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BACK TO SCHOOL



During the month of February, Assyrian language schools around Victoria began their school year. This year there are more than 400 students studying at the four schools. Pictured above are two students from the school of St. Aphrem which is run by the Chaldean church. With forty new enrolments, the number of students attending the school is nearing 300.

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 St. George Assyrian Language School
SCHOOL FETE
 Face Painting ☺ Colour Hair Spray ☺ Barbeque ☺ Stalls ☺ Other Activies
 Sunday 12th March - 8 Broadhurst Ave. Reservoir

MERNA - THE PLAY

Page 4

MAR RAPHAEL I BIDAWID DISCUSSES IRAQIS SUFFERING

(ZNDA: Cincinnati) In this month's issue of St. Anthony Messenger Magazine, published in Cincinnati, Ohio, His Holiness Mar Raphael I Bidawid discusses the dire condition of the people of Iraq due to the economic sanctions imposed by the United Nations. In an interview with Carol Ann Morrow, assistant managing editor of St. Anthony Messenger, he reminds the American public of the Iraqi children, 5,000 of whom die monthly from diarrhea, pneumonia, breathing problems and malnutrition. He insists that the economic sanctions in Iraq, imposed after the Gulf War, and the no-fly zone have led to a disaster for the Iraqi people. Raphael I Bidawid, the Assyrian-Chaldean Catholic patriarch from Baghdad, believes that the U.N.'s position can be reversed. In his recent visit to the United States, His Holiness enlisted the help of people of influence like Cardinal John J. O'Connor (New York), Dr. Billy Graham and former President Jimmy Carter. Without a change in the U.N. policy, Bishop Thomas J. Gumbleton, an auxiliary bishop in the Archdiocese of Detroit, believes those who live will be intellectually impaired and emotionally destroyed. Gumbleton, who most recently visited Iraq in December, said the only way to eliminate the sanctions is for people to inundate the White House with phone calls, postcards and letters. Until a change is made, Mar Bidawid remains firm in his commitment: "The embargo is inhuman and immoral... It is disaster for the Iraqi people."

CHILDREN IN SICILY LEARN ABOUT BABYLONIAN HISTORY

(ZNAP: Sicily) Soon the students in the small Sicilian town of Santa Maria di Licodia will be attending shows at Don Bosco School's new "Saddam Hussein Auditorium". The gift was made by a group promoting ties between Italy and Iraq. Saddam's name will be on the 500-seat auditorium when it opens in April. The founder of the group, Salvatore Nicotra, described it as an offer the Sicilian officials couldn't refuse. Nicotra travels regularly to Iraq on business and wishes to raise awareness of what he considers the unjust U.N. sanctions forced upon the people of Iraq. Italy, France, and Russia are among the nations taking part in the international effort. Angered by the Italian government's acceptance of this gift, a group of Assyrian activists led by Mary Younan of Canada have begun circulating a letter of protest. The introduction reads: "We would like to express our concern and deception with the Sicilian officials regarding the new auditorium inauguration. The world has witnessed atrocities committed by Saddam Hussein and his Ba'ath government on the Iraqi population. We must not forget the Government of Iraq has

violated provisions of international law including the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), to which Iraq is a party, and also violates Iraq's interim Constitution. The sanctions imposed on Iraqi people are very sad, and Saddam Hussein must not be considered as a heroic persona."

According to Rome's La Repubblica daily newspaper, in response to the gift, the school's 350 students are now learning about Babylonian history. "By now, they'll know the Tigris and Euphrates better than the Po and the Tiber," the newspaper predicted.

TUKULTI-NINURTA SILVER PLATE, EVIDENCE OF A TRADITION

(ZNDA: Rome) In an effort to re-classify and document the findings of a museum in Germany, a German archeological crew has found

a small silver plate belonging

to the Assyrian King Tukulti-Ninurta I (1243-1207 B.C.) buried under the stone foundation of a building. This silver plate was thought to be lost.

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF STATE

On June 19, the Assyrian International News Agency (AINA) reported that the partially decomposed body of Helena Aloun Sawa, a 21-year-old Assyrian woman missing since early May, was discovered by a shepherd in a shallow grave near Dohuk dam. Her family reportedly suspected that she was raped. Sawa was a housekeeper for Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP) Political Bureau member Izzeddin Al-Barwari. Reporting that the KDP offered no assistance in searching for Sawa and that Al-Barwari had intimidated the family into not pursuing an investigation, AINA concluded that the murder "resembles a well-established pattern" of complicity by Kurdish authorities in attacks against Assyrian Christians in northern Iraq. It reported that Sawa had been coerced into working for Al-Barwari to restore to her family a KDP pension that had been suspended arbitrarily. The pension had been awarded because of the recognition of Sawa's father as a KDP martyr after he was killed in the uprising against the Iraqi regime in 1991.

However, on June 21, a spokesperson for the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) announced that the Dohuk police Homicide Division and the Dohuk General Security Department were investigating the Sawa murder. A subsequent KRG statement indicated that there

did not appear to be a "political or racial" motive. The KRG noted that the Al-Barwari family had reported last seeing Sawa when she left Dohuk on her way to a vacation at her family village in the Nerwa O Rakan area, and that Al-Barwari had been in Damascus, Syria at the time. Nevertheless, Al-Barwari was suspended from official KDP duties pending the conclusion of the investigation. At the end of June, KDP President Massoud Barzani decided to appoint a three-member commission to further investigate the killing. No results of that investigation were reported by year's end.

MILD EARTHQUAKES SHAKE NORTHERN IRAQ & URMIA

(ZNRU: Istanbul) On Saturday three tremors ranging up to 5.0 on the Richter scale shook the Turkish-Iraqi border region. "These are not of the scale that would cause any damage," a spokesman for the Kandilli observatory in Istanbul told Reuters. The first tremor of magnitude 5.0 struck at 10:18 a.m. local time. It was followed by a 4.0 tremor at 11:29, and another of 3.8 at 11:35.

Two devastating earthquakes hit Turkey in August and November last year, killing at least 18,500 people and wreaking widespread damage in the industrialized northwest.

In Iran, an earthquake measuring five on the richter scale hit the city of Urmia at 11:48 hours local time (08:18 GMT) Saturday, causing panic among citizens. The epicenter of the tremor, the second hitting the city in one day, was registered at 30 kilometers west of Urmia, by the East Azarbaijan seismological network affiliated to the Tehran university geophysics center.

Another 4-degree quake had already shook the city at 04:13 hours local time (00:43 GMT) Saturday morning.

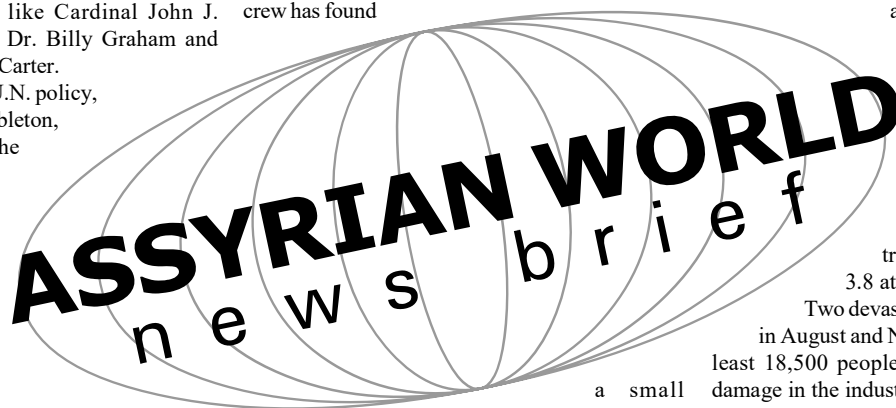
CULINARY EVENT TO RAISE \$100,000 FOR ASSYRIANS

On Friday, 28 April 2000, the AAS is planning a banquet in the elegant Garden Court of the Palace Hotel in San Francisco. The goal is to raise \$100,000 to be used for specific named projects in north Iraq.

The menu will be prepared by five or six Middle Eastern chefs and will be an exceptional showcase for their talents. Additionally, the Palace Hotel is attempting to bring in one of the Starwood Hotel chefs from the Middle East. Some of the finest of all California wines will be served.

George Zaia of Babylon Printing in Milpitas, California will be the dinner chairperson. Babylon Printing has been donating the AAS printouts, the quarterly Tree of Life, and this year's full color Christmas cards.

Dinner tickets will be available for \$200.00 per person. For more information write to: Assyrian Aid Society of America 350 Berkeley Park Boulevard Kensington, CA 94707



USay

"USay" is an on going discussion on issues that affect us.

DISCUSSION 1

Have we forgotten about our people who still remain in the Middle East?

DISCUSSION 2

Is it right for an Assyrian guy/girl from the West to travel to the Middle East to marry an Assyrian guy/girl?

DISCUSSION 3

What is our "Culture", and what are our "Traditions"?

ON #2

It seems to me that marriage has lost its true meaning if one is to travel to the Middle East (or any other country) purely for marriage. Especially if people intend to go to overseas to pick a bride that they have never met. What ever happened to meeting someone, getting to know them, falling in love and then take the next step of spending the rest of your life with him/her? But, who are we to dictate whats right or whats wrong. Most people who do travel for marriage purposes have about 2, at most 3months to find a bride, get engaged and get married. In this whole process, the couple would have seen each other about 10 to 15 times (including the engagement day!!). Is it possible to get to know a person in such a shorttime considering that you will be spending the rest of your life with them? Some of you may argue that you never fully get to know a person. I would agree with that.

Infact ask your parents if they fully know each other. Possibly not. I believe that you will learn things about your husband/wife until the day you leave this world, but to know enough about a person to convince you that he/she is the right one whom you will be spending the rest of your life with, you are going to need weeks, months maybe even years of spending time with him/her. Will the two months be enough? Only you can answer that. You have to also ask yourself, is it morally and/or ethically right to travel overseas purely for marriage? If it is acceptable by the traveller and it is acceptable by the person he/she choses to marry, then it should be acceptable by the rest of us. To them it may seem to be the right way to take the next step in their lives. We may have a differing opinion, but then again everyone is free to have their own views. It is not wrong to travel to an overseas destination to meet a spouse. I personally would not do it, but some people are quite happy in doing that. If that is what you really want and you have explored all other possible options and have had no luck then I wish you all

the best. Marriage is a very big step in our lives. One that is full of love, shared experiences, happy moments and children. One that opens a whole new chapter in our Biography. This chapter will always have a happy beginnig. Will it have a happy ending? We all need someone to share our love, experiences (good or bad) and the majority of our life with. It is a need that we are born with and it is directly related to the love that we received from our parents (mainly our mothers) from the day we were born. Put yourself in a time when you are about 80 years old (assuming most of us will live that long, and I'm sure we will). Would it not be nice to look back in your life and remember all that you have been through, all the happiness and how much of that you shared with your spouse? Would it not be nice to know that you have chosen the right spouse to share all those moments with? Ultimatley It is your life and you have full control of it. Experience as much of it as you can and do whatever makes you happy. You are the one that is going to live with all the memories of your life.

Regards, N B - Melbourne

ZINDA

6 Years of International News

Our Assyrian World News feature is compiled by using the resources of Zinda magazine. This month they celebrated their sixth year anniversary. The following is their celebrations in their own words.

OUR Z-CREW

What better way to celebrate our birthday than to celebrate our team at Zinda Magazine. Very briefly, we would like to introduce our "News & Information" team that brings you the articles and news feeds every week without

interruption (you really don't want to know about our insane "techies" shown on this week's cover photo). The final draft is then sent to our "Technical" team that transforms our writings into HTML, JPEGs, and Hyperlinks. It takes nearly 50 hours of research, editing, and design to produce a single issue of Zinda Magazine. Zinda Magazine is truly the result of the dedication of over 20 volunteer reporters, researchers, artists, and editors.

Thank you Z-Crew and thank you Z-

readers for making us the most influential Assyrian medium of information.

R.C. Samo - Mazin Enwiya - Adrin Takhsh - Firas Jatou - Juliet George - Raman Mikhael - Michelle Badal - Marian Younan - David Chibo - Evelyn Enwiya - Attiya Gamri - Matay Arsan - Maha Hermes

From all of us at Zinda Magazine, thank you for reading Zinda! We look forward to 5, no 50, more years of serving our readers throughout the world!

Do Assyrian cultural values restrict you from exercising your freedom in relationships?



►Male/54/USA
▷The answer is no, I do not feel restricted in my relationship with others.

►Male/15/Canada
▷Assyrian cultural values allows me to fall in love. But only with an Assyrian woman. I believe that if the parents teach the child that it is not wise to marry someone that is not an Assyrian, then we will remain a strong cultural group. My dad had explained to me, my sister, and my brother that the Assyrian culture and people will only live on if we marry Assyrian men and women! Otherwise, we will be in danger of forgetting who we are and turning into something we are not!

►Female/34/America
▷Every society is governed by certain values and these may be good or bad depending on the point of view of each community. We as Assyrians who have been raised in other countries and then came to the West have certain ideas and values which we have accommodated to a certain extent so as we can live in these societies which are different in many ways than ours and certainly in our values. I believe that I have been able to distinguish which of my values are important to me to apply to my life in these countries and which I consider to be a blessing, and hopefully I didn't see that my Assyrian values clashed with the freedom in these countries which to a certain extent is too much.

►Female/23/USA
▷I live with my parents and 4 brothers and sisters. As a young Assyrian female growing up in the United States, it was tough for me. I had to abide by ALL of my parents' rules: going out with friends was a big NO NO; I could not date guys (let alone have any as friends); I could not wear any facial cosmetics. Up until the end of my high school year was I allowed to wear cosmetics. Recently have I started to date guys with the consent of my parents. If I wanted to date when I was younger, I would have to do it "behind" my parents' backs. I often think to myself about things I used to do when I was younger. The only "good" reasons I would find were that I did it in revenge; just to get back at my parents, and to see how it felt to do something they did not allow. To this day I can proudly say I never did anything besides kiss the male that I was dating. I believe my parents restricted me from doing the above because of good moral judgement. Parents (shockingly) are very "psychic." I guess it is because of the fact

that at one point in their young lives they were once like us. As far as relationships go, I have to say that I'm not involved in one at this time, but when I was, of course my parents knew, they (especially my mother) were trying to "hurry" us to get engaged. Sadly, the relationship ended because I was being "pushed" to do something I was not ready to do. In answer to your question, yes I believe Assyrian cultural values restrict me (in some cases) from exercising my freedom in a relationship. But if I follow my instincts and especially my heart, then all will end well.

►Female/18/Melbourne
▷Just like our bodies need vitamins A,B,C etc.. our hearts need vitamins L (love), and my answer to your question is: Yes, and it actually tires me very much. It makes love seem like a big challenge and it makes life much harder than it already is. At this age love is vital because it is the only age where you have enough energy to really love and make the most of it. It is also very unhealthy for the mind and very stressful to be constantly worried about it. Such unhappiness that these restrictions could cause may lead to destroying a pure and perfect relationship. I love my culture and all the wonderful myths and legends of it. However it disappoints me, being a part of a culture with big current problems but we have to busy ourselves in dealing with such minor social issues in order to be able to live a normal life with enough freedom to love. I have many plans ahead of me and I have a future to look forward to, these problems are draining that energy out me.

Something to remember: we are all born with that seed of love in our hearts. When love comes to sprinkle that seed with its water, that seed has the right to bloom with life and beauty and it grows to reach the light. If that seed is restricted from life it will never grow. It will never reach the light. It will be destroyed by the thorns of other plants. It will never stop bleeding.

►Male/17/Melbourne
▷Definitely, I believe that our cultural beliefs and values have a strong restriction on not only our relationships but our life.

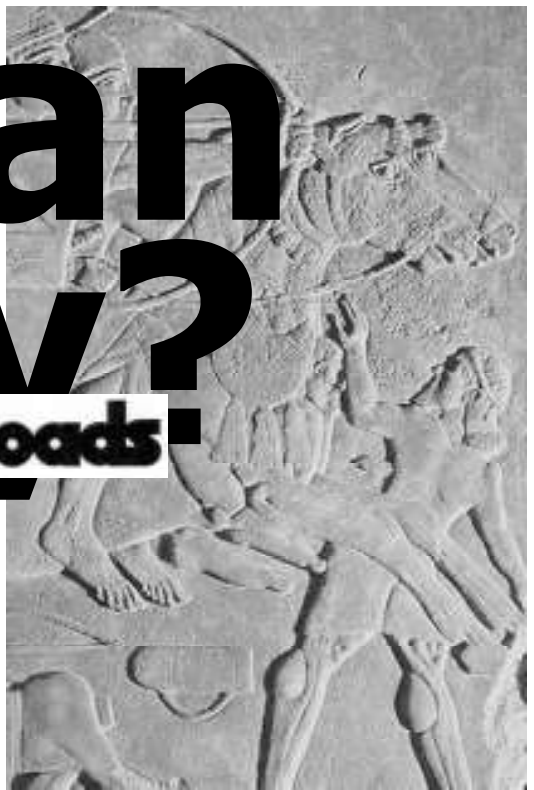
There many things that Assyrian people can not do such as having a "normal relationship" without causing a huge dilemma between parents and their kids. The main reason for this is that our parents follow the commandments of our religion, and therefore enforce us to grow in a similar way. They don't want us to change our ways, they want us to grow with the knowledge that they grew up with. The other reason might be that they look around and see how the society is and they don't want us to be like that.

►Female/24/Sydney
▷The Assyrian female in general has been disadvantaged because of the Assyrian culture and tradition, especially in Middle East. However, as we can see the measures are different here in Western countries where females have more freedom and opportunities, but this depends on different families prospects. Some families are more open than others and can give their daughters more freedom to mix with and to know different people.

But, even by living in Western countries females are the first ones to blame. Females are monitored by all people in everything they say and can get criticised easily in any simple innocent action. Assyrian community generally blame females first before males that is if they are going to do so. I believe that even if we are living in Western countries females are still living like prisoners in their own home and community. Probably this is the reason why some Assyrian females don't mix with the Assyrian community. I believe that as females we need more freedom and our parents and community should give us more chances of mixing with the Assyrian males to get to know them better and to find the right Assyrian partner. Assyrian families should encourage their sons and daughters to mix with each other not necessarily to have a marriage among them but to have more Assyrian friends to help each other maintaining our language and some of our traditions. At the same time I believe that Assyrian females should respect the freedom they are given so their parents will not be disappointed in them.

assyrian cruelty?

vicroads



This article was inspired by a message that was published on the 'Assyrian Forum'. It is intended to finally dispel the myths and rumors that have tarnished the name of the ancient Assyrians, and subsequently their modern descendants.

The topic of "Alleged Assyrian Cruelty" is especially poignant today as our own youth tend to have also been caught up in the false and baseless rumours and generalisations spread by some historians and writers.

In a recent conversation, my own cousin recently made the following remarks, after I had finished explaining to him the genocides that had been committed against the Assyrian people throughout the ages. "We probably deserved it. After all, weren't we also a cruel and violent people when we ruled the Middle East?" was his reply.

Now, hold that thought for a moment as I attempt to answer this question through the use of an analogy.

An Assyrian girl from America, named Claudia, came to Melbourne for a visit last year. After meeting and talking to her, I asked her what she found different in Melbourne, as compared to Washington, where she was originally from. She stated, "The Australian drivers are crazy and, she felt compelled to wear a seat belt whenever she was in a car".

I made further enquiries and found out the real reason why she had made that strange statement.

Today the VAC (Victorian Accident Commission) spend millions of dollars a year in accident prevention. Their "Prevention is better than cure" policy appears to be working. They prevent accidents by using the power of the media and advertising. They accomplish this by using shock advertising tactics depicting; children being run over, passengers being hurled through car windcreens and others being burnt alive. Although I am today desensitised by the ads, which are incidentally shown on prime time television, they still cause me to wince upon seeing them. Claudia,

had apparently been watching Australia television and had seen a few of these ads. She was now in a state of being extra-cautious when it came to traveling on Victorian roads.

I laughed after she had told me her story, and went on to explain to her that Victoria had one of the best road safety records in the Western world. Since 1989, the Transport Accident Commission (TAC) has embarked on an aggressive and co-ordinated accident prevention campaign (in conjunction with Police and VicRoads) which had seen the State's road toll almost halved.

In a recent road safety conference held in Victoria the European equivalents had sent their delegates specifically to Melbourne to determine how to lower their road tolls and make their roads safer. She found this information astonishing as she had been too busy paying attention to the television commercials.

What has this story got to do with the alleged Assyrian cruelty?

I could complete this answer, but my opinion could be seen as being biased, as I am an Assyrian, and descendent of the ancient Assyrians. Thus I shall let a non-Assyrian named H.W.F.Saggs, an Assyriologist, complete the point I am attempting to make through the use of the above-mentioned analogy.

"Amongst all the aspects of ancient Mesopotamian life, there are few which have been more widely misunderstood and misrepresented than the nature of Assyrian imperialism. Few historians or other writers who touch upon Assyria in the period between 900 B.C. and its final fall just before 600 B.C. can resist the temptation to gather up their skirts and add yet another shocked comment upon barbarism, brutality and unmatched ruthlessness of the Assyrians. It is rare to find any attempt to look at Assyrian warfare and imperialism as a whole in its perspective. Yet, as it is hoped to show below, when one considers the whole functioning of the Assyrian Empire, and particularly

when one passes judgement in accordance with the standards, not of our own times but of the other peoples of the ancient world, a very different picture emerges. The Assyrian Empire was efficient and would not gladly bear those who wished to upset the civilised world order, but it was not exceptionally bloody or barbaric. The number of people killed or mutilated in an average Assyrian campaign in the interest of efficient administration was, even in proportion to the population, probably no more than the number of dead and mangled humans that most Western countries offer annually as a sacrifice to the motor-car, in the supposed interest of efficient transport".

It is therefore fair to say that the ancient Assyrian bas-reliefs performed the same task that our modern television, and advertising, accomplishes today. Thus the ancient Assyrians, who have wrongly been maligned by ignorant writers and lazy historians, upon closer inspection are left with a record of efficiency and stability that was the envy of the ancient world. Their powerful use of psychological warfare and propaganda, which can today be seen in the world's Museums, in the form of bas-reliefs, was so effective that modern viewers can be forgiven for equating the bas-reliefs depicting violent images as symbolic of the ancient Assyrians. ■

David Chibo

References: *Everyday Life In Babylonia and Assyria* - H.W.F. Saggs. p.99

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أَوْسَاor-ho.....	guest.....	ar-kha.....	أَوْسَا
سَبْ يَوْ نَوْseb-yo-no.....	free will.....	su-ya-na.....	سَبْ يَوْ نَوْ
أُو ثَوْyo-tho.....	ego.....	ya-tha.....	أُو ثَوْ
أُو تِيرْ ثَوْ	.....tir-tho.....	conscience.....	ter-tha.....	أُو تِيرْ ثَوْ
أُو مَفْ رَنْ سَوْ نَوْ ثَوْ	.....mpa-ren-so-noo-tho.....	administration.....	mpa-ren-sa-noo-tha.....	أُو مَفْ رَنْ سَوْ نَوْ ثَوْ
أُو مَفْ رَنْ سَوْ نَوْ	.....mpa-ren-so-no.....	administrator.....	mpa-ren-sa-na.....	أُو مَفْ رَنْ سَوْ نَوْ
أُو مَدَابْ رَوْ نَوْ ثَوْ	.....mdab-ro-noo-tho.....	management.....	mdab-ra-noo-tha.....	أُو مَدَابْ رَوْ نَوْ ثَوْ
أُو مَدَابْ رَوْ نَوْmdab-ro-no.....	manager.....	mdab-ra-na.....	أُو مَدَابْ رَوْ نَوْ
أُو نَفْ قَوْ ثَوْnep-qo-tha.....	expenses.....	nep-qaa-tha.....	أُو نَفْ قَوْ ثَوْ

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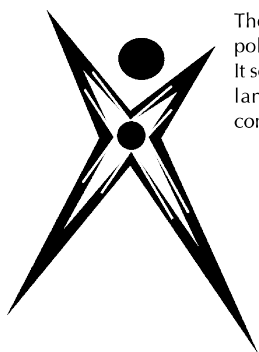
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The Assyrian Youth Group of Victoria is a non-political, non-religious and non-profit organisation. It seeks to promote the Assyrian culture, history and language, as well as the Assyrian name and community, bringing it to the world stage.

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