

Canonization in the Assyrian Church of the East: Political or Spiritual

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In civilian life, national or honorary medals are not awarded to people who have broken the laws of their respective states or kingdoms. However, there are some instances where heads of state have awarded national medals to questionable individuals simply because the recipients were personal friends or based on recommendations from powerful groups among other reasons. However, we have also seen how certain US presidents were mocked and ridiculed on social media and by people from around the world for selecting questionable individuals to receive, for example, the US Presidential Medal of Freedom.¹

When it comes to the religious aspect of life, Catholic and Orthodox churches confer canonization or sainthood on clergymen who have performed a genuine miracle – this is a cornerstone of canonization. In order for the Church to determine that a cleric is holy, the act of an instantaneous and complete miracle associated with a canonization must leave doctors, scientists and people dumbfounded with no scientific or natural explanation as to what happened in relation to that miraculous act. It must not be based strictly on what people claim or how they feel towards a cleric. The second most important factor in the canonization of a clergyman is that the candidate must be a person who has not broken his ecclesiastical laws. Of course, other factors are taken into account, such as indifference, righteous life, humility, martyrdom, exceptional degree of holiness, or closeness to God, etc., but many argue that the first two points must be fulfilled first and foremost.

The Assyrian Church of the East has no need to create lesser conditions or prerequisites just to increase the number of saints in it so that it can catch up with other churches. Conferring sainthood on the clergy who have not performed miracles or on those who have broken the laws of the Church would open the door to scrutiny and ridicule. The leaders of the Assyrian Church of the East do not need to prove anything to anyone, for the Church's past speaks loud about its glorious history.

The Canonization of Mar Abimalek Timotheus

In May 2018, the Assyrian Church of the East announced that the late Archbishop of India Abimalek Timotheus (1878-1945) was going to be canonized following the adoption of a new procedure for canonization. The sainthood was proclaimed in the 2019 Synod.² What was this new procedure (which was not explained) and did Mar Timotheus meet all the prerequisites and the requirements?

Mar Timotheus traveled from India to Baquba Refugee Camp, Iraq to witness the settlement of a segment of the Nestorian Assyrian WWI refugees.³ He obtained permissions from the authorities in India and Mesopotamia in order to visit the camp.⁴ In June 1920, Mar Eshai Shimun was consecrated patriarch in the Baquba camp after the passing of his uncle Mar Polous Shimun, in accordance to the traditional practices of passing the patriarchate from uncle to nephew. The majority of the clergy and tribal leaders in Mosul supported the consecration.⁵ However, Mar Timotheus who was in India at the

¹Accessed 6/6/2024 https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_Presidential_Medal_of_Freedom_recipients

²Accessed 6/6/2024 <https://news.assyrianchurch.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/07/May-June-Voice-of-the-East-2019.pdf>

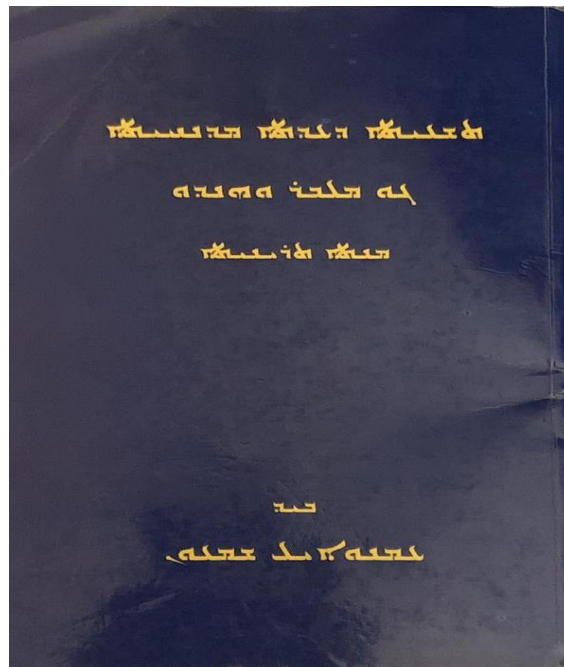
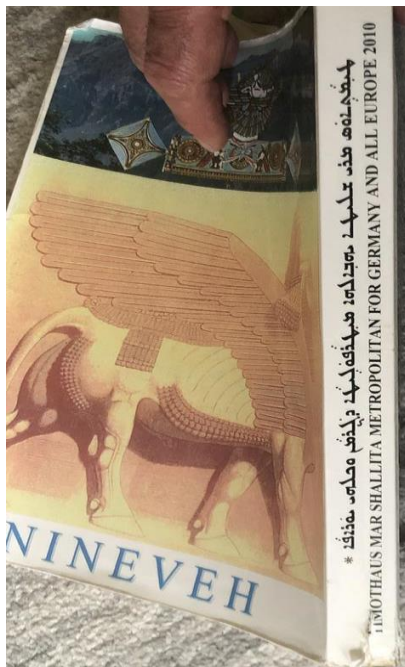
³Mar Aprim. "Mar Thoma Darmo: A Biography". Mar Narsai Press, Trichur, Kerala, India. 1974. Page 5.

⁴ Brig. Gen. H. H. Austin. "The Baquba Refugee Camp". The faith Press, London. 1920.

⁵Deacon Emmanuel Shimun. History of the Church of the East in Malabar and India. Part II. Chicago 2012. p. 76.

time protested for two reasons: First, he argued that the new patriarch was very young. Secondly, he was upset, because he was not invited to the consecration event considering that he had seniority over Mar Yosip Khnanesho, who performed the consecration. Later, after traveling to Mindan Camp⁶, a truce was reached where Mar Timotheus was offered the position of a reagent to the patriarch.⁷ It was agreed to send Mar Timotheus to England as a church ambassador to facilitate Assyrian schools project and strengthen work with the Church of England that was initiated since the 19th Century.^{8 9} However, Shamasha Gewargis d' Bet Benyamin writes that in February 1921 the archbishop lost his handbag in Shirqat¹⁰ while on the way from Baghdad to Mosul. The handbag included his own important documents and also documents of Lady Surma Khanim that were needed for the England trip.¹¹ This did not help the tension that already existed between the archbishop and the patriarchal family.

In 1927, Mar Timotheus traveled again from India to Mosul, but this time without any invitation from, or permission of, the patriarch. During his stay in Mosul, he ordained Yosip Kelaita as a priest. Kelaita was a teacher, editor and historian.¹² Mar Eshai Shimun was the patriarch who resided in Mosul, and the region was part of his diocese. Also, Mar Yosip Khnanesho was already a metropolitan and administrative assistant to the late Patriarch Mar Polous Shimun since December 1918, while the latter was ill in the Baquba camp. The [Assyrian] Church of the East sonhados¹³ states the following: ***“A bishop or a metropolitan cannot enter or administer in the diocese of any other bishop or metropolitan and that it was only the patriarch who has such authority.”***



⁶In 1920, the Baquba Refugee Camp was closed and the refugees were moved to Mindan Camp, near Mosul.

⁷Mar Aprem. “Mar Thoma Darmo: A Biography”. Mar Narsai Press, Trichur, Kerala, India. 1974. Page 6.

⁸Deacon Emmanuel Shimun. “History of the Church of the East in Malabar and India”. Part II. Chicago 2012. p. 82-83.

⁹ For details on the Mission see, Rev. Edward I. Cutts. “The Assyrian Christians”. R. Clay, Sons, and Taylor, London. 1877. Documents Relating to the History of the Archbishop of Canterbury’s Mission to the Assyrian Christians.

¹⁰ Shirqat is the new name for the Assyrian ancient capital city of Ashur (Assur)

¹¹ Shamasha Gewargis d’ Bet Benyamin d’ Asheeta. “History of Life & Activities of Metropolitan of Malabar and India (1878-1945)”. In Assyrian. Nineveh Press, Chicago. 1978. Page 89.

¹² Accessed 6/9/2024 <https://syriacmuseum.com/en/yosip-qelaitas-joseph-dekelaita/>

¹³The sonhados (Canon Law) or the laws of the Assyrian Church of the East.

This means that Mar Timotheus was not legally able to travel from his diocese in India to Mosul, the diocese of another bishop (the patriarch), ordain priests or deacons or hold meetings or have sermons without a permission from the patriarch. **Mar Timotheus broke his church laws.** Moreover, when Mar Timotheus arrived in Baghdad, he stayed at the Patriarchate of the Chaldean Catholic Church as a guest of Patriarch Yousef VI Emmanuel II Thomas. In fact, he did not visit Mar Yosip Khnanesho because he was angry with him for consecrating Mar Eshai Shimun in 1920.¹⁴ Mar Timotheus could have still had ill-feelings in his heart, but that does not justify breaking his church laws. The patriarch suspended Kelaita and ordered Mar Timotheus to return to India immediately.¹⁵ The young patriarch was simply executing the church law and enforcing the authority of the sonhados and His See, because the ordination of raabi Yosip Kelaita was illegal.

I must clarify here that raabi Yosip Kelaita rendered great services to the Assyrian people and culture in connection with the Assyrian language and school education,¹⁶ but this is not about Kelaita's merits, which no one can question or deny. This is about the illegal actions of Archbishop Timotheus.

In his book, Deacon Emmanuel Shimun writes that the ordination of Kelaita by the archbishop was aimed at creating chaos in the church and the nation. In addition to the ordination, Mar Timotheus wrote a questionable letter and spread it throughout the various squadrons/battalions of the Assyrian LEVY and also to Brigadier General J. Gilbert Browne,¹⁷ who was the commander of the Iraq Levies. This led to the official government expulsion of Mar Timotheus from Iraq in November 1927 by the British High Commissioner.¹⁸ However, Shamasha Gewargis d' Bet Benyamin writes that the metropolitan had no intentions to divide his nation and church even when there was a faction among the Assyrians in the Mindan Refugee Camp that favored and wanted him to become a patriarch, but the archbishop was aware that division would bring deterioration to and disintegration in the nation so Mar Timotheus declined to entertain the idea.¹⁹

The Assyrian Church of the East, Diocese of India, has presented testimonies about the good deeds of Mar Timotheus for the diocese. However, many also argue that he violated his ecclesiastical laws and this is the most critical factor that should not have been ignored during the investigation process. Metropolitan Mar Timotheus himself has written that there is no one in the Chaldean Syrian Church (the Church of the East is also known by this name in India) who is above the Patriarch in authoritative matters and that the faithful of the Church of the East believe that the Patriarch is the representative of Christ on earth and that there is no one but the Patriarch who can add or take away the authority vested in him [Mar Timotheus] as Metropolitan.²⁰ This meant that the Metropolitan understood the laws of the Church, yet he still broke them. The question that arises here is whether the Assyrian Church of the East approves of all the actions or teachings of Mar Timotheus, despite the facts that he broke his church laws and created the disputes with both Patriarch Mar Eshai Shimun and Archbishop Yosip Khnanesho. Did the leaders of the Assyrian Church of the East overlook the violation of church laws by Mar Timotheus and caved in to pressure from members of the Trichur Archdiocese in India?

¹⁴Mar Timotheus Shalita Yawalaha. "Nineveh". Germany, 2010. P. 55.

¹⁵Mar Aprem. "Mar Thoma Darmo: A Biography". Mar Narsai Press, Trichur, Kerala, India. 1974. Page 7.

¹⁶Peera Sarmas. "Literary History of Assyrians". Vol. II. Assyrian Youth Cultural Society Press. 1969. In Assyrian.

¹⁷Brigadier-General Browne died on 12 February 1968.

¹⁸Deacon Emmanuel Shimun. "History of the Church of the East in Malabar and India". Part II. Chicago 2012 (In Assyrian).
Translated to English by the author of this article.

¹⁹Shamasha Gewargis d' Bet Benyamin d' Asheeta. "History of Life & Activities of Metropolitan of Malabar and India (1878-1945)". In Assyrian. Nineveh Press, Chicago. 1978. Page 90.

²⁰"Assyrian Church Trumpet". Vol. 1, No. 2. March-April 1965, page 1. The Assyrian Church Youth's Union. Trichur, S. India. English Edition.

The Calls for Mar Dinkha IV Canonization

Calls and posts have recently resurfaced on social media from certain members of the dioceses of the Assyrian Church of the East in Chicago and California calling for the canonization of the late Patriarch Mar Dinkha IV. This is a travesty. I have written about this issue before where I addressed some of the reasons for disqualifying the canonization of the late patriarch²¹, but because calls have resurfaced again and some other reasons and facts were obtained, I felt it was important to present the case again to the readers. I invite the readers to read the following facts with open minds in order to understand the circumstances, events, actions, and the church laws, because with understanding comes empowerment. We are taught that ignorance is nothing to be ashamed of, however, choosing to remain ignorant is.

a) Hypocritical Stands, Behavior and Favoritism

1. Mar Dinkha had repeatedly affirmed that he had not interfered and would not interfere in politics; but he did so habitually and frequently. We do not have to look far, because the circumstances of the US invasion of Iraq after 2003 and the patriarch's numerous meetings concerning national and political affairs with Masoud Barzani, US officials and others suffice. **Mar Dinkha did not tell the truth.**

2. Mar Dinkha supported and favored politicians who were tribally related to his own tribal affiliation, including Aghajan, Hariri, Hakkari, and few others in northern Iraq and around the world. However, he showed less enthusiasm in supporting other popular groups that were voted for by the Assyrian people. We read, quote: "*Mar Dinkha responded energetically that COL Lull should instead 'go to the source' and speak directly to Assyrians. He pointed enthusiastically at Sarkesi [Sarkis Aghajan], insisting that he is the key individual who 'knows Assyrian issues'.*"²²

Why Sarkis Aghajan? Was Aghajan the only politician, official, historian or thinker elected by the Assyrian people in the 2005 elections? We know Aghajan was an official member of Barzani's Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP)²³ and his loyalty was first and foremost to Barzani's Kurdish political party. **Mar Dinkha favored his tribally related politicians.**

3. Mar Dinkha should not have belittled the Assyrian institutions in the diaspora that worked very hard during and after the fall of Saddam Hussein. As a patriarch, he should have encouraged and promoted such groups. When Patriarch Mar Dinkha was in Iraq in 2006, he basically ridiculed the Assyrian Academic Society (AAS), whose dedicated and highly educated members were in constant contact with the American officials to protect the rights of the Assyrian people in Iraq. Mar Dinkha met Kenneth Lull, the deputy commander of the 25th Infantry Division, in Arbil, where he (Mar Dinkha) "... was equally dismissive of Assyrian-American associations and the Assyrian Academic Society -- in response to a Team Leader query on their roles, Mar Dinkha answered vaguely that he 'had heard of them'. Mar Dinkha's translator and secretary ... interjected that they 'held picnics' to raise money for Assyrians in Iraq." End Quote. It was unthinkable that the Assyrian Academic Society be presented as a group that simply held picnics. **Mar Dinkha was not fair; he undermined those groups not close to him.**

Below are the photo shots of two WikiLeaks documents addressing the issues aforementioned above.

²¹<https://www.fredaprim.com/pdfs/2021/Sainthood.pdf>

²²Accessed 6/4/2024 <https://www.atour.com/government/wikileaks/20111014b.html>

²³Accessed 6/6/2024 <https://www.atour.com/government/wikileaks/20121004z.html>

... thanks to Sarkesi ...

¶5. (C) COL Lull pointed out that he is Task Force Lightning DCO BG Wiercinski's delegate for Iraqi Christian issues. COL Lull noted that he has visited several Christian areas in Ninewa, and has made contact with Assyrian Democratic Movement representatives. Mar Dinkha responded energetically that COL Lull should instead 'go to the source' and speak directly to Assyrians. He pointed enthusiastically at Sarkesi, insisting that he is the key individual who 'knows Assyrian issues'. Mar Dinkha was equally dismissive of Assyrian-American associations and the Assyrian Academic Society -- in response to a Team Leader query on their roles, Mar

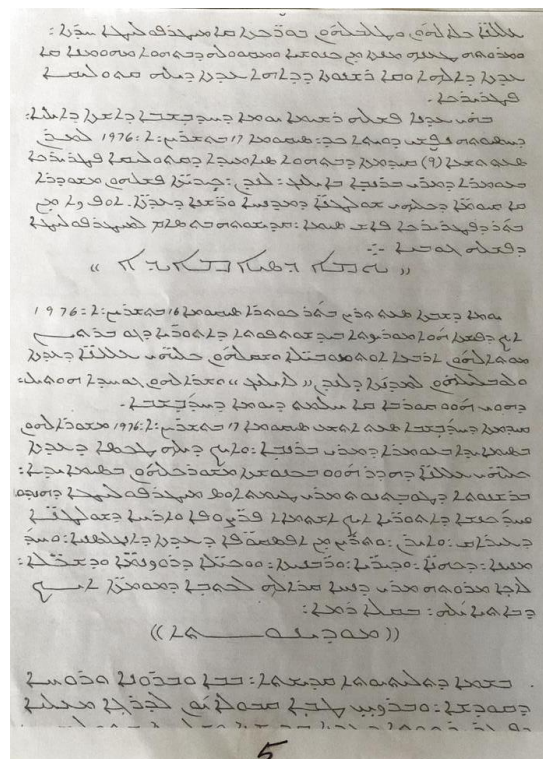
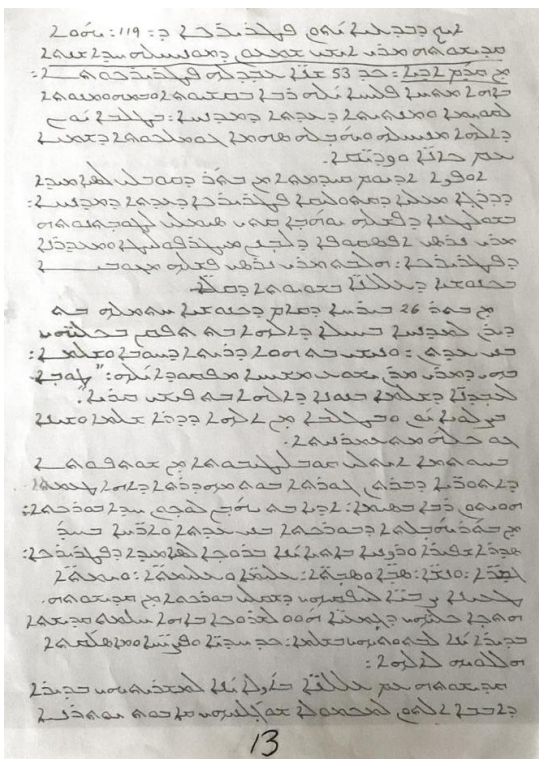
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Dinkha answered vaguely that he 'had heard of them'. Mar Dinkha's translator and secretary (Fr. Georgeese Tanoor, also resident with Mar Dinkha in Chicago) interjected that they 'held picnics' to raise money for Assyrians in Iraq.

Summary

¶1. (C) The Patriarch of the Assyrian Church of the East and his primary non-clerical interlocutor in Iraq, Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) Minister of Finance and leading Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP) member Sarkis Aghajan Mamando 'Sarkesi', concur that Assyrian Christians enjoy unprecedented freedom from persecution and opportunity in the KRG. To assure these benefits become permanent, Sarkesi -- tacitly supported by the Patriarch -- strongly advocates the establishment of an autonomous Assyrian homeland carved out of the Ninewa Plain under the protection of the KRG. Sarkesi, like other KRG leaders who advocate incorporation of all historically Kurdish areas into the KRG, is unconcerned about social or political disruption upon establishment of such an area. End summary.

4. On November 9, 1975, in California, Mar Dinkha said that Patriarch Mar Eshai Shimun “*pishleh monyikha yan qteela*” [passed away or killed] by David d’ malik Yacqu d’ malik Ismael, who was a tool in the hands of others. This statement was different from the one he made later during his consecration on October 17, 1976 in London, where he simply said that the Mar Shimun passed away.²⁴ Why did Mar Dinkha choose not to say that Mar Eshai Shimun was murdered during his consecration in London? What made him change his tone and rhetoric? Also, why the consecration was held in London when the Church did not have a diocese in England? **Mar Dinkha tried to mislead the London audience.**



²⁴Audio recordings of the speeches of Mar Dinkha.

5. Mar Dinkha visited Iraq several times during his patriarchate. He visited the grave of the Kurdish leader Mustafa Barzani and said a prayer on the soul of the Kurdish leader; however, he did not do the same in regards to the graves of the Assyrian martyrs who were members of the Assyrian Democratic Movement (ADM). Nor did Mar Dinkha visit any of over 30 Assyrian schools that the Assyrian Aid Society (AAS) has set up in the Kurdish region in northern Iraq (Occupied Assyria). Why not make the Assyrian students happy by visiting them? What and who prevented him? **Mar Dinkha was bias and his actions were dictated on him by Kurdish leaders through his tribally related Assyrian empowered leaders imposed by the Barzani.**

b) Egotistical and Presumptuous

1. In a tape-recorded statement at the funeral of martyr Mar Eshai Shimun on December 5, 1975, Mar Dinkha said that the clergy of the Church of the East were not educated and had no knowledge of church laws (sonhados) or administration. He said he had tried to be close to the bishops, to be patient, to show sympathy and love towards them so that they would not be tricked by the public. Mar Dinkha added that when Mar Aprim Khamis came to America, he was influenced by some priests and parishioners who ruled over him. But he as a bishop should have told the priests and parishioners what to do and not the other way around. He added that Mar Aprim could have accepted suggestions and recommendations, but he should have made the decisions and not let priests and parishioners tell him what to do. For example, on November 16 [1975], Mar Dinkha said, he had to conduct a service in Turlock, California. He [Mar Dinkha] arrived early and was told that a new deacon had already been ordained. This was not right and against church laws, Mar Dinkha said, because the church was mourning the murder of the patriarch and no ordination should have taken place as it was a sign of celebration. However, Mar Aprim succumbed to pressure and instructions from a priest to carry out the ordination of the priest's son.²⁵

As a bishop, Mar Dinkha should not have maligned his fellow bishops in this way, even if he were right. **It is against the teachings of God for a clergyman to discredit and slander his fellow clergymen in such a degrading way and insinuate that he is the only educated among them.** It would have been right to initiate disciplinary proceedings, because he was the administrator of the church. He did nothing about what he thought was wrong and simply let it stand. When Mar Aprim sinned and created a legal and moral mess within the Assyrian Church of the East, the news was kept in the closet until a Chicago Tribune reporter stumbled on the adultery of the bishop and the blackmail he had paid towards the silence of Yasmine Khan, the Pakistani woman. Mar Dinkha was supposed to defrock the bishop. However, Patriarch Mar Dinkha did not execute that step.²⁶ After all was said and done, Mar Aprim was transferred to the Arizona diocese of the church – a slap on the hand.²⁷ Many argue, Mar Dinkha did not have full control over the church, as in many cases the bishops did as they pleased. At that time, Mar Dinkha and Mar Aprim were the last remaining bishops who were involved in the 1970s events that led to the assassination of the martyred Patriarch Mar Eshai Shimun. Neither Mar Dinkha nor Mar Aprim dared to antagonize one another. Furthermore, **why did Mar Dinkha, as patriarch, defrock certain bishops but not others when they broke church laws.**

Khamis Sando Rehana interviewed Patriarch Mar Dinkha while in Iraq. He asked the patriarch, why Mar Aprim was not reprimanded. Mar Dinkha replied “*la mseelan biyyeh*” [we could not win over

²⁵Audio recording of the statement of Mar Dinkha dated Dec 5, 1975.

²⁶Accessed 6/7/2024 <http://www.zindamagazine.com/html/archives/2001/7.23.01/index.php#ZindaSays>

²⁷Mar Aprim continued to serve the church until he retired on June 1, 2024 as declared by the April 22-27, 2024 Synod of the Assyrian Church of the East and received all the benefits that come with that.

him].²⁸ Rehana later issued a public letter emphasizing that the church throughout history honored its sonhados and punished those bishops who sinned without exceptions.

2. Mar Dinkha encouraged the use of visual stimuli and other means, such as using life-size pictures of himself, to be displayed throughout the parishes. It is natural for individuals to use pictures of people they admire in their homes, but when a cleric “encourages” his pictures to be displayed everywhere, it reflects self-promotion, self-congratulation, and flattery. The posters would not be there if he ordered the church committees not to do so, but he did not.



Two life-size framed pictures of Mar Dinkha at Saint Andrews Church in Glenview, Illinois

3. Mar Dinkha contributed 100,000 dollars from his own personal patriarchal account to build a shrine for his final resting place. The cost amounted to 200,000 dollars²⁹, but other plans for the shrine will certainly exceed this cost. Patriarch Mar Eshai Shimun's resting place at Turlock Memorial Park in Turlock, California is the same size as the surrounding graves that belong to common people. The church must not treat its deceased patriarchs thru different standards. Did Mar Dinkha serve as patriarch longer than Mar Shimun? The answer is No. Was Mar Dinkha as educated as Mar Shimun? The answer is No. Then why this difference in treatment? Some apologists say that it was the congregation that planned the construction of this shrine. This is absurd. Since when was the funeral of a patriarch planned by the people? What were the church leaders doing? Individuals couldn't just withdraw money from the patriarch's personal account without his prior approval or perhaps via a legal Will. Also, why would a patriarch have \$100,000 in his personal account when all his expenses are paid

²⁸Khamis Sando Rehana. “Qeerat d’ Baytokh Kheelinna (Zeal for Your House Has Consumed Me), An open message to the congregation of the Assyrian Church of the East”. Kirkuk, Iraq. February 2003. Of course the title of the letter is taken from Psalm 69.

²⁹The Assyrian Church of the East Magazine, *Voice of the East*, Vol 63, May-June 2016, No. 5 & 6.

by the church? Consider this was happening while most of the Assyrians in the Khabor region in Syria and Nineveh Plain in Iraq had fled their homes and were refugees around the world.



Patriarch Mar Eshai Shimun's Grave, Turlock



Patriarch Mar Dinkha's shrine in Chicago

4. On July 15, 2007, Mar Dinkha celebrated his fifty years of priesthood with a ceremony in which a section of Ashland Avenue in Chicago was renamed "His Holiness Mar Dinkha IV Blvd". This was planned and executed while the patriarch was still alive. In fact, the patriarch personally led a huge musical parade to celebrate the event. He could have refused to participate, but he chose to do so. The Bible says, **“But our lord has given us abundant grace. Therefore he said, God humbles the proud, but gives grace to the humble.”**³⁰



5. The glorification of the clergy during their lifetime contradicts with the teachings of the Bible that demands humility. Encouraging artists to sing or write poetry for religious figures contradicts every teaching of the Holy Books. **Mar Dinkha loved the attention and his birthday and anniversary parties** which he attended annually with great enthusiasm.

³⁰ James 4:6. “Holy Bible: From The Ancient Eastern Text”. George Lamsa’s Translation from The Aramaic of the Peshitta.

c) Consent to Hatred

1. On November 7, 2005, Mar Dinkha chose to remain silent when Bishop Mar Meelis Zaia appeared on Assyria Sat television station in Ceres, California. In his message, the bishop incited hatred within the community and called on the church congregation to boycott and sever ties with fellow Assyrians and businesses.³¹ **Where did God ask church leaders to incite hatred among people, let alone within their own congregation?**

2. A harsh-language letter signed by several priests addressed to the late Patriarch Mar Eshai Shimun created a chaos within the church and in the community. In the letter, the priests addressed the patriarch as “myoqra” [Mr.]. In their letter, they told Patriarch Mar Shimun that they do not want him, they did not want him to act as an administrator of the church or under any other capacity.³² Mar Dinkha, as the church administrator at the time, did nothing to control the priests.³³ The reason for the late Mar Dinkha’s weakness and indecision is hidden in the pages of history as the six bishops had too much dirt on each other, which ensured that they did not interfere in each other’s affairs.

3. During the same audio address mentioned earlier, Mar Dinkha stated that he couldn’t travel to Chicago to deal with the problems caused there [by certain priests led by Aprim De Baz and some members of the congregation], because Mar Aprim and Mar Narsai had told him that the Assyrians in Chicago were angry with him because of his statements of “support” for Mar Shimun and that the Chicago community was planning to assassinate him if he traveled to Chicago. We do not know to what extent these statements were accurate, but it seems odd that after his consecration as patriarch, Mar Dinkha transferred the Patriarchal See to Chicago and settled there. This is strange coming from someone who was threatened with assassination. **Something is fishy here.**

d) Breaking Church Laws

This particular violation of church laws is familiar to many people. Six bishops of the Church of the East met illegally in a Catholic Cathedral in Beirut, Lebanon between Sept. 6-13, 1973 and humiliated their patriarch. The bishops were:

- a) Mar Dinkha, bishop of Iran, later patriarch (passed away)
- b) Mar Narsai de Baz, bishop of Lebanon (passed away)
- c) Mar Aprim Khamis, bishop of Basrah (now retired)
- d) Mar Youkhana Philipos Aziz, bishop of Arbil (passed away)
- e) Mar Youkhana Oraham, bishop of Syria (passed away)
- f) Mar Daniel Yaqu, bishop of Kirkuk (passed away)

The Synod of Mar Dadisho of AD 424 of the Church of the East³⁴ declares: “... *by the Word of the Trinity*” ***no one is allowed to convene a council against the catholicos or cause disputes, schisms, or divisions, or to send copies of written summaries to the dioceses as they sent out against Mar Papa, or to insinuate himself into houses for his wicked tale-bearing.***”

In doing so, the six bishops broke the canon law of their own church. The illegal synod in Beirut and the actions that followed eventually led to the assassination of Mar Shimun on November 6, 1975.

³¹Accessed 6/8/2024 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ppp3zjyBvAs>

³²Letter dated June 28, 1975 from several clergies in the US.

³³Mar Aprim Khamis and Mar Narsai De Baz assisted Mar Dinkha, the administrator.

³⁴See the sonhadods, the Laws of the Assyrian Church of the East (Canon Law).

Final Thoughts

Canonization process must not be politicized

There are several camps either favoring or pushing for the canonization of the late Mar Dinkha. The first is the influential members of Mar Dinkha's own tribe who were his backbone supporters in Illinois from the late 1970s until his death in Chicago in 2015.³⁵ The second is a group in California that was born and raised in Iran and knew and associated with Mar Dinkha since his time as a priest and bishop in Iran. The third camp is the Barzani-empowered individual Assyrians in northern Iraq who share a tribal affiliation with him.

Also, Patriarch Mar Awa III is now based in Arbil; he is expected to be under pressure from this last influential group. Moreover, the new Patriarch Mar Awa was very close to the late Mar Dinkha. Why? It is because **Mar Dinkha had personally ordained Mar Awa to all the levels of priesthood**, from sub-deacon (1991) to deacon (1992), priest (May 1999), co-bishop (2006), archdeacon (November 23, 2008), and just one week after the last ordination, he ordained him bishop for California on November 30, 2008.³⁶

The congregation is the church, and it plays an important role in building a healthy community. The congregation in general must not remain passive or silent when they witness misconduct by the clergy or attempts by a minority to impose its will on the majority. The congregation must ensure that the church leaders abide by the *sonhados* because if the church leaders circumvent the church laws, the church loses its sacred reputation. Why is the church having all these problems? If the church was discipline, consistent with honoring the *sonhados* and executing the necessary and required laws, the church would not be where it is today. We must agree that the canonization of a cleric must not be politicized or be influenced by tribal affiliation and must not be left completely to the public to decide or influence. Yes, church leaders must welcome thoughts and feedback from the community, but they must be disciplined and committed enough to act and respond strictly according to the necessary requirements and the laws.

A cleric is not holy when he deliberately continues to commit acts that are not pleasing to God and when one is not pleasing to God, then he could not be a saint. The canonization of clergy must be based primarily on spiritual factors, church requirements and laws. The congregation must be well informed of all the circumstances before their opinion is considered for a recommendation. Tribalism and its influence must never find a place in church affairs. To declare a clergyman a saint means that he has led a heroic, virtuous life, has sacrificed his life for others or has been martyred for the faith and is worthy of emulation.³⁷ The church leadership must not allow itself to be put under pressure and must not politicize this important issue. Mar Dinkha could not be canonized because many argue that a single blemish in a cleric's life prevents him from becoming a saint, and Mar Dinkha has too many vices as he violated church law, was involved in many negative acts and behaviors, showed favoritism, was not humble, did not tell the truth, was biased in how he dealt with different people or groups and most importantly he never performed a miracle.

³⁵Mar Dinkha was elected patriarch on October 14, 1976 at Alton Abbey, Hampshire, United Kingdom and consecrated on October 17, 1976 in the church of St. Barnabas, Ealing, London. Mar Yosip Khnanesho and Mar Yosip Sargis did not attend the events.

³⁶Information taken from a pamphlet distributed by the church on this occasion.

³⁷ Accessed 6/9/2024 <https://www.usccb.org/offices/public-affairs/saints>