

Reflections on Yousif Hermiz Jammo's Book "The Remains of Nineveh or the History of Telkaif"

As I have stated in a previous article posted in Zinda few weeks back, Assyrians need not to worry because history is behind them. Education is the only means through which we can overcome our shortcomings. It is very unlikely that an educated nation would fall in a deceitful trap, because an educated nation is a conscious nation and an informed nation is rarely misguided. Therefore, we must continue our efforts to undo the mistakes of the past and this we can accomplish through educating each other.

Two years ago I heard about a book titled "The Remains of Nineveh or the History of Telkaif", unfortunately a copy of the book was not found at the time. Today, luckily, the book was made available to me. It was only natural that the book, which is self-explanatory through its title, would attract my attention. What was really intriguing was the fact that the author, teacher and journalist Yousif Hermiz Jammo (1892-1965), is Bishop Sarhad Jammo's father.

Today Bishop Sarhad Jammo is leading a new movement that started few years back to create a new nation under the title Chaldean, separate from the Assyrians! I needed to read the book written by the bishop's father and find whether both father and son had the same perspective concerning the Catholics of northern Iraq (i.e. Chaldeans). Reading the book and knowing Sarhad Jammo's thoughts that have been expressed by him publicly on many occasions, puzzled me. I wondered why are the father and the son so apart in portraying the ethnic background of the inhabitants of the Christian Catholic villages of northern Iraq in general and Telkaif in particular.

Originally, "The Remains of Nineveh or the History of Telkaif" was published in 1937 in Baghdad but a revised edition was reprinted in Detroit in 1993. One cannot help wondering the extent of editing the original 1937 version had undergone! Still, the reader will admire the father's pride in his Assyrian heritage. The author had expressed carefully crucial thoughts throughout the book, thoughts that are very significant. Honestly, I was awestruck by the strong Assyrian national sentiments of Jammo, the father, in comparison to latest arguments by Jammo, the son.

The book is in Arabic and covers around 140 pages. The selected paragraphs below in my opinion are ample to give the reader a good sense for the author's genuine feelings towards his Assyrian ancestry.

The author begins his book by describing the Fall of Nineveh and how the land of Ashur became a mere province and a nation within the Persian Empire. He mentions on page 19 how the heroes of Ashur were mentioned in historical accounts like Herodotus' writings and how the Assyrian soldiers fought in the Persian army. He added that with the fall of Ashur sovereignty was transferred from East to West and from Semitic nations to Indo-European nations.

When describing the city of Telkaif and its name, the author states on page 20 that Telkaif was a suburb of Nineveh and that it was an ancient fort during the Kingdom of Ashur, just like other forts that were built to defend Nineveh. He adds on page 21 that Telkaif was part of Nineveh the capital, and that after the fall of Nineveh Telkaif inherited and became the heir of Nineveh. Yousif Hermiz Jammo adds that those who lived in Telkaif since antiquity were the descendents of the people who built Nineveh, whether they lived in Telkaif or in the villages around it. He stresses later that the inhabitants of Telkaif were the Ninevites without any doubt.

Yousif Hermiz Jammo on page 26 writes that if one visits the location called Nineveh today, one cannot but conclude that Telkaif or its fort, were founded from the day that Nineveh began its expansion. The author writes later that the well-known artificial mound in Telkaif "*is the making of the ancient Assyrians*" just like other mounds that are present here and there. He refers on page 27 to Ainsworth (dead 1622) who had stated that Telkaif was inhabited by the remnant of the Assyrians.

Describing the religion of the people of Telkaif, the author on page 61 wrote that they were all Christian Chaldean Catholics. Yousif Jammo adds that these inhabitants were pagans who worshiped the Assyrian gods just like their ancestors until they became Christians in the first century AD by Mar Addai and Mar

Mari. He continues to state that in the 5th century these Christians became “*allies of Nestorius*” and their church became known as the Church of the East. They remained as so, he wrote, until the 17th century when they united with the Roman Church.

Describing the Rogation of the Ninevites on page 83, the author writes that the Chaldean Church enforced the fast of Ba’ootha (forgiveness) on the Christians, who were the remnants of the Ninevites, or the Assyrians, as he puts it. And on page 113 the author writes that the population of the Chaldeans in Iraq was 100,000.

Yousif Hermiz Jammo covers the issue of leadership in Telkaif and mentions about certain leaders of that city. On page 127 he describes certain great world leaders and questions why was it that Agha Potrus was not glorified as he led a naked, barefoot, and miserable army and still was able to beat the Turkish Ali Ehsan Pasha in 14 battles despite the fact that the two armies were proportionately measured one to ten! The author wonders whether the world would remember the heroic acts of Agha Potrus, who was neither a German, nor a French, or Russian, but was as the author put it “*an Athuraya (Assyrian) Leader*”.

The book is a wonderful source and reference regarding the history of the town of Telkaif, its people, their habits, customs, costumes, and other related topics. Reading Yousif Hermiz Jammo’s book raises many questions about the latest attempts by individuals, like the author’s own son Bishop Sarhad Jammo, in changing the history of the inhabitants of Telkaif and their obvious Assyrian heritage and origin.

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