

## The Objectives of Our Journal

From its very inception in 1985, the Assyrian Academic Society has espoused the idea of producing a publication as a partial fulfillment of its educational and academic objectives. The publication was named The Journal of the Assyrian Academic Society (JAAS), and this is our fourth issue.

Our editorial board has three objectives: firstly, to encourage the publication of research articles in both Assyrian and English and by both Assyrian non-Assyrian writers and scholars; secondly, to produce creative literature in Assyrian in the form of poetry, short stories, tales and the like that will help reactivate the skills of our modern writers and provide them with a forum for publication; and thirdly, to initiate a modest attempt at filling the vacuum created by the discontinuation of such prestigious magazines as **Gilgamish**.

The editorial board recognizes that these three objectives can only be attained with hard work and investigation, and with sacrifice in time and money.

Insofar as research-oriented articles are concerned, JAAS has always hoped to see Assyrian writers develop topics of interest to the reader and of relevance to our current educational, cultural, historical and literary concerns, investigating these topics extensively in light of the available literature in both Assyrian and non-Assyrian languages, integrating what others have, hitherto, produced with what they themselves have produced. All this requires a systematic tackling of the topic, a coherent stylistic formulation of primary and secondary resources. To keep regurgitating what other writers have said or rewording what other authors have coined without proper attribution of sources falls short of what modern research is all about and it is not consistent with the particular objective of JAAS.

As for encouraging Assyrian writers to produce creative literature, JAAS offers an open forum to embrace any works that are interesting in content, attractive in style and coherent in argument. The editorial board has practiced minimal prerogative in editing the submitted materials. As concerns content, style and reasonable coherence, the board has always felt that these are the responsibility of writers themselves. They are supposed to have developed the habit of intensive and extensive reading of relevant works of other writers, and to have benefited from them. It goes without saying that our contributing writers should not restrict themselves to works written in Assyrian or by Assyrian writers only. A serious body of literature exists on Assyrian history, language, culture and civilization, written in foreign languages and by non-Assyrian writers. Without an exhaustive survey of relevant materials, quality research and creative works are difficult to attain.

In the history of our classical and our modern literature, there are many creative and distinguished writers whose works provide a good guide and model for exemplary writing. To cite a modern example, recently the editorial board was provided with a copy of a narrative-descriptive piece of writing by the late *John Alkhas* entitled **Badri**.

This is the type of literature that cannot be read only once. One has to read it more than once because with every reading, the reader discovers yet another fascinating aspect of this sort of creative writing. A first reading may be for the semantic content, a second reading for the style, and a third for its esthetic value. Every time one reads the work, his/her respect and admiration for the author increases. The contents are emotional and thrilling and the style is exquisite. Esthetically, reading the work is like listening to a captivating classical piece of music; the more you listen to it the more you are immersed in it, both at the conscious and subconscious levels.

What is even more interesting about this work is that if you try to read it a fourth time, you will end up being a listener, not a reader, because you will develop the feeling that the author becomes the relater. This is one way of telling the reader that **Badri** is full of life and full of emotions and sensations. This stage at which the author becomes the relater, is a stage when there is no way of expressing your admiration and involvement other than by allowing a few unconcealable warm tears to moisten your eyes. Efforts to restrain those tears would be of no avail.

**Badri** is a piece of masterly prose blended with poetic rhythm. The writer gives his head and soul the liberty to wrestle with the worries, hopes and dreams of his fellow Assyrians who were reduced to refugees after deserting their homes and homeland to escape the tyranny of their tormentors during the First World War. He ends the wrestling contest by crowning his head with the worries of elderly, the sick, the women and the children, and by healing his soul with their hopes and dreams. The cadence in **Badri** is superb; there is music and harmony in every sound, syllable, word and longer-than-a word stretch. The selection of words and their repetition enhance the impact of the contents on the reader.

In essence, it is the type of Assyrian literature that JAAS aims at, yearns for and dreams of. Well, it is a sweet dream and everyone is entitled to one; even those in Hell are entitled to have sweet dreams. It is for these reasons that we have reproduced this exquisite piece of modern Assyrian literature to serve as an example and inspiration for our young writers to follow. We have also tried to remember the late John Alkhas through the dedication of this issue of JAAS to his memory.

