

Welcome to the 20th Edition

This is the 20th edition of JAAS, and it is a milestone reached thanks in no small part to the encouragement of you, our readers. We thank you for the various forms of your support: Some have sent in financial contributions, others their thoughtful comments. Your valued subscription is equally significant.

In scanning the horizon of previous Assyrian publications which might be considered academic, we have been reminded that JAAS has already traveled further, touched on a greater variety of issues, and reached a broader audience than any of its predecessors. From a tentative beginning, which yielded two issues in 3 years, the Journal has become an established fixture appearing on a regular, semi-annual basis. The Journal's present appearance was adopted some three years ago, following two other styles previously tried and dropped. Our Journal title has been altered only once, for reasons addressed in our previous issue. For the past several years, the same editorial team has been in place, top to bottom. If anything new might be said of JAAS, it is the creation of its Board of Advisors, a group of distinguished individuals whose endorsement we highly value.

We open this issue with Professor **Michael P. Zirinsky's** "*American Presbyterian Missionaries at Urmia During the Great War.*" Dr. Zirinsky is a Professor of History at Boise State University, Idaho, and he has been the recipient of innumerable awards. His many published articles and the papers he has presented on several continents invariably touch on some aspect of Iran and its history. He has indicated to the Journal that he places great importance on the fact he attended high school in the last of the Presbyterian Mission's schools in Iran, the Community School of Tehran. In his own words, "*this international school experience in Iran in the 1950s has deeply affected my subsequent life.*" In explanation of the subject he addresses, Dr. Zirinsky observes: "*Frankly, I have been obsessed with the tragedy which befell the people of Urmia during the First World War ever since I began to come across personal accounts in the archives. For the Assyrians, . . . the disaster had the proportions of the Holocaust -- yet the events hardly appear in historical accounts. So, for years, I have been trying to sort out what actually occurred and to try to do justice in writing to these events.*"

Fairness also requires us to mention the Tehran Round Table (TRT), where Dr. Zirinsky first offered this paper. TRT was a significant gathering of scholars (particularly Iranian, French and German) gathered to consider the hitherto neglected subject of the impact of World War I on Iran. TRT was organized by Oliver Bast, of Bamberg, Germany, who will soon publish the Proceedings of the entire conference. Mr. Bast was most gracious in extending his assistance to JAAS, making it possible to bring you this paper.

While Professor Zirinsky's paper is based on American and British archival materials which have been open to researchers for some time, he reports that there are important materials newly being made available to historians from the government archives of Iran, France, and Russia. In particular, the Iranian government is publishing documents from its archives concerning the World War I era. These documents shed new light on the era of the end of the Qajar dynasty, the rise of the Pahlavi dynasty, and – consequently -- the roots of the Islamic Revolution and the present situation in Iran. As a secular historian trying to recount the past "*as it actually occurred*," the availability of new materials and the analysis of them by young scholars from diverse backgrounds made the TRT conference truly exciting. Mr. Zirinsky adds: "*In the past, there has been much myth written about World War I in Iran and little fact. This Tehran Round Table Conference thus seemed to be imbued by a spirit not unrelated to the words which the American Presbyterian missionaries put over the main doors of their schools in Tehran: 'You Shall Know the Truth, and the Truth Will Set You Free'.*"

Because the role played by the missionaries among our people in the Middle East has been a subject of several recent exchanges, we considered it opportune to seek out another point of view on the general subject. We are pleased to present the commentary of **Dr. Arian Ishaya's**, whose writings have appeared in this publication several times before.

Alberto Fernandez is an American. Foreign Service Officer with the U.S. Information Agency. He holds BA. and MA. degrees in Middle East Studies from the University of Arizona. A Cuban exile, he is proficient not only in Spanish but also in Arabic. According to Mr. Fernandez, his interest in the Assyrian people was prompted "*by Aziz Atiyah's History of Eastern Christianity (1968), and John Joseph's 1957 doctoral dissertation, titled **The End of Nestorian History**, which eventually became the basis for Joseph's fine 1961 book, *The Nestorians and their Muslim Neighbors.*"*

Mr. Fernandez has had a longtime interest in the Assyrian community on the Khabur, fueled in part by Bayard Dodge's "vivid description" in 1940. He describes the present article "***Dawn at Tell Tamir: The Assyrian Christian Survival on the Khabur River***" as "*a very preliminary work in progress.*" This paper was first presented by Mr. Fernandez at the 31st annual Middle East Studies Association Conference, and it has been slightly modified for the Journal. Having previously served a stint in Damascus, Mr. Fernandez will soon be going to Jordan, to serve as Director of the U.S. Information Service in Amman. Barring any objections from the Syrian government, Mr. Fernandez hopes to continue his research on the Assyrian communities of the Khabur. Very obviously, we wish him the best.

Abdul Massih Saadi, a native of Syria himself, taught Syriac language and literature at St. Ephrem Theological Seminary (Damascus). More recently, he has taught Syriac Church History at North Park College, Chicago. While completing his doctoral dissertation at Lutheran School of Theology (Chicago), Mr. Saadi has been cataloguing the Syriac Manuscripts at this institution.

The article, “*Christological Contention and Tolerance in the Syriac Church Traditions: A Case for Ecumenism*,” is a timely one in view of the increasing dialogue for rapprochement among the various Middle Eastern denominations.

Dr. William F. Macomber first published “*The Sources for a Study of the Chaldean Mass*,” in *Worship*, Vol. 51, no.6 (November 1977), as a companion piece to his “*A History of the Chaldean Mass*” (see *JAAS*, Vol. XI, No.2). Once again, we appreciate permission to reprint. Dr. Macomber’s original design was to prepare a series of articles shedding light on the historical development of the Chaldean mass. It is our loss that Dr. Macomber’s subsequent research projects (including a Bohairic-English dictionary) prevented him from realizing his earlier intention.

To avoid misunderstanding, references in Dr. Macomber’s article to “the Chaldean Church” or to “the Chaldean Mass” actually refer to “*the Assyrian Apostolic Church of the East*,” except where specific reference is made to the Chaldean Catholic Church.

Ms Monica J. Blanchard is the Librarian of the Catholic University of America’s Semitics Library and Institute of Christian Oriental Research (ICOR). This is a major repository for the study of languages and history of the Christian churches of the Near East, including Syriac. In addition to her doctoral work and several publications, Ms Blanchard is the Managing Editor of the monographic series *Eastern Christian Texts in Translation*. We are very grateful to Ms. Blanchard for her brief comment on the two reprinted articles of Dr. Macomber regarding the Chaldean Mass.

In our previous issue, **Dr. John Joseph** questioned the proposition that Assyria and Syria should be deemed synonymous. In “*The Bible and the Assyrians: It Kept their Memory Alive*”, he considers the Assyrians in the context of the Holy Book.

A graduate of the American School for Boys, Baghdad, Dr. Joseph received his undergraduate education at Franklin and Marshall College. Following his doctoral work at Princeton University, he returned to teach at his alma mater. Retired a few years ago after a 20-year tenure as full Professor, Dr. Joseph keeps an active schedule both as lecturer and writer.

Helen Younansardaroud is currently working on her doctoral thesis, at Berlin Free University, under the supervision of Prof. Dr. R. Voigt. As is often

the case, she is eponymously named following the village of her birth, Sardaroud. She lived in Iran through her secondary school years, and emigrated to Germany in 1985. Her present article, “*Synharmonism in the Sārdā:riḏ Dialect*,” is a short glimpse into her future dissertation, which will focus on the grammar of the Sardaroud dialect.

In the matter of Book Reviews, we were fortunate to have the assistance of George V. Yana and Rochdi A. Younsi, two individuals equally proficient in French and in English.

The parents of **Mr. George V. Yana** were natives of Khosrava, Salamas, Iran, and he is himself the great nephew of the late Abouna Guivargis, Bishop of Khosrava, Mr. Yana’s ancestors may also include Matran Yossip Ghanima. Although he was born in France, Mr. Yana returned to Iran at a young age and received his education there. A physics graduate from the University of Tehran, he enjoyed a varied career in civil engineering, ranging from major earth dam and irrigation projects to the structural design of nuclear power stations. Recently retired from his profession, he has become active in the research and translation of Assyrian-related works originally written in French (Mr. Yana is also fluent in Persian and Assyrian).

Mr. Yana reviews Professor Raymond Le Coz’s Histoire de l’Eglise d’Orient. Professor Le Coz is a French academic particularly interested in historical questions related to the Assyrian Church of the East. Among his other French writings is a three-article series, “*Nestorian physicians from the 6th to the 13th Century*,” published in 1993. We hope to have the opportunity to offer more of his work in English translation.

Our reviewer **Rochdi A. Younsi** is a doctoral candidate in History at the University of Chicago. He received a B.A. degree in Law from the University of Algiers, and he is as fluent in Arabic as he is in French. While an undergraduate, he participated in humanitarian missions organized by members of the Catholic Church of Algeria. Later, as a legal assistant, he worked in the area of international human rights, documenting cases of political abuse

In the present issue, Mr. Younsi analyzes Professor Joseph Yacoub’s Babylone chrétienne. While many of us are already familiar with the name of Dr. Yacoub, unfortunately we do not know a great deal about his scholarship. Dr. Yacoub made an auspicious first appearance in 1984, with his seminal doctoral dissertation, La Question Assyro-Chaldéenne, les Puissances Européennes et la Société des Nation (1908-1938). While this thesis has never been translated to English, it includes a voluminous bibliography and archival source references which can provide significant aid to the scholar of Assyrian history. JAAS readers will also recall our previous publication of his “*The Christians in Iraq: A Historical Perspective*,” (Vol.V No.2, 1991).

To judge fairly, the works of a scholar must be considered as a whole. Therefore, it is difficult to assess Dr. Yacoub’s achievements to date, since much

of his material is written in French and remains untranslated. However, occasional works of his which have been translated often come across as stilted, subjective, and often lacking order. These shortcomings may be a product of poor editing or mediocre translation, rather than careless writing, but in any event they make the reviewer's task all the more difficult.

In JAAS, Vol. XI, No.2, several letters were published on the subject of "religious unity." The Journal invited intellectual discourse from its readers, on the principle that ideas need to be tested and challenged, with vigorous dissent as welcome as avid endorsement. We expected but did not receive any responses from Assyrian intellectuals. But we are glad that those letters served to inspire **Dr. William F. Macomber** to send us "*Some Thoughts About Christology*." Dr. Macomber is well-qualified to comment on this topic, having authored an impressive list of articles, several of them specifically on Christology.

We conclude with an Announcement from *The Syriac Computing Institute*, whose many projects include some bound to interest our readers. As a matter of practice, JAAS avoids singling out individuals, but the activities of Dr. George Anton Kiraz, clearly offer exceptional circumstances.

The Syriac Computing Institute was created by **George A. Kiraz**, who holds a Ph.D. from Cambridge University, England. Certainly if there is reason for our collectivity to look to the decades ahead, it is based on our hopes for individuals of his caliber. Simply stated, Dr. Kiraz has been a pioneer in bringing Syriac studies into the computer age. Although still a young man, he has demonstrated the kind of ability which has earned widespread approbation in the community of Syriac scholars. Dr. Kiraz already has already published copiously in print, and there is no doubt we will be reading much more about his work in future years. Parenthetically, our Journal is extremely proud to know that Sargon Hasso, a significant and loyal member of the JAAS team, has worked in close collaboration with Dr. Kiraz in at least one of his important projects.

Dr. Kiraz' next *Syriac Computing Conference* will be held in conjunction with Syriac Symposium III, "*The Aramaic Heritage of Syria*". Those interested in attending these events (June 17-20, 1999) will find further detail in the Announcement.

"On Momentary Hold"

Due to commitments with our printer, we were regrettably obliged to delay the publication Dr. Zomaya S. Solomon's *Pronouns and Pronominal Elements in Assyrian Aramaic* that we are eager to bring you.

Dr. Zomaya is an important member of the Editorial Board, and his treatises on the elements of our language have become a fixture of the Journal.

Anticipating questions from our readers about his absence from this issue, we can assure you that his next essay is complete and only awaits our next edition.