

Foreword

The ASSYRIAN ACADEMIC SOCIETY is an infant organization which is only nine months old. As a non-profit and non-political institution, A.A.S. is proud to produce its first issue which contains the works of some distinguished scholars.

Undoubtedly, at this stage and with limited resources, the technical quality of our publication does not match the quality of its contents; nevertheless, to publish in an area where original materials are scarce is a worthwhile enterprise.

Since the English versions of the papers of two of my distinguished colleagues, Professors Fabrizio Pennacchietti and Bruno Poizat were unedited, I allowed myself to make a few stylistic changes bearing in mind that the authors are entitled to their own style. Inasmuch as ZMIRYATE-D RAWE are concerned, the A.A.S. expresses its deep gratitude and appreciation to Professor Pennacchietti who has successfully documented for the first time an important category of our folklore songs. We are also proud to publish them in Assyrian(Neo-Aramaic) for the first time.

The complete Assyrian version of Pennacchietti's Rawe is transcribed by Malpana Nimrod Simono. For the purpose of comparison and contrast, we also included a selection from those Rawe transcribed by Shamasha Gewargis Benjamin. Obviously, there are differences between the two Assyrian versions; the following are the most important reasons for the differences:

1. The songs are in Tlari-Barwar dialect so drastically different from the Standard Written Neo-Aramaic language which both Simono and Benjamin try to abide by according to their personal interpretation of what Standard Proper is.
2. The Standard Written Neo-Aramaic does not have a fully and absolutely correct form; so variations in spelling and lexicon are not unexpected.

3. Apparently, Malpana Simono is not familiar with the Tiari-Barwar dialect; thus, occasionally he is inaccurate in the graphic rendition of the songs. For instance, instead of / mšaṯni / 'to have temperature or fever' he writes / msaṯni / which has no etymology, whereas the former is derivative from /ša:ṯa /; moreover, instead of / harwi / 'to speak or utter something' is rendered / xarwi /. Some of this kind of inaccuracies have been edited for the sake of precision. On the other hand, Shamasha Benyamin, a typical speaker of Tiari dialect, is influenced by his intimate familiarity with the language of the songs to the extent that he occasionally avoids the etymological spelling in favor of an impressionistic one.

4. Malpana Simono is quite precise in rendering the phonetic transcription of Professor Pennacchiotti. And because the latter uses the velar symbols of / g, k / to stand for the true palatal plosives / c^h, ʒ /, his velar symbols are usually followed by a / y / to indicate their palatalization. This / y / in Simono's transcription forces him to add an unwanted character of 'Yuud' thus creating an inaccuracy in the conventions of the Assyrian spelling for which he is not responsible.

Nevertheless, the joy of publishing the Rawe surpasses the "inconsistencies" in the two renditions of the songs.

The article of the renowned Semitist and Arabist Professor Otto Jastrow comes at a time when everyone feels the danger of the likelihood of the extinction of the Neo-Aramaic language. The talk of Professor Bruno Poizat, a scholar who works in two almost unrelated areas of Mathematical Logic and Semitic languages, has already been well received by the audiences of the A.A.S. when it was presented as a lecture in Chicago. Dr. Arian Ishaya's research is a pioneering work in the field of the social life of the Assyrians in diaspora. The short story of my friend Yousip Canon is better described as a beautiful, and easy-to-read short story. It provides a succinct expression of the feelings of a conscientious Assyrian of today. The prayer of Mami Odisho which signals the finale of his short story tells a long history of suffering and loss in just a few words.

The Assyrian Academic Society thanks all those who contributed to the first issue of its publication and it looks forward to more contributions.

Assyrian Academic Society

Edward Y. Odisho,

President