



Henri Bedros Kifa defended

By: David Dag

Dear readers, the Assyrian faction of the Aramean (Syriac) people published an article in their web based magazine *Hujada* (*Huyodo* = Union) under the title "[*Henri Bedros Kifa avslöjad*](#)" (Henri Bedros Kifa revealed) on 30th January 2012. Where the author of the article has chosen to remain anonymous and had hidden his identity behind the name "*Redaktionen*" (editorial office). The author probably did so because he wanted to have integrity protection and to avoid personal attacks and future harassments. Other authors have earlier revealed their identity in *Hujada.com* in similar cases, while others who have written articles hide behind *pseudonyms* for protection reasons.

Something that I regard as being cowardly, by the anonymous author of this article, is that the article itself is written in a language that Kifa himself doesn't understand, because he lives in France, and is originally from the Aramean city of Urhoy (Edessa, modern Urfa in Turkey). According to primary indigenous sources, the city was Aramean, and not Assyrian - *which the author of the article aimed against Kifa unfortunately and indirectly* - wants his readers to believe.

The author himself maybe didn't have in mind that Kifa doesn't understand nor speak Swedish, but can only speak Arabic, French and English. Instead he chose to write the article in Swedish. Another thing, is that the person (Kifa) that the author himself had chosen to "*reveal*" (to use the words of the author of the *Hujada*-article himself), has the right to defend himself by writing an article against the anonymous author because I believe that it's his human right to do so. Therefore I felt obliged, through my concern to defend Kifa against angulations regarding him.

Another mistake by the anonymous author, was, instead of referring to Kifa and his article directly, he instead chose to refer to Kifa's "mistake" indirectly, through a lecture that was held by the "apologist of Assyrian identity" Augin Kurt Haninke, who in turn was invited to the *Assyriska Kulturhuset* (*Assyrian Cultural Association*) in Gothenburg in the Västra Frölunda district in Sweden. Augin's lecture was filmed by the newly established Webb TV channel Assyria TV. His lecture was very much angulated and most of what he mentioned has existing counter-arguments against them with accompanied sources that I have in my possession. But I will refute them in a series of articles in the future.

It seems as if the anonymous author cannot read Arabic himself, because otherwise he would have referred to Kifa's master thesis directly, instead of having taken help by an *Arabophone*-representative in the Assyrianist faction, who can both read and write in Arabic.

The focus in the article is about Kifa's master thesis in Arabic "*Nakbat as-Suryan al-Rhawiyin 1924*" that Kifa wrote in 1982, at the University of Lebanon. The master thesis is about the 10 000 of Arameans (Syriacs) and Armenians who fled the city of Urhoy (ar-Ruha, modern Urfa in Turkey) in 1924 when the Turkish Republic was still one year old. 1924 was the year that the Ottoman Empire

had ceased to exist officially to be replaced by the “Republic of Turkey” under Mustafa Kemal *Pascha* (later called Ataturk). The Arameans (Syriacs) fled to the French protectorate of Syria. At that time Lebanon was also part of this French protectorate.

Kifas main focus in it, is about the fate of his grandparents, where he also among others resonates about the name *Suryan's* (Arabic) origin and also other thing as well (that are irrelevant in my article)

They fled to the city of Aleppo (Halab) in the nearby Syria, where they settled down in “*Hay as-Suryan*” (“*The Syriac Quarter*”, the late malfono Abrohom Nuro from Urhoy, who also lived in Aleppo made a mistake also made by assyrianists. He erroneously translated *Hay as-Suryan* in English as “*The Assyrian Quarter*” in his red book “*Krukhyo Dil*” (My Tour) which is a bilingual book in Edessan Aramaic (Syriac) and Arabic. If on the other hand, it was called “*Hay al-Ashuri*” then it would be reasonable to translate it as “*The Assyrian Quarter*”, but this is not the case in his book as well as in general.

According to the Syriac Orthodox archbishop of Aleppo Mor Gregorius Yuhanon Abrohom, the first Arameans (Syriacs) to settle in Aleppo were not from Urhoy/Urfa, but rather from the village of Sadad outside Homs in Syria (the villagers of Sadad are known as *Saddiye* in Arabic), afterwards next migration wave came from Urhoy/Urfa and Mardin in the Mesopotamian part of southeastern Turkey.

During that period after the so-called “Sykes-Picot Accord” of 1919, the colonial powers of France and Great Britain divided the Middle Eastern part of the Ottoman Empire between themselves after World War I, when the Ottoman Empire was falling apart during the Seyfo (Genocide) period. Syria fell to the French colonialists That’s why one can find papers and identification papers in French where denominational affiliation is mentioned. I have seen a copy of one these papers from the 1930s where it erroneously said “*Assyriene*” (Assyrian) in French. This must have been a phonetic mistake between the French and their own interpretation of the Arabic nomenclature “*as-suryan*”(also pronounced “*as-sirian*”, which to the French ear sounds like the “*Assyriene* [Assyrians in French]”)

The same thing happened in America during the end of the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th century, where the Americans translated the Arabic *as-suryan/as-sirian* into the English *Assyrians*. In both cases it was through the influence of the Assyrian movement that was active back then (only by an elite only though).

At the same time the author of the *Hujada*-article wants his readers to believe that the Armenians also called our people Assyrians. This is in fact, nothing more than a misinterpretation, based on the only fact that the Indo-European Armenians call our people by the name *Asori* in Armenian (which the author erroneously spelled *Asuri*). He simply wanted the link the Armenian term *Asori* to the Arabic *Ashuri* (Assyrian) and the Turkish *Asuri* (Assyrian).

The term *Asori* in Armenian does in fact not refer to *Assyrian* but rather *Syrian* (English). The modern term “*Syriac people*” (singular) and *Syriacs* (plural) was first officially used in English since the *American Census 2000*.

Johny Messo wrote an [article](#) against the Iranologist Richard Nelson Frye, where he wrote the following about the Armenian term *Asori*:

*“We further read about the Armenians in whose language **classical Syriac** is known as “the **Asori** language.” This case, too, leads Frye to believe that “The general terms ‘Assyrian’ and ‘Syrian’ were regarded as synonyms not only in early times” (JNES, 1992:283).*

*Asori, as was long ago cogently argued by [John] Joseph, does not mean ‘Assyrian’, but ‘Syrian’. An Assyrian, however, is designated in Armenian literature as *Asorestants’i*. Last year, Prof. Joseph reiterated that the “Armenian name *Asori* referred to the people of geographical Syria, the Aramaeans; it was the name of Aramaeans wherever they were found.” In other words, Arameans both in and outside the geographical boundaries of Syria were called *Asori*.”*

[21] J. Joseph, *The Nestorians and their Muslim Neighbours* (Princeton 1961), 15; also consult the three Armenian dictionaries referred to by Joseph on p. 15 n. 53. Cf. [Wolfhart] Heinrichs, *op. cit.* (n. 8), 107.

[22] J. Joseph, *op. cit.* (n. 11), 20 n.69. See also Joseph (JAAS, 1997), 39f.

(J. Joseph, *The Modern Assyrians of the Middle East Encounters with Western Christian Missions, Archaeologists, & Colonial Powers* (Brill 2000) p.20, footnote 69.)

Even John Joseph wrote against Frye before Johny Messo with the same title “[Assyria & Syria: synonyms?](#)”. He wrote the following in page 39 and 40:

*“We are told that “**Asori**” in Armenian refers to “**Classical Syriac**,” a dialect of Aramaic; but Aramaic, “called Syrian by the Romans,” is called “Assyrian by the Armenians,” an obvious misreading of **Asori**.*

*What is missing from the above statement is that in the Armenian language ‘Syrian’ and ‘Assyrian’ both start with an initial A [the vague “prefixed a-” above], and the two words are distinguished from each other: **Asori**, singular, refers to a ‘**Syrian**’ [Aramean] person (as in *Suraya/Suroyo*)--**Asoriner** is the plural. Syriac language [Aramaic] in Armenian is **Asoreren**. The word for ‘Assyrian’ in Armenian is **Asorestants’i**. The names for geographical Syria and Mesopotamia are also distinct in the Armenian language and both start with an initial A. **Asorik**’, wrote Professor Sanjian in a letter to this writer [John Joseph], is “the traditional Armenian term for Syria,” and **Asorestan** “for Assyria.”[7]*

*The “Area of Assyria” was known in Armenian as **Norshirakan**, apparently a borrowing from the Partheans; ‘**Asorestan**’ in Armenian refers, according to the Table, to the “Area of Mesopotamia.[8]”*

Assyria	<i>Asorestan/Norshirakan</i>	<i>*sometimes Asorestan = (lower) Mesopotamia.</i>
Assyrians	<i>Asorestantji/Asorestans’i</i>	
Syria	<i>Asorik</i>	
Syrians (and Syriacs)	<i>Asori (singular)</i>	<i>Asoriner (plural)</i>
Syriac (Aramaic)	<i>Asoreren</i>	

Etymology: a worthless methodology in the “name issue”

Over and over again the apologists of the Assyrian identity use etymology as a method in order to try to prove to our people that we are Assyrians. But it's entirely absurd, not to mention a failed methodology, because to put it the Harvard University scholar Wolfhart Heinrichs words “*the constant naive identification of population groups on the basis of the identity, or near-identity, of their names; such mistakes,*” he adds, “*are omnipresent in the apologetic literature written by historians with no philological training.*” (W. Heinrichs, “*The modern Assyrians – Name and Nation,*” in: R. Contini, F.A. Pennachiotti, M. Tosco (eds.), *Semitica. Serta Philologica Constantine. Tsereteli dicata* (Torino, 1993), 103.)

I also fully agree with the admonishment of Heinrichs when he wrote that “*the basic identity of the names does not necessarily imply the identity of the people(s) named by them.*” That is, even if we take it for granted that the etymology of the term ‘Syria(ns)’ was derived from ‘Assyria(ns)’ in Greek, it does not automatically follow that the people(s) who in later periods were known under the name of Syrians must be ‘Assyrians’. Because one has to have in mind that names can change semantically. That is, a word can lose its initial meaning and acquire a new one as time passes by due to, *inter alia*, historical, cultural, social and political factors. For example in modern times the majority of Syria’s “Syrian” population is Muslim Arabs. And, the *Baathists* have renamed it from “*The Republic of Syria*” into “*The Arab Republic of Syria*” (since 1968), in fact Syria’s indigenous people are the Arameans, but modern Syria is also a mosaic of different ethnic groups as well as a mosaic of religious denominations. So indirectly the term, Syrian is today almost equal to Arab because of the impact of pan-Arabism (*Surube*) in modern times..

There exist Greek sources that differentiate between Syrians and Assyrians. The best known is the book *Cyropaidea* by Xenophon who lived in the 5th century BC (book 1, chapter 5), as well as Poseidonius of Apamea in the 2nd century BC who equates Syrians with Arameans.

I prefer the Swedish translation of Xenophon’s book, because its better mirror translation with the Greek one, rather than the English translation, because, in the English translation it says “Syria” instead of “Syrians” *per se*. While the Swedish reads “*den assyriske kungen underkuvade syrierna...*” (meaning: ***The Assyrian king subjugated the Syrians...***). The English [translation](#) instead says: “*At that time the king of Assyria had subjugated all Syria*”. The Greek original says “*ὁ δὲ τῶν Ἀσσυρίων βασιλεὺς κατεστραμμένος μὲν πάντας Σύρους*” (*O de ton Assurion Basileus katestrommenos men pantas Surous*) which means. “***The Assyrian king subjugated the Syrians***”

One has to stop confusingly mix up the concept of etymology with synonymy. They are two separate and distinct concepts and two distinct methods that constantly shouldn’t be mixed up together.

There are fact nations and peoples with more than one name. For example Iran and Persia (Persia changed name to Iran in 1935) both the names Persians and Iranians are both synonyms although they don’t sound alike nor or are spelled the same or even almost the same. Other examples are Holland/Netherlands (synonyms) where *Hollander* and *Nederlander* is their *endonym* while *Dutch* is their English language *exonym*. *Soumi*/Finland (Finland is the *exonym*, while *Soumi* is the *endonym*), India/Baharat (Baharat is the *endonym* and India is the *exonym*, as for Hindustan it is only a portion of India. Egypt is an *exonym* that indirectly is derived from the Greek *Egyptos*. The ancient Egyptians called their land *Kemet* in hieroglyphs, in Hebrew its *Misraim*, in Aramaic *Mesren*, in Arabic *al-Masr*. All these are synonyms) just to mention a few.

My own analogy

Parallel to this, the people of Holland/Netherlands are not Germans because they are known as *Dutch* in English (*exonym*). Just because the English *exonym*, *Dutch* resembles the *endonym* (self-

designation) of the Germans themselves (*Deutscher*), doesn't automatically follow that the Dutch are Germans, just because *Dutch* in English looks or sounds like *Deutscher* (Germans), *Deutschland* (Germany) and *Deutsche sprache* (German language). Sure both the Dutch and the Germans speak Germanic languages from the Germanic language tree. But they are still not the same people today.

As for the native indigenous population of pre-Columbian and post-Columbian America, they are not the same as the people of India, just because both are called *Indians* in English. India's *endonym* is *Baharat*, while the "native American Indians" were divided into tribes with different exotic tribal names such as the Apache and others. The natives were simply "lumped together" by the colonialist umbrella name *Indians* that was coined for them.. But in Spanish the "Native Americans" and the "Indians of India" were distinguished from each other by *Indos* and *Indianos* or *Indios*. In Swedish they are differentiated from each other. The people of India are called *indier* while the Native Americans are called *indianer*. In Arabic those of India are called "*hnud*" (Indians) while the Native Americans are known as "*hnud al-humur*" (Red Indians).

In other words, a people's ethnicity and origin is not always decided nor is can it always be traced back through etymology because the "Dutch-German" and "Indian-Indian" are good examples, and are evident in this matter. It only leads to confusion and once again synonyms are not the same as etymologies.

The author of the *Hujada*-article goes on (marked in red by me):

"I ett exemplar som han (Henri) dedicerade till malfono Abrohom Nuro den 28 oktober samma år, beskriver Henri Bedros på sidorna 17-18 **tre förekommande teorier om varifrån namnet Suryani (Suryoyo) kommer**. Den första **teorin** tillhör patriark Yakub III (1912-1980) som hävdade att det kommer från den persiske kungen Cyrus [svenska: Kyros] som störtade Babylon 539 f.Kr. Den andra **teorin** tillhör den kaldeiske biskopen Adday Sher i staden Siirt som mördades under folkmordet Seyfo 1915. Han hävdade att Suryani kommer från ett fornegyptiskt namn på Syrien. Enligt biskop Sher kallade egyptierna Syrien för Kharu eller Sharu och grekerna gjorde om det till Syria."

Translation:

"in one copy that he (Henri) dedicated to malfono Abrohom Nuro on the 28th October the same year [1982], Henri Bedros describes on the pages 17-18 **three theories on where the name Suryani (Suryoyo) comes from**. The first **theory** belongs to the patriarch Yaqub III (1912-1980) who claimed that it came from the Persian king Cyrus [the Great] who conquered Babylon 539 BC. The second **theory** belongs to the Chaldean bishop Adday Sher in the city of Siirt who was killed during the genocide Seyfo 1915. He claimed that Suryani comes from an ancient Egyptian name for Syria. According to bishop Sher the Egyptians called Syria Kharu or Sharu and the Greeks transformed it into Syria"

The former Syriac Orthodox patriarch Mor Ignatius Jacob III was the one who put forward the thesis for the origin of the term *suryoyo* is to be traced back to the personal name of the Achaemenian Persian king Cyrus the Great. But this is scientifically not true. This patriarch was the first person who believed this theory to be true and wrote about it in his book from 1953 "*History of the Syrian Church of Antioch*". This theory among many other theories, was also mentioned by Ishak Akan Baroshe in his Swedish book from 1995 "*En kort introduction av Syrianerna/Arameerna och syrisk ortodoxa kyrkan*" (A short introduction on the Syriacs/aramaeans and the Syrian orthodox church).

The reason as to why it's not true is because philologically, the name of the Persian king in Old Persian cuneiform was *Kurush*, his name in Aramaic is *Koresh*, in Swedish he is known as *Kyros* and in English he is known as *Cyrus* (phonetically spelled with an S). The patriarch's chosen theory was limited to the English form of the king's name (instead of asking the question of what he was known as in his own Old Persian native language). Anyhow the English equivalent of the king's name was

tried to be linked to the mythical king Suros (this myth comes from a Greek myth composed by the Wise Diokles, see also my "[Did king Suros really exist?](#)" and is according to Kifa found in the British Library or British Museum in an Aramaic translation under manuscript add. 12152)

Scholars are absolutely sure that Suros never existed at all since no king list nor any ancient source outside the myth mention him and that not even a coin with his face or name has been found..

Some church fathers who believed that he existed, claimed him to be a descendant from Noah's son Japhet

Noah => Japhet => Aginur => Suros,

In fact neither Suros nor his father Aginur are mentioned in Old Testament in the Bible, nor do did they ever exist.

The myth goes something like this: Aginur had three sons Cilicus, Phoenicus and Suros, This myth was composed in order to explain the origins of the geographical names of Cilicia in south-central Turkey, Phoenicia (in modern Lebanon), and Syria.

We do know that some church fathers believed that Suros founded the city of Antioch near the Orontes River (*nahr al-Asi*). But this is not true, because the Antioch was founded by one of Alexander the Great's generals Seleucus I Nicator (the founder of the Seleucid dynasty in Syria, during the Seleucid period that flourished before the Roman imperial period).

In other words the Persian king Cyrus and the mythical Suros are not two versions of the same name nor are they the same king. Nor is the above mentioned Adday Sher theory trust worthy.

Back to Kifas master thesis from 1982

I further quote what the *Hujada*-article author mentioned from Kifas master thesis:

"Enligt den tredje teorin kommer beteckningen Suryan från Ashur och assyrierna. Grekerna kallade hela området med detta namn på grund av att dess befolkning var under det assyriska herraväldet. Grekerna gjorde således om namnet (Ashur, red a) så att det passade deras uttal, vilket blev Assyrian. Araberna tog över detta namn av grekerna och lade till bokstaven L eftersom de utgick från att inledningsbokstaven S var shamshi. Således blev det al-Suryan (uttalas: as-Suryan, red a)"

Translation;

"According to the third theory, the term Suryan is derived from Ashur and the Assyrians. The Greeks called the entire region under this name because its populations were under the Assyrian hegemony. The Greeks reshaped the name (Ashur) so that it would fit in with their own pronunciation, which became Assyrian. The Arabs took this name from the Greeks and added the letter L because they assumed that the introductory letter S was shamshi. Hence it became al-Suryan (pronounced: as-Suryan)"

Yes dear reader, it's true that Kifa wrote this in his master thesis from 1982. But it was one out of many proposed theories. Even if the theory would be correct hypothetically, it would still not make our people Assyrian, just because the etymology of Syria is to be sought in Assyria. Because there is evidence that the Arameans weren't assimilated into Assyrians just because the ancient Greeks called the Arameans *Surioi* (Syrians) just because it looks or sound like Assyrians..

But it doesn't stop there.

Simultaneously as the ancient Greek sources confirm, that the people whom the Greeks called *Surioi* called themselves *Aramaioi* (Greek for Arameans), it also proves at the same time, that the ancient Arameans still called themselves as Arameans (long after the ancient Assyrian empire had fallen). And as such, the conclusion of the Simo Parpola - *the Finish assyriologist of Helsinki University* - that the ancient Assyrians managed to assimilate and assyrianize the Arameans under their Assyrian hegemony, just because the ancient Arameans were later called Syrians has been debunked and refuted by me.

One must in fact differentiate between when the Greeks call the Arameans *Surioi*, and when the Arameans themselves started to use it (i.e when the Greek *exonym* entered the Edessan Aramaic language itself) in the form *Suryoyo* and *Suryaya* in accordance with the grammar of Aramaic.

The ancient Greeks started to use the term *Surioi* about the Arameans first during the Achaemenian Persian Period - this is evident and starts with Xenophon in the 5th century BC who mentions the Arameans indirectly without mentioning them by name, using the terms Syrians separate from Assyrians, as I mentioned above.

It is possible that the Aramaeans also feature in Homer's (Homeros) Iliad. In the Book of the Iliad, lines 782-3 read, "*Zeus thunders and lashes the earth over Typhoeos among the **Arimoi** where they say Typhoeos has his couch*"

(Sebastian Brock & David Taylor in the book "*The Hidden Pearl Vol. I – The Ancient Aramaic Heritage* p. 8)

During that period the Arameans were not termed *Surioi* among the Greeks yet, probably because their city-states had not yet been annexed by the Assyrian empire. One can say that the ancient Greeks were confused at the beginning because during that time they first came in contact with the ancient Assyrians and their empire when the aramaization process of Assyria was still active. This was the reason as to why some of the ancient Greeks called the Aramaic script by the name *Assuriya Grammata* (script of Assyria), this term was also confused with Old Persian cuneiform as well (that was introduced ca 520 BC for royal inscription). One can read about this in the article of Richard C Steiner "[Why the Aramaic script was called Assyrian in Hebrew Greek and Demotic](#)" and also in first volume of the book "[The Hidden Pearl Vol. I - The Ancient Aramaic Heritage](#)" chapter 6, p. 122 by Sebastian Brock and David Taylor.

Herodotus of Halicarnassus: the Assyrian fractions "favorite Greek"

One argument the Assyrianists use in order to argue that *Suryoye* = Assyrians, is a quote from Herodotus.

Herodotus described the Assyrian troops as a part of the Achaemenid Persian Empire and as a part of its army under the leadership of the Persian king Xerxes (486-465/4):

"The Assyrians went to war with helmets upon their head, made of brass, and plated in strange fashion, which is not easy to describe. These people, whom Greeks call Syrian, are called Assyrian by the barbarians."

Herodotus usage of the term barbarians refers to Persians, Armenians and other non-Greek peoples. We have to have in mind that this quote does not necessarily refer to the ancient Assyrians *per se*. but can refer to other peoples, such as the Arameans. Here below I will explain why.

(Herodotus, translation by Aubrey de Sélincourt (1972), *Herodotus: The Histories* Harmondsworth: Penguin Books and Herodotus, trans. Harry Carter (1958), *The History of Herodotus* New York: The Heritage Press)

Even though Herodotus called the Assyrians by the name Syrians – in contrast to other Greeks such as the above mentioned Xenophon, Posedonius of Apamea etc – he evidently differentiated between Syria and Assyria. To Herodotus Syria was situated west of the Euphrates river to the Mediterranean including ancient Phoenicia, Philistia and Cyprus and all these were part of the 5th Persian satrapy while "Herodotus' Assyria" was situated between the Euphrates and the Tigris including what was once the heartland of the ancient Assyrian empire situated east of the upper middle Tigris River and this was part of the 9th satrapy.

Johny Messo wrote the following about Herodotus against Richard Nelson Frye:

"In Herodotus (7.63) we read: "These people (Assyrians) were called Syrians by the Greeks, the name for them elsewhere being Assyrian" (Frye's translation in JAAS, 1999:69).

From the classicist Macan, who edited, translated and commented on the books of Herodotus, we learn that "under this term [Assyrioi, the Assyrians] Hdt. may here intend to include (a) Assyrians properly so called, (b) Babylonians, and dwellers in Mesopotamia generally, (c) Syrians (Aramaeans) properly so called [sic]." [9] According to Van Groningen, the meaning of "Assyrios, Assyrioi" has to be understood, first, in its general meaning of "Mesopotamians" (cf. Hdt. 6.1: Syrion) and, secondly, in the special meaning of "Assyrians." [10] In other words, Herodotus, in whose works the terms 'Syrians' and 'Assyria' are somewhat loosely used and which can denote various peoples, is not an authority for the assertion that the people who came to be known as 'Syrians' (cf. n. 7 and below) are the offspring of the ancient Assyrians.

There is, of course, much more to say about Herodotus, and other classical writers for that matter. Some aspects have already lucidly been discussed by [John] Joseph (cf. the cited literature)."

("Assyria & Syria: synonyms?" an article by Johny Messo aimed against Richard Nelson Frye)

(R.W. Macan, Herodotus, the seventh, eighth & ninth books with introduction, text, apparatus, commentary, appendices, indices, maps (Macmillan and co. 1908) p.87 commentary on Herodotus. 7.63.)

(B.A. van Groningen, Herodotus Commentaar [Herodotus Commentary], 1946 boek [book] 1-9, pp.58 on Herodotus.)

John Joseph wrote against Frye before Johny Messo. He wrote the following:

“Herodotus very clearly differentiated between the two terms and regions. Randolph Helm’s researches show that Herodotus “conscientiously” and “consistently” distinguished the names Syria and Assyria and used them independently of each other. To Herodotus, writes Helm, “Syrians” were the inhabitants of the coastal Levant, including North Syria, Phoenicia, and Philistia; he “never [emphasis Helm’s] uses the name Syria to apply to Mesopotamia.” To Herodotus Assyria was in Mesopotamia; he never uses the name Assyria to apply to Syria. The clear distinction made by Herodotus, comments Helm, was “lost upon later Classical authors, some of whom interpreted [Herodotus’] Histories VII.63 as a mandate to refer to Phoenicians, Jews, and any other Levantines as ‘Assyrians’.[2]..... When the Greeks became better acquainted with the Near East, especially after Alexander the Great overthrew the Achaemenian [Persian] empire in the 4th century B.C., and then the Greeks and Romans ruled the region for centuries, they restricted the name Syria to the lands west of the Euphrates. During the 3rd century B.C., when the Hebrew bible was translated into the Greek Septuagint for the use of the Hellenized Jews of Alexandria, the terms Aramean and Aramaic of the Hebrew Bible were translated into “Syrian” and “the Syrian tongue respectively.”

(“Assyria & Syria: synonyms” by John Joseph against Richard Nelson Frye, in Journal of Assyrian Academic Studies [JAAS] page. 38)

(See Randolph Helm’s “Herodotus Histories VII.63 and the Geographical Connotations of the Toponym ‘Assyria’ in the Archaemenid Period” (paper presented at the 190th meeting of the American Oriental Society, at San Francisco, April 1980). See also his “‘Greeks’ in the Neo-Assyrian Levant and ‘Assyria’ in Early Greek Writers” (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Pennsylvania, 1980), pp. 27-41; see also Herodotus’ Histories, I.105 and II.106. The late Arnold Joseph Toynbee has also clarified that the Syrioi “are the people whom Herodotus includes in his Fifth Taxation District” which includes “the whole of Phoenicia and the so-called Philistine, Syria, together with Cyprus.” The Syrioi, emphasizes Toynbee, are “not the people of an ‘Assyria’ which contains Babylon and which is the ninth district in his list.” A Study of History (1954), vol. vii, p. 654 n. 1. See also George Rawlinson, The History of Herodotus, ed. Manuel Komroff (New York, 1956), bk. ii, p. 115.)

Johny Messo wrote the following against *malfono* Gabriel Afram on this topic :

“I fully agree with the admonishment of Prof. Wolfhart P. Heinrichs that “the basic identity of the names does not necessarily imply the identity of the people(s) named by them.” That is, even if we take it for granted that the etymology of the term ‘Syria(ns)’ was derived from ‘Assyria(ns)’ in Greek, it does not automatically follow that the people(s) who in later periods were known under the name of Syrians must be ‘Assyrians’ ...Conversely, the second point to clarify is that there are good examples to show that two entirely different names, whatever their independent etymologies, can indeed be used for one group of people. Take, for example, British/English and Persian/Iranian. So, after closer examination, the reasoning that the appellation Aramaic is erroneous just because it does not look or sound like Syrian, also appears to be no argument at all.”

(Johny Messo – “A refutation of Gabriel Afram’s arguments for calling our language ‘Assyrian’: Gabriel Afram’s logical fallacies: The Jews remembered their adopted Aramaic script as ‘Assyrian’. Ergo, we can call our original Aramaic script and language accordingly.” Published 2006, see also Wolfhart P Heinrichs – The Modern Assyrians name and nation)

Poseidonius of Apamea (in Syria, ca 135 BC dog ca 51 BC):

*"The people we [Greeks] call **Syrians** were called by the **Syrians** themselves **Aramaeans**..."*

(See J.G. Kidd, *Posidonius* (Cambridge Classical Texts and Commentaries, 1988), vol. 2, pt. 2, pp. 955-956. See also Arthur J. Maclean, "Syrian Christians," *Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics*; Frederic Macler, "Syrians (or Aramaeans)" [sic] in *ibid.*, where the two terms are "taken for granted" to have been originally synonymous. Consult also Sebastian Brock, "Eusebius and Syriac Christianity," in Harold W. Attridge and Gohei Hata, eds., *Eusebius, Christianity, and Judaism* (Leiden 1992), p.226.)

The Greeks and the Aramaic script and language

Herodotos: Assyria Grammata = Aramaic script

Thukydides: Assyria Grammata = Aramaic script

Xenophon: Syria Grammata = Aramaic script and cuneiform, Surisi (syristi) =Aramaic language

Diodoros: Syria Grammata = Aramaic script

Themistokles: Assyria grammata = Old Persian cuneiform

(Sebastian Brock and David Taylor – [The Hidden Pearl Vol I .page. 122](#). See also Richard C Steiner "[Why the Aramaic script was called "Assyrian" in Hebrew Greek and Demotic](#), and also Theodor Nöldeke "[Assurios, Surios, Suros](#)" *Hermes* 5, 1871)

Oldest translation of the Old Testament from Hebrew into Greek

*Septuagint(a) (LXX)

Hebrew: Aramit (Aramaic) Greek: Suristi (Syriac, Syrian tounge)

Hebrew: Arami (Aramean) Greek: Surous (Syrian singular)

Hebrew: Aramim (Arameans) Greek Surioi (Syrians plural)

Richard C Steiner, that I had mentioned earlier, wrote that the reason as to why the Aramaic script was called "Assyrian" by outsiders was because the Greeks just as the Egyptians didn't have any foggiest clue as to when the aramaization of the Assyrian empire had started. This was because both the Egyptians and the Greeks came first in contact with the Assyrians and their empire since its expansion westwards. They assumed that when the ancient Assyrians and their subjects wrote in Aramaic, that it was in fact the mother-tongue and official language of the Assyrian. But in fact it wasn't. Aramaic became first an official language and *lingua franca* during the Achaemenian Persian Empire. The Assyriologists know in fact that the ancient Assyrian mother-tongue was a form of Akkadian known as *ashuritu akkadatu* (Assyrian Akkadian) rather than Aramaic. Plus the ancient Assyrians even differentiated between their mother-tongue (*ashuritu akkadatu*) and Aramaic which they in their own clay tablets in that language called *Armitu* and *Armaya*.



- *Tupsharru Aramaya* (Aramean or Aramaic royal scribe, writing on animal skin or papyrus) is differentiated from the *Tupsharru Ashuraya* (Assyrian royal scribe, who wrote on clay tablets in cuneiform)
- *Egirtu Armitu* (letter written in Aramaic)
- *Nibzu Armaya* (document written in Aramaic)

(Hayim Tadmor – “*The Aramaization of Assyria: aspects of Western impact*”. See also Stephen A Kaufman – “*The Akkadian influences on Aramaic*”, and Richard C Steiner - “*Why the Aramaic script was called Assyrian in Hebrew, Greek and Demotic*”)

In other words the term Assyrian is from a linguistic perspective occupied and reserved for a language that has been dead for the last 2500 years or so. This in turn, means that it was the mother-tongue of the ancient Assyrians. And can therefore not be applied for another language that is still living and spoken today, namely Aramaic. Which in turn has a reserved name for it Aramaic or Syriac, (*turoyo/turabdinoyo* = Central Neo-Aramaic also called Western Neo-Syriac, *Sureth* = Eastern and/or Northeastern Neo-Aramaic also known as Eastern Neo-Syriac, *kthobonoyo* = Edessan Aramaic also known as [classical] Syriac).

Some Assyrian minded persons believe that we still speak the same Assyrian as the ancient Assyrians did. While others have even claimed that Aramaic was renamed Assyrian or Assyrian Aramaic by the ancient Assyrians. There is in fact no evidence for such a claim at all.

Akkadian influences in Aramaic

Stephen A Kaufman wrote that the term *egirtu* wasn't originally an Assyrian-Akkadian word but rather an Aramaic word, which had entered or was fused into Assyrian-Akkadian rather than the opposite. He wrote this in his “*The Akkadian influences on Aramaic*”, (from the 1970s).

He mentioned that this word (*egirtu*) can only be found in clay tablets from the Neo-Assyrian period only (the Neo-Assyrian period started somewhere between 900s and lasted to 600s BC), but not before that during the Old Assyrian or in the Middle Assyrian period preceding it. He also discovered that there were influences during the Neo-Assyrian period in both directions i.e from Akkadian to Aramaic and vice versa as well. He wrote that it's not only the Aramaic dialects of Mesopotamia had but also Aramaic that had been spoken and written west of the Euphrates as well. For example Jewish Palestinian Aramaic (*Sursi Arami*, outdead), Christian Palestinian Aramaic (CPA, outdead), Samaritan Aramaic, as well as spoken Western Neo-Aramaic (*Suryon Aromai*, Maaloula Aramaic) has influences

from Babylonian-Akkadian rather than from Assyrian-Akkadian. The Babylonian form of Akkadian outlived the Assyrian form by many centuries until the 200s A.D.

Akkadian influences together with Greek, Persian, and Arabic influences are also evident in Edessan Aramaic (classical Syriac) according to Han Drijvers book "*The Old Syriac Inscriptions of Edessa & Osrhoene*"

Back to Kifa

Kifa believes that the name of Syria is derived from the name *Suristan* that sounds and looks like *Asuristan*, he believes that these terms were used during the Achaemenid Persian Imperial period (500s - 300s BC).

Even though the Sassanid Persians used to call the lower Mesopotamia by the name *Asuristan*, there is no evidence that native inhabitants of that area ever used it themselves. There is evidence that they called that area *Beth Aramaye* (this is evident in sources in Edessan Aramaic that are from at least the 4th century up to the 10th century AD and this is also confirmed by scholars such as Sebastian Brock, John Joseph and also by Jean Maurice Fiey, just mention a few.

Upper Mesopotamia was called *Arabistan* by the Sassanid Persians. This was because of the increase of nomads or semi-nomads and their infiltration and migration into that region. But this doesn't mean that we are Arabs of course. On the contrary our own ancestors in the north were Arameans just as the ones in the south.

I can also add that the terms of *Asuristan* and *Suristan* didn't exist yet during the Achaemenid Persian period because it's not attested to have been used in the Old Persian cuneiform inscriptions. But started to be used in another language of the Iranian or Iranic language family (which consists of many languages such as Elamite, Old Persian, Pahlavi, modern Persian "*farsi*" etc)

The terms *Suristan* and *Asuristan* appear in history much later, and independently of each other, first during the Parthian Arsacid or during the Sassanid Persian imperial periods. While Old Persian was the language of the Achaemenid Persian elite since at least the 520s BC up to the 300s BC, it was only reserved for royal inscriptions only. So this means that one cannot find these two terms in Old Persian cuneiform but only the term *Athura* is found instead. It was used by the ancient Achaemenid Persians as referring both to the area that used to be the heartland of ancient Assyria in what is today northern Iraq, as well as the area west of the Euphrates. This means that from a Persian perspective both the 5th and the 9th Persian satrapies were known as *Athura* (only in Old Persian cuneiform). Babel or Babylon in the south was known in Old Persian as *Babiru/Babirush*. At the same time there were other names in use for the area situated west of the Euphrates river in Biblical Aramaic, Hebrew and Babylonian Akkadian, namely '*abar nahara* (Biblical Aramaic), '*avar nahara* (Hebrew). This is found in the book of Ezra in the Old Testament in the Bible, while the Babylonian-Akkadian name for it was *ebirnari* according to the Babylonian version of the trilingual Behistun inscription in Bisitun in Iran. It was written in Old Persian, Elamite and Babylonian Akkadian from the time of the Achaemenid Persian king Darius the Great. The strange thing is that the Swedish Bengt Knutsson in his book "*Assur eller Aram*" (1982) in Swedish, mentions it to be from a trilingual inscription in Susa more to the south during the reign of the same king) ([*For more details of the Persian provinces and satrapies see the sources at the end of my article*](#))

Although this was the case there is no evidence that the Arameans were "Assyrianized" during this period. There is evidence that the Arameans outlived and preserved their Aramean identity prior to Christianity and well into modern times.

The Arabic *as-Suryan shamshi*

There is no scientific evidence that the Arabic *Suryan* (*as-suryan* with *shamsi*) entered Arabic via the Greek. This is only a hypothesis based only on the fact that when the Arabs invaded Syria, Lebanon, and what is today Iraq etc because Aramaic and Greek was spoken there prior to the invasion.

The end of the *Hujada*-article

The author wrote the following at the end of his *Hujada*-article:

"Nu 30 år senare framträder samme man ofta i en anti-assyrisk TV-kanal och framhäver en ren arameisk identitet som saknar varje anknytning till de forna assyrierna.

De två bifogade filerna nedan är scannade från Bedros Kifas egen magisteruppsats. En visar omslaget till magisteruppsatsen och den andra visar sidan 17 där han resonerar kring sitt assyriska ursprung."

Translation: *"Now 30 years later the same man appears often on an anti-Assyrian TV-channel and highlights a pure Aramean identity that doesn't have any association to the ancient Assyrians*

The two attached files below are scanned from Bedro Kifas' own master thesis. One that shows the cover of the master thesis and the other showing page 17 where he resonates around his Assyrian origin"

The author seems to believe that Kifa was a defending apologist of "his Assyrian origin" in the past, since the author wrote that Kifa "resonates around his Assyrian origin" (the anonymous author refers to his own interpretation of what Kifa wrote on page 17 in his master thesis back in 1982). The author seems to believe that Kifa had been Assyrian minded in the past, through his own interpretation of page 17. He also seems to have followed someone else's translation of that quote blindly, without reading the entire master thesis in its entire context.

The author also seems to have got a wrong picture of Kifa from the beginning because if one studies Kifas article from the beginning until today one would find out that he always believed in his Aramean origin. And hence the author seems to have gotten the picture all because of a quote taken out of its original context into his own wishful thinking about Kifa.

Although Kifa mentioned "the term *Suryan* is derived from *Ashur* and the *Assyrians*", that sentence started saying "According to the third **theory** the term *Suryan* is derived from *Ashur* and the *Assyrians*". This means that Kifa only mentioned three theories without necessarily believing one of the three theories being true prior to 1982. The author must have deliberately or undeliberately have ignored all the other articles and master theses in general. Because these would surely have proven his pro-Arameinism without any doubt, whether they are written in Arabic or in English. This is evident from his first to his last articles even though he mentioned only a theory that mentions the supposed etymology of *Suryan* from Assyrian (etymology is not always the same as synonymy). So it doesn't follow automatically that our people would be Assyrians regardless if it's true or not. The author seems to have made an assumption about Kifa based on his ignorance or his wishful thinking.

And just because he mentioned that one out many theories is that Syria's etymology is to be found in the name of Assyria doesn't mean that Kifa believes that he is an Assyrian.

Discourse to Hypatius IV:

"They have combined and made from the word 'man,' as it is written in the **Aramaic** (the explanation) that this (word) refers to a (single) man, that is the Primal Man, the Father of the Five Shining Ones whom they call Ziwane (the Bright Ones)."

... ܐܘܨܘܢܐ ܕܘܨܘܢܐ...

(S. Ephraim's Prose Refutations of Mani, Marcion and Bardaisan. Transcribed from the Palimpsest British Museum Add. 14623 by C. W. MITCHELL, M.A., volume 1 (1912), p. 122)

[note: Mitchell rendered "Aramaic" as "Syriac" here, see therefore the original syriac text, where it is "Oromoyo/Aramaic"]

The biography of Rabbula of Edessa (d. 435) written by his disciple right after his death:

ܦܥܡܐ ܕܥܘܨܘܢܐ ܕܥܘܨܘܢܐ...

(He) translated the New Testament from Greek to **Syriac**...

(Published by the Chaldean Catholic priest Paul Bedjan in *Acta Martyrum et sanctorum syriace* , Vol IV, Paris 1894, page 410)

ܐܘܨܘܢܐ ܕܥܘܨܘܢܐ ܕܥܘܨܘܢܐ ܕܥܘܨܘܢܐ
ܕܥܘܨܘܢܐ ܕܥܘܨܘܢܐ ܕܥܘܨܘܢܐ ܕܥܘܨܘܢܐ.

"He wrote 46 letters to priests, kings, leaders, and monks, we worked on translating them from Greek to **Syriac**."

(Published by the Chaldean Catholic priest Paul Bedjan in *Acta Martyrum et sanctorum syriace* , Vol IV, Paris 1894, page 440)

PS This is one of the first sources when the greek exonym Suryoyo enters the Edessan Aramaic (Syriac) vocabulary.

Sources:

- [*The Hidden Pearl Vol. I – The Ancient Aramaic Heritage*](#) – Sebastian Brock and David Taylor. p. 122.
- [*The correct nomenclature of our language*](#) – David Dag
- [*Why the Aramaic script was called “Assyrian” in Hebrew, Greek and Demotic*](#) – Richard C Steiner
- [*A Commentary to the preface of bishop Jacob Eugin Manna’s dictionary*](#) – Henri Bedros Kifa (see part 2 of 4)
- [*Aramaic, Syriac or Assyrian?*](#) – Henri Bedros Kifa
- [*Assyria & Syria: synonyms?*](#) - John Joseph
- [*Assyria & Syria synonyms?*](#) - Johny Messo
- [*The Akkadian Influences on Aramaic*](#) – Stephen A Kaufman
- [*Krukhyo Dil \(My Tour\)*](#) – Abrohom Nuro
- [*Assur eller Aram*](#) – docent Bengt Knutsson
- [*A refutation of Gabriel Afram’s arguments for calling our language “Assyrian”*](#) – Johny Messo.
- [*The Aramaization of Assyria: aspects of Western Impact*](#) – Hayim Tadmor

- Albert Kirk Grayson, "Mesopotamia (History and Culture of Assyria)," i D. N. Freedman (ed.), *Anchor Bible Dictionary Vol. 4* (New York: Doubleday, 1992), sidorna. 740 och 741.
- Allan R. Millard, "Assyrians and Arameans," in *Iraq 45* (1983), sidan. 107.
- Ran Zadok, "The Ethno-Linguistic Character of the Jezireh and Adjacent Regions in the 9th-7th centuries (Assyria Proper vs. Periphery)," in Mario Liverani (ed.), *Neo-Assyrian Geography* (University of Rome, 1995), sidan. 281.
- Stephen A Kaufman – *The Akkadian influences of Aramaic*
- Han J. W. Drijvers – *The Old Syriac inscriptions of Edessa and Osrhoene*
- [A Full translation of the Behistun inscription](#)
- [Seleucid Period \(320-141 BC\)](#)
- [Parthian Arsacid Period](#) "The **Parthians** left the local administrations and rulers intact when they conquered **Mesopotamia**. According to **Pliny the Elder** (Natural History VI. 112) the **Parthian** empire consisted of 18 kingdoms, 11 of which were called the upper kingdoms (or satrapies), while 7 were called lower kingdoms, meaning that they were located on the plains of **Mesopotamia**. The centre of the lower kingdoms was ancient **Babylonia**, called **Beth Aramaye** in **Aramaic**, and it was governed directly by the **Parthian** ruler. In the south was **Characene**, while to the northeast of **Ctesiphon**, which had supplanted **Seleucia** as the **Parthian** capital, was **Garamaea**, with its capital at modern **Kirkuk**. **Adiabene** had **Arbela** as its capital, and farther north was a province called **Beth Nuhadra** in **Aramaic**, which seems to have been governed by a general who was directly responsible to the **Parthian** king, because this province bore the brunt of **Roman** invasions. **Nisibis** was the main city of the desert area of **Arabistan**, but at the end of the **Parthian** period the desert caravan city of **Hatra** claimed hegemony over this area. There were other principalities in the northwest: **Sophene**, where **Tigranes'** capital was located; **Gordyene** and **Zabdicene** (near modern **Çölemerik** in eastern **Turkey**), located to the east of **Sophene**; and **Osroene**, with its capital **Edessa** (modern **Urfa**, in **Turkey**.), which lay inside the **Roman** sphere of influence. Rule over so many small kingdoms gave **Mithradates II** the title "**King of Kings**," also borne by later **Parthian** rulers."
- **Suristan** was used as a name in two senses during the Sassanid Persian Empire 226 to 651 AD. It was used to designate the Persian province of Surestan, roughly the same as today's Syria, as opposed to Asuristan, which was a separate province in northern and central Iraq, south east Turkey and north east Syria which denotes Assyria (from a Persian administrative perspective). It was also the name of the Sassanid city of Surestan (today's Kufa in Iraq) situated in the Persian province of Middle Bih-Kavad. **Asuristan** was the province of what was the ancient Assyrian heartland (north Iraq) under the Sassanid Empire (226–640 AD). It corresponds to the Babylonia province in the south under the Parthian Empire. (During both parthian's and sassanians the south was called Beth Aramaye in Aramaic). The province of Asuristan for the most part stretched from Mosul to Adiabene. In contrast to the Sassanian empire's predecessor the Parthian Arsacid empirical period, the previously Assyrian heartland which wick called the north Nod-ardagshiragan (Assyria ruled by the Parthian king Ardashir) this in turn is also evident in Armenian sources in form of Norshirakan. (See *The Decline of Iranshahr: Irrigation and Environments in the History of the Middle East*, By Peter Christensen. Sidan 291-292)

- [Encyclopaedia Britannica](#): *The list of provinces given in the inscription of Ka'be-ye Zardusht defines the extent of the [Sassanian Persian] empire under Shapur, in clockwise geographic enumeration: (1) Persis (Fars), (2) Parthia, (3) Susiana (Khuzestan), (4) Maishan (Mesene), (5) Asuristan (southern Mesopotamia), (6) Adiabene, (7) Arabistan (northern Mesopotamia), (8) Atropatene (Azerbaijan), (9) Armenia, (10) Iberia (Georgia), (11) Machelonia, (12) Albania (eastern Caucasus), (13) Balasagan up to the Caucasus Mountains and the Gate of Albania (also known as Gate of the Alans), (14) Patishkhwagar (all of the Elburz Mountains), (15) Media, (16) Hyrcania (Gorgan), (17) Margiana (Merv), (18) Aria, (19) Abarshahr, (20) Carmania (Kerman), (21) Sakastan (Sistan), (22) Turan, (23) Mokran (Makran), (24) Paratan (Paradene), (25) India (probably restricted to the Indus River delta area), (26) Kushanshahr, until as far as Peshawar and until Kashgar and (the borders of) Sogdiana and Tashkent, and (27), on the farther side of the sea, Mazun (Oman)*
 - Wiesehofer, Josef. *Ancient Persia*. published 1996, page 184 - Text: *"And I [Shapur I] possess the lands [provinces; Greek ethne]: Fars [Persis], Pahlav [Parthia], Huzestan [Khuzistan], Meshan [Maishan, Mesene], Asorestan [Lower Mesopotamia], Nod-Ardakhshiragan [Adiabene = Hadyab], Arbayestan [Arabia], Adurbadagan [Atropatene], Armen [Armenia], Virozan [Iberia], Segan [Machelonia], Arran [Albania], Balasagan up to the Caucasus and to the 'gate of the Alans' and all of Padishkwar[gar] the entire Elburz chain = Tabaristan and Gelan (?), Mad [Media], Gorgan [Hyrcania], Marv [Margiana], Harey [Aria], and all of Abarshahr [all the upper (=eastern, Parthian) provinces], Kerman [Kirman], Sakastan, Turgistan, Makuran, Pardan [Paradene], Hind [Sind] and Kushanshahr all the way to Pashkibur [Peshavar?] and to the borders of Kashgaria, Sogdia and Chach [Tashken] and of the sea-coast Mazonshahr [Oman]."*
-