

Article p. 4&5



Domar David – the low-down

Age: 9

Tennis club:

The Oak Park Tennis Club

Greatest tennis achievements so far: Great Northern Leveller 2001 Overall Singles Winner, 9th – 11th April 2001. Chosen to represent Northern-suburbs.

Ambition:

To represent Assyrians in world tennis.

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KALU SULAQA

This month Assyrians around the world will celebrate the famous Assyrian holiday they have come to know as *Kalu Sulaqa* - Syriac words that literally translate to 'Bride of the Ascension'.

This year's event is especially significant as it marks the 600th anniversary of a milestone that changed the course of Assyrian history and defined the modern Assyrian people.

The legend of *Kalu Sulaqa* tells of a young Malik Shalita, governor of the Assyrian homeland's capital Mosul, who was first noticed by Timurlaine after he had successfully fought and defeated his initial attack on the city.

The battle is then described as Assyrian freedom fighters, both Christian and Muslim, defended against the Mongolian attack.

It was during this time that, according to legend, Malik Shalita's wife organised Assyrian women dressed in white, and was given the responsibility to collect provisions from the nearby towns in order to feed the men fighting at the front. Having heard of the fate that had befallen their countrymen in Tikrit and Mardin, they knew very well the fate in store for them if they were to lose this battle. Instead of running and hiding the women prepared for the battle and joined the ranks of the defenders against hopeless odds.

The historical account is in keeping with the legend, as both describe a brutal battle of attrition, in which both men and women joined together and defended themselves against Timurlaine's attack. Malik Shalita and his wife - according to the legend dressed in white - are recorded as having been killed in this fateful battle.

The few survivors would have remembered only a scene of carnage and bloodshed.▶

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IRAQI CHRISTIANS TO HOLD PEACE CONGRESS

(ZNDA: Baghdad) A congress for peace in Iraq and the world will be held in Baghdad from May 15, according to the Chaldean church, the country's leading Christian denomination. Senior religious figures from abroad, including Muslims and Buddhists, have been invited to the five-day meeting which will hear of "the Church's contribution to bringing peace to the world, and particularly to Iraq," said His Holiness Raphael Bidawid, Patriarch of the Chaldean Catholic Church.

"At least 400 personalities have said they will attend," the Chaldean leader said, adding they would also visit Christian sites in northern Iraq. The Chaldeans want to "remind public opinion of the tragedy Iraq and its people are living through," because of international sanctions in force since Saddam Hussein sent his troops into Kuwait in 1990. This will be the fifth such congress the Chaldean church has organized. The last took place in 1999.

Over one million Christians live in Iraq among a population of 22 million, a majority of whom are Chaldean Catholics.

REPORT OF THE AUA VISIT TO ARMENIA AND GEORGIA

(ZNDA: San Jose) An official delegation of the Assyrian Universal Alliance from the United States visited the Republics of Armenia and Georgia between April 20 and 27, led by AUA Secretary General, Senator John Nimrod. They arrived in Armenia on April 20 where they were jubilantly welcomed by the hospitable Assyrian families in Armenia, the representatives of the Assyrian Association of Armenia & the Assyrian Youth Center of Armenia.

The AUA delegation included Senator John Nimrod, AUA Secretary General; Mr. Carlo Ganjeh, Assistant to Secretary General, and Mr. Luther Alkhasseh, president of Assyrian American Chamber of Commerce.

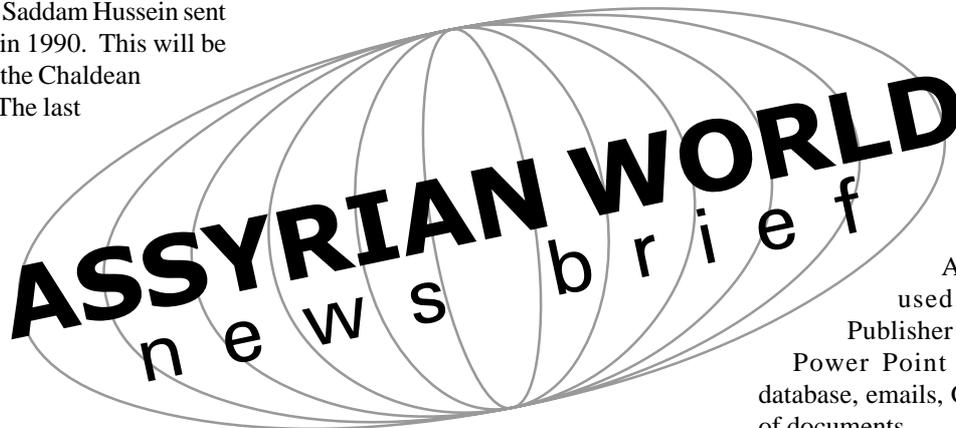
IRAQ SAYS STOLEN BABYLONIAN RELIC ON SALE IN LONDON

(ZNDA: Baghdad) An ancient stone head stolen from Iraq is on sale at a London exhibition, an Iraqi official says. "Interpol has notified Iraq that it found a head made of stone from a statue which dates back to the Babylonian era on sale at an exhibition in London," acting head of Iraq's Antiquities Department, Mahmoud al-Qaissi said in the

Al-Ra'i weekly newspaper. The report gave no further details.

Iraq says 4,000 antiquities went missing in the confusion that followed the 1991 Gulf War. It believes many have already been sold abroad. Another Iraqi weekly said Iraqi archaeologists have discovered a haul of artifacts dating from the Sumerian period at a site in Wassit province, 170 km (105 miles) south of Baghdad. The collection ranged from pots to fired clay tablets, head of the excavation team Salim Younis was quoted as saying in the al-ittihad weekly newspaper.

"The clay tablets...show the earlier stages of writing," Younis said. He said they dated from the third Ur dynasty and the Akkadian era, which ended about 4,200 years ago. Pottery toys, human and animal figures, jars and cups made from pottery and copper, and inscribed cylindrical seals were also discovered.



ASSYRIAN CANDIDATE RUNNING FOR NEW BRITAIN'S MAYORAL OFFICE

(ZNDA: New Britain) The city of New Britain in the state of Connecticut is shaping up to be a contest among serious candidates for this year's mayoral elections. While party nominations are still months away, early announcements signal a campaign that will allow office seekers time to make themselves known to the voters and engage in useful and spirited debate on the issues.

Republican alderman Peter Oshana, an Assyrian, got into contention early by announcing in February his plan to seek his party's nomination. Mr. Oshana has been elected twice to the common council and will draw on that experience during his campaign. Two years ago, the Republicans had ceded the race to incumbent Democrat Mayor Lucian Pawlak until Patrick J. Cloutier took the GOP ballot spot through an eleventh-hour petition process.

Other mayoral candidates in New Britain are Peter C. Steele, a city parks commissioner, and Mr. Pawlak, a three-term incumbent.

BETH-MARDUTHO RELEASES 21 SYRIAC FONTS

(ZNDA: New Jersey) On May 3, Beth Mardutho: The Syriac Institute (formerly The Syriac Computing Institute) released its flagship non-profit product Meltho, version 1.1. The Meltho software contains twenty-one professional Syriac fonts for the Windows operating system.

The Meltho software allows users to create Syriac documents and web pages under Windows 2000 and Windows XP. It also allows users to view documents created by others under Windows 95/98/ME. The software is available free of charge. The cost of the production of the fonts was donated by many generous institutions, foundations, and individuals whose names appear on the Meltho page.

Meltho fonts support the three scripts Estrangelo, Serto (West Syriac), and East Syriac. The supported languages are Classical Syriac, Surith/Swadaya, Turoyo, Garshuni, and Christian Palestinian Aramaic. The fonts can be used to create Word and

Publisher documents, web pages,

Power Point presentations, Access database, emails, Graphics, and other types of documents.

In the process of implementing Meltho, Beth Mardutho was instrumental in the addition of Syriac to Unicode, the international standard for storing texts in many languages. The institute provided free consultation to Microsoft for adding Syriac support in the Windows XP and Office XP products. The Meltho fonts are the first Syriac fonts to implement the new OpenType font technology.

Users can download the free fonts from www.bethmardutho.org.





40 - LOVE

Domar David wins game, set and match...and it looks like nothing can stop him. He now has his sights set on the world.

He is the overall singles winner of the Great Northern Leveller 2001 and has been chosen from over 50 clubs to represent the Northern-suburbs this coming August. He looks set to be seeded amongst Victoria's best. When we heard of an Assyrian who has accomplished so much in so short a time, at our interview we expected to meet someone at least in his or her teens. Instead, we were greeted at the door by Domar David, who is touted by many to be our very own junior Agassi. He is just nine.

Meeting with Domar and his father Joseph, we heard just how he got to rise the ranks so quickly and so early in life. Assyrians are well known for being an inventive lot, and Joseph's improvised training techniques are nothing short of inventive. Joseph didn't believe in "breaking" his son into tennis. In what can only be called the tennis equivalent of "being thrown in at the deep end", Domar went straight to senior sized racquets. "It's good for the arms," Joseph says. "I taught him how to grasp the racquet using *both arms*." And with the racquet standing taller than the diminutive 3-year old Domar (that's when he first picked up tennis) he *had* to learn how to hold it properly!

"Everyone has their own unique way of training," says Joseph, "and mine, I guess, could be seen as a little unusual!" A little teddy bear would serve as a "mini-target" for Domar to improve the accuracy of his volleys. Each time he hit the bear he would earn 10c. (A word of warning to parents wanting to use the same motivational strategy - we believe Domar almost sent his father broke doing this). Small hoops through which the balls were hit would similarly serve to improve his aim. Tennis balls suspended from long elastic bands were struck repeatedly to increase stamina and concentration.

Wimbledon and the Davis Cup were his favourites. Domar would ask his father to wake him up at two in the morning to watch the games. "Only don't tell mum," he would mischievously ask his father.

These early training sessions were to stand Domar in good stead when, six months later, he first attempted to join the Glenroy Tennis Club. "Sorry, four is just *too* young for our club..." the club manager told a disappointed Domar, shaking his head. (Domar was actually three and a half at the time). His father, however, was confident. "Just give him a chance!" Joseph insisted. After giving in and seeing Domar beat boys twice his age, a surprised manager quickly backtracked and exclaimed, "He's just *too good*!"

And he hasn't lived those words down yet. Domar consistently beats boys almost twice his age. At the age of five, he was quickly up-graded, despite playing against 11-year olds. The next step for this "pocket rocket" is to team up with a select few others - chosen from amongst many players from around fifty Northern-suburbs clubs - to play against other districts around Melbourne. This will almost certainly lead to tournament level tennis where Domar will be seeded at a state level. "At this stage, he is probably still just a bit *too* young for that," Joseph explained. "The older guys are naturally faster. Within another year at most, though, I reckon he will be at tournament level, no worries!"

To get to that level, Domar's training has had to change a little since his early days. Balancing school work and training must be tough for a nine year old - 45 minutes to an hour Sunday through 'til Tuesday with a professional coach, one and a half hours on Saturdays and Wednesdays, followed by practice with his father on the remaining days. This, along with the frequent and necessary matches with other clubs, makes for a busy schedule. Domar takes it all in his stride though, just like any seasoned "pro" would. "I love it all!" Domar enthuses. Domar is now with the Oak Park Tennis Club, where he is in the A reserve, playing amongst 16 to 17 year olds.

The last word goes to Domar. What are you aiming for? we ask. "To be number 1" he states confidently, "in the world!"

Nakosha looks forward to following this young man's bright tennis future. ■

Dr. Sennacherib Daniel

Who am I?

This is the first question usually asked by most children upon reaching awareness. This question becomes a quest, for some, and the answer they pursue for the rest of their lives. Self-awareness, however, can also be a curse. The next step after self-awareness is usually fright or self-preservation, and humankind's greatest fear- death.

Humankind usually focuses the rest of their lives on vainly attempting to avoid this inevitable fate.

The ancient Egyptians and their Pyramids are prime examples of attempting to avoid the "inevitable". Their fears of the "afterlife" were harnessed and focussed in order to create one of the seven wonders of the ancient world.

Our ancient Assyrian ancestors were very different in that they lived life. Every Assyrian has heard the legendary story of Gilgamesh. In the tale Gilgamesh chases after eternal life in the form of a magic plant, which had power to renew life and give youth and strength to those who were old. The plant is however snatched from his grasp in the end, by the Earth Lion. He later concludes that the aim of life is to have good friends and simply pursue happiness.

Man has since then created a myriad of religions in a vain attempt to explain the unknown, as well as provide a psychological crutch.

As for the Assyrians, after the fall of the Assyrian Empire, the people of the Middle East adopted different religions and cultures. Some adopted Christianity, and its Jewish culture, whilst others adopted Islam and its Arab culture.

Recent DNA tests, and the *Melammu* Project, undeniably prove that the Assyrians did not disappear after the fall of the Assyrian capital, Nineveh, in 612 BC. The Assyrians simply changed their names, and can today be seen in the same place that their ancestors made famous - Iraq.

This paradigm shift may be a shock to some, but it serves to remind us of the connection between our ancient roots and our people in today's world.

This is especially significant this month as we celebrate the 600th anniversary of *Kalu Sulaqa*. It is exactly 600 years, to the day, that Malik Shalita, his wife and the majority of the male and female defenders of our homeland, lost the battle against Timurlane. The result of this battle helped usher in a new Islamic religion and Arab culture, under Mongolian rule, that would forever change the destiny and identity of the Assyrian people and the entire Middle East.

The very same Iraqi people, who today are still being oppressed by U.N. sanctions, are our descendants, and, as such, deserving of our consideration.

I hope you take the time this month to commemorate *Kalu Sulaqa* and remember the fate of our people, both Christian and Muslim who today remain in Mesopotamia. ■

David Chibo

THE NABU

Assyrianism is not a word you will find in any dictionary. Even dictionaries on the “all-knowing” Internet fail to produce meaningful search results. But the Syriac equivalent of Assyrianism - *Atourayoota* - is a word familiar to most Assyrians. What it means, though, varies from person to person.

To some, it is a cultural link to an ancient people who still survive to this day and have maintained their traditions, cuisine, music, dance and thoughts against seemingly unbeatable odds. To others it is strongly linked with religion. Whatever each individual's interpretations may be, few would deny the importance of the common language as an integral part of what it means to be Assyrian. While speaking Syriac is not an automatic ticket to Assyrianism, it is a vital part. There is no master key to the cultural life of a people, the saying goes, but language unlocks a vast treasure house.

Being as important as it is to Assyrian identity, it's no wonder so much international effort is going into the preservation of the language. Schools have already been set up around the world to combat the erosion of this precious component of Assyrianism. In Bet-Nahrain, the Assyrian Democratic Movement (known colloquially as *Zowaa*) has already set up no less than 32 schools teaching curricula entirely in Syriac to over 7,000 students. Closer to home

here in Australia, the Assyrian Australian Association established the Assyrian School in Sydney in 1974 - the first of its kind in Australia. The school's beginnings were humble - 15 students and two teachers. Today, its 17 teachers instruct almost 400 students in Assyrian. Sydney-sider Assyrians plan to officially open the first Australian Assyrian Primary School - the St. Hormizd Assyrian School - by the year 2002. This will be the first-ever full-time fully Assyrian owned school to ever be opened in the diaspora.

With the view of establishing more relevant, contemporary Assyrian computer classes, three Melburnian Assyrians, David Chibo, Fraydon Heskell and Sami Kamber, joined together and worked to set up a new Syriac computer literacy school, linked with the already well-established St. George Assyrian Language School.

Over the last few years, Fraydon Heskell and David Chibo increasingly felt that there was a lack of Assyrian classes teaching young children Syriac computer literacy. Towards the end of last year, they decided to do something about it. Sami Kamber's insurance company supplied ten computers, all free of charge. Grants from the Department of Education were enough for a network hub, the portable housing the students and computers, and to pay various bills. *Nakosha* magazine donated a printer.

Once the basic, day-to-day components of a school were acquired, the three men worked over three short weekends to synthesize the constituents into a functioning computer class. The curriculum, based around

those used by Victorian schools to teach English, is contemporary and relevant. “We wanted the students to learn Syriac in a setting that's appropriate to their lives today,” said David Chibo, “and *not* some outdated curriculum. Teaching styles that use stories like



Mam Youkhana plishleh min dibba aren't exactly ones that students can relate to today!” The case in point being today's class, where the teaching of Syriac was structured around questions relating to health: teeth, dentists, tooth decay, smoking and other topics pertaining to well-being. It's a case of killing two birds with one stone - health education (or whatever the topic of the day happens to be), learning Syriac and learning to use it *on the computer*. O.K., that's three birds.

“Teaching Syriac,” claimed Fraydon Heskell, “shouldn't focus just on grammar and syntax. At the school we do that, but we also want to go a little further and teach much broader, far-reaching issues, so that they may be able to use Syriac in a practical, social and humanistic sense... something we need to be able to do if Syriac is to survive beyond this century.” In order to live up to these lofty goals, the school's curriculum - as mentioned earlier, based on those used to teach English in Victoria - cover such broad issues as drugs, peer group pressure, dealing with anger, and human development.

One of the problems of Syriac as spoken by many of us is that we use a limited “everyday” vocabulary, and the ability to express ourselves and complicated issues is difficult. Teaching Syriac using the school's unique approach will allow students to express difficult concepts more eloquently in their day-to-day lives, at the same time gaining a wisdom independent of learning the language.

The classes are a perfect example of first-



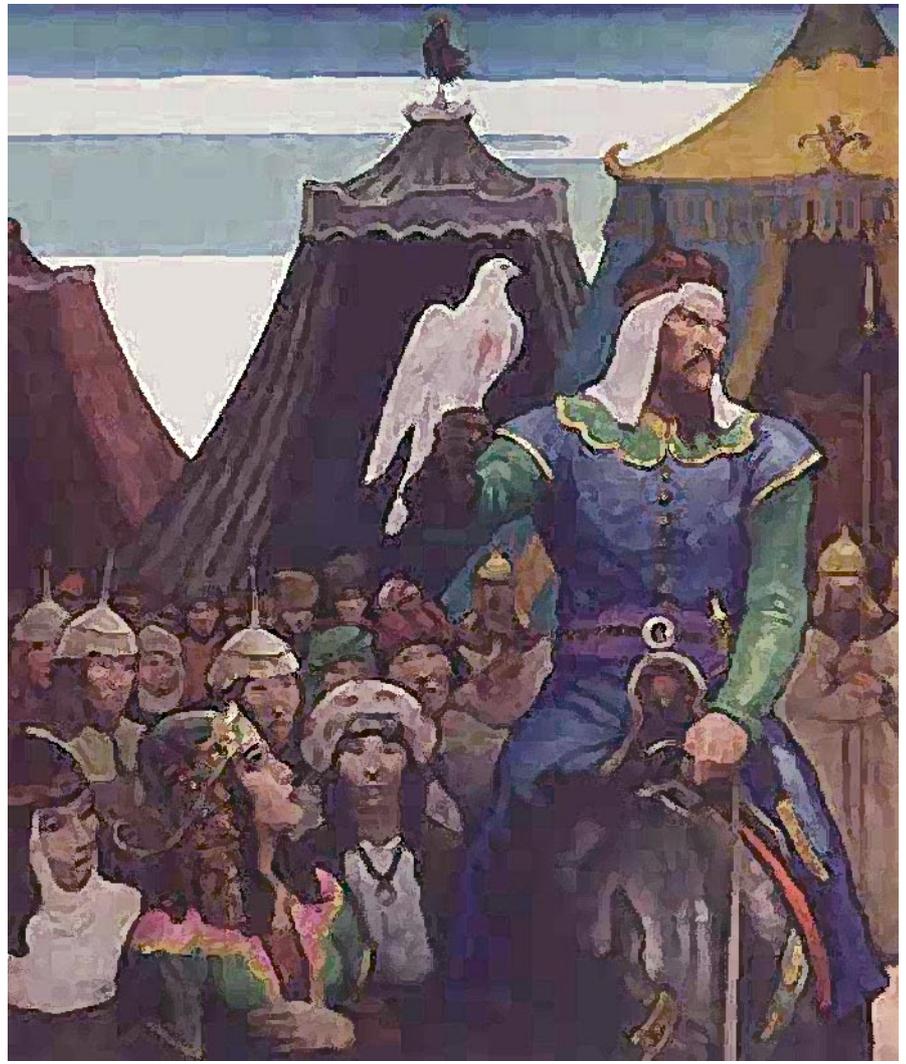
from p.1

After Timurlane's capture of Mosul and other cities in Mesopotamia, and the innumerable atrocities which were committed by his soldiers in the city, a large section of the Christian Assyrians who managed to escape, fled for their lives to the Hakkari mountains (present day Eastern Turkey) and districts near Mosul. The remaining Assyrians in Iraq gradually blended with their Muslim country-men and gradually followed the religious customs enforced by their Mongolian conquerors and converted to Islam *en masse*, losing their unique identity. This event was a turning point for Assyrians in the acceptance of Islam, its Arab culture and the subsequent loss of identity by the surviving Assyrians. Although Assyrians adopted the Judeo-Christian culture, they remained the only descendants of the ancient Assyrians to maintain any semblance of the ancient Assyrian identity.

These same people, responsible for retaining the Assyrian culture, traditions and language were to be secluded in isolated mountainous pockets throughout the Middle East, awaiting the coming of Western missionaries in the 19th century.

The historical account - as well as the legend - should be appreciated in order to understand the significance and origins of this special holiday. *Kalu Sulaqa* is a milestone in the history of the Assyrian people and when fully understood explains in part the current dilemma surrounding our identity.

David Chibo



References

"History of Assyria", Menasha Ameri

KALU SULAQA - CUSTOMS & TRADITIONS

The Assyrian historian Arsanous states that the young boys and girls represent the dead young men and women who ascended to heaven because they died for the cause of Christianity and in defence of their homeland. The tragic nature of the 1401 event had left such a indelible impression on the minds of the survivors that they remembered the final battle and have honoured the memory of the fallen by re-enacting the camaraderie of the Assyrian men and women who died defending their homeland.

There are many traditional practices that Assyrians observe when celebrating *Kalu Sulaqa* (Ascension Day). Most commonly, in Hakkari, prior to the First World War, girls in each village would gather and choose the prettiest one among them to be the *Kalu d-Sulaqa* / *Kaltho d-Suloqo* (the Bride of the Ascension) for that year. She would be dressed in a traditional Assyrian wedding costume and then paraded around the village singing and asking for *gawzeh w-kishmeeshah* / *yabeeshah* (walnuts and raisins), which they would then share amongst themselves in a feast held afterwards in honour of the "bride".

Assyrians would celebrate this day like any other *Shahra* / *Shahro*, with music, dancing, food and drink - but also a few differences. Apart from the little girls dressed as brides there was also a peculiar custom practised by Assyrians living in Hakkari, whereby ropes were tied to strong branches of large trees common to that district. After this was done, all those present would attempt to climb one, and any not doing so would mean bad luck for them, while anyone reaching the end of the rope and the branch would have the best of luck for the coming year. This was done to represent the Ascension of Christ into Heaven and the eventual resurrection of the dead and final judgement. This custom is seldom practised today apart from certain areas in the northernmost extremities of Iraq.

In Urmi, on the other hand, it was customary for the little girls in the villages to dress as brides and when "doing their rounds" of their villages would also ask for pennies or trinkets - although this is only a reflection of the generally greater wealth of the Assyrians in the plains of that region.

It is also said that the very same custom was used during fierce battles. Young girls, dressed

as brides, were ordered to take provisions to the men fighting on the battlefield. Their mothers, knowing that they may never return, used this custom to instill courage in their young daughters.

In Syria young girls and boys would join together and form a couple, dressed as bride and a groom, and then go from door to door, singing. They were usually rewarded, not with money or candy, but rather people would give *piridha* (wheat), rice, fruits, and so on, then at the end the children would go out to a field to cook and eat what they had collected on the day.

This custom, peculiar to members of the Church of the East and the Chaldean Catholic Church, survives in these communities worldwide and is always marked by a party, often women only!

It is also a new custom to hold a mock wedding reception. It is held just like any other traditional Assyrian wedding reception - *khigga*, slow dance, dinner, cake and all, the only difference being that the Bride, Groom, Best-Man and Matron-of-Honour are all young girls! ■

Nicholas Aljeloo

ملف لغوي

كلمة لغوية

z'or-youtho	Ethnic	taw-hma	٢٥٣
math-lo	Example	tuo-sa	٢٥٤
mtow-ro-noo-tho	Development	mit-taw-ra-noo-tha	٢٥٥
ti-mo	Price/value	tee-ma	٢٥٦
ta-yos-to	Aeroplane	tay-a-ra	٢٥٧
ko-see-tho	Hat	ko-see-tha	٢٥٨
ko-to-sho	Struggle	ko-ta-sha	٢٥٩
Sab-ro	hope	saw-ra	٢٦٠
hoolo	Longing	lhe-ku-tha	٢٦١
oroatho	argue	ar-u-tha	٢٦٢

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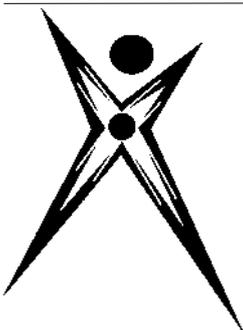
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The Assyrian Youth Group of Victoria is a non-political, non-religious and non-profit organisation. It seeks to promote the Assyrian culture, history and language, as well as the Assyrian name and community, bringing it to the world stage.

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