20th Century, Aulds Assyrians, Education, Literature and Turkish as the Language of Communication and the Turkish Alphabet Overview

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Summary

Assyrian Aulds belong to a non-muslim community that is known with their loyalty to the government of the land they live. Their loyalty was based on the rules in Holy Bible and their faith to the government of Ottoman Empire and Turkish Republic was a great example for other non-muslim communities. As Assyrians renounced their minority rights with Lozan Agreement, they asked government to close their minority schools after 1928. Although they were educated in Turkish for a long period of time, the attitude of Assyrians began to change during 1970s as a Diaspora was formed abroad and they reclaimed their right to establish minority schools. They asked for these rights from Turkish Republic who was trying to be a member of European Union.

Asyrians had a traditional education system based on Christianity and Orthodox Church during the period of Ottoman Empire. This religion based education was held in monasteries and churches. By the help of domestication characteristic of education, Assyrian monasteries and churches served as powerful and substantial castles of Orthodox Christianity. Deyruzzafaran and Deyrulumur monasteries in Mardin served from primary school to university in the period of Ottoman Empire. Also, Kırklar Church in Mardin still serves as an educational institute unofficially.

The only school left among Assyrian institutes after Turkish Republic is Mardin Kırklar Church. Assyrian officials demanded government to close the school and the school was closed in 1928. After this, Assyrian Churches, especially Kırklar Church, were used as summer schools for children to learn Assyrian religious rules as it is done in Muslim Mosques. Assyrians not only used Turkish as a means of education, but also to make a connection between their community and the government. In the period of Ottoman Empire, representative of Orthodox Patriarch of Assyrian Aulds in Istanbul gained trust among people who knew and practiced policies as he had some specialities other than spiritual features as he was in the capital of the state. It was important as a representative to have moral features that are worthy of this position and use the official language of the republic.

It can be seen that Turkish was very important both in relations of government and their own community. Diyarbakir Metropolitan Bishop Abdunnur Efendi was known with his knowledge of Turkish and he had great respect and love for the language. He worked for Turkish to be used as the language of education and science, but he was not as moderate to Armenian language. Known as an opponent to Armenian language, Abdunnur Efendi liked the community to talk in Turkish and moreover, he sometimes slapped and punished people who talked Armenian. It is supposed that the positive attitude of Assyrian religious men towards the use of Turkish as the language of education affected Assyrian community as the use and education of Turkish language increased in Assyrian community and countrywide with the help of Turkish Alphabet Revolution and campaigns such as “Citizens Talk Turkish”. Turkish can be seen as a widespread education language in the late 20th century. Assyrian religious men applied government to open courses of Holy Bible in their own language to transfer the language to the new generations in 1980s.

The most important characteristic of Assyrian community which makes the difference from other non-muslim communities is that they called themselves Turkish Assyrians and

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they repeated it many times in their history books and their attitude towards Turkish Alphabet Revolution. They accepted Turkish not only as a means of education but also an important part of their lives.