

The Assyrian Historiography and Linguistics

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I will discuss the Assyrian historiography and its synthesis, which is an accumulation of events across a period of 6 millenniums. The historiography enables them to thwart hard critics and attempts to discredit their legitimate claim. It also aspires them to catch up with the requirements of post cold-war period and the policies of the new world strategy.

The Assyrian persistence is evidenced in "Historical Relics" that had revealed a structure of social institutions and an economy that had supported a polity system until it collapsed in 612 BC. The excavations of Layard and Hormizd Rassam, the writings of Saggs and other orientalist such as "The Might that was Assyria" could not be ignored.

The following mile-stones are the most luminous periods in the Assyrian history.

- The emergence of the Assyrians as a political power in the 2nd millennium BC at Ashur, a site on Tigris south of present Mosul.
- Their prevalence in three successive empires and the establishment of a great human civilization.
- The fall of the Empire in 612 BC, and the tiny state in Harran that lasted until 606 BC.
- The perseverance in city states like Arba-Eilo under the Parthians and Sassanians.
- The advent of Christianity and the conversion of the Assyrians.
- The political eclipse of the Assyrians during the first five centuries AD. and their retreat and confinement.
- The advent of Islam in the 6th century AD, the demise of the Assyrian political role, and their subsequent prominence in medicine, culture, arts and language, philosophy, and in other sciences under the Arabs.
- The invasion of Tamur Lane (Taymor Linga) and Hulago.
- The Ottoman hegemony and Assyrian self-administration under the Millet- System.
- World War 1 and the massacres in Anatolia.
- The Assyrians in Urmi and Nineveh under direct rule of the Persians and the Ottoman Governor of Baghdad.
- World War 2 and the elimination of their claim to autonomy.
- The July 14, 1958 Revolution in Iraq and the harsh circumstances after 1963 under Saddam Hussain.
- The Assyrians in Diaspora and the change of regime in Baghdad in 2003.

These events resemble the backbone of their political structure. The Assyrians, therefore, have to learn from their past. They have to consider the following:

1- The documentary Cuneiform that gives witness to their achievements, the Bas-reliefs, statues and slabs like those erected on the mountains overlooking Mediterranean in Lebanon, are segments of the authentic synthesis which forms the kernel of their historiography and render their political claim as legitimate.

2- The Assyrians of the invincible mountainous regions of Hakkari assumed leadership of a protracted endeavor to reemerge. Under the patronage of the Church of the East and Millet System they resuscitate, retained their language, preserved customs and the fabric of a tribal society with the five main tribes, i.e. Jelu, Baz, Tyari, Tkhuma, and Deez forming the highest authority under His Holiness Mar Shimun, the patriarch.

3- The meddling of Western powers in internal affairs of the Ottoman Empire and other factors created antagonistic policies that forced the minorities to flee and seek refuge in Iraq, Iran, Syria, Lebanon, Russia, and the United States.

The demographic geography of the Assyrians at this point had changed. Some remained in Turkey, the bulk returned to Mesopotamia, and some dispersed all over. Below is a description of their new environments.

1- In Russia they encountered a socialist system that contradicted with their psyche as previous inhabitants of rural environments. So they were unable to resocialize and adapt to the society's new values.

2- In Iran they interacted with the Assyrians of Urmi and jointly survived the atrocities and tragedies that befell the nation.

3- In Iraq, their ancestral homeland, they were reunited with their indigenous brethren under the policies of Mandate, offered a settlement deprived of national and political rights, and in 1933 unjustly massacred on false allegations of anti-state activities. Their case was shelved without clarification.

Did they gave up and abandon their political claim? Not during the Monarchy, Not under General Qasim, not under fascist Saddam Hussain who tried to Arabize them, and not under any other repressive policies the Assyrians ever thought to recede and abandon their claim to self-determination.

Today the Assyrian Democratic Movement in the North is participating in the efforts to establish a democratic regime in Iraq that will legitimize autonomy for the minorities. This active participation is added to their historiography and the authentic synthesis we use to justify their claim to self-determination which they are already exercising on a de-facto basis. The role of the Assyrian Democratic Movement represents another period of the Assyrian continuous national endeavor.

The two World Wars added to their plight. We find them in Iraq, Syria, Lebanon, Iran, Russia, and the United States, as well as, Australia, New Zealand, Holland, Sweden, Germany, France, England, and Canada. As a result of the dispersion, a linguistic geography shaped up out of the new environments and social values. Their resocialization created new language which is being integrated into their present political concepts. The process of adjusting their ideology following urbanization is also addressed carefully and the Assyrians reared in urban societies are clearly understanding their new obligations as developed and elaborated out of the present social and political values of the new urban environments. In other words, these new concepts are coordinated along with the national policies of the countries of dispersion and, most importantly, with the policies of their ancestral homeland. The purpose is to create positive attitudes towards the ideas of a democratic regime in Iraq.

The political linguistics of the Assyrians are easy to understand, though some difficulty exists because of using the Eastern script and pronunciation in some areas and the Western script and pronunciation in others. This small problem is being successfully solved through reciprocal efforts. Today they communicate, argue, and negotiate and, if necessary, through a third medium like Arabic and other languages.

The expose of the Assyrians to rival ideologies is integrated into the existing process and line of thinking thus fostering a unified national ideology and promoting a solidarity on basis of one perspective, i.e. the future of the Assyrians which is supreme and in conformity with the urban linguistics prevailing in their communities.

The historical development of the Assyrians and especially after the two World Wars and their ideas and social institutions were not based upon a common economy. The Assyrians residing in different countries experienced rival economies such as Socialism, Democracy, Dictatorship, Feudalism, Autocracy, and Representative Democracy. Such a diversity did not establish a common structure of a material economy; therefore, the historical materialism does not apply to this period, but their cultural activities are a link in the chain that hooks

up with the synthesis of a common material culturalography that is analogous to the common economical structure. This culturalography, therefore, holds on as a scientific reality that produces tangible proofs and a legitimate justification of their existence as an entity that is steadfastly preserving the elements that constitute the ingredients of their legal claim to self-determination or autonomy in their ancestral homeland. Their historiography which is a narrative documentation, the linguistics, and the new concepts developed in urban centers are withstanding the test of time and, meantime, confirming that their claim is a perennial demand. The Assyrians, therefore, need to remain aware of the ongoing national and international policies in light of the following.

1- Their demographic distribution as indigenous in Iraq and dispersed in Diaspora, promotes joint efforts in strict adherence to their common values and national interest.

2- The existing dialects are not blocking the efforts to explore new means of interaction that can further expedite the process of a secular integration. This process necessarily needs common linguistics and a reconceptualization of the dialects to reflect similar aspirations and methods of action in an era of collective and material utility.

The Assyrian historiography as a factor has revived their solidarity spirit. As a legal aspect, it had enabled them to link together their past and present, and on such a legitimate right, the type of self-determination they are entitled to claim under present circumstances is.

1-Indigenous Self-Determination: The Assyrians themselves create the positive situations and indoctrinate the youth with their tasks and aim which is a self-rule, autonomy, or independence in-as-much as the democratic regimes recognize the political rights of its nationalities and in-as-much as the world powers concede.

2- Self-Determination of dispersed Assyrians or Assyrians in Diaspora, who extend moral and material support to their indigenous brethren, lobby on their behalf with their state and local authorities as we often do in the United States.

These two types of self-determination are complimentary and their philosophy is in total agreement with the present strategy of the Assyrian nation.

The questions often asked by today Assyrians are as follows:

1- To what extent the World powers, the USA in the foremost, are extending moral and material help to the Assyrian freedom fighters now holding on a de-facto political situation in North of Iraq.

2- To what extent the Assyrians in Diaspora, particularly, are extending help and relief to their freedom fighters brethren in homeland?

My dear brothers, the Assyrian historiography and linguistics are clearly pointing to their future. Their intent and desire have not waned, as well as, the fervor. What they require is material support and reinforcement of their situation in the North. Such a relief, in my opinion, can be done as follows.

1- The Assyrians in Diaspora initiate a reverse immigration to their ancestral homeland to solidify the efforts of the Assyrian Democratic Movement..

2- Request their former Allies, who are conscious of their past career to support their demand for an autonomy under a federal and democratic regime.

3- Indoctrination of the Assyrian multitudes with the new developments and in light of their historiography which is functioning so they become more supportive of the ongoing political effort.

4- Financial and material relief to the indigenous Assyrians and the Democratic Movement in particular, who is a participant in the joint efforts to stabilize Iraq under a representative democracy.

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My dear friends: The de-facto situation in the North is the last ditch for the minorities. Let the Assyrians accommodate their friends, remind them of their past collaboration, request actions to reinstate their past rule.

Without the historiography and linguistics, the Assyrians could have become an extinct nation. Their strong desire to come back and to rehabilitate their past rule similar to other Biblical people is more than promising. Let us teach them to our posterity. They are our protective shield and safety kits.