

الذخيرة

الطبعة 6751 أكتوبر 2001

مخبرتي دعيني أخبرك

The Team

Sennacherib Daniel
sdaniel70@yahoo.com
David Chibo
davidchibo@hotmail.com
Sakhi Warda
Sanharib@hotmail.com
Fraydon Heskel
samerheskel@hotmail.com
Haitham Patrous
c/o Nakosha@hotmail.com
Nineveh Daniel
m.daniel@mei.unimelb.edu.au

Major Sponsor

Zinda Corporation, Zinda Magazine
www.zindamagazine.com

www.nakosha.org

Nakosha was established in 1997 with the view of advocating free speech and establishing a social link among our Australian and worldwide communities, especially those in our homeland.

Nakosha is growing with a contemporary generation of Assyrians who are aware of their identity, with an understanding and appreciation of our culture, language and heritage.

Nakosha is a non-profit publication. Holding a neutral stand within the community, its views are not religiously or politically motivated – they are based on human values not sectarian beliefs.

Circulation and Subscription enquiries, Sydney

The Assyrian Australian Academic Society
Assyrian Australian Society
Assyrian School
Bet Nahrain Organisation
Nineveh Club
Nineveh Video

For correspondence and subscriptions(Australia):
nakosha@hotmail.com

P.O. BOX 948 Merlynston,
Victoria, Australia 3058.
www.atour.com/aygv

e ditorial

Media, as defined by the Oxford dictionary, are the means by which something is communicated. Great Assyrian journalists such as

Naoum Elias Yakob Balakh, commonly known as *Malfono* (teacher) Naoum Faik (b.1868 Omid /Diyarbekir, d.1930) understood the value of mass communication. In 1909 *Kukhwa d' Madinkha* (Star of the East) came to being. In 1916 in the United States of America he founded the journal *Bethnahrin* published in Syriac, Arabic and Turkish. In 1921 he was the chief editor of the Chaldo-Assyrian National Association's magazine *Huyada*.

Malfono Faik was a great believer in the crucial role of printing presses, magazines and schools – he saw them as basic tools for the survival of the Assyrian culture and the shaping of nationalistic youth.

Nakosha, too, sees media as great tools for communication and upholding the Assyrian heritage. While it still comes in a small package, *Nakosha* is even now really in its infancy, still laying foundations. Part of that foundation is its new website, www.nakosha.org.

The recently released site's homepage is in royal Assyrian purple. The *Nakosha* insignia – an abstraction of a bell and designed by Sakhi Warda – runs across the page. The latest issue can be downloaded by clicking its icon, placed squarely in the middle of the page. An archives tab takes you back to old school *Nakosha*, right down to the first edition in 1997.

Nakosha magazine targets Assyrian youth worldwide. In its attempt to reach a wider youth audience *Nakosha* is delivered free of charge directly to Assyrian youth within Australia. Distribution centres around the world have also been set up to reach Assyrians in the diaspora. The

Nakosha homepage was established in an effort to more efficiently distribute *Nakosha* magazine worldwide to Assyrian youth who cannot pick up a free copy at its distribution centres.

In its ambition to become part of an Assyrian "nervous system", a system which carries impulses of information from one point of the world to another, *Nakosha* is forming synapses with other like-minded organisations, both here in Australia and overseas. In the not too distant future, once a rock-solid foundation has been laid for *Nakosha*, the magazine will expand its connections with other magazines around the globe, bringing to fruition *Malfono* Faik's ideology of media as sustaining forces for Assyrianism.

And the winner of last month's spot the error competition goes to Nicholas Al-Jeelo from Sydney, Australia. One of many readers who sent e-mails complaining about the locations of the spots on the map of Iraq – Habanea and Babylon were hundreds of kilometres off target – we reproduce here a map of what it *should've* looked like.

We were only testing our readers, really. ■

Sennacherib Daniel



Liberal Candidate

Mr. Buller

meets with

Bet-Nahrain Club



Assyrians have a fundamental need to represent themselves in governments throughout the world. Without such representation, and no country to call their own, they run the risk of permanently becoming an “invisible people,” identified only by their country of origin, not their unique ethnicity. By working closely with local governments in the diaspora, Assyrians can ensure their interests are safeguarded. But such a grass roots level alliance is certainly not a “one-way street.” Australia is no longer safe, by dint of its physical isolation, from the problems faced by the world community. As the recent “Tampa crisis” and events in America show, by better understanding its own ethnic groups - and those of the world - Australia stands a greater chance of keeping its already coherent community safe and content, truly an example to the rest of the world.

It was with these ideas that the **Bet-Nahrain Club**

(BNC), based in Meadow Heights, Melbourne, Australia, organised its recent meetings with local government representatives at the *Buchan Street Community Centre*. In the ten years of its existence, the BNC has, unfortunately, not received any show of interest from local government or candidates for Calwell. The first candidate for the seat to take notice is Mr. Darren Buller.

Mr. Buller, a 35-year old Liberal politician running for the safe Labor seat of Calwell, believes the Liberal Party represents free enterprise and family values. A “Meadow Heights boy”, he introduced himself to the gathering of over fifty Assyrians as a family man with strong Christian beliefs.

This seemed to naturally lead on to the major issues he would tackle if elected - unemployment and drugs. Unemployment figures under Labor, he said, were around 11% - under the Liberals, 6.7%. He would work to ensure these figures also held true for Calwell, he promised.

“Drugs are a major problem in the Broadmeadows

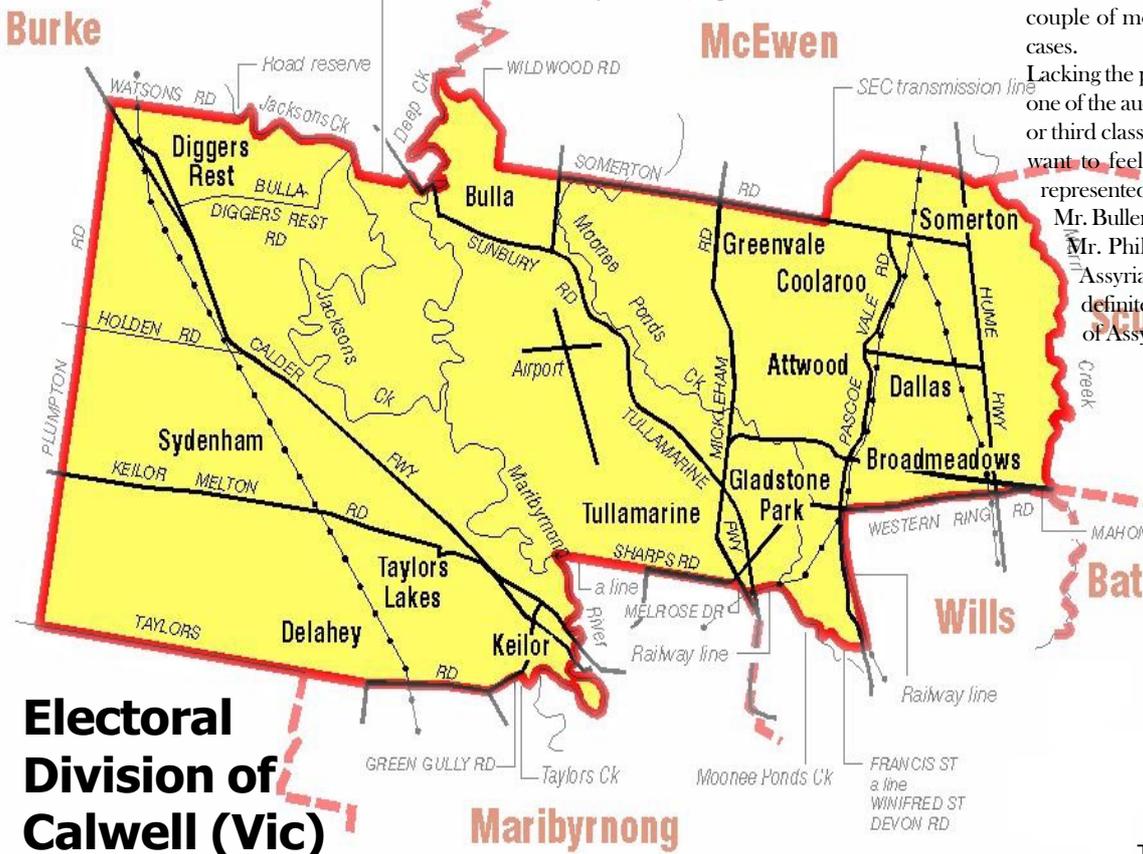
area,” Mr. Buller said, “and I will work to solve it through education and finding the drug dealers.” Just *how* he would do this wasn’t mentioned, nor was the fact that this has been the tried and failed method of combating drugs by governments the world over.

The immigration issue is a “complex problem,” “one that needs us to come together as a community, to work together on *individual* cases.” When questioned in particular on the subject of asylum seekers, Mr. Buller commented that each case needs to be looked at specifically and that he couldn’t generalise, above all when referring to the Tampa issue. “Australia is second to Canada in the number of immigrants it accepts” through legal channels, he pointed out. When pressed further on the issue during question time, however, Mr. Buller admitted - quite uncharacteristically for a politician - that “I’m not strong on the immigration policy” and that “immigration is one of the most difficult portfolios.” He doesn’t have the answers, he said, but would work closely with the Assyrian people, meeting every couple of months if necessary to work on specific cases.

Lacking the proper recognition in their homelands, one of the audience members said, being not second or third class but *fourth* class citizens, the Assyrians want to feel that their rights are recognised and represented at the local and eventually federal level.

Mr. Buller promised that he would bring the Hon. Mr. Phillip M. Ruddock MP to meet with the Assyrians, if not before the elections, then definitely next year, to discuss the difficult area of Assyrian asylum seekers. ■

Sennacherib Daniel



The Hon Dr Andrew Theophanous MP

**Electoral
Division of
Calwell (Vic)**

SORRY, BUT YOU MISSED THE BEST CONVENTION EVER!

The Assyrian American National Convention (AANC) was the largest organized, profitable, and eventful Assyrian convention in the history of the Assyrian American National Federation. Perhaps as many as six thousand Assyrians gathered at the Double Tree Hotel in San Jose to participate between August 30 and September 2.

In all, the 2001 convention was a resounding success, thanks to the leadership of Chairperson Jacklin Bejan, the computer technology used in processing information, and an army of volunteers! Here's a blow-by-blow report of the events for those who were unable to attend.

The Registration Process implemented for the first time here expedited the handling of ticket purchasing, events information, and minimized unlawful activities. Everyone in the lobby and the hotel rooms was pre-identified



and accounted for.

The Welcome Packet was a work of art. Everything we needed to know about the convention was pre-bagged and we even had maps, San Jose's points of interests, our tickets and a complete list of events in one place. So classy!

We were all carrying a badge with our names. It was very convenient to meet people from previous conventions whose names we had forgotten.

At the Genocide Conference, Mr. Wilfred Alkhas of *Zinda Magazine* moderated a half-day event during which several scholars and political activists expressed their research and views on the Assyrian-Armenian Genocide of 1915. Dr. Racho Donef from Australia commented, "The Turks have treated the Genocide as a taboo and have discouraged discussions on it. It would not be impossible to find people in Istanbul who may have never heard of the Genocide."

Dr. Richard Hovanessian of the University of California in Los Angeles argued that the government of Turkey's efforts in denying the Genocide of its Christian populations in 1915 have passed through several stages since 1918. He said that "the denial has progressed into the phases of rationalization and relativization in order to make it seem more reasonable and to



raise doubts about the intent to destroy an entire people." Lastly, Dr. Gabriele Yonan from Berlin reviewed the important events before and after the 1915 Genocide.

All events, whether educational, political, or entertaining were quickly filled. Often people were standing in the back of the rooms and hallways.

Two speakers discussed two major Internet projects at the Internet Conference on Saturday morning. Mr. Paul Younan presented his website, Peshitta.org, remotely via video-streaming technology from his office in Chicago and Dr. George Kiraz explained his Syriac Digital Library project. A group of Assyrian webmasters then responded to several questions from the audience. These were Dr. George Kiraz, Albert Gabriel (nineveh.com), Firas Jatou and Peter Betbasoo (AINA.org), George Stifo

There were as many as four hundred people at the Sunday afternoon Political Round Table. We heard Congressman Mike Honda and Mr. Peter J. Abajian educating us on the ways of becoming more politically active in Washington. Mr. Yonadam Kanna, General Secretary of the Assyrian Democratic Movement presented the "News From Homeland" portion of the event. A film produced by Zinda Magazine entitled "Assyrians in North Iraq After the Gulf War" gave a brief overview of who Assyrians are and why they demand greater recognition in the West.



Two other unforgettable events were the Children's Talent Show and the Assyrian Folklore & Contemporary Fashion Show. Assyrian poetry lovers rejoiced on Saturday when Ninos Aho, Hannibal Alkhas, and Yosip Bet-Yosip assembled in an informal gathering for a 90 minutes of non-stop Assyrian

Assyrian W

(bethsuryoyo.com), Paul Younan (peshitta.org), and Sargon Tavour (thinkassyrian.com).

Mr. Tavour then announced the creation of the Assyrian Internet Group and invited others to join this group in the future. At the end of the program, Mr. Wilfred Alkhas pledged a \$2,500.00 contribution on behalf of Zinda Magazine toward the Syriac Digital Library. Dr. Bijan Davidson then matched this amount for a total of \$5000.00.

At the Youth Excellence Pageant each candidate gave a moving introductory speech and then demonstrated an artistic talent. The winner of this year's contest was Mr. Anobel Odisho of San Jose, California. A student at University of California in Berkeley, Mr. Odisho demonstrated the website he has created for the Dept of Near Eastern Studies which allows students and faculty at UCB to search and view over 600 images of Near Eastern artefacts. The second prize (\$1000.00) went to Mr. Ramen Benjamin, and Ms. Ilbert Bakunians took the third prize (\$750.00). The first prize was worth \$1500.00.

poetry recital in both Eastern and Western Assyrian languages. It was music to our ears.

The picnic on Monday could be almost perfect had there been some music. The weather on the other hand was perfect.

So here's Zinda Magazine's Top 10 most unforgettable events at this year's 68th Annual Assyrian American National Convention in San Jose, California:



10. Prof. Hovanessian at the Genocide Conference
9. Joseph's kabobs at the Monday Picnic
8. Fred Parhad's statuettes draped in black
7. Men's Basketball Finals
6. Portrait of Andre Aghassi at the Art Exhibition
5. The Assyrian folk costumes shown at the Fashion Show
4. Remote video presentation at the Internet Conference
3. Sargon Lewie's embarrassing comments, addressing Congressman Honda at the Political Roundtable
2. David Yonan's Surprise Performance at the Youth Excellence Pageant
1. Jacklin Bejan declining the "Woman of the Year" award at the Sunday Banquet

Unofficial reports indicate that this year's profits from the convention may have been more

than double the most profitable convention in the past. Next year's convention - Detroit, Michigan.



ASSYRIAN ENTREPRENEUR SPONSORS DINNER IN HONOR OF CLINTON

(ZNDA: Sydney) Internet and telecommunications entrepreneur Karl Suleman puts his check book where his praise is for Bill Clinton.

Such is the Froggy group [www.froggy.com] chief's attachment to the former US president that he parted with at least \$235,000 to stay as near as he could during Mr. Clinton's Sydney visit last weekend.

Mr Suleman successfully bid \$150,000 so his table would include Mr. Clinton at the Westmead Children's Hospital fundraiser in Randwick on Saturday night. Members of the

submission on behalf of the AUA, together with a letter of endorsement from Mr. Nimrod. President Clinton was very pleased with the submission and promised to consider the Assyrian issues raised in this document.

ASHURBANIPAL LIBRARY PROJECT AT MOSUL UNIVERSITY

Courtesy of al-Thawra Newspaper

(ZNDA: Baghdad) Last month President Saddam Hussein reviewed several prototype designs of the Ashurbanipal Library Project and the Saddam Institute for Cuneiform Studies, scheduled for construction in Nineveh Province, Iraq. The project consists of a library designed according to the Assyrian style, a lecture hall, a service centre and an institute for cuneiform studies.

The architectural designs presented to President Hussein depict the dual nature of Assyrian society's scientific and military attributes.

same period.

The July 19th "personal communication" by former Illinois State Senator Nimrod received the much-delayed response from Mr. Barzani on August 24, 2001. According to the Behdanani strongman, "Our response to your concern has taken some times (sic) because we wanted to establish all of the facts of the case." In reality, though, AI had already inquired into Youkhana's abduction as early as June 1. According to AI, KDP silence lasted nearly three months until a growing outcry from numerous Assyrian websites and organizations proved to be too intense for the KDP to continue to ignore.

As previously reported regarding the official charges against Youkhana, Mr. Barzani stated that Youkhana had been "willingly helping and assisting PKK terrorists." Mr. Barzani further added, "The PKK is an illegal and unlawful group in Iraqi Kurdistan."

Most notable in the letter was Mr. Barzani's acknowledgment of Youkhana's torture while in KDP custody. On account of international observers as well as several family members

World News

local Assyrian Universal Alliance chapter in Australia and His Grace Mar Melis Zaia were among the guests sitting next to Mr. Clinton. With Froggy as the dinner sponsor, he hosted Mr Clinton on his luxury harbour launch on Saturday. That prompted him to successfully bid \$50,000 that night for an autographed photo of Gandhi as a gift to Mr Clinton.

On Sunday, he paid \$7,000 to join another 43 businessmen at a fundraising dinner at Double Bay, with Mr Clinton the special guest and the Australian Labor Party the chief beneficiary.

The five-course Raffles Ballroom dinner cost \$7,000 a head. That covered the hotel bill and the former US president's \$200,000 fee for his companionship and a 45-minute dinner speech on the challenges confronting the world.

The businessmen made a \$138,000 donation that night to Mission Australia and a 1.5 million-dollar donation to the party.

A number of Assyrians attended the special dinner including Mr. Wilson Younan, head of the Assyrian program on SBS Radio, members of the Assyrian Universal Alliance (AUA), among them Ms. Suzy David. Ms. David was seated next to Mr. Clinton. On the other side of Mr. Clinton was Mr. Karl Suleman and His Grace Mar Meelis Zaia, Bishop of the Assyrian Church of the East. Ms. David conversed with the President about the Assyrian Question and presented him with a detailed

The prototypes were presented by the Dean of the College of Engineering in Mosul University and few staff architects at the University who worked on the designs. The Architects emphasized the point that when studying Assyrian history, they found the close relationship between the words rifle and pen. "This complex will be a pivotal point for archaeological studies and a centre to attract not only Iraqi archaeologists but also archaeologists and scholars throughout the world to view the depth of the Mesopotamian civilization and its role in the world renaissance and its positive impact on humanity", writes al-Thawra Newspaper in Iraq.

KDP ADMITS TORTURE OF ASSYRIAN MAN

Assyrian International News Agency (AINA) www.aina.org

In a campaign of damage control aimed at countering the growing international criticism of the abduction and torture of Youkhana Khaie, the Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP) released a statement to the public on August 27, 2001. Three days earlier, KDP strongman Mr. Masoud Barzani officially and personally responded to an Assyrian Universal Alliance (AUA) inquiry into the matter by Secretary General of the AUA John Nimrod. According to Amnesty International (AI), their official inquiry was also finally answered during the

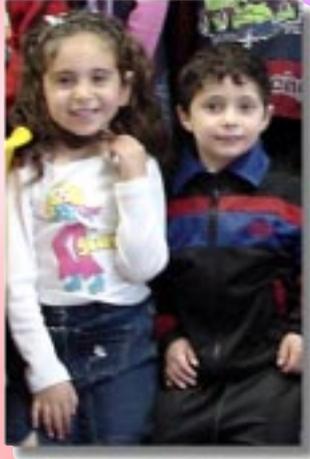
eventually succeeding in visiting Youkhana, the KDP strongman was in no position to deny the scars already inflicted upon Youkhana. Mr. Barzani did, however, attempt to minimize the impact of his acknowledgment by stating "The other accusations of him being severely tortured are exaggerated." The letter did not in any way attempt to apologize for the savage beatings or make any pledge to investigate the perpetrators of Youkhana's torture.

Senator Nimrod was heartened by the long overdue setting of the trial date for September 2, 2001 and the statement by Mr. Barzani that "on your appeal, we would advise the authorities to consider his case on humanitarian grounds." However, on September 2 the trial was postponed because the presiding judge had been inexplicably sent on leave to Syria. No new date has been given and no parole has been granted to Youkhana. The diplomatic courtesy of an explanation has not been provided to Senator Nimrod.

Courtesy of



www.zindamagazine.com



بچہ ہم کو ہستی¹ لکھتا ہے
 دھندلے لکھنے کے لیے بچہ
 بچہ بچہ کے لیے ہے² بچہ
 بچہ کے لیے ہے³ بچہ
 بچہ کے لیے ہے⁴ بچہ

بچہ کے لیے ہے⁵ بچہ
 بچہ کے لیے ہے⁶ بچہ
 بچہ کے لیے ہے⁷ بچہ
 بچہ کے لیے ہے⁸ بچہ
 بچہ کے لیے ہے⁹ بچہ
 بچہ کے لیے ہے¹⁰ بچہ
 بچہ کے لیے ہے¹¹ بچہ
 بچہ کے لیے ہے¹² بچہ
 بچہ کے لیے ہے¹³ بچہ
 بچہ کے لیے ہے¹⁴ بچہ

بچہ کے لیے ہے

- | | | |
|-------------|---------------|----------------------|
| 14 migrated | 19 therefore | 24 origins |
| 15 nine | 20 talk | 25 shared activities |
| 16 subjects | 21 psalms | 26 generation |
| 17 ethics | 22 melody | |
| 18 easy | 23 connection | |

Matay beth Arsan
25
Medical student, Free
University of
Amsterdam

1. From a global perspective what does Assyria to you? My world, My mesopotamia, My Tur-Abdin, My Arbo, My Shawtho MesHoyto.... My world.

2. What gives you a sense of identity? Othuroyutho ("Assyrianism"): a reality composed of Suryoyutho, Chaldoyutho, Nestornuyutho, Tur-Abdinoyutho, Ninwoyutho, Bobiloyutho, Beth-Na inoyutho.... a son of the most powerful heritage on Earth.

3. What is the most significant event of Assyrian history in the 20th century? The return of an organized and armed group of Assyrian patriots from Diaspora to their homeland: Hope is revived!

4. What was the low point of your life? The day I realized this fact: God Almighty, shoubh'ó I-Eshme, closed His eyes and ears for the desperate cry of His innocent Christian Assyrian people in 1915 while being massacred and oppressed in the most barbaric and humiliating manner in such a big number, that even our own Assyrian Saints revolted against God's silence and impassive attitude by rescuing some Assyrian lives. Truly the most depressive moment in my life!

5. What was the high point of your life? The moment I realized that I personally am able to return to my homeland in the future and to live there a decent life.

6. What are your favourite pass-times?
 -Sports (all kinds)
 -Board of Beth-Na in TV AMSTERDAM
 -President of the youth council of the Yoldath-Alloho Maryam, Syriac Orthodox Church of Amsterdam
 - Enjoying life :-)

7. What is your favourite Assyrian dish? The perfect dinner: Aprakh from my mother's hands, Wine from the grapes of the Izla mountain... in front of me the joyful smile of an Assyrian beauty! :-)

8. What is your favourite Assyrian song? At this moment I have three favourite songs:
 - "Daworo-no b-arHo d-sheno b-turo Heloyo u Hashino", by Habib Mousa
 - "Yalda min dimmi ya Aturayta, en hawyat a'mi... Atur le mayta", by Habib Mousa
 - " Haw d-nurone d-zoyHin meneh dan-khorun-beh blah'mo u h'amro lewun h'ozen Hal fothuro",
 Classical (west-)Assyrian church song, at the end of the Holy Mass on Sundays especially when it is being sung by Khoury SimHan Saliba of Mor Sharbil Church.

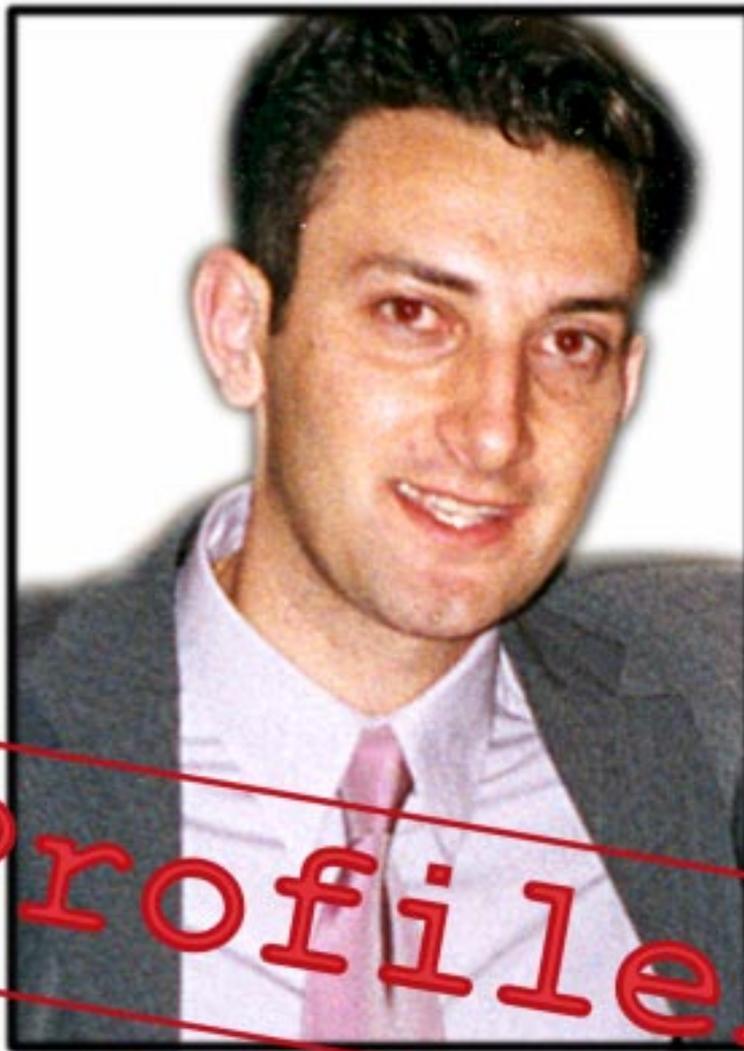
9. What is your favourite non-Assyrian dish? My own mix of chicken-filet, mushrooms, parsley, cream and white wine... I think it's Italian.

10. What is your favourite non-Assyrian song? "Hasta Siempre (Commandante Che Guevara)", by Nathalie Cordone, lyrics by Carlos Puebla

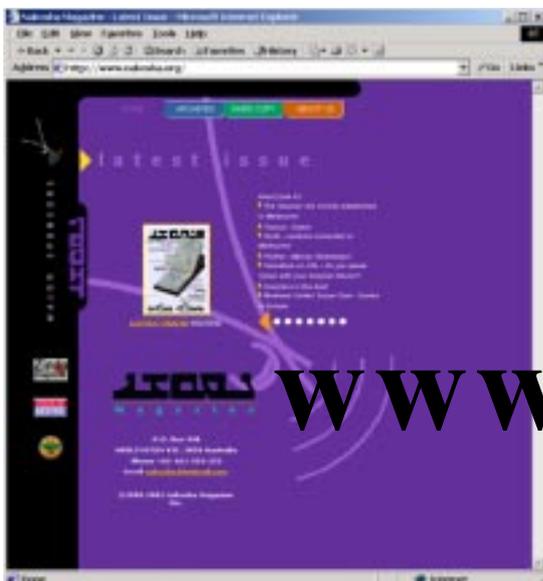
11. Future goals?
 Achieving

recognition for the Assyrian nation on international level. This of course is not a struggle, not a fight... but a real political war! Or a revolution! :-) Hasta La Victoria Siempre!

12. What is your philosophy on life?
 An Assyrian without an ideology is born to die, an Assyrian with an ideology is born to live!



Profiler



If you're reading this on the Net, ignore this message..... but if you're holding a somewhat dreary (but still great!) B&W hard copy, get onto the Internet and download *Nakosha* in all its colourful, royal-purple glory, read back issues and contact us via email.

www.nakosha.org

left: the home of *Nakosha*, draped in royal Assyrian purple. You will require Acrobat reader to download issues - don't worry, it's freely available at this website; downloads may take a few minutes, depending on connection speed.

Q

If Assyria were to be re-established as a country would you return?

F/33/Melbourne, Australia

I'd have to say YES but would like to qualify that by adding that I would as long as it were safe, the government was fair and just, and there were sufficient employment opportunities. What more could one ask for?! :)

F/35, and growing younger/American Continent.

The dream of having one's own country is a matter which is dear to the heart of every person who has a sense of belonging and who wants to keep his/her heritage and culture alive for the coming generations.

A place in the sun even if it's a small one, it will be very large when it's in your own homeland.

We as Assyrians and for a long time have been deprived of that feeling of belonging, and even though some of us were born in our homeland and when they were there they had a sense of belonging. However, I do believe that it was a borrowed one, and here we are now like leaves spread into the four corners of the world.

Some of us might not even feel that they

need to be back home, they might have established themselves in whatever country they're in, but others might still have that nostalgia of being back home.

I for one can't say that I can describe my nostalgia towards my homeland because I wasn't born there. However I do feel a sense of belonging because that's where my roots are and that's where my thoughts turn when I think about all the misery that we all passed through and those before us.

As to going back, I can say for sure that if we were to have our own homeland, a place where we can be safe, and we know that we can establish our lives, I would like very much to go and see how it would go, but at the same token don't you think that those who will be our representatives in the homeland have to work hard in order to bring us back?

M/25/Australia

My grandfather was born in Hakkari Turkey, my grandmother was born in Urmi Iran, and my father was born in North Iraq, I was born in Baghdad and now living in Australia, I think now all I need is a homeland and a homeland needs me! To build or to fight when the time comes I will be there, we have suffered and our ancestors have suffered a lot too. We can't give up now the twenty-first century has come and with it a big war is on our footsteps we should always be ready for the right moment. May God bless Assyria.

F/25/San Jose, Ca. USA

Not Likely

M/26/Austria,Vienna

Yes

M/35/USA, Phoenix

Yes, but only if it was established as a democratic country with multi party system similar to the United States.

F/20/Australia, Sydney

Yes, I would go

M/35/CANADA/TORONTO

Very good question. No doubt, the answer is YES. God willing, one day we will have our own country.

F/54/USA,Apopka, FL

Return to Assyria: yes.

F/22/Illinois

Safety would be a concern, but ultimately I would want to return in order to help my people.

M/18/Australia, Sydney

Now is that any kind of question to ask? OF COURSE!

If Assyria is ever established as an independent state we not only need to make sure that we make up the majority of the population, we will also need to have everyone we can present to offer their expertise in any given field.

We will need to build a whole national infrastructure. We will need professors, teachers, lawyers, doctors, nurses, policemen, engineers, computer technicians, businesspeople, economists, soldiers - everyone must be in it, and I would only be too happy to be there to help.

But this will always remain a dream as long as our people remain without hope in the Diaspora and there is no sense of our national struggle in their hearts and minds. We can never establish a nation-state when true Assyrian nationalism is dying in our people. We must first wake up and organise ourselves nationally. Take the Jews, Armenians and Kurds as Middle Eastern examples of national fervour and achievement. If our people put their minds to it, we can achieve miracles.

M/26/Sweden/Södertälje

Of course, I would invest a lot of capital, and make Swedish companies invest in Assyria, and a lot more.

One thing here in Sweden is that we don't know a lot about the different projects in North Iraq or other places.

M/17/Sydney, Australia

The chances of me returning would be difficult as I am getting my education here in Australia and if I am to have a career in the fields that I want returning to Assyria will be difficult.

However, that is not to say I will not visit Assyria and even purchase a house and business there and allow any relative living in the area to take advantage of them. I believe by doing so I will be helping out the economy of Assyria and I will dedicate much funds for the welfare of fellow Assyrians living in Atour.

M/33/England, London

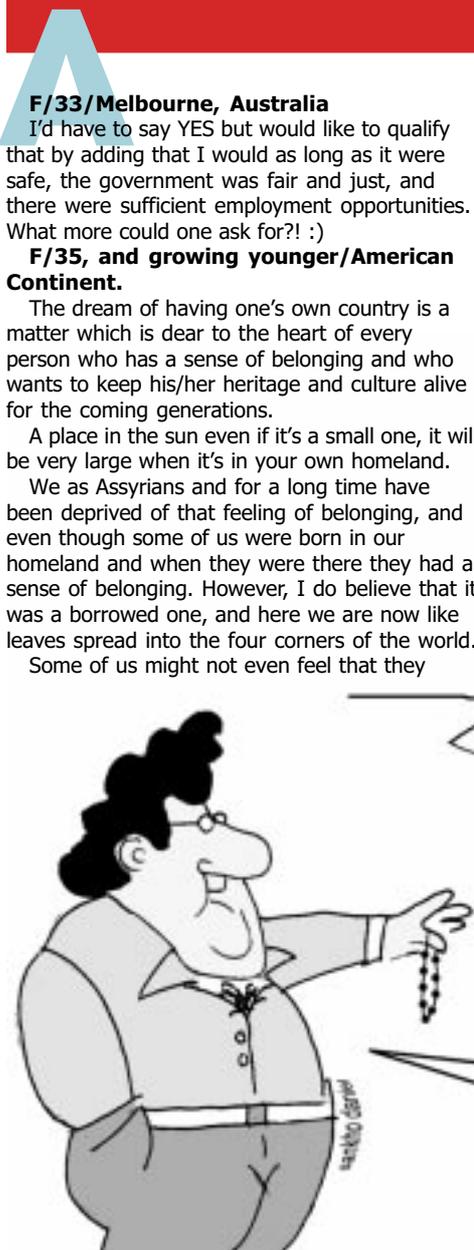
Difficult question, I would love to live in my own land

however this would require consultation with the wife and family. I believe that it is also important for Assyrians to have a high level presence in most democratic and powerful countries to assist and support our

country (e.g. Israel). I was born and raised in England as an ASSYRIAN, my ultimate aim in life is to kiss the ground of my own country, whilst the Assyrian flag is hoisted high and proud in the horizon.

Male/28/Chicago, USA

Unfortunately, no I would not return. We cannot get along with ourselves. Why do we have divided churches, clubs, and organizations? If we can't do these little things right, how can we run a country?





BASSAM MUNEER

One of the many vital functions of the artist is to present visually that which cannot be expressed in words - either because the words are too ineloquent, or because the message is too powerful, horrific or beautiful for mere words to describe. And herein lies the difficulty of the art reviewer. *Writing* about an artist's work conveys infinitely less than what actually lies beneath. This was the dilemma faced when writing about Bassam Muneer and his outstanding *oeuvre*.

From Arbil in Bet-Nahrain, 29-year old Bassam has spent the last two years in Melbourne. Sadly for Melburnians, most of his works are still in the Middle East - fortunately, though, there is at least a representative sample here. While most artists move from one school to another over decades, Bassam's body of work looks like a mature who's who of schools crammed into one short decade. Major influences are clearly Dali's Surrealism, Picasso and Braque's Cubism and Delaunay's Orphism - there are even elements of Dadaism.

Bassam's most potent and incisive images are perhaps his compassionate, political anti-war series. *Untitled* (Pawns of War, opposite page, lower right) was painted in Damascus in 1996. A Dali-esque watercolour landscape with dismembered, decaying body parts on a chessboard background with pawn chess-pieces, it is a work as powerful and pacifist as Picasso's *Guernica* or Goya's *Third of May*. In an era when television provides the Western World's mass audiences with everything it would ever care to know about war and politics (TV's entertainment hour screenings of the Gulf War being the most recent example), Bassam's humane view of brutality offers a much needed counterpoint to this modern "commercialisation" of war.

Style and content hold equal value to Bassam. His works are heavily loaded with meaning, but style is just as weighty: otherwise, why would people bother looking at a meaningful but unattractive painting? Bassam reflects.

An apparently more playful reflection on war is *Untitled* (Terrain with Tennis Balls). Here, war is blatantly a game played out on a barren, shadowy Di Chirico-like landscape. Tennis balls eerily hover in suspended animation over the land, looking like full moons. This surreal arena for the game of war looks cheerful and benign at first sight, but closer inspection reveals its nightmarish truth - to the right, a bizarre "omelette", with what looks like an eyeball for a yolk, is being served with large fork and spoon. Bassam's skill here is in being able to bring disparate objects onto the two-dimensional field of the canvas and convey emotions that are well beyond the power of words.

Bassam works with mixed media - oils, watercolour, pen, paper, charcoal, crayon and pastels - to bring life to his inner world. Delicately beautiful little prints capture the essence of man's inhumanity, again with great compassion and the sensitive touch of someone who has clearly been a first hand witness to it. *Untitled* (Prisoner) is a Kafkaesque dream of a man imprisoned by an unambiguously Middle Eastern power (the date palm trees and earthenware jugs are instantly recognizable "logos" pointing out location). The pages of a tear-away calendar strewn across the cell are counting down the years. A hand passes through the bars. Even the sunset, normally a romantic symbol of freedom and hope, is locked behind bars, giving a melancholic sense of claustrophobia. Like Kafka's *The Trial*, what the audience is left perplexed with, though, is just *why* he is imprisoned.

Bassam's earliest contact with art was in Year 7 in Iraq under the guidance of *Rabi Rafik Noori*, an Assyro-Chaldean artist.

Owning a portrait studio for two years in Syria, Bassam spent the majority of his time painting for the love of it. Unfortunately, under the Iraqi government's regime, Bassam was unable to enter Baghdad University, not being a member of the prevailing political power. Now politically free in Australia, Bassam is in his second year of a 2-year Diploma Of Visual Arts (Painting) at The Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology.

Bassam's cultural heritage obviously influences his work - it's inevitable, he claims. *Ishtar's Gate* is a technically perfect orphic manipulation of colours, so that the gate dissolves into colours and is reconstructed in the mind's eye. It appears to metamorphose into lions and springs up at the viewer. Everything an artist looks at needs to be analysed afresh, Bassam says, so that even a very old and well-worn image like The Gate of Ishtar can take on a new life, imbued with new ideas and themes. And Bassam achieves this with great aplomb. These ideas and emotions are the very reason Bassam paints - like Picasso said in a conversation in 1932, "Ideas and emotions will in the end be prisoners in [the painter's] work. Whatever they do, they can't escape from the picture." In this case, emotions and ideas are prisoners for *life* in Bassam's works, with no chance of parole.

While Bassam's past personal experiences and cultural language are translated into art,



“
**that which
 cannot be
 expressed
 in words**
 ”

an artist's maturity lies in being able to capture his new surroundings and transform them with vitality into his own personal artistic vision. That is part of the inevitable growth of a good artist. Coming to Australia has been the next phase of Bassam's artistic development.

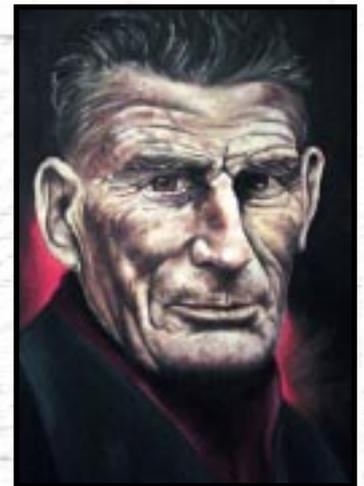
Visual art and music are parallel languages for Bassam. An abstract image can be based on an actual form or it can be a visual representation of something essentially non-visual, like feelings - anger is red, envy green, for example. This idea that a musical, visual or literary sensation has an equivalent in another medium of expression (known as synaesthesia) was popular in the 1800s.

Ishtar's Gate portrays Orphism's synaesthetic qualities perfectly. But Bassam takes this notion further in *Untitled* (Violinist).

A young lady plays a violin. The colour scheme is the muted monotonous of a Cubist painting. Painted spheres look like quanta of mental energy emanating from the violinist's mind. Bassam bridges the gap here between not only music and painting, but painting and sculpture - the surface of the work attains a sculpted quality as pieces of paper look for all the world like sheet music, their corners folded, peeling away from the violinist's mind, a mind filled with a fugue of ideas.

Ultimately, Bassam aspires to work full-time as a professional artist. With such a gift for self-expression possessed by this young painter, he will no doubt achieve that, and much more. Unquestionably such a painter will close the ever-widening gap between artist and society, particularly the Assyro-Chaldean and Western societies, bringing our rich cultural heritage back to the world stage. ■

Sennacherib Daniel



KARATE KIDS



My quest for a sports article this month had brought me to a dark Craigieburn house on a cold wintry Tuesday night. As the door creaked open I was greeted by five Assyrian kids who welcomed me in and jumped around elated to be interviewed for *Nakosha* magazine.

The sports interview this month would be on Karate, a word that literally means open-hand.

Having seen the Karate Kid three times in my lifetime I felt that my extensive research in this field had prepared me well for this interview.

The Karate kids numbered five in all, and the official name of their sport is *Shitoriyu Karate-do*, they explained pointing to the badges sewn on to their Karate uniforms. They quickly introduced themselves as I struggled to write down their details.

The athletes were Vanessa Slayo and Ramina Yadegar-Yalda, both aged 11, and holding the coveted yellow stripe blue. They were followed by 9-year old Clint Batros and his brother Jason Botros, aged 7, who, along with the youngest Karate kid, Mary Yadegar-Yalda aged, only seven, held a yellow-belt.

Before commencing with the interview, I asked for a glass of water.

Lesson one - *Never* say 'water' in a room filled with Assyrian Karate kids.

Having just finished dinner, and consequently dessert, these sugar charged Karate kids paired off and began sparring as I ducked for cover behind the couch.

"What could possibly compel someone to take up this brutal sport?" I thought crouched behind the couch.

"I joined because of Jason and Ramina, my sister", said a shy Mary. Thankfully Jason explained the real reason why. "They wanted to go", said Jason pointing to the girls, "and now they're stronger than us!"

Clint's reasons weren't very different from the other answers. "Because, I asked my mum for it. Because I wanted to learn, and because I could defense (sic) myself!" he said giggling and mumbling as his comrades broke into hysterical laughter.

Clint continued unfazed. "I've learned now to do a *Kata*", to which I foolishly asked, "Uhhhhmm, what's that?"

Lesson Two - *Never* ask for an explanation of a strange sounding foreign word in a room filled with Karate kids.

"Pin Sandun!" he yelled at the top of his lungs and went into an aggressive Karate stance. Time seemed

to stand still in a scene reminiscent of the hit movie *Matrix*, as I ducked back behind the couch, again. His friends joined him in what appeared to be a choreographed display of flaying at the air and yelling in Japanese at the top of their lungs.

"What positive points could someone possibly tell others about this crazy sport?" I pondered, taking my seat yet again.

"If a robber hits him in the face, it wouldn't affect him," said Jason, as his friends rolled around in fits of laughter.

"The teachers are nice to us", said Clint and he explained how many friends he's made and the fun he's had at Karate class. "I want everyone at class to have friendship and be kind to each other."

"...all the teachers are girls!" said an elated Vanessa. "Karate is not about winning trophies, it's about having fun!" Vanessa also recommended the sport for "people who have no discipline."

"I've learnt that it's not just for boys, and you can have fun, not just learn", interrupted Ramina.

In explaining the positives of the sport, as well as a well-known American television advert, Ramina energetically summed up the interview with "If you like something, don't think about anyone else. Just think about yourself and just do it!" ■

David Chibo