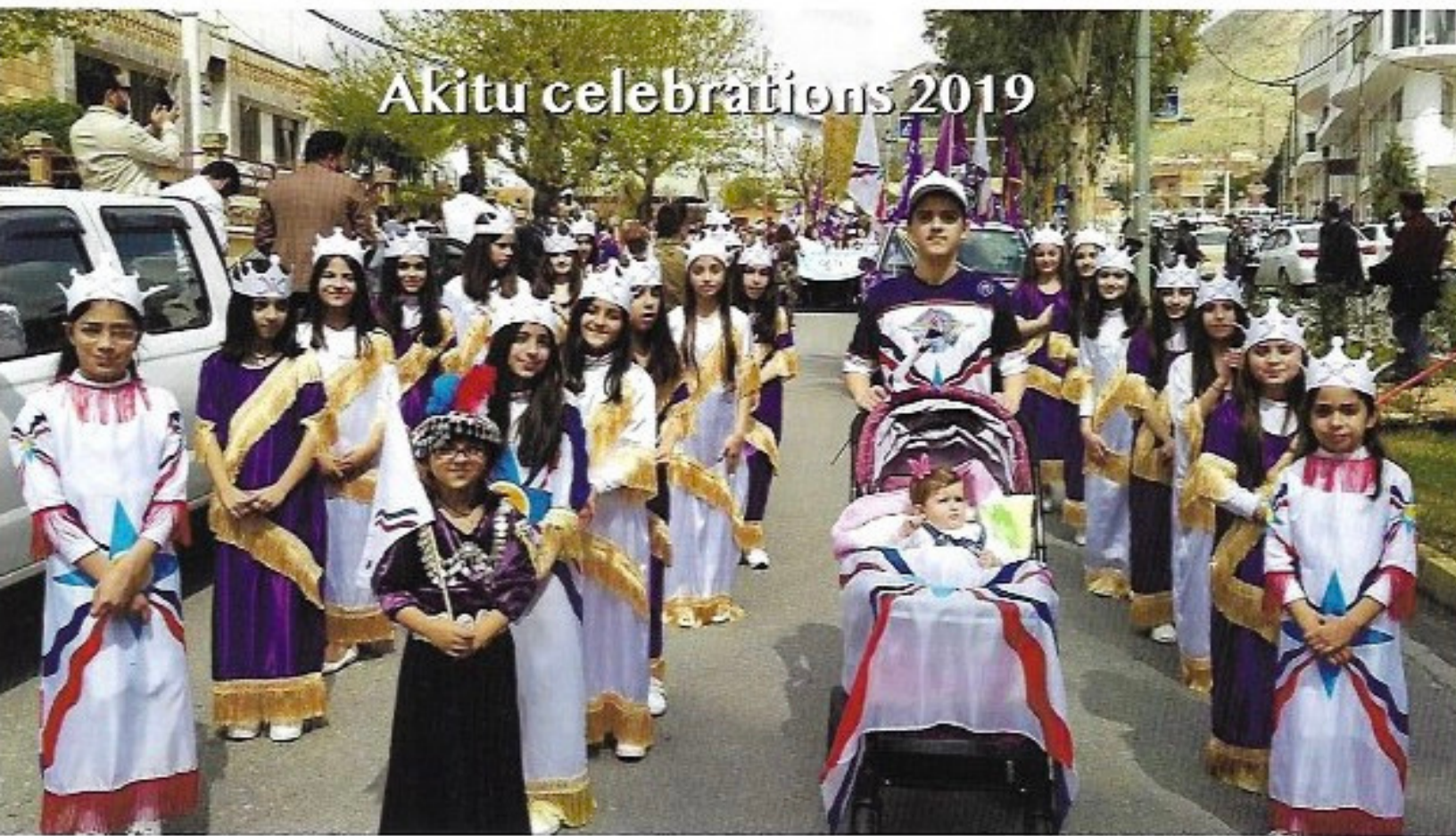




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# Preserving Assyria

## A New Program at the Assyrian Studies Association

Alexandra J. Lazar, Executive Director of ASA

As the Assyrian Studies Association (ASA) approaches its 2nd anniversary on June 28, 2021, the achievement comes with a year ever-more committed to serving the Assyrian community. Through ASA's passion and commitment to preservation, the Association has impacted many lives worldwide through its new program, Preserving Assyria, and its supporting initiatives.

Ever aware of the growing need to have a program dedicated to protecting the Assyrian culture and identity, ASA created Preserving Assyria and its three initiatives: Heritage Archive, Oral History, and Giving Back – designed to educate, inspire, strengthen, and build connections between academic institutions and scholars from around the world. Originated from the need to bridge academic fields that have traditionally dabbled with Assyrian subjects from the ancient to the modern world, Preserving Assyria and its three initiatives aim to highlight research on the Assyrians from various academic fields and beyond, bringing them into concert with each other to illustrate a vibrant, robust, and authentic experience of Assyrian heritage.

Through the Heritage Archive Initiative, ASA digitally preserves, revitalizes, and restores out-of-print Assyrian books, photographs, and other historical documents to allow future generations of Assyri-

ans and scholars to use for their research. Since the inception of the initiative, ASA has been working hard to fundraise the purchase of an essential preservation equipment that is Federal Agencies Digital Guidelines Initiative (FADGI) compliant. With plans to use this equipment to fully digitize all Assyrian cultural heritage materials acquired, ASA's goal is to upload digitized pieces on their website to mitigate against the materials being lost, damaged, ruined, or placed in the wrong hands. The goal is to encourage academic research about the Assyrian cultural heritage by providing a free resource to academics and non-academics interested in Assyrian history. Unlike institutions that require a paid membership or physical presence to be able to access the materials, ASA is offering free access in an effort to encourage more research on the Assyrians from various academic fields.

Through our Oral History Initiative, ASA supports virtual projects that introduce a dialogue to the backdrop of archival materials. Within this initiative, ASA supports ethnographic films that historically record, document, and positively preserve Assyrian American communities' history across the United States. Currently, the Association is funding the ethnographic project, *Assyrians in Motion 1937 Film* by Dr. Ruth Kambar, a public-school English teacher and author



Sanherib Ninos, winner of Assyrian Studies Association's Academic Publication Grant.



Ashor Sworesho, one of the winners of the Assyrian Studies Association's Children's/Popular Book Grant.





# Assyrian Studies Association

of Assyrians of Yonkers, and Annie Elias, a playwright and director in the San Francisco Bay area who specializes in the creation of documentary theater. Their film is the first ethnographic project ASA has funded under the Oral History initiative that documents Assyrian refugees living in the diaspora, having escaped ongoing erasure attempts, including the Assyrian Genocide of 1914-1917, to establish a new home in the United States. Uniquely, the film is mostly made up of silent vignettes that captures everyday scenes—picnics, church gatherings, funerals, dancing, playing music -- in the life of Assyrian American communities in 1937 Chicago, Yonkers, Elizabeth New Jersey, Philadelphia, and New Britain, among other places.

Lastly, under the Preserving Assyria program, ASA operates the Giving Back Initiative, where they actively provide grants to students, scholars, authors, and emerging authors to conduct research or publish works that introduce audiences to the rich Assyrian history, culture, and language. Within the past year, ASA created two grant opportunities open to all from around the world – Academic Publication Grant and the Children’s/Popular Book Grant – and awarded a total of \$5,500 in grants. ASA’s first grant recipient, Sanherib Ninos, a graduate student from Frankfurt, Germany, was awarded \$2,000 from the Academic Publication Grant to fund the continuation of his Ph.D.

dissertation research. His topic includes conducting research on the Assyrian crisis of identity and discourse of nationalism among the members of the Syriac-Orthodox Church in Germany.

Most recently, ASA announced the three winners of their Children’s/Popular Book Grant - Rachel Sarah Thomas from Chicago, Illinois; Sarah Ego from Mannheim, Germany; and Ashor Sworesho from Ontario, Canada. Their upcoming publications will offer a close look into the Assyrian identity through a non-fiction memoir, children’s songbook and dictionary, and a fiction coloring book for children learning the Assyrian tongue. Altogether, ASA has become the vessel for providing opportunities for Assyrians worldwide to help preserve the Assyrian culture for future generations to come.

As the Assyrian Studies Association approaches its 2nd year of operation, we are counting on your support to ensure our mission continues full force. We invite you to join us in celebrating this accomplishment and contributing to the Association’s success so that we can provide more grants and financial support to Assyrians worldwide so they can embark on the journey to preserve the Assyrian culture and identity.



Rachel Sarah Thomas, one of the winners of the Assyrian Studies Association’s Children’s/Popular Book Grant.



Sarah Ego, one of the winners of the Assyrian Studies Association’s Children’s/Popular Book Grant.