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Advisor: Professor E. Roger Owen Arbella Bet-Shlimon

Kirkuk, 1918-1968: Oil and the Politics of Identity in an Iraqi City

Abstract

In this dissertation, I use methodological approaches from studies of urbanism, oil modernity, nation building, and identity formation to analyze the relationships between urban change, oil, state integration, and the politicization of group identities in the multiethnic Iraqi city of Kirkuk from 1918 to 1968. I argue that, in early to mid-twentieth-century Kirkuk, the oil industry, Baghdad's policies, and the British neocolonial presence interacted with local conditions to produce the crystallization of ethnic group identities within a nascent domain of local politics. I find that at the time of the formation of the Iraqi state in the early 1920s, group identities in Kirkuk were fluid and local politics did not align clearly with ethnicities or other self-identities. Instead, they were largely subsumed under relations between more powerful external entities. Kirkukis' political loyalties were based on which entity best served their interests—or, as was often the case, were positioned against a side based on its perceived hostility to their concerns.

These political dynamics began to shift with Kirkuk's incorporation into Baghdad's domain, the beginnings of the Iraq Petroleum Company's exploration just northwest of urban Kirkuk, and the end of British mandate rule. The Iraqi central government's integration efforts exacerbated fault lines between emergent Kurdish, Turkmen, and Arab ethnic communities at a time when the city's population and its urban fabric were growing rapidly. The oil industry, which provided the livelihood for a

substantial percentage of Kirkuk's population, became the focus of Communist-led labor organization. Consequently, the Iraqi government, the British government, and the oil company attempted to counter Communist influence through urban development schemes. The combination of urban growth and the expansion of discursive activities stimulated the emergence of a distinct civic identity and an accompanying arena of local politics in which Kirkuk's ethnic communities were deeply invested. After the destabilizing effects of the Iraqi revolution in 1958, a cycle of intercommunal violence began in Kirkuk along increasingly apparent ethnic lines. Escalating conflict between Baghdad and the Kurdish movement for control of Kirkuk after 1958 fueled these tensions further. The reverberations of the revolution's aftermath are still evident today.

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For my parents and my grandmother

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In 1981, my mother dedicated her thesis in Pathology at the University of Manitoba to her mother (and only surviving parent), Seranoush Elias. In the same tradition, I dedicate this work to my parents—and also to my maternal grandmother, who will appreciate more than most that I have finally finished it. I hope that I have told the story of the city where she spent many years of her life, and where my mother was born, with the insight and judiciousness that it is due.

Arbella Bet-Shlimon
Cambridge, Massachusetts
July 2012

Note on Language and Transliteration

In this dissertation, I have broadly adhered to the standards of *The International Journal of Middle East Studies (IJMES)*. I have used the *IJMES* transliteration guide for the transliteration of words and names from Arabic and Kurdish that do not have common English spellings. Words in modern Turkish, which uses the Latin alphabet, have been rendered as is; Ottoman names have been rendered in their modern Turkish forms. If a name has a very common alternate transliteration, as is often the case with, for instance, Kurds who have names of Arabic origin, I have included it in parentheses after its first mention.

However, I have made exceptions to *IJMES* rules for a few Kirkuki names that are of multilingual or linguistically ambiguous origin. For instance, "Naftchizada," the name of a prominent Kirkuki Turkmen family, combines an Arabic word with Turkish and Persian suffixes; therefore, to transliterate it as though it were a fully Arabic (Naftjizada) or fully Turkish (Neftçizade) name would be problematic, politically and otherwise. In a few cases, the fact that I have not found a non-Latinized rendering of a specific name compounds the problem. Therefore, in these instances, I have rendered the names as closely as possible to *IJMES* standards while maintaining readability and faithfulness to the names' diverse origins. On the other hand, in accordance with prevailing practice in the English-language historical literature on Iraq and for the sake of simplicity, I have consistently used the Arabic names of Iraqi places as a basis for transliteration in instances where the names do not have a single dominant English form.

For instance, the name of the city of Arbil is rendered as such, rather than as "Erbil," an equally common spelling that reflects the city's name in Kurdish and Turkish.

The quotations included in this dissertation come from a mixture of: archival materials originally in English, which I quote verbatim; sources that were originally in a language other than English but were translated into English by someone other than me, such as translated Iraqi press excerpts included in British archival files, which I also quote verbatim; and archival materials and sources originally in Arabic, French or Turkish, which I have translated into English myself. In general, it is clear from a combination of context and the citation whether a quotation of a particular text is translated from a language other than English and whether, if translated, the translation is my own or someone else's. Where this is ambiguous, I have clarified it in a footnote.

Abbreviations

Archive names:

BL	British Library, London
BP	BP Archive, University of Warwick, Coventry, UK
DA	Constantinos A. Doxiadis Archives, Athens
IOR	India Office Records at the British Library, London
MECA	Middle East Centre Archive, St. Antony's College, Oxford, UK
UK	National Archives of the United Kingdom, London
US	National Archives of the United States at College Park, College Park, MD

File categories from the National Archives of the United Kingdom:

AIR	Records of the Air Ministry (Royal Air Force Overseas Commands)
BW	Records of the British Council
CAB	Records of the Cabinet Office
CO	Records of the Colonial Office
DSIR	Records of the Department of Scientific and Industrial Research
FO	Records of the Foreign Office
LAB	Records of the Ministry of Labour and successors
MPK(K)	Maps extracted from Foreign Office records
POWE	Records of the Ministry of Power and related bodies
WO	Records of the War Office
WORK	Records of the Office of Works and successors

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Introduction

In 2005, twenty-five years after leaving his homeland and immigrating to the United Kingdom, and two years after the overthrow of the Iraqi Baʿth regime headed by Saddam Hussein, the Kirkuki Kurdish filmmaker and actor Karzan Sherabayani returned to Kirkuk with a cameraman and a plan: to talk to as many people there as he could about the city's future.[1] In particular, Sherabayani wanted to discuss the possibility of their hometown becoming part of an independent Kurdish state—a cause he passionately advocates. While this issue forms the overarching theme of the documentary he produced as a result, it is only one facet of a complex combination of social and political circumstances that become evident upon a careful viewing of what he recorded. Over the course of the year Sherabayani spent in Kirkuk, fluidly moving between the Kurdish and Arabic languages depending on whom he was speaking to, he found both optimism and fear among his fellow Kirkukis. He also found a city in turmoil.

In January of that year, a rocket was fired into his niece's house. Although the house was damaged, no one was hurt. Later that month, on the day of the parliamentary elections, a rocket hit a stadium that displaced Kurds returning to Kirkuk had turned into a makeshift refugee camp, killing a Kurdish boy named Yusuf. Sherabayani also found impoverished Kurds squatting in the former Kirkuk headquarters of Saddam's secret police, an eerie, decrepit building where Sherabayani recalled being incarcerated and tortured as a teenager. In October 2005, he happened to come across the gruesome aftermath of a car bomb attack on the Kirkuk police force that had killed two officers and

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[1] Karzan Sherabayani, *Return to Kirkuk: A Year in the Fire* (New York: Eagle Media, 2007), DVD.

wounded two others. Nearby, he witnessed three handcuffed, blindfolded men being dragged into the back of a flatbed truck by Arabic-speaking Iraqi Army soldiers. An especially attentive viewer of the film might notice that each man had a placard hanging around his neck bearing handwritten information in English under several categories, including “Name,” “Age,” “Location,” and—significantly—“Ethnic.” According to the placards, they were all Arabs. The soldiers explained to Sherabayani that they suspected the men in the bombing because they had been seen walking by playing with their cellular phones, which are often used in Iraq to detonate bombs remotely, and because one of them was carrying a photo of Saddam. The blindfolded men, uncertain of their pending fate, wept despairingly and protested, in Arabic, that they were innocent. One of them, named Haydar, wailed: “I am a blacksmith! I do not make bombs!”

Sherabayani found that, in general, Kirkuki Kurds shared his enthusiasm for a federal Iraq that would foster Kurdish autonomy—a cause they felt was advanced by their approval of the new Iraqi constitution in the October 2005 constitutional referendum and their participation in the parliamentary elections of January and December 2005.[2] However, he encountered strong resistance, only briefly displayed on screen, from members of other ethnic groups to the idea of federalism and regional autonomy. When, in conjunction with the December election, he informally polled people on their opinion of Kirkuk’s rightful future status, one Arabic-speaking man objected to the idea of federalism and loudly insisted, *“ʿIraq wahid! ʿAlam wahid!”* (One Iraq! One flag!) Earlier in the year, one of the more interesting sights Sherabayani saw was a set of

[2] For a series of studies on federalism and regionalism in Iraq that consider the crucial year of 2005, see Reidar Visser and Gareth Stansfield, eds., *An Iraq of Its Regions: Cornerstones of a Federal Democracy?* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2008).

competing election rallies that he described facetiously as a “carnival.” Facing the camera, he pointed out the locations of Kurds, Turkmens and Assyrians, each displaying their own flags in full force. He approached the Turkmens, who were flying their blue-and-white variant of the Republic of Turkey’s emblem;[3] one of them was flying a red, white and black Iraqi flag on the same pole. Sherabayani then found himself listening to the furious rant, in Arabic, of a man with a Turkmen-flag bandanna tied around his head. “George Bush is a liar! Kofi Annan is a liar!” the man bellowed. “The Kurds, by siding with them, make us Turkmens their enemy.”

That a person would defend the integrity of one flag while literally wrapped in another is one of the curiosities of modern Kirkuk. In this scene, Sherabayani expresses a sense of revulsion at the Turkmen demonstrator’s anger and simply moves on to another subject without further probing. Throughout his documentary, he prefers to focus on the mission close to his heart: proving that Kirkuki Kurds have a deep-seated desire for inclusion in Kurdistan and Kurdish autonomy. In the process, however, he produces ninety minutes’ worth of fascinating footage that raises a number of questions. Why are the election rallies, in effect, ethnic rallies—indeed, rallies that imply the existence of unitary ethnic groups with separate political agendas? Why does the Iraqi Army feel the need to assign an “Ethnic” category to each person it arrests in Kirkuk? Why does hearing the word “federalism” make Kurdish speakers smile and Arabic speakers cringe? Why do self-identified Turkmens, virtually all of whom in Kirkuk are multilingual, prefer to speak Arabic with Sherabayani while Kurds speak Kurdish?

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[3] The Turkmens of Iraq are not to be confused with those of Turkmenistan, who speak a different Turkic language and have a different flag.

The documentary also indirectly raises another question: where does the oil fit in? For much of the twentieth century, Kirkuk was the heart of Iraq's oil industry. Kirkuk's oil fueled its growth and change and rendered both the city and its hinterland a strategically crucial region for Baghdad, which went to great lengths—including ethnic cleansing—to integrate the majority non-Arab area into mostly Arab Iraq. Sherabayani, like many Kirkukis, dismisses Kirkuk's oil as a mere "curse" for the trouble it has brought the city; "in a way," he says, "I wish we never had it." Yet, in one touching and humorous scene, the Kurdish manager of a fueling station gives his friend free gasoline ahead of a long line of cars waiting to purchase it, saying, "In Europe, people give flowers to their friends as gifts. Here, we give petrol."

The inextricable links between identity, urban politics, and oil

A historical perspective on Kirkuk goes a long way toward addressing these questions and others. Comprehending the context of historical forces and collective memory in which the city currently operates allows one to interrogate the pretexts and assumptions behind present-day sociopolitical circumstances and practices. Furthermore, historical analysis of the politicization of identities in Kirkuk is essential to a fuller understanding of how its present-day politics have come to be organized around ethnic claims to the city. Engaging with these kinds of questions in a substantively critical way has never, in Kirkuk's modern history, been a more urgent task. At present, the city's status is formally disputed between those who wish to bring it under the control of the semi-autonomous Kurdistan region in Iraq's northeast, which is governed by the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG), and those who are determined to maintain the

status quo that has prevailed since the 1920s in which Kirkuk is officially part of Iraq proper and under the direct jurisdiction of Baghdad. The Kirkuk area's population has been multilingual and multicultural for centuries, and opinions in the current dispute tend to fall along the lines of self-identified ethnic groups that have been prevalent in some form since the early twentieth century.

In Kirkuk, as in the rest of Iraq and many other parts of the Middle East, a person's or community's primary language is the foremost constitutive element of their ethnic identity; "ethnic" is therefore typically synonymous with "ethnolinguistic."[4] Generally, Kirkukis who self-identify as members of a particular ethnic group speak and write the language associated with that group at home and among others of that group, or were born into a family that does so. Thus, in certain social contexts, self-identified Kurds speak and write in Sorani Kurdish. Similarly, self-identified Turkmens speak a distinct Turkic dialect and write in modern Anatolian Turkish. Self-identified Arabs speak and write in Arabic. Self-identified Chaldeans and Assyrians (or Chaldo-Assyrians), in more limited contexts, speak vernacular Neo-Aramaic and occasionally employ a written form of the language.

Kirkuk's self-identified Kurds generally believe, as Sherabayani found, that Kirkuk should become part of the area administered by the Kurdish-led KRG.

[4] I sometimes employ the term "ethnolinguistic" when a higher level of precision is necessary. In this work, Sunni Arabs and Shiʿi Arabs are considered ethnically identical, as are, for example, Sunni Turkmens and Shiʿi Turkmens, while Arabs, Kurds and Turkmens are considered separate ethnic groups. While this definition of the term "ethnic" is certainly open to criticism and reevaluation, as is the concept of ethnicity in general, my use of this term reflects the prevalent basis of communal distinctions in Kirkuk. I will further discuss and qualify my terminology with regard to ethnicity later in this Introduction. More information on the sociolinguistics of ethnicity in Kirkuk may be found in a fascinating study written by a Kurd from Kirkuk who conducted research on what he called "language loyalty" in his hometown in the late 1970s, during the Baʿth era: Mohammed Amin Qadir, "The Linguistic Situation in Kirkuk: A Sociolinguistic Study" (PhD diss., University of Aston in Birmingham, 1980).

Consequently, the KRG is pushing for the implementation of Article 140 of the 2005 Iraqi constitution, which decrees that a referendum should be held in Kirkuk in order to allow its inhabitants to determine their own status. Self-identified Turkmens, Arabs, and other groups, however, as well as the non-Kurdish Iraqi population in general, typically oppose any measures that might result in the Kurdish government formally taking control of the city. Differing notions of the city's history, its inherent "ethnic character," and its rightful ownership have combined with sustained low-level violence to create profound tensions between Kirkuki communities, raising the stakes of a crisis already exacerbated by a sclerotic process of political reconciliation.

Scholars who have focused on Kirkuk since 2003 have predominantly studied the city from a political-science perspective and have operated almost exclusively within an ethnopolitical paradigm.[5] The only academic monograph on Kirkuk in the English language published thus far, Liam Anderson and Gareth Stansfield's 2009 book *Crisis in Kirkuk: The Ethnopolitics of Conflict and Compromise*, exemplifies this approach. Anderson and Stansfield, along with most journalists and scholars who have written about Kirkuk, hold that the crisis is best understood as consisting of three main narratives, each powerfully associated with an ethnic self-identity. The Kurdish narrative asserts that Kirkuk is rightfully a part of Kurdistan, and its proponents often try to make the case that it has always been Kurdish. The Turkmen narrative holds that Kirkuk is a historically Turkmen city that has undergone demographic changes but must retain its Turkmen character. The Arab narrative insists that Kirkuk is a multiethnic Iraqi city first

[5] Recent political-scientific studies of the Kirkuk issue include: Denise Natali, "The Kirkuk Conundrum," *Ethnopolitics* 7, no. 4 (2008); David Romano, "The Future of Kirkuk," *Ethnopolitics* 6, no. 2 (2007); Stefan Wolff, "Governing (in) Kirkuk: Resolving the Status of a Disputed Territory in Post-American Iraq," *International Affairs* 86, no. 6 (2010).

and foremost, and hence that it must retain its Iraqi identity—an identity that is defined as pluralistic.[6] Of course, no analyst denies that some members of one ethnic group may subscribe to another's viewpoint, or an amalgam of certain aspects of these viewpoints, or indeed another political narrative entirely. For example, the notion of Kirkuk as a microcosm of Iraq's diversity, often promoted by Arabs, is not rejected outright by members of other groups—the Arab-led Baghdad government's designation of Kirkuk as the official "Capital of Iraqi Culture" in 2010 included festivities that featured cooperation from people of various ethnicities, including some from the Kurdistan region.[7] It is also inevitably the case that, due to the nuances of self-identity, multilingualism, and intermarriage, there are Kirkukis who consider themselves members of more than one ethnic group or do not primarily identify with their ethnolinguistic heritage.

Nevertheless, it is undeniable that claims to Kirkuk's history and culture are a powerful factor in the dispute over its status and that these narratives are usually articulated in ethnicized ways. For example, prominent Kurds, including Iraqi president Jalal Talabani, have referred to Kirkuk as the "Kurdish Jerusalem." Talabani's invocation of this metaphor provoked protests in Baghdad in 2011.[8] The city of Kirkuk is an even more omnipresent theme in Iraqi Turkmen discourses, both popular and literary, than in Kurdish ones. Turkmen writers, representing a much smaller ethnic group, have referred

[6] Liam Anderson and Gareth Stansfield, *Crisis in Kirkuk: The Ethnopolitics of Conflict and Compromise* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2009), 56-86.

[7] "Intilaq Faʿʿaliyyat Karkuk ʿAsima lil-Thaqafa al-ʿIraqiyya bi-Musharakat Muhafazat Iqlim Kurdistan," *Al-Sumariya Niyuz*, 18 January 2010, http://www.alsumarianews.com/ar/6/12525/news-details-.html.

[8] See for instance: Sinan Salaheddin, "Bomb Kills 10 Iraqi Troops as Ethnic Tensions Rise," *Associated Press*, 14 March 2011, http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2011/03/14/AR2011031400652.html; Maggy Zanger, "Refugees in Their Own Country," *Middle East Report* 32, no. 222 (2002).

to Kirkuk as the "ancestral capital" of their people.[9] While watching the Turkish-language Iraqi satellite television channel Türkmeneli TV on a visit to Arbil in 2011, I noticed that it featured advertisements for businesses that were almost exclusively located in Kirkuk—an indication that the city is the dominant social and economic center for the Iraqi Turkmen community. In addition, members of the small Kirkuki Chaldo-Assyrian community, a Christian group who often oppose the Kurdish case for Kirkuk as much as Turkmens and Arabs typically do, frequently emphasize that the city has ancient Assyrian roots and claim a direct connection to this heritage.[10]

In the present work, I seek to intervene in the prevailing focus on Kirkuk's ethnopolitics with four additional issues to consider. First, I hold that it is important to treat Kirkuki group identities as dynamic processes rather than as static phenomena. To their credit, the political scientists who have analyzed the Kirkuk crisis have been careful to note that Kirkuki ethnic identities and the rivalries between groups that result from them are not primordial.[11] But in the absence of any in-depth modern historical studies of Kirkuk, they lack the necessary context that would allow them to examine the development and evolution of local politics and ethnic identities in Kirkuk over time. The consequence of this omission is that, in popular forums such as the news media, writers often wrongly state or imply that the conflict over Kirkuk's status has been ongoing

[9] See for instance: Yücel Güçlü, "Who Owns Kirkuk? The Turkoman Case," *The Middle East Quarterly* 14, no. 1 (2007).

[10] See for instance: Nineb Lamassu, "Fallacy of a Kurdish Intellectual," accessed 14 July 2012, http://www.christiansofiraq.com/fallacyMay186.html.

[11] See for instance: Natali, "The Kirkuk Conundrum," 442.

between three unitary ethnic groups for at least as long as the Iraqi state has existed.[12] This work corrects this misconception.

Second, I seek to introduce the analysis of geographies, especially urban geographies, into the study of the history of Kirkuk. For a conflict that centers on claims to physical spaces—a 2008 International Crisis Group report on Kirkuk and other disputed Iraqi territories was memorably titled "Oil for Soil"[13]—there has been surprisingly little critical examination of, or even speculation about, the processes by which these spaces become imbued with political significance, internally segregated, and contested. In this project, I have paid close attention to Kirkuk's changing urban geography over the course of the twentieth century, as well as the ways in which both Baghdad and the Kurdish national movement came to construct it and its hinterland as a crucial point on the Arab-Kurdish borderland.

My third intervention is to rethink the role of oil in Kirkuki society. The prevailing discussion of the politics of Iraqi oil, both historically and in the present, often functions within a false dichotomy that views actions like staking a claim to Kirkuk as being either "about the oil" or motivated by something more "authentic." According to this framework, those who claim Kirkuk are either aiming to gain access to its oil or are emotively connected to the city as part of their identity and culture. In the first case, writers characterize the politics in question as avaricious and immoral, and therefore

[12] See for instance: Charles McDermid, "New Force Emerges in Kirkuk," *Asia Times*, 20 February 2010, http://www.atimes.com/atimes/Middle_East/LB20Ak02.html.

[13] International Crisis Group, "Oil for Soil: Toward a Grand Bargain on Iraq and the Kurds," in *Middle East Reports* (Kirkuk/Brussels: International Crisis Group, 28 October 2008).

illegitimate; in the second, they are considered pure and genuine, and hence legitimate.[14] This dichotomy is profoundly misleading and not useful analytically, but it is nonetheless common. For instance, Anderson and Stansfield make the error of resting their interpretation of oil-related issues in Kirkuk on these sorts of assumptions. After coming to the reasonable conclusion that an imminent KRG seizure of Kirkuk's oil anticipated by some is very unlikely to happen, they proceed to reject the idea that oil is at all relevant (for the Kurds, at least) to the post-2003 dispute, excoriating those who think it is a central factor as anti-Kurdish and as "too lazy to think the issue through for themselves."[15] Setting aside the issue of whether or not the authors' resolute insistence that the KRG is indifferent to the status of Kirkuk's oil is well reasoned,[16] their take vastly oversimplifies the role of oil in the places where it is produced by presuming that

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[14] A similar, and better-known, false dichotomy about the role of oil in politics is also found in discussions of Western motivations for intervention in Iraq. It was particularly potent in the United States in debates surrounding the American-led invasion of Iraq in 2003, when protesters' chants of "no blood for oil" were met with the defensive argument that the invasion had "literally nothing to do with oil" (in Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld's words), which was sometimes countered by the argument that the war *was* "for oil" and that fighting Saddam Hussein for control of Iraqi petroleum was a perfectly legitimate cause. For a prominent example of the last argument, see: Thomas Friedman, "A War For Oil?," *The New York Times*, 5 January 2003, http://www.nytimes.com/2003/01/05/opinion/a-war-for-oil.html?src=pm.

[15] Anderson and Stansfield, *Crisis in Kirkuk*, 234-36.

[16] Article 112 of the current Iraqi constitution leaves the rights to management and development of presently producing Iraqi oil fields ambiguous. Anderson and Stansfield reach their conclusion on the basis of the fact that the KRG has expressed a willingness to resolve this ambiguity by putting the management of Kirkuk's oil field fully in the hands of the federal government, citing a 2007 constitutional review whose conclusions the KRG has agreed to (p. 235). However, the KRG's stance on this issue has not been quite so straightforward, as will be discussed briefly in the Conclusion. In a March 2012 statement, the KRG protested an attempt by the Baghdad-run North Oil Company to sign an agreement with BP to develop the Kirkuk oil field, specifically invoking their perceived constitutional right to be consulted in this matter under Article 112. In light of the fact that the KRG and Baghdad have not yet resolved issues related to sharing oil profits, this kind of tension is unsurprising, and it appears that any definitive conclusions with regard to the KRG's future stance on the legal status of Kirkuk's oil are premature at this stage. Furthermore, even if one were to assume that Anderson and Stansfield's argument is fully correct, it remains true that the role of oil goes far beyond the production of wealth under the direct control of a particular government. For the aforementioned KRG statement, see: Kurdistan Regional Government, "Natural Resources Ministry: Kirkuk Oil Field Development Requires Approval of KRG and Kirkuk Governorate," *KRG.org*, 26 March 2012, http://www.krg.org/articles/detail.asp?lngnr=12&smap=02010100&rnr=223&anr=43451.

either it is greedily desired as a source of wealth or it is immaterial. Instead, I concur with Michael Watts's observation that oil should be conceived of as an "oil complex"—not simply as a revenue-generating product, but as a composite of institutions and as a means of political, social and economic activity from which many different kinds of community and conflict can emerge. Oil, Watts writes, is not only a "biophysical entity" and a commodity, but also a source of "particular relations of production" and of widespread cultural significance.[17] The aforementioned Kurdish fueling-station owner's comment about gift-giving in Kirkuk—"Here, we give petrol"—is an indication of oil's role in Kirkuk's popular imagination and identity.

The centrality of oil in Kirkukis' lives is unsurprising in light of the immense influence of the British-led Iraq Petroleum Company (and, after 1972, its nationalized successor) in the city. As will be discussed in Chapters 3 and 4, oil workers and their families made up nearly half the population of urban Kirkuk by the late 1940s, thereby linking a substantial percentage of Kirkukis to a single industrial entity for their livelihood; the company therefore dominated Kirkuk's labor affairs and wielded enormous leverage in its local politics. I argue that these kinds of cultural and political-economic elements can never be fully separated from economically and strategically motivated claims to wealth-generating, resource-bearing areas. It is possible, even inevitable, for disputes over oil-rich regions to be competitions for a coveted commodity, a political domain, and a cultural imaginary simultaneously.

Fourth, this project differs from the most common approaches to Kirkuk by focusing on the city in the modern state of Iraq *before* the era of the second Baʿth

[17] Michael Watts, "Resource Curse? Governmentality, Oil and Power in the Niger Delta, Nigeria," *Geopolitics* 9, no. 1 (2004): 60-61.

republic, which was established in 1968. The few studies of ethnicity in Kirkuk that have sought to provide a historical perspective on the topic have usually confined their discussion to the "Arabization" campaign that started in the 1960s and accelerated during the Saddam regime (1979-2003). "Arabization" was the Baʿthist term for an often-brutal effort to achieve demographic change in Kirkuk in which the Arab-led government expelled Kurds and Turkmens from the city and its surrounding areas, settled Arabs there from other parts of Iraq, and gerrymandered the Kirkuk *liwa*ʾ borders to exclude Kurdish and Turkmen areas.[18] These policies are certainly worthy of further scholarly research and analysis. They unquestionably distorted the geographies of urban and rural Kirkuk, destroyed many people's lives, and intensified antagonisms among the region's ethnic groups. However, I analyze earlier periods in Kirkuk that have been almost entirely overlooked and yet which are essential to a fuller understanding of the roles of oil, center-periphery relations, and group identities in the city. After the late 1960s, Kirkuk was no longer completely dominant within Iraq as a center of oil production, and the extreme trauma of Arabization overshadowed the city's previous circumstances. It is therefore important to write the decades between 1918 and 1968 back into the narrative of Kirkuk's history.

This dissertation argues that, in early to mid-twentieth-century Kirkuk, the oil industry, Baghdad's policies, and the British neocolonial presence interacted with local conditions to produce the crystallization of ethnic group identities within a nascent domain of local politics. I find that group identities in Kirkuk were fluid at the time of the formation of the Iraqi state in the early 1920s. Local politics did not align clearly with

[18] See for instance: Anderson and Stansfield, *Crisis in Kirkuk*, 24-42.

ethnicities or other kinds of self-identities; instead, they were largely subsumed under relations between more powerful external entities. As a result, the political interests of the people of Kirkuk were primarily determined by their ties to one or more of three patrons: the British administrators of mandate Iraq, the fledgling Iraqi central government, or Turkey. Before Kirkuk's formal incorporation into Iraq, Kirkukis chose sides in the dispute over its status based on which entity best served their interests—or, as was often the case, positioned themselves against a side based on its perceived hostility to their concerns.

These pre-existing political dynamics began to shift with Kirkuk's definitive integration into Baghdad's domain in 1926 and with the establishment of the Iraq Petroleum Company's headquarters just northwest of urban Kirkuk after the company struck oil at Baba Gurgur in 1927. The Iraqi central government made efforts to promote Arab influence in the mostly non-Arab city, a process that exacerbated fault lines between emergent ethnic communities. At the same time, the city's population and its urban fabric grew rapidly. The oil industry, which provided the livelihood of a substantial percentage of Kirkuk's population, became the focus of Communist-led labor organization.[19] The British government had retained a significant degree of informal neoimperial influence in Iraq. Consequently, the Iraqi government, the British government, and the oil company attempted to counter Communist influence through urban development schemes, including the construction of housing. The combination of urban growth and the expansion of discursive activities stimulated the emergence of a distinct civic identity and an accompanying arena of local politics in which Kirkuk's

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[19] I use the capitalized term "Communist" to refer to members of the Iraqi Communist Party and the lowercase form "communist" to refer more generally to adherents of the ideology.

ethnic communities were deeply invested. After the Iraqi revolution in 1958 and the resulting radical instability in Kirkuk's urban politics, a cycle of intercommunal violence began along increasingly apparent ethnic lines. The escalation of conflict between Baghdad and the Kurdish movement for control of Kirkuk and its hinterland after 1958 fueled these tensions further. The reverberations of the revolution's aftermath are still evident today.

The remainder of this introduction will perform three functions. I begin by explaining the position of the present work in relation to relevant literatures on Iraq, oil, urbanism, and identity, as well as summarizing my own approaches to analysis within these frameworks. Then, I briefly outline the sources I have utilized, explain the constraints on archival research into Kirkuk's history, and clarify the ethnicity- and identity-related terminology I use. Finally, I provide an outline of the remaining chapters in this work.

Relevant literatures and methodological frameworks

The present work is the first sustained historical analysis of Kirkuk in the era of the modern Iraqi state based on substantial primary-source research and written in the English language.[20] The existing scholarship about Kirkuk's history in English consists mainly of small sections of projects that have a larger geographical scope. Most notably, Hanna Batatu, in his definitive political and social history of Iraq, wrote an

[20] This work incorporates material from my own forthcoming articles, which are also based on this research: Arbella Bet-Shlimon, "Group Identities, Oil, and the Local Political Domain in Kirkuk: A Historical Perspective," *Journal of Urban History*, in press (2012); Arbella Bet-Shlimon, "The Politics and Ideology of Urban Development in Iraq's Oil City: Kirkuk, 1946-1958," *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa and the Middle East*, forthcoming (2013).

unprecedented account of the July 1959 massacre in Kirkuk using municipal police records that he was able to access in 1964.[21] In addition, there is a substantial literature on Kirkuk's history in Arabic, Turkish and Kurdish written by both professional and amateur scholars who are often themselves from Kirkuk or nearby areas. Some of these works have been translated or adapted into English; occasionally, as in the case of Turkmen writer Yücel Güçlü, the author has written primarily in English. The consistent pattern in these works is that they are almost always written from either a Turkmen or Kurdish ethnopolitical viewpoint and aim to make a case for what the authors perceive to be the city's inherent ethnic character. Hence, even though they may muster thought-provoking evidence from a variety of sources, their goal is to be descriptive rather than critical.[22]

Kurdish historians such as Kamal Muzhir Ahmad tend to rely to a great extent on Western, particularly British, sources, as well as published sources in Arabic and Kurdish. Turkmen scholars writing about Kirkuk often compile information from more

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[21] Hanna Batatu, *The Old Social Classes and the Revolutionary Movements of Iraq: A Study of Iraq's Old Landed and Commercial Classes and of Its Communists, Baʿthists, and Free Officers* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1978), 912-21. Even chapter-length writings on Kirkuk such as this one are highly unusual. Another noteworthy chapter on Kirkuk in a larger book, by the journalist George Packer, examines the Baʿth campaign to Arabize Kirkuk and the uncertainties of the period immediately following the 2003 invasion: George Packer, *The Assassin's Gate: America in Iraq* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2005), 333-69.

[22] See for instance: Kamal Muzhir Ahmad, *Karkuk wa-Tawabiʿuha: Hukm al-Tarikh wa-l-Damir* (Arbil: Matbaʿat Rinwin, n.d.); Yücel Güçlü, *The Turcomans and Kirkuk* (Philadelphia: Xlibris, 2007); Şemsettin Küzeci, *Kerkük Soykırımları: Irak Türklerinin Uğradığı Katliamlar, 1920-2003* (Ankara: Teknoed Yayınları, 2004); Suphi Saatçi, *The Urban Fabric and Traditional Houses of Kirkuk*, trans. Mehmet Bengü Uluengin (Istanbul: Kerkük Vakfı, 2007); Nuri Talabani [Nouri Talabany], *Mintaqat Karkuk wa-Muhawalat Taghyir Waqiʿiha al-Qawmi* (Arbil: Dar Aras, 2004); Nouri Talabany, *Arabization of the Kirkuk Region* (Arbil: Aras Press, 2004); Ata Terzibaşı, *Kerkük Matbuat Tarihi*, 2nd ed. (Istanbul: Kerkük Vakfı, 2005). One entertaining exception to this rule is a memoir by an Armenian Kirkuki currently living in the United States that claims to illuminate the city's history and politics but contains few verifiable details: Henry D. Astarjian, *The Struggle for Kirkuk: The Rise of Hussein, Oil, and the Death of Tolerance in Iraq* (Westport: Praeger Security International, 2007).

obscure primary sources, such as local newspapers in Turkish.[23] These writings by Turkmens therefore constitute useful examples of a genre which might generally be termed "works of memory": while they are not precisely memoirs, they comprehensively document various aspects of the experience of the Turkmen community and are therefore of interest to historians regardless of the limitations and biases inherent in their approach. One prominent example of scholarship on Kirkuk that is mostly by Middle Eastern scholars and transcends these limitations to some extent is a volume of conference proceedings featuring papers delivered at an Arabic-language conference about Kirkuk held in London in 2001. These essays feature explorations of some fascinating primary sources and are slightly subtler in their use of ethnopolitical frameworks. Nevertheless, despite the deliberate selection of the English title *Kirkuk, the City of Ethnic Harmony*, exclusionary ethnicized lenses still predominate: most of the authors explicitly identify themselves within the volume as either Kurdish or Turkmen, and the papers correspondingly tend to emphasize either Kurdish or Turkmen aspects of Kirkuk's history.[24] In this study, I have made an effort to mine the aforementioned sources for their most useful pieces of information and observations.

The litterateurs of the Kirkuk Group (*Jamaʿat Karkuk*), a collective of novelists, poets and scholars, have also produced compelling works of memory about Kirkuk which warrant a brief introduction and will be referenced herein. Two members of this group,

[23] The Turkmen author Ata Terzibaşı produces such works prolifically. See for instance: Terzibaşı, *Kerkük Matbuat Tarihi*; Terzibaşı, *Kerkük Hoyratları ve Manileri* (Istanbul: Ötüken Yayınevi, 1975). The latter book explores two common forms of poetry in the Iraqi Turkmen literary tradition while the former is a study of Kirkuki newspapers in Turkish.

[24] Markaz Karbalaʾ lil-Buhuth wa-l-Dirasat, ed. *Karkuk: Madinat al-Qawmiyyat al-Mutaʾakhiyya* (London: Markaz Karbalaʾ lil-Buhuth wa-l-Dirasat, 2002). The alternate English title, featured on the book's back cover, is a loose translation of the Arabic title, which is literally something like "Kirkuk, the City of Fraternally Coexisting Ethnicities."

Fadhil al-Azzawi and the late Anwar Al-Ghassani, have written essays about Kirkuk's literary scene and local politics in the early revolutionary era.[25] The poet Sargon Boulus also wrote about the city after he had emigrated, recalling that it was "a 'divine sponge' soaked with different languages, ethnicities and culture."[26] These authors have also written about Kirkuk in their literary work. The most notable example is Azzawi's novel *Akhir al-Malaʾika* (The Last of the Angels), which, though fictional with satirical and fantastical elements, creates a detailed portrait of the city from the late 1950s to the mid-1960s, complete with lovingly meticulous descriptions of its neighborhoods.[27]

From a methodological standpoint, I engage with and respond to three interrelated literatures that are relevant to a thorough understanding of the history of Kirkuk as an urban area; as an oil hub; as a provincial region; as an ethnolinguistic, political, and strategic borderland; and as a site of intersection and interaction for local, national and neoimperial interests. The first approach I employ is the refocusing of Iraqi history in order to understand national integration and British neocolonialism from a provincial perspective. Whether "Iraq" denotes the modern state or the historical region, histories of the area are usually written from the perspective of Baghdad. Among histories of the

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[25] Fadil al-ʿAzzawi [Fadhil al-Azzawi], *Al-Ruh al-Hayya: Jil al-Sittinat fi al-ʿIraq* (Damascus: Dar al-Mada, 1997), 279-317; Anwar Al-Ghassani, "The Rose and Its Fragrance: The Kirkuk Group / Fifty Years of Presence in Iraqi Culture," 2003, http://al-ghassani.net/an-kirkuk-and-kirkuk-group/kirkuk-group-essay-2003.html.

[26] As quoted in: Sinan Antoon, "The Divine Sponge," *The National*, 5 February 2009. The article is available at: http://www.aina.org/ata/20090205174210.htm. All three of these authors—Azzawi, Ghassani, and Boulus—also wrote reflective essays in 1992, after they had all left Iraq, addressing their experiences as young writers. These did not focus on the period when they were in Kirkuk but are nevertheless of interest. Fadil al-ʿAzzawi [Fadhil al-Azzawi], "Qissat Jil al-Sittinat fi al-ʿIraq," *Faradis* 4/5 (1992); Sarkun Bulus [Sargon Boulus], "Al-Hajis al-Aqwa: Khawatir Hawl al-Sittinat," *Faradis* 4/5 (1992); Anwar al-Ghassani, "Al-Sittinat, Hunaka, Huna, Hunalika: Al-Hubb, al-Hurriyya, al-Maʿrifa," *Faradis* 4/5 (1992).

[27] Fadil al-ʿAzzawi [Fadhil al-Azzawi], *Akhir al-Malaʾika* (London: Riyad al-Rayyis, 1992). There is an excellent English translation of this novel: Fadhil al-Azzawi, *The Last of the Angels*, trans. William M. Hutchins (Cairo: American University in Cairo Press, 2007).

British “informal empire” in Iraq and of public interactions with various forms of authority, there are few exceptions to this rule.[28] More research has been done on provincial Iraq in the Ottoman era than in the twentieth century, most likely because the relevant Ottoman archival sources on places like Mosul and Basra are relatively easy to access in Istanbul.[29] With regard to the modern Iraqi state, two notable histories of provincial Iraq are Nelida Fuccaro’s study of the Yazidis of Jabal Sinjar in the British mandate era, which also examines the British neocolonial enterprise in this area, and Reidar Visser’s analysis of an abortive separatist movement in Basra in the 1920s.[30] There are also several histories of the Kurds as an ethnic group that primarily analyze northeastern Iraq, though these are inevitably focused on the Kurdish national movement rather than on other political elements of provincial-center relations.[31] The divide between the metropolis and provincial cities is particularly visible in studies of Iraqi

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[28] I am using the term “informal empire” in the sense first articulated by John Gallagher and Ronald Robinson. Daniel Silverfarb later developed this idea in the context of monarchy-era Iraq to include considerations of the continued Royal Air Force presence after the end of the mandate and supplying of arms, among other methods of maintaining a level of indirect control. John Gallagher and Ronald Robinson, “The Imperialism of Free Trade,” *The Economic History Review* 6, no. 1 (1953); Daniel Silverfarb, *Britain’s Informal Empire in the Middle East: A Case Study of Iraq, 1929-1941* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986).

[29] See for instance: Thabit Abdullah, *Merchants, Mamluks, and Murder: The Political Economy of Trade in Eighteenth Century Basra* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2001); Gökhan Çetinsaya, *Ottoman Administration of Iraq, 1890-1908* (London: Routledge, 2006); Dina Rizk Khoury, *State and Provincial Society in the Ottoman Empire: Mosul, 1540-1834* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997); Sarah D. Shields, *Mosul Before Iraq: Like Bees Making Five-Sided Cells* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2000).

[30] Nelida Fuccaro, *The Other Kurds: Yazidis in Colonial Iraq* (London: I.B. Tauris, 1999); Reidar Visser, *Basra, the Failed Gulf State: Separatism and Nationalism in Southern Iraq* (Piscataway: Transaction Publishers, 2005).

[31] There is a large body of political-scientific work on the Iraqi Kurds and the Kurdish national movement. Among the texts that are either historical in methodology or have a significant historical angle are: Wadie Jwaideh, *The Kurdish National Movement: Its Origins and Development* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 2006); David McDowall, *A Modern History of the Kurds*, 3rd ed. (London: I.B. Tauris, 2004); Martin van Bruinessen, *Agha, Shaikh, and State: The Social and Political Structures of Kurdistan* (London: Zed Books, 1992).

urbanism; these works, by both historians and specialists in architecture and urban planning, are forming a growing and increasingly sophisticated literature but focus almost exclusively on Baghdad.[32]

In taking Kirkuk as my geographical scope within Iraq, I pursue three primary goals. First, I consider the Iraq Petroleum Company as a node for a combination of British neocolonial and private international interests by looking at its local, and especially its urban, impact in Kirkuk. This aspect of my analysis adds a crucial provincial dimension to the prevalent understanding of the British enterprise in Iraq, which tends to highlight, for instance, the presence of British advisors in the Baghdad-based central government at the expense of understanding the subtler ways that British influence operated throughout the country. Second, I provide a view of Iraqi state building, or integration, from the perspective of an area where such efforts were particularly troubled, were occasionally unsuccessful, and proved to be divisive—not unifying—to the local population.[33] Third, I contend that pursuing a spatial framework that creates an alternative to the histories enclosed by Iraq's political boundaries and centered in the capital is a methodologically productive end unto itself. While I seek to intervene in the prioritizing of Iraqi-territorial nationalism that currently leaves other

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[32] See for instance: Mona Damluji, "'Securing Democracy in Iraq': Sectarian Politics and Segregation in Baghdad," *Traditional Dwellings and Settlements Review* 21, no. 2 (2010); Dina Rizk Khoury, "Violence and Spatial Politics Between the Local and Imperial: Baghdad, 1778-1810," in *The Spaces of the Modern City: Imaginaries, Politics, and Everyday Life*, ed. Gyan Prakash and Kevin M. Kruse (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2008); Mina Marefat, "From Bauhaus to Baghdad: The Politics of Building the Total University," *The American Academic Research Institute in Iraq Newsletter* 3, no. 2 (2008); Panayiota Pyla, "Back to the Future: Doxiadis's Plans for Baghdad," *Journal of Planning History* 7, no. 1 (2008).

[33] I derive the term "integration" from Abbas Kelidar's collection of papers on early Iraqi state building processes and events: Abbas Kelidar, ed. *The Integration of Modern Iraq* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1979).

"spatial formation[s] buried under the national space," in Prasenjit Duara's words,[34] I also consciously choose to use the phrase "Iraqi city" in the title of this work as a description of Kirkuk in recognition of the fact that Baghdad's attempts to integrate the area into its developing domain form a pivotal aspect of its twentieth-century history. I therefore emphasize that my concept of an "Iraqi city" is not static and is not intended as an argument for Kirkuk's rightful status or innate character.

The second method I employ is the conceptualization of Kirkuk as an "oil city" in order to understand its urban and provincial politics and social relations. This concept contains two separate but equally important features: the role of industry, specifically oil production, as a sociopolitical agent; and the urban arena as an analytical scope.[35] Older histories of oil industries—at least, of those in the Middle East—were prone to being descriptive and typically disregarded the experiences of local employees and communities in the places where firms operated.[36] Lately, a number of more rigorous academic works have examined oil industries as a way of combining analytical approaches to social, cultural, political, and/or environmental history in a specific place and time, including Alison Frank's study of oil in Galicia under the Austrian Empire, Miguel Tinker Salas's history of foreign oil companies' impact on social relations in

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[34] Prasenjit Duara, "Transnationalism and the Challenge to National Histories," in *Rethinking American History in a Global Age*, ed. Thomas Bender (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002), 38.

[35] A forthcoming essay by Nelida Fuccaro, which serves as the introduction to the volume in which my article (Bet-Shlimon, "Politics and Ideology") will appear, examines cities as analytical categories in the study of oil modernity: Nelida Fuccaro, "Introduction," *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa and the Middle East*, forthcoming (2013).

[36] The thorough two-volume official history of British Petroleum (now BP), based on BP's archival records and sponsored by the company, falls into this category: R. W. Ferrier, *The History of the British Petroleum Company, Vol. 1: The Developing Years, 1901-1932* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982); J. H. Bamberg, *The History of the British Petroleum Company, Vol. 2: The Anglo-Iranian Years, 1928-1954* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994).

twentieth-century western Venezuela, and Myrna Santiago's study of the "ecology of oil" in Veracruz in the context of the Mexican Revolution.[37] Additionally, Timothy Mitchell's newly published *Carbon Democracy*, an examination of "democracy *as* oil—as a form of politics whose mechanisms on multiple levels involve the processes of producing and using carbon energy," forms a comprehensive framework for understanding the macropolitical effects of the Middle East's role in the global oil industry in the modern era.[38] Of course, many other industries can also prove to be fertile ground for studies of politics and social relations, including relations between ethnic or confessional communities. For instance, in an analysis of Hindu-Muslim relations in India, Ashutosh Varshney considers the links between various trade- and industry-related networks and civic associations and their effects on intercommunal politics in the Gujarati cities of Ahmedabad and Surat in the twentieth century.[39]

Traditionally, studies of Middle Eastern urbanism have omitted these kinds of political-economic approaches. Orientalist historians of the early to mid-twentieth century studying Middle Eastern cities tended to subscribe to rigid notions of the form of the "Islamic city," fuelling a decades-long debate about what constituted such a city.[40] In more recent decades, scholars have developed an abundant and theoretically complex

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[37] Alison Fleig Frank, *Oil Empire: Visions of Prosperity in Austrian Galicia* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2005); Miguel Tinker Salas, *The Enduring Legacy: Oil, Culture, and Society in Venezuela* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2009); Myrna I. Santiago, *The Ecology of Oil: Environment, Labor, and the Mexican Revolution, 1900-1938* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006).

[38] Timothy Mitchell, *Carbon Democracy: Political Power in the Age of Oil* (London: Verso, 2011), 5.

[39] Ashutosh Varshney, *Ethnic Conflict and Civic Life: Hindus and Muslims in India*, 2nd ed. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003), 219-78.

[40] Janet L. Abu-Lughod summarized this literature and interrogated the "Islamic city" typology in an essay that has become a classic text of Middle Eastern urban studies: Janet L. Abu-Lughod, "The Islamic City—Historic Myth, Islamic Essence, and Contemporary Relevance," *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 19, no. 2 (1987).

literature on the histories of Middle Eastern metropolises—including, as mentioned previously, Baghdad—taking factors such as political economy and urban geography as objects of study.[41] However, studies of urbanism in the oil-producing countries of the Persian Gulf region have tended to overlook these cities' characteristics in the pre-oil era and have done little more than document their development under the assumption that modernization is a steady, linear process advancing logically from the accrual of oil revenues.[42] Noteworthy recent works that indicate a gradual progression beyond this approach include Nelida Fuccaro's history of politics, space and urban change in Manama, Bahrain, before and after oil and Mandana Limbert's historical ethnography of the Omani town of Bahla, in which she intimately explores the social effects of transformations wrought by oil and development.[43] Robert Vitalis's history of the Arabian American Oil Company (ARAMCO) in Saudi Arabia and the evolution of American-Saudi relations may also be considered to be part of this category; the inequitable political relationships he documents were first manifested in the segregated oil-company town of Dhahran.[44]

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[41] Seminal studies on other Middle Eastern metropolises include: Leila Tarazi Fawaz, *Merchants and Migrants in Nineteenth-Century Beirut* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1983); Philip S. Khoury, *Urban Notables and Arab Nationalism: The Politics of Damascus, 1860-1920* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983); André Raymond, *Cairo*, trans. Willard Wood (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2000).

[42] Nelida Fuccaro, "Visions of the City: Urban Studies on the Gulf," *Middle East Studies Association Bulletin* 35, no. 2 (2001). This article reviews the literature on Gulf cities, though it does not specifically consider Iraq as part of the Gulf region.

[43] Nelida Fuccaro, *Histories of City and State in the Persian Gulf: Manama since 1800* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009); Mandana E. Limbert, *In the Time of Oil: Piety, Memory, and Social Life in an Omani Town* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2010).

[44] Robert Vitalis, *America's Kingdom: Mythmaking on the Saudi Oil Frontier* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2007).

My work contributes to existing efforts to understand the claiming, extraction, refinement and export of oil as a crucial aspect of local social and political processes that must be analyzed in order to achieve a nuanced understanding of the oil city's urban affairs. Furthermore, oil is not a predictable agent. It does not always lead to prosperity and modernity in accordance with a Western idea of what constitutes those conditions. Even when it does, it does so unevenly, and the development of an oil industry certainly does not benefit all of the local inhabitants it affects. This is particularly true of Kirkuk, which is unusual among Middle Eastern oil cities that house oil-company headquarters and operations insofar as it had a long history of expansion, bureaucratization as part of Ottoman governmental centralization, and the growth of a local political apparatus prior to the discovery in 1927 that it was resting atop an oil field capable of large-scale commercial production.[45] In other words, Kirkuk was not a planned "company town" in the same way that, for instance, Dhahran was. Its physical and human geographies were not built from the ground up on the basis of a foreign company's inclinations, but evolved out of decades of interplay between local, external, and neoimperial forces. This study therefore extensively analyzes Kirkuk's local politics, arrays of self-identity, and relationships with external political elements in the decades prior to the Iraq Petroleum Company's presence. It then considers the ways that the oil industry *interacted* with this dynamic local domain, contributing to both its growth and its consolidation. Oil did not create Kirkuk, but oil was a key aspect of its reorientation toward Baghdad as a political

[45] A conversation with Idan Barir helped me clarify this point with regard to civic identity and politics in Kirkuk in the late Ottoman era. Barir's PhD dissertation at Tel Aviv University, for which research is currently in progress, will address Kirkuk's developing relations with the Ottoman state in the late 19th and early 20th centuries.

center of gravity, as well as of the reorganization and disaggregation of its ethnic communities.

My third analytical method concerns the politics of local and civic identity. Specifically, I seek to understand how political activity and communal interests in Kirkuk came to be organized in ethnicized categories. Scholars specializing in the study of Iraq in various disciplines, particularly history and political science, have created a robust literature in recent years on the subjects of Iraqi identity formation and Iraqi nation building.[46] These works offer nuanced analyses of identities in a variety of Iraqi discourses, whether collective or factional, simple or "hybrid," or unifying or divisive. A common finding of this scholarship has been that one of the most potent identity-based divergences in Iraqi politics for most of the twentieth century was that between pan-Arabists and Iraqi-territorial nationalists. Another is that divisions fell along ideological, class, and rural/urban lines more often than sectarian ones. Altogether, scholars writing on the topic of Iraqi identity have thus far usually focused on conceptualizing identities that are coterminous, whether harmoniously or contentiously, with the boundaries of the nation-state. While they do look at identity-based fault lines and "othering" within Iraqi society,[47] they tend to conclude that even these divided and divisive group identities formed a cohesive, yet complex, Iraqi whole in some form. In Sami Zubaida's words,

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[46] In addition to the other works cited in this section, examples include: Toby Dodge, *Inventing Iraq: The Failure of Nation Building and a History Denied* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2003); Reeva Simon, *Iraq Between the Two World Wars: The Militarist Origins of Tyranny* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2004); Peter Wien, *Iraqi Arab Nationalism: Authoritarian, Totalitarian, and Pro-Fascist Inclinations, 1932-1941* (London: Routledge, 2006).

[47] For instance, Orit Bashkin's book has a chapter on the topic of "Iraq's others" that includes, among other discussions, a brief analysis of Iraqi Turkmen discourse: Orit Bashkin, *The Other Iraq: Pluralism and Culture in Hashemite Iraq* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2009), 157-93.

they were "fragments imagin[ing] the nation."[48] As a result of their focus on the formation of a communal Iraqi identity, these authors typically rely on Benedict Anderson's concept of the "imagined community" as a point of reference, whether for agreement or departure.[49] These analyses are consistently careful to avoid oversimplifying Iraqi group identities in the past and present, but they also tend to imply or state outright, with evident (if not quite nostalgic) regret, that Iraq's legacy of pluralistic discourse in an earlier era contrasts with the present-day reality of pervasive sectarianism brought about by the Saddam era and the American-led invasion of 2003.[50] Sectarianism, in this view, is especially apparent in the political rivalry between Arab members of Islamic confessional sects: Sunni Arabs and Shiʿi Arabs. The Kurds, regardless of religion or sect, are often considered to be an analogous third group.

My examination of the politics of identity in Kirkuk, while taking into account previous analyses of Iraqi identities, departs from this literature in two ways: first, it examines the coalescence of *ethnicized* politics in multiple forms; and second, it holds centralizing, integrative trends emanating from Baghdad at a distance, viewing them as an external force in Kirkuk that did not have unifying effects and was more divisive than it was hybridizing. With regard to the first point, group identities within Kirkuk are unique among those in Iraq's major urban areas because the popularly perceived distinctions between communities fall along the lines of ethnolinguistic identity. No other

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[48] Sami Zubaida, "The Fragments Imagine the Nation: The Case of Iraq," *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 34, no. 2 (2002).

[49] Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, 3rd ed. (London: Verso, 2006).

[50] See for instance: Bashkin, *The Other Iraq*, 271-74; Eric Davis, *Memories of State: Politics, History, and Collective Identity in Modern Iraq* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005), 277-78; Sami Zubaida, "Iraq: History, Memory, Culture," *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 44, no. 2 (2012): 344.

large urban area in Iraq is as thoroughly multilingual without a truly predominant majority group as Kirkuk. Indeed, few other major cities in the Middle East are as ethnically and/or linguistically pluralistic. Today, it is not unusual to see multilingual public signs in Kirkuk in Kurdish, Turkish, Arabic, and even sometimes Neo-Aramaic.[51] This diversity does not naturally connote, however, that Kirkuk was always a "city of ethnic harmony"—an idea that suggests the existence of a shared, convivial sense of being Kirkuki that is "hyphenated" with ethnic identities.[52] While many Kirkukis today sincerely profess hybrid identities, such as the Turkmen demonstrator Sherabayani met who was loudly defending Iraq against Kurdish nationalism while wearing a Turkmen flag, ethnic groupings in Kirkuk were simply not as politically salient in the early twentieth century. This circumstance was a result of the fluidity, as well as the relative irrelevance, of ethnic self-identity combined with universal multilingualism.

As for the second point, throughout the period I am examining, there was never a strong unifying *national* identity in Kirkuk—whether Iraqi, Kurdistani, or otherwise. This is even true of the local notables who aligned themselves with Baghdad early in the process of Kirkuk's integration into the Iraqi state; they did not do so out of an articulated affinity with Baghdad. Kirkukis were, to borrow Pieter Judson's description of people on the "language frontiers" of the Austrian empire, largely "nationally indifferent."[53] In Kirkuk, as in other culturally and socially heterogeneous places, popular nationalism was

[51] Kirkukis' personal photographs indicate that this is the case. See for instance: Photograph of Al-Mas garden sign, accessed 23 May 2012, http://sphotos.ak.fbcdn.net/hphotos-ak-ash1/hs500.ash1/27267_105617946131104_100000486972951_141039_862127_n.jpg.

[52] "Hyphenated" is a term Orit Bashkin uses to describe these kinds of combined identities, e.g., Turkmen and Iraqi. See for instance: Bashkin, *The Other Iraq*, 156, 178.

[53] Pieter M. Judson, *Guardians of the Nation: Activists on the Language Frontiers of Imperial Austria* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2006), 3.

not necessarily a natural outcome of the post-World War I era of newly created Middle Eastern nation-states. As Prasenjit Duara finds in the case of rural North China in the early twentieth century, the extension of state influence and accompanying local bureaucratization can, and often does, precede the penetration of any kind of popular identification with the nation-state into peripheral areas. The two processes—the first "state making," the second "nation building"—are distinct.[54]

British attempts to govern Kirkuk in the eras of military and mandate rule relied on rigid and inaccurate assumptions about the area's "racial" composition and the distinct political interests of each "race," dividing its population into Kurds, Turkmens, Arabs and Christians for this purpose. The eventual coalescence of these groups was the result of a symbiotic relationship between the practices of British and Baghdad authorities and those of local notables as separate communities became invested in a growing domain of urban politics. With the advent of the oil industry, a reoriented Kirkuki civic identity emerged that was bound to oil, development, and Western-influenced notions of modernity—but this, too, became a basis for competition rather than purely being a source of conviviality. In a study centered on a similar argument with regard to the politicization of confessional sectarianism in the "colonial encounter" of nineteenth-century Lebanon, Ussama Makdisi makes the important observation that "it is imperative to dispel any illusion that sectarianism is simply or exclusively a native malignancy or a foreign conspiracy."[55] Rather, intercommunal divisions are produced in the interplay

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[54] Prasenjit Duara, *Culture, Power, and the State: Rural North China, 1900-1942* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1988), 1-6. Duara cites Charles Tilly as one of the originators of the term "state making"; see Charles Tilly, ed. *The Formation of National States in Western Europe* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1975).

[55] Ussama Makdisi, *The Culture of Sectarianism: Community, History, and Violence in Nineteenth-Century Ottoman Lebanon* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000), 2.

between localized social, political and economic dynamics and external forces exerting their influence in the local arena. In this project, therefore, I take an innovative approach to the question of Iraqi identity and nation building by examining the political economy of communal identities in a provincial oil city.

Sources and terminology

My findings are based on research in several archives in the United Kingdom, as well as in the National Archives of the United States and the Constantinos A. Doxiadis Archives in Athens, Greece; several kinds of published primary sources in Arabic and English, including works of memory, magazines, and newspapers; and personal correspondences and interviews, including a few in Arbil in 2011. Many of these sources have been underutilized or untapped by historians. It is especially noteworthy that the Iraq Petroleum Company papers in the BP Archive have seldom been used by historians of Iraq and have never, to my knowledge, been used as the basis of an analysis of labor affairs, local politics, and urban development in Kirkuk. I also employ secondary sources in Arabic and English, along with a handful in Turkish and French. In addition to written sources, the many maps and photographs found in these archives and publications have proven to be vital in portions of my analysis, such as the assessment of the geographical aspects of the massacre of May 1924 in discussed in Chapter 2. Figures on Kirkuk found in the Iraqi censuses of 1947 and 1957 form the basis of an examination of urban demographic change in Chapter 3.

The extensive use of official British archival materials, including reports, letters, and memoranda to and from embassy and consular officials, is a particularly common

approach in the writing of the history of Iraq, where the ability of foreigners to do archival research is inevitably constrained by political circumstances. Conducting research within Iraq has been prohibitively difficult or outright impossible for Americans since about 1990, if not earlier. In his seminal article on the "politics of notables," Albert Hourani noted that these kinds of European sources "must be treated with caution because those who wrote them were themselves actors in the political process"; they therefore did not always dispassionately record what they were witnessing, and seldom accounted for the views of "town-dwellers" and their leaders, the titular "notables."[56] Aside from their neocolonial pretensions, there is the more basic problem of accuracy. British officials' reports from Kirkuk and Baghdad often made claims that were uncertain or verifiably incorrect once checked against more reliable sources. However, British archival sources have the advantages of being plentiful, well organized, freely available, and authentic. Despite their weaknesses, they provide an excellent basis for nuanced, albeit consistently cautious, analysis of a variety of topics in Iraqi history. They have led to my framing of many parts of this project, particularly in the first four chapters, as an analysis of Kirkuk's interactions with and reactions to the advent of British influence in the city in multiple forms. This is not necessarily a weakness; it is arguable that a more consciously "internalist" account of Kirkuk's history would lack an adequate treatment of the crucial dimension of neocolonialism, a problem that features in other parts of the historical literature on the Middle East.[57]

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[56] Albert Hourani, "Ottoman Reform and the Politics of Notables," in *Beginnings of Modernization in the Middle East: The Nineteenth Century*, ed. William R. Polk and Richard L. Chambers (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1968), 40.

[57] Juan Cole criticizes some of the modern historical literature on Egypt as "internalist" because it mostly employs Egyptian archives, an approach that "downplays crucial colonial and neocolonial interventions": Juan Cole, *Napoleon's Egypt: Invading the Middle East* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), 246.

While I did not ultimately do any research in Kirkuk for this version of the project, my conversations with friends and interlocutors who have lived there or conducted research on Iraq strongly suggest that municipal and provincial records of various kinds are likely to have been largely purged during the Baʿth era or during the looting that followed the fall of the city to coalition-affiliated Kurdish *peshmerga* forces in 2003. For instance, one friend recalls having witnessed the *peshmerga* taking over government offices and destroying records when they briefly occupied the city in 1991. One of my interviewees in Arbil personally salvaged (or, depending on how one views it, looted) some old Iraq Petroleum Company geological files from the headquarters of Iraq's North Oil Company in Kirkuk during the period of lawlessness in 2003 and showed them to me to prove it. To my knowledge, the only historian of any nationality who has cited archival materials accessed *within* Kirkuk in a published work in any language is, as previously mentioned, the late Hanna Batatu—who did so nearly half a century ago. Additionally, a scholar who has conducted research on the present-day Kirkuk crisis once commented to me that, at present, there is an effort in Iraq to buy and sell "historical documents" about Kirkuk due to widespread obsession with the topic. The authenticity of these documents is doubtful and, in any case, it appears that they are being purchased by elements who would not be interested in making them available to external researchers.

This is not to say, of course, that there are no substantial primary sources on Kirkuk other than in non-Iraqi archives and published materials. There are evidently some relevant collections of personal papers that are held among Iraqi Turkmen

expatriates currently living in Turkey.[58] Even more importantly, there are valuable materials relevant to Kirkuk in the Iraq National Library and Archive in Baghdad, a city where I have not yet attempted to conduct research. This vital national institution's holdings were badly damaged in the looting that followed the fall of Baghdad to American-led forces in 2003, but it is nevertheless still functioning under the directorship of the historian Saad Eskander.[59] There may also be some essential Iraq Petroleum Company papers from Kirkuk archived in the Iraqi oil ministry, which is also in Baghdad. Finally, I am certain that there is crucial information in Turkish- and Kurdish-language memoirs and other works of memory that are presently obscure to most foreign researchers.[60] Due to the scope of my project, the realities of attempting to do research in multiple countries, and my own linguistic limitations, I have included few Turkish-language sources, nearly all of them secondary, and no Kurdish-language sources to supplement the English- and Arabic-language sources I have used. It is my sincere hope that scholars with the necessary language skills and unfettered access, and with the primary intent of taking an academically rigorous approach that eschews immediate political agendas, will eventually tap into these underutilized sources in greater numbers

[58] I came across Guldem Buyuksarac's as-yet unpublished ethnographic study of Iraqi Turkmens in Turkey, in which she employs these personal papers, late in the research process. I have incorporated some of her research into my analysis. Guldem Baykal Buyuksarac, "The Poetics of Loss and the Poetics of Melancholy: A Case Study on Iraqi Turkmen" (PhD diss., Columbia University, 2010).

[59] A short account of the logistics of conducting research in this archive written by a University of Maryland PhD student is forthcoming: Alda Benjamen, "Research at the Iraqi National Library and Archives," *The American Academic Research Institute in Iraq Newsletter*, in press (2012). I thank Benjamen for sharing her insights with me. Her experience confirms that there is untapped potential for valuable research in the archive despite the damage it has sustained.

[60] A very knowledgeable Kurdish scholar once told me in conversation that many politically active Kurds spent time in Kirkuk between 1958 and 1975 and wove accounts of their experiences there into memoirs that are written in Kurdish, but these books have not thus far been translated into any other language. Due to a lack of Kurdish language instruction in most educational institutions outside of Iraq, there are relatively few non-Kurdish scholars who read Kurdish well enough to use such sources.

in order to advance our understanding of Kirkuk in the modern Iraqi state beyond the analysis that I have presented here. The problems with accessing any remaining archival sources in Kirkuk itself and of collecting oral histories there, approaches that are virtually impossible for outside researchers in the current political environment and risky even for the city's inhabitants, are unlikely to be resolved soon.

The terminology of ethnicity I use in this work requires its own explanatory note. It is particularly difficult to use ethnic descriptors with fixed definitions in a work that proceeds from the premise that identity, ethnicity, and ethnic differentiation were processes, not innate features of Kirkuki society. As a matter of principle, it is also questionable to assign ethnic identities to groups when certain individuals commonly considered to be within them may prefer to associate themselves with another identity first and foremost. Ethnolinguistic identity does not preclude multilingualism, which is extremely common, and the language in use in any given situation varies depending on a large number of factors. For instance, it is noteworthy that, in Sherabayani's documentary, Turkmens tend to speak to him in Arabic. Arabic is the most widespread common language in Iraq and is the language in which the vast majority of Iraqis (outside of autonomous Kurdistan) are educated; Turkmens' use of Arabic while talking to a Kurdish nationalist therefore suggests a conscious underscoring of their opposition to Kurdish autonomy. Moreover, further complicating the picture of ethnolinguistic identity, intermarriage between ethnolinguistic communities certainly exists—though its prevalence is currently impossible to measure.

The self-identity of any given individual in early to mid-twentieth century Kirkuk who warrants a mention in archival sources is often unknown. It is impossible to know

for certain whether, for instance, a particular British report describing an urban notable as a "Turkmen" or a "Kurd" is doing so based on that individual's professed ethnicity or on the basis of European racial theories that considered someone of a particular "stock" to belong to that group regardless of other factors such as language, sociality and class. I have therefore been careful to differentiate between individuals' and groups' primary language and their most likely ethnic self-identity. I use adjectives such as "Turkish-speaking" and "Kurdish-speaking" and the corresponding nouns ("Turkish speaker," "Kurdish speaker") when the primary language is all that is known about an individual's or group's differentiation from others and when their ethnic self-identity, if they indeed have a distinct one, is not clear from the context. If I know or am reasonably certain that a person or group would call themselves "Kurdish," "Turkmen" or "Arab"—or if they would be perceived that way universally in a context that would render idiosyncratic self-identities moot, as in the case of the violence of 1959—I use those ethnic terms.[61] Readers will notice that the uncomplicated use of the nouns "Kurd," "Turkmen" and "Arab," along with their corresponding adjectival forms to describe people and groups, will become more frequent in chronologically later sections. This is one of many indications of the solidification of these ethnic group identities.

[61] The word "Turkmen," when used to refer to members of the Iraqi Turkic ethnic group, is spelled in many different ways in English, including Turkman, Turkoman, Turkomen and Turcoman. The plural is also confusing. The Arabic collective term for this group is "*al-turkuman*," which is often simply transliterated into English in one way or another to describe members of the ethnic group as a whole. Further complicating matters is the fact that some English-language writers seem to erroneously think that the word "Turkmen" is analogous to "Englishmen" or "Irishmen." Like the authors of several (but by no means all) recently published academic works on Iraq that mention this group, as well as *The New York Times* and *The Washington Post*, I choose to use the singular "Turkmen" and plural "Turkmens." These are the closest English renderings of the Turkish-language terms for this group (singular: Türkmen, plural: Türkmenler). However, whenever one of the other variant spellings and/or plurals is used in something I am quoting or the title of a work I am citing, I have rendered it as is without adding *sic* or any other sort of indicator.

The term “Chaldo-Assyrian” also merits a separate explanation. “Christian” is often inaccurately used as an *ethnic* descriptor for Christians from Iraq in general and from Kirkuk in particular. This usage dates back to the British military occupation of Iraq after World War I and, to be fair, has often been adopted by people in the region themselves. But Iraqis who profess belief in Christianity, practice Christianity, and/or come from a family of Christians may belong to one of several ethnicities. For instance, there are Armenian Iraqis who are Christians, including a very small community in Kirkuk. Also, some Iraqi Christians have been known to consider themselves Arab or, in northern Iraq, Kurdish or Turkmen on the basis of their first language and the linguistic-cultural sphere with which they identify. All the same, the largest ethnic group in Iraq whose members are overwhelmingly Christian consists of those who speak Neo-Aramaic or, if they have personally assimilated into another language group, whose recent ancestors spoke Neo-Aramaic. Members of this Iraqi Christian group, who retain an ethnolinguistic heritage that long predates the advent of Islam and of the Arabic, Kurdish and Turkish languages in Iraq, tend to call themselves “Chaldeans” if they belong to the Chaldean Catholic Church and “Assyrians” if they belong to the Assyrian Church of the East.[62] A variety of unified terms to refer to this group, including “Assyro-Chaldean,” are in use. I have opted to use “Chaldo-Assyrian,” which has gained currency since 2003.[63] Yet, in a Kirkuki context, this collective term can be misleading. As will be discussed

[62] The history of the split between these confessional groups and the particularities of identity that have evolved from it are formidably complex topics that are far beyond the scope of this work. I refer interested readers to an in-depth, methodologically interdisciplinary study of Chaldean identity in America that explores these issues, including Assyrian identity, throughout: Yasmeen S. Hanoosh, “The Politics of Minority: Chaldeans Between Iraq and America” (PhD diss., University of Michigan, 2008).

[63] One of the most prominent early uses of this term was in the 2004 Law of Administration for the State of Iraq for the Transitional Period, which recognized the rights of “ChaldoAssyrians” [*sic*].

later in this study, the majority of Christians native to Kirkuk in the time period covered herein were members of the Chaldean Catholic Church and spoke Turkish as their first language; some even go so far as to describe them simultaneously as Chaldeans and as ethnic Turkmens. Neo-Aramaic-speaking people in Kirkuk who self-identified as Assyrian were, after World War I, most often refugees from other areas or their descendants. This difference was frequently significant because Assyrians were perceived as outsiders in Kirkuk. The consequences of this tension could prove to be disastrous, as in the May 1924 incidents analyzed in Chapter 2. Self-identified Assyrians also tended to have closer connections, for better or for worse, to the British presence in Iraq before 1958—whether the Royal Air Force, mandate authorities, or the Iraq Petroleum Company. I have therefore used the separate terms "Chaldean" and "Assyrian" when the distinction between these communities is salient and the collective term "Chaldo-Assyrian" when it is not.

Of course, all of the abovementioned dilemmas and complexities have required me to make a large number of subjective decisions with regard to how to characterize various people and groups throughout this work. I do not claim that any of the ethnic or ethnoreligious descriptions I use herein are objectively correct; identity is, after all, an inherently personal and fluid phenomenon. Most of all, I hope readers will recognize that all of the group- and self-identity descriptors I have used in this work are carefully selected in good faith and without any chauvinistic political intentions.

Chapter overviews

The British military administration in Kirkuk between 1918 and 1921, culminating in the accession of King Faysal after a coercive referendum that Kirkukis rejected, constitutes the temporal framework of Chapter 1. This chapter concerns the beginnings of Kirkuk's process of political reorientation after the British occupation broke off the town's formal ties with Ottoman Istanbul. It argues that opposition to centralization under a Baghdad-based government, which took several different forms, was the single most important political trend in Kirkuk and its rural hinterland and was bolstered by the ambiguity of Kirkuk's status as a part of the disputed Mosul *vilayet* region. As a result, attempts by lower-level British officers at fostering pliability among influential Kirkukis failed to effect their desired outcome in the Faysal referendum of 1921 despite overwhelming success in other parts of Iraq. Anti-centralization forces in Kirkuk nevertheless had to contend with the patronage networks built by the British among some local notables, and the division between these two groups formed Kirkuk's most potent political fault line at a time when the distinctions among ethnolinguistic groups were not at all clear and had little to do with political interests.

A similar pattern persisted during the early years of the British mandate in Iraq, as will be discussed in Chapter 2. In Kirkuk, mandate rule produced a variety of relationships between urban notables, rural leaders, corresponding communities, and British and Iraqi local and central government authorities. These relations were unpredictable as long as Kirkuk was caught in the dispute between British Iraq and the Republic of Turkey. After a treaty cemented the Mosul *vilayet* region's status as part of

Iraq in 1926, the Turkish-speaking urban elite of Kirkuk began to exhibit closer and more consistent ties with Baghdad, creating an emergent but still minor ethnicized dispute with the Kurdish community, who were more inclined to oppose centralization. The Western-led mediation process to resolve the "Mosul question" had assumed that "Kurds," "Turks," "Arabs" and "Christians" each had distinct interests as a group, thereby creating a rigid, ethnically based paradigm that undergirded the nascent salience of ethnic politics.

The settlement of the Mosul question had also partly hinged on the known presence of oil in the former *vilayet*, especially in the Kirkuk area; members of the League of Nations commission appointed to determine the region's status even offered to intercede on behalf of what was then called the Turkish Petroleum Company in its negotiations with the Iraqi government for an oil concession. In the midst of the mediation process, Baghdad was pressured into a concession that gave the company a monopoly over oil in Iraqi territory. Chapters 3 and 4 start with the subsequent discovery of oil at Baba Gurgur in 1927 and proceed to analyze Kirkuk's growth from a provincial market town into an oil city, along with the geographical, social and political changes that this process engendered. Chapter 3 begins by examining the newly renamed Iraq Petroleum Company's contentious relations with urban notables and the Kirkuki population from the outset of its presence in the city, an outgrowth of its heavy-handed tactics in Baghdad. The chapter then discusses Kirkuk's urban population growth patterns as the city began to accommodate immigrants seeking work with the oil company at an accelerating rate. A large percentage, if not the majority, of these newcomers were Kurds from rural areas in proximity to Kirkuk, as indicated by the particularly rapid growth of a poor Kurdish quarter southeast of the citadel; at the same time, however, Baghdad

expanded its influence in the city, particularly through the growing prevalence of Arabic-language usage in schools. The oil company maintained a segregated, isolated existence and, despite its enormous influence in the city, lacked productive relations with its labor force. Kirkuki oil workers therefore proved to be amenable to organizing under the auspices of the ascendant Iraqi Communist Party. Urban political tensions culminated in a 1946 strike during which Kirkuk police killed many oil workers, a watershed moment that stimulated the oil company's active involvement in Kirkuk's evolving urban arena.

Chapter 4 details the development and housing projects that resulted directly from these events and defined the trajectory of Kirkuk's urban politics until the revolution of 1958. It analyzes the ways that these projects became sites of interaction and competition for influence between the company, British authorities, and Kirkuki and Iraqi authorities at several levels, lending increasing significance to the local political domain. It also examines how the presence of the oil industry and of development projects aimed at achieving "modernity" also defined Kirkuk's civic identity as the Iraqi "city of black gold," which Kirkukis, other Iraqis, and Westerners alike portrayed eagerly in various public discourses.

Chapter 5 returns to the theme of the ethnicization of local politics. It begins with the Iraqi revolution of 1958, which brought the development projects of the previous decade to a halt, led to the decline of British influence, and instantly altered the axes around which local politics in Kirkuk revolved. Unlike in the monarchy era, Kirkukis' political interests aligned with their ethnicities in the revolutionary era more than with any other single factor, a development that stemmed partly from class differences between Turkmens and Kurds that played a role in determining each community's

predominant form of political mobilization. Hence, in Kirkuk, the tensions between pan-Arabists, Iraqi-territorial nationalists, and Communists that were evident in Baghdad presented in the form of a cycle of intercommunal violence between Turkmens and Kurds. Both communities sought to assert their control over the city and its institutions literally and symbolically, demonstrating the fact that the Kirkuki civic identity that had emerged in recent years exacerbated these ethnicized fault lines. The worst episode of violence, in which armed Communist-affiliated Kurds massacred dozens of Turkmens and destroyed many Turkmen homes and businesses, took place in July 1959, bringing about the decline of Communist influence while predisposing Baghdad to ever more repressive tactics against organized Kurdish politics. The Kurdish nationalist movement, which was based in areas north and east of Kirkuk, actively and forthrightly claimed Kirkuk's oil and turned the Kirkuk *liwa*ʾ into a battleground for the first time. Baghdad met these efforts with a level of brutality that, up to that point, had been unprecedented in Kirkuk and its hinterland in the era of the modern state. The Iraqi central government also gradually began the process of consolidating ethnic Arabs' position in Kirkuk through administrative reforms and resettlement. These events were harbingers of the cruelty of Baghdad's efforts to exert control over Kirkuk in the second Baʿth republic.

Finally, in the Conclusion, I discuss why 1968 was a turning point in Kirkuk's history, examine some events since then in historical perspective, and consider the ways in which an understanding of Kirkuk's politics and society between 1918 and 1968 is relevant to today's discourses on the city's intractable crisis and its uncertain future.

1. Kirkuk and the Forging of Iraq: The British Military Administration, 1918-1921

Introduction: October 1918

Kirkuk's integration into modern Iraq began in the final stages of the British Mesopotamian campaign of World War I in 1918. In May of that year, troops under British command briefly occupied the town before evacuating and ceding it once more to Ottoman control. The British continued to control territory up to the town of Tuz Khurmatu, about 55 miles to Kirkuk's southeast. They then re-entered Kirkuk in late October. On 29 October 1918, officer C.C. Garbett wrote about the moment when British troops had entered the town a couple of days earlier:

> The town was completely quiet. There were very few people about, but in the bazaar the food shops were open. Capt. Longrigg had already interviewed the notables and made arrangements for the policing of the town. There was no plunder and none of the tendency to disorder which attended the occupation of Baghdad.[1]

British officials soon realized that the town's population had declined by nearly half, from about 25,000 to 14,000, during the Mesopotamian campaign. Many of those who had left Kirkuk had fled to refuge in British-controlled areas to the south. The town's Christian community, in particular, had "all hurried to Baghdad," according to officer Humphrey Bowman. Other Kirkukis had died of starvation. Early reports indicated that about one-seventh of the city's houses were in disrepair and that starvation remained widespread, both in Kirkuk and in surrounding regions. Agriculture and commerce were

[1] C.C. Garbett, 29 October 1918, in Office of the Civil Commissioner, Baghdad, to The Secretary of State for India, London, 14 November 1918, L/PS/10/619, IOR.

at a standstill. For months, the inhabitants of Kirkuk had relied on inadequate supplies of imported wheat from the city of Arbil and the Lesser Zab River region to the north.[2]

From this troubled beginning, British military officers would spend the next few years forging precedents for the policies that civilian British authorities and, later, the Iraqi central government would follow in Kirkuk and throughout its hinterland and surrounding regions. In order to understand Kirkuk's political, social and economic trajectory over the next several decades, it is necessary to address two main questions about the period of British military administration in Kirkuk from 1918 to 1921: first, in what political, social and economic context authorities were operating; and second, how authorities attempted to integrate Kirkuk into the process of contriving the modern Iraqi state. Unlike some of the oil "company towns" of the Gulf, Kirkuk was already a sizable town with a pre-existing history as a site of commerce and of Ottoman influence. Aware that the Kirkuk area was rich with oil and had commercial potential, the British government aimed to control it as part of a modern colony in the Iraqi region as they fought the declining Ottoman Empire in World War I.

In their early years in Kirkuk, British authorities built and maintained linkages with influential people, typically family patriarchs and tribal leaders, as a way of solidifying their control over the area. This approach, which entrenched tribal figures' power, created relationships of patronage that were useful to the British but also had serious shortcomings. In 1921, despite the ongoing ambiguity of Kirkuk's status with relation to Iraq, British officials unsuccessfully attempted to incorporate the Kirkuki notables into a procedure to unanimously confirm the Iraqi monarch. The failures of early

[2] Ibid.; Humphrey Bowman, 9 April 1919, in volume "April 1918 to August 1919," Humphrey Bowman Collection GB165-0034, Box 3B, MECA.

British administration stemmed from a lack of understanding of the interdependence of urban and rural Kirkuk, its distinctness from nearby majority-Kurdish areas, and the fluid nature of its group identities.

Kirkuk before the late Ottoman era

The Kirkuk area is among the oldest continuously inhabited areas in the world. Therefore, a short summary of its history before the modern era such as this one inevitably omits many crucial details for the sake of brevity, which should not lead to the mistaken assumption that the area was quiet and unimportant over the course of three millennia. Kirkuk is located on the Khasa River, a tributary of the Tigris, in the northeastern part of the Tigris-Euphrates river system; traditionally known as Mesopotamia, this region is located between Anatolia, Persia, and the Arab Levant (Figure 1.1). Kirkuk is just under 100 kilometers west of the Zagros mountain range. Scholars generally believe that the modern city is located on the site of the ancient city of Arrapha. The site of the ancient city of Nuzi, which was excavated by a team of Western archaeologists during the British mandate era, is several kilometers away. Kirkuk's oldest feature is a citadel built on the east bank of the Khasa River. Archaeological evidence indicates that the citadel, which remains in the center of the modern city, was probably constructed sometime in the middle of the third millennium BC. As late as the Islamic era, writings by geographers indicated that the settlement that is now Kirkuk consisted solely of the citadel. An architect and writer originally from Kirkuk, Suphi Saatçi, claims that due to the frequent attacks that were the inevitable consequence of the town's

Figure 1.1: A view of Kirkuk (whose location is indicated by the tag marked “A”) and surrounding regions, including major cities, with present-day political boundaries. © 2012 Google.

frontier location, it did not expand significantly beyond the fortified hill and onto both sides of the Khasa River until the seventeenth century.[3]

In its earliest era of settlement, the area including Arrapha and Nuzi was inhabited by two groups, the Akkadians and the Hurrians, both of whom controlled it at various times.[4] Over many centuries, numerous other polities conquered and controlled the town that eventually became Kirkuk. It was an especially significant town under the Neo-Assyrian Empire. When it was part of the Sasanian Empire, its Syriac name was Karkha d-Beth Slokh, a likely source for the modern name; it was significant for being a place where Christianity, particularly the Church of the East (also known as the Nestorian Church), flourished.[5] In the seventh century, the Kirkuk area and its surrounding regions came under the control of the Islamic caliphate along with most of the rest of the Sasanian domains. The Abbasid caliph al-Mansur founded Baghdad, which is located on the Tigris about 240 kilometers south of Kirkuk, as the capital of the caliphate in the eighth century. Throughout the many conquests of the centuries that followed, the political status of the Kirkuk area typically corresponded to Baghdad's. The modern name of Kirkuk first appears in a fifteenth-century source.[6]

For reasons related to the twentieth- and twenty-first-century dispute over Kirkuk's status, the subject of when each of its major ethnic groups first appeared in the

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[3] Saatçi, *The Urban Fabric and Traditional Houses of Kirkuk*, 19-20, 25.

[4] Robert H. Pfeiffer, *Nuzi and the Hurrians: the Excavations at Nuzi (Kirkuk, Iraq) and Their Contribution to Our Knowledge of the History of the Hurrians* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1936), 553.

[5] J.H. Kramers, "Kirkuk," in *Encyclopaedia of Islam, Second Edition*, ed. P. Bearman, et al. (Leiden: Brill Online, 2011), http://referenceworks.brillonline.com/entries/encyclopaedia-of-islam-2/kirkuk-SIM_4390; Joel Thomas Walker, *The Legend of Mar Qardagh: Narrative and Christian Heroism in Late Antique Iraq* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006), 99-100.

[6] Kramers, "Kirkuk."

town is highly contentious. For instance, some theories posit that the Turkmens of Kirkuk are descended from Turkic troops of the early Islamic era or from Turkic immigrants who arrived during the period of Seljuq rule beginning in the eleventh century, while others suggest their antecedents did not arrive in Kirkuk until the sixteenth or even the eighteenth century.[7] Significantly, the latter theories have been used to attempt to discredit the Turkmens' presence in Kirkuk, as will be discussed in Chapter 5. There are also a variety of highly inventive claims about the origins of Kirkuki groups, especially among the Kurds and the Assyrians, which assert that they have been present in Kirkuk for many millennia.[8] Many, though certainly not all, of the Chaldo-Assyrians in Kirkuk today are probably descended from the Syriac-speaking Christians who dominated the town in the Sasanian era.[9] It is reasonable to believe that the tribes of the Kirkuk area, which are predominantly Kurdish, are descendants of the nomadic tribes who were, like Syriac speakers, verifiably in the region at least as early as the Sasanian era. However, it is not possible to prove any specific claims regarding these tribes' descent from particular peoples of antiquity who lived in Kirkuk.[10] The only Kirkuki ethnic group about whose origins there appears to be little dispute is the Arabs; presumably, Arabic-speaking

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[7] C.J. Edmonds, *Kurds, Turks, and Arabs: Politics, Travel and Research in North-Eastern Iraq, 1919-1925* (London: Oxford University Press, 1957), 267-68; Kramers, "Kirkuk."

[8] See, for instance, pertaining to the Kurds: Ahmad, *Karkuk wa-Tawabiʿuha*, 5. Ahmad claims that the Kurds are descended from two peoples who lived in or near the Kirkuk area in the third millennium BC: the Hurrians and the Lullubians. Needless to say, claims of this sort are not only impossible to verify, but also largely meaningless with regard to modern group identities.

[9] As will be discussed below, many Assyrians who were refugees from areas outside of the borders of modern Iraq, such as the Hakkari region, moved to Kirkuk after World War I.

[10] For instance, David McDowall describes these tribes as "Kurdish" even with reference to their status in the Sasanian era, but also notes that the term "Kurd" was synonymous with "nomad" at the time and was not limited to its current ethnolinguistic meaning until the nineteenth century. McDowall, *A Modern History of the Kurds*, 13, 21-23.

people first came to Kirkuk at the time of the Islamic conquest of Iraq in the seventh century.

While some scholars have made impressive attempts to trace and summarize what is known about the origins of Kirkuk's modern ethnic groups through available sources and to weigh the plausibility of different claims,[11] I contend that to do so any further here would, at best, anachronistically and inaccurately imply that present-day ethnicities are a reflection of group identities that existed in Kirkuk many centuries ago. At worst, it would perpetuate the idea that a particular ethnic group can claim a more legitimate presence in Kirkuk on the basis of perceived longevity, which in turn entails deeply flawed assumptions about the ethnic or racial purity of each modern group. It should go without saying that intermarriage between communities was and is certainly not unknown in Kirkuk. Digging into ancient and medieval history for more information on the origins of modern Kirkukis also ignores the fact that enormous immigration into the city took place in the twentieth century, swelling the numbers of almost every ethnic group with people from other regions. Finally, the process of tracing communities' origins in Kirkuk by working backwards from today's prevalent ethnic groups erases the experiences of Kirkukis from groups that are no longer present in the city—most notably the Jewish community, virtually all of whom departed for Israel under duress in the mid-twentieth century—and elides group identities, such as religious ones, that exist outside of an ethnic paradigm.[12]

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[11] See for instance: Anderson and Stansfield, *Crisis in Kirkuk*, 13-19.

[12] For exhaustive details about Kirkuk's various modern communities, including religious sects and tribes, see: Edmonds, *Kurds, Turks, and Arabs*, 266-73.

In summary, while the details of Kirkuk's political history throughout its first two or three millennia remain hazy, the fact that the town has perpetually been located on frontiers between peoples suggests that a close analysis of this history, if possible, would reveal many heretofore-untold episodes of contestation whose human costs were probably much greater than that of the violence driven by ethnonationalisms in the city in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. Furthermore, the origins of Kirkuk's modern ethnic groups can only be guessed at, and the ethnic and religious composition of its population has changed dramatically in the past several centuries. These changes have taken place not only because of shifts in Kirkuk's political status, but also because of multilingualism and fluctuations in dominant languages and identities over a very long period of time. For instance, it was not uncommon for individuals or families in Kirkuk who were thought to be descended from a particular ethnic group to primarily speak the language of, and identify with, another group.

Late Ottoman administration in Kirkuk: patronage and the perils of a frontier

Kirkuk became part of the Ottoman Empire in the sixteenth century, when Ottoman troops gradually conquered the region that is now the modern state of Iraq. Istanbul changed the administrative boundaries around Kirkuk frequently during this time, but it was generally part of an administrative unit called Şehrizor. In 1879, Şehrizor became part of the new *vilayet*, or province, of Mosul.[13] The three *vilayets* of Mosul, Baghdad and Basra would eventually correspond, for the most part, to the borders of the modern state of Iraq.

[13] Çetinsaya, *Ottoman Administration of Iraq*, 4-5; Edmonds, *Kurds, Turks, and Arabs*, 265-66.

In the late Ottoman era, Kirkuk was a point of intersection for Ottoman, Persian, and independent Kurdish tribal interests and influences. For centuries, Şehrizor was a site of frequent fighting between Ottoman and Persian forces due to its proximity to Iran. Along with Sulaymaniyya to its east, the Şehrizor division was predominantly populated by tribal Kurds. In general, Ottoman policy in Iraq relied on a system of the patronage of local notables, or prominent people with independent local influence, to maintain control and to collect taxes.[14] Consequently, beginning early in the era of Ottoman control of Iraq, authorities in Istanbul appointed Kurdish families to govern Şehrizor and Sulaymaniyya through semi-autonomous, hereditary tribal principalities.[15] While their intention was, in part, to use these linkages to keep Şehrizor secure from Persian invasions, the Kurds remained largely independent from Istanbul's influence and sometimes made alliances with Persian leaders.[16] Persian forces entered Şehrizor frequently, and the town of Kirkuk even briefly surrendered to the Persians on a few occasions.[17] The fact that Kurdish tribal leaders in the area had a long history of openly allying themselves with both the Ottomans and the Persians, frequently switching sides, and aligning with different sides within the same family is especially significant to an

[14] I am using Albert Hourani's now-standard concept of the "politics of notables" in the late Ottoman era, discussed at length in: Hourani, "Ottoman Reform," 41-68.

[15] Çetinsaya, *Ottoman Administration of Iraq*, 4.

[16] Stephen Hemsley Longrigg, *Four Centuries of Modern Iraq* (Beirut: Librairie du Liban, 1968), 231-33.

[17] For example, for an account of the Persian siege of Kirkuk in 1743, see: Robert W. Olson, *The Siege of Mosul and Ottoman-Persian Relations, 1718-1743: A Study of Rebellion in the Capital and War in the Provinces of the Ottoman Empire* (Bloomington: Indiana University, 1975), 123. Longrigg describes the many occasions that Persian forces threatened Kirkuk and/or Şehrizor; see for instance: Longrigg, *Four Centuries of Modern Iraq*, 180-86.

understanding of twentieth-century politics in Kirkuk.[18] The town of Kirkuk itself, unlike its hinterland, was predominantly Turkish-speaking and was, as a result, "conspicuous as a nursery of the official class" of Turkish-speaking elites, according to British military officer and historian Stephen Longrigg.[19] Longrigg served as one of the first British military officials in charge of Kirkuk beginning in 1918.

Ottoman policy in Kirkuk under Sultan Abdülhamid II (1876-1909) was preoccupied with the fact that the town and its surrounding region were part of more than one ethnic and political frontier; hence, the basic task of maintaining security there was a priority for Istanbul. In this time period, the first frontier was between the Ottomans and Kurdish tribes. Istanbul had begun an active attempt to bring the Kurdish tribes in Ottoman domains under their control beginning early in the nineteenth century by repressing and sidelining the leaders of the semi-autonomous principalities.[20] During the era of Tanzimat reforms, which began in 1839, the extension of central government influence to frontier regions became an integral aspect of Ottoman policy. In eastern Anatolia, for example, the Ottoman government created a Kurdish cavalry force for social and political purposes in addition to its strategic functions, doing so as a way of integrating those provinces into the nation-state.[21] As for Kirkuk, its tribal hinterland and neighboring regions—including the town of Sulaymaniyya just under 100 kilometers to

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[18] For instance, for an account of the changing and differing alliances of the Kurdish Baban brothers in the Kirkuk area, see: Longrigg, *Four Centuries of Modern Iraq*, 182-83.

[19] Ibid., 300.

[20] Jwaideh, *The Kurdish National Movement*, 54.

[21] Janet Klein, *The Margins of Empire: Kurdish Militias in the Ottoman Tribal Zone* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2011), 1-6.

its east—came to be prominent sites of tribal Kurdish resistance to Istanbul's interference.

Secondly, Kirkuk continued to be a significant point in the violently disputed Ottoman-Persian frontier region. These frontiers were inextricably linked in Ottoman policy, as the extension of central government control to Kurdish areas was associated with efforts to define and harden the ambiguous and fluid borderlands between Ottoman-controlled and Persian-controlled areas that had begun with the drawing of an Ottoman-Persian boundary in the mid- to late nineteenth century.[22] As a result of the fluctuating relationships between locally influential Kurdish tribes, Ottoman authorities, and the Persians, Şehrizor and Sulaymaniyya were the most unstable areas in the Iraqi region. This problem was exacerbated by the decline of central government influence caused by the Russo-Turkish War of 1877-8, a blow to their leverage from which Ottoman authorities did not fully recover.[23]

In addition, the Ottomans' suppression of the secular and hereditary leaders of the former Kurdish semi-autonomous principalities created a power vacuum which various tribal chiefs in the Mosul *vilayet* exploited for their own gain by, for instance, habitually undertaking raids. The Kurdish Hamawand tribe, which controlled areas between Kirkuk and Sulaymaniyya, became especially infamous for this type of violence. The void in secular leadership also allowed the rise in power of Kurdish shaykhly families. Of these, the Talabani sayyids of the Qadiriyya, a Sufi order, were especially important in the Kirkuk area. The Talabanis wielded influence over other Kurdish tribes around Kirkuk,

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[22] Sabri Ateş, "Empires at the Margin: Towards a History of the Ottoman-Iranian Borderland and the Borderland Peoples, 1843-1881" (PhD diss., New York University, 2006), 15-16.

[23] Çetinsaya, *Ottoman Administration of Iraq*, 45, 75.

as well as owning a large amount of land. Indeed, one of the most famous Kirkukis of the time period was Shaykh Rida (Riza) Talabani (d. 1910), a popular poet originally from a village on the outskirts of Kirkuk who eventually settled in Baghdad and wrote poems in several languages, including Kurdish.[24] The Talabanis' Qadiri rivals, the Barzinji family, dominated Sulaymaniyya in a similar way. The fierce antagonism between these families further destabilized the region between Kirkuk and Sulaymaniyya and would persist after the fall of the Ottoman Empire.[25]

In 1879, the newly created Mosul *vilayet* had its seat in predominantly Turkish-speaking Kirkuk, but the governor was transferred to the mainly Arabic-speaking city of Mosul in 1883. In the years that followed, the troubled Mosul governorship saw a succession of inadequate officeholders as Istanbul repeatedly dismissed governors and appointed new ones. In addition to failing to prevent the continuous tribal unrest around Kirkuk and Sulaymaniyya, these governors were often accused of crimes such as exploiting the tax-collection system.[26] Around 1900, the central government sent a committee and, subsequently, an investigative commission to the Mosul *vilayet* in an attempt to address these issues. Their findings confirmed the existence of official corruption and various types of tribal disturbances, but Istanbul failed to intervene effectively to solve these problems.[27] The violent resistance of Kurdish tribes therefore worsened. In particular, the Hamawand tribe escalated its raids, at times disrupting or

[24] Edmonds, *Kurds, Turks, and Arabs*, 290-95; ʿIzz al-Din Mustafa Rasul, "Tatawwur al-Haraka al-Thaqafiyya fi Karkuk – Al-Shaykh Rida al-Talabani Namudhajan," in Markaz Karbalaʾ lil-Buhuth wa-l-Dirasat, *Karkuk*, 506-08. Shaykh Rida remains especially famous among Kurdish poets.

[25] van Bruinessen, *Agha, Shaikh, and State: The Social and Political Structures of Kurdistan*, 221; Çetinsaya, *Ottoman Administration of Iraq*, 74-76; Jwaideh, *The Kurdish National Movement*, 75-76.

[26] Çetinsaya, *Ottoman Administration of Iraq*, 63-64.

[27] Ibid., 65-66.

completely stopping trade and transportation between Kirkuk, Sulaymaniyya and Baghdad.[28] In 1909, Sulaymaniyya's foremost Kurdish leader, Shaykh Saʿid Barzinji, who had married into the Hamawand tribe (thereby gaining further influence) and had encouraged their uprising, was killed in a riot in Mosul that may have been instigated by Ottoman authorities. This event only further provoked the Hamawand, whose insurrection was still ongoing as of the beginning of World War I in 1914.[29] At that point, Kirkuk's administrative subdivision still extended to the Ottoman-Persian border. Persian currency, which remained in use in Sulaymaniyya, appears to have circulated in Kirkuk as well.[30] There was also a Persian consul stationed in Kirkuk, as well as an Ottoman garrison, indicating that the town continued to be an important site both politically and strategically on the Ottoman-Persian frontier.[31]

Ottoman-Kurdish and Ottoman-Persian interactions in and around Kirkuk in the twilight of the Ottoman Empire therefore established two consequential political precedents that continued to play a role in Kirkuk's politics in the era of British military control after World War I, at which point the Persians ceased to be an important political factor in the area. First, Kurdish tribes in the Kirkuk area desired a return to the relative autonomy to which they were accustomed and were, as a result, in ongoing revolt against centralized rule. Second, Ottoman authorities had attempted to maintain their authority, collect taxes, and thwart external influence in the Kirkuk area through a system of

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[28] Ibid., 86.

[29] McDowall, *A Modern History of the Kurds*, 97.

[30] *Handbook of Mesopotamia: Vol III: Central Mesopotamia with Southern Kurdistan and the Syrian Desert*, 375, in L/MIL/17/15/41/4, IOR.

[31] "Copy of Memorandum No. 23919 dated 31st October 1918 from Civil Commissioner, Baghdad to Major E.W.C. Noel," in Office of the Civil Commissioner, Baghdad to The Secretary of State for India, London, 14 November 1918, L/PS/10/619, IOR; *Handbook of Mesopotamia: Vol III*, 360.

patronage of local notables. Despite its overall ineffectiveness for Istanbul's purposes,[32] this was an idea that the British would soon adopt and modify according to their own interests and their ideas of the political model that best suited the people of Kirkuk and its surrounding regions.

Kirkuk circa 1918: urban fabric and rural hinterland, commerce, and group identities

Significant portions of what is known about Kirkuk's circumstances around the time of the British occupation come from Western accounts. Beginning in the late eighteenth century, European explorers traveling through the Ottoman and Persian domains sometimes stopped in Kirkuk, as did a few Christian missionaries.[33] Western travel in the Middle East became much more common from the mid-nineteenth to the early twentieth century for a variety of reasons, usually based on either religious or strategic interests. For many provincial parts of the region, these explorers' travel memoirs, their shortcomings and inaccuracies notwithstanding, are among the few extant records from the late Ottoman era to contain fine-grained details about local societies and economies; they are therefore essential to understanding the contexts in which post-World War I authorities would operate.[34] It is salient that most of the explorers who

[32] Istanbul's nineteenth-century policy of extending its influence to other frontiers of the empire was arguably effective, or at least competent, in places where the central government did not compete with local notables or Western interference: Eugene L. Rogan, *Frontiers of the State in the Late Ottoman Empire: Transjordan, 1850-1921* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 17.

[33] For an extensive compilation of quotations from many of these early accounts of Kirkuk, see: Mirella Galletti, "Kirkuk: The Pivot of Balance in Iraq Past and Present," *Journal of Assyrian Academic Studies* 19, no. 2 (2005). A discussion of French-language European travelers' accounts about Kirkuk may be found in: Halkut Hakim, "Karkuk fi Kitabat al-Rahhala al-Fransiyyin," in Markaz Karbalaʾ lil-Buhuth wa-l-Dirasat, *Karkuk*.

[34] Shields makes the same observation in writing about the Mosul *vilayet* in the nineteenth century: Shields, *Mosul Before Iraq*, 12-13.

wrote about Kirkuk were British. Many of them, especially those who were military officers, would eventually play a role in the Anglo-Iraqi administration after World War I. For example, prior to his political career and stint in the War Office, Sir Mark Sykes wrote an account of stopping in Kirkuk during a trip through the Ottoman domains in 1903.[35] E.B. Soane, who would later serve in the postwar military administration of Iraq, published a description of Kirkuk based on his travels in the Iraqi region in 1909 dressed as a Persian; he evocatively titled his memoir *To Mesopotamia and Kurdistan in Disguise*.[36] Gertrude Bell, later the Oriental Secretary in mandate Iraq, traveled to Kirkuk in 1911 with the aid of an existing War Office map of the region that was, she complained, "very imperfect."[37] Several British travelers presented their findings on the geography of Mesopotamia and Kurdistan to the Royal Geographical Society in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries; at least one military officer, F.R. Maunsell, explored the Kirkuk area and other nearby regions specifically for information on oil resources.[38] While referring to these British travelers as spies may be an overstatement, their travel was often officially sanctioned, and the British military used the information they gathered for various strategic and practical purposes.[39] In the case of the evidence of

[35] Mark Sykes, *Dar-Ul-Islam: A Record of a Journey Through Ten of the Asiatic Provinces of Turkey* (London: Bickers & Son, 1904), 186-200.

[36] E.B. Soane, *To Mesopotamia and Kurdistan in Disguise: With Historical Notices of the Kurdish Tribes and the Chaldeans of Kurdistan* (London: John Murray, 1912), 120-39.

[37] Gertrude Bell, letter, 1 April 1911, in *Gertrude Bell Archive*, http://www.gerty.ncl.ac.uk/letter_details.php?letter_id=1811.

[38] F.R. Maunsell, "The Mesopotamian Petroleum Field," *The Geographical Journal* 9, no. 5 (1897). For another example of a British military figure's account of traveling to Kirkuk and presenting his findings to the Royal Geographical Society, see: Bertram Dickson, "Journeys in Kurdistan," *The Geographical Journal* 35, no. 4 (1910).

[39] Roger Owen notes that individuals such as Sykes and Bell should not be conflated with professional members of the intelligence services: Roger Owen, "British and French Military Intelligence in Syria and Palestine, 1914-1918: Myths and Reality," *British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies* 38, no. 1 (2011). For

the presence of oil, these details even played a role in British maneuverings to maintain control of certain parts of the Mosul *vilayet* region, including Kirkuk, beginning with the Sykes-Picot Agreement of 1916.

Late nineteenth-century and early twentieth-century European accounts describe Kirkuk primarily as a market center for goods from the surrounding region, while also sometimes mentioning that it housed an Ottoman army division. Most descriptions of Kirkuk also note its reputed Biblical connection; a tomb in the citadel was said to be that of the prophet Daniel, and the natural gas fires burning outside of the city, correspondingly, represented the "fiery furnace" of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. Estimates of its population varied widely. A British military handbook from the World War I era states that the Kirkuk area had been "devastated by plague" about a century prior.[40] The consensus indicates that Kirkuk had about 25,000 inhabitants in 1918; furthermore, according to Stephen Longrigg, it had "doubled in size" since 1890.[41] The town was connected by main roads to Baghdad in the south, Mosul (via Arbil) in the northwest, and Sulaymaniyya in the east, but only indirectly to other major urban areas. The military estimated that, traveling by foot or animal as caravans at the time would have done, the distance between Baghdad and Kirkuk on the roads then in use was about 187.5 miles.[42] Kirkuk's growth may have been related in part to an increase in trade activity; starting in the second half of the nineteenth century, trade caravans going to

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an example of official use of this information, see *Handbook of Mesopotamia: Vol III*, which cites Sykes and Soane, among others, with regard to Kirkuk. Some of the other official texts cited in this section appear to have derived their information from previous travelers' accounts.

[40] *Handbook of Mesopotamia: Vol III*, 360.

[41] Stephen Hemsley Longrigg, *Iraq, 1900 to 1950: A Political, Social, and Economic History* (London: Oxford University Press, 1953), 53.

[42] *Handbook of Mesopotamia: Vol III*, 358.

Baghdad via Aleppo and Damascus began to travel much more frequently on a northern route through Mosul, which would have also taken them through Kirkuk, for reasons of safety.[43] One British report suggested that Kirkuk's trade networks, like those of other parts of Iraq, extended as far as Britain and India.[44]

A 1919 War Office map of Kirkuk (Figure 1.2) shows that the urban fabric had grown not only around the citadel but also to the west side of the Khasa River, where the military barracks and government offices were located. A narrow stone bridge beginning at the southwestern edge of the citadel connected the two halves of the town. The map indicates extensive areas of cultivation on the outskirts of the town's inhabited areas, and even between its neighborhoods; in March 1911, Gertrude Bell described the residential dwellings of the western side of Kirkuk as "houses set in gardens."[45] Similarly, in 1910, Captain Bertram Dickson described Kirkuk as "a veritable oasis in the desert, with palm-trees and fruit-gardens."[46] In addition to its urban cultivation, Kirkuk's rural surroundings contained fertile ground for agriculture, producing large quantities of wheat for export, as well as various other grains, vegetables, and cotton for local use. In the town, Christians produced well-known liquors for export which were taxed by Ottoman authorities.[47]

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[43] Shields, *Mosul Before Iraq*, 101-02.

[44] Political Officer, Kirkuk to the Civil Commissioner, Baghdad, "Memorandum No. K.1760/3/1 of 29-11-19," in 29 November 1919, Office of the Civil Commissioner, Baghdad to the Under-Secretary of State for India, London, File 2023-1919 Part 10, L/PS/10/821, IOR.

[45] Gertrude Bell, diary entry, 31 March 1911, in *Gertrude Bell Archive*, http://www.gerty.ncl.ac.uk/diary_details.php?diary_id=938.

[46] Dickson, "Journeys in Kurdistan," 375.

[47] C.C. Garbett, "Land Revenue Note on Kirkuk," 1919, C.J. Edmonds Collection GB 165-0095, Box 7 File 1, MECA.

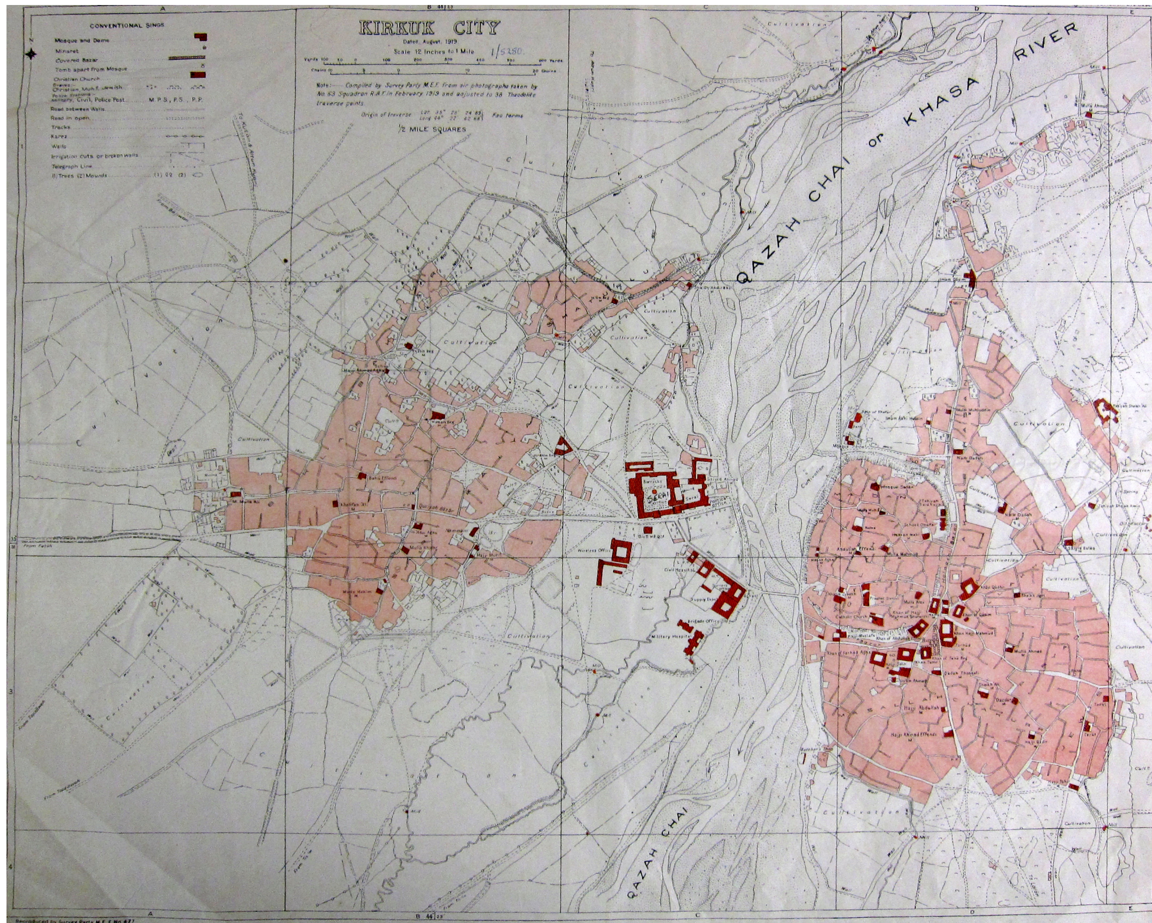

Figure 1.2: A British War Office map of urban Kirkuk in 1919. Source: WO 302/553, UK. Reproduced with permission from the National Archives of the United Kingdom.

The town, which was still limited in size, was defined by the citadel at its core. An early French traveler who visited Kirkuk in 1735 described the town as split into two distinct sections: the citadel, which was relatively sparsely populated, and the plains surrounding the citadel, where commerce took place.[48] Two centuries later, the British engineer A.M. Hamilton, demonstrating his careful eye for man-made structures, wrote:

> It is an ancient place. Successive cities, built one upon the other, have raised a mound which stands well above the surrounding plain.…Only the main residential quarter is today contained within the wall built upon the mound, for the straggling bazaar has long ago overflowed on to the flat land by the river where it is at times threatened by widespread floods. In spite of the bombardment of flood-waters, the bridge, of a series of short-span masonry arches, is one of the few built during the Turkish régime that still stands.[49]

On a Friday during her 1911 visit, Gertrude Bell took a photograph from this famous stone bridge while facing the citadel (Figure 1.3). This image offers a rare glimpse of the Ottoman-era town from the ground, including several pedestrians and beggars. Bell, who had worked as an archaeologist, found Kirkuk's scope for archaeological study fascinating. But she was repulsed by the lack of hygiene in the confined spaces of the oldest part of the town:

> Kerkuk is perhaps the dirtiest town I have ever seen. An open drain, smelly and disgusting, runs down the middle of each narrow street and the exiguous space on either side of it on which you walk is filthy beyond words.[50]

Bell's contempt for urban Kirkuk would later be echoed in official British reports from the town during the period of military rule. With a similar tone, Soane described the town's architecture as consisting of "solid stone buildings of no beauty" and "a few mean

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[48] Jean Otter, *Voyage en Turquie et en Perse,* as cited in Hakim, "Karkuk fi Kitabat al-Rahhala al-Fransiyyin."

[49] A.M. Hamilton, *Road Through Kurdistan: Travels in Northern Iraq* (London: Tauris Parke Paperbacks, 2004), 45-46.

[50] Bell, letter, 1 April 1911.

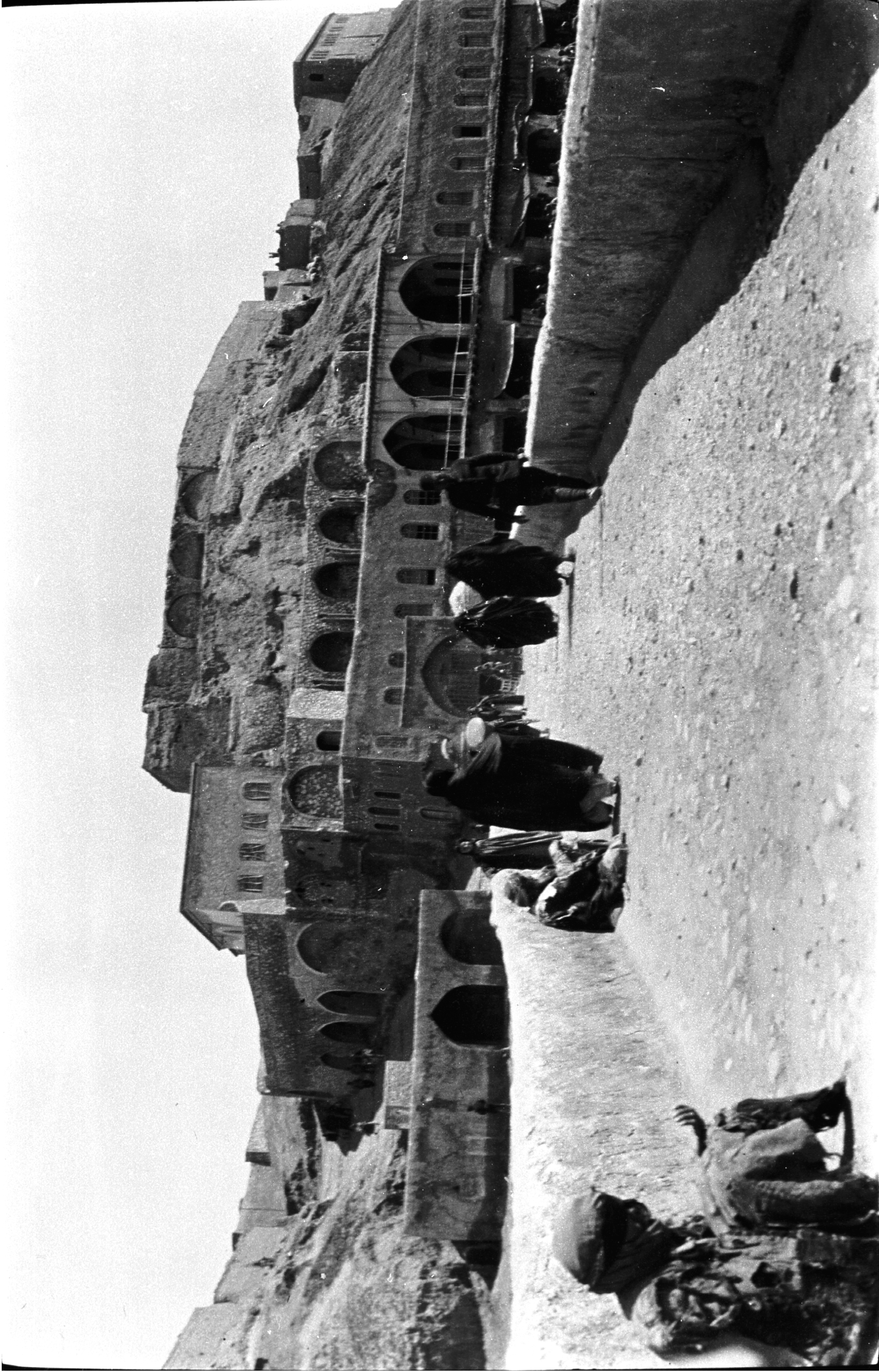

Figure 1.3: Gertrude Bell's photograph of the Kirkuk citadel taken from the stone bridge across the Khasa River, 31 March 1911. Reproduced with permission from the Gertrude Bell Photographic Archive, Newcastle University, United Kingdom.

mosques."[51] As the 1919 map shows upon a close examination, there were several mosques on both sides of the Khasa; British official C.J. Edmonds's memoir mentions that Kirkuk was also home to several *takiyyas*, or Sufi establishments, a reflection of the influence of the Qadiriyya order over the area.[52] There were, of course, houses of worship for the Christian and Jewish communities as well. A French Catholic mission had recently built a cathedral for Kirkuk's Chaldeans, or Eastern rite Catholics.[53]

Along with some other areas in the Mosul *vilayet*, Kirkuk's hinterland was also the site of a minor oil enterprise that had existed for as long as the area had been inhabited. Where it seeped out of the ground of its own accord, and sometimes with the added assistance of digging or boring, petroleum was collected in tins and transported via donkey or camel for sale.[54] People in the Ottoman domains, like their antecedents, used petroleum and associated substances such as bitumen for a variety of everyday and commercial functions, including fueling lamps and waterproofing rafts. After the opening of the Suez Canal in 1869, oil was also used to power steamboats on the Tigris run by both British and Ottoman companies, which greatly increased the Iraqi region's international trade.[55] The Ottoman government also used Kirkuk's oil for military

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[51] Soane, *To Mesopotamia and Kurdistan in Disguise*, 120-21.

[52] Edmonds, *Kurds, Turks, and Arabs*, 265.

[53] *Handbook of Mesopotamia: Vol III*, 359.

[54] See for instance: "Report No. 14., May 15-June 1," in Captain A.T. Wilson, Officiating Civil Commissioner, Baghdad, to The Political Secretary, India Office, London and The Secretary to the Government of India, in the Foreign and Political Department, Simla, 8 June 1918, L/PS/10/732, IOR. This report describes the process of oil production and transport in the town of Tuz Khurmatu. For a more general discussion of the pre-modern oil trade in Kirkuk and neighboring areas, see: Stephen Hemsley Longrigg, *Oil in the Middle East: Its Discovery and Development*, 3rd ed. (London: Oxford University Press, 1968), 10-11.

[55] F.R. Maunsell, *Reconnaissances in Mesopotamia, Kurdistan, North-West Persia, and Luristan from April to October 1888*, vol. 1, in Papers of George Nathaniel Curzon, MSS Eur F 112/396/1, BL; Roger Owen, *The Middle East in the World Economy, 1800-1914*, 2nd ed. (London: I.B. Tauris, 1993), 180-83.

purposes and had considered it a significant resource for centuries. Reflecting this fact, the central government had issued a decree in 1639 formally granting the rights to the Kirkuk division's oil-bearing areas to the Naftchizadas, an elite Turkish-speaking family.[56] The Naftchizadas claimed that they had been selling oil for generations prior to the Ottoman conquest of Iraq, a fact suggested by their name—"naftchi," combining an Arabic word with a Turkish suffix, means "oilman." As will be discussed in Chapter 3, the Naftchizadas continued to claim the rights to these lands in the twentieth century.

Travelers' accounts verify Longrigg's aforementioned claim that Kirkuk was predominantly Turkish speaking. Soane humorously described Kirkuk as being famous for "Turkomans, fruit, and crude oil, all of which abound."[57] It should be noted, however, that in this era, the ethnic self-identity of those who spoke Turkish in Kirkuk was ambiguous. British accounts use the terms "Turk" and "Turkmen" (the latter in a variety of archaic spellings) interchangeably to refer to Kirkuk's Turkish-speaking community. Moreover, according to Edmonds, Kirkuk's "leading aristocratic families" considered themselves to be "Turks" even if they were believed to be of Kurdish origin.[58] Even the phrase "Turkish-speaking" is not entirely accurate as a coherent description of an ethnic community. Kirkuk's Chaldeans also typically spoke Turkish as their first language but, being Christians who still retained some use of Neo-Aramaic amongst themselves, they identified themselves as part of the community of Christians who spoke modern Neo-Aramaic as a vernacular.[59]

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[56] Olson, *The Siege of Mosul*, 30, 40n125.

[57] Soane, *To Mesopotamia and Kurdistan in Disguise*, 120.

[58] Edmonds, *Kurds, Turks, and Arabs*, 266.

[59] See for instance: Soane, *To Mesopotamia and Kurdistan in Disguise*, 122.

As the title of Soane's memoir implies, these writers typically characterized Kirkuk as part of a region they called Kurdistan, describing the town's Turkish-speaking majority as a point of contrast with its surroundings. The name "Kurdistan," meaning "land of the Kurds," has been used since at least the Seljuq period to describe the parts of Anatolia, Mesopotamia and Persia that are majority Kurdish.[60] The borders of Kurdistan have not been strictly defined in any era and remain contentious. British portrayals of Kirkuk in the early twentieth century generally placed the town on the southern frontier of Kurdistan; by this definition, Kurdistan's center was in the Hakkari region of southeastern Anatolia.[61] Accordingly, Longrigg called Kirkuk one of the "main entrepôts for Kurdistan."[62] There is little evidence that this description of Kirkuk's location reflected the regional self-identity of people in the town. Rather, it mainly indicated the British tendency to define regions first and foremost based on the ethnic and sectarian makeup of the majority of their rural tribes. Indeed, writers like Edmonds sometimes also included the majority-Arabic-speaking city of Mosul in their definition of Kurdistan because of the Kurdish tribes in its hinterland.[63] Kirkuk's hinterland was not exclusively Kurdish; there were also Arab tribes in the area, as well as ethnolinguistically mixed villages that were not affiliated with tribes. Altogether, Kirkuk and its hinterland probably had a Kurdish-speaking plurality, but no ethnolinguistic majority.[64] There were

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[60] Th. Bois, V. Minorsky, and D.N. MacKenzie, "Kurds, Kurdistan," in *Encyclopaedia of Islam, Second Edition*, ed. P. Bearman, et al. (Leiden: Brill Online, 2011), http://referenceworks.brillonline.com/entries/encyclopaedia-of-islam-2/kurds-kurdistan-COM_0544.

[61] Edmonds, *Kurds, Turks, and Arabs*, 2-3.

[62] Longrigg, *Iraq, 1900 to 1950*, 20.

[63] Edmonds, *Kurds, Turks, and Arabs*, 2.

[64] Precise demographics for this time period are unknown, particularly with regard to ethnicity and language, and the borders of subdivisions changed frequently. As will be discussed in Chapter 3, the 1957

also Kurdish-speaking inhabitants of urban Kirkuk, some of whom were even trained as Ottoman officials and would therefore have also been fluent Turkish speakers.[65] In spite of Edmonds's observation that such elites tended to think of themselves as Turks or Turkmens, it is impossible to know for certain whether or not their political status typically affected these individuals' ethnic self-identity. Soane's account of Kirkuk conveys its unusually robust linguistic and religious diversity; in his memoir, he enthusiastically detailed the presence of "Jew, Arab, Syrian, Armenian, Chaldean, Turk, Turkoman, and Kurd," described urban public spaces as "indifferently" multilingual, and said that this state of affairs afforded Kirkuk "considerable freedom from fanaticism."[66]

Kirkuk's urban notables came from all of these fluid groupings and could derive their authority from their political, economic, or religious standing, or some combination thereof. The most influential families in urban Kirkuk—that is, the families to whom Ottoman authorities usually turned in order to appoint local officials—were primarily speakers of Turkish regardless of their descent. As a result of the strong native presence of Turkic culture, Kirkuk had a solid foundation for political connections to Istanbul. Edmonds described the town as a "centre of Ottoman influence" within the mainly Kurdish *vilayet* of Mosul.[67] Members of the aforementioned Naftchizada family were

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census found that Kurdish-speaking people constituted a plurality in the Kirkuk *liwa'*. A 1925 British map with demographic numbers, possibly skewed by the British interest in retaining the Mosul *vilayet* as part of Iraq during League of Nations mediation, indicates that Kurds were the largest group in the Kirkuk *qada* at about 41% of the population: "Annexure to Answer to Question II of the Supplementary Questionnaire," 1925, MPKK 1/54/2, UK. Overall, it is reasonable to assume that any administrative subdivision with Kirkuk as its seat in this time period would probably have had a Kurdish-speaking plurality.

[65] S.H. Longrigg, "Kirkuk Progress Report, No. 2, for period ending November 29th, 1918," in Office of the Civil Commissioner, Baghdad to The Under Secretary of State for India, London, 23 February 1919, L/PS/10/619, IOR.

[66] Soane, *To Mesopotamia and Kurdistan in Disguise*, 120-24.

[67] Edmonds, *Kurds, Turks, and Arabs*, 416.

among the most powerful Turkish-speaking elites. Two other Turkish-speaking Kirkuki aristocratic families whose patriarchs were politically prominent were the Yaʿqubizadas and the Kırdars. Around the turn of the twentieth century, a member of the latter family, Mehmet Ali Kırdar, served as the mayor of the town in addition to representing Kirkuk in the Ottoman parliament's Chamber of Deputies.[68] Sufi religious leaders, who were typically members of the Kurdish Talabani and Barzinji families, were also influential in urban Kirkuk. In addition, there were Chaldean Christian and Jewish traders and landowners who sometimes held positions in the provincial government.[69] In rural areas, tribes other than the Talabani and the Hamawand whose leaders were noteworthy included the Dawudi, the Jaf and the ʿUbayd; contemporary British sources and later Iraqi ones characterize the ʿUbayd as an Arab tribe and all of the others as Kurdish, though these categorizations may not have been as relevant or simple to the tribesmen themselves.[70] All of these notables would continue to play important roles in the governance of Kirkuk after the British invasion, though many would find themselves at odds with British authorities at various times.

An important and subtle element of Kirkuk's social and economic life that is captured in these early accounts is that the mainly Turkish-speaking town was closely bound to a principally tribal and mostly Kurdish and Arab hinterland. Travelers and officials would talk about both entities together as "Kirkuk," then emphasize the most

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[68] Ebubekir Hâzım Tepeyran, *Hatıralar*, 2nd ed. (Istanbul: Pera Turizm ve Ticaret, 1998), 369.

[69] Edmonds, *Kurds, Turks, and Arabs*, 266-67.

[70] An extant 1947 biographical dictionary on Kirkuk, which will be discussed at length in Chapter 4, provides an overview of these tribes and others: ʿAbd al-Majid Fahmi Hasan, *Dalil Tarikh Mashahir al-Alwiya al-ʿIraqiyya*, vol. 2: *Karkuk* (Baghdad: Matbaʿat al-Salam, 1947), 60-66. By that time, as I will argue later in this dissertation, ethnic groupings had crystallized to a great extent. The heterogeneous nature of Kirkuk's countryside, discussed below, suggests that simplified ethnic descriptions of Kirkuk's tribes in earlier decades may not have been accurate.

obvious differences between the urban and rural areas, which bore little resemblance to one another structurally or culturally, in the same breath. As Sarah Shields argues, this was a common pattern throughout the Ottoman domains, where cities and their hinterlands had become increasingly interdependent over the course of the nineteenth century both politically and economically.[71] The accounts from November 1918 cited at the beginning of this chapter vividly depict urban Kirkuk's complete reliance on rural areas for food and the drastic effects of its temporary disconnect during the Mesopotamian campaign from the countryside that supplied it. Shields's observation that hinterlands often adjoined markets on the edges of urban fabric where products from rural areas were sold, creating economic continuity between rural and urban areas, could also be said to apply to Kirkuk.[72] The town's main centers of commerce were along the edges of the citadel, which was historically the center of its population, and roads from Arbil and Sulaymaniyya led directly into markets on both sides of the Khasa River.[73]

These realities run counter to simplistic notions of a division between urban and rural Kirkuk sometimes encountered in travelers' writings. For instance, Soane made a point of contrasting the town's "excellent state of affairs" with a dangerously unstable hinterland that began "only a mile or two outside the town."[74] While tribal violence was a problem in late Ottoman Kirkuk by all accounts, these circumstances did not connote that urban and rural Kirkukis were unitary and separate groups. Rather, there were close

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[71] Sarah D. Shields, "Interdependent Spaces: Relations Between the City and the Countryside in the Nineteenth Century," in *The Urban Social History of the Middle East, 1750-1950*, ed. Peter Sluglett (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 2008).

[72] Ibid., 44.

[73] "Kirkuk City," map, 1919, WO 302/553, UK. This is the map of which Figure 1.2 is an overview.

[74] Soane, *To Mesopotamia and Kurdistan in Disguise*, 124.

linkages among them, including familial bonds. For instance, Ahmad-i Khanaqa, the leading Sufi sayyid in urban Kirkuk, was a member of the Barzinji family, which was based in the countryside of the Sulaymaniyya area. Sayyid Ahmad was particularly influential among rural Kurdish cultivators in Kirkuk.[75] Another prominent religious figure in urban Kirkuk and a member of the rival Talabani family, Habib, was the brother of Shaykh Hamid Talabani, who was one of the most powerful rural tribal chiefs in the Kirkuk area and controlled some productive oil wells at Gil southeast of Kirkuk.[76] At the same time, Kirkuk and its hinterland were not as strongly influenced by the politics of nearby urban areas. In his study of urban notables, Albert Hourani advanced the argument that that the city of Mosul functioned like a small "city-state" in the late Ottoman era, failing to exert political pull over much of the countryside in the *vilayet* of which it was the seat. This contention is confirmed by the fact that urban Mosul's reorientation toward the Arabic-speaking world during the late Ottoman era—reflected in its flourishing Arabic-language culture—seems to have had little effect in Kirkuk.[77] Instead, the town of Kirkuk circa 1918 could be described as having its own uniquely heterogeneous hinterland distinct from those of other towns and cities. The politics of urban and rural Kirkuk at this time are best understood as developing in connection with one another.

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[75] Edmonds, *Kurds, Turks, and Arabs*, 266.

[76] "Baghdad Wilayat Fortnightly Report No. 16, June 15th to July 1st, 1918," in Office of the Civil Commissioner, Baghdad to The Director, Arab Bureau, Cairo, 23 November 1918, L/PS/10/732, IOR.

[77] Hourani's assessment of Mosul is in: Hourani, "Ottoman Reform," 52. For a study of Mosuli Arabic culture in this era, see: Percy Kemp, "Power and Knowledge in Jalili Mosul," *Middle Eastern Studies* 19, no. 2 (1983).

Starting in 1918, the British military administration did not adequately take into account the linkages between urban and rural Kirkuk and the fluidity of ethnolinguistic indicators among Kirkuk's population. British accounts, which initially focused on "Turks" (or Turkmens) and Kurds as the most distinct groups, would eventually construe Kirkuk's smaller communities of Arabs, "Christians," and sometimes "Jews" as analogous ethnic categories. Previous depictions of the town's many group identities thus coalesced into a perception that Kirkuk had four, or perhaps five, discrete ethnic communities in total.[78] Nuances in self-identity notwithstanding, this rudimentary anthropological sketch of Kirkuk, and of the Mosul *vilayet* in general, would persist after World War I and would inform British policy throughout both military and mandate rule. By classifying Kirkukis in this manner, British authorities were following the lead of the late-Ottoman nation-building project of the past few decades in which, in Janet Klein's words, ethnicities such as "Kurdish" and "Armenian" were being "made up."[79] What extant accounts of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries in Kirkuk manage to convey upon a close reading, however, is that identities there had not yet been produced in an ethnicized fashion; rather, they were determined by a complex and shifting combination of language, religion, class, and perceived lineage in a context of exceptional diversity in all of these categories.

[78] See for instance: Political Officer, Kirkuk to the Civil Commissioner, Baghdad, "Memorandum No. K.1760/3/1 of 29-11-19," L/PS/10/821, IOR. This was also particularly true of the discourse surrounding the Mosul question, discussed in Chapter 2.

[79] Klein, *The Margins of Empire*, 14.

Exploring, and controlling, Kirkuk's oil in the early twentieth century

British travelers to Kirkuk in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries also sometimes exhibited an interest in its oil. In the second half of the twentieth century, the "hydrocarbon era" of personal automobile usage, ubiquitous petrochemical products, and commercial air travel would make oil a crucial global resource. Although it had not yet attained this level of importance in the nineteenth century, oil was already essential to the expansion of steam-powered seafaring. The use of petroleum expanded commercial enterprise by enabling longer-distance trade by sea; as previously mentioned, steamboats became a factor in Middle Eastern trade after the opening of the Suez Canal. Even more importantly, it became a major resource for naval operations, as oil-powered fleets were widespread by the time World War I began. The United States dominated world oil production in this era, and the perceived necessity of reducing their dependence on the Americans and controlling oil resources on their own spurred British prospecting in other parts of the world.[80] Most notably, a British businessman, William Knox D'Arcy, had obtained a concession from the Shah of Iran for oil exploration at the turn of the century. Upon the discovery of oil in the southwestern part of the country, D'Arcy formed the Anglo-Persian Oil Company (APOC) in 1909. The British government purchased a majority of shares in the company and signed a contract to supply the Royal Navy with fuel just before the outbreak of war in 1914.[81] D'Arcy's British contemporaries included the aforementioned military officer F.R. Maunsell, who gathered information on oil in the Iraqi region in the late nineteenth century. In an 1897 paper titled "The Mesopotamian

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[80] M.E. Yapp, *The Making of the Modern Middle East, 1792-1923* (London: Longman, 1987), 332.

[81] Longrigg, *Oil in the Middle East*, 17-21, 34.

Petroleum Field," Maunsell detailed the composition and commercial potential of a "petroleum-bearing belt" in the Mosul *vilayet*; he specifically mentioned "petroleum springs" near the town of Kirkuk that were especially "extensive." Maunsell concluded that the Ottoman Empire's political instability at the time could facilitate British obtainment of concessions "to develop some of these remarkable mineral riches."[82] By 1919, official information about potentially valuable oil drilling sites was considerably more extensive and included a thorough assessment of "Oil in the Kirkuk Anticline," among other areas.[83]

As a result of Maunsell's expedition and others by European explorers, the oil wealth of the Mosul *vilayet* was well known to Germany and France as well as to Great Britain. Istanbul was also aware of the Europeans' growing interest in Middle Eastern petroleum and thus started the process of creating a commercial oil industry with the involvement of the great powers. In 1888, Sultan Abdülhamid took control of the known oil-bearing areas of the Mosul and Baghdad *vilayets* through the Civil List, the first step in preparation for making concessions. He then commissioned a resourceful Armenian businessman from Istanbul named Calouste Gulbenkian to undertake an expedition to Mesopotamia in order to assess its prospects for oil production.[84] Many European companies attempted and failed to secure oil concessions in Mesopotamia prior to World War I. The Turkish Petroleum Company (TPC) was eventually formed under Gulbenkian's tutelage in 1912. Various oil firms wrangled over shares in the TPC, and in

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[82] Maunsell, "The Mesopotamian Petroleum Field," 528-32.

[83] E.H. Pascoe, "Oil in the Kirkuk Anticline," 26 February 1919, in *Mesopotamia Geological Reports 1919*, L/PS/10/815, IOR.

[84] Marian Kent, *Oil and Empire: British Policy and Mesopotamian Oil, 1900-1920* (London: Macmillan, 1976), 15.

1914 the APOC prevailed: the British company would hold a 50% interest, with the other shares held by Deutsche Bank, Shell, and Gulbenkian himself.[85] The outbreak of war in 1914 put an immediate hold on the TPC's concession.

Just over a year later, Sir Mark Sykes, then an adviser to the War Office, and the French diplomat François Georges-Picot began secret negotiations over the partition of Ottoman territory into zones of direct control and "influence" for Britain and France. Though these talks took place while the Mesopotamian campaign was still in its early stages, Sykes and Picot undertook them in anticipation of a full victory over Germany and the Ottoman Empire. Their agreement, signed in 1916, placed the city of Mosul in the French zone of influence and the Kirkuk area in the British zone of influence (Figure 1.4).[86] In Sykes's own words, he wished to "draw a line from the 'e' in Acre to the last 'k' in Kirkuk," south of which the British would have their domain.[87] Many scholars inaccurately imply through imprecise language that the Sykes-Picot agreement put the entire Mosul *vilayet* in the French zone, therefore giving the French future control over all of the region's oil, and that the French subsequently relinquished Mosul to the British zone of influence in return for a share in its oil revenues.[88] The problem with this prevalent imprecision is that it suggests that the British were not interested in controlling

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[85] Daniel Yergin, *The Prize: The Epic Quest for Oil, Money, and Power* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1991), 185-88.

[86] For the original, signed map of the Sykes-Picot Agreement, see: "Map of Eastern Turkey in Asia, Syria and Western Persia," 1916, MPK 1/426, UK.

[87] Sir Mark Sykes, "Meeting Held at 10 Downing Street," as cited and quoted in James Barr, *A Line in the Sand: the Anglo-French Struggle for the Middle East, 1914-1948* (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 2012), 7.

[88] See for instance: Anderson and Stansfield, *Crisis in Kirkuk*, 21; Sarah Shields, "Mosul, the Ottoman Legacy and the League of Nations," *International Journal of Contemporary Iraqi Studies* 3, no. 2 (2009): 219; Benjamin Shwadran, *The Middle East, Oil, and the Great Powers* (Jerusalem: Israel Universities Press, 1973), 199; William Stivers, *Supremacy and Oil: Iraq, Turkey, and the Anglo-American World Order, 1918-1930* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1982), 23.

oil resources in the Middle East in the early twentieth century, while the French were. In fact, Picot did not specifically pursue including the Kirkuk area in the French zone of influence during the negotiations despite French awareness of its oil.[89] Sykes, unlike Picot, had a clearly established opinion both of the importance of incorporating Kirkuk into the British zone of influence and of the significance of controlling Middle Eastern petroleum resources. Though he did not specify that he intended to include Kirkuk for its oil,[90] he emphasized in a secret memorandum dated soon after the signing of the Sykes-Picot agreement that a "vast pocket of oil, the future propellant of the Navy," was at stake in Mesopotamia if the Germans ended up controlling it at the end of the war.[91] The Sykes-Picot agreement ceded the city of Mosul and its surrounding area to the French because the War Office was willing, at the time, to create a strategic French "wedge" between their zone and Anatolia. Therefore, they drew the partitioning line in the Mosul *vilayet* at the Lesser Zab River.[92] Sykes had ensured, in accordance with the wishes of the War Office, that the city of Kirkuk and its known oil-rich surrounding area were in the British zone of influence.[93]

However, once British troops had occupied the Mosul *vilayet* in full in 1918, including the city of Mosul, the British government aimed to control the Iraqi region in

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[89] The differences between Sykes's, Picot's, and associated officials' expressed interests in oil or lack thereof are explained at length in: Edward Fitzgerald, "France's Middle Eastern Ambitions, the Sykes-Picot Negotiations, and the Oil Fields of Mosul, 1915-1918," *The Journal of Modern History* 66, no. 4 (1994).

[90] Ibid., 715n56.

[91] Sir Mark Sykes, "The Problem of the Near East," 20 June 1916, FO 925/41378, UK. Even after the negotiations, Sykes indicated that he wished the entire Mosul *vilayet*, which the British correctly believed held oil in its north, would be under British influence: Roger Adelson, *Mark Sykes: Portrait of an Amateur* (London: Cape, 1975), 279. He did not live long enough to see this control established.

[92] Kent, *Oil and Empire*, 122; Fitzgerald, "France's Middle Eastern Ambitions," 723.

[93] Kent, *Oil and Empire*, 120-22.

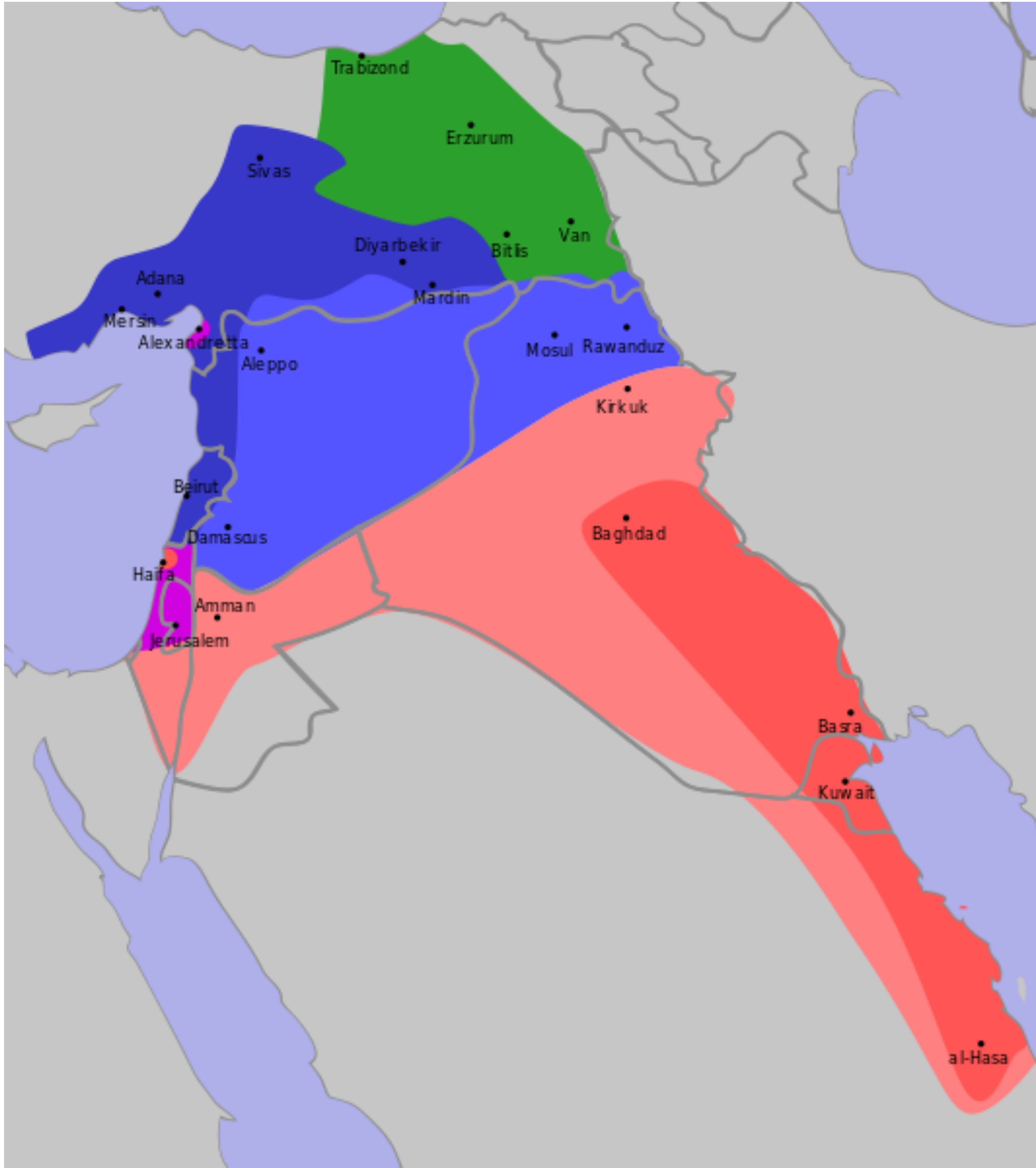

Figure 1.4: Map of the Sykes-Picot agreement laid over the modern political boundaries of Iraq, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, Jordan, Israel, the Palestinian territories, Lebanon, Syria, and Turkey. Areas shaded light or dark red indicate proposed areas of British "influence" or direct control, respectively, while areas shaded light or dark blue similarly indicate proposed areas of French "influence" or direct control. Areas shaded purple are proposed international zones. The agreement also proposed, after consultation with Petrograd, that the area shaded green would be under Russian control. In this agreement, Kirkuk fell into the zone of British influence. Map by Wikipedia user Rafy, http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Sykes-Picot.svg; reproduced under the conditions of a Creative Commons license.

its entirety. At the San Remo conference in the spring of 1920, which formally established the British Mandate of Mesopotamia, the British recognized that the French had an interest in Iraqi oil revenues. They therefore agreed to give 25% of TPC shares to French business in return for French recognition of British control over the whole Mosul *vilayet*; the newly formed Compagnie Française des Pétroles would eventually take over these allotted French shares. Hence, the French interest in the Mosul *vilayet*'s oil was of secondary importance to their diplomats and was always purely commercial in nature. The British, on the other hand, demonstrated an early strategic interest in gaining control over Kirkuk. The San Remo agreement also stipulated that France would receive 25% of Iraq's oil revenue should the oil industry instead end up being run by the Iraqi state, but Foreign Secretary Lord Curzon in London and British officials in Iraq maneuvered to ensure that the TPC would, in fact, be the entity that would develop Iraq's oil privately.[94]

Early British military policy in Kirkuk: tribal patronage and urban and rural affairs

During their campaign against Ottoman troops during World War I, British troops occupied Baghdad in March 1917. They controlled the Iraqi region up to Khanaqin, a town close to the Persian border roughly halfway between Baghdad and Kirkuk, by late 1917 and began to establish contacts with influential Kurdish tribes soon thereafter. The British subsequently took control of Kirkuk in May 1918, but were forced to withdraw due to logistical difficulties. Upon retaking Kirkuk in the fall of 1918 and discovering it in the state of hunger and disrepair described at the beginning of this chapter, British

[94] Ibid., 137-54; Stivers, *Supremacy and Oil*, 45, 87-88. The French shares in the TPC came from the shares that the German Deutsche Bank had lost as a consequence of the war.

officers urgently set out to import more grain from Arbil. As Kirkuk's population slowly returned, they also supplied the town doctor and opened an orphanage. The abiding British concern with hygiene led to the establishment of a sanitation system, as well as to the registration and quarantining of prostitutes and the evacuation of some of them to Baghdad.[95] Kirkuk's limited printing activities also quickly restarted under British supervision. Beginning in December 1918, a local printing press that had produced Kirkuk's first newspaper under the Ottomans began publishing a daily newspaper in Turkish, *Necme*. By the end of 1919, the newspaper printed three times weekly and had a circulation of about 300 to 400, mostly among local officials.[96]

Another urgent task was to analyze and document prevailing local systems of land ownership and revenue collection, as well as the general organization of authority within the Kirkuk division. As documented in his "Land Revenue Note on Kirkuk," officer C.C. Garbett found that the Ottomans had left an array of different local administrative systems in the area. The towns of Kirkuk and Altun Kopri had mayors, councils and courts. The smaller settlements were typically villages and consisted almost entirely of *miri*, or state lands. Most tenants had obtained "prescriptive rights" to their land resembling individual ownership, usually because one family would cultivate a plot for

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[95] "Telegram from Asstt. Political Officer Kirkuk to Civil Commissioner, Baghdad – No. 7 dated 27-10-18" and S.H. Longrigg, "Copy of Report No. K.6/8 dated 27-10-1918 from Asstt. Political Officer Kirkuk to Civil Commissioner," 27 October 1918, both in Office of the Civil Commissioner, Baghdad to The Secretary of State for India, London, 14 November 1918, L/PS/10/619, IOR; "Note of Revival of Kurdistan" in Office of the Civil Commissioner, Baghdad to The Director, Arab Bureau, Cairo, 1 January 1919, L/PS/10/619, IOR; Longrigg, "Kirkuk Progress Report, No. 2, for period ending November 29th, 1918," L/PS/10/619, IOR.

[96] "Kirkuk Administration Report for 1919," in Office of the Civil Commissioner, Baghdad to The Under-Secretary of State for India, London, 29 April 1920, L/PS/10/621, IOR; Terzibaşı, *Kerkük Matbuat Tarihi*, 78.

generations.[97] These village heads were sometimes tribal chiefs, while in other cases they were "overlords" overseeing loosely defined collectives of area farmers. Despite the formalization of Kurdish tribal authority for much of the Ottoman era, some villages in Kirkuk's hinterland were not affiliated with tribes at this time.[98] These villages were under the independent control of peasants or large landowners who had interacted directly with Ottoman governors.[99]

As Garbett noted, trained civil servants known as *memurs* had coordinated the collection of taxes in the Kirkuk area under the late Ottoman system. Reports dating from some months prior to the second occupation of Kirkuk in October 1918 suggest that the British had initially planned to continue a *memur*-led system of administration there. For example, British officials in Baghdad had established separate Turkish-language classes specifically for Kirkuki refugees at a school for the training of *memurs*.[100] However, this plan soon evolved into a policy to replace all existing administrative systems in predominantly Kurdish rural areas of Iraq, including Kirkuk's hinterland, with a single, simplified one based on tribal units. The British Political Officer in Kirkuk, E.W.C. Noel, articulated this change in course in a directive to assistant officers in the region dated two weeks after the occupation of Kirkuk:

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[97] Garbett, "Land Revenue Note on Kirkuk"; A.T. Wilson to Denys Bray, "Monthly Administrative Report No. 3, December 1st to January 1st, 1919," 9 January 1919, L/PS/10/732, IOR. For an overview of some of the complexities of Middle Eastern property rights that are applicable to this era, see: Roger Owen, "Introduction," in Roger Owen, ed. *New Perspectives on Property and Land in the Middle East* (Cambridge: Center for Middle Eastern Studies of Harvard University, Harvard University Press, 2000), x-xiv.

[98] Longrigg, "Kirkuk Progress Report, No. 2, for period ending November 29th, 1918."

[99] Garbett, "Land Revenue Note on Kirkuk."

[100] "Baghdad Wilayat Fortnightly Report No. 16, June 15th to July 1st, 1918," in Office of the Civil Commissioner, Baghdad to The Director, Arab Bureau, Cairo, 23 November 1918, L/PS/10/732, IOR.

> It is our policy to foster the tribal system of government and with that object every effort should be made to strengthen the authority and develop the initiative of the recognised tribal chiefs.…It is essential that the executive staff of our administration should be Kurds, that no ex-Turkish officials should be employed in connection with Kurdish tribal areas, and that our proclamations, notices etc should be printed in Kurdi and not in Turkish or Arabic. [Assistant Political Officers] should obtain the services of relatives or members of the families of the big Shaikhs in their districts as their assistants in revenue and other work.

Noel explained that the ultimate goal of this policy would be to form a "Kurdish confederation" under the aegis of Britain. He also outlined a plan for paying tribal leaders for these services.[101]

Noel was an unusually strong proponent of the cause of creating an independent Kurdish state.[102] Nevertheless, other officials accepted the general principle of actively cultivating the loyalty of Kurdish tribes and vesting authority in tribal leaders in order to maintain British control. The concept of elevating familial structures would also become prevalent in British neocolonial policies outside of Iraq, including in the mandate administration of Palestine.[103] This idea was popular among British officials for several reasons. A primary reason was the notion that an administrative system that relied on tribal authorities was inherently better suited to the simple, primitive nature of the rural people of the region than something that replicated the Tanzimat-era Ottoman administrative system. For instance, in his land revenue report, Garbett described the tribal unit as a "simple form of responsible community" and a system of government

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[101] "Copy of Memorandum No. 1 dated 7th November 1918 from Political Officer, Kirkuk to Asstt. Political Officer, Kifri, Kirkuk and Altum Keupri," in Office of the Civil Commissioner, Baghdad, to The Secretary of State for India, London, 14 November 1918, L/PS/10/619, IOR.

[102] Noel was well known for this tendency among British officials. He further articulated his views on Kurdish independence in a 1919 report: E.W.C. Noel, "Note on the Kurdish Situation," July 1919, C.J. Edmonds Collection GB 165-0095, Box 7 File 1, MECA.

[103] See for instance: Issa Khalaf, *Politics in Palestine: Arab Factionalism and Social Disintegration, 1939-1948* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1991), 18-22.

based on tribes as a "form of constitution in which the general desire for self-expression and for freedom can find fulfilment."[104] Many of the British officials who served in Iraq throughout the military and mandate administrations had previously worked in colonial India, where they had operated according to a very similar conception of rural tribesmen. They transplanted certain forms of governance they had developed there to Iraq with no regard for differences in local conditions, considering rural people in both regions to have been untouched by modernity and therefore essentially similar.[105] The idea of paying tribal leaders, for example, was probably informed by the British precedent of indirect rule through tribal subsidization in India and other colonies.[106]

There was also an important short-term strategic reason for promulgating a unitary policy that privileged tribal shaykhs in all northern rural areas. Namely, as long as the British hold over the former *vilayet* of Mosul was tenuous, it was crucial to maintain the favor of individuals who held influence over the frontier—and in Kirkuk, these figures were unusually amenable to anti-British ideas. This was particularly true once British control over the region came to be actively challenged by the nascent Republic of Turkey through the National Pact of January 1920, which claimed the former Mosul *vilayet*, among other areas, as Turkish territory.[107] As part of their campaign to challenge British authority in the region, Turkey fomented Kurdish unrest on the Turkish-Iraqi

[104] Garbett, "Land Revenue Note on Kirkuk."

[105] Later, during the mandate era, British High Commissioner to Iraq Sir Henry Dobbs would draft a set of regulations on tribal disputes that was almost identical to the regulations he had abided by while working in India's North-West Frontier (today in Pakistan) and rested on the concept of the "premodern tribesman," a figure who was seen as essentially the same whether in India or Iraq. While Dobbs's North-West Frontier experience was especially influential, British officials in Iraq had served in other parts of India as well. Dodge, *Inventing Iraq*, xxiii, 92-95.

[106] Jwaideh, *The Kurdish National Movement*, 165.

[107] Erik J. Zürcher, *Turkey: A Modern History* (London: I.B. Tauris, 1998), 169.

frontier north of Kirkuk by distributing anti-British propaganda in the former Mosul *vilayet*.[108] Turkish propaganda was especially effective among Kirkuki tribal leaders who had come to distrust the British after their initial withdrawal from Kirkuk in the spring of 1918,[109] therefore requiring British officials to actively counter its influence despite the fact that Kirkuk was relatively distant from the unstable edges of the frontier.

Nevertheless, the British tribal policy initially backfired in Kirkuk during the short-lived attempt at indirect rule in Kurdistan through collaboration with Shaykh Mahmud Barzinji, the son of the aforementioned late Shaykh Saʿid Barzinji. Shaykh Mahmud had inherited his father's immense influence in Sulaymaniyya, as well as his active opposition to Ottoman authorities. The shaykh offered his assistance to British troops as they approached full control of the Mosul *vilayet* in 1918.[110] Less than a week after the capture of Kirkuk, the Civil Commissioner in Baghdad, Arnold Wilson, authorized Noel to appoint Shaykh Mahmud as the representative of British authorities in Sulaymaniyya.[111] Soon thereafter, in December 1918, Wilson informally granted Shaykh Mahmud authority over the region between the Greater Zab and Diyala Rivers, which included Kirkuk.[112] In a January 1919 report, Wilson reported to the India Office in London that, while the system of maintaining security and collecting revenues was proceeding smoothly overall, notables in Kirkuk were alarmed by the strengthening

[108] Jwaideh, *The Kurdish National Movement*, 147.

[109] Ibid., 163.

[110] Ibid., 161; McDowall, *A Modern History of the Kurds*, 156.

[111] "Copy of Memorandum No. 23919 dated 31st October 1918 from Civil Commissioner, Baghdad to Major E.W.C. Noel," L/PS/10/619, IOR.

[112] Jwaideh, *The Kurdish National Movement*, 166-9.

British relationship with Shaykh Mahmud and the possibility that he could become the governor of an independent Kurdistan that included Kirkuk:

> All parts of the Kirkuk area make emphatic protest against the possibility of Shaikh Mahmud Qaradaghli [*sic*] of Sulaimaniyah being appointed Wali of Kurdistan. It is felt that the path of progress lies in the direction of Baghdad and not in that of Sulaimaniyah. Moreover there is no trace of Kurdish national feeling in Kirkuk. British control and protection is strongly desired as well as the absence of any administrative frontier between the Kurd and the Arab.[113]

This passage demonstrates that the notables of Kirkuk exhibited two tendencies from the beginning of the British occupation: a strong aversion to Sulaymaniyya-based Kurdish politics despite Sulaymaniyya's geographical proximity to Kirkuk in comparison to other major urban areas, and a desire for external patronage. Kirkukis' opposition to unification with Sulaymaniyya stemmed at least in part from the preexisting rivalry between the Barzinjis and the Talabanis; for instance, another January 1919 report communicated that the lands of the Jabbari tribe, whose ruling family were Barzinjis, were being removed from the administration of the Kirkuk district and attached to the Sulaymaniyya district.[114]

In March 1919, while facing the obvious fact that Shaykh Mahmud was profoundly unpopular in Kirkuk, British officials formally established a new district encompassing Kirkuk and neighboring Kifri outside of the shaykh's purview.[115] Internal opposition had also developed among British officers to Shaykh Mahmud's consolidation of power. Aware of his decline in standing with British authorities, Shaykh Mahmud

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[113] A.T. Wilson to The Political Secretary, India Office, London, "Monthly Administration Report No. 3, December 15, 1918 to Jan. 15, 1919," 24 January 1919, L/PS/10/732, IOR.

[114] "Kirkuk Progress Report No. IV for month ending January 20th, 1919," in Office of the Civil Commissioner, Baghdad, to The Under Secretary of State for India, 19 May 1919, L/PS/10/620, IOR.

[115] Jwaideh, *The Kurdish National Movement*, 179.

forcibly seized Sulaymaniyya and proclaimed himself the ruler of Kurdistan in May 1919. After initially suffering a disastrous defeat at the hands of Shaykh Mahmud's troops just outside of Sulaymaniyya, British troops converged at Kirkuk and Khanaqin in order to advance on the town again. Of the many Kurdish tribes in the Kirkuk division, only one section of one tribe sided with Shaykh Mahmud; the Talabani family even offered their services to the British. British troops retook Sulaymaniyya in June 1919, badly wounding Shaykh Mahmud in the process. The region between the Greater Zab and the Diyala therefore once more came fully under the Civil Commissioner's direct control. Shaykh Mahmud was treated and eventually allowed to return to Sulaymaniyya, where he continued to wield influence.[116] Kirkuk's response to Shaykh Mahmud's first rebellion is an illustrative example of its often-uneasy relationship with its neighboring areas. Scholars who have written about majority-Kurdish areas in the period of British administration have often framed their analyses in terms of Kurdish ethnic politics, thereby indiscriminately treating Kirkuk, a diverse area with no ethnolinguistic majority, as unified with Kurdistan. This approach overlooks the often-contentious ways in which Kirkuk interacted with these districts.[117]

While the British alliance with Shaykh Mahmud and the experiment of an independent Kurdish-led region did not last, the broader concept of privileging tribal ties and organizing politics along familial lines continued to dominate British administration

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[116] "Kirkuk Administration Report for 1919," L/PS/10/621, IOR; Jwaideh, *The Kurdish National Movement*, 180-82.

[117] For instance, Saad Eskander's critical analysis of early British policy in Kurdistan states that one of the ways that the British misconstrued the region was to refer to "such Kurdish towns as Arbil and Kirkuk" as "Turkish." While this may very well have been an inaccurate characterization of those towns, depending on the reasons for the use of such terminology, it is equally ill-considered to simply regard Kirkuk in this era as "Kurdish." Saad Eskander, "Britain's Policy in Southern Kurdistan: The Formation and the Termination of the First Kurdish Government, 1918-1919," *British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies* 27, no. 2 (2000): 160-1.

of the Mosul *vilayet* and led to the development of a political system based on networks of patronage. British alliances with and sponsorships of Kurdish tribes often arose from improvised solutions to immediate problems relating to security, often turning to officials' experiences in colonial India for ideas. An important example of one such solution was the creation of a police force of "sowars," or armed men who maintained control over roads and answered directly to their respective tribal leaders; "sowar" was an Indian term used to refer to similar forces under the British Raj. The quotation at the beginning of this chapter, in which Garbett wrote that Longrigg had already "interviewed the notables and made arrangements for the policing of the town," implies that British forces relied on Kirkuk notables' prevailing linkages to maintain stability in the area from the very moment of occupation. Officers then proceeded to recruit and pay several sowars from each of nine major tribes or tribally based groups in the Kirkuk area.[118] Tribal notables from Kirkuk who had established relationships with British authorities through the sowar system would eventually be more likely to support Anglo-Iraqi interests in the dispute between Turkey and Iraq over the Mosul *vilayet* region, as will be discussed in Chapter 2.

The practice of empowering tribes and tribal leaders in a variety of ways prevailed despite internal acknowledgements of the shortcomings of the approach. One early report from Kirkuk exhibited a slight concern that the policy ignored the desires of non-tribal rural villages and did not account for the fact that tribal leaders tended to treat cultivators, in particular, poorly.[119] The foremost British critic of the focus on tribes, E.B.

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[118] Longrigg, "Kirkuk Progress Report, No. 2, for period ending November 29th, 1918," L/PS/10/619, IOR.

[119] A.T. Wilson to Denys Bray, "Monthly Administrative Report No. 2, November 15th to December 15th, 1918," 27 December 1918, L/PS/10/732, IOR.

Soane, asserted based on his experiences in Sulaymaniyya that the policy invested undue influence in "petty village headmen" in places that had long since "detribalised."[120] Even Noel recognized from the beginning that putting power in the hands of tribal leaders meant bolstering a system that would not function well for cultivators, but dismissed this potential problem as a concern of overly indulgent Westerners that was irrelevant to the primitive Kurdish tribes of Kirkuk and other areas:

> In this feudal system which we are striving to preserve, there must necessarily be a good deal that is repugnant to our western ideals of democracy and justice, and there is a natural temptation to intervene on behalf of the peasant tribesman vis a vis his feudal chief and landlord; but this temptation must be resisted.[121]

In addition to the chaotic collapse of the Shaykh Mahmud scheme and the continued mistreatment of those of a lower social status, another consequence of the tribal focus was a lack of a coherent policy in urban Kirkuk due to its lower priority with regard to British interests. Structurally, the town's urban political and security status quo appears not to have changed significantly under British military rule from the circumstances that prevailed in the late Ottoman era. For instance, in contrast with the sowar system, British authorities reconstituted Kirkuk's urban police force with many of the "old Kirkuk police," despite the fact that they had "an unsavoury reputation."[122] In urban Kirkuk, as in rural areas, British authorities concentrated primarily on building relationships with existing notables; most often, these were the patriarchs of major families, merchants with local prominence, or religious leaders. They combined this approach, however, with an unusual level of scorn for residents of the town, an attitude

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[120] E.B. Soane, *Administration Report of Sulaymaniyah Division for 1919*, as cited in McDowall, *A Modern History of the Kurds*, 157.

[121] "Copy of Memorandum No. 1 dated 7th November 1918," L/PS/10/619, IOR.

[122] Longrigg, "Kirkuk Progress Report, No. 2, for period ending November 29th, 1918," L/PS/10/619, IOR.

that Toby Dodge has identified throughout British administration in Iraq and termed the "demonizing of cities." In the most common British official view, which stemmed from discourses that were common in Britain, there was an urban-rural divide wherein the people of the latter were "noble" and "natural" while the people of the former were "degenerate" and tainted by modernity. Of course, given the rapid rate of rural-to-urban migration that had occurred beginning in the late nineteenth century (in Kirkuk as well as in Baghdad and other urban areas), any kind of rigid distinction between the two made little sense.[123]

British anti-urbanism further combined with standard paternalistic notions of the time period regarding Islam's unsuitability for modern progress and capitalist work standards. For instance, Longrigg remarked in November 1918 that Kirkuk's applicants for municipal employment and local religious leaders alike were averse to "hustle and efficiency" and found the idea of committed work "dreadful," though he was more forgiving of "the Jew, Christian, and pushful Muslim merchant." He also described the town's religious leaders as "extraordinarily mercenary."[124] Later, using similar language, an annual administration report on Kirkuk in 1919 dismissed the opposition of the urban population to British administration as part of their inherent tendency to be hostile to "an efficient Occidental Christian power."[125] In his minutes on a 1920 meeting of the Kirkuk divisional council, which consisted mostly of urban notables, Longrigg characterized the body as incoherent and impotent, concluding, "It explicitly asks, and patently requires, to

[123] Dodge, *Inventing Iraq*, 63-81.

[124] Longrigg, "Kirkuk Progress Report, No. 2, for period ending November 29th, 1918," L/PS/10/619, IOR.

[125] "Kirkuk Administration Report for 1919," L/PS/10/621, IOR.

be lead [*sic*]."[126] Regardless of whether or not any of these charges were objectively true, the relentless contempt for urban Kirkukis evident in British authorities' correspondence constituted a political failure that undoubtedly contributed to their inability to control the outcome of the Faysal referendum of 1921 in Kirkuk.

The British tendency to inflexibly separate urban and rural politics also belied the close relationship between the city of Kirkuk and its hinterland and the fact that the political concerns of the Kirkuk area were most clearly definable if viewed as distinct from those of other areas. The effects of the Iraqi revolt of 1920 in Kirkuk illustrate these dynamics. Populations all over the Iraqi region, especially tribes in the mid-Euphrates, began to express grievances with the British in the spring of 1920 and rose up against the military administration beginning in June of that year for a variety of reasons stemming from widespread opposition to direct British rule of the emerging state of Iraq. Due to Kurdish discontent with the lack of resolution of the question of Kurdish independence, the revolt spread to the Arbil and Mosul divisions north of Kirkuk, where some Kurdish tribal leaders briefly overpowered British officials.[127] Kirkuk itself, however, was "phenomenally quiet" as agitation began in the spring, according to Longrigg.[128] By the summer of 1920, when neighboring Arbil was in disarray, Kirkuk was also experiencing the effects of "a wave of political restlessness emanating from Baghdad." However, Longrigg was most concerned about the "increased liveliness in political talk," which

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[126] S.H. Longrigg, "Kirkuk Divisional Council: Third Meeting, August 4th, 1920," File 2023-1919 Part 10, L/PS/10/821, IOR.

[127] McDowall, *A Modern History of the Kurds*, 159.

[128] S.H. Longrigg in "Monthly Reports of Political Officers for April and May, 1920," in Office of the Civil Commissioner, Baghdad to The Under-Secretary of State for India, London, 20 July 1920, L/PS/10/622, IOR.

British officials attempted to curb by halting their payments to a particularly vocal Kirkuki religious leader. Specifically, Kirkuk's political discourse had a common "note throughout the townships and the Kurdish tribes" alike: "dread of an Arab government."[129] The unity of Kirkuki townspeople and tribespeople in opinion on this issue contradicts the argument made by the General Officer Commanding Mesopotamia at the time, Sir Aylmer Haldane, that the 1920 insurrection was primarily the work of a restless and troublemaking Iraqi urban elite.[130] An opposition to Arab-led, Baghdad-based Anglo-Iraqi rule that cut across ethnic and urban-rural divides had therefore emerged in Kirkuk by 1920, becoming prominent at the very moment that British officials were trying to forge the new state of Iraq under an Arab monarch.

The Faysal referendum of 1921 and the limits of colonial contrivance

One of the most significant milestones during the transition to civilian rule in Iraq was the Cairo Conference. In March 1921, the Secretary of State for the Colonies, Winston Churchill, convened a conference in Cairo to discuss, among other topics, British policy in mandate Iraq and in Kurdistan. Sir Percy Cox, who had arrived in Iraq in the fall of 1920 with the new civilian title of High Commissioner, led the Anglo-Iraqi delegation. The conference participants determined that Amir Faysal, a son of the Sharif Hussein of Mecca and a leading figure of the World War I Arab Revolt, would be made King of Iraq. High Commissioner Percy Cox made sure to extract an agreement from

[129] S.H. Longrigg in "Monthly Reports of Political Officers for June 1920," in Office of the Civil Commissioner, Baghdad to The Under-Secretary of State for India, London, 21 August 1920, L/PS/10/622, IOR.

[130] Sir Aylmer L. Haldane, *The Insurrection in Mesopotamia, 1920* (Edinburgh: W. Blackwood and Sons, 1922), 19-34.

Faysal, prior to his accession, that he would allow British officials a "free rein" in the administration of predominantly Kurdish districts in the former Mosul *vilayet*.[131] Cox's insistence indicated the ongoing ambiguity of the region's status. In addition to Turkish claims to the Mosul *vilayet* lands threatening security on the frontier, British authorities had not yet determined what form Kurdish independence would take, or if it would be fostered at all. They were especially uncertain with regard to whether the Kirkuk area, with its distinctive diversity and contentious relations with nearby majority-Kurdish districts, should be included in an independent Kurdish entity.

Like many meetings, reports and memoranda before it, the Cairo Conference ultimately left the issues of Kirkuk's status and Kurdish independence unresolved. At the conference, Churchill and the delegation from Iraq broadly agreed that the predominantly Kurdish areas of the Mosul *vilayet* should be administered separately from the rest of Iraq in order to create a so-called "buffer" north of Iraq proper, a variation on a theme first imagined by the War Office in the era of the Sykes-Picot negotiations. Furthermore, the 1920 Treaty of Sèvres, though negotiated and signed with an Ottoman government on its last legs, had put into writing the stipulation that an independent Kurdistan would be created. Despite this apparent (if limited) consensus, the Cairo Conference did not settle the confusion surrounding the question of Kurdistan. A few months later, Cox and Churchill would exchange correspondence in which they disagreed as to whether or not the "balance of opinion" at the conference had been in favor of creating an independent Kurdish state or integrating the Kurdish districts into Iraq. Churchill also could not recall afterwards whether Cox had intended to include Kirkuk in the Kurdish region or in Iraq

[131] High Commissioner for Mesopotamia to the Secretary of State for the Colonies, 17 August 1921, CO 730/4, UK.

proper and suggested, barring the objection of local opinion, that a case could be made for the former, as the "buffer state" he envisioned would be broadly composed of "non-Arab elements" rather than simply of Kurdish tribes.[132] Cox countered that Kirkuk would not "be content to lapse into insignificance" among "mainly Kurdish units."[133]

The procedure by which Faysal would accede to the throne was not established at the conference because Cox felt that, due to the Kurdistan stipulation in the Treaty of Sèvres, it was first necessary to formulate an election law that would account for the special status of the mainly non-Arab northern districts that Britain was then administering as part of Iraq.[134] It was not until after returning to Baghdad that Cox came under pressure from Churchill to establish Faysal as King as soon as possible. Churchill, who was himself under pressure in London to prove that Iraq was on its way to independence and that the expensive task of maintaining troops there could soon come to an end, insisted that Faysal's coronation was a more pressing matter than resolving the ambiguities of Kirkuk and the majority-Kurdish districts.[135] Heeding the demands of the "vernacular papers" in Iraq, the High Commissioner's office devised a plan for what they referred to as a "referendum" to legitimize Faysal's accession.[136]

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[132] High Commissioner for Mesopotamia to the Secretary of State for the Colonies, 21 June 1921, CO 730/2, UK; Secretary of State for the Colonies to the High Commissioner for Mesopotamia, 24 June 1921, CO 730/2, UK.

[133] High Commissioner of Mesopotamia to the Secretary of State for the Colonies, Part 2, 5 July 1921, CO 730/3, UK.

[134] High Commissioner of Mesopotamia to the Secretary of State for the Colonies, 9 July 1921, CO 730/3, UK.

[135] "Secretary (M)," 9 July 1921, in "Future Administration of Mesopotamia: Proposed Inclusion of Kurdistan," 5 July 1921, CO 730/3, UK; Secretary of State for the Colonies to the High Commissioner for Mesopotamia, 9 July 1921, CO 730/3, UK.

[136] High Commissioner of Mesopotamia to the Secretary of State for the Colonies, 11 July 1921, CO 730/3, UK.

Scholars have often stated or implied that the Faysal referendum, in which nearly every division overwhelmingly confirmed the amir, was plainly rigged, therefore only mentioning the event in passing in analyses of early British civilian administration. However, the referendum was a fallible process that failed dramatically in Kirkuk despite its successful implementation elsewhere. Characterizing it as fraudulent therefore obscures the nature of the procedure and overlooks the relative agency of those who participated in it. While the referendum had the predetermined and explicitly stated goal of obtaining Iraqi approval of Faysal, it consisted of a series of negotiations carried out by lower-level officers throughout provincial Iraq with local notables about a variety of issues concerning their relations with Baghdad. For instance, in Mosul, the Divisional Adviser reported success in getting Yazidi and Kurdish figures to sign in indication of their approval of Faysal when they were allowed to add clauses related to minority rights.[137] In Arbil, Divisional Adviser Wallace Lyon recalled the referendum as a "very long, hot and tiring day" during which he had to convince the area's reluctant tribal and urban notables that there was no need for opposing candidates. Lyon, like many other lower-level officials, had a poor understanding of the reasoning behind Iraq policies formulated in Baghdad and London and was not even aware of why his superiors had selected Faysal to be King.[138]

These local officials had to rely on their ties with certain powerful individuals in order to ensure a favorable result for the chosen monarch. In order to sway Kirkuk toward approval of Faysal, British officials decided to invest their efforts in a Kirkuki Turkmen

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[137] Office of the Divisional Adviser, Mosul, to the Secretary to H.E. the High Commissioner, Baghdad, 22 August 1921, CO 730/4, UK.

[138] D. K. Fieldhouse, ed. *Kurds, Arabs and Britons: The Memoir of Wallace Lyon in Iraq, 1918-44* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2002), 94-95.

notable and former Ottoman official, ʿIzzat Pasha Karkukli, whom they had appointed Minister of Education the previous fall.[139] The placement of ʿIzzat Pasha in the education ministry was meant solely to keep him in the patronage of the British and had nothing to do with his suitability for the position, as officials privately acknowledged, even mockingly. Gertrude Bell, the Oriental Secretary, sent her father an indelicate limerick written by an unnamed person in the High Commissioner's office in reference to ʿIzzat Pasha's lack of fluency in formal Arabic:

> There was an old man of Kirkuk,
> Who knew nought of the pen and the book,
> And was not good at speech,
> So they set him to teach
> All the ignorant boys in the suq.[140]

Perhaps unsurprisingly, by the fall of 1921,ʿIzzat Pasha had been transferred to the post of Minister of Public Works.[141] While in Baghdad, ʿIzzat Pasha became friends with Bell, who was aware that Kirkuk would be a particularly difficult district to control in the upcoming referendum. At a dinner party held in Faysal's honor in July of 1921, ʿIzzat Pasha sat next to Bell and, during the course of conversation, asked her why the British had chosen Faysal to be Iraq's king. Bell responded, "It's because he is the best Arab of his day. Is that enough?" According to Bell's account, ʿIzzat Pasha responded, "Yes, that's enough." The following morning, he had "a long private conversation" with Faysal.

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[139] "Mesopotamian Intelligence Report No. 1," 15 November 1920, in Office of the High Commissioner, Baghdad to The Under Secretary of State for India, India Office, London, 3 December 1920, L/PS/10/962, IOR.

[140] Gertrude Bell, letter, 29 November 1920, in *Gertrude Bell Archive*, http://www.gerty.ncl.ac.uk/letter_details.php?letter_id=438.

[141] Arshad al-Hurmuzi [Arshad Al-Hirmizi], *Al-Turkuman fi al-ʿIraq: Dirasa Mujaza ʿan Tarikh al-Turkuman fi al-ʿIraq wa-Marahil Istitanihim wa-Aslihim* (Baghdad: Matabiʿ Dar al-Zaman, 1971), 28.

Bell wrote in a letter to her father, "Faisal thinks he has got him. If he has, he has got Kirkuk."[142]

Meanwhile, events in Kirkuk suggested that the idea of being ruled by an Arab government continued to be as deeply unpopular as it had been during the agitation spurred by the 1920 revolt. Turkey, for its part, had actively been circulating propaganda throughout the former Mosul *vilayet* asserting that their military position on the Mosul frontier was particularly strong and emphasizing the Turkish role as protectors of the caliphate.[143] The town of Kirkuk had already emerged as a center of operation for those who favored the Mosul *vilayet* region's inclusion in Turkey, and Colonial Office officials feared that such propaganda would further sway the Turkmen population of Kirkuk against inclusion in Iraq.[144] In July of 1921, the administrative adviser in Kirkuk circulated the district's official referendum protocol (*madbata*). This document made the British government's desires known, asked those opposed to Faysal to "reconsider their position," and excluded the possibility of Turkish rule. In response, anti-Faysal proclamations were posted in the town.[145] Sayyid Ahmad-i Khanaqa, the prominent Kirkuki religious figure, used his public addresses to denounce the Arab-ruled government.[146] Shortly before the referendum was to take place, a meeting at the home of

[142] Gertrude Bell, letter, 8 July 1921, in *Gertrude Bell Archive*, http://www.gerty.ncl.ac.uk/letter_details.php?letter_id=486.

[143] High Commissioner, Baghdad to Under Secretary of State for the Colonies, London, 13 June 1921, CO 730/2, UK.

[144] High Commissioner of Mesopotamia to the Secretary of State for the Colonies, Part 2, 5 July 1921, CO 730/3, UK.

[145] "Iraq Intelligence Report No. 18," in Colonial Office to The Under Secretary of State, India Office, 7 September 1921, L/PS/10/962, IOR.

[146] Edmonds, *Kurds, Turks, and Arabs*, 344.

another local religious leader concluded that a fatwa should be issued branding Faysal a "Yazidi"—essentially, an apostate—and that if he were chosen, "they would demand union with Kurdistan." The next day, a notice was posted in Kirkuk's central market in Turkish castigating Faysal for destroying the Islamic Ottoman government as part of the Arab Revolt. It concluded, "The Arabs have always disliked the Turks," and, invoking the language used in pro-Turkish propaganda, called for inclusion in the caliphate.[147]

The Colonial Office had hoped to get "the barest majority" in support of Faysal in Kirkuk.[148] Ultimately, the tide of opinion went completely against him. Out of just over 2,800 people approached for polling in the district, only 64 voted in favor of Faysal's accession.[149] While no account of the exact proceedings of the referendum in Kirkuk is extant, C.J. Edmonds wrote that Turkmens there typically expressed support for the selection of a Turkish ruler while Kurds indicated that they favored some form of Kurdish administration. However, the Kurds of Kirkuk remained hostile to Sulaymaniyya, especially to Shaykh Mahmud's continued influence, and therefore did not favor unification with other parts of Kurdistan.[150] The precise role that ʿIzzat Pasha played in the referendum in Kirkuk is also unknown, but what is clear is that his interference was resented. After the referendum, another notice appeared in Kirkuk's central market mocking him for his inability to manipulate the results—"because," it said, "our people here are too good to give away to the words of such a man."[151] In the end,

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[147] "Iraq Intelligence Report No. 19," in Colonial Office to The Under Secretary of State, India Office, 13 October 1921, L/PS/10/962, IOR.

[148] "Iraq Intelligence Report No. 18," L/PS/10/962, IOR.

[149] "Iraq Intelligence Report No. 19," L/PS/10/962, IOR.

[150] Edmonds, *Kurds, Turks, and Arabs*, 118; McDowall, *A Modern History of the Kurds*, 167.

[151] "Iraq Intelligence Report No. 19," L/PS/10/962, IOR.

96% of respondents in the Faysal referendum throughout Iraq heeded the British demand to vote in favor of his accession, and the dissenting 4% were almost entirely from Kirkuk. “I hold the Kirkuklis to be asses,” a disappointed Bell wrote to her father in August 1921.[152]

The events of 1921 therefore demonstrated the limits of Britain’s neocolonial enterprise in Iraq. The success of the mandate relied on divisional-level officials and their close relationships with local patrons, especially urban notables and tribal leaders; this tactic, carried over from military administration, failed to effect Britain’s desired outcome in Kirkuk. The Faysal referendum also marked the beginning of a trend in Kirkuk of activity against centralized, external government. Despite being little more than a historical footnote in most works on Iraq, the referendum is frequently mentioned as an important event in writings about Kirkuk’s history by Iraqi Turkmens. These authors characterize their antecedents’ rejection of Faysal as a bold, dangerous move that incurred the wrath of British authorities and brought about violence against their community beginning with the massacre of 1924 (analyzed in Chapter 2)—a perception that may also have been prevalent among Kirkukis at the time.[153]

In general, Kirkuk’s position with relation to the nascent Arab-led Anglo-Iraqi government is best understood in terms of Kirkukis’ attitudes toward power centered in Baghdad—a fact that is also true of the majority-Kurdish districts. The district of Sulaymaniyya, which retained a separatist viewpoint, had refused to participate in the

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[152] Gertrude Bell, letter, 21 August 1921, in *Gertrude Bell Archive*, http://www.gerty.ncl.ac.uk/letter_details.php?letter_id=500.

[153] See for instance: Al-Hurmuzi, *Al-Turkman fi al-ʿIraq*, 28-29; Küzeci, *Kerkük Soykırımları*, 37. Though these authors do not provide specific citations for this characterization of the event, their books are grounded in historical research from the perspective of the Turkish-speaking Kirkuki community.

referendum altogether. The notables of the district of Arbil, despite the anti-British unrest that had taken place there the previous year, were forthright about their desire for British protection and therefore did not harbor the same level of hostility to Faysal as those of Kirkuk and Sulaymaniyya. Indeed, their relations with Kirkuk were not friendly, making them equally unlikely at this stage to favor Kurdish unification.[154] Altogether, while the discourses surrounding the Faysal referendum occasionally took on an ethnicized cast, identity-based communal divisions were less salient than pro- and anti-centralization forces in the earliest phase of Iraqi state making.

In a final act of defiance, Kirkuk and Sulaymaniyya did not send delegations to Faysal's coronation ceremony. Moreover, Kirkuki officials did not fly the Iraqi flag in the district until 1924.[155] Recognizing the fraught nature of Baghdad's relationship with Kirkuk, Bell wrote a few months after Faysal's accession, "It's best to have the Kirkuk situation undefined."[156]

Conclusion

By the fall of 1921, Kirkuk was a de facto part of the British Iraq mandate, but neither British officials nor Kirkukis themselves were certain where it belonged: administratively, politically or otherwise. The single most consistent feature of politics in Kirkuk at the beginning of the mandate was an opposition to the government in Baghdad,

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[154] "Iraq Intelligence Report No. 21," in Colonial Office to The Under Secretary of State, India Office, 15 September 1921, L/PS/10/962, IOR.

[155] Edmonds, *Kurds, Turks, and Arabs*, 118, 393.

[156] Gertrude Bell, letter, 9 November 1921, in *Gertrude Bell Archive*, http://www.gerty.ncl.ac.uk/letter_details.php?letter_id=519.

whether headed by the British or by King Faysal and Arab civil servants. This tendency was present, albeit in different forms, in both the town of Kirkuk and its hinterland, reflecting the extent to which urban and rural interests and affairs were intertwined. The question of Kirkuk's status would persist as long as Turkey and British Iraq were actively wrangling over the status of the Mosul *vilayet* and while the remote possibility of the creation of an autonomous Kurdish region existed. But once the Kingdom of Iraq was formally established in 1921, an inexorable process of integration with the predominantly Arab state was already underway. Kirkuk's potential as an oil-bearing area enhanced the importance, as far as the British and Iraqi governments were concerned, of integrating the Mosul *vilayet* region into Iraq.

Kirkuki opponents of centralization competed with patronage networks fostered by British authorities, continuing a pattern of contentious local autonomy and reliance on external sponsors that had been present in the area since the Ottoman period. Kirkuk's political discourse in the early 1920s, though distinct from that of other areas, also showed signs of being swayed by external influences, especially Turkish and Kurdish nationalisms. Ethnic identities played a role in these political stances—especially with regard to the fact that Kirkukis, who were mostly non-Arab, straightforwardly denounced Arab rule in their rhetoric. However, these identities were not clear-cut categories, but rather dynamic arrays of language, lineage, religion, and class. The debate surrounding the Mosul *vilayet*'s status in the 1920s would contribute to the consolidation of these groupings.

2. Kirkuk and Iraqi Integration: The British Mandate Period, 1921-1932

Introduction: The Iraq Levies in Kirkuk

On 5 May 1924, Kirkuk was in the midst of a second day of intercommunal violence that had been provoked by local Iraq Levy infantry forces under British command. Disregarding both orders and common sense, the Assyrian Christian levies had opened fire on civilians in central Kirkuk on 4 May, killing many of the predominantly Muslim, Turkish-speaking townspeople and triggering a level of urban unrest unknown in recent memory. Though the Assyrians were quickly removed from the town, the unrest continued, and another local unit of the Iraq Levies made up of Kurdish cavalry troopers also began to defy their British officers. Special Service Officer H.A. Anson later reported to his superiors in Baghdad a bizarre spectacle he had witnessed on the morning of 5 May:

> I was returning from the aerodrome and, when opposite the fort, noticed two troopers from the Iraq Levies accompanying a donkey with a Sewing machine on its back. They were coming from the direction of the Singer Sewing Machine shop which I was subsequently informed had been broke into a few minutes previous to the incident above recorded. Approximately half an hour later I observed another trooper from the Iraq Levies leading a donkey bearing a Sewing machine.[1]

As Anson found, the Iraq Levy troopers' insubordination to their British patrons included a brazen robbery of the Kirkuk office of the Singer Manufacturing Company, an American outfit that had been selling sewing machines in Kirkuk since long before the

[1] H.A. Anson, "Singer Sewing Machines," in Air Headquarters, British Forces in Iraq, Baghdad to Headquarters, Iraq Levies, Mosul, 2 June 1924, AIR 23/562, UK.

British invasion.[2] This unusual incident is more understandable in the context of the development of a distinct pattern of unrest over the course of 4 and 5 May. What began as a seemingly random series of altercations became an act of rebellion against Anglo-Iraqi centralized authority in which urban violence expanded to include the targeting of people and commercial entities perceived to have a connection with external political and economic forces. Several local Kirkuki Christians also died in the violence, and looting was widespread.

This episode demonstrates that one of the primary defining features of politics in Kirkuk from 1921 to 1932 was the constantly shifting nature of relationships with centralized Anglo-Iraqi authority. As British officials in Iraq transitioned to a League of Nations-sanctioned mandate system, they sought to cut costs by devolving a certain amount of power to some notables and employing local forces for security while nevertheless maintaining effective control—a system they also employed in other colonial and neocolonial territories, most notably India. Individual notables' loyalties with respect to the Anglo-Iraqi government had implications for Kirkuk's local politics in the context of the dispute between Iraq and Turkey over the former Mosul *vilayet*, a conflict that destabilized the region until 1926. These loyalties—pro-centralization or anti-centralization—were prone to change with differing political circumstances, particularly after the resolution of the "Mosul question" solidified Kirkuk's status as part of the new Iraqi state. Despite Western officials' expectations, Kirkuki political loyalties did not predictably align with factors such as ethnolinguistic identity.

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[2] E.B. Soane, who visited Kirkuk in 1909, mentions the company's presence there at that time: Soane, *To Mesopotamia and Kurdistan in Disguise*, 120.

At times, as in the events of May 1924, insipient group identities interacted with patronage politics in a manner that created intercommunal tensions and violence at a crucial moment in Kirkuk's history. These kinds of tensions were only a marginal feature in Kirkuk's politics during the mandate era, but they constitute an illustrative example of how local politics were inextricably linked with state making and other national and international dynamics, evolving in tandem with their fluctuations. They also evince some of the roots of ethnicized conflict in Kirkuk, a phenomenon that was produced partly in local interactions with the state and with neocolonial authorities. By the end of the mandate in 1932, these interactions revealed a number of fault lines between gradually coalescing ethnic communities.

Violence, instability, and Kirkukis' relations with Anglo-Iraqi authorities

As of the beginning of British mandate administration of Iraq, the former Mosul *vilayet* remained under Anglo-Iraqi governance. The contentiousness of British control of the region brought about a combination of destabilizing circumstances that engendered anxiety in Kirkuk and exposed the structures of patronage that the post-Ottoman reorientation of authority had created. The Turkish Republic continued to claim the entire Mosul *vilayet* region as part of its territory, exacerbating tensions by amassing troops on its frontier. In an attempt to weaken British control over the former Mosul *vilayet*, Turkey also dispatched agents to the region, including one who arrived in Rawanduz in March 1922 and described himself as the *kaymakam* (provincial governor) of the district. Turkish agents fomented unrest by promising Kurdish tribesmen the backing of Turkish

forces if they resisted British control.[3] Furthermore, Kurdish tribesmen periodically rose up against British authorities and their patrons independently of Turkish influence as a result of ongoing widespread hostility to centralized authority.[4] Therefore, despite the fact that the new state of Iraq was formally in the process of transitioning to a civilian mandate administration with an Arab monarch, the northern third of the state—if, in fact, it could be called part of Iraq—remained a site of active military operations after 1921. These realities aggravated the existing uncertainty of the Kirkuk area's relationship with British and Iraqi authorities.

British methods of controlling the former Mosul *vilayet* became progressively more violent after the establishment in 1922 of a system of air control throughout Iraq led by the Royal Air Force (RAF). After much internal debate, the British government adopted a policy of policing unstable areas in Iraq through aerial bombings as a way of reducing the expenses associated with maintaining a large ground force. Controlling Iraq without occupying it in the traditional sense also suited the structure of the mandate system, whereby British officials administered the country in collaboration with a less powerful but more visible Arab government.[5] Moreover, as Priya Satia argues, contemporary British notions of "Arabia," a broadly defined cultural category, undergirded the use of brutally repressive tactics in Iraq by regarding them as especially effective in relation to the local population's "Oriental" mentality.[6] Urban Kirkuk did not

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[3] Edmonds, *Kurds, Turks, and Arabs*, 245; Jwaideh, *The Kurdish National Movement*, 188.

[4] Peter Sluglett, *Britain in Iraq: Contriving King and Country* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2007), 78.

[5] David E. Omissi, *Air Power and Colonial Control: The Royal Air Force, 1919-1939* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1990), 18-38.

[6] Priya Satia, "The Defense of Inhumanity: Air Control and the British Idea of Arabia," *The American Historical Review* 111, no. 1 (2006).

directly experience the effects of the region's mostly rural rebellions or British military operations to counter them, but its proximity to the violence—especially through its direct links with Sulaymaniyya, which remained outside of centralized control—created an omnipresent unease in the town, according to the detailed contemporary accounts of C.J. Edmonds.

Though local accounts of RAF operations in the Mosul *vilayet* region do not seem to be extant, British accounts indicate that these operations were psychologically devastating to rural communities. Edmonds wrote approvingly of this aspect of air control in his description of a bombing campaign in the restive northern division of Marga in late 1922 while downplaying the overall damage it caused:

> The new incendiary bombs having arrived seven Ninaks flew up from Baghdad and attacked Marga; all machines from here cooperated with ordinary bombs. Four large fires were observed in the morning but evidently did not spread far since they were out by the afternoon; mud houses are very unpromising material.…If the actual damage inflicted was not great the moral effect was, and for several weeks on end the Bristols and the Snipes were out every day on operations which were progressively extended from Marga.[7]

Similarly, at an early point in the debate over air control, a 1920 memorandum considering its use in predominantly Kurdish areas acknowledged that it was "a harsh and brutal instrument of force" and concluded that, prior to targeting humans, it would best be initially used against targets such as livestock, crops and property "which the tribal mind might consider valuable."[8] British officials considered the tactic of inspiring fear in local populations not only as useful to their mission, but as a hallmark of the "humaneness" of an air control policy that would ostensibly lead to less loss of life than its alternatives.

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[7] Edmonds, *Kurds, Turks, and Arabs*, 300.

[8] "Memorandum on the Scheme for the Employment of the Forces of the Crown in Mesopotamia," in A. Haldane, Baghdad, to The Secretary, War Office, London, 28 May 1920, L/PS/10/766, IOR.

Needless to say, those who subscribed to this notion ignored the ruinous effects on villagers of the loss of their homes and resources, as well as the inevitability of human casualties when explosive and incendiary bombs were dropped on populated areas.[9]

In the former Mosul *vilayet*, the worst of this violence took place in areas north and east of the Kirkuk division, particularly around Sulaymaniyya. In comparison, Kirkuk and its rural hinterland were relatively peaceful. In the aforementioned 1920 memorandum, British officials specifically ruled out the use of aerial bombings in the town of Kirkuk itself unless extreme circumstances were to arise, and British records of Kurdish unrest in the 1920s do not specifically indicate that tribes in rural Kirkuk joined in these revolts against central authority.[10] However, due to its relative proximity to Sulaymaniyya, Kirkuk usually served as the base where British-led troops would converge in order to carry out military operations in that division.[11] At one point in early 1923, Shaykh Mahmud, based in Sulaymaniyya as usual, even positioned his forces in such a way as to directly threaten Kirkuk.[12] A regiment of Indian Sikh troops under British command also continued to be stationed within the town. These troops were accompanied by a regiment of the Iraq Levies, a force made up predominantly of Assyrian refugees from southeastern Anatolia whom the British had found especially useful as a replacement for their own ground forces because of their military background, their ready loyalty to British patronage, and the reduced expense of employing them in

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[9] Satia, "The Defense of Inhumanity," 34.

[10] "Memorandum on the Scheme for the Employment of the Forces of the Crown in Mesopotamia," L/PS/10/766, IOR.

[11] For more detailed information, see, for instance, C.J. Edmonds's extensive accounts of the operations dubbed "Ranicol" and "Koicol" that sought to put down rebellions in the Ranya and Sulaymaniyya districts in 1922 and 1923, respectively: Edmonds, *Kurds, Turks, and Arabs*, 244-62, 312-38.

[12] Jwaideh, *The Kurdish National Movement*, 198-99.

lieu of British or Indian troops. The Iraq Levies eventually replaced Indian troops in Kirkuk entirely in 1923.[13] Overall, a continued military presence and persistent violence ensured that Kirkukis were well aware of the volatility of their surrounding region while simultaneously at a distance from the most brutal aspects of the unrest.

As mentioned, the instability of the Mosul *vilayet* region created a tense atmosphere among Kirkuki townspeople in the early years of the mandate. This mood became especially pronounced after the convening in November 1922 of the multilateral Lausanne conference, the last peace conference of World War I in which the main agenda was to forge a definitive peace with Kemalist Turkey. The British were determined to maintain the Iraqi status quo, while the Kemalists rejected the terms of the Treaty of Sèvres and proceeded to formally assert what they perceived as their rightful sovereignty over the entirety of the former Mosul *vilayet*. The disagreement between Britain and Turkey led Kirkukis to be anxious about what would happen next. Edmonds wrote in January 1923 that people all over the Kirkuk division were preoccupied with the proceedings and that "even the most unsophisticated tribesmen constantly ask after the progress of the European conference." Rumors regarding the movement of Turkish troops were "rife." In one particularly frightening incident the same month, Turkey amassed an unusually large number of troops in an area near Zakho, a town in the extreme northwest of the Mosul *vilayet* region's frontier. In Edmonds's telling, Kirkuk's atmosphere reached "fever heat," while local authorities collaborating with the British were "pallid with

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[13] Edmonds, *Kurds, Turks, and Arabs*, 283, 389; David Omissi, "Britain, the Assyrians and the Iraq Levies, 1919-1932," *The Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History* 17, no. 3 (1989): 301-07.

terror." A British-led redistribution of the Indian troops stationed in Kirkuk in response to these actions led to widespread fear of renewed warfare.[14]

In the midst of this fraught situation, British officials in Iraq returned to the issue of incorporating the predominantly non-Arab governorates of the former Mosul *vilayet* into the election law, a problem that had preoccupied them in the months leading up to King Faysal's coronation. In the fall of 1922, Kirkuk, despite its uneasy relations with Baghdad, was obliged to undergo electoral registration along with every other Iraqi division except for Sulaymaniyya. Kurdish tribesmen met the electoral registration process with considerable suspicion of British designs for areas that were predominantly Kurdish.[15] British officers stationed in Kirkuk and in other non-Arab areas were subsequently required to undertake negotiations with influential local figures in order to secure their participation in the elections. In Kirkuk, local notables initially demanded that the dispute with Turkey over the Mosul *vilayet* region be resolved as a condition of their participation in the elections, which was clearly not possible if the elections were going to be held in a timely manner. Adding to the difficulty of this process was the fact that Iraqi central government civil servants in Baghdad continuously roused the ire of the mayor of Kirkuk, ʿAbd al-Majid Yaʿqubizada, and the *mutasarrif* of the Kirkuk governorate, Fattah Pasha, by attempting to play a role in matters of local administration. Edmonds wrote in June 1923 that the election negotiations had been "neutralized by the grievances of the municipality which feels that it is being subjected to much arbitrary and illegal interference from Baghdad." In one provocative instance, a nepotistic central

[14] C.J. Edmonds, "Kirkuk Liwa Report for Period 1 January to 31 January 1923," C.J. Edmonds Collection GB 165-0095, Box 1 File 1a, MECA; Edmonds, *Kurds, Turks, and Arabs*, 313.

[15] McDowall, *A Modern History of the Kurds*, 168.

government minister in Baghdad dismissed and replaced a local appointee. Soon afterwards, however, both sides had reached an acceptable compromise: Kirkuk would participate in the elections on the condition that appointed positions in the district would be filled by local figures and that Turkish would remain the district's official language. The High Commissioner officially recognized these rights in July of 1923.[16]

The conclusion of the Lausanne conference that same month failed to resolve the destabilizing dispute over the Mosul *vilayet* region, ensuring that complex pro-centralization and anti-centralization dynamics stemming from a vexed relationship with Baghdad would continue to dominate Kirkuk's politics for the foreseeable future. Instead, by agreement between the British and Turkish delegations, the Treaty of Lausanne stipulated that a year's worth of Anglo-Turkish talks would take place and that if they did not settle the dispute, it would be referred to the League of Nations for arbitration. In the meantime, the military status quo on the frontier, including British control over the former *vilayet*, would be maintained. The treaty was therefore a victory for the British, since they could make their case for retaining the region as part of Iraq from the position of ongoing administration of the area, not to mention from a position of strength within the League of Nations.[17] British and Iraqi authorities also managed to partially calm Kurdish tribal unrest by reoccupying Sulaymaniyya with a combination of Iraqi Army and Iraq Levy forces in July 1924, forcing Shaykh Mahmud to flee.[18]

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[16] C.J. Edmonds, "Confidential Report No. 4 of 1923 of the Kirkuk Liwa," C.J. Edmonds Collection GB 165-0095, Box 1 File 1a, MECA; Edmonds, *Kurds, Turks, and Arabs*, 343-4.

[17] William Stivers reaches the same conclusion. Stivers, *Supremacy and Oil*, 141-2.

[18] Jwaideh, *The Kurdish National Movement*, 202.

Notably, the unrest stemming from the Mosul *vilayet* region's volatility and the uncertainty surrounding Kirkuk's status exposed the main factors that influenced the loyalties of its inhabitants—namely, the existence of client-patron relationships between British authorities and some Kirkuki notables, as well as the competing perception among other notables that the British and Iraqi governments were opposed to their interests. For instance, British officials' eventual success in getting Kirkuk to participate in the elections was in large part due to a good personal relationship between the deputy administrative inspector A.F. Miller, who spoke fluent Turkish, and ʿAbd al-Majid Yaʿqubizada, the town mayor.[19] The Yaʿqubizada family was a prominent urban Kirkuki family who were thought to be of Kurdish descent but who nevertheless self-identified as Turkish-speaking elites.[20] While ʿAbd al-Majid cultivated close linkages with British authorities, however, his younger brother Mustafa was one of many people from Kirkuk's prominent families who formed clandestine groups that opposed Anglo-Iraqi administration, which British authorities termed "pro-Turkish committees," in the midst of the questions about the Mosul *vilayet* region's political future that the Lausanne conference raised.[21]

One of the most influential figures to be involved with anti-Anglo-Iraqi activities was the leading local religious figure of the Naqshbandi Sufi order, Sayyid Ahmad-i Khanaqa. A Kurd both in terms of descent and self-identification, Sayyid Ahmad was a relative of the Barzinji family of Sulaymaniyya who held particularly robust authority

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[19] Edmonds to Cornwallis, 25 August 1923, C.J. Edmonds Collection GB 165-0095, Box 1 File 1c, MECA; Edmonds, *Kurds, Turks, and Arabs*, 342-3.

[20] Ibid., 266.

[21] Edmonds, "Kirkuk Liwa Report for Period 1 January to 31 January 1923."

among fellow Kirkuki Kurds.[22] British authorities and their local patrons therefore quickly moved to expel him from Kirkuk. In early February 1923, Edmonds and Fattah Pasha arranged a meeting with Sayyid Ahmad in order to inform him of their suspicions as to his clandestine activity, which he denied. He was then arrested, transported to a plane waiting for him at the city's airfield, and deported. Several other people fled Kirkuk in alarm at this apparent crackdown on activities in opposition to Anglo-Iraqi authority. One of these was the patriarch of the Naftchizada family of Turkmen notables, Nazim Beg, a former Ottoman official whom Edmonds called "the leading citizen of Kirkuk." Nazim Beg left Kirkuk for Turkey, where he would continue to be based for years to come.[23]

British sources from the mandate era tend to assume that the fact that Kirkuk was majority Turkmen, or at least majority Turkish speaking, rendered it more prone to being a center of purportedly "pro-Turkish" activity. However, while some Turkish-speaking elites like Nazim Beg might have had a close relationship with the nascent republic of Turkey, these activities were not an indication of loyalty to Turkey as a country so much as they were part of the general trend in Kirkuk against being subjected to the whims of a distant administration. As Edmonds noted in a 1923 letter to the British adviser of the Iraqi interior ministry, the Mosul *vilayet*'s municipalities were accustomed to being "almost entirely independent and left entirely to run their own show" and resented the fact that, following the formation of the Iraqi central government, they were "never free from Baghdad dictation."[24] Furthermore, a closer examination of the details of local

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[22] Edmonds, *Kurds, Turks, and Arabs*, 78, 313.

[23] Ibid., 317-18.

[24] Edmonds to Cornwallis, 25 August 1923.

politics indicates that the affiliations of Kirkuk's notables depended more reliably on their patronage networks than on their ethnic identities. Hence, even brothers from the same prominent family, the Yaʿqubizadas, were working toward different goals with regard to Iraqi centralization. Similarly, Nazim Beg Naftchizada's uncle, Salih Beg Naftchizada, who represented Kirkuk in the central government's Constituent Assembly after the elections were carried out, reportedly opposed Nazim's defection to Turkey. A report in the Baghdad-based newspaper *Al-Istiqlal* in 1925 went so far as to claim that Salih Beg was "bitterly angered" by his nephew's "lack of faith to his country."[25] Altogether, the era of the Mosul dispute would prove to be the apex of the politics of patronage in Kirkuk in the modern Iraqi state. It was the time period in which, more than in any other in the twentieth century, personal relationships and direct client linkages—or a disadvantageous lack thereof—between notables and more powerful external forces played a role in determining popular opinion.

The Assyrian Levies massacre and intercommunal violence in 1924

The explosive capacity of the friction between Kirkukis and centralized Anglo-Iraqi authority became manifest in a violent series of events in May 1924. The incident that sparked these events, a massacre of townspeople by Assyrians in the Iraq Levies, receives very little treatment in the writings of the officials involved, evidently because it was a tremendous embarrassment to the British establishment in Iraq. C.J. Edmonds and R.S. Stafford, another British official, downplayed the significance of the massacre in

[25] "Al Istiqlal No. 543 dated 23rd January 1925," in "Intelligence Report No. 3," 5 February 1925, CO 730/72, UK.

their memoirs by simply saying that the Levies "ran amok" after a disagreement in Kirkuk's central market on 4 May 1924. Historians subsequently describing the event, who usually only mention it in passing, have repeated this trivializing phrase—which also appears in official British documents—with remarkable regularity.[26] Yet, the prominent role that these events continue to play in the collective memory of Kirkukis in the present day, especially in historical writing by self-identified Turkmens, demands a detailed analysis. Accounts of the incident written by Turkmens consistently characterize it as a massacre (*katliam*) orchestrated by the British, who, in their view, were specifically targeting the Turkmen community of Kirkuk in retaliation for their rejection of King Faysal's leadership in the 1921 referendum on the monarchy. Turkmen authors refer to the killings of 4 May as the "Levy Massacre" or something similar.[27] While the idea that these killings were a British act of revenge is extremely dubious, its continued significance to Kirkukis merits examination. Furthermore, the events of 5 May—the intercommunal conflict that ensued after the initial attack by the Levies—demonstrated the potential of the relationship between authorities, their patrons, and their local opponents to become intertwined with popular group identities. In this particular moment, the groupings that emerged revolved around Muslim and Christian religious

[26] Edmonds, *Kurds, Turks, and Arabs*, 389; R.S. Stafford, *The Tragedy of the Assyrians* (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1935), 47. For examples of the uncritical repetition of the phrase "ran amok" by other authors describing the event, see for instance: Ernest Main, *Iraq From Mandate to Independence* (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1935), 152; Omissi, "Britain, the Assyrians, and the Iraq Levies," 309; Silverfarb, *Britain's Informal Empire in the Middle East*, 36.

[27] See for instance: Al-Hurmuzi, *Al-Turkman fi al-ʿIraq*, 29; Küzeci, *Kerkük Soykırımları*, 37-9. The latter book is an example of a source that calls the incident "Levi Katliamı," or the Levy Massacre. Another book by a Turkmen author written in English characterizes the massacre as specifically targeting Turkmens as an ethnic group: Güçlü, *The Turcomans and Kirkuk*, 78. One anthropologist has found that Iraqi Turkmens now living in Turkey often remember the massacre erroneously as the "Armenian Massacre," reflecting the extent to which its association with ethnic Assyrians has been supplanted by an emphasis on its perceived British backing: Buyuksarac, "The Poetics of Loss and the Poetics of Melancholy," 221.

heritage, reflecting a type of social categorization that had become salient in areas outside of Kirkuk during the late Ottoman era.

As previously mentioned, the Iraq Levies were local forces under British command that were key to Britain's neocolonial enterprise in Iraq. Many sources use the alternate name "Assyrian Levies" to refer specifically to the detachments of these forces that were made up entirely of Assyrian refugees. Assyrians made up the majority of the Iraq Levies by 1924 and constituted all of the infantry in urban Kirkuk. There was also a cavalry unit of the Iraq Levies in Kirkuk made up of Kurds, but the British typically employed the Assyrians exclusively in operations against tribal Kurdish unrest. As agents of British authority, as Christians, and as frequent partners in the quelling of rural uprisings, the Assyrian Levies came to be particularly closely associated with centralized Anglo-Iraqi authority in the view of local populations throughout the region. There was therefore abundant animosity between the Assyrian Levies and the people of the former *vilayet*. This was especially true of rural Kurds, who were angered by the fact that the Levies' operations often failed to distinguish between rebels and civilians.[28] Further exacerbating mutual tensions between the Levies and locals, the Assyrian refugees in the levy forces had fled from mass killings in Anatolia during World War I that, regardless of who ordered them, were typically carried out by Kurds.[29]

The details of the events of 4 May 1924 can be approximated on the basis of records of British officers' and some Kirkukis' testimonies as part of the later inquiry into

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[28] Omissi, "Britain, the Assyrians, and the Iraq Levies," 308-09.

[29] "Special Report on the Recent Disturbances in Kirkuk," 8 May 1924, AIR 23/562, UK.

the massacre.[30] That day, of the Assyrian Levies stationed in Kirkuk, two companies were in Chamchamal, a Kurdish village east of Kirkuk along the road to Sulaymaniyya, while two other companies were still in the town and under orders to march to Chamchamal by 5 May.[31] Various accounts agree that on the morning of 4 May, an argument broke out between some of the Assyrian Levies remaining in urban Kirkuk and a Muslim shopkeeper in Kirkuk's central market, which flanked the southern and eastern sides of the citadel on the eastern half of the town.[32] The argument, which apparently began over the price of a purchase of sugar, subsequently became charged with hostile language against the feuding parties' religions. Some British sources even suggest that it was significant that 4 May was the day before the beginning of ʿId al-Fitr, the religious holiday at the end of the Islamic month of Ramadan, and that the shopkeepers were consequently nearing the end of a "trying fast."[33]

While religious animosity appears to have been one underlying factor of the confrontation, it must also be understood in the context of Kirkuki discontent with Anglo-Iraqi administration and the violent operations that the Levies carried out on its behalf in the Mosul *vilayet* region. For instance, Lieutenant P. Paulet King, who was in charge of the Levies in Kirkuk, recalled that in addition to making derogatory comments about their Christianity, the shopkeepers had allegedly taunted the Assyrians "with their probable

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[30] Collections of these, transcribed and translated where necessary, are enclosed in: Dobbs to Amery, 19 February 1925, CO 730/72, UK.

[31] "Evidence of the 1st Witness, Lieut. P. Paulet King, 2nd Battalion 'Iraq Levies," in Dobbs to Amery, 19 February 1925, CO 730/72, UK.

[32] The central market, or "Bazar," is indicated in these locations on the 1919 map of Kirkuk shown in Figure 1.2: "Kirkuk City," map, 1919, WO 302/553, UK. The testimonies cited above and below also imply that this series of events began on the east side of the river near the stone bridge across the Khasa.

[33] See for instance: "Special Report on the Recent Disturbances in Kirkuk," AIR 23/562, UK.

failure in assumed future operations against Shaikh Mahmud."[34] This reference indicates that the shopkeepers were aware that the Levies were in the process of gradually leaving the town and marching toward Sulaymaniyya—which, as mentioned before, they would eventually take part in reoccupying in July 1924. The Kirkukis in the market therefore correctly deduced that the Levies' movements indicated impending central-government action against Shaykh Mahmud's rebellion. According to one report, rumors of the reoccupation of Sulaymaniyya had recently been the subject of a great deal of discussion among people in Kirkuk's traditional social centers, further supporting this interpretation of the comment.[35] The fact that Kirkuki notables and tribes, regardless of ethnic self-identity, tended to be hostile to Shaykh Mahmud at this time suggests the conclusion that the shopkeepers' derision in this instance did not stem from support for Mahmud, but from resentment of the Levies and the British-dominated authority they represented.

What occurred next is disputed. One British witness, referred to in his testimony as Officer Burgess, attested that that the Assyrian Levies, who were not armed at the time, had then beaten some of the shopkeepers in the market. On the other hand, Lieutenant Paulet King stated that the shopkeepers had attacked the Levies, striking two on the head and one on the hand. Regardless of who began the physical altercation, Kirkuk police, led by Officer Burgess, arrested the three shopkeepers involved.[36] Paulet King thereafter ordered the two Levy companies to assemble. Using an Assyrian officer

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[34] "Evidence of the 1st Witness, Lieut. P. Paulet King," CO 730/72, UK.

[35] In a report dated 8 May, Special Service Officer H.A. Anson noted that the "bazaar talk" in Kirkuk was full of speculation that the Levies would soon occupy Sulaymaniyya. H.A. Anson, "Special Report on the Recent Disturbances in Kirkuk," 8 May 1924, AIR 23/562, UK.

[36] "Evidence of the 1st Witness, Lieut. P. Paulet King" and "Evidence of the 3rd Witness, Station House Officer Burgess, Kirkuk Police," in Dobbs to Amery, 19 February 1925, CO 730/72, UK.

as an interpreter, he ordered that they were not to re-enter the market or to cross the nearby stone bridge spanning the Khasa; this seems to have been an attempt to prevent them from returning to their barracks, which were on the western side of the town directly across the river from the citadel. He then sent a picket of Levies to enforce the ban on crossing the bridge and dismissed the remaining soldiers.[37] As they were proceeding away from the parade ground where they had gathered, some of the Levies stormed into a nearby coffee shop, destroying furniture and beating the customers. One British officer reported seeing two people with bloodied faces thrown from the shop.[38] The extant testimonies do not suggest any reason for this action and imply, perhaps inaccurately, that it was random. Afterwards, defying Paulet King's orders, the Levies began to force their way across the bridge to the west side of the town, fighting the picket of soldiers stationed on the bridge. In the midst of the melee, the Kirkuk police fired rifle shots from their station near the west side of the bridge, striking and killing an Assyrian Levy sergeant.[39] While these were probably not the first shots fired that day, they appear to have been the first to result in a death.[40] After the police opened fire and news of the sergeant's death spread among the crowd, the Levies rushed across the bridge to their barracks, where they gathered their arms. They then returned to the center of town and began to shoot indiscriminately at Kirkuki townspeople. A British officer testified that, while near the coffee shop on the east side of the river that had been the site of the earlier

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[37] "Evidence of the 1st Witness, Lieut. P. Paulet King," CO 730/72, UK.

[38] "Evidence of the 2nd Witness, Captain W.E.N. Growden, Inspecting Officer of Police," in Dobbs to Amery, 19 February 1925, CO 730/72, UK.

[39] "Evidence of the 5th Witness, Sergeant Wade, Transport Sergeant, 2nd Bn 'Iraq Levies," in Dobbs to Amery, 19 February 1925, CO 730/72, UK.

[40] Nigel D. Davidson, report on Court's findings, in Dobbs to Amery, 19 February 1925, CO 730/72, UK.

altercation, he saw one of the Levies pursue and shoot a “poorly dressed” civilian at point-blank range after the man had dropped to his knees and held up his hands.[41]

A well-known Chaldean merchant and landowner named Toma Hindi, whose large and prominent house was in the southwestern part of the citadel and thus within firing range of the bridge and west riverbank, testified:

> I was in my house on the morning of the 4th May when I heard some firing and almost immediately afterwards someone shouted in Turkish to be let in the front door. In spite of my objection a number of Assyrian soldiers succeeded in forcing an entrance. They went straight to the roof (about a dozen) where they were joined by others…Two of the soldiers who came in the door seized me….[An Assyrian] Officer gave some orders in his own tongue to the two men which was apparently to the effect that they were to leave me alone….Firing had been going on from the roof of the house from the moment when the first soldiery reached it and continued for about 10 minutes after the Officer had reached the roof.[42]

It is noteworthy that Toma Hindi, although a Christian like the Levies, underscored in his brief testimony the differences between himself, a native Kirkuki Chaldean,[43] and the Assyrians, an external force. This emphasis is especially clear with regard to the language barrier between them. Despite the fact that he was probably a descendant of Syriac speakers, as were the Assyrians, Toma Hindi was most likely a Turkish speaker first and foremost like most of Kirkuk’s notables—a fact indicated by the Levies’ use of Turkish when trying to enter his house. Among themselves, the Assyrian soldiers would presumably have been speaking their vernacular dialect of Neo-Aramaic.

As it happened, the Levies had taken up positions on more than one strategically important rooftop other than that of Toma Hindi’s house and were firing at civilians from

[41] “Evidence of the 7th Witness, Lieutenant A.T.O. Lees, Squadron Commander, 1st Levy Cavalry Regiment,” in Dobbs to Amery, 19 February 1925, CO 730/72, UK.

[42] “Evidence of the 15th Witness, Toma Hindi Effendi,” in Dobbs to Amery, 19 February 1925, CO 730/72, UK.

[43] Edmonds, *Kurds, Turks, and Arabs*, 266.

several directions. A Kirkuki police inspector testified that he had seen gunfire from the roof of the school on the west riverbank and from the "Bridge head" in addition to the shots coming from the citadel, and that the Kirkuk police were returning fire from the roof of their station on the west riverbank.[44] According to a British captain with the Levies, a police sniper fired numerous shots that hit the east riverbank and also fired in the direction of women relatives of the Levies in the area of the barracks.[45] The violence of 4 May therefore took place entirely in the town's historical, political, social, and commercial core, centering on the bridge across the Khasa (Figure 2.1). The significance of this location is reflected in the fact that while the area in which the firing took place was relatively small, the shooting victims originated from fifteen different neighborhoods or quarters of Kirkuk.[46] Furthermore, in another attack on an emblematic, traditional node of social and economic interaction, some of the Assyrian Levies set fire to the market where their initial fight with Kirkuki townspeople had occurred. The Kirkukis in the vicinity of the market who later testified about this occurrence claimed that the Levies had created the large fire complete with the assistance of fuel and pumps. These Kirkukis consistently described the Levies as "Tiaris," or people from the Tiyari region of southeastern Anatolia, differentiating them from local Christians and emphasizing their status as unwelcome outsiders.[47]

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[44] "Evidence of the 12th Witness, Inspector Hasan Effendi, Station House Officer, Kirkuk," in Dobbs to Amery, 19 February 1925, CO 730/72, UK.

[45] "Evidence of the 13th Witness, Captain O.M. Fry, 2nd Battalion 'Iraq Levies," in Dobbs to Amery, 19 February 1925, CO 730/72, UK.

[46] "Local Casualties," in Dobbs to Amery, 19 February 1925, CO 730/72, UK.

[47] Testimonies appended to J.M.L. Renton, 9 May 1924, in Dobbs to Amery, 19 February 1925, CO 730/72, UK.

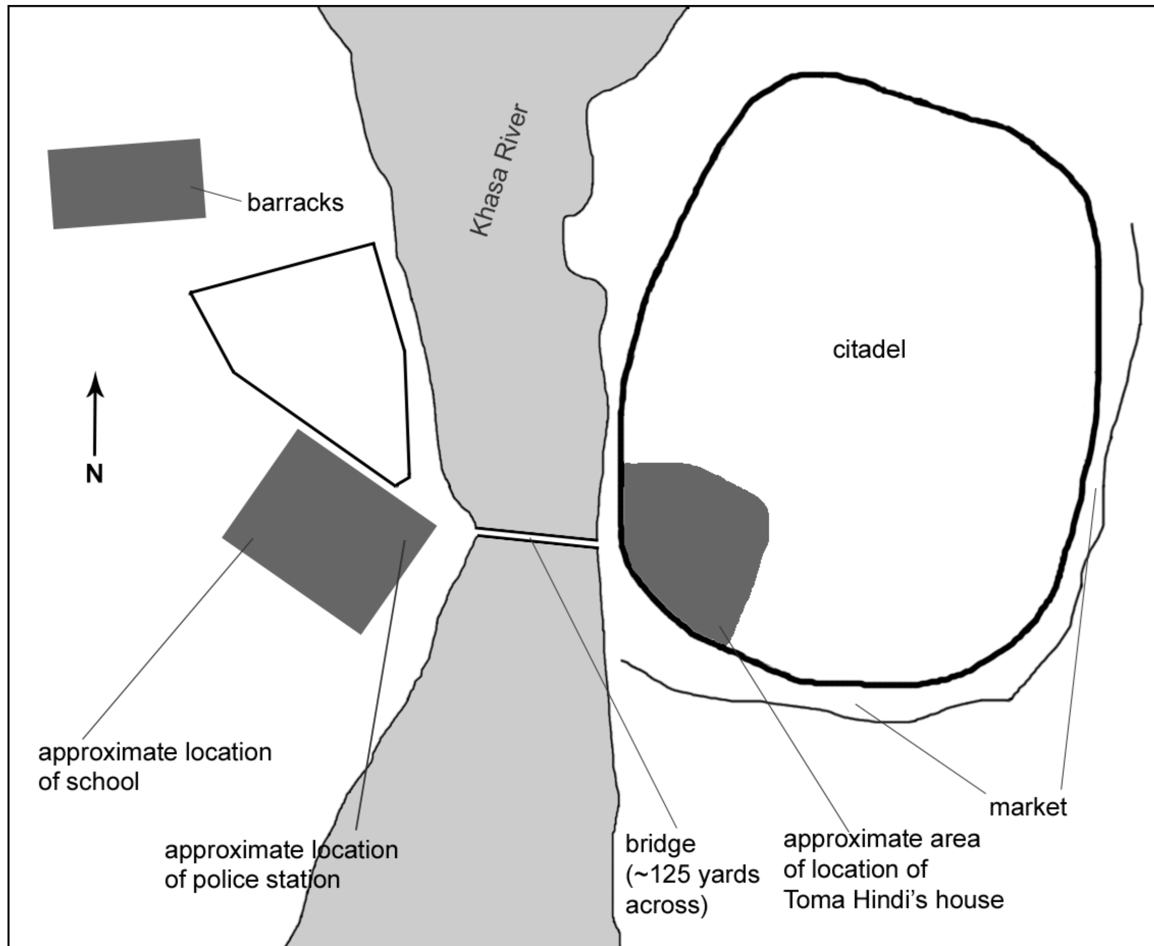

Figure 2.1: A map of the traditional core of central Kirkuk illustrating where the events of 4 May 1924 took place. Based on various maps of Kirkuk and testimonies of the events as cited in this chapter.

By the end of 4 May, at least thirty-six and up to fifty Kirkukis had been killed in the chaos, and dozens more wounded.[48] Some Turkmen authors have claimed that the number of people killed was far higher.[49] Two witnesses, including the British civil surgeon in Kirkuk, F.M. Halley, testified that three of the dead were local police officers.[50] Around sixteen of the casualties were women, at least four of whom died; Halley reported that while most of the victims suffered or died from rifle wounds, one of the women killed had been stabbed in the face.[51] Halley also testified that six Assyrian Levies died, presumably including the sergeant who was the first person to be shot, and that one member of the Kurdish Iraq Levy cavalry unit—which did not side with the Assyrian infantry—was killed.[52] On the afternoon of 4 May, British and Levy officers managed to bring the Assyrian soldiers under control and march them back to their barracks across the dry riverbed while the Kirkuk police continued to fire in their direction.[53] British authorities also flew in Sikh troops from Baghdad as reinforcements.[54] That evening, the officers marched the all of the Assyrian Levies and their families out of Kirkuk.[55] The next day, the British High Commissioner in Baghdad, Sir Henry Dobbs,

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[48] The lower estimate of the number of deaths, along with an analysis of all casualties, is found in: "Local Casualties," CO 730/72, UK. For the higher estimate of the number of deaths, see for instance: Stafford, *The Tragedy of the Assyrians*, 67.

[49] Yücel Güçlü cites other Turkmen authors as having estimated the number of victims to be as high as 280: Güçlü, *The Turcomans and Kirkuk*, 78. The plausibility of this claim is uncertain.

[50] "Evidence of the 2nd Witness, Captain W.E.N. Growden," CO 730/72, UK; "Evidence of the 4th Witness, Dr. F.M. Halley, Civil Surgeon, Kirkuk" in Dobbs to Amery, 19 February 1925, CO 730/72, UK.

[51] "Local Casualties," CO 730/72, UK; "Evidence of the 4th Witness, Dr. F.M. Halley," CO 730/72, UK. For the names of some of the victims, including women, see Küzeci, *Kerkük Soykırımları*, 42.

[52] "Evidence of the 4th Witness, Dr. F.M. Halley," CO 730/72, UK.

[53] "Evidence of the 13th Witness, Captain O.M. Fry," CO 730/72, UK.

[54] Edmonds, *Kurds, Turks, and Arabs*, 389.

[55] "Evidence of the 13th Witness, Captain O.M. Fry," CO 730/72, UK.

issued a proclamation for distribution in Kirkuk reassuring the townspeople that the Assyrian Levies had been sent "to a place distant from Kirkuk" and promising an inquiry into the events.[56]

The testimonies collected as part of the subsequent inquiry, which provide most of the available details about these events as given above, only concern the massacre of 4 May. The events of 5 May, though less thoroughly chronicled, are equally significant to a fuller understanding of Kirkuk's local political and social circumstances in the early mandate era because they constituted an evolution of the chaos into a clear pattern of intercommunal violence. One reason for this development may have been an impression on the part of Kirkuki townspeople, possibly fueled by rumors, that local Christians had sided with the Assyrian Levies in the various altercations of 4 May. For instance, two Kirkukis who later testified about the arson attack on the market claimed that they had seen some local Christians accompanying the "Tiaris" and providing the fuel.[57] In any case, by the morning of 5 May, elements of Kirkuk's Muslim population had turned against the local, and predominantly Chaldean, Christian community and begun to attack them and to loot their homes and businesses. Special Service Officer H.A. Anson summarized the incidents in a report to Baghdad, exhibiting a characteristic British scorn for Kirkuk's urban classes that, astonishingly, appeared to be stronger than any sense of dismay he might have felt about the killings of civilians:

> During the course of the day some 8 or 9 Christians were murdered and any Moslem so disposed applied himself vigorously to the task of getting something for nothing. A more revolting spectacle could not have been afforded than the streets of Kirkuk on that day. Every scoundrel in the town procured for himself

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[56] "Evidence of the 18th Witness, Captain A.F. Miller, Administrative Inspector," in Dobbs to Amery, 19 February 1925, CO 730/72, UK.

[57] Testimonies appended to J.M.L. Renton, CO 730/72, UK.

> some article of value from the houses and shops broken into. Singer Sewing machines were to be seen being carried away on donkeys by troopers from the Iraq levies, effendis staggering under bundles of clothing, scum from the bazaar decked out in silks and satins, and street urchins haggling over bales of cloth….Many of the Iraq Levies were openly in partnership with townsmen, the former doing the looting while the latter removed the booty to their houses.[58]

The looting and violence of 5 May, by targeting people and businesses that were "Christian" in a broad sense, signified a momentary shift to a politics of identity in which, in the viewpoint of some of Kirkuk's Muslim population, being Christian comprised an association with the Assyrian Levies and consequently with Anglo-Iraqi authority. The concept of a split between Muslims and Christians in which the latter were popularly, and violently, construed as threatening outsiders had a precedent in the late Ottoman era, especially among Kurds and Armenians in eastern Anatolia.[59] As previously mentioned, the Assyrian refugees who made up most of the Iraq Levies had escaped similar massacres during World War I. Hence, while the Muslim-Christian divide had not previously taken hold in Kirkuk to a significant degree, the historical and social context is likely to have compounded intercommunal tensions. In this moment, patronage politics were temporarily subordinate, as indicated by the Kurdish Iraq Levy troopers' participation in the anti-Christian looting despite being under British command. The status of intercommunal relations in Kirkuk on 5 May 1924 therefore demonstrated the possibility that tensions between a provincial area and Iraqi centralized authority could interact with, and exacerbate, previously latent tensions between ethnic and religious communities on a local level.

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[58] Anson, "Special Report on the Recent Disturbances in Kirkuk," AIR 23/562, UK.

[59] See for instance: Klein, *The Margins of Empire*, 181.

The spasm of violence in Kirkuk came to an end after 5 May. However, unrest spread as far as Sulaymaniyya, where Shaykh Mahmud declared a "jihad" against the British and the Assyrians. In accordance with the ongoing policy of using air control to weaken local morale and to bolster British influence, the RAF bombed Sulaymaniyya in response.[60] Lower-level agitation against local Chaldo-Assyrian Christians also continued. In cooperation with British authorities, ʿAbd al-Majid Yaʿqubizada, by then the governor of the Kirkuk district, had three people arrested on 10 May for "making inflammatory remarks" against Christians.[61] Further intensifying the animosity between Kirkukis, and the Iraqi public, on one hand and the Assyrian Levies and Anglo-Iraqi administration on the other, the official inquiry into the events of 4 May did not lead to a conclusive conviction of any of the individual Assyrian Levies involved. The court of inquiry was able, on the basis of the detailed witness accounts cited above, to cite several officers by name whom it recommended should be put on trial for murder and who were subsequently arrested.[62] However, the court that tried them, while determining that they had fired at civilians and sentencing most of them to life in prison as a result, did not pursue the death sentence because "it could not be proved that they had actually killed any" particular person.[63]

This confusing close to the affair led to a widespread perception among Iraqis that British authorities were intentionally harboring the guilty Levies,[64] a conjecture that is

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[60] Omissi, "Britain, the Assyrians, and the Iraq Levies," 309.

[61] Administrative Inspector Kirkuk to High Commissioner, 10 May 1924, AIR 23/562, UK.

[62] J.G. Hearson to O.C., 2nd Bn., Iraq Levies, in Dobbs to Amery, 19 February 1925, CO 730/72, UK.

[63] High Commissioner for Iraq to Amery, 18 March 1925, CO 730/73, UK.

[64] Edmonds, *Kurds, Turks, and Arabs*, 389.

plausible but cannot be confirmed. Extant documents demonstrate that officials in London, at least, expressed interest in punishing both the Levies involved and their British officers.[65] There is also no evidence in archival sources, nor any a priori reason, to support the common Iraqi Turkmen contention that British authorities intentionally unleashed the Assyrian Levies on the Turkmen community of Kirkuk as an act of revenge for their rejection of King Faysal. On the contrary, frustrated British officials fancifully speculated in the first few days after 4 May that the Levies' initial acts might have taken place as a result of some sort of interference by Shaykh Mahmud.[66] Additionally, while the majority of the 4 May victims are indeed likely to have been Turkish-speaking Kirkukis, this fact reflects the town's demographic composition at the time rather than an organized campaign against a single ethnic group.

Nevertheless, the events of 4 and 5 May 1924 revealed the potential for tensions and violent actions among Kirkuk's communities that would persistently be linked with the British presence in Iraq, as well as with relations between Kirkuk and Baghdad, for years to come. For instance, the anger at Assyrians and at the British that the massacre of 4 May provoked among Muslim inhabitants of Kirkuk was so strong that when the Iraqi Army massacred scores of unarmed Assyrian civilians in the village of Sumayl, near the northern city of Dohuk, in 1933, Kirkukis recalled the incidents of 1924 and reacted with "excitement."[67] The relationship between Iraqi Christians, especially Chaldo-Assyrians, and British neocolonial authority would also continue to develop and to engender a specific intercommunal fault line in urban Kirkuk. This relationship became especially

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[65] Memoranda in front matter of "Outbreak at Kirkuk in May, 1924," 19 February 1925, CO 730/72, UK.

[66] Anson, "Special Report on the Recent Disturbances in Kirkuk," AIR 23/562, UK.

[67] Stafford, *The Tragedy of the Assyrians*, 197.

significant after the establishment of the British-led Iraq Petroleum Company in Kirkuk and during its subsequent growth and period of influence in the municipality, as will be discussed in Chapter 4.

Resolving the Mosul question: Kirkuk's "races" and the entrenchment of oil interests

It was in this tense atmosphere that Anglo-Iraqi and Turkish delegations met in Constantinople in May and June of 1924 to settle what had come to be known as the "Mosul Question." The Turkish public had been galvanized by the dispute over the former Mosul *vilayet* and public opinion of the British as expressed in local newspapers was highly unflattering. François Georgeon writes that during the 1920s, the Turkish satirical press—a good indicator of Turkish popular opinion due to its popularity, even though it had been mostly appropriated by Kemalists—was particularly active in the media campaign against the British. One paper, *Karagöz*, portrayed Britain as an absurd character inseparably attached to an oil drum, representing the region's reputed oil wealth, and controlling the strings of League of Nations figures and King Faysal, who were depicted as puppets. This charge was meant to question the legitimacy of the Iraqi claim to the former Mosul *vilayet*, suggesting that it was driven by British interests and was based entirely on a Western desire to control oil resources.[68] Kirkuk, which had long been one of the most famous oil-bearing sites in the Mosul region, was therefore a subtext to one of the most sensitive aspects of the dispute.

[68] François Georgeon, "De Moussoul à Kirkouk: la Turquie et la question du Kurdistan irakien," *Maghreb Machrek* 132 (1991): 41.

Indeed, the Constantinople Conference revolved primarily around conceptions of legitimacy. It became an opportunity for the figure at the head of each party—Fethi Bey, president of Turkey's Grand National Assembly, on the Turkish side, and Sir Percy Cox on the Anglo-Iraqi side—to express his delegation's perception of the nature of the dispute and how to settle it, as well as to articulate his side's concept of what constituted rightful claims to the region. The arguments Fethi and Cox presented relied in large part on the idea of "race" and assumed that the legitimacy of a claim to the region rested on which "race" had demographic primacy within it. The conference's discourse therefore delimited ethnolinguistic categories that were actually very ambiguous. The elevation of the concept of "race" also contradicted Cox's own previous position, based on the observations of officers on the ground in the Mosul *vilayet* region, that the lines between Kurds, Turkmens and Arabs were, in his words, "very blurred" and that political allegiances were not easily predictable on the basis of such identities.[69]

Both Fethi and Cox also used the idea of "race" to tout their fairness and inclusiveness while simultaneously lambasting the other side for supposedly lacking this principle. For instance, Fethi challenged the British government's preoccupation with the matter of settlement of Assyrian refugees; he asserted that the Assyrians were a "tiny" minority and that, in light of that fact, the British were obliged to pay more attention to those who constituted the large majority of the population of Mosul, or "the Turks and the Kurds." Fethi then mentioned the fact that the Assyrians were Christians and assured Cox somewhat provocatively that he understood the British government's inclination to support them especially as a result of this religious affinity, but that the Turkish

[69] High Commissioner of Mesopotamia to the Secretary of State for the Colonies, 5 July 1921, CO 730/3, UK.

delegation recognized the same rights for all regardless of "race" and religion, and that the Assyrians would, "on Turkish territory," enjoy the rights they had had for centuries. Cox, who was conscious of the fact that he was at the conference to represent an ostensibly sovereign Iraq rather than Britain, sidestepped the issue of religion and turned the racial argument against Fethi. In a later meeting, he asserted that Fethi was trying to co-opt the Kurds so as to make Kurds and Turks seem ethnically indistinguishable and therefore give the impression of the Turks having a large majority in the Mosul *vilayet* region.[70] In the end, the talks made no progress, but the ideas and terminology employed by the Turkish and Anglo-Iraqi delegations, which prioritized the perceived interests of ethnic groups as coherent entities, created a precedent that dominated the ensuing League of Nations arbitration of the dispute.

During the course of this arbitration, the idea of "race" evolved into a form of strict categorization and determinism. For instance, in support of the Anglo-Iraqi position on the issue, the Foreign Office submitted a memorandum to the League in August 1924 laying out the case for attaching the Mosul *vilayet* region to Iraq through four categories of argument: "Racial," "Political," "Economic," and "Geographical and Strategic." The "Political" category was actually an analysis of the alleged political interests of the different "races." Additionally, for the first time, when describing these groups, British officials began to put the colloquially used adjective "Turks" in quotation marks when describing Turkish-speaking inhabitants of the region and emphasized that these "Turks" were racially distinct from those of "Osmanli" descent, because they were, in fact,

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[70] "Procès-Verbal No. 3," 21 May 1924, from Richard N. Schofield, ed. *Arabian Boundary Disputes*, vol. 9 (Slough: Archive Editions, 1992), 37-40. These negotiations were conducted in French; the translations of quotes herein are my own.

"Turkomans." The British government clearly intended for this conception of ethnically based politics to diminish as much as possible the number of people in the Mosul *vilayet* region who could be considered likely to be loyal to Turkey.[71] Ironically, this approach undercut their argument in the case of Kirkuk, as illustrated by a later British memorandum to the League of Nations on the Mosul question. In the latter document, British officials underscored the fact that, upon their initial occupation of the Mosul *vilayet*, they had issued proclamations in Arabic in most areas, but noted that their proclamations in Kirkuk had been in Turkish. More critically, while trying to argue that the people of the region had demonstrated loyalty to the new Iraqi state, the memorandum had to concede the fact that Kirkuk had rejected King Faysal in the 1921 referendum.[72] The fact that inhabitants of the Mosul *vilayet* region, especially in Kirkuk, had often shown a tendency to oppose any kind of centralized authority required British arguments in the Mosul dispute to rely on a simplistic idea of "racial" preferences rather than accounting for demonstrated loyalties.

The League of Nations' solution to the dispute was to send a multilateral commission to the former Mosul *vilayet.* In accordance with the idea of the "self-determination of peoples," which was especially prevalent in the discourse of international institutions at the time and had been most famously articulated by American president Woodrow Wilson, the Mosul Commission aimed to discern whether the people

[71] "Memorandum on the Frontier between Turkey and Irak," 14 August 1924, in Schofield, *Arabian Boundary Disputes*, 9:58-67.

[72] "Questionnaire for the British Government, with Answers," 29 November 1924, in Schofield, *Arabian Boundary Disputes*, 9:120, 131.

of the region wanted to be part of Turkey or part of Iraq.[73] The three primary commissioners were Colonel Albert Paulis, a Belgian military officer who had served in the Congo; Einar af Wirsen, a Swedish diplomat; and Count Paul Teleki, a former prime minister of Hungary. The Commission was accompanied by secretaries, British and Turkish representatives, and designated "experts" on Iraq and Turkey. C.J. Edmonds, whose papers provide some of the most detailed information on the Commission's activities, served as a British liaison. Fascinatingly, Nazim Beg Naftchizada, who, as previously mentioned, had fled to Turkey in 1923, served as the Turkish delegation's "expert" on Kirkuk. The Commission carefully considered economic, geographical, racial, strategic and historical arguments, drew up elaborate maps, and conducted many interviews with notables to ask them if they were "for Iraq" or "for the Turk."

The Commission arrived in Baghdad in mid-January of 1925 for just over two months of work. Soon after their arrival in Mosul, they decided that it would be best to split up and evaluate smaller regions separately (Figure 2.2). They determined that Colonel Paulis would take on the Kirkuk area, accompanied by one Iraqi and one Turkish "expert" along with C.J. Edmonds. Kirkuk had already been the scene of overt "pro-Turkish" activity in January, when a brother of Nazim Beg Naftchizada had spread rumors that the *vilayet* had already been granted to Turkey and that Nazim Beg would be its *mutasarrif*. Soon afterwards, meetings of the clandestine committees opposed to Anglo-Iraqi rule began to plan street demonstrations for when the Commission came to

[73] For an in-depth analysis of the Wilsonian concept of self-determination and the ways in which various populations worldwide adopted it, see for instance: Erez Manela, *The Wilsonian Moment: Self-Determination and the International Origins of Anticolonial Nationalism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007). For a discussion of this concept in a Middle Eastern context, see for instance: Sarah D. Shields, *Fezzes in the River: Identity Politics and European Diplomacy in the Middle East on the Eve of World War II* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011).

Figure 2.2: Map of the Mosul Commission's itineraries in the Mosul *vilayet* region enclosed in the commission's report (League of Nations, *Question of the Frontier*). © UNOG Library, League of Nations Archives. Reproduced with permission.

Kirkuk. In one of these meetings, a suggestion was made that demonstrators should carry Turkish flags dipped in sheep's blood to represent the blood of the citizens of Kirkuk who had died at the hands of the Assyrian Levies the previous May. British authorities had started the process of recompensing townspeople for their damaged property as a result of those events, but contrary to disposing the claimants to a positive opinion of British administration, they tended to assume British generosity in this regard was a result of the presence of the Commission. The Kirkuk *mutasarrif*, ʿAbd al-Majid Yaʿqubizada, ordered the arrest of several people associated with anti-British and anti-Iraq activities in order to restore "calm" to the city prior to Paulis's arrival.[74] Paulis expressed support for these repressive measures, noting in a letter to Edmonds that the quelling of street demonstrations allowed him to assess people's opinions in what he viewed as an authentic fashion.[75]

Though he conducted interviews extensively in rural villages and urban Kirkuk, Paulis, who continued to harbor a colonialist mindset and explicitly drew on his experiences with the Congolese, repeatedly indicated in staggeringly blunt language that he did not take local popular opinion seriously. At one point during the process, he remarked in exasperation, "A child is not asked whether it would like to go to school…it is just sent."[76] He may have adopted this attitude in part because the answers his interviewees gave to what the Commissioners called the "secret question"—Iraq or

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[74] Untitled memorandum, 16 February 1925, C.J. Edmonds Collection GB 165-0095, Box 1 File 2c, MECA; Office of Administrative Inspector, Kirkuk to Liaison Officer to Mosul Frontier Commission, Mosul, 12 February 1925, C.J. Edmonds Collection GB 165-0095, Box 1 File 2c, MECA.

[75] Paulis to Edmonds, 16 February 1925, C.J. Edmonds Collection GB 165-0095, Box 1 File 2a, MECA; also see Edmonds, *Kurds, Turks, and Arabs*, 415-16.

[76] Office of Administrative Inspector, Kirkuk to Liaison Officer, Frontier Commission, Kirkuk, 15 February 1925, C.J. Edmonds Collection GB 165-0095, Box 1 File 2c, MECA.

Turkey?—were not easily predictable and were therefore, in his view, arbitrary. In his diary about his activities with the Commission, Paulis noted that ʿIzzat Pasha, who had previously enjoyed a close relationship with the British and had even tried to promote support for Faysal in Kirkuk in 1921, now supported unification with Turkey. On the other hand, the *mutasarrif* of the province and the mayor of Kirkuk both supported continued unification with Iraq, citing the region's closer economic ties with Baghdad. Nazim Beg Naftchizada, Paulis wrote, had supported Anglo-Iraqi administration prior to his defection to Turkey.[77] In his own diary entry of 21 February 1925, C.J. Edmonds wrote that the tribal parts of Kirkuk that were under the influence of the Talabanis had expressed support for Iraq and that the Kirkuk area was evenly divided so far.[78] Opinions in Kirkuk were not even consistent within families; for instance, the Yaʿqubizada brothers continued to be divided. One British official later dryly suggested that at least one member of this family had to keep "a foot in the Turkish camp" as part of "the family Insurance Policy."[79] However, Paulis still tended to conceive of the dispute through an ethnic paradigm, suggesting at one stage that perhaps the Commission should recommend granting the predominantly Arab areas of the former Mosul *vilayet* to Iraq while attaching predominantly Turkmen and Kurdish areas to Turkey.[80]

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[77] Colonel A. Paulis, "Enquête en Irak: Journal Privé," as cited in Sarah Shields, "From Millet to Nation: The Limits of Consociational Resolutions for Middle East Conflict," in *EUI Working Papers* (Fiesole: European University Institute, 2010).

[78] Liaison Officer to the High Commissioner, 22 February 1925, C.J. Edmonds Collection GB 165-0095, Box 1 File 2c, MECA.

[79] H.A. Anson, "Notes on the Question of Kurdish Independence," 18 February 1926, C.J. Edmonds Collection GB 165-0095, Box 3 File 2, MECA.

[80] Liaison Officer to the High Commissioner, 22 February 1925, Edmonds Collection.

The Commission's persistent attempts to understand public opinion in terms of "race" are remarkable in light of their own conclusion in their final report to the League of Nations that throughout the Mosul *vilayet* region, multilingualism and intermarriage rendered impossible such a simplified approach. In this report, the Commission presented a "racial" analysis of the Kirkuk *liwa*ʾ that divided its population into "Kurds," "Turks," "Arabs" and "Christians," notably excluding any people who fell outside of their definitions of those categories, including the Jewish community, from serious consideration. They reported that while virtually all Christians favored inclusion in Iraq and a majority of "Turks" favored inclusion in Turkey, the opinions of Arabs and Kurds were divided. To their credit, the Commission recognized that patronage played a role in the opinions of certain respondents. For instance, they noted that the Kurdish tribal leaders of Kirkuk who favored inclusion in Iraq were often those who were being paid to police the roads in the Kirkuk area under the sowar system. However, they termed this factor "opportunism," thereby implying that any expression of loyalty that was not based on "race" was somehow not legitimate.[81]

In light of the ambiguities of local opinion, the Mosul Commission's conclusions ended up hinging to a great degree on their opinion of the Mosul *vilayet* region's economic needs. Since the region's economy was mainly based on agriculture and trade, the question the Commission considered was whether its inhabitants mainly conducted trade with Turkish cities or with Baghdad. In particular, the ongoing construction of a railway from Baghdad to Mosul played a pivotal role in Colonel Paulis's reasoning with

[81] League of Nations, *Question of the Frontier Between Turkey and Iraq: Report Submitted to the Council by the Commission Instituted by the Council Resolution of September 30th, 1924* (Geneva: League of Nations, 1925), 37, 77.

regard to Kirkuk's economy. The railway was a British-led project dating back to the early occupation of Iraq. Its extension into the north was ahead of schedule, most likely for the very purpose of impressing the Commission as to the importance of the region's trade and communications with Baghdad. In Paulis's view, the railway was a crucial component of the Mosul *vilayet* region's future trade prospects. He was so thoroughly fascinated with the railway that once it became a dominant factor in his thinking, he even imprudently told people he was interviewing in Kirkuk that he already thought the Mosul *vilayet* region should be attached to Iraq. The railway had nearly reached Kirkuk at that point and would, he surmised, transform the town's commerce, allowing Kirkuk's farmers and merchants to take greater advantage of the Baghdad market by exporting their goods more efficiently.[82] As the commission noted in its report, though, the majority of Kirkuk's trade already took place with Baghdad rather than with any cities to the north. This was partly a matter of the inexpensiveness of exports via river raft on the Tigris, which ran south, but it was also a result of postwar circumstances. Tensions on the Mosul *vilayet* frontier made it difficult or impossible for anyone within the region to take advantage of markets in Anatolia.[83] It does not appear that merchants in Kirkuk or the Mosul *vilayet* region in general shared Paulis's unbridled enthusiasm for the project, since the impact the railway would have on the prices of goods, for example, was uncertain.[84] Such was Paulis's eagerness that when one openly pro-Turkish Kirkuki

[82] Office of Administrative Inspector, Kirkuk to Liaison Officer to Frontier Enquiry Commission, Kirkuk, 25 February 1925, C.J. Edmonds Collection GB 165-0095, Box 1 File 2c, MECA; Shields, "Mosul," 229.

[83] Sarah Shields also reaches this conclusion: ibid.

[84] "Kirkuk Administration Report for 1919," L/PS/10/621, IOR; Political Officer, Kirkuk to the Civil Commissioner, Baghdad, 22 March 1920, File 2023-1919 Part 10, L/PS/10/821, IOR; Shields, "Mosul," 228 contains views from Paulis's diary of a Mosul merchant who complained that British goods would be privileged on a railroad.

notable noted his disapproval of the railway project, Paulis "put him down as a rogue and a fool."[85] Hence, while the Mosul Commission professed to gauge popular opinion, its conclusions ultimately rested on a deterministic set of assumptions about the region's status, both "racially" and economically.

Another factor in the Mosul Commission's final decision was the region's potential for large-scale oil production and the implications of this possibility with regard to the Iraqi government's ongoing negotiations with the Turkish Petroleum Company (TPC). The TPC's proposed activities and the legal framework under which they would take place were of particular significance to Kirkuk, which would naturally be one of the early sites of exploration. While the Commission did not express an official opinion on the concession negotiations between the TPC and the Iraqi government, two of the commissioners, Paulis and Teleki, made it clear to Sir Henry Dobbs in separate private conversations that their decision would be affected by whether or not Iraq granted the TPC a concession to explore for oil in the Mosul *vilayet* region. The role of oil in the Commission's thinking is not readily obvious because the diplomatic correspondence and memoranda surrounding the Mosul question, including the Mosul Commission's report, only seldom mention the region's oil wealth.[86] This omission has led some historians to question or even dismiss the idea that oil was relevant to the dispute or its resolution.[87]

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[85] Edmonds to The Secretary to H.E. the High Commissioner for Iraq, 7 March 1925, C.J. Edmonds Collection GB 165-0095, Box 1 File 2c, MECA.

[86] The Commission's 90-page report contains only two sentences about the possibility that the former Mosul *vilayet* would prove to be an "oil-bearing region." League of Nations, *Question of the Frontier*, 69.

[87] See for instance: Elizabeth Monroe, *Britain's Moment in the Middle East, 1914-1956* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1963), 103-04.

C.J. Edmonds's explicit denial of the pertinence of oil to the Mosul question has also been frequently cited.[88]

However, there are more convincing reasons for the relative lack of discussion of oil in the Mosul question. As far as native inhabitants and lower-level British officials operating on the ground in the Mosul *vilayet* region were concerned, oil was not a major consideration at this stage because their immediate concerns were with local commerce. The existing oil industry in villages near Kirkuk, in which output was measured in tins rather than barrels and transported via donkey rather than pipeline, was very minor as a component of the region's economy as a whole. Maintaining control over the former Mosul *vilayet*'s oil was important from the perspective of London, as discussed in Chapter 1, but higher-level British officials recoiled at the fact that the legitimacy of their claim to the *vilayet* was questioned in the press as a result of their perceived greed.[89] These officials therefore took pains to distance themselves from the oil issue during the Mosul dispute. Their hesitant attitude was an early sign of what would prove to be a symbiotic but often uncomfortable relationship between the British government and the Iraqi oil industry, as will be discussed in Chapter 4. Nevertheless, there is little doubt that the strategic importance of controlling oil-bearing areas in the Middle East was one of the most important underlying factors in the British endeavor to ensure that the former Mosul *vilayet* became part of the state of Iraq.[90]

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[88] Edmonds, *Kurds, Turks, and Arabs*, 398.

[89] See for instance: Lindsay to MacDonald, 21 May 1924, in Schofield, *Arabian Boundary Disputes*, 9:25-26.

[90] This point is emphasized in, for instance, Sluglett, *Britain in Iraq*, 75-78. Based on his reading of official British documents, Sluglett rejects the common notion that the British fought to include the Mosul *vilayet* region in Iraq because they were entertaining the idea of a strategic buffer between central Iraq and Turkey.

Furthermore, strategic and commercial considerations were intertwined, as demonstrated in the British government's determination to ensure that the TPC's rights to a concession from the prewar era would be honored. Negotiations between the TPC and the Iraqi government for a concession began once the state had been established in 1921 and therefore took place under the shadow of the Mosul question; the possibility, however remote, that the Mosul *vilayet* region might yet end up under the control of the Turkish government remained. All parties involved also wanted to establish a concession before an Iraqi parliament was formed, as the involvement of a legislative body would complicate the process. Despite the air of urgency surrounding the negotiations, they were drawn out until 1925 due to several points of contention between the Iraqi government and the Western oil companies, especially the commitment the Iraqis had obtained at the San Remo conference to a 20% ownership share in the TPC.[91] The talks were therefore approaching their conclusion when the Mosul Commission began its work.

In a meeting with Dobbs on 22 January 1925, Paulis suggested that Iraq's ministers, whom he actually called "ridiculous persons playing at being Ministers," would do best to grant the TPC a concession so that it could not only develop Mosul's oil, but also take on the role of a chartered company and effectively run Iraq. In addition to expressing his belief in a colonial system spearheaded by a foreign company, which he based on his experience interacting with the Mozambique Company while serving in the Congo, he explained that he held some interests in oil companies himself and thus had extensive knowledge of the oil industry. According to Dobbs's account of the

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[91] Edith Penrose and E. F. Penrose, *Iraq: International Relations and National Development* (London: Ernest Benn, 1978), 60-61.

conversation, Paulis all but stated that the Commission would make a decision in favor of British Iraq if the Iraqi government granted the TPC concession:

> If the Turkish Petroleum Company with its large international interests could get the ‘Iraq Government to sign the oil concession, he thought this might interest so many Powers in the stability of ‘Iraq and so dominate the ‘Iraq Administration that it would be a good substitute for a Chartered Company. The question whether ‘Iraq did or did not accept the Turkish Petroleum Concession would weigh very greatly with him and his colleagues. I said I wished he would tell some of the ‘Iraqi Ministers this, as I was in the midst of very difficult discussions with them on the subject. He said he would be quite ready to do so. He also said that it was quite evident that there was no other combination of oil interests in the world which could undertake the exploitation of the Mosul oil.[92]

Just over a month later, Teleki indicated to Dobbs his uneasiness with the possibility that the powerful commercial entities holding shares in the TPC could interfere with the Commission’s eventual conclusion as to the Mosul *vilayet* region’s proper status if this conclusion conflicted with the companies’ perceived interests. In view of this concern, Teleki personally suggested to Dobbs while in Baghdad that he could pressure the Iraqi government to accept the TPC’s terms and sign the oil convention, thereby binding the oil company to Iraq.[93] The manner in which Teleki carried out this proposal is unclear, though the very fact that he attempted these “independent activities” left his fellow Commissioners, including Paulis, “incensed.”[94] As he had done with Paulis, Dobbs expressed his approval of the possibility of Teleki’s intercession on the TPC’s behalf because, in his view, a signed Iraqi convention would secure greater international support

[92] “Note of a Conversation with Colonel Paulis on the Evening of the 22nd January, 1925,” in Dobbs to Amery, 27 January 1925, CO 730/72, UK.

[93] High Commissioner for Iraq to Secretary of State for the Colonies, 2 March 1925, CO 730/73, UK.

[94] “Diary No. 4 of the Liaison Officer with the Frontier Commission for the Period 4th to 18th March, 1925,” in High Commissioner for Iraq to the Secretary of State for the Colonies, 26 March 1925, CO 730/74, UK.

for Iraq's position in the Mosul dispute due to American and French firms' shares in the TPC.[95]

Around the same time, several Iraqi newspapers demonstrated that they, too, were aware of the relationship between the TPC negotiations and the Mosul Commission's deliberations, and that they met this reality with trepidation. The press also expressed a related anxiety that Britain would abandon Iraq's claim to the Mosul *vilayet* region if the Constituent Assembly did not ratify a new Anglo-Iraqi treaty reaffirming the British mandate for a further twenty-five years. The latter possibility was raised most prominently by Nuri al-Saʿid, a confidant of King Faysal and career military officer who would later become the Iraqi government's most powerful figure and a close ally of British authorities.[96] The British government did not, in fact, plan to abandon Iraq's claim to Mosul under any foreseeable circumstances, but used Iraqi unease and uncertainty in this regard to their advantage.[97] In its lead article of 28 February 1925, the paper *Al-ʿAlam al-ʿArabi* summarized the predicament that the press believed Iraq had found itself in:

> Here are the powers now placing the 'Iraq…before a scale with two cutting edges…that is to say she should either pay a further ransom price, namely the granting of the oil concession to a certain company to the exclusion of any other one, or else forfeit her right [to Mosul] and the fruit of her labours, sacrifices and defence.[98]

[95] High Commissioner for Iraq to Secretary of State for the Colonies, 2 March 1925, CO 730/73, UK; "Intelligence Report No. 5," 5 March 1925, in Bell to the Under Secretary of State for the Colonies, 5 March 1925, CO 730/73, UK.

[96] 'Al-Iraq No. 1197 dated the 17th April, 1924," in Bell to the Under Secretary of State for the Colonies, 1 May 1924, CO 730/59, UK.

[97] See for instance: J.H. Thomas to High Commissioner, 11 June 1924, CO 730/59, UK.

[98] "Al 'Alam al-'Arabi No. 288 of 28-2-1925," in Bell to the Under Secretary of State for the Colonies, 2 April 1925, CO 730/74, UK.

The Iraqi press's fears that the oil convention would not benefit Iraq fairly were realized when the TPC declined to allow the Iraqi government its previously promised 20% share in the company, and the Iraqi negotiators acquiesced before a more favorable compromise could be reached. The TPC concession was signed on 14 March 1925, several days before the work of the Mosul Commission came to an end. Digging began near Kirkuk soon afterwards.[99]

The Commission left Iraq in March 1925 and issued its final report on the dispute that August, recommending that the former Mosul *vilayet* be awarded, with certain conditions, to British Iraq. The British government briefly feared that Turkey would attempt to challenge this decision by force, and some months of diplomatic tension ensued. Eventually, the Foreign Office was able to elicit Turkish cooperation in the settlement by promising that the Iraqi government would pay the Turkish government ten percent of their royalties received from oil production for 25 years. This stipulation was written into the Anglo-Iraqi-Turkish treaty of 1926 that settled the Mosul question.[100]

For Kirkuk, the legacy of the dispute over the region was twofold. First, the process by which the dispute was resolved solidly established the limited ethnic and ethnoreligious paradigm, still prevalent in the present day, in which members of Kirkuk's population are considered to fall into one of four separate categories—Kurdish, Turkmen, Arab or Christian—that are each thought to have distinct political interests. Second, the way that the TPC and British authorities forced the Iraqi government's hand in negotiations, as well as the way that the Iraqi press reacted to this fact, were harbingers of

[99] Penrose and Penrose, *Iraq*, 62-66; Stivers, *Supremacy and Oil*, 87-88.

[100] "Treaty Between the United Kingdom and Iraq and Turkey Regarding the Settlement of the Frontier Between Turkey and Iraq, With Notes Exchanged," *The American Journal of International Law* 21, no. 4 (1927): 136-43; Stivers, *Supremacy and Oil*, 166-72.

the future political roles that the oil company, British diplomats, and Iraqi oil workers would play in Kirkuk. The coercion inherent in the TPC concession created a precedent whereby the oil company, in close collaboration with British governmental authorities, wielded political influence in service of its commercial interests and often at the Iraqis' expense. The company would continue to act according to this pattern once it became an important political and economic force in Kirkuk.

Shifting loyalties and emerging fault lines at the end of the mandate

While the integration of Kirkuk and the rest of the Mosul *vilayet* region into Baghdad's domain had been an ongoing process since the creation of the monarchy in 1921, the political developments that took place after the settlement of the Mosul question underscored the fact that this was the overarching goal of Anglo-Iraqi policy in predominantly non-Arab areas. As the Baghdad-based Iraqi government progressively became more involved in affairs at the levels of provincial and municipal government in Kirkuk, changes in patronage led to shifting loyalties among its communities. The fact that the Iraqi government was Arab-led strengthened the ethnic dimension of these affiliations and antagonisms in a way that did not occur when Kirkukis who supported the Baghdad-based government were more heavily reliant on the patronage of the British, a wholly external and (at least ostensibly) temporary power. Additionally, the gradual hardening of defined ethnic and ethnoreligious categories in Kirkuk, which had begun to take place during the Mosul dispute largely as a result of the impression among various officials that each group had particular concerns and loyalties, had the effect of generating more interests that were specific to self-identified groups. Efforts to bring the

British mandate to an end and pursue Iraq's admittance to the League of Nations, which began as early as 1927, compounded the effects of these trends by creating an atmosphere of instability.

Turkish-speaking elites comprised one of the groups that came to have a more coherent set of political views. This may have been in part because in the mandate era, self-identified Turkish speakers or Turkmens constituted a majority of Kirkuk's provincial officials appointed by Baghdad; hence, once the Republic of Turkey lost most of its influence in Kirkuk and its surrounding region, these elites would have found centralized authority to be the next logical patron. This shift is exemplified by Mustafa Yaʿqubizada, who had previously engaged in clandestine anti-centralization activity and, unlike his brother, supported the Turkish claim in the Mosul dispute. Mustafa was acting in full support of the Iraqi government by 1931, even distributing pro-government propaganda to tribal chiefs in Kirkuk.[101] The nature of loyalty to centralized authority was also gradually changing as British officials withdrew from direct control of Iraqi institutions. In the process of fostering support for Baghdad's Arab-led government, Mustafa would continue to criticize the perceived nefariousness of British authorities much as he had done when he was agitating against Baghdad. For instance, one British intelligence report alleged that Mustafa was trying to discredit the opposition Ikhaʾ Party by spreading rumors that it was an element promoted by the British in order to destabilize the Iraqi government.[102]

[101] C.B.R. Pelly, "Report No. 17 for period ending 13 October 1931," 13 October 1931, AIR 23/338, UK.

[102] C.B.R. Pelly to Air Staff Intelligence, 27 July 1931, AIR 23/338, UK.

Since Turkmen figures like the Yaʿqubizadas had typically been influential notables and administrators under the Ottomans, their dominance in the early Kirkuki government was not unexpected. Nonetheless, the comparative lack of Kurdish representation in a *liwa*ʾ that had a Kurdish plurality caused consternation among Kirkuki Kurds as well as some concern among British officials.[103] The impending end of mandate administration also caused considerable unease among Iraq's Kurds. By 1929, the British government had definitively indicated that it would support Iraq's admission to the League of Nations on the condition that Britain would retain a strong position of informal influence in the country. To this end, British officials negotiated a new treaty with the Iraqi government, ratified in 1930, which rendered Iraq officially independent of British control while maintaining the presence of British military personnel and advisers.[104] The Kurds feared that inattention to their interests, especially their concern with the continuous Arabization of local governments and schools in predominantly Kurdish areas, would be a permanent policy under a fully sovereign Arab government.[105] For its part, the Iraqi government denied that this was the case while simultaneously resisting Kurdish efforts to ensure that the majority of appointees to local government posts in predominantly Kurdish *liwa*ʾs would be ethnic Kurds.[106]

After British authorities applied pressure on the Iraqi government to solve the problem, the Iraqi parliament passed the Language Law of 1931, which ensured that the

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[103] See for example: Note by J.H. Hall, 13 October 1930, CO 730/157/6, UK.

[104] For an extensive discussion of the process of Iraq's admission to the League and the implications of its relationship with Britain for future independent states subject to informal imperialism, or "decolonization's Faustian bargain," see Susan Pedersen, "Getting Out of Iraq—in 1932: The League of Nations and the Road to Normative Statehood," *The American Historical Review* 115, no. 4 (2010).

[105] Sluglett, *Britain in Iraq*, 128-29.

[106] See for instance: Jaʿfar al-ʿAskari to H.W. Young, 19 August 1930, CO 730/157/5, UK.

official language of administration, courts and schools in Kurdish-dominated parts of these governorates would be Kurdish.[107] Many Kurds were dissatisfied by this compromise, which only ensured that local officials would *know* the Kurdish language, an unexceptional requirement in a multilingual region.[108] The Language Law was particularly controversial in Kirkuk, where multilingualism was so prevalent that knowledge of languages did not necessarily correspond to communal identities in a predictable way. Indeed, of the 232 officials in the Kirkuk governorate in 1931, only 42 were self-identified Kurds. About 40 to 50 of the non-Kurds did not know Kurdish and would therefore have to be replaced; none of the officials in the latter category, however, were self-identified Turkmens. Virtually all of the self-identified Turkmen officials had enough knowledge of Kurdish to satisfy the legal requirement.[109] Therefore, even the implementation of the Language Law would do little to rectify the problem, from the Kurdish viewpoint, of Kurdish underrepresentation in local government. Moreover, the law had no effect on the continued entrenchment of the power of Turkmen elites in Kirkuk. These circumstances would engender tensions between Kirkuk's Kurdish and Turkmen communities.

The lack of Kurdish representation among officials implied that the steady Arabization of primary and secondary education in Kirkuk and throughout predominantly non-Arab areas of Iraq in general, which began in earnest toward the end of the mandate,

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[107] "Extract from Gazette No. 29," 23 May 1931, CO 730/161/1, UK.

[108] Memorandum by K. Cornwallis, 4 February 1931, CO 730/161/2, UK.

[109] F.H. Humphrys to Prime Minister, 29 May 1931, CO 730/161/1, UK; "Copy of Circular from His Excellency the Prime Minister to All Ministries," enclosed in Hull to G.W. Rendel, 30 October 1931, FO 371/15318, UK. The latter document indicates that there were 49 non-Kurdish-speaking officials in the Kirkuk governorate while the former indicates that there were 39.

would continue unabated. Amir Hassanpour has argued that mandate- and monarchy-era educational policies in Iraq endangered Kurdish language usage and may have even hindered Kurdish students' ability to obtain a post-secondary education.[110] It was also especially important for self-identified Kurds in rural areas to have some recourse to influence in the local government due to Iraq's mandate-era political and economic system in which landowning elites who were in the service of the central government wielded considerable autonomous power over taxation.[111] The latter problem is illustrated in a forceful petition that the chiefs of the Dawudi tribe, who lived in an area south of urban Kirkuk, submitted to the League of Nations when the latter was considering the question of Iraq's membership and its subsequent independence. The Dawudi chiefs complained that they were "subject to a pitiless and ruthless treatment" by Arab and Turkmen officials of the Kirkuk governorate, who treated them as "aliens" and imposed exorbitant taxes. They also explicitly demanded inclusion in a Kurdish state.[112]

It is therefore clear that while Kurdish grievance was less "pronounced" among Kirkuk's thoroughly multiethnic and multilingual population in comparison to other largely Kurdish areas, according to one official,[113] it was nonetheless present. Kurds throughout the region sent numerous petitions to the Iraqi prime minister and to the League of Nations advocating the creation of an independent Kurdish province or state. The Dawudi petition was the only major petition to originate in Kirkuk, although various

[110] Amir Hassanpour, *Nationalism and Language in Kurdistan, 1918-1985* (San Francisco: Mellen Research University Press, 1992), 312-16.

[111] Sluglett, *Britain in Iraq*, 161-62.

[112] R. Brooke-Popham to Lord Passfield, 3 September 1930, CO 730/157/5, UK.

[113] G.C. Kitching to Sir Kinahan Cornwallis, 11 August 1930, CO 730/157/5, UK.

Kirkuki Kurds put their names to other petitions.[114] Furthermore, British intelligence reports from Kirkuk indicated that there was some sympathy among Kurdish tribes for Shaykh Mahmud, to whom most of the Kurds of Kirkuk had previously been hostile.[115] That said, despite these signs of consolidation of ethnic groups' political positions, complexities resulting from the influence of powerful forces external to Kirkuk continued to abound. The Talabani notables, for example, continued to exhibit loyalty to centralized authority amidst a Kurdish revolt in 1931 and were rewarded with a gift of arms from Kirkuk's *mutasarrif* as a result.[116] On the other hand, anti-centralization sentiment continued to manifest itself to the extent that some Kirkuki Turkmens, including members of the Naftchizada family, were inclined to sympathize with those who advocated the creation of an independent Kurdish region or state.[117] One British intelligence report from 1929 went so far as to allege that the long-influential Turkmen notable ʿIzzat Pasha was cooperating with local Kurdish tribal leaders to spread propaganda in support of Shaykh Mahmud as a step toward the reinstatement of Turkish rule.[118] While some aspects of this claim are undoubtedly exaggerated, an underlying assumption of common political interests between some Turkmens and Kurds is apparent.

Hence, as Arab-led Iraq approached independence, a combination of increased centralization and language-based policies that failed to effectively expand Kurdish

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[114] See for example: Kurdish petition to the Prime Minister, 4 April 1929, C.J. Edmonds collection, Box 3 File 2, MECA.

[115] J.D. O'Malley, "Special Service Officer's Report for the Period Ending 28 April 1931," April 28, 1931, AIR 23/338, UK; J.D. O'Malley, "Special Service Officer's Report No. 5 for the Period Ending 5th May 1931," 5 May 1931, AIR 23/338, UK.

[116] O'Malley, "Special Service Officer's Report No. 5 for the Period Ending 5th May 1931."

[117] Anson, "Notes on the Question of Kurdish Independence," Edmonds Collection.

[118] "Extract from S.S.O. Sulaimani's report No. I/1/2," 7 March 1929, AIR 23/228, UK.

representation in local government strengthened the divide between Arabs and Kurds in Kirkuk. With so many Turkmen civil servants now unequivocally answering to the Baghdad government, these policies also led to the emergence of a distinct fault line between Turkmens and Kurds. Nevertheless, Kirkukis' political interests were still not necessarily tied to their ethnic identities in such a way as to pit its ethnic communities against each other inexorably. The above examples demonstrate that as of the end of British mandate rule of Iraq in 1932, Kirkuk's ethnic communities continued to often share political concerns and did not, at this time, develop specific goals that were antithetical to one another.

Conclusion

The era of the British mandate in Kirkuk was a time period during which both relations with authorities and the nature of external influence evolved and changed. By the end of the mandate, British governmental interests, which were also bound up in private commercial interests, had diverged from those of the Iraqi central government, such that those in the patronage of the latter often remained opposed to the former. While negotiations between Anglo-Iraqi authorities and the Republic of Turkey over the status of the Mosul *vilayet* region had emphasized ethnic, or "racial," elements that were imagined by Western arbitrators to be mostly immutable, the affiliations of the people of Kirkuk over the course of the British mandate can best be understood in terms of their relations with external patrons whose positions of influence were themselves in a state of flux. Previously obscure fault lines were occasionally revealed in this process, as in the intercommunal violence of May 1924. Another shift took place when the elites of the

Turkmen community, many of whom had previously opposed Anglo-Iraqi administration, became the bedrock of establishment power in Kirkuk once its surrounding region was definitively integrated into Iraq. However, by the time Iraq was admitted to the League of Nations in 1932, Kirkuk's communities were not on a clear path towards intercommunal antagonism. The complex interplay between group identities and local, provincial and national politics would continue to develop as the growth of Kirkuk's oil industry beginning in the 1930s created new local political dynamics and accelerated the city's integration into Baghdad's domain.

3. Iraq's "Oil City": The Iraq Petroleum Company and Urban Change in Post-Mandate Kirkuk

Introduction: The stories, written and unwritten, of Well No. 1

In his 1959 history of British Petroleum,[1] Henry Longhurst refers to 14 October 1927 as Iraq's "Day of Destiny." The book offers a gripping account of the first gusher at Baba Gurgur, just northwest of urban Kirkuk, marking the discovery of its supergiant oil field. Of the moment at which the American and Iraqi drilling crew working for the TPC struck oil during a midnight shift very early on 15 October, Longhurst writes:

> At the psychological moment, unaware of what was going on 1500 feet below, the driller decided to pull out the bit…He had raised the tools to within 20 feet of the derrick floor when a piercing hiss drowned the noise of the engine. Gas and oil, released from the tremendous pressure in the limestone, were rushing up the hole….A fountain of oil gushed up through the floor and high over the top of the derrick into the darkness. It was heard rather than seen, for nobody dared light a lamp.[2]

Rumors spread among the local population that the explosion was a sign of God's anger at them for straying from the "correct path."[3] For the next nine days, the oil surged out of the ground at an extraordinary rate estimated to be ninety-five thousand barrels per day. The accompanying clouds of gas created the frightening possibility of a conflagration in villages near Baba Gurgur and even in Kirkuk itself. If the oil had flowed into the Tigris, it could have caused an environmental catastrophe far beyond Kirkuk. A team of workers, including reinforcements rapidly brought in from elsewhere in Iraq, did not

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[1] By the mid-twentieth century, the company initially named the Anglo-Persian Oil Company had come to be known as British Petroleum. Today, it is simply called BP.

[2] Henry Longhurst, *Adventure in Oil: The Story of British Petroleum* (London: Sidgwick and Jackson, 1959), 86.

[3] "Qissat al-Biʾr al-Ula," *Ahl al-Naft*, October 1957, 7-8.

manage to bring the gusher under control until 23 October.[4] In his account, Longhurst quotes a TPC official discussing the dangerousness of this task, with an emphasis on the valor and perseverance of the workers:

> With gas masks on, and oil dripping from their hats, the drillers worked feverishly in the cellar….All day long men were collapsing and being hauled up unconscious to be revived outside in the comparatively fresh air. Some of the men were gassed two or three times a day, and yet staggered back to their jobs. It was inspiring to watch them, and the courage they displayed.[5]

What Longhurst fails to mention in his triumphant telling of the story is that not all of the people who were overcome by the gas ultimately recovered to come back to work. Two American workers suffocated despite the best efforts of three Iraqis to rescue them. All three of these Iraqi workers died as well.[6]

In *Cities of Salt*, a well-known and acclaimed novel about Arab oil workers and foreign executives modeled after the experiences of Dhahran, Saudi Arabia, Abdelrahman Munif poignantly describes the accidental death of an oil worker who was assigned to a dangerous job and the anguish that this incident caused his friends and coworkers, who already resented their expatriate employers.[7] This fictional episode is a rare example of an account of the hazards of large-scale oil extraction in the modern Middle Eastern petroleum industry from the (in this case, imagined) perspective of native workers. Munif's novel, which highlights the fear, confusion and discontentment of the local population in relation to the people and apparatuses of the nascent oil industry,

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[4] Longhurst, *Adventure in Oil*, 90; Yergin, *The Prize*, 188.

[5] Longhurst, *Adventure in Oil*, 89.

[6] "Turkish Petroleum Reports 50,000-Bbl. Gusher in Irak Area," *Oil & Gas Journal*, 10 November 1927, 45; Frederick Simpich and W. Robert Moore, "Bombs over Bible Lands," *The National Geographic Magazine*, August 1941, 171.

[7] Abdelrahman Munif, *Cities of Salt*, trans. Peter Theroux (New York: Vintage International, 1989), 298-304.

stands in stark contrast to the exultant tone of British and other Western accounts of Middle Eastern oil production. The latter versions of the story focus on the economic prosperity that oil had the potential to bring about, stressing the idea that oil companies pulled backwards areas into modernity. For instance, a BBC broadcast covering the opening of Kirkuk's pipeline to the Mediterranean Sea in 1935 stated that the oil industry brought "one of the outstanding achievements of modern engineering skill" to "a remote and sterile corner of Iraq."[8] Longhurst typifies British writers of his era who mention reactions from members of the local population only inasmuch as they reflect these themes; he quotes one Iraqi as having said that the discovery of oil at Kirkuk made his compatriots "happy and grateful, knowing how it would open up a new way of life for our people."[9] During the course of my own conversations with Iraqi former employees of the oil company, one former staff member mentioned that he occasionally joins an annual meeting at BP's global headquarters in St. James's Square, London that takes place every October to celebrate Well No. 1.[10] The more tumultuous, even painful, versions of the story that are likely to have been written or told by the local population in or soon after 1927 remain obscure.

The gulf between the Western perception of Kirkuk's oil and the difficulties faced by local oil workers is representative of a broader divide between Kirkukis and expatriates that constituted the greatest local political problem of the first few decades of the Iraqi oil industry. Once the mandate ended in 1932, the industry developed in the context of semi-official British neoimperial influence in Iraq under the terms of the

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[8] "IPC Ceremonies, BBC Broadcast, 7th February 1935," File 67881, BP.

[9] Longhurst, *Adventure in Oil*, 91.

[10] Adnan Samarrai, interview by the author, 1 June 2011.

Anglo-Iraq Treaty of 1930. The presence of the oil company in Kirkuk shaped local politics and would eventually have profound implications for urban development. In particular, the presence of a large number of foreign, especially British, workers and executives in an isolated company camp created social tensions and helped lead to the emergence of opposition in the form of organized labor.

At the same time, Kirkuk's demographics changed dramatically as the city's population repeatedly multiplied in the post-mandate monarchy era. This phenomenon occurred partly as a result of the oil company's attraction to laborers and former cultivators from rural areas seeking a way to make a living in the midst of an exploitative agricultural system and economic depression. Furthermore, Kirkuk's deepening relationship with Baghdad intensified the ethnic dimension of local politics, contributing to the steady crystallization of Kirkuki Kurdish, Turkmen and Arab communal group identities. As of 1946, however, the single most visible popular political movement in Kirkuk was the Iraqi Communist Party, whose members orchestrated a strike within the IPC that would have repercussions for years to come.

Nascent divergences between the oil industry and Kirkuk

The discovery of a large amount of oil in Kirkuk necessitated the immediate settlement of a number of outstanding problems within the TPC in order to enable the progress of large-scale petroleum extraction, production and export. In July 1928, several months after the strike at Baba Gurgur, the TPC's constituent companies and Calouste Gulbenkian finally signed an agreement that established the percentage of shares held by each entity. The D'Arcy Exploration Company (in which the Anglo-Persian Oil

Company held controlling shares), the Compagnie Française des Pétroles, Royal Dutch Shell, and a newly formed American consortium called the Near East Development Corporation each held 23.75% of the company's shares, while Gulbenkian managed to negotiate a 5% cut for his role in structuring the company.[11] British shareholders, including the British government, held shares in the APOC and in Royal Dutch Shell; the British government therefore had a direct and significant interest in the TPC as well. The TPC was incorporated in the United Kingdom and had an office in London in addition to its headquarters in Iraq.[12] Consequently, although the company was formally a private entity that, in the end, was predominantly owned by non-British shareholders, the TPC's close relationship with the British government meant that the company pursued both corporate and British imperial interests.

In its early years, the TPC's problems included disputes over its claim to exploitation rights in Iraq's oil-bearing areas.[13] The 1925 concession granted the TPC the "exclusive right," contingent on certain conditions, to "explore, prospect, drill for, extract and render suitable for trade petroleum, naphtha, natural gases, ozokerite, and the right to carry away and sell the same and the derivatives thereof" in the concession area.[14] The TPC's concession, signed in Baghdad, had no legitimacy in the view of the Naftchizada

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[11] Sluglett, *Britain in Iraq*, 137-38; Yergin, *The Prize*, 204.

[12] The Iraq Petroleum Company holdings of the BP Archive at the University of Warwick in Coventry, which are cited throughout this work, are the remnants of the papers of the London office of the IPC. The papers of the IPC's Iraq headquarters are still in Iraq, though their exact status is unknown. As mentioned in the Introduction, at least some of them were looted and likely destroyed in 2003.

[13] A well-known example of such challenges that is beyond the scope of this discussion is the claim made by the heirs of the late Sultan Abdülhamid to lands that had been controlled by him via the Civil List, including Iraq's oil-bearing areas, prior to these lands' reversion to the Ottoman state in 1908. For a detailed account of this dispute from a perspective sympathetic to the heirs, see: E. Mahmud Sami, *The Quest for Sultan Abdülhamid's Oil Assets: His Heirs' Legal Battle for Their Rights* (Istanbul: Isis, 2006).

[14] H. Dobbs to L.C.M.S. Amery, 19 March 1925, CO 730/74, UK.

family of Kirkuk, who had been exploiting the Kirkuk region's oil for centuries. As mentioned in Chapter 1, they had held formal rights to oil seepages in the Kirkuk area by Istanbul's decree since the seventeenth century. While these rights were presumably superseded by the TPC's concession from a legal standpoint after 1925, the Naftchizadas were still extracting and selling Kirkuk's petroleum exclusively as of the point when the TPC began prospecting for oil in the same area.[15]

Around the time that the TPC began exploring, the Iraqi government began to challenge the Naftchizadas' rights to oil-bearing lands. For instance, in March 1926, a land registry official acting on behalf of the Kirkuk *liwa*ʾ took legal action against a member of the Naftchizada family and fourteen of his associates for "usurping" a particular naphtha mine and demanded that they surrender it to the provincial government.[16] Another controversy arose over the TPC's well digging at Baba Gurgur. In July 1927, a few months prior to the first oil gusher, the TPC's general manager in Iraq wrote a letter to Salih Beg Naftchizada to assure him that the company's work would "not in the least interfere" with his family's wells, since the wells the company created were "some thousands of feet deeper" than those dug by the Naftchizadas.[17] In reply, another member of the Naftchizada family recognized what the TPC's letter carefully skirted: the fact that, regardless of the depths of the wells they produced, the TPC's activities threatened to foreclose local residents' ongoing endeavor to commercially produce Kirkuk's oil and to supplant their right to do so on a more advanced level in the

[15] Longrigg, *Oil in the Middle East*, 68.

[16] "Gouvernement d'Irak Tribunal de Première Instance de Kerkuk," 30 October 1926, File 33519, BP.

[17] TPC General Manager to Saleh Beg Naftchizadah, 28 July 1927, File 33519, BP.

future. While emphasizing that Baba Gurgur was private land and that his family had documentation to prove their rights to the area, the replying family member also stated:

> Hundreds of natives of Iraq and foreigners who own these estates together might one day as a natural right wish to exploit the petroleum from the lower layers as they are actually exploiting the upper ones.[18]

In December 1928, more than a year after the successful digging of Well No. 1, the absentee family patriarch Nazim Beg Naftchizada directed a much more forceful letter to the TPC director from his residence in Istanbul protesting the TPC's exploitation and use of oil at Baba Gurgur. He cited what he considered to be universally recognized concepts of property rights and repeated the claim that the Naftchizada family had ample documentation verifying their entitlement. At one point, he underscored the longevity of the family's connection to the land, claiming that they had owned the oil-bearing areas since long before the Ottoman era, while conveying the perceived enormity of the TPC's transgression:

> I wonder how and on the basis of what right your company violates and encroaches upon my legitimate rights, rights that even the most despotic tyrants and invaders of the Middle Ages spared.

Nazim Beg's letter also claimed that the Iraqi government could not be trusted to be "impartial and neutral" in any matter concerning his family due to the fact that he had favored the former Mosul *vilayet*'s inclusion in Turkey and had been part of the Turkish delegation during the League of Nations Mosul Commission's visit. Boldly, he cited the Mosul Commission's own statement in its report that those in the Mosul *vilayet* region who were politically "compromised" deserved safeguarding, including the right to leave the country. He reasoned on that basis that the Iraqi government's actions on matters

[18] Letter from Neftchi Halid Bey Zade, undated, File 33519, BP.

related to the oil-bearing areas that his family owned, including its convention with the TPC, therefore had "no legal value." Nazim Beg concluded with a demand that the TPC cease its activities, close its wells, and provide him with compensation for the oil already extracted.[19]

Although the Naftchizadas' efforts to regain their rights to Kirkuk's oil from the TPC were never likely to succeed and were perhaps quixotic, the dispute is significant for several reasons. First, it illustrates the fact that at least one prominent group of Kirkukis had a well-established concept of their ownership of oil as a resource with the potential for further development. This idea was furthermore grounded in a concept of their legal rights to certain lands. The British narrative of the beginning of large-scale petroleum production, as discussed above, misrepresents this connection between Kirkukis, local oil, and local land by stressing the fear that the townspeople and nearby villagers felt when witnessing the first gusher, thereby implying that the substance was alien to them on a visceral level, and then focusing on their presumed gratitude for Western intervention to develop it. Second, Nazim Beg's categorization of his elite Turkmen family as politically "compromised" in the context of the Baba Gurgur dispute implied that the Iraqi government threatened their rights in a manner that went beyond simply denying their entitlement to oil revenues. This contention corresponds with the idea that remains common among Turkmens, as discussed in Chapter 2, that the Anglo-Iraqi mandate government was actively punishing their community for their perceived insubordination to King Faysal. Third, the dispute demonstrates the fact that Kirkuk's oil industry was born into controversy. The precedent of disagreement between local

[19] Neftchi Zadé Nazim to Turkish Petroleum Company, 26 December 1928, File 33519, BP. The quotations of this letter herein are my translations from the original French.

inhabitants, the oil company, the provincial government, and Baghdad would hold for decades and would indelibly affect Kirkuk's local politics.

The early behavior of the company with relation to the economy of the global oil market would also prove to have a local impact because curtailed production threatened the urban labor force. In general, the TPC's constituent companies, all of which had interests in many other parts of the world, wished to exploit and export oil as slowly as possible while still meeting global demand in order to prevent a decline in international oil prices.[20] In 1930, the company, newly renamed the Iraq Petroleum Company (IPC), started to consider laying off a large fraction of its drillers within the constraints of its existing convention, which regulated the company's activity by mandating a minimum amount of drilling per year. One memorandum proposed restricting drilling hours to the daytime and introducing a more complicated, and therefore slower and less productive, drilling procedure in certain areas, with the goal of reducing expenditures and heading off the Iraqi government's attempt at an "open-door formula."[21] Then, in 1931, the company negotiated a revision of the convention. Crucially, they pushed for the deletion of the original version's Article 5, which contained the exploration requirement. Article 5 also threatened the company's monopoly over Iraqi oil by opening up the lease of certain plots of land to competition. In the negotiations over the revision, the drilling obligation had proven to be a particularly contentious point between the company and the Iraqi government. After suggesting changes to Article 5, the company managed to have it removed entirely from the final version signed in March 1931. The Minister of

[20] Penrose and Penrose, *Iraq*, 141-42.

[21] Undated memorandum discussing drilling, c. late 1930, File 164084, BP.

Economics and Communications, Muzahim al-Pachachi, resigned in protest of the fact that the revised convention was less advantageous to Iraq.[22] All of these efforts were characteristic of the IPC's inclination throughout the 1930s toward delaying the pace of oil production in Iraq, a tendency that its cartel status undergirded.[23]

As of January 1931, the IPC employed over 2,300 workers throughout Iraq, nearly 2,000 of whom were native Iraqis.[24] The majority of the latter were working at Baba Gurgur. Since the total population of urban Kirkuk could not have grown too far beyond its estimated magnitude of 25,000 in the mid-1920s at that point, IPC employees must have already constituted a large fraction of Kirkuk's labor force among men of working age. Recognizing Kirkuk as "the best labour centre outside of Baghdad and Mosul" and considering its proximity to the oil field, the IPC moved their headquarters there from their previous location in Tuz Khurmatu in March 1931.[25] However, they had already begun dismissing hundreds of workers as early as February.[26] After the revision of their convention later that month, the IPC, no longer encumbered with exploration requirements, continued its layoffs while proposing a temporary stop to the vast majority of its drilling operations. In August 1931, a Royal Air Force officer stationed in Kirkuk

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[22] Hubert Young to J.E. Shuckburgh, 24 April 1930, POWE 33/381, UK; Letter to W.B. Brown, 27 May 1930, POWE 33/381, UK; John Cadman to Nuri Said Pasha, 15 October 1930, POWE 33/381, UK; F.H. Humphrys to Lord Passfield, 27 March 1931, POWE 33/382, UK.

[23] For more details on this topic and an economic analysis of the IPC's behavior as a cartel-specific phenomenon, see Walter Adams, James W. Brock, and John M. Blair, "Retarding the Development of Iraq's Oil Resources: An Episode in Oleaginous Diplomacy, 1927-1939," *Journal of Economic Issues* 27, no. 1 (1993).

[24] "Extract from Economic Report No. 3 for March 1931," CO 730/161/12, UK.

[25] Ibid.; Fields Manager, Iraq to the Acting General Manager, London, September 17, 1930, File 164084, BP.

[26] "Extract from Economic Report No. 4 for the month of April, 1931," CO 730/161/12, UK.

reported that crime was increasing there as a result of growing unemployment.[27] By October 1931, when the virtual suspension of drilling went into effect, the company had let go more than 1,400 of its Iraqi workers in Kirkuk. At that point, it employed a total of only 514 Iraqis throughout the country.[28]

Both IPC and British government officials correctly anticipated that the Kirkuk layoffs would result in a backlash from the Iraqi government, press, and population at large. Even internal communications among these British officials, who were broadly in agreement with one another in their support for the company's actions, assumed a defensive tone. They cited the deletion of Article 5 to justify the dismissals and argued that there was no need to explore further until after the construction of a pipeline to the Mediterranean Sea, which would allow Kirkuk's oil to be exported to the world market, was completed.[29] Indeed, as one British official noted, the company also had no urgent need to keep exploring because they were "free from competition."[30] Later communications verify that the reduction of the IPC's workforce had provoked a negative reaction among Iraqis throughout 1931. For instance, one letter from an IPC official at the company's headquarters in Kirkuk recalled that the Iraqi government's Director of Oil Affairs had "on more than one occasion mentioned the anxiety felt in local circles at

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[27] C.B.R. Pelly, "Report No. 13 for Period Ending 17th August 1931," AIR 23/338, UK.

[28] "Extract from Economic Report No. 11 for the month of November, 1931," CO 730/161/12, UK.

[29] The 1931 revision of the IPC's convention required the construction of a pipeline to the Mediterranean Sea. Conflicting British and French preferences over whether the terminus of the pipeline was to be located in the mandate territory of one country or the other resulted in a compromise in the form of a bifurcated line that would transport oil to both Haifa in Palestine and Tripoli in Lebanon. Construction on the pipeline would begin in 1932. Longrigg, *Oil in the Middle East*, 75-77.

[30] J.H. Thomas, draft letter, 12 October 1931, CO 730/161/12, UK.

the continued fall in employment."[31] In contrast, IPC officials felt earnestly and fervently that suspending drilling operations was the best option moving forward from a business standpoint. As Sir John Cadman, the IPC chairman in London, wrote to company official G.W. Dunkley,

> In view of possible criticism arising from the necessary slowing up of operations, particularly drilling in Iraq itself, I am anxious that if and as suitable occasions present themselves, you should do all you can to enlighten those around you, and in Baghdad, as to the reasons for such a course….Nothing could, of course, be more reasonable, or more consistent with the principles of sound commercial development.[32]

The IPC therefore felt that their task was to convince Iraqis, or what one official called "the Iraqi mind," that this was, in fact, the most rational path.[33] The British government agreed, suggesting that "a certain amount of advance propaganda" could address the problem of Iraqi opposition.[34] Accordingly, an article titled "The Pipe-Line" appeared in the *Times of Mesopotamia*, an Anglo-Iraqi English-language newspaper, on 28 September 1931 that assured readers that the IPC was committed to continuing its work in Iraq and somewhat illogically attributed the reduction in Kirkuk's workforce to "the attention being lent by the company to the extension of the oil pipe-line to the Mediterranean." The public British stance on the layoffs was that they were the result of a diversion in the company's focus; unlike internal discussion of the issue, the article did not try to make a case for the supposed commercial wisdom of this approach, instead

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[31] [W.E. Cole?] to Sir John Cadman, 4 November 1931, File 72542, BP.

[32] Sir John Cadman to G.W. Dunkley, 29 October 1931, File 72542, BP.

[33] G.W. Dunkley to Sir John Cadman, 20 November 1931, File 72542, BP.

[34] J.E.W. Flood to Sir John Cadman, 12 October 1931, CO 730/161/12, UK.

choosing to center on a refutation of the claim that the company was suspending its activities throughout Iraq.[35]

The IPC's operations in Kirkuk therefore continued to be contentious in their early years. From the very beginning of the company's activities, there were competing visions among the IPC, British government officials, Iraqi officials, and Kirkukis of the company's obligation to the local population. It is possible to infer from what is indicated about the Iraqi viewpoint in the correspondences cited above that, in general, Iraqis believed the IPC had a duty to employ Kirkuk's labor force as long as it was both contractually and publicly committed to large-scale oil production. The Iraqi government would continue to adopt a similar attitude about the IPC's responsibilities to Kirkuk even after expropriating nearly all of its concession, as will be discussed in Chapter 5. British officials and the IPC's expatriate executives were not in accord with the Iraqis with regard to labor affairs or legal obligations, instead thinking exclusively about how to maintain high oil prices and preserve the IPC's monopoly, even if doing so required modifying the legal framework under which they were operating. Once again, a divergence both in concepts and aims marked the relationship between corporate and British neocolonial concerns on the one hand and the interests of local officials and notables on the other. In addition, the layoffs of 1931 were an early sign of the extensive political and economic influence that the IPC would soon wield in Kirkuk. This influential position served as a site for the emergence of discrete local political interests in Kirkuk among Kirkukis, Iraqis and expatriates alike.

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[35] "The Pipe-Line," 28 September 1931, newspaper clipping from the *Times of Mesopotamia*, File 72542, BP.

As always, the official British presence in Kirkuk was intertwined with, and occasionally indistinguishable from, that of the IPC. After Iraq's admission to the League of Nations in 1932, the terms of the Anglo-Iraq Treaty of 1930, which preserved British interests in Iraq, came into effect. Britain's activities in Iraq shifted from the purview of the Colonial Office to that of the Foreign Office. The British government maintained considerable sway over Iraqi politics and policy through the strategic placement of powerful diplomats, as well as the maintenance of Royal Air Force bases, in a typical example of its practice of "informal empire" throughout former colonies.[36] Soon after dismantling the apparatus of the mandate in 1932, the Foreign Office opened a vice consulate in Kirkuk, professing in internal communications that it did so in the interest of keeping track of Kurdish separatist activity. This outpost subsequently closed for unknown reasons in 1936.[37] Officials associated with the British embassy in Baghdad, such as land-settlement officer Wallace Lyon and education consultant John Brady, continued to operate in Kirkuk intermittently and kept up a close relationship with the IPC. In May 1941, British troops reoccupied Iraq, restoring pro-Western establishment politicians to power who had been temporarily marginalized by pro-German forces and bringing British government influence back to Kirkuk in its full capacity, including the eventual re-establishment of a vice consulate.[38] The strategic concerns that partially motivated the British invasion of 1941 were omnipresent in communications from

[36] An extensive discussion of British policy in Iraq in this time period is found in: Silverfarb, *Britain's Informal Empire in the Middle East*.

[37] Foreign Office to the Secretary to the Office of Works, 13 February 1933, WORK 10/53/1, UK; C. Howard Smith to the Secretary to the Treasury, 18 March 1936, WORK 10/53/1, UK.

[38] During the Anglo-Iraqi conflict of May 1941, Iraqi forces interned the few British government employees in Kirkuk, including Lyon and Brady, in IPC camps. For a fascinating account of these few weeks, see: John Brady, *Eastern Encounters: Memoirs of the Decade, 1937-1946* (Braunton: Merlin Books, 1992), 68-73.

Kirkuk, where protecting the oil fields from possible Axis encroachment was a primary concern, including extensive plans for the demolition of wells if an enemy takeover proved inevitable. Kirkuk's oil was essential for British military operations in Iraq; the IPC provided fuel for military vehicles directly from its own installations.[39]

Provincial town to oil city: Kirkuk's demographics in the mid-twentieth century

The IPC's emergence also permanently changed Kirkuk's urban fabric and demographic composition. In general, Iraq's population grew rapidly in the early to mid-twentieth century, as was typical of developing countries in that time period. Urban areas experienced the brunt of this growth, expanding at an unprecedented rate as impoverished rural inhabitants formerly engaged in agriculture moved into cities in search of work—a phenomenon that was also common throughout the developing world, including in and around Middle Eastern metropolises such as Damascus and Cairo.[40] In Iraq, one of the factors that precipitated rural-to-urban movement was a vastly unequal land-registration system that concentrated land ownership among tribal shaykhs and notables and dramatically exploited sharecroppers. The 1933 Law Governing the Rights and Duties of Cultivators was particularly punitive to cultivators in that it had the potential to hold them responsible for anything that could go wrong with the crops they worked on, trapping them in debt to landowners. The global depression that began in 1929 exacerbated the effects of this system by lowering the prices of agricultural products, thereby reducing the

[39] See for instance: "Draft for Demolition Scheme M.G.R.F. Tenth Army," undated (c. 1942), WO 201/1541, UK.

[40] See for instance: Philip S. Khoury, "Syrian Urban Politics in Transition: The Quarters of Damascus During the French Mandate," *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 16, no. 4 (1984); Raymond, *Cairo*, 339-74.

revenue yielded from land and forcing cultivators to move to urban areas in order to seek other means of living.[41]

In the period between 1918 and the 1950s, Kirkuk experienced the effects of Iraq's trend of rural-to-urban migration in an especially pronounced way. A 1958 report on Kirkuk by the urban planning firm Doxiadis Associates, whose work will be discussed further in Chapter 4, found that the population of the city of Kirkuk was increasing at an annual rate of 5.9%, while the average annual rate of increase in the populations of Iraqi *liwa'* capitals altogether (that is, including Kirkuk) was 5.3% and Iraq's overall population growth rate was 3%.[42] A close examination of the data relevant to Kirkuk in the two full and reliable Iraqi population censuses of the mid-twentieth century, conducted in 1947 and in 1957, reveals population growth patterns consistent with the regional trend of rural-to-urban migration as well as with the accumulation of an urban industrial labor force. First, though, it should be noted that it is difficult to compare these censuses with full statistical rigor. The two censuses did not consistently measure the same population categories; for example, the 1957 census contains an analysis of Kirkuk's population by native language, while the 1947 census does not. In addition, the definitions of the urban *mahallas* (neighborhoods or quarters; Figure 3.1) of Kirkuk, as well as of the province's *qada's* (provincial subdivisions), apparently changed over the course of ten years, and some *mahallas* and *qada's* appear in one census but not the other. The versions of these censuses that I consulted were not accompanied by maps,

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[41] Penrose and Penrose, *Iraq*, 151-54, 174; Joseph Sassoon, *Economic Policy in Iraq, 1932-1950* (London: F. Cass, 1987), 164; Sluglett, *Britain in Iraq*, 178-80.

[42] Doxiadis Associates, *The Future of Kirkuk: A Long-Term Program and a Master Plan for the Development of the City and its Region* (Athens: Doxiadis Associates, 1958), 17.

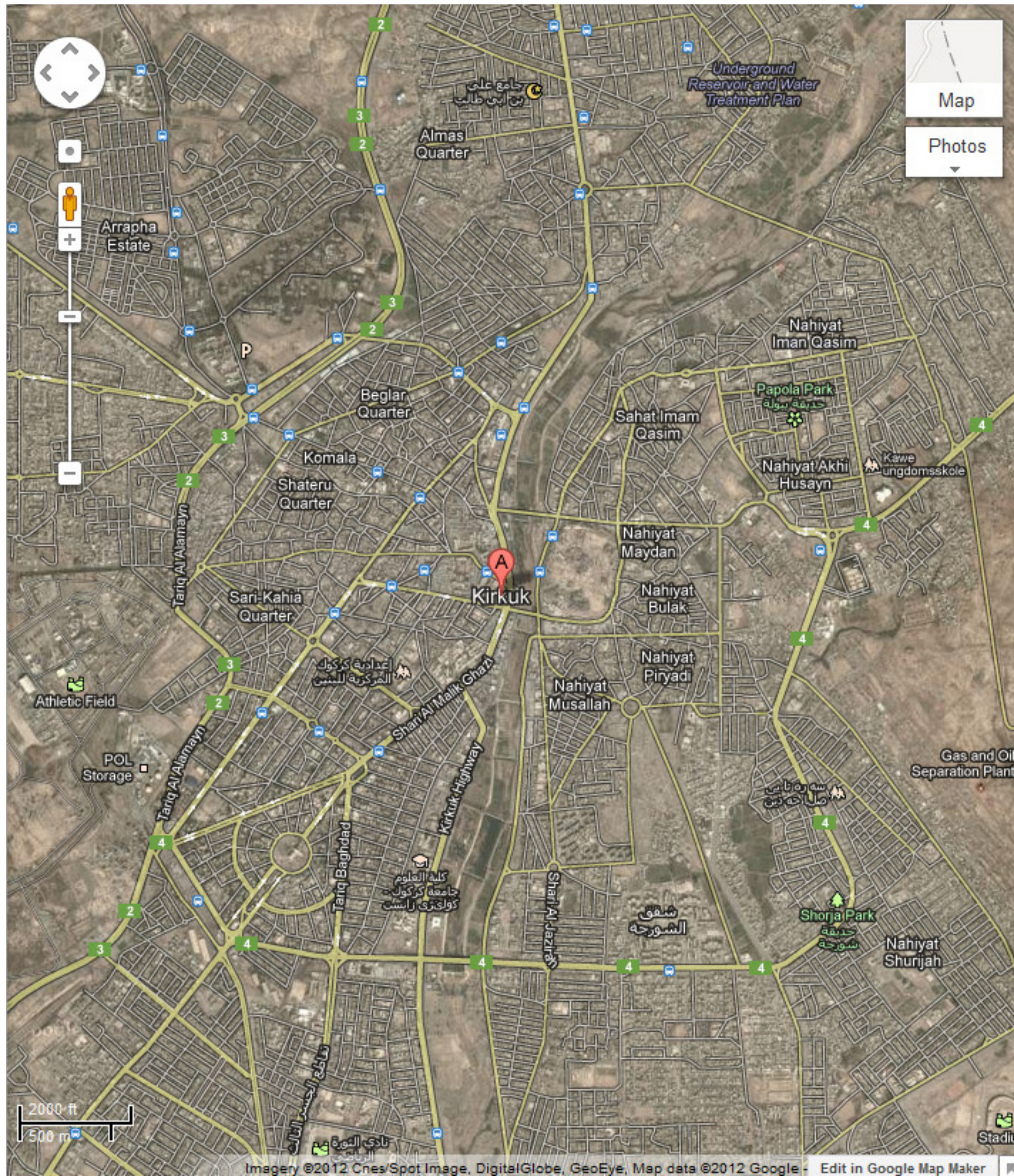

Figure 3.1: A partial map of present-day Kirkuk which includes the names of most of the *mahallas* in the city that date back to the mid-twentieth century or earlier. (The full extent of the city has since expanded far beyond this area; see Figure 6.1.) © 2012 Google.

which could have clarified the latter issues.[43] Nonetheless, a comparison of the populations of some urban *mahallas* and provincial *qadaʾs* whose boundaries are unlikely to have changed significantly illuminates the particular ways in which Kirkuk's urban demographics changed in the three decades following the discovery of oil.

As mentioned in Chapter 1, various officials had estimated Kirkuk's urban population to be around 25,000 in the mid-1920s. Two decades later, the 1947 census found that Kirkuk's urban population was just over 68,000.[44] A 1948 British government report estimated that Kirkuki IPC workers and their families all told numbered about 30,000 at that time, therefore implying that nearly half of the city's inhabitants were directly or indirectly reliant on the oil company for their livelihood.[45] The 1957 census found Kirkuk's urban population to be over 120,000.[46] The 1958 Doxiadis Associates report contains a series of maps that demonstrate the expansion of the urban fabric between 1924 and 1957 (Figure 3.2). While the urban population grew especially fast, increasing by 76% between 1947 and 1957, the population of the areas of Kirkuk's provincial subdivision outside of the city—that is, the villages immediately surrounding urban Kirkuk, as well as the town of Altun Kopri—grew by about 39%, from 73,000 to 101,000, in the same time period.[47] By way of contrast, the population of the mostly rural

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[43] Mudiriyat al-Nufus al-ʿAmma, *Census of Iraq 1947*, vol. 2 (Baghdad: Government of Iraq, 1954); Mudiriyat al-Nufus al-ʿAmma, *Al-Majmuʿa al-Ihsaʾiyya li-Tasjil ʿAm 1957*, vol. 5 (Baghdad: Wizarat al-Dakhiliyya, 1962). The published copies of these censuses that I consulted are held in the Harvard University library system. It is likely that there are versions of these censuses archived elsewhere, such as in Baghdad, that contain further details.

[44] Mudiriyat al-Nufus al-ʿAmma, *Census of Iraq 1947*, 2:115.

[45] M.T. Audsley, "Report on Visit to Iraq from 8th June to 10th July, 1948," FO 371/68482, UK.

[46] Mudiriyat al-Nufus al-ʿAmma, *Al-Majmuʿa al-Ihsaʾiyya li-Tasjil ʿAm 1957*, 5:154.

[47] Mudiriyat al-Nufus al-ʿAmma, *Census of Iraq 1947*, 2:115; Mudiriyat al-Nufus al-ʿAmma, *Al-Majmuʿa al-Ihsaʾiyya li-Tasjil ʿAm 1957*, 5:139, 154.

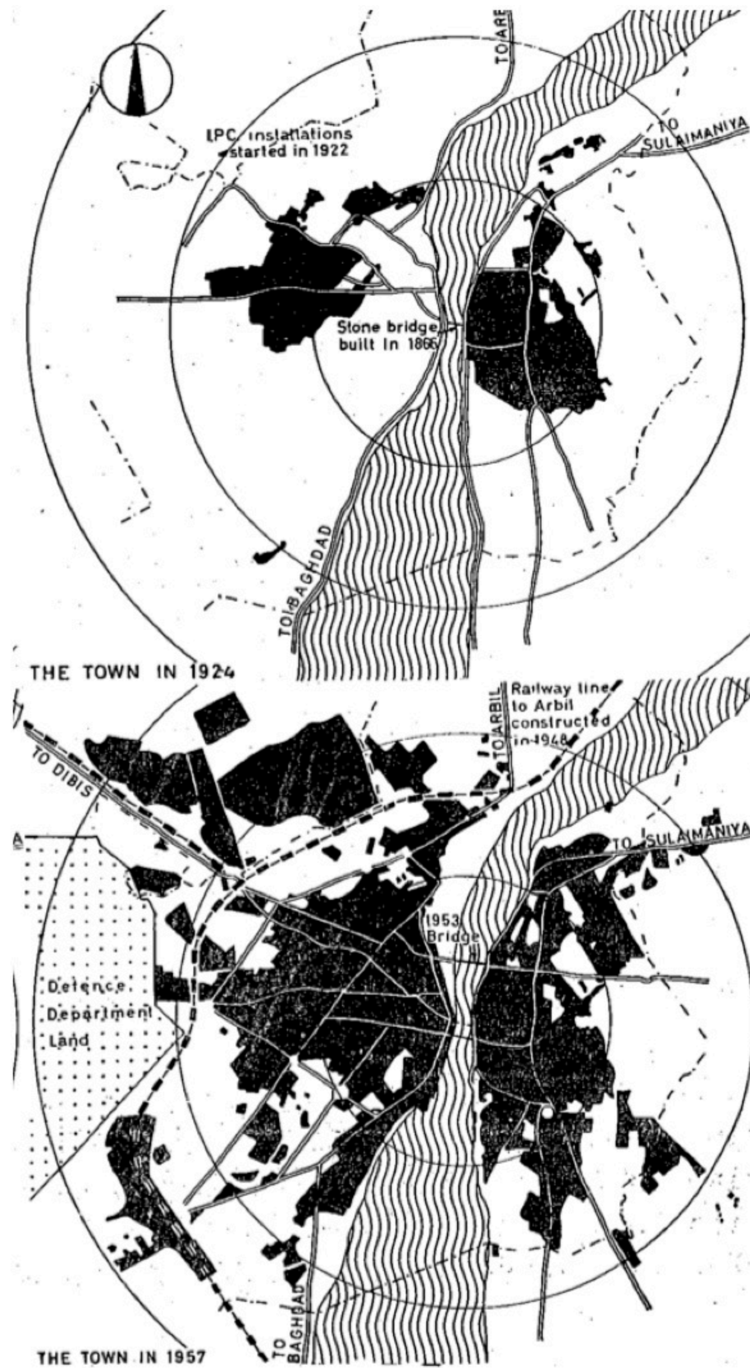

Figure 3.2: Two annotated maps depicting the extent of Kirkuk's urban fabric in 1924 and 1957. Source: Doxiadis Associates, *The Future of Kirkuk*, 13.

*qada*ʾ of Chamchamal, located between Kirkuk and Sulaymaniyya, increased by only 15% from 1947 to 1957.[48] The inhabitants of these rural areas appear to have regularly moved to Kirkuk in search of work with the IPC whenever a harvest was poor, as indicated by the tone of a report by the British vice-consul in Kirkuk for June 1947 suggesting an ipso facto connection between such events: "The damage done by locusts has brought peasants from the outlying villages of Kirkuk flocking to the I.P.C. Employment offices."[49] Many migrants to the city were from outside of Kirkuk altogether; in 1947, 28% of the urban population of Kirkuk had been born in places other than the Kirkuk *liwa*ʾ. By 1957, the proportion of people in the city who were from outside of the Kirkuk *liwa*ʾ had decreased to 22%, but, of course, the absolute number of non-natives had increased along with the rest of the population. In the *liwa*ʾ as a whole, including all other towns and rural areas, the percentage of the population from outside of Kirkuk in both 1947 and 1957 was 9%, confirming that most migrants from other parts of Iraq (and expatriates from other countries) settled in Kirkuk city. The largest numbers of non-Kirkuki migrants came from Baghdad and from mostly Kurdish *liwa*ʾ*s* in relatively close proximity to Kirkuk, including Mosul, Sulaymaniyya, Arbil, and Diyala.[50]

The fact that migrants seeking work with the IPC largely drove urban Kirkuk's population growth is further indicated by the fact that there were more men than women throughout the city in this time period; indeed, men predominated among the abovementioned migrants from outside of Kirkuk. In 1925, not long after World War I

[48] Mudiriyat al-Nufus al-ʿAmma, *Census of Iraq 1947*, 2:124; Mudiriyat al-Nufus al-ʿAmma, *Al-Majmuʿa al-Ihsaʾiyya li-Tasjil ʿAm 1957*, 5:139.

[49] "Political Summary for Kirkuk and Sulaimania Liwas – June 1947," 7 July 1947, FO 624/117, UK.

[50] Mudiriyat al-Nufus al-ʿAmma, *Census of Iraq 1947*, 2:115, 124, 134, 146; Mudiriyat al-Nufus al-ʿAmma, *Al-Majmuʿa al-Ihsaʾiyya li-Tasjil ʿAm 1957*, 5:241.

and the disastrous effects of the Mesopotamian campaign, C.J. Edmonds estimated that the number of women in Kirkuk was about 10% greater than the number of men.[51] Yet by 1947, the population of the city of Kirkuk was 54% male and 46% female.[52] In 1957, the proportions had evened out slightly to 52% male and 48% female; however, unlike in 1947, men outnumbered women in every single urban *mahalla*.[53] The gender distribution of the population of the Chamchamal *qadaʾ* once again illustrates the dissimilarity between Kirkuk and nearby rural areas; Chamchamal had roughly equal numbers of men and women in 1957, with a difference of just 1.5% between them.[54] While it is possible that there are other reasons for the comparative disparity in the proportions of men and women in urban Kirkuk, the presence of a predominantly male population that maintained a majority over the course of one decade is consistent with the fact that a large percentage of urban Kirkukis were employed in an extractive industry. Naturally, it followed that other industries and types of labor and commerce would expand in order to provide services to the growing population, which in turn may have fueled further immigration. The IPC itself started to encourage local enterprise in the 1950s by beginning to solicit local services, as will be discussed in Chapter 4.

Another indication of this phenomenon—the expansion of industry and new forms of commerce—is the fact that the population of the citadel, the traditional core of Kirkuk, was growing only modestly in comparison with that of the rest of the city and

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[51] Administrative Inspector, Kirkuk to the Adviser to Ministry of Interior, Baghdad, 9 January 1925, C.J. Edmonds Collection GB 165-0095, Box 3 File 2, MECA.

[52] Mudiriyat al-Nufus al-ʿAmma, *Census of Iraq 1947*, 2:115.

[53] Mudiriyat al-Nufus al-ʿAmma, *Al-Majmuʿa al-Ihsaʾiyya li-Tasjil ʿAm 1957*, 5:152-54.

[54] Ibid., 162.

was steadily declining as a share of the city's total population. Between 1947 and 1957, the populations of the three *mahallas* that made up the citadel—Maydan, Aghaliq, and Hammam Muslim—grew by 17%, from 4,980 to 5,826, and their percentage of the city's population as a whole dwindled from just over 7% to just under 5%.[55] In stark contrast, the *mahalla* of Shorija (Al-Shurja) experienced more rapid growth than any other part of the city between 1947 and 1957. Shorija, a newer neighborhood, was located southeast of the citadel and its surrounding *mahallas* that had constituted Kirkuk's Ottoman-era core on the east bank of the Khasa River (Figure 3.3). Though it was just within the municipal boundary and, on its western side, was very close to the *mahallas* of Piryadi (which housed the city's Jewish quarter), Chuqur and Musalla, it was still physically separate from the rest of the inhabited areas of the city as of the mid-1950s.[56] Shorija's population more than tripled from 2,365 to 7,711 between 1947 and 1957, amounting to an increase of 226%. No other *mahalla* in Kirkuk experienced a comparable rate of growth.[57] Its residents were mostly Kurdish migrants to urban Kirkuk from rural areas. In a conversation in June 2010, a Kirkuki Kurd who now lives in London described 1940s-era Shorija as a Kurdish "shantytown" where, in his view, no non-Kurds would have wanted

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[55] Mudiriyat al-Nufus al-ʿAmma, *Census of Iraq 1947*, 2:101; Mudiriyat al-Nufus al-ʿAmma, *Al-Majmuʿa al-Ihsaʾiyya li-Tasjil ʿAm 1957*, 5:154. On the same page cited herein, the 1947 census also contains a figure for a *mahalla* called Hammam Masihi, or Christian Hammam (as distinct from Hammam Muslim). The 1957 census does not include a *mahalla* called Hammam Masihi. It is possible that the population of the Christian part of Hammam was simply included as part of Hammam Muslim in the 1957 census. If this were the case, the population of Hammam Masihi in 1947 (732) would have to be added to those of the other three *mahallas* of the citadel in 1947 to produce an accurate comparison. Since the population of the citadel in 1947 would therefore be higher than indicated here (5,712), the argument that the citadel's population grew much more slowly than that of the rest of the city and that it declined as a share of the city's total population holds even more strongly in this case.

[56] IPC Lands Department, "Kirkuk Town, 1955," map, File 163897, BP.

[57] Mudiriyat al-Nufus al-ʿAmma, *Census of Iraq 1947*, 2:101-02; Mudiriyat al-Nufus al-ʿAmma, *Al-Majmuʿa al-Ihsaʾiyya li-Tasjil ʿAm 1957*, 5:152-54.

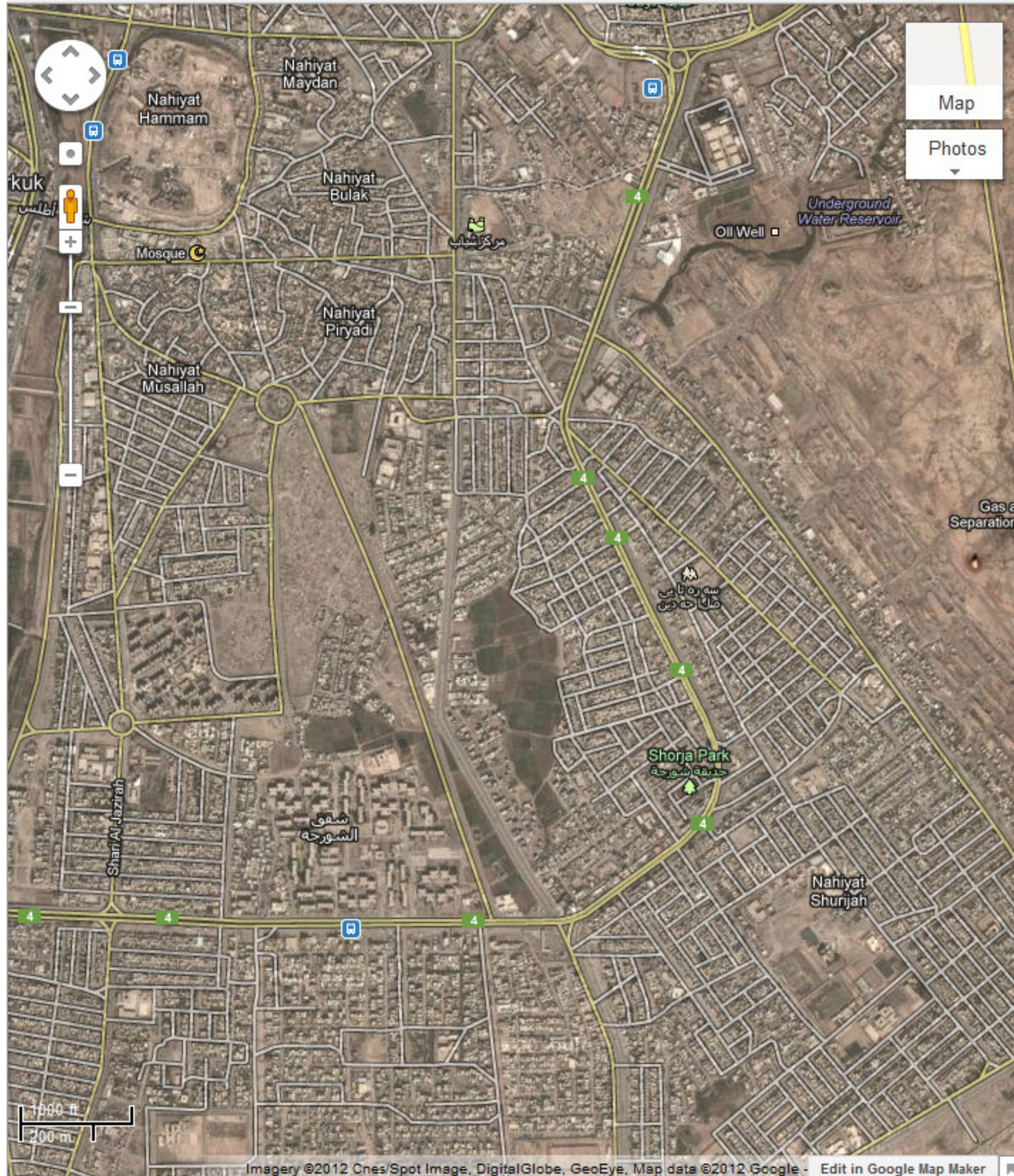

Figure 3.3: A partial map of present-day Kirkuk depicting the southeast quadrant of the city in accordance with the extent of the urban fabric in the mid-twentieth century. The citadel is visible in the upper left corner of the map, while the *mahalla* of Shorija takes up most of the lower right. A stark contrast is evident between the grid-like streets and blocks of Shorija and the irregular configurations, by modern construction standards, of the centuries-old *mahallas* around the citadel. © 2012 Google.

to live. He recalled that the populations of the much older neighboring *mahallas* that surrounded the citadel were mostly Turkmen, an observation that makes intuitive sense in light of the fact that self-identified Turkish speakers had historically dominated urban Kirkuk.[58] The remarkable expansion of Shorija demonstrates the fact that rural-to-urban migration, especially of Kurds, was one of the most striking patterns within Kirkuk's urban population growth. It also further confirms the observation that, as was often the case with urban immigrants in many other places, these newly arrived Kirkukis were disproportionately poor and tended to live in harsh conditions.

Migration into Kirkuk also brought an end to the demographic primacy of the Turkish-speaking community, a fact that is affirmed by a frequently cited table in the 1957 census that analyzes the province's population with reference to "mother tongue" (*lughat al-umm*). While those identified as Turkish speakers still constituted a plurality of the urban population at over 45,000, the census identified more than 40,000 Kurdish speakers and 27,000 Arabic speakers in the city.[59] My conversations with those who lived in or spent time working in Kirkuk in the mid-twentieth century typically led to the conclusion that these ethnolinguistic communities were spatially divided within the city, though the precise nature of these divisions has thus far been impossible to verify. As

[58] Kamal Majid, conversation with the author, 26 June 2010.

[59] Mudiriyat al-Nufus al-ʿAmma, *Al-Majmuʿa al-Ihsaʾiyya li-Tasjil ʿAm 1957*, 5:243. Articles on the post-2003 Kirkuk crisis very often cite this table, and the 1957 Iraqi census's "mother tongue" figures in general, either in support of a particular ethnonationalist position or in the interest of outlining the main ethnopolitical narratives of Kirkuk's rightful ownership. For an example of an article by a Kurdish politician that stresses the census's finding that the Kirkuk *liwaʾ* (as opposed to the city) had a Kurdish plurality, see: Nouri Talabany, "Who Owns Kirkuk? The Kurdish Case," *The Middle East Quarterly* 14, no. 1 (2007): 75-78. For an example of an article by a diplomat of Turkmen origin that instead uses these figures to extrapolate a generous estimate of Iraq's modern Turkmen population, see: Güçlü, "Who Owns Kirkuk? The Turkoman Case," 79-86. For an example of an article that indirectly cites the figures in this table in a discussion of the stakes of the Kirkuk crisis, see: Rod Nordland, "Now It's a Census That Could Rip Iraq Apart," *The New York Times*, 26 July 2009, http://www.nytimes.com/2009/07/26/weekinreview/26nordland.html.

mentioned above, the city's historic core on the east side of the Khasa River was most likely predominantly populated by self-identified Turkmens, while the rapidly expanding nearby *mahalla* of Shorija was clearly Kurdish. Notwithstanding, one former IPC employee recalled that Kurds tended to live on the "left," or west, side of the river; he verified that Turkmens tended to live on the "right" side, as did Assyrians.[60] Another former IPC employee, speaking in English but using an Arabic term, described the city as being divided into "ethnic *mahallat*."[61] A former American consul to Kirkuk, Lee F. Dinsmore, who lived there in the 1950s, offered the opposing view that "Kirkuk's population lived in a mixed environment," clarifying that what he meant by this was that there were no "strictly located or agreed-upon subdivisions" at the time.[62] In light of these perspectives, it makes sense to conclude that urban geography and ethnic identity were definitely linked, but neither rigid nor institutionalized, in mid-twentieth-century Kirkuk.

Unsurprisingly, the geographies of ethnicity in Kirkuk, both urban and rural, constitute one of the most controversial and enduring topics of discussion in analyses of its twentieth-century history. Present-day histories of Kirkuk, especially those written by Kurdish nationalist scholars, often charge that the Iraqi government began the process of Arabizing the Kirkuk region as early as the 1930s. These texts point to the inauguration of an irrigation project in the Hawija region southwest of urban Kirkuk as a seminal moment in the attempt to bolster Arab influence in the province. The Hawija project stemmed from the Iraqi government's official approach to rural agricultural policy in the

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[60] Adnan Samarrai, interview by the author, 9 June 2011.

[61] George Yacu, interview by the author, 8 June 2011.

[62] Lee F. Dinsmore, personal correspondence with the author, 3 May 2009.

period after the British mandate ended in 1932, which was based on the premise that the transition from subsistence agriculture to settled agriculture was central to economic development. The government's approach also privileged the interests of shaykhs, concentrating the agricultural rights to arable lands among a relatively small number of tribal notables.[63] It was in this context that the Iraqi government, starting in the mid-1930s, constructed an irrigation system in Hawija using water from the nearby Lesser Zab River. Beginning in 1940, the government granted nomadic Arab tribes the rights to agricultural utilization of plots of land in Hawija, thereby allowing them to settle there. While the land tenure system in Iraq was complex and contestable, the Hawija plots appear to have consistently fallen under the category of *miri sirf*, or state-owned land for which the government retained the entitlement to determine exploitation rights under all circumstances. In 1950, the Iraqi government launched a new *miri sirf* cultivation project in Hawija.[64]

It is difficult to confirm or refute the idea that the Iraqi government undertook the Hawija project to change Kirkuk's demographics. On one hand, it is undeniable that Iraqi irrigation projects, like irrigation projects in many other parts of the developing world, typically carried the goal of settling a certain group of people in a particular region. It is clear that officials involved in every branch of Iraq's politics would have been cognizant of the effects that this settling would have on the region in which it took place. For instance, in the case of a Euphrates-based irrigation scheme in the southern half of the

[63] Samira Haj, *The Making of Iraq, 1900-1963: Capital, Power, and Ideology* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1997), 32-34.

[64] Talabani, *Mintaqat Karkuk*, 42; Sassoon, *Economic Policy in Iraq*, 143; Warren E. Adams, "The Pre-Revolutionary Decade of Land Reform in Iraq," *Economic Development and Cultural Change* 11, no. 3 (1963): 269.

country, the British embassy in Baghdad went so far as to briefly consider settling Palestinian refugees in the irrigated area in the aftermath of the 1948 Arab-Israeli War in order to make up for a "lack of population" in the region.[65] One American agricultural economist who spent time in Iraq wrote that in the case of *miri sirf* distributions in the southern region of Dujayla in the 1940s, some settlers had to go through a rigorous application process with the Iraqi government, who then chose whom to grant rights on the basis of factors such as age and marital status.[66] Hence, the notion that the Iraqi central government intentionally placed carefully chosen Arabs in the Kirkuk province for strategic reasons is plausible. This is especially true in light of the fact that this settlement would have put Arabs in close proximity to the oil pipeline from Baba Gurgur to the Mediterranean Sea, thereby ensuring, at least in theory, that the pipeline would not fall into Kurdish hands.

On the other hand, the population of Hawija from the 1930s to the 1950s was only a small component of the population of the Kirkuk province and did not alter its demographic balance significantly. Even if, as Kurdish politician and author Nouri Talabany claims, there were over 27,000 tribal Arabs in Hawija in 1957,[67] this number means very little in comparison to the enormous growth that was taking place in urban

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[65] Henry B. Mack to Ernest Bevin, 30 October 1948, FO 371/68468, UK.

[66] Adams, "The Pre-Revolutionary Decade of Land Reform in Iraq," 269.

[67] Nouri Talabany (Nuri Talabani) writes that there were 27,705 "individuals of settled Arab tribes" in Hawija in 1957 and cites the 1957 census as containing this figure, though without providing a page or table number: Talabani, *Mintaqat Karkuk*, 44. The version and/or section of the 1957 census I am consulting indicates that the *total* population of Hawija, which would be likely to include at least some of the tribal Kurds who used its lands for grazing their livestock, was 26,981. Mudiriyat al-Nufus al-ʿAmma, *Al-Majmuʿa al-Ihsaʾiyya li-Tasjil ʿAm 1957*, 5:158.

Kirkuk.[68] As mentioned above in the discussion of migrants to Kirkuk city, the 1947 and 1957 censuses indicate that the proportion of native-born inhabitants of the Kirkuk *liwaʾ* as a whole was 91% (and higher in rural areas alone), while in the city it ranged from 72% to 78%. The settlement of Arab tribes in Hawija was also not engineered well enough to be free of inherent security problems, as evidenced by the occurrence of violent disputes between different tribes over the rights to newly irrigated areas in the 1940s.[69] Overall, while the settlement of Arab tribes in Hawija certainly appears, with the benefit of hindsight, to have foreshadowed the gerrymandering of Kirkuk that began a few decades later, Kirkuk's urban growth in the same time period as a result of the presence of the IPC proved to be a much more momentous factor in demographic shifts and geographical change in the province and should therefore remain the focus of a study of these issues. Nonetheless, the Hawija project is significant as a sign of Baghdad's continued attempts to consolidate its influence in the northern part of the country. In this case, it did so by asserting its control over *miri sirf* lands and establishing the potential for commercial agriculture in the region under the auspices of the central government.

The salience of the politics of identity in post-mandate Kirkuk

In the early period of Iraqi independence and British informal control following the end of the mandate, Kirkuk's politics were characterized by the continuing permeation of Baghdad's influence through its many state-making efforts. Baghdad-

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[68] Kamal Muzhir Ahmad, a Kurdish author advancing an argument for the Kurds' claim to Kirkuk's ownership, also reaches the conclusion that the Iraqi government did not, in fact, begin the Arabization of Kirkuk in the monarchy era: Ahmad, *Karkuk wa-Tawabiʿuha*, 79.

[69] See for instance: E.K. Wood, "Tribal and Political Weekly Intelligence Summary No. 74 for week ending 13th July 1942," 13 July 1942, WO 208/1567, UK.

centered political discourse also gained a foothold in Kirkuk while the ethnicization of group identities steadily intensified. Broadly, political disputes in Kirkuk pitted those who supported centralized Iraqi power against those who had separatist tendencies, as they had during the mandate era. From the 1930s forward, the strongest separatist faction was the Kurdish nationalist movement, which continued to actively defy Baghdad and carried some influence within Kirkuk. Arab influence also grew in Kirkuk, while Turkmens expressed a clear ethnic consciousness, a sense of communal loss, and an opposition to the Kurdish movement. As a result, stances for and against centralized power tended to fall along more sharply defined ethnic lines in the post-mandate monarchy era than they had before. The ways in which different communities of Kirkukis were mobilized in accordance with ethnic group identities may be called ethnic nationalisms—at least, in a budding form. These political developments took place among burgeoning Iraqi narratives of independence and anti-imperialism that had different effects in Kirkuk than they did in Baghdad.[70] They also occurred in the context of emergent pan-Arab nationalism in monarchic Iraq, suggesting that the development of ethnic nationalisms was a statewide trend.

Educational institutions in Kirkuk were one of the most noteworthy fronts on which the Iraqi central government strove to increase its influence, particularly with regard to the language of instruction. From the beginning of the British occupation of Kirkuk and the rest of the former Mosul *vilayet*, British officials had condoned the Arabization of primary and secondary education, which was conducted in Turkish at that time, as a way of integrating the region into Iraq. For instance, in 1919, the British officer

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[70] For a detailed analysis of Iraqi nationalist discourses in this time period, see: Bashkin, *The Other Iraq*, 52-86.

in charge of educational affairs in Iraq, Humphrey Bowman, wrote about the difficulty of finding "schoolmasters who can teach Arabic" in Kirkuk, a task that he felt was necessary because Arabic would be "the language of commerce and intercourse" going forward.[71] The Language Law of 1931, Baghdad's controversially limited compromise with the Kurds with regard to education and political representation, specifically stated that primary education in each *qada'* should be conducted in the language spoken by the majority of students therein but did not make any stipulations for secondary education.[72] Hence, by the early 1930s, although Turkish remained the dominant language of primary instruction throughout the Kirkuk *liwa'* in accordance with the Language Law, education at the secondary level was usually in Arabic.[73] In the case of girls' primary schools in Kirkuk, an Iraqi government memorandum explained the presence of Arabic-speaking staff members as being the result of a lack of qualified Turkmen and Kurdish female teachers.[74] This example, along with the circumvention built into the Language Law, demonstrates that Baghdad's approach to education policy in Kirkuk in early independent Iraq consisted of gradually allowing primarily Arabic-speaking teachers to assume positions of authority within the confines of a framework that acknowledged, but did little to address, the professed interests of non-Arabs.

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[71] Bowman, 9 April 1919.

[72] See for instance: Jaʿfar al-ʿAskari to Major H.W. Young, 5 August 1930, CO 730/157/5, UK.

[73] In addition to the Turkish-language schools, there were a few Kurdish-language schools in rural areas, and Jewish schools in urban Kirkuk conducted their instruction entirely in Arabic. Nuri al-Saʿid to H.W. Young, 7 November 1931, CO 730/161/1, UK; Hassanpour, *Nationalism and Language in Kurdistan*, 311-12.

[74] "Copy of Circular from His Excellency the Prime Minister to All Ministries," enclosed in Hull to G.W. Rendel, 30 October 1931, FO 371/15318, UK.

While the Iraqi Turkmen dialect of Turkish continued to be, and still is, one of the primary vernacular languages in Kirkuk, the use of Arabic had risen in prevalence by 1955 to the point that the IPC was offering its expatriate workers classes in colloquial Iraqi Arabic so they could communicate with Kirkukis.[75] This would have been unlikely to happen just three decades earlier, when a working knowledge of Turkish or Kurdish was essential for British officials who were serving in Kirkuk. At that time, Arabic was considerably more marginal—or even, in Bowman's view, "foreign."[76] Consequently, by the 1950s, some self-identified Kurdish teachers in northern Iraq were unable to teach in Kurdish because they had been educated in Arabic themselves, even in historically Kurdish-majority areas like Sulaymaniyya.[77] The lack of Kurdish-language education was a constant point of contention between Kurdish leaders and the Iraqi central government in the years following the end of the mandate. Kurdish pressure led to some nominal attempts to address this issue, including in Kurdish-majority areas of the Kirkuk *liwa'*.[78] Neither Kirkuk's Turkmens nor any other group appear to have made a correspondingly strong effort to promote Turkish-language education. In all, the Arabization of education and the consequent rising prevalence of the Arabic language

[75] Iraq Petroleum Company, "Guide to Kirkuk," 1955, File 119015, BP.

[76] As mentioned in Chapter 2, the mandate-era British official A.F. Miller spoke fluent Turkish and therefore had a close relationship with Kirkuk's Turkish-speaking notables. In his memoir, C.J. Edmonds demonstrates a general knowledge of several Middle Eastern languages, but he was a specialist in Kurdish, a language he continued to write and lecture about long after retiring from military and government service. In 1919, Humphrey Bowman described Arabic in Kirkuk as being like a "foreign language": Bowman, 9 April 1919. This is undoubtedly an exaggeration, but probably an accurate reflection of Arabic's tertiary status.

[77] Hassanpour, *Nationalism and Language in Kurdistan*, 316.

[78] There are many instances in which British records mention Kurdish grievances about education and the Iraqi government's responses in the 1930s and 1940s. For example, in connection with the Language Law, the Iraqi government proposed appointing a Kurdish education inspector who, it was suggested at one point, could oversee the Kurdish-majority *qada'*s of the Kirkuk *liwa'*. Jaʿfar al-ʿAskari to Major H.W. Young, 17 July 1930, CO 730/157/5, UK.

were the inevitable results of the process of Kirkuk's deepening relationship with Baghdad through the process of state making. These were outcomes that Baghdad actively facilitated but did not design.

The ongoing integration of Kirkuk also furthered a politics of loyalty to an Arab-led Iraq centralized in Baghdad among some notables and local authorities that hastened the emergence of intercommunal fault lines. Kirkuk's position on the frontier between majority-Kurdish and majority-Arab areas of Iraq was a key aspect of this process. For both Baghdad and the Kurdish national movement, as well as for British authorities after the reoccupation of Iraq in 1941, Kirkuk increasingly served as a strategic and political nexus of communication between Iraq's divided regions while remaining distant from the violent tribal unrest that caused turmoil in other parts of the country. The existing pattern of Kurdish revolts against the Iraqi central government continued throughout the 1930s and 1940s as Kurdish nationalism grew in strength. Kurdish separatist action came to be led by the Barzani tribe, who were centered in the Barzan region about 165 kilometers north of Kirkuk. Both the British embassy in Baghdad and the emergent leader of the Kurdish movement, Mustafa Barzani, corresponded actively with the British Political Advisers stationed in the city of Kirkuk after 1941.[79] The Political Advisers' primary tasks included keeping a close watch on the Kurdish insurgency through meetings with local officials and Kurdish leaders themselves, conveying the desires of British diplomats through letters to Kurdish leaders, and acting as the conduit through which these leaders

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[79] See for instance: Mulla Mustafa Barzani to H.E. Colonel Lyon, 11 January 1944, FO 624/66, UK; Political Adviser's Office, Kirkuk, to Oriental Secretary, British Embassy, Baghdad, 29 August 1944, FO 624/66, UK; "Minute Sheet," 8 April 1945, FO 624/71, UK.

attempted to communicate with the British embassy about their interests and demands.[80] As previously discussed, Kirkuk's geographical location had made it a logical base for military operations against Shaykh Mahmud in the mandate era; while its in-between role was therefore not new, it became further institutionalized over time.

As a result of Kirkuk's position and because of its large Kurdish population, the province was also a natural site for competing influence between Kurdish separatists and centralized power. One example of this activity took place in the spring of 1931, when both the Iraqi government and the then-prominent Shaykh Mahmud attempted to control the affairs of Kurdish tribes in the Kirkuk *liwa*ʾ in different ways. The government tried to intervene to stop the selection of a chief within the Jaf tribe whom it perceived as unfriendly to its interests. At the same time, Mahmud was reported to have collected taxes from some tribes in the *liwa*ʾ.[81] Additionally, there is evidence that Kurdish nationalist organizations from outside of Iraq viewed Kirkuk as an important target for activity; for instance, in the late 1920s and early 1930s, the international Kurdish organization Khoybun, based in Beirut, operated in Kirkuk as well as in areas to its northeast and northwest.[82] Despite the growing importance of external Kurdish nationalist movements in Kirkuk, however, there is little evidence to suggest that Kirkuki Kurds themselves were significantly involved in such activities as of the 1940s. While

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[80] See for instance: Richard Wilson to H. Moore, 23 April 1945, FO 624/71, UK.

[81] Special Service Officer, Sulaimani, "Report I/S/R for Period Ending March 8th 1931," 8 March 1931, AIR 23/233, UK; "Extract SSO Arbil Report No. 3 dated 17/3," AIR 23/233, UK; Special Service Office, Sulaimani, "Report No. I/S/R/2 Dated for Period Ending March 22nd 1931," 22 March 1931, AIR 23/233, UK.

[82] Nelida Fuccaro, "Kurds and Kurdish Nationalism in Mandatory Syria: Politics, Culture and Identity," in *Essays on the Origins of Kurdish Nationalism*, ed. Abbas Vali (Costa Mesa: Mazda, 2003), 197n15.

they could occasionally be swayed by figures such as Mahmud, the Kurdish rebellion did not spread to the Kirkuk *liwa*ʾ in this era.

Political trends emanating from Baghdad therefore were manifested in Kirkuk in a complicated interplay with these local dynamics. For instance, in 1931, prominent opposition parliamentarians joined together to form the Ikhaʾ Party, whose popularity was then bolstered by Iraqis who were critical of British influence in the Iraqi government.[83] Evidently taking advantage of discontent with the continued British presence in Iraq, Kirkuki supporters of the Iraqi government, whom a British official in Kirkuk called "pro-Arab," distributed literature to local Kurds claiming that the concept of Kurdish independence was a British plot to ensnare gullible people.[84] This occurred shortly after a visit by the Iraqi interior minister to Kirkuk as part of a tour of northern *liwa*ʾs in which he spoke to a group of local notables, appealing "for unity and the sinking of racial and religious differences."[85] The continued Baghdad-based patronage of prominent Turkmens in government also progressively led to more incidents of ethnicized antagonism between Turkmens and Kurds. The most noteworthy of these Turkmens was ʿAbd al-Majid Beg Yaʿqubizada, the Kirkuki Turkmen notable and former *mutasarrif* of the Kirkuk *liwa*ʾ, who went on to serve as the *mutasarrif* of the majority-Kurdish Arbil and Sulaymaniyya *liwa*ʾs in the 1930s. He obtained his positions largely as a result of his ties to Jamil al-Midfaʿi, a member of the coterie of elite Arabs who circulated through Iraqi government ministries in the monarchy era. A British report on

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[83] Charles Tripp, *A History of Iraq*, 3rd ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 69-71.

[84] Special Service Office, Kirkuk, "Report No. 7 for Period Ending June 2nd 1931," 2 June 1931, AIR 23/338, UK.

[85] Special Service Office, Kirkuk, "Special Service Officer's Report No. 6 for the Period Ending 19th May 1931," 19 May 1931, AIR 23/338, UK.

his administration in Arbil characterized it as "anti-Kurdish" and worried that it had provoked resentment among Kurdish tribes, ultimately recommending that he be replaced by a Kurdish *mutasarrif*.[86]

On a popular level, though, Kirkuki Turkmens sometimes felt disempowered. In a historical-ethnographic reading of Turkish-language Iraqi poetry from the 1930s, Guldem Buyuksarac finds that Turkmen poets exhibit a sense of loss stemming from their disengagement from a Turkish-dominated nation upon the creation and consolidation of Iraq. While these discourses may not be expressions of political ethnic nationalism, precisely speaking, she posits that they are indicative of a Turkmen "ethno-national culture."[87] In one very telling instance of grievance in 1942, Turkmen students from Kirkuk sent a petition to the legation of the Republic of Turkey in Baghdad complaining that they were being mistreated by Arabs and Kurds at Kirkuk schools. According to a British summary of the petition, the students claimed:

> (a) that they were prisoners of the Arabs and Kurds and, that though KIRKUK was a Turkish town, the Kurds were living a better life than they did and (b) that the Kurds were depriving them of their rights and were trying to instal a government of their own. The document went on to state that many of the students were excluded from the school, that ATATURK was abused in the school yard, and reference was made to fifty Turcoman students being sent away from school for a week by the headmaster, etc.[88]

While this account of the Turkmen students' plight is indirect and its details cannot be corroborated, the fact that the students in question complained to Turkish diplomats and specifically cited Kurds' and Arabs' purported disrespect for Mustafa Kemal Atatürk

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[86] Untitled copy of memorandum from Adviser to H.E., c. 1930, CO 730/157/5, UK; A.J.B. Chapman, "Annual Liaison Report for 1938," File 162461, BP.

[87] Buyuksarac, "The Poetics of Loss and the Poetics of Melancholy," 140-43.

[88] E.K. Wood, "Tribal and Political Weekly Intelligence Summary No. 71," 22 June 1942, WO 208/1567, UK.

indicates the power of the idea that Kirkuki Turkmens were facing hardships *as ethnically Turkic people* at the hands of members of other ethnic groups. The oblique mention of the Kurdish national movement in this passage suggests that, in addition to exacerbating divisions between the Kurds and Baghdad, Kirkuki Turkmens perceived ongoing Kurdish separatist activities as harmful to their community by this time. It is significant that a Turkmen notion of imminent Kurdish ascendancy as a threat existed by the 1940s, as the fulfillment of this possibility on a local level in Kirkuk immediately following the 1958 revolution would go on to spark intercommunal violence.

Kirkuk's developing relationship with Baghdad in the post-mandate monarchy era thus lent ever more salience to ethnic group identities. It is especially important to recognize the various divisive aspects of Baghdad's influence in Kirkuk because existing analyses of the flourishing of territorial-nationalist discourses and their offshoots in the twentieth-century Middle East often focus on how these ideas essentially *unified* people of different sectarian, ethnic, ideological, and/or familial backgrounds. Orit Bashkin, for instance, concentrates on the "shared universe of discourse" that Iraqi intellectuals created in the Hashemite era.[89] Israel Gershoni and James Jankowski, writing about Egyptian discourses of the nation, analyze what they describe as the process of "collective self-definition."[90] This tendency also exists in urbanist scholarship; for instance, in a study of Damascus during the era of the French mandate, Philip Khoury

[89] Bashkin, *The Other Iraq*, 7.

[90] Israel Gershoni and James P. Jankowski, *Redefining the Egyptian Nation, 1930-1945* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), xi.

demonstrates how the rise of Syrian nationalism and other extralocal foci of identity "began to corrode traditional ties to the quarter, family, clan, and confessional group."[91]

These arguments are cogent when applied to Middle Eastern metropolises, but may be much less relevant outside of them. Kirkuk, a provincial city located on a political and ethnolinguistic borderland, is a remarkably illustrative example of how centralizing power and the promotion of a politics of loyalty to the nascent nation in which a certain municipality is located can actually play a role in reinforcing urban social divisions and the distinctness of corresponding group identities. Altogether, the development of ethnicized identities in Kirkuk was a key aspect of the evolution of the city's local political affairs, a domain in which Kirkukis were increasingly invested.

Conditions "not fit for civilized men": the Iraqi Communist Party and the 1946 strike

The combination of Baghdad's influence, growing political consciousness, and growing tensions in Kirkuk in relation to the IPC culminated in a catastrophic strike in 1946 that would shape the city's political and economic trajectory until 1958. The IPC was a key site in which the British government pursued its interests in Kirkuk, albeit not without some conflict with company officials' desires. It was natural that the company would serve as the arena in which Kirkuk's post-mandate political frictions would first become violently apparent, as it was an influential and even semi-sovereign entity in its own right that continuously shaped urban affairs. Notably, however, the organization that spearheaded the strike, the Iraqi Communist Party, did not emerge from or align with ethnic or other identity-based political groupings in Kirkuk. Instead, it mobilized workers

[91] Khoury, "Syrian Urban Politics in Transition," 509.

on the basis of a nonsectarian form of anti-colonialism in which the IPC served as a symbol of Western influence in Iraq.[92]

The idea of the company as a manifestation of imperialism resonated with Kirkukis because of the highly independent and aloof way in which the IPC operated in Kirkuk, a tendency that the Iraqi government bolstered. Baghdad's view of the nature of the company's position in the city is suggested by a letter from the Iraqi Minister of Economics and Communications to the company written in April 1939, amidst geopolitical turmoil and the immediate possibility of war in Europe. The minister indicated that, as far as the Iraqi government was concerned, the IPC was solely responsible for the defense of its oil fields against possible enemy air raids, including the purchase of anti-aircraft weapons.[93] In other words, the Iraqi government treated the company as though it were a separate governing body with complete authority, even in a military-strategic capacity, over its concession.

Given its powerful influence within Kirkuk, the company's isolation from its workers and from the everyday life of the city at this time was remarkable. The IPC's executives and their families, who were primarily British expatriates, lived in a company camp slightly northwest of the city in close proximity to Baba Gurgur. Like many expatriate enclaves in the developing world, the camp had its own social facilities for expatriate and Iraqi staff-level employees. The company also had its own police force and airplane fleet. It operated private flights to other company sites, including Baghdad, Basra, and some areas outside of Iraq. Employees could book seats on these flights for

[92] While "nonsectarian" often specifically means "not related to religious sects," I use the term "nonsectarian" in this dissertation in a less literal sense—broadly, "not related to group identities, including ethnic ones."

[93] Omar Nadhmi to The Iraq Petroleum Company, 30 April 1939, FO 371/23215, UK.

official purposes or for their family members' leisure; one former Iraqi staff-level employee recalls reserving seats on flights to Baghdad for his wife when she wanted to take a day trip to the capital to go shopping.[94]

The IPC's distance from the urban center of Kirkuk, as well as the very notion of their dwelling as a "camp" or small inorganic territory, was a physical manifestation of the social segregation that they created and perpetuated in the city. This type of segregation, well known in colonial cities, was also a phenomenon in the communities surrounding oil-producing areas in the Middle East during the era of foreign-owned oil companies, as Robert Vitalis has documented.[95] Furthermore, the company's Iraqi workers did not reside anywhere near the company camp. The IPC's initial building plans in Kirkuk, made in 1930, indicate that they had planned to construct permanent housing in or near the company camp for a large proportion of their Iraqi employees, including up to 1,250 "labourers," a category presumably comprising daily-wage workers such as drillers.[96] It is unclear if this plan ever came to fruition in any form. By the mid-1940s, however, the IPC's Iraqi workers in Kirkuk certainly did not have access to any permanent company-subsidized housing or transportation to and from the field.

British diplomats in Iraq and Foreign Office officials in London expressed concern about the lack of functional relations between the company and the local government specifically. For instance, on a visit to Kirkuk in October of 1946, a British embassy counselor remarked that these relations were so poor that the IPC fields manager, M.S. Mainland, did not even know the name of the new *mutasarrif* of the

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[94] Samarrai, interview, 9 June 2011; Yacu, interview, 8 June 2011.

[95] Vitalis, *America's Kingdom*.

[96] "Fields Gathering Line Scheme with Tentative Estimates," 13 June 1930, File 164082, BP.

Kirkuk province.[97] In general, British government officials were eager both to foster British political influence in Kirkuk and to ensure the involvement of the IPC in that process. IPC officials' responses to these efforts appear to have been tepid. One British official visiting Kirkuk in 1948 remarked that he was under the impression that the IPC actually discouraged social contacts between expatriates and members of the local community, vividly describing the relationship between the IPC's management and the local laborers as being "outwardly that of 'sahibs' and 'niggers.'" This problem, he wrote, was exacerbated by the differences in their living conditions and the executives' physical distance from the city.[98] The IPC's inattention to local interests was also reflected in its mostly nonexistent relations with its Kirkuki workforce up until the strike of 1946.[99]

A comparative lack of attention by the British government to labor issues in Kirkuk prior to 1946 suggests that despite their professed concerns about the previous trajectory of IPC-Kirkuki relations, they, too, did not notice any problems until the strike occurred. For instance, in a September 1945 letter to the Foreign Secretary, British embassy counselor G.H. Thompson noted that Iraq's labor conditions required improvement in general but that, as an exception, "the Oil Companies always take an enlightened and liberal view of their obligations to their workers."[100] Thompson's comment reflects the fact that British officials were not opposed to certain kinds of

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[97] "Oil: IPC Labour Welfare," 25 October 1946, FO 624/105, UK.

[98] F. Wells, "Oil: Iraq Petroleum Coy.," 7 April 1948, FO 624/130, UK.

[99] Even later reports, including a 1950 report, criticized the distance between IPC management and workers: W. J. Hull, "Visit to I.P.C., Kirkuk Fields, 15-18 August 1950," August 1950, LAB 13/672, UK.

[100] G. H. Thompson to Ernest Bevin, 28 September 1945, LAB 13/193, UK.

progressive labor practices, even in imperial outposts. Indeed, under British auspices, Iraq had developed a relatively liberal set of labor laws by Middle Eastern standards; the problem lay in their lack of implementation by the Iraqi government and industries.[101] It is therefore not surprising that both British officials and the IPC were blindsided by the Kirkuk oil workers' strike of July 1946. The strike occurred after decades of government indifference, and British obliviousness, to Kirkuk's urban affairs.

In this environment of discontent, the presence of a large-scale industrial employer in Kirkuk provided an opportunity for labor organization to emerge in the city for the first time. The Iraqi government had outlawed strikes in 1932, using this law as a pretense to ban unions. Unions were otherwise not specifically prohibited under the labor system that had developed during the mandate era. The government then began to sanction unions in 1944, but remained averse to their formation and activities.[102] Unions appeared in response to several immense difficulties that workers faced. Foremost among them were low wages, which had proven to be increasingly inadequate to cover the skyrocketing cost of living since the British invasion of 1941.[103] Among IPC workers, the lack of access to housing and transport was another major issue. The attempt to form a union in the IPC in Kirkuk also followed a longstanding precedent of workers' organization in the Middle Eastern oil industry. Indeed, labor action had even previously taken place within the IPC itself at its Kirkuk-Haifa pipeline terminus in mandate Palestine. Employees of the IPC in Haifa—a workforce made up Palestinian Arabs and Jews who were, as far as is known, not acting in coordination with Kirkuki workers—

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[101] Sassoon, *Economic Policy in Iraq*, 260.

[102] Ibid., 256-60.

[103] Tripp, *A History of Iraq*, 113.

began to go on periodic strikes for higher wages in 1935, almost immediately after the inauguration of the pipeline. These strikes took place in the context of the highly active and complex local labor movement in Palestine.[104] While the roots of labor organization in Haifa were not immediately relevant to 1940s Kirkuk, they demonstrate the IPC's potential as a fertile ground for actions stemming both from workers' grievances and from idiosyncratic political circumstances.

As was the case in both Iraq and Iran, unionizing efforts in Middle Eastern oil companies were often inspired by communist methods. For instance, communists had played a key role in a strike in the Iranian oil town of Abadan as early as 1929. The Iraqi Communist Party, first formed in 1935, was not legally sanctioned by the Iraqi government, but it attracted a large following and gained considerable political power despite repeatedly facing suppression and censorship. Kirkuki IPC workers' action began in 1937, when the IPC's workforce briefly went on strike twice as part of nationwide labor action in response to poor industrial working conditions; the Iraqi Communist Party had played a role in spurring the general strike.[105] Significantly, the Iranian communist Tudeh Party later led a strike of oil workers that began days after the Kirkuk strike ended in 1946.[106] The exact nature of the connection between the Kirkuk and Abadan strikes of

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[104] Zachary Lockman, *Comrades and Enemies: Arab and Jewish Workers in Palestine, 1906-1948* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996), 232-34, 327-32.

[105] A.J.B. Chapman, "Annual Liaison Report for 1937," File 162461, BP; Batatu, *The Old Social Classes*, 443-44.

[106] For an in-depth study of the 1929 strike, see Stephanie Cronin, "Popular Politics, the New State, and the Birth of the Iranian Working Class: The 1929 Abadan Oil Refinery Strike," *Middle Eastern Studies* 46, no. 5 (2010). The 1946 strike, and the Tudeh Party's relationship with the urban working class in general, is analyzed in Ervand Abrahamian, *Iran Between Two Revolutions* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1982), 347-75.

1946, if any, remains unclear.[107] Nonetheless, both strikes reflect the fact that communists in the region, including those of the emergent Iraqi Communist Party, began to concentrate on organizing oil workers in the 1940s and found the local employees of these foreign-owned companies to be receptive to their efforts.

There were 54 active members of the Iraqi Communist Party in urban Kirkuk in the 1940s, constituting 5.3% of the Party's total recorded nationwide membership (most of whom were located in Baghdad). One of these Kirkuki activists was in the Party's central committee, while five more were at mid-level ranks. Two of the latter had worked for the Party in other cities.[108] Organizational efforts within the IPC were led by an experienced member of the Party from Baghdad, Hanna Ilyas. Along with some other Iraqi Communists, Ilyas had moved to Kirkuk and had specifically sought employment with the oil company as part of the Party's operations.[109]

In January 1946, a pamphlet that was almost certainly authored by Party members, typifying the language they used and the specific grievances they often cited, circulated among IPC employees. According to the English translation of the document that an IPC official submitted to company headquarters in London, the employees decried their low standard of living, contrasting it with the profits gleaned from the extraction of oil by "imperialistic foreigners." The pamphlet also stated that the workers' situation could "not be considered fit for any free and civilized man in the age of the atomic bomb," reflecting a desire to achieve a universally recognized form of modernity that

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[107] There does not appear to have been a direct organizational linkage between these strikes, but their similar timing is unlikely to have been entirely coincidental since Iraqi and Iranian communists were in communication with one another: Batatu, *The Old Social Classes*, 579-80.

[108] Ibid., 1188-89.

[109] Ibid., 622.

would later characterize many of Iraq's development projects, including those in Kirkuk. The authors criticized their low wages, lack of housing and adequate food, and severe working conditions. They ended with a call for IPC workers to unionize.[110]

Under the tutelage of workers who were Party members, the IPC's employees subsequently tried and failed to form a union but constituted a fifteen-member workers' committee in June 1946. Though sanctioned by the company, five of its members were Party operatives. When the company rejected the committee's demands for the improvement of workers' welfare through such measures as an increase in daily laborers' minimum wage, the right to unionize, and the creation of pensions, the now well-organized Party members successfully orchestrated a strike that began on 3 July 1946.[111] The ongoing labor action became a public event highly visible to Kirkukis outside of the company as striking workers gathered daily in Gawurbaghi, a large garden on the western outskirts of Kirkuk about a kilometer south of the company camp. The strike continued relatively uneventfully for over a week before its brutal suppression. On 12 July, Kirkuk's *mutasarrif*, Hasan Fahmi, sent police to intervene in the strikers' gathering, where they eventually opened fire. At least ten workers and perhaps as many as eighteen were killed, and many more were wounded.[112] The strike ended on 16 July, a day after the IPC agreed to raise the workers' minimum wages as a stopgap measure.[113]

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[110] "Iraq During the Year 1945," File 162461, BP; "Iraq During the Year 1946," File 162461, BP.

[111] Batatu, *The Old Social Classes*, 622-23.

[112] Ibid., 624. ; R. Goddard-Wilson to Sir Hugh Stonehewer Bird, 7 May 1947, FO 371/61637, UK; Sir M. Peterson to Foreign Office, 25 July 1946, FO 371/52456, UK.

[113] Batatu, *The Old Social Classes*, 624.

While the police's violent actions had occurred on Iraqi orders, the strike's disastrous ending badly damaged the political position of the British establishment in Kirkuk, a fact of which IPC officials, British diplomats, and the Foreign Office were acutely conscious. The IPC and British government officials also feared the potency of communism among the company's Iraqi employees and hoped to work against it. Therefore, in response to the strike, the IPC immediately launched a series of urban development initiatives in collaboration with the local and provincial administrations as well as the central government; some of these initiatives took place at the governments' prompting. The first major project, IPC workers' housing, was a direct response to the strike. In subsequent months and years, political forces, development ideologies, and genuine necessity combined to draw the IPC, the British government and different Iraqi administrations into educational projects, selective dialogue with oil workers, and citywide infrastructural projects. These projects, as well as the emergent discourse of Kirkuk as Iraq's "oil city" and a symbol of modernity, will be the subject of Chapter 4.

Conclusion

In the era of Kirkuk's initial rapid growth after the discovery of oil, its burgeoning local political domain gradually rendered obsolete the patronage politics that had characterized what had formerly been a provincial town reliant on external forces. These forces, especially the Iraqi central government and the British official presence in Iraq, certainly remained powerful in Kirkuk. But the city's affairs increasingly came to revolve around the oil industry, both as an institution and as a social and political agent. The IPC's presence spurred both the beginnings of communist organization and the dramatic

demographic shifts that left the previously dominant Turkmen community, in particular, fearing its progressive loss of preeminence. Kirkuk's importance to Iraq as the center of its oil industry and the location of its only known supergiant oil field intensified Baghdad's motives for integrating the city and region into its domain, an effort that interacted with the nuances of the local status quo in divisive ways.

While such state-making efforts tended to cause more political divisions that fell along ethnic lines than had been present during the mandate era, the most potent form of popular mobilization that emerged in the watershed moment of July 1946 was a non-ethnic, fundamentally aggregating movement based on communist and anti-imperialist ideas. This trend demonstrates the complexity of the development of Kirkuki identity politics in the early years of Iraqi independence—while they gained significance in certain contexts, they did not yet frame the city's political domain or definitively determine most Kirkukis' interests. The next decade would see the construction of a distinct Kirkuki civic identity both inside and outside of the region as the "oil city" became an ever more compelling symbol of Iraq's political-economic and ideological trajectory.

4. The Politics, Ideology and Discourses of Urban Development in Kirkuk, 1946-1958

Introduction: The "city of black gold"

In 1951, the Iraq Petroleum Company began publication of two monthly magazines which circulated in the United Kingdom and in the Arab world: *Iraq Petroleum* in English, and *Ahl al-Naft* (People of Oil) in Arabic. While these magazines primarily served to draw positive attention to Iraq's development projects, particularly those the company was leading or with which it was assisting, they also featured articles on a variety of other general-interest subjects, as well as cartoons and poetry. Much of the magazines' output described the changes taking place in Kirkuk. In one instance, the February 1958 issue of *Ahl al-Naft* featured a poem about Kirkuk titled "The Eternal Fire" (*Al-Nar al-Khalida*), a reference to the perpetual natural gas fires of Baba Gurgur. The poem was credited to a writer named Bashir Mustafa.

> Kirkuk, O city of black gold,
> This flame of yours does not have a hearth
> as though your insides burned
> blazingly, bursting forth from a closed heart
> that complains with tongues of flame superiorly
> and the superiority of the complainers is the greatest glory
> and it draws with the lights the clearest picture
> of what grief and rebellion it suffers
>
> Kirkuk, I don't know! Did the verse of a poet
> shake my conscience unintentionally?
> Or my devil, which worships the Magi,
> saw, near the flame, the holiest temple![1]

[1] Bashir Mustafa, "Al-Nar al-Khalida," *Ahl al-Naft*, February 1958, 24. Copyright Iraq Petroleum Company; reproduced with permission. The translation is my own.

In this piece, Mustafa employs a form and meter common in classical Arabic poetry. The poet's references at the end of the poem to his "devil" (*shaytani*) and to the worship of the Magi are further indications of his engagement with pre-Islamic literary tropes. These archaic elements contrast starkly with Iraqi literary trends of the time period in which the poem was written and published. Beginning in the late 1940s, the Iraqi poets Badr Shakir al-Sayyab and Nazik al-Malaʾika led the Arabic literary world in challenging traditional poetic forms through their innovative use of free verse.[2] In this context, Mustafa's work comes across as bombastic, and his persistent descriptions of the Baba Gurgur fires with reference to Kirkuk create an unusually dramatic image of the city as volatile and passionate. The most striking aspect of the poem is the poet's reverence for Kirkuk's mineral resources. The fires that Mustafa glorifies are the surface-level manifestation of Kirkuk's natural gas. His concluding suggestion that he may have been moved to write the poem because the city of Kirkuk is "the holiest temple" emphasizes the fact that this temple is "near the flame," the proof of the city's riches. The poem juxtaposes ancient images with the modern city; the phrase "city of black gold" comes to invoke both.

"The Eternal Fire" is emblematic of the discourses that accompanied Kirkuk's urban development projects in the aftermath of the 1946 strike and up until the Iraqi revolution of 1958. Amidst the interactions that constituted much of the processes of these projects, the IPC, British government, and Iraqi government operated on the assumption that urban development could counter the influence of communism and lead to the attainment of modernity. Their public expressions of the goals and achievements of

[2] See for instance: Terri DeYoung, *Placing the Poet: Badr Shakir al-Sayyab and Postcolonial Iraq* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1998), 191-96.

development projects reinforced this ideological framework by stressing the advances made in infrastructure and housing as part of the undertaking of integrating Kirkuk into a Western-led capitalist system. At the same time, both Westerners and local intellectuals wrote about Kirkuk's ancient past, tracing the city's path to what they perceived as a thriving present, which they portrayed as the natural culmination of thousands of years of history combined with the discovery of plentiful natural resources and the helpful intervention of the IPC. The tone of these discourses formed a sharp contrast with the scorn for urban Kirkuk that British officials had exhibited in the mandate era. Mustafa's poem demonstrates one way that Iraqis and non-Iraqis alike combined a consciousness of history and the promotion of contemporary development symbiotically in the concept of Kirkuk as the Iraqi oil city.

The presence of oil in Kirkuk shaped both the trajectory of urban development and its political and social implications. A large percentage of Kirkuk's population worked for the IPC, making the strain in its labor affairs that had culminated in the 1946 strike an urgent problem. This urgency led to interventions, including a home-ownership scheme and company involvement in labor organization, to promote capitalist ideals. Notably, the IPC's projects began before the Iraqi government started to pursue large-scale development and modernization initiatives in 1950. Discourses of the "oil city" bolstered these schemes and created a space in which a Kirkuki civic identity developed alongside active efforts by the IPC to ensure that its workers were invested, literally and figuratively, in urban Kirkuk. The fact that the oil industry had greater access to resources and materials and a more advanced infrastructure than the Kirkuk municipality allowed the IPC to spearhead housing, water and other public-works projects, setting precedents

for subsequent Iraqi governments to follow and inspiring similar schemes by other oil companies throughout the Middle East. Finally, as the site where Iraq's oil wealth was produced, Kirkuk was of vital importance to the Iraqi and British governments. Both Iraqi and British officials on several levels pressured the IPC to act in ways that would benefit their interests. In turn, the IPC learned to leverage its growing local political influence. Notwithstanding the positive aspects of Kirkuk's urban development projects, segregation between ethnic groups in Kirkuk may have been hardened by the schemes' focus on creating a middle class that disproportionately excluded the growing Kurdish community. Kirkuk's local political domain and its communities' distinct group identities therefore simultaneously became more salient.

IPC housing schemes in Kirkuk: the making of "small-scale capitalists"

A twelve-year period of activity surrounding urban development projects in Kirkuk commenced in 1946 with a workers' housing scheme. The striking oil workers of July 1946 had made six demands that were similar to the demands made by the Communist-led workers' committee that preceded them. The first demand was that the IPC construct housing for its employees or, in the absence of doing so, grant them an allowance for their rent.[3] The notion of a large company providing housing for its workers was not unprecedented in Iraq; according to a 20 July 1946 letter from the British ambassador, Hugh Stonehewer Bird, to Iraqi Foreign Minister Fadhil al-Jamali, three Iraqi government-run companies housed their employees at the time. Indeed, as previously mentioned, the IPC itself had initially planned to provide housing to workers

[3] Hugh Stonehewer Bird to Ernest Bevin, 19 July 1946, FO 371/52456, UK.

in the early 1930s. However, Stonehewer Bird's letter to Jamali held that expecting the IPC to provide such housing or a rent allowance was unreasonable and could lead to similar demands from workers in all sorts of other industries.[4]

At the same time, there was some internal British recognition that the strikers' demand for housing was fair and that fulfilling it might be necessary. The Foreign Office and the Iraqi government, who were particularly concerned with preventing further Communist Party exploitation of workers' grievances, immediately recognized while the strike was still ongoing that the strikers' concerns about pay and housing were "legitimate."[5] In the aftermath of the Kirkuk strike, the Iraqi parliament passed Law No. 29 of 1947 requiring all companies employing over 100 workers to provide housing for their employees.[6] For its part, the IPC also came to acknowledge that, in the words of company official H.H. Wheatley, "most of the Labour troubles at Kirkuk—although sometimes politically inspired—have resulted in showing up weaknesses in our provision of welfare and amenities." Writing in the context of an impending budget cut that could have affected the company's housing plans, Wheatley warned that the postponement of building would "have a very serious effect on our Labour."[7] Consequently, the IPC had drawn up plans for workers' housing by November 1946.[8] These rapid actions demonstrate that the political tensions created by oil were inextricably intertwined with Kirkuk's urban affairs. In order to salvage their political positions in the city, the Iraqi

[4] Hugh Stonehewer Bird to Fadhil al-Jamali, 20 July 1946, FO 371/52456, UK.

[5] Foreign Office to Bagdad, 12 July 1946, FO 371/52459, UK.

[6] Fahim I. Qubain, *The Reconstruction of Iraq: 1950-1957* (New York: Praeger, 1958), 247. However, Qubain noted that the law had not yet been enforced as at the time of his writing in 1958.

[7] H.H. Wheatley to Managing Director, 15 February 1949, File 135819, BP.

[8] "Oil: IPC Labour Welfare," 21 November 1946, FO 624/105, UK.

government, British government, and IPC chose first to pursue urban development projects.

Just as importantly, though, the actions taken by these establishments illustrate the ideological underpinnings of initial development efforts in Iraq. Specifically, British officials sought to promote capitalist ideas in Kirkuk and to underscore what they viewed as, in G.H. Thompson's aforementioned words, the "enlightened" Western approach to labor. For instance, in mid-August 1946, British Embassy official Douglas L. Busk wrote to the Foreign Office that housing schemes, among other projects, would be a necessary measure to counter Communist influence. Busk noted that Britain had a "double interest" in undertaking such projects: first, to address the "commercial concerns" of British-led companies such as the IPC, and second, to maintain what he considered to be Britain's status as "the world's pioneer in the promotion of social justice."[9] At the same time, the IPC showed signs of leveraging their political influence in Kirkuk by fashioning their Iraqi employees into "small-scale capitalists," a phrase employed in a British consular report describing an agreement between the IPC and the Eastern Bank to allow Iraqi employees to set aside a portion of their wages in accounts with interest. According to the consul, the IPC fields manager viewed the instilling of capitalism in the workers as a way to "give them a stake in the stability of the country."[10]

Therefore, with a combination of political urgency and an ideological basis, construction began on the workers' housing on IPC property northwest of Kirkuk's urban center within months of the strike. According to a 1950 British government report, the

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[9] Douglas L. Busk to Ernest Bevin, 13 August 1946, LAB 13/193, UK.

[10] Guy H. Clarke, "Political Report for Kirkuk, Erbil and Sulaimania Liwas – February, 1950," 28 February 1950, FO 624/186, UK.

Arrapha Estate, named for the ancient Assyrian city whose site was near present-day Kirkuk, consisted of 246 "bungalows" for Iraqi personnel (Figure 4.1).[11] By 1955, there were over 450 houses.[12] By that time, there were about 6,200 monthly-rate and daily-rate employees of the IPC in Iraq, the majority of whom were native Iraqis in Kirkuk; hence, the percentage of workers and their families housed by the company was still fairly small but growing.[13] Housing was allocated according to workers' family size.[14] A 1950 British government report by W.J. Hull described the Arrapha Estate houses, which were designed in London, as being "built of good local kiln-fired brick" (Figure 4.2). The houses consisted of three or four rooms and had ceiling fans; some of the more expensive ones had central heating. A large number of smaller, two-room houses were in the process of being built.[15] The estate eventually came to include grocers and other basic shops constructed by the company for the benefit of its residents.[16]

Unsurprisingly, Hull also noted that the estate was "completely separated from Kirkuk town." He also observed that there was a serious shortage of housing in Kirkuk for those who were not in the IPC's employ. On these topics, he remarked,

> Until more is done either by the local authority or the I.P.C. or both, the contrast between the highly efficient modern industrial undertaking under foreign management, and the ramshackle oriental city will remain, and the sense of a sharp cleavage between the two may increase. It is a situation not without its dangers.[17]

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[11] W.J. Hull, "Visit to I.P.C., Kirkuk Fields, 15-18 August 1950," August 1950, LAB 13/672, UK.

[12] "Guide to Kirkuk," c. 1955, File 119015, BP.

[13] "Personnel Statistics for 31st December 1954, All Areas Summary," File 39649, BP.

[14] P.R.A. Ensor to Tripoli, 10 February 1951, File 135818, BP.

[15] Hull, "Visit to I.P.C., Kirkuk Fields, 15-18 August 1950."

[16] "Block of New Shops for Arrapha Estate," *Iraq Petroleum*, August 1953, 43.

[17] Hull, "Visit to I.P.C., Kirkuk Fields, 15-18 August 1950."

Figure 4.1: An aerial view of the Arrapha Estate in 1951. An unknown IPC employee drew red arrows on this photograph to indicate the locations of the houses that had been built so far (bifurcated arrow in center), the estate's shop units (leftmost arrow), and the company camp's sports pavilion (arrow in bottom right). The expatriate executives' houses, ringed by gardens, are visible in the lower half of the photo. Source: File 49717, BP. Reproduced with permission from the BP Archive.

Figure 4.2: Two boys stand in a road adjacent to a block of houses in the Arrapha Estate, c. 1953. Source: DSIR 4/3021, UK. Reproduced with permission from the National Archives of the United Kingdom.

Hull's characterization of the "modern" company camp in opposition to the "oriental" city reflects a preoccupation on the part of British officials with order and capitalist efficiency in urban growth. His observations corresponded with the company's sense that uneasiness persisted in Kirkuk following the beginning of construction in the Arrapha Estate. As early as 1949, an IPC report had stressed that the company housing option should not be made "too attractive financially" for fear that this would create tensions between workers housed in Arrapha and those continuing to live in urban Kirkuk. The report recommended that the company continue to provide all workers, regardless of where they lived, with a "high cost-of-living" allowance.[18] The 1956 Iraqi housing census found that the average rent of a house in central Kirkuk was ID 5.251 per month, an amount easily covered by the IPC's allowance for daily-wage workers around that time.[19] Still, these perceived tensions, combined with the desire on the part of the British government and the IPC to promote capitalism among the company's workers, led to the IPC's idea of initiating a "home ownership scheme." Though innovative in the context of the Middle East, the concept of the scheme derived from the building societies that had arisen in Industrial Revolution-era Britain and dominated the British mortgage market. Under this scheme, "thrifty" Iraqi employees would obtain a loan from the Eastern Bank to buy plots of land in urban Kirkuk and build their own houses with the company's

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[18] W.V. Fuller, "Report on Kirkuk Housing Scheme," 25 Aug 1949, File 135819, BP. The report debates, based on advice from an Iraqi lawyer, whether or not workers should be charged rent at all.

[19] "Monthly Rent of Houses and Rooms in I.D., Kirkuk Liwa (1956 Housing Census)," Iraq Reports R-QA 460-525, March 1957, Archive Files 23904, DA. The cost-of-living allowance in 1954 ranged between about ID 5.4 and 12.5 per month depending on the worker's wage: Baghdad to London, 6 April 1954, File 163884, BP.

financial and logistical assistance, thereby becoming property owners. The home ownership scheme began to come to fruition in the fall of 1950.[20]

The IPC viewed the home ownership scheme as a way to link their aim of maintaining political leverage with their ideology of urban development. For instance, in January of 1951, an IPC memorandum enumerated three principal reasons for the pursuit of the scheme that reflected the company's concerns with regard to its relationship with the city of Kirkuk and the political practices and beliefs of its workers. First, the company wanted to make a visible contribution to Kirkuk economically, since the city did not exhibit the benefits of the IPC's "cash disbursements" to the Iraqi government, which generally went to Baghdad. Second, the company believed that the scheme would relieve them of the costly burden of a major expansion of the Arrapha Estate. Third, they felt the scheme would "encourage the employee to make good use of his wages in the improvement of his standard of living and give him a positive stake in the community of the town of which he is a member."[21] Less than a month later, IPC official P.R.A. Ensor marked the IPC's shift in priorities when, in a letter to the company's general management in Tripoli, he asserted, "in Kirkuk we must regard [the home ownership scheme] as the more important" housing project.[22] Ultimately, the scheme proved to be successful enough in the company's view that the IPC and its associated firms proceeded to duplicate it in other parts of the Middle East, including Syria and the United Arab

[20] "Notes on I.P.C. Group Meeting on 9th November 1950," File 60550, BP; "Chairman's Speech for Inaugural Ceremony at Kirkuk," c. 1952, File 65577, BP.

[21] H.S. Gibson, "House Building in Kirkuk Town," 30 January 1951, File 135819, BP.

[22] P.R.A. Ensor to Tripoli, 10 February 1951, File 135818, BP.

Emirates, for years to come.[23] The American-owned Arabian American Oil Company (ARAMCO) in Saudi Arabia also went on to inaugurate a similar scheme in 1953.[24]

By the end of 1954, 202 houses had been built and 19 purchased in Kirkuk under the scheme.[25] A 1955 IPC map indicates that the plots of land purchased or in the process of being purchased under the home ownership scheme were overwhelmingly on the west side of the Khasa River in newer *mahallas* rather than in the older *mahallas* in and around the citadel on the east side, implying that the scheme aimed primarily to construct in areas that were not yet integrated into the urban fabric and that it did not replace any historic buildings. The largest concentrations of these plots of land were in *mahallas* in northwestern Kirkuk that were in relatively close proximity to the company camp, particularly Al-Mas and Beglar. There were also some collections of plots in *mahallas* closer to the center of the city or the railway station in the southwest, such as Shatirlu, Sari Kahya and Tisʿin. Plots associated with the scheme on the east side of the river were few, more scattered, and generally in newer areas on the outskirts of the older neighborhoods. However, the poor and rapidly growing Kurdish neighborhood of Shorija, unlike most of Kirkuk's younger *mahallas*, had no plots of land associated with the IPC's home ownership scheme as of this time.[26] The fact that the IPC was not constructing in Shorija is indicative of the home ownership scheme's focus on creating a middle class.

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[23] See for instance: documents in File 163897, BP, particularly C.K. O'Ferrall to A.F. Ensor, 4 November 1970, which discusses the Abu Dhabi scheme.

[24] Ian Seccombe and Richard Lawless, *Work Camps and Company Towns: Settlement Patterns and the Gulf Oil Industry* (Durham: University of Durham, Centre for Middle Eastern and Islamic Studies, 1987), 40.

[25] "Industrial Relations, 1954," 26 April 1955, File 39649, BP.

[26] IPC Lands Department, "Kirkuk Town, 1955," map, File 163897, BP.

Shorija's separation from IPC housing construction, both physically and socioeconomically, is also consistent with a pattern of inequalities in urban Kirkuk corresponding to ethnic group identities that long predated the presence of the IPC but was exacerbated by its hiring practices. A former IPC staff member whom I interviewed echoed anecdotal reports that Kirkuki IPC employees in clerical positions like his own were mostly of either Turkmen or Assyrian origin. This outcome is predictable in light of the Turkmens' historically higher socioeconomic status in Kirkuk and the Assyrians' longtime association, whether it was advantageous to them or not, with British authorities. The Kurds and Arabs who worked for the IPC, on the other hand, tended to hold daily-wage unskilled labor positions; some worked in skilled labor or as technicians.[27] Some authors, including Nouri Talabany, claim that Kurds made up a much smaller proportion of the company's workforce as a whole relative to their strength in Kirkuk's population.[28] Since the IPC does not appear to have kept track of or even internally discussed its employees' ethnic backgrounds in any official capacity, this is difficult to verify with any precision.[29] Talabany reiterates a frequent argument about the IPC's impact in Kirkuk: namely, that its hiring patterns indicated a policy of ethnic discrimination against Kurds that was tied to Baghdad's efforts to increase Arab influence and marginalize Kurds in the Kirkuk region.[30] While a discrepancy in the hiring

[27] George Yacu, interview by the author, 3 June 2011.

[28] Talabani, *Mintaqat Karkuk*, 41.

[29] Officials did sometimes mention differences between Christian and Muslim workers; for instance, a 1953 report on a company educational scheme requiring young entrants to have had three years of secondary education expressed concern that Muslims were less likely to be able to fulfill this requirement. "Note on the Apprentice Entrance Examination," in "Project No. 43 (Revised): Kirkuk Training Institute," File 166111, BP. The Christian-Muslim distinction in the IPC is discussed further below.

[30] See for instance: Anderson and Stansfield, *Crisis in Kirkuk*, 32.

of Kirkuki Kurds for daily-wage positions would be difficult to explain if it did in fact exist, the apparent relative absence of Kurds in the higher levels of the company was almost certainly due to the fact that they were, on average, poorer than Kirkukis of other ethnicities and less likely to have attained the education level requisite for the IPC's skilled and clerical positions.

I contend that the common question of whether or not the IPC (and, in some versions of the argument, the Iraqi government) deliberately followed hiring practices that were prejudicial to Kurds as part of the project to bolster Arab influence lacks nuance and cannot be answered definitively. Instead, it is important to observe that the ethnicization of employment categories in the IPC would have aggravated the socioeconomic stratification in Kirkuk that already corresponded to group identities. Within the IPC, this stratification was so pervasive that its ethnicization would have even resulted in the physical separation of workers of different ethnicities within the company's facilities. For example, there were separate "messes" (cafeterias) for staff and laborers, and the company's hospital at the K1 pumping station had three distinct wards for daily-rate, monthly-rate, and covenanted employees in addition to the medically necessary maternity and outpatient wards.[31] The IPC's fostering of a middle class of skilled and clerical workers who were kept apart from daily-wage workers and who disproportionately consisted of members of politically or socioeconomically privileged ethnic groups is very likely to have contributed to solidifying group identities and negatively impacting intercommunal relations.

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[31] Yacu, interview, 8 June 2011; "Programme for J.M. Pattinson's Visit to Kirkuk, Housing Production and Construction – Iraq Petroleum Co," 22 October 1951, File 49717, BP.

The home ownership scheme's absence in Kirkuk's fastest growing, predominantly Kurdish *mahalla* signals the possible influence of this phenomenon on the urban spatial distribution of different ethnic groups. The conjecture that the segregation of employees at different levels of the company may have been indicative of evolving identity-based disaggregation in urban Kirkuk on a larger scale is also supported by the verifiable ethnoreligious composition of the IPC's housing schemes. While it is difficult to glean from available sources how Iraqi IPC employees and Kirkukis in general viewed these projects, the demographics of each are suggestive of how attitudes toward them were probably affected by the relationship that different communities had with British authorities in Iraq. A 1953 company report observed that the employees who took up residence in Arrapha Estate, which was in close proximity to where the expatriates lived, were mostly "Christians," while the majority of IPC workers who had purchased houses in urban Kirkuk under the home ownership scheme up to that time were "Muslims." According to the report, the company had offered houses in Arrapha Estate to more than 600 employees, and only 68 Muslims had accepted the offer. The report did not mention ethnicities, but Kirkuk's religious categories generally fell along lines of ethnic self-identity. In view of Kirkuk's demographic patterns, it is clear that the Christians living in the Arrapha Estate were mostly Chaldo-Assyrians, while the "Muslim" category comprised the vast majority of Turkmens, Arabs, and Kurds. Indeed, locals nicknamed the Arrapha Estate the "Assyrian Village," and the neighborhood is associated with Chaldo-Assyrians to this day.[32] One IPC official noted that this apparent self-segregation

[32] George Lenczowski, *Oil and State in the Middle East* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1960), 233. For a brief sketch of the Arrapha Estate's demographic composition in the present day, see for instance: Anderson and Stansfield, *Crisis in Kirkuk*, 89.

of ethnoreligious groups into different parts of the city could not "be viewed without disquiet." Echoing British diplomats' concerns from several years earlier, the same official also warned that expanding the company camp northwest of the city would exacerbate the company's disconnect from urban Kirkuk and engender "envy" among the "townsfolk," forming "a focus of resentment against the foreigner."[33]

The IPC's housing schemes therefore did not ameliorate the greatest contributing factor to the unrest that undergirded the 1946 strike: the separation of the company camp from the city's historic urban fabric and the corresponding segregation between expatriates and locals. They may also, despite their relatively small scale, have contributed to divisions between local communities—in particular, the insulation of Chaldo-Assyrians from Kirkuk's urban space and the marginalization of Kurds within the city. As argued in Chapter 3, spatial divisions between Kirkuk's communities existed but were probably neither rigid nor institutionalized in the era of the Hashemite monarchy. By the time of the 1958 revolution, however, the distinctions between ethnic groups, especially Turkmens and Kurds, had become salient enough to fuel a cycle of intercommunal strife. The 1940s- and 1950s-era ethnicized stratification of IPC employment categories—specifically, in light of the linkages these groupings had with housing plans and the attempt to engineer a middle class of "small-scale capitalists"—is an occurrence that demands a close reading despite a lack of conclusive evidence as to the exact nature of these divisions. Part of the complexity of this question stems from the fact that Kirkuk, unlike Middle Eastern oil cities that were designed from the ground up and exhibited obvious ethnic segregation, had a very old urban fabric and a lengthy

[33] "Accommodation at Kirkuk," 6 January 1953, File 135819, BP.

history of intercommunal relations with which the IPC's presence interacted.[34] In any case, there is reason to believe that both the provision of suburban company housing and the urban home ownership scheme would have catalyzed the separation of Kirkuk's ethnic communities in a manner that was inextricably linked with these communities' socioeconomic statuses and their relations with British and Iraqi authorities.

Doxiadis and the Iraqi government's modernization plans in Kirkuk

Another source of discontentment in Kirkuk was the fact that the Iraqi government, for its part, failed to take the initiative to pursue much-needed urban development projects in the provinces. In particular, it allowed the capital generated by the IPC to be spent in enterprises that ultimately benefited Baghdad rather than Kirkuk.[35] When the Iraqi government first turned its attention to large-scale development projects in 1950 after negotiating a new revenue-sharing agreement with the IPC, it focused strongly on the agricultural sector and on rural areas with little, if any, attention to urban issues outside of Baghdad. These projects were administered by the Iraqi Development Board, which was created by an act of parliament in 1950. The Board was a group of several full-time executives, including two foreign "experts" (one British and one American), which oversaw the spending of the 70% of Iraq's oil revenues that the Iraqi

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[34] For example, Ian Seccombe and Richard Lawless characterized the ethnic segregation perpetuated by the Anglo-Iranian Oil Company in the planned company town of Abadan, Iran as "strict" and characterized by "sharp breaks between adjacent areas containing population groups of markedly different status": Seccombe and Lawless, *Work Camps and Company Towns*, 55. For more on the topic of segregation in the AIOC's planned towns in Iran, see: Mark Crinson, "Abadan: Planning and Architecture Under the Anglo-Iranian Oil Company," *Planning Perspectives* 12, no. 3 (1997); Kaveh Ehsani, "Social Engineering and the Contradictions of Modernization in Khuzestan's Company Towns: A Look at Abadan and Masjed-Soleyman," *International Review of Social History* 48(2003).

[35] See for instance: M.T. Audsley, "Report on Visit to Iraq from 8th June to 10th July, 1948," FO 371/68482, UK.

government had set aside for development. The Development Board defined multiple areas, including transportation and industry, in which it planned to invest its funds, but it ultimately concentrated most of its efforts on irrigation and flood control.[36]

This tendency changed to some extent in 1955 in the aftermath of an Iraqi government report on the Development Board's activities authored by a British civil servant, Lord Salter. Salter's report criticized the development initiatives' failure to manifest in the form of tangible improvements to the lives of ordinary Iraqis and expressed concern at the resulting popular resentment.[37] The Iraqi government's interest in diversifying its development projects led it to commission the Greek architect and urban planner Constantinos A. Doxiadis and his firm, Doxiadis Associates, to design master plans for the modernization of major Iraqi cities, including Kirkuk. Doxiadis's work in Iraq proved to be an early stage in what would eventually become a large-scale international practice for his firm. The Iraqi government selected Doxiadis to lead its urban development projects for several reasons, foremost among them that his planning philosophy corresponded with prevailing ideas among Western governments and institutions about achieving modernization through economic development. This philosophy, which he called "ekistics"—or "the science of human settlements"—had the advantage of appearing apolitical on the surface while in reality encompassing what Pascal Menoret describes as "containment urbanism," or the attempt to "prevent rural

[36] Majid Khadduri, *Independent Iraq, 1932-1958: A Study in Iraqi Politics*, 2nd ed. (London: Oxford University Press, 1960), 352-57; Paul W. T. Kingston, *Britain and the Politics of Modernization in the Middle East, 1945-1958* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 103-04.

[37] Lord Salter, *The Development of Iraq* (n.p.: Iraq Development Board, 1955). For other accounts of the Salter report's impact, see: Waldemar Gallman, *Iraq Under General Nuri: My Recollections of Nuri al-Said, 1954-1958* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1964), 106-07; Michael Ionides, *Divide and Lose: The Arab Revolt of 1955-1958* (London: Geoffrey Bles, 1960), 119-26.

migrants from falling for communism" through the construction of features such as wide roads that facilitated state control of cities.[38]

In one of his articles on economic development, Doxiadis argued that a highly systematic approach to construction in provincial areas, with a focus on housing projects, was the key to fighting the "war of liberation from poverty" in the developing world by building settlements that could "integrate all functions towards the emergence of a better and richer life for the people."[39] In accordance with their prescriptive method, Doxiadis Associates' plans for Kirkuk were ambitious and unrealistic; their master plan for the city in keeping with the theory of ekistics rather than with the principle of seeking practical solutions to concrete problems.[40] Nonetheless, these efforts are an indication of the goals that the Iraqi government wanted to achieve in rapidly growing cities like Kirkuk that had large numbers of people, especially recent migrants, living in poverty. Doxiadis's firm envisioned a radical reorganization of the non-differentiated city into separate residential and commercial zones, which they described as a means to impose "control" on its "haphazard" growth. They also called for the creation of open communal spaces, including in the citadel; networks of wide streets; and the construction of nearly 3,000 houses in different parts of the city and other areas of the Kirkuk province by 1965.[41]

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[38] Pascal Menoret, "Development, Planning and Urban Unrest in Saudi Arabia," *The Muslim World* 101, no. 2 (2011): 276-77; Pyla, "Back to the Future," 6-7.

[39] C.A. Doxiadis, "No More Regional Planning: A Move Towards Regional Development Programs," 1958, Articles-Papers 2509, DA.

[40] Similarly, Doxiadis envisioned using "traditional methods of construction" in his Baghdad housing projects in keeping with the idea of organic development, but this idealized practice proved not to be possible at the scale of these projects. Hashim Sarkis, *Circa 1958: Lebanon in the Pictures and Plans of Constantinos Doxiadis* (Beirut: Dar An-Nahar, 2003), 23-25.

[41] Doxiadis Associates, *The Future of Kirkuk*, 24, 49-53.

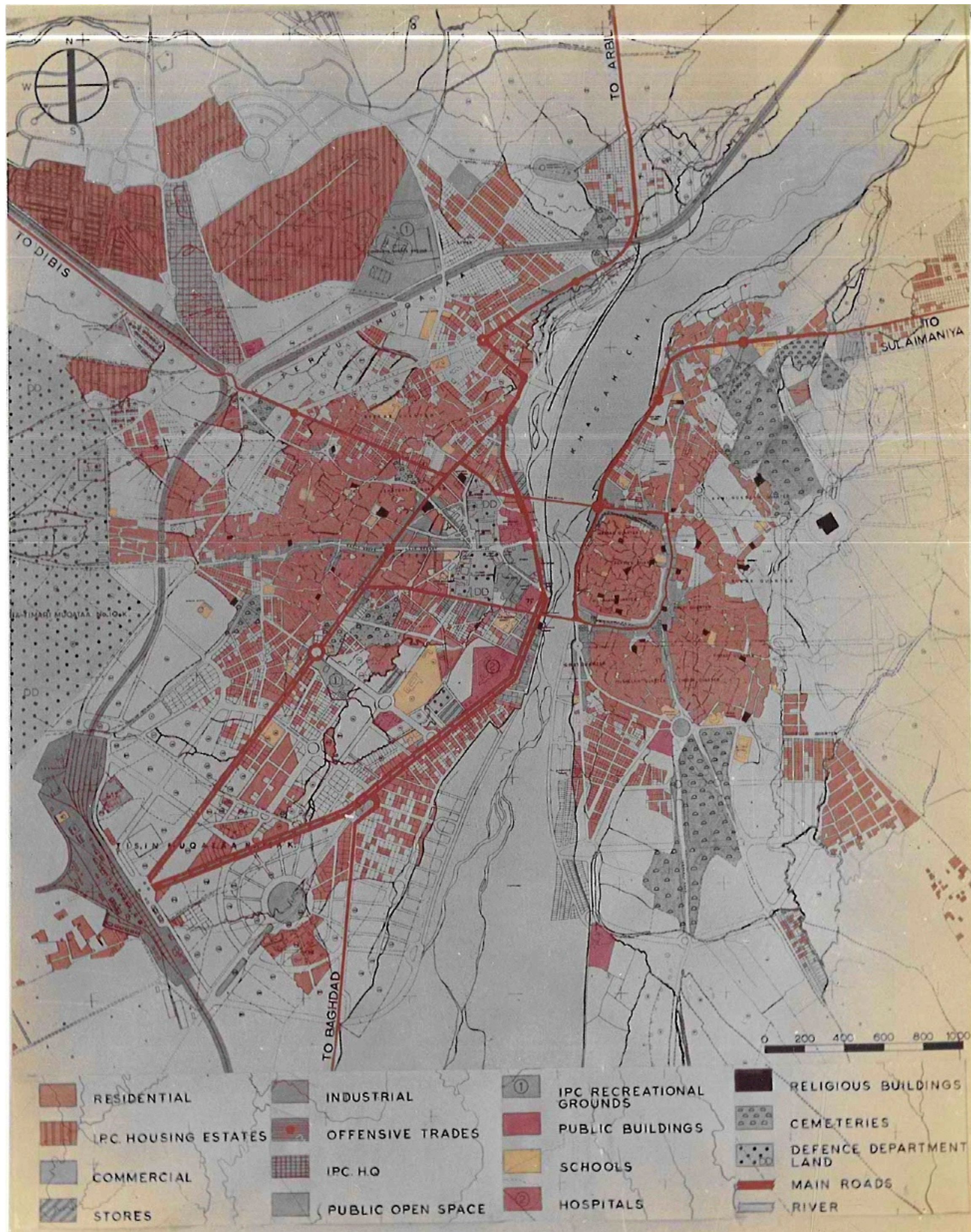

Figure 4.3: Doxiadis Associates' map of Kirkuk as of 1958. The Arrapha Estate is represented by red blocks with vertical lines just northwest of the city, beyond the railway line. The outlines of the Doxiadis scheme are indicated by faintly visible dotted lines representing proposed streets south of the road to Sulaymaniyya in the northeastern part of the urban fabric. Newer maps of Kirkuk indicate that the construction of this neighborhood was eventually completed. Source: Doxiadis Associates, *The Future of Kirkuk*, 25. © Constantinos and Emma Doxiadis Foundation.

In the end, Doxiadis Associates made little headway toward achieving their stated goals. By the time the revolutionary government in Iraq forced the firm to abandon their projects and leave the country in 1959, they had only overseen the building of a total of 309 houses, with some "corresponding community facilities," in urban Kirkuk.[42] The part of Doxiadis's initial housing plan that his firm successfully implemented expanded the city's inhabited area in the northeast very slightly along the road to the city of Sulaymaniyya (Figure 4.3). Aside from the relatively limited construction, it is unclear how the Iraqi government planned to pursue housing projects like the one in Kirkuk from an administrative standpoint once the houses were built. Michael Ionides, a British engineer and member of the Development Board, noted in his memoir that the Iraqi government did not establish a legal or organizational framework for the allotment of the housing that resulted from such projects.[43]

The significance of Doxiadis's plans in Kirkuk lies in the fact that they were the first projects sponsored by the Iraqi government to develop Kirkuk's built environment separately from the IPC. Like the IPC's housing schemes, they are especially notable for their underlying ideology—in this case, the notion that "scientific" urban planning could bring about modernity in provincial cities. In addition, they were the first housing plans intended to benefit Kirkukis who were not on the payroll of the oil company and the first plans that adopted a broad social and civic scope, aiming far beyond the fostering of a middle class. It is notable that Doxiadis's approach to housing in Kirkuk took into

[42] C. A. Panaghiotakis to H. E. the Mutasarrif, 28 June 1959, Iraq Corr. C-QB 3984-4586, Archive Files 24028, DA; "Kirkuk – Detailed Community – Layout Plans," 1958-60, Maps and Drawings 27676, DA. This was not the end of Doxiadis Associates' activities in Kirkuk, however; in 1974, Iraq's Baʿth government commissioned the firm to create another master plan for Kirkuk. "IRAQ: Kirkuk Master Plan," *D. A. Review* 11, no. 91 (1975): 4-7, in Articles-Papers 1107, DA.

[43] Ionides, *Divide and Lose*, 203-04.

account the precedent of the IPC housing projects; on a 1956 visit to the city, he studied the Arrapha Estate as an example of a recently constructed "high standard settlement" in Kirkuk but lamented what he viewed as its inefficient utilization of space and unpaved roads.[44]

The available details of Doxiadis's approach to the Kirkuk housing projects also provide a valuable glimpse into the factors underlying the demand among Kirkukis for urban development. For instance, when Doxiadis visited Kirkuk in December 1955, he met with the provincial *mutasarrif* and other officials, including a representative of the Iraqi Mortgage Bank. The officials noted that the city was in particularly dire need of "low-income group housing for labourers and farmers," most of whom had moved into Kirkuk in recent years from the rural hinterland and from other parts of Iraq. Farmers, in particular, were moving into the city in urgent circumstances due to a lack of water in the countryside at that time, and some of them exhibited a preference for working for the IPC or construction contractors once they arrived.[45] This rural-to-urban influx mirrored the pattern of population growth in Baghdad, which was the focus of Doxiadis's Iraqi urban planning. In Baghdad, the government was especially insistent that Doxiadis's housing plans should attempt to eliminate the intercommunal divisions that had been exacerbated by rural migrants. However, Doxiadis Associates ultimately avoided addressing this issue in the capital.[46] Similarly, the firm's master plan for Kirkuk generally emphasized improving the built environment in response to population growth without specifically

[44] Constantinos A. Doxiadis, "23.1.56, Kirkuk City," Iraq Diary DOX.Q.8, 1956, Archive Files 23875, DA.

[45] Constantinos A. Doxiadis, "7.12.55, The City of Kirkuk," Iraq Diary DOX.Q.7, 1955, Archive Files 23874, DA.

[46] Pyla, "Back to the Future," 12-13.

addressing any of the reasons for migration into the city that Iraqi officials had discussed with Doxiadis.[47] Despite the Iraqi central government's approval of Doxiadis's methods, there was a disparity between his approach and the urban issues that local officials found most pressing.

Therefore, just as rapid population growth in the capital presented daunting social and economic challenges that government-commissioned housing efforts did not fully take into account, so too did growth in the provincial oil city produce poor living conditions for many immigrants that the Iraqi government's plans, funded by newly acquired oil revenues, did not improve. The subtext of both the government's housing scheme and the IPC's schemes was the notion that the achievement of modernity was inextricable from the growth of capitalism and the pursuit of economic development. These ideological dynamics were a feature of the politics of urbanism throughout the region, especially in Middle Eastern oil cities, around the mid-twentieth century, as indicated by the eventual spread of the concept of the home-ownership scheme as well as the expansion of Doxiadis's activities into other Middle Eastern countries including Iran, Saudi Arabia, Libya, and Syria.[48]

Leveraging power through public utilities: the case of the Kirkuk water scheme

The IPC's relations with local government officials in the Kirkuk municipality and province were also a crucial component of the progress of development projects,

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[47] Doxiadis Associates, *The Future of Kirkuk*, 40-46.

[48] The spread of oil companies' home-ownership schemes is aforementioned. In the years following Doxiadis's early work in Iraq, Doxiadis Associates were commissioned to apply the idea of "ekistics" all over the Middle East and the developing world in general. Pyla, "Back to the Future," 3-4; Sarkis, *Circa 1958*, 23.

yielding an arena in which local power politics distinct from external trends burgeoned. Nowhere are these dynamics more apparent than in the company's provision of infrastructural needs to the city. The IPC had established an early precedent for sharing their resources, particularly water, with the municipality of Kirkuk. In 1930, the company initially derived its water supply by sinking wells in the Khasa River. When these wells became insufficient for the company's expanding operations, the IPC bequeathed them to the Kirkuk municipality and proceeded to build a system to obtain water from the much larger Lesser Zab River.[49] By the time of the 1946 strike, the IPC's former wells had also proven to be inadequate for Kirkuk's rapidly growing population. Following the strike, Kirkuk's provincial government saw an opportunity to solicit further help from the IPC in obtaining water for the municipality after the company turned their attention to development projects.

The *mutasarrif* of Kirkuk province, ʿAbd al-Jalil Parto, first contacted IPC officials about this matter in September 1946, when he asked the company to, in one official's paraphrase, "do everything possible to assist the Kirkuk Municipality to overcome the seasonal shortage of drinking water." The IPC's managing director assured Parto that the company would use its own equipment and newly built pipelines to pump the water it could spare from its own supplies—a maximum of 500,000 gallons a day during the hottest part of the summer—into a new municipal water tank. In further correspondences during project delays, Parto repeatedly emphasized the city's dire need for water and the fact that Kirkukis had begun to complain about the water shortage, putting pressure on company officials. Upon the project's completion in May 1947, both

[49] M.S. Mainland to Management, London, 25 February 1950, File 163852, BP.

Parto and the Iraqi interior minister wrote to the IPC to thank them effusively for their "service" and "gift free of charge" to "the people of Kirkuk Town."[50]

This correspondence occurred at a time when Parto was concerned about the financial relationship between the Kirkuk municipality and the central government in Baghdad with regard to local projects. In a meeting with the British ambassador in October 1946, the *mutasarrif* expressed apprehension about the fact that while the central treasury held an allotted budget for the municipality of ID 50,000 per year, the latter found it "extremely difficult" to obtain permission from Baghdad to use the funds locally to undertake, for example, a public transportation scheme. Parto also suggested that he would like either British government or IPC help in obtaining film projectors for the new Kirkuk cinema. In response, the ambassador emphasized that Parto was the one responsible "to badger the Central Government" about these problems and that Kirkuk should not expect the IPC or the British government to address such issues; British officials did not want the relationship between them and Kirkuk to be "all give on our side and all take on" the *mutasarrif*'s.[51] In his 1950 report on the IPC oil fields in Kirkuk, Hull noted that the municipality was "well off," their budget having increased to about ID 60,000 or 70,000 per year; he was critical of local officials for not doing more to address public health problems, among other pressing issues. However, he did not take possible difficulties in the relationship between Kirkuk and Baghdad into account.[52] The relationship between the capital and the oil city was also troubled by the fact that, as

[50] M. S. Mainland to Douglas L. Busk, 12 December 1946; Abdul Jalil Parto to the Manager, 4 March 1947; Abdul Jalil Parto to Fields Manager, 8 April 1947; Abdul Jalil Parto to Fields Manager, 1 May 1947; Minister of Interior to The I. P. C. Ltd., Kirkuk, 16 March 1947; all in File 163852, BP.

[51] "Oil: IPC Labour Welfare," 25 October 1946, FO 624/105, UK.

[52] Hull, "Visit to I.P.C., Kirkuk Fields, 15-18 August 1950."

previously mentioned, the Iraqi Development Board was primarily focusing its efforts on the agricultural sector, especially on rural flood control projects. In 1952, when the IPC's endeavor to provide Kirkuk with water had evolved into a "municipal water scheme" to create a fully separate system for the municipality to obtain water from the Lesser Zab river, the company transferred nominal control over the project to the Development Board.[53] Nevertheless, the company continued to effectively operate the project, and in 1953 they drafted a formal agreement with the Development Board to bear part of the project's costs.[54]

The Iraqi central government encouraged the company's financial and material contribution to Kirkuk's municipal water scheme. For instance, the Iraqi Minister of Economics, Nadim al-Pachachi, suggested to the acting manager of the IPC in Baghdad in a 1951 meeting that the company should "consider making a definite monetary contribution" towards the cost of the scheme not because the Board lacked ample money to fund it but because, "in the opinion of the Prime Minister" of Iraq, it would be "a gesture which would bring wide publicity to the Company's advantage, and which should show the people of Iraq the extent to which the Company was now interesting itself in the general progress and development of the country."[55] In 1952, the Development Board indicated to the IPC that it wanted the IPC to publicize its commitment to contributing part of the cost of the water scheme through its upcoming ceremonies associated with the increase of oil production to 25 million tons per year. Most suggestively, according to

[53] General Management, Tripoli, to Managing Director, London, 20 August 1952, File 163852, BP.

[54] "Agreement," enclosure in Chief Representative, Baghdad to Management, London, 5 August 1953, File 163852, BP.

[55] General Management, Tripoli, to Managing Director, London, 20 August 1952, File 163852, BP.

Mainland, this highly visible promotion of the IPC's role in the project would "provide the reply to the question—asked by both the Government and the Development Board—as to what contribution the Company were prepared to make."[56] Iraqi newspapers that were sympathetic to British influence in Iraq rewarded the IPC's contributions to Kirkuk with positive attention, as in a 1950 article in the newspaper *Al-Shaʿb*, written by a correspondent in "the black-gold city," praising the IPC's provision of electricity.[57]

For their part, IPC officials in Kirkuk indicated repeatedly that continued engagement in and full cooperation with the demands of the project was necessary in order to maintain good political relations with the local government. In 1948, for instance, the IPC official H.H. Wheatley wrote that supplying water to Kirkuk was, "whether we like it or not…as much a necessity as our industrial requirements."[58] In 1950, when contemplating an expansion of the project that the city had requested, fields manager Mainland described it as "a measure of insurance against further demands for water from the Municipality."[59] In contrast, IPC officials in London were lukewarm about the prospect of spending an increasing amount of company money on the scheme; Mainland responded that doing so was an "obligation."[60] Once the scheme was in the process of coming under Iraqi control, however, the company's description of its political interests took on a tone that was less defensive and more politically strategic. In 1951,

[56] M.S. Mainland to Dr. C.T. Barner, 1 November 1952, File 163852, BP.

[57] Article from *Al-Shaʿb*, 3 August 1950, as translated and enclosed in H.H. Wheatley to Sir John Cunningham et al, 29 August 1950, File 135819, BP.

[58] H.H. Wheatley to E.A.S., 8 July 1948, File 163852, BP.

[59] M.S. Mainland to Management, London, 25 February 1950, File 163852, BP.

[60] L.V.A. Fowle to Fields Manager, Kirkuk, 10 March 1950, File 163852, BP; M.S. Mainland to Management, London, 5 April 1950, File 163852, BP.

Mainland favored the company's continued participation in the scheme by arguing that it would be useful for the IPC to exercise some control over Kirkuk's infrastructure to maintain a strong position in relation to the municipal government in the face of potential political difficulties. "By placing the Kirkuk Town Water supply under operations which we control," he wrote in a dispatch to the IPC in London, "we shall be establishing some community of interest between ourselves and the municipality in the matter of public services which may be valuable should labour or living conditions become difficult in Kirkuk."[61] It is apparent that as the IPC became progressively more involved in Kirkuk's economic development, it began to wield its resulting influence in the city more deliberately. By this time, the IPC's infrastructural projects had made the transition from essentially ad-hoc attempts by the IPC at improving relations with Kirkuk to fully realized political endeavors in which the local and central Iraqi governments were also participating.

The Kirkuk municipal water scheme illuminates yet another facet of the IPC's role in Kirkuk's everyday social and political life. In addition to its effects on Kirkuk's economy, its physical layout, and its communities, the company became an ever more integral part of the municipal and provincial governments' activities. When it initiated a development project, it often did so in advance of Baghdad's participation—a fact that Baghdad used to its advantage. The IPC's interactions with the municipality simultaneously increased its power on a local level and lent greater potency to the provincial oil city's civic domain by creating a set of political dynamics in which older forms of patronage politics and reliance on Baghdad became less relevant.

[61] General Manager, Kirkuk Fields to Managing Director, London, 21 August 1951, File 163852, BP.

Vocational training and "genuine" unionizing: the IPC's human concerns

The IPC's "sociological" interest in Kirkuk, as one British diplomat put it,[62] was not limited to improving Kirkukis' standard of living through housing and infrastructural schemes. It also included continuing concerns with the lack of interaction between IPC expatriates and the local population. The improvement of the IPC's relations with its workers, in particular, was a goal that preoccupied the British government because the company was the largest employer in the city and as such monopolized its labor affairs. The Hull report of 1950 on the IPC indicated that to the extent that there was unemployment in Kirkuk, as the *mutasarrif* had informed him, it resulted primarily from the company's periodic layoffs. Since the company ultimately aimed to employ fewer daily-rate laborers as its production increased to 25 million tons per year, there was little prospect that this situation would improve.[63] Political friction therefore spurred interventions in the form of the establishment of social, and particularly educational, institutions aimed especially at oil workers.

The British government first attempted to create an educational enterprise in Kirkuk with the establishment of the British Institute in 1946. The British Institute was operated by the British Council, an organization funded by the Foreign Office for the purpose of promoting British influence worldwide through targeted cultural projects. The Institute—which also had branches in Baghdad, Basra and Mosul—offered classes in

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[62] In 1947, a British diplomat in Baghdad used the term "sociological," albeit irregularly spelled as "socialogical," to describe the IPC's endeavors in Kirkuk that went beyond the extraction, refinement and export of oil. G.C. Pelham, "Foreign Office Minute," 28 August 1947, FO 371/61676, UK.

[63] W. J. Hull, "Visit to I.P.C., Kirkuk Fields, 15-18 August 1950," August 1950, LAB 13/672, UK; see also: Acting Assistant Chief Personnel Officer to Fields Manager, 23 November 1949, File 164177, BP.

English, held occasional lectures and social functions, and screened films. Initial missteps led to adjustments; for instance, the Institute eventually began to provide explanations in Arabic during their screenings of English-language films due to the fact that the vast majority of Kirkukis could not understand English. It is notable that, though smaller than Iraq's three historically important metropolises, Kirkuk also attracted the attention of the British Council as an important site for public diplomacy. Ironically, the very presence of the immensely powerful oil company, which enhanced Kirkuk's significance to Britain, distorted the usual approach of British diplomatic activities by creating a competing force with which the Institute had to contend. While the Institute had limited successes in involving members of the community, particularly in the English classes, the British Council eventually deemed it a failure and closed it in 1948. One of the Institute's main complaints was that IPC officials were not sufficiently involved in its activities despite attempts to solicit their help and interest; upon its closing, the Institute's director lamented the IPC's "luxurious seclusion."[64]

Whereas the British Council failed to secure the IPC's involvement in providing educational services to the Kirkuk community, the Iraqi government succeeded in doing so through consistent pressure. The government had indicated to IPC officials as early as 1948 that they were obligated to provide their workers with vocational education, and continued to stress this expectation during negotiations with the company at least until 1953.[65] Accordingly, the IPC started a two-year course for the company's artisans in

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[64] W.H. Earle, "British Institute, Kirkuk, Annual Report, 1946-47," 20 March 1947, and J.E.F. Gueritz, "Report of the Closing of the British Institute, Kirkuk, During the Quarter Ending 30th September, 1948," BW 39/10, UK.

[65] "Minutes of the Meeting of the Technical Sub-Committee of the Kirkuk Training Institute held at 214, Oxford Street on Thursday, 4th June 1953 at 11:00 a.m.," File 163449, BP.

1948. They expanded their educational offerings in 1951 with an apprentice training scheme for the technical training of fifteen- and sixteen-year-old boys with a primary education. In 1953, they inaugurated an adult training scheme for older students. The IPC also started a training scheme in cooperation with the Iraqi government in 1951 that would prepare students to study at a British university at the end of the course.[66] About a dozen Iraqi students per year from the Kirkuk institute were sent to the United Kingdom as part of a scholarship program to study in exchange for a commitment to working for either the Iraqi government or the IPC.[67] By about 1955, the IPC offered seven different types of educational courses, including technical training, language training in both Arabic and English, and other types of vocational training such as typewriting.[68]

The IPC initiated these schemes with the intention of increasing the number of Iraqi employees in higher-ranking positions, especially in skilled labor and management, which were then held mostly by expatriates.[69] The political implications of increasing the presence of British-trained Iraqis in higher levels of the company were subtle but significant to both the company's management and the Iraqi government, both of which wished to head off any further discontentment. The company, in particular, viewed these programs as part of an "obligation" to their workers.[70] A former IPC staff member recalls

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[66] London to the Groups, 5 July 1951, and "Apprentice Training Scheme / Kirkuk Training Centre," File 15619, BP; "Kirkuk Training Institute," April 1953, File 166111, BP.

[67] David H. Finnie, *Desert Enterprise: The Middle East Oil Industry in Its Local Environment* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1958), 123.

[68] "Guide to Kirkuk," c. 1955, File 119015, BP.

[69] "Project No. 43: Kirkuk Training Scheme / Apprentice Training Centre," July 1951, File 15619, BP. As will be mentioned in Chapter 5, the Iraqi government and the IPC would eventually refer to this process as the "Iraqi-isation" of the company. See for example: "New Iraq Labour Law," enclosed with [Illegible] to Maxwell, 19 June 1958, File 163884, BP.

[70] "Project No. 43: Kirkuk Training Scheme / Apprentice Training Centre," July 1951, File 15619, BP.

that in the beginning, the apprentice training scheme primarily attracted Christians, in a pattern that paralleled the demographics of the Arrapha Estate: the children of skilled and clerical workers who were closer to the mostly British expatriates than the laborers were given preference. Gradually, however, the variety of education programs reached many Muslim employees, including daily-wage workers and their children. The number of Muslims in clerical positions grew, and some of the Muslims who had been educated through the British-university scholarship program and appointed to staff-level positions chose to live in the Arrapha Estate. The scholarship program also allowed a larger number of Kurds to become trained as engineers than had been the case previously, allowing them to take up highly skilled positions within the company.[71]

In spite of the Company's efforts to assuage the sensibilities of the workforce, British authorities continued to be suspicious of external influences that might damage further the relationship between the IPC and its workers. This fear was not unfounded. Iraqi Communist Party communications intercepted by British intelligence in 1949, for example, indicated that the Communists were still actively attempting to organize Kirkuk's oil workers.[72] British and Iraqi officials alike were also apprehensive of the Communists' potential to act as a conduit for Soviet influence in Iraq.[73] Consequently, beginning as early as July 1946 when the workers' strike was still ongoing, British diplomats repeatedly emphasized the importance of the establishment of what they usually called "genuine trades unions" among oil workers and other laborers in Kirkuk.

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[71] Yacu, interview, 3 June 2011; Yacu, interview, 8 June 2011.

[72] Appendices of "The Iraqi Communist Party (Supplementary Paper)," April 1949, FO 371/75131, UK.

[73] See for instance: Bagdad to Foreign Office, 19 July 1946, FO 371/52459, UK. This fear was strong enough on the part of Iraqi officials that Iraq suspended relations with the Soviet Union in 1955: Tripp, *A History of Iraq*, 135.

This was their term for workers' unions friendly to the British and the IPC. One Foreign Office official in London was more explicit about the inorganic process of forming these types of unions, suggesting that, if possible, "we should endeavour…to put into control of labour unions at Kirkuk, and any other potential focus of trouble, labour leaders who are known to have anti-Communist views."[74] IPC fields manager Mainland, whose role in this process appears to have been more passive, indicated to the British ambassador that he agreed with the idea of forming such unions.[75] In any case, British efforts to form such unions were not successful. One report indicated that those whom they called the "best workers" wanted nothing to do with unionizing after the disastrous end of the July 1946 strike.[76] "Genuine" unions aside, the IPC did eventually succeed in forming "joint consultative and welfare committees" of oil workers. Unlike the very first Communist-led workers' committee that eventually led the 1946 strike, these committees met uneventfully on a regular basis with company officials to discuss the housing schemes and other welfare provisions that affected IPC workers, such as transportation. About 13 or 14 of these committees operated in Kirkuk in the mid-1950s. The progress they made regarding issues that affected oil workers, if any, is unclear; from the company's perspective, though, they were "a useful two-way channel of communication."[77]

Even so, IPC officials remained uneasy with the idea of their Kirkuki workers engaging in such consultative activities, as indicated by an episode that took place in

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[74] Foreign Office to Bagdad, 12 July 1946, FO 371/52459, UK.

[75] "Oil: IPC Labour Welfare," 25 October 1946, FO 624/105, UK.

[76] Hugh Stonehewer Bird to Ernest Bevin, 25 October 1946, LAB 13/193, UK.

[77] See for instance: "Industrial Relations, 1954," 26 April 1955, File 39649, BP; "Note of Information on Personnel Matters Reported to Board Meetings on 26th June, 1956," 10 July 1956, File 39649, BP.

1950. The International Labour Organization (ILO) held a conference that year in Geneva, and the British advisor to the Iraqi Ministry of Social Affairs, W.J. Hull, recommended that the Iraqi government send a delegation of Iraqi oil workers to the conference selected from the joint consultative committees at Kirkuk and other oil fields. The IPC fields manager at Kirkuk at the time, P.R.A. Ensor, told Hull upon learning of the idea that he felt it was "quite premature to think of choosing a couple of people who are only learning the first steps in joint consultation locally, giving them first class travel and five pounds a day, and expecting them to benefit even from sitting in on joint consultation at [the] international level."[78] Hull nevertheless tried to find at least one oil worker at Kirkuk whom he deemed appropriate to represent Iraqi oil workers as part of a delegation. His main criteria were that the worker had to speak English well and be a Muslim. Through the latter criterion, he ruled out sending an Assyrian or Armenian (that is, Christian) employee, of whom there were many at Kirkuk who spoke English; presumably, he felt that these employees would be perceived as being too close to the British. Despite the IPC's hesitation to support him, Hull managed to find an English-speaking employee in Kirkuk who was a member of one of the joint consultative committees and whom he felt was suitable. However, the Iraqi government failed to support him in the endeavor, eventually sending a delegation to Geneva that did not represent the workers.[79]

The positions that the Iraqi government, the British government, and the IPC assumed in this episode reflect their attitudes toward engagement with Iraqi oil workers.

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[78] W.J. Hull to Sir Guildhaume Myrddin-Evans, 3 September 1950, FO 371/82505, UK.

[79] Ibid.; Hull to Guildhaume Myrddin-Evans, 23 October 1950, FO 371/82474, UK.

The IPC remained reluctant to deal with their workers, and with Iraqis in general, on any explicitly political level even while closely involved with urban development, including human development efforts that made some headway toward giving valuable educational access to less privileged employees. British governmental representatives, on the other hand, were keen to take clear, public steps to co-opt workers politically. The Iraqi government in Baghdad maintained its distance from the politics of labor in Kirkuk even while urging the IPC to provide more benefits to their workers. The oil city's human and labor affairs, caught between the politics of the Iraqi and British governments and the IPC's interests as a mostly private enterprise, developed in occasionally unpredictable ways. Nevertheless, they managed to consistently bring forth a growing number of opportunities, however conditional, for Kirkukis outside of the local government to learn new skills, achieve literacy, and engage in local politics.

Kirkuk's civic identity: defining and celebrating modernity in the oil city

Another aspect of the British and IPC political strategy in Kirkuk was the publicizing of local housing, infrastructural and human-centered projects, particularly those that were led by the IPC. British public promotion of development in Kirkuk dovetailed with the Iraqi government's own ritual celebration of Development Board projects in periodic events such as the ceremonial "Development Week" in Baghdad.[80] The discourses of modernity that resulted from these efforts prioritized the city of Kirkuk as a focus of identity, holding that the prosperity the oil company had brought to the city was a distinctly Kirkuki achievement and source of pride. These discourses coincided

[80] See for instance: Ionides, *Divide and Lose*, 198-99.

with a rise in literacy and the consequent expansion of Kirkuk's literary culture. A large new public library was built in Kirkuk sometime in the 1950s, and there was also a local library owned by the Muslim Brotherhood. In addition, beginning around this time, the IPC kept a library of mostly English-language books in the Arrapha Estate. The local office of the United States Information Service also established a library of English-language materials in the city center beginning in 1952 under the direction of Lee F. Dinsmore, who would go on to serve as American consul in Kirkuk in the late 1950s. Along with the libraries, there were several bookstores in Kirkuk by the 1950s that sold books and periodicals in multiple languages, including Arabic, Kurdish, Turkish and English; some of the periodicals were themselves multilingual.[81] The members of the writing collective eventually known as the Kirkuk Group, who were among Iraq's most influential literary figures in the 1960s, came of age during this era, and a couple of them have subsequently noted that their interest in literature was first piqued as a result of what they were able to read at these libraries and bookstores.[82] In conversation with me, a former IPC employee also fondly recalled, without my prompting, the history books he used to read at the library in Arrapha.[83] As the small percentage of literate people slowly grew and literary activity, however relatively limited, began to thrive in the oil city, Kirkukis and other Iraqis adopted and modified British-led discourses of oil-enabled modernity in the process of constructing a Kirkuki civic identity.

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[81] Fahmi ʿArab Agha and Fadil Muhammad Mulla Mustafa, *Madha fi Karkuk* (Kirkuk: Matbaʿat al-Tatwij, 1957), facing 121; Yacu, interview, 8 June 2011; Dinsmore, personal correspondence, 3 May 2009; Al-ʿAzzawi, *Al-Ruh al-Hayya*, 279-80.

[82] Sinan Antoon, "Remembering Sargon Boulus (1944-2007)," *Jadaliyya* (22 October 2011): http://www.jadaliyya.com/pages/index/2925/remembering-sargon-boulus-%281944-2007%29; Al-ʿAzzawi, *Al-Ruh al-Hayya*, 280.

[83] Yacu, interview, 8 June 2011.

Beginning in 1951, the IPC strove to generate positive publicity for itself by promoting its housing projects and other works in Kirkuk through articles in its new monthly magazines: *Iraq Petroleum* and its Arabic-language companion publication *Ahl al-Naft.* To some extent, these magazines were formed in the mold of the American magazine *Life*, featuring high-quality photographs on most pages, occasional crossword puzzles and cartoons, and human-interest news stories from all of the countries where the IPC operated. The English-language *Iraq Petroleum* emphasized the highlights of expatriate life in the Kirkuk oil fields, such as theater troupes and golf tournaments, for the benefit of a foreign audience.[84] When the magazine's focus turned to the city of Kirkuk, it celebrated the fact that development schemes using oil revenues had, in the words of one article, "transformed [it] almost completely into a modern industrial suburbia."[85] The magazine's writers were particularly preoccupied with the ceremonies that ritualized this transformation, featuring photographs of Iraqi officials cutting ribbons (often literally) to inaugurate new technology.[86]

According to the viewpoint expressed in these articles, Kirkuk's industry embodied its modernity and, as a result, its newfound identity. Another article referred to the oil fields' "B" power station, from which the company also provided the municipality with electricity, as the "beating heart of Kirkuk's industrialism."[87] Moreover, a common trope in *Iraq Petroleum* was the active contrasting of Kirkuk's long documented history

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[84] See for instance: "Golf in the Fields of Kirkuk and Zubair," *Iraq Petroleum*, August 1952, 24-25.

[85] "Kirkuk – The Domestic Scene," *Iraq Petroleum*, November 1957, 11-13.

[86] See for instance: "New Water Pump Station for Kirkuk," *Iraq Petroleum*, September 1956, 45.

[87] ""B" Power Station – Beating Heart of Kirkuk's Industralism," *Iraq Petroleum*, December 1951, 5-9.

and its relatively economically advanced present. In an article titled “Kirkuk Bridges the Centuries,” a writer named Anne Kitchen depicted the contrast for readers:

> The most interesting feature to be noted in Kirkuk today is the fascinating juxtaposition of new and old from every conceivable view-point—the smith pursuing his craft in traditional fashion next door to the shopkeeper selling radios; Western dress jostling alongside Kurdish costume; it strikes the eye over and over again, and it is a clear sign of the times. For Kirkuk today is in the process of turning itself into a very modern and progressive town….So today, while the dust blows across the shattered palaces of Babylon, and through the ruins of Nineveh, their splendour departed, their story written and finished, a town of similar great age, Kirkuk, is already well on the way towards establishing itself as a centre of outstanding importance in modern Iraq.[88]

As in many Western discussions of the “juxtaposition of new and old” in the Middle East, Kitchen simultaneously praises Kirkuk’s long history while intimating that the region’s “splendour” has remained untapped for generations, requiring a Western-led intervention to revive it in modern form.

The prevalence of this theme extended to many other Western portrayals of Kirkuk and of the oil-bearing parts of the Middle East in general. For instance, an American oil company’s promotional film about the construction of the Kirkuk-Baniyas pipeline, which opened in 1952, opened by evoking the common idea that Kirkuk’s natural gas fires were the Biblical “fiery furnace.” It concluded with a voiceover delivering the following monologue over a transition from a Western-style classical soundtrack to the quiet background of a traditional oud:

> It was in the Middle East that Western civilization had its beginnings. Culture and commerce attained high levels there two thousand years ago, but later went into a decline. Now, with the aid of the Westerners who inherited and expanded the scientific and cultural knowledge of the Middle East, the modern citizens of these ancient lands have gained enormously in material wealth and in a resurgence of

[88] Anne Kitchen, “Kirkuk Bridges the Centuries,” *Iraq Petroleum*, July 1954, 20-24.

> industrial activity based in large measure on the development of petroleum reserves that would otherwise have lain dormant for long years to come.[89]

Ahl al-Naft, though targeting an Arabic-speaking audience with slightly different content, wholeheartedly embraced and utilized this temporal juxtaposition theme in its treatment of Kirkuk. The poem "The Eternal Fire," quoted at the beginning of this chapter, exemplifies the creative ways in which writers characterizing Kirkuk deployed this contrast, particularly through its use of a classical meter to extol the "city of black gold." The inclusion of a poem about Kirkuk also reflects *Ahl al-Naft*'s more sustained focus on culture and, correspondingly, on cultural developments that would have been of interest to its pan-Arab readership. For instance, the August 1957 issue featured an article about the growing prevalence of drawing and painting in Kirkuk and of recent exhibitions to promote artists' work, describing it as a trend that "augurs a good future"; the article was called "An Artistic Movement in the City of Black Gold."[90] The IPC's magazines thus elevated various aspects of Kirkuk's history and the evolution of its society and economy while repeatedly and explicitly linking these attributes to the oil industry. In doing so, they sought to define distinctive elements of Kirkuki experience and to make the case that these elements were tied to oil modernity.

The tropes that the IPC magazines incorporated also appeared in the work of Arabic-language writers who were unaffiliated with the oil company. Iraqis writing about Kirkuk in Arabic employed many of the same themes that characterized texts like "The Eternal Fire." One example of the kinds of works about Kirkuk's past and present that began to appear in this era is a volume in a series of biographical dictionaries by ʿAbd al-

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[89] *Kirkuk to Banias*, prod. Richard Finnie (Bechtel, 1952), VHS, ARC Identifier 656854, Records of the Central Intelligence Agency, Record Group 263, US.

[90] Samih Nabil, "Haraka Fanniyya fi Madinat al-Dhahab al-Aswad," *Ahl al-Naft*, August 1957, 34-35.

Majid Fahmi Hasan, an Iraqi Arab journalist, titled *Dalil Tarikh Mashahir al-Alwiya al-ʿIraqiyya* (A Guide to the History of the Notables of the Iraqi Liwaʾs).[91] Biographical dictionaries of provincial cities in the Islamicate world first appeared around the tenth century, at a point when power in the Islamic caliphate had started to decentralize, lending greater political weight to areas in the margins of the empire.[92] The publication of the second volume in Hasan's series, a guide to the Kirkuk *liwaʾ*, in 1947 coincided with a growing interest in Kirkuk promoted not by a decline in Baghdad's leverage, as the medieval pattern might suggest, but rather by Kirkuk's own newfound prominence economically within Iraq. Hasan's series also coincided with a flourishing of intellectual production in Baghdad, especially in social and political history and geography, which stressed a separate Iraqi-territorial identity.[93] With respect to Kirkuk, this trend was manifested as an interest in the city's distinct local identity as it was intertwined with its production of oil.

Hasan's series of biographical dictionaries was licensed by the Iraqi government's Directorate General of Propaganda; his volume on Kirkuk is correspondingly friendly to Baghdad and British interests in its tone.[94] The book combines the classic elements of a geographically localized biographical dictionary with chapters on the city and its

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[91] Hasan, *Dalil Tarikh Mashahir al-Alwiya al-ʿIraqiyya*, 2. Nouri Talabany (Nuri Talabani) summarizes the contents of this volume from the perspective of the Kurdish nationalist case for Kirkuk's status in a 2002 article: Nuri Talabani, "Karkuk fi Mawsuʿa ʿIraqiyya Sadira ʿAm 1947," in Markaz Karbalaʾ lil-Buhuth wa-l-Dirasat, *Karkuk*.

[92] Wadad al-Qadi, "Biographical Dictionaries: Inner Structure and Cultural Significance," in *The Book in the Islamic World: The Written Word and Communication in the Middle East*, ed. George N. Atiyeh (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1995), 107-08.

[93] Bashkin, *The Other Iraq*, 128-31.

[94] The book's front matter states that its writing was undertaken in collaboration with "a staff made up of a select elite of young intellectuals" and mentions its licensing by the government. Hasan, *Dalil Tarikh Mashahir al-Alwiya al-ʿIraqiyya*, 2: front matter. For a discussion of state attempts to control intellectual production in this time period, see Bashkin, *The Other Iraq*, 92-93.

hinterland that reflect its contemporary significance and its well-established identification with the production and export of oil. In keeping with the long-held customs of the genre, the dictionary contains detailed profiles of the preeminent male inhabitants of Kirkuk and surrounding areas along with histories and descriptions of elite Turkmen families and notable Kurdish and Arab tribes of the *liwa*ʾ.[95] The earlier sections of the book, however, consist of exhaustive articles on Kirkuk's political history, geography, climate, agriculture, and particularly its oil industry. The book's introduction narrates a typical day in the journey of a train transporting passengers, mail and goods northward from Baghdad and imagines it approaching, at nightfall, "the lights of glowing electric lamps and the tongues of the eternal fire." It continues:

> This is Kirkuk, the city of oil and factories, the axis of movement and activity, the center of one of Iraq's greatest *liwa*ʾ*s* with respect to its present and its past, and the source of the enormous canal of oil that flows effusively toward the west…so that black gold pours into the [white] Mediterranean Sea.[96]

Hence, from the outset, Hasan frames the volume by juxtaposing evocations of Kirkuk's past, particularly the "eternal fire," with descriptions of the modernized, industrialized trappings of its present and the oil that has enabled them. Throughout the book, he continues to stress the extent to which the city of Kirkuk has experienced dramatic changes between the past and the present; for instance, he portrays the city as having become "overfilled with masses" of various types of professionals after the establishment of the oil industry encouraged immigration.[97] Hasan thus validates, in the typically

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[95] See for instance: Hasan, *Dalil Tarikh Mashahir al-Alwiya al-ʿIraqiyya*, 2:60-65, 283-88.

[96] Ibid., 1. The contrast between "black" and "white" in this passage stems from the fact that the Arabic name for the Mediterranean Sea is literally the "White Middle Sea" (*al-bahr al-abyad al-mutawassit*).

[97] Ibid., 55.

regional context of the biographical dictionary, a key aspect of the British narrative of Kirkuk's character.

In other parts of the book, Hasan echoes various ideas about Kirkuk that solidified in British-led discourses in the early to mid-twentieth century. When describing the city's population, he writes that there are "three ancient Eastern peoples" in Kirkuk, "and they are: the Arab, the Turkish and the Kurdish." He later mentions "the Armenians and the Nestorians"[98] in passing as minorities in the *liwa*ʾ while downplaying the significance of these groups by incorrectly implying that all of the city's minorities immigrated to Kirkuk after World War I. Hasan thereby maintains an intact and simplified tripartite model of Kirkuk's demographics reminiscent of the framework used in the era of the Mosul dispute.[99] Furthermore, in his discussion of the IPC, Hasan describes at length the "genius" of the company's negotiator in obtaining the company's initial concession in 1925 and touts the company's housing and water schemes, concluding by stating emphatically that the IPC has greatly helped Kirkukis and especially its own workers.[100] The volume therefore indicates the extent to which British frameworks for understanding Kirkuk's people and the position of the oil industry in the city had, by the late 1940s, become standard in the Arabic-language Iraqi discourses on Kirkuk that were aligned with the Baghdad and British establishments.

Local Kirkuki intellectuals also participated in constructing an image of Kirkuk as a city with a rich history and prosperous present. The example of Matbaʿat al-Tatwij

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[98] "Nestorians" is another common term for Assyrians—specifically, those belonging to the Assyrian Church of the East.

[99] Hasan, *Dalil Tarikh Mashahir al-Alwiya al-ʿIraqiyya*, 2:57-58.

[100] Ibid., 28, 46-48.

(Coronation Press) and the book about Kirkuk, *Madha fi Karkuk* (What's in Kirkuk), that it published illuminates how the process of creating a Kirkuki identity was bound to the oil industry in multiple ways. In the mid-1950s, Shamasha Youkhanan Moushi Lazar, a deacon in the Assyrian Church of the East resident in Kirkuk, founded Matbaʿat al-Tatwij as an English- and Arabic-language commercial printing outfit with the IPC as its main client. For the first two decades of its operation in Iraq, the IPC had imported nearly all of the materials it required, both industrial and mundane, from the UK—a practice that was yet another symptom of its isolation from urban Kirkuk. In concert with its other efforts to create an urban middle class in the early 1950s, the company began to purchase its necessities locally in order to encourage enterprise in the city, and Shamasha Youkhanan took the opportunity to establish a press in order to print the IPC's forms.[101] The press also ended up printing some non-commercial works. There was relatively little printing activity in Kirkuk at the time in comparison with that in Baghdad; consequently, the few extant works that were produced in Kirkuk in this era provide a unique window into the discourses of the city's mid-twentieth-century literary and academic culture.[102]

Madha fi Karkuk, an Arabic-language informational volume on Kirkuk's history, culture and economy written by the Turkmen novelist and scholar Fahmi ʿArab Agha, was published in 1957. Overall, Agha adopts a more academic approach and tone than Hasan does; the book documents details about Kirkuk's local social and political life with

[101] Daniel Benjamin, interview by the author, 27 June 2011; Daniel Benjamin, "Assyrian Printing Presses in Iraq During the 20th Century," *Journal of Assyrian Academic Studies* 22, no. 2 (2008): 53.

[102] *What's in Kirkuk* is the only book printed in the city of Kirkuk in the era of the Hashemite monarchy that I have been able to access thus far. Searching the Iraq National Library and Archive's (INLA) online catalog on 12 April 2012, I was only able to find a total of six books (including *What's in Kirkuk*) that were published in Kirkuk prior to 1960, as opposed to thousands from Baghdad. A WorldCat search on 12 April 2012 revealed a handful of other printed works from Kirkuk in this era that are not listed in the INLA catalog.

an apparent view to making this information available for future learning and scholarship. For instance, it features extensive informational tables on Kirkuk's largest tribes and their geographic locations, on the *mutasarrifs* of the Kirkuk *liwa*ʾ and the years that they each served, and on the numbers of students and staff members in Kirkuk's primary and secondary schools.[103] Unlike Hasan, Agha documents the lives of ordinary Kirkukis, including photographs of women in a domestic arts class and the local women's branch of the Red Crescent organization.[104] Nevertheless, though he does not praise the IPC quite as fulsomely as Hasan does, Agha also emphasizes the central role of oil in Kirkuk's affairs, calling it "the fundamental axis for all aspects of life." He features a series of photographs of Kirkuki IPC employees enjoying the benefits that working for the company has provided them, including one of a man standing in front of his new house built under the auspices of the home ownership scheme.[105] Agha died shortly before completing the volume; a subsequent author named Fadil Muhammad Mulla Mustafa enabled its eventual publication and appended a short obituary paying tribute to Agha's immense knowledge and his command of both Arabic and Turkish.[106] As an example of writing by a prominent Kirkuki intellectual of the 1950s era, *Madha fi Karkuk* illustrates the intricate ways in which oil had become a part of Kirkuk's civic identity and demonstrates the growing interest among the city's writers and publishers in constructing Kirkuk as a discrete arena of history, economy and culture.

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[103] Agha and Mustafa, *Madha fi Karkuk*, 21, 23, 86-88.

[104] Ibid., facing 33.

[105] Ibid., 102, 104-05.

[106] Ibid., back matter.

Certainly, there were long-established writing traditions in Kirkuk prior to the oil era. For instance, Turkish-language poetry by Kirkuki Turkmen and other Iraqi Turkmen writers had been prevalent in the Ottoman era, and Iraqi Turkmen poets continued to write in the same classical forms throughout the twentieth century. In the mid-twentieth-century, these poems, like other writings from and about Kirkuk, exhibited a strong Kirkuki identity. The poems elevate the city in effusive verses that stress the Turkmen community's attachment to it as a "homeland." This identity is therefore tied to a particular form of Turkmen ethnonationalism that, in turn, relies on the city of Kirkuk as the figurative (and, arguably, geographical) heart of the Turkmen community. As Orit Bashkin argues, the Iraqi Turkmen concept of "nation" in this era was linked to a more universal Iraqi identity but it "marked in most cases the city [of Kirkuk] rather than the state."[107] The view of Kirkuk's oil expressed in these poems is also telling with regard to the contrast it forms to the portrayals of oil in the English- and Arabic-language writings on Kirkuk discussed above. While Turkmen poets place emphasis on oil as a positive and lucrative element of Kirkuk's physical being, this enthusiasm is sometimes tempered by the way that the oil has been exploited. For instance, in a ghazal simply titled "Kerkük" and dated 9 February 1953, the Turkmen poet Hıdır Lütfi deplores the fact that Kirkuk has become "a source of wealth for foreign nations."[108] Even when local discourses appeared to echo British-led conceptions of Kirkuk, Kirkukis who were not in the patronage of the IPC or the Iraqi government retained their suspicion of external authority and expressed a sense of injustice about foreigners' domination of the oil

[107] Bashkin, *The Other Iraq*, 177-78.

[108] Hıdır Lütfi, "Kerkük," in Ziyat Akkoyunlu and Suphi Saatçi, eds., *Irak Muasır Türk Şairleri Antolojisi* (Ankara: Kültür Bakanlığı, 1991), 42-43.

industry that was reminiscent of Nazim Beg Naftchizada's impassioned complaints to the company in the 1920s.

The ideas of Kirkuk as Iraq's "city of black gold," as a bridge between antiquity and modernity in which elements of both eras were visible, and as a focus of cultural identity became increasingly universal in the 1940s and 1950s. But they were also malleable and were not necessarily politically unifying, despite the IPC's attempts to promote local identification with Kirkuk as part of the project to build a middle class. After the 1958 revolution, Kurdish nationalists' attempts to identify Kirkuk's oil with the Kurds would further illustrate the manner in which a Kirkuki identity could serve as an axis for different rigid ethnic group identities rather than as a basis for intercommunal conviviality.

Conclusion

In the 1940s and 1950s, Kirkuk's distinct domain of local politics came to the fore. With the inauguration of a variety of urban development initiatives, policymaking and political maneuvering within the municipal and provincial governments—and between these local authorities and various external entities—achieved a level of sophistication that signaled the culmination of Kirkuk's growth into a provincial metropolis in its own right. This domain was part of an arena including a broader civic identity based on a sense of shared culture and history. By the time of the Iraqi revolution in 1958, Kirkuk had developed a distinctive local character in which Kirkukis were deeply invested. Kirkukis, partly following the lead of the IPC and British authorities, articulated an increasingly coherent concept of Kirkuk's past and of its purpose as an "oil

city": an example of Iraqi modernity and the lifeblood that made the country's economic development possible.

Between 1946 and 1958, Kirkuk's oil played a variety of roles in the city's political, economic and social affairs as they related to urban development. First, it provided the means, both in terms of revenue and the industry's own infrastructural advancement, for the undertaking of housing, water and electricity projects. The post-1946 housing schemes aimed to undermine the influence of the Iraqi Communist Party by instilling the characteristics of the middle class—in particular, savings and property ownership—in oil workers while attempting to avoid further political difficulties by prioritizing building within the city. The home ownership scheme also had the stated goal of giving oil workers a "stake" in the Kirkuki "community"; the cultivation of civic identity was therefore crucial to the creation of a middle class. At the same time, the oil city served as a site for competition among and cooperation between governmental and private actors, both local and Western. Underpinning all of these interactions were the ideologies that characterized British and Iraqi approaches to urbanism: capitalism and a desire to achieve "enlightened" modernity through development.

Ultimately, however, Kirkuk did not escape the pattern of social segregation and stratification common to Middle Eastern oil cities and other variations on the colonial metropolis. The IPC's and Iraqi government's urban development projects, which usually focused on building and benefiting a middle class, had very little positive impact on the poor. The latter category of Kirkukis, who were disproportionately Kurdish and much less likely to be on the IPC's monthly-wage or covenanted payroll, grew in number through the 1950s, as indicated by the rapid growth of the *mahalla* of Shorija. The

division between the formerly dominant Turkmen community and the incipiently powerful Kurdish community would prove to be the first major fault line to destabilize Kirkuk after the 1958 coup.

5. Revolutionary Kirkuk: The Rise of Intercommunal Violence and the Ethnic Competition for the City, 1958-1968

Introduction: The assassination of Eugene Shamoun

With the expansion of international reporting by Western newspapers and wire services, Iraq's increasingly tumultuous political scene became a frequent subject of articles in English-language newspapers in the 1950s and 1960s. In the context of the Cold War, these news outlets were myopically concerned with the activities of Iraqi Communists and those perceived to be close to them politically or ideologically, often speculating about how much influence the Communists—sometimes described as the "leftists" or "reds" and conflated with the Soviet Union—were gaining. Along these lines, the *Associated Press* transmitted a dispatch from Baghdad that appeared in newspapers on Friday and Saturday, 26 and 27 August 1960. It was published under headlines such as "Communist Leader Shot Dead in Iraq." Remarkably, it concerned an episode of violence that had occurred in Kirkuk, a city which, aside from fleeting mentions in business and economic reports on the Iraqi oil industry, received extremely little Western media coverage.

> Eugene Shamoun, a leading member of the outlawed Ittihad al Shaab Communist party, was shot and killed on the doorstep of his house in Kirkuk Wednesday night, it was learned today. Shamoun, owner of a Communist bookstore, was shot at least 10 times. Police said three gunmen were believed involved. Political violence in Kirkuk in the last six months has left eight persons dead.[1]

[1] Associated Press, "Communist Leader Shot Dead in Iraq," *The News and Courier*, 26 August 1960, http://news.google.com/newspapers?nid=2506&dat=19600826&id=BoNJAAAAIBAJ&sjid=xwsNAAAAIBAJ&pg=7061,4284616; Associated Press, "Communist Shot," *The Ottawa Citizen*, 27 August 1960, http://news.google.com/newspapers?nid=2194&dat=19600827&id=X1ExAAAAIBAJ&sjid=euQFAAAAIBAJ&pg=4900,4951306.

Inevitably, the *Associated Press*'s account, written from the vantage point of Baghdad by a reporter who probably did not speak the local languages, was imprecise. *Ittihad al-Shaʿab,* "the People's Union," was the name of the Iraqi Communist Party's then-banned newspaper rather than the name of the party itself. The fact that Shamoun was ideologically leftist, though, is indeed well known. Members of the Kirkuk Group literary collective, most of whom joined the Iraqi Communist Party after the 1958 revolution, were first exposed to a variety of leftist and Marxist works through his store, "Eugene's Bookstore" (*Maktabat Yujin*), which sold used books in English.

The assassination of Eugene Shamoun is noteworthy herein not because it was unusual. On the contrary, it was merely one act of political violence among hundreds in post-1958 Kirkuk about which historical records are now fragmented or, quite possibly, nonexistent. It was one in a long series of events that can be traced back to the polarized and unstable political results of the coup of 1958, which interacted with volatile local dynamics in Kirkuk in deadly ways, pitting the city's ethnic communities and associated political consortiums against one another in a manner that had yet been unknown in its modern history. Shamoun's death has not been entirely lost to history only because he was acquainted with the Kirkuk Group, whose members have since mentioned him in their writings about mid-twentieth century Kirkuk.[2] It is also a revealing event in the context of revolutionary Kirkuk because Shamoun's own political activity, like that of so many forgotten victims of the city's violence, was not ethnicized or otherwise sectarian in nature—but, as will be discussed below, a member of the Kirkuk Group specifically characterized Shamoun's suspected assassins as Turkmens. Whereas nonsectarian

[2] Al-ʿAzzawi, *Al-Ruh al-Hayya*, 280; Al-Ghassani, "The Rose and Its Fragrance".

communism had managed to briefly take hold among Kirkuki workers in the 1940s, overshadowing other political trends that revolved around ethnic identities, such ideologies had since become subsumed under the rubrics of ethnic nationalisms in Kirkuk.

After 1958, the Kirkuki Turkmen and Kurdish communities, as well as the Baghdad-based Iraqi state, publicly staked their claims to the city of Kirkuk, its history, and its oil. They did so both verbally and violently in a manner that indicated the full formation of a distinct but divisive Kirkuki civic identity in which there was little room for negotiation. Over the course of the previous four decades, the oil city had grown to accommodate tens of thousands of mostly Kurdish poor rural migrants, while the city's formerly dominant Turkmen elite had declined in proportion and influence but generally maintained their higher socioeconomic status. The organization of politics along the lines of left/right and poor/elite in revolutionary Iraq therefore dramatically intensified the ethnopolitical mobilization in urban Kirkuk that had already been evident for decades, albeit in a weaker form. The eventual rise of Iraqi Arabist governments who aimed to consolidate the influence of Arabs in Kirkuk sharpened these ethnic divisions still further. More so than at any prior time in the era of the modern Iraqi state, Kirkukis' interests after 1958 came to depend on whether they were Kurdish, Turkmen, Arab or Christian.

A coup, a revolutionary regime, and Arab-Kurdish "partnership"

At about 4:30 in the morning on 14 July 1958, two brigades of the Iraqi Army led by Brigadier General ʿAbd al-Karim Qasim and Colonel ʿAbd al-Salam ʿArif that had been ordered to march to the Iraqi-Jordanian border instead entered and occupied

Baghdad. Qasim and ʿArif were members of the Free Officers, a clandestine revolutionary movement that had formed within the army in the early 1950s; around the mid-1950s, it began to grow in influence and started to plot an eventual overthrow of the monarchy. Around 8:00 a.m. on 14 July, some of the Free Officer-led forces took over the Royal Palace, killing the entire royal family, including the young King Faysal II and his older and more powerful cousin, Crown Prince ʿAbd al-Ilah. The following day, forces tracked down and killed the old regime's frequent former prime minister and most powerful establishment figure, Nuri al-Saʿid. By all accounts, the coup met no popular resistance. In fact, once ʿArif announced the formation of the republic on the radio at about 6:30 a.m., his proclamation was greeted by supportive crowds demonstrating—and, before long, destroying property—in the streets of Baghdad. To some extent, these crowds consisted of followers of various Iraqi opposition groups, including the banned Communist and Baʿth Parties, who ordered their constituents to demonstrate in support of the coup under pressure from the new military regime. Narratives of the Iraqi revolution written from the vantage point of Baghdad typically emphasize, whether positively or negatively, its short-lived but intense celebratory chaos that soon necessitated the imposition of martial law. Some stress the brutality of the events of 14 July and its aftermath, including the public mutilation of the corpses of ʿAbd al-Ilah and Nuri, acts which most Iraqis and international observers found repugnant.[3]

In Kirkuk, there were no serious acts of violence, but the city also reacted to news of the coup with excitement. Fadhil al-Azzawi, a Kirkuk Group novelist who was about

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[3] Many works contain accounts of this coup, including: Batatu, *The Old Social Classes*, 800-07; Marion Farouk-Sluglett and Peter Sluglett, *Iraq Since 1958: From Revolution to Dictatorship* (London: I.B. Tauris, 1987), 49-50; Phebe Marr, *The Modern History of Iraq*, 2nd ed. (Boulder: Westview Press, 2004), 84-86; Tripp, *A History of Iraq*, 141-45.

eighteen years old in 1958, recalls in an autobiographical essay about the Group's early experiences:

> When the republic was announced in Iraq while we were still students in school, we felt that our lives had begun with the revolution. Suddenly, we found ourselves in the middle of a sea of people: processions in the streets, signs everywhere, speakers in the squares, crowded coffeehouses like on holidays…The city no longer slept….The revolution appeared to us, we who were still at the beginning of our literary lives, to be a thing resembling the unending festival that remained standing throughout the year.[4]

Azzawi's account reflects his intimate engagement, as a young man coming into social consciousness, with Kirkuki society and private life. From his vantage point, the entire city was consumed with revolutionary fervor. Externally, though, visible activity in Kirkuk on 14 July and the following days appears not to have exceeded normal levels to an extraordinary extent. British accounts suggest that 14 July was a quiet day in Kirkuk, though not entirely without incident; some youths took to the streets and ended up attacking and damaging two British cars. Power passed promptly and peacefully into the hands of the Iraqi Army's 2nd division, whose headquarters were in the city. According to a report by the British consul in Kirkuk written nearly one month later, the notables of the *liwa*ʾ reacted to 14 July with little concern one way or another, instead adopting a "wait and see" approach.[5] Of course, the British perception that the revolution was uneventful in Kirkuk may have stemmed partly from their relief at the new regime's quickly expressed intent not to nationalize the IPC. On July 19th, the commander of the 2nd army division personally delivered a message to the head of the IPC reassuring him that the new government was interested in keeping Iraq's oil flowing without disruption,

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[4] Al-ʿAzzawi, *Al-Ruh al-Hayya*, 305-06.

[5] H.C. Whyte, "Report by H.M. Vice-Consul, Kirkuk," 8 August 1958, FO 371/134202, UK.

indicating a desire on the part of the revolutionary government to cooperate with the company.[6] The coup's immediate effects in Kirkuk were therefore subtler than in Baghdad, but its long-term effects were yet to be felt.

The revolution's reverberations shook Kirkuk in full force once the new regime, led by Qasim styled as Prime Minister, moved toward acceptance of the political parties under which Kurds in Kirkuk and surrounding regions had begun organizing in the 1930s and 1940s. Specifically, Qasim's government allowed the Iraqi Communist Party and the Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP), which were politically allied with one another in northern Iraq, to operate freely, leading to the ascendancy of Kurdish nationalist interests. The KDP was led by Ibrahim Ahmad within Iraq and chaired by Mustafa Barzani in exile. Barzani had emerged as the most prominent member of his family and thus the primary leader of a unified Kurdish movement, but had been forced to leave Iraq under duress after the collapse of his rebellion in 1947 and was, as of 1958, in the Soviet Union. Both the KDP and the Communist Party, aware of the Free Officers' potential friendliness to their ideologies and activities, had endorsed the coup in one way or another. Two days after the coup, Ibrahim Ahmad proclaimed his party's support for Qasim's regime and optimism for the Kurds' future in Iraq in harmony with the Arabs.[7]

Thereafter, in its earliest phase, Qasim's government was careful not to take any steps that could alienate the Kurds; instead, it began to explicitly attempt to appropriate them as allies. In the words of an official in the British embassy in a September 1958 letter, "the party line has been that the Arabs and the Kurds are brothers and are equal and

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[6] J.C.C. Bennett to Levant Department, 20 July 1958, FO 371/133879, UK.

[7] McDowall, *A Modern History of the Kurds*, 302. An English translation of the KDP proclamation can be found in: Massoud Barzani and Ahmed Ferhadi, *Mustafa Barzani and the Kurdish Liberation Movement* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003), 174-75.

free citizens of Iraq under one flag."[8] Some scholars have suggested that Qasim's own background of mixed heritage—his father was Arab, his mother Feyli Kurdish—was a factor in this seemingly "integrative vision," in Charles Tripp's words, for Iraq.[9] A new interim Iraqi constitution, drafted just after the coup and announced by Qasim on 27 July, stated in its third article that "Arabs and Kurds" were "partners in this homeland" and that the government recognized the Kurds' "national rights within the limits of the Iraqi unity," offering Iraq's Kurds clearly stated recognition as a distinct but included community for the first time. The article immediately preceding this one, however, stated that Iraq was "part of the Arab nation," an indication of the Free Officers' internal conflict between Iraqi-territorial nationalist and pan-Arabist sympathies in which the latter occasionally prevailed.[10] Nevertheless, the regime took a number of steps toward satisfying the demands of Kurdish nationalists in its first months, such as the establishment of a Directorate General of Kurdish Studies within the Ministry of Education in May 1959 to address Kurds' expressed educational concerns.[11]

As mentioned, the Iraqi Communist Party had also indicated its support for the coup by prompting supportive demonstrations among their followers starting on 14 July. For the sake of his own legitimacy, Qasim was soon obliged to co-opt the Communists as the organization with the strongest base of popular support in Iraq, an impressive fact in

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[8] R.S. Crawford to F.D. Brown, 9 September 1958, FO 371/133134, UK. Crawford claims that the Free Officers initially proclaimed an "Iraqi Arab Republic" on 14 July and then, realizing their mistake, quickly changed the name. Batatu's English translation of the full proclamation, however, does not contain this specific phrase: Batatu, *The Old Social Classes*, 802.

[9] Tripp, *A History of Iraq*, 146. Those in Iraq who self-identify as Feyli Kurds are typically Persian-speaking Shiʿi Kurds originally from areas near the Iraqi-Iranian frontier.

[10] "Annex A" to "Iraq Since the Revolution," 12 August 1958, FO 371/134202, UK. These quotes are a British official's translation from the original Arabic.

[11] Hassanpour, *Nationalism and Language in Kurdistan*, 317.

light of their previously clandestine existence.[12] The Communist Party had a predominantly Kurdish membership in northern Iraq, including Kirkuk, by 1958. The nature of the Party's activities in Kirkuk had thus come to be ethnicized since the Communists' initial appearance in Kirkuk's political scene among IPC workers in 1946, in spite of the fact that the Party's leadership in the city remained diverse and nonsectarian.[13] Kurdish Communist activity became potent enough in the 1950s that the Department of State of the United States established a United States Information Service office in Kirkuk in 1952 for the purpose of promoting American ideas and culture through various forms of propaganda in the Kurdish areas of northern Iraq—including rural areas in Kirkuk's hinterland and beyond—with the goal of limiting the Party's leverage. The office, which the Department of State converted into a consulate in 1957, used Kirkuk as a base for keeping track of increasing levels of Communist activity among Kurds in northern Iraq on behalf of the American diplomatic delegation based in Baghdad.[14] The Communists themselves also used Kirkuk as a pivotal post from which to distribute letters and literature originating in Baghdad to various areas in northern Iraq.[15] Hence, in the years leading up to the revolution, Kirkuk had become a crucial frontier for the Communists in an effort that, in northern Iraq, took on an increasingly Kurdish cast and exhibited ties with the Kurdish nationalist movement. For instance, the British consul

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[12] Farouk-Sluglett and Sluglett, *Iraq Since 1958*, 54-55.

[13] Fadhil al-Azzawi (Fadil al-ʿAzzawi) describes the Party's leadership in Kirkuk as having consisted of "a mixture of Kurds, Arabs, Turkmens and Christians" in 1958. Al-ʿAzzawi, *Al-Ruh al-Hayya*, 307.

[14] Lee F. Dinsmore, "Regrets for a Minor American Role in a Major Kurdish Disaster," *Washington Report on Middle East Affairs* (May/June 1991): http://www.wrmea.com/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=1643.

[15] See for instance: "The Iraqi Communist Party (Supplementary Paper)," April 1949, p. 34, FO 371/75131, UK; "The Iraqi Communist Party (Supplementary Paper)," July 1949, p. 32, FO 371/75131, UK.

in Kirkuk wrote in August 1958 that Communists there were "active with an independent Kurdistan line" and expressed an intent to align themselves with Barzani.[16]

The role of Kirkuk's Communists in local politics in the immediate aftermath of the July 1958 coup was therefore enabled not only by Qasim's fostering of the Communist Party, but also by his broader promise of Arab-Kurdish "partnership" and consequent cooperation with the KDP. At this early stage in the trajectory of revolutionary Kirkuk, the fates of the Kurdish and Communist movements were closely intertwined. The initial ascent of these movements under the Qasim regime's tutelage led to politically active Kurds who were members of either the Communist Party or the KDP taking over several important local government posts in Kirkuk, including the mayor's office and the leadership of the court.[17] While Baghdad's relationship with both parties would dramatically change within the next year, the rise to power of a large number of organized, politically active Kurds set the stage for an immediate deterioration in Kirkuki intercommunal relations. The Western entities that were attempting to limit the growth of Communist influence in Kirkuk were mostly removed in November 1958, when the Qasim regime ordered the closing of all foreign diplomatic missions outside of Baghdad, Basra and Karbala.[18] The American and British consulates in Kirkuk never reopened.

[16] Whyte, "Report by H.M. Vice-Consul, Kirkuk," FO 371/134202, UK.

[17] Batatu, *The Old Social Classes*, 914.

[18] "Closure of Consulates," 13 November 1958, FO 371/133136, UK.

Turkmen-Kurdish friction and the cycle of intercommunal violence

While politically active Kurds tended to be aligned with either the KDP or the Communists, most of Kirkuk's long-entrenched Turkmen elite aligned themselves with the opposing pole in the revolutionary regime—the pan-Arabists and Baʿthists who, in Baghdad, were linked to the 14 July coup's co-leader and Qasim's rival, ʿAbd al-Salam ʿArif, as well as to the president of the United Arab Republic (UAR), Gamal Abdel Nasser. Given the hostility of most Turkmen notables to Arab leadership during the era of the British mandate, their sympathy for pan-Arabist movements three decades later may initially seem like a counterintuitive development. However, their support for these elements stemmed not from any sort of devotion to the idea of Iraqi unification with Egypt and Syria, but rather from their perception of the ascent of organized Kurds in local government as a threat to Turkmens as an ethnic community.[19] In addition, Turkmen political activity, unlike that of many Kurds, was typically not organized under the auspices of trade unions. Turkmens tended to hold positions in the middle- and upper-class socioeconomic strata. They were highly represented among the city's merchants, businessmen, artisans, and landowners; as previously mentioned, they were also particularly numerous among the IPC's Iraqi staff. Kirkuki Kurds, who were disproportionately poor laborers, whether for the IPC or other industries, were more receptive to unionizing and therefore benefited directly from the rise of the Communist

[19] Al-ʿAzzawi, *Al-Ruh al-Hayya*, 307; Majid, conversation, 26 June 2010.

Party.[20] The socioeconomic differences between Kirkuk's two largest ethnic communities therefore solidified and politicized their preexisting divisions.

The increasingly flammable tensions between the Kirkuki Turkmen and Kurdish communities met their first spark in October 1958, when Mustafa Barzani, upon receiving a passport sent by Qasim via emissary to his temporary domicile in Prague, returned to Iraq after eleven years in exile. Mustafa Barzani's rebellion had long been supported by the entire Barzani clan, and other members of the family had also been punished under the monarchy. In a symbolic initial step one week after the 14 July coup, the new government freed Mustafa Barzani's brother, Ahmad Barzani, from a Baghdad prison where he had been incarcerated for twelve years. Ahmad Barzani passed through Kirkuk and Arbil on the way back to his family's native Barzan in far northeastern Iraq, receiving what his nephew, Massoud Barzani, has described as a "magnificent popular reception" in both cities. Similarly, when Mustafa Barzani returned to Baghdad on 6 October, the Communist Party and other parties aligned with Qasim ensured that a supportive crowd would greet him at the airport.[21]

Barzani then toured Iraq, arriving in Kirkuk on 25 October. In anticipation of his arrival, Kirkuki Kurds, possibly with official backing, had festooned the city with banners associating Barzani with Qasim. In this instance, the public lionization of the Kurdish nationalist leader and privileging of the theme of Arab-Kurdish partnership proved to be too provocative to pass by without incident. Turkmens who were angered by the festivities tore down the Kurds' banners, starting a riot. The Iraqi Army's 2nd division

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[20] Batatu, *The Old Social Classes*, 913.

[21] Barzani and Ferhadi, *Mustafa Barzani*, 178-83.

responded quickly by imposing a curfew, breaking up crowds, and incarcerating a large number of people.[22] Later, a Turkmen political organization issued a declaration in which they described the day's events as follows:

> On October 25, 1958, the patriot Barzani returned from Suleimaniyya to Kirkuk on his way to Baghdad. Extremist Kurds who came from outside Kirkuk exploited this occasion and provoked the residents of Kirkuk by their banners and outcries against Iraqi unity in general and Turcomans in particular. One of these outcries was "Kirkuk is the city of the Kurds, and let foreigners leave" and Kirkuk being a Turcoman city is an indisputable fact. They marched in the streets of Kirkuk raising hostile banners and chanting "Down with imperialism and its agents," pointing at passers-by and those in cafés.[23] [*sic*]

The declaration, purporting to represent the views of "democratic Turkmens," is careful to avoid criticizing Barzani or *Kirkuki* Kurds directly, instead attributing the most disturbing aspects of the day's demonstrations to external forces and asserting support for Qasim as well as making the statement, "Long live Arab-Kurd-Turcoman fraternity." In continuation of the theme of blaming outsiders for trouble in Kirkuk, the declaration implies that Western expatriates in Kirkuk played a role in the rioting by ending the document with the proclamation "Death to imperialism, [and] its reactionary agents"—a sentiment that echoes the slogan apparently chanted by Kurdish demonstrators.[24] Government officials were eager to promote this evidently popular idea, which seemed to excuse Kirkukis from any wrongdoing; a rumor soon spread in Kirkuk, with the assistance of an inflammatory pamphlet, that the American consulate had caused the

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[22] H.N. Pullar to Selwyn Lloyd, 8 December 1958, FO 371/133136, UK. The version of this dispatch available for viewing in the National Archives of the United Kingdom is extensively redacted. A request made under the provisions of the British Freedom of Information Act to see the full original document was unsuccessful.

[23] Barzani and Ferhadi, *Mustafa Barzani*, 349-50. The quotes herein are from the English translation of the Turkmen organization's declaration as it appears in this book.

[24] Ibid., 350.

rioting. This led the commander of the 2nd army division, Nazim al-Tabaqchali, to take steps to limit the Americans' movements under the assumption that they were functioning as spies.[25] The ordered closure of foreign consulates in the city less than a month later therefore could not have come as a surprise.

Despite these seemingly ethnically inclusive Iraqi-nativist diversions, the Turkmen document's emphasis on the "indisputable fact" of Kirkuk's Turkmen character betrays the salience of ethnicized politics in the city and their role in turning Barzani's visit into an episode of interethnic strife. Tabaqchali would later testify that the army troops sent to control the rioting had divided up by ethnic group and fought one another.[26] The British consul's report on the events verified the Turkmens' claim that Kurds from other areas, particularly Arbil and Sulaymaniyya, had been among those causing trouble on 25 October; Tabaqchali's troops had to prevent them from entering the city as the day wore on.[27] The events of October 1958 were significant because they constituted the beginning of a cycle of intercommunal violence between the Turkmen and Kurdish communities of Kirkuk. Smaller, but nonetheless severe, confrontations occurred in ensuing months, including an attack by armed Kurds on a Turkmen neighborhood in January 1959 leading to a series of events that left several dead.[28] The clash of 25 October was also one of the first public episodes in which the city of Kirkuk became a battleground for Kurdish activists from outside of Kirkuk who had previously concentrated their activities in mostly rural areas to its north and east.

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[25] Pullar to Lloyd, FO 371/133136, UK.

[26] Batatu, *The Old Social Classes*, 913.

[27] Pullar to Lloyd, FO 371/133136, UK.

[28] BBC, 15 January 1959, as cited in Batatu, *The Old Social Classes*, 913.

In addition to physical violence, intellectuals also drew battle lines in written discourse. One noteworthy episode of the Turkmen-Kurdish competition for Kirkuk took place in a Baghdad newspaper, *Al-Ahali*, in March 1959. *Al-Ahali*, which was the official newspaper of the Baghdad-based National Democratic Party (NDP), had long been a medium for the opposition under the monarchy, arguing in favor of democratic principles and featuring a variety of leftist ideological commentaries.[29] Though the NDP had been in contact with the Free Officers prior to the revolution and allied with Qasim following the coup, *Al-Ahali* did not necessarily serve as a mouthpiece for the new regime, thereby allowing it to become a venue for organic debate. On 1 March, a Turkmen writer from Kirkuk named Shakir ʿUmar published an article in *Al-Ahali* under the title "The History of the Peoples of Iraq" (*Tarikh al-Aqwam fī al-ʿIraq*). Though the article never mentioned Kirkuk, it was plainly a manifestation of the ethnopolitical ideas that Kirkuki Turkmens had begun to adopt in response to their perceived marginalization in the city that they had once dominated.

ʿUmar's extremely dubious central argument was that civilization in the Iraqi region, extending back for several millennia, was of Turkish origin. While repeatedly using the adjective "Turkish" to describe Iraqi and Mesopotamian people and places, he consistently included "Turkmen" in parentheses afterwards, thereby tying Iraqi Turkish speakers' relatively recent distinct identity as "Turkmens" to a broader and much older Central Asian heritage which, he claimed, gave birth to Mesopotamia. ʿUmar referred to the Sumerian people of ancient Mesopotamia as "Sumerian Turks (Turkmens)." He offered apocryphal Turkish etymologies for the names of Iraqi and Mesopotamian cities;

[29] For the early history of *Al-Ahali*, see Bashkin, *The Other Iraq*, 62-69.

for instance, he claimed that the name "Sumer" came from a Turkish word meaning "suck" or "absorb," though without trying to explain why this word would be used as a place name.[30] In an echo of the pan-Arabist ideas that had come to influence Kirkuki Turkmens, he anachronistically described the Assyrian empire and its capital city of Nineveh as "Arab," implying that "Arab" was synonymous with "Semitic." Most strikingly of all, ʿUmar asserted that the Kurds were descendants of a branch of the Turks who had split off—a claim that seemed to link the Kurds and Turkmens on the surface but attempted to subordinate the Kurds historically.[31]

A Kurdish student from Sulaymaniyya who was studying history in Baghdad at the time, Kamal Muzhir Ahmad, read ʿUmar's article in *Al-Ahali* and was incensed. He proceeded to write an incredulous and often indignant six-part response to the article that was published in *Al-Ahali* throughout the rest of March 1959.[32] Part of Ahmad's goal was to straightforwardly refute ʿUmar's more egregious distortions of history, but his arguments and rhetoric also revealed the underlying hostility between Turkmens and Kurds that catalyzed the exchange. For instance, Ahmad claimed that ʿUmar believed the Kurds of Arbil and Kirkuk, in particular, were "Turks," although ʿUmar had not explicitly stated this. Ahmad's assertion indicates his attention to a subtext, whether imagined or real, of Turkmen claims to rightful authority over those cities. Ahmad then

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[30] Shakir ʿUmar, "Tarikh al-Aqwam fi al-ʿIraq," *Al-Ahali* 77, 1 March 1959, 3. ʿUmar was most likely referring to one of two Turkish verbs: "soğurmak" (to absorb) or "sorumak" (to suck).

[31] Ibid.

[32] Kamal Muzhir Ahmad, "Radd ʿala Maqal Tarikh al-Aqwam fi al-ʿIraq, 1," *Al-Ahali* 79, 3 March 1959, 3, 6; Kamal Muzhir Ahmad, "Radd ʿala Maqal Tarikh al-Aqwam fi al-ʿIraq, 2," *Al-Ahali* 80, 4 March 1959, 3; Kamal Muzhir Ahmad, "Radd ʿala Maqal Tarikh al-Aqwam fi al-ʿIraq, 3," *Al-Ahali* 81, 5 March 1959, 3; Kamal Muzhir Ahmad, "Radd ʿala Maqal Tarikh al-Aqwam fi al-ʿIraq, 4," *Al-Ahali* 83, 8 March 1959, 3, 6; Kamal Muzhir Ahmad, "Radd ʿala Maqal Tarikh al-Aqwam fi al-ʿIraq, 5," *Al-Ahali* 85, 10 March 1959, 3; Kamal Muzhir Ahmad, "Radd ʿala Maqal Tarikh al-Aqwam fi al-ʿIraq, 6," *Al-Ahali* 88, 13 March 1959, 3, 7.

went so far as to claim that the Turkmen presence in Iraq dated back four centuries at the most, thereby accepting ʿUmar's framework in which legitimacy of ethnic character was determined by a community's longevity. Ahmad argued that the Iraqi Turkmens were the descendants of Turkish soldiers who had been settled there by the Ottomans along a line running southeast from Arbil to Mandali, with Kirkuk in between, in order to strengthen the Ottoman position in the region.[33] Decades later, in 2006, after a long career as a history professor at Baghdad University, Ahmad recalled having been told by a friend in Kirkuk that people there had purchased the issues of *Al-Ahali* in which his articles appeared and, owing to a lack of copies, passed them around to each other. The exchange between ʿUmar and Ahmad also generated other responses, including public approval of Ahmad's articles by a prominent Kurdish historian.[34] The high demand for these issues led to their being sold at a much higher price than usual: up to 100 *fils* per copy, whereas the newspaper typically sold for 16 *fils*.[35]

This series of articles in *Al-Ahali* reveals a dimension of the conflict between Turkmens and Kurds over Kirkuk that is not obvious when considering intercommunal violence alone: namely, the investment that these groups had in claiming their historical legitimacy in opposition to one another throughout northern Iraq, but especially in Kirkuk. Both intellectuals accepted the premise that the question of which ethnic group arrived first in the region was crucial to determining their rightful political positions. Each therefore tried to delegitimize the other's community by offering a doubtful theory

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[33] Ahmad, "Radd ʿala Maqal Tarikh al-Aqwam fi al-ʿIraq, 5," *Al-Ahali*.

[34] Mufid Abdulla, "Dr Kamal Mazhar Ahmad: Every Kurd Would Love to See an Independent Homeland," *KurdishMedia*, 24 September 2006, http://www.kurdmedia.com/article.aspx?id=13304.

[35] Kamal Muzhir Ahmad, conversation with the author, 16 June 2011.

of their origin that implied that they had been the ones to appear later. What is especially noteworthy throughout ʿUmar and Ahmad's exchange is the power of Kirkuk as a subtext to the arguments despite the fact that the city itself is seldom mentioned within them. In his 2006 recollection of how ʿUmar's article had initially angered him, Ahmad incorrectly claimed that ʿUmar primarily argued that Kirkuk was a Turkmen city—a conclusion perhaps implied by the combination of ʿUmar's Kirkuki background and his premise that Iraqi civilization was Turkish, but never explicitly stated within the article.[36] As for ʿUmar, his retreat into a bizarrely chauvinistic Turkmen-centered ideology of Iraqi (and, it is implied, Kirkuki) identity was an early form of what Guldem Buyuksarac, in an ethnographic study of the Iraqi Turkmens in the present day, has described as "melancholic resistance" rooted in a sense of loss and employed as a survival mechanism.[37]

By 1959, Kirkuk's Kurdish and Turkmen communities thus exhibited crystallized and antagonistic group identities, even if they occasionally performed the pretenses of inclusiveness. These identities were irreconcilable because they were each profoundly invested in the idea of a rightful ethnic ownership of Kirkuk. Furthermore, Kurds from outside of Kirkuk, like Ahmad, also increasingly had a stake in its ethnic characterization.

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[36] Abdulla, "Dr Kamal Mazhar Ahmad."

[37] Buyuksarac, "The Poetics of Loss and the Poetics of Melancholy," 110-51. Buyuksarac is particularly interested in this expression of Turkmen identity as a form of resistance against the "normalizing effects of Arab nationalism" in a later time period, particularly with regard to the legacy of Iraq's Baʿth era.

14 July 1959 and its aftermath: the first ethnic battle for Kirkuk

In the meantime, evolving tensions between Iraqi-territorial nationalists and pan-Arabists in the Baghdad government, as well as Qasim's increasingly troubled attempts to maintain a relationship with the Communists that worked to his advantage, permeated the Iraqi provinces and interacted with local fault lines. Two serious challenges to Qasim's authority by pan-Arabists with ties to Gamal Abdel Nasser, including an attempted coup in December 1958, set off a chain of events that benefitted the Communist Party. Qasim took the opportunity to marginalize ʿArif, declare himself the "Sole Leader" of Iraq, and force several other pan-Arabists and Baʿthists out of government positions. The Communists and those who were aligned with them or sympathetic to them maneuvered to fill the vacuum both in the government and in various civilian organizations. As a result, by the beginning of 1959, the Iraqi Communist Party was approaching the apex of its power and influence.

Free Officers of several ideological affiliations who were allied with the Nasserist-Baʿth axis, along with political and religious conservatives, were angry at Qasim's maltreatment of ʿArif and viewed the Party's rise with trepidation. Soon, officers in the Mosul army garrison, led by ʿAbd al-Wahhab al-Shawwaf, would hatch a plan for a revolt against Qasim under the assumption that it would be supported by the UAR and local tribesmen.[38] In February 1959, the Peace Partisans, a Communist-aligned leftist group, decided to hold a rally in the city of Mosul in the first week of March as a show of

[38] Farouk-Sluglett and Sluglett, *Iraq Since 1958*, 58-67; Marr, *The Modern History of Iraq*, 90-91.

force in response to reliable rumors of an anti-Qasim plot. They announced their intent in the Iraqi Communist Party's newly authorized official newspaper, *Ittihad al-Shaʿab*. The Peace Partisans initially received Qasim's full approval, including support through the state media and even the scheduling of extra trains in order to allow an enormous influx of Party members, sympathizers, and government supporters to get to the city.[39] Shawwaf openly voiced his strong disapproval of the rally to Qasim, but the massive Communist-backed event nevertheless went ahead on 6 March. By 7 March, it devolved into clashes that fell along numerous party and tribal lines loosely corresponding to the pro-Qasim and pro-UAR sides. On 8 March, Shawwaf declared the planned revolt against Qasim, accusing him of having "betrayed" the revolution, and named Kirkuk's 2nd division commander, Nazim al-Tabaqchali, as a supporter of the revolt. Four days of extremely violent and complex turmoil followed in Mosul in which about 200 people died; Shawwaf himself was killed on 9 March. Forces loyal to Qasim regained control on 12 March. Tabaqchali and other suspected co-conspirators in the revolt were swiftly arrested and taken to Baghdad.[40]

The horrors of March 1959 proved to be a fleeting but tremendous gain for the Communist Party politically, including in Kirkuk. In the midst of a highly charged political and social atmosphere throughout Iraq in which competitions for authority were taking place at all levels and in both physical and discursive spaces, the leader of the Kirkuk-based 2nd division was imprisoned and charged with a capital crime, and his replacement was a Communist: Brigadier Dawud Salman ʿAbbas al-Janabi, an Arab

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[39] Batatu, *The Old Social Classes*, 879-80.

[40] Ibid., 881-89; Farouk-Sluglett and Sluglett, *Iraq Since 1958*, 67-68.

member of the Party, who took over the command position on 14 March.[41] However, despite Qasim's growing reliance on the Communists for support in the face of active insurgent opposition among his own troops, he had no intention of allowing them to grow so strong as to threaten his own non-partisan position. He therefore began the uneasy process of achieving a balance between appeasing the Party through certain appointments and policies while dismissing Army officers with links to the Communists.[42] The Turkmen historian Arshad Al-Hirmizi states that during his tenure in Kirkuk, Janabi actively quelled the influence of those who opposed the Communists, shutting down Turkmen newspapers and exiling and imprisoning Turkmens who were openly against Qasim's government.[43]

On 1 July 1959, just a few months after ordering him to assume the command of the 2nd division in Kirkuk, Qasim had Janabi fired. Janabi was later arrested along with five other army officers who were suspected of Communist ties.[44] Meanwhile, in the wake of the Mosul disaster, provincial northern Iraq continued to be riven by clashes between people aligned with and against the Communists and between rival tribes, especially in Kurdish areas.[45] The events of the spring and early summer, beginning with Mosul and culminating in Janabi's arrest, agitated the overwhelmingly Kurdish popular base of the Communist Party in Kirkuk and, in turn, the mostly Turkmen local faction who opposed them. Both sides felt the need to publicly demonstrate their dominance over

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[41] Batatu, *The Old Social Classes*, 914.

[42] Farouk-Sluglett and Sluglett, *Iraq Since 1958*, 70.

[43] Arshad Al-Hirmizi, *The Turkmen Reality in Iraq* (Istanbul: Kerkük Vakfı, 2005), 102-03.

[44] H. Trevelyan to S. Lloyd, 9 July 1959, FO 371/140919, UK.

[45] Humphrey Trevelyan to G.F. Hiller, 17 June 1959, FO 371/140918, UK.

the city. On top of everything else, Kirkuk was suffering a high unemployment rate due to the suspension of development activities after the 1958 coup.[46] It was in this context that the worst episode of intercommunal violence in Kirkuk since the founding of the modern Iraqi state occurred on 14 July 1959, the first anniversary of the revolution.

The precise details of what happened on 14 July 1959 and the next couple of days vary widely in different tellings. Hanna Batatu's thorough analysis of the event, based on interviews and his one-time access to Kirkuk's municipal records, is generally considered the definitive and most reliable account.[47] Among the other versions of the story available for study are: reports submitted to the British Foreign Office, which tended to be based on secondhand information due to the absence of a consulate in Kirkuk; a detailed memorandum by "Turkmen citizens" dated 18 July 1959, which has been reproduced in more than one book; and a very detailed and fascinating interview conducted by Guldem Buyuksarac with a Kirkuki Turkmen expatriate in Turkey whom she calls Resmiye Hanim, who was eleven years old when the violence occurred and witnessed it firsthand.[48] It is unsurprising that each account, including Batatu's, is subtly different in its interpretation of the events, and the variations correspond with the teller's political vantage point. As a result, many historians of Iraq have refrained from offering a detailed analysis of the events, simply noting that they were bloody and chaotic. Phebe Marr exemplifies this trend in her single-sentence summary of the whole affair:

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[46] P.T. Hayman to G.F. Hiller, 30 September 1959, FO 371/140924, UK.

[47] Batatu, *The Old Social Classes*, 912-21.

[48] For accounts held in the British archives, see for instance: P.T. Hayman to G.F. Hiller, 24 July 1959, FO 371/140920, UK; Attachment to Copeland and Eichelberger to Colonel F.T. Davies, 30 July 1959, FO 371/140921, UK. The Turkmen memorandum of 18 July 1959, cited below in Al-ʿAni (2001), is also found in English translation in: Al-Hirmizi, *The Turkmen Reality in Iraq*, 110-18. Hirmizi includes many documents relevant to the July 1959 events in his book verbatim. The Buyuksarac interview with Resmiye is in: Buyuksarac, "The Poetics of Loss and the Poetics of Melancholy," 205-10.

"Unfortunately, matters got out of hand."[49] For the purposes of a national history of Iraq centered in Baghdad, this treatment of the events may suffice. However, a close reading of what occurred in Kirkuk is necessary to expose the specific ways in which intercommunal tensions presented primarily as claims to Kirkuk's civic identity and therefore to urban space.

For example, it is telling that, as in the case of the banners linking Barzani and Qasim that caused offense in October 1958, the clash of 14 July 1959 evolved out of a dispute over public, visual symbols of political engagement and ascendancy that were manifested in communal areas and tied indirectly to socioeconomic class. In the months following the 1958 coup, organized groups in Kirkuk built a large number of triumphal arches in the city in order to express their support for the revolution and, in doing so, appropriate its popularity for their own interests. The hasty construction of these kinds of showy temporary structures was a common response to military victories in the region and had occurred in modern Iraq as early as 1933.[50] In revolutionary Kirkuk, these arches became a point of pride, and therefore of competition, for those who erected them. Turkmens, who typically had more money, would even provoke the Kurdish community by building larger and more elaborate arches in the vicinity of arches that had been put up by Kurds.[51] The aforementioned Turkmen memorandum characterized the building of

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[49] Marr, *The Modern History of Iraq*, 94.

[50] R.S. Stafford wrote that such arches were built in Mosul after the Iraqi Army's "victory" over the Assyrians in Sumayl, where scores of civilians were killed in 1933: Stafford, *The Tragedy of the Assyrians*, 201. Kanan Makiya has suggested that these sorts of arches could be seen as precursors to "vulgar" constructions such as the Victory Arch monument built by Saddam Hussein consisting of two sets of enormous crossed swords held by disembodied forearms: Samir Al-Khalil [Kanan Makiya], *The Monument: Art, Vulgarity and Responsibility in Iraq* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991), 140n33.

[51] Majid, conversation, 26 June 2010.

these celebratory arches as a primarily Turkmen endeavor intended to demonstrate their community's loyalty to the new regime, maintaining that Turkmens had built more than 130 arches featuring pictures of Qasim and Iraqi flags.[52] These details, whether or not they are accurate, reflect a forthright attempt by Turkmens to promote the notion that they, and not the Kurds and the Communists, were the genuine supporters of Qasim. In the days preceding 14 July, local Kurdish affiliates of the Communist Party planned to further advance their claim to Kirkuk's public space by staging a demonstration in the city's traditional center on the anniversary of the revolution. The Turkmen community planned their own demonstration for the same day, apparently in response to the challenge. Kirkuk's chief of police, an Arab with Communist sympathies, wrote in a 15 July letter to Kirkuk's *mutasarrif* that, "in view of the deep-rooted enmity between the Kurds and the Turkmen," the police took "appropriate precautionary measures" ahead of the planned marches.[53]

Accounts generally agree that the day began with peaceful, uneventful demonstrations that met in the center of the city. Batatu's map (Figure 5.1) indicates that the processions paraded on two bridges across the Khasa—a bridge near the location of the nineteenth-century stone bridge, which had been demolished in 1954, and a newly built bridge to its south.[54] The Turkmens were in traditional dress, and there were men, women and children among them. Some of the Turkmens seem to have been riding in

[52] Memorandum by "Turkmen citizens," 18 July 1959, in Nuri ʿAbd al-Hamid Al-ʿAni, *Tarikh al-Wizarat al-ʿIraqiyya fi al-ʿAhd al-Jumhuri, 1958-1968*, vol. 3 (Baghdad: Bayt al-Hikma, 2001), 47-51. The content of this memorandum, which the volume describes as a document held in the library of Khalil Ibrahim Husayn Al-Zawbaʿi (p. 51n1), seems to be similar to one that Hanna Batatu describes as "undated" and as having been written by two prominent Turkmen leaders: Batatu, *The Old Social Classes*, 914n10.

[53] Letter No. 497 from Kirkuk chief of police, 15 July 1959, as cited in Batatu, *The Old Social Classes*, 915, 915n11.

[54] Ibid., 916.

decorated trucks, which the Kirkuk chief of police puzzlingly described as "army vehicles." It is nearly certain that they were unarmed. At the same time, a procession of people carrying ropes was marching toward the Turkmen parade. The Kirkuk chief of police described the marchers as "soldiers," while Buyuksarac's interviewee, Resmiye, described them simply as "Kurds" and "Communists."[55] This lack of clarity as to who the seemingly armed marchers were reveals the extent to which armed groups (including the Army and civilian forces), Communist organizations, and Kurdish organizations had become blurred together in the popular imagination of revolutionary Kirkuk. Batatu speculates that these marchers may have belonged to military detachments that had been close to Janabi.[56] At the time, P.T. Hayman of the British embassy in Baghdad implied that they were commonly thought to be members of the Popular Resistance Force, a government-organized militia that had come to have Communist ties.[57] While it is now impossible to know for certain whom they were representing, it is accepted in most accounts, including contemporary ones, that they were Kurdish. The implication that the Turkmens presented themselves as ornately dressed while the Kurds appeared uniform and militarized also indicates the prevalence of commonly perceived differences in socioeconomic status between these groups—status differences that would mark them as having distinct political interests.

That evening, an altercation was touched off in the vicinity of a well-known coffeehouse located near the older bridge on the west side of the Khasa, directly across

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[55] Letter No. 497, as cited in Batatu, *The Old Social Classes*, 915-17; Buyuksarac, "The Poetics of Loss and the Poetics of Melancholy," 207.

[56] Batatu, *The Old Social Classes*, 917.

[57] Hayman to Hiller, FO 371/140920, UK.

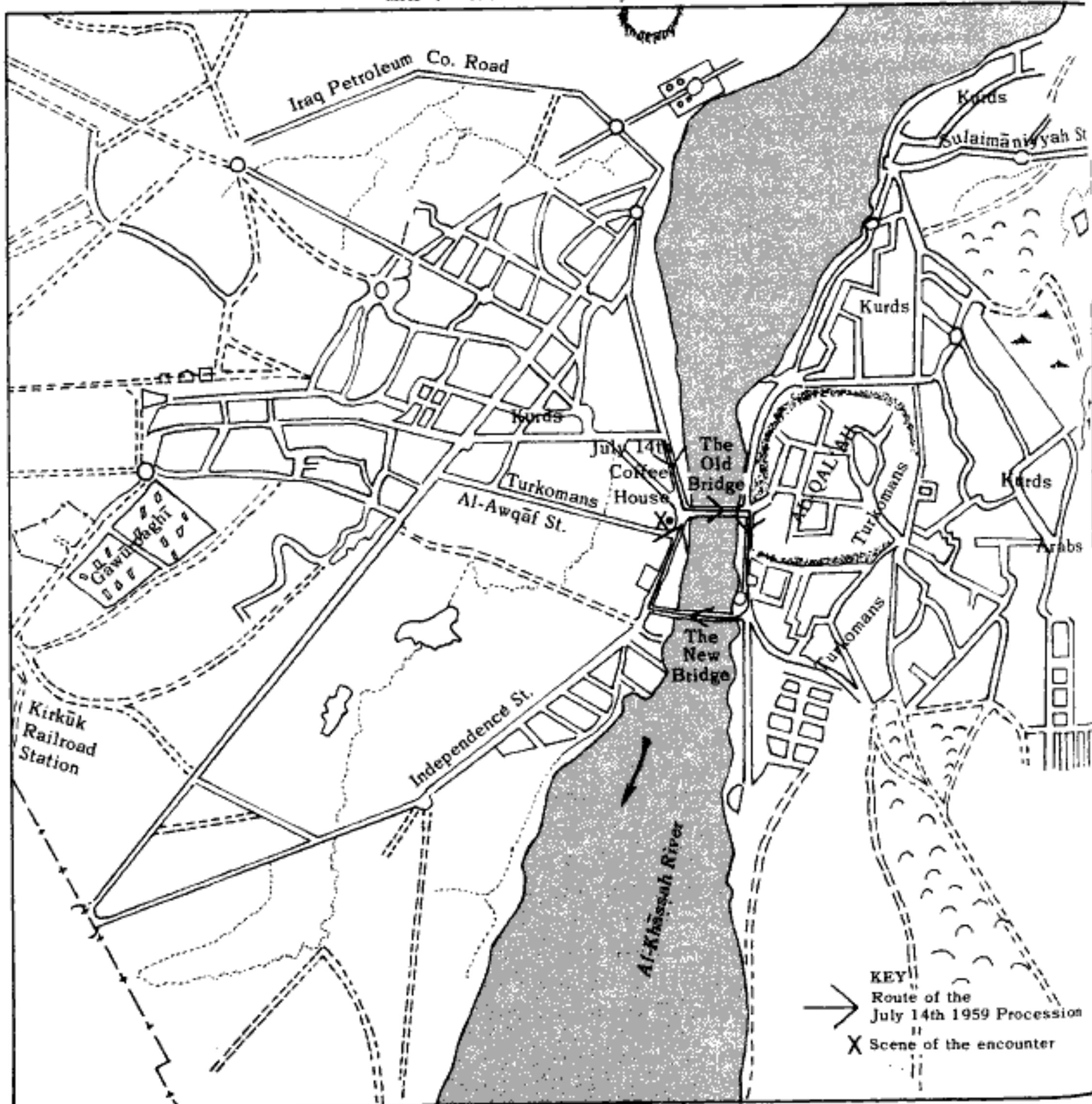

Figure 5.1: Hanna Batatu's map of the events of 14 July 1959 in central Kirkuk.
© Princeton University Press; reproduced with permission.

from the citadel, called the 14th of July Café (recently renamed, of course, for the 1958 revolution). More than one account states that the dispute began as a result of a visual element involving a political slogan. Hayman claimed that the offending object was "some Turkish writing on a decorative arch."[58] An account that appears to have originated with an American oil executive, based on multiple sources, claims that the owner of the 14th of July Café, a Turkmen named Osman, had displayed political slogans inside and outside of his shop and that some Kurds of uncertain affiliation ordered him to remove them.[59] There are also reasons to believe that this dispute was primarily ethnically charged, rather than a political or ideological dispute that happened to fall along ethnic lines. The American account makes the claim that, earlier in the day, "army trucks began blaring out insults to the Turkomen."[60] While this event cannot be directly confirmed, it bears a resemblance to Resmiye's recollection that the marchers carrying ropes were yelling "Torani," or *turani*, a racial term for people of Central Asian Turkic descent—often translated into English as "Turanian"—that was occasionally used in Iraq at the time to refer to the Turkmens.[61] The Turkmen demonstrators' choice to wear traditional clothing may well have intensified both the visual and ethnic dimensions of the rivalry between demonstrators from both ethnic groups.

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[58] Ibid.

[59] Attachment to Copeland and Eichelberger, FO 371/140921, UK. The name of the ill-fated proprietor of the café is rendered in both Turkish (Osman) and transliterated Arabic (e.g., ʿUthman) spellings in various sources. I have opted for the former not out of a prescriptive notion of his ethnic identity, but because it is the spelling used in the Western account cited herein—an account that was most likely rendering the name phonetically and therefore in accordance with Osman's probable preference.

[60] Ibid.

[61] Buyuksarac, "The Poetics of Loss and the Poetics of Melancholy," 208.

At some point around seven in the evening, shots of unknown origin were fired, causing a violent skirmish to break out. The Kurds were armed and therefore quickly overwhelmed the Turkmens. A mob killed Osman and publicly mutilated his body; one account says his body was hung from a tree, while others say the corpse was dragged in the streets in a manner reminiscent of the treatment of ʿAbd al-Ilah and Nuri one year earlier.[62] Osman's death was the beginning of a lengthy and grisly spectacle. The Kirkuk police chief wrote that about twenty other Turkmens were lynched that evening and that seventy Turkmen-owned businesses were looted.[63] Interestingly, the authors of the Turkmen memorandum written four days later felt that it was important to point out that the mob also tore down and burned some of the triumphal arches with Qasim's picture and Iraqi flags on them: indicating, they imply, a distinct lack of patriotism on the part of the Kurds.[64] That the competition between Kurds and Turkmens for political legitimacy in revolutionary Kirkuk continued in subtle ways in the immediate aftermath of a public bloodbath is remarkable.

There is little question that the violence consisted mostly of armed Kurds, whether civilian or affiliated with the military or a militia, attacking Turkmen civilians. Resmiye recalls that when the fighting began, she and other Turkmen children who had been part of the procession were led to nearby military headquarters for their own safety. They hid there until about midnight while shots rang out all around them.[65] This memory

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[62] Attachment to Copeland and Eichelberger, FO 371/140921, UK; Memorandum by "Turkmen citizens" in Al-Hirmizi, *The Turkmen Reality in Iraq*, 112.

[63] Letter no. 497, as cited in Batatu, *The Old Social Classes*, 915.

[64] Al-Hirmizi, *The Turkmen Reality in Iraq*, 112; Letter no. 497, as cited in Batatu, *The Old Social Classes*, 915-17.

[65] Buyuksarac, "The Poetics of Loss and the Poetics of Melancholy," 208.

corresponds with Hayman's report that "some of the Turkish community managed to barricade themselves inside an old fort."[66] In the meantime, people aligned with the attacking mob—who, by the Kirkuk police chief's account, were members of the Popular Resistance Force—broke into the Imam Qasim police station and took weapons from its arsenal. According to Batatu, a witness later testified that this group yelled an anti-Turkmen slogan as they emerged from the station with police rifles.[67]

For the next two days, armed Kurds attacked Turkmen targets in Kirkuk's traditional core, where Turkmens remained the majority of the population. Many Turkmen men perceived to be hostile were detained and held hostage, and some were killed. Kurds from the local army division joined the fight, bombarding houses in the citadel with shells and destroying two Turkmen-owned cinemas.[68] A group of Communists from Kirkuk later claimed in a memorandum that the army had been fired on from these locations and was forced to return fire.[69] This allegation is not easily confirmed or disproven. Prior to the shelling of the citadel, Resmiye recalls, its residents—including her family—were warned that a bombardment was imminent and advised to evacuate the area. After they took refuge at a relative's house outside of the citadel, armed men captured and detained her father, uncle and grandfather. These men and others were later found imprisoned in a school, having been deprived of food and water for a couple of days in the stifling July heat, though they were otherwise

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[66] Hayman to Hiller, FO 371/140920, UK.

[67] Batatu, *The Old Social Classes*, 917.

[68] Ibid., 918.

[69] "Memorandum Submitted to the Prime Minister by the Representatives of Democratic Organisations in Kirkuk," enclosure with Hayman to Hiller, FO 371/140920, UK.

unharmed.[70] These details suggest that the attackers aimed to assert dominance both over Kirkuki Turkmens as people and over the Kirkuk citadel as a historic symbol.

On 16 July, forces from Baghdad finally arrived in Kirkuk and ordered the 2nd Division and the Popular Resistance Forces to return to their base or their homes. The violence came to an end by 17 July. Kurdish soldiers who had been firing on civilian targets were disarmed.[71] The final official count of the dead was 31, with about 130 injured; the vast majority of people in both categories were Turkmens, and the actual number of dead was probably higher. Twenty-four out of the 28 people who were eventually convicted of perpetrating these crimes were Kurds.[72]

The Kirkuk attacks riveted Iraq and devastated the standing of the Communist Party nationwide. Qasim took advantage of the horror of the events to crack down on the Party by arresting hundreds of its members, shutting down various associated organizations, demobilizing hundreds of troops, and dismissing officers from Communist-influenced military units. He also had graphic photos of the victims displayed on national television and publicly employed very strong language against the accused perpetrators of the attacks, though he stopped short of explicitly denouncing the Communists as an organization. Nevertheless, July 1959 marked the beginning of the Iraqi Communist Party's "ebb" from its apogee of influence.[73] Communists also lost their position within the KDP when Mustafa Barzani forced out executives who were

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[70] Buyuksarac, "The Poetics of Loss and the Poetics of Melancholy," 208-10.

[71] Hayman to Hiller, FO 371/140920, UK; Batatu, *The Old Social Classes*, 918.

[72] Ibid., 912, 919; Farouk-Sluglett and Sluglett, *Iraq Since 1958*, 71.

[73] Batatu, *The Old Social Classes*, 919, 922-23; Farouk-Sluglett and Sluglett, *Iraq Since 1958*, 71-72.

sympathetic to the Party.[74] The Party itself, whose central leadership had no role in the events, worked hard to distance itself from the perpetrators of violence against civilians—though, as mentioned above, at least some Party members tried to argue that the Turkmens had opened fire on the 2nd army division. *Ittihad al-Shaʿab* took a more hackneyed approach, blaming the initial shots that set off the violence on "conspirators" in a "colonialist plot."[75] While vocal opposition to colonialism and imperialism had itself long been a prevalent local mode of political thought, this contention had remarkably little impact in the context of ethnicized political violence in the revolutionary era.

Qasim's curbing of the Communists in 1959 led to frequent killings of affiliates of the Communist party throughout Iraq, particularly in the city of Mosul, where right-wing religious and political elements were especially influential. This "reign of terror," in Batatu's words, also spread to Kirkuk, where the massacre had created a deep-seated resentment of the Party among much of the city's population. The influence of officers who were sympathetic to these anti-Communist purges was such that they were able to take place relatively openly. Iraqi politician Kamil al-Chadirchi even told Batatu that "well-known merchants of the city [of Mosul] offered as high as ten dinars for dead members of the party."[76] The exact number of victims of these ideologically motivated killings in Kirkuk is probably impossible to know. But the assassination of Eugene Shamoun, mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, occurred in the context of this wave of violence in August 1960 and was especially noteworthy because of Shamoun's

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[74] Johan Franzén, "From Ally to Foe: The Iraqi Communist Party and the Kurdish Question, 1958-1975," *British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies* 38, no. 2 (2011): 172.

[75] *Ittihad al-Shaʿab*, 20 July 1959, as cited in Al-ʿAni, *Tarikh al-Wizarat al-ʿIraqiyya*, 3:43.

[76] Batatu, *The Old Social Classes*, 951.

prominence in the city as the owner of a bookstore peddling works that were influential for Iraqi Communists and for Kirkuki intellectuals.

One of several members of the Kirkuk Group whom Shamoun influenced, the poet and journalist Anwar Al-Ghassani, wrote many years later that Shamoun's assassins had been "reactionary Turcoman thugs."[77] This detail, assuming it is true, appears to correspond to the predictable ethnicized political correlations of the time—that is, that Turkmens were particularly predisposed to be politically conservative because of their instinct to preserve their historic position in Kirkuk and because of the association of communism with Kurds. However, Shamoun and his associates illustrate how these categories, despite their simple appearance, were much more complex at the margins. Shamoun's preferred and professed self-identity is now unknown, but his name indicates that he was of Christian, possibly Chaldo-Assyrian, origin. The Kirkuk Group self-consciously characterized itself as multiethnic; for instance, Ghassani himself, who died in 2009, was of mixed Turkmen and Arab heritage.[78]

The polarization of revolutionary Iraq, and subsequently of Kirkuk, had little room for these nuances. Indeed, one of the ramifications of the chaotic post-1959 political environment was the gradual exodus of a large percentage of the Kirkuki Chaldo-Assyrian community because the most powerful ethnic factions in Kirkuk did not serve their interests. Among those who did remain, there was a profound sense of alienation with the political changes that had taken place in Kirkuk. Daniel Benjamin, an Assyrian and former IPC employee whose family owned a printing press in Kirkuk,

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[77] Al-Ghassani, "The Rose and Its Fragrance".

[78] Ibid. For an obituary that highlights Ghassani's mixed background, see "Anwar al-Ghassani, 1937-2009," *Banipal*, accessed 14 July 2012, http://www.banipal.co.uk/contributors/388/anwar-al-ghassani/.

recalls that he used to print custom cards for his community for occasions such as Christmas and weddings, selling thousands per year during the monarchy era. After 1958, he was no longer able to sell them and still had a surplus of cards he had printed in 1957 when he left Kirkuk a decade later.[79] Within the IPC, Chaldo-Assyrian employees also tended leave Kirkuk, transferring to positions in Baghdad or emigrating from Iraq entirely.[80]

It should also be noted that many aspects of the events of July 1959 remain strongly contested. The most controversial question is whether or not the attacks on the Turkmen community were premeditated by those acting as representatives of the Kurds and/or the Communists as a group. The belief that such an operation had long been planned by the Communists was common; for instance, Tabaqchali, the imprisoned former commander of the 2nd Division, mournfully told a lawyer upon hearing of the events that the Communists had been planning such a massacre since he had been in Kirkuk, but that he had prevented them from carrying it out for as long as he was there.[81] Tabaqchali continued to pursue this line while on trial for his alleged complicity in the Mosul violence, though he was ultimately unsuccessful. He was convicted and executed for his supposed role in those events in September 1959.[82] The Turkmen memorandum submitted to Qasim on 18 July made a different, racially based claim that has since become very common among Turkmens: that the massacre was part of a "genocidal war

[79] Benjamin, interview, 27 June 2011.

[80] Yacu, interview, 3 June 2011.

[81] Jasim Mukhlis, *Mudhakkirat al-Tabaqjali wa-Dhikrayat Jasim Mukhlis Al-Muhami* (Baghdad: Matbaʿat al-Zaman, 1985), 24. Mukhlis, the lawyer in question, was himself executed by the Saddam Hussein regime in 1993 following a failed coup: Edmund Ghareeb and Beth Dougherty, *Historical Dictionary of Iraq* (Lanham: Scarecrow Press, 2004), 162-3.

[82] Annex A in Humphrey Trevelyan to Selwyn Lloyd, 14 October 1959, FO 371/140931, UK.

against the Turkmen race."[83] Much like similar characterizations of the 1924 Assyrian Levies massacre by Turkmen nationalists, this idea is not substantiated by available evidence. Even Batatu makes the error of overemphasizing the presence of "inveterate enmity"—"almost instinctive," he suggests—between Kurds and Turkmens in the process of exonerating the Iraqi Communist Party of wrongdoing in the attacks.[84]

However, the attacks of July 1959 in Kirkuk were like the 1924 attack in that they were eruptions in the city's historic residential and commercial centers—even long after the urban fabric had expanded well beyond that core—that threw into relief the idiosyncratic ways in which local politics had developed in recent years. In this case, the racialized language used by Turkmens describing the event, considered along with the stark ethnic differences between the perpetrators and the victims regardless of their organizational affiliations, is salient. Namely, the strongest forces in Kirkuk's politics had shifted from alignment with a pro- or anti-centralization dichotomy to alignment with discrete and mutually hostile ethnic categories. The new forces prioritized control over the city of Kirkuk itself, politically, historically and symbolically, as a distinct and crucial political domain.

The undoing of the IPC's position in Kirkuk

The political dysfunction of the revolutionary era in Kirkuk affected the operations of the IPC. While British influence throughout Iraq declined dramatically after

[83] Memorandum by "Turkmen citizens," in Al-ʿAni, *Tarikh al-Wizarat al-ʿIraqiyya*, 3:47. This is my translation from the original Arabic. Arshad al-Hirmizi's translation of the memorandum oddly omits this racialized language. For another example of this kind of characterization of the July 1959 events, see for instance: Küzeci, *Kerkük Soykırımları*, 51.

[84] Batatu, *The Old Social Classes*, 912, 914.

the 1958 revolution, particularly after the expulsion of consuls in provincial areas, the company remained as a small outpost promoting a combination of imperial and private interests at its headquarters near Baba Gurgur. Government-led development projects with foreign involvement were suspended, but the IPC's internal projects, like the home ownership scheme, continued.[85] The new regime, as previously mentioned, was quick to assure the company that it did not intend to nationalize the oil industry, but within a few weeks the Directorate General of Labour and Social Security made it clear that the revolutionary government intended to keep close track of the company's activities. In a 31 July 1958 letter, the Directorate requested that the IPC "do their best to avoid arbitrary disbandment of labourers" and demanded that no worker be fired without first consulting the Directorate as to the reasons for the discharge. The IPC responded defensively that they reserved their right to let employees go, but the Directorate repeated in further correspondence that they were to be informed of the reason given for any firing of an IPC worker.[86] In 1960, the government suspended the laying off of workers altogether under the stipulation of martial law.[87]

Iraq's revolutionary politics also affected hiring decisions and promotions, which often hinged on workers' political affiliations. In the early Qasim era, the IPC was

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[85] For example, as mentioned in Chapter 4, the government-sponsored housing scheme in Kirkuk under the auspices of Doxiadis Associates was suspended and the firm was forced to leave the country in 1959. Former IPC general manager George Tod mentions that the first house under the home ownership scheme was fully paid off in the mid-1960s. George Tod, *From Pillar to Post: The Autobiography of George Tod* (unpublished typescript), 121, George Tod Collection, GB 165-0349, File 2, MECA.

[86] Directorate General of Labour & Social Security to IPC, Ltd., 31 July 1958, and Chief Representative, Baghdad, to the Director General of Labour & Social Security, 26 August 1958, both enclosed in Chief Representative, Baghdad, to Iraq Petroleum Company, London, 6 September 1958, File 163884, BP; Directorate General of Labour and Social Security to I.P.C./M.P.C./B.P.C., 10 September 1958, enclosed in Chief Representative, Baghdad to Iraq Petroleum Company, London, 15 September 1958, File 163884, BP.

[87] "Note on Personnel and Industrial Relations Matters in Iraq During 1961," June 1962, File 39651, BP.

pressured into recruiting affiliates of the Communist Party, many of whom had recently been released from prison; when Qasim's relationship with the Communists soured, these new employees were often incarcerated again.[88] Just as individuals who had political connections that were advantageous (at a given moment, anyway) could gain employment, existing employees who lacked these connections found their attempts to rise in the company thwarted. Daniel Benjamin, for instance, was working as the chief clerk of the IPC's stores department in 1958 and did not belong to any political party. He failed to receive a previously expected promotion to a covenanted staff position following the revolution. After nine years without receiving the promotion, he transferred to a job in Kuwait.[89]

Turkmens, in particular, faced dismissal from the IPC during the wave of Communist influence in 1959, often accompanied by accusations that they were pan-Turkists or Baʿthists.[90] Furthermore, these kinds of problems were pervasive outside of the oil industry in Kirkuk. For example, at Tabaqchali's trial in August 1959, the director of a women's teaching college in Kirkuk who had been transferred there recently by Qasim testified that pan-Arabist, anti-Communist colleagues actively prevented her from doing her job. According to her account, she was non-partisan, but students and staff nonetheless held a demonstration against her tenure and even attacked her under the assumption that she was a Communist.[91] Even the contents of the IPC's private Arrapha Estate library changed with ascendant waves of political influence; Communists, pan-

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[88] Yacu, interview, 3 June 2011; Yacu, interview, 8 June 2011.

[89] Benjamin, interview, 27 June 2011.

[90] Yacu, interview, 8 June 2011.

[91] Enclosure in Baghdad to Foreign Office, 14 August 1959, FO 371/140930, UK.

Arabists, and Baʿthists looted the library in succession and restocked it with texts that reflected their ideological inclinations.[92]

The Qasim regime's attempts to assert authority over the IPC's employment practices proved to be a major problem for the company once the government left no doubt that it intended to either prompt or force the company to relinquish the rights to most of the lands in its concession where exploration had not yet taken place. This move met with the approval of the Iraqi population, among whom resentment of the IPC's monopoly and its 50% share of the country's oil revenues was commonplace. When negotiations between the IPC and the government over what percentage of the lands to relinquish broke down in 1961, the legislature passed Law No. 80, shutting the company out of 99.5% of its previous concession outside of areas already being exploited.[93] The law immediately rendered redundant hundreds of employees in geophysical exploration nationwide and, in the company's view, created the possibility that about 3,000 more employees engaged in jobs such as drilling would also prove to be surplus labor. While the IPC futilely sought permission from the government to discharge these employees a few hundred at a time, even claiming that this intention reflected their good-faith acceptance of the terms of Law No. 80, Qasim declared publicly that he intended to preserve all Iraqis' jobs in the oil company. IPC officials feared the consequences of the impasse for the morale of their workforce and the subsequent negative political effects this mood could have, particularly because so many workers lived physically close to the

[92] Yacu, interview, 8 June 2011.

[93] Farouk-Sluglett and Sluglett, *Iraq Since 1958*, 78. For the IPC's view of the negotiations, see for instance: W.V. Fuller to Stockwell et al., 17 June 1959, File 163300, BP.

headquarters in company housing.[94] The high rate of unemployment already prevailing in northern Iraq could not have helped. The IPC's G.W. Herridge openly admitted in a conversation at the British Embassy in Baghdad that the company was trying to "indoctrinate their Iraqi employees with the idea" that the problems caused by Law No. 80 were Qasim's fault.[95] Qasim's government also provoked the company's ire by trying to push along the undertaking of replacing expatriate staff with specially trained Iraqis, which both the company and the government termed "Iraqi-isation," through tactics such as obstructing visa processing and withdrawing foreign staff members' work permits without warning once it was determined that those individuals could be replaced by Iraqis.[96]

While the company viewed Qasim's oil and labor policies with a combination of annoyance, fear, and barely concealed disdain, the government exhibited a certain level of sincerity in its desire to continue to collaborate with the company, as indicated by its commitment to the ongoing Kirkuk urban water scheme for which the IPC provided material support and installations. However, like the monarchy-era government before it, the revolutionary regime attempted to coax the company into bearing the costs of as many aspects of the project as possible. In 1962, company official N.M. Ekserdjian complained in an internal letter that the Kirkuk municipality owed the IPC about £150,000 and was making no attempt to pay this debt or to make improvements to a well portion of the water system that would soon run dry, creating an emergency that,

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[94] G.H. Herridge to N.R. Power, 30 August 1962, File 39651, BP; [Illegible] to G.G. Stockwell, 31 August 1962, File 39651, BP.

[95] Roger Allen to R.S. Crawford, 8 October 1962, FO 371/164280, UK.

[96] "Note on Personnel and Industrial Relations Matters in Iraq During 1959," 21 June 1960, File 39650, BP.

Ekserdjian warned, the municipality would probably expect the company to address. Ekserdjian suggested relieving the municipal government of its debt on the condition that they assumed all responsibility for the city's water supply, freeing the company of any future obligations.[97] This idea appears not to have been followed up by either the company or municipality. On the contrary, after ʿArif had ousted both Qasim and the Baʿth in 1963, the new minister of oil contacted the company yet again with a request that the IPC bear the costs of a water project to expand upstream irrigation on the Lesser Zab without affecting the supplies of the company and the Kirkuk municipality. The IPC responded in a scathing letter a few months later that it had no intention of doing so.[98]

In the absence of a government amenable to its interests, the oil company saw no need to continue its 1940s- and 1950s-era policy of cooperating with the local and national authorities in order to leverage its influence. The death of the collaborative, and mutually manipulative, relationship between the IPC and the government through development projects signaled the inexorable decline of the British position in revolutionary Iraq. The Iraqi government created a state-run oil company in 1966 and, under ʿAbd al-Rahman ʿArif, bolstered its control over the development of oil fields through two laws passed in 1967.[99] Sclerotic negotiations eventually culminated in the nationalization of the IPC in 1972 under the second Baʿth republic.[100] From then on, the

[97] N.M. Ekserdjian to General Division, 21 August 1962, File 161974, BP.

[98] Abdul Aziz Al-Wattari to I.P.C., Ltd., 25 November 1963, File 161974, BP; T.W. Elliott to D.G. of Oil Affairs, 4 March 1964, File 161974, BP.

[99] Farouk-Sluglett and Sluglett, *Iraq Since 1958*, 100.

[100] For more information on the processes that resulted in the IPC's nationalization, see: Samir Saul, "Masterly Inactivity as Brinkmanship: The Iraq Petroleum Company's Route to Nationalization, 1958-1972," *The International History Review* 29, no. 4 (2007); Brandon Wolfe-Hunnicutt, "The End of the Concessionary Regime: Oil and American Power in Iraq, 1958-1972" (PhD diss., Stanford University, 2011).

formerly complex politics of oil workers' interests and oil-funded development in Kirkuk were entirely subjected to Baghdad's authority.

The Kurdish war and emerging Kurdish claims to Kirkuk

Another one of the most important political changes in Iraq after 1958, which appears especially momentous with the benefit of hindsight, was the addition of a notion of Kirkuk as a *Kurdish city* and as a crucial part of Kurdish ethnic identity to Kurdish nationalist discourses. Since this shift was subtle in nature, it requires some explanation and qualification. As discussed in previous chapters, notions of the Kirkuk *region*, a concept usually corresponding to the borders of the Kirkuk *liwa*ʾ, as part of a loosely defined greater Kurdistan region dated back at least to the 1920s. Some Kirkuki Kurds, especially in mostly Kurdish rural areas, had long explicitly expressed a desire to join such an entity. However, the largely Turkish-speaking *city* itself and the elements associated with urbanism—most notably, the oil industry—were not a significant battleground, whether geographically or ideologically, for Kurdish nationalists in the monarchy era. Moreover, the notion often encountered today that Kirkuk is the "heart of Kurdistan"[101] evidently did not exist yet to any consequential degree. The character of Kurdish nationalist portrayals of Kirkuk and its oil changed very quickly after the 1958 revolution, when Kurds started to explicitly stake their claims to Kirkuk as a Kurdish city. For instance, on 18 July 1958, just a few days after the 14 July coup, the British consul in Kirkuk reported that some prominent Kurds were promoting the idea that

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[101] For instance, as encountered in the title of: F.H. Khorshid, *Kirkuk: Qalb-e Kurdistan* [Kirkuk: Heart of Kurdistan], as cited in Natali, "The Kirkuk Conundrum," 443.

"Kirkuk oil is Kurdish oil" through cards they had made for an Islamic holiday.[102] It is not clear where the Kurds distributing these cards were located, but what is known about the October 1958 riots following Mustafa Barzani's visit suggest that it was Kurds from outside of the city who spearheaded some of the most strident ethnonationalist sloganeering in Kirkuk. The Kurdish movement, which was centered in areas northeast of Kirkuk, began to permeate the city's political domain and was particularly invested in appropriating its trappings of urban modernity. The movement also came to distance itself from the Iraqi Communist Party, thereby severing ties with what had been a major nonsectarian ideological force among politically active Kurds.

The Kurdish separatist rebels associated with this movement, who were based in regions like Barzan, did not use physical force in the Kirkuk area right away. They had avoided staging uprisings in the city of Kirkuk in its hinterland before 1958, or perhaps had simply failed to do so. But Kirkuk evolved into a battleground when war broke out between the Kurds and Baghdad in the early 1960s. The war was a consequence of the fact that, from the beginning, the new government had been loath to consider granting the Kurds the autonomy they demanded to any extent despite its overtures to the KDP.[103] Relations between Qasim and Kurdish leaders had therefore started to fall apart by early 1961. For instance, the Education Ministry's early gestures to Kurdish education notwithstanding, Qasim cancelled a congress of Kurdish teachers in February 1961 and issued a corresponding declaration in which he downplayed the Kurds' distinctiveness as an ethnic group. This public statement reversed the trend that had started with the Kurds'

[102] Hugh Pullar to Hadow, 18 July 1958, FO 371/134255, UK.

[103] Farouk-Sluglett and Sluglett, *Iraq Since 1958*, 80.

recognition in the provisional constitution.[104] In March, the ongoing cycle of intercommunal violence in Kirkuk continued in a clash of obscure origin between Kurds and Turkmens that left seven dead and over 100 injured; the army had to take over the city and impose a curfew to control the chaos, as it had done in 1959.[105] In June and July 1961, Qasim's government made moves toward consolidating its influence in the Kirkuk region by creating new administrative subdivisions in the largely Arab areas of Riyad and Hawija west of urban Kirkuk through Republican Decrees 328 and 378. While these areas were already part of the Kirkuk *liwa*ʾ, the establishment of two new administrative seats in Arab-majority areas near Kirkuk signaled a shift toward a new, ethnicized tactic in Baghdad's attempts to assert control over the city that would eventually find its most extreme expression in the ethnically based expulsions and resettlements of the Baʿth era.[106]

That same summer, rebellion broke out in rural Kurdish areas north of Kirkuk dominated by tribal landowners for a reason completely unrelated to Kurdish nationalist politics: discontent with the Agrarian Reform Law of September 1958, a signature piece of legislation Qasim promoted in order to curb large-scale landownership and redistribute land holdings among peasants. The law's implementation had proceeded very contentiously in the Kurdish north. When Kurdish rebels ambushed an Iraqi Army target in September 1961 and Qasim responded with airstrikes in Barzan, the KDP joined the

[104] Hassanpour, *Nationalism and Language in Kurdistan*, 119.

[105] Associated Press, "7 Slain in Iraqi Town," *The New York Times*, 14 March 1961, 15.

[106] "Republican Ordinance No. 328," *The Weekly Gazette of the Republic of Iraq*, no. 39 (27 September 1961): 780-81; "Republican Ordinance No. 378," *The Weekly Gazette of the Republic of Iraq*, no. 43 (25 October 1961): 847. Anderson and Stansfield erroneously imply that these Arab subdivisions were *attached* to Kirkuk in 1961, thereby suggesting that these ordinances were an early form of the ethnically based gerrymandering of the provincial borders that would take place under the Baʿth regime in the 1970s: Anderson and Stansfield, *Crisis in Kirkuk*, 28.

uprising. The Communist Party denounced the rebellion, alienating many of its Kurdish members in the north; these people began to leave the party and align themselves with the rebels.[107] The KDP even began to make contacts with Qasim's pan-Arabist rivals even though, from an ideological and practical standpoint, they did not constitute logical allies to the cause of Kurdish autonomy.[108] By this time, the notion of Arabs and Kurds as "partners" in Qasim's Iraq was effectively dead, and Kurds' political interests became ever more closely associated with their ethnic group identity.

It was at this point that the Kurdish nationalist movement began to forthrightly demonstrate its physical presence in Kirkuk. In 1962, in the midst of the ongoing, brutal government campaign against the Kurds, Kurdish militants mounted an attack on the police force in ʿAyn Zala in northwestern Iraq. They killed several police officers and civilians; then, they kidnapped a British employee of the IPC, D.C. Dankworth, and two Iraqi employees. All three were eventually released unharmed. In the meantime, their captors covertly delivered messages from the hostages to IPC headquarters in Kirkuk, reflecting the extent of their penetration of the municipal boundaries. IPC general manager George Tod later remembered finding the notes "on the seat of my car, lying on a table, just lying about anywhere."[109] A few weeks later, Kurdish militants kidnapped another group of IPC employees an hour and a half's drive north of urban Kirkuk. These included a British geologist, Frank Gosling; an Iraqi geologist, Adnan Samarrai; and three other Iraqis. The captives were treated well. In fact, Samarrai recalls that Mustafa Barzani himself intentionally orchestrated their "guest" status to create a positive

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[107] McDowall, *A Modern History of the Kurds*, 309-11.

[108] Ibid., 312-13.

[109] Tod, *From Pillar to Post*, 114-18.

impression of the Kurdish movement.[110] Kurds abducted the leader of the village of Baba Gurgur, which was about eight kilometers northwest of urban Kirkuk, shortly thereafter. IPC employees had never previously faced such threats, and a state of nervousness over the Kurdish rebellion prevailed. This anxiety was exacerbated by a perception that Iraqi security in the Kirkuk area was inadequate due to the commitment of troops to fighting the rebels elsewhere, as well as by the fact that European staff members lived in the Baba Gurgur area and were therefore particularly close to the areas where militants were active.[111] In December 1962, expatriates in Kirkuk began to adhere to a curfew.[112] The government also increased armed protection of oil installations in Kirkuk in coordination with the army's 2nd Division.[113]

The heavy presence of the army in northern Iraq left strategically important points in Baghdad vulnerable to a coup just as the disputes between Qasim and his many rivals, especially ʿArif and the Baʿth Party, were coming to a head. On 8 February 1963, pan-Arabist and Baʿth officers seized key bases and the national radio station, declaring a revolution. ʿArif assumed the Iraqi presidency, though the Baʿth led the new regime. Unlike the 14 July 1958 coup, this announcement was met by massive popular opposition from Qasim's supporters, especially among Baghdad's urban poor, triggering two days of

[110] Samarrai, interview, 9 June 2011. Frank Gosling's report on the ordeal is found in: F. Gosling, 17 January 1963, FO 371/170501, UK. British journalist David Adamson met the captives while reporting on the Kurdish rebellion for the *Sunday Telegraph*; his account is found in: David Adamson, *The Kurdish War* (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1964), 133-37. Adamson sardonically noted that, to the Kurdish captors, "the difference between 'guest' and detainee is a loose one."

[111] Baghdad to Foreign Office, No. 831, 14 December 1962, FO 371/164281, UK; Baghdad to Foreign Office, No. 836, 15 December 1962, FO 371/164281, UK.

[112] Eric Downton, "Europeans in Iraq Agree to Curfew," *Daily Telegraph*, 27 December 1962, newspaper clipping in FO 371/164281, UK.

[113] Baghdad to Foreign Office, 31 December 1962, FO 371/170501, UK.

bloody fighting. The rebel officers forced their way into Qasim's quarters in the Ministry of Defense and summarily executed him on 9 February. The Baʿth government would eventually collapse in November, leaving an army autocracy under ʿArif's leadership in place.

Meanwhile, the intervening months witnessed a new wave of brutal suppression of Iraqi Communists. The regime publicly justified these acts as a warranted response to the events of 1959 in Mosul and Kirkuk, a reflection of the fact that anger over those attacks remained a well from which politicians in Baghdad could productively draw.[114] Indeed, just three days after the declaration of the new regime and two days after Qasim's execution, the Arab Communist former commander of the 2nd division in Kirkuk, Dawud al-Janabi, was hanged.[115] Qasim had refrained from carrying out the death sentences of the mostly Kurdish Communists convicted of the crimes of July 1959 in Kirkuk, but the Baʿth did not hesitate to implement them, executing all 28 men on 23 June. The government announced the executions on national radio and made a point of describing the criminals as Communists while reiterating the gruesome acts that the accused had been convicted of committing.[116]

The Baʿth also took a much harsher approach to the presence of Kurdish rebels in Kirkuk than Qasim had. In 1963, the army began to attack Kurdish civilians in urban Kirkuk's hinterland by razing villages that were in close proximity to the oil fields. Nouri Talabany documents the names of thirteen Kurdish villages that the first Baʿth

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[114] Farouk-Sluglett and Sluglett, *Iraq Since 1958*, 83-87.

[115] Al-Hirmizi, *The Turkmen Reality in Iraq*, 109.

[116] Reuters, "28 Communists Executed by Iraq for 1959 Massacre," *The New York Times*, 24 June 1963, 24.

government ordered destroyed in this manner.[117] In his unpublished memoir, George Tod describes one such incident that occurred sometime in early 1963. His account is worth quoting at length.

> One day the General in charge 'phoned me up and asked me to send him all our [i.e., the IPC's] earth moving equipment (about 50 pieces of power shovels, bulldozers, huge diggers etc.)…He told me he had orders from the President of the Republic in Baghdad to bull-doze down and destroy all houses of Kurds in Kirkuk [*sic*]. Outside villages had already been destroyed by fire but the town had so far been spared….I refused. He said he would come with his men and take the machines. He did. That same night all Kurdish men were rounded up, put into cattle trucks on the railway and taken by train to Basrah….At the same time…the army set about destroying and levelling out their habitations, throwing women and children on to the streets of Kirkuk with no shelter, food or means of getting it. For about a week the streets and the roads around our installations were littered with pathetic bundles of huddled bodies in their black robes, the women silent, the children crying. This final cruelty confirmed my decision to leave as soon as I was pensionable.[118]

Tod's implication that all the Kurdish men within the municipal boundaries of Kirkuk were exiled, and their houses destroyed, appears to be a simple error in the text or in memory; not only would this be impossible, but his description of the event implies that the area that the army razed was closer to the oil fields than to the central urban fabric. Nevertheless, the incident he describes, the outlines of which are corroborated by other sources cited herein, constituted a level of intrusion into the nearby outskirts of urban Kirkuk and the oil company's property by the Iraqi army that was then unprecedented in the history of the modern Iraqi state. This episode is a shocking example of the ethnicized targeting of civilian Kurds in Kirkuk as a way of suppressing the organized Kurdish movement.

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[117] Talabani, *Mintaqat Karkuk*, 54-55. One of the destroyed villages mentioned is Shoraw, the home village of Karzan Sherabayani, who talks about the incident in his documentary, also recalling that it happened in early 1963: Sherabayani, *Return to Kirkuk.*

[118] Tod, *From Pillar to Post*, 119.

As for the Kurdish movement's leadership, the KDP's establishment of good relations with the pan-Arabists briefly paid off, though the tenuous alliance between the groups soon fell apart. One of the KDP's younger executives, Jalal Talabani, led a Kurdish delegation accompanying the Iraqi Baʿth to an April 1963 conference in Cairo addressing the possibility, never realized, of Iraq joining Syria and Egypt in the UAR. Talabani issued a memorandum favoring a level of autonomy for the Kurds, an approach that he described as "decentralization." The Kurds' concerns were ultimately not recognized in the accord resulting from the conference.[119] The KDP put forth more forceful demands in late April; most notably, they insisted on the creation of an autonomous region that would include northern Iraq's oil fields, including those of Kirkuk, as well as the city of Kirkuk. The Baʿth responded with an unsparing offensive against Sulaymaniyya and areas north of Arbil and Kirkuk, though none within the Kirkuk *liwa*ʾ.[120] Instead, their approach in Kirkuk, as well as in Arbil, was to expel Kurdish civilians from villages and replace them with tribal Arab settlers. In late 1964, during a lull in the war in which large numbers of Kurds were returning to Kirkuk in dire circumstances, Iraqi prime minister Tahir Yahya claimed that the Kurds who had been displaced from Kirkuk villages could not be allowed to reclaim their homes because the Arab settlers were needed to keep an eye on "the imperialistic oil companies."[121] The method of using resettled civilian Arabs as proxies for Baghdad in Kirkuk had therefore

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[119] Kamal Muzhir Ahmad, *Al-Kurd wa-Kurdistan fi Dawʾ al-Wathaʾiq al-Sirriyya al-Britaniyya*, 2nd ed., vol. 1 (Arbil: n.p., 2009), 688-710; McDowall, *A Modern History of the Kurds*, 313. The former contains the full original text of Talabani's memorandum.

[120] McDowall, *A Modern History of the Kurds*, 314.

[121] S.L. Egerton to M. St. E. Burton, 30 October 1964, FO 371/175754, UK; S.L. Egerton to M. St. E. Burton, 21 November 1964, FO 371/175754, UK.

evolved into an official government policy. Likewise, the twin notions that Kirkuk was the southern Kurdish frontier and that Kirkuk's oil was a Kurdish prerogative were firmly cemented in virtually all branches of organized Kurdish politics. Both the Kurdish movement and the Arab-led government in Baghdad had completed the transition to an ethnopolitical approach to controlling Kirkuk.

The polarization of Baghdad's and the Kurdish movement's fight for Kirkuk as a frontier drove wedges between the city's communities, furthering the emergence of vicious divides that had profound emotional import. These external forces also began to interfere with the lives of all Kirkukis, permeating many aspects of everyday life. As previously mentioned, they hurt business pursuits, interfered with employment, and even resulted in the looting of private property and violence against the politically marginalized. When describing these effects of the post-1958 Iraqi political scene on their everyday doings, my interlocutors typically conveyed a wry sense of the absurdity of it all, and most who had a memory of the monarchy era either stated or implied that these changes were a phenomenon with no direct precedent. George Tod poignantly conveyed the reality of Kirkuki alienation in an anecdote about a dinner party for IPC employees that he held at his house in the executive estate sometime in the 1960s. While the party was ongoing, the Iraqi army began to shell a Kurdish village just north of the city. In the dark, and from the vantage point of the hill where the house was located, the explosions were clearly visible. "It was sad," Tod wrote, "to have to witness it." Traumatized Kurdish guests left the party. Some Arab guests "jeered," while others were embarrassed.[122]

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[122] Tod, *From Pillar to Post*, 119.

It is perhaps not unexpected that, decades later, novels about Kirkuk written by Kirkuki expatriates who are not Kurds tend to downplay or ignore the Kurdish presence in the city.[123] Similarly, while being interviewed by Guldem Buyuksarac about her experiences in Kirkuk, the Turkmen emigrant Resmiye exclaimed repeatedly, "There were no Kurds. Am I clear?"[124] I have also heard sentiments of this sort voiced by an Assyrian from Kirkuk who grew up in Arrapha. These Kirkukis do not mean to suggest, of course, that there were literally no Kurds in the city; all objective evidence indicates that as of the 1960s, they were the city's second largest ethnic group. Rather, these viewpoints reflect the isolation of discrete ethnicized social groups in Kirkuk that was exacerbated by their competing claims to the city and by external, but uncomfortably proximal, warfare.

Conclusion

The death of ʿAbd al-Salam ʿArif in a plane crash in 1966 left a power vacuum that enabled a second Baʿth coup in 1968, establishing a regime that would remain in place until 2003. The focus of Baghdad's relations with Kirkuk shifted dramatically over those decades as the Iraqi central government adopted a transparent policy of expelling non-Arabs from Kirkuk and replacing them with Arab settlers in an attempt to change the province's demographics, as well as of gerrymandering the Kirkuk *liwa*ʾ borders to exclude Kurdish areas. The nature of the oil industry and its relationship with the city was also fundamentally different after the company's nationalization in 1972, removing the last vestiges of British imperial influence from Kirkuk.

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[123] Ronen Zeidel, "The Iraqi Novel and the Kurds," *Review of Middle Eastern Studies* 45, no. 1 (2011): 26.

[124] Buyuksarac, "The Poetics of Loss and the Poetics of Melancholy," 208.

Over the course of the twentieth century, Kirkukis had experienced everything from war and starvation to political tensions, gaping and growing socioeconomic inequalities, and uncertainty for the future. However, the violence that destabilized both urban and rural Kirkuk after 1958 was of a very different type. Namely, it tore apart the region's social fabric along distinct lines of group identity. These ethnicized identities had become the basis for competing claims to Kirkuk's character, and therefore to historical authority over the city and political authority over its institutions. Turkmens, who had lost their unquestioned political dominance over the city and correctly sensed that their cultural dominance was also declining, felt threatened. Kurds, boldly and sometimes brutally, began to assert their power, eventually doing so through an ascendant nationalist movement. The horrors of July 1959, which gripped the whole country, fed a cycle of intercommunal strife that continued well into the 1960s.

Meanwhile, Kirkuk became an ever more crucial borderland between the domains claimed by Baghdad and the Kurdish nationalist movement—a competition that penetrated the city and its oil for the first time in the revolutionary era, both in expressed ideas and in physical force. The turmoil of internal and external violence over and around Kirkuk created anxiety in the daily lives of Kirkukis in various pursuits and of all ages, worsening the distrust between ethnic communities. The extent to which distinct group identities solidified in Kirkuk over the course of the twentieth century is starkly clear in the light of the 1958 revolution. Similarly, it is evident that a divisive, rather than unifying, conception of Kirkuki identity had come to dominate local discourse.

Conclusion

Kirkuk since 1968 in historical perspective

Two of the factors that shaped Kirkuk's local politics between the British invasion of 1918 and the coup of 1968 changed dramatically in the ensuing era of the second Baʿth republic: the role of Kirkuk's oil industry within Iraqi oil production, and the ways in which Baghdad extended its influence into Kirkuk. The extent of the central government's penetration into Kirkuk was so drastic that it has led most writers who choose to consider how Kirkuk's history is relevant to the present day to focus more or less exclusively on the period after 1968. Furthermore, since 2003, the flow of Baghdad's state-making efforts in Kirkuk has begun to ebb, while the influence of the Kurdistan Regional Government has steadily grown and consolidated. While, as a result of all of these changes, Kirkuk's present-day circumstances are substantially different from those that prevailed in the first five decades of the Iraqi state, I contend that they ultimately occur in the context of similar sociopolitical structures. Understanding Kirkuk's history from 1918 to 1968 therefore facilitates the critical examination of its affairs since that time.

Around the time that the Baʿth took power in 1968, Kirkuk's position as the heart of Iraq's oil industry began to decline. Soon thereafter, the oil company in Kirkuk ceased to function as a site of foreign, neoimperial influence. The discovery of a supergiant oil field at Baba Gurgur in 1927 had been the first such find in Iraq, and it remained the only find of its scale in the country for more than two decades. In the era of the British-led IPC, even after the discovery and development of other fields, the Kirkuk field was by

some distance the most productive one in Iraq. As a result, Kirkuk was the main focus of any oil-related policies emanating from Baghdad, and it was crucial for both local governments and the Iraqi central government to jockey with the IPC in order to pursue large-scale development projects that were funded entirely by oil profits. Simultaneously, though, exploration in southern Iraq by the IPC's sister company, the Basra Petroleum Company (BPC), yielded discoveries of the Zubayr and Rumayla oil fields. Exports from these fields via Basra began in 1950 and 1954, respectively, and eventually surpassed those originating in Kirkuk. Today, Rumayla, not Kirkuk, is easily Iraq's single most productive oil field, exporting about 1.4 million barrels per day in comparison to Kirkuk's 670,000.[1] Rumayla's immense potential bolstered Baghdad's position in relation to the IPC in the late 1960s. After contentious negotiations and several confrontations, the Iraqi government under President Ahmad Hasan al-Bakr (and his powerful deputy Saddam Hussein) nationalized the IPC in 1972, eventually renaming the new state-owned entity the North Oil Company.[2] Therefore, under the second Baʿth republic, the company no longer acted as a competing center of political gravity in the local arena. Instead, it became yet another manifestation of Baghdad's ever-growing influence in Kirkuk. The strength of the southern oil fields also made Kirkuk less essential to the industry as a source of quality crude, leading to the egregious physical

[1] Rumayla is also estimated to hold much greater reserves, particularly when grouped with several other smaller fields in the same region. Kirkuk's production has declined from its 1980 peak rate of 1.2 million barrels per day due to war-related disruptions and failure to maintain the oil field, as well as the damage the field sustained due to injection. Dahr Jamail, "Western Oil Firms Remain as US Exits Iraq," *Al Jazeera English*, 7 January 2012, http://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/features/2011/12/2011122813134071641.html; Saad Z. Jassim and J. C. Goff, eds., *Geology of Iraq* (Prague/Brno: Dolin/Moravian Museum, 2006), 233; U.S. Energy Information Administration, "Iraq: Country Analysis," accessed 14 July 2012, http://www.eia.gov/countries/cab.cfm?fips=IZ.

[2] Farouk-Sluglett and Sluglett, *Iraq Since 1958*, 145-48.

mismanagement of the Kirkuk field, including the use of injection of excess fluids to boost pumping rates.[3]

The more repugnant side of Baghdad's consolidation of power in Kirkuk, revealed while the government faced an ever more active Kurdish movement, was the series of efforts to Arabize the Kirkuk governorate.[4] The Baʿth regime continued the ʿArif government's policy of demolishing Kurdish neighborhoods and villages, exiling Kurds, and settling Arabs in their place. Crucially, they also broadened the campaign to target other non-Arabs. While these increasingly massive population movements were achieved by force in most cases—even the Arab settlers were often involuntarily relocated from southern Iraq—the government also accelerated the process through various financial incentives for Arabs to move to Kirkuk and for non-Arabs to emigrate. Within urban Kirkuk, the Baʿth rapidly built thousands of units of subsidized housing for the Arab immigrants, vastly expanding the urban fabric toward the south (Figure 6.1). They also built very wide roads in Kurdish *mahallas* like Shorija for strategic purposes, reflecting the extent to which the militarization of the city had become routine. Beginning in the 1970s, the government repeatedly gerrymandered the Kirkuk governorate's borders, excluding districts that were predominantly Turkmen and Kurdish—including Chamchamal, which is fewer than 80 kilometers east of urban Kirkuk and was historically closely linked to it—and including areas that were predominantly Arab. By the 1990s, a large number of non-Arabs in Kirkuk were forced to register as Arabs with

[3] Anderson and Stansfield, *Crisis in Kirkuk*, 45-46.

[4] Nouri Talabany (Nuri Talabani) provides a thorough and well-organized book-length chronicle of the Arabization campaign: Talabani, *Mintaqat Karkuk*. However, due to his focus on Kurdish grievances, his book lacks any consideration of how other non-Arabs were negatively impacted by Arabization. This problem will be discussed further in the last section of this Conclusion.

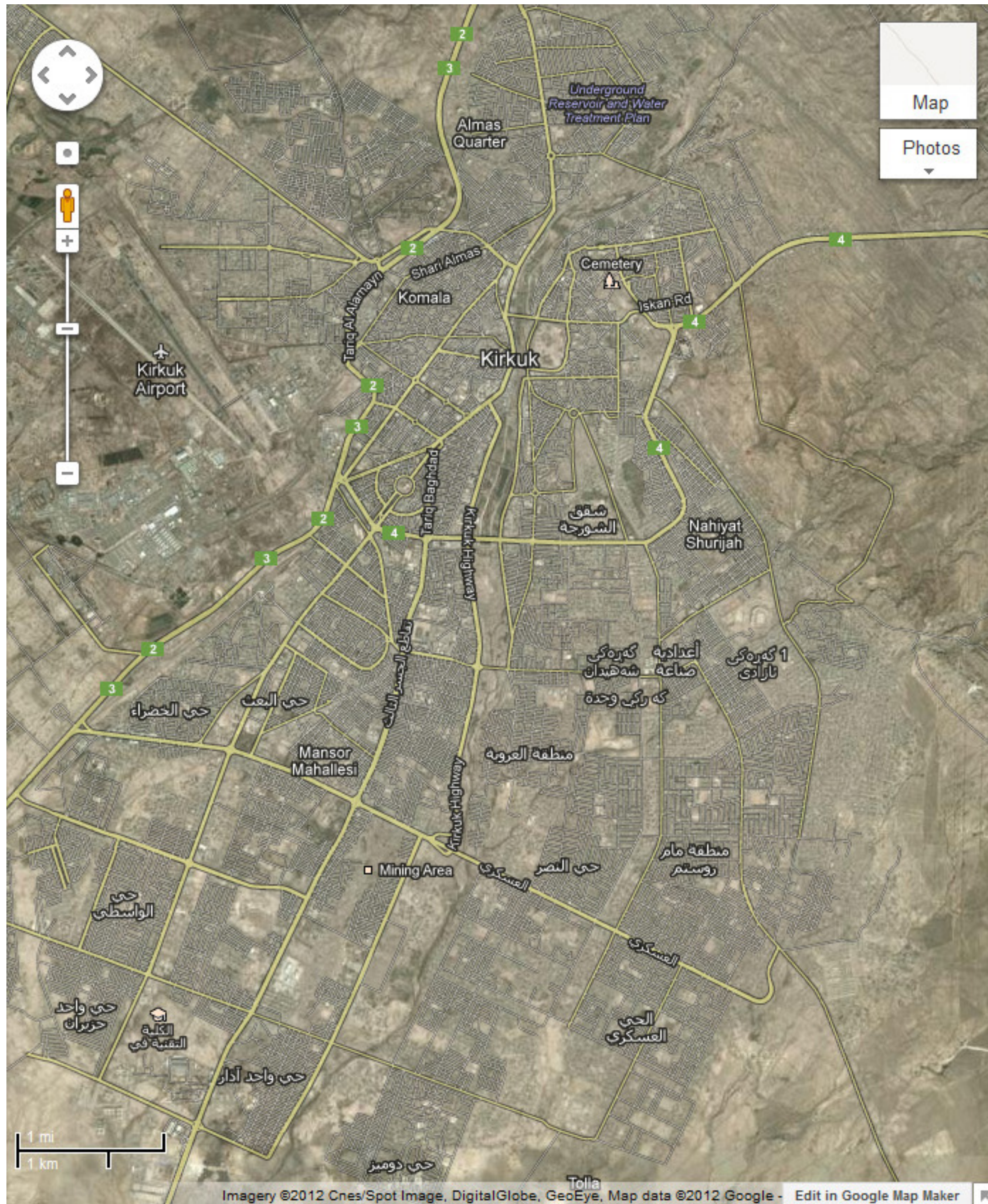

Figure 6.1: Kirkuk in the present day. The southern half of this map depicts urban fabric that has been constructed since 1958. The city's historic core, including the citadel, now lies in its northern third. © 2012 Google.

the government, distorting estimates of how many self-identified members of each ethnic group lived there. Many Kurdish, Turkish, and other non-Arabic place names were also replaced with Arabic ones.[5] This included the official name of the Kirkuk governorate itself, which was renamed Al-Taʾmim, or "Nationalization," in the 1970s, only reverting back to its original name in 2006.

The Arabization of Kirkuk, contrary to the government's intentions, intensified the Kurdish movement's determination to claim the governorate as part of a proposed independent Kurdish region. The Kurds realized their first milestone toward the goal of self-government in a 1970 agreement with Baghdad that granted them limited autonomy in northeastern Iraq—but which, of course, excluded Kirkuk from this area. Kurdish leaders continued to formally demand control over Kirkuk in talks with Baghdad, making Kirkuk one of the most contentious aspects of the ongoing conflict. In March 1991, during a series of uprisings against Saddam Hussein's government following the withdrawal of the American-led coalition of Operation Desert Storm, Kurdish *peshmerga* forces took control of Kirkuk fleetingly before being forced out again by Iraqi army troops.

During the American-led 2003 invasion, it was once again the *peshmerga*—by now the official forces of the autonomous Kurdistan Regional Government—who captured Kirkuk, this time on behalf of the coalition. They controlled the city for six months before withdrawing and leaving it in control of American troops, though they maintained, and continue to maintain, an ongoing presence in close proximity to the city.[6]

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[5] Anderson and Stansfield, *Crisis in Kirkuk*, 27-30, 36-42, 64-67, 81; Talabani, *Mintaqat Karkuk*, 45-62.

[6] Mustafa Mahmud, "Iraq: Plan to Deploy Peshmerga to Kirkuk Alarms Minorities," *Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty*, 8 August 2007, http://www.rferl.org/content/article/1078043.html.

In the early months of post-Baʿth administration of Kirkuk, American officials who oversaw the formation of temporary provincial councils relied heavily on the notion that what they thought of as Kirkuk's "four major ethnic groups" (Kurdish, Turkmen, Arab and Christian) needed to be equally represented, thereby institutionalizing the politics of identity anew.[7] Similar identity-based formulas for political institutions, especially with regard to sectarian identities—Sunni versus Shiʿi—prevailed elsewhere in American administration in Iraq.

The councils proved not to be potent forces in Kirkuki affairs. In this environment, the KRG and its two leading parties, the Kurdistan Democratic Party and the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan, began to wield their authority in Kirkuk in more ways than ever before. The KRG's intelligence agency, Asayesh, started to operate influentially in Kirkuk in a manner that intensified interethnic tensions. For instance, an investigation by *Washington Post* reporters Steve Fainaru and Anthony Shadid in 2005 found that Asayesh agents and Kirkuki Kurdish police officers with ties to major Kurdish political parties were covertly orchestrating illegal abductions of Kirkuki Arabs and Turkmens to KRG prisons, where they were held without charges and often tortured.[8] In retaliation, militant groups made up mainly of Arabs have targeted Kirkuk-based Asayesh agents in attacks, including a deadly series of car bombs in February 2011 most likely carried out by the extremist Muslim group Ansar al-Islam.[9]

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[7] Anderson and Stansfield, *Crisis in Kirkuk*, 93-101.

[8] Steve Fainaru and Anthony Shadid, "Kurdish Officials Sanction Abductions in Kirkuk," *The Washington Post*, 15 June 2005.

[9] Michael S. Schmidt, "Fatal Bombs in Iraq Seemed Aimed at Militia," *The New York Times*, 9 February 2011, http://www.nytimes.com/2011/02/10/world/middleeast/10iraq.html. Note that the article incorrectly characterizes Asayesh as a "militia."

The KRG's influence has also grown in Kirkuk in subtler ways, including through the control of some of the city's infrastructure. In 2011, the Kurdish provincial governor of Kirkuk, Najmaldin Karim, negotiated an arrangement whereby the governorate's electrical grid is now attached to Kurdistan's.[10] This deal came about in response to Kirkukis' omnipresent complaints about the city's sustained lack of functional utilities and sanitation. Journalist Gina Chon and political scientist Denise Natali, among others, have found through interviews with Kirkukis that concern with the lack of access to these kinds of basic services, as well as inadequate health care and education, is far more prevalent in Kirkuk than concern with matters such as the implementation of Article 140 to resolve Kirkuk's status.[11] Much like the IPC in an earlier era, the KRG has come to command leverage over Kirkuk's electricity supply for reasons related to local politics—in this case, yielding the positive effect of a greater number of hours of electricity per day than in the regions connected to Baghdad's grid. Moreover, the KRG has recently expressed its perception that it has a constitutional right to play a role in decisions regarding the development of the Kirkuk oil field.[12] This particularly bold intervention in local industrial affairs is a sign that the political-economic elements of the KRG's claim to Kirkuk continue to grow and evolve.

Altogether, Kirkuk's sociopolitical trajectory over the course of the twentieth century has not followed a predictable or straightforward path. One hundred years ago, it

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[10] Annie Gowen, "In Iraq, A New Breed of Returning Exile," *The Washington Post*, 4 September 2011, http://www.washingtonpost.com/world/middle-east/in-iraq-a-new-breed-of-returning-exile/2011/08/24/gIQAnzSN2J_print.html.

[11] Gina Chon, "In Kirkuk, Ethnic Strife Takes Toll," *The Wall Street Journal*, 25 February 2008, http://online.wsj.com/article/SB120390692899189767.html; Natali, "The Kirkuk Conundrum," 438, 443n13.

[12] Kurdistan Regional Government, "Natural Resources Ministry: Kirkuk Oil Field Development Requires Approval of KRG and Kirkuk Governorate."

would have been virtually impossible to predict that the market town of Kirkuk would eventually be some orders of magnitude larger and end up caught between the pull of political entities based in, of all places, Arbil and Baghdad. Even sixty years ago, the strongest trends in Kirkuk's local politics were centered on urban development and labor organization. But despite the occurrence of several points of radical change over time, a deeper historical analysis of the city and its hinterland in the early to mid-twentieth century demonstrates that its present-day circumstances fall into well-worn patterns. Today, the KRG and the Iraqi central government are each trying to integrate Kirkuk. While they do so, Kirkuk's rightful political place—if it could be said to have one—is no less ambiguous than it was nine decades ago, at which point the competition for its ownership was between Baghdad and London on one side and Ankara on the other. The KRG is, at present, ahead in the competition for control over Kirkuk and is evidently utilizing both patronage politics and public works in the process.

Using historical analysis to shed light on the roots of ethnicities and intercommunal conflict in Kirkuk also imparts knowledge of how these ethnic group identities were produced in the interplay of state centralization, local politics, economy, and culture. In doing so, this practice provides a sense of the extent—and thus the limitations—of ethnic identities as a factor with explanatory power in Kirkuk's local political domain.

Thinking beyond the ethnopolitical paradigm

It should go without saying that the most widespread ethnonationalist mythologies surrounding Kirkuk, all evocative and compelling in their own way, leave little room for

the intricacies of its twentieth-century history. However, in view of the fact that these ideas have penetrated the news media and even, to some extent, the academic literature about Kirkuk in the form of seemingly common wisdom,[13] it is necessary to take a moment to summarize some of their deficiencies.

The Kurdish nationalist idea of Kirkuk as the lost "Jerusalem" of the Kurdish people belies the complexity of Kirkuki Kurdish interests for much of the twentieth century. In urban Kirkuk, politically active Kurds did not outwardly and operatively align with the Barzani-led Kurdish national movement in large numbers until the revolutionary era after the 1958 coup. Urban Kirkuk and its hinterland were certainly not physical battlegrounds for the Kurdish movement until that time. It is only since then that Kurds have come to constitute what appears to be a demographic majority in both the city and the Kirkuk governorate.

Meanwhile, the Turkmen nationalist concept of Kirkuk as a Turkmen "ancestral capital" pervaded by Kurdish and Arab influence is poignant in light of the community's losses of life in intercommunal violence and the steady decline of the city's once linguistically Turkic culture. But Turkmen nationalist politicians tend to deny that their community is dwindling in number. They rely on unusually high estimates of Turkmens' demographic percentage in the Iraqi population, subsequently demanding impractical solutions to the Kirkuk crisis such as an ethnically based "proportional" power-sharing

[13] For instance, political scientist Brendan O'Leary approvingly cites Massoud Barzani's characterization of Kirkuk as "both a city of Kurdistan and of Iraq" in his argument that Kirkuk should accede to the KRG's region: Brendan O'Leary, *How to Get Out of Iraq With Integrity* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2009), 160. Similarly, but from a perspective of sympathy for Turkmen nationalism, Guldem Buyuksarac concludes her dissertation by noting that "Turkmen nationalists place greater emphasis on the territorial integrity of Iraq": Buyuksarac, "The Poetics of Loss and the Poetics of Melancholy," 240. Also, *The Middle East Quarterly* published two articles in 2007 featuring formulaic Kurdish and Turkmen nationalist arguments in the form of a point-counterpoint on the Kirkuk crisis: Güçlü, "Who Owns Kirkuk? The Turkoman Case"; Talabany, "Who Owns Kirkuk? The Kurdish Case."

scheme split 32-32-32-4 between Turkmens, Kurds, Arabs, and Christians, respectively.[14] Therefore, much like the Kurdish nationalist perspective, the Turkmen nationalist perspective hews to dubious convictions and consequently produces unrealistic interpretations of Kirkuk's current circumstances.

Finally, the Iraqi nationalist idea—usually promoted by Arabs and sometimes by Turkmens—of fighting for Kirkuk as part of the struggle for the unity of a multiethnic Iraq may seem pleasantly pluralistic in the context of the pervasive sectarianism that has riven Iraq since 2003. Indeed, ordinary Iraqis who express it are often sincere about the principle of inclusiveness. However, a historical perspective makes it clear that this notion is inevitably loaded with the brutal legacy of Arabist policies that disenfranchised and displaced Kirkuk's Kurdish, Turkmen and Chaldo-Assyrian communities beginning as early as the 1960s. It is small wonder that Kurds, the community most consistently targeted and profoundly harmed by Arabization in Kirkuk, usually find the idea of remaining aligned with Baghdad hard to stomach.

Much of this work has focused on the ethnicization of Kirkuk's local politics over the course of the twentieth century, a continuing reality that the ideas described above demonstrate. Ethnopolitics and the narratives of Kirkuk's "rightful" status that accompany them remain a powerful force in Kirkuk today, as reflected in the present state of the academic literature on the Kirkuk crisis. As a topic of study, they certainly merit continued scholarly attention. Nevertheless, by treating ethnic group identities as dynamic historical processes, I seek to encourage critical interrogation of the

[14] For an example of a high estimate of Iraq's Turkmen population (in this case, claiming 8-10% of the total Iraqi population), see: Güçlü, *The Turcomans and Kirkuk*, 27-28. For more on the notion of a 32-32-32-4 scheme and its problems, see Anderson and Stansfield, *Crisis in Kirkuk*, 229-30.

ethnopolitical paradigm that currently dominates discussions of Kirkuk and to open up other pertinent lines of inquiry. The ethnopolitical paradigm is not itself inherently inadequate—on the contrary, it is useful for understanding the ways in which communities' collective stakes in the current crisis are articulated. But it is only one starting point in the effort to fully comprehend the intricacies of Kirkuk's local political domain. Its persistent use as an all-encompassing framework for understanding modern Kirkuk can, and sometimes does, lead to ahistorical and simplified analyses of the dispute by implying that it is solely a crisis of failed interethnic relations.

At worst, this paradigm can foreclose questions about other issues, such as the political economy of the dispute. For instance, it often reduces the role of oil in the conflict to the false dichotomy discussed in the Introduction—coveted prize versus utterly irrelevant—or conceives of it as simply a "curse" rather than as a complex. One might ask instead how the oil industry and other sites of labor relations continue to shape the city's local politics and society. Another question might be how Kirkuk's evolving urban physical geography as large numbers of exiled Kurds return (or immigrate anew) to the city, in urbanist terminology, "reproduces" and "spatially reinforces" ethnic divisions.[15] Within the context of ethnopolitics themselves, it is necessary to consider the significance of the fact that certain claims to Kirkuk's status overlap despite having different ethnicized casts. Most notably, one could argue that the Arab and Turkmen "narratives" should not be viewed as distinct, but rather as different forms of the same conception of Kirkuk, since they both hold that Kirkuk's status as an Iraqi city must not

[15] In this case, I am borrowing the terminology from Mona Damluji, who argues that American policy in post-2003 Baghdad "actively reproduced, intensified, codified and spatially reinforced the significance of sectarian difference." Damluji, "'Securing Democracy in Iraq'," 71.

change.[16] The partial convergence between Arab and Turkmen claims to Kirkuk could be said to date back to the 1950s, when, as discussed in Chapter 5, prominent Turkmens first began to exhibit sympathy for pan-Arabist ideas.

Overuse of the ethnopolitical paradigm to the exclusion of other lines of inquiry can also reify ethnic identities in a way that compromises the depth of the critical analysis of those groupings. For instance, the interests and concerns of Chaldo-Assyrian Kirkukis have largely been left out of discussions of the Kirkuk crisis because, as a community, they are small in number and hence have no stake in controlling any of Kirkuk's institutions.[17] However, leaving them out of these discussions implies that Kirkuk is only to be understood as some sort of parcel to be divided in one way or another between larger communities—even if authors do not intend to perpetuate that idea. The omission of those who fall outside of the tripartite Kurdish-Turkmen-Arab framework ignores the fact that paying close attention to these Kirkukis may be precisely the best way to understand the contours and limits of ethnopolitics, the roots of communal interests and anxieties, and how these phenomena are prone to shift over time. Accordingly, it appears that a close reading of the Chaldo-Assyrian narrative of Kirkuk's history would show that they, like Turkmens, often see the city as a sort of ancestral capital and fear the

[16] Anderson and Stansfield treat the "Turkmen perspective" and the "Arab perspective" in separate chapters, but unify these two "group preferences" in their chapters on resolving the crisis. While this approach arguably makes sense, the significance of the simultaneous differences and convergences between these ethnic narratives is not fully explored. See for example: Anderson and Stansfield, *Crisis in Kirkuk*, 56-70, 79-86, 204-33.

[17] Many works on Kirkuk barely mention Chaldo-Assyrians at all and do not attempt to explain the omission. The justification that Anderson and Stansfield give for leaving Chaldo-Assyrians out of the substantive portion of their analysis is that this lacuna "reflects the naked political reality that Christian numbers are so low as to be irrelevant to any determination of Kirkuk's future status": ibid., 6.

ramifications of their numerical and political decline as a community.[18] The similarities between Chaldo-Assyrian and Turkmen characterizations of Kirkuk suggest that such notions are not uniquely part of a "Turkmen narrative," but rather are natural consequences of the vicissitudes of urban change for smaller communities that could also potentially affect marginalized Kirkukis along, for instance, class or religious lines. This kind of nuance, not to mention human empathy, is desperately needed in the current discourse on Kirkuk.

Indeed, one of the most striking features of recent ethnonationalist writings on Kirkuk is the absence of any sense of how political, social, and economic trends over the course of the twentieth century subjected every Kirkuki ethnic community to profound harm in some way, often simultaneously and for similar or identical reasons. Instead, reading books such as the Kurdish-nationalist *The Kirkuk Region and Attempts to Change its Ethnic Reality* or the Turkmen-nationalist *The Turcomans and Kirkuk*, one could come away with the impression that Kirkuk's politics have always been a zero-sum game in which one solid, clearly defined, unitary ethnic community loses catastrophically while the others avariciously pursue the region's oil. The lack of nuance in discourses on Kirkuk is inextricably linked with a lack of mutual understanding between Kirkukis of different ethnicities. For example, Karzan Sherabayani, the Kurdish filmmaker mentioned at the beginning of this work, is sincere in his conviction that Kirkuk is a crucial part of Kurdistan. He believes that the city's presence atop an oil field has prevented it from

[18] As mentioned in the Introduction, members of this community often stress the city's roots in the ancient Assyrian city of Arrapha and claim a connection to that heritage. For another example of this trope, see: Sargon Yousip Potros, "The History of Kirkuk City," *Assyrians of Kirkuk*, accessed 7 June 2012, http://assyriansofkirkuk.com/kirkukhistory.html. Kirkuki Chaldo-Assyrians also continue to commemorate a fifth-century massacre of Christians in the citadel on an annual basis, an event that the city's Chaldean archbishop, Louis Sako, has connected to ongoing persecution in the present: Mindy Belz, "A Fragile Light," *World Magazine*, 7 November 2009, http://www.worldmag.com/articles/16022.

acceding to that status and has hurt the Kurds. On the other hand, the Arabic-speaking Kirkuki he encountered who yelled "One Iraq! One flag!" is equally sincere in his belief that Kirkuk should remain part of a non-federal Iraq under Baghdad's jurisdiction. He probably believes, as do most of those in Iraq who oppose Kurdish nationalism, that the Kurds are trying to annex Kirkuk solely to use its oil for economic and strategic purposes toward the goal of independence.[19] As long as each of these Kirkukis ascribes illegitimate motives to the other, empathy is impossible. Furthermore, as long as they each deny the central role of the sociopolitical and cultural "oil complex" in their own stances—regardless of whether or not they, individually, have vested interests in the oil industry—they will continue to question each other's motives.

Consequently, it might seem ironic that the other dominant trope in writings on Kirkuk is the idea that it is a "city of ethnic harmony." Upon closer examination, though, this notion can easily go hand in hand with the absence of intercommunal cooperation. The many Kirkukis whose personal socialities, or even immediate families, exist at the intersections of different groups may promote the idea of Kirkuk's cosmopolitanism with utmost sincerity, and such harmony—especially with regard to culture and language—may be a reality within their own lives. But the concept of Kirkuk as a "city of ethnic harmony" disregards the fact that multiethnic cities are not inherently cosmopolitan simply by virtue of being diverse.[20] Fostering actual diversity and open-mindedness in ethnic identity is, of course, a worthwhile endeavor. Notwithstanding, idealizing diversity

[19] See for instance: Güçlü, *The Turcomans and Kirkuk*, 103.

[20] A forthcoming article makes a similar point in the case of the city of Alexandria by differentiating between "cultural and economic cosmopolitanism" and "liberal and political cosmopolitanism": James Moore, "Between Cosmopolitanism and Nationalism: The Strange Death of Liberal Alexandria," *Journal of Urban History*, in press (2012).

in a vague way can, in the worst case, allow strident nationalists of all stripes to advance narrow-minded arguments while maintaining a patina of liberal inclusiveness and, at the same time, accusing those with different views of violating this ideal. The edited volume of papers titled *Kirkuk, the City of Ethnic Harmony* illustrates this problem in its ultimate failure to transcend limited ethnopolitical frameworks; even the table of contents indicates the ethnic self-identity of most of the authors.[21]

This dissertation, through its varied methodological approaches to the analysis of Kirkuk's twentieth-century history, has sought to move beyond the ethnopolitical paradigm and its limitations. It is a historical study, so it does not purport to offer any proposed solutions to the present-day crisis of Kirkuk's status, a task best left to those who study policy. However, I believe that the analysis I have presented here warrants the conclusion that good-faith efforts at concession of interests, withdrawal of blame, and recognition of each other's needs and grievances are required of all those who have a stake in the dispute, both locally and regionally, during the process of negotiation. Ethnonationalists, Iraqi nationalists, and all Kirkukis would do well to realize that acknowledging Kirkuk's painful history of ethnic fault lines and their relationship with the city's and hinterland's oil-fueled change—in other words, cultivating empathy—may be a vital initial step toward mediating the crisis. Conflict in Kirkuk runs deep, but it must not be seen as the city's defining feature. There is no innate reason why the "divine sponge," to use Sargon Boulus's description of Kirkuk, has become subjected to conflicting claims. One can only hope that a frank reckoning with history, as well as with

[21] Markaz Karbalaʾ lil-Buhuth wa-l-Dirasat, *Karkuk*.

the role of oil in Kirkuk in the past and in the future, might play a small role in reconciliation.

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