



MĀLIK, GĪWARGĪS DĀWĪD

MĀLIK, Šamāšā' **GĪWARGĪS DĀWĪD**, *Assyrian* writer, educator, and missionary (1836-1909; [Figure 1](#)). Šamāšā' (deacon) Gīwargīs was born in the village of [Sipūrḡān](#) in the Urmia plain, [Azarbaijan](#). He belonged to the Bēt Mālik family, one of the four major clans of the village. Surviving tombstones indicate that the family was settled in the village as early as 1529. Gīwargīs graduated from the Male Seminary (later Urmia College) of the American Protestant Mission in 1853. In 1857 he married Rāḡel 'Ārsānīs and was ordained as a deacon in the Assyrian Church of the East by Mār Yōḡānān, bishop of Gāwīlān (Pers. Gavelān; Razmāra, p. 467; Deḡkodā, s.v., no. 5). Over the next eight years, he worked with the Americans as a preacher and missionary in various mission stations such as Salamās, Tabriz, [Tehran](#), and [Hamadan](#). His work with the Americans led to contacts with other Europeans and enabled him to travel widely in the Middle East with them as an interpreter. He was also able to travel to Europe, where he established friendships with Lutherans in Norway who were interested in missionary work in the Middle East.

In 1873 Gīwargīs became involved in a dispute over the ownership of the parish church in Sipurḡān. By this time the American missionaries had begun organizing an Assyrian Evangelical Church that was formally separate from the Assyrian Church of the East. Attempts were made by adherents of the new church to take over the properties of the old church in some villages. Gīwargīs, working with others, successfully opposed this attempt. Although he remained on good terms with the Americans following this incident, he was clearly



disillusioned with foreign missions in general and later observed:

Each society built its own church and preached its own doctrine to the detriment of the church of the country. At present we have many missions there, most of them working against each other and against the Syrian Church. The result is discord and division. Our nation is now divided into many sects, and strong national feeling strengthened by the love for their common faith has been sadly diminished. (Malech, p. 399)

Between 1886 and 1891, Gīwargīs served as a teacher of Oriental languages and literature at Urmia College. He resigned from this position in order to devote his last years to writing. He completed four works in modern Assyrian, all of which appear to be lost except for an English translation of his *Tāš'itā' d-'ēdtā' d-madenḥā'* (History of the Church of the East) which was edited and published in the United States by his son under the title of *History of the Syrian Nation and the Old Evangelical-Apostolic Church of the East*. Although the name 'Syrian' is used, this book represents one of the earliest attempts by an Assyrian to connect the history of his people with the ancient Assyrians by addressing the pre-Christian history of the people and advancing the idea that the Arameans, Chaldeans, Assyrians, and Syrians are all one nation (Malech, pp. 40-43).

The second book, *Ktābā' d-sūnhādōs* (Gk. *Synodicon*, Ecclesiastical law book), is a translation of the Syriac work of the same name by Mār 'Abdīšō' Bār Briḳā' (d. 1318; see Teule) with additions and adaptations to address modern circumstances. The intended audience of this book included Assyrians from all denominations and was aimed at helping to provide a resource for resolving legal disputes within the community according to their traditional legal sources. The third and fourth books, *Tāš'itā' d-'Īrān* (History of Iran) and *Lōqāṭē' 'al šā'irē' 'Īrānāyē'* (Extracts from Iranian poets) represent a new-found interest in Iranian history and culture and a growing awareness of belonging to a wider national Iranian entity on the part of the Assyrians of Urmia. The history is said to have been a large and comprehensive work in multiple volumes (Sarmas, p. 235; Macuch, p. 211).

Gīwargīs made arrangements to have the first two books published by the American Mission Press in Urmia. However, the Americans backed out of the commitment, and Gīwargīs decided to travel to the United States to try to have them published there. Injuries sustained during an accident on the road between Tabriz and Julfa resulted in his death on 15 June 1909 in Tbilisi. He



was survived by two sons and four daughters (Malech, pp. xii-xiii).

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