



DA'TID BAHRANA

DA'TID BAHRANA (with the Persian title *Āyanda-ye rowšan* “Bright future”), Assyrian bilingual periodical published in Tehran in 1951.

Begun on 16 March 1951 as a weekly, in Tehran, by Rabi Issa Benyamin (qv), this was the first Assyrian periodical to be published bilingually in Assyrian neo-Aramaic and Persian. All others, before World War I, had appeared only in the mother tongue of the community. The necessity for bilingualism arose due to the closing of Assyrian schools in Urmia and its satellite villages and in Salamas (or Salmās, renamed Šāpur) and its villages after the massacre and exile of Assyrians from the Urmia region following World War I, which resulted in a drop of two-thirds in the Assyrian population. The forced closing of missionary schools (American and French especially) in Urmia in 1934 left very limited opportunities for Assyrians to become literate in their own language. The trend set by this Assyrian Iranian periodical extends into the exile communities as well where the written mother language has lost its ability to hold the ethnic group together.

Extant copies of *Da'tid bahrana* are few, with a single issue at Harvard College Library and possibly a full set at the Majles library in Tehran. The 6 April 1951 issue (at Harvard and examined here) is in four pages and appears as number three of the first year. The editor has stated, in oral interviews, that only a few issues were printed without specifying how many in total. The paper is cheap and brittle, but this extant copy was preserved in an Assyrian home in Philadelphia, and, therefore, we assume that it had been sent overseas to some activists. Of the four pages of the periodical, three are in Persian and one in



Assyrian. The price per issue is set at five rials. There is no subscription information and no advertisements. It was printed by Naqš-e jahān printing house in Tehran and readers were advised to purchase their copies at newspaper stands on Nāderi street.

Da'tid bahrana came to life at a crucial time in Iranian politics, when Moḥammad Mosaddeq became prime minister (April 1951) and the Tudeh party was very active. The Assyrians took the opportunity of political turmoil to launch their first post-massacre periodical. Yet none of the content reflects any of the political turmoil of the society at large. Instead, the focus of the articles, mostly short, is on two issues: uniting Assyrians in order to elect their Majles representative, a right granted in the constitution but not put into practice until 1958, and language and culture preservation. Produced on the Assyrian page is one of the first glimpses of the monumental painting by the Tehran based master painter, Andre Givelevitch (1911-85) (q.v.) illustrating the flight of Assyrians from Hakkari to Urmia in 1918.

Bibliography:

D'atid bahrana, 16 March 1951.

“Integrity and Dedication,” *Assyrian Star* 54/3, pp. 12-14.

Gabriele Yonan, *Journalismus bei den Assyrern: ein Überblick von seinen Anfängen bis zur Gegenwart*, Augsburg, 1985 p. 56.

Interviews with Issa Benyamin, conducted by the author in 2004-05 at his home in Normal, Illinois.