not the Iraqi government. Their accusations were false, created to wedge distrust between the Iraqi government and Assyrians. This duplicity resulted in both the Iraqi government and the Assyrians as the losers.

Mar Eshai Shimun returned from Geneva empty-handed as the British had reneged their commitment of support. During the period of his absence from Iraq, the numbers of Assyrians opposing the patriarch increased. They wrote to the League of Nations that Mar Shimun was not their representative, instead stating they were pleased with the Assyrian conditions in Iraq, and that the government was supportive and helpful.

The writers of this petition[24] were several of those who swore at the council of Upper Sar Amadia and signed the request on behalf of the nation. It became apparent that Humphreys' promises of supporting the nation's request and assisting the patriarch in the League of Nations was a ruse to keep His Holiness away for a time, in order to rally more Assyrians against the patriarch's work.

The Iraqi government invited the patriarch to Baghdad to meet the minister of interior. At the meeting, the minister requested him to sign conditions which were prepared ahead of time by his government. As the patriarch read the terms, he saw they were completely the opposite of those requested by the Assyrian leaders from the council at Sar Amadia. These conditions stipulated that our people would not be recognized as a nation, but as a clan or tribe living in Iraq. The patriarch refused to sign on these conditions. In a punitive move, the government did not permit him to return home to Mosul. He was detained at the YMCA, where he was staying during his visit in Baghdad.

[24] LoN (R2318/6A/22528/655/Jacket6): Iraq - Situation of Assyrian Christians in Iraq - Various correspondence.

On July 10, 1933, Assyrian leaders of both sides were summoned to the governor's building by the vice administrator, Khalil Azmi, even though the mutassarif himself was not there. He, the leaders, and the government proposed to settle us in the Nahla and Dashtazi regions. He went on to say that anyone not amenable to this settlement was free to leave in peace and go to any country that would accept them. Col. R. S. Stafford said something inaudible to him. In a turnaround, Khalil Azmi withdrew his statement, recanting that he could not provide a response until he had received orders from the ministry in Baghdad.

This incident further enforced the belief that the purpose of this meeting was to cause dissension among the Assyrians.

As our hopes had ended, then Rab Tremma Yaqu (Jacob) Malik Ismael and Rab Khamshi Lawco Shlimon Badawi from the family of maliks of Tkhuma crossed to Syria, where the French were ruling.

About two weeks later, approximately one thousand five hundred fighters joined them with the same intention along with their families to settle in Syria. The Assyrians left Iraq respectfully. Not even a chicken was killed or taken from a village. In turn, the Iraqi government was relieved with the Assyrians' departure. It was their belief that the British, someday, would use us against the Iraqi government, as had been done with the Kurds.

With their departure, the Assyrians were relieved their obligation to the British was finally over. The British requested Iraq that its entire military force be sent to Faishkhabur, on the Syrian border. Even though Iraq was independent in name, realistically, it was still under British rule and could not refuse sending the army. Furthermore, the British asked for France's intervention, who then occupied Syria to disarm the Assyrians and returned them to Iraq. Neither the Iraqi government nor the Assyrians had any influence in this, even though we did not want to return; nor did the Iraqi government want us. The political influence of the British caused the Assyrians and the Iraqis to fight against their will. From both sides, hundreds were killed. The hatred, if possible, escalated, causing a deeper division between the government and their Assyrian subjects. This continued to puzzle me. I could not understand who started the fight. Each side blamed the other.

In the midst of this turmoil, the British planes dropped leaflets on the Assyrians, telling them to lay down their arms, surrender to the government, so that they would be free to return to their village. These leaflets, printed in the Syriac language, were authored by Deacon Yosip Kelaita.

Chapter Eleven

1933-1954, The d'Mar Shimun Family Expulsion from Iraq and Exile in Cyprus

Synopsis. The British action taken against the patriarchal family of placing them under house arrest, stripping them of their citizenship, and relocating them to Cyprus is detailed. Additional information includes the arrest of the patriarch, the Honorable Theodore, Rab Khaila, and his brother, the Honorable Zaya, as well as the involvement of some Assyrians. The separation of the family, their living conditions, surmounting pressure brought against Lady Surma, and her subsequent decisions are detailed.

On August 9, 1933, Rab Khaila Dawid and I were taken to Baghdad by the government and deposited at the YMCA, where the patriarch and the Honorable Zaya were already detained.

Lady Surma, Lady Esther, and Lady Elishwa, with the rest of the family, mostly children, were left alone in Mosul. The Assyrians were intimidated and frightened to come to our home, having heard the news. Only one man used to come to sell them food, Krekor Tarzian, an Armenian from the village of Pagé near Julamerk. Because of his love for us, he did not leave our family without an attendant during that difficult time. The deceitful Assyrians, those who opposed the patriarch and his works, created this situation and dared not reveal themselves to us.

The British coerced the Iraqi government to take our family from Mosul to Baghdad and from there to Cyprus. However, Lady Surma refused to be taken to Baghdad, for she felt that the family's departure would be an act of abandonment given the nation's current turmoil. The government witnessed Lady Surma's refusal to leave Mosul three times before the Iraqi government sent Mar Emmanuel, the patriarch of the Chaldean Catholic Church, in one last attempt to influence her decision. She refused again, stating that she did not want to abandon the nation during such a critical period.

The bullying finally took its toll, and Lady Surma only conceded, feeling at that point the family's departure was more useful to the remaining Assyrians than staying. She acquiesced to the government and, with the remaining family, was taken to Baghdad. Their emotional state was a combination of fear and pure exhaustion, particularly the younger children. It was under these circumstances that our family was forced to abandon the nation.

While the traitors prevailed, there were also those who remained faithful. A number of women, including the Honorable Shiriné, her daughter, Rehana of Tkhuma, and the respectable Khanimé of Jilu, demonstrated in protest against the treatment our family received. These women gathered before the office of the mutassarif and other public places, opposing the actions committed by the government against our family and our relocation to Baghdad. It was particularly poignant that these women demonstrated when one considered the oppression of an Islamic state at a time when even fewer freedoms were granted to Assyrians, much less females. These brave women, who had no care for their own welfare, were the embodiment of courage.

At the YMCA on August 15, at 1:00 p.m., a Rab-Ima (commander of one hundred), an Iraqi police officer, brought three letters from Wassir Khaleta; one for His Holiness Mar Shimun, one for Rab Khaila Dawid, and one for me, informing us that our citizenship was stripped away. Armed policemen surrounded the YMCA, forbidding either entry or exit from the building.

About an hour later, the air vice-marshal of the British came from the Hinaidi camp and told us, "Early tomorrow morning, your family will be escorted to Cyprus. The British government is assuming responsibility for you."

The patriarch became very angry and began speaking harshly against our unlawful and unconstitutional expulsion from the country. The Rab Khaila Dawid, soto voce, using the Assyrian language, advised the patriarch that his objections were futile because this action had been predetermined, and no amount of protestation would change their decision.

The evening before our departure at 9:00 p.m., King Faisal and the British high commissioner Humphreys were sailing in a motor launch on the Tigris River. Only they knew what was discussed and what agreements were made.

On August 16, 1933, Rab Khaila Dawid and I were deported to Palestine and on August 19, taken to Cyprus. At that time, Cyprus was used by the British for the Middle Eastern countries similar to the way Siberia was used for the Russians. King Hussein, the father of King Faisal of Iraq and of King Abdullah of Jordan, was detained in Cyprus by the British as well. His house arrest lasted for five years, nearly until the end of his life. His sons returned him to Amman, Jordan, where he died shortly after his confinement was lifted by the British.

Fifteen days after my father and I arrived in Cyprus, the rest of the family, including Lady Surma, joined us. We were together, save one family member, Zaya, who remained for a short time at the YMCA in Iraq, organizing the family's affairs. Yusuf Malek, the author of *The British Betrayal of the Assyrians*, also had come to Cyprus from Beirut to see us.

The news of the family's deportation began to spread among the Assyrians. That evening, they sent Rab Khamshi, Kasu, of the levies, accompanied by a soldier, and sought the patriarch and Rab Khaila Dawid in order to learn the truth. As they approached the YMCA, a blaze of gunfire began, deterring their entrance and forcing their escape through the garden. Immediately, they returned to the camps in Hinaidi and told others what had happened.

After our arrival in Cyprus, the British reneged on the commitment of caring for us. Lady Surma sent a telegram to the foreign office in London requesting the fulfillment of the British promise during our departure from Iraq. She further stipulated that if the British continued to renege on their promise, then we should be allowed our freedom to leave for another country where we could live. We had received no reply. Later, the British government informed us that King Faisal would pay us £65 each month. It was possible that this may have been planned the night before our deportation from Iraq between Humphreys and Faisal. The government sent an official to find us a house to rent. He also sent a merchant to buy us furnishings. Each month £5 were deducted from the £65 until all that he had purchased was paid. In a newspaper article, the government publicly claimed that they were not responsible for us and therefore would not guarantee any loans made to the family by others. The publication of such private information felt like the government's deliberate intention to publicly shame and dishonor us.

For the twenty-one years and six months that we lived in Cyprus, we never borrowed any money. We lived meagerly, but within our own means. It was through pride that we sustained our own living in Cyprus, and we never deigned to borrow from anyone.

After World War II, the British again deported to Cyprus a well-respected Muslim dignitary from Syria, who supported the French. However, he opposed the president the British had installed. The British government did not release him until almost the end of his life, when his son-in-law brought him to his home in Al Ladhiqiyah located on the western coast of Syria. He died shortly after his return.

The patriarch immediately began working on a petition to the League of Nations. An eighteen-page booklet was sent to various governments and church leaders around the world.

Shortly after the petition was circulated, an order came from England to the Cypriot government, approving a passport for the patriarch's travel to Geneva to personally present the case of the Assyrians before the League of Nations.

The patriarch selected Yusuf Malek to accompany him as a secretary and left without delay. At this point, we were skeptical about what could be gained there. America was not a member in the League of Nations, and neither was Russia.

Mussolini was gaining influence in Italy, while Germany was preparing for the Second World War. England remained as the major influence and leader within the League of Nations, with the French following as the second most powerful. Even if the French and others had any interest or concern in the Assyrian cause, they were distracted by the impending war.

The d'Mar Shimun Family, Nicosia, Cyprus, 1934 From left to right:

Front Row: Wardia*, Virgina+, Eshaya+, Plarim*, Paulus+, Gewargis+

Middle Row: Lady Esther holding Sargina*, Lady Surma, Lady Elishwa holding Mersina+

Standing: Captain Sargon*, Rab Khaila Dawid, Helene*, Rev. Issac Rehana, Rowena* Honorable Zaya, Honorable Theodore*

* Children of Rab Khaila Dawid and Lady Esther + Children of the Honorable Zaya and Lady Elishwa

Chapter Twelve

1933-1939, Mar Eshai Shimun's Advocacy for the Assyrian People at the League of Nations amid Further British Duplicity

Synopsis. Mar Eshai Shimun's continuing efforts on behalf of the Assyrian people and the Church of the East from 1933 to 1939 are highlighted. His work presented to the League of Nations and thwarted attempts at success are detailed. An explanation of the British motives as well as their view of Assyrians' usefulness to drive their agenda in Iraq is elucidated.

For years the patriarch worked unabatedly writing letters, attending meetings, and lobbying government officials for support and a resolution for the Assyrian cause. The tremendous suffering and toil were in vain for our fate was at the mercy of the British.

The British intention was to keep the Assyrians in Iraq for their own personal interest. There were many excuses for delays fabricated by the British to preserve the Assyrian population in Iraq. One petition written in Iraq and sent to the League of Nations by Assyrian traitors said, "We don't want to leave Iraq". The League of Nations sent some members to investigate this issue.

After the members from the League of Nations concluded their investigation in Iraq, a report was filed that determined the Assyrians wished to leave. Only approximately seventy individuals, who did not have their families with them, wanted to stay.

It was at this same time the British anticipated a war during which Assyrians would be useful as expendable pawns in Iraq. For this reason, the British employed stalling tactics that prohibited the Assyrians from emigrating from Iraq. Additionally, they were confident that the Assyrians would provide service and work for the British, certainly not out of any love for or faith in their promises, but because of the dependence the British had created for the Assyrians' livelihood and the care required for their families. It was also during this time that the British were the administrators of the League of Nations. There were too many stumbling blocks put in the way of the patriarch's ability to achieve success, namely, fabricated events that delayed presentation of the case. Such included:

1. They said that the Assyrians would be taken to Cyprus.

2. The nation would be settled on the banks of the Khabur River in Syria.

3. The nation would be taken to Ladhiqiyah, Syria. The Orontes River would be directed to the other side of the mountain to irrigate the plains where the Assyrians would be settled. An amount of £1 million would be needed for the settlement. They proposed that the French, British, and Iraqi governments contribute £250,000 as well as an equivalent amount to be raised by the rest of the nations within the League. This proposal was sabotaged: the British claimed that Iraq was not paying and that, therefore, they would not contribute either. The French claimed that if England would not pay, they would not participate in reparations either, and so on.

4. Assyrians would be taken to the island of Socotra, which is approximately three hundred fifty kilometers south of the Arabian Peninsula. The patriarch agreed to this proposal.

5. They said that we would be taken to Kenya, Africa. This also did not materialize.

6. The League of Nations sent Brig. Gen. Browne to Brazil so that we might be accepted there. The cost of the settlement would be paid by the League of Nations. The Brazilian government was willing to settle us in Parana. The next day an article was published in the country's newspaper describing the Assyrians as "a nation of brigands . . . it didn't get along well neither in Turkey, Iran nor in Iraq." Of course, we knew from which source this article originated. The Brazilian government declined, believing that if the commentary were true they had no desire to spoil their Parana with such people.

7. Finally, the British told the patriarch they would take us to Guyana. The patriarch replied, "Gehana, in our language, means hell. Even if we have to go to hell to escape oppression, so be it."

The patriarch agreed to all because he did not want to give the British any excuse to claim the Assyrians were difficult and uncooperative, and because he knew that they were not serious about these proposals.

Daily, the only focus of the patriarch's waking hours were the conditions of his people. Often, the patriarch would not finish his work, writing letters regarding this oppressed and desperate nation, appealing to any person of influence, until the early hours of the morning. These petitions were sent to government leaders throughout the world, to the leaders of churches, and to other prominent people. The patriarch alone toiled without any assistance or secretary for the period of seven years, from 1933 until about 1940. After about six months, Mar Eshai Shimun saw evidence that Yusuf Malek, the person he had chosen to accompany him to Geneva, was either manipulated or hired by others who had an interest in the patriarch. Information taken from the patriarch was given to various sources who paid for these records.

Mar Eshai Shimun, XXIII, Catholicos-Patriarch, United States, 1940

Chapter Thirteen

For My Fellow Assyrians

Synopsis. This chapter exposes both falsehoods and controversial issues. By using a combination of data and sharing private family knowledge, not anecdotal commentary or hearsay, the author's goal is to dispel and finally put to rest the many misconceptions. Breaking with tradition and "setting the record straight" is the only time any d'Mar Shimun has spoken outside of the confines of the family

The Sacrifices of the Patriarchal Family Forgotten

Over the years, many found it easy to criticize, judge, and accuse the patriarch of doing nothing for the Assyrians. They contended he was merely traveling in Europe. Yet for all his work, toil, and suffering, he was repaid by an assassin's bullet at point-zero range.

If the patriarchal family had been motivated by personal gain and individual glory, it would have been the betrayers of the nation. Throughout the history of our family, 658 years of service to our church and her people, there has never been a betrayal, neither of the church nor of the nation. The contributions of our family have not been for personal glory, and we have many times paid the ultimate sacrifice. Most know what had happened to the five brothers of Mar Benyamin Shimun,

the patriarch. Eshaya, the youngest brother, was a youth of nineteen years when Mar Benyamin sent him from Dizan to Tkhuma, where the Turks and Kurds were planning to attack. As he was making his way, he stopped to rest at the monastery of Mar O'Disho, developed pneumonia, and died shortly afterward.

The Honorable Hormizd, the third brother of Mar Benyamin, was studying in Istanbul. The Turkish government tried to blackmail Mar Benyamin in an empty and futile attempt to bend the patriarch to their will by holding Hormizd hostage. Mar Benyamin answered that Hormizd was one brother, but the entire Assyrian nation were all his children. It was better to lose one brother than to sacrifice his Assyrian people. Hormizd was hanged publicly for a full day in Mosul.

Mar Benyamin Shimun was assassinated in Kuinashar, Salamas, Iran, for the sake of his nation.

Mar Poulus, his brother, was elected by the nation to be the patriarch. Mar Poulus proclaimed his weakness and reluctance but bore the mantle of patriarchal duties, obeying the demand of all tribal and religious leaders. Mar Sargis and Awo Shmoel-khan escorted Mar Poulus to his consecration. The heavy burden of church work, the worry, and the suffering of fleeing from the country intensified his already physically weakened state.

The Honorable Zaya, the twin brother of Mar Poulus, died in Cyprus during our exile. Like the loss of my uncle Eshaya, this one stands out as profoundly bitter. We were alone, mourning by ourselves, the only bearers of his coffin. We alone carried him to his grave without others to comfort us.

Economically, we were very hard-pressed by the British government's duplicity in its promise to provide financial support. Some have falsely spread rumors and claimed that we were well taken care of, enjoying a leisurely life in Cyprus, thanks to the government of Iraq's financial support.

One day a historical account will be written with greater detail, and then people will know the truth of the suffering we have endured.

Mar Timatheus, Rev. Yosip, and the Assyrian School

Mar Shimun requested the Episcopal Church of England to send an educational mission like the one sent before World War I. There, in Iraq, we needed to establish schools to preserve our language and church, for these two are the pillars of our existence. The archbishop of Canterbury refused, explaining that because the British government was the ruling force in Iraq, educational missions were not possible. The archbishop instead suggested to the patriarch that he and his church leaders approach the Episcopal Church in America. The archbishop indicated that he would support this effort.

The patriarch accepted the proposal. He suggested that a letter be drafted appointing a representative of the Church of the East, Mar Timatheus, metropolitan of Malabar, India. This letter was to be signed by the patriarch, the metropolitan Mar Yosip Khnanishu, and the bishop Mar Zaya Sargis. With the support of the archbishop of Canterbury, Mar Timatheus would be sent as the patriarchal delegate to America. Mar Timatheus' task was only to request from the Episcopal Church to send an educational mission for the Church of the East in Iraq. The proposal was approved, and Mar Timatheus left for America.

Lady Surma received a letter from W.C Emhardt, of the American Episcopal Church in the United States, asking if Mar Timatheus was nominated as regent or delegate. Mr. Amhurst's request for clarification was a significant one: the meaning of regent is one who exercises ruling authority, versus a delegate, which is one who is providing representation. Mar Timatheus had misrepresented his mission. He was not acting as patriarch.

The lady Surma's reply to Mr. Amhurst was a simple and truthful one: "What is written in the letter of appointment is a fact." Consequently, Mar Timatheus became angry.

Finally, the educational mission was established in Mosul and later spread throughout the villages. Deacon Yosip Kelaita (later ordained as a priest), was appointed administrator for the schools.

About a year after the school was established, Deacon Yosip and Rev. Panfil had an argument. The primary reason for this disagreement was money. Deacon Yosip was the administrator since its inception and was sanctioned with full charge in the management of this school, according to his desire. The proceeds for the school were raised by the order of the Archbishop of Canterbury in England. Monthly, a check would arrive from England in the name of Lady Surma. Lady Surma had a high degree of confidence in him and would sign over to Deacon Yosip the entire amount of the subsidy. He was free to do anything with it since Lady Surma trusted Deacon Yosip. The relationship with Rev. Panfil became acrimonious, as the deacon was used to this degree of freedom, and he was unable to work under the supervision of others. Deacon Yosip left the school to establish another school of his own. He then wrote to Mar Timatheus to come to Iraq, informing him of the situation.

Mar Timatheus and Deacon Yosip had a long-standing feud dating back to 1920. This was the first time they communicated with each other. In India they had disagreed over money for a printing press. Twenty thousand rupees had been raised from the Assyrians in the mountainous regions by Patriarch Mar Poulus, the metropolitan Mar Yosip, the bishop Mar Sargis, and Lady Surma for the purpose of purchasing a printing press. This printing press was to have Assyrian alphabetical fonts so that church books be printed in memory of Mar Benyamin Shimun and his murder in Iran. Mar Timatheus wanted the deacon to give him the money so that he would buy the printing press and have the alphabet made. Deacon Yosip refused to hand over the money. It was for this reason, they had not spoken with each other until 1925, at which time they reconciled. During this same period, Mar Timatheus was angry with us concerning the definition and role of "regent" versus "delegate".

In 1927, Mar Timatheus arrived in Mosul. He and Deacon Yosip began to interfere in the affairs of the nation, but without any success. Neither Lady Surma, Rab Khaila Dawid, nor the Honorable Zaya took any negative action against the disruption Mar Timatheus caused. Rather they attempted a peaceful reconciliation, but to no avail. Mar Timatheus ordained Deacon Yosip a priest. Of course, this consecration was illegal. The synod states that there is no permission for a bishop to ordain a cleric outside his diocese. Because Mar Timatheus was metropolitan of Malabar in India, he had no authority to ordain a priest in Iraq.

Much to the disappointment of the family, the situation escalated beyond repair, and Lady Surma felt she had no other recourse but to write to the office of the British high commissioner informing them of the activities of Mar Timatheus. At this point, Mar Timatheus had taken up residence in Baghdad. The British oriental secretary called after him and told him, "Tomorrow you must go to Basra and take the first ship going to India. If you do not, you will be expelled by force."

For over two years, the opportunity given to Mar Timatheus to amend his ways was in vain.

Several years later, Mar Timatheus published the *Qdam Wather* in India. In the book, Mar Timatheus explains from what original books the *Qdam Wather* was copied. The book compares copies of *Qdham Wathar* in which Mar Timatheus denies the priesthood of the man who calls himself Qashisha (Reverend) Yosip Kelaita.

The Unchristian Working Manner of the Missionaries

In the year 1917, when the Russian troops had not yet completed their withdrawal from Iran, Shedd requested from Malik Ismael fifty men and fifty mules to Sharapkhana to pick up the armory the Russians left, before the Turks and Iranians took them. Malik Ismael requested that five tomans be paid for each man and a mule. The next day, an article was published in the daily newspaper issued by the American mission criticizing Malik Ismael's audacity of his request. The newspaper, however, praised Malik Khoshaba's patriotism because he had sent men and mules without any pay.

During 1926, Lady Surma was in America. Father Jacob, a Presbyterian priest, invited her to his home for dinner. He brought up this incident and said that for each man and mule of Malik Khoshaba Shedd had paid nine tomans, but he had refused to pay Malik Ismael five tomans for the same job. The newspaper praised Malik Khoshaba because he was a Presbyterian but made disparaging comments about Malik Ismael. This manner of work was typical of Shedd and his friends, the American Presbyterian missionaries.

In 1943, during World War II, several companies of Kurdish levies were brought to Cyprus. In each company, comprising two hundred, there were four Rab Imas (commander of one hundred) and Rab Khamshi (commander of fifty), a few clerks, and one or two Assyrian sergeants or sergeant majors as well as a few British administration officers. The government forbade them to visit the patriarchal family. However, four dissented and visited us without permission. One of them was the driver of the British colonel of the levies battalion. The driver of the colonel was stripped of his rank, and the others were reprimanded. The Rab Trema (commander of two hundred), Tawfiq Sadeq, a Kurd, and Rab Ima, Beijan Peekoo Garganaya, went to the colonel. Tawfiq challenged the colonel by asking if the government would arrest them if they were to visit their "father's house." Tawfiq contended that the patriarchal house was not only the house of the Assyrians but also the house of the Kurds. The Rab Ima Beijan Peekoo said, "When you told us in Habbaniya that anyone who wanted to go to Cyprus should step forward, I was one of the volunteers. I left my wife and children to come to Cyprus. I volunteered for the sake of seeing this family. Now you are preventing us from visiting them. Why? Are we prisoners of war?"

When the British saw they could not control the levies, they relented; and to avoid any disruption or further dissension, they gave him and the others permission. However, they asked that a British officer accompany them during the visit. When there are speakers challenging one's rights, it is impossible that the request is denied. But if there is no demand, an objective will never be achieved. A person would be considered an idiot if he did not understand his ability to demand his rights.

Some of the Forgotten Deeds and Works of Mar Eshai Shimun

Mar Eshai Shimun XXIII shifted the focus of his activities for the Assyrian nation starting September of 1939, the beginning of World War II, and in 1940, the patriarch left for America.

After the war, the League of Nations was reestablished under a new name, the United Nations. Its first meeting was in San Francisco, California. Mar Eshai Shimun attended and took with him the then-president of the Assyrian American National Federation, the Honorable Joseph Durna. The patriarch attended the opening session in which he presented the Assyrian case before the United Nations. Similar to his prior experience, his efforts to persuade this body of the Assyrians' compelling case were unsuccessful.

Before attending the UN session in San Francisco, Mar Shimun also presented to the British parliament in London. The British foreign affairs minister said that he was prepared to see the patriarch, but unable to help. The intention was to draw Mar Shimun to England to create the perception that the British government had an interest in the Assyrian case. They wanted Mar Shimun to go to England prior to receiving American citizenship. Even after that, in many ways, the British government tried unsuccessfully to lure Mar Shimun to England. However, at this point Mar Shimun was familiar with their politics and tactics.

In 1962, both Mar Yosip and Lady Surma were "invited" to England by government officials. Without our knowledge, they had made Lady Surma write a letter from England to the patriarch requesting that his presence there was very important. The patriarch never replied.

As noted earlier, the Anglican Church is the chosen religion nationally, with all its expenses paid by the government. It had been used as a tool of the government. At the end of 1962, the patriarch traveled to India, Iran, and Lebanon. During his stay in Iran, the London *Times* wrote an unsubstantiated and a very offensive article against Mar Shimun, alleging he was "the enemy of Muslims." When the British saw the reception with which the patriarch was received, the honor and respect accorded him in Iran by the shah, the ministers and the government in general, they sought to ruin and sully this friendship, which was a part of their strategy. However, their efforts could not harm the patriarch because this friendship had been created many years before.

After World War II, the Russians established a government in Azerbaijan but were pressed by the American government to leave Iran. During their withdrawal from Iran, four Assyrian Communists were killed, while others of them fled to Iraq. The emigrants from Urmia (Iran), who were then living in America, told the patriarch that the Iranian government had killed four hundred of their people in Azerbaijan. They asked the patriarch to inform the American government and react in response to these murders. The patriarch wrote to the State Department, and after an investigation, the patriarch was informed that only four men had been killed and not four hundred, as it had been told.

The Iranian ambassador in Washington invited Mar Shimun and several American senators and representatives from congress. In his speech of welcome, he first said "Your Holiness," addressing the patriarch; "Your Excellency," addressing each of the ambassadors; and "Your Honorable," addressing each of the senators and representatives. The first honor was given to the patriarch, and its significance was not lost on Mar Shimun. From that time, a solid relationship between the Iranian government and the patriarch developed.

In 1970, the patriarch was invited to Iraq by the government. This was significant because it was his first time in Iraq since the British expulsion in 1933. Thousands of Assyrians saw and heard firsthand Mar Shimun's speech in which he reminded them Iraq was their country, and as such should be loyal to it. This statement created anger among some Western governments because it was counter to their own plans and intentions for Iraq. Additionally, it was not to the benefit of a few Assyrians who were working with these Western governments.

The patriarch, from his experience, was very familiar with words of flattery and empty promises. Therefore, it was not possible anymore for him to be misled by outsiders. The British government thought that during the time of exile, which had been almost forty years, his influence would have diminished among the Assyrian nation, and with the Iraqi government. In fact, they were wrong. Thousands experienced the positive changes made by the Iraqi government concerning the Assyrians living there after the patriarch's visit to that country in 1970. Similarly, the Assyrians in Iran had no influence in the government before the patriarch's visit in 1962. Until that time, they were commonly thought of as Armenians, not as Assyrian nationals.

The Case of Malik Khoshaba

In the Hakkari region, Malik Khoshaba was known as Khoshaba Yosip only. In Urmia, he became known as Malik Khoshaba. His family had been lay rectors of the Mar Gewargis Church.

Mar Benyamin had established that anyone appointed in charge of a church must teach ten students for the priesthood. If not, he must pay thirty pieces of gold each year to the school for priests to be established in Qudshanis. This was because churches had substantial income, and the profits were directed to the administrator of the church.

Yosip, Khoshaba's father, declined the position after Mar Benyamin's decree. Sliwo, Yosip's nephew, volunteered to the patriarch to take on the administrative position and was willing to tutor ten boys for priesthood.

As a Presbyterian, Khoshaba had studied in the American Missionary School in Urmia. He was a brave and intelligent young man, respected in Lower Tyari. Whenever there was an issue concerning Tyari, he was invited to be part of the council. During the second visit of Mar Benyamin to Iran to meet the Russians, Khoshaba was chosen to accompany the patriarch.

Mar Benyamin wrote to Lady Surma: "The reason for the delay was due to sending Mar Yahwala and Khoshaba to Tabriz to see the consuls of the allied governments and to seek whatever assistance they could provide."

This substantiates Khoshaba's faithfulness before our departure to Urmia, Iran. In Urmia, ill-intentioned people, agitated by Agha Potros and Presbyterian missionaries, whose objective was to change the Church of the East and the Assyrian nation, influenced him. By creating this turmoil among the Assyrian nation, it would be easier to split and ultimately dissolve the church. Agha Potros and his family were Presbyterian and against our church.

In Urmia, the Presbyterian missionaries published a newspaper regularly. Not conforming to the tradition of the appointment of maliks, they created their own methods by naming everyone they wrote about a malik. Each village bore loyalty to their malik, who in turn was loyal to the patriarch. The practice of labeling Presbyterian supporters' maliks served to undermine the honor and credibility of our real maliks.

In Hakkari, there were six tribes or clans, each with its own malik. In some tribes, the position of malik was inherited, transferred from the father to the eldest son. After a malik's death, the tribal leaders and the priests would present the eldest son to the patriarch seeking his approval to appoint him malik in place of his father.

For the following tribes, the office of malik was hereditary: Upper Tyari, Lower Tyari, Greater Jilu, Ishtawzin, Zirine, and Dizan. In Tkhuma, the office of malik was in one family. This family had grown so much that every three years, the patriarch appointed a malik from one branch of the relations. Among the Baz tribe, the office of malik was not hereditary. The person they would recommend would be brought before the patriarch to be appointed malik. If the patriarch thought him qualified and capable, he would then confer the appointment of malik.

Malik Zirine of Greater Jilu was the head of the assembly when the leaders would meet with the patriarch, with the rest taking their usual place. The mayors of Qudshanis, of Mar Zaya, and Ashita also participated in the patriarchal council among maliks.

For a variety of reasons, such as external influences from others, Khoshaba's heart hardened against us. Because Khoshaba was able, the patriarch had to honor the ancient, established protocol and electoral process for appointing two maliks in Lower Tyari. If he did not, it would cause dissension and quite possibly bloodshed. The villages of Salabakan Valley and two-thirds of Ashita would have supported the family of Malik Barkhu because the office of Malik of the Lower Tyari was institutionalized within his family. One-third of Lower Tyari would have followed Khoshaba. The agitators knew this and were provoking Khoshaba, resulting in the desired dissension.

In 1921 or 1922, the Tyari brought Khoshaba before the patriarch, who at the time, was in Bebeide. This was the first time Khoshaba had come to see the patriarch after his friend Agha Potros was expelled from Iraq. As it was our custom, he was received peacefully. Khoshaba was given a mule and money because of his financial hardship.

After the crime he committed in Iraq, i.e., killing his wife and daughter, Khoshaba escaped to Turkey. Several years later, he returned to Iraq, after being attacked by a bear. He was wounded quite badly. The Iraqi government did not want to permit him to return because of his crime of murder. The family represented his case and persuaded the government authority to allow him entry, where we hospitalized him so that he could recuperate. Khoshaba was in desperate financial circumstances, and his father raised money on two occasions for his care. However, throughout all of this, he continued to be manipulated by others. He was desperate, which further drove his actions. He himself had told Lady Surma in Sar Amadia in 1932, "As long as this soul is alive, this mouth wants to eat."

It was regrettable that he had again reverted to this behavior. There is a proverb that says, "You cannot make a dry stick straight, and if you try to straighten it, it will break."

When Khoshaba was in Turkey, the Rab Khaila Dawid d'Mar Shimun sponsored Yosip, Khoshaba's son, to the military academy in Iraq. This simple act demonstrated the patriarchal family bore no animosity toward Khoshaba.

1928 Mosul

Sheikh Ahmad Barzani and his brother Mustafa Barzani were young men when, together with their mother, were taken to Tkhuma by Malik Barkhu, after their father, Sheikh Mahmoud, had been arrested by the Turks and sentenced to death. Mar Benyamin intervened with the Turkish vali of Mosul, the vali of Van, the Turkish minister of religious affairs, and the minister of the interior. He succeeded in saving Sheikh Mahmoud from death, and his family was free to return to Barzan.

Because of Mar Benyamin's intervention, Sheikh Mahmoud had maintained a harmonious relationship with him.

In 1928, Shareef Agha came to Mosul to see Rab Khaila Dawid. He was received by Lady Surma and the Honorable Zaya and was told that Rab Khaila Dawid was in Baghdad because the headquarters of levies had moved there. Lady Surma said that if Sheikh Ahmad needed any assistance with the Iraqi government, we would be willing to help.

Shareef Agha replied that help was not necessary. He said that a week before, a British major had come to Ahmad Barzani, requesting the sheikh's support in going to war against Iraq. The major had said that Sheikh Mahmoud in Sulaimaniya had begun fighting against the Iraqi government. The major further proposed that if Sheikh Ahmad also began an attack from the northwest while Sheikh Mahmoud approached from the northeast, both could defeat Iraq and gain independence. The major pointed out that Iraq had eight battalions and six small planes implying their army was weak.

Shareef Agha said that Sheikh Ahmad had sent him to discuss this matter with Rab Khaila Dawid. Lady Surma suggested he do nothing against the Iraqi government; otherwise, what happened to him before may happen again. Sheikh Ahmad heeded Lady Surma's advice.

In the summer of 1928, Sheikh Mahmoud of Sulaimaniya was arrested by the British, who had encouraged him to fight against the government, and he was taken to southern Iraq. The British were inciting the Kurds to revolt against the government because the Iraqis were demanding independence from the British. Because the Iraqi army could not fight the Kurds, their government would be obliged to ask England for help. The British would send the Assyrian levies to fight the Kurds. They could then point out that without the British help, Iraq could not defend itself against the Kurd and Arab tribes.

This is what the British did in Iraq. It simply is their political maneuvers. Everything was done and promised for the sake of advancing the British agenda, which extended their presence in Iraq.

The House in Modesto, California

After his exhausting work and suffering of over fifty-five years for the church and the nation, Mar Eshai Shimun continued to be attacked by baseless and false accusations. A house was purchased by the members of our church for His Holiness in Chicago. The house was sold when the patriarch moved to California. From the proceeds of the sale of the Chicago house, one was built for him in Modesto for the cost of twenty-three thousand dollars. Shortly after moving in, it was determined that His Holiness could not continue to live in the house because it was built on the bank of a river. At his doctor's insistence, he moved out of the central valley of California and away from the allergens that pervaded the river's bank and his home in Modesto. He moved to San Francisco, where he took a one-bedroom apartment on the eighth floor in Park Merced.

After retiring from his responsibilities in the church, and because nothing had been settled yet, three individuals from Turlock wrote to him requesting that the money from the house in Modesto be given to them. The patriarch did not take any action regarding their request. He knew that if he turned over the money to them, that sum would be lost. After he was assassinated, the money was found in a bank's safe-deposit box under the name of the Church of the East. He had bought 280 shares in Pacific Telephone and 282 shares in Bethlehem Steel. The net gains of the shares were between eight to nine thousand dollars and were put in a savings account to be used by the Church.

Mar Eshai Shimun, XXIII, Catholicos- Patriarch, Trichur, India, 1963

Mar Eshai Shimun was often blamed and accused of the loss of this money. He never told anybody where the money was, and it was only discovered after his assassination in a safe deposit box placed under the name of the Church of the East. A lawyer wrote to Mar Dinkha, the current patriarch, asking what should be done with the shares and bank account. Mar Dinkha, then in Iran, advised the attorney to give them to Bishop Mar Aprim. According to Mar Dinkha's request, the money and shares were given to Mar Aprim Khamis in Chicago. The three men who had demanded the money from His Holiness Mar Eshai Shimun should address this issue directly to Bishop Mar Aprim Khamis.

The Accounts of Deacon Gewargis Benjamin of Ashita

In his 1987 book *Reshanoota d' Atourayeh* (The Leadership of the Assyrians), Deacon Gewargis Benjamin of Ashita made many statements that need addressing. It saddens me that Deacon Gewargis has written something so fraught with error, particularly because he was educated and fluent in modern Syriac and Aramaic. It appears that Deacon Gewargis was unaware of the actual events. Either he was told the story incorrectly or he was incapable of maintaining any sense of objectivity. Regardless, I can respond to some of his assertions. Since I have been away from Iraq for over fifty-five years, the subsequent events that have occurred during that period do not require my commentary. I will leave that to the experts because I cannot render an opinion on something I do not know. If I do apply judgment, I too share in the culpability of those who do not know what they speak.

The deacon stated that Lady Surma employed the practice of divide and conquer, like the policy of the Roman Empire. I can emphatically assure the deacon that such a policy was never implemented by Lady Surma. It saddens me that Deacon Gewargis has learned the expression, but not the proper way to distinguish the truth and real meaning.

Furthermore, never have we favored our relatives over others. I have addressed this earlier and will not belabor the topic. Finally, Mar Timatheus never went from Baquba to Baghdad to effect a reconciliation with our church and Mar Emmanuel of the Chaldean Catholic Church. Mar Emmanuel had, on two occasions, met Mar Poulus, once during the ordination of Mar Yosip and the other when Mar Emmanuel and the local priests visited us in Baquba. On December 16, 1918, Mar Poulus, Mar Yosip, and Lady Surma met Mar Emmanuel in Baghdad, after Mar Yosip's ordination to the metropolitan. Mar Poulus requested Mar Emmanuel and the Chaldeans to join us in asking for our due right to be settled in northern Iraq. Mar Emmanuel declined, replying that it was not possible without the approval of Rome. Had we reached an agreement and formed a united front in 1933, it would have been better for our people.

The deacon additionally addressed Mar Eshai Shimun as "His Grace," which is the proper term for a bishop, but not a patriarch. The proper title for a patriarch is "His Holiness." It appears that the author is embittered and lacks an objective perspective when relating historical facts. In fact, it calls into question this writer's credibility. The history documented by Rab Trema Malik Ismael depicts the facts of these historic events more accurately, reflecting the circumstances during the troubled times of the 1930s.

The petition written and signed June 1, 1932, by the Levy officers, with Rab Khaila Dawid's support, was sent to Hinaidi headquarters. Again, the facts have been misstated by the deacon. The British government was dismantling the levies, except for four companies, which amounted to a little more than four hundred soldiers. As a nation, we had lost everything. The only path to survival was conscription of the levies. For that reason, we asked that our ancestral lands be returned, or that we be sent to a colony specifically for Assyrians or placed in northern Iraq in the government villages. I am sorry to say that without our knowledge, we were pitted against the Iraqi government. The British must have enjoyed the comedy that unfolded before them.

Furthermore, the meeting in Sar Amadia on June 16, 1932, included some of the most respected leaders of the Assyrian nation; however, a few of them were troublesome agitators and agents of the British and Iraqi governments. They worked on the writing of the petition. Mar Shimun and Lady Surma did not approve certain articles because they were meant to worsen relations between the Assyrians and the Iraqi government.

The author further criticizes the ordination of Mar Eshai Shimun at the age of twelve years old and claims it is against the canons of the church. It surprises me that this individual would make these claims, where it is obvious he did not first substantiate the canonical law. Nowhere in the *sunhadus* (synod) is an age of ordination stipulated. Rather, the decision is driven from the immediate context and, quite bluntly, the death of the prior patriarch. For example, on the death of Mar Rowil, Mar Benyamin, his successor, was sixteen years old at the time of his ordination to patriarch. Mar Eshai was ordained patriarch after the death of his uncle, Mar Poulus. Mar Yosip was consecrated to the rank of bishop at the age of twenty. Mar Yawallah was consecrated bishop at the age of eighteen, and Mar Zaya Sargis was consecrated at the age of thirteen to the rank of bishop. These all occurred

because of the death of their predecessor, which as mentioned earlier, is based on a succession from uncle to nephew. Although some might have been young, they were educated and mentored by the more tenured church clerics. Moreover, during their education and training, other trusted clerics would provide guidance until they matured. In ecclesiastical duties, Mar Yosip was the tutor for Mar Eshai Shimun. For secular responsibilities, Lady Surma, Rab Khaila Dawid, and his uncle Zaya served as his advisors and counselors until he returned from his studies in England, when he took full responsibility and control of both secular and ecclesiastical affairs. The writer was correct in stating that Mar Eshai Shimun had not enough experience in the political affairs at such a young age. However, he construes this as detrimental to the Assyrian nation and the fault of the family. Furthermore, Deacon Gewargis implies again without validation that Mar Eshai acted alone, without his trusted advisors at such a young age.

These blatant falsehoods were planted by Mar Timatheus, the metropolitan of India, and the Deacon Yosip Kelaita of Mar Bisho. Mar Timateous, who was ordained by Mar Benyamin as metropolitan, never criticized the patriarch for being ordained at the age of sixteen. Yet in later years, when we were in Iraq, Mar Timatheus was openly critical about the ordination of Mar Eshai Shimun. The factor of age was never a consideration; nor was it against the canons of the church. As I mentioned earlier, for 658 years this has been the practice for the patriarchal succession as well as the metropolitan one. No article exists in the canons that requires an age minimum, nor does it state that it is illegal to consecrate a patriarch because of his young age.

For example, the royal family of Bulgaria was involved in both the religious and secular affairs of their country. Later, after breaking away from Turkish rule, the royal family had more political involvement in their secular affairs and left the ecclesiastical ones to the church. That was their method of succession until the king was dethroned and the royal family removed from Bulgaria.

An Example of Faithfulness

Mar Eshai Shimun once told my brother Sargon, when he was taking our plea to the League of Nations, that Mr. Emery, a British attaché, had requested that His Holiness posture himself and falsely accept the responsibility for the "mistake" made by the Assyrians. By doing so, Emery contended, the patriarch and his family would be free to return to Iraq and would have the patriarch's status and honor restored. The patriarch replied, "I cannot deny the truth and become a traitor to my nation for a personal benefit for myself and for the members of my family."

Yusef Malek quotes in his book, *The British Betrayal of the Assyrians*, the Reverend Canon W. A. Wigram's assessment of the British's policy about the Assyrians as a blight on the British national shield. Malek quotes Wigram in his summary of the situation and of his perspective of Mar Eshai Shimun's integrity: "They were not contented, however, and being tribesmen, tried to present their grievances through their youthful Patriarch-Chief, Mar Shimun. Hence, he was accused of fomenting trouble in the desire for temporal power, of disloyalty, and of caring only for his own family and kin. It is worth noting that the accusations are self-contradictory. His demands amounted to his, far less than what the League had said was his due: (Mar Shimun states) "All must obey the law, but surely the ignorant who do not know Arabic may be permitted to use the mediation of their own patriarch with the government. That is our tradition, and we think it ought to be respected. That is allowed to any Arab sheikh, and the claim will pass automatically as education grows." It is worth noting that the authorities who blamed the young man for trying for temporal power also made a habit of applying to him to "use his influence with the Assyrian Levy and keep it loyal" when that necessary body began to partake in the general discontent; and the man who was accused of caring only for his own family was offered a most liberal endowment for it by the government of Iraq if he were "reasonable." Mar Shimun refused: "I take no bribe to abandon my people.[25]

[25] *The British Betrayal of the Assyrians,* chapter 7

Chapter Fourteen

Conclusion

Synopsis. This chapter contains the author's concluding remarks and his evocative thoughts posed to the Assyrian community at large. It also provides additional insights into key information. Of significance is the request of changing the church calendar, the reasons for which had long been erroneously reported and now finally clarified.

Dear readers, by now you have become more familiar with our life in our ancestral land. You now know of our oppression, the looting, the hatred, and the killings visited upon us by other natives of Turkey, Iran, Iraq and by the missionaries who called themselves Western apostles. These missionaries were from many different religious denominations, most of which had been recently formed, which lacked ordination or apostolic succession. The Western missionaries' work largely resulted in the division of our church and nation, segregating us into several factions and dispersing us throughout the world. "If a house is divided against itself, that house cannot stand" (Mark 3:25). These Westerners, who called themselves apostles, were in fact as fierce as wolves and just as crafty. They represented their governments and furthered the political purposes of those governments. If they were truly apostles of Christ, they would have implemented the commands of Jesus, which are fasting, prayer, love, peace, purity, and goodness. Instead, the missionaries carried out the political agendas of their governments, resulting in killing, looting, lying, fomenting division, hatred and so on. Their actions worked against the commandments of our Savior, Jesus Christ.

The governments of Turkey and of Iran believed that we, the Christians, brought these Western missionaries to their countries. These missionaries led both governments to believe they were aiding Eastern Christians. We did not want their support after we learned their true motives. However, the Western influence was strong. The governments of Iran and Turkey were weak and unable to control them. We were caught between these two factions. Even the Kurds rose against us because they too believed we brought these Western Christians to conquer their lands.

What would have occurred had we not learned from their treachery? Despite our history and experience, governments with their own agendas still exist today, manipulating some Assyrian organizations. There are some who are being paid to destroy our culture and obliterate us. Unlike before, they are not working among us under the guise of Christianity; rather, they are working in the name of nationalism.

Assyrians of Iraq, Syria, and Turkey, are you forgetting your parents, your brothers, your sisters, and your relatives living in these countries? Half of the Assyrian nation still lives there. How can you dare to speak against these countries? Do you not realize that you are only bringing harm to them and yourselves? Your words jeopardize the lives of your people and your nation. What wickedness have we seen from these two or three governments? There are people who are manipulating rather than being sincere in their love. They are not the builders of Assyria; they are working in the name of Assyria for their personal gains. They should cease such behavior and not be the cause of further persecution of innocent people. For there are a few individuals disguising their claims of nationalism that are, in fact, only interested in their own benefit and personal gain.

One day I saw a monument placed in one of the Assyrian organizations in memory of the Assyrians massacred in Simele in August of 1933. During this massacre, the British airplanes were dropping leaflets written in the Assyrian language advising our people to surrender their arms and live in peace. But in Iran, from 1914 until 1918, during World War I, about forty thousand adults and children were killed. Why then did we not establish a monument to commemorate the forty thousand? I will leave this for your judgment.

Mar Eshai Shimun XXIII worked vigorously for us, desperately searching for a permanent Assyrian homeland. The British reply was always "There is no place for you except to live in Iraq." At that time, the royal government was ruling in Iraq under the guidance of the British, who needed us. However, after the British departed, we found ourselves manipulated into claiming northern Iraq.

This history should be a profound lesson to us. Today we are dispersed to the four corners of the world. I plead to each Assyrian son and daughter to stay away from such loathsome and cunning individuals, whose deception is motivated only for their personal gain. I realize the criticism and attack I will endure because of the caution I give to you; however, I believe your safety is more important. I feel this is my obligation to you. I can imagine what some may say, but again I leave this to your judgment.

In 1924, the Tyari and Tkhuma Assyrians were attacked which forced their escape into lower Barwar (Iraq). There was no army to protect the villagers. Lady Surma was in Bebeide during those summer months when she learned of what was happening. As quickly as she could, she reacted to organize the Barwar Assyrians, together with the Tyari and Tkhuma Assyrians, totaling four hundred fighting men. They hastily threw together an army that staved off the Turkish attacks for a day or two until the levies reached them in lower Barwar, where they joined the fighting. When the Turks saw the levies join the battle, coupled with their knowledge that this very issue was being addressed between London and Ankara, their army retreated.

In 1925, Lady Surma was sent by the British government to Geneva, Switzerland, to attend the League of Nations conference to set the boundaries between Turkey and Iraq. The British did not work to establish a homeland designated for the Assyrians. After that disappointment, Lady Surma was sent to England and later to the United States to raise money for the Assyrian refugees.[26] It was during this time the British government wished to award her with an OBE (Order of the British Empire), conferred by King George V. The British ambassador in Washington DC sent for her so that she would receive the award at the British embassy. It was to be bestowed upon Lady Surma for her efforts in raising the volunteer army against the Turks in 1924. Lady Surma declined the OBE because she felt that it was not the purpose of her journey. The sole intent for her trip was to attend the League of Nations and participate in securing a homeland for the Assyrians, not to be the recipient of awards. She perceived this act as a frivolity which she would not place before the plight and respect she felt her Assyrian people deserved. After she returned to England, the pressure to accept the OBE continued to mount, even though she consistently refused. Finally, in Iraq, the high commissioner confronted her and implied that her refusal to accept the OBE was not only insulting to the king but could hurt the cause of the Assyrians. At that point, she relented to the pressure and accepted the commendation.

During the time Lady Surma was in England, she attended a meeting at the foreign office. During conversation, she asked why the promises made by the British armed forces and government were not fulfilled. In response, she was told that the aim of a war is to win. A military official will give any promise at any time to achieve his purpose, namely, victory at any cost.

In 1932, King Faisal I was in northern Iraq at the same time Mar Eshai was there. The two met privately. The king warned the patriarch not to place much regard or faith in the promises the British made. He asked the patriarch not to listen to the British because they would do to him exactly what they did to the king and his family.

[26] Surma Khanum's 1925-26 mission to the U.K. and U.S. is documented in a three-part series by Christopher R. Nelson in Nineveh Magazine (v. 46, n. 3, 2021; v. 46, n. 4, 2021; and v. 47, n. 2, 2022).

It is important for each member of the nation or church to understand certain individuals for their works and deeds. For example, Mar Yosip, from 1933 until his death, acted as the religious and national leader of Assyrians in Iraq and other middle eastern countries since the patriarch was exiled until 1970.

It saddens me to say that Mar Yosip was unaware that he was used by others, even though it hurt the nation. The first trip to Syria, he took with him Loko, the representative of Tkhuma, and Daniel, who represented Tyari, Lewon, as well as the remaining tribes. At the British embassy there, the group was told that Mar Eshai Shimun was in America, living lavishly, eating and drinking without a concern for them or the Assyrian people. Cunningly, they were advised to fend for themselves since Mar Eshai Shimun was not concerned for their welfare. At that time, the current situation of Assyrians in Khabor, Syria, was disadvantaged and vulnerable. They were advised that Brazil was a large country and willing to welcome all needy settlers. They were also told they were to be awarded a small stipend.

The seeds having been planted, this delegation left the embassy feeling that Brazil was the place to conclude the promise of an Assyrian settlement. That was simply a ruse. The lies about Brazil and the allegations that the patriarch was living in the excesses that America offered were devised as ways to create a deeper chasm between the patriarch and the Assyrian nation. The country of Brazil would not likely accept the Assyrians without the millions and millions of pounds it would take to create these settlements, notwithstanding the exorbitant amount of money the Assyrians did not have, and the British were not willing to relocate and re-establish the nation. Had the government of Brazil agreed, the British would forbid the Assyrians' departure because, who else would willingly serve them in the Middle East? This whole issue was because Mar Shimun was in the United States, and the British were unable to lure him to England.

In 1962, Rab Trema Yaqu Malik Ismael visited our family in San Francisco and told me the following story: Mar Yosip asked Rab Trema to accompany him to the British embassy in Damascus, Syria. Rab Trema took him but refused to enter the embassy for fear of what the Syrian authorities might think since he was a citizen of that country. Instead, he agreed to wait across the street in a café.

In 1964, Mar Yosip Khnanishu came to San Francisco, after having a medical procedure in England. During that visit, he told the patriarch that our people in Iraq had asked him to present their request to switch from the Julian calendar to the Gregorian one. He explained the reason was that their Muslim neighbors were sneering at them and asking how many times "your Jesus" was born. Other denominations observe December 25, while we observe January 7. He pleaded with Mar Eshai Shimun, stating that the Assyrians were the laughingstock of their Islamic neighbors.

Mar Shimun replied that this was the first time he had heard of such complaints. It had never been mentioned nor discussed with him. Hearing the metropolitan's plea, Mar Shimun replied that he would do nothing without the agreement of all the bishops.

The patriarch directed Mar Yosip to write a letter proposing the change from January 7 to December 25 and to send it to the bishops and priests and to forward their replies to him. He said that if all agreed, he would sign the letter. However, he stipulated that no change would occur without the agreement of *all* the bishops.

During his visit, I broached the subject with Mar Yosip. I asked why we could not change the Christmas holiday to December 25 but keep the Easter holiday following the Jewish Passover, like the others. Mar Yosip became very angry and asked how this could be when the Jewish calendar has thirteen months every fourth year. I replied that the Greek Orthodox and others had converted to December 25 yet had maintained the Julian calendar for the Easter holiday. He replied that it would not; both holidays required changing. At that point, I did not pursue the matter.

This is not a criticism of Mar Yosip Khnanishu. He was my favorite uncle, and he was a very good man; however, providing full context is important and this is crucial information that Assyrians must be aware of because for almost forty years the truth has not been told.

Finally, I need to explain that all the four sons of Malik Ismael were true Christians—in their prayers, in their fasting, and, indeed, by their acts. These men were brave and true, with never a false word spoken by them. Their loyalty to the patriarch was unmatched. It is, therefore, truly shocking and heartbreaking that the murder of Mar Eshai Shimun was committed by one of their children, disgracing such an illustrious family. Evil and wicked men caused this tragedy to be committed by a naïve man. This was to defame the name of Malik Ismael and the Upper Tyari clan. It was neither for the sake of the Assyrian nation nor the Assyrian church but done to destroy both of them. The crime was committed for selfish and empty glory, and for a personal gain. It is unfortunate that the evil men who planned the assassination are enjoying themselves in the name of the Assyrian nation while the murderer suffered in prison and was made a scapegoat for the accomplishment of their personal intention.

Concluding Remarks

My dear Assyrians, where were you the day we were imprisoned for your sake for twenty-one years in Cyprus? We were not killers, thieves, plunderers, or deceivers. We were arrested by the British because we were demanding rights for our Assyrian nation and church.

During those years, no one spoke up on our behalf with the British, questioning why and for how long we would be detained. The British have called Assyrians "animals on two feet". We have seven senses, but we only use our sense of hearing, and no more. Never at any time did we complain about the oppression visited on us by the British government, especially during those years in Cyprus. The suffering we endured was done for the sake of our nation and was an honor for us. No Assyrian, except for Mar Zaya Sargis, asked after us. Not even as a national duty did anyone offer us assistance. We would have taken heart and been thankful had our fellow Assyrians had not forgotten us.

In 1946, Mar Yosip came to visit us in Cyprus. He told us about the British ambassador in Iraq's request for a meeting with the two clerics, himself and Mar Zaya Sargis. We never asked Mar Yosip why they went to the embassy; nor did he volunteer the details. However, well into the discussion, Mar Yosip told us that Mar Sargis spoke privately, challenging him to address our exile in Cyprus. Mar Yosip simply replied "it is not the right time". Mar Sargis disagreed and took it upon himself demanding the patriarch and his family be returned to Iraq from Cyprus. Mar Sargis addressed the ambassador, questioning how long the separation of the patriarchal family would continue from the church and nation. To this day, we do not know what the reply was to Mar Sargis' questions. This man was the only Assyrian who spoke on our behalf.

For hundreds of years, our family was never a burden to the nation or the church. In Turkey we had sixteen villages of our own. We worked the farmlands and fed the people of the nation. When the patriarch was in Iraq, he never went to any Assyrian house to ask for money, as others would have done. We never, at any time, placed personal gain before our duty to our church and nation. In Iraq we were offered by the government to choose for ourselves seven villages among the districts of Duhok, Sar Amadia, Zakho, and Aqra. Those villages would have been registered in our name in government records.

However, we declined, feeling that would have been a betrayal to the church and the nation. We would have been as guilty as those who had betrayed the church and nation for a small sum of money. Instead, we accepted exile, suffering, and your hatred.

Because of the painful lesson he had learned earlier, Mar Eshai Shimun XXIII did not associate with the deceivers in the name of the nation, the laborers for personal benefits, and the inflictors of harm to our church and our nation. I will leave this for the judgment of the readers. Having read this far, you now know the truth. Until now we have not spoken against those who have falsely accused, lied, and blamed us. What I am writing for you amounts to a fraction of these incidents we lived through. If I document more detail concerning the achievements and destructive acts of a particular person, it would be more embarrassing to the history of the nation. Therefore, it is not necessary to further expose these traitors, particularly those who do not know us, lest the peaceful Assyrians and non-Assyrians turn away from us.

Our exile was for you, because we chose to stand firmly against the proselytizing Westerners and their agendas. The British practice is to expel a person who knows their motivation and intention. This is usually achieved after a ten-to-fifteen-year period. Usually, after this time individuals have "learned their lesson".

I was the last to leave Cyprus, after twenty-one years. Initially, I did not want to go to England and was reluctant to accept citizenship as a royal subject relocating to England. Ultimately, I agreed to join the rest of my family, who had left and settled in England a year earlier.

In 1947, the Mau Mau movement arose, a clandestine band of the Gikuyu people who fought the oppression of the British colonial regime. History does not often fully portray Gikuyu's circumstance during that time. Their conditions of hunger and misery were ripe for British exploitation to colonize their farmlands. Their repression was a bloody battle resulting in the loss of lives and the expulsion of their leader, Jomo Kenyatta.

The Mau Mau conflict was a war for independence. It was resolved by the intervention of the United Nations General Assembly through the Declaration of Concession of Independence to the Colonial Countries and Peoples, including John F. Kennedy's appeal for an Africa for the Africans.

I mention this as a comparative example. How could Assyrians fail to see the treachery, even when English is not their first language, as it is not the first language of the Kenyans? Unlike the Kenyans, who bravely fought for their land and independence, a faction of Assyrians chose to write letters denying the patriarch was their representative. The British did not need to further manipulate us. In those select Assyrians who were actively involved the British had their allies. Our own people's treachery and lack of support for our representatives resulted in Assyrians dispersing throughout the world. The History of the Patriarchal Succession of the d'Mar Shimun Family

There were individuals who contended openly that the Iraqi government was paying our family a generous allowance, permitting our alleged comfortable existence in Cyprus. Those allegations were lies. The British government told us that King Faisal would support us with £65 monthly. However, after the first year, this allowance was cut off. The British government refused to take on this responsibility. The Archbishop of Canterbury wrote in the church newspaper to friends we had in that country [England] to contribute some £1,500 to support us in Cyprus. When this amount had run out, I believe a second request was made for help from our friends. One of our friends, General Renton, donated from his own pocket £2,000 to the archbishop to spend on us when we were in Cyprus. Dr. Wigram donated £500, and another £500 he raised from his relatives. The total amount of £1,000 was to be used to build two homes for us and to buy one piece of land we could live on.

This money was placed under the administration of the British cleric in Jerusalem, Bishop Brown. It was spent later for our journey from Cyprus to England.

In 1938 or 1939, the British government began to give us a monthly allowance of £65. From this amount, £13 was for rent of the houses, £30 for boarding school fees for the children. The remaining portion of £22 was used for living expenses for the two large families. The suffering from the poverty we experienced in Cyprus could not be told. We never complained, nor had we confided to anyone. We did so because it was our sense of national duty and accountability and, as such, an obligation to carry this burden without complaining to others.

If the history is written in detail, then you will know how many sacrifices this family had made for the past 658 years for the sake of the church and nation, and learn as well about the oppression endured from kings, emirs and Westerners. We had never complained to our people or others, nor had we aggrandized our contributions for the sake of worldly honor and fame as others have done and are doing now. Today the traitors to the nation and the spoilers of the church are being honored by our organizations that are calling themselves patriots and nationalists, even when these organizations are following the footsteps of the betrayers who walked ahead of them.

Mar Eshai Shimun, XXIII, Catholicos-Patriarch, San Francisco, California, 1968

Appendix

I. "Syriac is a dialect of Aramaic, the dominant language of the Near East from about the 6th century B.C. through the 6th century A.D. Aramaic (though not the Syriac dialect) was the language spoken by Jesus of Nazareth. Two books of the Old Testament, Ezra and Daniel, are partly in Aramaic, as are sections of the Babylonian Talmud, the Midrash (Jewish commentaries on the Bible), and the Dead Sea Scrolls. The Aramaic script eventually became the basis of the Hebrew alphabet, of the Arabic (via the Nabateans), and possibly of the Brahmi script that gave rise to all the alphabets of modern India.

II. "The Syriac dialect developed around the city of Edessa (now Urfa, in southeastern Turkey), the leading center of Christianity after about 200

A.D. It eventually became the most important of the Aramaic dialects and, after Greek, the most important language in the eastern Roman Empire. Syriac (or Aramaic) continued to be spoken until the rise of Islam, when it quickly gave way to the dominant influence of Arabic. By the 8th century, the language remained in use mainly for liturgical purposes.

"In modern usage the term Syriac generally refers to the liturgical language of the Maronite Catholic Church, the Syrian Catholic Church, the Syrian Jacobite Church, the Nestorian (or sometimes Assyrian) Church, and a number of others. The term Aramaic refers to the language as it is still spoken in small communities in Syria (in and around the village of Ma'lula, north of Damascus) and in Turkey (near the town of Mardin, east of Urfa). Another form of Aramaic, generally referred to as Assyrian, is spoken by about 150,000 people in Iraq, 100,000 in Iran, and smaller numbers in Lebanon, Syria, and Russia.

"Aramaic was first written in the Phoenician alphabet, but by the 8th century B.C., a distinctive Aramaic script had evolved. The first Syriac alphabet developed from a later form of Aramaic used at Palmyra in Syria. This gradually evolved into the script known as Estrangelo, which was used almost exclusively until the 5th century. At that time the Eastern Church split into several factions, with each producing a modified version of its own. Three scripts are in use today: Estrangelo, Jacobite (or Serto), and Nestorian." [27]

III. "Aramaic (Central Semitic) is the label for a group of related dialects, originally spoken in what is SYRIA today. It is attested since the beginning of the first millennium B.C. It later spread to all of the Near East, replacing Akkadian. Hebrew, and other languages, only to be replaced, in turn, by Arabic after the rise of Islam in the seventh century A.D. Major parts of the biblical books of Ezra and Daniel are in Aramaic. Jesus' native tongue was Palestinian Aramaic. Nabataean was spoken by ethnic Arabs around the beginning of the Christian era. The Babylonian Talmud was written in Eastern Aramaic, a language close to Syriac, the language of the Christian city of Edessa (till the thirteenth century A.D.), still the liturgical language of the Nestorian and Jacobite Christian churches. Classical and Modern Mandaic are associated with a Gnostic sect. Today a variety of Western Aramaic is spoken in three villages near Damascus, Syria. Dialects of Eastern Neo-Aramaic (Modern Syriac) are still vigorous in Christian communities in northwestern Iran and adjacent areas in Iraq, in Soviet [sic] Georgia, and in scattered communities around the world. The speakers (at least 300,000) are sometimes inappropriately called Chaldean, (Neo-Assyrian). Eastern Neo-Aramaic is further maintained by Jews in Israel coming from the same region and elsewhere. The Aramaic consonantal square script is used for Hebrew today."

IV. "Akkadian (East Semitic) was the language of ancient Mesopotamia (approximately today's Iraq), the carrier of a grandiose civilization from 3000 B.C. to the beginning of the Christian era. Akkadian gradually replaced the unrelated Sumerian, which had greatly influenced it. It was soon divided into Assyrian (northern) and

[27] Kenneth Katzner, "Syriac," in *The Languages of the World*, 3rd ed. London, (New York: Routledge, 2002), 160-61.

Babylonian (southern) branches, corresponding to a political division. The last written documents date from the first century A.D. Afterwards, Akkadian was completely forgotten and had to be rediscovered, with its writing system deciphered, in the nineteenth century. The Akkadian script, usually written from left to right, is called cuneiform, i.e., 'wedge-shaped,' because of the graphic components of the symbols."[28]

[28] Robert Hetzron, "Semitic Languages," in *The Major Languages*, ed. Bernard Comrie (Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press, 1990), 654-56.

Letter written by Her Ladyship Surma d'Mar Shimun (October 1915: believed to be addressed to the Nissan family.)

I have not written to you for a long time. I think you will know the reason is that the war with Turkey has stopped the post to Europe. As you know, during past years there have been difficulties between the Turks and ourselves, but now the truth of the matter is made clear. When we saw many Christians of Gawar and Albek killed without reason, we thought our turn would come. Every kind of warfare commenced, and since then, for months, we have been fighting in the mountains; in the end we were not successful, because the Kurds were helped by the artillery of the Turkish Government. Of course when our cartridges were exhausted we could not stand before the great force of Turkish artillery. Then first of all Tiari was destroyed; we then thought we could flee to the mountains in the hope of victory, but soon the Turks came to the entrance of Tkhoma and our hope was destroyed—either we must deliver ourselves to Turkey and be killed or flee to save ourselves. We did the latter, but even then half the nation was left behind.

Now we are here in Diliman, Salmas; but the larger part of Tiari and Tkhoma is conquered. Up to the present time we have no news of those people; whether they are alive or have been destroyed, we know not.

Many of the refugees who come here are dying of hunger; they have no bedding, and many men just died on the way here. Would you were here to see with your own eyes our state; your sympathy would indeed be aroused. All the houses have been destroyed (also Mar Shimun's house and your Mission house in Qudshanis) and burnt and robbed; we are in rags and hunger and in a strange land. Many of the houses where you have spent the night as a guest have no bedding, the house of Malik Ismail, for instance, and the house of Khiyu.

Of all these the condition of the Tkhumnai is the most miserable; they are quite destitute. If some help is not forthcoming for the nation all hope of survival is at an end, for three parts will die of hunger. Our thanks are due to the Russian Consul, who is taking care to distribute the people among the villages to prevent them dying of cold, for all are under trees and in fields in the open.

In the course of February, Esther and I and her children went down to Malik Ismail's house in Tiari, for we thought it would be safer there. Then we soon moved from Tehumbar to Dadush, a small village of Tiari. When the Turkish army drew near that place we fled to the Church of Mar Audishu of Tal. In each place we were obliged to leave behind some of our clothes and our bedding; many times we were hungry; we made our journeys by night, and Esther's little children would fall asleep on the road. Three months we stayed in Mar Audishu, the whole time the fighting drawing nearer. Our brothers are fighting in Dizan, and there every three or four men are sleeping together for want of quilts at night. We sleep with our clothes on, ready to start when it may be necessary. In Mar Audishu the food was good, but the provision for sleeping and bathing was bad. Soap there was none; water could be had for drinking and cooking only. Sometimes we would go down to one of the Tal villages to wash our clothes and to bathe.

From Qudshanis everything we possessed was carried off and our house destroyed. A few quilts we brought to Dizan; these we could not bring away with us because we had no mules, for the Kurds had carried them off, and I think they will now remain for our neighbours (the Kurds). Of clothes to wear we had only enough for the road, but not enough for the cold of the winter. When we came here, on the road, we saw some women who had never known want entirely naked; we divided our clothes among them, giving them just enough to prevent them dying of cold. During all these years our state has been, glory to God, that only our souls have been chastened, but fi nally one thing has befallen us which we can never forget. I recall the last days that I stood in the Church. I had gone down to Dizan because Paulus. my brother (in September of 1915), was sick and Ishaya was ill with fever in Mar Audisbu. It was at the time—when the guns of the Turks were drawn up before Tkhuma and were moving forward then it was. he sickened and died. Mar Shimun had arrived there a little before. Romi and Esther and her children, at that very time of great sorrow, when they least wished to leave, had to set out, weeping, with their families. Only Mar Shimun with two priests and a few men remained in the Church for the funeral service, for as quickly as

they could they had to place the body of Ishaya in the grave and hasten after their families. Going quickly on foot they arrived at Darawar, where Malik Ismail was. Those little children (God bless them) went on foot, without a servant, accompanied by Romi and Esther. That day, if our families had delayed in Mar Audishu, they would have been prisoners now in Turkey. The day after they left, the Turkish army entered the Church, for they knew we were there. But, thanks be to God, we had escaped.

Paulus is better, and now our family is with Mar Shimun in Diliman. Up to the present time we have not hired a house, for we do not know where we shall settle down. There is a Church here.

Mr. McDowell came from Urmia to see us and they hope to help this people as much as they can with food and clothing.

Of all the things that were left in our house I am sorrowing most of all for my English books that have gone. Those of our own language are hidden; I do not know whether they will be safe or not. I only left about forty in Dizan.

Letter written by Her Ladyship Surma d'Mar Shimun (Spring 1916: sent to Mrs. Margoliouth.)

I was very glad to get your sweet letter, for which I was longing and looking forward, my dearest friend. I know how you loved Ishaya, and he always asked after you. I wonder if you ever got his letter that he wrote to you in Syriac.

I wrote to you while at Quodshanis (before the war) but got no answer; I wondered if you might be away from home. I wonder if Mr. Wigram and Mr. Heazell got my letters, written since we came to Diliman; I am afraid you won't get yours, the address was incorrect.

You most kindly asked after Hormizd. I wish we knew his fate, dear boy; we have no news of him since the 20th February (5th March), 1915. I asked Mrs. Wigram if she would be able to tell us something of him by way of Dr. Wigram's letters; we are most anxiously looking forward to the answer.

The hospitals which are endowed by great Russia to help the sick are a great help. Now the people get nursed well, and, of course, the sickness is growing less. But outside the hospitals, although they do get help from Russia (recently some clothes, too), England and America, still their miseries are great, and their living very poor.

I trust and hope you will read the report recently written by Mr. Paul Shimmon. A copy has been sent to Mr. Heazell. It is all quite true, and there you will see our nation's wretchedness. Really, Russia couldn't have done more than she has by helping with hospitals, money and clothes.

Now the Russian Government wants us all to go up to Bashkala—the people to be provided with oxen and wheat to be able to plough land for themselves. Of course, Mar Shimun is quite willing to make the people do what they are ordered, and what is best for them. It really is a very good thing, but I am much afraid it won't come to pass, for two reasons—first, the difficulty of finding enough oxen and corn, and, secondly, because it is getting too late for sowing. Soon after Easter Mar Shimun intends to go to Khoi and talk the plan over with General Tchournazoukov.

I wanted very much to go to England, but Mrs. Wigram wrote to me that my friends didn't think it advisable. I don't understand well what you say in your letter about directing to me through Mr. Shipley. If it is anything to help the poor, it is most welcome.

One can't help longing to read the London Times and the Church Times, especially the bishop of London's sermons. What will be the end? Is the world being refined? Who will endure to the last? We can only pray for mercy. Its will be done. My heart is yearning to hear that "England has conquered"; pray God it will prove so-although one does feel for all the young men's lives, whether friend or foe, no difference, and for the world's misery.

Last October David and I went down to Urmia and stayed with dear Mr. Nisan. His house seemed to me quite desolate with no Beatrice or her mother, but he was the same, cheering and helping others. His daughter- in-law Nanajan is very nice, and, with her little dear boy, she will be a comfort for his old age. Samuel is still in America; it is rather hard for the young wife. I have twice written to Mr. Nisan to send service books, which he kindly sent. We often wonder what our church would have done if it were not for English printing presses? Nearly all our church books are gone. Mar Shimun has consecrated little tablets, and nearly every priest in Diliman has one to celebrate on for the people; it is the same in Urmia and Khoi.

You will like to hear that David, Zaya, Paul and Ishaya fought most bravely in Dizan. Twice the Kurds were driven away with twelve killed, and the third time Paul and Zaya alone with four servants fought against the foe and saved the little ammunition they had. I intend to write a report of all that happened (what I saw and heard) in the mountains. But really I can't, as long as I am with ten children playing in the small yard and making as much noise as a herd of the Kurds, poor little kids. I don't think you know that David is father of two boys and four girls, and Romi is mother of three girls and two boys.

Are not they old? The children are as happy as children ought to be, only they are disappointed at not having as many new clothes as they used to have at home, and especially the boys, for they are not going to have any new clothes for Easter as they had theirs at Christmas, and now it is the girls' turn for Easter. The market is another difficulty for them—seeing new toys and sweets (they were free from that in Quodshanis) and with no money to buy them. However, they get used to it, poor dears.

I teach the four boys for two hours a day; they are promising pupils if properly taught. The little girls read their alphabet, too.

Romi and Esther have suffered very much under the circumstances. It was too much for them, although they have gone through it quite bravely, especially Esther, who was with child all this time, and during the last days of flight was expecting the child every hour. However, God was merciful, and the baby girl was born nearly a fortnight after we arrived in Diliman. She is baptised Helena. I am rather uneasy about Esther. She is very weak, and after Easter she will go to Urmia, both to visit her father's house (the Mutran's brother) and see the doctor.

I can't say it was too much for me; if it were not for certain reasons I should have been rather enjoying the struggle between the Kurds and Turks and us. Thank God we are very well at present, except for being over anxious for our poor nation's misery. The living here is very hard for us; we simply have no money for our ordinary necessities, and at times we have people coming to our door who can hardly stand on their feet for hunger; how could one turn them away?

However, all the world is suffering, and so must we and our nation.

Would you kindly tell Mr. Heazell that Mar Shimun got the £50 which he sent. I never wrote to him that the Mutran was let free by the Turks and has come to Urmia safely, although quite broken and very weak.

I rather enjoy the plan of going up to Bashkala after we have lost our country and home. It will suit us to turn into nomads, like the Israelites—Mar Shimun for Moses; can't make David into Aaron, he has no beard, so dear old Peter for Aaron, with his white beard; I suppose I must be Miriam, and we must take a tent, too, for celebration, which we will call the "Assyrian Tabernacle"; and very likely we shall always be having skirmishes with the Canaanites to get to our fathers' land. Wouldn't you like to come and see us, the new Israelites

The houses in Bashkala are all ruined.

Mar Shimun sends his blessing to you and Professor Margoliouth, and we send our best regards.

Glossary of Terms

by W. A. Wigram, DD

Taken from Assyrian Church Customs and the Murder of Mar Shimun[13] by Surma D'Bait Mar Shimun[29]

agha	Chief of a Kurdish tribe or clan
malik	The paramount chief of a district among the Christian tribes. It is often used as a title of honor to one who does not actually hold office.
mar	"Lord." It is a title used both for saints and for bishops. "Mar Shimun" (Lord Simon) is the hereditary title of the patriarch.
matran	"Metropolitan" or "archbishop." The title is given in the Assyrian church to the second dignitary in their hierarchy, the metropolitan of Shamisdin. In the modern use of the Chaldean body, which has become subject to the pope, "matran" is used, with some disregard of etymology and history, for an ordinary bishop and "abuna" for a priest.
millet	A Christian subject nation in the Ottoman Empire, organized (as they always are) in a church and often having its own language. From a root meaning "to speak."
rabban:	A celibate. A Christian monk or nun (plural Rabbanyati)
rayis:	The headman of a village, Christian or Moslem.
sheikh	Lit. "elder," "old man." Among Arabs, a chief. Among Kurds, the work implies religious chieftainship also.
vali	An Ottoman governor-general of a province.

[29] First published in England, Faith Press, 1920.

About the Author

Theodore d'Mar Shimun was born on October 15, 1906 in Qudshanis, Turkey. He was the eldest of twelve children born to Rab Khaila David d'Mar Shimun and Lady Esther, sister of Mar Yosip Khnanishu, metropolitan of the Church of the East. He knew his uncles, the Catholicos-Patriarchs Mar Benyamin Shimun XXI (1903-1918) and Mar Poulus Shimun XXII (1918-1920); and he was the trusted confidant of his younger brother, Mar Eshai Shimun XXIII (1920-1975), the Catholicos-Patriarch for over fifty-five years.

The Honorable Theodore lived in Qudshanis, Turkey, until 1915, when the political upheavals forced the patriarchal family, along with thousands of other Assyrians, to take flight from their ancestral homelands. They made their arduous way to Salamis, Iran, during the catastrophic years of World War I. History has already documented the bitterness of this bleak period for Assyrians, including the Christian genocide and the unfulfilled British promise of support to create an Assyrian homeland. Eventually the family reached Iraq and settled in Baquba, and later in Mosul, where Theodore's education was tended to with great care. From an early age, both he and his brother received the necessary theological and liturgical training by the archdeacon of the patriarchate, the Very Reverend Thoma of Ashita, and by his uncle, the bishop of Rustaqa, His Grace Mar Yosip Khnanishu. Furthering his education, Theodore attended the prestigious Royal Military Academy at Sandhurst in England, where he graduated and returned to live in Mosul until 1933.

In 1933, Theodore; his brother, His Holiness Mar Shimun, Rab Khaila Dawid; and his uncle, the Honorable Zaya, were arrested by the British, exiled with the rest of the patriarchal family to the island of Cyprus, which separated them from their fellow Assyrians. The only reason the British offered for the deportation was their intention to provide safety and protection for the family until a more permanent solution could be determined.

In Nicosia, Theodore worked for the government of Cyprus. At one point during the family's exile, the British government summoned Theodore and his brother, the Honorable Captain Sargon, to report to their army headquarters in Jerusalem, Palestine. They attempted to recruit the brothers as champions and spokesmen to travel to Khabur, Syria, to raise an Assyrian army. Needless to say,this insulting proposal by the British was met with a firm refusal. The British retaliated by detaining the brothers in Jerusalem for almost a year.

Twenty-one years later, the British government lifted its unjustified restriction against the patriarchal family. In 1955, Theodore joined the others in London. In 1960, Patriarch Mar Shimun made arrangements for the whole family to be reunited in San Francisco, California, thanks to a private bill passed by Congress and signed by President Eisenhower.

The family moved one last time, to Turlock, California, in 1974, where Theodore lived until his death on December 30, 2001, at the age ninety-five. His final resting place is beside his brother, Mar Eshai Shimun XXIII, Catholicos- Patriarch of the Church of the East; his sister, the Lady Rowena d'Mar Shimun, Sr.; near his parents, Rab Khaila Dawid and Lady Esther; and aunt, Lady Surma. The Honorable Theodore was an expert on the Church of the East, Assyrian geopolitical history, and a recognized authority, whose depth of knowledge can never be matched. He played a crucial role in Assyrian history in the early and mid-twentieth century, not only as an eyewitness, but in many cases as an active participant. Those who knew him can attest to his subject matter expertise as well as his uncanny ability to recall the minutest level of detail with keen acuity and accuracy. The unimpeachable ethics of his character and his unflagging honesty were not merely policies, but principles that carefully and thoughtfully guided his life.