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## The Reality of the Title Assyrian

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The English word “Assyrian” comes from classical Greek “**Assurios**” through Latin “**Assyrius**”; the Greeks borrowed it in the 8th century BC directly from the Assyrians, who at that time called themselves “Assurayeh,” originating from their capital city “**Assur**”.



The [Aramaic](#) word “**Athourayeh**” was likewise borrowed from Assyrian, but earlier, in the 12th century BC, when the later “**Assurayeh**” was pronounced “**Athourayeh**” [the sound (th)

**Assyrian** *n.* aššūrāiu 𐎠𐎵𐎲𐎠𐎺𐎠  
**Assyrian (language)** *n.* aššūrītu

shifted to (s) in Assyrian about 1100 BC]; still earlier, about 2300-1600 BC, the word had been pronounced “**Ashur**” and “**Ashourayeh**”. The initial syllable in “**Assurayeh**” was frequently dropped in the Neo-Assyrian period (900-600 BC), so that “**Assurayeh**” also had a variant “**Surayeh**,” which the Greeks took over as “**Surios**” (the English equivalent being Syrian). There was originally no difference in meaning between Assurayeh/Surayeh and Assurios/Surios; both meant the same thing.

The Arabs borrowed their terms “**Ashur/Ashuri**” or “**Assyria/Assyrian**” from the Jews; their Suryan “**Syrian**” is a loanword from Greek “**Surios**.”<sup>1</sup>

The term Syrian is merely the shortened form and a Christian adaptation of the word “Assyrian”, which Assyrians may with equal right take to themselves as their most proper name; and that, originally, they are not from Syria proper as the term “Syrians” would suggest, but from Assyria.<sup>2</sup>

Many other historians attest to this fact like Herodotus. Professor Richard N. Frye of Harvard University says:

“It seems clear that the general terms “Assyrian” and “Syrian” were regarded as synonyms not only in early times but late into the medieval period by at least some people in the East.”<sup>3</sup>

Therefore, singular “Suraya” is “Syrian” and is “Assyrian”. It is worth mentioning that the eastern Syriac dialect title “Suraya,” and at times “Suryaya,” is pronounced “Suryoyo,” in the western Syriac dialect.




It is very common for Arabs to pronounce words which starts with certain letters like 'S', 'T', and others, and preceded by 'al' (the Arabic for 'the') in such a way that the 'L' in the 'al' is dropped when pronouncing the word. For example: The word ‘sam’ in Arabic means ‘poisonous,’ and ‘al-sam’ means ‘the poisonous’ accordingly... but when this word is pronounced, it does not sound like ‘al-sam’ rather ‘as-sam’. And there are hundreds of examples which can be listed to back up this very common way of pronunciation by the Arabs.

When the Arabs began their well known process of the Greek translations, they used the ancient Greek word 'Syrian' literally and used it to refer to us. If we apply what we talked about above to this word, we would see that; 'SYRIAN', is the unknown, 'the Syrian' is a special person, which becomes 'AL-SYRIAN' in Arabic, or, again, as pronounced by the Arabs, 'AS-SYRIAN' although when pronouncing the word it sounds more like 'AS-SIR-IAN' or 'AL-SIR-YAN'.




In summary, Assyrians were called "Athourayeh" and "Ashurayeh" (Assurayeh). With the dropping of the first syllable (A) we began to call ourselves "Surayeh". The Greek came in contact with us and called us "Suriors" or "Syrians". The Arabs took this name and used it literally with a very minor change in the pronunciation, calling us "Sir-yan" meaning "Syrian" and "Assyrian". It is worth mentioning that the Arabs through their more recent Arabic studies kept our original Semitic names "Ashouri" and "Athouri" and used them as they are. Therefore, all these names; Assyrian, Athourayeh, Ashourayeh, Surayeh, Syrian, Sir-yan, Suryaya and Suryoyo mean the same thing.

One final note, it is a well known fact that due to some religious disputes, misunderstandings, and circumstances, some of our people have, erroneously, used their [church titles](#) to relate to themselves ethnically; using terms like the Nestorians, Jacobites, Chaldeans, and many others.

### References:

1.  [Professor Simo Parpola, "Assyrians after Assyria"](#)
2. William Wright,  ["Comparative Grammar of the Semitic Languages"](#)
3. Richard N. Frye, PhD., Harvard University,  ["Assyria and Syria: Synonyms"](#)  
Journal of Near Eastern Studies.

### Further Readings:

-  [Assyrians, Syrians and Syriacs](#)
-  [Assyrian Names and Meanings for Boys and Girls](#)
-  [Assyrians in History](#)

### Assyrian Translation in Multiple Languages:

Language	Assyrian (in that language)	English Pronunciation
Afrikaans	Assiriese	Ah-seer-es-se
Akkadian	𐤀𐤃𐤔𐤏𐤍 (Aš-šū-rāi-a   Assyrian)	Aa-shoo-ri-a
	𐤀𐤃𐤔𐤏𐤍𐤀 (Aš-šū-rāi-u   Assyrians)	Aa-shoo-ri-yoo
Arabic	أشوري (Āshūrī)	Aa-shoo-ree
Armenian	Ասորի ( <a href="#">Asori</a> )	Ah-so-ree
Bengali	অ্যাসিরিয়ান	Ah-see-ree-yun
Burmese	အဆီးရီးယန်း	Ah-see-ree-yan
Chinese	亚述人 (Yà-shù-rén)	Yah-shoo-ren
Danish	Assyrisk	Ah-syoo-risk
Dutch	Assyrisch	Ah-seer-ish
English	Assyrian	Uh-seer-ee-uhn
Filipino	Asiryó	Ah-sir-yo

Language	Assyrian (in that language)	English Pronunciation
Finnish	Assyrialainen	Ah-seer-ee-ah-lie-nen
French	Assyrien	Ah-seer-ee-un
German	Assyrer	Ah-soo-rer
Greek	Ασσυριακός (Assyriakós)	Ah-see-ree-ah-kos
Hausa	Bassuriyawa	Bah-soo-ree-yah-wah
Hawaiian	ʻAsuria	Ah-soo-ree-ah
Hebrew	אַשּׁוּרִי (Ashuri)	Ah-shoo-ree
Hindi	असीरियन	Ah-seer-ee-yan
Indonesian	Asyur	Ah-shoor
Italian	Assiro	Ahs-see-ro
Japanese	アッシリア人 (Asshiria hito)	Ah-see-ree-ah-jin
Korean	아시리아의 (Asiriaui)	Ah-shee-ree-ah-ui
Kurdish	Asûrî	Ah-soo-ree
Malay	Asyur	Ah-shoor
Norwegian	Assyrisk	Ah-syoo-risk
Persian	آشوری (Āshūrī)	Aa-shoo-ree
Polish	Asyryjski	Ah-sih-ri-yee-skee
Portuguese	Assírio	Ah-see-ree-oo
Russian	Ассирийский (Assiriyskiy)	Ah-see-ree-y-skee
Spanish	Asirio	Ah-seer-ee-o
Swahili	Ashuru	Ah-shoo-roo
Swedish	Assyrier   Assyrisk   Assyrisk	Ah-syoo-ris-ka
Thai	อัสซีเรีย (Xaṣ sīreīy)	Ut-see-ree-ya
Turkish	Asurlu	Ah-soor-loo
Urdu	آشوری (Āshūrī)	Aa-shoo-ree
Vietnamese	Assyria	Ah-see-ree-ah
Yoruba	Asiria	Ah-seer-ee-ah

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“In this context it is important to draw attention to the fact that the [Aramaic](#)-speaking peoples of the Near East have since ancient times identified themselves as Assyrians and still continue to do so. The self-designations of modern Syrians and Assyrians, Sūryōyō and Sūrāyā, are both derived from the ancient Assyrian word for "Assyrian", Aššūrāyu, as can be easily established from a closer look at the relevant words.”

“Today, the Assyrian nation largely lives in diaspora, split into rivaling churches and political factions. The fortunes of the people that constitute it have gone different ways over the millennia, and their identities have changed accordingly. The Syrians in the west have absorbed many influences from the Greeks, while the Assyrians in the east have since ancient times been under Iranian cultural influence. Ironically, as members of the [Chaldean Catholic Church](#) (established in 1553 but effectively only in 1830), many modern Assyrians originating from central Assyria now identify with "Chaldeans", a term associated with the Syriac language in the 16th century but ultimately derived from the name of the dynasty that destroyed Nineveh and the Assyrian Empire!”

“Disunited, dispersed in exile, and as dwindling minorities without full civil rights in their [homelands](#), the Assyrians of today are in grave danger of total assimilation and extinction ([Aprim 2003](#)). In order to survive as a nation, they must now unite under the Assyrian identity of their ancestors. It is the only identity that can help them to transcend the differences between them, speak with one voice again, catch the attention of the world, and regain their place among the nations.”

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 [Assyrian Identity in Ancient Times and Today](#)

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**Assyria** \ã-'sir-é-ä\ *n* (1998) **1:** an ancient empire of Ashur **2:** a democratic state in Bet-Nahren, Assyria (northern Iraq, northwestern Iran, southeastern Turkey and eastern Syria.) **3:** a democratic state that fosters the social and political rights to all of its inhabitants irrespective of their religion, race, or gender **4:** a democratic state that believes in the freedom of religion, conscience, language, education and culture in faithfulness to the principles of the United Nations Charter — **Atour** *synonym*

**Assyrian** \ã-'sir-é-an\ *adj or n* (1998) **1:** descendants of the ancient empire of Ashur **2:** the Assyrians, although representing but one single nation as the direct heirs of the ancient Assyrian Empire, are now doctrinally divided, inter sese, into five principle ecclesiastically designated religious sects with their corresponding hierarchies and distinct church governments, namely, Church of the East, Chaldean, Maronite, Syriac Orthodox and Syriac Catholic. These formal divisions had their origin in the 5th century of the Christian Era. No one can coherently understand the Assyrians as a whole until he can distinguish that which is religion or church from that which is nation -- a matter which is particularly difficult for the people from the western world to understand; for in the East, by force of circumstances beyond their control, religion has been made, from time immemorial, virtually into a criterion of nationality. **3:** the Assyrians have been referred to as Aramaean, Aramaye, Ashuraya, Ashureen, Ashuri, Ashuroyo, Assyrio-Chaldean, Aturaya, Chaldean, Chaldo, ChaldoAssyrian, ChaldoAssyrio, Jacobite, Kaldany, Kaldu, Kasdu, Malabar, Maronite, Maronaya, Nestorian, Nestornaye, Oromoye, Suraya, Syriac, Syrian, Syriani, Suryoye, Suryoyo and Telkeffee. — **Assyrianism** *verb*

#### Ethnicity, Religion, Language

- » Israeli, Jewish, Hebrew
- » Assyrian, Christian, Aramaic
- » Saudi Arabian, Muslim, Arabic

**Aramaic** \ar-é-'máik\ *n* (1998) **1:** a Semitic language which became the lingua franca of the Middle East during the ancient Assyrian empire. **2:** has been referred to as Neo-Aramaic, Neo-Syriac, Classical Syriac, Syriac, Suryoyo, Swadaya and Turoyo.

-  [The Assyrian Statehood: Yesterday's Denial and Today's Moral Obligation](#)
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return