

Kirkuk: The Pivot of Balance in Iraq Past and Present[§]

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Kirkuk is the town where for ages various ethnic groups such as Kurds, Turkomans, Assyro-Chaldeans, Arabs and Jews, representing three monotheistic religions (Jewish, Christian and Muslim) have lived together. Therefore, all the adherents of these religions have a historical or religious link to this town, often without being aware of it. For example, in the monastery of “ad Aquas Salvias” in Rome, Saint Anastasius’s head has been venerated since 7th century A.D. This Persian monk was martyred in Kirkuk in 628 A.D. Twelve thousand martyrs were reported in this town in 445 A.D. This is an exaggerated figure but does indicate the presence of numerous Christians in the region.

Kirkuk was defined as the city of ethnic harmony in an international symposium held in London (2001) by the Iraqi opponents to the Baathist regime (Kurds, Shiite Arabs, and Turkomans).¹ For ages, the Kirkuk population has differentiated itself from the other Mesopotamian and Kurdish towns by its distinctive ethnic, linguistic, religious and cultural diversity. This diversity has been historically documented for millennia and it is important to preserve it, despite the policy of Arabization perpetrated by the Baathist regime beginning in the seventies up to the fall of the regime in 2003.

The town’s identity was mirrored in its multiethnic composition. After the discovery and drilling of its rich oil fields, it was nicknamed the “City of Black Gold” and/or the “City of Eternal Fire.”²

[§] *The generous help of many friends cannot here be fully acknowledged. I am especially indebted to Prof. Fabrizio Pennacchietti and Prof. Angelo Michele Piemontese for their stimulating comments and criticism in the chapter concerning Christians and Europeans visitors in Kirkuk, and Barbara Vicinelli and Arianne Ishaya for their help in revising the English text. I need hardly add that the mistakes are all my own.*

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¹ Kirkuk. Madinat al-qawmiyyah al-mutâkhiyyah. Kirkuk. The city of Ethnic Harmony. Scientific Symposium Held by Karbala Centre for Research and Studies in London on 21-22 July 2001 (1-2 Jamadi al-Ula 1422 Hijri), first edition, London: Published by a group of academic Iraqis residing in London, Karbala Centre for Research & Studies, 2002. This article is related to the paper presented in that occasion “Reports on Kirkuk by modern European visitors,” A1-A31. See also M. Galletti, *Incontri con la società del Kurdistan*, (Genova: Name, 2002), 43-74.

² E. Y. Odisho, “Kirkuk: A Historical Hub of Ethnic Diversity and Multilingualism,” *Journal of Assyrian Academic Studies*, vol. XVI, no. 1 (2002): 44.

The Kirkuk region is rich in its oilfields and farmlands. Geographically, it straddles the strategic trade routes between Anatolia, Iran, and Iraq. This has been the main reason for attempts by former ruling powers to settle Turkomans in the region.

In the Baba Gurgur area near Kirkuk, the presence of oil was known from ancient times. Using primitive methods, the Ottoman army had extracted oil in this area for local consumption since 1639.

Kurdistan became a battleground for a long period between the Shiite Safavids, whose capital was Tabriz, and the Sunni Ottomans in the 17th and 18th centuries. Because of its strategic location, Kirkuk changed hands many times during these wars.

The discovery of vast quantities of oil in Kirkuk was the reason for its annexation (16th December, 1925), as part of the Mosul Vilayet, to the Iraqi kingdom, which was established in 1921, under the British mandate. The systematic and organized exploitation of the Kirkuk oil fields did not start, however, until March 1925. The Turkish Petroleum Company (TPC), which was established in 1914 in Istanbul was granted the concession to exploit the oil fields in the Mosul and Baghdad vilayets by the Ottoman state.

Oil began to flow on 27 October 1927, from the Baba Gurgur oil fields near Kirkuk. The name of the company was then changed to the Iraq Petroleum Company (IPC), which was able, around 1931, to exploit most of the land in northeastern Iraq. The establishment of the petroleum industry in Kirkuk led to a significant changes in the social and ethnic character of the city, because the British oil company employed a large number of people, most of who were brought from other provinces to work in the company and then to settle in the city.

This led, in a relatively short period of time to the creation of self-contained neighborhoods within the old quarters of the city and new neighborhoods, which were made up mostly of Assyrians and Arabs in the area near the oil company's facilities. The percentage of Kurdish workers employed by the company was lower than all the others. Thus, the exploitation of the oil fields in Kirkuk and the area around it led to the permanent settling in Kirkuk of a large number of people from other provinces.

In the mid thirties, the Government took another step towards settling Arab tribes for its irrigation projects in the Hawija plains, which lie to the south west of Kirkuk. The government brought Arab tribes who knew nothing about agriculture and who had never engaged in farming before. It built modern villages for them and distributed the land among them. This was the first Arab settlement in the Kirkuk province, planned and executed by various Iraqi governments during the era of the monarchy.³ Since then, and particularly from 1963 onwards, there have been continuous attempts to change the ethnic make-up of the region.

³ N. Talabany, *Iraq's Policy of Ethnic cleansing: Onslaught to change national/demographic characteristics of Kirkuk Region*, (London: n.ed., 1999), 13-14.

Historical Origins:

The tradition of Kirkuk narrates that Nebuchadrezzar founded the city, known as Karkha d° Bêth Slôkh in Syriac sources, between 605 and 562 B.C., after the fall of Nineveh (612 B.C.). This date seems to be probable, if one considers the almost simultaneous disappearance of the resort of Arrapkha in the texts, whose remains are at approximately three kilometres north-west of Kirkuk.⁴ Karkûk, ancient d° Bêth Slôkh, was the ancient capital of Arrhapachitis, Arrapha, flourishing in the middle of the second millennium, at the time of the Aryan dynasty of Mitanni [16-14th century B.C.]; later it was the residence of the Saka dynasty of Adiabene [ca. 130 B.C.].⁵

Quintus Curtius reported that after the victory at Arbela (1st October, 331 B.C.):

Alexander arrived on his fourth day's march at the city of Mennis. In that place there is a cavern from which a spring pours out so vast an amount of bitumen that it is a well-known fact that the walls of Babylon, a prodigious work, are cemented with bitumen from that spring" (V, I, 16).⁶

The city could be the present Kirkuk.⁷

Plutarch gave a detailed description of the naphtha that was poured on the road and then set on fire with flames spreading from one side to the other (35. 1-2).⁸ It was the first time that the eternal fires of Baba Gurgur were shown to Greek people. Under suggestion of his bath servant, Alexander the Great permitted a second experiment. A boy of the court was poured with naphtha and then set on fire. The flames burned him horribly and he could be saved by pouring several

⁴ J. M. Fiey O.P., "Vers la réhabilitation de l'histoire de Karka d°Bêt Slôh," *Analecta Bollandiana*, vol. 82, fasc. 1-2 (1964), 192. A very detailed philological analysis on the names of the cities in Beth Garmai region is: G. Hoffmann, *Auszüge aus syrischen Akten persischer Märtyrer*, (Leipzig, 1880), 267.

⁵ E. E. Herzfeld, *Iran in the ancient East*, New York: Hacker Art Books, 1988, 161. The district of Adiabene had Arbela as main town (present name Erbil).

⁶ *Quintus Curtius with an English translation by John C. Rolfe*, (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press - London: William Heinemann Ltd, 1971), 331.

⁷ Strabo, 16, 1, 4; J. Seibert, *Die Eroberung des Perserreiches durch Alexander den Großen auf kartographischer Grundlage*, (Wiesbaden: Dr. Ludwig Reichert Verlag, 1985), 96.

⁸ Plutarco, *Vite parallele. Alessandro*. Introduzione, traduzione e note di Domenico Magnino, (Milano: Rizzoli, 2000), 121-125.

buckets of water on him.⁹ Either the Persian king Darius or Alexander the Great is said to have settled five tribes from the Istahar city of Fars in Karkha.¹⁰

Le Strange remarks that the name “Karkûk is not mentioned either by earlier geographers, nor by Yâkût; but it is mentioned by 'Alî of Yazd (i 661) as near Tâûk’.”¹¹

The oriental sources of information on this city are few. The great Kurdish historian, prince of Bitlis, Sharaf Khan Bidlisi (1543-1604), narrated that at the beginning of the 16th century “in the principality of Baban [Baban included the whole of Sulaimaniya and part of Kirkuk], the prince Bdagh, son of Abdal Beg, conquered Kirkuk which was under the rule of Baghdad.”¹²

The famous Arab traveler Ibn Battuta (1304-1377) did not visit the city, and the Turkish Evliya Celebi (1611-1682) reported about the oil gushing from a field in Kirkuk. At the beginning of 19th century Mirza Aboul Taleb Khan [of Persia] described the city of Kirkuk as:

*Large and well fortified; but it is threatening to collapse. The houses that are inside the walls of the citadel are all in stone and bricks, but those of the suburbs are only made of mud. Situated in the middle of a vast plain Kirkuk offers an imposing aspect and can be seen from considerable distance.*¹³

Travel Literature

The Western travel literature on Kurdistan is copious, but information on Kirkuk is quite rare and difficult to find before mid 19th century. This is probably due to the geographical position of Kirkuk, which is bypassed by the Tigris. The river is the beaten track between Mosul and Baghdad. Also, Kirkuk is not on the trade route between Baghdad and Persia. Besides travelers did not visit Kirkuk because they were not attracted by it. Instead they preferred Erbil, because of the battle of Arbela, won by Alexander the Great. Amadiya was a favourite destination because of its peculiar position, perched on a mountain and with important Christian and Jewish settlements. Sulaimaniya and its valleys were also attractive

⁹ Robin Lane Fox, *Alessandro Magno*, (Torino: Giulio Einaudi editore), 1981, 256.

¹⁰ J. M. Fiey O.P., *op. cit.*, 1964, 193.

¹¹ G. Le Strange, *The Lands of the Eastern Caliphate. Mesopotamia, Persia, and Central Asia from the Moslem conquest to the time of Timur*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1905), 92 note 1.

¹² Sheref Khan Bidlisi, *Sheref-nameh translation into Kurdish by Hejar*, (Baghdad: Kurdish Scientific Academy), 1972, 519.

¹³ Mirza Aboul Taleb Khan, *Viaggi del principe persiano Mirza Aboul Taleb Khan in Asia, Africa ed Europa scritti da lui medesimo*, (Milano: Sonzogno, 1820), 180. Aboul Taleb, son of Mohammed from Isfahan, left for Calcutta in February 1799 and returned in 1803.

by the end of 18th century. All these cities were under the rule of powerful Kurdish dynasties. The most quoted cities - and therefore indicators of the importance of the site - are Amadiya (above all in the 17th and 18th centuries), Bitlis and Diyarbakir until the 19th century, Erbil from the 18th century on, Mardin above all till the 18th century, Sulaimaniya throughout the 19th century. The reason why there is little information on Kirkuk is probably because of its unstable political status. Sometimes it was under Persian control; at other times it was under the influence of the government in Baghdad.

The Golden Age of travel and exploration in this part of the Middle East started in the mid 19th century. To the traditional group of visitors such as travelers, diplomats, Catholic missionaries, and merchants in the 19th century, a new group consisting of military officers, archaeologists, Anglo-Saxon and American Protestant missionaries were added. Many of them were agents and active instruments of the European powers. They were sent into Kurdistan by their Government, for the purpose of exploring and obtaining geographical and strategic information. Some of which included the geography of the territory, the location of waterways and lines of communication connecting the cities, the physical aspect of the land, scientific observations on the mineral resources, soil and agricultural qualities, flocks, numbers and sizes of ruins, habitat, archaeology, military security, taxation system, religious communities,¹⁴ socio-anthropological accounts, and so on.¹⁵ The interest in the town of Kirkuk was due to the presence of petroleum in that area and the importance of oil in the world economy.

European visitors considered the Turks to be usurpers of the lands of Christianity or of antiquity, and justified the claim to return those lands back to their original owners. That is why the journals or reports of these visitors contain the names of those monuments that date back to antiquity, and lament their decline due to the negligence of the Ottoman government. So the reports reveal the dilemma of the visitor, who tries to present a balanced account of historical monuments such as fortresses with Greek or Latin inscriptions on the one hand,

¹⁴ Joëlle Redouane remarks the interest of Claudius James Rich and George Percy Badger toward the Oriental Christians: "... l'influence prépondérante de la *Bible* dans la culture anglaise et le renouveau évangéliste du 19^e siècle poussent les voyageurs à faire de nombreuses références au Livre... En tant que miroir du monde biblique, les chrétiens orientaux jouent donc un rôle de premier plan..." (Joëlle Redouane, *L'Orient arabe vu par les voyageurs anglais*, Alger, Entreprise nationale du livre, 1988, pp. 234-235).

¹⁵ On this subject see the several articles published by *The Journal of the Royal Geographical Society* on the Ottoman Empire and Persia, and their most remote regions, as Kurdistan in the 19th century. This interest flourished particularly in the periods 1839-1841 and 1863-1868. See the accounts of William Ainsworth, James Brant, Frederick Forbes, R. J. Garden, R. N. Glascott, Instructions..., Viscount Pollington, H. C. Rawlinson, J. G. Taylor.

and the Christian shrines and places of pilgrimage on the other.¹⁶

Lieut.-Colonel Chesney states:

*In some instances, the ancient sites may still be recognized, but by far the greater number are unknown; and the cities of this once splendid empire {Assyrian} are feebly represented by the modern towns of Mòsul, Se'rt, Amàdiyah, (the town of the Medes,) Bitlis, Vàn, Arbil, Suleïmaniyah, Kerkùk, Kòi-Sanjàk, Zakhò, Rowànduz, and Jùlàmerik [Hakkari].*¹⁷

Nineteenth century traveler narratives present several similarities. Invariably, they all refer to the journey of the Danish scientist and explorer Carsten Niebuhr. In these narratives, Kirkuk is compared to Erbil because of its location perched on a hill. Moreover, the presence of oil, and its multiethnic character comprising of Kurds, Arabs, Turkomans, Jews, Assyro-Chaldeans is cited. Many visitors refer to quotations from ancient Greek and Latin authors about the city.

The tomb of the prophet Daniel is often mentioned. Today, it is still a pilgrimage site in Kirkuk, but it is known that the real tomb is considered the one situated in Susa.¹⁸ In the mosque of Nabi Daniel in Kirkuk are said to be buried Daniel and his companions, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah, for service in the Nebuchadrezzar's household. According to the Bible, the king made a great statue of gold and ordered all his subjects to adore it. The three companions of Daniel refused to obey and were cast into a furnace. They were untouched by the flames and Nebuchadrezzar, convinced by this miracle, ordered those who had charged them with the crime to be cast into the furnace.¹⁹ This tradition is of course connected to the 'burning fiery furnace', in reference to the perpetual fires of petroleum gas in a depression called Baba Gurgur about two miles north-west of

¹⁶ S. Yerasimos, *Les voyageurs dans l'Empire Ottoman (XIVe-XVIIe siècles). Bibliographie, itinéraires et inventaire des lieux habités*, (Ankara: Publications de la Société Turque d'Histoire, série 7, no. 117, 1991), 18, 20.

¹⁷ Lieut.-Colonel F. R. Chesney, *The expedition for the survey of the rivers Euphrates and Tigris, carried on by order of the British Government, in the years 1835, 1836, and 1837*, vol. I (London: Longman-Brown- Green-and Longmans, (4 vols.), 1850), 120.

¹⁸ M. Streck, "al-Sūs," *Encyclopédie de l'Islam*, vol. IV, 1934, 594; B. Carra De Vaux, "Daniyal," *Encyclopédie de l'Islam*, vol. I, 1913, 939; Teofilo Garcia de Orbiso, "Daniele," *Bibliotheca Sanctorum*, (Roma: Città Nuova editrice, 1995), 448-464; "cadaver Danielis Prophetæ in Susan" is quoted by Joseph Simonius Assemani, *Bibliotheca Orientalis Clementino-Vaticana*, (Rome: Typis Sacrae Congregationis de Propaganda Fide, 1719-1728), 4 vols. folio, see vol. III, 306.

¹⁹ *The Book of Daniel* 3: 1-24; "Daniel", in: J. L. Mckenzie, *Dictionary of the Bible*, London-Dublin: Geoffrey Chapman, 1965, 172; J. J. Collins, "Daniel, book of," in: D. N. Freedman (editor in chief), *The Anchor Bible dictionary*, (New York: Doubleday, 1992), 29-37.

the town. This mosque is said to have existed as a church until the 18th century.²⁰ Although, 5th century sources do not mention such a church, and this is evidence that the tradition is not ancient.²¹

In 1678 Angelo Legrenzi, a Venetian physician, left for Mesopotamia and Persia. He wrote a journal titled “On the nation of the Kurds.” In that journal he mistakes Takrit for Kirkuk and therefore his narrative is not accurate.²²

Carsten Niebuhr gives the first detailed description of Kirkuk at the end of the 18th century. His description is quoted below in full because of its importance and also because it has been used as a source by many writers:

Kirkuk lies in beautiful and fertile plain, which is scarcely cultivated, at the Pole height 35°. 29'. There are very few remains of the city, which is situated at the foot of a rocky hill. The hill is surrounded by a ground wall, and is called the citadel because the Janissary troops inhabit it. The citadel is very dirty, I have never seen a place like that in my life, and also the dwellings are in a very bad state. Here there are three mosques with towers one of which is remarkable because the tombs of the Prophets, Daniel, Mishael, Hananiah and Azariah are located here. The Jews do not doubt, that these Prophets are effectively buried here. The Muslims do not allow them to enter the mosques and to pray near the tombs.

In Kirkuk there are approximately forty Chaldeans or Nestorians who have joined the Roman Church. When they learned that a European had arrived in the city, immediately some of them paid a visit to me and they were delighted in meeting a man from the Eternal City and they insisted on my staying there a few more days. They were complaining of the obstinacy of the other Oriental Christians, as they did not want to abandon their ancient errors and recognize the Pope as Vicar of Jesus Christ. I exhorted these good people to tolerate these other Christians patiently, without informing them that I myself I was not of their confession.

In general I observed, that all the Oriental Christians help one another but all of them cannot stand the Roman Catholics. Instead all those who are converted by the European monks and their missionaries are the most hostile enemies of those who do not want to abandon their ancient Church. Kirkuk is the residence of a Pasha of two tails of horses, he does not live in the city but in front, in the opposite side of the river. His territory is very limited. The rest of the great government Schahhr essul that stretches on

²⁰ J. M. Fiey O.P., *Assyrie Chrétienne*, vol. III, (Beirut: Imprimerie Catholique, 1968), 52.

²¹ J. M. Fiey O.P., *op. cit.*, 1964, 216.

²² A. Legrenzi, *Il pellegrino nell'Asia cioè Viaggi del Dottor Angelo Legrenzi Fisico, e Chirurgo, Cittadino Veneto. Con li Ragguagli dello Stato dell'Imperio Ottomano, del Rè di Persia, de Mogori, e Gentili loro Leggi, vite e costumi. Opera divisa in Libri quattro. Parte seconda*, (Venetia: Domenico Valvasense, part II, 1705), 71.

the route from Tauq to Erbil presently belongs to Baghdad, as I have already mentioned before. Nadir Shah did not make strong efforts to occupy the city with the Citadel; but as he was not so happy in Mosul, he was obliged to withdraw orderly, hence he lost much. I found several bombs on the way which had been left by the Persians twenty years before.

In this region there are many watermills; that is why large amounts of flour are taken from here to Baghdad, whereas dates and other goods are imported from Basra. It is reported that near Kirkuk there are also springs of bitumen naphtha. A place called Baba Gurgur is above all remarkable because the earth is so hot that eggs and meat can be boiled here. You only need to dig a hole and put your pot in it. It is said that during the night flames can be seen here, I have been told by people who visited this place.²³

At the end of 18th century Guillaume-Antoine Olivier was sent by the French government to the Middle East and gave a detailed description of the city, taking Niebuhr's report into account:

Like Erbil, Kirkuk is situated on a hill in the middle of a vast plain, surrounded by a defence wall and a strong Janissary garrison. The Pasha of Baghdad controls a Mutasallim.²⁴ A part of the city lies at the bottom of the hill.

For a long time Kirkuk has been part of the Pashaliq of Shahrizur; hence there was a Pasha with two tails. But nowadays Kirkuk has only a Mutasallim appointed by the Pasha, as Shahrizur and all the territories lying east of the Tigris, the Great Zab and the Kurdistan are part of the Pashaliq of Baghdad.

This city is likely to have occupied the place of the ancient Mennis and then we report our conjectures. Quintus Curtius reports that with his army on his way to Babylon, Alexander the Great arrived from Arbela to Mennis in four days. Mennis is a remarkable city for its cavern where a large quantity of bitumen is springing and according to tradition the walls of Babylon are said to be cemented with this bitumen. In fact bitumen is obtained in the area of Kirkuk as we have already mentioned.

We arrived from Erbil in Kirkuk by horses in fifteen hours [...]. In the area there are neither remains nor location better situated than those of Kirkuk. Consequently, the hill might have been the settlement of an important city since ancient times. Since our departure from Mosul we were lit by petrol. Bales of raw cotton are made with bitumen pouring from a pot. The smell of this light in the air would be unbearable in a room

²³ Carsten Niebuhr, *Voyage en Arabie & en d'autres Pays circonvoisins*, Amsterdam: Chez S.J. Baalde, Utrecht: chez Barthelemy Wild., 1780, vol. II, pp. 274-275.

²⁴ *Mutasallim* was the deputy-governor of a Sanjaq.

*unless a hole in the wall is made to let the fume escape. With the cow excrements, the straw and the bitumen mixed together bricks are made which are used for lighting and cooking. With old linen soaked in naphtha, torches are made to light the roads.*²⁵

In 1818 the Italian Dominican Giuseppe Campanile gave a detailed description of the whole region of Kurdistan. He mentioned Kirkuk because in the past the city had been under the rule of Baban (p. 51, 53) and also because of its commercial relations with the Kurdish city of Akâr [Aqra] where there lived the powerful and warrior tribe of Zibari (p. 34).²⁶

The Italian scholar Gaetano Moroni described Kirkuk in his *Dizionario* as the “chief town of the Sanjaq, situated on a hill in the middle of a plain. The city has a citadel as a defense and it is located on a steep mountain, at the bottom of which the Kerkuk-soui flows. One of the mosques is famous because it is said to contain the graves of Daniel and his companions, but the Turks do not allow the Jews to visit the place. Here there live Turks, Armenians, Nestorians and Kurds.... There are nine churches and more than 1700 Catholics.”²⁷

A short description of the city can be found in the French military man Felix de Beaujour's writings “... Kirkuk is reached walking across streams from where naphtha can be seen springing. In the whole region light is obtained by means of cotton torches soaked in this bitumen. Like Arbela, Kirkuk is situated on a hill lying in the middle of a beautiful plain with all kinds of fruits. This city may have from five to six thousand inhabitants, and it is surrounded by a simple wall with loop-holes in it.”²⁸

The British traveler James S. Buckingham gives one of the most detailed descriptions of Kirkuk:

²⁵ G.-A. Olivier, *Voyage dans l'Empire Othoman, l'Egypte et la Perse, fait par ordre du gouvernement pendant les six premières années de la République*, vol. II (Paris: chez H. Agasse, 1804), 373-374.

²⁶ Giuseppe Campanile, *Storia delle regione del Kurdistan e delle sette di religione ivi esistenti*, (Napoli: stamperia de' fratelli Fernandes, 1818), 213.

²⁷ "Kerkuk," in: Gaetano Moroni, *Dizionario di erudizione storico-ecclesiastica da S. Pietro sino ai nostri giorni*, (Venezia: Tip. Emiliana, 1846), 16-17.

²⁸ [Baron] F. de Beaujour, *Voyage militaire dans l'Empire othoman, ou Description de ses frontières et de ses principales défenses, soit naturelles, soit artificielles...*, vol. II (Paris: F. Didot, 1829), 79.

It is composed of three distinct portions, each of a considerable size.²⁹ In the principal one of these, is a high and extensive mound, artificially shaped on the inclined slope, like that of Arbela, before described. On this, stands a fortified town, rather than a castle, within the walls of which are included a great number of dwellings, and the minarets of three mosques are seen to rise above the rest of the buildings from below. In this, it was said, none but Moslems were privileged to reside, and the number of these was considered to be five or six thousand, but probably overrated.

The second portion, though inferior, in consequence, as to the rank of those who reside in it, and its importance as a place of defense, is yet by far the most extensive and the most populous of the three. This is spread out on the plain around the foot of the citadel, as the elevated portion is called, and in it are the principal khans, coffee-houses, bazaars, etc.; though the minarets of only two mosques are seen, as the inhabitants are not all Mohammedan, but contain a mixture of Armenians, Nestorians, and Syrian Christians. The population of this portion amounts to about ten thousand souls, and the burying-ground below is as extensive, in the space that it covers, as a moderate-sized village.

The third portion is distant half a mile from the two former ones, and it was at a house in this that we had halted to sleep away the burning heat of the day. This is smaller and more scattered than either of the other parts of the town, and cannot add more than a thousand to the gross number of the population of Kerkook, which may, therefore, upon the whole, be nearly fifteen thousand.

This was the first place at which we had seen any trees since leaving Mousul, and here the date-tree was more numerous than any other. I heard a great deal, at this place, of the springs of naphtha, which are in the neighborhood of Kerkook, and of the earth from which issues flames, which are both looked on by the inhabitants as prodigies, known nowhere else in the world, and marks of God's peculiar favor to their soil. They are said to be chiefly among the rocky hills through which we had passed at midnight on our way from Altoun Kupree to this place, so that I had no opportunity of seeing them.

In the examination of the countries bordering on the Tigris and Euphrates, after passing the Zab, and still speaking of the course of the latter towards the sea, D'Anville says, the country adjoining to the left or eastern bank is called Garm, in which he thinks it is plain to discover that

²⁹ Rauwolff speaks of it thus: "After the Sabbath of the Jews, my companions, was over, we went on again, and came the twenty-sixth of December to Carcuck, a glorious fine city, lying in a plain, in a very fertile country; at four miles distance is another that lieth on an ascent, whither we also traveled, my companions having business in both of them, and so we spent two days in them before we were ready to go on again."— p. 162.

of *Garamaei*, which is the name of a country placed by Ptolemy in Assyria, near the middle of its whole extent from north to south.³⁰ In my inquiries after this name, I could gain no satisfactory assurance of its being applied to the country here, though those of whom I made such inquiries could only inform me of what was popularly known, and knew nothing of history or geography. It is probable, however, that the *Kark*, or *Carcha*, of Ammianus Marcellinus, and Simocattus, was the present *Kark*, near Samarra, on the banks of the Tigris, to the southward of this; and that the *Carcha* nearer to Nineveh, spoken of by Masius and Ortelius, from which the former was distinct, was the present *Kerkook*, which is generally thought to be the *Demetrias* of Strabo, and the *Corcura* of Ptolemy. The three divisions of the town as it now stands are, however, large enough to admit a belief that it might have been a metropolitan see in later times, and have given its name to the district in earlier ones, if it be still thought to be the *Garm* of Assemani, as it is still the largest town throughout the plains to the east of the Tigris; while, on the other hand, the appearance of its castle, seated on an elevated mound, is sufficient to induce a belief of its having been always a fortified post of some importance, and with equal probability a military station of the Romans during the existence of their power here. At all events, little doubt can remain of this *Kerkook* being the place intended to be identified with these ancient stations by the French geographer, on a comparison of the details which he gives of its local features with those which actually exist near this spot.³¹ Tibullus, in his *Elegies*,³² speaks of the territory of *Erec*, one of the cities founded by

³⁰ "Le pays adjacent à la rive gauche, ou orientale, est appelé *Garm*, et ce nom conserve évidemment celui de *Garamaei*, que Ptolomée place dans l'Assyrie, vers le milieu de son étendue du nord au midi. Dans M. Assemani, *Garm* est un district dépendant de Maphrein, résidant à Tekrit, et il est fait mention d'un métropolitain de *Garm*—cette métropole est appelé *Beth so loce* (sive Seleucia) autrement *Kark*; et *Carcha*, dans le récit de la marche de Jovien, par Ammien; *Carcha* dans Simocatte, dont la leçon est préférable, et qui se lit de même à l'égard d'une ville située également en Assyrie, mais voisine de Ninive, comme il en est parlé dans Masius, *in libro Mosis de Paradiso*, et dont Ortelius fait mention."—*D'Anville sur l'Euphrate et le Tigre*, p. 95.

³¹ "Dans le voisinage de cette ville, il sort des rochers, de l'huile de napthe, qui est reçue dans un espèce de puits; et je trouve dans une relation manuscrite d'un voyage au Levant par le Père Emanuel de St. Albert, visiteur des Missions de son ordre des Carmes, et depuis Evêque *in partibus*, qu'en remuant la terre aux environs, il en sort des bluettes. On lit dans la Géographie Turque, qu'en creusant la terre sur un tertre appelé *Khor-kour-baba*, il en sort du feu qui fait faire flamme, et que des vases posés dans des trous, qu'on y voie, bouillir l'eau dont en les a remplis; en ajoutant, qu'on éteint la chaleur de ces trous en les comblant de terre."—*D'Anville sur l'Euphrate et le Tigre*, p. 107.

³² Lib. iv. *Memoires de l'Academie des Inscriptions*, tome xxvii. p. 30.

*Nimrod on the banks of the Tigris, and in the land of Shinar, as producing springs of naphtha, which the poet calls the "combustible waters of the land of Erec," alluding, probably, to some known account in his own time of these springs, as the geography of Babylonia and Assyria must have been always popularly known to the learned among the Romans, after the histories of Alexander's expedition into the East were written.*³³

*On my return to the house at which the Tartars had put up, I found a large party assembled, who seemed to derive great entertainment from the antics of a dancing bear. This was a large white shaggy animal, which had been brought by the Koords, who exhibited it, from the snow-clad mountains of their own country, at a distance of four days' journey to the eastward. They said that these animals were very rare among their hills, and the liberality with which the spectators rewarded their shewing [sic!] it, seemed to imply that it was a creature still less frequently seen here.*³⁴

*From the report of my guide, corrected by some confronting testimonies of others whom I questioned on the same subject, I learnt that there were, in each of the three portions of which Kerkook is composed, ten mosques, twenty-four coffee-houses, ten khans, and two public baths; and that the number of Christian places of worship, of different sects, was either four or five. The town is subject to the Pasha of Bagdad, and its environs are sufficiently productive to yield him a respectable tribute. The governor is one of his own immediate dependants, and attached to him are just a sufficient number of soldiers only to form a bodyguard for his personal defense.*³⁵

In mid 19th century the British surgeon and geologist William Ainsworth surveyed the geographical features of Kurdistan and its vicinity for the Royal

³³ Naphtha is mentioned as abounding in Babylonia, and was said to run in the manner of liquid bitumen. The affinity between it and fire is insisted on, and it was thus, says Pliny, that Medea burnt her husband's concubine. Her girdle, being anointed by it, was caught by the fire when she approached the altars to sacrifice.— *Plin. Nat. Hist.* book ii. c. 105.

³⁴ Wild beasts of almost all the larger species were found in this country in the time of the elder Cyrus; and the hunting of them formed an important part of the education of the princes and nobles of Persia. — *Cyropaedia*, book i.

³⁵ J. S. Buckingham, *Travels in Mesopotamia. Including a journey from Aleppo, across the Euphrates to Orfah, (the Ur of the Chaldees,) through the plains of the Turkomans, to Diarbekr, in Asia Minor; from thence to Mardin, on the borders of the great desert, and by the Tigris to Mousul and Bagdad: with researches on the ruins of Babylon, Nineveh, Arbela, Ctesiphon, and Seleucia*, (London: Henry Colburn, 1827), 336-339.

Geographical Society.³⁶ His description of the geology of Southern Kurdistan is as follows:

[The region] presents fresh-water limestones, gypsum, calcareous gypsum, and sands and sandstones, with bitumen, naphtha, sulphur, and salt deposits; and they contain the burning fountains of Abú Géger or Kerkúk Bábá, at an elevation of 543 feet."³⁷ The geologist analyses in detail "the character of the limestone deposit at the Abú Géger of the Arabs, the Korkúk Bábá of the Turks, both meaning the father of boiling, a place remarkable for the exhibition of flames, which appear to have been in existence from the most remote periods, as they are noticed by Strabo. The limestone at this point has entirely superseded the marles and gypsum, and the fires occur in this formation in a little central depression upon the summit of the ridge. The strata do not preserve the general dip, but incline more or less from the same point as a common centre, leaving no distinct anticlinal line..."³⁸

Lieutenant-Colonel J. Shiel, second in command of a British military mission to Persia and later H.M. Minister at Tehran remarks:

Three miles before reaching Kerkúk we passed several naphtha pits, which diffused a disagreeable odour to a considerable distance. In Kerkúk, naphtha is used for lights and fire. Kerkúk is a large open town in a plain, and, like all the towns in this part of the world, is in great part in ruins: plague, famine, and, I believe, cholera have almost destroyed it. Near to it is a fort built on a mound, not very high but steep. It is said to have no manufactures except a coarse calico, but there is a considerable trade in gall-nuts, which are brought from the Kurdistán mountains. The river of Kerkúk, called the Khàseh Chái, was now dry: here we saw, for the first time, date trees, which would have reminded us, if it were necessary, that we were now in a very hot climate. The inhabitants are Arabs and Osmànli, with some Christians and Jews, but no Kurds. The women wear immense turbans, which has a very strange effect to a person not accustomed to see females in the East with that head-dress."³⁹

³⁶ "Instructions of the Council of the Royal Geographical Society of London addressed to the Leaders of the Expedition for Exploring in Kurdistàn. 1st June, 1838." *The Journal of the Royal Geographical Society of London* (London), vol. IX, 1839, part II (John Murray), pp. XIII-XXII.

³⁷ W. F. Ainsworth, *Researches in Assyria, Babylonia, and Chaldaea; forming part of the labours of the Euphrates Expedition* (London: J.W. Parker, 1838), 27.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 242.

³⁹ J. Lieut.-Col. Shiel, "Notes on a Journey from Tabriz, through Kurdistán, via Vân, Bitlis, Se'ert and Erbil, to Suleimàniyeh, in July and August, 1836," *The Journal of the Royal Geographical Society of London*, vol. VIII (1838): 100.

The German scholar Carl Ritter based his detailed research on Kirkuk taking into account the descriptions made by some modern travelers (Niebuhr, Shiel, Ker Porter and Ainsworth):

Of the city lying at the bottom of the steep hill very little has remained. According to Niebuhr the hill is a citadel with a strong garrison. It was conquered by the Shah Nadir with little effort though only after twenty-four days of a continual siege. The place is dirty. There are three mosques with minarets, in one of them there are the graves of the prophets Daniel, Mishael, Hananiah and Azariah. At the time of Niebuhr forty families of Chaldeans and Nestorians lived there and considered themselves Uniates. (...)

The son of a Genoese admiral lived in Kirkuk for a long time where he ordered many buildings. His father, Cicala,⁴⁰ had been kept prisoner in Constantinople, had become a Muslim and later obtained the title of Pasha with the famous name Cighala-Zade⁴¹

Ker Porter found Kirkuk with many inhabitants, from ten thousand to twelve thousand Turks, Kurds, Arabs, Armenians and Jews, and considers it one of the most important cities of South Kurdistan. At the time of Niebuhr many watermills were working to supply Baghdad with flour in exchange of dates and other goods. Ker Porter stated that a large quantity of wine and arak are produced, and much of the liquid is drunk despite the presence of an Islamic population.⁴²

In this regard, the Cicala deserves attention. In the 17th century, the Roman traveler and great orientalist, Pietro Della Valle, reported that during his journey to Baghdad, he was a guest in a large villa belonging to Mahmud Pasha “twice Pasha of Baghdad.” He is nicknamed Cigal'Ogli, meaning son of Cicala, because he is the son of that Cicala, famous renegade, who was a sea-captain.⁴³ According to Longrigg, “Mahmud, son of the great Cicala, [...] Mahmud Jighalzadah was twice to be ruler of Baghdad, and is remembered in the village -name of Mahmudiyyah which he founded a stage south of Baghdad.”⁴⁴ The father of Mahmud Pasha of

⁴⁰ Originally “Cicalla.”

⁴¹ Originally “Tschigalade.”

⁴² C. Ritter, “Die Erdkunde im Verhältnis zur Natur und zur Geschichte des Menschen oder allgemeine vergleichende Geographie als sichere Grundlage des Studiums und Unterrichts in physikalischen und historischen Wissenschaften,” *Die Erdkunde von Asien*, Berlin, IX, (1840): 553.

⁴³ P. Della Valle, *Viaggi di Pietro Della Valle il Pellegrino descritti da lui medesimo in lettere familiari*, vol. I (Brighton: G. Gancia, 1843), 379.

⁴⁴ S. H. Longrigg, *Four centuries of Modern Iraq*, (Beirut: Lebanon Bookshop, 1968), 36.

Kirkuk was Cighala-Zade Yusuf Sinan Pasha (c. 1545-1605), also known as Caghal-oghlu, and belonged to the Genoese house of Cicala. He was born at Messina in Sicily and received the Christian name Scipione Cicala. Captured at sea by Muslim corsairs in 1561, he was taken to Istanbul where he became a Muslim and was trained in the Imperial Palace. Through his marriage to a great-grand-daughter of the Sultan, he found himself in a privileged position of wealth, high office and protection at the Porte. He was Agha of the Janissaries (1575-1578), Beglerbeg of Van (1583), and of Baghdad (1586), of Erzurum (1590), and High Admiral of the Ottoman fleet (1591-1595). He accompanied Sultan Mehmed III on the Hungarian campaign of 1596, and was the Beglerbeg of Syria in 1597. He assumed unsuccessful command (1604) of the eastern front in the war between the Ottomans and the Persians. He died in Diyarbakir (1605) where his son Mahmud was governor.⁴⁵

Rev. Horatio Southgate, a contemporary of Ritter, has the following comments regarding Kirkuk:

The place presents the same external appearance with that of Arbela, which we passed the next day. A part of it lies upon the flat top of a hill, between one hundred and one hundred and fifty feet high, and about a mile and a half in circumference. This portion is enclosed in walls, and the sides of the hill are too steep to be ascended excepting by oblique paths. The rest of the town, which is by far the greater part, lies in the plain below, on the South and East sides of the hill. These eminences, which are very numerous in this region, and as far West as Mardin, are doubtless artificial, and were constructed both for the sake of greater coolness and greater security. An officer at Arbela informed me that the hill on which that city stands had been found to be composed of masses of brickwork. Externally, however, they are all covered with earth. As places of strength, they are not unimportant. Mohammed Ali Mirza of Kermanshah, in his invasion of this country, sat down for ten days before Kerkuk, and then went away despairing of taking it. I did not ascend to the citadel, but the part of the town below contains about 15,000 souls, among whom is a large number of Jews. There are also about fifty families of Chaldeans in the place, who were the first of which I had heard since leaving Bagdad.

We rode through the bazaars, of which only that for the sellers of cloth was covered, and resuming our Northerly direction, went off over the aforementioned sulphur. At the end of an hour's ride, we turned from our road again to visit a spot where, I had long since been informed, fire might be seen issuing from the ground in several places. After a few minutes'

⁴⁵ V. J. Parry, "Cighâla-Zâde," *The Encyclopaedia of Islam*, vol. II, 1965, 33-34; G. Benzoni, "Cicala, Scipione," *Dizionario Biografico degli Italiani*, vol. X, (Roma: Istituto della Enciclopedia Italiana, 1981), 320-340.

ride we surmounted a slight elevation, and saw, in a little hollow before us, flames bursting from a dozen small holes in the earth. The holes were about six inches in depth, and evidently excavated by the hand of man. The flame, as we at once discovered by the appearance and the smell, was burning sulphur. On turning up the ground in other spots, the whole soil seemed deeply impregnated with it, and, on opening holes near the burning ones, new flames at once burst forth. The fire was doubtless kindled in the first place by accident, and is kept burning above the surface only by opening fresh holes. There were many old excavations, where the sulphur had burned out, and the residue appeared to be pure lime.⁴⁶

It is worth mentioning that A. Clément had lived for a decade in Baghdad where he made the acquaintance of several important Kurdish personalities. With such favorable connections, he visited Southern Kurdistan in 1856. In a paper he writes:

The chief town of the Pashaliq of Shahrizur, Kerkut, is located to the extreme eastern border of the desert on the southern slope of the first hill to be crossed in order to penetrate into Kurdistan. This is the gate into this country from the nearby territory of Iraq-Arabi.

The large governmental district lying between Bassora and Jazirah and including Kurdistan, from Luristan to the Pashaliq of Rovanduz, is the largest province of the Empire, if not for importance, at least as territorial extension.

Kerkut is divided into two parts. The upper city, or the fortress, nowadays surrounded by walls, but in such bad condition that is no longer used for defence. Streets are dirty, narrow, and badly paved. All houses are built with hard stones covered by a strong stratum of plaster with great humidity inside. If compared to those of Asian Turkey, they only have a storey under the ground floor, and they do not have but a few windows on looking the street. Ornaments are set in the interior courts.

The low-lying part of the town is much larger, with bazars where trades flourish. At present no ancient walls surround the town. The streets are irregular in shape and spacious, with water drainage and two leaning pavements. It has two or three large squares. Here houses are built lesser well than in the upper town. Their basement is in stone and plaster, the height of a person. On the first floor, going upstairs they are made only in plaster, or materials mixed with gravel.

⁴⁶ H. Southgate, *Narrative of a tour through Armenia, Kurdistan, Persia and Mesopotamia—with observations on the conditions of Mohammedanism and Christianity in those countries*, vol. II, (London: Tilt and Bogue, New York: D. Appleton and Co., 1840), 208-209.

At a quarter of a league from the western city, the seraglio of the governor is located at the entry of a suburb where the richest inhabitants and the main officers live. The barracks are situated next door the palace.

The Kerkut population (upper and down city, suburb) but not including the garrison military men, reaches about twenty five thousand people of whom three quarters are Kurds. The governor Ali Pasha could make himself respected and loved for his energy, liberal ideas and goodness. He used to have a superb white pelican with him, following him like a dog that ate those pieces offered by his lord's hand with pleasure. The Israelites admit that prophet Daniel's grave is in Kirkuk, but nobody could give direction about the probable place of his tomb in the city.

We stayed two whole days in Kerkut, that we left on the 15th in order to enter Kurdistan through no beaten tracks but only outlined by the natives. Once left the valley and engaged in the mountains of Kurdistan and Taurus, the travel can be made only by horse or on foot. The use of coaches or carts is unknown and would be impossible in such bad routes, where the horsemen often have difficulties when they intercross.⁴⁷

According to Tinco Martinus Lycklama a Nijeholt, a member of the Geographical Society in Paris, who visited Middle East from 1865 to 1868:

Kirkuk is ancient. Some writers (Olivier, Ritter) consider it the Mennis of Quintus Curtius, city where Alexander made a stop in his journey from Arbela to Babylon. Other writers are of d'Anville's opinion who identifies the city with the Kerkura of Ptolemy [VI.1.fol. 146]... At present Kirkuk has from two to three hundred Christians and a hundred Jewish families, out of a population of approximately twelve or thirteen thousand souls. The walls surrounded the hill [...] have an ancient character perhaps Assyrian. In an ancient church, turned into a mosque there is a tomb that is said to be of the famous Thomas-Ghair, general of the king Shapur.⁴⁸ A dozen churches dating back to the early times of Christianity have been turned into mosques. Besides the church to which the memory of the prophet Daniel is related, there is another one that tradition reports it contains the grave of the Holy Virgin Mary. These different monuments built in stone have nothing worth being visited. A little stream Toussi-Teshai flows through Kirkuk. On the other side of the city there is the Serai the palace of the Governor apparently simple but large and comfortable.

⁴⁷ A. Clément, "Excursion dans le Kourdistan Ottoman Méridional de Kerkout à Ravandouz," *Le Globe. Journal Géographique organe de la Société de Géographie de Genève pour ses Mémoires et Bulletin*, t. V, fasc. 3, (1866): 198-200.

⁴⁸ Thomas-Ghair whose real name is said to be Tahmazgard.

[...] A hill shows a small crater, called Baba Gurgur, from where fires come out. Nearby there are rich naphtha wells from where you obtain the bitumen needed to cover the walls of Babylon and the other Assyrian cities.⁴⁹

Tahmazgard or Tohm Iazdgerd, commander in Nisibis, was sent to Karkha de Bêth Slôkh by Sassanid king Yazdgerd II to perpetrate the persecutions against Christians. The way in which one of the Christian women, Shirin, and her two sons met their death so touched the King's officer in charge of the proceedings that he too confessed faith in Christ and on 25 September 446 was himself crucified. Tahmazgard became the main patron of the church of Tahmazgard built around 470 in Kirkuk. This sanctuary was destroyed by an explosion in 1918 because it was used as an ammunition dump by the Turks. In its reconstruction in 1923, the original building plan was not observed.⁵⁰

In the first half of the twentieth century, the British officer E. B. Soane gives perhaps the most detailed and remarkable description of the city:

Kirkuk is famous for Turkomans, fruit, and crude oil, all of which abound. The town, which must have a population of at least 15,000, is one of the trilingual towns of the Kurdistan borders. Turkish, Arabic, and Kurdish are spoken by everyone, the first and last being used indifferently in the bazaars. Itself a Turkoman town, to its south and west are nomad Arabs, and to its east the country of the Hamavand Kurds. Turkish power is very evident here. Being near to Bagdad—seven days and possessing a Turkish-speaking population, it is in a position to supply a large number of youths to the military schools, which, half-educating the lads, turn them out idle and vicious, and incapable of existing without a uniform. The result is that they all obtain some post, telegraph, police, or customs, or join the ranks of the superfluous and unattached army “officers,” and return to their native town to lounge in the innumerable tea-houses, and earn a living by tyrannizing over whatever unfortunate their position enables them to blackmail and persecute. Consequently Kirkuk is full of

⁴⁹ M. Lycklama a Nijeholt, *Voyage en Russie, au Caucase et en Perse, — dans la Mésopotamie, le Kurdistan, la Syrie, la Palestine et la Turquie exécuté pendant les années 1865, 1866, 1867 et 1868, par T.M. chevalier Lycklama a Nijeholt*, vol. IV (Paris: A. Bertrand, Amsterdam: C.L. van Langenhuysen, 1872-1875), 86-87.

⁵⁰ J. M. Fiey O.P., *op. cit.*, 1964, p. 215; J. Labourt, *Le Christianisme dans l'Empire perse sous la dynastie sassanide (224-632)*, (Paris: Librairie Victor Lecoffre, 1904), 126-127; R. E. Waterfield, *Christians in Persia*, (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1973), 26; A. Bugnini, *La Chiesa in Iran*, (Roma: Edizioni Vincenziane, 1981), 52; J. M. Fiey O.P., *op. cit.*, 1968, p. 51; G. Hoffmann, *op. cit.*, p. 50-51, 267; Ferdinand Justi, *Iranisches Namenbuch*, (Marburg: N. G. Elwert, 1895), 319, on Tahm-Yazdagerd.

uniforms containing the scum of the town, often drunken brutes—who sap the life of the place, driven to any length of rascality to gain a living, for they are usually unpaid. Despite this plethora of police, I was unmolested, probably the composite crowd of the Kirkuk bazaar makes a stranger too inconspicuous for their attention.

The architecture of the place is purely Arab; the Persian influence noticeable in Bagdad, Mosul; Diarbekr, and other cities of Mesopotamia and Syria is not seen here. Solid stone buildings of no beauty, a few mean mosques and minarets, very solid, but with no ornamentation, and an immense arched bazaar, make the architectural features of the place. The Turkoman population, or rather the commercial section of it, compares very favorably with the people of Bagdad and Mosul. A stranger does not meet with great consideration, nor is he swindled right and left, nor annoyed, as among the Arabs of the greater cities. Purchasing food and other things in the bazaars, I found everywhere an astonishing honesty and rough goodwill that wins the heart of a stranger, and this, notwithstanding the fact that I was taken for a Persian, and a Shi'a Muhammadan, with whom the Sunni has very little sympathy.

I can quote an example which shows how this hospitable quality often appeared. [...]

Besides the Turkomans and other Muhammadans there is a large number of Chaldeans and of Syrian Christians, natives of Bagdad. A few Armenians are also there, employed in Government and commercial affairs, but they are natives of Diarbekr or Armenia. The Chaldean settlement is of considerable antiquity, having migrated here, according to their own traditions, during the time of Alp Arslan, in the 11th century. If Kirkuk is, as the natives assert, a remnant of the Seljuq kings, this is possible, and perhaps even probable. Unlike the Chaldeans of Mosul, they have not forgotten the Syriac character, and while they speak only Turkish, employ these characters in writing among themselves. It is only the Chaldeans who are found living among the Kurds, who have retained their language, both written and spoken. In Mosul, where it is reckoned part of a good education to know it, it has no generality of use, and one has to go to the villages to hear it spoken.

There is a church in Kirkuk administered by priests from Mosul; the Chaldeans are, like nearly all in Turkish territory, Roman Catholics, for the old Chaldean Church died under the unscrupulous assaults of the Roman Catholics, who pursued a Machiavellian policy in bringing over the old Church to Papal allegiance, a change which has been for nothing but the worse.⁵¹

⁵¹ Lest this statement seem unwarrantable, I beg to support it by the opinion of the Chaldeans themselves. They are in most cases fully aware of the circumstances under which their forbears—and contemporaries—became absorbed into the Roman

In Kirkuk they enjoy great freedom from persecution, despite the periodical efforts of Muslim priests to incite ill feeling against them. Their presence is too necessary to the well being of the town to make a massacre anything but a catastrophe for the Mohammedan traders, who have been led by their integrity and capability to place great faith and confidence, and often to deposit large sums of money with them. In these qualities of honesty, and ability for getting on with Muslims amicably without conceding a particle of their behavior as strict Christians, they contrast very forcibly with the Armenians, Syrians, and Arab Christians.

They are distinguishable by their head-dress and shirt-sleeves alone, for they wear the long, striped tunic reaching to the heels, and the zouave jacket or "salta," which, however, they do not ornament with scroll-work in gold and silver as do the Kurds.

Their shirt-sleeves are right round the wrist, and do not appear below the long sleeves of their jackets; while their head-dress, a blue handkerchief round a skull-cap, is worn broad and flat, embracing the head closely, not standing out as do the turbans of the Mohammedans.

Up to recent years they still displayed a partiality for light yellow striped garments, a relic doubtless of the choice of color forced upon them in the early Middle Ages by the Khalifas of Baghdad, who commanded all unbelievers to wear a distinctive dress, usually honey colored.

In Kirkuk there is a large colony of Jews, the first of the hosts of that race that exist from here eastward all through Kurdistan to Sina of Persian Kurdistan and Hamadan.

It is thought possible that these are direct descendants of the Jews of the third captivity,⁵² whom Nebuchadnezzar carried away to Babylonia in the 6th century B.C., just after the fall of the Assyrian Empire.

They use the Aramaic character, and in Kurdistan speak Hebrew, a remarkable fact being that the Chaldeans of Sina in Kurdistan and the Jews of the same place, while survivals of different epochs, speak almost exactly the same ancient Semitic dialect, a conclusive proof, were any needed, of the Semitic origin of the Chaldeans.

In Kirkuk, as in all Kurdistan, the chief occupation of the inhabitants is that of drapers and mercers, the cotton cloth and print trade is entirely in

Catholic Church, and there are very few of them whom I ever heard express any sentiment upon the matter save deep regret, the more so that they know now that it was possible to have the much-prized education the Roman Catholics supply without a disintegration of their Church, for the Archbishop of Canterbury's mission has taught them that.

⁵² "In the third year of the reign of Jehoiakim king of Judah came Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon unto Jerusalem, and besieged it. And the Lord gave Jehoiakim king of Judah into his hand, with part of the vessels of the house of God, and he carried them into the land of Shinar." Daniel 1: 1-2.

their hands; in fact so far have their co-religionists of Bagdad progressed, that the cottons of Kurdistan are supplied from Manchester by Bagdad Jews settled there.

Kirkuk is thus a collection of all the races of eastern Turkey, Jew, Arab, Syrian, Armenian, Chaldean, Turk, Turkoman, and Kurd, and consequently enjoys considerable freedom from fanaticism, besides being strongly governed by a Turkish governor who possesses sufficient military strength to keep in order almost every element, the Kurds being the only difficult section of the population, with their contempt for all rule and order that does not emanate from their own khans. Unfortunately this excellent state of affairs does not extend for more than a mile or two outside the town, where Arab and Kurd roam at will, defying all.

In the bazaars one occasionally sees a knot of swarthy fellows, very ragged, speaking a dialect only the traveler in southwestern Persia can recognize. These are the Faili Lurs, Persian subjects, whose presence warrants the institution of a Persian Consul here.⁵³

In 1937, the Italian traveler and writer Arnaldo Cipolla describes the oil-wells and the town of Kirkuk. “*All the religions are represented in Kirkuk, a meeting place of different races: Chaldean churches, Nestorian patriarchs, synagogues, mosques and even devil-worshippers, Yazidis from the mountains separating the desert of Syria from Iraq.*”⁵⁴

The British officer Cecil John Edmonds writes the following detailed description:

The city of Kirkuk is built partly on the great rectangular mound that rises some 120 feet above the level of the plain and partly at its foot on both banks of the broad shingly bed of the Khasa Chai. The western half of the mound was largely in ruins and the leading Muslim families were established in houses of comparatively modern construction in the newer parts below; but the Christian quarter on the eastern side was still inhabited and in good repair, with several large houses rising, like the walls of a fortified city, from the very verge of the steep slope. Of the many mosques, takyas, shrines and other monuments in the town I need mention here only two, the reputed tomb of Daniel and an ancient octagonal tower dating from Seljuq times. The tradition regarding the former is of course connected with the ‘burning fiery furnace’, the perpetual fires of petroleum gas in a depression called Baba Gurgur about two miles

⁵³ E.B. Soane, *To Mesopotamia and Kurdistan in disguise, with historical Notices of the Kurdish Tribes and the Chaldeans of Kurdistan*, (London: John Murray, 1926) (II), 120-124.

⁵⁴ Arnaldo Cipolla, *Sino al limite segreto del mondo. Viaggi terrestri ed aerei nel Vicino Oriente, Iran, Afghanistan, India*, (Firenze, R. Bemporad & F., 1937), 54-55.

north-west of the town and near the shallow hand-dug wells of the primitive oil industry that had flourished here since the days of Herodotus and earlier. The second, according to the inscription, was erected in honor of a noble lady named Bughday Khanum, but was now chiefly valued by the occupants of the neighboring houses as offering a convenient flat surface on which to plaster their cakes of dung to dry for fuel. Kirkuk became definitely a part of the Ottoman dominions under the first of the frontier treaties, that of 1555, but it was temporarily occupied by the Persians on at least two occasions during the wars of the next two centuries, in 1623-30 by Shah Abbas and in 1743-6 by Nadir.

The population at the time of which I am writing numbered perhaps about 25,000, of whom the great majority were Turkomans and about one-quarter Kurds, with smaller colonies of Arabs, Christians and Jews. In the eighteenth century Kirkuk was the headquarters of the Ottoman province (*ayálat*) of Shahrizur, comprising the modern liwas of Kirkuk, Arbil and (nominally) Sulaimani, under a *Mutasallim* appointed by Baghdad; with the reforms of Midhat Pasha, Wali of Baghdad from 1869 to 1872, the name Shahrizur was given to the *sanjaq* of Kirkuk (corresponding to the present liwas of Kirkuk and Arbil) while the historical Shahrizur remained outside in the new *sanjaq* of Sulaimani; the Mosul *wilayat* was formed in 1879; Kirkuk remained an important garrison town and, for reasons of language and the racial composition of the population, an important recruiting center for civil servants and gendarmes on whom the Ottoman administration could rely.

The leading aristocratic families either were in fact Turks or, even if their origins were Kurdish, nevertheless considered themselves to be such. The most important of these families were: the *Naftchizadas* who, as their name implies, owned and exploited the ancient oil seepages; the *Ya'qubizadas*, landowners, who were alleged to be of Kurdish Zangana origin; and the *Qirdars*, who were both land-owners and merchants. In addition there were several soldiers and civil servants who, though not members of the old and wealthy families, had reached high office in the Ottoman service and had returned to their native province after the dismemberment of the Empire. The leading Kurd was Saiyid Ahmad-i Khanaqah, a member of the Barzinja family, but unlike the majority a *Naqshbandi*; he kept open house at this well-endowed *takya* and not unnaturally exercised great influence over his peasant compatriots, who formed the largest racial group in the liwa as a whole.

Under the Sasanian Empire Kirkuk was a celebrated centre of the Nestorians, the seat of the Metropolitan Bishop of Bêth Garmê. This ancient community was now represented by about 150 families of Chaldeans, most of whom, as I have mentioned, lived in one of the older quarters on the mound. They were headed by the Metropolitan, Stefan Jibri, whose see still bears the ancient name, and by three prosperous

Christian merchants and land-owners, Minas Gharib, Qustantin, and Toma Hindi, who enjoyed considerable esteem; the first was a member of the elective Administrative Council, a body which had had important functions under the Turks but which tended to lose its independence under the more centralized administration of Iraq. Until the war the community could boast of having preserved the most ancient Christian church in the world, the fifth-century Church of the Martyrs commemorating the victims of the persecutions of the Sasanian Yazdigird II (A.D. 438-57); used by the Turks as an ammunition dump it was blown up and completely destroyed when they retreated in 1918.

The Jewish community was humbler than the Christian, being composed chiefly of traders in a small way. They were headed by the Rabbi and a merchant named Ishaq Ifrayim who, later on, was for a time Jewish Member of Parliament for Mosul. The head of the liwa finance department, Uzair Efendi, an able and scrupulously honest official, was also a local Jew.⁵⁵

The Origin of Christian and Jewish Communities in the Region

To conclude, the presence of Christian and Jewish communities in the region is further justification that there is and was a strong appeal among European and Middle Eastern people of the same faith to visit the remnants of Kirkuk in present day Kurdistan.

If you consider the location of Kirkuk on the map, with Assyria to the North, Babylon to the South, Media to the East and the Arab desert to the West, it is no surprise that it represents a pluralistic city in terms of its population.

From the beginning of the Christian period (1st and 2nd century), the Arabs settled in the West, and the Kurds and Turkomans shared the East.⁵⁶ Christianity spread in the city with the arrival of the apostles Addai and Mari.⁵⁷ Like Judaism, the Christian religion was a considerable force in the Sassanian Empire (226-651 A.D.) and its influence was concentrated in Iraq. By the 3rd century this region, with the inclusion of northern Mesopotamia and the region around Susa, had been divided into a series of dioceses, with Episcopal sees at Sinjar, Arbela, Kirkuk, Hulwan and others.⁵⁸ Assemani reports that Beth-Garmai (in Syriac sources the

⁵⁵ C. J. Edmonds, *Kurds, Turks and Arabs. Politics, Travel and Research in North-Eastern Iraq 1919-1925*, (London: Oxford University Press, 1957), 264-267.

⁵⁶ J. M. Fiey O.P., *op. cit.*, 1968, 16.

⁵⁷ J. M. Fiey O.P., *op. cit.*, 1964, 194.

⁵⁸ E. Yarshater (edited by), *The Cambridge history of Iran. Volume 3 (1). The Seleucid, Parthian and Sasanian periods*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), 499.

province of Kirkuk) was not sovereign but under the rule of Persia.⁵⁹ Rivalry between Persians and Romans had a strong impact on Christians. Under the rule of Yazdgard II, Christians were persecuted and twelve thousand of them were martyred in Kirkuk in 445.⁶⁰

According to the British historian Percy Sykes, in the second half of the 5th century “persecution spread apparently to Mesopotamia, and we read that at Karka, west of Hulwan, John the Metropolitan was put to death with thousands of other Christians. Karka to-day is known as Karkuk or Kirkuk, and it is of no small historical interest to find that every year a solemn assembly is still convened to commemorate the death of these martyrs, at the little church on the hillock outside the town which was dyed with their blood.”⁶¹

Saint Anastasius was a Persian monk, martyred in 628 under Chosroes II, whose feast occurs in many medieval calendars and martyrologies on 22 January. His body was buried at the monastery of St. Sergius near Bethsaloe (Kirkuk), the place of his martyrdom. When news of Anastasius' sufferings and death reached his own monastic community in Jerusalem, there arose a great desire to acquire the martyr's mortal remains. These remains were obtained covertly, since the monks of St. Sergius were unwilling to relinquish possession of the relics - and brought back in triumph to Palestine, first to Caesarea and then to Jerusalem, where they arrived on 2nd November, 631. By the middle of the seventh century (probably already by 645), the head of Anastasius was being venerated in Rome. The monastery of “ad Aquas Salvias,” where the relic of St. Anastasius was kept and venerated, soon became an honored place of pilgrimage.⁶²

The Chaldean patriarch John VIII Hormizd converted the Christian population of Kirkuk to Catholicism between 1767 and 1780.⁶³ As a mirror image

⁵⁹ “Nihil vero propius divi potuit: Verum tamen non est: nam Beth-Garme non urbs quaedam erat, sed regio Persis subjecta...” Joseph Simonius Assemani, *op. cit.*, vol. I, 1719-1728, 177.

⁶⁰ J. M. Fiey O.P., *op.cit.*, 1964, 211-213. Under Yazdgard II (439-457), religious fanaticism culminated in the attempt forcibly to convert Christian Armenia, the Zoroastrian clergy having an important share in this project and in widespread persecution of all non-Zoroastrian religions, including the Jewish minority. See Ehsan Yarshater (edited by), *The Cambridge history of Iran. Volume 3 (2). The Seleucid, Parthian and Sasanian periods*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), 942.

⁶¹ P. Sykes, *A History of Persia*, (London: MacMillan and Co., 1951), 435-436.

⁶² Carmela Viricillo Franklin, Paul Meyvaert, “Has Bede's Version of the ‘Passio S. Anastasii’ come down to us in ‘BHL’ 408?”, *Analecta Bollandiana*, vol. 100, (1982): 373-400; B. Flusin, *Saint Anastase le Perse et l'histoire de la Palestine au début du VIIe siècle*, (Paris: CNRS, 1992), vols. 2.

⁶³ J. M. Fiey, *op. cit.*, 1968, 48.

of the Biblical world, the Eastern Christians played an important role during many centuries.

The Jews of Kirkuk

There was a small colony of Jewish merchants in Kirkuk, but it disappeared since the foundation of Israel (1948) when almost the whole Kurdistan and Iraqi Jewish community (about 120,000 people) emigrated to the new State (1950-51). It is thought they were the descendants of the Jews who were deported to Babylon by Nebuchadnezzar after the capture of Jerusalem (586 B.C.) and they continued to speak Aramaic.⁶⁴

According to Jewish sources, Kirkuk was visited by the Yemenite Yihya (Zekharya) al-Zahiri (Avner ha-Temani) who lived in the second half of the sixteenth century and came from San'a in Yemen. His book bears the title *Sefer ha-Musar* (Book of instructions). The third chapter contains a description of his journey when he set out from Baghdad to visit Kirkuk. He saw the graves of Daniel and his companions there. He labels the Jews of Kirkuk as "men of sin, wantonness, and guilt."⁶⁵

*The first known Jewish settlement in Kirkuk dates from the 17th century. There is information available on local Jews who traded mainly with Baghdad during the 18th century. Various travelers Jewish and non-Jewish of the 19th and early 20th centuries report on the existence of a Jewish community numbering about 200 families which lived in a separate quarter in the town.*⁶⁶

The first European traveler after Benjamin of Tudela to give a detailed account of the Kurdish Jews and to penetrate into the Kurdish highlands in person was R. David d'Bet Hillel, whose journey took place in the early 19th century. He visited Kirkuk (Koorkook) and then proceeded to Baghdad (1827).⁶⁷ Undoubtedly, R. David's journey was a significant achievement. Only a few travelers had visited such large sections of Kurdistan. Because of the danger of attack on travelers by the Kurdish tribes, the government authorities refused to issue travel permits. R. David's book suffers from the fact that he spent only a short time in each place and was therefore not able to familiarize himself with the life of

⁶⁴ J.H. Kramers, Th. Bois, 'Kirkūk', *The Encyclopaedia of Islam*, vol. V, 1986, 144-147.

⁶⁵ E. Brauer, completed and edited by R. Patai, *The Jews of Kurdistan*, (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1993), 40, 64, 368 note 10.

⁶⁶ "Kirkuk," *Encyclopaedia Judaica*, vol. X (Jerusalem: Keter Publishing House, 1971), 1048.

⁶⁷ E. Brauer, *op. cit.*, 1993, 42.

the people. In 1848, Joseph Israel Benjamin (Benjamin II) ended his travels in Kurdistan at Kirkuk.⁶⁸

At this time the London Society for Promoting Christianity amongst the Jews, an organization of the Church of England, began to work among the Jews of Kurdistan and Mesopotamia. Most of the missionaries sent out by the Society were converted Jews. Henry Aaron Stern, a converted Jew, set out from Baghdad and visited Kirkuk (1848), amongst the other cities. In 1848 P.H. Sternschuss also visited the Jewish community of Kirkuk.⁶⁹

According to ancient sources, Christian and Jewish communities had similarities as minority groups but political power rested in Kurdish and Turkoman hands.

Ethnic Cleansing in Kirkuk, 1970-2002

The Arab Baath Socialist Party returned to power in a military coup on 17 July 1968. Shortly thereafter, the regime began to take the following measures in order to change the ethnic character of the city of Kirkuk, and the entire province, by giving the Arabs a numerical majority. The Baath policy of Arabizing Kirkuk took on a more pervasive character in time and continued to be carried out according to a systematic and calculated plan.

The following are some of the arbitrary measures which the Baathist regime took to Arabize the Kirkuk region:

- Changing the name of Kirkuk to “al-Ta’ mim,” an Arabic name meaning nationalization to mark the nationalization of the foreign oil companies operating in Iraq on June 1st, 1972.
- Civil servants, including Kurdish primary and secondary school teachers, as well as workers in various Government Departments and in the oil company facilities, were transferred to areas outside the Kirkuk Governorate and replaced with Arab civil servants and workers. A Kurd who leaves Kirkuk for any reason whatsoever is barred from ever returning there.
- The names of Kurdish neighborhoods were changed and Arabic names were given to schools, streets, and markets in Kirkuk. The owners of commercial establishments were forced to adopt Arabic names for their businesses.
- Wide streets were opened up in the Kurdish neighborhoods, and the houses that had to be demolished for this purpose were appropriated in return for very little compensation. The owners of these properties were not

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 47. See also Joseph Israel Benjamin, *Cinq années de voyage en Orient (1846-1851)*, (Paris: Lévy frères, 1856), pp. XVI, 240.

⁶⁹ E. Brauer, *op. cit.*, 1993, 45.

permitted to buy houses or land in the city of Kirkuk in order to force them to leave.

- New lists were added to the lists of names in the 1957 census and the names of the Arab newcomers were registered in those new lists to give the impression that they had been living in Kirkuk since 1957 or earlier.
- The Kurds were forbidden to sell their homes and properties in Kirkuk except to Arabs and were prevented from buying homes and properties under any circumstances. The city administration refused to grant any “building permit” or “permit to renovate” to Kurds, even if their homes were badly in need of renovation, in order to force them to sell their homes or abandon them and then move out of the city. Later these measures were also applied to the Turkmans .
- Various “charges” were leveled by the regime against many Kurds to scare them into leaving the city and then their homes and properties were appropriated. The Governorate’s administrative offices and the headquarters of the trade unions, professional and other organizations were moved from their old location to the Arabized section of the city on both sides of the road between Kirkuk and Baghdad. Factories and government facilities were built in the area near the Kirkuk-Hawija-Tikrit road and thousands of residential units were constructed for the Arab workers employed there. The city and the area surrounding it was transformed into a large military camp and military fortifications were built inside and outside Kirkuk. The historic castle in the city was turned into a military fort.
- A major step in the process of Arabization of Kirkuk was the settling of thousands of Arab families in successive waves with guaranteed housing and jobs. Parallel to this policy, the regime announced the granting of a monetary gift or bonus to any Kurd who would leave Kirkuk, in addition to securing housing for him in southern or central Iraq, or offering him, free of charge, a plot of residential land on which to build in the “Autonomous Region”—a name given to parts of Kurdistan by the Baath regime.⁷⁰

During the campaign known as Anfal⁷¹ in 1988, it was reported that the

⁷⁰ N. Talabany, *op. cit.*, 1999, 20-21.

⁷¹ Anfal, ‘the Spoils’, is the name of the eighth sura of the Koran, a revelation to the Prophet Muhammad in the wake of the first great battle of the then-new Muslim faith at Badr (624 A.D.). The term ‘Anfal’ refers to the plunder or spoils of the infidel, and was used by the Iraqi regime to drive a religious justification to its attacks against the Kurds of Iraq, although they too are Muslim. It was a series of military actions which lasted from February 23 until September 6, 1988. While it is impossible to understand the Anfal campaign without reference to the final phase of the 1980-1988 Iran-Iraq War, Anfal was not merely a function of that war.

total number of villages destroyed in Kurdistan by the end of 1989 was three thousand eight hundred and thirty nine (3,839), including one thousand nine hundred and fifty seven (1957) schools, two thousand four hundred and fifty seven (2,457) mosques and two hundred and seventy one (271) small clinics. The total number of families expelled from their villages and towns was two hundred and nineteen thousand eight hundred and twenty eight (219,828), mostly farming families. It becomes clear that the number destroyed in the Kirkuk Governorate amounts to one-fourth of the total number of villages destroyed in Kurdistan as a whole.

During the March 1991 uprising and before the city of Kirkuk was liberated on March 20, 1991, Ali Hassan al-Majid, the then Iraqi minister of Defense, directed and supervised the arrest of thousands of Kurds, among them military men who were in Kirkuk on leave. They were taken to prison in Tikrit and Mosul where they were deprived of food and water for many days. As a consequence, many of them died and those who survived were not released until later.

The regime continued to deport Kurdish and Turkman residents of the city of Kirkuk. It gave the Kurdish citizen a choice between going to southern Iraq, in which case he was allowed to take his possessions with him, or going to the liberated region of Kurdistan, in which case all his possessions, including real estate, were confiscated. Christians were usually spared by the Iraqi army being considered neutral, or the Assyrian nationalists escaped to the Autonomous region of Iraqi Kurdistan in order to struggle against Saddam Hussein regime after 1991.

In the latter part of 1996, the new governor of Kirkuk, Ali Hassan al-Majid tried to force all the Kurds and Turkman residents in the region to register themselves as Arabs. Failure to do this meant banishment to southern Iraq.

Thousands of Kurdish families were prevented from returning to Kirkuk after they were forced to flee the city because of aerial bombardment and shelling by the Republican Guard and Special Forces units, which retook the city from the Kurdish Peshmerga at the end of the Gulf war. Kurds were not allowed to return to their homes in Kirkuk. On top of that, their homes, businesses and possessions were confiscated.

However, the Anfal campaign was planned differently from earlier campaigns against the Kurds. One difference was that the Baghdad regime planned that, those rural Kurds who remained alive, would never return to their lands. In keeping with this strategic goal, the Anfal campaign devoted astonishing resources to the destruction and removal of the remnants of the saboteurs and their premises. In practice, this meant that the army destroyed whole villages down to the foundations of their buildings. Middle East Watch & Physicians for Human Rights, *The Anfal campaign in Iraqi Kurdistan. The Destruction of Koreme*, (New York: Human Rights Watch, 1993), 71; Middle East Watch, *Genocide in Iraq. The Anfal campaign against the Kurds*, (New York: Human Rights Watch, 1993), 3; Human Rights Watch/ Middle East, *Iraq's crime of genocide. The Anfal campaign against the Kurds*, (New Haven and London: Yale University Press - Human Rights Watch Books, 1995).

Tens of thousands of Kurdish families from Kirkuk had to live in tents and camps in the liberated area of Kurdistan in extremely harsh conditions that resulted in the death of many, especially among the children and the elderly. Currently, they depend on assistance from relief organizations and international aid for their survival. The regime insisted in expelling hundreds of families from Kirkuk city and other regions which were under its control.

The 1957 census is a basis for determining the ethnic composition of the Kirkuk Governorate.⁷²

Mother Tongue of Kirkuk Population Based on the 1957 Census

Mother tongue	Kirkuk city	Kirkuk Governorate	Total population
Arabic	27,127	82,493	109,620
Kurdish	40,047	147,540	187,593
Turkish	45,306	38,065	83,371
Aramaic	1,509	96	1,605

A quick comparison of the contents of this table, with the other census held in Iraq following the Arabization program in the Kirkuk Governorate, shows clearly the extent of the Arabization program which the regime has implemented. As a result, the percentage of Arabs in the Kirkuk Governorate has increased from 28.2% of the total population according to the 1957 census to 44.41% according to the 1977 census. At the same time, the percentage of the Turkman population has decreased from 21.4% to 16.31%. The population of the Kurds decreased during the same period from 48.3% to 37.53%.

Ethnic Composition of the Kirkuk Governorate: A Comparison between the 1957 and 1977 Census

Nationality	1957 Census	1977 Census
Kurdish	48,3%	37,53%
Arab	28,2%	44,41%
Turkman	21,4%	16,31%
Chaldean and Syrian	0,5%	0,9%

⁷² This was made clear after the announcement of the results of the aforementioned census of 1959. When a number of Kurdish citizens inquired from the Census & Registration Department in Kirkuk, they discovered that they had been falsely registered as Turkman in the column for "mother tongue" by the census officials. This applied especially the popular Kurdish districts as most of their inhabitants could not speak or read Arabic, and the officials arbitrarily filled in the forms on their behalf. Some of the citizens lodged complaints with the appropriate authorities; others went to court to change their registration by legal means. N. Talabany, *op. cit.*, 1999, 41, 19-20.

No official statistics are available concerning the ethnic composition in either Kirkuk city or Governorate after 1977.⁷³ According to Kurdish sources, about 1 million Kurds, 100,000 Turkmans and 30,000 Assyrians were believed to have lived in Kirkuk before the 1991 Gulf war.⁷⁴ However, the fact is that the regime continued to settle Arabs in the city and its environs and to drive out Kurds and Turkmans en masse.

In another report, the population in the Governorate of al-Ta'mim reaches the number of 787,043 people, whereas the population of the free Governorate of Kirkuk is recorded at about 420 thousand persons, including the refugees.⁷⁵

On 6th September 2001 Saddam Hussein regime applies the resolution no. 199 in order to increase the campaign of ethnic cleansing against non-Arab ethnics in Kirkuk, and states: Allowing any Iraqi, 18 years or older, to change his ethnicity to Arab ethnic. This is to be done after an Iraqi submits a request for national identity at a civil office, where he is registered.

A Nationality Officer in the governorate has to look into the request within 60 days from the date of application. Iraqi official forms give a choice to applicants to decide whatever ethnicity they want to select.

Baghdad continued and intensified its policy of forced Arabization of the Kurdish territories that remained under its control and which represented about 40% of the area of Iraqi Kurdistan.

Beginning with the general census of the population in 1997, up to the fall of the regime, the Iraqi authorities had been distributing "*forms for rectification of nationality*" to non-Arab inhabitants: Kurds, Turkomen, Assyro-Chaldeans. Those who refused to fill them out and to call themselves Arabs were considered suspect. They were banned from any public employment and then expelled to the Kurdish administered zones. They were not allowed to sell their property to non-Arabs before their expulsion. In the majority of cases, their property was purely and simply confiscated.

In the Kirkuk Governorate, the registration and nationality offices and administrations in Kirkuk have been informed that under no circumstances should newly born children of Kurds, Turkomen and Assyrians be given and registered with Kurdish, Turkoman and Assyrian names. In case there is any Kurdish, Assyrians or Turkoman names of children in the registration offices in that city [Kirkuk], they are immediately changed to Arab names without even the parents' consent.⁷⁶

⁷³ N. Talabany, *op. cit.*, 1999, 78.

⁷⁴ Associated Press, 12 February 2002.

⁷⁵ Kurdistan Regional Government, Ministry Of Interior, Kirkuk Governorate, Four years of uncovering the atrocities of arabization in Iraq-Kurdistan, Suleimaniya, n.ed., 2001, 5.

⁷⁶ *Brayeti*, 10 February 2002.

The massive and systematic Iraqi campaign of forced expulsion of Kurds, Turkomans, and Assyrians from Kirkuk, Khanaqin, Makhmur, Jangar, Tuz Khurmatu, Shaykhan as part of its Arabization program continued until the Baathist regime collapsed.

The Iraqi regime was urging Arab tribes from Tikrit, Samara and Alam to move their residence to areas adjacent to the liberated Kurdistan region. It was offering generous incentives such as free electricity and water services as well as agricultural equipment. A well-funded Iraqi project was completed to provide water to many of the Arabized villages in the Kirkuk area.

The Arabization process of the following villages started in the 1980s. The original Kurdish names of the villages have all been changed to Arabic names:

Kalo has become al-Shahid
Bebani has become al-Gihad
Yarimch has become al-Fida
Nabi Awa has become al-Simud
Kalozi has become al-Wathba

Iraqi intelligence, the Mukhabarat, officially notified all business owners, shops, restaurants, factories and plants to change their existing Kurdish and Turkoman names to Arabic ones.⁷⁷

Those expelled were settled by the Kurdish authorities in camps where they lived in precarious material conditions since these internally displaced people did not come under any classification covered by UN's aid program under the "Oil for Food" Resolution 986.

Quoting official statistics, the Kurdish daily *Brayeti* of 29 January 2002, "to date 22,955 families, i.e. over 120,000 Kurds, expelled from Iraqi-controlled Kirkuk province, have been settled in the Kurdish-administered Erbil Governorate. The number of expelled people received by the Sulaimaniya Governorate was even greater. The Iraqi regime had thus succeeded in driving out of the zones it controlled over 250,000 Kurds."⁷⁸

After the fall of the Baathist dictatorship (April 9, 2003) Kirkuk is under strict control by the Americans. Masses of Kurds and Turkomans have returned and claimed their rights and their properties. Consequently, Kirkuk represents a powder-keg [explosive area]. For the Kurds, the claim to their rights on Kirkuk has an emotional as well as economical implication with respect to a future Kurdish state. For Mas'ud Barzani leader of Kurdistan Democratic Party, "Kirkuk is the heart of Kurdistan" and for Jalal Talabani leader of Patriotic Union of Kurdistan

⁷⁷ *Kurdistan Newslines*, 27 February, 2002.

⁷⁸ *Bulletin de liaison et d'information* (Paris), no. 202, Janvier 2002, 5; M. Zanger, 'Refugees in Their Own Country', *Middle East Report*, vol. 32, no. 222, 2002, 40-43. For further information on this subject, see the Iraqi Kurdistan Despatch site www.ikurd.info.

and President of Iraq (elected on 6 April 2005), “ Kirkuk is the Jerusalem of Kurdistan.” The Turkomans call for a special status for Kirkuk. They are supported by Turkey, which threatens to directly intervene. The Turkish minister of Foreign Affairs, Adullah Gul, has stated that “In case of conflict in Kirkuk, Turkey will not remain inactive.” The Kurdish leaders have warned Ankara that any intervention will lead to disaster. A possible fair solution to the matter of Kirkuk would also give a hope of national reconciliation for Iraq as a whole.